

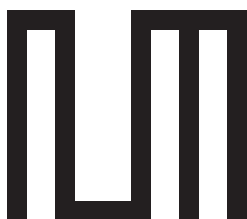


# ATENEAE

---

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

---



VOLUMEN XXVII • NÚMERO 2  
DICIEMBRE 2007



## **ATENEA**

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

***Junta Administrativa:***

Rector: JORGE VÉLEZ AROCHO

Decano: MOISÉS ORENGO AVILÉS

Directora de Publicaciones: LISSETTE ROLÓN COLLAZO

**Junta Editorial:**

Editora: NANDITA BATRA

**Consejo Consultivo Editorial**

LUIS AVILÉS, Departamento de Ciencias Sociales, Universidad de Puerto Rico-Mayagüez

BEN BENNANI, Facultad de Artes y Ciencias, Emirates University

ANDERSON BROWN, Departamento de Humanidades, Universidad de Puerto Rico-Mayagüez

RIMA BRUSI, Departamento de Ciencias Sociales, Universidad de Puerto Rico-Mayagüez

LILIA DAPAZ, Departamento de Estudios Hispánicos, Universidad de Puerto Rico-Mayagüez (Jubilada)

GAURAV DESAI, Departamento de Inglés, Tulane University

LIBE GARCÍA ZARRANZ, Departamento de Filología Inglesa, Universidad de Zaragoza

JACQUELINE GIRÓN, Departamento de Estudios Hispánicos, Universidad de Puerto Rico-Mayagüez

ERICH FREIBERGER, División de las Humanidades, Jacksonville University

FRANCISCO GARCÍA-MORENO BARCO, Departamento de Estudios Hispánicos, Universidad de Puerto Rico-Mayagüez

ANA KOTHE, Departamento de Humanidades, Universidad de Puerto Rico-Mayagüez

MARY LEONARD, Departamento de Inglés, Universidad de Puerto Rico-Mayagüez

CORA MONROE, Departamento de Humanidades, Universidad de Puerto Rico-Mayagüez

CHRISTOPHER POWERS, Departamento de Humanidades, Universidad de Puerto Rico-Mayagüez

HUGO RÍOS, Departamento de Literatura Comparada, Rutgers University

DAVIDE STIMILLI, Departamento de Literatura Comparada, Universidad de Colorado-Boulder

MANUEL VALDES-PIZZINI, Departamento de Ciencias Sociales, Universidad de Puerto Rico-Mayagüez

Ayudante Editorial Estudiantil: SHARON MÉNDEZ RODRÍGUEZ

LA JUNTA EDITORA DE LA REVISTA **ATENEA**

publica artículos relacionados con las humanidades y las ciencias sociales escritos en español o en inglés y algunos cuentos y poemas.

Los artículos deben regirse por las normas estipuladas en la última edición del manual del Modern Language Association of America (MLA). Favor de enviar tres copias a la Editora, Revista Atenea, PO Box 9265, Universidad de Puerto Rico-Mayagüez, Mayagüez, Puerto Rico 00681.

La Junta Editora no se hace responsable de las opiniones emitidas por los colaboradores y se reserva el derecho de publicación.

Derechos de propiedad literaria reservados.

© 1999 Universidad de Puerto Rico-Mayagüez

ISSN 0885-6079

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

Tipografía: HRP Studio

Diseño y arte portada: José Irizarry y Nandita Batra ©

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

Ilustrador: José Irizarry

---

*THE EDITORIAL BOARD OF REVISTA **ATENEA***

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

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

*Right to Literary Property Reserved.*

© 1999 University of Puerto Rico-Mayagüez

ISSN 0885-6079

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

Typography: HRP Studio

Cover designed by José Irizarry and Nandita Batra ©

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

*Courtesy of the Ancient Coin Forum.*

*Illustration: José Irizarry*

## ÍNDICE / TABLE OF CONTENTS

### ENSAYOS / ESSAYS

KANCHANA MAHADEVAN - Wounding Words and Speech Acts: Between Habermas and Butler .....	9
MICHAEL MIKULAK - The Nature of Solidarity and Nature's Solidarity: Bioregionalism, Situated Knowledge, and Unity in Diversity within Biocultural Systems .....	33
LIBE GARCÍA ZARRANZ - <i>Diswomen Strike Back?</i> The Evolution of Disney's <i>femmes</i> in the 1990s.....	55
SARA SCOTT ARMENGOT - The Return of Patient Zero: The Male Body and Narratives of National Contagion.....	67
JESSICA WEBB - Corrupting Boyhood in Didactic Children's Literature: Marryat, Ballantyne and Kingsley.....	81
PATRICIA CATOIRA - El barroco y la patria criolla en <i>Espejo de paciencia</i> .....	95
STÉPHANE PILLET - When Strategic Mistakes Save the Play Application of Game Theory in Sartre's <i>Dirty Hands</i> .....	109
JOCELYN A. GÉLIGA VARGAS - El incierto proyecto del "cine nacional" puertorriqueño ante el colonialismo y la globalización .....	121
MARK MASCIA - Redefining Civilization: Historical Polarities and Mythologizing in <i>Los conquistadores</i> of Pablo Neruda's <i>Canto general</i> .....	137

**POESÍA / POETRY**

GILES GOODLAND - Blister; Ghost; Myth of the Jews;  
Nothing; Representation; The Poet..... 161

**ENSAYOS / *ESSAYS***





## WOUNDING WORDS AND SPEECH ACTS: BETWEEN HABERMAS AND BUTLER

*Kanchana Mahadevan*

“...the issuing of the utterance is the performing of the action—it is not normally thought of as just saying something” (Austin 6).

**F**eminist philosophy treats embodiment as a “situation” lived through the symbolic dimension of language, as well as the materiality of socio-economic institutions and practices. Language reflects women’s materiality paradoxically through masculine generic terms that exclude and includes them secondarily through wounding names such as ‘witch.’ Injurious names locate bodies in abjection; yet, since the body is a situation the latter is also a sign of hope. Embodiment is a contingent phenomenon linked to contingent practices such as language, in an equally contingent patriarchal society. Consequently, it opens prospects for dislocating symbolic and material injury.

According to J.L. Austin’s speech act theory, language is a form of action. As Judith Butler observes, speech acts are more closely connected with the body than written marks. Though the latter do require the body, there is an ambiguity about to whom writing belongs, unlike speech. The social life of the body is produced through linguistic interpellation, which recognizes and abjects the body. Jürgen Habermas’s and Butler’s diverse appropriations of Austin reveal that the performative aspect of injurious language is either illocutionary or perlocutionary. Habermas evokes Austin’s illocutionary speech acts to develop language as communicative action, whereas Butler proposes a performative account that heeds the semantic excess in perlocutionary speech. Habermas’s critique of subject-centered language resonates with the feminist critique of patriarchal speech. However, Butler alleges that Habermas’s emphasis on argumentation and agreement neglects gender.

This article engages with Habermas/Butler debate on language with reference to the injurious term ‘witch.’ Since witch-hunting still

prevails in highly exploited tribal communities in India, Mahasweta Devi's short story '*Bayen*' frames the article, which is divided into three parts. The first explores the linguistic turn in feminist philosophy. The second section examines Habermas's views on language given feminist concerns of linguistic injury and Butler's critique. In its final part, the article explores the possibility of a counter-patriarchal linguistic project through Habermas's post-conventional identity.

## I

### Gendered Turn to Language: Masculine Thinker, Feminine Embodiment

If femininity is acquired rather than given, it shapes both mind and body through historical practices.<sup>1</sup> Further, the body is not a foundation for the cultural embodiment of gender.<sup>2</sup> When philosophy typically proclaims it as the prison of the soul, the body is already marked by language that deleteriously equates women with bodies. In a patriarchal society, women's relation to their bodies is mediated by names that acquire authority by drawing upon prior practices (Butler, *Bodies* 226-30). Thus, 'girl,' 'woman,' 'mother' or 'witch' initiate materialization of feminine practices, with a long complex history of regulation governed by a hierarchical opposition between the thinker and 'his' body (232-233).<sup>3</sup> Words like 'mother' equate her with the reproduction of life, whereas those like 'witch' make her life-threatening. Indeed, the sign 'witch' projects the woman as an unruly force—a body that does not matter, an object that is outside the order of norms. "The mother has become a devouring monster ..." (Irigaray, *Reader* 40). As Irigaray points out, the imagery of myths and legends is not about patricide but "an even more archaic murder, that of the mother" (36). The repression of the female body shows a dread of returning to the womb;<sup>4</sup> it simultaneously attempts to demonize the locus of procreation through hate speech.<sup>5</sup> Thus,

---

<sup>1</sup> De Beauvoir maintains the coextensiveness of the body with consciousness, unlike Sartre (Butler, *Sex and Gender* 32-33).

<sup>2</sup> The body (or sex) does not determine gender (Butler, *Sex and Gender* 30-31). Being a woman is one cultural interpretation of female embodiment; the latter can be interpreted in other ways.

<sup>3</sup> This is despite the body first relation with the mother (Irigaray, *This Sex* 34-46).

<sup>4</sup> The Latin word *matrix* means 'womb' (Butler, *How Bodies*, 31).

<sup>5</sup> In most languages expletives are directed against women as 'witch' represents.

according to Irigaray, “The womb, unthought in its place of the first sojourn in which we become bodies, is fantasized by many men to be a devouring mouth...” (41).

The woman is named as the reproductive mother to preserve property in a social order where men head families. Yet, besides the matter that reproduces within patriarchy, there is shapeless matter as its condition; “There is... a matter that exceeds matter” (Butler, *Sex and Gender* 47).<sup>6</sup> The abject is produced in the materialization of the non-human or “the differential materialization of the human” (Butler, *How Bodies* 281). This unlivable dimension of abject also has a discursive life. The witch “lives within discourse as the radically un-interrogated and as the shadowy content-less figure for something that is not yet made real” (281).<sup>7</sup>

Mahasweta Devi’s short story ‘Bayen’ exemplifies linguistic injury and bodily exclusion in its protagonist Chandidasi’s tension and fusion between mother and witch. A woman from the marginalized Dom community in Bihar, India, her existence is mediated by the names of Chandidasi or ‘servant’ and Chandibayen ‘witch’ (Devi *Bayen*) The Doms, who are among the lowest in caste hierarchy, have as their occupation the traditional caste-ordained one of cremating the dead. Chandidasi, who took such labor for granted, experiences remorse after becoming a mother of a son. She is disheartened to continue with her caste-given occupation. Chandidasi’s community fears her empowerment and blames her for the fatal illness that befalls her niece. Labeled as ‘witch,’ she is banished to the world of the dead. Her existence repeats the activities of the reproductive mother who preserves the family and community. Her new name ‘Chandibayen’ contains her existence. ‘Bayen’ is a witch who is feared by the entire village for preying on children; she is a shadowy abject mother behind the socially accepted mother. Chandidasi, ‘dasi’ being servant, metamorphoses from ‘mother’ to ‘witch’- a child-giver to child-hunter, an exiled mother separated from her son. Devi “...touches the larger space of the social forces that separate mother and son in a male-dominated system.”<sup>8</sup>

The name ‘bayen’ or ‘witch’ is particularly traumatic in Chandidasi’s case because it reflects the stark operation of patriarchy amongst the underprivileged Dom population, which projects its anxieties

---

<sup>6</sup> Butler makes this remark with reference to Irigaray.

<sup>7</sup> One should heed Butler’s warning in this respect that the abject is contentless, so that none of its examples can be taken as absolute (Butler, *How Bodies* 281).

<sup>8</sup> Samik Bandhopadhyay, as quoted by Bose (134)

on its women.<sup>9</sup> Like all disenfranchised communities, the abjection of women amongst the Doms is related to their exploitation by the mainstream. In the story Chandidasi is targeted when her niece succumbs to small pox. This shows the need to identify the cause of the frequent deaths and disease that befall communities with no access to nutrition, drinking water, basic medical care, sanitation and even literacy. The Doms and the tribals work on cremation grounds and mines, respectively, in the interest of Indian development.<sup>10</sup> Their plight is further aggravated by the presence of ritual witch hunters who wield power great power over them. Witch hunters make their victims confess, pay whatever penalty is necessary and live on the margins. Those labeled witch often accept it stoically and fall prey to autosuggestion (Devi, *Witch-Hunting* 172). Vested interests force these communities to their lowest ebb so that they can be exploited and their unity destroyed (178). Hence, they encourage the superstitious practice of witch hunting. "Those branded witches ...are victims of feuds, political vendetta, clan-hatred..." (173).<sup>11</sup>

In her segment on biology, de Beauvoir claims that natural facts gain significance only when they are filtered through non-natural systems of interpretation, or culture (35-69). The body is never a natural phenomenon: "it is not merely as a body, but rather as a body subject to taboos, to laws, that the subject is conscious of himself

---

<sup>9</sup> These points are derived from Devi, *Witch-Hunting* 170-75.

<sup>10</sup> Tribals are the indigenous population of India, who have been exploited by the Indian as well as British colonial elite. Following Mahasweta Devi, the term 'tribal' is more appropriate than indigenous or aboriginal in the Indian context (*Telling History* ix). Although they constitute approximately one-sixth of the Indian population (Devi, *Conversation* i), mainstream Indian identity tends to exclude and exploit them. This is testified by for instance the Santhals of West Bengal, the Warlis of Maharashtra, the Dangs of Gujarat. Tribals have a communal approach to land, but are often evicted by feudal and modern institutions; they eke out their impoverished livelihood through hunting and food-gathering in forest regions. But they are often driven out from forests due to government policy and development projects. Devi's oeuvre and activism reveal how disenfranchised the indigenous tribes remain even today. Most tribal groups in India do not have access to literacy, employment and health. Consequently, malnutrition is the primary threat to life amongst many tribal sections of Indian society. "The tribal world is like a continent handed over to us, and we never tried to explore it, know its mysteries, we only destroyed it" (Devi, *Telling History* x). Tribal cultures and histories are erased under a maze of material obstacles, so that they are not written about. Devi aptly observes that tribals are "...basically gentle, polite, highly civilized...A tribal lives in harmony with nature..."(ix). See Devi, *Conversation* for a detailed overview of tribals in India.

<sup>11</sup> The powers of a witch get converted to a powerlessness in a patriarchal society (Bose 136). There are three stages of pollution: menstruation, birth and death. Chandidasi is a polluter on all three counts (Bose 137).

(sic) and attains fulfillment...” (40). Thus, as a text the body is the homogeneous reproductive organism constructed by patriarchy, as well as, heterogeneous resistances to the same. It allows for taking up received meanings so that they are renewed, refused or reinterpreted (Butler, *Sex and Gender* 38). Thus, the body is a dialectical process of reinterpreting those interpretations that have taken a corporeal form (38).<sup>12</sup> The body is a situation—albeit a subordinate one.<sup>13</sup> Citing Diana Fuss, Cavallaro aptly maintains the body to be a site of contradiction (120), which opens the space for change. As an active process of interpreting the body, names like ‘witch’ or ‘mother’ do not designate women’s lives in their entirety; they can be exposed, critiqued and reworked. As excess, the body cannot be completely symbolized. “We can never complete the circuit, explore out periphery...” (Irigaray, *This Sex* 213). Irigaray’s question, “But what if the object started to speak?” (*Speculum* 135) is crucial from Chandibayen’s position of exile.<sup>14</sup> The following section argues that to disrupt hate speech women have to talk back, using the very language of patriarchy.

## II

### Perlocutions or Illocutions? Butler and Habermas

The relation between abusive language and abjection shows that the traditional representative account of language as a reflection of a naturally given order is problematic. As Austin maintains, one does things with words; language is an everyday activity that makes the world available through prevailing social hierarchies. Speech acts are performatives derived from ‘perform’ and ‘action’ (Austin 6). Austin treats speech as action, which one might add is inextricably connected with the body. In continuity, Habermas argues that organisms have to be invested with meaning ranging from social, cultural and symbolic structures of personality to matter (*Actions, Speech Acts* 252). Analogously, Butler observes that speech presents itself

---

<sup>12</sup> Thus, body is not owned by the subject. Moreover, if it is a situation, the dichotomy between sex and gender vanishes (Butler, *Sex and Gender* 38)

<sup>13</sup> Also see Kruks for this point.

<sup>14</sup> Butler affirms “There are abject bodies” as a performative contradiction in opposition to Habermas (*How Bodies* 280). However, it is only from the perspective of a patriarchal or specular logic where each word represents its object absolutely that one can term this as a performative contradiction. From the point of view of transcendental logic, abject bodies form the necessary condition for all other bodies to exist. But Habermas does not justify language through performative contradiction as Apel does. See note 33 below for a detailed discussion on performative contradiction.

through the body in ways that are quite different from that of writing (*Excitable* 152).<sup>15</sup> Speech acts are more closely connected with the body than written marks. Though the latter does require the body, there is an ambivalence regarding whose body it is. But, “The speech act, however, is performed bodily, and though it does not instate the absolute or immediate presence of the body, the simultaneity of the production and the delivery of the expression communicates not merely what is said, but the bearing of the body as a rhetorical instrument of expression” (152). Since the social life of the body is produced through linguistic interpellation (5, 153), the body is sustained and threatened through language (5). Naming instills respect or fear by including or excluding the interpellated subject from social discourse. Oppressive language does not just represent violence—it is violence (6); language is both what is done (the performance) and what is effected (8).

Linguistic injury or hate speech is, thus, performative. Austin distinguishes between locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary speech acts. A locution is a proposition with meaning, where “to say X, is to do X” (Austin 94-5).<sup>16</sup> Wounding words are hardly descriptive in this sense. The Austinian model opens up two conflicting performative paradigms for comprehending hate speech: illocutionary and perlocutionary speech acts. The former establishes dialogical relations “in saying something,” while perlocutions achieve effects “by saying something” (Austin 121). This distinction rests upon the significance of conventions and effects:

### 1. *The Role of Conventions:*

Illocutionary acts inform or proclaim bring about effects in saying something through backing by conventional force. Perlocutionary acts of threats and deterrence, on the other hand, are not supported by convention in their bid to bring about effects by saying something (Austin 109, 119-20). Thus, even if illocutionary acts do renounce language, they attain their effects through conventions, unlike perlocutionary speech acts.

### 2. *The Status of Effects:*

For most part, illocutionary acts produce consequences through linguistic means (Austin 116, 118, 120). “many illocutionary acts

---

<sup>15</sup> Butler critiques Derrida for not acknowledging this difference between speech and writing (*Excitable*, 152-3).

<sup>16</sup> Locutionary act is the traditional proposition with meaning, where ‘to say X, is to do X’ (Austin 94-5).

cannot be performed except by saying something. This is true of stating, informing (as distinct from showing), arguing, giving estimates, reckoning, and fining (in the legal sense); it is true of the great majority of verdictives and expositives as opposed to many exercitives and commissives" (120). Whereas perlocutionary speech acts can achieve their effects through nonlinguistic (or nonlocutionary) means (119). Linguistic acts differ from physical acts in that they do not have a mechanical relation with their consequences (113-114). Illocutionary acts are not just consequences of locutions, but of the forces of convention in specific situations (115). They too lead to consequences in the sense of securing an uptake, taking effect and inviting a response (116).

Butler believes that perlocutionary speech acts are performatives with feminist promise (*Excitable*). Threatening perlocutions structurally (rather than semantically) break with conventions so that they can be repeated (148, 149).<sup>17</sup> They separate word from deed, so that by saying X, one produces effects. The lapse of time between saying and doing (17) allows for an emphasis on future consequence. Since some of the latter are unintentional, they can be tapped to counter the utterance. In contrast, illocutionary speech acts identify saying with doing and emphasize prior convention without any time lapse between saying and doing. For example the judge who says "I sentence you" executes the sentence in the course of uttering it. According to Butler, if hate speech is understood as illocutionary there is no room for resistance since it is tied to prior convention, whereas as a perlocutionary speech act, it creates room for resistance. Her concerns for linguistic resistance notwithstanding, Butler's arguments betray problems:

(A) On Austinian terms perlocutionary and illocutionary speech acts cannot be neatly segregated. Both are performatives bound to effects. Illocutionary speech acts lead to consequences in the sense of securing an uptake, taking effect and inviting a response (Ibid., 116). Against such an interactive effect, perlocutionary speech acts *get* their listeners to do act in a certain way. However, as performatives, illocutions and perlocutions are susceptible to failures or "infelicities."<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> This insight from Derrida's reading of Austin is employed by Butler to comprehend both hate speech and ways of resisting it.

<sup>18</sup> Habermas does not separate the illocutionary and locutionary speech acts as force and meaning (*Toward a Critique* 70-71).



(B). In her focus on “I declare you man and wife...” as the prime example of illocutionary speech acts, Butler equates illocutionary speech acts with what Searle has termed as declaratives (Habermas, *John Searle's* 273).<sup>19</sup> Declaratives are issued from an institutional standpoint to conclude contracts, close meetings, initiate relationships, etc. They have “two directions of fit” where in saying X, they produce X or “they both state a fact and produce it” (273). Declaratives are able to produce new social facts because they are backed by institutional and legal norms.<sup>20</sup> For instance, a declaration of marriage gets backing from the institution of marriage and family. Searle tends to reduce the illocutionary content of all speech acts to those of declaratives á la Butler. However, as Habermas remarks, if persons call things into existence by occupying positions in institutions, language itself becomes an institution (274). However, “Language, however, is an institution only in a metaphorical sense” (274). Words transcend institutional affiliations. Hence, all cases of illocutionary acts are not those of institutionalized declarations.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, even proclamations with institutional backing can be challenged and revoked by language. A proclamation does not tie the person to a specific mode of existence. The husband who proclaims “I declare you to be a witch,” does not make an absolute claim. The wife can refuse it, critique it, accept it—all of which are illocutionary possibilities. As Austin observes in performatives, our saying something is doing it. Hence, we attend to the illocutionary force of an utterance and abstract away from its locutionary aspect of correspondence with facts (Austin 146).<sup>22</sup> This applies to both illocutions and perlocutions.

(C) Moreover, perlocutionary effects can be attained without language as they impose the speaker’s subjective intentions upon the listener. In contrast, illocutionary speech acts require language (most of the time) to go beyond the subject’s intention and connect with the listener. Thus, against Butler, perlocutions are not unconnected with intentions, nor are illocutions inextricably bound to them. Rather perlocutions are unconventional in the sense of being subjective- they

---

<sup>19</sup> These are also institutional facts.

<sup>20</sup> They are like directives in that like orders they rely on normative contexts. They are also like commissives such as promises they rely upon the speaker’s responsibility (Habermas, *John Searle's* 273)

<sup>21</sup> Illocutionary speech acts are carried out by means of performative sentences.

<sup>22</sup> Austin does contend that the separation between locutionary and illocutionary speech acts is an abstraction (Austin 147), since each speech act encompasses both.

get the listener to obey the speaker, instead of debating the issue. Perlocutionary speech acts do not exist independently of illocutionary ones as Butler assumes (Habermas, *Communicative Rationality* 201). It is when perlocutionary effects<sup>23</sup> are *hidden* through making public its transcendental, illocutionary assumptions that perlocutions work. Openly perlocutionary speech replaces the speaker's validity claims by power claims (200). It is analogous to strategic action, where speech can be replaced by overt violence. Despite this, such overt perlocutionary acts are "parasitical" on illocutionary acts.<sup>24</sup> Their comprehensibility is derived from the conditions that underlie illocutionary speech acts or an antecedently habitualized language oriented towards communication (201). Tacitly perlocutionary speech also has a derivative status (*Actions, Speech Acts* 224). In the deceptive usage of illocutionary speech acts (*Toward a Critique* 82-83),<sup>25</sup> perlocutionary goals have to be secret while illocutionary aims are made public (*Actions, Speech Acts*, 223). They can function "when at least one side assumes that language is being used with an orientation toward reaching an understanding. Whoever acts strategically in this way must violate the sincerity condition of communicative action *inconspicuously*" (*Toward a Critique* 82).<sup>26</sup> In Derridean terms, the conditions for the possibility of perlocutions are also conditions of its impossibility. Perlocutions depend upon the illocutionary successes of using a language (84);<sup>27</sup> since they conceal their goals, they are instances of injury. Whereas illocutionary speech acts, which are instances of public avowal, are conducive to tolerance. As Kant's transcendental principle of publicity maintains, a course of action that cannot be public acknowledged violates others (*Perpetual Peace* 135).

In a Habermasian vein, women are excluded from speech community through words like 'witch'; feminists can expose the exclusions in sexist language because language moves beyond the

---

<sup>23</sup> Perlocutionary effects are those that go beyond the communicative dimension of the speech act (Habermas, *Communicative Action Vol* , 202).

<sup>24</sup> Habermas claims that in his earlier position "My mistake was to treat this limit case of a pure imperative backed up by power as a class of speech acts in its own right." (*Communicative Rationality* 201).

<sup>25</sup> These are termed by Habermas as latently strategic aims (*Actions, Speech Acts* 203).

<sup>26</sup> Emphasis added.

<sup>27</sup> Actions oriented towards reaching a success can be done egocentrically, while those oriented towards agreement are done cooperatively (*Communicative Rationality* 204).

speaker so that any one can respond to language in principle. Thus, if 'witch' is used in a communicative way, the silenced could generate alternative meanings. As Habermas argues, instead of the intentions of a subject, meaning requires an interplay between subjects, society and the object under consideration in any given speech act. All those who are affected by a term can enter the speech situation to rework the term. Women have to struggle for recognition by speaking and resisting curse words directed against them. Even injurious names give them an opportunity to speak and disrupt the patriarchal order to attain a different relation to language (Irigaray, *This Sex* 191).<sup>28</sup>

However, according to Butler, Habermas's linguistic communication is another instance of silencing hearers by appealing to the intentions of a speaker (*Bodies*, 192; *Excitable* 87).<sup>29</sup> Moreover, since hearers can respond to speakers with a yes or a no, the former can silence dissent (*Excitable* 86). Butler locates Habermas's stress on consent as an attempt to impose semantic uniformity (86-88). However, her critique neglects Habermas's distance from intentionalist, semantic and use theories of meaning. He upholds that meaning is not the property of the speaker's thoughts or grammar of utterance or a specific context, since the hearer is confined to passivity (*Toward a Critique*). For Habermas, non-subjective meaning emerges when each pole is transgressed through "a speaker coming to an understanding with another person about something" (58). The speaker's utterance provides the hearer with an opportunity to take a stance of accepting, rejecting, arguing, modifying and the like (*John Searle's* 269). This process of communication is never complete for any conclusion that is reached can be revised in principle. The interaction between the speaker and hearer can resist the institutionalized deformities of life and language (Habermas, *Actions, Speech Acts* 240).

Dialogue implies that hearers do not accept the utterances of speakers under conditions of duress, but through constant exchange of roles with speakers. Habermas's idealizations of freedom and equality are implicit in dialogue. They emphasize the conditions of symmetry under which discourse partners can accept, reject and modify terms. Further, though dialogue requires provisional agreement—it is structural. A specific meaning is attached to a term consistently only within a given situation—not in all situations. Moreover, it can be subsequently repudiated, as well. Habermas uses the term 'ideal'

---

<sup>28</sup> For an analogous defense of communicative speech acts see Hornsby (87-106).

<sup>29</sup> This is upheld by many poststructuralist critiques of Habermas, as well.

to indicate the communicative excess presupposed by all speech.<sup>30</sup> He comprehends universality, not as absolutism or uniformity, but as openness to the point of view of the other (*Neo-Aristotelianism*). Ideal communication demands that meanings of words have to meet with the approval of all affected by them. Thus, meaning is generated through a process of both critique of convention and dialogue. However, since words are assumed and yet violated in actual communication, there is a tension between the ideal and the actual. Moreover, rather than idealize consent, as social contract theorists, Habermas brings the circumstances of consent into relief with his focus of the relations between dialogue partners. Habermasian communication enables language users to contest injurious interpretations and pave new contexts through dialogue. It makes perlocutionary or injurious speech's resistance to dialogue public and taps its illocutionary excess in innovative directions. Like Butler, it transcends injurious language to first examine the sedimentations of history underlying it (Butler, *Excitable* 13). It breaks with the past context (though not absolutely) where the words are critiqued and resignified to usher in a new future (14). By untying words from past contexts and sovereign subjects, the receiver re-signifies them through a nonexclusive process of interaction. Habermas goes a step further than Butler in exploring the implications of disentangling words from both intention and context. Actors who employ perlocutionary speech acts confront each other as entities, rather than as dialogue partners (*Communicative Rationality* 204).<sup>31</sup> Hence, perlocutions are hardly promising since hearers concede to speakers under duress. Mahasweta Devi observes that many of the tribal women accept the title of witch because of their urge for empowerment under conditions of subordination (*Witch-Hunting* 171).

Butler's preference for perlocutionary speech acts is also connected with her being suspicious of consent and universality as homogenizing. Following Lyotard's postmodernism, which famously maintains "To speak is to fight," she believes agonism to be the spirit of language. However, this presumes individuals to be atomic units who are under the Hobbesian state of permanent war. In contrast, Habermasian communication neither ignores difference nor inflicts uniformity. Habermas upholds that the most individual expressions in language contain the possibility of openness to another. There is an internal connection between understanding (*Verstehen*) and reaching

---

<sup>30</sup> As Benhabib observes the notion of excess is found in both Habermas and Derrida (*Sexual Difference*).

<sup>31</sup> Purposive actors assume that they can intervene in the causal nexus of inner-worldly processes.

an understanding (*Verständigung*) (Habermas, *Communicative Rationality* 199). But this does not imply that there is an equation between linguistic understanding (*Verstehen*) and agreement (*Einverständnis*). To achieve understanding is to arrive at a communicatively reached agreement (*Toward a Critique*, 80). Thus, "More discourse means more contradiction and difference. The more abstract the agreements become, the more diverse the disagreements with which we can nonviolently live" (Habermas, *Unity of Reason* 140). According to Habermas, "the nonidentical" that escapes metaphysical concepts is available in everyday discourse (*Postmetaphysical* 48).

Habermas does not treat illocutions as declaratives backed by institutions, as Butler claims, but as interactions of the lifeworld that are reciprocally related to communicating individuals (*Actions, Speech Acts* 251). The lifeworld is not a system from which individuals should be secluded; nor is it a whole of which individuals are parts. It is neither an organization to which individuals belong as members, nor an association comprised of individuals joined together. Cultural reproduction, social integration and socialization in the life-world allow for everyday communicative practices and are in turn nurtured by them (252).

According to Habermas, speakers are communicative actors who foreground the horizon of the situation and the topic, which are in turn rooted in the background of the life-world (241-245). The life-world is immediate, certain and holistic. It comes into view only from the perspective of language users who want to reach an understanding. Habermas argues that the actor is no longer an "initiator but rather...the product of the traditions within which she is situated, of solidarity groups to which she belongs, of socialization and learning processes to which she is subjected" (246). The life-world comprised of culture, society and personality is thematized and reproduced through communicative action (248-250). Each of these, however, does not have circumscribed boundaries: Cultures have the widest boundary, whereas societies have narrower ones and personalities are the most narrow. However, there is an overarching relationship between them through everyday language, even as distinct systems culture, society and personality are not governed by money or power. Culture operates through school, society is reproduced through law and personality is reinvented through family, all of which are structures in the lifeworld of everyday communicative practices.<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>32</sup> Habermas does not attempt to justify discourse ethics a priori as Apel does with the notion of performative contradiction (*Discourse Ethics* 80-83). Those who argue against discourse tacitly utilize the norms of discourse-this is basically what

Indeed, Butler and Habermas have much in common. Like Habermas she maintains that language is not controlled by sovereign subjects. Subjects are brought into existence through linguistic naming. However, interpellation exceeds the subject and vice versa (Butler, *Excitable* 34). The entry into language through a name that has never been chosen becomes the limit and basis of agency; hence, the subject is not condemned to permanent victimization (38, 41). The subject who addresses an other is also someone who has been addressed. Intersubjectivity consists in this process of mutual address rather than autonomy (30).<sup>33</sup> Although hate speech is out to silence the addressee, it can be appropriated to contest oppression when the addressee responds to it in unpredictable ways (160). The subject who repeats these very same names assumes responsibility for them—not as their originator but as someone who recites them (39). The subject can break with previous contexts and conventions to inaugurate new meanings—since her body exceeds the utterance. “The subject is called a name, but “who” the subject is depends as much on the names that he or she is never called” (41). Indeed, both Butler and Habermas eschew Austin’s notion of a happy performative as that which is invoked conventionally, appropriately, correctly, completely, intentionally and continuously (Austin 14-15). According to

---

Apel means by performative contradiction. Practical reasoning cannot rely upon deductive arguments nor inductive arguments. It relies upon discursive argumentation. Yet the latter cannot be understood as ultimate—it is only a fallible reconstruction of some of the assumptions of the social practice of language. Yet in reconstructing the terms of argumentation there is a hypothetical moment which Apel is not ready to accept (96-97). The terms of discourse can be viewed modestly as a rational reconstruction of moral consciousness at the socio-cultural and ontogenetic levels (98). Thus, both the skeptic and the foundationalist are looking for ultimate justifications.

Again the notion of performative contradiction does not take into account the fact that the skeptic can very well renounce argumentation following Nietzsche and Foucault (99). But the skeptic cannot deny having grown up in a socio-cultural web of which communicative action is a part. Thus, the skeptic who is a product of socialization also reproduces this form of life. Indeed, for Habermas the abstract choice between strategic and communicative action can only take place in extremely individual cases (102). The actor belongs to the lifeworld that is reproduced through three processes: cultural tradition, social integration and socialization. Each of these processes require the medium of an action oriented towards understanding. A long term absence from appropriating traditions, belonging to social groups or taking part in socializing interactions would result in the monadic isolation of strategic action. It would also entail schizophrenia or suicide or self-destruction in the long run (102).

<sup>33</sup> Butler remarks that Althusser’s interpellation reduces the one who addresses to a voice and the addressee to someone who consciously accepts the name. In contrast, Butler upholds that the interpellating agent and addressee internalize regulative norms in a subconscious way (Butler, *Excitable* 31-33).

them language works only if these conditions remain unfulfilled.<sup>34</sup>

Thus, words are not intractable properties hoarded in subjects or contexts. Despite their history of oppression, words are what Butler terms as “vulnerable” or “excitable.” Wounding terms can be turned against the exclusions—not by accommodation but by blurring existing boundaries (Butler, *Excitable* 161-163). By questioning their exclusions, one can open up hate speech to a future filled with hope and risks. According to Butler, a name that hurts can also be a site of counter-mobilization. “The name one is called both subordinates and enables, producing a scene of agency from ambivalence, a set of effects that exceed the animating intentions of the call.” (163). For Butler, if the response to injurious language is a risk taken in response to being put at risk, it would have to be a repetition that forces change.<sup>35</sup> However, against Butler, words are not perlocutionary strategies but interactive. Language presupposes semantic, as well as, communicative excess.

To return to Devi’s ‘*Bayen*,’ Chandidasi foils an impending train-robbery planned by a group of bandits who were busy blocking the tracks by piling bamboo sticks on them. She threatened them and drove them away in her avatar as ‘witch.’ The train, however, ran over Chandidasi as she struggled communicate the danger of the blockade that lay ahead. Chandidasi reinterprets the ‘witch’ as someone who protects rather than harms the living. The brigands run away only because they feared her as a ‘witch.’ Chandidasi’s reappropriation of the witch forces the village community to recognize a loving figure-though it is too late. “the scapegoat has crafted her own final sacrifice, in her death, however, she is able to snatch back her identity even as she denies her community a chance for their own salvation” (Bose 135). Thus, it is not just the semantic excess in the word ‘witch’ that matters, such as Chandidasi singing lullabies when she is alone. It is also the relationship between the terms witch/mother

---

<sup>34</sup> Austin’s view is that speech acts fail when they do not abide by previous conventions. Derrida too believes that this failure is the very condition under which speech acts can perform (Butler, *Excitable* 151). However, Glendinning quotes Austin’s counsel that “old habits of *Gleichschaltung*, the deeply ingrained worship of tidy-looking dichotomies” be abandoned (13). *Gleichschaltung* was a term used by Hitler and it meant that one induces clarity, simplicity by violence (14). Glendinning cites Derrida as someone who resists *Gleichschaltung*, and one might add here that Habermas too resists it.

<sup>35</sup> Butler’s critiques Derrida for making rupture an autonomous feature of language in oblivion to its social code. For Derrida, the performative continuously breaks with the previous contexts. Thus, he does not distinguish between performatives that cause injury by repeating a trauma and those that don’t (Butler, *Excitable* 150).



and the rest of society. Chandidasi's reconstruction of these terms infuses a new relation to language that brings about a new kind of socialization. As Irigaray remarks, in nonpatriarchal language there is a constant movement of words from giving to receiving and vice versa (*This Sex* 213).

The speaker (writer) cannot predict the future of language (Butler, *Excitable*, 8). Thus, those who named Chandidasi as 'bayen' could not have imagined that she would have transformed the term in a constructive and nonpatriarchal way. Words can be received in innumerable ways they are violent, however, when they control or encapsulate (9). Butler herself acknowledges that damaging speech is a bodily act that prefigures another bodily act (11). The performative as interpellation brings the social/discursive body into existence (154). The body of the speaker exceeds the words that are spoken and thereby the addressed body is no longer in its control (10-13, 156).<sup>36</sup> "That the speech act is a bodily does not mean that the body is fully present in its speech" (155). The indeterminacy of language with no *telos* is intertwined with the heterogeneity of the body (Irigaray, *This Sex* 210). In Devi's 'Bayen' the mother turns into a witch who in turn becomes a mother and then a martyr because the performative's potential for contesting hurt relies upon post-conventional notion of identity.

### III

#### **Beyond Injurious Language: Postconventionality and Publicity**

Habermas's communicative excess relies upon a post-conventional identity noteworthy from the feminist standpoint because it critiques conventional patriarchal concepts such as 'witch.' Further, by transcending existing understanding of gendered terms it allows for innovation and solidarity.

##### *Postconventionality*

When women who are silenced use language, they speak and write without territory (Irigaray, *Speculum* 27). Thus, they acquire a post-conventional reflective distance from rigid patriarchal meanings of their conventional roles. Habermas has developed a post-

---

<sup>36</sup> Butler regards hate speech as a threat to the body since only embodied speakers can threateningly comport themselves towards addressees (Butler, *Excitable* 12-13). The speaker's body does not necessarily act on the spoken threat and the hearer's body is also no longer under the threat's control (12-13). But, pace Butler, this applies to both perlocutionary threats and illocutionary proclamations.



conventional account of identity that could both strengthen feminist aspirations and also learn from it. It replaces the subject-object relation with a subject-subject paradigm of a plurality of participants. Instead of the object, there is the second person, a participant in communication. Thus, the I/it relation becomes I/you. At the conventional level this relation is mediated by “me” who forms the generalized other of group or institutional expectations or even a social “we” (Habermas, *Individuation* 179-180; Dean, 223). This mediation fixes the roles of participants who internalize them and employ strategic (as opposed to communicative) action to preserve socially sanctioned roles. At this level, role expectations empower sections of society at the expense of others.<sup>37</sup> Thus, women’s reproductive tasks enhance the quality of men’s lives. However, their reproductive experiences reveal many conflicts at the conventional level, which can be resolved communicatively only by moving to a post conventional stage (Habermas, *Individuation* 184). At this stage, identity permits “a decreasing degree of repressiveness and rigidity, increasing role distance and the flexible application of norms- socialization without repression” (*Communication and Evolution*). A post-conventional attitude enables the participants to treat their conventions as hypotheses to be justified by ideal role taking (Meehan, *Introduction* 5). The latter takes the perceptions of those who would potentially be affected by the convention into account. “For it is only when the force of the group and tradition loosens its grip, that individuals can reflectively ... move beyond merely conventionally justified beliefs and values” (3).

However, critics maintain that post-conventionality is severed from the specificities of culture and society. Feminists argue that universality is often a mask for uniformity. Its emphasis on agreement homogenizes differences between men and women (and even amongst women). As Braaten observes, feminist theorizing has to be sensitive to both difference and story telling. However, Habermas does make space for the different stories of human life. “what is at issue here is the reconstruction of the voice of reason, a voice that we have no choice but to allow to speak in everyday communicative practices—whether we want to or not.” (Habermas, *Communicative Rationality* 207). He upholds that “Criticizable validity claims are Janus faced” (206). Since they are claims, they transcend local agreements and can be disputed; yet such claims have to be raised within specific contexts (Habermas, *Communicative Rationality* 206). Thus, the

---

<sup>37</sup> Although Habermas does consider the observer to be neutral, one could follow Jodi Dean in gendering the observer to make the patriarchal color of social conventions explicit (*Different Voices*)

conventional “me” or generalized other is not abandoned in favor of a situation-free position. There is the theoretical “me” through which an agent becomes conscious of herself in the course of her interaction with her alter. The practical “me” is the agency that a subject establishes by the mediation of the alter’s expectations and behavior. This second person perspective is enlarged to include the generalized expectations that all members of society have towards her—or the generalized other. In this sense, the practical “me” is a conventional identity that is a necessary condition for a postconventional identity. The practical “I” opposes the conventional “me” in both pre-social drives and innovative fantasy (*Individuation* 179-192). The intersubjectivity of the practical self is reflected in the tension between the conventional “me” and the innovative “I.” Indeed, the conventional relation between “me” and “I” is reversed in post-conventional identity. The post-conventional “I” is both performative and communicative. In performing the speech act “I address you” a new intersubjective context and person is posited through language. An unlimited communication community is posited; it creates public space for those who are directly or potentially involved in the situation or affected by the topic under debate (Habermas, *Neo-Aristotelianism* 129). For Habermas universalism means the following:

That one relativizes one’s own way of life with regard to the legitimate claim of other forms of life, that one grants the strangers and the others, with all their idiosyncracies and incomprehensibilities, the same rights as oneself, that one does not insist on universalizing one’s own identity, that one does not simply exclude that which deviates from it, that the areas of tolerance must become infinitely broader than they are today. (Habermas, *Limits* 240)

In exchanging the perspectives of the speaker and hearer, one engages in ideal role taking that is distanced from conventional roles (Meehan *Introduction*). Indeed as Jodi Dean observes, the conventional generalized other does not have fixed expectations nor is it singular; there are several generalized others (223-224). It is this ambiguity, as well as conflict among multiple roles that provides the space for post-conventional generalized other. Such an open-endedness implies that “we can never completely assume the perspective of the generalized other. Instead, we take over an interpretation of it, an interpretation which arises out of our understanding of ourselves in the context of the relationships in which we are situated” (224). Thus, taking up “a hypothetical attitude toward the generalized other is an essential aspect of post-conventional morality” (225).

To return to Chandidasi in Devi’s ‘*Bayen*,’ her name indicates the conventional identity of grave-digger ascribed to her on the basis of her Dom caste. However, Chandidasi experiences a conflict of

duties when she becomes a mother. She renounces her traditional caste occupation given her inability to reconcile the roles of burying dead babies and being a mother, but her attempt to retain her role of mother is disrupted by the community, which exiles her as a witch. As Chandibayen or 'witch' and mother she protects total strangers from calamity. Chandidasi/Chandibayen's identity belies conventional notions of 'mother' and 'witch.'

*Solidarity:*

As Braaten observes, Habermas distinguishes between community and solidarity (144). The social ability to use language presupposes a community of communication, which in contrast to administrative and corporate systems does not assign any determinate roles to individuals. As an unrestricted and ever-expanding field, Habermas's community refers to all those who can participate in communicative action. Braaten likens Habermas's community to Kant's kingdom of ends (143). His notion of solidarity reproduces the lifeworld; it consists in the movement of culture, social order and personal identity from one generation to another. Solidarity is membership in "legitimately ordered interpersonal relationships" governed by modern rational norms of associations; 'rational' implies being less tailored to concrete forms of life.

Feminists such as Braaten and even Benhabib indict Habermas for neglecting feelings. They argue that his solidarity is grounded in a community "held together by shared techniques of justification" (Braaten 149) and has no place for feelings, which is uniquely feminine. According to Braaten, the whole domain of enculturation cannot be founded on such a sparse ground; community, solidarity and society concern relationships and require mimesis, sympathy and affection. She maintains that feminist reasoning proceeds from empathy, which is a part of solidarity and community. Hence, instead of justifying community and solidarity reasons are situated in community and solidarity. Braaten urges that one build on "the essential continuity of friendship or solidarity and the knowledge that is at the basis of the feminist movement." Benhabib analogously turns to the concrete other or the human individual rather than the generalized other or humanity as the basis of communication (Benhabib, *Other*).<sup>38</sup>

---

<sup>38</sup> Truth and justice are values pertaining to science and philosophical ethics according to Braaten (149). Benhabib similarly argues that Kohlberg's ideal role taking takes the generalized (rational) other as its point of departure (*Other*). In this there is a neglect of the private sphere, an abstraction from situation and relationships of love and friendship characteristic of the concrete other (*Ibid*). Hence, for Kohlberg kinship, love, friendship implied in marriage and divorce are personal rather than moral issues.

However, sympathy or personal feeling is culled from the private domain and has the danger of confining women to the very same sphere. A patriarchal society inhibits women from interacting with each other or with men in public; women are isolated in personal relationships as care givers. Care is directed towards an individual or a small number of individuals with specific life histories with whom there is immediate contact such as family or tribe (Benhabib, *Other*). This is because it is confined to the well-being or welfare of one's own individuality or community. Against this, feminists have to confront the issue of making public what has hitherto been labeled as personal. Women would have to struggle, contest and reconstruct mainstream vocabularies to articulate their own experiences, all of which requires discourse (Fraser 1986). As socialized individuals, women are involved in linguistically mediated interactions (Habermas, *Justice and Solidarity* 48). The pragmatic features of language allow members of such groups to engage in reciprocal role taking to create social bonds of solidarity with strangers. Indeed, as Habermas observes, if one takes benevolence as primary one might not be able to endorse general well-being where even strangers matter (45-46).<sup>39</sup>

Respect can transcend personal relations without postulating an abstract humanity. One could reframe the notion of unrestrained community as the unbounded dimension of both meaning and interaction in language. It is, thus, an excess that cannot be tamed through nation, gender or race. Hence, solidarity rather than sympathy or benevolence should serve as the social bond of communication (47). As Iris Marion Young observes, an emphasis on care leads to parochialism.<sup>40</sup> "one can love a city, love the fact of its diversity, contribute to the mutual support of its diverse populations, without sustaining affectionate and personally supportive relationships with all of the individual people whose paths one crosses" (Braaten, 153).<sup>41</sup>

---

Habermas develops this into a distinction between situation sensitive ethical questions and moral questions (*Neo-Aristotelianism*, 126-7). The former includes the personal and the ethnocentric dimension, but it requires a commitment to the larger communicative perspective. Benhabib suggests that the concrete other be the foundation of communication. Instead of humanity, focus is on human individuality and accompanying "moral categories ... of responsibility, bonding and sharing. The corresponding moral feelings are those of love, care, sympathy, and solidarity" (Benhabib *Other*)

<sup>39</sup> Habermas observes that Kohlberg introduces the concern for the welfare of the other or the principle of benevolence to supplement the moral point of view of ideal role taking (*Justice and Solidarity*, 45). However, he discerns a fundamental conflict in the status of the two principles.

<sup>40</sup> This is quoted in Braaten (153).

<sup>41</sup> This is Braaten's summary of Young's position. Young cautions against rural bias in friendship and benevolence (Braaten, 153)

Fraser offers a via medium between abstract humanity and concrete individuality in the form of the “collective concrete other” that is established through relations of solidarity rather than care (*Discourse Ethic* 428).<sup>42</sup>

However, eschewing the principle of care does not doom the postconventional self to asociality. As individuation develops it gets entangled in “dense” and “subtle” networks of interdependencies, in whose groups individuals are located (Habermas, *Justice and Solidarity* 46). These groups reproduce the lifeworld and have as their ideal an unlimited communication community: “the person forms an inner center only to the extent to which she simultaneously externalizes herself in communicatively produced interpersonal relationships” (46). Hence, individual identity is vulnerable, just like language because of exposure to others. To preserve the integrity of individuals, their symmetrical social relationships and the dignity of each individual to innovate would have to be nurtured. At the same time, the welfare of her consociates connected in a symmetrical intersubjective web of relations also needs safeguarding. For Habermas, solidarity is bonding with all other members of the group that posits an ideal unlimited communication community (48). It transcends the boundaries of family, tribe, city, or nation. “Even passing *strangers in foreign lands* will expect from one another a readiness to help each other in emergencies. Such weak normative contexts are still sufficient to authorize a speaker’s expectations for conduct, which the hearer can criticize if need be.” (Habermas, *Toward a Critique* 84, emphasis mine).

The postconventional ‘I’ refers to heterogeneous community at two levels. At the moral level the ‘I’ points to an expanding community to ascertain whether a specific norm is consensually binding or whether or not it has exclusions. At the ethical level, the identity of a specific individual depends upon recognition by the larger universal community (not as an instantiation of a given social type). Increasing social differentiation, instead of individuating, burdens the individual with conflicting demands and forces a critical attitude towards conventions. The subsequent breakdown of the latter allows for both the

---

<sup>42</sup> Habermas views affective relationships as the foundation for communicative competence. He claims “to defend a thesis that does not sit well with the spirit of the times: that anyone who has grown up in a reasonably functional family, who has formed his identity in relations of mutual recognition, who maintains himself in the network of reciprocal expectations and perspectives built into the pragmatics of the speech situation and communicative action, cannot fail to have acquired moral intuitions ...” (*Neo-Aristotelianism* 114).

loss of the self and its emancipation. The loss of the conventional 'me' can be gained only when it leads to a postconventional 'I'; such a self is not isolated but integrated with a wider community that transcends the conventional community.

Devi's Chandidasi dies saving strangers who do not belong to her community. She evokes a sense of solidarity that goes beyond her community by reappropriating the witch and the mother in a postconventional vein. Moreover, Chandidasi imposes a sense of guilt on her existing community for treating her as property and ostracizing her. Further, she ushers in a boundlessness of words and community from her position of exile within a specific form of life, namely the Doms in Bihar. Chandidasi's location without a territory of her own enables her. Personal contact and feeling are on the wane in an increasingly globalized world, Moreover, even those who interact directly have to appeal to the intervention of language, culture, society... in short, distance. Butler would also endorse this point given her adherence to Derridian language. Derrida and Habermas oppose the ownership model of language where it is a property of given subjects or cultures. Indeed, language has no owner or origin; it "comes from everywhere, all at once" (Irigaray, *This Sex* 208). Despite patriarchy's attempt to ossify it through abuse, language remains semantically and communicatively unbound, so that feminists can oppose the (im)propriety of language. When the abjected woman begins to speak or breaks into the symbolic, there is "an upheaval of the old property crust" (Cixous, *Medusa* 258). The exiled woman anonymously innovates an ever expanding network of relations and meanings that cannot be circumscribed by boundaries (264).

*Kanchana Mahadevan*  
University of Mumbai  
India

### Works Cited

- Austin, J.L. *How to do Things with Words?* 1962. London, Oxford: Oxford University Press.1976.
- Benhabib, Seyla. "The Generalized and the Concrete Other: The Kohlberg-Gilligan Controversy and Feminist Theory." *Praxis International* 5.4 (1986): 402-424.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Debate Over Women and Moral Theory Revisited." *Feminists Read Habermas: Gendering the Subject of Discourse*. Ed. Johanna Meehan New York: Routledge, 1995. 181-203.

- \_\_\_\_\_. "Sexual Difference and Collective Identities: The New Global Constellation." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 24.2 (1999): 335-361.
- Braaten, Jane. "From Communicative Rationality to Communicative Thinking: A Basis for Feminist Theory and Practice." *Feminists Read Habermas: Gendering the Subject of Discourse*. Ed. Johanna Meehan. New York: Routledge, 1995. 139-61.
- Bose, Brinda. "Cast(e)ing Wicked Spells: Gendered Errancy in Mahasweta Devi's Bayen." *Translating Caste*. Ed. Tapan Basu. New Delhi: Katha. 2002. 131-141
- Butler, Judith. *Bodies that Matter*. London & New York: Routledge, 1993.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Excitable Speech*. New York & London: Routledge, 1997.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir's Second Sex." *Simone de Beauvoir: A Critical Reader*. Ed. Elizabeth Fallaize. New York: Routledge, 1998. 29-42.
- Cavallaro, Dani. *French Feminist Theory*. New York: Continuum, 2003.
- Cioux, Hélène. "The Laugh of the Medusa." *New French Feminisms: An Anthology*. Ed Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron,. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980. 245-264.
- Costera Meijer, Irene and Bauke Prins. "How Bodies Come to Matter: An Interview with Judith Butler." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 23.2 (1998): 275-286.
- Dean, Jodi. "Discourse in Different Voices." *Feminists Read Habermas: Gendering the Subject of Discourse*. Ed. Johanna Meehan. New York: Routledge, 1995. 205-229.
- Devi, Mahasweta. "Witch-Hunting in West Bengal: In Whose Interest?" *Dust on the Road: The Activist Writings of Mahasweta Devi*. Calcutta: Seagull Books, 1997. 166-180.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Bayen." *Translating Caste*. Ed. Tapan Basu. New Delhi. 2002. 25-41.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Interview with Gayatri Chakravarti Spivak "The Author in Conversation" *Imaginary Maps*. Calcutta: Thema, 2001 (1993). i- xvi.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Interview with Gayatri Chakravarti Spivak "Telling History" *Chotti Munda and His Arrow*. Malden M.A & Oxford, U.K.: Blackwell, 2002. ix-xxiii.
- Fraser, Nancy. "Toward a Discourse Ethic of Solidarity" *Praxis International* 5.4 (1986): 425-429.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "What is Critical about Critical Theory? The Case of



- Habermas and Gender." *Unruly Practices*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989. 113-143.
- Glendinning, Simon. "Inheriting 'Philosophy': The Case of Austin and Derrida Revisited." *Arguing with Derrida* Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001. 9-33.
- Habermas, Jürgen. *Communication and the Evolution of Society*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1979.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Theory of Communicative Action: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*. 1981. Vol. 1. Boston: Beacon Press, 1984.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Theory of Communicative Action: Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*. 1981. Vol. 2. Boston: Beacon Press, 1989.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Justice and Solidarity: On the Discussion Concerning 'Stage 6'" *Philosophical Forum* XXI: 1-2 (1989-90): 32-52.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Discourse Ethics: Notes on a Program of Philosophical Justification." *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1990. 43-115.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Themes in Postmetaphysical Thinking." *Postmetaphysical Thinking*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1992. 28-53.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Toward a Critique of the Theory of Meaning." *Postmetaphysical Thinking*. Cambridge, Mass: Polity Press, 1992. 57-87.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Individuation through Socialization: On George Herbert Mead's Theory of Subjectivity" *Postmetaphysical Thinking*. Cambridge Mass: Polity Press, 1992. 149-204.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Unity of Reason in the Diversity of its Voices." *Postmetaphysical Thinking*. Cambridge Mass: Polity Press, 1992. 115-148.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Limits of Neo-Historicism." *Autonomy and Solidarity: Interviews with Jürgen Habermas*. 1986. Ed. Peter Dews. London: Verso, 1992. 237-243.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Lawrence Kohlberg and Neo-Aristotelianism." *Justification and Application*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1993. 113-132.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Communicative Rationality and the Theories of Meaning and Action (1986)." *On the Pragmatics of Communication*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1998. 183-213.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Actions, Speech Acts, Linguistically Mediated Interactions, and the Lifeworld (1988)." *On the Pragmatics of Communication*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1998. 215-255.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Comments on John Searle's 'Meaning, Communication, and Representation.'" *On the Pragmatics of Communication*. Cam-



- bridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1998. 257-275.
- Hohengarten, William Mark. "Translator's Introduction." *Postmetaphysical Thinking* by Jürgen Habermas. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1992. vii-xx.
- Hornsby, Jennifer. "Feminism in Philosophy of Language: Communicative Speech Acts." *The Cambridge Companion to Feminism in Philosophy*. Ed. Miranda Fricker and Jennifer Hornsby. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2000. 87-106.
- Irigaray, Luce. *Speculum of the Other Woman*. 1974. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. 1985.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *This Sex which is not One*. 1977. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Irigaray Reader*. 1991. Ed. Margaret Whitford. Oxford: Blackwell, 1994.
- Kant, Immanuel. "To Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch." *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays*. 1795. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1983. 107-143.
- Kruks, Sonia. "Beauvoir: The Weight of Situation." *Simone de Beauvoir: A Critical Reader*. Ed. Elizabeth Fallaize. New York: Routledge, 1998. 43-71.
- Meehan, Johanna. "Introduction." *Feminists Read Habermas: Gendering the Subject of Discourse*. New York: Routledge, 1995. 1-20.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Autonomy, Recognition and Respect." *Feminists Read Habermas: Gendering the Subject of Discourse*. New York: Routledge, 1995. 231-246.

**THE NATURE OF SOLIDARITY AND NATURE'S  
SOLIDARITY: BIOREGIONALISM, SITUATED  
KNOWLEDGE, AND UNITY IN DIVERSITY  
WITHIN BIOCULTURAL SYSTEMS**

*Michael Mikulak*

*¿Qué aprendió el árbol de la tierra  
para conversar con el cielo?*

(What did the tree learn from the earth/  
to be able to talk with the sky?)

Pablo Neruda – *El libro de las preguntas*

**T**he Canadian Multiculturalism Act purports to promote a distinctly Canadian form of nation building and citizenship by recognizing that “multiculturalism is an inherent part of the history of Canada” (*Multiculturalism* n.p.). By recognizing and working to preserve and enhance diversity within a “bilingual framework” (3), the Canadian government claims to produce the first legislation of its kind that enshrines a commitment to “unity in diversity” (15). But what does this mean? What kind of glue holds together the Canadian mosaic, and who gets to decide where the pieces go? Moreover, how do we understand diversity and citizenship within the homogenizing forces of neoliberal capitalist globalization? The question of how to understand and “manage” diversity is perhaps one of the most important issues of this new century. How can we conceptualize and implement a social structure of unity within diversity that deals with the diverse needs of diverse populations, while also avoiding a relativistic voice from everywhere and nowhere, or the xenophobic parochialism of excessively local politics? When we are dealing with real inter-ethnic violence and animosity, are ideas like hybridity, plurality, tolerance, and integration really enough to give humanity a common ground to stand on?

It is my contention that in its conceptualization of unity within diversity, Canada’s official multiculturalism act has no language for power and thus can only function on a largely symbolic level as

an ideological state apparatus for maintaining national unity. I will examine the various metaphors and arguments surrounding official multiculturalism and situate them within similar debates surrounding the ecological crisis in order to show their interrelatedness and to offer an alternative to official multiculturalism. The notion that multiculturalism is both constitutive, an adjective that describes an already present situation, and latent, in the form of the verb "multiculturalized," meaning that it must be performed and brought into existence through government regulation, reflects similar tensions in wilderness and biodiversity debates. Thus, this essay will explore and seek to re-conceptualize solidarity, with an emphasis on the convergence of natural and cultural diversity. The creation of a pluralistic ethic that does not universalize and conceal a hegemonic position is fraught with the same issues environmentalists face when they try to articulate a biocentric environmental ethic that takes into account that humanity must make its living off the land, yet still respects the often competing needs of other members of the biosphere? Both these scenarios represent the difficulty of mediating disputes that occur in light of competing claims and overlapping subjectivities.

It is thus with sensitivity to the dangers of confusing biological and cultural categories that I proceed cautiously, attempting to account for the way biology and culture meet, but also how they diverge. Questions of silence, privileged, centre-margin, dualistic thinking, and hegemony are all germane to the debate surrounding unity in diversity within both nature and culture. In addition to providing theoretical tools for examining multiculturalism, I will deploy several ecocritical theories in order to examine the metaphors for multiculturalism, especially in terms of the movement between symbolic and literal plurality. The basis for unity must transcend the parochialism of anthropocentric liberal humanism by recognizing (rather than imagining) the literal and profoundly interconnected nature of all life on earth. Both official multiculturalism and reform environmentalism pay lip service to diversity, but never really create a language and politics capable of articulating and addressing the very real material power inequities and asymmetries at the heart of political and environmental exploitation. To move from metaphoric/shallow plurality, to a literal/deep plurality, we must recognize diversity as an ontological, epistemological, and biologic modality of being at the center of all life processes. The self-regulating *vereditas* of ecological systems is more than a metaphor; it is the way life survives, finding power and dynamic stability in plurality. Thus, I will argue that *situated bioregional knowledge* based on a deep understanding of the *literal interconnectedness* of all life provides a better model for unity in diversity,

allowing us to rethink citizenship and nationality in profoundly more egalitarian and ecologically sustainable ways.

## Methodology

The metaphors that describe multiculturalism are diverse, but a surprising number revolve around the image of cultivation and gardening. As early as James Woodsworth's *Strangers Within Our Gates*, Canada is conceptualized as a "promising field" where the best and brightest of the world's peoples are transplanted and cultivated (33). The nation as garden invokes many corresponding metaphors, ranging from the categorization of certain people as weeds and the difficulty of transplanting and "taking root again in a strange soil," to the naturalized discourse of blood and soil<sup>1</sup> that fears invasive alien species (Woodsworth 43). Former Prime Minister John Diefenbaker commented that rather than a melting pot, Canadian multiculturalism is "a garden into which have been transplanted the hardiest and brightest flower from many lands, each retaining in its new environment the best of the qualities for which it was loved and prized in its native land" (*Multiculturalism* 9). This Edenic imagery of cooperative harmony conceals a much darker aspect of multiculturalism, namely, the role of the nation-state as a gardener that carefully selects which flowers to plant, which to designate as weeds, and which will get the most sun, soil, and light. Not all flowers are created or tended to equally, and the gardener has control over which ones will be provided with the conditions appropriate to its flourishing. Without addressing the entrenched privileged that certain groups experience within this system, the promise of multiculturalism can only amount to an ideological sleight-of-hand that conceals a convenient political expedient in order to expand the inroads for capitalism to further commodify culture. Because official multiculturalism claims a power-neutral position in defining the Other, especially the visible minority, it cannot produce a functional multicultural society that deals with the very real material inequities of asymmetric power distribution. Instead, it produces a discourse of multiculturalism that nurtures and mystifies the paralytic trinity of territory, nation, and rights.

Eva Mackey points out that "nations are the most universally legitimate, and seemingly natural, political units of our time" (Mackey 4). They are the "authorised marker of the particular" (Mackey 4),

---

<sup>1</sup> The most extreme example being that of National Socialism, which took the trinity of territory, nation, and rights to a terrifying logic of inclusion and exclusion.

building on categories of geography, genetics, authenticity, and various origin stories in order to legitimate the creation of an “imagined community” that delimits and naturalizes the boundaries between self-other, neighbour-stranger, and us-them (Mackey 2). Drawing on the kind of natural metaphors I mentioned above, I will use the metaphor/example of the *arboreal rhizome* in order to problematize and explore the creation of subjectivity as it relates to the relationship between nature, culture, geography, community, and the nation. Moving from soil, roots, trunk, to canopy, I will use the metaphor of the tree to destabilize the naturalized categories of plurality within Canada's multicultural policy, and instead, offer up an alternative basis for unity in diversity within the *watershed consciousness* of ecological thinking and situated bioregional knowledge.

While this essay does promote a metaphoric pedagogy that uses the tree to tease out the radical potential of bioregionalism in order to challenge some of the ideological baggage of multicultural citizenship, the tree is much more than a metaphor. It is what Donna Haraway calls a “material-semiotic actor,” existing in the interstices of language, biology, ideology, and the whole apparatus of bodily production (*Simians* 200). Thus the tree is simultaneously an artifact of language, a metaphoric structure that I necessarily anthropomorphize for political ends; however, it also exceeds my attempts to map it, existing as a sign to many different beings, with many different sets of relationships forming in these complicated networks of (mis)communication. It is therefore an implicit assumption of this paper that the metaphor is necessarily exceeded by the materiality of the tree in a way that (hopefully) prevents it from simply becoming another metaphor for unity in diversity that falls short of engaging and taking into account the real actors, human and non-human, involved in the co-production of biocultural communities. As profoundly linguistic creatures, our bodies and reality are always already inscribed by metaphor, which like ecology, is the throwing together of seemingly unlike things in a manner that reveals deeper connections. While there will always be problems in moving between metaphoric and literal conceptions of community, diversity, nature, and culture, it is precisely in the messy and uncouth garden of this paper, that I hope to take the lessons I learned from the tree and learn to speak with the sky.

## Soil

A seed falls and lands on the soft earth with a barely audible sound. Soon the radicle will stir and begin to push gently through

the dark soil, insinuating itself into the moist loam with a prescribed lust for water, minerals, and nitrogen. Meanwhile, the xylem works its way towards the sky, translating the rich semiotics of the soil—that miraculous living skin of the earth—with profound eloquence. Roots will enmesh, greeting fungus, bacteria, and other roots with the common language of survival. Without this invisible world, filled with alliances, betrayals, and agreements that rival those of any human community, nothing could grow.

As any gardener knows, the soil determines the quality and type of plant you can cultivate. Soil is an organism in itself, and is the foundation upon which the tree takes root. The kind of soil—whether sandy, clayey, rocky, nitrogen rich, or replete with organic matter—greatly affects the place-based strategies that a tree must employ in order to survive. Metaphorically, the soil is the ideological, ontological, epistemological, and material conditions in which plurality flourishes or is stagnated. The gardener has considerable control over nutrient, pH, and organic matter levels. Unlike true wilderness (although this is problematic), the national garden is bureaucratically regulated, controlled, and legislated in order to create a pleasing, yet structured, simulacrum of natural diversity. Richard Day suggests that “Canadian diversity [is] a technology of governance” (18) that seeks to manage the problem it has created. Like a gardener anxious about the state of his/her garden, multiculturalism is the soil for the governmental gardener to arrange the political and civic flora of Canada, while all the while claiming that it has arranged itself in an authentic, natural order. Echoing Diefenbaker’s claim that Canada’s garden contains the best and brightest flowers transplanted into our inviting soil, the role of the gardener is effaced into the benign and uncritical biological discourse of ecological harmony, obfuscating the considerable role played by economics, immigration rules, bureaucratic systems, and the global flows of human and monetary capital that impels people to move. Moreover, what traits are being selected by this benign gardener? How is diversity being arranged and displayed? Sneja Gunew makes a useful distinction between critical and state multiculturalism, stating that “official multicultural policies often produce restrictive notions of ethnicity that are still fuelled by assimilationist and to some extent racist principles” (Gunew 453). Moreover, “because multiculturalism uses the rhetoric of inclusion it cannot properly address the politics of exclusion” (Gunew 458).

The question thus becomes, what kind of soil is multiculturalism? In the first place, it is a soil artificially augmented for the prosperity of Anglophone and Francophone stock, in an “equal partnership between the two founding races” (*Royal* 3). The arrival of the Europeans

is thus ameliorated into the white-washed picturesque garden, and colonialism is recoded as “inevitably intensif[y]ing cultural diversity” (*Building* 13). The founding races theory makes no mention of Aboriginal land rights or the brutal colonial history of reservations, residential schools, and the ongoing economic and political marginalization of the Native population, which in Canada, like much of the world, remain unaddressed. Much like the devastating introduction of European plant varieties into already stable North American ecosystems, the “founding races” spread through the human flora with equally opportunistic fecundity, establishing a new climax ecosystem/regime and then claiming to have enhanced the diversity of the ecosystem by assuming an Edenic teleology of the colonizer that has succeeded in “the brining of light to the dark world of inchoate nature” (Merchant 137). The white man’s burden becomes the task of transforming the chaos of wilderness into a manicured garden that produces a simulacrum of Nature’s diversity, and therefore naturalizes the current order of things by appealing to the category of the natural. Thus the government of Canada simultaneously deploys diversity as always already present, a tautological statement about general immigration trends, and also as a threat to the unification of the country under the rubric of a perilous nationalist subjectivity. The perennial problem of Quebec separatism, especially as echoed in the *Bilingualism and Biculturalism Commission*, suggests that while diversity defines us as Canadians, it also threatens to divide us. The solution of multiculturalism within a bicultural and bilingual framework claims to address both similarity and difference. However, this model is highly reductive in its conceptualization of articulate subjectivity because all diversity must be filtered through the two dominant cultures. The centre-margin dialectic is reinforced by using “ethnic Canadians” as “pawns in the old Canadian tug-of-war between Anglophones and Francophones” (Bissoondath 41).

The tension between preservation and enhancement, in the sense that the multicultural gardener sees him/herself as tending and enhancing a diversity that is already there (post colonization of course), allows the government to officially support plurality in the formaldehyde of heritage, exoticizing the other and assuming that “people, coming here from elsewhere, wish to remain what they have been” (Bissoondath 43). By claiming a power neutral position, while nonetheless carefully controlling the Canadian garden, multiculturalism becomes nothing more than a symbolic “difference-studded unity” (Bannerji 95) of a carefully landscaped and exotic garden, and thus has very little ability to address segregation, racism, structural inequities, and conditions of emergence and sustenance that

are unequally applied. The gardener thus prunes, tends, organizes and fertilizes the garden, only to pretend that it is wild. Because “multiculturalism is accepted only insofar as it promises to enhance the cultural capital of the mainstream” (Kamboureli 90), the garden resembles the exotic imperial gardens of Victorian England, a tribute to the colonial spirit, and a scenic facsimile of diversity that cannot account for the material and ideological content of its soil, nor the violence of its taxonomic reductionism.

In a comparable way, officially preserved wilderness works under similar taxonomic divisions between self-other, urban-wilderness, and nature-culture. Like the “construction of visible minorities as a social imaginary” (Bannerji 92) within multiculturalism, national parks quarantine nature from culture by designating the appropriate space for the wilderness experience as separate and distinct from the nature we always already inhabit. In naming the other, segregation is always implied in official policies of plurality, whether cultural or biological. Michael Carr argues that “destruction of natural ecologies is being accomplished by the same system and the same systemic processes that are destroying social ecologies” (Carr 90). By naming nature as out there, a healthy urban and rural diversity is sacrificed for the wilderness fantasies of highly staged and bureaucratically regulated space of touristic consumption. In the search for the “authentic” antithesis of civilization, isolated wilderness preserves become an urban palliative that excuses the unsustainable nature of cities. Rather than giving access to nature, preserved and isolated wilderness promotes and supports the dominant modes of the very consumer culture such marketed experiences purport to escape. As William Cronon states, “the trouble with wilderness is that it quietly expresses and reproduces the very values its devotees seek to reject” (80).

Rather than living in nature, and thus taking responsibility for our presence in the world, much of humanity’s relationship with nature is increasingly that of the tourist. Wilderness is not a place to escape civilization; it is a place to excuse it. We use it to make the urban experience more bearable and to make the whole techno-economic liquidation of nature more palatable. Tellingly, Parks Canada is under the same jurisdiction as the preservation of historical and cultural sites, which indicates the importance of wilderness in the creation of a shared national identity. Moreover, this historic dimension reinforces the status of parks as past tense; they are museums or genetic repositories that leave a small amount of natural capital in the bank account and thus detract from the fact that humanity is vastly overextending the earth’s carrying capacity by fostering the illusion that we have a trust fund we can call upon in times of crisis.



The spectacularized and mummified memory of nature allows real Nature to be destroyed. Much like the policies of multiculturalism, the diversity strategy of national parks allows the *symbolic* importance of wilderness to survive in the collective national imagination, while nature is *literally* decimated. So while Parks Canada purports to be maintaining healthy ecosystems, the competing demands for tourism and access mean that true diversity and the flourishing of populations of non-human nature are threatened by the very structure that is ostensibly preserving them. One needs to look no further than the frequent and deadly interaction between automobiles and wildlife in National Parks to realize that animals are not being preserved so much as being made available to the human gaze. "Natural" landscapes are moulded to fit the dominant modes and expectations surrounding the fetishized wilderness experience, and the viewer is duped into carefully staged authenticity that, rather than providing contact with nature, further sutures nature and culture by spatially and temporally isolating the appropriate site for experiencing "wilderness." When access is the only consideration, the formally wild place becomes the "museum-like diorama to which industrial tourism tends to reduce the world" (Papa Jr. 328).

The typical multicultural festival, with its emphasis on heritage, food, traditional dress and dance, caricatures diversity in the same way, reducing it to a spectacularized facsimile and historically static representation of fetishized difference. The preservationist mentality relies on the very binary it purports to deconstruct, and thus cannot address deep structures of power and ideology that constitute the soil from which domination is nurtured and grows. Without addressing this conceptual soil, the seeds of white privilege, anthropocentrism, and the system of patriarchal colonialist capitalism will continue to act like a weed and colonize the freshly decimated earth. The increasingly homogenous monoculture of capitalism threatens to undermine the structures of diversity within nature and culture that ensure long-term survival. Official policies of plurality promote diversity in ghettoized festivals and parks, while ignoring the issue of how local structures of self-governance can be instituted to truly promote an already present plurality. Smaro Kamboureli makes the claim that official multiculturalism practices a "sedative politics, a politics that attempts to recognize ethnic differences, but only in a contained fashion, in order to manage them" (Kamboureli 82). The Canadian Multiculturalism Act and various national/provincial park policies can only maintain symbolic/capitalistic diversity rather than literal/biocentric diversity, applying a top-down logic that masquerades a particular in the guise of a universal. The official position, a voice from everywhere and no-

where, undermines the very project of plurality because it does not have a language for power or privilege and does not recognize its own situated position—the ideological soil from which it sprung—as having very specific conditions that cannot be applied universally. A cactus and a black spruce cannot grow in the same soil, yet Canadian multiculturalism makes this claim; depending which the gardener chooses, one will flourish at the expense of the other. In the “doctrine of objectivity that promises transcendence” (Haraway, *Simians* 187), the mythical gaze from nowhere “inscribes all the marked bodies” with a sign of their difference (Haraway, *Simians* 188). The unmarked body is thus absolved of the need to justify its position, thereby presenting its power as obvious, inevitable, and natural. Himani Bannerji argues that speaking of “culture without addressing power relations displaces and trivializes deep contradictions. It is a reductionism that hides the social relations of domination that continually create ‘difference’ as inferior and thus signifies continuing relations of antagonism” (Bannerji 97).

Facile difference is thus coded as authentic, relegating both cultural and natural diversity to contained and spectacularized displays of static heritage and wild “authenticity.” In the same way that stereotyped conceptions of folklore become the only claim to “authentic heritage” (Kambourelis 108), the myth of virgin wilderness relies on “the removal of Indians to create an ‘uninhabited wilderness’—uninhabited as never before in the human history of the place—remind[ing] us just how invested, just how constructed, the American wilderness really is (Cronon 79). Like an herbicide clearing the field for the monoculture of capitalism, the syntax of forgetting, integral to the nation-building project, can only provide a commodified and touristic consumption of difference. Both heritage folklore and wilderness preserves rely on static conceptualizations of an idealized past that denies and surreptitiously solidifies the binary modality of us-them, and nature-culture by appealing to categories of authenticity, mass access, and purity.

As an alternative, the ecological model of literal interconnectivity challenges the Enlightenment conception of the autonomous and sovereign individual, and thus has the ability to move from the metaphoric/symbolic mode of diversity, to a literal/popular form. Many environmentalists employ the literal and metaphoric image of the watershed in order to remind us that everyone is downstream from someone else. Moreover, the watershed, “as a defining image of community has the additional advantages of being a quick and easy way of calling attention to the arbitrariness of official borders,” suggests that we are part of a natural community connected by

mutual need and desire (Buell 246). The power of the watershed comes in the ability to move from metaphor to the world and back again. The watershed thus becomes a physical model for natural boundaries and communities, while also providing an ontological basis for understanding the literal interconnectedness of life. It is an “aesthetic-ethical-political-ecological image” (Buell 247) geared towards real change, functioning on a metaphoric and pedagogical level, but also providing an example of the “first kind of community” (248). Multiculturalism can learn from this model of unity in diversity, whereby the movement back and forth between literal and metaphoric performs a kind of ecological pedagogy rooted in situated bioregional knowledge.

The unity of nature does not come in some sort of imagined totality, but rather, in the prolific set of interpenetrating relationships that constitute the web of life. The modern environmental crisis is rooted in the failure to understand that we are always already within and part of nature. The conceptual schism of nature-culture and the self-other binary is the toxic soil in which contemporary western capitalism grows, producing a sterile and monstrous Frankenstein that will inevitably kill its creator. The Canadian government is proud that “Canada’s bilingual and multicultural heritage represents an asset, offering a capacity to relate naturally and with understanding to almost every country in the world. It can be especially valuable in developing trade links” (Multiculturalism 4). The expediency of culture as resource within a global marketplace ends with the creation of what Todd Giltin calls a facile “shopping centre of identity politics” (Gunew 456). The corporate soil is toxic, and it is time to uproot the juggernaut of capitalism.

## Roots

Roots bind us to the soil, recalling the nurturing structures of support—whether cultural, environmental, political, social—that constitutes the foundation upon which subjectivity is based. For the tree, roots mirror the canopy, spreading filaments and blurring the boundary between soil and tree, stretching out in search of stability, sustenance, and community. With this extended metaphor, I would like to offer the tree as simultaneously a hierarchical/individualistic structure, and also communistic/rhizomatic, a material-semiotic chain of nodal points that communicates with other trees, fungus, translates abiotic into biotic components (nitrogen fixing from the air, mineral uptake), and even produces vast communal organisms of interconnected trees that share nutrients, carbohydrates, and warn each other

against insect invasions (Suzuki and Grady 45). Trees are connected through their roots in a mutualistic relationship with each other and with fungal mycorrhizal mats that extend the surface area of the roots by up to a factor of one thousand. The fungus cannot synthesize its own food and thus draws on the tree for carbohydrates, and in exchange, it radically extends the nutrient and water absorption capabilities of the tree (Suzuki and Grady 54-55). These are the hidden ties that bind, the “vector[s] of category transformation” that form the interpenetrating “geometries of relationships” that constitute nature’s unity in diversity (Haraway, *Vampire* 322, 336). This is the model and the basis for bioregional democracy and ecological citizenship.

While the tree appears to be an individual, almost the epitome of the singular organism, it is communistic in a very profound way, especially when you look beneath the surface. The language of the earth moves through rhizomatic connections within the entire forest ecosystem. The tree’s relationship with fungus is a perfect example of interconnectivity, mutualism, and a metaphoric and literal model for unity in diversity. Both tree and fungus are separate organisms, yet their level of interdependence is such that they cannot exist without each other, at least not at the same level of size and complexity. This type of mutualism has caused Neil Evernden to challenge conventional conceptions of boundaries between self and other. In this sense, ecological theory is subversive because it undermines Cartesian dualisms, neat divisions, and taxonomic categories that separate the world into independent subjects and objects. It also challenges the assumption that human beings are the sole bearers of value. Neil Evernden uses ecology to undermine the sense of self-bound-by-skin and thus moves into an expanded mode of “fields of self” (Evernden 33). Are the tree and fungus two separate organisms, even though they cannot survive without each other? Are the bacteria in the human digestive tract a part of us, or separate? The literal interconnectedness of all life changes the role of border zones from vulnerable areas in need of patrol and careful surveillance, to areas of mutual interpenetration, cooperation, and survival. Michel Zimmerman proposes:

So long as people conceive of themselves as isolated egos, only externally related to other people and nature, they inevitably tend to see life in terms of scarcity and competition. When people conceive of themselves as internally related to others and to nature, however, they tend to see life in terms of bounty, not scarcity, and in terms of cooperation, not aggressive competition. (Zimmerman 242)

The tree is both bioregion and individual, macro and micro in the sense that the local and the global are always interpenetrated. There are no central points or positions in a rhizome, only multiple loci of potentiality. Although arborescent models of descent and ascent are

usually associated with hierarchies, the tree, like all life, is *positionally rhizomatic*—simultaneously together and apart, translating the language of sun, soil, water, and nutrients into the myriad biophysical and social networks of constitutive interconnectivity upon which all life relies. Even death does not bring separation, for it is upon the dead core that the tree leans for support, and upon the dead tree that the forest springs forth in opportunistic fecundity. Hierarchies are abstractions, isolated simplifications that artificially constitute a subject or object as a coherent and separate totality, rather than acknowledging the infinite play of signifiers and material-semiotic chains that proliferate from the porous nature of ecological interconnectivity. Perpetual cycles, one of nature's vectors of category transformation, are broken by the false dualisms of abstracted arborescent models of descent, like the sham corporate diversity embraced by the model of multiculturalism as resource.

The rhizome is a vector, always moving, incapable of being broken, a reconstitutive space of flows that follows the proliferating transversal edge of category transformation, translation, and perpetual becoming. Official multiculturalism cannot comprehend this model/mode, for it must always seek the glue of bilingual unity that conceals its own positionality in order to naturalize the machinations of white privileged, and provide an ideological state apparatus for nation-building. The visible minority, in its isolation as both problem and solution, must never be integrated into the governmental arborescence that constitutes the white-washed vertical mosaic of official multiculturalism. Like the national park that patrols the border of town and country, rural-urban, and garden-wilds, the presence of the other, especially in the symbolically elevated modality of "difference-blind policy," entrenches the very disunity, structural disjunction, racism, and duality it purports to eliminate (Taylor 107). Situated bioregional knowledge, on the other hand, embraces transformational multiplicities. This is the basis for *ecosocial capital*, a system of exchange that does not conceal the relational nature of all exchange, translation, and vector transformation. Michael Carr describes ecosocial capital as a "vital bonding process" of "synergistic energy" that creates the "horizontal community-building strategies" that diversity must be based upon (Carr 17). Ecosocial capital is the antithesis of atomized, hyper-individualistic *homo economicus*. Both the roots of economics and ecology are based in the Greek word *oikos*, meaning home, suggesting the transactional nature of establishing a dwelling place that is sustainable, balanced, and fair. To create a home means to engage in relations that proliferate rather than stagnate ecosocial capital. This is the basis of healthy, biosocial citizenship.

Somewhat artificially, I have decided to code bioregionalism as part of the tree's trunk, because bioregional situated knowledge is a kind of semiotic highway that translates and mediates between the knowledge of the roots, soil, canopy, and air. The artificial division between the different aspects of the tree, destabilized by the particularities of both the metaphoric structure I have created, and the literal interconnectivity of ecological subjectivity, suggests an ontological and epistemological intervention to state multiculturalism that challenges the segregationism that undergirds the policy as incommensurate with a biocultural rhizomatic structure of deep diversity. The co-creation of a society based on the acceptance and proliferation of diversity, or in other words, the reinsertion of culture within nature, requires a pedagogical strategy of promoting watershed/ecological consciousness that also seeks alternative structures of mediation/governance. This new strategy of unity in diversity cannot be limited to the human agents of nature, but rather, must harbour a deeply felt sense of inter-subjectivity that resists the suturing, hyper-individualistic discourse of neoliberal capitalism. Bioregionalism is the political ecological framework in which to translate the idea of difference into practice; hence, we must realize subjectivity is not bound by skin. The bourgeois monad of Enlightenment rationality, ensconced in the liberal humanistic discourse of freedom, happiness, and free-will performs a violence towards nature that has synergistically culminated in the wholesale liquidation of the environment. While we are only one species among some thirty million, humans use "40% of global net primary production" (Alberti et al. 1169). Shockingly, the United Nations *Millennium Assessment Report*, conducted by 1300 researchers in 95 countries, warns that two thirds of the 24 ecosystems in the world are in major decline and in danger of collapse. It warns that over the next 100 years, 32% of amphibians, 12% per cent of birds, 25% of conifers, and 23% of mammals could become extinct (Millennium 59). Echoing these concerns, Fredric Jameson argues that the techno-bureaucratic system of late global capitalism threatens a "radical eclipse of Nature itself" (Jameson 34). Perhaps 'eclipse' is not a strong enough word: we are entering a phase of history where neoliberal capitalism is systematically liquidating the basic life-support systems of the planet. In order to solve this problem, we need to get to the epistemological, ontological, political, and economic roots of the environmental crisis.

## Trunk

The trunk is the infrastructure of the tree, the highway for water and nutrients to ascend towards the canopy, and for sugars and various chemical signals to descend from the leaves. It is also an ecosystem for numerous fungi, birds, insects, rodents and countless species of moss, lichen, and bacteria. The trunk keeps the tree standing against the elements, building upon the dead heart of the wood. It is liminal in a profound way, with only a few centimetres of cambium between the bark and core actually alive, the trunk is the epitome of nature's remarkable ability to generate life from death. Symbolically, I have decided to code the trunk as the infrastructure of the government's entrenched privilege: those mediating discourses of official policy, centralized governmental power, and global capitalism that undergird and undermine any true attempt at moving from a hierarchical arborescence, to a rhizomatic bioregionalism that truly embraces and fosters diversity. For the government, the trunk is pure resource, awaiting the transubstantiation of the cash nexus in order to code diversity as commodity and thus maintain an infinite chain of consumer desire by offering a resource pool of novel distraction and a sense of difference that functions as a kind of Trojan horse for commodified and exchangeable identities. The cyclicity of life from death is thus wrenched into the linearity of consumer capitalism.

Valuing and performing biocultural diversity begins with decentring the human subject as the sole dispenser of value. Likewise, any governmental multiculturalism or biodiversity strategy must also move beyond the entrenched power dynamics of its particular historic moment by decentring the privilege of the cultural dominant. Evolutionarily, diversity is about the ability of a species or culture to draw on numerous survival strategies and thus increase the group's chances of survival. Based on the ecological truism that diversity is good, watershed consciousness becomes a translation matrix of separate, yet inseparable material-semiotic actors that deploy vectors of category translation in order to increase their survival strategies. As a basis for theory, these vectors challenge the Cartesian thorn of anthropocentrism and dualistic thinking that privileges human consciousness and separates subjectivities into neat, preserved, isolated, and independent fragments. Without diversity on the local level, the global scale is radically impoverished. As Aldo Leopold states, "a thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise" (Leopold 262).

To foster true diversity, the trunk must provide an infrastructure that makes room for dwelling, agency, and self-direction, first and



foremost, by denuding the myth of bounded subjectivity and moving to a model of ecological inter-subjectivity. Environmental ethics requires an even deeper intervention in order to reconnect the vocal chords of nature based on an I-thou rather than I-it subject-subject interaction (Evernden 98). Power needs to be addressed rhizomatically along all the axes of the arborescent model. In order to foster diversity, nature (including people) must be allowed to regulate itself. David Harmon points out that “uniformity is often confused with unity” (157). On the figurative level, the rhizomatic arborescent model of unity in diversity suggests a pedagogical intervention that promotes the internalization of an ecological/watershed consciousness based on local, situated knowledge, and a deep understanding of the literal interconnectedness of all life. Beginning with the decentring of the human subject, bioregionalism involves a sensual re-inhabitation of the world based on full immersion and dialogue with place. As Michael Carr notes, “the bioregional movement is inspired by and organized around the concept of healthy and sustainable local communities, completed by broader efforts at social change through regional and interregional networking in both rural and urban environments” (70). Bioregionalism thrives on a kind of democratic asymmetry because it understands true difference as the ability to acknowledge and celebrate the myriad contribution that bodies and knowledges produce within their own contexts. Donna Haraway’s model of situated knowledge productively augments bioregionalism because she argues for “epistemologies of embodied, and therefore accountable, objectivity” (194). Situated knowledge is about accountability, positionality, and dialogue. Since everyone possesses the ability to create truth, but no-one has the monopoly on the process or end result, bioregional situated knowledge facilitates a process of discourse by uncovering the axes of power that undergird all truth claims and communal interactions.

Bioregionalism, as an ethical-political-aesthetic-ontological category, moves between figurative and literal modes in order to articulate an ecological or watershed consciousness that has a language for power capable of politicizing the question of unity in diversity. In other words, bioregionalism is simultaneously an ecological and political discourse, albeit a utopic one for now, that moves between metaphoric and literal modalities in order to produce a paradigm shift rooted in the particular, grass-roots, local environs always already situated within a global system. The lesson of the tree, whereby an individual (arboreal monad) is rhizomatically connected with the entire biosphere, provides a model of unity in diversity based on the ecological fact of interconnectivity. The tragedy of current political



organization is that we have forgotten that interconnectedness is literal, and not just metaphoric. The West is particularly bad in treating Nature as pure resource, acting as if a declining ecosystem will somehow unaffected the continued growth of capitalism.

The tree thus becomes a third space between literal and metaphoric, an example of arboreal rhizomatic communalism based on individuality situated within an immense network of interwoven parts that simultaneously retain their individuality, while also functioning as elements of a much larger whole. Like Haraway's notion of situated knowledge, the tree becomes a "material-semiotic actor" (Haraway, *Simians* 200) that translates knowledge from the earth into the ephemeral, but vital language of water vapour, oxygen, weather—the very language of life itself speaking through the tendrils of profoundly objective and subjective truth. Metaphorically, the tree becomes a model for knowledge production and communalism that negotiates the space between monad and rhizomatic node, a unity in diversity that retains both group and individual identity. Bioregionalism embraces this kind of structure, espousing the need for the "decentralization of power... [and] more self-governing forms of social organization" (Carr 79). By creating a sense of home that is a "nurturing incubator of ecocentric social capital" (Carr 79), communities can live within a more reciprocal relationship with their surroundings, rather than drawing on a dispersed global resource base and thus living beyond the earth's regenerative capacity. Moving from epistemology to ontology, metaphor to literal, the "embedded ecosocial individual" is thus able to negotiate a third space between nature and culture that embraces both the limitations and potentialities of each particular watershed and biocultural environment (Carr 93). Humanity therefore moves from exploiter to eco-citizen in the bio-agera. The bioregional trunk translates between language, ideas and action, drawing from the conceptual soil of ecological thinking to dwell responsibly within the network of biocultural systems. The metaphor/literality of bioregionalism is thus concerned with the production of ecological sustainable bodies capable of proliferating, rather than destroying difference.

Sylvia Bowerbank suggests that we need "a green civility based on bioregional values and knowledges" (Bowerbank no page). She emphasizes that "story-telling is a cultural technology of connectivity and groundedness; stories are told in the flesh, on the ground, by a body in a specific place" (Bowerbank). Stories of reinhabitation develop a rhizomatic network of situated knowledge and thus provide the epistemological and ontological basis for challenging the power structures that obfuscate many attempts at developing alternatives to corporate globalization. By creating "narrative grounded in geog-

raphy” (Cheney 31), we can begin “considering nature not just as the stage upon which the human story is acted out, but as an actor in the drama” (Glotfelty xxi). Moreover, “bioregions provide a way of grounding narrative without essentializing the idea of self, a way of mitigating the need for ‘constant recontextualization’ to undercut the oppressive and distorting overlays of cultural institutions” (Cheney 33). Situated bioregional knowledges provide a way of articulating truths grounded in the particular ecosocial environs of a specific place, and thereby avoiding the dangers of essentialism, parochialism, and the pitfalls of metanarratives. They also acknowledge the need for a contextual identity politics that does not claim transcendence, universalization, or the relativistic voice from everywhere and nowhere of liberalism.

Christopher Manes suggests that “Nature *is* silent in our culture (and in literate societies generally) in the sense that the status of being a speaking subject is jealously guarded as an exclusively human prerogative” (Manes 15). Metaphorically, this silence is akin to cutting the trunk of the tree and severing the material-semiotic highway between the earth and sky. It is a silencing that drowns out the articulate rustle of leaves and thereby positions humanity as the vivisectionist of nature. Manes points out that “to regard nature as alive and articulate has consequences in the realm of social practices” (15). Bioregional situated knowledge can become the locus by which we define ourselves; micronarratives of inhabitation, origins, fragments and contested terrain form the soil of unity in diversity. There is no need to search for some national or international subjectivity, the interconnectivity of ecosystems furnishes us with the perfect model of postmodern subjectivity, a unity based on porous borders, self-regulation, dynamic flux, cyclical rhythms, rhizomatic structures, and situated knowledge and consciousness rooted in the earth. We have to move away from the artificially constituted metanarratives of nation, the bourgeois monad, rationality and capitalism, and learn to listen to the silenced, but ever-present figurative and literal lessons of nature. Perhaps this is what Robert Kroetsch means by “the disunity that becomes our dance of unity” (361).

Ecological agency is co-agency; not an effacement of freedom, but the recognition that the notion of autonomy and sovereignty are dangerous and artificial borders that promote a violent and unsustainable competition. The nature of ecological interconnectivity undercuts the notion that agency can ever be manifest in isolation. Isolation is an ontological category we must radically transform, one that will have positive consequences for human and non-human nature. Culture must re-learn to adapt to nature, rather than assuming nature

will adapt to culture. We must re-insert humanity within the stream of evolution, that insatiable drive towards difference and plurality. Thus, bioregionalism is utopic vision and political intervention, philosophy and practice, ontology and epistemology, and aesthetic and utilitarian. Perhaps completely self-sufficient communities are historically improbable ideals, however, in the act of striving, the artificially sutured culture of Enlightenment rationalism and bureaucratic market capitalism begins to be realigned within the cyclical and regenerative metabolism of nature. In his seminal work *A Sand Country Almanac*, Aldo Leopold makes the case for an ideological shift that changes "the role of Homo Sapiens from conquerors of the land-community to plain members and *citizens* of it" (emphasis mine 240). Rather than a linear industrial model of society, bioregionalism embraces the discursive circularity of nature's material-semiotic chains; it demands that we acknowledge nature's agency as significant in our own, and thereby reflect certain patterns within our relations. It turns us into true citizens of the world.

## Canopy

The canopy completes the cycle. Plant life is the basis of most forms of life on earth, translating the otherwise inchoate language of sunlight into the trembling atoms of water that release oxygen and create the sugars the entire food-web is based upon. Without photosynthesis, there would be no terrestrial life, save for some bacteria in the oceans. The tree's canopy is a micro-ecosystem in itself, housing countless species of insects, birds, mammals, rodents, other plants, and providing shade for the forest floor. A tree also provides a vital link between the earth and the sky, transpiring water through the leaves and thus re-hydrating the atmosphere, cleansing it of pollutants, and moderating climactic patterns. Although the canopy is the furthest point from the roots, the leaves will eventually provide the organic matter for the very soil the tree needs to survive. The canopy is the cyclical basis of a tree, shedding every year, bearing fruit, and feeding itself with the translated language of sunlight. It is a system in and of itself, but one that cannot survive without the infrastructure and mediation of the trunk, nor the stability and semiotic translation of the root structure. The tree speaks the secrets of the earth to the sky; it cleanses the air, provides moisture, and splits atoms with its green lifeblood. It completes the material-semiotic chain of life, an unbroken and rhizomatic system of unity in diversity.

With the extended metaphor of the arboreal rhizome, frequently meandering and conflating the issue of biologic and cultural diversity,

nature and culture, wilderness and city, I hope a concept of situated bioregional knowledge and rhizomatic eco-citizenship has emerged as an alternative basis upon which to build a framework for unity and diversity. Although a bioregional society based on largely self-sufficient communities may be impossible during this current historical moment, the utopic vision provides a politics of hope that begins with a pedagogic moment capable of translating between symbolic and literal discourses of diversity. That said, communities around the world are already engaging in bioregional politics by establishing community sponsored agriculture, co-operatives, bioregional councils, neighbourhood alliances, car-sharing programs, and various other grass-roots approaches to community building. The global nature of the current environmental crisis, although tragic, also provides solidarity based on mutual vulnerability. Although poor people tend to be disproportionately affected by pollution, the immanence of anthropogenic environmental destruction transcends individuals, nations, races, gender, and species. As Ulrich Beck argues, while “hunger is hierarchical... nuclear contamination, however, is egalitarian and in that sense, democratic” (Beck 27).

I began this essay with a quotation from Pablo Neruda, and offer it up as a challenge and vision for the kind of category transformation and material-semiotic highways humanity must re-build with nature. What can we learn from the earth to be able to speak with the sky? Our collective survival depends on whether or not we can heed the lessons of the tree and become healthy and productive citizens of the world.

*Michael Mikulak*  
McMaster University  
Canada

### Works Cited

- Alberti, Marina, et al. “Integrating Humans into Ecology: Opportunities and Challenges for Studying Urban Ecosystems.” *BioScience* 53 (2003): 1169-1179.
- Bannerji, Himani. *The Dark Side of the Nation: Essays on Multiculturalism, Nationalism and Gender*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, 2000.

- Beck, Ulrich. *Ecological Enlightenment: Essays on the Politics of the Risk Society*. Trans. Mark A. Ritter. New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1995.
- Bissoondath, Neil. *Selling Illusions: The Cult of Multiculturalism in Canada*. Toronto: Penguin, 1994.
- Bowerbank, Sylvia. "Telling Stories About Places: Local Knowledge and Narratives Can Improve Decisions About the Environment." *Alternatives* 23 (1997): 28.
- Buell, Lawrence. *Writing for an Endangered World: Literature, Culture, and Environment in the U.S. and Beyond*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2001.
- Carr, Michael. *Bioregionalism and Civil Society: Democratic Challenges to Corporate Globalism*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004.
- Castells, Manuel. *The Informational City: Information Technology, Economic Restructuring, and the Urban-Regional Process*. New York: Blackwell, 1989.
- Cheney, Jim. "Postmodern Environmental Ethics: Ethics as Bioregional Narrative." *Postmodern Environmental Ethics*. Ed. Max Oelschlaeger. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995. 23-42.
- Cronon, William. "The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature." *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*. Ed. William Cronon. New York: Norton & Company, 1996. 69-90.
- Day, Richard. *Multiculturalism and the History of Canadian Diversity*. Toronto: U Toronto P, 2000.
- Evernden, Neil. *The Natural Alien: Humankind and the Environment*. Toronto: U. Toronto P, 1985.
- Glotfelty, Cheryll & Fromm, Harold., ed. *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. Athens: Georgia UP, 1996.
- Gunew, Sneja. "Multicultural Multiplicities: US, Canada, Australia." *Meanjin* 52 (1993): 447-461.
- Haraway, Donna J. *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. New York: Routledge, 1991.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Universal Donors in a Vampire Culture: It's all in the family: Biological Kinship Categories in the Twentieth-Century US." *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*. Ed. William Cronon. New York: W.W. Norton, 1996. 321-366.
- Harmon, David. *In Light of Our Differences: How Diversity in Nature and Culture Makes Us Human*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002.

- Jameson, Fredric. *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Durham: Duke UP, 1992.
- Kamboureli, Smaro. *Scandalous Bodies: Diasporic Literature in English Canada*. Toronto: Oxford UP, 2000.
- Kroetsch, Robert. "Disunity as Unity: A Canadian Strategy." *New Contexts of Canadian Criticism*. Eds. Ajay Heble, Donna Palmateer Pennee, & J.R. Struthers. Peterborough: Broadview, 1997. 355-365.
- Leopold, Aldo. *A Sand County Almanac: with Essays on Conservation from Round River*. 1949. New York: Ballantine Books, 1966.
- Mackey, Eva. *The House of Difference: Cultural Politics and Identity in Canada*. Toronto: U Toronto P, 2002.
- Manes, Christopher. "Nature and Silence." *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. Eds. Cheryll Glotfelty & Harold Fromm. Athens: Georgia UP, 1996.15-29.
- Millennium Assessment Report. 1 April 2005. <<http://www.maweb.org/en/>>
- Merchant, Carolyn. "Reinventing Eden: Western Culture as a Recovery Narrative." *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*. Ed. Cronon, William. New York: W.W. Norton, 1996. 132-159.
- Multiculturalism: Building the Canadian Mosaic, Report for the Standing Committee on Multiculturalism*. Ottawa: Government of Canada, 1987.
- Neruda, Pablo. *The Book of Questions*. Trans. Willialm O'Dally. Port Townsend: Copper Canyon Press, 2001.
- Papa, James A. Jr. "The Politics of Leisure: "Industrial Tourism" in Edward Abbey's *Desert Solitaire*." *Coyote in the Maze: Tracking Edward Abbey in a World of Words*. Ed. Peter Quigley. Salt Lake City: U Utah P, 1998. 316-334.
- Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism*, vol. IV. "The Contribution of Other Ethnic Groups." Ottawa: Government of Canada, 1969.
- Suzuki, David & Grady, Wayne. *Tree: A Life Story*. Vancouver: Greystone Books, 2004.
- Taylor, Charles. "The Politics of Recognition." *New Contexts of Canadian Criticism*. Eds. Ajay Heble, Donna Palmateer Pennee, & J.R. Struthers. Peterborough: Broadview, 1997. 98-131.
- Woodsworth, James S. "Excerpts from Strangers Within Our Gates." *The Social History of Canada*. Ed. Michael Bliss. Toronto: U. Toronto P, unknown.
- Zimmerman, Michael, E. *Contesting Earth's Future: Radical Ecology and Postmodernity*. Berkeley: U California P, 1994.



## **DISWOMEN STRIKE BACK? THE EVOLUTION OF DISNEY'S *FEMMES* IN THE 1990s<sup>1</sup>**

*Libe García Zarranz*

Girls bored me—they still do. I love Mickey  
Mouse more than any woman I've ever known.

Walt Disney qtd. in Wagner, *You Must Remember This*

**T**he tendency to rewrite traditional fairy and folk tales has flourished in the world of Hollywood cinema with the cultural and commercial icon of Walt Disney. The dramatic transformation of literary fairy tales, nonetheless, has been problematic, since Disney's animated fairy-tale adaptations have systematically undergone a process involving sanitization and Americanization, two distinctive features to compound the so-called "Disneyfication" of folklore and popular culture. Disney's machinery transformed a child-oriented genre into a mass-oriented vehicle disguised as innocent entertainment while simultaneously portraying power relations and adult sexuality. As Jack Zipes claims, "[Disney] employed animators and technology to stop thinking about change, to return to his films, and to long nostalgically for neatly ordered patriarchal realms" (40). By developing an appealing cinematic language of fantasy, Disney's fairy tales often manage to conceal a suspicious ideology concerning sexual, race and class politics. In this respect, the construction of Disney's heroines has become a controversial site for discussion in terms of stereotyped femininity and sexuality following the demands of a pervasive patriarchal system. Referring to the story of *Snow White*, Zipes argues that "the house for the Grimms and Disney was the place where good girls remained, and one shared aspect of the fairy tale and the film is about the domestication of women" (37). Like-

---

<sup>1</sup> A preliminary version of this article, entitled "*Diswomen: The Disneyesque Rewriting of Fairy Tales*," was presented at the *Feminist & Women's Studies Association Conference "Feminism and Popular Culture,"* held at the University of Newcastle (June 29<sup>th</sup>-July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2007).



wise, feminist critic Elizabeth Bell claims, “[w]ith the logo ‘Walt Disney Pictures,’ Disney wrote his name and ownership on the folk stories of women, creating indelible images of the feminine” (“Somatexts” 108). Nevertheless, Disney’s imaginary cannot be defined in terms of a single and straightforward conservative ideology, since it contains multiple ideological layers that must be interrogated, especially regarding the representation of gender. This article examines the evolution undergone by some of Disney’s female characters through the first years of the so-called “Disney Decade” of the 1990s, paying special attention to the representation of sexual politics. Stephen Fjellman criticises Disney’s biased rewriting of history by employing the term “Distory.” Subverting his argument, I propose to coin the term “Diswomen” to refer to those female characters who trespass the boundaries of Disney’s traditional Manichean definition of femininity, becoming multi-faceted women who are successfully represented, consistent with a contemporary discourse on gender and sexuality.

The release of *The Little Mermaid* in 1989, a free adaptation of Andersen’s classic, marked the rebirth of the Disney Corporation as one of the largest multinationals in America. Regarding the representation of gender, Disney’s construction of the teenage mermaid Ariel generated the beginning of an ideological debate among feminist scholars. As Laura Sells explains, “the mermaid figure becomes both an icon of bourgeois feminism and a sign of the stakes in reinventing the category of “woman,” or reimagining women as speaking subjects” (177). A different line in criticism describes Ariel as “the very embodiment of consumer-fetishism” due to her compulsive need to collect multiple human objects (Byrne and McQuillan 23). Similarly, it has been argued that Ariel was modelled after a “slightly anorexic Barbie doll” (Giroux, *The Mouse* 99) with “thin waist and prominent bust” (O’Brien 173) thus portraying a dangerous model for young women. Moreover, the female community is limited in Disney’s film when compared to Andersen’s fairy tale, since Ariel’s friends are male and her sisters work as “agents of patriarchy,” as O’Brien claims. Even so, several critics have cited *The Little Mermaid* (1989) as the turning point signalling the studio’s new openness in sexual and gender roles, since Ariel systematically rebels against the norm of the Father, aspires to grow intellectually and strives to achieve agency in the film (Bell, 1995; Deleyto, 2003). It is interesting to remember that it is Ariel who initially saves a male human being from drowning, thus transgressing her father’s rules and proving her courage and determinacy. Nonetheless, it is Disney’s construction of Ursula the sea-witch that introduces subversive readings of the film in terms of sexual and power politics. By means of using her extreme power,

Ursula not only manipulates Ariel at will but manages to trick Triton, the symbol of patriarchal law. Physically, the sea-witch is drawn as a queer predatory monster with a grotesque overwhelming body that occupies the whole screen. Trites argues that Ursula's menacing body reflects Disney's negative tendency to depict older women as predatory villains (qtd. in O'Brien 179). Her monstrous body, however, transgresses multiple boundaries, becoming a potential site for feminist pleasure. As Mary Russo has argued, "the grotesque body is the open, protruding, extended, secreting body, the body of becoming, process, and change [...] opposed to the classical body, which is monumental, static, closed, and sleek" (219). Moreover, Ursula's queerness subverts gender categories thus turning this female witch into an ironic positive figure; a "multiple cross-dresser," as Sells claims, who destabilises gender through her excess and theatricality (182). As a result, Ursula becomes a transgressive Diswoman, since she manages to subvert Disney's Manichean definition of femininity through her celebration of the grotesque and her gender performance.

Critical interest has also read Belle in Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* (1991) as an intelligent active woman who reads passionately to escape the monotony of the French "provincial town," as she puts it. Susan Jeffords argues that "while the earlier Beauties were also avid readers, the Disney film marks Belle's interest as more of a social than a character feature, using it to distinguish Belle from the rest of the townspeople, marking her as better and less provincial than they are" (170). Jeffords even goes so far as to claim that "Belle is, for all intents and purposes, a Disney Feminist" (170). And what is more, Belle is not in the least interested in the type of excessive masculinity displayed by the primitive Gaston. Drawn as a caricature of the macho hero, Gaston still attracts the rest of the women in the film who swoon over him and comically faint when in his presence, becoming a parody of traditional femininity. The sort of masculinity embodied by Gaston is deliberately drawn to give way to the problematic character of the beast in Disney's film. As Jeffords explains, the 80s action hero type needed to be transformed into a family man, more in tune with domestic policies of the 1990s. Certainly the beast is a Byronic hero, a tormented man who needs to be re-educated to become a symbol for the "New Man" in order to represent a new kind of masculinity that will enable men to suffer, to love and to remain happily within the domestic realm. It is therefore reasonable to argue, as Marina Warner does, that Disney's version of *Beauty and the Beast* "is more vividly aware of contemporary sexual politics than any made before" (313).

Disney's evolution in the construction of heroines continues with Jasmine, the rebellious princess in *Aladdin* (1992). When she is first introduced in the film, the camera points at her back and yet, when she is about to turn, the aggressive face of a tiger bursts into the frame holding an item of male underwear. From this moment onwards, the representation of this female character is marked: she is a determined woman, who rejects patriarchal laws. One of the features distinguishing a contemporary Disney princess like Jasmine from previous heroines like Cinderella is that she realises the benefits of royalty. Aware of her father's inefficiency, Jasmine furiously warns the villain Jafar about his methods: "At least some good will come of my being forced to marry. When I am queen, I will have the power to get rid of you." The recognition of power is a mark of transition that differentiates Jasmine from traditional Disney females. Besides, she transgresses the viewers' expectations when she dares to kiss the sinister Jafar, a performance to protect her kingdom and his real lover, Aladdin. It is worth mentioning that Jasmine is the first Diswoman to ever kiss the villain, which enhances the possibilities for the genre of the animated fairy tale, giving way to new paths in terms of both narrative expectations and gender representation.

Moving into 1995, the construction of an independent, strong and wise female character like Pocahontas<sup>2</sup> opened uncharted spaces in the evolution of Diswomen in terms of sexual and power politics. Pocahontas' dissatisfaction subverts the conventions of previous Disney songs, since she expresses in "Just around the Riverbend" her thirst for adventure away from "a handsome sturdy husband/who builds handsome sturdy walls/ and never dreams that something might be coming." Pocahontas' wishes depart from those expressed by conventional heroines, since she not only rejects the compulsory union with Kocoum, the brave hero from her tribe, but also decides to leave John Smith, a Prince Charming figure representative of western colonizers. Furthermore, the movie *Pocahontas* is one of the first films in the Disney imaginary to widen the female community surrounding the heroine. Nakoma's friendship grants Pocahontas the strength to become one of the leaders in her tribe. Then, an older generation of women represented by the character of Grandmother Willow provide Pocahontas invaluable advice about which path to take in life, making her reconsider the implications of entering into a compulsory

---

<sup>2</sup> I am aware of the suspicious ideology surrounding the film *Pocahontas* with respect to historical accuracy and the racial depiction of Native Americans. Nevertheless, my discussion focuses on Disney's evolution in the representation of the heroine Pocahontas in terms of gender and sexuality. For an interesting reading of *Pocahontas* as a neocolonial narrative see Buescher and Ono's study (1996).

marriage. Moreover, Pocahontas's mother has dramatically shaped her daughter's character: she is confident, brave and politically committed to her people, traits she has inherited from her mother. As the Indian Wiseman proudly exclaims: "She has her mother's spirit. She goes wherever the wind takes her." The implications of rendering the inheritance of the mother's character as a positive force in woman's learning process shows Disney's attempt to integrate feminist discourses within the narrative of the animated fairy tales.

And yet, while bearing in mind the positive evolution of Diswomen like Belle or Pocahontas, it is the subversive construction of Esmeralda in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1996) that introduces radical changes in Disney's portrayal of female sexuality. Esmeralda, the exotic gypsy heroine is firstly furnished with a blatant sexuality by means of visual strategies. Her colourful and daring dress code clashes with previous Disney attire like Belle's, which mostly consisted of monochrome "serious" dresses. Esmeralda always sports a wide plunging neckline, making her breasts stand out, which contributes to her construction as a sexualised Diswoman. After the release of *The Hunchback*, critic John Kelly argued that "Esmeralda is drawn with more curves and beguiling shadows than you'll find in the typical Disney heroine" (1996). Furthermore, the Disney team employed a successful strategy to construct the character of Esmeralda by deploying actress Demi Moore's voice and manners, since the image of the celebrated actress has been sexualised from the late 1990s through films like *Striptease* (1996). Interestingly, both films were released in the same year, signalling Hollywood's shift in the representation of women's sexuality. Female characters could display a blatant sexuality without risking their inner goodness. As Amy Davis argues in her recent study of Disney's heroines, "by the 1990s, the notion that a woman could be both good and sexy had ceased to be such an unimaginable concept in representations of femininity in much of America's popular culture" (173). Therefore, by means of adopting Moore's voice and gestures, Esmeralda is effectively constructed under the new features of the 90s sexually active woman.

If we follow this line of argument, the character of Esmeralda becomes problematic, since she trespasses the boundaries of Disney's Manichean definition of femininity in various ways. Examining the techniques employed to construct some of Disney female villains, Bell explains that "[t]he evil women of Disney's films are the only female characters rendered in close-ups" ("Somatexts" 116). Nevertheless, this trait is altered in 90s Diswomen like Jasmine, Pocahontas or Esmeralda, some of the female heroines who do not conform to

traditional Anglo-Saxon features. In the case of Esmeralda, there are several close-ups worth interpreting, since they help to construct her as a dangerous and powerful heroine. As Janet Maslin points out, “in close-ups [Esmeralda] sometimes has the hard, bold features of a Marvel Comics action hero, which suits the aggressive side of this story” (1996). During the Feast of Fools sequence, Esmeralda is shot in close-up, framed mostly by her own dark curly hair. Her narrowing green emerald eyes and her arched eyebrows turn her face into a threatening explosion of beauty and provocation. According to Bell, this type of close-up is characteristic of the representation of Disney’s *femme fatales*, to intensify “not only the women’s evil natures—their unknowable interiors—but [to recall] primal fears and animal phobias, transforming their faces to the exterior icons of wolves and cats whose eyes glow in the dark” (“Somatexts” 117). Esmeralda thus subverts stereotyped definitions of femininity by becoming the first successful *femme fatale* heroine within Disney’s universe.

Chris Cuomo argues that heroines like Belle or Ariel embody brightness, beauty and goodness, virtues which are enhanced due to an array of female wicked women constructed as witches (217). The paradigmatic Disney witch is the jealous queen in *Snow White*, who has become a cultural icon symbolising evil. As Zipes and others have noted, however, it is precisely these evil characters that are charged with an erotic subversive force, appealing to children and adults alike. Bell explains that “Disney transforms the vain, active, and wicked woman of folktales into the *femme fatale*, the ‘deadly woman’ of silent film and of Hollywood classic film” (“Somatexts” 115). In this respect, Esmeralda is bright and beautiful and yet, she is also active and sexualised, becoming an animated *femme fatale*. Jane Place describes the construction of the *femme fatale* in terms of the danger she poses to men. Esmeralda therefore can be read as an example of *femme fatale* in terms of the menace she poses to the evil Minister Frollo, symbol of the status quo. Then, commenting on the iconography surrounding Hollywood’s *femme fatale*, Place argues that it is “explicitly sexual, and often explicitly violent as well: long hair (blond or dark), make-up and jewellery. [...] the iconography of violence [...] is a specific symbol [...] of her ‘unnatural’ phallic power” (54). In this respect, it is interesting to point out that Disney’s heroines never use jewellery and yet Esmeralda transgresses this norm, since she wears one earring and some bracelets on her wrist and an anklet. Likewise, Esmeralda does participate in this violent and phallic iconography in several sections of the film. At the Feast of Fools, she bravely takes a knife from her leg, proving her deadly nature, and cuts the rope that traps the bellringer Quasimodo. She next escapes from lots of

obstacles by throwing soldiers' helmets like lethal discuses, capable of decapitating some of the men and thus proving her ability to survive in an aggressive society that oppresses her as an independent gypsy woman. After that, Esmeralda escapes Frollo and the law by parodying stereotyped images of femininity like weeping. The French feminist critic Luce Irigaray describes feminine masquerade as "the acting out by the female subject of a series of male-defined roles and script" (qtd. in Palmer 48). Irigaray then proposes the term "mimesis" as a weapon to demolish these male-defined constructs: "by parodically mimicking conventional images of femininity and introducing into her performance an element of excess, [Woman] can expose the artifice and inauthenticity of these images" (49). In this respect, Esmeralda's conscious attempt to use stereotypes to her own benefit contributes to reading her as a transgressive Diswoman. In *The Little Mermaid*, Ursula teaches Ariel "the artifice and trappings of gendered behaviour" (Sells 183). Esmeralda, however, has already acquired that knowledge as proof of her construction not as an innocent teenager but as a sexually experienced woman.

It is interesting to investigate the processes by which the sexuality and power of Hollywood and Disney's *femmes fatale* remain intact even though they are eliminated from the narrative through death or domestication. As Place suggests, "the visual style gives her such freedom of movement and dominance that it is her strength and sensual visual texture that is inevitably printed in our memory, not her ultimate destruction" (63). These heroines stand as symbols of an appealing sexuality for both women and men, and their fascinating power remains even when they physically vanish. Esmeralda is partly tamed in the course of the narrative when she loses her independent spirit by sharing her cause with Phoebus, a soldier. Her sexuality also diminishes at the end of the film through a change in *mise-en-scène* elements like clothing or lighting. Nevertheless, in spite of Disney's attempts to domesticate the sexualised heroine, Esmeralda manages to escape her own construction. Demi Moore's voice is still heard and the intensity of previous images portraying her dancing or fighting against a corrupted law represented by the cruel Frollo remains. Her sexuality thus cannot be tamed, since it has already permeated the audience's senses. Furthermore, Bell argues that Disney *femme fatales* are doomed ("Somatexts" 118). Esmeralda, however, survives.

A very significant moment in the construction of Esmeralda is the dance sequence at the Feast of Fools. She pops out of a cloud of smoke, simulating a magic trick or even an instance of witchcraft. An exuberant young woman showing her dancing and gymnastic abili-

ties with a twofold purpose: to earn a living and to participate in the carnival experience. When Esmeralda takes a soldier's long spear, she sticks it on the stage and starts her performance, as if dancing on a bar. The spear and the way she sticks it demonstrate her phallic power, a common trait of Hollywood's *femmes fatales*, as I previously argued. In addition, it should be borne in mind that dancing has often been read as a metaphor for the sexual act. Subsequently, when Esmeralda dances on her own, she is not only succumbing to male desire, but actually enjoying her own sexuality. In examining the construction of some of Disney's heroines following the lines of classical ballet, Bell argues that "[t]he markers of class [...] are covertly embodied in the metaphors of classical dance" ("Somatexts" 110). In this sense, the dance sequences in *The Beauty and the Beast* clash ideologically with Esmeralda's performance in "The Feast of Fools," since they become a display of royalty and bearing. According to Bell, "the Disney apparatus buys into and then sells the twofold fantasy of little girls who want to grow up to be princesses and ballerinas" (111). In this sense, even though the character of Belle anticipates certain proto-feminist traits, she ultimately resembles traditional Disney's heroines like Cinderella or Aurora in that all of them obtain material triumph by becoming princesses of the castle and with it, all the essential accomplishments their class would require like becoming a talented dancer. In contrast, Esmeralda dances for money and for the pleasure of expressing her blatant sexuality, which opens up new possibilities for the construction of Diswomen in terms of gender and class politics.

Challenging to decode and interpret, Esmeralda becomes one of the most complex female characters in Disney's imaginary. As Doane argues, the paradigmatic *femme fatale* "never really is what she seems to be. She harbors a threat which is not entirely legible, predictable, or manageable" (1). Drawn as a multi-faceted woman, Esmeralda is indeed unpredictable, since she is simultaneously able to perform a sexual dance, stand as a devoted admirer of God, become a defender of social injustice and act as a powerful *femme fatale*. She resists stereotyped images of femininity and is successfully represented, consistent with a contemporary discourse on gender and sexuality.

As a final thought, I propose to go back where everything started. When the beautiful but wicked queen is transformed into an old crone, she tempts the naïve Snow White with a bright scarlet apple. However, the fruit is poisonous. Disney's heroine succumbs to the temptation and bites the forbidden fruit falling into a sleeping death. In my view, part of the critical institution tends to obliterate Disney



films, since they are rendered as “rotten apples.” Their enchanting, colourful and cheerful exterior layer hides a problematic ideology promoting endless dangerous “-isms” like American imperialism, consumerism, racism, sexism and so on. However, as I have endeavoured to demonstrate, there are some resistant spaces in Disney’s animated fairy tales that subvert the conservative ideology of early classics to incorporate contemporary discourses regarding sexuality and power. As Byrne and McQuillan claim, “the Disney text [...] is a site for the *representation* of the conflicting ideologies in operation in Western society at the time of production and so therefore has a non-simple relation to American cultural and economic imperialism” (19-20). Therefore, even though it is still a long time before we can speak about successful feminist representations in a commercial icon like Disney, recent films incorporate complex female characters that are worth taking into consideration.

### Notes

My thanks to Professor Celestino Deleyto from the University of Zaragoza for his help and advice in the completion of this article.

*Libe García Zarranz*  
University of Zaragoza  
Spain

### Works Cited

- Bell, Elizabeth. “‘Somatexts at the Disney Shop’: Constructing the Penitents of Women’s Animated Bodies.” *From Mouse to Mermaid: The Politics of Film, Gender, and Culture*. Ed. Elizabeth Bell, Linda Haas and Laura Sells. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1995. 107-125.
- Bell, Elizabeth, Haas, Linda and Laura Sells. *From Mouse to Mermaid: The Politics of Film, Gender, and Culture*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1995.
- Buescher, Derek. T. and Kent A. Ono. “Civilized Colonialism: *Pocahontas* as Neocolonial Rhetoric.” *Women’s Studies in Communication* 19. 2 (Summer 1996): 127-153.
- Byrne, Eleanor and Martin McQuillan. *Deconstructing Disney*. London: Pluto Press, 1999.
- Cuomo, Chris. “Spinsters in Sensible Shoes: Mary Poppins and Bedknobs and Broomsticks.” *From Mouse to Mermaid: The Politics of*



- Film, Gender, and Culture*. Ed. Elizabeth Bell, Linda Haas and Laura Sells. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1995. 212-224.
- Davis, Amy M. *Good Girls and Wicked Witches: Women in Disney's Feature Animation*. Eastleigh: John Libbey Publishing, 2006.
- Deleyto, Celestino. *Ángeles y Demonios: Representación e Ideología en el Cine Contemporáneo de Hollywood*. Barcelona: Paidós, 2003.
- Doane, Mary Ann. *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, Psychoanalysis*. New York: Routledge, 1991.
- Fjellman, Stephen. M. *Vinyl Leaves: Walt Disney World and America*. Colorado: Westview Press, 1992.
- Giroux, Henry A. "Memory and Pedagogy in the 'Wonderful World of Disney': Beyond the Politics of Innocence." *From Mouse to Mermaid: The Politics of Film, Gender, and Culture*. Ed. Elizabeth Bell, Linda Haas and Laura Sells. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1995. 43-62.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Mouse that Roared: Disney and the End of Innocence*. Lanham, Boulder, New York and Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999.
- Jeffords, Susan. "The Curse of Masculinity: Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*." *From Mouse to Mermaid: The Politics of Film, Gender, and Culture*. Ed. Elizabeth Bell, Linda Haas and Laura Sells. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1995. 161-175.
- Kelly, John F. "The Hunchback of Notre Dame." *Washington Post*. 21 June 1996.
- Maslin, Janet. "The Dancing Gargoyles Romp and Wisecrack." *New York Times* 21 June 1996.
- O'Brien, Pamela Colby. "The Happiest Films on Earth: A Textual and Contextual Analysis of Walt Disney's *Cinderella* and *The Little Mermaid*." *Women's Studies in Communication* 19. 2 (1996): 155-183.
- Palmer, Paulina. *Lesbian Gothic: Transgressive Fictions*. London and New York: Cassell, 1999.
- Place, Jane. "Women in Film Noir." *Women in Film Noir*. Ed. E. Ann Kaplan. London: British Film Institute, 1998. 47-68.
- Russo, Mary. "Female Grotesques: Carnival and Theory." *Feminist Studies/Critical Studies*. Ed. Teresa de Lauretis. London: Macmillan, 1988. 213-229.
- Sells, Laura. "Where Do the Mermaids Stand? Voice and Body in *The Little Mermaid*." *From Mouse to Mermaid: The Politics of Film, Gender, and Culture*. Ed. Elizabeth Bell, Linda Haas and Laura Sells. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1995. 175-193.

- Trites, R. "Disney's sub/version of Andersen's 'The Little Mermaid'." *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 18 (1991): 145-152.
- Wagner, Walter. *You Must Remember This*. New York: Putnam, 1975.
- Ward, Annalee R. *Mouse Morality: The Rhetoric of Disney Animated Film*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002.
- Warner, Marina. *From the Beast to the Blonde: On Fairy Tales and their Tellers*. London: Vintage, 1995.
- Wasko, Janet. *Understanding Disney: The Manufacture of Fantasy*. Cambridge and Malden: Polity Press, 2001.
- Zipes, Jack. "Breaking the Disney Spell." *From Mouse to Mermaid: The Politics of Film, Gender, and Culture*. Ed. Elizabeth Bell, Linda Haas and Laura Sells. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1995. 21-43.



## THE RETURN OF PATIENT ZERO: THE MALE BODY AND NARRATIVES OF NATIONAL CONTAGION

Sara Scott Armengot

The popularization of the Patient Zero story in the United States continues to promote the dehumanizing idea that people living with HIV/AIDS outside the mainland United States are only significant either as sources of contagion or as consumers of expensive designer drugs. My analysis of the novelistic narrative *And the Band Played On* (1987) by US author Randy Shilts and the two films inspired by the book—*Zero Patience* (1993) as well as *And the Band Played On* (1993)—demonstrates how Shilts' book and the US produced film of the same name deploy the Patient Zero character as an agent of foreign contagion whose hyper-sexual male body threatens the national health of the USA while *Zero Patience*, a Canadian film, encourages viewers to dissociate sex and gender from nation and to imagine a space of positive human contact regardless of nationality, native tongue, HIV/AIDS status or sexual orientation.

The term "Patient Zero" was first applied in a cluster study conducted in 1982 by the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) in their early attempts to understand the epidemic that was later named AIDS.<sup>1</sup> While the original CDC study limited itself to an investigation of the disease's possible modes of transmission, the mainstream North American press located Patient Zero not as someone who had himself been infected with the AIDS virus, but rather as the carrier who had contaminated the North American continent with AIDS. The voluntary participation of an HIV positive French Canadian named Gaetan Dugas in the CDC study was instrumental in providing the scientific community with a strong indication that the disease was sexually transmitted.

Despite his willing participation in the study, Dugas' identity in the

---

<sup>1</sup> See D.M. Auerbach, W.W. Darrow, H.W. Jaffe, and J.W. Curran "Cluster of Cases of the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. Patients Linked by Sexual Contact." *The American Journal of Medicine* 76 (1984): 487-492.

media was quickly subsumed under the label Patient Zero. He was depicted in the mainland United States in particular as a promiscuous gay French Canadian airline steward responsible for bringing the AIDS virus to North America. The media invested the story of Patient Zero with a sensational explanatory power: frequently portrayed as a vain serial killer and a monstrous criminal who knowingly spread AIDS from coast to coast, Patient Zero became recognizable as a symbol of gay narcissism, irresponsibility, and culpability. Subsequently, a number of artists have made use of the story. However, portrayals of Patient Zero differ widely in their basic assumptions about his significance in the history of the AIDS epidemic. After a brief discussion of Shilts' book, I will demonstrate how subsequent depictions of Patient Zero in film alternately challenge and reinforce narratives of xenophobia and gay monstrosity.

Patient Zero, the mythologized gay French-Canadian airline steward who reportedly brought AIDS to North America in the 1970s, became a symbol of contagion after the publication of Randy Shilts' best-selling book on the early history of AIDS, *And the Band Played On: Politics, People, and the AIDS Epidemic* (1987). Shilts portrays Patient Zero as a wanton serial killer with a seductive French accent spreading AIDS from New York to San Francisco while US institutions did little or nothing to combat the disease. Shilts' interest in the AIDS epidemic as a national crisis enables him to critique the gross inaction on the part of national institutions. In his prologue Shilts declared that the "story of these first five years of AIDS in America is a drama of national failure, played out against a backdrop of needless death" (xxii). While the subsequent development of anti-retroviral medications signals a substantial advance in medical treatment, the often prohibitive cost of these drugs where patented reminds us that more than two decades after the AIDS epidemic was identified, the worldwide drama of 40 million people living with HIV is far from over.

Not surprisingly, after the publication of Randy Shilts' *And the Band Played On*, in which the story of Patient Zero functions as a significant narrative thread, media interest in Patient Zero increased. Shilts' publisher, St. Martin's Press, engaged in a successful publicity campaign for *And the Band Played On* that focused on the story of Patient Zero as the book's main selling point. While much of the mainstream press remained enthralled by the titillating story that appeared to explain the origin of the AIDS epidemic in North America, Shilts was heavily criticized in vocal sections of the gay press.<sup>2</sup> Roger Hallas asserts that "Gay skepticism toward popular culture obviously

---

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of the criticisms lodged against Shilts' book and his

increased during the first decade of the AIDS epidemic, when television and the popular press consistently pathologized and demonized gay men as 'AIDS killers'" (86-87). While Shilts attempted to deflect criticism of his portrayal of Patient Zero as a narcissistic serial killer by appealing to the supposedly factual basis of his characterizations, David Crimp has argued that "[t]he real problem with Patient Zero is that he already existed as a phobic fantasy in the minds of Shilts' readers before Shilts ever wrote the story. And, thanks in part to *And the Band Played On*, that fantasy still haunts us" (124). By choosing to tell a story that perpetuated homophobic stereotypes of gay men and homosexual culpability for the AIDS epidemic, Shilts guaranteed himself a large and receptive audience.

According to Robert Cagle, the Patient Zero narrative was "exactly the kind of story that America wanted to hear, placing blame, as it did, on an 'outsider' and bringing some semblance of organization, of 'meaning,' into the chaos of life in the time of AIDS" (70). Another critic offers Shilts' book as "an archetypal instance of how the myth of the gay male vampire got superimposed onto people with AIDS and how the whole package was sold (by a gay journalist) to the American public" (Hanson 331). The lasting appeal of this narrative can be gauged by the depictions of the Patient Zero story that have emerged in the wake of Randy Shilts' book and the ensuing media frenzy.

### **Bodies in Flames, Flaming Bodies: Roger Spottiswoode's *And the Band Played On***

Based on Shilts' 1987 eponymous book, Roger Spottiswoode's film *And the Band Played On* (1993) depicts Patient Zero as a key piece in the puzzle of the AIDS epidemic. With a cast of Hollywood stars including Richard Gere, Lily Tomlin, Angelica Huston, Steve Martin, Alan Alda, Mathew Modine, Ian McKellen and an appearance by Phil Collins, the film, optioned by HBO and released theatrically in Great Britain, had wide appeal and reached a broad audience. The film was not overlooked in Canada either. Roger Spottiswoode, born in Ottawa, Canada in 1945, won the Montréal World Film Festival's special grand prize for his work in directing the film.

The film, which was marketed as a fact-based drama about the history of the AIDS virus, frames itself instead as a docudrama of the CDC's struggle against national infection by foreign contaminants. *And the Band Played On* opens not with the story of AIDS, but with

---

portrayal of the Patient Zero story see Tim Kingston "Controversy Follows Shilts and 'Zero' to London." *Coming Up* (1988): 11.

that of the Ebola virus. The evocative establishing shot follows several World Health Organization vehicles entering a remote village along the Ebola River in Central Africa. The camera slowly reveals the widespread death caused by the Ebola virus among the people of Central Africa to great dramatic effect through the perspective of two traumatized white Anglophone medical professionals. As the doctors dutifully burn the bundled bodies of the dead, a two-part intertitle appears superimposed on the flames: the upper half of the screen reassures the audience that the Ebola fever was successfully contained before it could reach the outside world while the lower half ominously informs the viewer that although this was not AIDS it was “a warning of things to come.”

The privileged initial presentation of the Ebola virus may appear misplaced in a film which purports to be about AIDS. However, the attempt to create a portentous link between the 1976 outbreak of the Ebola hemorrhagic fever in Zaire (known as the Democratic Republic of the Congo since 1997) and the AIDS epidemic in North America effectively perpetuates a climate of unfounded fear concerning the nature of AIDS transmission. In contrast to the level of precaution required to prevent the transmission of the AIDS virus, the Ebola virus has been classified by the CDC among the world’s most contagious diseases at Biosafety level 4. This level not only requires special protective clothing for anyone who comes in contact with an infected person, but also special equipment to sterilize air as well as liquid and solid waste. The incredible speed with which the Ebola virus attacks humans is another factor that contributes to its sensational ability to evoke horror and fear. Unlike the often lengthy period between exposure and contraction of full-blown AIDS, the Ebola virus generally results in death within 3 weeks of exposure. Regardless of the fact that AIDS was present prior to 1976 in both Central Africa and in North America, the film instead focuses on the tragedy surrounding a completely unrelated virus.

The juxtaposition of the 1976 Ebola outbreak in Africa with the subsequent recognition of AIDS in North America suggests that the Ebola virus was little more than an ill-omened warning relevant principally as a precursor to AIDS. The story of the Ebola virus loses importance for the narrative as soon as the viewer is informed of its successful containment within the African continent. However, this gratuitous depiction of Africa as a site of potential contamination that threatens the “outside world” sets the stage for the film’s overall narrative structure. Designed as a medical mystery or detective story, *And the Band Played On* follows the efforts of its protagonist, presumed heterosexual doctor Don Francis, and others as they attempt to un-

derstand and contain the unknown disease.

This structure acquires added relevance in an analysis of the film's depiction of Patient Zero. Patient Zero becomes the successful French Canadian analogue to his unsuccessful Central African counterparts whose bodies were burned on-screen at the beginning of the film. In opposition to the somber cremation ceremony to which the victims of the Ebola virus were anonymously subjected, Patient Zero not only refuses to be contained, he refuses to understand the gravity of the situation. He flippantly transgresses sexual, national, and linguistic borders in order to avoid containment and wantonly infect the national "body" of the United States.

Patient Zero also functions as the puzzle-piece that ultimately allows the CDC to deduce that the disease is sexually transmitted. Through its cluster study of Dugas' sexual activities, the CDC amasses evidence that links many of the earliest detected cases to Gaetan Dugas. In a narrative that locates Dugas as a human "ground zero" for the AIDS epidemic in North America, the blame is placed on the French Canadian Dugas as both immediate origin and agent of the epidemic. Significantly, despite Dugas' pronouncement that if he has the disease someone else must have given it to him, no attempt is made to discover the source of Dugas' infection and thus the Patient Zero story is allowed to remain intact.

In Spottiswoode's film the CDC doctor who interviews Dugas finds him not only flippant and conceited, but clearly reluctant to cooperate. Dugas has little time or patience for the doctor's humanitarian efforts. Upon asking the doctor if he could smoke while they talk, the doctor sighs "if you must" in apparent recognition of the patient's self-destructive antisocial behavior. While Dugas ultimately concedes to cooperate with the CDC, he is portrayed as essentially narcissistic due to the fact that he participates only on his own strictly controlled terms. The brief interview is followed by a phone call in which Dugas gives the CDC doctor a list of names and the doctor triumphantly returns to his colleagues. He presents a colorful chart and happily proclaims "This is patient zero." The other doctors congratulate him and announce that he has found the "first sign of real proof" that the disease is sexually transmitted.

### **Up in Smoke: John Greyson's *Zero Patience***

As a counterpoint to this detective-style narrative that triumphantly and unequivocally assigns Dugas the dubious honor of being "Patient Zero," John Greyson's musical comedy *Zero Patience*



(also released in 1993) contests the predominantly heterosexual, US-centered understanding of Dugas' historical and scientific significance. The film's title suggests an active impatience with the ways the AIDS epidemic has been dealt with by the media and the scientific community. In addition to parodying the Patient Zero story, the title echoes a popular 19<sup>th</sup>-century operetta by the English duo Sir William Gilbert and Sir Arthur Sullivan: *Patience; or Bunthorne's Bride* (1881). Like Gilbert and Sullivan's *Patience*, Greyson's film includes a love story that only develops after certain popular trends fall into disrepute. In the case of *Zero Patience*, the blinding fashions that must be overcome for the romance to unfold are the demonization and exploitation of homosexuals and people with AIDS.

Accordingly, Greyson employs a "strategy of reappropriating mainstream media" (Dyer 270) to dispute depictions of homosexuals as monstrous or unnatural. The popular Patient Zero story is not only contested, but his character is literally brought back from beyond the grave to play a rather different role in a film that partakes of multiple genres including science fiction and the horror film. The revivification of Dugas is significant both as a rewriting of the Patient Zero story and as a broader engagement with the frequent filtering of representations of homosexuals "through the iconography of the horror film" (Benshoff 1). Particularly relevant to the Patient Zero story is the connection Harry Benshoff draws between the horror film and media coverage of the AIDS crisis: "the representational codes and narrative tropes of the monster movie (plague, contagion, victimization, panic) have been grafted onto much television and newspaper coverage of AIDS" (3). Ellis Hanson suggests that the AIDS documentary has served as a replacement genre for the vampire film or novel which previously incited panic around homosexuality (325). Greyson's Patient Zero figure, while exhibiting characteristics routinely marked as "monstrous" such as invisibility, an inability to cast a reflection in mirrors or be videotaped and his status as ghost or revenant, clearly subverts popular images of homosexuals as dangerous blood-sucking vampires.

Instead of appealing to viewers' preconditioned fears of "monstrous" bodies, the film encourages viewers to engage in complex conversations on the role of memory, the effects of loss and the importance of agency in understanding and combating AIDS. Indeed, the surfacing of the revenant in this film is much more than a plot device and could be productively interrogated in terms of recent critical interest in the representation of absence: Jacques Derrida's concept of hauntology<sup>3</sup> and the subsequent critical work of others on

queer ghost theory highlights the potential for “a queer criticism that attempts to understand communal mourning, group psychologies, and the need for a politics that ‘carries’ our dead with us into battles for the present and future” (Muñoz 369). Ellis Hanson’s insightful essay “Undead” suggestively raises the issue of the revenant’s role in facilitating or accompanying agency: “I only deny now the myths that designate us the abjected ones. To be gay and to speak is always to risk flirtation with the revenant, who inevitably rises from the grave in anticipation of our speech” (338).

In addition, Greyson’s *Zero Patience* challenges mainstream filmic representations of Canada as an exclusively heterosexual nation. As Christopher Gittings has argued, *Zero Patience* appropriates “hegemonic systems of representation and refutes the expulsion of gayness from the Canadian nation by making formerly invisible Dugas visible and formerly illegible queer nation legible” (36). Richard Dellamora points out that “Greyson does not disavow the representation of Canada in the dominant culture, but he transforms it by queering it” (527). While the use of camp<sup>4</sup> is perhaps the most obvious element in subverting the overdetermined identification of sexual, national, and linguistic difference with monstrosity and pathology, a recurring tension between sight and blindness also contributes to the film’s subversive approach to mainstream media portrayals.

While Michael Saunders suggests that “the visibility of gay people is what makes them dangerous” (2), Greyson’s Patient Zero character is determined to tell his story to the mis-informed world despite his invisibility. Although those who knew Patient Zero in life are incapable of seeing him in his resurrected body, he is easily seen and identified by chief museum taxidermist Richard Burton. The inclusion of Sir Richard Francis Burton, the 19<sup>th</sup>-century British ethnographer, as the scientist who wants to rebuild his reputation by including Patient Zero in an exhibit on contagious diseases entitled the Hall of Contagion for Toronto’s Natural History Museum, suggests a historical connection and contemporary continuation of Burton’s Victorian era sexology as well as what Dellamora refers to as “the interminable implication

---

<sup>3</sup> See Jacques Derrida, *Spectres of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf. New York: Routledge, 1994.

<sup>4</sup> Robert Cagle defines camp as “the name given to a specific sensibility that informs certain cultural appropriations—of texts, of images, of *fragments*— in the service of commenting upon social and cultural realities from a specifically disempowered subject position” (78). For an extended discussion of camp see Susan Sontag, “Notes on ‘Camp’” in *Against Interpretation and Other Essays*. New York: Delta, 1964. 275-292.

of anglophone Canadian identity in the expansion of the Empire ‘on which the sun never sets’” (531).

In his search for a project that will be “groundbreaking yet crowd-pleasing” Burton stumbles on the story of Patient Zero as the origin of AIDS in North America. The museum director, the aptly named Doctor Placebo, is not convinced that Burton’s idea to center the exhibit on the story of “a promiscuous, irresponsible, homosexual Canadian” will be attractive to a broad national audience. However, when Burton specifies that Patient Zero was French-Canadian, the director’s reply, “Ah, *French-Canadian*,” precedes his acquiescence and tacit approval of the exhibit’s potential ability to please its audience. With the question of audience appeal resolved, the next concern Doctor Placebo raises is that of funding.

The financial arrangements agreed upon for the exhibit reinforce the absurdity of Burton’s outlandish emphasis on appearances. The Gilbert and Sullivan Pharmaceutical Company agrees to assist Burton in his plans for a “music video” style exhibit complete with lasers. The exhibit’s chief sponsor also happens to be the producer of the most expensive AIDS drugs on the market. Ironically, one ACT-Up activist discloses that clinical tests in Europe suggest that these drugs have no significant effect in improving the health of people with AIDS. It is hardly coincidental, then, that the company name is synonymous not with healthcare or scientific research, but with Gilbert and Sullivan, who produced no fewer than 14 comic operas in a profitable partnership that lasted 25 years.

As Zero and Burton become acquainted, the historical Burton’s 19<sup>th</sup>-century theory of homosexuality as geographically determined, and thus not possible in England, is introduced and revealed by Burton’s character as a self-serving mechanism by which he kept the national imaginary safe from homosexuality in order to preserve his ability to publish freely in Victorian England. Cagle argues that the Patient Zero story of North American AIDS, like Burton’s “scientific” explanation of homosexuality as alien to England is yet another theory of what he calls “externalized difference” (72). This externalization of difference is challenged when Burton is forced to abandon his supposedly objective position as scientific observer and constructor of meaning.

Although Burton dutifully assembles a fictionalized documentary for the museum’s “Hall of Contagion” exhibit on Patient Zero that identifies him as the monstrous, originary site of AIDS in North America by employing the usual “talking heads” and distorting editing techniques, he later regrets his actions after entering into a serious rela-

tionship with Zero. The beginning of the intimate relationship between the two is signaled by a campy musical number which consists of a duet between puppets representing the recta of Burton and Zero.

One of the most widely referenced scenes of the film, the duet engages the recta of the two protagonists in a debate over a number of influential theories of homosexuality and AIDS. While Burton's rectum worries about the supposed conflict that his homosexual relationships might pose to his patriarchal duty as a member of the British empire, Zero's rectum contends, "Sex is not for queen and country. You don't have to rant and rave." He follows this critique of Burton's excessively symbolic Victorian interpretations with an equally glib denouncement of a more recent contribution to theories of male homosexuality.<sup>5</sup> In a clear response to the work of Leo Bersani he appends: "Sex is so symbolic. Your rectum ain't a grave." Burton's rectum then voices the fear that AIDS might somehow be the product of a subconscious Freudian death wish manifested in the bodies of gay men: "Freud said we have a death wish. Getting buggered's getting killed. Is this ghastly epidemic something our subconscious willed?" to which Zero's rectum responds "An asshole's just an asshole."

Thomas Waugh's description of the body in queer film as a battleground "not only against the virus but also against censorship, conformity, and control" (245) is exemplified in this shift from traditional documentary-style talking heads to the inclusion of talking bodies and in this case singing recta. The body becomes a speech organ and the relationship between the ethnographer and his subject is ultimately transformed into a sexual and emotional relationship between two people. Similarly, the relationship between Zero and his own body is transformed as he listens in on a conversation between the various elements in his blood stream fighting over the cause of the AIDS virus. Through the assistance of his blood stream, Zero becomes visible just long enough to tell his side of the story on video before fading back into invisibility.

After having challenged the Patient Zero story and changed Burton's mind on a number of issues, Zero gives Burton a good-bye kiss in the final scene of the film. Upon telling Burton that he wants to disappear, Zero enters into his own image on the museum's screen as the film's theme song begins to play. After diving back into the pool "somewhere between existential limbo and the primordial void" from which he came at the beginning of the film he gleefully sings the theme song in which he proclaims his innocence. Seductively,

---

<sup>5</sup> See Leo Bersani "Is the Rectum a Grave?" in Douglass Crimp, ed. *AIDS: Cultural Analysis, Cultural Activism*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT, 1988. 197-222.

he asks Burton to light his cigarette and then intentionally sets off the emergency sprinkler system in the museum. The cigarette, which is portrayed as a negative sign of reckless, compulsive, self-destructive behavior when smoked by Gaetan Dugas in *And the Band Played On*, becomes the ecstatic, sensual means by which Greyson's Zero makes the fictional Patient Zero story literally self-destruct.

As the sprinklers cause the very equipment through which Zero's image is projected on the screen to short circuit, he joyfully bathes himself while he watches the museum exhibit of which he is a part disappear. This dramatic exit on behalf of the revenant, I argue, depicts an image of what José Esteban Muñoz has referred to in a different context as utopian transport. Far from a negative image of self-erasure Zero's triumphant disappearance into the campy primordial ooze of the swimming pool located outside of time and always somewhere between spaces "performs a desire for a perfect dissolution into a primordially pure empty space" (Muñoz 361).

### **Conclusion: Negotiating with Ghosts, Spectres of DR-CAFTA**

This return to a space both beyond and between the realms of life and death, past and present offers a sense of closure to Zero's journey. Certainly, Greyson's film makes use of the gothic as "a cultural imaginary in which the trope of the living-dead and their return from the grave materializes a certain unpaid symbolic debt" (Castricano 16). However, Zero's journey has not followed the route of more conventional ghosts who supposedly "wander the earth in search of repentance for their sins" according to Burton's research into the "experts'" analysis of the phenomenon of ghostly presences. Rather than a materialization of guilt or vengeance, the story of Zero's momentary resurrection embodies both memories of the past and an intimation of the future possibilities for a space of negotiation where queer identities can be fostered.

*Zero Patience* writes this space into existence through the negotiation of meaning between Zero and Burton. Burton gains as much from his experience as Zero. In fact, the relationship between the two produces the ghostly effect of change or utopian transport: "talking with ghosts does not only mean being in conversation with them. It also means to use them instrumentally and, in turn, whether one knows it or *not*, to be used by them" (Castricano 134). The symbolic debt enacted, then, is one of recognizing the ghosts that accompany us and the extent to which the living depend on them as much as the dead depend on the living.

In conclusion, the portrayals of the Patient Zero story in these two films differ widely in terms of their basic assumptions about the possibility and promise of transformative contact with bodies marked as abnormal or atypical with respect to health, sexual orientation, nationality, and native tongue. Despite its ostensibly realistic representations, Spottiswoode's docudrama *And the Band Played On* perpetuates the popular horror film device of "monstrous" diseased bodies that threaten the individual and collective health and well being of the nation. The film feeds off of the visceral power evoked by a sensationalist perpetuation of unfounded fears and the rush to assign blame that has historically been so often associated with mainstream representations of the AIDS epidemic and the lives of those living with AIDS.

Greyson's outrageous musical comedy, however, subverts the very horror film iconography it employs not by rejecting tropes like the living-dead, but by reinscribing them in such a way that they promote dialogue and continued negotiation of meaning. Rather than an uncritical acceptance and continuation of the overly determined Patient Zero story, *Zero Patience* creates a space of negotiation on screen. While Shilts' book and Spottiswoode's film deploy the Patient Zero character as an agent of foreign contagion whose hyper-sexuality threatens the national body of the USA, Greyson's film encourages viewers to dissociate sex from nation. Where Shilts and Spottiswoode depict the AIDS epidemic as a national crisis, Greyson's film presents male characters that experience positive, life-changing contact with each other despite differences regarding their attitudes toward homosexuality as well as their HIV/AIDS status, nationality, and native tongue.

These competing late 20<sup>th</sup>-century narratives that depict male bodies as agents of national contagion and international cooperation are as relevant as ever today. In 2005 the US Congress approved DR-CAFTA (the Dominican Republic-Central American Free Trade Agreement), a trade agreement that seeks to impose intellectual property rights on HIV/AIDS drugs in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and the Dominican Republic, effectively preventing many poor HIV/AIDS patients from receiving adequate treatment.<sup>6</sup> In effect, the trade agreement further expands the initiative undertaken with the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which was established between Canada, Mexico, and the USA in 1994, and

---

<sup>6</sup> As of early 2007, Costa Rica is the only nation that has not yet ratified the DR-CAFTA trade agreement.

brings George W. Bush's administration closer to its goal of brokering a hemispheric trade agreement: "Though Central America isn't a huge market, the Bush administration considers the pact key to building a free trade zone from Alaska to the tip of South America" (Dickerson). This prioritizing of trade agreements and intellectual property rights over the lives of those living with HIV/AIDS suggests that the ignominious national failure of the Reagan administration to acknowledge and confront the HIV/AIDS epidemic within the United States in the 1980s has become an international failure in which an administration that purports to foster a culture of life promotes trade agreements that will ultimately result in needless death.

### Notes

I would like to thank Ralph Rodriguez and Kit Hume for their comments on earlier drafts of this article.

Sara Scott Armengot  
The Pennsylvania State University  
United States of America

### Works Cited

- Benshoff, Harry M. *Monsters in the Closet: Homosexuality and the Horror Film* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997.
- Cagle, Robert L. "Tell the story of my life...": The Making of Meaning, "Monsters," and Music in John Greyson's *Zero Patience*." *The Velvet Light Trap* 35 (1995): 69-81.
- Castricano, Jodey. *Criptomimesis: The Gothic and Jacques Derrida's Ghost Writing*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's, 2001.
- Crimp, David. *Melancholia and Moralism: Essays on AIDS and Queer Politics*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT, 2002.
- Dellamora, Richard. "John Greyson's *Zero Patience* in the Canadian Firmament: Cultural Practice/Cultural Studies." *University of Toronto Quarterly* 64:4 (1995): 526-535.
- Dickerson, Marla and Evelyn Iritani. "AIDS Patients See Life, Death Issues in Trade Pact" *Los Angeles Times* 22 Apr. 2005, 18 Dec. 2007 <<http://www.globalpolicy.org/socecon/trade/2005/0422aidspatients.htm>>.

- Dyer, Roger and Julianne Pidduck. *Now You See It: Studies in Lesbian and Gay Film*. Second Edition. London: Routledge, 2003.
- Fletcher, Michael A. "Bush Hails Progress Toward 'Culture of Life'" *Washington Post* 25 January 2005: A03.
- Gittings, Christopher. "Zero Patience, Genre Difference, and Ideology: Singing and Dancing Queer Nation." *Cinema Journal* 41.1 (2001): 28-39.
- Greyson, John, dir. *Zero Patience*. Cineplex Odeon, 1993.
- Hallas, Roger. "AIDS and Gay Cinephilia." *Camera Obscura* 52.18.1 (2003): 85-118.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Genealogical Pedagogy of John Greyson's *Zero Patience*" *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 12.1 (2003): 16-37.
- Hanson, Ellis "Undead." *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories*. Ed. Diana Fuss. New York: Routledge, 1991. 324-340.
- Muñoz, José Esteban. "Ghosts of Public Sex: Utopian Longings, Queer Memories." *Policing Public Sex: Queer Politics and the Future of AIDS Activism*. Eds. Dangerous Bedfellows. Boston: South End, 1996. 355-372.
- Saunders, Michael William. *Imps of the Perverse: Gay Monsters in Film*. Westport: Praeger, 1998.
- Sharkey, Betsy. "And the Band Played On: Searching for Truth." *Why Docudrama? Fact-Fiction on Film and TV*. Ed. Alan Rosenthal. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1999. 160-166.
- Spottiswoode, Roger, dir. *And the Band Played On*. Home Box Office, 1993.
- Waugh, Thomas. *The Fruit Machine: Twenty Years of Writings on Queer Cinema*. Durham: Duke, 2000.
- Wolfreys, Julian. *Victorian Hauntings: Spectrality, Gothic, the Uncanny and Literature*. New York: Palgrave, 2002.





## CORRUPTING BOYHOOD IN DIDACTIC CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: MARRYAT, BALLANTYNE AND KINGSLEY

*Jessica Webb*

A significant and centralised strand of Victorian children's literature is the didactic tale: that is to say, a story that consciously emphasises role-model qualities to the intended child-reader. Throughout the nineteenth century, what occurred was a transformation of the conduct book genre, and the creation of literature specifically designed to maintain parental influence while the child was away from the home. The brutal reality of child labour, disease and malnutrition was ignored as the middle and upper classes strove to capture and uphold an idea of child purity. In attempting to validate such an ideology, the thinking of the eighteenth-century philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau was vitally important as his work entitled *Emile* (1762) centred on the idea of the infant's original innocence. A desire to bring the problem of child morality under control—adhering to Rousseau's ideal of spiritual purity—prompted worried parents to purchase “acceptable” fiction containing an appropriate tone and subject matter. But what becomes apparent, however, is that it is at this very point that the impression of the child as an object of desire is actually a far more dominant, even if insidious, idea.

### I

Even at the very beginning of the Victorian period, and in works with far more substance than simple morality tales, this trend was beginning to emerge. The popularity of Captain Frederick Marryat's *Mr. Midshipman Easy* (1836) emphasises how an eighteenth-century tradition of unruly public school dandies was becoming a thing of the past. Published a year prior to Queen Victoria's 1837 coronation, this narrative centres upon British naval life. Jack Easy's progression from boy to English hero, whereby he upholds righteousness and polite values, serves to reassure its audience. Indeed, in contrast to

the anxieties of a society faced with disruption—1836 witnessed the founding of the London Working Men's Association that became the cradle of Chartism—Marryat's seafaring story offers a much needed sense of stability.<sup>1</sup>

It seems complicated that throughout *Mr. Midshipman Easy* public school pedagogy is presented as nothing more than a nuisance. Although Jack is the son of a "gentleman" (3)<sup>2</sup> landowner and, therefore, would be expected to follow convention and progress onto the public school of Rugby or Harrow, the reader is immediately presented with a complete dismissal of such a custom:

it is intended that a boy who is sent to [public] school should gain by precept and example; but is he to learn benevolence by the angry look and flourish of the vindictive birch [...] or patience, when the masters [...] are out of all patience and modesty [...] Is it not the duty of a father to preserve his only son from imbibing these dangerous and debasing errors, which will render him only one of a vile herd (10).

Nicodemus Easy's attack upon public schooling stems from a need to protect his child. Indeed, these schools are portrayed as havens for corruption and vice, places capable of reducing his son to "one of the herd" (10). Immediately, this symbolic image suggests that the gentlemen-to-be are reduced to something base and almost working class. The genteel quality that such institutions are designed to cultivate is the very thing that is destroyed by them. It is perhaps this fragile notion of gentility, along with boyhood innocence, that the concerned father wishes to "preserve" (10). As such, the blame for public school contamination lies firmly with the adult schoolmasters. It is their thirst for brutality that poses the threat to the impressionable child. There is a logic at work here as Marryat's self-conscious rebellion against academic convention offers a new start for a new type of narrative hero.

This again becomes evident in Jack's refusal to cooperate with any form of tuition. Traditionally, the mind of a gentleman was furnished with a thorough understanding of Latin and Greek, a preliminary foundation before going on to an Oxford or Cambridge University degree. It is interesting, therefore, that the boy voluntarily

---

<sup>1</sup> Chartism was a movement that boiled up in the mid-1830s due to working class discontent with the Whig governments. The Chartists drew up their demands in a six-point list known as *The People's Charter*. After this charter was rejected by Parliament in 1839, 1842 and 1848, the Chartists replied with outbreaks of violence. For more information on this movement see, John K. Walton's *Chartism*.

<sup>2</sup> Captain Frederick Marryat. *Mr. Midshipman Easy*. Cirencester: Echo Library, 2005. All further references to *Mr. Midshipman Easy* are to this edition and given parenthetically in the text.

deprives himself of this privilege in favour of a nautical life: “no man claims his share of the sea—every one may [...] plough as he pleases [...] I have resolved not to go to school again, which I detest, but to go to sea and propagate our opinions” (29). Although extreme in his actions, Jack’s heart is inevitably in the right place. Wishing to promote equality and the “rights of man” (29), the “lad of fourteen” (28) assumes a new role of teacher rather than pupil; he is presented as a missionary figure in his endeavour to spread morality. The relevant point here, therefore, is that by rejecting the school environment, Jack seems to have simultaneously bypassed boyhood. A higher level of maturity becomes more and more evident: “Jack, although [...] seventeen, was very strong and tall for his age; indeed, he was a grown man, and shaved twice a week” (138). Jack’s experiences of naval life seem to have sped up the transition from adolescence to manhood. His need to repeatedly shave signifies that he has not only reached puberty, and therefore sexual maturity, but that he is almost too much of a man. It must be regulated by the removal of his excessive facial hair. There is a new sense of boyhood and its relationship to the sea; removed from the stifling world of the public school, the hero is free to distinguish himself as both an officer and masculine English gentleman.

To a large extent Jack Easy maintains this innocent reputation. Upholding his principles of fairness, he protects fellow midshipman from naval bullying and controversially befriends the black Mephistopheles, earning the pet-name of “Equality Jack” (53). These positive elements, however, are undermined as the novel progresses. Indeed, it is his “great friendship” (49) with this enslaved African warrior that acts as a catalyst for his revolt against naval authority. Marryat’s self-conscious reference to Christopher Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus* encourages the reader to draw parallels between Jack’s companion and Marlowe’s malevolent devil, Mephistopheles. Furthermore, it is not simply in name that Mesty is labelled as demonic, he haughtily confesses that “I killed a panther [...] and [...] my blood [...] mixed with that of the beast [...] Proudly did I go into town dripping with blood and smarting with pain [...] I filed my teeth and became a man” (83). Savagery and gore mark his conduct while the language evokes images of a tribal ritual; Mesty must sacrifice the animal and mutilate his own body in order to gain adult status. Moreover, just as Marlowe’s fiend tempts Faustus into necromancy and damnation, Jack’s disconcerting black shipmate leads him astray in another equally dangerous way: “[a]ll Mesty’s advice was good, with the exception perhaps of advising our hero how to disobey orders and take a cruise” (66). Unnervingly, the midshipman’s decision to leave

the man-of-war without permission is, in fact, mutiny.<sup>3</sup> Seemingly oblivious to the consequences of this crime—the death penalty was the set punishment—Jack chooses to abandon ship, ignoring naval protocol in favour of frivolity with Mesty. At one level, this behaviour is criminal. But there is also a feeling that Jack's antics are just harmless fun; the narrative voice restrains from identifying the "cruise" (66) as mutiny while Captain Wilson refers to his misconduct as simply an "adventure" (135). In this instructive children's text, therefore, the hero is never presented as completely immoral; a tone of light heartedness conceals even the most extreme naval crime.

The principle governing *Mr. Midshipman Easy* seems to be correct conduct. Although Jack's display of recklessness goes unpunished, the young man is represented as not needing adult guidance. He can independently see the error of his ways: "it was not the sharks—it was I—, I who have murdered those men [...] If I had not disobeyed orders [...] not shown them the example of disobedience, this would not have happened" (80). The language exposes Jack's intense desperation and remorse while his emotional suffering reveals that the midshipman understands his own blunder and, as such, is forced to repent. His experiences at sea have afforded him, even if indirectly, the opportunity to develop morally; it is the navy rather than the school that instils respectable values. Moreover, as the narrative progresses, both Jack and Mesty are able to find their place in British society. The protagonist's excessively liberal idea of equality is moderated, allowing him to marry and take his "seat in Parliament" (252), while his bloodthirsty companion undergoes a complete transformation: "Mesty's delight at [...] leaving with his patron was indescribable. He laid out a portion of his gold in a suit of plain clothes [...] he was now a complete gentleman's gentleman" (219). Mimicking Jack's conduct and appearance, the African is able to assume a new identity, developing into a form of gentleman. The overt emphasis on gentility reveals how his menace has been negated; Mesty is no longer savage but classified as almost refined. In Marryat's novel it is the navy that unexpectedly nurtures a gentleman. It would be possible to find additional levels of significant and, as such, disconcerting complication

---

<sup>3</sup> Perhaps the most famous mutiny in British naval history was that led by Mr. Fletcher Christian in 1789. After taking control of the *Bounty* and a number of its crew, Christian set adrift the overthrown Captain William Bligh and seventeen companions in an open boat in the middle of the South Pacific. The mutineers then proceeded to take Tahitian wives and settle on the uninhabited island of Pitcairn. For more information on the mutiny of the *Bounty* see John Barro's *The Mutiny and Piratical Seizure of H.M.S. Bounty* and Greg Denning's *Mr. Bligh's Bad Language: Passion, Power and Theatre on the Bounty*.

in Marryat's *Mr. Midshipman Easy*, and indeed in his other novels; it is perhaps more rewarding, however, to turn to works that are, on the face of it, more overtly didactic and moralistic. As we shall see in relation to *The Coral Island*, there is, in such works, always an underlying threat to the spiritual development of the boy; even the most didactic children's literature reveals that corruption is fundamental, rather than marginal, in the typical child-focused novel.

## II

Published over two decades after *Mr. Midshipman Easy*, Ballantyne's *The Coral Island* (1857) symbolises the need for a new type of children's conduct book in an ever-changing Victorian society.<sup>4</sup> With less room for the obvious rebellion apparent in the character of Jack Easy, this narrative is a reworking of the desert island story; three boys stranded in the South Pacific must not only survive but also triumph over cannibalism and heresy in order to recreate their own civilized community. Placing this in context, it may be said that the novel offers stability to its audience, a form of escape from a volatile mid-nineteenth century society. Indeed, 1857 witnessed a considerable challenge to British imperial rule after a Sepoy revolt at Meerut on 10 May, sparking the Indian Mutiny. As horrific reports inundated newspapers, the Victorian public became aware of the dangers of colonial expansion and, as such, the vulnerability of the Empire itself. Further upheaval was apparent in this year with radical changes in domestic legislation. The 1857 Matrimonial Causes Act transformed the husband-wife power structure, establishing divorce courts in Great Britain.<sup>5</sup> With such indicators of a society in flux, therefore, there is a sense that children's literature provided reassurance for not only the adolescent reader, but also for the concerned parent.

Although presented as an adventure story for boys, *The Coral Island* displays key elements expected to be found in didactic work.

---

<sup>4</sup> Claudia Nelson's *Boys Will be Girls* looks at contemporary responses to *The Coral Island*, arguing that the author adheres to the mid-Victorian hope that boys would retain child-like purity amongst the brutality of the adult world. It is however, Fiona McCulloch's *The Fictional Role of Childhood in Victorian and Early Twentieth-Century Children's Literature* that is most interesting. Dedicating an entire chapter to misrepresentations in the novel, the critic explores the emergence of fractured textuality and the complexities of a multi-faceted text.

<sup>5</sup> The 1857 Matrimonial Causes Act was a turning point for women's rights as it denied the husband access to the earnings or property of a wife he had deserted. It also awarded a divorced wife the status of a single woman again see Grisewood's *Ideas and Beliefs*.

In contrast to Jack Easy's mutiny, Ralph Rover, Peterkin Gay and Jack Martin are forced out of their naval environment and shipwrecked on a desert island; it is plain, therefore, that disobedience is not the cause of their misfortune. What is significant in Ballantyne's work is that the boys are presented as exemplifying both boyhood and contemporary British imperial ideals.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, eighteen-year old Jack Martin is, "very tall, strong, and manly for his age, and might easily have been mistaken for twenty" (150)<sup>7</sup> and always carried a "pocket-handkerchief, with sixteen portraits of Lord Nelson printed on it, and a Union Jack in the middle" (19). This description emphasises that Jack's masculinity is linked to his patriotism; the handkerchief acts a constant reminder of Victorian values that help him achieve manliness. Furthermore, the excessive number of images of Nelson branded onto a personal belonging implies that it is almost a love-token. Jack's worship of this national hero gives him a role model to adore and imitate, allowing him to become the "leader" (23) of the castaway group himself.

Inevitably, however, it is not long before paradise is shattered, prompting the boys to step forward as true soldiers defending their new colony: "two savages hastened towards the fire dragging the three women and their two infants with them [...] Jack uttered a yell that rang like a death shriek [...] and] rushed upon the chief" (158-159). Threatened by a force of native cannibals, the boys are forced to witness intensely gruesome scenes. While this frenzied savagery and hunger for human flesh is the antithesis of every civilized Victorian notion, it is, nevertheless, the unprovoked infanticide that is most unnerving. Indeed, in contrast to the nineteenth-century belief in the sacred child, this display reveals moral and cultural degeneracy. Although these cannibals are killing enemy children, the image seems to draw upon the highly publicised accounts of Captain Cook and his horror at the Tahitian custom of murdering newborn babies as a form of birth control (McDonagh 60). Similarly to Cook, the boys must defend decency and humanity, resorting to aggression to regulate the problem. The impression is that the black adult savage is powerless when confronted with British values, even when those values are upheld by three adolescent boys.

Throughout *The Coral Island* the various offences against polite ethics range from bodily to spiritual transgression. While cannibalism

---

<sup>6</sup> It is relevant to note that although this thesis does not use critical theory to examine the text, it is Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) and Patrick Brantlinger's *The Rule of Darkness* (1988) that explore the issue of colonisation and Empire in great detail.

<sup>7</sup> Robert Michael Ballantyne. *The Coral Island*. London: Puffin, 1994. All further references to *The Coral Island* are to this edition and parenthetically in the text.

and infanticide provoke disgust, it is heresy that is most problematic for the boys to regulate; violence is useless when trying to reform native sacrilege. After the initial battle, the boys go through a “ceremony” (162) to welcome the victorious savages to the island before introducing them to a Christian ritual: “[t]he natives immediately perceived what we wanted, and running for their paddles, dug a hole [...] to contain all the bodies of the slain” (165). This notion of respectfully burying the dead is symbolic of a Church funeral. Indeed, these Victorian boys seem to have the responsibility of missionaries; the tribe complies with their instructions to move closer to some form of civilized behaviour. Nevertheless, as this burial draws to a close native heresy threatens to ruin the service: “While they were about to throw the sand over this chief, one of the savages [...] cut a large slice of flesh from his thigh” (165). Jack instinctively reacts to this human desecration with the command, “come, come you blackguard [...] pitch that into the hole. Do you hear?” (165). What is significant is that the boy uses language rather than brutality to force the savage to conform. Jack undertakes a pedagogical role to correct and regulate this outburst of cannibalism. This is a narrative suffused with indicators of correct conduct; Ballantyne creates a world that is reliant upon the spiritual strength of the child hero.

Yet it is precisely this strength that is shown to weaken as the novel progresses. After triumphing over native savagery, a more deadly threat emerges. But it is not those that the text presents as racially degenerate who pose the real danger to boyhood. In contrast, Ralph’s kidnap by British pirates exposes him to a new type of moral corruption. Indeed, the white captain adopts a more subtle tactic, denying that his crew are piratical and simultaneously labelling the boy as his “protégé” (189). A wish to abuse adolescent naïveté results in this attempt to gain Ralph’s trust. What is most disconcerting for the reader, however, is the apparent success of this manipulation:

I was surrounded by human beings [...] to whom the shedding of blood was a mere pastime [...] Even Bill, with whom I had [...] a kind of intimacy, was so fierce [...] as to have acquired the title of “Bloody” from his vile companions (221).

This reference to using murder as an amusement emphasises the level of evil that Ralph is forced to contend with. Indeed, while the natives are presented as ignorant of their barbarity—cannibalism is often presented as a type of formal procedure in the aftermath of a battle—these white outlaws are knowingly committing a sin against God. Furthermore, it is unnerving that the impressionable boy has formed an “intimacy” (221) with the most bloodthirsty pirate aboard ship. There is a sense, perhaps, that nationality has played a role in



uniting this unlikely couple. Indeed, it is important that the pirates never physically harm Ralph. Moreover, he is never fully identified or treated as a prisoner, positioning him as a member of the crew rather than a hostage. As such, a lingering potential for violence seems ready to erupt.

A central element in Ballantyne's novel is the idea of Ralph as both pirate protégé and Victorian boy. Indeed, these polar opposites seem interdependent in his character as he begins to affiliate himself with his new shipmates: "I began to find that [...] constant exposure to scenes of blood was having a slight effect upon myself, and I shuddered when I came to think that I, too, was becoming callous" (219). Although still aware of the criminality of bloodshed, the young boy lacks a degree of compassion. The influence of the pirates seems to have taken hold, transforming this former defender of justice into a heartless observer. His language suggests that it is an involuntary reaction: the young boy has lost control over his conduct. Furthermore, as time passes Ralph seems to become less conscious of the difference between right and wrong:

[the] battle ceased [...] I felt assured that our men had been conquered [...] I recognised [...] a shout from the savages. Then came another [...] shriek of agony [...] as I felt convinced that they were murdering the pirate crew in cold blood" (227).

Ralph's position on the boundary between innocent child and pirate shifts as he identifies himself as one of the crew. For example, the reference to "our men" (227) blurs this divide, emphasising Ralph's incorporation into the felonious institution. Additionally, his criticism of native brutality and homicidal actions reveals how the boy has forgotten the excessive violence often displayed by the pirates themselves; he is unable to acknowledge the similarities between these two groups of men. What is further significant is that the boy does not escape from the pirate ship. After this conflict with the South Sea savages, the entire pirate crew is destroyed. As a result, therefore, Ralph has no other option but to seek out and reunite with Jack and Peterkin. Although the author provides the happy ending necessary for this adventure genre, this is somewhat undermined by the, albeit oblique, corruption of Ralph Rover. Indeed, whereas Jack Easy's progress towards Christianity comes under threat from his own indiscipline, in Ballantyne's novel Ralph's moral development is almost completely blighted. He is not the innocent figure that we might assume him to be. He is, in effect, groomed by corrupt adults, but then becomes enthusiastic about indulging and expressing his own more corrupt impulses. And as we shall see with *The Water Babies*, this is a cluster of ideas that becomes more and more apparent

in supposedly instructive children's literature; in particular, however, Kingsley focuses on the sexually corrupt, abusive adult.

### III

Charles Kingsley's *The Water Babies* (1863) represents a complex response to a marked era of change in British history.<sup>8</sup> In 1863 William Gladstone opened the London Underground railway, signalling huge modifications in technology and communication. In the same year, Broadmoor Asylum for the criminally insane was established. As a result, the Victorian desire to label and contain seems to have been satisfied with this revolutionary type of prison. Although such events emphasise the period's display of progress, this was nevertheless a time of unease. Perhaps the most significant event that shook the Victorian ethos was the 1859 publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species by Natural Selection*. Viewed as a direct challenge to Christianity, Darwin's theory of evolution essentially undermined the notion of God's creation of mankind. In a society where faith in God was undoubtedly weakening, it was often children's literature that the disconcerted parent looked towards in order to instil a sense of piety. Indeed, with allusions to science, evolution and religion, *The Water Babies* seems to find a neutral ground, allowing such conflicting ideologies to coincide: a new idea emerges as science is shown to support religion. Although placed in a fairytale framework, allusions to the spiritual crisis of a post-Darwinian world are obvious. Kingsley, therefore, seems to offer a new pedagogical role, satisfying the demands of a new Victorian society.

Throughout *The Water Babies*, the young chimney-sweep Tom represents all of the evils of a world steeped in industry. With no family, schooling and religious education, this little "heathen" (60)<sup>9</sup> is a far cry from Rousseau's ideal of childhood innocence. Indeed, it is significant that in contrast to the supposed purity of a Victorian child, Tom "never washed himself" (3). Body and soul seem interdependent as this image of filth symbolises both industrial contamination and immorality. Moreover, it is the influence of the master sweep Mr. Grimes that is cited as the cause of the child's corruption: "He had never been taught to say his prayers [...and] cried when he had to

---

<sup>8</sup> The issue of *The Water Babies* as a particularly Victorian work is discussed by Lila Marz Harper in "Children's Literature, Science and Faith: *The Water Babies*". This critic explores the era's spiritual crisis, looking at the influence of Charles Darwin and Kingsley's position as minister, novelist and scholar of natural history.

<sup>9</sup> Charles Kingsley. *The Water Babies*. London: Puffin, 1994. All further references to *The Water Babies* are to this edition and given parenthetically in the text.

climb the dark flues [...] As for chimney-sweeping, and being [...] beaten, he took all that for the way of the world" (3-4). Unaware of the difference between right and wrong, the ignorance of the child is foregrounded. The language emphasises how both the physical and spiritual being of the child is abused: Grimes refuses to become a substitute father figure, exploiting Tom while simultaneously subjecting him to cruelty and neglect. Nevertheless, even in the early stages of the text there is still a sense that the boy retains some degree of a moral conscience. After witnessing Grimes wash his body in a nearby spring, he ignores his master's declaration that "[t] wasn't for cleanliness I did it, but for coolness" (11) to boldly reply, "I wish I might go and dip my head in [...] It must be as good as putting it under the town pump; and there is no beadle here to drive a chap away" (12). Time and time again, it is adult intervention that is shown to destroy the wholesomeness of childhood. Just as Grimes discourages Tom from following his own example, so too does the town beadle prohibit the young boy from cleaning his bodily filth. Furthermore, the child's despair at remaining dirty suggests that some form of innate instinct tells him that he must clean himself. It is only when Tom is removed from this context, however, that his spiritual transformation can begin; Kingsley is forced to resort to fantasy in order to explore the controversial topic of spiritual reincarnation.

The effect of fantasy, therefore, is that events do not need to have a rational explanation. Disorientated and fatigued, the chimney-boy falls into a stream only to be reborn as a water baby. With such an obvious allusion to a Christian baptism, it comes as no surprise that Tom is cleansed of his sins, leaving the corpse of his corrupted body behind. Moreover, the narrator emphasises the fact that the child is now free to explore his new environment "without the least bit of clothes on [...] his] back" (89). This reference to nudity is symbolically juxtaposed with Tom's Christian transformation, evoking biblical images of Adam and Eve. The knowledge that prior to Eve's yielding to temptation and their expulsion from Eden, they were both ignorant of their own nakedness suggests a connection between virtue and nudity (Lass 4). Indeed, modesty is symbolic of corruption and mankind's fall from Paradise. Tom, however, has found himself in quite the opposite position. His metamorphosis allows him to embrace nudity, implying that the child has reached a newfound state of ignorance and a higher spiritual status. As a result, Tom is now able to begin a process of re-education.

The real complication that emerges, however, is that it is in this apparently Christian environment that Tom is exposed to brutality even more extreme than that displayed by Mr. Grimes. Indeed, it is

the actions of Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid that is most disturbing:

She called up all the doctors who gave little children [...too] much physic [...] And [...] pulled all their teeth out; and [...] bled them [...] dosed them with calomel, and jalap, and salts and senna, and brimstone and treacle [...] then she gave them a great emetic of mustard and water (134).

Essentially, it is at this point in the text where the fairy godmother-figure transforms into the fairytale monster. Although she is superficially presented as delivering justice, the overt savagery completely undermines any sense of security. Mutilated and rendered completely powerless, the doctors are forced to endure extreme torture. Indeed, while the reference to extracting teeth implies that the physicians' appetite for cruelty is negated, it simultaneously reveals how a new and more ferocious craving for violence is awoken in Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid. In particular, the use of brimstone immediately evokes images of the Lake of Fire and Brimstone, juxtaposing the woman with biblical images of Satan. The knowledge that this was the name given to Hell by Saint John the Divine in the Book of Revelation emphasises the extent of this "strange" (143) fairy's sadism (Lass 127). After witnessing such a grotesque scene, Tom admits that he, "could not help thinking her a little spiteful" (137). Even this slightly mischievous child is aware of the difference between right and wrong; Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid displays a complete lack of Christian forgiveness and feels no remorse, proving to be a strange role model in Tom's journey towards moral improvement. Here is a fault in Kingsley's instructive children's text: attention is shifted away from the reincarnated boy towards the savage adult leaving the reader confused as to whose conduct they are expected to uphold.

*The Water Babies* proves to be possibly the most unnerving of didactic texts for children. While superficially it is a narrative that follows a chimney-sweep's process of self-realisation and re-birth as a morally-conscious Victorian, it is, nevertheless, overrun with images of both physical and sexual abuse. But it is the culprits of this exploitation that are most surprising. Introduced to the reader as the "most nice, soft, fat, smooth, pussy, cuddly, delicious creature who ever nursed a baby" (139), Mrs. Doasyouwouldbedoneby's beauty and maternal instincts reveal how she is the antithesis of her ugly sister Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid. Insidiously, however, something more begins to be conveyed in the descriptive details: she is presented as a figure of excess, and a figure of excess that is repeatedly linked to children. When the water babies catch a glimpse of her they all immediately "put their thumbs into their mouths, and begin cuddling and purring [...] like kittens" (140). Such an unusual and almost

mechanical reaction implies that the children are under some form of a spell. The woman's presence alone is enough to transform them into domesticated pets, craving attention. Moreover, it is Mrs. Doasyouwouldbedoneby's intimacy with Tom that seems to exceed a simple mother-child bond: "she took up [...] armfuls of babies [...] and threw them away [...] But she took Tom in her arms, and laid him in the softest place of all, and kissed him and patted him" (140). Tom is offered special treatment while the other babies are discarded like waste. Indeed, the fairy's desire to caress and place the boy "in the softest place of all" (140) is suggestive of cradling the child next to her breast; this touching of a highly sexualised part of the female body is at odds with the moral storyline. The orphaned Tom soon becomes mesmerised by his substitute mother and the gifts that she offers: "wondering when the strange lady would come [...] he thought of [...] lollipops by day and dreamt of nothing else by night [...] he began to watch her to see where she kept the sweet things" (144). Seduced and held spellbound by a desire for more lollipops, Tom now seems a slave to her will. Furthermore, placed in the framework of fairytales, sweets are often portrayed as a device to lure and capture non-assuming children. As such, images of the Grimm Brothers' *Hansel and Gretel* are evoked as Mrs. Doasyouwouldbedoneby is positioned as a fairytale witch. By the end of *The Water Babies*, there is such a potent impression of violence and underlying child abuse that it is hard to see how it could ever have got the problem of immorality under control.

As is apparent with *Mr. Midshipman Easy* and *The Coral Island*, books designed to control the boy-reader's progress from child to gentleman seem only to expose and foster new problems. The intended emphasis might fall on the "cultivation" of the young gentleman, but the reality is a stress on the "grooming" of the child. The fact is, however, that most authors of didactic tales seem unconscious of such a problem. This becomes particularly clear when our attention is placed on those who tell a story that attempts at breeding and instructing a gentleman through literature. The body of the child seems to come under a subtle yet relentless attack.

Jessica Webb  
Cardiff University  
United Kingdom

### Works Cited

- Ballantyne, Robert Michael. *The Coral Island*. London: Puffin, 1994.
- Barrow, John. *The Mutiny and Piratical Seizure of H.M.S Bounty*. London: Oxford University Press, 1914.
- Claudia, Nelson. *Boys Will be Girls: The Feminine Ethic and British Children's Fiction, 1857-1917*. New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1991.
- Dening, Greg. *Mr. Bligh's Bad Language: Passion, Power and Theatre on the Bounty*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Grisewood, Harman., ed. *Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians*. (New York: EP Dutton, 1966.
- Harper, Lila Marz, "Children's Literature, Science and Faith: *The Water Babies*". *Children's Literature: New Approaches*, ed. Karin Lesnik-Oberstein. New York: Palgrave, 2004.118-143.
- Kingsley, Charles. *The Water Babies*. London: Puffin, 1994.
- Lass, Abraham H., David Kiremidjian David and Ruth M. Goldstein. *Dictionary of Classical and Literary Allusion*. Ware: Wordsworth, 1994.
- Marryat, Frederick. *Mr. Midshipman Easy*. Cirencester: Echo Library, 2005.
- McCulloch, Fiona. *The Fictional Role of Childhood in Victorian and Early Twentieth-Century Children's Literature*. New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2004.
- McDonagh, Josephine. *Child Murder and British Culture 1720-1900*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Walton, John K. *Chartism*. London and New York: Routledge, 1999.



## EL BARROCO Y LA PATRIA CRIOLLA EN *ESPEJO DE PACIENCIA*

Patricia Catoira

**E**l escritor José Antonio Echeverría descubre el poema *Espejo de paciencia* (1608) de Silvestre de Balboa Troya y Quesada en 1838 dentro de la *Historia de la Isla y Catedral de Cuba* de Pedro Agustín de Morell de Santa Cruz, y publica partes de él, junto con una descripción y valoración del mismo, en la revista *El Plantel*, editada por Ramón Palma (González Echevarría 575).<sup>1</sup> El poema constituye no sólo la primera obra de la literatura cubana sino la única conservada de los siglos XVI y XVII (Instituto 33). El tema de *Espejo* —referido así en el resto del ensayo— está basado en un hecho histórico que data del año 1604: el secuestro del obispo Fray Juan de las Cabezas Altamirano, por el pirata francés Gilberto Girón, cerca del puerto de Manzanillo (Yara), y su posterior liberación a manos de un grupo de vecinos, liderados por el bayamés Gregorio Ramos. El sabor cubano de *Espejo*, plasmado en la descripción de la naturaleza, los personajes, y el tema, ha ocasionado que diferentes grupos políticos, sociales, y literarios de Cuba, durante el s. XIX sobre todo, estudiaran el poema en busca de la patria criolla como primer paso hacia una futura nación, cultura y literatura netamente cubana. En este ensayo quiero abordar esta noción de la patria criolla en consonancia con el estilo y el contenido barroco de *Espejo* ya que es el espíritu del Barroco el que permite una heterogeneidad artística y conceptual que pone de manifiesto la confluencia y coexistencia de distintos grupos sociales y raciales en la Isla, y, por ende, el reconocimiento implícito de la patria criolla en esa amalgama.

Mientras que en España el Barroco empieza a mediados del s. XV con el plateresco y comienza a desaparecer a finales del s. XVII

---

<sup>1</sup> Existe poca información —y conflictiva en cuanto a fechas— sobre Silvestre de Balboa Troya y Quesada (1563-1644?). Se sabe que nació en Gran Canaria y que se fue a Cuba, probablemente en la última década del s. XVI, donde ocupó el puesto de escribano en la villa de Puerto Príncipe (Camagüey) y donde escribió *Espejo de paciencia*.



para dar paso al Neoclasicismo, en Latinoamérica se desarrolla en el s. XVII y se prolonga hasta bien entrado el s. XVIII (Carilla 32). No obstante, hay críticos como Alejo Carpentier, José Lezama Lima y Helmut Hatzfeld que prefieren ver el movimiento al margen de cronologías y más como una tendencia o espíritu recurrente en las letras de ambos lados del Atlántico. El debate sobre el impacto y desarrollo del Barroco en Latinoamérica se resume en tres posiciones. Por una parte, existe la vertiente *eurocentrista* la cual considera el Barroco como un estilo exportado por la monarquía española como parte de una ideología imperialista cultural; esta interpretación coincide con el realismo socialista de Althusser y Gramsci, para quienes el Barroco sería un arte clasista, cortesano y aliado con el poder (Roggiano 4). Según Jose Antonio Maravall, defensor de esta posición, el Barroco de Indias no puede ser sino una extensión del poder absolutista de España debido a la opresión que experimentaban las colonias tanto económica como culturalmente sobre todo en los centros urbanos (Ross 233). John Beverley, igualmente, considera la literatura española y latinoamericana del s. XVI al s. XVII como un corpus de la “era imperial”. Para él, el Barroco de Indias sólo existe en cuanto a su relación con ese sistema de dominación (13). Por lo tanto, para los proponentes de esta posición materialista, el escritor barroco del nuevo mundo responde a circunstancias materiales del momento sociohistórico, más que a su talento o genio individual, tal y como sostienen Lezama Lima, Octavio Paz y Severo Sarduy, entre otros.

Por otra parte, la vertiente del *revisionismo novohispano* propone la existencia de un Barroco propio americano. Mabel Moraña expone así la agenda de esta corriente:

Enfocando la relación colonial como una dialéctica entre centralismo y marginalidad, hegemonía y subalternidad, esta crítica descubre en las estrategias representacionales del Barroco virreinal un repertorio de tópicos, técnicas y problemáticas específicas que constituyen parte de una agenda criolla en la que tiene prioridad la elaboración de la diferencia que hace del sujeto colonial un ser consciente de sus articulaciones existentes o posibles con el Poder Imperial. (*Relecturas* iv)

Para Alfredo Roggiano, es imposible pensar en el Barroco como una ideología imperial por dos razones principales. En primer lugar, las primeras manifestaciones artísticas del movimiento a finales del s. XV son rechazadas por la corona, que prefiere el estilo herreriano. En segundo lugar, incluso durante la época de más apogeo con la obra de Góngora, se apoda despectivamente al culto *culteranismo*, aludiendo de esta forma a su carácter foráneo (luteranismo) y en oposición a lo hispano, lo propio y lo nacional. Por lo tanto, para Roggiano “una poética así sólo pudo llegar al Nuevo Mundo de contrabando, por la vía prohibida de la transgresión a la vigilancia oficial”

(6). Roggiano llega incluso a hablar de un “Barroco indígena” muy diferente al europeo porque en aquél llega a prevalecer lo intuitivo y lo mágico. De hecho, para algunos, las antiguas civilizaciones americanas eran ya de por sí predominantemente barrocas, sobre todo aquéllas más desarrolladas estéticamente y religiosamente (mayas, aztecas, zapotecas) (Bustillo 68).

El escritor cubano Lezama Lima considera el Barroco como “contra-conquista”, como un estilo artístico de disidencia que se enfrenta a la cultura homogeneizadora de la metrópoli. Para él, el Barroco constituye el origen de la literatura latinoamericana porque expresa la nueva cultura a través de elementos diversos y no de su síntesis (90-91). Además, Lezama Lima considera que no existe el corpus unitario entre el Barroco peninsular y el americano al que se refiere Maravall. En su opinión, el ambiente de caos y descontrol bajo el cual se llevó a cabo la conquista y colonización de las colonias impedía una rígida supervisión de la corona en las actividades coloniales (Bustillo 80).

Por otro lado, Mabel Moraña adopta una posición intermedia y conciliatoria de ambas corrientes críticas. Según ella, el Barroco es una “instancia inaugural de un proceso en que lo americano emerge con voz propia, aunque articulado todavía a las instituciones y discursos del imperio” (*Relecturas* i). Esa voz propia a la que se refiere Moraña apunta a una conciencia de identidad:

El gongorismo lejos de ser en todos los casos una ‘lengua muerta’ del poder imperial, dio a muchos intelectuales del Barroco indiano un motivo de lucimiento y de autoafirmación, actuando, paradójicamente, como pretexto en el proceso de conformación de la identidad cultural hispanoamericana. (*Barroco* 242)

La postura de Moraña es la que mejor explica el proyecto de Balboa en *Espejo*. Aunque el poema cuenta con algunas técnicas barrocas, es más bien el espíritu del Barroco el que impregna la obra del autor. Balboa se sirve de ese espíritu para crear una conciencia e identidad propia, criolla.

Ese criollismo no surge, sin embargo, en un vacío. El papel preponderante de la Compañía de Jesús en la formación clásica y humanista de los criollos propicia una toma de conciencia de sus intereses y derechos así como de su identidad (Sabat-Rivers 64). La literatura se convierte en un forum fundamental para ejercer esas demandas y construir —a veces inconscientemente— una base ideológica que se enfrente a la peninsular. De todos los géneros literarios el que más se cultivó durante el Barroco colonial fue la poesía. Emilio Carilla justifica esta preferencia por la lírica tanto en el auge del gongorismo, el cual tuvo su más ferviente defensor en el

criollo Espinosa Medrano, como en la posición privilegiada de este género dentro de la jerarquía literaria (45). Según el mismo crítico, los poetas siguieron dos vertientes líricas, una—a la cual pertenece *Espejo*—dedicada al homenaje, la naturaleza estilizada, el brillo ornamental, el sentimiento contenido y la reflexión sentenciosa, y, otra, enfocada en la burla y la sátira a través del uso del ingenio (47).

Para finales del s. XVII, el escritor Pedro Espinosa ya empieza a usar el verbo “gongorizar” para referirse a la poética de lo disímil, en oposición a las técnicas miméticas, que a su vez conciencia al escritor americano de la noción del estilo como expresión de lo personal. El escritor busca “saber para hacer” porque quiere crear y transformar el conocimiento en algo propio —en oposición al conocer para obedecer (Roggiano 9). Es decir, el escritor se apropia de los códigos de escritura peninsulares para conformar con ellos una creación personalizada y por extensión criolla.

En Balboa, ese “saber para hacer” se produce en una dinámica distinta a la de Espinosa, aunque ambos poetas llegan al mismo fin. Espinosa toma conciencia de su identidad criolla no ubicándose explícitamente en la realidad que le rodea sino en una recreación de la misma por medio de metáforas, hipérbatos, o juegos de ingenio. Sin embargo, Balboa reafirma la identidad criolla precisamente mediante la representación mimética de la realidad (i.e. gente, paisaje, fauna, flora, etc.) por medio de tropos barrocos más expresivos y sencillos tales como la enumeración, la ornamentación y la antítesis. La incursión de esos elementos americanos en el poema muestran la preferencia de Balboa por identificarse con la realidad de la Isla y no con la peninsular o clásica, lo cual permite la (re)presentación de una sociedad nueva, heterogénea, transcultural e híbrida que forma la base de la patria criolla.

El *Espejo* ofrece una muestra del panorama de la patria criolla de principios del s. XVII en Cuba. Su tema central —el secuestro y rescate de un obispo— puede hacer pensar inicialmente que se trata simplemente de una anécdota de la vida colonial. Sin embargo, al analizar su estructura, sus rasgos estilísticos, sus personajes y sus temas, uno se da cuenta que Balboa ha producido la primera obra criolla de la Isla, y por ende, cubana. El *Espejo* consta de una carta dedicatoria, seis sonetos laudatorios a Balboa escritos por parientes o amigos del autor y el poema en sí, que a su vez consta de dos cantos y un motete.

La “Carta dedicatoria”, dirigida al obispo Cabezas, establece ingeniosamente la legitimidad —historicidad— del texto, aspecto que la crítica ha pasado por alto. Balboa explica que decidió escribir el

*Espejo* no sólo para homenajear la “paciencia” y otras virtudes del Obispo y con ello propagar la fama del religioso, sino también porque éste le había pedido muestra de su escritura. De esta forma, Balboa excusa la “rudeza” de su ingenio mediante el uso de la retórica y, más importante, consigue que su lector ideal (el Obispo) sea a su vez el foco de atención de la anécdota, lo que por lo tanto concede autoridad orgánica al poema.

Algunos críticos como Carolina Poncet han llegado a cuestionar la autenticidad del *Espejo*, creyendo que podía haber sido más bien una broma literaria de Echeverría o del grupo de Domingo del Monte, o una creación de este grupo con el propósito de dotar a la literatura cubana de los orígenes épicos de que carecía. Sin embargo, se pueden descartar ambos, en primer lugar, dada la longitud del texto y las similitudes con los demás poemas de la época; y en segundo lugar, porque si se compara *Espejo* con cartas auténticas de Balboa no se encuentran razones que hagan cuestionar dicha autenticidad (Instituto 34).

El tono criollo de la obra así como el contexto social, político, económico, e incluso literario de la época queda establecido tanto por el poema como por los textos que lo acompañan. El alférez Lorenzo Laso de la Vega y Cerda, uno de los sonetistas, habla así de su Isla: “Dorada isla de Cuba o Fernandina/ de cuyas altas cumbres eminentes/ el acendrado oro y plata fina,/ bajan a los arroyos, ríos y fuentes” (60). En este sentido, el haber usado el nombre indígena “Cuba” junto al colonial “Fernandina” alude a una incipiente hibridación semántica y cultural. El hecho de que el nombre de cada sonetista aparezca con su título o profesión indica igualmente diversidad criolla y produce ambiente de época: hay dos militares, dos funcionarios del gobierno y dos vecinos de la villa, aunque uno sea de origen canario. El toque español subyace al final del poema de este último: “Ceñiréis de Silvestre ambas las sienas;/ pues con sus versos honra y engrandece/ de nuestra amenidad la patria amada” (60). La referencia a España no quita, sin embargo, la admiración por Cuba que el canario, Alonso Hernández, presenta en el resto del soneto. El arraigo al marco criollo flota entre los escritores sobre todo en el capitán Pedro de la Torre Sifontes, quien dice al final de su soneto: “Recibe de mi mano, bueno Balboa,/ este soneto criollo de la tierra/ en señal de que soy tu tributario” (57).

El homenaje a Balboa y la mención del Obispo por casi todos los sonetistas tienen consecuencias literarias. El alcalde Bartolomé Sánchez escribe: “Gracias al buen Silvestre de Balboa/ Que por tan dulce estilo mas declara/ De aqueste Obispo la paciencia” (58) y, similarmente, el alférez Cristóbal de la Coba Machicao dice: “Tú

que con nuevo estilo extraordinario/ Tu fama extiendes por el ancho suelo,/ Cantando la prisión y desconsuelo/ Del divino pastor santo vicario” (57). Ambos poetas establecen explícitamente intertextualidad con el poema del Balboa, pero también implícitamente permiten un atisbo del ambiente literario de la época. En el s. XVII, ya hay constancia de la existencia de academias y, sobre todo, de torneos literarios. La llegada de un prelado, por ejemplo, era motivo frecuente para certámenes literarios (Carilla 40). Por lo tanto, los sonetos, aunque sean independientes de por sí, aportan coherencia intrínseca y extrínseca a la totalidad de la obra.

El poema de Balboa está dividido en dos cantos que constan de tres partes cada uno. El primer canto se enfoca en el secuestro y rescate del Obispo y el segundo se centra en la venganza y victoria del pueblo contra los agresores. El tema religioso es fundamental en la época, ya que el miedo a los corsarios o piratas extranjeros significaba el rechazo al luteranismo de las naciones protestantes. Balboa establece una relación antitética entre los criollos católicos y los extranjeros a través de referencias bíblicas. En unas ocasiones se refiere al Obispo como pastor de un rebaño (fieles) y a Gilberto Girón como el lobo: “Cuando el lobo Gilberto de repente/ Dio en la pobre manada que dormida/ Estaba, descuidado el pastor santo/ Del repentino caso y mero espanto” (70). En otras, recrea la pasión de Cristo en la que el Obispo sería Jesús y los franceses los romanos: “Pues viendo los heréticos sayones/ Que descansado el paso recobraba/ El capitán le dio dos encontrones/ Con un arma de fuego que llevaba./ De esta manera fue entre dos ladrones/[...]” (74). En términos literarios, la figura antitética junto con la técnica asociativa de un hecho local con una conocida leyenda de la mitología cristiana ayuda a que la anécdota del Obispo se recuerde más fácilmente y pase así a la memoria colectiva del insular. Como resultado, se va construyendo una H/historia particularmente cubana, al margen de la oficial del imperio español.

La revuelta de los bayameses sugiere una colectividad (criolla) porque la lucha es de los isleños, no de los oficiales, contra los piratas franceses. Para Otto Oliveira, el verso “nuestra Troya es hoy Bayamo” análogamente remite a una autonomía espiritual y a un localismo que es “uno de los valores de mayor importancia en el poema en cuanto a ‘nacionalismo’ literario se refiere. Y en eso consiste su valor estrictamente cubano y americano” (32). La mención al lugar geográfico produce en los criollos arraigo e identidad al sitio donde viven. De hecho, la particularidad insular de Cuba incrementa el enraizamiento con la Isla. Se puede encontrar en este vínculo afectivo por la tierra el surgimiento de la noción de patria, noción que

solidariza la comunidad por muy diversa que sea. Balboa emplea diversas formas de la primera persona del plural para reiterar el arraigo y a la vez presentarse a sí mismo como portavoz o representante los habitantes de la isla: “nuestros Isleños”, “nuestro escuadrón”, “los nuestros”, etc. Como indica Sara Almarza, es posible para el criollo ser consciente de pertenecer tanto a un estado (político administrativo) como a una patria (identidad) (194).

El rescate y las menciones a detalles económicos muestran el lado económico de la sociedad colonial del s. XVII en Cuba. La fianza a pagar, “dos mil ducados y cien arrobas de carne y tocino”, remite a la importancia ya en esa época del ganado y la agricultura sobre los minerales o metales preciosos, a pesar de lo que pudieran tener en mente los bucaneros. Por medio de la descripción enumerativa, Balboa hace tres referencias a las minas o metales preciosos, cuatro a la agricultura, seis a la ganadería o productos derivados, y dos al comercio exterior y antimonopolista del rescate (Oliveira 30). La siguiente estrofa es quizás la que mejor condensa el contexto socio-económico del momento:

Tiene el tercer rey Filipo, Rey de España,  
La ínsula de Cuba o Fernandina  
En estas Indias que el océano baña,  
Rica de perlas y plata fina.  
Aquí de Anglia, Flandes y Bretaña  
A tomar vienen puesto en su marina  
Muchos navíos a trocar por cueros  
Sedas y paños y a llevar dineros. (65)

Los personajes complementan el ambiente criollo de la época y el carácter criollo del poema. En *Espejo* se dan cita españoles, criollos, indios aruac o taínos, y esclavos africanos. Todo ello contribuye a una atmósfera híbrida y transcultural que es la esencia del criollismo. El líder del grupo de vecinos es el héroe guerrero Gregorio Ramos. Su caracterización física y personal, así como el énfasis en su lanza, recuerdan al Cid: “Luego el valiente Ramos deseoso/ De dar de su valor al mundo muestra,/ Con un gallardo espíritu brioso/ de sus pocos soldados hizo muestra./ Iba delante del capitán famoso/ Con su espada en la cinta y en la diestra/ Una lanza que cuasi competía/ con la famosa de oro de Argalia” (89). Asimismo, la narración de las acciones de la contienda remiten a la visualidad hiperbólica del estilo épico: “Mas no la hubo sacado cuando al punto/ El alma salió por esta herida,/ Dejando el cuerpo pálido y difunto, Pagando las maldades que hizo en vida./ Luego uno de los nuestros que allí junto/ estaba con la mano prevenida,/ Le corta la cabeza, y con tal gloria/ A voces aclamaron la victoria” (103).

Balboa pone mucho énfasis en reconocer la valentía de los

veinticuatro hombres que se unieron a Ramos. Todos los vecinos son mencionados con nombre y apellido (a excepción de los esclavos, de los que se ofrece sólo el nombre) y se describe, aunque brevemente, algún aspecto de su físico o identidad: “El bravo portugués Miguel de Herrera/ con gran botafogo y espingarda/.../ El valor grande de su estirpe noble” (89), “De los Reyes Gaspar, el narigudo,/ Pasó con galán brío y gentileza,/ Y en el brazo derecho por escudo/ Un manatí partida la cabeza” (90), “Con arrogante talle pasó tieso/ Bartolomé Rodríguez el valiente,/ Con espada y broquel barcelonés” (91), “Un mancebo galán de amor doliente,/ Criollo del Bayamo que en la lista / Se llamó Miguel Batista” (91), “De Canarias Palacios y Medina/ Pasan armados de machete y dardo/.../Y Rodrigo Martín indio gallardo./ Cuatro etíopes de color de endrina” (92).

Este reconocimiento del papel de la colectividad en la empresa aleja *Espejo* de la épica y lo acerca al Barroco de comedias como *Fuenteovejuna*. Además, la participación de distintos sectores de la sociedad en la defensa de la Isla legitima su presencia como parte íntegra y necesaria de la patria. Por ejemplo, la mención del indio como participante y como única pérdida humana en la batalla del rescate del obispo recuerda, por una parte, a los primeros habitantes de la Isla, y por otra, a su futura rápida y desafortunada desaparición. Balboa celebra la participación del esclavo negro Salvador, quien se convierte, de hecho, en el gran héroe de la batalla porque da muerte al corsario Gilberto. El poeta alude en su relación de los acontecimientos no sólo al origen del esclavo (“Andaba entre los nuestros diligentes/ Un etíope digno de alabanza,/ Llamado Salvador negro valiente,/ de los que tiene Yara en su labranza;/ Hijo de Golomón, viejo prudente” (102)), sino también a su condición esclava (“Dale la libertad pues la merece” (104)) y al estigma social que produce en los blancos con los que entra en contacto (“Anda Don Gilberto ya cansado,/ Y ofendido de un negro con vergüenza” (103)).

Un aspecto relacionado con la figura del negro Salvador que convertiría *Espejo* en uno de los textos más populares y aclamados por las élites abolicionistas y pre-independentistas del s. XIX como el grupo de Domingo del Monte consiste en esa llamada a la libertad del esclavo. Aquí las estrategias de Balboa denotan un cierto ingenio. En primer lugar, el incluir la petición de libertad de un esclavo en un texto que explícitamente va dirigido a un Obispo supone un discurso transgresor y atrevido. Balboa implícitamente reconoce la importancia y legitimidad de ambas empresas liberadoras. Puesto que el Obispo es el receptor principal, Balboa le pide la liberación de Salvador aludiendo a su posición de poder como oficial religioso y también a su posición como cristiano que cree en el principio de



reciprocidad. Es decir, Balboa pide al Obispo que libere al negro como éste le liberó a él. Por otra parte, el poeta invoca también, y esta vez explícitamente, al pueblo de Bayamo para que se una en la libertad del esclavo como lo hizo en la del Obispo:

Oh, Salvador criollo, negro honrado!  
 Vuele tu fama y nunca se consuma;  
 Que en alabanza de tan buen soldado  
 Es bien que no se cansen lengua y pluma.  
 Y no porque te doy este dictado,  
 Ningún mordaz entienda ni presuma  
 Que es afición que tengo en lo que escribo  
 A un negro esclavo y sin razón cautivo.

Y tú, claro Bayamo peregrino,  
 Ostenta ese blasón que te engrandece;  
 Y a este etíope de memoria dino,  
 Dale la libertad pues la merece. (103-104)

Con esta caracterización de Salvador, la presencia negra esclava no queda solamente contextualizada en la Cuba del s. XVII, sino que, además, al referirse a él como criollo, legitima su existencia dentro de la patria criolla.

Si hay un aspecto de *Espejo* que toda la crítica ha destacado por su “acento cubano” es la descripción de la flora y fauna de la Isla. Esta incursión supone un elemento innovador en la poesía hispanoamericana de los siglos XVI y XVII en la que había “una general ausencia de la fauna y flora americanas, ni hablemos de una emoción del paisaje” (Vitier en Valdés Bernal 9). El tono de Balboa se semeja un poco al tono de admiración y asombro que sintieron los primeros conquistadores que arribaron a Cuba.

Balboa plasma la naturaleza local desde distintos niveles discursivos mezclando lo mimético-indigenista con lo literario-mitológico. Las descripciones de sitios geográficos puntuales, como Bayamo, suelen someterse a una mirada de carácter informativo (muy enumerativo), lo cual no significa que no lleve lirismo: “En esta ilustre villa generosa,/ Abundante de frutas y ganado,/ por sus flores alegre y deleitosa,/ Era en el mes de Abril, cuando ya el prado/ Se esmalta con el lirio y con la rosa” (65). La naturaleza también se presenta “en movimiento” como agente activo en la trama. El río Bayamo sale a saludar al Obispo tras su liberación: “‘Ahora brotarán todas las flores/ Con que se matizan mis orillas;/ Cantarán sin dolor los ruseñores;/ Gilgeros, pentasillos y abobillas;/ Abundarán los frutos en mejores;/ Alegraránse todas estas villas;/ Y en vos verán con santidad y alteza/ Sinceridad, quietud, amor, nobleza’” (110). En términos literarios, la personificación del río ha hecho que muchos críticos encuentren influencias en *Espejo* de la “Fábula del Genil” de Pedro de Espinosa



(1578-1650) y del poema "Las lágrimas de Angélica" de Luis Barahona de Soto (1548-1595), en donde cada poeta hace hablar a los ríos Genil y Comaro, respectivamente (Henríquez Ureña 53-54). En términos culturales, la interacción río-hombre puede interpretarse como un rasgo del animismo presente tanto en las creencias de indios aruac como en las de esclavos africanos, lo cual ofrece un amalgamamiento de creencias religiosas, sintomático del futuro sincretismo religioso cubano.

La transculturación es aún más obvia en términos culturales y literarios en cuanto a la participación de ninfas y otras figuras de la mitología clásica. Éstas permean todo el poema y se produce otra mezcla religiosa en el momento en que las deidades paganas salen del mar para ofrecer ayuda al prelado durante su secuestro en el barco:

Luego por todo el reino de Neptuno  
 La fama publicó caso tan feo;  
 El cual con Thétis, Palemon, Portuno,  
 Glanco Atamantes, Doris y Nereo,  
 Y las demás deidades de consuno  
 .....  
 Y condolidas del obispo santo,  
 Le ofrecen su favor con mano armada:  
 Mas él con la humildad que puede tanto,  
 No quiso en su defensa aceptar nada! (78-79)

Esta dinámica combinatoria llega a su momento culminante cuando los frutos y animales aborígenes se dan a conocer a través de estas figuras: "De arroyos y de ríos a gran prisa/ Salen nayades puras cristalinas/ Con mucho jaguará, dijao y lisa/ Camarones, viajacas y guabinas" (85) "Las hermosas oréades dejando/ El gobierno de selva y montañas/.../ Le ofrecieron con muchas cortesías/ Muchas iguanas, patos y jutias" (85). En esas citas se observa cómo por medio de la enumeración y técnicas ornamentativas surgen esos frutos y animales con sus nombres nativos. El lingüista Sergio Valdés Bernal explica en su libro *Los indoamericanismos en la poesía cubana de los siglos XVII, XVIII, y XIX* (1984) que el español de Cuba pronto empieza a recoger voces de las distintas lenguas americanas. Por una parte, los españoles de la Isla adoptan palabras aruacas para denominar aquellas cosas (fauna y flora, sobre todo) que eran exclusivas del medio americano, tales como la fruta guanábana. En el caso de *Espejo*, "los aruaquismos utilizados por Balboa en el poema tienen más justificada su presencia en la obra, máxime cuando en ésta el indio aparece como ente étnico activo" (16). Por otra parte, la función geográfica de Cuba como puerto de escala a las flotas que iban al continente americano propicia el esparcimiento

por la Isla de vocablos procedentes de las civilizaciones precolombinas del continente incluyendo las de los lejanos Andes. También, la importación de estos indios como mano de obra contribuiría a la introducción de americanismos en el habla isleña. De esta forma, en *Espejo* hay caribismos (iguana, tuna), nahuismos (tomate, aguacate), y tupi-guaranismos (tabaco). “Estas voces”, según Valdés Bernal, “lejos de poner en duda la autenticidad del poema, le dan mayor legitimidad, pues se trata de indoamericanismos cuyo uso es históricamente justificable en el español hablado en la Cuba de comienzos del siglo XVII” (16).

En la opinión de Felipe Pichardo Moya, el uso de la mitología clásica supone una traición a la flora y fauna cubanas, y su incursión solamente se explica como necesidad literaria para que el poema tenga dignidad (33). Otros, sin embargo, ven aquí el meollo del criollaje: la naturaleza aparece integrada ya en la sensibilidad del autor por la convivencia directa con la flora y fauna de la isla. No hay referencias naturales (como le ocurría a Colón) a otras tierras. Mas aún, se engrandece la naturaleza cubana al integrarla a la más prestigiosa tradición de la cultura occidental (Instituto 37). El ejemplo más mencionado por la crítica en este respecto ocurre cuando las hamadriades van vestidas de ropas indígenas: “Bajaron de los árboles en naguas/ Las bellas amadriades hermosas/ Con frutas de siguapas y macaguas” (83). Surge así la hibridación: una cubanización de las ninfas. A juicio de Vitier, la mezcla de *Espejo* “indica su punto más significativo y dinámico, el que lo vincula realmente con la historia de nuestra poesía” (38). Por lo tanto, la representación de la naturaleza cubana a través de discursos literarios clásicos subvierte dichos discursos y crea uno nuevo transformado, transcultural, y propio: criollo.

En resumen, podemos concluir que Balboa se apropia del discurso barroco para crear un poema que aunque ingenuo y simplista en apariencia, construye una base ideológica criolla que subvierte el discurso imperialista español. El escribano español recoge en *Espejo* una anécdota real de la historia local de la Cuba de principios del s. XVII que pone de manifiesto la complejidad de la sociedad colonial cubana. El Barroco surge en este contexto como un movimiento propio americano, pero que no pierde de vista los espacios de poder político y cultural de la metrópoli tal y como propone Moraña. El espíritu del Barroco ayuda a Balboa a presentar los excesos e incongruencias de la realidad del Nuevo Mundo que en el siglo veinte Alejo Carpentier recogería maestralmente en su temática de lo real maravilloso. La incursión en *Espejo* de elementos aborígenes (fauna, flora), subalternos (esclavos, indios) y transculturados (criollos)

dentro de uno de los espacios del poder —la literatura— produce una fisura transgresora al intento discursivo homogeneizador de la corona española y planta la simiente para la creación de la patria criolla. El poema inicia tanto una satisfacción literaria americana como la consolidación de una identidad criolla y, sobre todo, cubana que trasciende la época colonial. A través del héroe esclavo Salvador, el poema anticipa la narrativa antiesclavista decimonónica cubana y el debate sobre la inserción de la comunidad de origen africano a la nación. Asimismo, la solidaridad del pueblo contra los invasores establece siglos más tarde un paralelo con la etapa independentista contra España —en el s. XIX— y especialmente con los movimientos revolucionarios y populistas a principios del s. XX que culminaron con la subida de Fidel Castro al poder en 1959. Por lo tanto, esta capacidad de *Espejo* de recoger los elementos y las dinámicas que definirán el curso histórico cubano hace que el poema sea incuestionablemente uno de los textos fundacionales de Cuba.

*Patricia Catoira*

Montana State University-Bozeman  
Estados Unidos de América

### OBRAS CITADAS

- Almarza, Sara. "Variaciones en la noción de patria en la época colonial." XII Congreso de Latin American Studies Association. Albuquerque, abril de 1985.
- Beverley, John. *Del Lazarillo al sandinismo: estudios sobre la función ideológica de la literatura española e hispanoamericana*. Minneapolis: Prisma Institute, 1987.
- Bustillo, Carmen. *Barroco y América Latina: un itinerario inconcluso*. Venezuela: Monte Ávila Editores, 1988.
- Carilla, Emilio. *La literatura barroca en Hispanoamérica*. New York: Anaya, 1972.
- González Echevarría, Roberto. "Reflexiones sobre *Espejo de paciencia* de Silvestre de Balboa." *Nueva Revista de Filología Hispánica* 35 (1987): 571-590.
- Henríquez Ureña, Max. *Panorama histórico de la literatura cubana*. La Habana: Arte y Literatura, 1978.
- Instituto de literatura y lingüística de la academia de ciencias de Cuba.

- Perfil histórico de las letras cubanas*. La Habana: Letras cubanas, 1983.
- Lezama Lima, José. "La curiosidad barroca." *Ensayos Latinoamericanos*. México: Diana, 1997.
- Maravall, Jose Antonio. *La cultura del barroco*. Barcelona: Ariel, 1980.
- Moraña, Mabel. "Barroco y conciencia criolla en Hispanoamérica." *Revista de crítica literaria latinoamericana* 28 (1988): 229-251.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Apologías y defensas: discursos de la marginalidad en el Barroco hispanoamericano." *Relecturas del Barroco*. Ed. Mabel Moraña. Hanover: Ediciones del Norte, 1994. 31-58.
- Oliveira, Otto. *Cuba en su poesía*. México: Ediciones de Andrea, 1965.
- Pichardo Moya, Felipe. "Estudio crítico." *Espejo de paciencia*. De Silvestre de Balboa. La Habana: Instituto cívico militar, 1941. 1-48.
- Roggiano, Alfredo. "Para una teoría de un Barroco hispanoamericano." *Relecturas del Barroco*. Ed. Mabel Moraña. Hanover: Ediciones del Norte, 1994. 1-16.
- Ross, Kathleen. "Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora y la cultura del Barroco hispanoamericano." *Relecturas del Barroco*. Ed. Mabel Moraña. Hanover: Ediciones del Norte, 1994. 223-244.
- Sabat-Rivers, Georgina. "El Barroco de la contraconquista: primicias de conciencia criolla en Balbuena y Domínguez Camargo." *Relecturas del Barroco*. Ed. Mabel Moraña. Hanover: Ediciones del Norte, 1994. 59-96.
- Valdés Bernal, Sergio. *Los indoamericanismos en la poesía cubana de los siglos XVII, XVIII, y XIX*. La Habana: Ed. de Ciencias Sociales, 1984.
- Vitier, Cintio. *Lo cubano en la poesía*. La Habana: Instituto del libro, 1970.



## WHEN STRATEGIC MISTAKES SAVE THE PLAY APPLICATION OF GAME THEORY IN SARTRE'S *DIRTY HANDS*

*Stéphane Pillet*

*(translated by Balthazar De Ley)*

**A**s we know, Sartre's theatre is a theatre of situations, a theatre of liberty where each character "qui fait un acte est persuadé qu'il a raison de le faire" ["who takes action is convinced he is right to do so"]. Each situation represents an appeal to the characters' freedom of action. From another point of view, each of their decisions must take into consideration the presence of the other, thus creating a tight relational structure. It is in this way, precisely, that game theory players must reflect on their choices and their consequences, as well as on the choices of the other players. From this point of view, each choice is individual but at the same time depends on the situation given. Indeed, Nicolas Eber defines game theory as a prediction and decision-making tool to analyze interactions among individuals with divergent interests (120). Roger Myerson, one of the three 2007 Nobel Prize winners for their works on mechanism design, a branch of game theory, notes that his interest in the field lies in the fact that it promises a deeper understanding of the logic of conflict and cooperation that could possibly help build better social structures. In part, as Gaël Giraud explains, game theory studies the reasons for which different players are involved in or resist agreements or decision, and predict their actions and strategies (19). Hebert De Ley comments that the winning player seems to be the master of his destiny; he knows before acting what the good strategy is and what is the value of his game. "La théorie des jeux," he adds, "insiste sur le choix rationnel du héros" (138) ["Game theory insists on the rational choices of the hero"]. This is precisely the approach that Sartre develops in his theatre. Therefore, my aim in this study is to use game theory to determine whether, in *Dirty Hands*, the coalition was as logical and as inevitable as traditional criticism of the play suggests, and whether

Hugo's action was truly unexpected.<sup>1</sup>

One of the essential passages of *Dirty Hands* is of course the negotiation between three hitherto hostile Illyrian political factions. In an initial stage the Regent's group, the Pentagon group, and the Proletarian party have waged war mercilessly. The Proletarian party leader, Louis, speaks of "Trois groupes d'hommes d'intérêts inconciliables, trois groupes d'hommes qui se haïssent" ["Three groups of men with irreconcilable interests, three groups of men who hate each other"] (49). The Prince reminds Karsky that "vous avez organisé l'an dernier deux attentats contre mon père" ["last year you organized two assassination attempts against my father"] (141). And Hoederer observes that "Quand un type du Pentagone rencontrait un gars de chez nous, il y en avait toujours un des deux qui restait sur le carreau" ["When a guy from the Pentagon met one of our guys, there was always one who didn't get up"] (146).

The Pentagon hates the Proletarians and the Regent; the Regent hates the Pentagon and the Proletarians, and the Proletarians in turn hate the other two. The game presented in normal form in Figure 1 shows the possible decisions for any pair of these players and also their preferences before their negotiations and possible alliance. The dominant strategy for each group is the same, that is, to defeat the other. For this reason, player A may just as well represent the Prince as Karsky or Hoederer, and the same is true for player B. Apparently we have situations of total conflict, since A's preference is symmetrical to B's. Indeed either one's best choice (4) is also the worst choice (1) for the other. These are, therefore, zero sum games.

**Figure 1. The Game of the Parties**

		B	
		Pouvoir	Non pouvoir
A	Pouvoir	(3, 3)	(4, 1)
	Non pouvoir	(1, 4)	(2, 2)

The situation just described, which seems perfectly clear, could have lasted indefinitely, as long as each belligerent party sought the

<sup>1</sup>*Les Mains sales* (Paris: Folio, 1971), p. 30. Henceforth in text. De Ley, *Le Jeu classique. Jeu et théorie des jeux au Grand Siècle* (Paris, Seattle, Tübingen, 1988), p. 138.

maximum payoff. However, the matrix also shows us that the second choice (3) is the same for each player, that is, that each would prefer to retain power, even if the other group(s) retain power also. This is interesting, since it opens up the possibility of compromise and, specifically, negotiation. It means also that if some outside event intervened to change the situation, the two groups might unite rather than disappear from the scene altogether. And if two or more parties unite, the nature of the Game of the Parties is changed.

Of course just such an outside event occurs with the arrival of the Russians, requiring a partial change in strategy offering different payoffs. In *Dirty Hands*, the Russians are presented as a force of nature, all powerful, enigmatic, whose intentions can only be guessed at, but whose intentions can nevertheless be guessed with some certainty. Confronting the overwhelming power of the Russians, each group wants to retain power, but can only do this now if they accept the other(s) as allies. The objective for Karsky and the Prince is to retain power, and this can happen only if they find agreement with the Proletarian Party, to avoid being swept aside, purely and simply, by the Russians. Each non-proletarian group must therefore adopt a mixed strategy, safeguarding its own interests while cooperating with the others. This is why the Prince declares that “Aujourd’hui les positions se sont brusquement rapprochées...” [“Today, the positions have suddenly drawn closer together”] and he assures Hoederer that “Karsky estime que les divisions intestines ne peuvent que desservir la cause de notre pays” [“Today the positions are suddenly much closer... Karsky believes that internal dissension can only weaken the cause of our country”] (142-143).

This diplomatic discourse inviting everyone to come together in peace does not totally substitute for Karsky’s much less “fraternal” offer to Hoederer. Karsky is more inclined to play with Hoederer the classic game theory Game of the Wholesaler and the Retailer. In this game, two players have a certain interest in reaching agreement, but also seek to find the most advantageous possible price to charge or to pay. Naturally it often happens that the wholesaler, thanks to his greater resources, seeks to impose a price on the weak retailer. This is precisely what happens when Karsky, on the strength of his party’s support by fifty-seven per cent of the population, proposes “deux voix pour votre Parti dans le Comité National Clandestin que nous allons constituer” [“two votes for your party in the National Clandestine Committee we’re going to form”] (143-144). In Karsky’s plan, this will be two votes out of twelve. Karsky also wants “un remaniement et une fusion par la base de nos deux organisations clandestines. Vos hommes entreront dans notre dispositif pentagonal” [“a restructuring



and a fusion at the grass roots level of our two clandestine organizations. Your people will join the Pentagon forces”] (144).

The game of wholesaler and retailer does not stop, of course, with the first offer, and if the wholesaler’s price is too high the retailer can make a counteroffer or even refuse to play. Hoederer does indeed reject Karsky’s proposal. However, he continues to play the game as he changes the stakes:

Un comité directeur réduit à six membres. Le Parti Prolétarien disposera de trois voix; vous vous repartirez les trois autres comme vous voudrez. Les organisations clandestines resteront rigoureusement séparées et n’entreprendront d’action commune que sur un vote du Comité Central. (145)

[A steering committee reduced to six members. The Proletarian Party will control three votes; you can divide up the three others any way you want. The clandestine organizations will remain strictly separate. They can act together only on a vote of the Central Committee.]

Hoederer reverses the roles to his advantage and reinvents the coalition on his own terms: he proposes the conditions, and the others can only accept joining him or refusing to play. This position is perfectly rational if we take into account another notion of game theory, which is that of the Value of Shapley. Shapley’s value ( $v$ ) represents the gain which a given player brings to a coalition. It is of capital importance in *Dirty Hands*, where indeed it determines the nature of the coalition. As explained by Andrzej Novak and Tadeusz Radzik, two mathematicians using game theory, the classic form of a game of several players, in which various forms of cooperation are possible, is a function  $v$  which assigns to each coalition  $S$  a single real number which is the value—or the power—of  $S$  (150). As they study the formation of a coalition in an  $n$ -person game, they see a sequential process in which each player brings some value to the coalition, but this value depends not only on the players’ contribution(s) but also on the order in which the coalition is formed.

Taking this situation into account, the nature of the negotiations becomes obvious. Hoederer knows that he is, so to speak, the first member of the coalition. His adversaries are actually in a situation of weakness. The Prince has been a German sympathizer and Karsky represents primarily the bourgeoisie. Both are therefore in a poor position vis-à-vis the Russians—unlike the Proletarian Party, which has always supported the communist line. Clearly, a coalition would serve no purpose without the Proletarians. Karsky has tried to avoid a disadvantageous arrangement, but risks the possibility that Hoederer may abandon him in favor of an agreement with the Prince—who has the most to atone for and who therefore might make a more favorable agreement.

At this point in the negotiations, it is important to compare the traditional critiques of this passage with the lessons of game theory. For Françoise Bagot and Michel Kail, for example, Hoederer represents the purest realism. Their opinion is shared by Mark Buffat, for whom the negotiations “sanctionne la justesse des vues politiques de Hoederer” [“confirm the wisdom of Hoederer’s political project”] (72). He adds that “Hoederer “leur présente une image adéquate du réel. Et s’ils finissent par accepter ses propositions, c’est qu’ils en reconnaissent la vérité” [“He presents them with an adequate image of the real”] (74). Thus for the critics, Hoederer’s analysis as presented up to this point is lucid and adequate to the real. He is objective. He recognizes the divergences of the two other parties and does not seek to play them off against each other, but rather tries to integrate them in order to go beyond them. It appears that everyone, in the end, recognizes the correctness of his approach—the Regent, Karsky, and later Jessica and Louis and Olga. At the same time, for reasons of his own and to which I will return in a moment, Hugo remains the single exception.

It seems to me, however, that the success of the coalition depends less on the Prince and Karsky’s political realism than on Hoederer’s somewhat different political analysis. Actually, neither Karsky nor the Prince ever asks himself why Hoederer accepts negotiation. This is particularly curious when Hoederer asks the two others to remember that

quand les armées soviétiques seront sur notre territoire, nous prendrons le pouvoir ensemble, vous et nous, si nous avons travaillé ensemble; mais si nous n’arrivons pas à nous entendre, à la fin de la guerre mon parti gouvernera seul. (148)

[when the Soviet armies are in our territory, we will take power together, you and us, if we have worked together; but if we don’t reach agreement, then at the end of the war my party will govern alone.]

From one point of view Hoederer’s best strategy would be to adopt a passive policy and wait for the arrival of the Russians—and, of course, to make the coalition fail. Yet Hoederer does exactly the opposite, apparently without raising the slightest doubt among his adversaries.

The reason is that Hoederer possesses, in game theory terms, perfect information while the others possess imperfect information. In slightly different terms, one might say that Hoederer plays a different game than his opponents. Rather than laying out a position of pure realism, Hoederer has other views and has taken care not to say everything. As he explains later to Hugo, the Party’s taking power alone would place it in an untenable situation. It would be the party of a foreign power, a party imposed by the Russians. Moreover, the country is in ruins, and the measures necessary to rebuild it can

only be unpopular. If the Party takes power, it will be swept away by insurrection. Hoederer's solution will be to avoid responsibility for any drastic measures and remain in opposition even as it tacitly takes part in government: "Une minorité, voilà ce que nous devons être" ["A minority, that's what we should be"] (193) will be the temporary slogan of the Party. Of course, such a strategy should not be communicated to the Regent nor to Karsky, since it would be their turn to refuse any negotiation, which refusal would push Hoederer and his supporters into power, much to Hoederer's great regret.

The foregoing demonstrates in addition how the possession of perfect information leads to inertia. This remark is supported by the research of Barton Lipman, economic theorist and specialist in game theory, who has demonstrated that common understanding of rationality is different from common knowledge of the facts—for what is rational is a function of what is known (116). For this reason, he concludes, one may expect convergences to fail when mutual knowledge approaches infinity.

In this connection the reader may also want to think about the limits of game theory in a situation of perfect information opposing two players pursuing the same objective. Louis-Jean Calvet, in an only partly mathematical analysis, finds game theory too preoccupied with guessing the choice of the other, which may lead to *immobilisme*. He posits that the rational player may think that "s'il pense que je vais faire le choix 1 alors il va faire le choix 2 donc je vais faire le choix 3" ["If he thinks I'm going to choose one, then he will make choice two, so I will make choice three"] (193). And so on. Calvet quotes Michel Plon, who suggests that such reflections draw the players into a "mouvement perpétuel fondé sur le calcul des intentions de l'autre" ["perpetual movement based on guessing the intentions of the other"] (193). Plon and Lipman's ideas are described by some others as the problem of infinitely rapid feedback, which may lead not to perfection but to erratic reactions.

This limitation of game theory throws some light on the situation of the three political factions. Rather than enlighten his adversaries, Hoederer chooses to feed their own ideas back to them and make himself the interpreter of their own views. Hoederer's supposedly lucid vision is perhaps less to be admired than Karsky and the Prince are to be faulted for their own limited understanding. Their strategic weakness is perhaps all the more remarkable since it reveals the lack of good sense in leaders who do not even ask themselves the initial question of any coalition formation: why would my adversary wish to accept? A game theoretician might even see in this state of affairs a weakness in the strategic problem presented by Sartre: the game

depends on Karsky and the Prince's failure to assess correctly their own position.

This weakness of strategic thought is perceived, in a sense, by Bagot and Kail. These critics see it, precisely, as a form of inertia. They emphasize that Karsky and the Prince are "voués à la défense d'un ordre social ... qui contient l'essentiel et n'a plus qu'à perdurer à la faveur du principe d'inertie" ["committed to defense of a social order ... which contains everything essential and needs only to continue by inertia"] (87).

From this point of view they see time as the immutable order of the past; what was, is and will be so indefinitely. They are the representatives of an order which, according to themselves, cannot be modified. In such a situation the future has, therefore, no importance. The paradox is that the inertia of their thought allows the movement of the play and advances the strategy of Hoederer.

Whereas Hoederer plays masterfully his game with Karsky and the Prince, taking advantage of their imperfect information, their limited analysis, and a mental inertia not totally unknown to game theory, he plays a different and more complex game with Hugo, with somewhat different results.

For Hoederer the end justifies the means. "Tous les moyens sont bons," he declares, "quand ils sont efficaces" ["Any means is good, as long as it works"] (197). Hoederer is pleased, therefore, when he learns that his people have taken over an arms stockpile from Karsky's group. Karsky whines that Hoederer's men outnumbered his ten to one. Hoederer responds that "Quand on veut gagner, il vaut mieux se mettre à dix contre un, c'est plus sûr" ["When you want to win, it's better to be ten to one: better to be sure"] (140). Hoederer has a corresponding dislike for ideas and idealism. When Hugo expresses his political ideals, Hoederer concludes: "C'est vrai: tu as des idées. Ça te passera" ["It's true, you have ideas. But you'll get over it"] (195).

Examined more closely Hugo's attitude toward ideas is complex. He believes in ideas; he believes in absolute values, applicable in all situations. Naturally this makes him an idealist, someone who acts as if things happened in reality just as they might in an ideal world. As a result, Hugo lives in abstractions--an absolutely simple-minded view of reality. Hugo has nothing concrete to propose, since for him everything is abstract, even the other and perhaps especially the future. In a certain sense, his idea of reality is a fiction.

At the same time, however, Hugo is an intellectual who refuses his own way of thinking. Although formed as a thinker, he would prefer

to be like Kyo in Malraux's *La Condition humaine*. In *La Condition humaine* Kyo is the opposite of an intellectual. He sees the world through action, never asking questions, sustained by a true communist faith. As Francis Jeanson notes, Hugo would like to "tuer en lui-même ce pouvoir de réflexion... Seule l'action le délivrerait de son mal mais ce mal est précisément ce qui le rend incapable d'agir. Du reste, ce mal est celui de tous les intellectuels... Et naturellement l'action dont ils rêvent c'est d'emblée la plus héroïque" ["kill in himself this power of reflection... Only action can deliver him from his sickness, but it is precisely this sickness that makes him incapable of action. In fact this problem is the same for all intellectuals... And naturally the action they dream about has to be the most heroic"] (46).

Hoederer's objective in the Game of Hugo and Hoederer is to get Hugo to move from the illusion of idealism to the reality of politics. He wants to persuade Hugo and disdains the use of force: "Je lui parlerai," he says, "Je veux le convaincre" ["I'll talk to him... I want to convince him"] (213). What Hugo needs to be convinced of is, of course, that he would be wrong to kill Hoederer. And Hoederer wants him to discover this through the use of his own reason. In order to do this, acting just as he did with the Prince and Karsky, Hoederer wants to play back to Hugo a version of Hugo's own ideas—what Hugo would think, say, or do if he acted rationally, that is, according to the rationality of Hoederer.

However, in reality, each player plays, so to speak, in a different dimension. Hoederer is rational in his own terms and believes Hugo is irrational. Hugo thinks the same of him. Each one lives in a logical system which makes each one believe the other is wrong. The situation can easily be modeled in a game matrix as in Figure 2.

**Figure 2. The Game of Hoederer and Hugo (I)**

		Hugo	
		Realpolitick	Idealism
Hoederer	Realpol.	(4, 1)	(3, 3)
	Idealism	(2, 2)	(1, 4)

The realist Hoederer wants to persuade Hugo. His first choice therefore, is that he choose Realpolitick and Hugo do the same (4). His worst choice would be to adopt Hugo's idealism (1). In the same

way, Hugo would like Hoederer to be idealistic, and indeed Hugo respects Hoederer enough to go to some trouble to try to persuade the older man (4). Hugo's worst choice would be to share Hoederer's political cynicism (1). In Figure 2, the game matrix exposes one possible model of this situation: both players have dominant strategies, and these strategies nowhere coincide. One might say with Pascal that the two players' strategies belong to different orders of magnitude. Hoederer pursues the greater good through unattractive means. Hugo refuses the "dirty hands" of the political schemer and prefers the clean solution of the revolution.

Translated into action, however, the two players' strategies are somewhat different. In one possible modeling, the pragmatist Hoederer may care little for Hugo's philosophy, but only whether Hugo will shoot him or not. In trying to avoid getting shot, Hoederer may nevertheless prefer to recruit Hugo, or simply replace the father that Hugo detests. Under these conditions, Hoederer may want to persuade Hugo (4), but in any case to keep him from shooting (3). His worst alternative is perhaps to persuade Hugo but get shot anyway, which is one possible description of what actually happens in the play. Hugo, for his part, might simply choose whether to shoot or not. This second version of the game of Hoederer and Hugo is modeled in Figure 3.

**Figure 3. The Game of Hoederer and Hugo (II)**

		Hugo	
		Shoot	Don't shoot
Hoederer	Persuade	(1, 4? 3?)	(4, 2)
	Neutralise	(3, 3? 4?)	(2, 1)

From another point of view Hugo, the intellectual, may have some insight on Hoederer's position. He is attracted to Hoederer and would perhaps like to accept Hoederer's views and abandon his plans to shoot him. For Hoederer, Jessica lays out a different version of the Game of Hoederer and Hugo. As she sees it, Hugo would like to be persuaded. One possible form of Jessica's game is modeled in Figure 4. It gives Hugo a dominant strategy: don't shoot.

**Figure 4. The Game of H and H (Jessica version)**

		Hugo	
		Shoot	Don't shoot
Hoederer	Persuade	(2, 2)	(4, 4)
	Don't	(1, 1)	(3, 3)

In yet another view, however, Hoederer abandons realism to become idealistic. In this latter version of the Game of Hoederer and Hugo, it is Hoederer's turn to play with imperfect information. He disdains the "c'est plus sûr" which conditioned his thinking about Karsky, and he is at first unaware and then fails to take into account the circumstances which led Hugo to become his secretary. The latter, in accepting and even volunteering to shoot Hoederer, placed himself in a zero-sum situation: to kill or be put out of the way by the Party, as Olga reminds him. Her ultimatum is without appeal: "Si dans vingt-quatre heures tu n'as pas terminé ta besogne, on enverra quelqu'un pour la finir à ta place" ["If you haven't finished the job in twenty-four hours, they'll send somebody to finish it for you"]. If Hugo doesn't act, he has a good chance to "se faire buter... comme un petit imbecile dont on se débarrasse par crainte de ses maladresses" ["take a hit like the little imbecile you get rid of so he won't cause trouble"] (173). For Hugo, killing Hoederer is not only an idealistic act, but also a way of saving his own life.

Finally Hoederer is unaware of or forgets Hugo's original motive: by means of murder he wants to make himself a heavyweight, to give reality to his being. Thus Hoederer, when it comes to Hugo, fails to calculate his adversary's intentions. If he had, he would have known that Hugo might not be persuaded, and he would also have known how to avoid becoming his victim. Hugo has, of course, an internal conflict triggered by his own thoughts. As an intellectual, he asks himself "Si je le tue... Qu'est ce qu'il faut que je fasse? Que ferais-tu?" ["If I kill him... What must I do? What would you do?"] (179). This way of thinking makes Hugo someone who is not cut out to be an assassin. As an intellectual, he is incapable of acting in cold blood, without thinking. Indeed, he thinks so much that he does nothing, since to act he would have to answer all the questions he has asked himself, all these and more: What am I doing here? Am I right to do what I'm doing? Am I lying to myself?

Hoederer can succeed with Hugo either by persuading him or by neutralizing him. He can neutralize Hugo either by calling his bodyguards or simply by keeping Hugo in some kind of state of inertia. The latter strategy has to work only for a limited period of time since, as Hoederer tells Jessica, “S’il ne fait pas son coup ce matin, il ne le fera jamais” [“If he doesn’t do it this morning, he’ll never do it”] (213). The indicated strategy, perhaps his best strategy short of the use of force (2), is to keep Hugo thinking, or in other words to prevent Hugo from not thinking (3).

The intellectual Hugo’s best choice meanwhile would be to kill Hoederer in full awareness of his act, for then he would think and conclude in favor of action (4). His second choice would be to kill Hoederer without thinking, if only to save himself from Louis’ men. His last choice would be the one in which he actually finds himself, that is to want to kill without being able to (1). This last version of Hugo and Hoederer’s game is modeled in Figure 5. Figure 5 is a two-by-four matrix, since Hugo possesses four alternatives.

**Figure 5. The Game of Hugo and Hoederer (IV)**

		Hugo			
		Shoot		Don’t shoot	
		unconsc.	consc.	unconsc.	consc.
Hoederer	Persuade	(1, 3)	(1, 4)	(4, 1)	(4, 2)
	Neutralise	(3, 1? 2?)	(3, 2)	(2, 1)	(3, 2)

It is of course only Jessica’s intervention which stops Hugo thinking and permits him to act. Instead of choosing his worst solution (1), he moves to his second best (3): kill without thinking.

If the play were perfectly in agreement with the principles of game theory and with the rational decisions that Sartre wanted for his theatre, the action would have been blocked on two occasions. First the negotiation might never have concluded, since Karsky and the Prince would have understood Hoederer’s true utilities and his “he who loses wins” strategy. One might wonder, moreover, what became of the counselors each must necessarily have had to keep them from strategic blunders. On the second occasion Hoederer could have remained in a certain immobilisme and avoided senselessly provoking Hugo. Indeed Hoederer makes a manful effort to do so, before giving in to temptation. By giving up thinking himself, Hoederer gives



up his winning strategy(ies). And by giving up thinking, Hugo acts totally illogically with respect to his own previous behavior, perhaps a happy outcome for a Sartrean hero. He ends up with his second best choice (3), but no doubt for the greater good of the play, which continues and finds its ending.

That is, until Hugo gets out of prison. It is at that time, in the last tableau, that Hugo is able to become momentarily a Party heavyweight and give a political rationale to his action. In so doing, in his famous "Non-récupérable," he moves from his second best choice to the choice that was first for him all along.

*Stéphane Pillet*

University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez  
Puerto Rico

### Works Cited

- Bagot, Françoise and Michel Kail. *Jean-Paul Sartre. Dirty Hands*. Paris: P.U.F., 1985.
- Buffat, Marc. *Dirty Hands de Jean-Paul Sartre*. Paris: Folio, 1991.
- Calvet, Louis-Jean. *Les Jeux de la société*. Paris: Payot, 1978.
- De Ley, Herbert. *Le Jeu classique. Jeu et théorie des jeux au Grand Siècle*. Paris: Biblio 17, 1988.
- Eber, Nicolas. *Théorie des jeux*. Paris: Dunod, 2004.
- Giraud, Gaël. *La Théorie des jeux*. 2 ed. Paris: Flammarion, 2004.
- Jeanson, Francis. *Sartre par lui-même*. Paris: Seuil, 1955.
- Lipman, Barton. "A Note on the Implications of Common Knowledge of Rationality," *Games and Economic Behavior* 6 (1994): 114-129.
- Novak, Andrzej and Radzik Tadeusz. "The Shapley Value for N-Person Games in Generalized Function Form," *Games and Economic Behavior* 6 (1994): 150-161.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Dirty Hands*. Paris: Folio, 1971.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Un théâtre de situations*. Paris: Gallimard, 1973.

## EL INCIERTO PROYECTO DEL “CINE NACIONAL” PUERTORRIQUEÑO ANTE EL COLONIALISMO Y LA GLOBALIZACIÓN<sup>1</sup>

*Jocelyn A. Géliga Vargas*

### La incertidumbre de la identidad nacional en la era global

Uno de los resultados del complejo fenómeno que denominamos “la globalización” ha sido el incisivo cuestionamiento del perímetro y el carácter de lo nacional. Según la define Ulrich Beck, la globalización refiere a los procesos a través de los cuales los estados nacionales soberanos se ven atravesados y socavados por actores transnacionales que proponen variantes perspectivas de poder, orientaciones, identidades y redes (11). Los flujos migratorios y los entrecruces de fronteras físicas y simbólicas que ésta acarrea no han subvertido las relaciones de poder que favorecen a Occidente pero sí han replanteado los límites de la nación y su capacidad de contención. En el plano político-económico, la corporativización de los sectores públicos y su concurrente apropiación por empresas transnacionales han puesto en tela de juicio la habilidad de los estados nacionales para implementar agendas endógenas de (re)construcción y representación nacional. La capacidad de las nuevas tecnologías para tramar redes inter- y transnacionales de comunicación rebate la viabilidad y vigencia de proyectos y políticas en defensa de la denominada “cultura nacional”. Aunque, según lo expresa Néstor García Canclini, no está claro si el “balance de la globalización resulta negativo o positivo” (47), es indudable que la misma ha generado un estado de incertidumbre que abarca, si bien de manera diferenciada, a todas las regiones y polos de poder. Así lo explica John Tomlinson en su libro *Globalization and Culture*:

---

<sup>1</sup> Una versión preliminar de este trabajo, titulada “El sujeto nacional en el cine puertorriqueño”, fue presentada en el XII Encuentro Latinoamericano de Facultades de Comunicación Social, Bogotá, Colombia, 25-28 de septiembre de 2006.

Western nation-states clearly do for the present enjoy considerable political-economic dominance in the world—though, as we have observed, there is no reason to consider that this is indefinitely guaranteed. But the point is that the cultural experience of the West that accompanies this is not unambiguously one of a rugged, unquestioning conviction of its own cultural superiority, destiny or mission. It is indeed rather more likely to be one of uncertainty about once unquestioned cultural values, this being directly related to the pluralizing cultural properties of globalization—a growing awareness (through travel or popular cultural representation) of different lifestyles, beliefs and customs. This undermining of certainties is also liable to be accompanied by apprehension about the future... (96)

Ante la incertidumbre, se erigen respuestas defensivas: trincheras y fronteras materiales y simbólicas que pretenden acuartelar la supuesta identidad nacional. Ideólogos, políticos, artistas e intelectuales se empeñan en registrar, narrar y preservar la “singular” historia, integridad e imagen del sujeto nacional.

Esta pugna cobra un carácter particular en los debates que respecto a las políticas culturales se han venido desarrollando en la sociedad puertorriqueña durante las pasadas décadas. El estatus colonial del país —su centenaria subordinación política, ocupación militar y dependencia económica de los Estados Unidos tras cuatro siglos de dominación española— así como su particular experiencia diaspórica han repercutido notoriamente en el plano ideológico y cultural donde se forjan ardientes defensas de “lo nacional”. En el discurso académico reciente, según lo ha resumido Vivoni Gallart, el conflicto se postula en un antagonismo entre los “posmodernos” que cuestionan la hegemonía del discurso nacional y la inmutabilidad de la identidad colectiva, y los “puertorriqueñistas” que aún pretenden articular una monoidentidad nacional y satanizan el alegado pesimismo de los anteriores (86-87). Por otro lado, en los discursos públicos referentes a la producción cultural del país el debate cobra una diversidad de matices que refleja las intrincadas negociaciones entre lo popular, lo institucional y lo comercial en la era global.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> En *Sponsored Identities: Cultural Politics in Puerto Rico*, Arlene Dávila desarrolla un análisis complejo y detallado de estas dinámicas basado en su investigación de campo realizada a principios de la década de 1990. Sus observaciones y conclusiones reconocen las complejas maneras en que tanto los intereses comerciales (de corporaciones extranjeras) como las iniciativas populares de grupos locales han contribuido a interrogar y expandir los términos del debate en torno a la definición “oficial” y singular de la denominada “cultura puertorriqueña”. Su estudio contextualiza, de muchas maneras, el debate cultural acaecido a mediados de la década de 2000 que utilizo en este trabajo como punto de partida para repensar el concepto de “cine nacional” en Puerto Rico.

De esto último da cuenta la polémica desatada en 2004 a raíz de la aprobación de la denominada *Ley de Nuestra Música Puertorriqueña* (Ley número 223), una medida proteccionista que establecía que el 30% de los fondos asignados para la contratación de músicos en eventos financiados por el sector público debía dedicarse a intérpretes de la música autóctona puertorriqueña.<sup>3</sup> Con miras a hacer efectivo el cumplimiento de la ley, la Legislatura encomendó al Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña (ICP)<sup>4</sup> demarcar el terreno de tal categoría musical. Al cabo de siete meses la comisión de etnomusicólogos y músicos nombrada por el ICP pronunció su definición de la música autóctona puertorriqueña: toda música compuesta por autores del patio, residentes aquí y en el exterior, independientemente de si es bomba, rock, plena, jazz, salsa, samba o reggaetón. Para justificar los holgados términos de la definición, la entonces directora del Departamento de música del ICP, Brenda Hopkins, puntualizó que “el desarrollo de nuestra música no se detuvo en los siglos 19 y 20, sino que continúa en el 21” (Torres Torres, *Pugna*). Aunque pocos/as cuestionaron el fundamento telúrico de la definición —es decir, la subyacente correlación entre la identidad de la obra y el lugar de origen, aunque no de residencia, de su autor/a— fueron muchos los/as agravado/as por la apertura genérica de la misma, la cual constituyó un interesante repliegue del folclorismo característico del ICP (Dávila 64-69). En respuesta, se alzó una campaña multisectorial obstinada en disputar la autenticidad —léase “puertorriqueñidad”— de los géneros incluidos en la categoría de “música autóctona puertorriqueña”. El debate se vertió copiosamente en los medios de comunicación (los cuales, paradójicamente, dependen principalmente de capital y programación extranjeras, y son regulados por Estados Unidos a través de la *Federal Communications Commission*), en manifestaciones públicas y en sesiones de la Legislatura. Los ecos de la legendaria interrogante inicialmente planteada por los editores de la revista *Índice* en 1929 —“¿qué somos y cómo

---

<sup>3</sup> El texto completo de la ley está disponible en <<http://www.lexjuris.com/lexlex/leyes2004/lexl2004223.htm>> 12 septiembre 2007.

<sup>4</sup> Esta entidad fue creada en 1955, tres años después de la proclamación del Estado Libre Asociado de Puerto Rico, con el objetivo de (re)definir el carácter y promover la cultura puertorriqueña ante la amenaza de las presiones asimilistas estadounidenses. La página oficial del ICP <<http://www.icp.gobierno.pr/icp/index.htm>> ofrece información respecto a la historia, objetivos y alcance de dicha institución. Para una crítica sobre la postura ideológica asumida por la institución para definir y representar la cultura e identidad puertorriqueñas en el marco de una creciente dependencia económica y política de los Estados Unidos véase Jiménez Román y Arlene Dávila.

somos?”— reverberaron una vez más en la *polis* puertorriqueña, interpelando a un sinnúmero de actores a repensar los significantes y el significado de la puertorriqueñidad.

Los portavoces principales del llamado a la protección de la autenticidad musical puertorriqueña se congregaron en lo que se conoció como la *Alianza por la música tradicional puertorriqueña*, la cual dedicó un año a protestas y cabildeos que resultaron en enmiendas legislativas. Consecuentemente, el manto protector de la *Ley de nuestra música puertorriqueña* cobijó exclusivamente a la denominada “música autóctona tradicional puertorriqueña”. Esta revisada nomenclatura soslayó el génesis de el/la autor/a a favor del carácter de su producción, identificando como expresiones “auténticas” de la cadencia puertorriqueña sólo a un puñado de géneros musicales: la danza, la plena, la bomba, la guaracha jíbara, el aguinaldo, el seis campesino, “el bolero en su género puertorriqueño y los bailes de dichas expresiones, históricamente reconocidos” (Torres Torres, *Visto bueno*).

Las llamas sobre las cuales se fundieron los moldes de “lo autóctono”, “lo tradicional” y “lo puertorriqueño” a lo largo de este debate se nutrieron de la pugna ardiente entre lo nacional y lo global. Para los portavoces de la Alianza, el *appeal* que ciertos géneros populares “puertorriqueños” (o asumidos como tales) han tenido en el mercado global tanto para públicos como para sellos discográficos transnacionales constituye un significante de extranjerización, desnacionalización y adulteración del sujeto nacional. Aunque los argumentos esgrimidos para excluir a cada uno de ellos fueron distintos, géneros tan diversos como la música clásica, el jazz, el reggaetón, la salsa y el rock fueron conjuntamente concebidos como amenazas a la tradición musical netamente puertorriqueña y como símbolos de “la agresión que ha vivido la cultura puertorriqueña en el pasado siglo y en lo transcurrido de éste” (Torres Torres, *Visto bueno*). Esta reciente experiencia nos lleva a confirmar que en el terreno de las políticas y debates culturales puertorriqueños contemporáneos, según sugiere Dávila en su estudio sobre políticas culturales en Puerto Rico, el mercado juega un papel trascendental en la (re)definición de la identidad nacional en tiempos de globalización.

En el presente trabajo me interesa profundizar en la discusión respecto a la defensa de “lo nacional” en tiempos de globalización en el contexto colonial de Puerto Rico, un país que entró en la postmodernidad y la era global sin haber transitado el proceso de independencia y conformación de un estado-nación que ha recorrido la mayoría de los países latinoamericanos y caribeños. Aludo al reciente debate en torno a la música nacional para esbozar un contexto

y marco comparativo pero centro mi atención en el análisis de la construcción de la nacionalidad en el proyecto cultural denominado “cine puertorriqueño”. Aunque la reflexión académica en torno a este aspecto de la producción cultural puertorriqueña ha sido escasa, el cine fue el segundo medio (después de la literatura) donde se debatió el carácter de la identidad nacional puertorriqueña y se pretendió construir y proyectar una imagen del “puertorriqueño” tanto para el interior como para el exterior del país. En el Puerto Rico actual el cine es además un punto de inflexión entre lo local y lo global que pone de manifiesto los condicionamientos ideológicos y económicos que informan las políticas culturales en defensa de lo nacional. De alguna manera, hay una suerte de continuidad en este hecho, ya que, según veremos, la proyección de un “cine puertorriqueño” se gesta en el momento mismo en que Estados Unidos se impone como mediador de las relaciones de Puerto Rico con el resto del mundo.

### **El proyecto inconcluso del “cine nacional” puertorriqueño**

En su reciente revisión del cine caribeño Bruce Paddington afirma que, desde su invención en 1895 hasta el presente, el medio cinematográfico ha sido integral al desarrollo económico, social y cultural del Caribe (107). La generalización regional del autor es acertada en el caso de Puerto Rico, un archipiélago que se encuentra histórica y culturalmente inscrito en el Caribe Hispánico. No obstante, desde fines del siglo XIX los procesos de definición, formación y afirmación cultural puertorriqueños han estado condicionados por la subordinación político-económica del país a los Estados Unidos. Esta relación colonial incide en la historia del cine en Puerto Rico y, consecuentemente, en la manera en que la identidad puertorriqueña se ha construido y representado en el denominado “cine nacional”.

Como punto de partida me parece importante remarcar el hecho de que las primeras imágenes cinematográficas de Puerto Rico fueron filmadas por el ejército estadounidense durante la Guerra Hispanoamericana. El propósito de los documentalistas fue registrar la victoria del incipiente imperio frente a España y su ocupación del territorio que re-nombraron “Porto Rico” de tal modo que estas primeras cintas propugnaron el proyecto imperialista. Es bien sabido que Puerto Rico no es un caso aislado; según señala Robert Stam, el nacimiento de la cinematografía coincide con el auge del imperialismo y el medio cinematográfico mismo fue desarrollado por los supuestos “vítors” de la historia para proyectar “la empresa colonial como una misión civilizadora y filantrópica impulsada por el deseo de erradicar la ignorancia, la epidemia y la tiranía” (19). Por tanto,

discrepo con Paddington cuando señala que la principal relación que el Caribe ha tenido con el cine ha sido en calidad de consumidor de filmes extranjeros (107) ya que mucho antes de poder asumir ese rol, los sujetos caribeños habíamos sido recurrente y, con frecuencia, desapercibidamente objetos del lente imperial. Por ejemplo, las imágenes de la invasión norteamericana de Puerto Rico, así como tantas otras capturadas posteriormente,<sup>5</sup> fueron exportadas como mercancías exóticas y evidencia de la misión civilizadora emprendida por los “mecenas americanos”. Muchas veces fueron también proyectadas ante los propios puertorriqueños con la expectativa de que las adoptaran como auténticas representaciones del yo colectivo. Si bien la producción local de cine comenzó poco tiempo después de la invasión norteamericana, cabe consignar que la figuración del territorio y sus habitantes como telón de fondo —colorido, primitivo o turbulento— sobre el cual se ensalza el heroísmo de protagonistas “americanos” es una práctica habitual que ha sido frecuentemente promovida por el estado colonial.<sup>6</sup>

Además de ser objetos del lente extranjero, los puertorriqueños, específicamente la burguesía, pasaron prontamente a convertirse en consumidores del cine extranjero en los albores del siglo XX. Ya para 1912 existían en Puerto Rico al menos tres salas dedicadas exclusivamente a la proyección de cine, así como numerosas facilidades itinerantes. Inicialmente las películas provenían tanto de Europa como de Estados Unidos pero cuando el cine pasó a convertirse en pasatiempo popular en la segunda mitad del siglo era el cine de Hollywood el que predominaba en pantalla, si bien se exhibían regularmente películas nacionales y latinoamericanas. Hoy, al igual que en gran parte del Caribe y Latinoamérica, más del 90% del tiempo de proyección en salas comerciales está dedicado al cine *mainstream* estadounidense.

Por otro lado, cuando nos enfocamos en el campo de la producción cinematográfica nos vemos obligados/as a reconocer que Puerto Rico incursionó en este terreno mucho antes que la mayoría

---

<sup>5</sup> Un clásico ejemplar de la época es el filme *How the Porto Rican Girls Entertain Uncle Sam's Soldiers* (1899), un corto que “documenta” los alegados bailes que las jóvenes puertorriqueñas danzaban para el beneplácito de los soldados estadounidenses. El filme está disponible en la biblioteca del Congreso de EE.UU.

<sup>6</sup> Diversas posturas en torno a esta práctica y política cultural se expresan en el artículo de Mario Edgardo Roche publicado en *Diálogo*, el periódico de la Universidad de Puerto Rico. Los esfuerzos del estado para promover la producción de filmes norteamericanos en Puerto Rico también se documentan en la breve historiografía de la producción cinematográfica en el país de 1916 a 1981 publicada por Luis A. Rosario Quiles (*Es viable*).

de las islas caribeñas donde, salvo contadas excepciones, la producción endógena comenzó en la década de 1980 (Cham 3). Las historiografías existentes datan el inicio de la producción cinematográfica en Puerto Rico en la segunda década del siglo XX.<sup>7</sup> Dicha producción pretendió responder defensiva y creativamente al control colonial y la presión asimilista estadounidense, utilizando el cine, tal como lo plantea Jesús Martín Barbero para el caso latinoamericano en su libro *Communication, Culture and Hegemony: From the Media to Mediations*, como recurso para la construcción nacional. En una filmografía publicada a mediados de siglo, el periodista Juan Ortiz Jiménez vindicó los esfuerzos de los pioneros del arte cinematográfico en Puerto Rico en términos claramente antagónicos: “cuando Hollywood era todavía una plantación de albaricoques ... ya en Puerto Rico se exhibían películas filmadas por puertorriqueños” (57). El autor aludía a los llamados *tópicos* sobre el país, filmados y exhibidos por empresarios locales en las primeras décadas del siglo XX, así como a la producción de películas de argumento. Según documenta, esta última se inició en 1910 con el filme *Un drama en Puerto Rico*, cuyo objeto fue, según publicaciones de la época, “exhibir algo de las costumbres de Puerto Rico y sus maravillosos paisajes” (*La cinematografía* 57).

El inicio de la producción cinematográfica espoleó el primer intento de desarrollar una industria de “cine nacional”. En 1916 Rafael Colorado, de origen español pero reclamado en las historiografías como un pionero cineasta puertorriqueño, fundó la Sociedad Industrial de Cine Puerto Rico para importar películas extranjeras con el fin de satisfacer el creciente apetito cinematográfico del público local. Poco tiempo después Colorado se dispuso a producir películas locales con talento local. Su iniciativa fue seguida por la *Tropical Film Company*, fundada sólo un mes antes de que se le impusiera la ciudadanía estadounidense a los puertorriqueños en 1917. Encabezada por prominentes intelectuales y empresarios de la burguesía criolla, la compañía se propuso producir cine capaz de competir en el mercado global y de generar ingresos para el país. Calificando su empresa como un “proyecto práctico y patriótico” los fundadores de la *Tropical Film Company* definieron dos objetivos que iteran el antagonismo subyacente en la definición del cine nacional: divulgar

---

<sup>7</sup> Véase, por ejemplo, el efusivo testimonio de Juan Ortiz Jiménez, originalmente publicado en 1954, en el cual hace un recuento de los avatares de la producción cinematográfica en Puerto Rico durante la primera mitad del siglo XX. También se deben consultar las dos valiosas, si bien analítica y teóricamente limitadas, historiografías del cine puertorriqueño disponibles (Kino García 19-39, *Idillio tropical* 1-23).



las bellezas naturales del país para provocar en el extranjero el deseo de conocer la Isla y demostrar el desarrollo cultural isleño para que en Estados Unidos se vea que Puerto Rico “no es la oreja del cerdo” ni es un pueblo “indocto e inferior” (citado en Ortiz Jiménez 58-59).

Aunque las aspiraciones industriales de éstas y otras compañías de producción conformadas en las décadas siguientes no se materializaron, durante la primera mitad del siglo XX creadores identificados como puertorriqueños en la historiografía del cine puertorriqueño produjeron decenas de películas, algunas de las cuales fueron reconocidas en el exterior como evidencia del arte cinematográfico nacional. No fue, sin embargo, hasta mediados de siglo que resurgieron las condiciones para reavivar el sueño de desarrollar una industria de cine nacional.

La fundación de la *División de Educación a la Comunidad* (DIVEDCO) en 1949, un año después de que los puertorriqueños ejercieron por primera vez el derecho a elegir democráticamente a su gobernante insular, dio inicio a una nueva era en la cinematografía nacional. La DIVEDCO, gestada en las entrañas mismas del proyecto de desarrollo industrial que se dispuso a “modernizar” la colonia bajo las pautas y tutela del imperio estadounidense, promovió la producción de carteles, publicaciones y películas educativas destinadas especialmente al público rural y campesino. La unidad de cine de la DIVEDCO subvencionó una cifra récord de producciones locales; sirvió de taller para un contingente de técnicos, creadores y actores/actrices locales; facilitó la distribución y exhibición de películas locales dentro y fuera de la isla; y promovió el reconocimiento del cine puertorriqueño en circuitos internacionales. La DIVEDCO se gestó en la matriz de un nuevo sistema de gobierno, el Estado Libre Asociado oficialmente instaurado en 1952, el cual otorgó a los puertorriqueños un relativo nivel de autonomía en cuestiones locales pero “ratificó el concepto de unión permanente con los Estados Unidos” (Picó 270). En este escenario, no debería sorprendernos que las primeras películas “puertorriqueñas” producidas por la División, y reclamadas como tales en las historiografías del cine puertorriqueño, fueron guionadas y dirigidas por cineastas estadounidenses. Eventualmente, sin embargo, un significativo número de puertorriqueños participó en la dirección y guionaje de algunas de las más memorables producciones de la División. Entre ellos merece mención el director y guionista Luis Maysonet, cuya película *El resplandor* (1962) constituye no sólo una magnífica expresión del arte cinematográfico sino también un ejemplo de la utilización del medio para registrar aspectos de la historia colectiva que han sido eludidos en la historia oficial —específicamente la aberración del régimen esclavista, la

resistencia de los esclavos en Puerto Rico y los conflictos y diferencias raciales que cuestionan la construcción del sujeto nacional en términos monolíticos y homogéneos.

Luego de la desaparición de la DIVEDCO en 1968, tras varios años de languidez, el derrotero de la producción cinematográfica en Puerto Rico se asemeja al del resto del Caribe y gran parte de Latinoamérica. Si bien cineastas y, en las últimas dos décadas, videógrafos gestan proyectos cinematográficos considerados como “nacionales”, muchas veces con apoyo internacional, las posibilidades de consolidar una industria local que nos motive a definir el carácter del cine nacional se ven mitigadas por un conjunto de adversidades que incluye: el predominio del cine de Hollywood en las redes de distribución cinematográfica y las preferencias populares por el mismo; los altos costos de producción; la falta de apoyo estatal para la producción endógena; y las consecuentes obstrucciones en las vías de distribución de películas a nivel local, regional e internacional.

### **El dilema de definir el “cine puertorriqueño” en un contexto colonial y global**

Mi necesariamente abreviada reseña de la historia de la producción cinematográfica en Puerto Rico parecería sugerir que el lugar de origen o, en el caso de Rafael Colorado y otros creadores que han sido discursivamente “nacionalizados”, el lugar de radicación del artista/empresario/gestor determina la identidad del cine producido. Dentro de esta lógica, podría suponerse que cualquier creador nacido o radicado en Puerto Rico sería un contribuyente y representante del “cine nacional”, haciendo eco de lo postulado por la comisión conformada por el ICP a los efectos de que la música autóctona puertorriqueña podría incluir los acordes de cualquier “compositor del patio”. Aunque el debate en torno a la identidad del cine nacional no se ha volcado aún en los foros públicos que ocupó el debate sobre la música, la escasa literatura existente sobre el cine puertorriqueño plantea diversas definiciones de su carácter e identidad que matizan, aunque no disipan, este supuesto telúrico. En esta sección presento algunas de estas definiciones con el objetivo de discutir los retos que ellas plantean para el proyecto de definir y representar la subjetividad nacional ante la incertidumbre de la globalización.

La contribución de Kino García, aunque endeble en términos teóricos y metodológicos, constituye un esfuerzo pionero y titánico para documentar la historia del cine puertorriqueño desde sus inicios hasta la década de 1980. En su introducción el autor reconoce que uno de los problemas para escribir dicha historia es acertar a definir

el concepto de “cine nacional”, por lo cual se pregunta:

¿Qué es un cine con carácter nacional? ¿Cuáles son sus elementos? ¿Sus características? ¿Qué parámetros lo definen? Lo que nos lleva a la pregunta, ¿qué es cine puertorriqueño? ¿Cuáles son los elementos que lo definen? ¿Cómo diferenciarlo del “cine hecho en Puerto Rico”? (3)

Desafortunadamente, esta sugestiva y necesaria pesquisa es inmediatamente abandonada por el autor, quien procede, dos oraciones más adelante, a postular que en Puerto Rico “no existe una cinematografía nacional” dado que no ha habido continuidad en la producción y, a su modo de ver, muchas de las películas realizadas por creadores puertorriqueños “no responden a nuestros valores colectivos estando limitadas a su comercialismo e inmediatez” (p. 4). No obstante, García afirma que sí existe un cine con elementos y aspiraciones a convertirse en cine nacional. Para avanzar en su proyecto de reconstruir la historia del “cine puertorriqueño”, el autor se ve obligado a generar una definición operativa del mismo, la cual expresa en los siguientes términos:

1. El enfoque de la obra y los valores representados responden a *una* manera de interpretar la realidad que en su *esencia* es puertorriqueña;
2. La producción es *puertorriqueña* o la mayor participación en el esfuerzo de producir la película, ya sea en términos de el talento y los técnicos que participan, o en términos de la inversión de capital, es de origen puertorriqueño;
3. El contenido o tema responde a una realidad o planteamiento desde *el punto de vista* nacional, en términos del enfoque o tratamiento del mismo;
4. Tiene como meta, dentro de un proyecto histórico, el convertirse en cine *puertorriqueño o nacional* (4-5, énfasis de la autora).

Aunque García rechaza algunos de los criterios utilizados para determinar la identidad y filiación de un determinado cine —el lugar de producción, la nacionalidad del director, el idioma predominante en el film— los parámetros que esboza presumen una definición singular, y tautológica, del carácter nacional. Según lo han expresado teóricos del cine como Michelle Lagny y Andrew Higson, el concepto de “cine nacional”, tan arraigado en la historia y teoría del cine, frecuentemente presupone la homogeneidad y singularidad de lo nacional asumiendo que existe *una* experiencia histórica común que genera *una* cosmovisión, *un* conjunto de valores, *una* manera única de mirar el mundo y aprehenderlo (Lagny 4). García va aún

más lejos al suponer que el verdadero cine nacional no sólo proyecta una singular cosmovisión colectiva sino que ésta es irrefutablemente reconocida por el sujeto nacional como un auténtico reflejo de su yo colectivo.

Este supuesto de homogeneidad y autenticidad nacional se reitera en el trabajo de otros autores. En su reseña de lo que denomina “el nuevo cine puertorriqueño” producido entre 1951 y 1982, Luis Rosario Quiles argumenta que el lugar de nacimiento del cinematógrafo —o el de sus padres— es criterio suficiente para definir la identidad de su obra (*El nuevo cine* 477). En el caso de nuestro “cine nacional” aclara que, aun cuando los creadores no hayan nacido en Puerto Rico, si de su obra se desprende “su adopción de *la vida y cultura del país*” o la misma revela “temática y vigencia significativa *puertorriqueña*” corresponde incluirla en dicha categoría (477, énfasis de la autora). En términos aún más rígidos y definitivos Rosario Quiles postula, en otro ensayo, que el cine “proyecta *una imagen nacional* —tanto física como espiritual— dentro y fuera de sus fronteras” (*Es viable* 465, énfasis de la autora).

Podría pensarse que los citados trabajos de García y Rosario Quiles, ambos publicados a fines de la década de 1980, tienden a anclar la definición del cine nacional a una noción esencialista y unitaria de la puertorriqueñidad porque reflejan los paradigmas imperantes en torno a la identidad nacional en esa coyuntura histórica. No obstante, dicha tendencia se reitera en trabajos publicados ya entrado el siglo XXI.

En el capítulo final de *Dominio de la imagen: hacia una industria de cine en Puerto Rico*, Raúl Ríos Díaz y Francisco González vitorean los méritos de las nuevas tecnologías para el desarrollo del cine nacional y proponen, entre otras cosas, la adopción de formatos de video digital como vehículo para que “nuestro país... exhiba *su particular identidad de pueblo* a un público mundial” (153).

Por otro lado, la introducción de Ana María García, cineasta y académica, a su colección de entrevistas a realizadores puertorriqueños radicados en Estados Unidos constituye uno de los pocos intentos de definir la identidad de nuestro cine de manera inductiva, examinando, aunque de manera superficial, las convergencias temáticas y/o estilísticas de un diverso conjunto de productores cinematográficos. Si bien la autora admite la necesidad de teorizar la relación entre la experiencia y producción cultural diaspóricas y la cuestión nacional puertorriqueña, opta por evadir el asunto para definir el corpus de lo que denomina “cine y vídeo puertorriqueño: made in USA” meramente en términos de la identidad nacional/étnica

auto-afirmada por los creadores. En este caso, la nación, en su sentido geopolítico tradicional, no es el punto de referencia para el cine de modo tal que se abre un espacio para considerar la diversidad y heterogeneidad de experiencias que conforman el yo colectivo. No obstante, García se empeña en cerrar esa vía, argumentando que existe un elemento común en el cine producido por la diáspora puertorriqueña. A su modo de ver, esta producción cinematográfica refleja la marginación, el racismo y la opresión que sufren los puertorriqueños en Estados Unidos (xxvii).

A la luz de lo expuesto me veo inclinada a concluir que el debate en torno al carácter del cine nacional en Puerto Rico sienta sus bases en la afirmación de una consumada, homogénea y excluyente subjetividad nacional. Al mismo tiempo, se concibe al medio cinematográfico como un mero vehículo de proyección mimética de esa identidad que intenta recuperar un pasado común y proyectarlo al mundo (globalizado). El llamado de José García a los cineastas puertorriqueños a hacer cine expresa sucintamente ambas nociones:

No podemos continuar atados a nuestras viejas inseguridades, a nuestro "complejo de puertorriqueños". Somos puertorriqueños e independientemente de que nos lo proponamos, *nuestra cultura, nuestro modo particular de ver el mundo, saldrá como algo natural y lógico* en todo lo que hagamos. (473, énfasis de la autora)

La literatura sobre cine puertorriqueño pone en evidencia las limitaciones de la categoría de cine nacional. Según lo ha planteado Andrew Higson, aunque esta clasificación es un recurso taxonómico útil que se ha convencionalizado para ordenar de algún modo los complejos debates sobre el cine, la misma sufre de profundas limitaciones. No sólo recurre a la tautología para fetichizar lo nacional en vez de describirlo, sino que también erige fronteras entre obras y estilos producidos en diversos contextos, eclipsando las convergencias, la diversidad cultural, el intercambio y la interpenetración que han caracterizado históricamente a la actividad cinematográfica (64).

En el caso específico puertorriqueño me parece que la tendencia a afirmar una monoidentidad nacional en el proceso de definir el carácter del "cine puertorriqueño" responde a dos fenómenos. El primero es de carácter histórico y refleja el hecho de que la ideología dominante en torno a la puertorriqueñidad ha insistido en proyectar una identidad nacional, étnica y racial única basada en la integración, alegadamente harmónica, de "elementos" Taínos, españoles y africanos. Esta figuración de la identidad colectiva, reflejada en los escritos sobre cine, ha cobrado especial resonancia a partir de la fundación del Estado Libre Asociado: el escudo de la supuesta integridad cultural puertorriqueña se alza para enfrentar una asocia-

ción cada vez más estrecha y permanente con los Estados Unidos. La incertidumbre de la globalización ha redundado en una reticente afirmación de dicha monoidentidad puertorriqueña. En el debate en torno a la definición de la música puertorriqueña, esta identidad sienta sus bases en la raíz de la supuesta tradición. En el debate en torno al cine nacional no parece haber un consenso respecto a los parámetros que definen dicha identidad, pero tampoco se cuestiona la singularidad de la misma.

El segundo fenómeno es de carácter comercial y responde específicamente a las políticas culturales referentes al cine en Puerto Rico. Contrario a lo recientemente acaecido en el pentagrama musical, las políticas culturales atinentes al cine puertorriqueño lo incuban bajo el tutelaje de la producción cinematográfica extranjera —especial, si bien tácitamente, la producción estadounidense. La medida estatal más reciente en pos de la cinematografía nacional data del 2001. La misma dispuso la creación de la Corporación para el Desarrollo de las Artes, Ciencias e Industria Cinematográfica de Puerto Rico, cuya misión se expresa en los siguientes términos en el portal electrónico de la Oficina de Presupuesto del Estado Libre Asociado de Puerto Rico:<sup>8</sup>

Fomentar el desarrollo económico de Puerto Rico promoviéndolo como lugar de filmación y utilizando los recursos técnicos locales. Además, fomentar la industria local apoyando el desarrollo, producción y distribución de producciones fílmicas de un alto nivel de calidad bajo un esquema empresarial y no de subsidio.

Las justificaciones expuestas por la Corporación para la asignación de recursos presupuestarios para el 2007 priorizan la promoción de producciones “a la altura del buen cine universal, dirigidas tanto al mercado local como internacional”. En segundo lugar se propone el mercadeo de Puerto Rico como lugar de filmación y fuente de recursos técnicos. Y en tercer lugar se articula el apoyo a “producciones fílmicas puertorriqueñas” de un alto nivel de calidad bajo un esquema empresarial (implícitamente dependiente de capital extranjero).

Mientras en el caso de la música puertorriqueña las legislaciones recientes promueven un retorno regresivo a las “raíces” tradicionales y autóctonas, en el caso del cine se emplean los significantes de “lo universal” y “lo internacional” para fomentar la integración al mundo y el mercado global. Dentro de este esquema, la recalitrante afirma-

---

<sup>8</sup> El texto completo de la ley está disponible en: [http://www.presupuesto.gobierno.pr/Tomo\\_II/suppdocs/baselegal/234/Ley121-CINEA.htm](http://www.presupuesto.gobierno.pr/Tomo_II/suppdocs/baselegal/234/Ley121-CINEA.htm), consultado el 12 de septiembre de 2007.

ción de la capacidad cinematográfica de representar "auténticamente" una singular subjetividad nacional se figura entonces como un mecanismo para contrarrestar la incertidumbre identitaria que dicha integración podría producir.

A modo de cierre me animo a proponer una revisión de la manera en que se conceptualiza y se recorta el "cine nacional" en la coyuntura histórica actual. No considero necesario desechar tal categoría pero tampoco me parece acertado concebirla *a priori*, como el resultado directo de hechos históricos, límites geográficos u orígenes genealógicos. Tanto para aprehender el cine nacional como para aprender del mismo en tiempos de globalización es necesario auscultar las maneras en que, evocando la célebre frase de Benedict Anderson, el medio "imagina la comunidad" que se proyecta como nación y participa en la construcción de identidades colectivas. Adaptando lo sugerido por Stuart Hall en referencia al cine caribeño, conviene repensar el cine nacional no como vehículo de proyección mimética de identidades únicas sino como una práctica cultural a través de la cual se construyen y constituyen múltiples identidades en un proceso de constante reposicionamiento ante las continuidades y rupturas de la historia colectiva (226).

Concluyo, entonces, proponiendo que el cine nacional, el "cine puertorriqueño", no se defina exclusivamente a partir de la producción. Me parece imperativo considerar los intercambios y resignificaciones que ocurren en la recepción, un fenómeno que ha sido radicalmente transformado por la globalización, a la hora de definir qué constituye una representación de las identidades individuales y colectivas del sujeto nacional. Podríamos descubrir así que la identidad del "cine nacional" radica no en su singularidad sino en su "particular", compleja y conflictiva diversidad.

Jocelyn A. Géliga Vargas  
Universidad de Puerto Rico - Mayagüez  
Puerto Rico

### Obras citadas

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 1983.

Beck, Ulrich. *What is Globalization?* Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000.

- Cham, Mbye, ed. *Ex-Isles: Essays on Caribbean Cinema*. Trenton: Africa World Press, 1992.
- Dávila, Arlene. *Sponsored Identities: Cultural Politics in Puerto Rico*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997.
- García, Ana María, ed. *Cine y vídeo puertorriqueño "Made in USA"*. San Juan: Programa de Estudios de Honor, Universidad de Puerto Rico-Río Piedras, 2000.
- García Canclini, Néstor. *La globalización imaginada*. Buenos Aires: Paidós, 1999.
- García, José. "Alternativa para desarrollar un cine puertorriqueño". *Hojas de cine: testimonios y documentos del Nuevo cine latinoamericano*. Ed. Secretaría de Educación Pública. México, DF: Fundación Mexicana de Cineastas, 1988. 471-476.
- García, Kino. *Breve historia del cine puertorriqueño*. Bayamón: Taller de Cine la Red, 1989.
- Hall, Stuart. "Cultural Identity and Cinematic Representation." *Ex-Isles: Essays on Caribbean Cinema*. Ed. Mbye Cham. Trenton: Africa World Press, 1992. 220-236.
- Higson, Andrew. "The Limiting Imagination of National Cinema". *Cinema & Nation*. Ed. Mette Hjort and Scott Mackenzie. London: Routledge. 45-60.
- Idilio tropical: la aventura del cine puertorriqueño*. San Juan: Banco Popular, 1994.
- Jiménez Román, Miriam. (2001). "The Indians are coming! The Indians are coming! The Taíno and Puerto Rican Identity." *Taíno Revival: Critical Perspectives on Puerto Rican Identity and Cultural Politics*. Ed. Gabriel Haslip-Viera. Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers. 101-138.
- "La cinematografía en Puerto Rico." *Gráfico 1910. Boletín del Archivo Nacional de Teatro y Cine del Ateneo Puertorriqueño* 1 (2004): 57.
- Lagny, Michelle. *Cine e historia: Problemas y métodos en la investigación cinematográfica*. Trans. José Luis Fecé. Barcelona: Bosh Casa Editorial, 1997.
- Martín Barbero, Jesús. *Communication, Culture and Hegemony: From the Media to Mediations*. London: Sage, 1993.
- Ortiz Jiménez, Juan. "40 años de cinematografía puertorriqueña". 1954. *Boletín del Archivo nacional de teatro y cine del Ateneo Puertorriqueño* 1 (2004): 57-63.
- Paddington, Bruce. "Caribbean Cinema: Historical Formation, Issues of Identity and Film Practices". *Sargasso* 2 (2003-04): 107-116.



- Picó, Fernando. *Historia general de Puerto Rico*. San Juan: Ediciones Huracán, 2004.
- Ríos Díaz, Raúl y Francisco González. *Dominio de la imagen: hacia una industria de cine en Puerto Rico*. San Juan: Editorial LEA, 2000.
- Roche, Mario Edgardo. "¿Hacia dónde va el cine en Puerto Rico?" *Diálogo*, febrero 2007: 10-11.
- Rosario Quiles, Luis. "¿Es viable una industria local de cine? 1916-1981". *Hojas de cine: testimonios y documentos del Nuevo cine latinoamericano*. Ed. Secretaría de Educación Pública. México, DF: Fundación Mexicana de Cineastas, 1988. 465-469.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "El nuevo cine. 1951-1982". *Hojas de cine: testimonios y documentos del Nuevo cine latinoamericano*. Ed. Secretaría de Educación Pública. México, DF: Fundación Mexicana de Cineastas, 1988. 477-485.
- Stam, Robert. *Film Theory: An Introduction*. Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 2000.
- Tomlinson, John. *Globalization and Culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999.
- Torres Torres, Jaime. "Pugna por la 'música autóctona'". *El Nuevo Día* 7 marzo 2005. 2 septiembre 2006 <<http://www.adendi.com/imprimir.asp?num=5972&year=2005>>.
- Torres Torres, Jaime. "Visto bueno del Senado". *El Nuevo Día* 4 abril 2005. 2 septiembre 2006 <<http://www.adendi.com/imprimir.asp?num=7331&year=2005>>.
- Vivoni Gallart, Francisco. "Postmodernidad, globalización e identidad nacional en P.R." *Globalización, nación postmodernidad: estudios culturales puertorriqueños*. Ed. Luis Felipe Díaz y Marc Zimmerman. San Juan: Ediciones LA CASA Puerto Rico, 2001. 71-105.

**REDEFINING CIVILIZATION: HISTORICAL  
POLARITIES AND MYTHOLOGIZING IN  
LOS CONQUISTADORES OF PABLO NERUDA'S  
CANTO GENERAL**

*Mark Mascia*

**P**ablo Neruda's poetic history of Latin America, *Canto general* (1950), is perhaps best known for its lyricized defense of oppressed and subjugated peoples throughout Latin America, as the author had perceived them. This collection, organized into fifteen sections (often, though not always, linear in its chronicling of Latin American history), treats this social theme from Pre-Columbian times through the mid-Twentieth Century. In addition, the collection is clearly infused with a profoundly Marxist ideology, as well as a call to arms against powers which Neruda had perceived as aggressors, namely the United States and a number of its corporate interests abroad.<sup>1</sup> The third section, *Los conquistadores*, focuses specifically on the critical time period following Columbus' initial arrival in the Western Hemisphere, and recounts the conquest and initial efforts of colonization on the part of the nascent Spanish empire. Like many of the subsequent sections of the collection, *Los conquistadores* presents a clear and unambiguous demarcation between victims (in this instance, indigenous peoples of Latin America) and oppressors (Europeans, particularly the Spanish). This article aims to show that in *Los conquistadores*, Neruda intends to demythologize the standard recounting of the Conquest as a heroic period of achievement for Western Civilization by deliberately remythologizing the same time period as a bloody and shameful one.<sup>2</sup> *Los conquistadores* is founded on a discourse of violence which, while

---

<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of the development of Neruda's social poetry and the Marxist political ideology embedded within, see Alazraki 173-192. Neruda's social and political preoccupations predate the *Canto general*, and are generally considered to commence with his witnessing of the Spanish Civil War and with his subsequent volume, *España en el corazón* (1937).

<sup>2</sup> This remythologizing is not exclusively limited to *Los conquistadores*. Iris Chaves Alfaro notes that from the collection's first poem, "Amor América (1400)," Neruda

providing an alternative view of Latin American history that was not particularly common at the time, creates a polarized and oppositional view of different civilizations (indigenous and Spanish) by inverting their standard characterization, which, as Saúl Yurkiévich states, attempts to “revise history [that of Latin America] as a permanent confrontation between oppressors and liberators” (112; translation mine).<sup>3</sup> It will become clear that the Spanish—traditionally seen as the harbingers of order, progress, and civilization to the Western Hemisphere—are now largely demonized for their destruction of existing civilizations, whereas the various indigenous cultures of Latin America are instead linked to peacefulness, moral rectitude, and solemn and justifiable defense of their invaded lands. Along with this notion will appear the idea that the Spanish do not “belong to the earth,” while native Latin Americans are viewed as autochthonous (in a simultaneously figurative and literal sense as being “born from the earth”) and in harmony with a natural world which is treated as a living entity.<sup>4</sup> This native Latin American world will also become the mythologized *patria* of the author. In sum, *Los conquistadores* is an equally polarized revision and redefinition of history which creates an anti-myth of a violent encounter between cultures.

Perhaps the most fundamental principle that must be noted when reading *Los conquistadores*, as well as the rest of the *Canto general*, is that the historical rendering of Latin America and Neruda’s perception of its societies are based upon betrayal. Roberto González-Echevarría speaks of this in his introduction to Jack Schmitt’s English translation of the work. González-Echevarría notes that the original inhabitants of Latin America—the cultures with whom Neruda polemically sides throughout *Los conquistadores*—possessed an “allegiance of a collectivity with nature to create beauty and justice”—an allegiance, however, which later would be “marred by violence, abuse, and betrayal”

---

begins a process of recovering lost memory and “una remitificación” (57) of ancient native Latin American cultures. Similarly, Rovira places Neruda’s treatment of the indigenous world within the broader task of the poet’s “actividad mitificadora” (29). *Los conquistadores* simply contextualizes this within the general time frame of the Conquest.

<sup>3</sup> “Reseñar su historia [la de Latinoamérica] como enfrentamiento permanente entre opresores y liberadores.”

<sup>4</sup> Margarita Feliciano has characterized Neruda’s conception of Latin America as a “madre telúrica” (110), and, along with a number of other scholars, likens his treatment of nature and the Western hemisphere to that of the American poet, Walt Whitman. For further examination of the ways in which Neruda treated nature in Latin America in the *Canto general* as a work articulated specifically during the 1940s, see Fernández.

(Schmitt 7). This notion of betrayal at the hands of the conquering Spaniards (and, in later sections of the collection, at the hands of dictators and foreign companies) forms the “foundational story” of the entire poetic work; as González-Echevarría describes, betrayal “is an evil act committed by men in full knowledge of their own doings” (9). This betrayal attempts to break what the poet perceives as humanity’s rightful relationship to the earth. This notion is perhaps most applicable in the very first instance in the collection in which betrayal occurs on a mass scale, in *Los conquistadores*. González-Echevarría also alludes to the autochthonous portrayal of native Latin Americans in describing the notion of betrayal: “Betrayal is the leitmotiv of [*Canto general*], the culmination of which is the betrayal of the land itself... the very ground, the clay out of which humanity emerged innocent, uncorrupted, clean” (11). As a result, betrayal acquires considerable significance: not only is betrayal wantonly immoral in itself in that it affords people from opposing cultures the ability to usurp others and take away what was rightfully theirs, but also it aims specifically at those whose lives were forged out of nature itself and who were born from the earth, living in a peaceful and symbiotic coexistence with it.

The structure of *Los conquistadores* also reflects the overall structure of the rest of the work. As Juan Villegas observes, the various sections of *Canto general*

reiteran en sí, en unidades menores, la estructura total del poema. Hay un desplazamiento desde el caos o el infortunio hacia la esperanza y la felicidad, ya sea personal o social. (*Estructuras míticas* 75)

In this poetic structure, as applied specifically to *Los conquistadores*, indigenous people are presented as the victim of oppression from outsiders who invade their land and abuse it for their own profit. However, the oppressed natives unite their strength to try to resist the invaders and fight them, regardless of the outcome. At the end of the section appears the hope of restoration and unity once again between people and the land, after the long periods of suffering have passed. Marjorie Agosin notes this general pattern as well, and adds that this structure employs Marxist notions of dialectical materialism (as Neruda was an avowed Communist), especially as seen in later sections of this collection. This structure is tripartite: “In the first part there is a class struggle in which the poor are identified as the oppressed. In the second part the people unite in their struggle and resist. The third and final part... implies a rebirth, a future, and a hope of a people united” (60). Suffering on the part of the indigenous peoples of Latin America is paramount, then, for two principal reasons: to make the reader socially aware of the troubled history of Latin America and to give a fundamentally different perspective that

does not conform to the traditional glorification of the *conquistadores*; and, to use this very history as a period leading up to a potential time in which there may no longer be suffering or oppression.<sup>5</sup> Given the time during which this poetry was written, it should also be noted that Neruda bases many of his pronouncements on the invading Spanish on ideas and images associated with the entire *Leyenda negra* and the historical record passed down from Fray Bartolomé de las Casas' *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias* and other chronicles. Neruda's view of civilizations dates back centuries to the very beginning of this Black Legend and receives an updated treatment here; indeed, the mark left by Las Casas' seminal chronicle is indelible (Concha 98). Villegas adds that Neruda also had the intention to "sing of the deepest roots of that which is [Latin] American, without temporal limitations and with a concept of history as a wider discourse consisting of cycles" (36; translation mine).<sup>6</sup> In general, *Los conquistadores* maintains the pattern of intense suffering followed by resistance, thus allowing the possibility of peace and justice to exist again in the future, at the same time that it maintains a polarized stance on Pre-Columbian and Western civilizations.<sup>7</sup>

In *Los conquistadores*, the suffering of native Latin Americans is described in terms of corruption, rape, and dismemberment, brought about by the conquering Spaniards and imposed upon the

---

<sup>5</sup> There have been a number of studies devoted to what many perceive as utopian strains in Neruda's work, both in the *Canto general* and in other collections. This utopianism would include not only the notion of a peaceful future time (rooted largely in Neruda's Marxist vision of a just and classless society) but also that of an equally peaceful time in the Pre-Columbian past of Latin America. Neruda's utopian views are another facet of the remythologized account of Latin American history which is woven into the *Canto general*. For an examination of Neruda's utopian tendencies, see, for example, Bellini, Mascia, Mereles Olivera, and Niebylski.

<sup>6</sup> "Cantar las raíces más profundas de lo americano, sin limitaciones temporales y con una concepción de la historia como un amplio discurso constituido por ciclos."

<sup>7</sup> It should be noted, however, that Neruda's condemnation of Western Civilization here is essentially limited to Spain, and does not take into account the abuses and excesses committed by similar European powers throughout history, such as the French or the Dutch, as Emir Rodríguez Monegal has observed (238). In addition, as this section will show, Neruda chooses not to condemn any of the cultural or religious practices that today would be considered grotesque human rights violations which were common to cultures such as the Aztecs, Mayans, or Incas.

It should also be added that the Black Legend mentioned above was used largely by these other European powers to condemn Spanish imperial activity during the Conquest and to discredit Spain as a rival power. Thus, Neruda's remythologizing rests in part on the ideas handed down by authors such as Las Casas and by other antagonistic European societies, and not by most traditional Spanish historiography.

uncorrupted soil of Latin America's original inhabitants. Almost immediately, Neruda finds his revision of Latin American history based on these visceral descriptions. This is seen very early in the section, for instance in "Ahora es Cuba," which portrays the natural environment as a living body. Cuba is treated as a woman who is raped and further dismembered:

Cuba, mi amor, te amarraron al potro,  
te cortaron la cara,  
te apartaron las piernas de oro pálido,  
te rompieron el sexo de granada,  
te atravesaron con cuchillos,  
te dividieron, te quemaron. (Neruda 42)

For the poet, Cuba is a previously inviolate land whose most vital and private aspects, such as the "oro pálido" and the "sexo de granada" mentioned above, are overtaken and stolen by the pillaging Spaniards. There are similar stages of destruction throughout the poem, especially in the first line, which immediately sets a negative tone for the rest of the poem: "Y luego fue la sangre y la ceniza" (41). The land is portrayed as not even having had time to defend itself against an onslaught of invaders. As Frank Riess observes, "The image of division of a body is continued in terms of the robbing of life, and the rape of a woman. This last image is consistent with the equation of the form of the continent with the female form" (115, 116). This extreme trauma implied in the clash between two very different societies immediately suggests Neruda's stance, and begins the reconfiguration of the standard myth of the *conquistadores* mentioned earlier. More particularly, this traumatic encounter objectifies indigenous Latin America as a sexually violated female body (Mereles Olivera 58).

After the suffering of the native Caribs in their Pre-Columbian Arcadia—in "los valles de la dulzura" and in "la niebla" (42)—what remains is a profound sense of desolation and despair. This incredible sense of loss can be seen in the last section of the poem, in which Neruda likens the island not only to a female body but also specifically to his object of affection:

Cuba, mi amor, qué escalofrío  
te sacudió de espuma a espuma,  
hasta que te hiciste pureza,  
soledad, silencio, espesura,  
y los huesitos de tus hijos  
se disputaron los cangrejos. (42)

The very bones of the natives, as the last line suggests, are picked at by the crabs, amidst silence and loneliness. This disaster and its resultant desolation will form one early part in a long line of similar incidents, all of which might easily be considered examples of cultural

genocide. Villegas' opinion regarding the rape and subsequent dismemberment of Cuba is not unlike that of Riess; Cuba is like

una doncella forzada en la cual se aplica la máxima violencia... Las imágenes apuntan a la crueldad, al destacar no sólo su violación sino también el descuartizamiento final. La escena nos recuerda el sacrificio de las doncellas cristianas. (189)

The conquerors leave nothing behind in their wake, not even living captives, as Neruda characterizes them as "exterminadores" (42). Extermination is not only a physical or biological phenomenon but also a cultural one as well.

Consequently, the Spanish are consistently looked upon as not only rapists of the land which they conquer but also as greedy men fixed on taking advantage of the land, despite the staggering human cost on the part of the natives. Various poems after the preceding one illustrate this point. For example, in "Cortés," the Spanish are portrayed as betraying the very hands that welcomed them, in search of gold and power:

Cortés recibe una paloma,  
recibe un faisán, una cítara  
de los músicos del monarca,  
pero quiere la cámara del oro,  
quiere otro paso, y todo cae  
en las arcas de los voraces.  
El rey se asoma a los balcones:  
«Es mi hermano», dice. Las piedras  
del pueblo vuelan contestando,  
y Cortés afila puñales  
sobre los besos traicionados. (44)

The Spanish, led by Hernán Cortés, are not considered historical heroes by the poet; instead, they are harbingers of death and destruction, again all in the interests of gold. The idea that this same conquest was achieved through the familiar theme of betrayal is also present in "Cholula," which describes some of the actions of the Spanish towards generous native people as such: "Entraron matando a caballo, / cortaron la mano que daba / el homenaje de oro y flores" (45). A consistent pattern of not only death and greedy rapaciousness, but also betrayal as the cause of such a pattern, emerges. Meanwhile, Alvarado, another traditionally glorified *conquistador*, receives a similar treatment in a poem by the same name. Neruda metaphorizes this historical figure as a civilization-destroying bird of prey:

Alvarado, con garras y cuchillos  
cayó sobre las chozas, arrasó  
el patrimonio del orfebre,  
raptó la rosa nupcial de la tribu,  
agredió razas, predios, religiones,

fue la caja caudal de los ladrones,  
el halcón clandestino de la muerte.

The reference to Alvarado as a dishonorable person (or symbolic animal, in this instance) acting against “razas, predios, religiones” further highlights the poet’s stance regarding Spanish and indigenous cultures. Instead of founding a moral and just civilization on new shores, the Spanish are shown to represent the most corrupt and depraved elements of humanity. This retelling of history also militates against centuries of the intentional relegation of native Latin American societies to oblivion, as Martha Campobello observes: “La función social de la literatura aquí es, no sólo rescatar del olvido, sino también, mostrar que el discurso oficial, la ideología dominante—que históricamente ha sido la del conquistador—promueve el olvido” (70).

Various other poems continue to treat the deeds of other conquerors in equally vivid detail, and at times focus on both laymen and clergy. “Cita de cuervos” combines both secular and religious historical figures, without differentiating the positions of the arriving Spaniards:

Primero llegó Almagro antiguo y tuerto,  
Pizarro, el mayoral porcino  
y el fraile Luque, canónigo entendido  
en tinieblas. Cada uno  
escondía el puñal para la espalda  
del asociado, cada uno  
con mugrienta mirada en las oscuras  
paredes adivinaba sangre,  
y el oro del lejano imperio los atraía  
como la luna a las piedras malditas. (51, 52)

All were infused with materialism, and all are presented as avaricious men. Similarly, in “La línea colorada,” the once-proud Inca Empire succumbs to this same rapaciousness on the part of the Spaniards, who are characterized as “los bandidos” and who require the natives to hand in all their gold, as “Tres cámaras / había que llenar de oro y de plata” (53). All of the gold that the natives possessed is taken, rupturing the economy of Inca civilization and violating its cultural norms regarding ownership and property:

Arañaron la tierra, descolgaron  
alhajas hechas com amor y espuma,  
arrancaron la ajorca de la novia,  
desampararon a sus dioses.  
El labrador entregó su medalla,  
el pescador su bota de oro (54).

It is significant to note here that not only are the Spanish seen as



thieves, but also the Incas are characterized as ordinary, uncorrupted workers (“labrador” and “pescador”)—a subtle reference to Neruda’s Marxist tendencies. Additionally, in “Se entierran las lanzas,” the land of Chile is first conquered and divided by the Spanish as though it were a slaughtered animal (“cortada fue la tierra / por los invasores cuchillos”) and later settled by what Neruda considers money-oriented Basques: “Después vinieron a poblar la herencia / usureros de Euskadi, nietos / de Loyola” (62, 63). As Agosin recapitulates, Neruda sees the *conquistadores* “as agents of evil and presents them in a consistently negative form” (69). Betrayal, immorality, and conquest all have an economic facet as well, and are presented here in an intentionally anti-European context (Díez 20).

Just as the Spanish betrayed the earth which they conquered and later settled, the native Latin Americans maintained a stable order which was based largely upon respect for the land. This notion creates an opposition scenario in which the world imposed by the *conquistadores*, who do not rightfully own the land they now live on and who have been consistently portrayed as violent and covetous, contrasts with the established, peaceful civilization of the Indians. As María Rosa Olivera-Williams notes, the Spanish are, in this respect, not of the natural world: “[n]o ‘pertenece’ a la naturaleza y tampoco pueden relacionarse con ella. No tienen fundamento ni raíces. Su vocación, su necesidad casi, es el aniquilamiento” (136). One sees Neruda’s remythologized notion of “Duerme un soldado,” in which the ordered and harmonious cosmos of the natives continues despite the presence of a sleeping Spanish soldier. This world includes elements of

... la harina  
de la fertilidad y luego el orden,  
el orden de la planta y de la secta,  
la elevación de las rocas cortadas,  
el humo de las lámparas rituales,  
la firmeza del suelo para el hombre,  
el establecimiento de las tribus,  
el tribunal de los dioses terrestres. (49)

The earth is the metaphorical mother of all life, from which indigenous civilization springs. With this characterization of the world as a female body and of the natives as physically autochthonous, Neruda addresses himself to the earth in “Elegía”: “Te hablo dormido, llamando / de tierra a tierra, madre / peruana, matriz cordillera” (55). The earth provides the womb from which the indigenous emerged, thus enabling them to establish a peaceful social order which is mindful of this land. The indigenous world is thus not only organized and based on respect, but also one which provides the reader an insight

into the autochthonous nature of humankind.<sup>8</sup> Once again, however, this very order is constantly challenged, and usually usurped, by the Spanish, as can be observed from the question posed by the poet immediately following the quote mentioned above: “Cómo entró en tu arenal recinto / la avalancha de los puñales?” (55). The opposition scenario between the conquering ethic of the Spaniards and the naturalistic, just ethic of the natives is maintained. Riess emphasizes a similar idea, noting that

[t]hose who seek to take away the land from the *pueblo* and divide it up amongst themselves are compared to men who rape a woman, whilst *pueblo* and its heroes or *libertadores* are in a continual and intimate relationship with the earth, which is compared to normal and fruitful sexual relations... This relationship between *pueblo* and *tierra* as a normal, fruitful sexual intercourse, with the consent of the woman, contrasts as it were with the senseless, violent possession of the earth by the *conquistador*, the colonialist, the imperialist, and the oligarchy. (116)

In addition to its economic, moral, and political aspects, Neruda's reinvention of history includes a land and people which are sexualized and granted bodily characteristics. This bipolar historical reinvention is omnipresent throughout the entire collection:

La bipolaridad cultural española/imperialista contra la naturaleza americana atraviesa el libro trazando dos isotopías con valores opuestos: hay una fuerte carga axiológica negativa para la primera, y una exaltación positiva, para la segunda con hincapié en los elementos típicamente americanos, la naturaleza y el artesano laborioso. (Campobello 73)

*Los conquistadores* adds further criticism for the religious institutions brought over by the Spaniards as well. The men of the Catholic faith that arrived in Latin America for the first time are seen as often just as culpable as the secular Spanish colonizers. In examples such as these, clergymen did not always stop the brutality visited upon the Indians and, in fact, often had ulterior motives of their own. “Vienen por las islas (1493)” illustrates this point:

Sólo quedaban huesos  
rígidamente colocados  
en forma de cruz, para mayor  
gloria de Dios y de los hombres....

Aquí la cruz, aquí el rosario,  
aquí la Virgen del Garrote. (41)

---

<sup>8</sup> Even the poetry itself can be considered “autochthonous” or rooted in nature, as Yurkiévich suggests: “la poesía es una emanación de la naturaleza... Hunde sus raíces en la tierra, sobre todo la natal, de donde extrae su sustancia nutricia; de ella proviene la inspiración significativa, la energía que se transformará en canto” (117).

Once the secular *conquistadores* were done with their task of exterminating the inhabitants of Guanahaní, the priests were content with erecting their religious symbols—brought to those shores through the very efforts at exterminating the native population. Later, in “Las agonías,” Peruvian natives die under the yoke of both the cross and the sword, led by Pizarro, thereafter to be characterized as “cerdo cruel de Extremadura”: “Diez mil peruanos caen / bajo cruces y espadas, la sangre / moja las vestiduras de Atahualpa” (53). Earlier in the poem, the priest Valverde is responsible for the initial violence brought upon Atahualpa and his men:

El capellán  
Valverde, corazón traidor, chacal podrido,  
adelanta un extraño objeto, un trozo  
de cesto, un fruto  
tal vez de aquel planeta  
de donde vienen los caballos.  
Atahualpa lo toma. No conoce  
de qué se trata: no brilla, no suena,  
y lo deja caer sonriendo.

«Muerte,  
venganza, matad, que os absuelvo»,  
grita el chacal de la cruz asesina. (53)

For the mere reason that Atahualpa did not know what the Bible was, and since Valverde could not understand Atahualpa’s reaction, an essentially church-sanctioned slaughter ensued. Instead of being a symbol of love and morality, the cross has become a symbol of destruction in Neruda’s iconography. Rather than advocating justice, the priests and friars come to represent conquest as much as soldiers do, for their sanctioning of oppression and for their motives of converting the native people at any cost. Neruda’s criticism spares no one, as all members of Spanish society share the blame for the violence imported to America. Perhaps the most graphic example of the clergy’s culpability can be seen in the sentence that Neruda has the Friar Luque utter to his *conquistador* companions, Almagro and Pizarro, when breaking the Host in “Cita de cuervos”:

«Dios ha sido dividido, hermanos,  
entre nosotros», sostuvo el canónigo,  
y los carniceros de dientes  
morados dijeron «Amén». (52)

This time, the man of the cloth intends to take part in the spoils of conquest, as his motives are guided by materialism and domination no less than those of the men of the sword. Not once are the native

cultures of Latin America shown to be guided by the same motivations. Instead, the “Indian [sic] is the genuine offspring of Nature, the son of America; this authentic, indigenous, natural man is contrasted always with the inauthentic, artificial man of wigs and clothing, the rapacious invader, the *conquistador*.” (Durán and Safir 88)

The turning point in this section of *Canto general* occurs with Neruda’s call to arms, as the various native tribes begin to fight the invading Spaniards. One of the first examples of Neruda’s injunction to the Native Americans to defend themselves is “Ximénez de Quesada (1536).” At first, the bellicose images of the arriving Spaniards prevail; immediately thereafter, however, the call to repulse the invaders appears, invoking nature to complete this task:

Ya van, ya van, ya llegan,  
corazón mío, mira las naves,  
las naves por el Magdalena,  
las naves de Gonzalo Jiménez  
ya llegan, ya llegan las naves,  
deténlas, río, cierra  
tus márgenes devoradoras,  
sumérgelas en tu latido (50).

The forces of nature ally with the indigenous in order to stop the Spaniards; here, the poet enters a plea for the victory of nature over artificial constructions (the Spanish ships, in this instance). Later in the poem, Neruda openly cries for the land to defend itself as well as its honor and native traditions:

Ya entraron en la floresta:  
ya roban, ya muerden, ya matan.  
Oh Colombia! Defiende el velo  
de tu secreta selva roja.

Ya levantaron el cuchillo  
sobre el oratorio de Iraka,  
ahora agarran al zipa,  
ahora lo amarran. (51)

The forces of nature contained in this land may be considered destructive, as the first passage cited from this poem suggests, since there is a clear injunction to utterly destroy the invading Spanish fleet. However, such forces unleash their violence in a purely defensive role, and hence a justifiable one according to the polarized view of history that the poet constructs. Villegas elaborates this: “el yo poético apela a los elementos demoníacos para que colaboren en defensa. Es una especie de exorcismo, que recuerda poemas de Federico García Lorca” (207). The natural world of Pre-Columbian Latin America, along with its inhabitants, are not passive in this re-mythologized history.

In other instances throughout this poeticized history as well, Neruda identifies himself with the natives and their land. Various key phrases throughout *Los conquistadores* illustrate this point. In the poem cited above, for example, Neruda identifies the original land of Colombia as “mi patria verde y desnuda” (51), denoting a sense of brotherhood not only with the natives but also with their forest-covered, untamed land. Similarly, he identifies with the suffering of the Incas, in “Las agonías,” as he declares that “Nuestra sangre en su cuna es derramada” (53), while in “Cholula,” Neruda speaks of the overwhelmed natives in familial terms, as “mis hermanos sorprendidos” (45). In “Elegía,” although there is a sense of bewilderment on the poetic subject’s part, Neruda also declares that he, too, has the same mythologized roots as the very people who suffered there under the Spanish yoke centuries ago, in declaring, “Estoy hecho de tus raíces” (55). Although Neruda was Chilean by citizenship and Hispanic in ancestry (and, more precisely, Basque), he identifies with all of the oppressed peoples in Latin America’s conquest, since all can be said to belong to one common group, the *pueblo*.<sup>9</sup> In addition, since Neruda’s poetic subject identifies with the land as well as with the people who live on it, the poetic subject takes on somewhat of an autochthonous character himself. Emir Rodríguez Monegal portrays Neruda as precisely this: “el narrador que se levanta desde la arena nutricia y el océano para cantar la gloria y la miseria de la América hispánica” (19-20). This identification of Neruda with native Latin Americans and with the *pueblo* in general presents a remythologized historical rendering that is both individual (as it speaks to his own “autochthonous” roots) and collective (as it treats history as a whole). As Yurkiévich indicates globally regarding Neruda’s poetry,

El pueblo se convierte para Neruda en el fundamento significativo de toda poesía. Lo concibe como una prolongación de la naturaleza genésica dotado de todas las potestades de la potencia que lo engendra; tendrá los mismos atributos energéticos, la misma capacidad generadora y transformadora que la tierra madre. Para Neruda, la calidad, la cantidad, la intensidad del ser, la consistencia ontológica están siempre en proporción directa con el vínculo natural: a mayor contacto con la naturaleza, más entidad. Todo se refiere en última instancia a la naturaleza, hasta lo político. (125)

---

<sup>9</sup> It can also rightfully be said that Neruda fantasizes about being of indigenous origin, as Gordon Brotherston has noted: “He shares too that compensatory fantasy of an Indian [sic] father nobler and more potent than relentlessly effective European fecundators of the American womb” (127). This fantasy attempts to remove association with the European ancestors who committed the atrocities detailed in the *Canto general*.

The poet also expresses deep sentiment for the defense of his own country, Chile, against the invading Spanish *conquistadores* in “La tierra combatiente.” All of the natural elements unite their strength in defending the primordial land of Chile, known here as Arauco. The first line of the poem sets the tone of the earth’s tenacity against the intruders: “Primero resistió la tierra” (58). This *tierra* then is broken down into its various elements, all of which prove effective in halting the advancing Spaniards. The first of these elements is the snow: “La nieve araucana quemó / como una hoguera de blanca / el paso de los invasores” (58). It is interesting to note the antithetical pairing of words in this passage, as the “nieve” is compared to an “hoguera.” The air is the next line of defense for Chile: “El aire chileno azotaba / marcando estrellas, derribando / codicias y caballerías” (58). Then, the destructive force of hunger sets its desolating effects upon the Spanish troops and their horses:

Luego el hambre caminó  
de Almagro como una invisible  
mandíbula que golpeaba.  
Los caballos eran comidos  
en aquella fiesta glacial. (58)

Finally, death takes its toll upon the *conquistadores*, as “la muerte del Sur” and “la muerte del Norte” (58) combine, not unlike a pincers-manuever in battle, to surprise and defeat the Spanish.<sup>10</sup> Neruda’s mythical homeland, his *patria*, is described as a living organism whose natural elements were weapons which rightfully laid waste to Almagro and his men.

Through this notion of defense of the land, the *patria* is born. This *patria*, however, is not only described in terms of military defense, as once again Neruda employs imagery of a human figure in presenting it. “Descubridores de Chile” illustrates this:

Noche, nieve y arena hacen la forma  
de mi delgada patria,  
todo el silencio está en su larga línea,  
toda la espuma sale de su barba marina,  
todo el carbón la llena de misteriosos  
besos.

---

<sup>10</sup> Neruda’s treatment of Latin American history is not the only instance in which different societies have used nature as a metaphor for national self-defense or historical remembrance. For example, Russian society has often glorified its defeats over France in the War of 1812 and over Germany in World War II as instances in which the winter proved to be one of the principal elements in its successful defense against its invading enemies. Similarly, Japanese culture had long considered the destruction of invading Mongol fleets during its medieval period as due to the “divine wind” or *kamikaze*.

Como una brasa el oro arde en sus dedos  
y la plata ilumina como una luna verde  
su endurecida forma de tétrico planeta. (57)

The use of human anatomical imagery in describing Chile leads the reader to believe that it possesses an *animus* of its own. This *animus* is also what exercised the land's natural prowess in holding back and in vanquishing the band of men led by Almagro. At the end of this poem, the reader notes again the polarized opposition between the world of the Spaniard and the world of the native—specifically, the unspoiled world of the Araucanos, as seen for the first time by European eyes—as the Spaniard is confronted with a strange, powerful land in which he had never imagined he would be:

El español sentado junto a la rosa un  
día,  
junto al aceite, junto al vino, junto al  
antiguo cielo,  
no imaginó este punto de colérica piedra  
nacer bajo el estiércol del águila marina. (58)

Chile's early life is not the same as the Spanish world, and it is this cold, rocky land that gave birth to the Araucanos with which Neruda sides in this poem.

Perhaps the greatest occasion in which the reader observes the forging of the *patria* can be seen in two poems describing its fight against the Spanish: "Se unen la tierra y el hombre" and "Valdivia (1544)." The first of these two poems contains numerous natural images which detail the birth of the homeland and the people who are born from it. Once again, this homeland is forged through its self-defense. The word *Patria* (which is capitalized throughout the poem) is the entity which expresses the unity between humankind and the land. More precisely, it expresses the unity of the Araucanos with their land, and the intimate and autochthonous relationship between the two, as the Araucanos were simple in dress and were made of the stuff of the earth:

No tuvieron mis padres araucanos  
cimeras de plumaje luminoso,  
no descansaron en flores nupciales,  
no hilaron oro para el sacerdote;  
eran piedra y árbol, raíces  
de los breñales sacudidos,  
hojas con forma de lanza,  
cabezas de metal guerrero. (59)

Not only do people and the land assume common characteristics, but also they assume the characteristics of soldiers and weapons, as they are threatened by the encroaching Spaniards. Their attempt

at defense is what led to the birth of the *patria*, as Neruda cites at the end of the poem: "Así nació la patria unánime: / la unidad antes del combate" (60). Once again, however, it must be noted that a fruitful relationship between people and land can only occur when the former respect the latter and understand that they came from it. For this reason, Neruda considers the Araucanos as the rightful inheritors of the original Chile, whereas the invading Spanish armies and colonists came to possess the land with ideas of outright individual ownership instead of mutual symbiosis. Riess notes these ideas, stating that the

birth of *patria* only comes about when the men who inhabit a landscape take on a particular attitude towards each other and towards their environment. They must unite their common individual existences into a whole which is larger than the sum of their own particular lives. This is also an attitude which has to be based on an appreciation of their environment unadorned by religious cults or social fears, which pervert the truly natural or social existence. (101)

Humanity's autochthonous nature is highlighted by the fact that it is forced to defend the land from which it is born, as well as by much of the imagery which this poem employs. The various natural elements unite to create the *patria*, which are further used to identify the Araucanos. Neruda makes use of images such as air, rain, rocks, trees, and the shifting of daylight and darkness to accentuate what he believes to be the nature of the natives and their land. The following selections of "Se unen la tierra y el hombre" illustrate this:

Se hicieron sombra los padres de piedra,  
se anudaron al bosque, a las tinieblas  
naturales, se hicieron luz de hielo,  
asperezas de tierras y de espinas...

Patria, nave de nieve,  
follaje endurecido:  
allí naciste, cuando el hombre tuyo  
pidió a la tierra su estandarte  
y cuando tierra y aire y piedra y lluvia,  
hoja, raíz, perfume, aullido,  
cubrieron como un manto al hijo,  
lo amaron o lo defendieron. (59, 60)

The last noun in this selection, *hijo*, refers to the *patria* itself. Just as a child is born from the union of a man and a woman, the *patria* is born from the union between humankind and the land. Since people are a vital part of the *patria*, their origins are reverted back to the land, and the reader is left with a view of people now as entities with telluric or autochthonous origins as well as sexual ones. Nelly Santos observes this association: "Naturaleza y aborigen son el binomio hombre-tierra profundamente identificados" (234). All of the images which Neruda



uses to describe this *patria* are taken directly from nature, and are not yet cluttered by the trappings of “civilization” imported from Europe. The natural order and the social order approximate one another and, in fact, become one another as the *patria* is born and defended. In addition, Neruda feels a kinship with Araucano society, since it lived in harmony with nature and maintained its healthy relationship with it; as a result he refers to the Aracuanos as his “padres” (59) throughout the poem.

Many of these ideas continue to the following poem, “Valdivia” (1544). Here, the Araucanos continue to defend the land from which they were born while they start to suffer under Spanish domination. Neruda begins by condemning the efforts of Spaniards to divide land which is not theirs and to treat it as though it were property and not a living organism:

Valdivia, el capitán intruso,  
cortó mi tierra con la espada  
entre ladrones: «Esto es tuyo,  
esto es tuyo Valdés, Montero,  
esto es tuyo Inés, este sitio  
es el cabildo.»  
Dividieron mi patria  
como si fuera un asno muerto. (60)

Arauco is born amidst mass suffering which is described in disturbing terms: “Así empezó la sangre, / la sangre de tres siglos, la sangre océano, / la sangre atmósfera que cubrió mi tierra” (60). In this manner, Neruda creates an alternative “memory” or rendering of history in which the approximately three centuries of colonization are now seen as destructive and anti-civilizing, instead of constructive and glorious. The blood of the Araucanos shed in defense of their land becomes infused with the land, the sea, and the air; Arauco’s vital essence is spilled in its defense. The *patria*’s defensive war begins:

Pero aquí la unidad sombría  
de árbol y piedra, lanza y rostro,  
trasmitió el crimen en el viento.  
Lo supo el árbol fronterizo,  
el pescador, el rey, el mago,  
lo supo el labrador antártico,  
lo supieron las aguas madres  
del Bío-Bío.  
Así nació la Guerra patria. (61)

Though Valdivia does succeed in bleeding Arauco into submission, the importance of humanity’s relationship to the land and of the forging of the *patria* is not diminished. Though the suffering in this poem is quite intense and though its portrayal is gruesome—as the line, “Valdivia entró la lanza goteante / en las entrañas pedregosas / de

Arauco" (61) suggests—the unity of Arauco is maintained, in spite of being persecuted. Not only are the Araucanos related to their primeval Chile, they *are* Chile.<sup>11</sup> Thus, Neruda mythologizes his individual homeland as a violated living body along with himself and the rest of Latin America as a whole.

Finally, the last poem of *Los conquistadores*, "A pesar de la ira," is somewhat unique in that it contains an element of hope and closes the section on a positive note. It also confirms the structure of the section and of the rest of *Canto general*, in that the hope for a more positive future, after periods of oppression and violence have passed, is articulated. This new positive tone is apparent from the beginning of the poem, as the prospect of a new and just social order is shown:

Pero a través del fuego y la herradura  
como de un manantial iluminado  
por la sangre sombría,  
con el metal hundido en el tormento  
se derramó una luz sobre la tierra:  
número, nombre, línea y estructura. (67)

The arrival of various cultures, as seen in the phrase "claro poderío / de idiomas rumorosos" (67), forms the foundation of modern Chile, along with industry and commerce. These additions present something of a change in the view of "civilization" present in *Los conquistadores*, as contemporary Chile is not necessarily seen as an utterly dystopian wasteland following its ancestral Arauco, but rather as a dynamic, thriving new culture. The final lines of the poem illustrate hope and renewal the most clearly:

Así, con el sangriento  
titán de piedra,  
halcón encarnizado,  
no sólo llegó sangre sino trigo.

La luz vino a pesar de los puñales. (68)

An interesting opposition is contained in this passage, in which evil and violence, as symbolized by "sangre" and "puñales," are opposed to redemption, growth, and knowledge, symbolized by "trigo" and "luz." Villegas concludes by observing that "Por lo tanto, pese al tono opresivo, indignado y violento dominante en la sección, ésta concluye con un signo de optimismo" (56). The unity of all people, Spanish and indigenous, is forged, and a new, integrated social

---

<sup>11</sup> Olivera-Williams refers to the image of the Araucano presented here as an "hombre-naturaleza" (142) who derives strength and protection from the land, noting the symbiosis between humanity and the earth which Neruda weaves into his work.

structure is implied—even after the violent clash of opposing cultures in the initial age of the Conquest. This structure resembles the various elements of the earth, as the images of “Páginas de agua,” “racimos,” and “fulgor nevado” (67) demonstrate. Riess observes this phenomenon:

The emergence and growth of this structure are like the bubbling of water, the spreading of light, or the unfolding of a plant or a tree, which derive their nourishment from the soil; and like the image of the tree it opens out to reveal its autonomous organization and structure... There has been a movement in this poem from order of events to a structural order, from disorder to order, from death to life. (24, 25)

*Los conquistadores* closes with Neruda's belief that a new society can take shape, even with his poeticized view of history and human suffering. Neruda's vision maintains the structure intended for this section and for the *Canto*, along with its tone of optimism.

In conclusion, in *Los conquistadores* as in much of the *Canto general*, Neruda was searching for himself when re-examining the history of his continent, and specifically its many instances of injustice. Neruda would achieve the end of vindicating himself and his people (indigenous Latin Americans, and eventually all Latin Americans by historical association) in writing *Los conquistadores*, since his constant aim is to give a voice to the various elements of the *pueblo*.<sup>12</sup> *Los conquistadores* allows Neruda this personal and social vindication through a reinvented myth (still based on historical events, naturally, and on their rendering dating back to colonial-era chronicles and the exaggerated legends they spawned) of different civilizations and their violent struggle.<sup>13</sup> The vast instances of suffering seen here, however, are counterbalanced by efforts of the *pueblo* and the *patria* to defend themselves; and in such occasions of self-defense, humanity's true nature is revealed. Such nature is an autochthonous one, owing itself to the earth and in balance with the world and with one's fellows. If this balance is maintained, there is hope despite people's hardships.

---

<sup>12</sup> It must also be noted, however, that Neruda is not necessarily free of his own prejudices, namely traditional Latin *machismo*. Villegas is one of relatively few scholars who have studied this phenomenon in the *Canto general*, noting that women are seen too often to occupy a secondary and passive role in the recounting of Latin American history and in Neruda's hopes for a better future. See “Héroes y heroínas: El machismo del *Canto general*.”

<sup>13</sup> In certain respects, of course, Neruda's vision can be considered simplistic in its obvious bipolarity, as Durán and Safir have observed (83). There have been instances, however, in the *Canto general* in which indigenous civilizations are not so overtly idealized, and may even be seen somewhat ambivalently for their shortcomings. For a more thorough examination of this ambiguous treatment, see Camayd-Freixas 283.

Upon discovering Neruda's message, the reader is left with "a sensual experience, a contact with the humidity of wood and rain, and a vision of the wild landscapes of his beloved country" (Agosin 136). These are some of the poetic effects that Neruda was trying to create in *Los conquistadores*, in addition to the effect of awakening the reader's consciousness to distinctly social and historical themes.<sup>14</sup> *Los conquistadores* is a poetic essay on defeat and perseverance and on humanity's nature as complex and organic beings, at the same time that it remains a highly subjective treatise on the meaning of civilizations, history, and personal and cultural identity.

*Mark Mascia*  
Sacred Heart University  
Fairfield, Connecticut  
United States of America

### WORKS CITED

- Agosin, Marjorie. *Pablo Neruda*. Trans. Lorraine Roses. TWAS 769. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1986.
- Alazraki, Jaime. *Poética y poesía de Pablo Neruda*. New York: Las Americas Publishing Company, 1965.
- Bellini, Giuseppe. "Pablo Neruda fundador de utopías." *Actas del VIII Congreso de la Asociación Internacional de Hispanistas, I*. Eds. A. David Kossoff, José Amor y Vázquez, Ruth H. Kossoff, and Geoffrey W. Ribbans. Madrid: Istmo, 1986. 3-19.
- Brotherston, Gordon. "Neruda's *Canto general* and the Great Song of America." *Modern Critical Views: Pablo Neruda*. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York and Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 1989. 117-130.
- Camayd-Freixas, Erik. "*Alturas de Machu Picchu* and the Modern Revival

---

<sup>14</sup> There are additional interpretations regarding the notion that Neruda wanted to make the reader aware of the past. Politics—and particularly the politics set during the Cold War—play a role as well, as René de Costa has noted: "Granted for a moment the effectiveness, or rather the persuasiveness, of Neruda's revision of the continent's past history, the primary purpose of *Canto general* was not to educate the public concerning the evils of the past but to create a political consciousness in order to assess the present situation" (138).

- of Pre-Columbian Cultural Artifacts." *Revista de Estudios Hispánicos* 36.2 (2002): 277-290.
- Campobello, Martha. "La memoria histórica/la memoria textual: Una lectura del *Canto general* de Pablo Neruda." *Alba de América: Revista Literaria* 17.32 (1999): 69-83.
- Chaves Alfaro, Iris. "El código de veredicción mítico en el poema 'Amor América (1400),' primer poema del *Canto general* de Pablo Neruda." *Revista de Filología y Lingüística de la Universidad de Costa Rica* 19.1 (1993): 49-60.
- Concha, Jaime. "A orillas del *Canto general*." *Ideologías y literatura: Homenaje a Hernán Vidal*. Eds. and Intro. Mabel Moraña and Javier Campos. Pittsburgh: Instituto Internacional de Literatura Iberoamericana, U of Pittsburgh Press, 2006. 83-106.
- Costa, René de. *The Poetry of Pablo Neruda*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard U P, 1979.
- Díez, Luis Alfonso. "Grandeza telúrica y aliento épico del *Canto general* (Consideraciones sobre la poesía comprometida de Pablo Neruda)." *Sin Nombre* 4.2 (1973): 9-22.
- Durán, Manuel, and Margery Safir. *Earth Tones: The Poetry of Pablo Neruda*. Bloomington: Indiana U P, 1981.
- Feliciano, Margarita. "América: Madre, esposa y novia, en la poesía de Walt Whitman y Pablo Neruda." *La Chispa '89: Selected Proceedings*. Ed. Gilbert Paolini. New Orleans: Tulane U P, 1989. 109-118.
- Fernández, Teodisio. "Los hijos de la arcilla, la fauna cosmogónica: Imágenes de América en *Canto general*." *Insula* 690 (2004): 12-14, 19.
- Mascia, Mark J. "Pablo Neruda and the Construction of Past and Future Utopias in the *Canto general*." *Utopian Studies* 12.2 (2001): 65-81.
- Mereles Olivera, Sonia. "América natural en la trayectoria poética de Pablo Neruda." *Selected Proceedings of the Tenth Annual Symposium on Hispanic and Luso-Brazilian Literature, Language, and Culture: 2000*. Ed. Robert Sanders. Tucson, AZ: Hispanic Symposium Society, Department of Spanish and Portuguese, 2000. 55-60.
- Neruda, Pablo. *Canto general*. Barcelona: Editorial Bruguera, 1986.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Canto general*. Trans. Jack Schmitt. Berkeley: U of California P, 2000.
- Niebylski, Dianna C. "Añoranzas de utopía en la poesía de Pablo Neruda y Octavio Paz." *Utopías del Nuevo Mundo. Proceedings of the International Symposium, Prague, June 8-10, 1992*. Eds. Anna Houskova and Martin Prochazka. Prague, Czech Republic: Charles University, 1993.

- Olivera-Williams, María Rosa. "Las series III, IV, y V del *Canto general*." *Texto Crítico* 7.22-23 (July-December 1981): 134-162.
- Riess, Frank. *The Word and the Stone: Language and Imagery in Neruda's Canto general*. Oxford: Oxford U P, 1972.
- Rodríguez Monegal, Emir. *El viajero inmóvil. Introducción a Pablo Neruda*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Losada, 1966.
- Rovira, José Carlos. "Imágenes dibujadas y desdibujadas del «indigenismo» nerudiano." *Insula* 690 (2004): 26-29.
- Santos, Nelly. "Génesis de una concepción del compromiso poético en el *Canto general*." *Cuadernos Americanos* 251.6 (November-December 1983): 228-245.
- Villegas, Juan. *Estructuras míticas y arquetipos en el Canto general de Neruda*. Barcelona: Editorial Planeta, 1976.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Héroes y heroínas: El machismo del *Canto general*." *Alba de América: Revista Literaria* 4.6-7 (1986): 195-204.
- Yurkiévich, Saúl. "Mito e historia: Dos generadores del *Canto general*." *Revista Iberoamericana* 39.82-83 (1973): 111-133.



**POESÍA / *POETRY***





## BLISTER

*Giles Goodland*

The trees are trembling with what  
 could brush past like an air of what  
 imposed a self on what light stands in  
 with containment as the answerphone  
 realigns voice with target  
 a word was a moth hatching from dust  
 and in our talk we single out one  
 evening three years before  
 when a child was ill, and both  
 hold in mind the same blistered  
 skin containing a toddler, unaware  
 of the milktooth in the cemetery  
 its dark crown, a sky folding trees away.  
 We are floating above him like  
 the string to a lightswitch he  
 cannot quite reach we might  
 claim knowledge as partial in the light of  
 light this action can explain what  
 blood is for in a hushed shout.

## GHOST

The planet corrects its course  
 to the amount that your jumping onto the  
 floor alters anything,  
 a river shifts underground  
 by passages of poetry, and in  
 the evenings you hear forks  
 tinkling against time. Night  
 brushes and falls against mind  
 but like everything I touched  
 it is made of world.  
 A moth shutters in haiku-fragments  
 this language can change objects  
 as moonlight touching  
 dust. I think I thought I'd seen  
 a ghost, it was a negative  
 slighted in the wind.  
 There is a tense in the air,  
 a cat leaps like shadow.  
 The birds are scared  
 of doors, there are maybe  
 a thousand generations pushing me.  
 Their labour produced these tins.

## MYTH OF THE JEWS

In all of god's wonderful ruins  
 and the pyres on which we continue to burn  
 odd limbs of him  
 it's the opening of another shadow.  
 The quick-eared mole  
 mythed this tale to me,  
 following a thread of threat.  
 His moth-soft mouth and  
 his unlauted nose  
 slaked his curiosity in a hole:

“

I could feel gears shift miles below-ground.  
 The grass extending a long apology,  
 difficult flowers squeezed light  
 until a change rubbed against  
 silence. I crept myself into a hole, voices  
 spoiling over like light does, presuming  
 the dim sense of thingness.

Silverside of moon  
 a notch of bone  
 this that is body is  
 all and alone.

Broke into a great lit chamber, saw:  
 there was not enough room in the earth to fit the dead.

Here I met the oven-children,  
 the shit glistening inside them.  
 Generations earlier they had gone  
 snout-down, whole families moiled  
 into the fastness of Polish soil.  
 They still work into cavernacles  
 moling for grubs as their culture  
 metamorphoses. Crumbing  
 each lick of humus, hands splaying.

Nostrils close, eyes tighten until  
 their blind heads unhinge lids of soil.  
 The hills open for them  
 a screen of stars, the shape of  
 a child melted on the inside

as long as they have air to suck they say  
 if we could retrace those threads  
 that were people, us,  
 but above this there is the blanket  
 we have to lift by pushing at sky.

The forest had risen above tracks under which  
 pipes lead to structures  
 that melted decades before, and the pipes  
 still make the sound of people,  
 the cornered blood in their structures.

Leave them at the edge of a town  
 facing rows of tomorrows, absorbent  
 and many-coloured.  
 The roads are entwined.  
 A trace of language is left on a wall.

”

## NOTHING

My son asks what is inside an arm  
 I say, bone.  
 What is inside bone?  
 I say, marrow.  
 What is inside marrow?  
 I say, cells.  
 What is inside cells?  
 I say, proteins.  
 What is inside proteins?  
 I say, atoms.  
 What is inside atoms?  
 I say, a neutron.  
 What is inside a neutron?  
 Nothing, I say.  
 What is inside nothing?  
 And he answers, nothing.

## REPRESENTATION

I represent the thought of  
 eternity, said the clock, and the rocks laughed.

I represent the thought of  
 death, said the rocks, and the clock struck.

I represent the work of nothing, said eternity,  
 and the words shook.

## THE POET

The poet comes home  
and his three-year-old son runs at him  
with a monster-mask of his own construction.

The poet considers whether he should  
congratulate his child or run like hell.

The poet walks into the kitchen  
to witness his daughter fall from the high-chair  
onto the wooden floor  
and for the next hour there is no conversation.

The poet realises his mistake,  
makes an excuse and leaves.

This mask the poet purchased earlier  
appeared to contain a skull:  
you put it inside your head and it made you.

The poet cries out cloud, it made you cry  
something on the news.

The poet's son leaps up, he wants  
to cook everything, it should be  
given as many seconds as can be numbered.

The poet thinks if we were actors  
we might be really bad ones, yesterday  
he fluffed so many lines he felt like  
a thistle pouring whiteness across his family.

Somewhere she is in a poem  
rubbing her eyes. It's hardly even morning yet.  
It will be hours before she starts looking for the poet.

The poet writes a poem in which the narrator  
steps out and congresses with ropes of rainwater.  
He claims he made a new sun yesterday  
that casts no shadow. You can  
swim in it and not burn. He calls it  
language, and it has never set.

The first thing the poet forgets is his skin.  
Softly but continuously language is describing  
to the poet why it should go on, but the more  
it talks the fewer words it has left.

The poet listens to the pages emptying  
and is followed by a verb of motion.  
His cat has been missing for several decades now.

The road he did not take negates the poem.  
It is so bright and open,  
an inviting streetlit yellow cupped forever  
in the palm of his mind.

The poet laughs and cuddles in his sleep  
a razor blade and a tin of flowers.  
He has never been so afraid of the word night before  
but now it has been rotting in him  
so that it can burst through the tongue's vessels.

Waving from the unwritten corners of a book  
his other body is of water. The poet says  
start a poem with a word like furthermore,  
end it with nevermore.

*Giles Goodland*  
Oxford English Dictionary  
London  
United Kingdom



# NÚMERO ESPECIAL - CONVOCATORIA

**LA JUNTA EDITORIAL CONVOCA A LA ENTREGA DE TRABAJOS** relacionados con **tiempo y temporalidad** para la publicación de un número especial (junio 2009) de la revista.

Los ensayos pueden concentrarse en varios aspectos del tema, incluyendo:

- Cronología
- Teleología
- Tiempo y percepción
- Temporalidad y eternidad
- Representaciones y conciencia del tiempo particularmente relacionado con: Historia, Narrativa, Cine, Memoria, (Auto) Biografía, Cultura

Fecha límite para entrega: 15 de noviembre de 2008. Véase las normas para entrega de manuscritos en <http://www.uprm.edu/atenea> para información sobre el formato de manuscritos.

Los ensayos críticos (15-18 páginas) deben seguir las guías estipuladas por el MLA. Favor de acompañar todos los materiales para publicar con una hoja de cobertura que indique que el trabajo sometido no ha sido publicado anteriormente, o de lo contrario, provéase detalles sobre la publicación previa. Incluya nombre, dirección, números de teléfono y de fax, dirección electrónica y nombre de la institución a la que pertenece el autor. El manuscrito debe ser sometido en duplicado a la editora para ser evaluado anónimamente.

Se aceptarán consultas por correo electrónico ([atenea@uprm.edu](mailto:atenea@uprm.edu)) pero no se considerarán trabajos enviados por este medio. De ser aceptado para revisión, se le solicitará al autor una copia del trabajo en MS Word.



# SPECIAL ISSUE - CALL FOR PAPERS

**THE EDITORIAL BOARD INVITES SUBMISSIONS** for publication for a special edition (June 2009) on **Time and Temporality**. Essays may address a wide variety of topics including (but not limited to):

- Chronology
- Teleology
- Time and perception
- Temporality and Eternity
- Representation and consciousness of time particularly in its intersection with History, Narrative, Film, Memory, (Auto) Biography, Culture

Submissions for this issue must be received by 15 November 2008. See submission guidelines at <http://www.uprm.edu/atenea> for details about the format of manuscripts.

Critical essays (15-18 pages) must follow MLA style. All submissions should be accompanied by a cover page with the author's name, address, phone and fax numbers, email address, institutional affiliation, and a statement that the submitted piece has not been previously published or, if this is not the case, provides details of earlier publication. The typescript should be formatted for blind review and follow the guidelines stipulated by the Modern Language Association of America (MLA) and be mailed in duplicate to the editor.

Email queries are welcome ([atenea@uprm.edu](mailto:atenea@uprm.edu)), but electronic submissions are not considered. If the submission is accepted for publication, the author will be asked to provide a copy in MS Word.

## Información sobre suscripción

Dirección:

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

Precios de suscripción (2007-2009)

Puerto Rico y Estados Unidos:

Año (2 núms)	US \$14
Dos años (4 núms.)	US \$25
Número atrasado	US \$ 8

Otros países:

Año (2 núms)	US \$20
Dos años (4 núms.)	US \$36
Número atrasado	US \$12



Favor de enviar este cupón con su pago en dólares a nombre de "Revista Atenea" al Director de Publicaciones

Nombre \_\_\_\_\_

Correo-electrónico \_\_\_\_\_

Dirección \_\_\_\_\_

Ciudad \_\_\_\_\_ Código Postal \_\_\_\_\_ País \_\_\_\_\_

Marque aquellos que apliquen:

Individuo     Institución

Un año (2 publicaciones)     Dos años (4 publicaciones)

Número atrasado (especifique): \_\_\_\_\_

Estudiantes/Empleados de UPR-Mayagüez - Resten 10%

Total incluido \_\_\_\_\_

Cheque     Giro

Tarjeta de crédito:     American Express     Visa     Mastercard

Titular de la tarjeta \_\_\_\_\_

Número \_\_\_\_\_ Fecha de expiración \_\_\_\_\_

## Subscription information

Address:

Revista Atenea  
Office of Publications  
Universidad de Puerto Rico-Mayagüez  
PO Box 9280  
Mayagüez, Puerto Rico 00681-9010

Prices for Subscription (2007-2009)

Puerto Rico and the U.S.:

One Year (2 issues)	US \$14
Two Years (4 issues)	US \$25
Back Issue	US \$ 8

Other Countries:

One Year (2 issues)	US \$20
Two Years (4 issues)	US \$36
Back Issue	US \$12



Please send this form to the Director of Publications along with your remittance in U.S. dollars payable to "Revista Atenea."

Name \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_ Country \_\_\_\_\_

Check the boxes that apply:

Individual     Institution

One year (2 issues)     Two years (4 issues)

Past issue (Specify): \_\_\_\_\_

Students/Employees of UPR-Mayagüez - Subtract 10%

Total enclosed \_\_\_\_\_

Check     Money Order

Credit Card:     American Express     Visa     Mastercard

Name of credit card holder \_\_\_\_\_

Number \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration date \_\_\_\_\_