

BORDER CROSSINGS:

Boundaries of Cultural Interpretation

Selected Proceedings of the Border Crossings Graduate Student Symposium
at Vanderbilt University

October 16–18, 2008

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Department of Spanish and Portuguese
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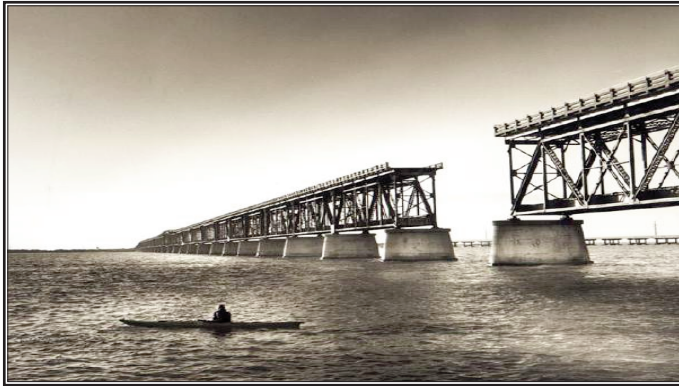
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EDITORS' NOTE

PABLO MARTÍNEZ DIENTE

Vanderbilt University

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When we decided to organize the second Graduate Student Conference at Vanderbilt University, we ambitiously endeavored to take our successful 2006 experience to the next level. Three years ago, graduate students from Washington University in St. Louis, Berkeley, University of Colorado, SUNY, Stanford, and the University of Tennessee, as well as a large presence from our own department, presented thought-provoking papers related to the core thematics of the conference: authority, the law, and the word. We succeeded in luring Sylvia Molloy to Nashville to provide the keynote address; her talk, “Property Rights: Autobiography, Fiction and the Ownership of Life,” was attended by a large multidisciplinary audience.

Last October’s conference, “Border Crossings: Boundaries of Cultural Interpretation,” intended to maintain the exceptional quality of the panels, while also establishing a new direction for our biennial gathering of graduate students. In order to increase dialogue among colleagues and attendees, the organizing committee decided on an expansive topic for the conference, endowing it with the polemical, yet attractive, rubric of “Border Crossings.” Given our desire to receive the greatest possible number of quality proposals, we employed significant domestic and foreign propaganda. Our call for papers received such a response that we decided to add an additional day to the conference, and, consequently, a quantitative and qualitative leap resulted. We targeted students from all fields of study to participate in what developed into a noteworthy interdisciplinary discussion. Indeed, the presence of students of history, philosophy, political science, French, and English contributed to the intellectual spectrum of the session dialogues. Our conference was comprised of nine panels and more than twenty-five presenters coming from such distinguished institutions as Arizona, Berkeley, Indiana, Kentucky, NYU, Notre Dame, Pittsburgh, Purdue, Texas, and, of course, Vanderbilt.

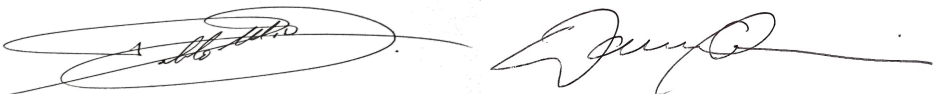
Two rarities were also featured in the conference; certainly, these were anomalies within the traditional scope of graduate student summits. One was the reknown of the keynote speaker, *traduttore* extraordinaire Gregory Rabassa, whose monumental corpus of literary translations in both Spanish and Portuguese—including the work of Machado de Assis, Clarice Lispector, Julio Cortázar, Mario Vargas Llosa, and Gabriel

García Márquez, among others—provided a privileged alibi for an hour of literary anecdotes, translation techniques, and spontaneous candor. Professor Earl E. Fitz was crucial in making Rabassa our guest, and our gratitude for his constant support of the graduate students in our department cannot be overstated. We also express our appreciation for Professor Rabassa's generous contribution of his transcribed speech to the publication of these conference proceedings.

Professor Edward H. Friedman kindly accepted an invitation to introduce another of the conference's extraordinary achievements: an interactive presentation of a scene from Lope de Vega's *La dama boba*. Former participants of the BYU Golden Age Theatre Program reunited from four different universities and combined their talents with newcomers from Vanderbilt to engage an audience of undergraduates, graduates, faculty, and the general public in a night at the *corral*. We sincerely appreciate Professors Valerie Hegstrom and Dale Pratt for their support of this endeavor and generous donation of authentic Golden Age costumes. We also are indebted to each of the outstanding actors who participated in the preparation and presentation of the scene, and, in particular, we express our gratitude to Anna-Lisa Halling for lending her talents as director of Lope's classic play.

In this volume, we present a representative compendium of our three-day conference. Within its pages, the reader will find a selection of student papers, a transcription of Gregory Rabassa's enlightening speech, and an array of pictures of both the talk and the theatre performance. As organizers of the conference and editors of the present volume, we would like to express our most sincere gratitude to the graduate students who helped in shaping the conference and the publication of its selected proceedings. The Center for Latin American Studies at Vanderbilt not only was an enormous support to the development of the conference, but also provided the financial contribution that made this publication possible. The Bishop Joseph Johnson Black Cultural Center, the Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities, the *Afro-Hispanic Review*, the English Department, the Department of History, The Commons, the Graduate School at Vanderbilt University, and, of course, the Department of Spanish and Portuguese were also generous sponsors of our conference. Finally, we are indebted to Cathy L. Jrade, Chair of our Department, and the faculty and administrative assistants who proved an invaluable source of motivation, guidance, and support.

While we cannot capture the entirety of the conference in this volume of selected proceedings, we hope that it stands as a testament to the countless hours that numerous participants contributed to ensure its success. Furthermore, we hope that future conferences will not only equal the quality that we have witnessed here, but also surpass it in the years to come.



INTRODUCTION

CATHY L. JRADE
Vanderbilt University

As Chair of the Department of Spanish and Portuguese, I have many delightful duties. Perhaps one of the most enjoyable is the dissemination of information regarding the achievements of our graduate students. So I happily agreed first to welcome the participants to the 2008 Graduate Student Conference at Vanderbilt University and now to affirm my enthusiasm for the final outcome in this brief introductory statement to the proceedings.

Until one undertakes the organization and management of a conference, one would be hard pressed to fathom the amount of work involved in the successful execution of such an endeavor. Despite warnings to this effect, our committed and industrious graduate students eagerly aspired to expand the goals of the first Graduate Student Conference held at Vanderbilt University in 2006. They raised money, sent out announcements, made selections, requested rooms, housed visitors, organized meals, and produced noteworthy scholarly papers as well. They were even able to lure the distinguished master of translation Gregory Rabassa to Nashville, Tennessee. His talk, which is included here, glowed with the enormous wit and talent that is the hallmark of his renowned masterpieces. In short, in every aspect of the conference, enormous efforts and great care were evident.

Pablo Martínez Diente and David P. Wiseman have now produced an impressive volume that contains many of the presentations. A quick glance at the table of contents reveals that the graduate students achieved their goal of broadening the scope of the conference. As the editors indicate, students from ten universities, seven fields of study, and many regions of the United States converged in Nashville to exchange ideas about their research and to establish valuable and lasting ties. All of us in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese are extremely proud of what our students accomplished and we are confident that the pieces included here will continue to enlighten and stimulate discussion. We are also confident that this undertaking is just one significant step on the long and fruitful journey of professional development for all the participants.

GREGORY RABASSA: AN INTRODUCTION

EARL E. FITZ
Vanderbilt University

Widely hailed as “the translator’s translator,” and as one of the greatest literary translators ever to take up pen, and once dubbed the “Pope of translation” by the publisher, Alfred A. Knopf, Gregory Rabassa has been instrumental in bringing the literatures of Spanish and Portuguese to the attention of the English-speaking world audience.

As Greg describes it in his delightful book, *If This Be Treason: Translation and Its Dyscontents*, a book of memoirs about the some sixty works of literature written in Spanish and Portuguese that he’s translated in his long and productive career, many major works by major writers, his involvement with translation came about rather by accident, or serendipity. As he puts it, “translation was not a *métier* I had set out to follow, nor did I prepare myself for it with any conscious training or contemplation. The Spanish have a saying that goes ‘El diablo sabe más por viejo que por Diablo’ [‘The Devil knows more from being old than from being the Devil’]. I’ve come to realize lately that what I’ve been preening myself for as intelligence is simply the fact that I’ve been around too damned long as I restrain hubris and remember that Lear was old ere he was wise. I have always thought that I just stumbled into translation because it was there, serendipity, but with my wiser retro-vision I can see that I harbored certain traits that fit nicely in with the needs of translation and which I have honed sharp through use.”

Paramount among these “translation needs,” as Greg has noted elsewhere, are the ability to be a close, careful, and discerning reader and the ability to write well, for it’s the translator’s unique burden not just to know what a writer is saying but to possess the creative talent to rewrite it—to bring it to life in all its myriad aspects—in another language system. And, as a host of authors, critics, and scholars have long insisted, Gregory Rabassa is a superb writer; indeed, as Gabriel García Márquez has famously said, Gregory Rabassa is “the best Latin American writer in the English language.”

It is no exaggeration to say that Cortázar and Greg, García Márquez and Greg, Lezama Lima and Greg, or that Clarice Lispector and Greg, Osman Lins and Greg, and Machado de Assis and Greg have changed the nature of literary relations between North and South America. Thanks to Greg’s work, as a translator and as a discerning and capacious literary critic, the literatures of Brazil and Spanish America, along with the literatures of Spain and Portugal, have begun to exert a significant

influence on writers, readers, and scholars in the United States. This is a towering, monumental achievement, one perhaps unique in the annals of world literary history, and Greg deserves full recognition for it.

Gregory Rabassa, the gentleman we refer to, lovingly, as “o mestre” and “el maestro,” is a great teacher, a great scholar, a great translator, and an all around great person. And, if I may say so, he is also a dear personal friend whose sage advice and counsel I still seek and whose gentle humanity and sprightly sense of humor still inspire my own life. It is with great pleasure, therefore, that I introduce this transcription of the keynote address from our esteemed guest and honored friend, Professor Gregory Rabassa.

IF THIS BE TREASON:
A CONVERSATION WITH GREGORY RABASSA

GREGORY RABASSA
Queen's College, CUNY

What follows is a transcription of Gregory Rabassa's keynote address, which is comprised of two distinct sections. The first is a speech in which our guest dissects the art of translation, as he entertains the audience with literary and personal anecdotes. The second consists of a brief, yet enlightening, question-and-answer session. We decided not to edit Rabassa's original words excessively in an attempt to preserve the spontaneity of his speech; minor alterations were made due to audio difficulties during the transcription. Antón García-Fernández, Erin García-Fernández, Pablo Martínez Diente, and David P. Wiseman carried out a primary transcription. Katie Willison edited the manuscript and produced the final transcription as it appears below.

I thought I would throw out a few comments on translation, what I think it's all about, and different ways of approaching it. Then, particularly with this group involved with the thankless job, I would like to leave time for questions, where some of you may have a problem and I can play the psychiatrist and kind of get you out of it. Though, I'm not sure that psychiatrists can solve anything after working with António Lobo Antunes who is, by profession, a psychiatrist, a shrink who writes very good novels, which would lead one to think maybe he needs some of his own treatment. Though, I thought he was a great person.

I often thought that translation, which I've done a good deal of, is really impossible, and I always mention this high expectancy that people have of translation. For some reason, they think that a book in Spanish, Portuguese, Urdu, or any other language can be reproduced in English. That, of course, is patently impossible. How do you reproduce the sounds? And then there's that question of reading, my theory is that translation is nothing but the closest possible reading you can have of a piece. But that book that we are reading is our book only. It doesn't even belong to the author. The author has given us this raw material, but as we read it, we are reading what we are thinking and what we see. So, every time a book is read by a great public, you have 10,000 subtly different books. And then, the translator puts it into another language. There's another reading. He is creating a different book by his own reading. And then, someone picks up the translation, three people pick it up, and they are now reading three different books of a book that is also a different book from the original. You see how we are getting down to those Russian dolls. One fits inside of the other and they are all the same doll, and yet they are different. That's why I think translation is

impossible, because even the original book cannot be conveyed to the reader. The reader has to be the author. And then, take this into mind: we are not the same person on Wednesday that we were on Tuesday. Something minute, some “nano” moment has happened, and it has made us different. The fact that we lost a few cells and gained a few new cells means we’re not the person we were yesterday. So, the reading on the second day will be different than the reading on the first. Another problem I have with all of this is theory. We’ve come up with theories of translation, literary theories, in order to find the Higgs boson of literature. I don’t think we’ll ever be able to get a spotless theory of what makes a book, what makes a work of art. I started off as a physics major in college and I still kind of dabble in it mentally.

So, let me start off with the impossibility. I always use the example of when I promised *New Directions* I would attempt a new translation of Guimarães Rosa’s *Grande Sertão: Veredas*. Even though it was impossible, it needed a new translation, a better impossibility. The first problem: what are you going to do with that strange title? It’s so Brazilian that you just can’t do anything with it. And then, I think of the epigraph at the beginning. It’s a version of the Faust legend from the Backlands of Brazil, and it says, “O diabo na rua no meio do redemoinho,” the devil in the street in the middle of the whirlwind. Fine. Take the word for “whirlwind,” *redemoinho*, and you find out the devil is not only in the middle of the whirlwind, but that the devil is in the middle of the word for whirlwind! *Demo! Re-demo-inho!* Impossible. I made an attempt, which I rather like, but it doesn’t really translate into English. It was “the devil in the street leading the wild demonstration.” It was quite a ways off, but I do get “demon” in “demonstration.” An attempt. These attempts that you make in difficult translations, I can only take pride in saying that they are rather noble. It is noble when you get that close to the impossible.

So, starting with that thesis, I still do translation. Any advice that I have is based on something that some might call spiritual or emotional, or something like personal, but which I would describe as instinctive. We do have instincts, but we have two types of instincts. In my book, I quote Ortega y Gasset, who spoke of the two types of reason. There’s the intellectual, mathematical reason and then there is what he calls vital reason, in which the whole collectivity of our experience has entered our brain, our psyche as they say, and has given us some new instincts. He uses the example of Alexander when he’s facing the Gordian Knot in Phrygia, and the prophecy has it that he who loosens the knot shall go on to conquer the East. Alexander knows that the word “loosen” has a little bit broader meaning than struggling to untie this terribly complicated thing. Almost without thinking, he draws out his sword and he cleaves it in two and people keep saying, “Well, why didn’t I think of that?” And, Ortega says, that’s vital reason at work. Vital reason is why, when driving a car, if a deer crosses the

road, I slam on the brakes. I don't think, "Here, let's see, I might have to lift this right leg and push it down on the brake to slow the car down." I have absorbed the mechanics of that automobile so that it has become part of my own instinct. And yet, I wasn't born with the brake in mind. So, I think this is how you approach translation. Trust your instinct. Don't think about it too much. I use this example, this experiment. You may have done it before, it's kind of childish, but I've done it all my life. Look at a word, in any language. If you look at that word long enough, if you concentrate on it, it becomes absolutely silly and meaningless. You've taken out any possibility of further meaning. So, what does it look like when you open your eyes? That's it. And you're probably right.

You can also see in that experiment the question of heritage, with meaning depending on where you were born, in what age, in what place, what languages you had heard. Again, there's a sense that we all read a different book, when we recite a poem, we're all reciting a different poem. So, if poetry is the most inner form of writing that you can do, translation of poetry is very difficult, because there you do have to be personal. When we read a poem, each one of us has been colored by experience and the past. And with nature poems, it depends on what is our native nature. Did we grow up in the piney woods or did we grow up in a deciduous forest? Did we grow up on a flat desert plain? Any kind of poem where there are natural objects takes on a different reading. I remember in Brazil, the question: what do we call a jaguar? And, of course, in Spanish, too, sometimes it's a *jaguar* and sometimes it's a *tigre*. The Spanish didn't know what a tiger looked like, they'd never been to India. So, based just on what they'd heard, this creature here must be a tiger, a *tigre*. As the Venezuelans say, "donde ronca el tigre no hay burro con reumatismo." The Portuguese, however, had been to India, knew what a tiger looked like, and knew that this spotted creature was not a tiger. But in India, there was also the ounce, a spotted leopard sort of creature. So, in Brazil, the jaguar became the *onça*, a smaller version of the leopard ounce. Except for Brazilians in the northeast, where there are *onças* all over the place, who don't call it *onça*, or *jaguar*, but *gato*. *Um gato na selva*. So, it all depends. It's all the same creature, but where do you come from? What do you call it? Take personal names and the strangeness in cultures, too. The Icelanders, for example, still use patronymics, they don't have any surnames in Iceland which confuses people to no end. Sigur's daughter would be Ingrid Sigursdóttir, and his son, Sigursson. The Brazilians will call themselves anything they want, and that's the whole creative thing.

So, I would say, use these instincts that have brought you along. Make your mind up and do it. But, most of all, translation is a matter of words. Know your words. Like your words. And on this, I keep thinking of the encounter between Degas and Mallarmé. Mallarmé had these famous *soirees*, on Tuesday nights I think it was, and people would gather: poets, artists, and so forth. Degas was a good friend of Mallarmé,

a member of his circle along with Antonio Machado and Rubén Darío, an international grouping. Degas, a great painter, an illustrator with a sense of rhythm and all that, wanted to write poetry because he was an artist. He said: “Stéphane, I would like to write poetry. I am full of ideas, but I can’t seem to write the poem.” And Mallarmé said: “Mon cher Claude, you must remember, poetry is not made with ideas. Poetry is made with words.” Which is very simple and very eloquent. It sounds simpleminded, as a matter of fact. But, the idea is in the word. The idea cannot come before the word. The words are first. We translate our ideas into words, any notion we get. You can write a mathematical formula, but that isn’t really an idea, the mathematical formula already exists. You’re just putting it down in shorthand. So, think of words. And that’s the hard part, in both writing poetry and doing translation.

Words will also change within a language, going from Portugal to Brazil, for example, you have to watch your step. You may make a misstep and say the wrong thing. Often, Spanish is thought to be much too close to Portuguese and people sort of conjoin them. You can make some terrible blunders. I remember some very noble families of Peru, the Porrás family, the Barrenechea, and others. Quite some time back, Peru was going to send an elegant, aristocratic ambassador to Brazil, Don Fulano Porrás y Porrás. He was not only noble on his father’s side, but also on his mother’s! Osvaldo Aranha, who was Getúlio’s foreign minister back then, would not sign the paper accepting this man, as a favor to him. He knew he would be ridiculed since *porras* is an absolutely unspeakable word, spoken very often as a curse (it’s what you say when you spill a glass of water on the floor). And Osvaldo Aranha excused himself with a comment: “Aceito o nome, o que não aceito é a insistência!” I accept the name, but I will not accept the insistence. And he saved the man from being a laughingstock. In Portugal, the word *bicha* is a line at the bank. In Brazil, it’s a drag queen. You can see the trouble you would have in Brazil if you said you were going to *fazer bicha*. Your moral squad, which is not very active in Brazil, fortunately, would catch you. So, these are a few of the problems that come in translation.

I said in my book that I give a lot of credit to who I was and where I was, and I cite Ortega again. I like to cite Ortega because he was much maligned. People would call him a fascist and he was the most anti-fascist there could be in Spain. But they thought he was a fascist because he was—another word that had become dirty—an elitist. In fact, he hated both fascism and Nazism because they were so common. He didn’t think too much of democracy either, but he was more of a democrat in the older sense of it. In that way, it is like George Bernard Shaw when he took up Lincoln’s famous comment that God must have loved the common people because he made so many of them. Shaw said God must have hated the common people because he made them so common! And so, once again you have the question of taking a word and

giving it two of its connotations. Ortega said: “Yo soy yo y mi circunstancia,” I am I and what’s around me, my circumstances. And you really have two different things. You can’t change your genes—there may be a day when you can do that, cast off the gene the way a chameleon casts off his tail. What we can change are circumstances. But even if we change them, that very change will have an effect on us. So, that’s what develops your vital reason, your nature if you want to use that word. And I think that dominates in translation.

I’ve left off so much here and there, let’s just fill it in with your questions. I won’t answer your questions, but I will entertain them.

Question: Not far from campus there’s a street called Demonbreun Street, which contains the word “demon” in it. So, if you wanted a highly localized, very Nashvillian epigraph for *Grande Sertão*, you could have “the devil in the whirlwind in the middle of Demonbreun Street.”

Answer: We also have the painter, Mondrian, who’s a devil of a painter!

Question: I was wondering if you could say some more about the role of the translator as an author. As you explained, you’re taking the text and making it look more like the original, and yet transforming it. How do you do this and how does this make you an author?

Answer: I would compare that notion to music. The translator, in some ways, is not that original in terms of raw material, but he’s an arranger. And, I said somewhere that translating a work from one language to another is like arranging a violin concerto for a trombone. Completely different voices, but they certainly maintain the melody and can also affect certain areas of tone. Music is a good example because every violinist who plays a violin sonata plays the notes that Beethoven put down, but he’s reading, giving it his own reading. It’s hard to tell what Beethoven was thinking when he wrote it down, and whether he would approve or condone what the artist has done with the work. So, the translator is really giving a version in another language and the quality of that translation will not rest entirely on accuracy. It’s very difficult to be accurate about a word. You can’t even be accurate about numbers, because the only place where numbers exist is in our universe. If you could jump out of this universe into another one, you might find places where two plus two does equal five. It’s fun to think about it, but it sort of frightens you.

Question: When you translate a literary work, do you read the work first and ponder it and then translate? And, do you do a rough translation and then go back and fine-tune? How do you go about it?

Answer: The first question depends on circumstance. I sometimes translated as I read a text for the first time, and I found something refreshing about that because it was alive still. I use the image of Doctor Frankenstein, going through the second time, because since you've already read it you're dealing with a corpse. You've killed it by reading it and now you're putting it back together, bringing it back to life. But, I also do a rough draft, going against what I just referred to in some ways, to look for meaning, to make sure I didn't make any real goofs on meaning or slip on a slang word, checking it up a little bit. And then, I rewrite it as if it were my own work, scratching out and moving things, changing word order and so forth. And then, I give it a last copy, all of this on a typewriter. I could never adjust to a word processor, I just couldn't rework a sentence within that screen, with too many buttons and all that. It's sort of part of my anal nature, I like the clean lines and neatness. And then, on the final copy—which publishers now bother me with because I can't put them on a disc, though they do have machines where they can put the text through, transpose it—I'll even make some last-minute changes. It's dangerous, though, because I find now that if I pick up a book that I did ten years ago, I still shake my head and say, "I could have done this, I could have done it that way..." Sometimes I pick up something I did ten years ago and say, "That's pretty damn good! A good piece of work!" So, I don't know what the distinction is there. I guess the idea is that the very definition of translation means you can never be satisfied.

Question: Charles V used to say that he would use French to talk to the baby, Italian for poetry, German to talk to his horse, and Spanish to talk to God. What is your experience with the languages that you use, the languages of your life? Do you get mad in a particular language or feel envy or jealousy in another?

Answer: If I were to speak to God, I would find myself, depending on which God it was, either speaking in Greek or Hebrew, or Latin, of course. Because I think Spanish-speaking to God is blasphemy. We all know that from Saint Jerome, and there's a translator! Why do you think that Michelangelo's famous statue of Moses has horns? That's Saint Jerome's fault. Ancient Hebrew doesn't have vowels, you had to guess what the vowels were from the consonants and the context. The word for "hero" and the word for "horn" evidently had similar consonants, and Saint Jerome wrote "horns." And in a Mediterranean country, it bears out that awful black humor bit about God as a cuckold anyway.

So, then, languages are different. I have a different effect when I read, because I read a little bit orally. That's awful because it slows you down so much. If you want to practice your linguistic ability, pick a language you're not too strong in. You begin slowing down. Although, I found that your eyesight has something to do with it, because I read more slowly now that I see more slowly. I've been trying to get through

proofs again after sixty years, but the print's not very big and it's taking me a long time. But you know, each language has its own virtue and that's the beauty of it. I wouldn't think of wanting to read a classic, and this is treason to our trade, in English, if I could read it in French. The sound of it, that's what we can't translate, and sounds are so important in language. I think that virtue of sound is what helps people get something out of a book in the original tongue which they don't get in English. And I think that a good translation proves itself because that doesn't become all that essential; you can usually read a bad translation and if the book is a masterpiece, you can get it. The Russians were introduced to English by Constance Garnett, God bless her. People criticize her translation, but she did do a wonderful job in getting the stuff out, then somebody else can work on it and do it better. But you can still get Dostoyevsky from her. My only criticism of Constance Garnett was when I first came upon her translations, in high school I guess it was, and I was puzzled by the style. How is it that Dostoyevsky, who obviously conceives this kind of character, sounds like Tolstoy, who has another kind of character? Their style seemed to be pretty much the same, and there was a screw loose somewhere.

Question: Do you often work with the authors of the texts you translate?

Answer: It depends on circumstance. Julio Cortázar and I got to know each other very well, we had already formed a good relationship through correspondence. And he went through my translation and would make little comments and suggestions, and beautiful drawings in the margins. He liked to scribble. I had never met García Márquez until I had done the translation, so I don't know, both of them worked out fine. I got to know Luis Rafael Sánchez, the Puerto Rican novelist, quite well. I visited him in Puerto Rico and went to a little beach and whatnot, and he helped with the translation of *Macho Camacho* because of some little comments and words that I wasn't quite sure of, Puerto Rican slang and all of that. The title of that book in English is actually the product of my wife, Clementine, she suggested it. We were pondering, what do you do with *La guaracha del Macho Camacho*? It's a beautiful, rhythmic title. *Guaracha* I probably could have gotten away with today, but at that time nobody on this side of the Caribbean knew what a *guaracha* was. *Macho* was coming in though, mainly through feminists. *Machismo* was coming into the vocabulary to such a degree that there was a fighter in New York, Camacho, who became known as "Macho Camacho." So, you could keep the rhyme there, it was a proper name after all. So, we called Luis Rafael Sánchez with Clem's suggestion of "beat." It's one of those words that contains many meanings. Since the *guaracha* is a song, it has a beat to it and the song goes through the whole novel as people are listening. But beat is also what the old foot policemen used to cover, you "cover your beat," reporters used to have a beat, sports beat, criminal beat, and so forth. And the novel does follow the characters as they move around: Benny is in his

Ferrari going this way, the senator follows his course, etc. So, it was like a beat and we got the nice play on words, so that was used.

But, I don't know if the author is all that helpful. Mario Vargas Llosa and I would talk and when he would make suggestions they were inevitably wrong. His English wasn't that good. Mario had the hubris to run for president of Peru, and a person who is going to run for president of any country has got to have a little bit of hubris. I keep thinking of when he lost the elections to Fujimori; I keep saying that was Fushia's revenge. In his book *The Green House, La casa verde*, Fushia was a Japanese Brazilian in the Amazon jungle, as we used to call it. (What do they do about "jungle gym"? Do children now play around on the "rain forest gym"?) In any case, Fushia was a villain of the peace and I think he was just getting his revenge on Mario, this Japanese-Peruvian running and beating him for president. We have to get into politics at the end.

Question: Do you only translate into English, or do you translate from English into other languages?

Answer: English is my native language, and like putting on the brakes, it's my instinctive language. My father, for example, who was from Cuba, became very fluent in English. He came here in his 20s to New York and he's more of a New Yorker in a way. But, his English was such that he could fool around with the language and all that, but when he cut himself, it was *carajo*. And so, that shows you, I say that your real native language is the language that you curse in and the language that you pray in. And, I curse in English. I'm pretty good at it! Someone said that the best curses come from people who deal with animals. You hear these people driving their cars, and they always use their horns and the F-word and things like that, but in the old days, if you ran into a teamster with a reluctant mule, he would unload a string of curses and insults never repeating himself for five minutes. Now that's linguistic ability!

BORDERLANDS AND HOMOSOCIAL
SITES OF TRANSGRESSION:
AN ANALYSIS OF ROLANDO HINOJOSA'S
PARTNERS IN CRIME

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Detective fiction narrating life on the US/Mexican border constitutes an ideal opportunity for the re-evaluation of cultural boundaries.¹ The detective's investigations into the truth behind a crime require an ability to negotiate the various epistemological crises brought about through the continual crossing of racial, national, and linguistic borders. One author who has repeatedly recounted such border crossings in fiction is Rolando Hinojosa, whose acclaimed "Klail City Death Trip Series" narrates life in the fictional Belken County on the Texas/Mexico border. Of the numerous novels in this series, however, his *Partners in Crime* takes especial advantage of the opportunities afforded by detective fiction in order to re-examine and often challenge readers' preconceptions of border life. Yet critics have not always looked favorably upon the novel. In his study on the Mexican-American border, for example, Thomas Torrans suggests that even though *Partners in Crime* does merit "consideration as a border novel" (154–55), he concludes that "little is depicted in maturity and growth of this cultural transformation. There are no philosophical insights, no sweeping observations. It's a young person's story" (156). Readers, it would seem, gain very little insight from the novel into the intricacies of border communities.

In this paper, I challenge such a restricted reading. Any discussion of *Partners in Crime* as detective fiction must begin by addressing Torrans's concerns regarding the novel's seeming lack of intricacy and "philosophical insights" (156). Employing Gloria Anzaldúa's notion of the borderlands as a "racial, ideological, cultural and biological cross-pollination" (99), a zone of contact in which epistemological crises abound, I suggest that the borderlands in *Partners in Crime* function as a heterogeneous locus of transgression which challenges our perceptions of reality and justice. I then analyze readers' renewed conceptions of justice more explicitly by exploring the ways in which Hinojosa problematizes crime in the novel. Crime is revealed as systemic, and the real focus becomes not murder, but unequal distributions of power between Anglos and Chicanos. In addition, Hinojosa complicates the situation even further by calling into question not only ethnic relations (Chicano vs. Anglo), but also gender relations as well. Therefore, in the final section of this paper, I present a treatment of masculinity,

particularly as revealed through a reading of the novel's homosocial spaces. In the end, I hope to defend *Partners in Crime* as more than simply a "young person's story" (Torrans 156), by acknowledging the various ways in which Hinojosa continually challenges readers' preconceived conceptions regarding everything from detective fiction to repressed homoerotic desires.

In his assessment of Hinojosa's narrative, Torrann posits that "[t]he plot is impeded by a plethora of trivia not germane to the tale, and the reader is introduced to far too many characters who have little depth and even less memorability" (156), and his criticisms are not unfounded. The novel opens with two criminal cases, neither of which is the principal case in the novel. Not until much later does the reader learn that Dutch Elder, a local prosecuting attorney, has been found murdered in the Kum Bak Inn. While the incident involves a triple homicide, there is no apparent connection between Dutch and the other two victims, who, as it turns out, are local drug traffickers. The murders are neither elaborate nor intricate. Of the five murders in the novel, three are unplanned, including the murder of Dutch Elder. Klaus Zilles ventures that *Partners in Crime* is probably "the only whodunit in the history of the crime mystery genre whose principal plot line is based on an absurd mix-up" (41). The central murder is a simple matter of mistaken identity. The murderers are finally caught, but the arrest is anti-climactic. While detective Buenrostro is able to determine the events leading up to the murder and arrest those who carried out the criminal act itself, the boss who ordered the hit gets away.

That would seem to give further proof to the novel's inadequacy. Detective stories are generally about justice above all.² They are concerned with reestablishing order in a situation where crime has brought about disorder. Stanley Hauerwas acknowledges this and further claims that detective fiction assumes that we "live in a morally comprehensible universe" with a fundamental obligation to make things right (207). Yet, readers must ask themselves what this type of justice implies. Hauerwas recognizes that it would not be unfair to challenge the kind of justice which detective fictions perpetuate and question "whether murder mysteries are inherently conservative literature in that detection of crime always favors the status quo" (281n24). Hauerwas goes on, however, to suggest that while there is some truth to the claim that detective fiction is conservative, such a generalization is clearly limited. Detective novels, he argues, may in fact challenge conservative viewpoints "by positioning the 'detective' on the edges of established society" (281n24). A detective on the edges of established society will be more prone to transgressive practices and thus capable of continually questioning and rejecting the received traditions of a particular community. If the detective lives on the edges of society, a nominal loss of intricacy—at the level of characterization—is necessary so that his perception of social justice remains transgressive. In a sense, therefore, the detective's character must necessarily appear out of place.

In the end, though, the notion of making things right implies a normative judgment and entails a reaffirmation of the order which was upset by the interruption of the crime. There is without a doubt a sense in which the pre-crime reality is preferred. The crime is solved and, presumably, rectified. What does it really mean, though, to make things right in *Partners in Crime* if the crime boss gets away? This question can only be answered by looking at the specific sites in which the crime occurs.

In his own essay “The Sense of Place,” Hinojosa considers a sense of place to be essential to his writing. The “adverb of place” continually haunts him in his creative works and he observes that a sense of place remained “not just a matter of importance; it became essential [...]. My works, then become studies of perceptions and values and decisions reached by [the characters] because those perceptions and values were fashioned and forged by the place and its history” (21). All space, as Hinojosa acknowledges, determines its inhabitants. Thus, the importance of space and place cannot be underestimated in detective fiction. Justice and the investigation of the crime as aberration are both predicated upon a detailed observation and narration of the most miniscule details of community life. Detective fiction must of necessity be as much about the sites of the crime, as the crime itself. In order to figure out “whodunit,” the readers must see where the crime was carried out and be able to follow the detective in putting together enough clues to solve the crime.

Narrations of life on the US/Mexico border often spotlight the tense relationship between the Anglo and Chicano communities. As many scholars have frequently observed, of course, one clear source of such contention is the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo in 1848. The complex history behind notions of migration and land ownership in the US Southwest—much of which was part of Mexico until the mid-nineteenth century—has led some Mexicans and Mexican Americans to assert their rights to the land. These historical struggles provide the essential backdrop for *Partners in Crime*. Susan Baker Sotelo, in her study of Chicano detective fiction, posits that in the novel “[o]ld-timer Tejano Mexicanos look back nostalgically to the past while the current generation views its life marginalized by the political, social and economic structures assembled and controlled by the Anglo American population” (57). Any hope for the future of Belken County, particularly for its *Tejano Mexicanos*, necessitates cooperation between the two communities and a constant negotiation of the cultural boundaries involved. Such border crossings, however, will inevitably require what Gloria Anzaldúa calls a “mestiza consciousness.”³

In her essay *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Anzaldúa seeks to promulgate a new “consciencia de la mestiza” and a theory of inclusivity that moves beyond entrenched habits and patterns whose rigidity can only lead to death (99–101). The goal is a celebration of contradiction and ambiguity. Her discussion of the US/Mexican border reveals the tension and transition of border spaces:

The U.S.-Mexican border *es una herida abierta* where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country—a border culture. Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish us from them. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants. (25)

Conceptualized as a spatial and socio-cultural zone of contact in which epistemological crises abound, this “herida abierta” offers an ideal setting for detective fiction. Since border cultures are in constant flux, their “vague and undetermined” nature creates a background which helps to further confound detectives whose search for the truth is already tenuous. For example, views of life on the border typically presume a pre-existing tension between the “transgressors” (the *mexicanos*) and those who are in control (the *gringos*). Those who currently have power—the whites and those who side with the whites—would then be the presumed legitimate inhabitants of the US Southwest. Anzaldúa challenges this legitimacy, of course, joining with other Chicano theorists in arguing that the US Southwest is Aztlán, the true homeland of Chicanos (23).⁴ Reclaiming the Chicanos’ lost homeland will necessitate a new *mestiza* consciousness. She suggests that “[b]ecause the future depends on the breaking down of paradigms, it depends on the straddling of two or more cultures. By creating a new mythos—that is, a change in the way we perceive reality, the way we see ourselves, and the ways we behave—*la mestiza* creates a new consciousness” (102).

There is no doubt that Detective Buenrostro, the sole Chicano on the detective squad, represents this new consciousness in *Partners in Crime*. By availing himself of various “pistas culturales” and an acquaintance with everyone in Belken County, Buenrostro is the most capable of negotiating both Anglo and Chicano cultures and thus of solving the crime at the end of the novel.⁵ His perception of reality is clearly *mestiza* and threatens the presumed legitimacy and ownership of those in power. Hauerwas’s assertion that detectives exist on the “edges of society” is clearly applicable in the case of Buenrostro. His constant presence in the novel ensures that race relations between Chicanos and Anglos, even when not explicitly mentioned, are indisputably part of the novel’s sense of place.

This intra-community tension is explicitly detailed in *Partners in Crime*, and the epigraph to the novel reveals its centrality: “And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household” (Matthew 10: 36). This dichotomy invariably sets up the ever-popular “us” versus “them” mentality, which plays out in much detective fiction as a battle between “good” and “evil.” This battle is clearly present along ethnic lines in *Partners in Crime*. But one of the most intriguing aspects of the novel is the way in which this battle is at the same time problematized, precisely through the tensions between Anglos and Chicanos. The novel portrays the crime wave in Belken County as resulting more from corrupt practices in politics and banking—crimes of the Anglos—than from the drug

use and violence perpetrated by drug traffickers—presumably Chicano or Mexican. In addition, the unequal distribution of power between *gringos* and *mexicanos* is a constant presence in *Partners in Crime*, always latent, but erupting from time to time when tensions flare—usually due to land disputes and legal struggles between those with power and those without and stemming unquestionably from historical struggles on the border. The real focus of the novel is not the crime per se, but rather the axis of power, just as in other works by Hinojosa.⁶

In *Partners in Crime*, the dramatic increase in international drug trafficking in the Rio Grande Valley results in a corresponding increase in federal and foreign bureaucratic presence. Hinojosa's fictional sense of place is being transgressed not only by drug smugglers, but also by every bureaucratic entity imaginable: FBI, DEA, US Border Patrol, US Department of State, and even its twin from across the border, *Relaciones Exteriores* (*Partners* 159–60). As Sotelo observes, this amounts to a “full scale bureaucratic invasion” (74). As one might expect, this intrusion of outsiders could potentially undermine the long-established axis of power in Belken County.⁷ Sotelo suggests that “the intrusion of drug trafficking in the valley threatens not only what has been good about this community, peace and relatively little crime, but also is disrupting what has been wrong, the bureaucratic monopoly of the good ol’ boy network” (74). The most lasting impression from this novel is not the motive of individual criminals, but rather the power of bureaucracy to shape and form the inhabitants of Belken County. That the criminals who committed the murders at the Kum Bak Inn turn out to be Mexicans is not what is critical to the novel. The novel is driven not by the criminals’ status as Mexican, nor their motive in committing the three murders, but rather their status as intruders. They are outsiders threatening established power structures in the valley. In the end, the real bad guys in the novel are not the murderers; the real bad guy is not Captain Gómez Solís of the Tamaulipas police force in Barrones, Mexico—the alleged mastermind who gets away at the end of the novel. The real bad guys are much closer to home. They are the “foes of his own household” who wield power in Belken County.

The families with power in the novel—Klail, Blanchard, and Cooke—were practicing for generations what one might call a legitimized robbery of the original *tejano mexicano* land (Sotelo 74). At the same time, the *tejano mexicanos* and the Mexican neighbors were limited to small-time crimes and the limited smuggling of marijuana across the border. One might say there was an unequal distribution of crime. The arrival of the new cartel disrupts this unbalanced criminality. But, the new large-scale drug traffickers are able to transgress the established borders of Belken County only because of the socioeconomic effects of this previous unequal distribution of crime across ethnic lines. The dealers are assisted by underpaid bank

tellers who supplement their own meager incomes by agreeing to launder the drug money.⁸ The implication, of course, is that were it not for the socio-economic inequalities, Dutch's murder might not have happened.

In this light, established conceptions of justice are continually questioned, and the line between good guys and bad guys is thus redrawn. The real crime in the novel is not the triple homicide. Dutch's mix-up murder merely sheds light on the broader injustices of the borderlands and the US/Mexican border dispute. Hinojosa's detective story ultimately reveals the unequal distribution of power and the 130-year crime of stealing land from its original inhabitants.

Once the overall sense of border places in the novel is undermined—that is, once the hegemonic power is challenged and readers begin to question received conceptions of justice and distribution of power—other sites of transgression become more visible. Alongside ethnic injustice, one of the most significant examples of unequal power relations concerns gender performance in Belken County. Rosaura Sánchez has noted the absence of a serious female presence in Hinojosa's novels, suggesting that “[o]ne would have to assume that the Valley is primarily a male world, with women as bed partners and not much else” (86). There are a few exceptions, of course, but for the most part women do not figure prominently in Hinojosa's novels, and *Partners in Crime* is no exception. For that reason, male homosocial sites—in which women are notably absent—deserve particular attention.

Male homosocial spaces are generally considered sites of male-bonding, such as workplaces, bars, etc., in which men interact with other men in a manner typically understood to be non-sexual. However, to label these sites “homosocial” conjures obvious connotations to sexuality. Eve Sedgwick in her study *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* notes the obvious associations between “homosocial” and “homosexual”:

“Homosocial” is a word occasionally used in history and the social sciences, where it describes social bonds between persons of the same sex; it is a neologism, obviously formed by analogy with “homosexual,” and just as obviously meant to be distinguished from “homosexual.” In fact, it is applied to such activities as “male bonding,” which may, as in our society, be characterized by intense homophobia, fear and hatred of homosexuality. (1)

In other words, homosocial spaces can represent sites in which homophobia, not homosexuality, defines the structure of men's relationships with one another. Sedgwick's goal in her analysis is to “draw the ‘homosocial’ back in to the orbit of ‘desire,’ of the potentially erotic” (1).

Such a move clearly challenges the non-sexual nature of these all-male spaces, thereby hypothesizing “the potential unbrokenness of a continuum between homosocial and homosexual—a continuum whose visibility, for men, in our society, is radically disrupted” (1–2).⁹ Such a move would also go contrary to much extant scholarship

concerning historical power relationships. Sedgwick observes that “much of the most useful recent writing about patriarchal structures suggests that ‘obligatory heterosexuality’ is built into male-dominated kinship systems, or that homophobia is a necessary consequence of such patriarchal institutions as heterosexual marriage” (3). It is for this reason that these homosocial spaces are often so revealing, particularly concerning power relationships within a community.

Typical sites of homosocial male interaction are present in many novels, but they abound in contemporary novels of detective fiction in which, as noted above, the detective works in conjunction with a larger police force, or as in the case of Detective Buenrostro, under the supervision of the office of the District Attorney. In *Partners in Crime*, readers find the typical homosocial sites: political offices, which are often held exclusively by men; higher executive offices in the bank;¹⁰ the law offices of Pratt and Hoskins; and, of course, the Belken County Homicide Squad.¹¹ But, in addition to these standard sites, there are also more overtly transgressive homosocial spaces which merit attention, not only because of what they might signify in themselves, but also because of how they in turn influence readers’ interpretations of the aforementioned homosocial spaces.

The clearest example of what I am calling “transgressive” homosocial spaces in the novel is the Kum Bak Inn. According to Torrans, the Inn’s “overtly sexualized spelling” is childishly immature and crude, and represents further evidence that *Partners in Crime* is a “young person’s story” (156). On the contrary, I find this to be a feigned immaturity, thereby paralleling the deceptive and problematized nature of the real bad guys mentioned above. The spelling calls attention to the Inn as a sexual site. Yet, references to the Inn are almost exclusively homosocial. Readers witness the significant presence of only one woman at the Inn, and that presence—as I indicate below—is noticeably problematic. If, as recent work in masculinity studies asserts, “obligatory heterosexuality’ is built into male-dominated kinship systems” (Sedgwick 3), whereby homophobia becomes a structurally necessary component of male homosocial spaces, the sexual references to the Kum Bak Inn become particularly transgressive. A sexualized, male, homosocial space within what is considered to be a very macho culture challenges readers’ preconceptions regarding accepted sexual practices in Latino culture. That is, Hinojosa’s description of the Kum Bak Inn forces readers to consider the possibility of homosexual activity among Latino men.

The inn is referenced repeatedly throughout the novel since it is the site of the triple homicide, and only in one instance do we witness the significant presence of a woman at the inn. During the investigation, Irene Paredes, a member of one of the lab teams, visits the Kum Bak Inn to gather evidence after the murders. Her presence, as it turns out, is not without complication. We first learn that the “boys” are inside picking up .45 cartridges when Irene enters the scene:

Irene Paredes walked toward them. There was blood on the plastic bags covering her lab shoes. The rich farm dirt was clinging to the bloody plastic. She was trying, with little success, to appear calm, at ease.

Rafe Buenrostro walked down to meet her and not unkindly said: "Before you say anything 'I,' the answer is yes. You can get used to it. It's like anything else, it's like everything else." (120)

Irene's response to the not unkind words of Buenrostro is, "I don't want to get used to it, Rafe" (120). While she disrupts the exclusively homosocial site, she is clearly "out of place," thus serving to accentuate the site as a proper of men. And, though it is implied that it is the blood to which she does not want to become accustomed, other readings are entirely possible.

Furthermore, the fact that the principal victim—Dutch Elder—was killed in the Kum Bak Inn as he left the restroom further sexualizes the Kum Bak as a homosocial space. According to Lee Edelman, public restrooms can be viewed as spatialized threats to the stability of heterosexual identity. The restroom is, according to Edelman, a site of the "loosening or relaxation of sphincter control" (563). He maintains that "the private enclosure of the toilet stall signals the potential anxiety at issue in the West when the men's room becomes the locus not of urinary but intestinal relief. For the satisfaction that such relief affords abuts dangerously onto homophobically abjectified desires" (563). In addition, as Calvin Thomas notes in his study of representations of the male body, the "stalling and destalling of masculine subjectivity" provokes an anxiety which "serves as the unnerving reminder not only of defecation but, by nervous extension, of that overdetermined opening or invagination within the male" (80).¹² This invagination of male identity is critical to Thomas' argument and merits an extended quote:

That homophobic masculinity construes anality as the hallmark of the recognizably queer suggests that there may always potentially be something anally queer—abjectifying and therefore effeminizing—about any recognizable mark. If, again, "I mark(s) the division" between, say, my self-presence and my self-alienation, between private self and public meaning, then I also furtively recognize, in the mark of otherness that "I" always is, the potential dissolution of whatever determinate entities are erected on either side of that division into an unstable, differential relation. (799)

This division of self and identity is central to Thomas's thesis concerning the relationship between homosexuality and writing, and what he terms "the anal dynamics of the self-alienations of language" (72). The act of writing, he suggests, "divides me from myself and potentially challenges the integrity and reliability of the very identity I am trying to guarantee" (78). This self-division cannot help but be "feminizing and queering" in a society whose patriarchy promotes "obligatory heterosexuality" and even homophobia (Thomas 80; Sedgwick 3). For my purposes here, the crisis of identity provides additional motivation for exploring Hinojosa's intentions in writing/narrating the homosexual presence in the novel.¹³

As noted above, “mistaken identity” murders are extremely rare in detective fiction. Zilles has gone so far as to claim that this is perhaps “the only whodunit in the history of the crime mystery genre whose principal plot line is based on an absurd mix-up” (41). There is clear evidence, as suggested above, that the “absurd mix-up” serves to shift focus away from the triple homicide and toward the historic border disputes and explosive relations between Anglos and Chicanos. Yet, the mix-up might also signal a re-interpretation of Dutch Elder’s identity. Not only is he mistaken for the crime boss, but because the murderers killed Elder with a shotgun and “[t]ore Dutch’s face off” (120), he is also without a face. Elder is referred to repeatedly during the investigation as “the man without a face” (123), and thus his identity would have to be verified through some other means by the Lab Man (132). This confusion, when coupled with the Kum Bak as a spatialized threat to Elder’s heterosexual identity, provides further impetus for readers to question all aspects of his identity, including sexual.

If these two examples—the Kum Bak Inn as a sexualized homosocial site and Elder’s mistaken identity—were the only homosexual allusions in the novel, perhaps they could be dismissed. Yet, homosexuality is also present as what several critics call the “false clue” in second murder, where the victim’s homosexuality is “assumed to be the motive for his murder” (Sotelo 70). Sotelo suggests that this second false start in the novel “points out that corruption in government agencies is to be expected and that the most obvious motive, the one handed to you—homosexuality in this case—should always be questioned” (70). The above discussion of sexualized homosocial spaces, however, ought to preclude such an outright dismissal of homosexuality as a motive in the crime. To include sexual preference as the so-called “false motive” and not another factor such as race was a conscious decision by Hinojosa and provides further evidence in suggesting homosexuality as a prevalent theme in the novel. In addition to the homosexual victim, at least one employee at the offices of Pratt and Hoskins is a practicing homosexual (60–61). Otis Krindler, the “business and office manager” at the law offices is, according to one of Buenrostro’s informants, “de los otros” (41). The abiding role of homosexuality in the novel cannot be denied. And, for a novel set in Belken County, Texas, where the unequal power structures favor an Anglo, heterosexual population, this is deeply significant.

To conclude, I would like to revisit once again the charges leveled by Torrains against Hinojosa’s *Partners in Crime*, as quoted at the outset of this paper. No reader of *Partners in Crime* could justifiably claim that it is a smoothly flowing story, and thus Torrains’s criticism certainly seem valid. Nevertheless, if the US/Mexican border is, as Anzaldúa avers, “una herida abierta” (25), I cannot help but respond to Torrains’s critique with a question of my own: how precisely does one smoothly narrate an open wound? That is the real issue at stake in *Partners in Crime*. Any attempt to deal truthfully with the realities of the borderlands will necessarily be unsmooth and perhaps

awkward, and the plot will likely be “impeded by a plethora of trivia not germane to the tale” (Torrans 156). Nevertheless, to dismiss the novel as a “young person’s story” overlooks the underlying meaning behind such a style of narration. In the end, I think that Hinojosa has quite subtly narrated that open wound that we call the US/Mexican border. By complicating and manipulating these cultural boundaries, Hinojosa seeks to open his readers’ eyes to the reality of border culture. His goal, I think, is not so much to uncover a simple crime, but rather to force readers to ask different questions than merely, “whodunit?”¹⁴ Hinojosa’s novel forces our eyes to adopt new habits of observation and to re-examine preconceived notions of fiction, justice, and the dynamics of homosocial spaces.

NOTES

¹ I owe special thanks to Susan Carvalho at the University of Kentucky for her comments and suggestions on early versions of this essay and to the University of Kentucky Graduate School, without whose financial support this project would not have been possible.

² In his essay on detective fiction, G. K. Chesterton notes the importance of the detective as an agent of social justice: “The romance of police activity keeps in some sense before the mind the fact that civilization itself is the most sensational of departures and the most romantic of rebellions. By dealing with the unsleeping sentinels who guard the outposts of society, it tends to remind us that we live in an armed camp, making war with a chaotic world, and that the criminals, the children of chaos, are nothing but the traitors within our gates. When the detective in a police romance stands alone, and somewhat fatuously fearless amid the knives and fists of a thieves’ kitchen, it does certainly serve to make us remember that it is the agent of social justice who is the original and poetic figure. [...] It reminds us that the whole of noiseless and unnoticeable police management by which we are ruled and protected is only a successful knight-errantry” (6).

³ My conception of border crossings and use of the term “borderlands” relies heavily on Anzaldúa’s position, as will become clearer as the paper progresses.

⁴ For more on the meaning of Aztlán in her thought, see especially (23–35).

⁵ For a discussion of these “pistas culturales” and Buenrostro’s unique Chicano position in the novel, see Taboada (122).

⁶ For a comprehensive examination of the “making of Texas”—and the resulting border crisis—as represented in Hinojosa’s fiction, see Zilles’s article on Hinojosa (145–93). Zilles’s study also includes a very helpful and detailed collection of short summaries of the plots of Hinojosa’s other novels.

⁷ For a discussion of the power of the media in *Partners in Crime*, see Sotelo (73). Much more could certainly be said regarding the relationship between this “good ol’ boy bureaucracy” and the media, particularly in relation to the District Attorney, Harvey Bollinger. Yet, Bollinger plays various roles in the novel. As the D.A. in Belken County, he is thus the person who oversees the Homicide Squad. He is also the direct reason why Dutch Elder was forced to take a vacation, and thus a distant, indirect cause in his murder (*Partners* 100–05).

⁸ Readers learn in the novel that one of these bank tellers is Black (113), but the ethnic identity of the other tellers is not revealed. Jehu, reflecting on the tellers’ involvement in the crimes, thinks “Thievery? Why not? They’re all underpaid; Noddy thinks I’m crank on this, but the job’s a damn drudge, they handle most of the cash, and then we don’t pay them enough” (114). Both Rafe and Jehu are aware of this unjust situation. Jehu protects the two informant tellers as much as possible and plans to hire them should they lose their jobs as a result of the investigation.

⁹ This disrupted continuity is not present in women's sites. Sedgwick writes: "[T]he diacritical opposition between 'homosocial' and the 'homosexual' seems to be much less thorough and dichotomous for women, in our society, than for men. At this particular historical moment, an intelligible continuum of aims, emotions, and valuations links lesbianism with the other forms of women's attention to women: the bond of mother and daughter, for instance, the bond of sister and sister, women's friendship, 'networking,' and the active struggles of feminism" (2). There are discontinuities, to be sure, but in the end, "the adjective 'homosocial' as applied to women's bonds [...] need not be pointedly dichotomized as against 'homosexual'; it can intelligibly denominate the entire continuum" (2–3).

¹⁰ While the tellers and secretaries are female, they typically occupy other spaces in the bank and are excluded from the bank executives' offices during male-male interaction. See, for example, the meeting between Jehu Malacara and Sam Dorson (*Partners* 82–83).

¹¹ The relationship and interaction between the five men on the Homicide Squad—Sam Dorson, Culley Donovan, Joe Molden, Peter Hauer, and Rafe Buenrostro—occupy the majority of the novel.

¹² Such discussion of openings and closings forces one to pause and re-consider Sotelo's choice of terminology in describing the novel. She writes: "Hermeneutic closure, assumed to be basic to the detective genre, is not part of *Partners in Crime*" (71).

¹³ The homosexual presence in the novel parallels very nicely Anzaldúa's concept of "borderlands." She states: "Only gay men have had the courage to expose themselves to the woman inside them and to challenge the current masculinity" (106).

¹⁴ In no way does that mean that the "whodunit?" question is without significance. As G. K. Chesterton explains: "It is good that the average man should fall into the habit of looking imaginatively at ten men in the street even if it is only on the chance that the eleventh might be a notorious thief" (4).

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THE MAN IN THE MIRRORED MASK:
ANONYMITY AS DISCURSIVE STRATEGY
IN SUBCOMANDANTE MARCOS'S
LETTERS TO THE PRESS

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Since the inception of the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) in 1994, its figurehead, Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, has received widespread international attention and has enjoyed a notable celebrity status, owed in part to the mystery surrounding his identity. In February 1995, former Mexican president Ernesto Zedillo revealed that Marcos was in fact Rafael Guillén, a former professor of philosophy trained in the theories of Althusser and liberation theology. Although Marcos has rejected this theory and insisted on maintaining his anonymity—an attitude reflected by numerous supporters, who have adopted the slogan “We are all Marcos”—he openly acknowledges his university education and his position as an outsider to the indigenous population that he represents. Despite this profound difference in cultural identity, Marcos has insisted that his role is simply that of an interpreter, that his word is the word of the Indians, and that he writes within the limits of what his superiors allow (*Yo, Marcos* 20).

In this context, perhaps the most significant contribution of the EZLN and Subcomandante Marcos to the field of cultural theory is their inherent response to the issue of subaltern representation, particularly in regards to Gayatri Spivak's famous question, “Can the subaltern speak?” Critics have debated whether or not the Zapatista Indians can speak and to what degree they are able to achieve agency despite having to speak through a *mestizo* representative. My own interpretation is that Marcos's role in the mediation of the indigenous voice is undeniable. However, I also sense that to a certain extent, this dualistic perception of subaltern representation in the context of the Zapatista uprising limits our understanding of the role of Subcomandante Marcos within the movement and his manipulation of anonymity as a political and discursive strategy for reinstating (or attempting to reinstate) indigenous agency in Mexican society. As I hope to show, the semiotics of the ski mask and the fundamental tenets of the Zapatista insurrection depend heavily on parody and paradox. While this could also be said of Marcos's communiqués themselves, what most interests me here is the way in which these two devices structure the political objectives of the EZLN as a whole and the function of Marcos within that framework. By shifting the emphasis

from subaltern representation to the theoretical model of paradox and parody, I hope to come to a deeper understanding of Marcos's mediation in the movement and of the social critique that the EZLN imparts.

Perhaps the most readily evident example of the significance of these rhetorical figures lies in the visual iconography of the movement itself: that is, the ski mask or bandana used to conceal the face of insurgents while distinguishing them from civilians. Naomi Klein observes that "[...] the paradox of Marcos and the Zapatistas is that, despite the masks, the non-selves, the mystery, their struggle is about the opposite of anonymity—it is about the right to be seen. When the Zapatistas took up arms and said, *Ya basta!* in 1994, it was a revolt against their invisibility" (116). In this regard, the ski mask reflects an ironic commentary on the problematic invisibility of Indians in society: to be seen, they must present a physical testament to that very invisibility. The resulting indistinction between them, in turn, suggests a parody of yet another racist cultural phenomenon: the tendency to homogenize the indigenous population, considering them a uniform mass of equally Indian and indistinct faces. Thus, the very act of donning the mask of anonymity implies a satirical response to racial discrimination. In this sense, the Indians of Chiapas wear the ski mask only in hopes of removing it. As Klein writes: "The Zapatistas are 'the voice that arms itself to be heard. The face that hides itself to be seen'" (117).

This transitory function of the ski mask suggests a common motif in the EZLN communiqués and Marcos's letters to the press: he frequently declares that the movement, as well as various symbolic and functional elements of it, constitute merely a means to an end and exist only with the aspiration of vanishing. In the text *Yo, Marcos*, he explains that "At the tip of the Zapatista rifles, you will see a white ribbon: this signifies the true function behind their use, it means that these are not weapons to be used in combat with civil society. It means, like everything here, a paradox: weapons that aspire to be useless" (120).¹ In a communiqué published in June of 1994, Marcos explains that the Zapatista insurgents have adopted a suicidal profession; that is, one that exists only to disappear (*Cartas y manifiestos* 51). "We became soldiers," he declares, "so that one day soldiers would no longer be needed" (*Yo, Marcos* 64). Likewise, Marcos maintains that one of the many functions of the ski mask is that of reinforcing the *anticaudillismo* of the Zapatistas, despite his clear ideological indebtedness to figures such as Emiliano Zapata and Che Guevara, and insists that when the insurrection succeeds he will take off his mask and cease to exist. The EZLN abounds in paradoxes: it is guerrilla warfare without combat—there have only been three days of physical combat in the fifteen years of the movement's existence—and an armed revolt whose principal weapon is language. It is an indigenous insurrection led by an educated *mestizo* who calls himself

Subcomandante and constantly undermines his individuality and importance, despite his unique narrative style and his central role in this “war of words.”

These examples demonstrate the fundamental paradox underlying the Zapatista uprising and thus provide a model with which to read the symbolic framework of the movement as a whole as well as the role of Marcos within it. Part of the ambiguity surrounding the image of Marcos is due to the rich polysemy of the ski mask. The ‘Sup’ constantly plays with his own anonymity as a means of suggesting the universality of the revolt, as evidenced in his famous declaration that Marcos is gay in San Francisco, black in South Africa, Asian in Europe, Palestine in Israel; in short, that Marcos is any human, that he is all oppressed minorities resisting and crying, “¡Ya basta! Enough!” (*Cartas y manifiestos* 71–72). In this sense, *Marcos* is less a man than a discourse that can be taken up and transmitted by any dissident voice. *Marcos* constitutes a floating signifier, a symbol whose signification depends on its context and on the particular ideological objectives of the EZLN at a given point in time. *Marcos*, or the ski mask (since ultimately they serve the same discursive function), embodies a series of metaphors that comment on and critique various aspects of society, the government, capitalism, neoliberalism, and racial hierarchy, to name only a few. This fluidity, for Manuel Vásquez Montalbán, results in the construction of an alternative revolutionary poetics (143–44). The ‘Sup,’ in turn, has acknowledged that *Marcos* refers less to himself than to the mask that he wears, to the role that he plays, noting that Marcos is ultimately only a persona and that the ski mask itself is what matters (150). Or, in the words of José de la Colina, the mask is the message (365).

However, I contend that the polyvalence of the ski mask in the context of the EZLN owes just as much to Marcos’s clever manipulation of his own fluid identity as to any symbolism inherent in the figure of the mask itself. The ‘Sup’ demonstrates a keen awareness of his ability to inhabit both worlds, to speak two cultural languages, and thus employs this strategic position in an attempt to bridge the gap between them. He figuratively shuttles back and forth between Mexican civil society and the indigenous population, including himself in both groups and speaking on their behalf. In this regard, his use of pronouns throughout is particularly revealing. In a curiously ambivalent moment in *Yá, Marcos*, the ‘Sup’ speaks of “nosotros los indígenas” (‘we Indians’) (108) only to refer, two pages later, to “nosotros los educados” (‘we, the educated’) (110). I’d like to quote him in Spanish here, since the sense of this strange use of pronouns is somewhat lost in the English translation. He writes:

Los indígenas tenemos el sagrado derecho de ser escuchados. Por eso les pido a nombre de mis compañeros todos que, si es posible, hagan el esfuerzo de buscar la forma de ser escuchados, porque entendemos bien que todos los indígenas del mundo somos los más despreciados, los más marginados, los más olvidados. (108; my emphasis)

Meanwhile, two pages later, he recounts that “Nosotros conocíamos los medios, su lógica, su funcionamiento, porque los estudiamos cuando éramos jóvenes, *cuando estábamos en la preparatoria, en la universidad* [...]” (110; my emphasis). These passages provide two examples of this tendency to vacillate between the first and third person; he both includes and excludes himself from the indigenous collective and from intellectuals. Of course, these two categories are not inherently mutually exclusive; however, his emphasis on his own education in contrast with the Indians in the movement suggests an attempt to distinguish these two groups as a means of creating a space for self-authorization. Additionally, this use of the first-person plural pronoun demonstrates Marcos’s ability to manipulate his audience as well as his cognizance of the impossibility of truly belonging to either group. By effectively inhabiting the interstice between two clearly divided sectors of society—Indians and *ladinos*—Marcos reduces the distance between the two and creates a point of contact. His recurrent references to the universality of Marcos as a discourse and his insistence that anyone can wear the mask suggest the function of his own anonymity as a space in which differences merge together and become irrelevant. In an interview with Vásquez Montalbán, Marcos declares that “The Zapatista movement is a symbol that resists being sacrificed within a world of standards. All differences are either incorporated, ceasing to be differences, or are eliminated” (106–07). However, he immediately follows this statement with an apparent contradiction: “We’re not proposing any kind of revenge but instead something much more creative. We’re proposing a society with a place for us in it, but that doesn’t mean we hope to homogenize that society. We’re not suggesting that everyone should be Indians and that everything that’s not indigenous should disappear” (107). So how is Marcos able to declare that the Zapatista revolt aims to eliminate differences while simultaneously maintaining heterogeneity?

Perhaps one way to approach this issue is by answering one paradox with yet another: that is, with Derrida’s model of the law of genre. Derrida presumes that for every genre—that is, for every artificial category regulated by a set of characteristics—there exists something that distinguishes it from other genres. This indicator, which he calls the re-mark of genre, does not pertain to the genre itself but rather exists outside it while also participating in the very process of categorization. In this sense, the re-mark of genre constitutes a paradoxical site where the demarcations of classification reveal the arbitrary nature of the terms while simultaneously reinforcing the basic structure of the system. As Joshua Lund explains in *The Impure Imagination*, “The limits established by genre only exist as such through the inherent possibility of transgression” (13). In this sense, Derrida’s model points to a dialectical relationship between the rule and its exception, which leads Lund to conclude that the concept of racial purity in fact depends on hybridity to maintain its legitimacy (15). The exception, rather than challenging the rule, reaffirms it.

With these concepts in mind, we might ask whether Marcos's own hybridity also has the effect of reinforcing racial and socioeconomic divisions rather than erasing them. The very use of the first person plural pronoun, for example, seems to reaffirm the fundamental opposition between Indians and *ladinos*, since "we" cannot exist without its counterpart, "them." Marcos cannot effectively include himself in one group without also excluding himself from the other. According to Lund's model, hybridity—in this case, Marcos's construction of himself as both *mestizo* and subaltern—in the end only refers back to the fundamental opposition between these two elements. Yet, we might ask to what extent this re-mark of genre, like the figure of the ski mask, also assumes an ironic function within the context of the Zapatista insurrection. If the mask itself operates as a means of emphasizing the very problem that the Zapatistas wish to eliminate (their invisibility in society), it stands to reason that their mediation through Marcos might constitute yet another symbolic manifestation of their predicament. At the very least, we must assume that the Zapatistas are aware of the problematic nature of having a non-indigenous spokesperson; to presume otherwise seems to replicate the age-old colonial illusion of the Other as naïve and incapable of complex cultural interpretation. Thus, to fully restore indigenous agency in this context is to recognize the possibility that the Indians of Chiapas manipulate their reliance on Marcos as a means of criticizing that very dependency. In this way, the paradox of an indigenous uprising led by a *mestizo* testifies to the necessity for the insurrection in the first place. Furthermore, if parody functions as a means of revealing the inherent absurdity of the text or cultural practice in question, we might ask to what extent Marcos, as the re-mark of genre, exposes the division between *mestizaje* and indigeneity as ultimately arbitrary and therefore problematic. By positing his own figure as a model for hybridity, as a metaphorical space in which opposites coexist and differences dissolve, he ultimately problematizes not cultural diversity itself, but rather the epistemological basis of racial difference. In this way, Marcos's attempt to universalize the struggle of the Zapatistas and the symbolic function of the ski mask, identifying himself with all minorities resisting oppression, manifests a shift in emphasis from race itself to its societal effects.

Given this apparently inextricable relationship between the metaphor of the mask, parody, and paradox and the inherent critique of society that they produce, I would like to close by turning to another recurrent motif throughout Subcomandante Marcos's letters to the press: that of the mirror. I would argue, in fact, that this image encompasses the various symbolic functions of the mask and of Marcos himself. The political critique of the Zapatistas, in the form of parody, functions as a sort of dark mirror, reflecting the defects of Mexican society. At one point, exasperated by the constant inquiries into his true identity, Marcos declares: "If you want to know what face is behind the mask, pick up a mirror and take a look" (*Yo, Marcos* 15). While this

statement reiterates the gesture of universalization mentioned above, its significance also lies in the fusion of the symbol of the mask with that of the mirror: rather than concealing the identity of the face behind it, the ski mask ultimately reveals the true face of Mexico. Read in its original context of a communiqué published in June of 1995, Marcos's fable, entitled "The Story of Mirrors," confirms the notion that the basic political strategy of the EZLN most often takes on the form of parody. In this text, Marcos constructs a myth of the creation of the moon: a small lake, forgotten by the gods, is condemned to move across the night sky, reflecting the light of the earth. This fable then provides the structure of the communiqué itself: the moon spends each night seeking her own reflection on the earth but only finds the corruption of the Mexican government and the ills of society. In this sense, as Brian Gollnick observes, Marcos posits the moon as an image of the EZLN's political critique by representing it as a mirror that reflects the defects of the world (163). Ultimately, however, the 'Sup' suggests that the mirror, like the ski mask as well as Marcos himself, is only a means to an end, an instrument for social change that is to disappear once it has served its purpose. In the final section of the communiqué, entitled "The Window to See to the Other Side," he writes that "Scoured from the other side, a mirror ceases to be a mirror and becomes a window pane. Mirrors serve to see from this side, and windows serve to see what is on the other side. Mirrors are made to be scoured. Windows are made to be broken... and to be crossed through to the other side..." (*Cartas y manifiestos* 297).

Given Marcos's occasional references to his own function as a *marco* ('frame') of a window to the indigenous people (Vásquez Montalbán 150), we might well ask what role he plays as the dividing line between inside and outside, as the re-mark that frames indigeneity, that participates without belonging to the genre itself? Furthermore, this liminal position mirrors the paradoxical function of parody: that is, the fine line that exists between legitimation and subversion. In terms strikingly similar to those of Derrida, Linda Hutcheon writes that "parody presupposes both a law and its transgression, both repetition and difference, and therein lies the key to its double potential: it can be both conservative and transformative, both 'mystificatory' and critical" (101). In this light, to cast the issue of Subcomandante Marcos's role in the EZLN in the terms of Spivak's model seems to overlook the complexities of mediation. Perhaps the more relevant question is whether Marcos's subversion of racial difference ultimately overshadows the simultaneous legitimation that it implies—in other words, whether the mask truly reveals more than it hides.

NOTES

¹ Given the interdisciplinary nature of the conference where this paper was presented, most quotes in Spanish have been translated into English. These translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

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TUPI OR NOT TUPI:
JOSÉ DE ANCHIETA'S DIDACTIC
THEATRE AMONG THE
TUPI-GUARANI AND OTHERS

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Since the Early Modern manifestation of the Jesuit order, theatre has been an essential part of their training and didacticism, whether amongst themselves or those they wished to convert. In the early Jesuit schools, the teachers and students would write and perform plays in Latin as an appropriate learning exercise “to teach the spoken arts, rhetoric, and Latin” (Wasserman 75). It was as much a part of the classroom as was reading, writing, and arithmetic. It comes as no surprise, then, that the Jesuits in Brazil, including José de Anchieta, utilized theatre, mostly *autos*, a form of religious drama, as a way of teaching and connecting with the indigenous population, as well as others living in the Portuguese colony. Anchieta’s *autos* were quite pedagogically effective because of the variety of languages they employed, dramatic spectacle, and the inclusion of recognizable characters, current social and cultural practices, familiar political situations, and recent history.

Although José de Anchieta was not the first in Brazil to write or employ the *auto* form, many critics argue that he is the precursor of Brazilian literature, while others deny his status as a Brazilian or even a Portuguese writer. It is his hybrid origin that some scholars may cite as reason to exclude him from the Spanish, Portuguese, or Brazilian canons; however, I believe that it is this very hybridity that enriched his literature in the sixteenth century. Born in Tenerife in the Canary Islands, in 1534, he was educated in Portugal and joined the Companhia de Jesús there in 1551 (Hamilton 407). Anchieta set foot in Bahia just two years later as a Portuguese-educated Spaniard, and, in 1554, he and twelve other Jesuits founded the Colégio de São Paulo in Piratininga. The courses the priests gave in this school dealt not only with Portuguese and Latin, but also Tupi, which the Jesuits referred to as the “grego da terra” (Hamilton 408). Renata Wasserman notes that the Jesuits provided education first “to the Amerindian inhabitants of religious missions, while the sons of the colonists were admitted to the mission school almost as an afterthought” (75). This focus on the indigenous Brazilian population and their language is essential to an understanding of the function and efficacy of Anchieta’s *autos*.

The presence of the language of the Tupi-Guarani in Anchieta's *autos* is one of the more surprising and essential elements of their character. According to D. Lee Hamilton, besides creating a "gramática do tupi," the Jesuit order "sempre urgiu o estudo da lingua indígena em qualquer região para onde fosse um dos seus missionários" (409). Perhaps Anchieta's own experience with code-switching in Portugal endowed him with a certain empathy for both Jesuit missionaries and the indigenous people whose interactions with one another were becoming more and more frequent. This linguistic empathy may be one of the reasons why he chose to pen his *autos* in Spanish, Portuguese, Tupi, and sometimes Latin. He was probably also motivated by the understanding that the inclusion of these languages assured the inclusion of all potential audience members in the dramatic action, whether they be Tupi-Guarani, Jesuits, other colonists, or even visiting dignitaries. In the amalgamation of different cultures, traditions, and practices, the combination of these languages was the perfect communicative, not to mention catechistic, tool.

Apart from language, spectacle was an extremely important didactic element of the *autos*. In observing the Tupi-Guarani, a noted Jesuit historian of the time period named Fernão Cardim noted that the native cultural practices did not include "adoração nenhuma nem cerimônias, ou culto divino" (qtd. in Cafezeiro 23). Even if there were some ceremonial expressions, it is doubtful that they could compare to the spectacular dramatic shows presented by the Jesuits. Therefore, it surely was a new and overwhelming experience for most of the audience to observe such an elaborate display, but it must have fascinated them and incited their curiosity about the Jesuit priests. These performances included singing, instruments, dance, processions, elaborate costumes, intrigue, battles of good versus evil, and even a few special effects, like reenactments of famous naval battles or live crucifixion of saints. In this sense, Brazilian Jesuit theatre held to the same style and conventions as did peninsular Golden Age *comedias*. However, although the majority of *comedias* were performed in *corrales*, there was no such purely theatrical space in sixteenth-century Brazil. Most of Anchieta's *autos* were performed in church courtyards or town squares, and it seems that some of his *autos*, such as *Auto da pregação universal*, were staged like the traveling *comedias* that toured from place to place and performed in open-air venues. There are accounts of *auto* stagings that speak of performing in small villages using nothing but the natural surroundings as backdrop and scenery. The actors were liable to find themselves in many different settings, and so the *auto* had to be pliable to a certain degree.

Among the characters these actors would portray, the figure of the devil was the most popular, since it seems that he appears in some form in all of Anchieta's *autos*, and was greatly appreciated by the audience. Oftentimes, the devil was the "fonte de comicidade" (Almeida Prado 20), and, therefore, well liked, although he is always the

indispensable villain that audiences love to hate. He was just one of the many characters employed in “depicting a struggle between Good and Evil, directly didactic, in a Brazilian ambience” (Fernández 36). Besides devils and demons, saints such as Lourenço, Sebastião, and Isabel also filled the stage. Related allegorical figures frequent Anchieta’s *autos* as well, including Alma, Governo, Amor de Deus, and Temor de Deus. Not to be outdone, certain figures from the classical tradition also made an appearance, such as the Roman emperor Décio and his sidekick Valeriano in *Na festa de São Lourenço*.

Speaking of these latter characters, Edwaldo Cafezeiro and Carmem Gadelha sensibly ask, “que índio, ou melhor, quais, entre os moradores da vila, saberiam o que importava para a história ser imperador romano?” (54). Although the Tupi-Guarani held no concept of Western world history as such, it is very probable that they would at least have recognized these two men as powerful leaders, just as the Portuguese, as chronicled in the famous *Carta do Achamento*, were able to recognize the chief of the tribe they encountered. It would certainly mean something to them that even a leader could suffer the pains and tortures of some place named Hell. It also served to juxtapose the figures of saints, many of whom were cruelly martyred on stage by the devils, only to return later on in the *auto*. Since, as Fernão Cardim explains, the Tupi-Guarani believed “que têm alma e esta não morre” (qtd. in Cafezeiro 23), this representation of resurrection or immortality would have resonated with them and perhaps inspired in them a desire to emulate the pious Saints who live on, as opposed to the worldly Romans who exist only in hellish captivity. In this way, the Jesuits introduced the indigenous members of their audience to the Catholic world of strict dichotomies, full of saints and demons, heaven and hell, and joy and pain. In order to relate to all members of the public, the playwright also included characters that would have been easily recognizable. Two of the devils in *Na festa de São Lourenço*, for example, share their names, Saravaia and Aimbirê, with “enemy Indian leaders, traitors who had fought with the French in their excursions against the Portuguese” (Fernández 36). This would have left no doubt in their minds as to whom they should devote their loyalties, since the presentation of good and evil in the *autos* was absolutely black and white. The Portuguese, the Jesuits, and the local tribe were all good, while enemy tribes, the French, and non-Catholics were bad.

Beyond characters, there were also plenty of references to local customs and practices, “ranging from the love potions concocted by Indian women to blood-letting engaged in as a normal medical practice” (Fernández 36), alongside a list of vices plaguing specific members of the audience, from drinking, smoking, and dishonesty to more serious sins such as cannibalism, slavery, and murder. As Wasserman indicates, these theatrical pieces “are intended as instruments of catechization, and can therefore be expected to have paid careful consideration to their intended audience’s ‘horizon of

expectations” (73). The Jesuits’ previous efforts to familiarize themselves with the language, customs, practices, beliefs, and ceremonies of the local population certainly paid off when it came time for them to be replaced with their own European values. It is also important to note that these *autos* directed themselves to a hybrid audience, and were able to both chasten the Christians and instruct the Tupi-Guarani. They taught simultaneously that unrepentant adulterers were headed to a fiery *inferno* and that the cannibalism of fallen enemies was a crime against humanity. Their versatility in instruction is impressive and speaks not only to the Jesuit mission of “la defensa de la libertad del indio, [y] la protección a su vida” (Rela 21), as well as “a sua função de educadores, de educadores letrados e humanistas” (Hessel 92), but also to José de Anchieta’s literary talent, his extensive knowledge, and his tremendous imagination.

Since the *autos* engaged both Europeans and Tupi-Guarani as spectators, it also makes sense that both were involved in their staging, as well. Lothar Hessel and Georges Raeders note that not even the Jesuit fathers themselves were above participating in the festivities (96), which sometimes enraged their superiors. Sábado Magaldi notes that “os próprios índios, ensaiados pelos padres, incumbiem-se da representação de diversos papéis” (23). These indigenous participants must have served as an efficacious tool for the catechization of their fellow tribe members, since they were one of the major elements that bridged the gap between the Jesuits and the Tupi-Guarani. Awe, genuine interest, or mere curiosity may have attracted the Tupi-Guarani to this intercultural, multilingual, spectacular, hybrid event where “os costumes atuais dos indígenas desfiam ao lado de imperadores romanos, num anacronismo só aceitável pela visão unitária do universo religioso” (Magaldi 18). Whatever it was that impelled the spectators to watch, and the participants to engage in the spectacle, the *autos* seemed to have universally held the public’s attention.

It was in this crossbreed, anachronistic world of theatre that the ancient could be mixed with the modern, the European could blend with the Brazilian, and the Christian could integrate itself with the pagan without problem or conflict of interest. The Jesuits never employed the sword nor slavery as a manner of conversion, dissimilar to other religious groups in Latin America. They were much more interested in gradually imposing their own beliefs on those previously held by the Tupi-Guarani. The indigenous people worshipped in a polytheistic system, which the Jesuits astutely employed to preach their own doctrine. This form of catechism ensured, for example, that the indigenous god Anhangá “ajustava-se ao papel de Satanás,” while the god of thunder, Tupã, “assumia a posição de Deus único e todo-poderoso, figura desconhecida entre os índios” (Almeida Prado 29). The catechized could then easily become accustomed to a new, monotheistic organization, perhaps without even realizing that their own system of beliefs was gradually being replaced.

Nevertheless, the intent to increasingly substitute one belief for another did not necessarily indicate an easy or a painless transition. For example, in Anchieta's *Festa de São Lourenço*, the playwright forcefully accuses the indigenous population of various and sundry transgressions. Using the devils as ironic mouthpieces, the author proceeds to list off all the inappropriate practices of the Tupi-Guarani. When the second act of this *auto* opens, we are introduced to Guaixará, king of the devils, and Ambirê and Saravaia, his two devilish cronies. They announce their plans to take over the "aldeia," and a certain Jesuit self-consciousness and self-referentiality shines through when Guaixará laments the arrival of a "virtude estrangeira" (21) and thus declares: "vêm os tais padres agora / com regras fora de hora / pra que duvidem de mim" (64–66). He goes on to praise the vices of the locals, such as public drunkenness, inappropriate dancing, body painting, smoking, and cannibalism. There is no mistaking Anchieta's rhetoric here. By using the names of rival tribal leaders for the devils, he firmly establishes their place in the good/bad dichotomy, while the devils' association with the indigenous people vilifies all the local practices he mentions. Not only does this demonic character express his appreciation and love for local customs, but he also revels in his fraternization with the native tribes, which he designates as "nosso povo" (87–88). Upon his arrival, the tribes welcome him into their midst, thus pacifying his worries about losing his constituency to the righteous foreigners. All of these references are directed at the indigenous audience members, and the idea of being held captive by such a creature must have been frightening to them, especially since an actor decked out in horns and a tail probably cut an intimidating figure on stage.

Aimbirê then explains that he cannot possibly tempt the indigenous people any more, since both São Lourenço and Bastião, two Catholic martyrs, constantly guard and watch over them. Guaixará, however, decries such cowardly fear of the two saints and promises, "os índios te entregarei. / E à força sucumbirão" (222–23). Such scare tactics were surely effective, but just when it seems that all is doom and despair in this play, the playwright reassures his audience. Saravaia, dialoguing with Guaixará about the indigenous people, states: "agradeço que me entregues / encargo tão desejado" (243–44). Anchieta reminds the spectators that both Jesuits and the forces of evil attempt to win them over because they are precious and important. Thus, the playwright offers a reaffirmation of their value as a people, and emphasizes this point as a form of encouragement. When São Lourenço and São Sebastião appear on stage, the contrast between the two groups is striking. The saints are presented as calm, powerful, confident figures, while the devils are boisterous, boasting, and bold, clearly hoping their sound and fury will make up for their lack of power and authority in comparison to the martyrs. The devils truly are no match for these two do-gooders. They are just too dim-witted and weak-willed, and now provide nothing more

than ridiculous, bumbling comic relief. This weakening of their position reveals the demons' inferiority while convincing audience members of the seriousness of their own sins.

After the devils ramble on about the numerous transgressions of the indigenous people, the saints are quick to indicate that "existe a confissão, / bem remedio para a cura" (431–32). Not only do the martyrs have the power, but it is clear that they have the answer, as well. Voicing the possible concerns of the audience, Guaixará claims that many will falsely confess while hiding their vices and Aimbiré indicates that others will give up their vices only at the last minute, when it seems death is nigh. São Lourenço, however, declares for the benefit of those watching that these tactics are morally wrong, and promises never to leave his people helpless. Soon thereafter, Anjo appears in order to help the saints overcome the devils. Each heavenly messenger takes hold of his devilish opposite while they cry in vain for help. The declaration of their fate is repeated three times: "Guaixará seja queimado, / Aimbirê vá para o exílio, / Saravaia condenado" (663–65). This repetition of their unfortunate end and their obvious inability to overcome their captors is the last straw that completely undermines their previous bombastic show of power. Anjo then turns to directly address the audience, as per typical theatrical conventions of the time period, and the playwright drives home the need for repentance through his speech. Anchieta's concern and love for the indigenous people especially shines through when the angel declares "santos e índios sereis / pessoas de um mesmo lar" (627–28). By placing the saints and the Indians on equal footing, the playwright essentially erases the difference between European and Brazilian, cultured and native, and Christians and pagans. His rhetoric is inclusive and affectionate.

The third act reintroduces the three devils, which are now at Anjo's bidding. Since they fear being lead away captive again, they quickly obey the angel's orders to punish Décio, a Christian-killing Roman emperor, and Valeriano, his Spanish companion, since these two are responsible for São Lourenço's unpleasant death. After much protest and lament, both Décio and Valeriano accept their unpleasant fate and leave with the devils to be eternally toasted in an infernal kitchen. As discussed earlier, the indigenous people watching the play would not have been familiar with the Roman empire nor any of its leaders. However, through costume and characterization it would have been clear that both were men of power and importance, although their status was certainly not enough to save them from damnation. This scenario is a direct warning to those who kill the servants of the Christian God, and perhaps served to ward off indigenous attacks against the Jesuits, since many missionaries were killed as a result of their attempts to catechize indigenous peoples.

In the fourth act, Temor de Deus and Amor de Deus join Anjo on stage. These two allegorical characters give bookend speeches about sin and redemption. Temor de Deus is ruthless and the accusations he throws at audience members sound gravely like nails being driven into a coffin. If Temor incites fear in the audience, then Amor cites God's infallible love for mankind. Amor's "recado" contains twelve manifestations of the verb "amar." He pleads with each spectator: "ama a Deus, que te criou [...] ama com todo cuidado, / a quem primeiro te amou" (2207, 2209–10), and his gentle exhortations help to soften the blows of Temor's doomsday speech. These two monologues are forceful reminders to the audience of the contradictory nature of Catholic deity as both a feared and a loving God who demands and pleads with the sinner to repent. As Amor says, "que Deus seja sempre temido e amado" (2305). The fifth and final act is short and performed by twelve young boys, presumably converted Tupi-Guarani, who dance while they recite their closing verses. This final spectacle helps restore some of the earlier self-awareness of the play, reminding the public that the whole thing is, after all, just theatre. Still, Anchieta does not let them forget the purpose of the momentary diversion. "Suas almas estão doentes" (2345), he reminds them, although there is still an opportunity to amend wrongdoings. It is clear that the playwright invites all members of the audience, sinner and saint, native and foreigner, Catholic and polytheist to come together as one in order to edify each other and avoid the pains of Hell.

These closing statements from *Na festa de São Lourenço* reflect the amazing hybridity of all of Anchieta's *autos* as well as that of Anchieta and the Jesuit mission itself. Instead of a sense of "us" versus "them," there is only "us." There is an amazing level of acceptance of the Other. Rhetoric and persuasion take the place of violence and force, and theatre replaces sermons. Hybridity also manifests itself in the unique blend of languages, characters, cultures, and even time periods within the *autos*. All of these elements not only reflected the hybrid situation of the Jesuits and their intended converts, but served a specific didactic purpose, as well, by teaching Catholic principles in context. In summation, José de Anchieta is a master teacher who not only masters his subject matter, but also is sufficiently familiar and sympathetic with those in his audience. His *autos* are perfectly tailored to his public, and while many critics consider them to be nothing more than imperfect curios, they are fascinating and valuable in their own right. Although several critics have authored articles and books on the subject, perhaps a performance tradition could be recovered in order to allow modern audiences to take another look at these literary gems.

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REDISCOVERING SHIPS AS SIGNS IN TWO *AUTOS SACRAMENTALES*

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Christianity is replete with symbolic imagery. Originally, this imagery could be found in written texts or on the walls and altars of cathedrals. After developing for centuries, it began to emerge in the religious plays of medieval Spain. By the start of the seventeenth century some of Spain's greatest playwrights had taken up the pen to try their hand at writing *autos sacramentales*. Each year cities dipped into their coffers to fund the production of these widely popular religious plays. As cities competed to produce the best *autos*, they not only hired the most celebrated playwrights, but also renowned craftsmen and artisans to create a veritable visual spectacle of liturgical significance.

Bruce Wardropper asks: "¿Cómo es posible que un público, en su mayor parte analfabeto y sin cultura literaria ni teológica, asistiera de buena gana y con provecho espiritual a obras dramáticas de las más difíciles e intelectuales que se hayan escrito?" (85). While I concede the illiterate demographics described by Wardropper in his question, I believe the Spanish people were very indoctrinated in the theological culture of the time period and unquestionably well-versed in reading the signs of religious imagery. Although many of the people were illiterate, their inability to read did not stop them from developing a profoundly rich theological culture. At the heart of the Counterreformation, the Catholic Church compensated for the general illiteracy by not only providing regular sermons, but also by fostering one of the most visually symbolic cultures in history. The biblical stories and religious symbolism portrayed on cathedral walls and altars effectively served as a religious *text* for all with sight to *read*.

As theater grew in popularity in Spain, the performance and props of the *auto* served as yet another theological text for people to read. The use of semiotics may be one of the best ways to understand this type of literacy based on visual spectacle and the vocally-pronounced lines of the actors. However, despite their usefulness in investigating *autos*, even semiotic studies must be narrowed in order to fully appreciate the semantic depth of these religious plays. The ships described in *El viaje del Alma* by Lope de Vega and *La nave del Mercader* by Calderón de la Barca serve as perfect examples of the liturgical significance contained in a simple yet polysemous symbol. To many modern readers, this semiotic study of the ships mentioned in these *autos* may even reveal meanings associated with certain images that much of society has forgotten.

Keir Elam gives a simple definition of semiotics that I will employ throughout this study. He writes: “Semiotics can best be defined as a science dedicated to the study of the production of meaning in society. As such it is equally concerned with processes of signification and with those of *communication*, i.e. the means whereby meanings are both generated and exchanged” (1). In order to understand this creation and exchange of meaning, semiotics relies on the sign, which is composed of a *signifier*—“the form that the sign takes”—and a *signified*—“the *concept* to which it refers” (Chandler 18). With that in mind, semiotics can assist in understanding the theatrical signs corresponding to the ships of the aforementioned *autos*.

For a modern reader to understand the signs of a seventeenth-century *auto*, that reader must first understand what to look for and what should be identified as a sign. Petr Bogatyrev declares: “[...] on the stage things that play the part of theatrical signs can in the course of the play acquire special features, qualities, and attributes that they do not have in real life. Things in the theater, just as the actor himself, are transformable [and] may acquire a new, hitherto foreign, function” (35–36). For example, in Catholicism, the mental image of the Eucharist, in this case the signifier, invokes the mental concept of Christ, the signified. However, how is the reader or spectator, to determine the foreign function of a less common theatrical sign? Elam recognizes this potential dilemma summarizing the thesis of one of Jindřich Honzl’s studies: “[...] any [signifier] can stand, in principle, for any signified class of phenomena: there are no absolutely fixed representational relations (13). Therefore, the form of a snake could draw to mind the concept of the devil, of medicine, or any other meaning that society endows upon it. Clearly a reader or spectator can conjure up one signified after another when considering a given signifier. However, even though the decoding of certain meanings may prove to be a daunting task with some ambiguous texts or with a text produced within some remote and obscure culture, the abundance of religious art preconditioned contemporary spectators of seventeenth-century *autos* to understand the intended meaning of any given object on stage.

The signs associated with the ships of *El viaje del Alma* and *La nave del Mercader* largely received their meaning as a result of intertextuality, or in other words, a shared theological culture of meaning. In reference to this type of intertextuality, Honzl declares: “The constancy of a structure causes theatrical signs to develop complex meanings. The stability of signs promotes a wealth of meanings and associations” (79). Julia Kristeva further refines this idea stating: “Whatever the semantic content of a text [...] its condition as a signifying practice presupposes the existence of other discourses [...]. This is to say that every text is from the outset under the jurisdiction of other discourses which impose a universe on it” (qtd. in Culler 105).¹ Therefore, in addition to expanding the meaning of signs beyond the actual script of a play, intertextuality also limits the meaning of signs, causing it to fit pre-existing significations.



St. Peter, in a boat representing the church, implores the Lord's intervention (Avril 63).

The ship as a symbol has a long history in Catholic tradition.² Sometime in the sixth century, Flavius Magnus Aurelius Cassiodorus comments on a passage in Psalms 106: 23 that says: “They that go down to the sea in ships [...]” In relation to the verse, he says the ships are the churches that navigate the tempests of the world on the wood of the cross (Arellano 158). An image in the *Belleville Breviary*, a fourteenth-century illustrated manuscript, provides an early visual representation of a boat representing the church. The waves of the sea push the boat (the church) to and fro as Peter implores for divine intervention. In answer to his supplications, the Lord blesses him from above (Avril 62–63). The tradition of the cross/ship serving as the metaphorical equivalent of the church becomes even more prevalent in the architecture of the cathedrals themselves. Numerous gothic cathedrals take the shape of the cross, while the large and spacious area reserved for worshippers becomes known as the nave (from the Latin *navis*, meaning ship). Gil Vicente then helps the preexisting sign of the ship make the jump into drama with *autos* like the *Auto da barca do Inferno* and *Auto de la barca de la Gloria*, although not without slightly altering the intended signified of the sign. Instead, he relies on an even older cultural meaning assigned to the image of the boat. In these two plays, the ships do not carry mankind through life; rather, they carry individuals to their final destination after death much like the ferry operated by Charon at the River Styx in Greek mythology. Vicente does, however, maintain the metaphor between the church and the cross in *Auto de la barca de la Gloria*.

Yo confío
 en Jesús, redentor mío,
 que por mí se desnudó;
 puestas sus llagas al frío,
 se clavó 'n aquel navío
 de la cruz donde espiró. (521–26)

These examples, along with countless others, give evidence of the intended symbolism of the ship with regard to religious matters. By the time Lope de Vega and Calderón de la Barca began writing, the sign of the ship had become well entrenched in the theological fabric of Spanish society.

The similarities shared by each of the ships in *El viaje del Alma* and *La nave del Mercader* clearly show a shared cultural context that expands, yet limits their meanings. Yet, at the same time, both authors add numerous, additional signs in the form of the ships architecture, contents, passengers, and crew.

El viaje del Alma

Descubrióse en esta sazón la nave de la Penitencia, cuyo árbol y entena eran una Cruz, que por jarcias desde los clavos y rótulo tenía la Esponja, la Lanza, la Escalera y los Azotes, con muchas flámulas, estandartes y gallardetes bordados de Cálices de oro, que hacía una hermosa vista: por trinquete tenía la Columna, y San Bernardo abrazado á ella: la popa era el Sepulcro, al pie del cual estaba la Magdalena: San Pedro iba en la bitácora mirando al aguja, y el Pontífice que entonces regía la Romana Iglesia, estaba asido al timón. En lugar de fanal iba la custodia con un Cáliz de maravillosa labor é inestimable precio; junto al bauprés estaba de rodillas San Francisco, y de la Cruz que estaba en lugar de árbol bajaban cinco cuerdas de seda roja, que le daban en los pies, costado y manos, encima del extremo de la cual estaba la Corona de Espinas á manera de gavia. (14)

La nave del Mercader

El primer carro ha de ser una nave, rica y hermosa, adornada de sus jarcias y velas; el farol ha de ser un cáliz grande con su hostia y en su proa un serafín; sus flámulas y gallardetes blancos y encarnados, pintados todos de cálices y hostias. En su árbol mayor ha de tener una elevación en que pueda subir hasta el tope una persona, y ha de dar vuelta, y tener bajada para el tablado. (11–12)

The descriptions of both ships give added meaning to Jiří Veltruský's declaration, "All that is on the stage is a sign" (84). The two playwrights seem to have considered every detail to maximize the didactic significance of each sign.

The ship of Penitencia in *El viaje del Alma* contains numerous signs concerning the crucifixion, the Eucharist, saints, and the leadership of the church after Christ's death and resurrection, yet all the signs fit in naturally with the physical design of the ship. In this manner, all the signs play integral roles in helping spectators comprehend the larger sign of the ship or church. The cross takes the place of the mast while banners and flags carry the insignia of the Eucharistic chalice to represent the flag under which the ship sails. The elevated stern of the ship provides enough space to serve the role of Christ's tomb with Mary Magdalene at its base. Saint Peter naturally serves the role of the ship's pilot as he charts the direction in which it (the church) sails. This serves as a particularly appropriate sign since Christ left the direction of the church in the hands of Peter, one of his apostles. The contemporary pope of the *auto* captains the ship under the directions given by Peter. In other words, the pope guides the church based on the example of Peter, who is recognized as the first pope of Catholicism. The monstrance, representing Christ, replaces the *fanal*, or lantern at the back of the ship. According to the *Diccionario de Autoridades*, a *fanal* "es el farol grande que el navío u galera capitana lleva en el remate de la popa, para que los demás que componen la armada puedan seguirla de noche, guiados por la luz" (qtd. in Arellano 83). By replacing the *fanal* with the monstrance, Lope de Vega emphasizes the central role of the Eucharist in guiding the faithful. And finally, the public can easily recognize Saint Francis of Assisi (San Francisco) by the stigmata received from the distant cross. In order to represent this readily recognizable sign, yet still have it fit the physical parameters of a ship, red silk replaces the standard ropes that make up the rigging that extends from the mast of the ship. The ship itself could occupy the public for some time as they attempt to decode the multiple mental signifiers created by all the visual representations of the ship of Penitencia.

Calderón de la Barca's white ship (*nave blanca*) contains fewer, though no less significant, signs than the ship of Penitencia. The Eucharist also takes the place of the *fanal* on Mercader's ship, and like the ship of Penitencia, images of the Eucharist cover the banners and flags on the ship. From one of Culpa's lines, the audience learns that Amor serves as the ship's pilot (898). In other words, the love of God directs his church. The seraphim extending from the bowsprit of the ship signifies the divine role of the church in leading mankind safely through life's trials and temptations. The whiteness of the ship further aids the audience to decode the signs by immediately conjuring up thoughts of goodness and purity with which the color is often associated.

While the acoustics of these performances would have made it difficult for the audience to hear and understand all the actors' lines, each of the signs in these two *autos* provides a script that a largely illiterate public could readily read. The theological culture in which they lived would have enabled them to decode the signs much better than a typical modern audience, which has not shared the same level of exposure to the intertextuality of these religious signs. An engraving from a 1622 publication can help a modern reader or audience better visualize and understand the signs of the ship of Penitencia and that of the Mercader. It shares numerous characteristics with these two ships, including the cross in place of the mast. Although the image contains Latin text, there are enough cognates for the *illiterate* spectator to begin to *read* or decode the signs.



This image comes from the *Psalmodia eucharistica* by Melchor Prieto. In the image Saint Peter distributes the sacramental host. The seven canons on the side of the ship represent the seven sacraments.³

While this image from the *Psalmodia eucharistica* proves very useful in better understanding the ship of Penitencia and that of Mercader, it also lends itself as a practicable counterpoint to the two other ships mentioned in the script of the *autos*. The ship of Deleite and Culpa's black ship (*nave negra*) complete the metaphorical representation of good versus evil. In direct opposition to the ships representing the church, these two ships carry out the will of the devil as they seek to either entice mankind into a life of sin or to cause humanity to languish under the weight of guilt. As the binary opposites of the two good ships, they also contain a wealth of symbolic imagery that forces the spectator to decode the signs they provide in order to fully understand the liturgical significance of the constant struggle between good and evil as the two forces seek to persuade mankind that life will be more worthwhile serving under their respective banners.

El viaje del Alma

Entró á esta sazón el Demonio en figura de marinero, todo él vestido de tela de oro negro bordado de llamas [...]. (7)

[...] comenzaron dentro á hacer una faena de nave con la zaloma que se acostumbra, haciendo el Demonio y el Deleite oficio de piloto y contraestre [...]. (10)

Corrieron á este tiempo una cortina, descubriéndose la nave del Deleite, toda la popa dorada y llena de historias de vicios, así de la divina, como de la humana historia, encima de la cual estaban muchas damas y galanes comiendo y bebiendo, y alrededor de las mesas muchos truhanes y músicos. Los siete pecados mortales estaban repartidos por los bordes, y en la gavia del árbol mayor iba la Soberbia en hábito de brumete [...]. (12)

La nave del Mercader

El segundo carro ha de ser una nave negra con un dragón en la proa y por farol un árbol, a cuyo tronco ha de estar enroscada una culebra. Sus banderolas han de ser negras y pajizas; ha de tener su elevación, su torno y su escalera, y en los gallardetes, pintados áspides. (11–12)

As with the other two ships, Lope's offers the more elaborate spectacle with a greater number of signs to decode. Calderón's, though simpler, comes closer to visually representing the exact opposite of its antipodal rival.

Lope does not attempt to minimize the visual appeal of Deleite's ship. Instead he portrays it as an attractive locus of revelry. Consequently, when decoding the sign of the ship, the spectators immediately recognize the sinful nature of the merrymaking portrayed on the vessel, but the meaning they extract from the spectacle must also include the appeal that such temptations have on mankind. Demonio, the ship's pilot, has flames sewn onto his sailor clothes to make his characterization readily identifiable to the audience. The gold-colored stern, full of representations of different vices, represents the love of money or gold, while the *historias de vicios* indicate the sinister mission of the ship of Deleite. The passengers of the ship live a riotous life of gluttony and drunkenness. While the personified characters of the seven deadly sins remain on the edges of the boat to draw attention to their number and their intended sign, Pride's lofty placement in the crow's nest also helps the audience identify his characterization. Although Lope does not describe the attire of these characters, they

undoubtedly resembled the time period's conventional visual characterizations of the seven deadly sins. Each of these symbols on the ship of Deleite allows audience members to *read* a visual sermon that enumerates the sins that ensnare mankind.

Culpa's ship in *La nave del Mercader* depicts a similar but simpler counterpoint to its rival vessel piloted by Amor. The black ship stands in stark contrast to its white adversary. The dragon on the bowsprit and the serpents painted on the banners allude to biblical passages that refer to the devil in this manner. In place of the *fanal*, or lantern, the tree and the serpent represent Lucifer's temptation of Eve in the Garden of Eden. The staging conventions during the time period in which Calderón wrote this *auto* allows him to disperse his props and scenery more than Lope could. After 1647, Calderón uses four large carts or wagons to carry stage machinery and props, including the two ships.⁴ Previously, *autos* had only used two carts. This may explain why Calderón chose not to use as many symbols on each of his carts. If he had, the audience may not have had time to decode all the signs of the *auto*.

Both these *autos* skillfully juxtapose the signs of good and evil by using the common visual representations of theological subjects, particularly the image of the ship to represent the journey mankind makes through life with the assistance of the church or the deceptions of the devil. While both *autos* also demonstrate the superiority of the forces of good, *El viaje del Alma* does so in such a dramatic fashion that even the most illiterate spectator could read the meaning of the scene when the ship of Penitencia comes to free Alma from Deleite's vessel. At the point of maximum climactic tension in the fight for Alma's soul, Penitencia's ship opens fire with *versos*, *medias culebrinas*, and *falconetes* (12). Aside from entertaining the audience with such a spectacle, Penitencia's superior firepower demonstrates the power of repentance in cleansing mankind of sin. Alma completes the repentance process by boarding Penitencia's ship (the church) where Cristo (Christ) asks: "Hay quien se quiera embarcar / Al puerto de salvación" (13). The church enables Alma to commune with Deity during her journey through life by partaking of the Eucharist.

Undoubtedly the grand liturgical spectacle offered by these *autos* caused their audiences to reflect on the different signs and their meanings. The spectators' intertextual knowledge of visual theological representations allowed them to proficiently *read* or decode the different signs. The typical modern reader, however, struggles to read and appreciate the same theatrical signs. Perhaps the *illiteracy* of modern readers, prevents them from seeing and appreciating the profound depth of these plays, and tangentially, from understanding a society at the center of the Inquisition and the Counterreformation. As modern readers figuratively *watch* these performances, they must seek to see everything on stage as a sign full of meaning, not just as another prop. They must seek to read or decode the theological symbols that largely defined a society. Doing so will open new horizons, or old ones, that will allow us to more fully appreciate such a rich culture.

NOTES

¹ While I readily concur with Culler's translation of the original French text, he references the wrong pages in Julia Kristeva's *La révolution du langage poétique*. He actually cites pages 338–39 as opposed to 388–39. “Quel que soit le contenu sémantique d'un texte, son statut en tant que pratique signifiante présuppose l'existence des autres discours [...]. C'est dire que tout texte est d'emblée sous la juridiction des autres discours que lui imposent un univers” (Kristeva 338–39).

² While some semioticians, including Saussure, avoid using the word symbol in relation to their studies, I believe its use is appropriate in this context. Susanne Langer says: “Symbols are not proxy for their objects but are *vehicles for the conception of objects* [...]. In talking about things we have conceptions of them, not the things themselves; and *it is the conceptions, not the things, that symbols directly mean*” (qtd. in Chandler 20; emphasis mine).

³ Although there are no pages for this image, it appears immediately after page 172. A few more pages follow after this image of the *ecclesia navis* before the book continues its regular pagination with page 173.

⁴ N. D. Shergold and J. E. Varey provide an informative history of the transition from the use of two carts to four in the following study: N. D. Shergold and J. E. Varey, “A Problem in the Staging of *Autos Sacramentales* in Madrid, 1647–1648.” *Hispanic Review* 31.1 (1964): 12–35.

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ENUCLEATED EYES IN “SEM OLHOS”
AND “O CAPITÃO MENDOÇA”
BY MACHADO DE ASSIS

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*It seems impossible, in fact, to judge
the eye using any word other than seductive,
since nothing is more attractive in the bodies
of animals and men. But extreme seductiveness
is probably at the boundary of horror.*

~George Bataille

Pluck out his eyes.

~King Lear 3:7

Machado de Assis published over two hundred short stories, the majority as *folhetins* in periodicals such as *Jornal das Famílias* and *Gazeta de Notícias*. Among these stories, around twenty contain elements of the fantastic, supernatural, or marvelous, eleven of which were published in 1973 under the title *Contos fantásticos de Machado de Assis*.¹ Machado was influenced by the fantastic stories of E. T. A. Hoffmann (1776–1822), making reference to him in several stories.² Hoffmann’s story “The Sand-man” (1816) seems particularly influential in Machado’s stories “Sem Olhos” (1876) and “O Capitão Mendonça” (1870). “The Sand-man” was also the basis for Sigmund Freud’s essay “The Uncanny” (1925), in which he points out that “the theme of the ‘Sand-man’ who tears out children’s eyes” is re-introduced at several points in Hoffmann’s story (379). The central argument of his reading of the uncanny is centered on the childhood fear of “damaging or losing one’s eyes” (383). This paper analyzes the treatment of the image of the enucleated eye in the Hoffmann-influenced stories “Sem olhos” and “Capitão Mendonça,” utilizing Freud’s theory of the uncanny to mediate the discussion.

There are few academic studies that fully develop the theme of the fantastic in the works of Machado de Assis. Although a handful of critics mention the influence of Hoffmann in Machado, there are no in-depth comparative textual analyses. Nearly all the studies, to some extent, employ Tzvetan Todorov’s definition of the *le fantastique*, *l’étrange*, and *le merveilleux*.³ Although Todorov briefly discusses Freud’s theory of the uncanny, no critic thoroughly studies its presence in Machado’s

fantastic stories. Both Maria Figueiredo dos Reis, in *O fantástico na narrativa de Machado de Assis*, and Marcelo J. Fernandes, in his Master's thesis *Quase-macabro: o fantástico nos contos de Machado de Assis*, attempt to categorize Machado's stories using Todorov's structuralist definition of *le fantastique*. While they offer succinct plot summaries and indicate the main fantastic elements, they fail to explore the fundamental theoretical currents that drive the stories.

This is not, however, the first study to indicate Hoffmann's influence on Machado. Reis reads "O espelho" as a rewriting of "The Lost Reflection" ("Das verlorene Spiegelbild"). Darlan Lula, in "O lugar fantástico em Machado de Assis,"⁴ links "Sem olhos" to "The Sand-man" and briefly mentions Freud's "The Uncanny," but his analysis is cursory, citing large sections of text without offering in-depth commentary. Therefore, a study of this nature is indispensable to more fully appreciate the link between these stories and, more importantly, the role of the uncanny in Machado's fantastic stories. The theme of the enucleated eye, or an eye that has been removed from its socket, plays a fundamental role in these particular stories of Hoffmann and Machado. A close textual reading of this theme will reveal the rich theoretical underpinnings that drive the stories. Although Machado borrows heavily from "The Sand-man," his own reading/rewriting of the story explores shadow-cast corners of Freud's principle of the uncanny.

Hoffmann published "The Sand-man" in 1816 as part of *Nachtstücken*. The story is composed of three letters and a section written after the events by an unnamed narrator who was a friend of Nathaniel and his family. Freud and numerous critics summarize and examine the story at length; therefore, only the most pertinent sections that directly apply to the Machado stories will be studied here. Again, as Freud points out, the main theme that links Nathanael's childhood and adulthood is the development and recurrence of the fear of having his eyes removed by the Sand-man. In the first letter, Nathaniel recounts to the Lothair, the brother of his betrothed, several dreadful childhood encounters with the Sand-man. The origin of his obsession with this horrific creature is rather innocuous. His mother would frequently tell her children it was time for bed and that the Sand-man was coming. Nathanael confronts his mother, and she explains: "There is no Sand-man, my dear [...] when I say the Sand-man is come, I only mean that you are sleepy and can't keep your eyes open, as if somebody had put sand in them" (184). Curious to learn more, he asks his sister's nurse and she offers the following explanation:

Why, 'thanael, darling, don't you know. [...] Oh! he's a wicked man, who comes to little children when they won't go to bed and throws handfuls of sand in their eyes so that they jump out of their heads all bloody; and he puts them into a bag and takes them to the half-moon as food for his little ones; and they pick naughty little boys' and girls' eyes out with them. (185)

This horrific description of the Sand-man and the violence he invokes on children's eyes inspires in Nathanael a mixture of revulsion and fascination with this figure. Of course he "was quite old enough to perceive that the old woman's tale about the Sand-man [...] couldn't be altogether true; nevertheless the Sand-man continued to be for [him] a fearful incubus" (185). This blend of rational deduction and wild imagination leads him to hide in his father's study to ascertain the true identity of the Sand-man who turns out to be the lawyer Coppelius, a spiteful man that apparently engages in alchemical experiments with his father. His fears are substantiated when he is discovered and Coppelius cries out "Now we've got eyes—eyes—a beautiful pair of children's eyes" (188). He throws Nathanael onto the hearth, pulls out several hot coals from the fire and threatens to burn out his eyes. The young boy truly believes Coppelius to be the Sand-man. A year later, the Sand-man returns to work with the father on one final experiment. There is a mysterious explosion, leaving the father "dead, his face burned black and fearfully distorted." Coppelius flees the scene and the family assumes he killed their father. Nathanael closes his letter to Lothair stating that he has met an Italian named Giuseppe Coppola who he is positive is Coppelius and that he intends to exact revenge.

Clara, Lothair's sister and Nathanael's fiancée, inadvertently reads the first letter and responds to her sweetheart imploring him to think rationally about the situation. She points out that "all the horrors of which you speak, existed only in your own self" (191). She deduces that Nathanael and Coppelius were involved in "secret experiments in alchemy" and that his father died in a horrible accident, but nonetheless, an accident. Again, she reiterates the fact that this "dark and hostile power" that he attributes to Coppelius can only have power over him if he believes he can. In the third and final letter, Nathanael indicates to Lothair that his sister is correct. Coppola is not Coppelius. One of his professors, Spalanzani, confirms that Coppola is an Italian optician whom he has known for years. However, he is "not quite satisfied" with the explanation since the feelings of Coppelius returned so strongly upon seeing Coppola. It is around this time that Nathanael learns of Spalanzani's daughter, Olympia. Her angelic beauty is offset by her "strangely fixed look about her eyes [. . .] as if they had no power of vision [like] she was sleeping with her eyes open" (194). Nathanael returns home for a short holiday and reconnects with Clara. Their happiness is short lived. Nathanael spends most of his time composing a poem about how Coppelius will "ruin his happiness" (199). One of the central images of the poem is of Clara and Nathanael's wedding. Coppelius appears and touches "Clara's lovely eyes which [leap] into Nathanael's own bosom, burning and hissing like bloody sparks." Understandably, the poem disturbs her and she tells him to throw it away. He responds by calling Clara a "damned lifeless automaton" (200).

Nathanael returns to school to find his apartment has burned down. Some friends put him up in an apartment facing Professor Spalanzani's home, and more

importantly, Olimpia's bedroom. Coppola returns and tries to sell Nathanael a barometer but he refuses: "Eh! No want weather glasses? No weather glasses? I got eyes-a too. Fine eyes-a." Nathanael's previous hypothesis of Coppola's true identity—that of Coppelius—returns for a moment before he realizes that the "eyes-a" are simple spy-glasses and spectacles. Seeing all the eyewear and thinking of thousands of eyes resurrects previous fears of "the gruesome incubus" of Coppelius. He quickly purchases a set of spy-glasses just to be rid of Coppola. He places them to his eyes and soon ascertains that he has never "had a glass in his hand that brought out things so clearly and sharply and distinctly." Gazing out the window, he notices Olimpia sitting at her table. For the first time he notices "the regular and exquisite beauty of her features. The eyes, however, seemed to him to have a singular look of fixity and lifelessness." As he continues to gaze upon her, it seems as if her "power of vision was now being rekindled" (203). Thus begins his passionate obsession with Olimpia. There are several instances where he touches her ice cold hands or lips only to warm them up with his own. Her speech is infrequent and most of their time is spent holding hands staring earnestly into each other's eyes.

Siegmund, Nathanael's good friend, tries to point out Olimpia's "statuesque and soulless" nature, pointing out that if "her eyes were not so utterly devoid of life [...] of the power of vision, she might pass for a beauty" (208). He also makes reference to her clocklike and mechanical movements. Nathanael disregards his friend's comments as jealousy and continues his pursuit of Olimpia. The day that he intends to discuss a marriage proposal with her father the professor, he stumbles upon Spalanzani and none other than Coppelius/Coppola fighting over Olimpia. It turns out she is an automaton made of wood and clockwork. The optician makes off with the wooden and eyeless doll. Spalanzani implores Nathanael to follow him, picking up Olimpia's bloody eyeballs and throwing them at Nathanael's breast, thus fulfilling the vision he outlined in the poem he had written for Clara. This revelation is too much for him to take and he slips into madness. He cries out, "Aha! aha! aha! Fire-wheel—fire-wheel! Spin round, fire-wheel! merrily, merrily! Aha! wooden doll! spin round, pretty wooden doll!" and falls on Olimpia's creator and tries to strangle him (211).

Spalanzani is ordered to leave the area for having "smuggled a wooden puppet instead of a living person into intelligent tea-circles" (211). In the meanwhile, Clara helps Nathanael return to reality by suppressing the madness of his past. They prepare for their nuptials and spend a day in town with his mother and her brother. They decide to go up the highest tower to take a final look at the town before they head out to the country to spend the holiday. Something odd below attracts Nathanael's attention. He instinctively pulls out the spy-glass he had purchased from Coppola. What he sees triggers a violent eruption against Clara, yelling "Spin round, wooden doll! Spin round, wooden doll!" (213–14). Lothair, down below, hears the commotion,

rushes up to the top of the tower, and arrives just in time to stop Nathanael from throwing Clara over the edge. Nathanael, continuing his insane outburst, fixes his eyes upon Coppélius—whom he must have seen in his spy-glass—and steps to the ledge of the tower. Screaming out “Eh! Fine eyes-a, fine eyes-a!” Nathanael leaps over the railing, falling to the ground below and shattering his skull.

At this point in his essay, Freud offers his interpretation of the central image of enucleated eyes and the Sand-man as seen in the Coppélius/Coppola character. Freud observes that psychoanalytic study shows that “a morbid anxiety connected with the eyes and with going blind is often enough a substitute for the dread of castration” (383). The loss of a valuable organ, such as the eye, provokes a proportionate dread similar to the fear of castration. Freud supports his argument by linking the castration-complex with the figure of the father. He notes that Hoffmann connects the anxiety about eyes with the father’s death. Also, the Sand-man appears “each time in order to interfere with love.” Freud admits that many of the elements of the story seem “arbitrary and meaningless” as long as there is no correlation between “fears about the eye and castration.” However, “they become intelligible as soon as we replace the Sand-man by the dreaded father at whose hands castration is awaited” (384). This connection between the castration-complex and the child’s dread of losing his eyes is simply the uncanny effect of the Sand-man.

Freud continues his textual analysis indicating that the principle of *repetition-compulsion* lies at the center of the uncanny. Throughout the story, Nathanael exhibits an involuntary repetition of the same situation. He remarks several times that fate rules his life and that Coppélius is destined to destroy his happiness. Despite her efforts, Clara is unable to convince her fiancée that these dark powers of evil only have influence over him if he permits it. Unfortunately, he disregards her counsel. Freud observes that this morbid anxiety of recurrence and repetition is “the secret nature of the uncanny.” This point takes us to the beginning of Freud’s essay, which he begins with a linguistic analysis of the words *das Heimliche* and its opposite *das Unheimliche*. The former conveys an idea of home, safety, security, and familiarity, while the latter “is in reality nothing new or foreign, but something familiar and old-established in the mind that has been estranged only by the process of repression.” Freud references Schelling’s definition of the uncanny “as something which ought to have been kept concealed but which has nevertheless come to light” (394). Therefore, the uncanny is actually a situation that is simultaneously familiar and unfamiliar. The *repetition-compulsion* principle is uncanny in the sense that the individual continually returns to the source of anxiety and fear. Again, in “The Sand-man” it is the anxiety of enucleation and the castration-complex that drives Nathanael to return again and again to the same kind of self-destructive situations revolving around the Sand-man/Coppélius/Coppola figure.

Although Machado borrows elements of Hoffmann's story, particularly that of the disembodied eye, he expands certain images and explores other aspects of the fantastic and uncanny. In fact, the points of divergence are what make Machado's reading/rewriting of "The Sand-man" appealing. Although "Sem olhos" was published six years after "O Capitão Mendonça," the Hoffmann influences and the theme of the enucleated eye are stronger in the later.

"Sem olhos," like many of Machado's stories, is composed of one story that introduces and frames the principal tale. It begins with a group of friends invited by the Vasconcelos couple: Bento Soares, his wife Maria do Céu, the bachelor Antunes, and Cruz, a judge of the court of appeals. Before tea is served they discuss the death of an acquaintance which leads to a discussion of other-worldly spirits, tales of witches, and werewolves. Several of the participants regard these stories as mere foolishness, but Cruz affirms that ghosts indeed exist, to which Maria do Céu exclaims, "Fantasmas! [...] Pois há quem tenha visto fantasmas?" Cruz indicates that he has seen a ghost, and although he does not discount the possibility that "os fantasmas são fruto do medo," he affirms that if Maria had seen "o que eu vi uma vez, estou certo de que ficaria apavorada." Visibly shaken, he attempts to change the subject, but the group insists he continue his tale.

As a student in São Paulo, he spent some time living in Rio de Janeiro during a vacation where he met Damasceno Rodrigues, an odd fellow with strange biblical interpretations and theories of how the moon was actually "uma ilusão dos sentidos." For the most part, Cruz avoids contact with his crazy neighbor until he hears he was sick. As he enters Damasceno's room he sees that his neighbor "tinha os olhos cravados na parede." When Cruz leaves to find a doctor, his neighbor, still staring at the wall, shouts out, "Não! ainda não! Vai-te! Depois, daqui a um ano!... a dois... a três! Vai-te, Lucinda! Deixa-me!" The doctor comes but reveals to Cruz that his neighbor is going to die. Cruz decides to spend the night with Damasceno, since he has no other friends or relatives with whom to spend his last moments.

As Cruz tries to keep Damasceno comfortable, his neighbor looks at him seriously, and says, "não olhe nunca para a mulher do seu próximo. [...] Sobretudo não a obrige a olhar para o senhor. Comprará por esse preço a paz de sua vida toda." Cruz attributes this disjointed warning to the onset of delirium. However, Damasceno asks Cruz to open a box and remove some papers, amongst which is a small painting of "uma formosa cabeça de mulher, e os mais expressivos olhos." Damasceno tells the story that has caused many afflictions in his life: "Eu era moço, ela moça; ambos inocentes e puros. Sabe o que nos matou? Um olhar." He continues to recount a time when he was in Bahia and made the acquaintance of a doctor and his young wife Lucinda, who was forbidden to look at any man other than her husband: "Lucinda não

me olhava nunca. Era medo, era talvez intimação do marido.” Given her situation, Damasceno took pity on her and desired to be her friend. One day, he was able to get her to look him directly in the eyes:

Lucinda estremeceu, e levantou os olhos para mim. Cruzaram-se com os meus, mas disseram nesse único minuto [...] toda a devastação de nossas almas; corando, ela abaixou os seus, gesto de modéstia, que era a confirmação de seu crime; eu deixei-me estar a contemplá-la silenciosamente. No meio dessa sonolência moral em que nos achávamos, uma voz atroou e nos chamou à realidade. Ao mesmo tempo achou-se defronte de nós a figura do marido.

Needless to say, her husband was furious and Damasceno left quickly but afraid of what would become of Lucinda. After several weeks without contact, Damasceno was worried that her husband had harmed Lucinda or worse. He began to hear rumors that she had died, that she had committed suicide, or that she had simply disappeared.

Resolute to discover the truth, he went to see her husband: “disse-me que eu fizera bem em ir vê-lo, que Lucinda estava viva, mas podia morrer no dia seguinte; que, depois de cogitar na punição que daria ao olhar da moça resolvera castigar-lhe simplesmente os olhos...” The doctor led Damasceno into the other room to see his wife:

Ali chegando... vi... oh! é horrível! vi, sobre uma cama, o corpo imóvel de Lucinda, que gemia do modo a cortar o coração. “Vê, disse ele—só lhe castiguei os olhos.” O espetáculo que se me revelou então, nunca, oh! nunca mais o esqueceré! Os olhos da pobre moça tinham desaparecido; ele os vazara, na véspera, com um ferro em brasa... Recuei espavorido. O médico apertou-me os pulsos clamando com toda a raiva concentrada em seu coração: “Os olhos delinqüiram, os olhos pagaram!”

Because of one reckless glance, the doctor had burned out his wife’s eyes, thus preventing her from ever repeating that mistake. Damasceno pauses in his narration for a moment and then suddenly screams out “Vai-te! Vai-te! ainda não!... Olhe!... Olhe! la está ela! la está,” pointing to the far wall. Cruz, following his dying neighbor’s gaze sees the ghost of Lucinda: “De pé, junto à parede, vi uma mulher lívida, a mesma do retrato, com os cabelos soltos, e os olhos... Os olhos, esses eram duas cavidades vazias e ensangüentadas.” He continues to relate how he almost lost “todos os sentidos [...] e quase a razão.” Damasceno Rodrigues dies later that morning.

After finishing his story, Vasconcelos is the first to respond: “Não podemos duvidar que o senhor visse a figura dessa mulher, disse ele; mas, como explicar o fenômeno?” Cruz says that the story has an epilogue. He discovers that Damasceno had never actually lived in Bahia, the picture that he had was of a niece, and that “o episódio que ele me referira era uma ilusão como a da lua, uma pura ilusão dos sentidos.” Cruz, however, does not doubt that he saw the woman without eyes: “Que a vi, é certo, tão claramente como os estou vendo agora.” He leaves the problem of explaining the phenomenon to “os mestres da ciência, os observadores da natureza humana.” One of the guests offers a possible explanation, that perhaps the “desvario

do doente foi contagioso.” However, the story does not resolve with an explanation of the phenomenon and ends maintaining the fantastic element of the story.

Now, the influence of Hoffmann is noted in the image of the woman without eyes. Certainly, the castration-complex is present in the original story Damasceno tells. Cruz, referring to the story of Lucinda states: “Que outro rival de Otelo há ai como esse marido que queimou com um ferro de brasa os mais belos olhos do mundo, em castigo de haverem fitado outros olhos estranhos?” The doctor prefers to burn out his wife’s eyes, rather than allow her to even entertain the thought of infidelity, and thus emotionally castrate him. It is also interesting to note that he burns out his wife’s eyes with a “ferro de brasa,” similar to Coppélius and the “red-hot grains” he tried to put in Nathanael’s eyes. This image of fire is somehow connected to the enucleated eye. Perhaps the presence of the uncanny is not particularly strong in “Sem olhos.” Nonetheless, the influence of Hoffmann can be seen in Machado’s appropriation of the theme of the enucleated eye. Furthermore, it is left to be determined how and why Damascenos created the story about Lucinda and also how Cruz could have seen the figure of the woman without eyes. Certainly, there is room for interpretation about the anxiety of enucleation and the castration-complex in the character of Damascenos, but Machado does not give enough of a reliable back-story to construct a cogent argument. The ending of the story also begs the question as to why Cruz focuses his efforts on getting Maria do Céu to believe in ghosts rather than disproving the other’s incredulous remarks. Perhaps there is a correlation between the gaze of desire of Damascenos and Lucinda and that of Cruz and Maria do Céu.

The Hoffmann influence in “O Capitão Mendonça,” however, is much more apparent. Freud’s interpretation of the uncanny is therefore more applicable. The story opens with Sr. Amaral attending a play. During the first intermission, he is reflecting on the first act when “um sujeito, já velho” introduces himself as a friend of Amaral’s father. The captain invites the young Amaral to his home. He reluctantly agrees and they leave the theater. They arrive at a large and strange house and enter a darkened corridor, inspiring certain trepidation and hesitation in Amaral. He jokingly refers to the passageway as “o corredor do inferno.” Sensing the young man’s fear, and in an attempt to lighten the mood, Mendonça replies: “Quase acertou [...] não é o inferno, mas é purgatório [e] o purgatório tem boa cara; em vez de caldeiras tem sofás.” The captain invites him to supper with his daughter Augusta, who has “dois belíssimos olhos verdes.” Neither the captain nor his daughter is shy in their frank declaration of contentment that Amaral is there with them. He is especially intrigued with the fact that Augusta makes no attempt to hide her “belos olhos verdes” from his gaze. After dinner they head to a sitting room with old furniture and stuffed animals. Amaral finds the room fantastic and purgatorial, as the captain had indicated. He concludes that Augusta is “o único laço” between himself and the world.

Amaral is taken by surprise when the captain directly asks him, “Não acha formosa esta pequena?” and “Que lindos olhos, não são?” He responds in the affirmative. Mendonça makes some seemingly disjointed remarks regarding the vanity of his daughter and her origin. After a few moments, the captain asks again, “Então acha esses olhos bontitos?” to which Amaral replies, “São tão formosos quanto raros.” The next question takes him off guard, “Quer que lhos dê?” He replies that it would be lovely, so the captain walks over to Augusta, “que inclinou a cabeça sobre as mãos dele. O velho fez um pequeno movimento, a moça ergueu a cabeça, o velho apresentou-me nas mãos os dois belos olhos da moça.” Understandably shocked, Amaral’s reaction is one of horror:

Olhei para Augusta. Era horrível. Tinha no lugar dos olhos dois grandes buracos como uma caveira. Desisto de descrever o que senti; não pude dar um grito; fiquei gelado. A cabeça da moça era o que mais hediondo pode criar imaginação humana; imaginem uma caveira viva, falando, sorrindo, fitando em mim os dois buracos vazios, onde pouco antes nadavam os mais belos olhos do mundo. Os buracos pareciam ver-me; a moça contemplava o meu espanto com um sorriso angélico.

This episode is similar to the scene in which the true nature of Olimpia is revealed to Nathaneal. Although the horror, trepidation, and enucleated eyes, are similar in both stories, the greatest difference is that in Machado there is no apparent violence toward Augusta’s eyes. In fact, the old captain and Augusta act as if everything is normal. The situation is disconcerting and horrific for Amaral, however, especially the way in which Augusta seems to still see him, even though her eyes have been removed. Mendonça insists that Amaral take a closer look at her eyes that he is now holding in his hand:

Os dois olhos estavam fitos em mim, pareciam compreender-me tanto quanto os buracos vazios do rosto da moça; separados do rosto, não os abandonara a vida; a retina tinha a mesma luz e os mesmos reflexos. Daquele modo as duas mãos do velho olhavam para mim como se foram um rosto.

This passage is perhaps the first true representation of the uncanny, albeit in its most elemental form. Here, Amaral is looking at a pair of beautiful eyes that belong to a beautiful girl whose father encourages the apparent attraction between the two. There is nothing out of the ordinary in this scene other than the fact that her father is holding her eyes in his hands with no apparent disconnect between the enucleated eyes and the now empty eye sockets. There is a simultaneous blend of the familiar (*Heimliche*) and the unfamiliar (*Unheimliche*).

This sense of the familiar/unfamiliar continues when Augusta leaves the room and her father comments on her sway: “Vê a graça com que ela anda? [...] Aquilo tudo é obra minha... é obra do meu gabinete. [...] É verdade; é por ora a minha obra prima.” At this point, Amaral’s only preoccupation is to get out of the house. Seemingly able to read his mind, Mendonça, speaking of his daughter, says: “Deve estar encantado, ainda

que um tanto assustado.” He reveals that Amaral should feel privileged to witness the unveiling of his *obra-prima*—Augusta. He explains that she is “um produto químico,” the fourth in a number of experiments that have taken him three years to perfect. Despite her “origem misteriosa e diabólica” Amaral still feels a strange attraction for her, even though he knows she is a simple automaton. He leaves their home for the evening, promising to return the following day under the threat of death if he does not. Outside he hesitates between what “os meus olhos viam” and what “a minha razão negava.” In this state of hesitation, he attempts to resolve the conflict in his mind:

Quem sabe se eu não podia conciliar tudo? Lembrei-me de todas as pretensões da química e da alquimia. Ocorreu-me um conto fantástico de Hoffmann em que um alquimista pretende ter alcançado o segredo de produzir criaturas humanas. A criação romântica de ontem não podia ser a realidade de hoje? E se o capitão tinha razão não era para mim grande glória denunciá-lo ao mundo?

Amaral attempts to reconcile his vacillation between the fantastic and the real by considering the miraculous advances of science. It is interesting to note the deliberate reference to Hoffmann. Perhaps this alchemist is the professor and creator of Olimpia. In any case, the hesitation between fact and fantasy is associated with the familiar/unfamiliar nature of the uncanny in the sense that Amaral attempts to rationalize the one element that is askew in his reality—Augusta’s disembodied eyes that represent this fantastic breakthrough in technology. In fact, Amaral considers various advances in human understanding in the past (Galileo, Columbus) that were once considered fantastic but now accepted:

A incredulidade de hoje é a sagração de amanhã. A deixa desconhecida não deixa de ser verdade. É verdade por si mesma, não o é pelo consenso público. Ocorreu-me a imagem dessas estrelas que os astrónomos descobrem agora sem que elas tenham deixado de existir muitos séculos antes.

Amaral prudently reconciles the fantastic with an explanation based on science. Content with his logical and rational acceptance of an otherwise fantastic situation, Amaral returns to visit Capitão Mendonça and Augusta the following day. The captain reveals the secret of Augusta’s lifelike abilities—vanity. Through the chemical manipulation of mercury, Mendonça was able to recreate the human quality of vanity and, thus, Augusta appears as full of life as any young girl her age. When Amaral suggests he share his secret with the world, the captain insists that he will take it to the grave.

For the young man’s entertainment and enlightenment, Mendonça has prepared an experiment to illustrate his abilities in alchemy. He turns a lump of coal into a diamond. While he busily works in the lab, Amaral and Augusta continue their courtship: “Não era possível ocultá-lo; eu já a amava; e por cúmulo de ventura era amado também. O casamento seria o desenlace natural daquela simpatia.” Unlike Olimpia, Augusta is coquettish, gregarious, and intelligent. Whereas Nathanael’s love

is so intense because the automaton allows him to indulge in the projection of his own narcissism, Amaral and Augusta truly form an equal romantic relationship even though she is “filha da ciência e da vontade do homem.” Gradually, the uncanny experience of yesterday becomes the accepted norm of today, just as modern science explains once hidden truths.

After Mendonça turns coal into diamond, he explains that his greatest achievement will be to take “um homem de talento, notável ou medíocre, ou até um homem nulo, e [fazer] dele um gênio.” The captain explains that he has an Arabic book of alchemy from the sixteenth century that outlines how to manipulate the chemical composition of the brain and increase an individual’s level of intelligence. The following day, the captain reveals that he has a plan that will result in the “completa felicidade de três pessoas.” Amaral, thinking the captain refers to the marriage of Augusta, is surprised when he says: “O gênio. A felicidade é o gênio.” Augusta, chiding her father, tells him to tell the whole plan. Amaral is excited to hear that Mendonça has offered him Augusta’s hand in marriage; however, there is one condition. In order to take his place by Augusta, Amaral must undergo an operation to enhance his level of intelligence in order to equal that of his betrothed and his future father-in-law. Otherwise, Amaral will remain “uma estrela [,] um fósforo [ou] um vaga-lume” in comparison to the “sol” of the others.

Suddenly the fantastic world that Amaral had accepted as familiar and normal is turned on its head and becomes unfamiliar and horrific. Amaral wonders if he is trapped in a world of lunatics or phantasms, but the captain is rather matter-of-fact in his scientific explanation of the chemical manipulation of ether that will result in supreme intelligence. Amaral tries to escape but realizes too late, as Mendonça drugs him, that his fate is to undergo this operation. The captain explains: “Eu vou furar-lhe a cabeça. Apenas sacar o estilete, introduze-lhe o tubo e abre a pequena mola. Bastam dois minutos.” Amaral feels a sharp pain in his cranium, a strange sensation, and then he faints. He awakes to an empty laboratory when suddenly he hears a voice, “Olá! acorde!” In another twist, Machado reveals that Amaral never left the theater and that his encounter with Capitão Mendonça and Augusta was all a dream. Machado leads the reader down a path of uncanny situations, offering rational evidence that the fantastic world is plausible. As soon as this uncanny and fantastic world is accepted, he pulls the rug out from underneath the reader.

Machado continuously plays with the themes of reality and imagination. He presents the reader with several fantastic situations but provides plausible, rational, and scientific explanations. However, the unfamiliar, or in this case the fantastic as seen in the figure of the enucleated eyes of Augusta, constantly clash with the familiar—the rational world of science. Augusta’s eyes represent a rupture in the positivist

mindset. There is a constant desire to explain the numerous repetitions of this subversive rupture. Freud's principle of *repetition-compulsion* explains why Amaral keeps returning to the home of Capitão Mendonça and Augusta. He has a morbid fascination with uncovering the truth of the various mysteries. This is not unlike Nathanael's morbid obsession with the Sand-man. At the beginning of the story, Amaral is fearful to enter the purgatorial home; however, he is driven to explore its dark and fantastic nature and that of its owner. Once he meets and is enchanted with Augusta, he is compelled to pursue her affection. Even though he is at first shocked by the revelation that she is an automaton, he later rationalizes his love for her. Because of his budding passion for Augusta, he disregards many of the tell-tale signs of the lunacy of the captain. On several occasions, Amaral states that he does not understand what the old man is talking about regarding his experiments, alchemy, and genius. Unfortunately, by the time Amaral figures out what is going on, it is too late. Although Nathanael's own madness prevents a similar objective view on his own circumstance, it is the *repetition-compulsion* that leads to his suicide. He cannot cast aside the self-destructive obsession with the Sand-man/Coppelius/Coppola figure. Likewise, Amaral's desire for Augusta prevents him from observing his precarious situation for what it is.

Nicholas Royle, in his study *The Uncanny*, suggests that this desire to repeat is the death drive that Freud discusses in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Again, Freud reveals that the secret nature of the uncanny is the morbid anxiety of recurrence and repetition. But ultimately, it is the *repetition-compulsion* with the drive towards death that lies at the center of the uncanny. Hoffmann uses the image of the enucleated eye to represent the simultaneous repulsion of and morbid fascination with death. The Sand-man/Coppelius/Coppola figure is simply a projection of Nathanael's own death drive. The uncanny, or the repetition of the unfamiliar in the familiar, is simply the manner in which the death drive appears in his life. Likewise, Machado taps into this same theme by appropriating Hoffmann's image of the disembodied eye. In "Sem olhos," it is apparent that Damasceno is headed toward death even before he falls ill. For whatever reason, the eyeless phantasm of Lucinda represents his death drive. At least Nathanael and Damasceno are vaguely aware of their insanity and respective death drives. In "O Capitão Mendonça," on the other hand, Amaral suppresses his death drive by continually attempting to reconcile the fantastic and supernatural forces with positivist thought. Ultimately, it is fascinating to note how much of Freud's theory of the uncanny can be observed in these two stories of Machado. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that the uncanny is inextricably linked to the image of the enucleated eye since it encapsulates the essence of the death drive.

NOTES

¹ This collection was compiled by Raymundo Magalhães Júnior in 1973, member of the Academia de Letras Brasileiras.

² Edgar Allan Poe (1809–1849), Guatier (1811–1872) and Mallarmé (1842–1898) were also notable influences in Machado’s fantastic stories. This aspect of his work is also understudied.

³ I use the terminology in French here since *l'étrange* is mistranslated in English as the uncanny, which unfortunately has little to do with Freud’s definition. Todorov references Freud in explaining how the uncanny is linked to the repetition of a repressed childhood memory. Undoubtedly, there is a deeper connection between Freud’s uncanny and Todorov’s theory of the fantastic; however, that discussion lies beyond the focus of this study.

⁴ Unfortunately, these Brazilian MA theses are not available in the US library system. Both Fernandes and Lula have published articles in student journals that are available online. Lula’s article comes from his thesis *Machado de Assis e o gênero fantástico* (2005).

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UNLIMITED SPACES OF LANGUAGE: CULTURAL GEOGRAPHY IN GALLEGOS'S DOÑA BÁRBARA

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*El Llano enloquece y la locura del hombre de la tierra
ancha y libre es ser llanero siempre. En la guerra buena,
esa locura fue la carga irresistible del pajonal incendiado
en Mucuritas, y el retozo heroico de Queseras del Medio;
en el trabajo: la doma y el ojeo, que no son trabajos, sino
temeridades; en el descanso: la llanura en la malicia del
<<cacho>>, en la bellaquería del <<pasaje>>, en la
melancolía sensual de la copla; en el perezoso abandonado:
la tierra inmensa por delante y no andar, el horizonte todo
abiertos y no buscar nada; en la amistad: la desconfianza,
al principio, y luego la franqueza absoluta; en el odio: la
arremetida impetuosa; en el amor: <<primero mi caballo>>.
¡La llanura siempre! Tierra abierta y tendida, buena para
el esfuerzo y para la hazaña, toda horizontes, como la
esperanza, toda caminos, como la voluntad.*

~Rómulo Gallegos

I

If we were to apply superlatives to the three most blatantly geographical narratives of Latin American literature, there would exist a retrogression in language from wild (Rómulo Gallegos's *Doña Bárbara*, 1929), to wilder (Euclides da Cunha's *Os Sertões*, 1902), to wildest (Domingo Faustino Sarmiento's *Facundo*, 1845). Though Gallegos's debt to Sarmiento and da Cunha is at once evident, his representation of the Venezuelan land exhibits a refined control, a finesse that allows the narrative to become a legitimate novel with a proper protagonist (Santos Luzardo) and antagonist (Doña Bárbara). Yet, *Doña Bárbara* too is a hybrid text that crosses the borders between essay, political pamphlet, historical narrative, and anthropological discourse, albeit within the framework of an allegorical novel that depicts the epic battle between civilization and barbarism on the Venezuelan *llano*. The cyclical tale is one of droughts and floods, of crimes and revenges, and of love and war, culminating in the triumphant expulsion of Doña Bárbara, the personification of rural despotism and barbarism incarnate, by Santos Luzardo—the cultured urban lawyer, eliminator of corruption, and civilization embodied.

Similar to the Brazilian and Argentine narratives, the human characters of the Venezuelan novel often reside on the back burner, only to be replaced by inordinate attention bestowed upon representations of the national terrain. Humboldtian in their execution, these descriptions suggest an appeal to the discipline of geography as a force of authorization. By extension, I contend that arguments for science as the hegemonic discourse nourishing Latin American narrative of this period should be taken a step further—I speak here of Roberto González Echevarría in his *Myth and Archive* (1990)—from the generality of science to the particularity of geography.¹

Geography reigns supreme in Gallegos's magnum opus, yet, all the same, the author claims in the 1954 *Una posición en la vida* that his intent far surpassed a sole desire to depict the landscape for creative release and production. He sought, rather, to symbolize via his fictitious characters the “intellectual or moral forms of [his] concerns with regard to the problems of the Venezuelan reality with which [he had] lived.” By deriving his symbols from personal experience and transforming them so as to ameliorate his tension-ridden society, Gallegos explains, he was better equipped to create the necessary myths whereby the nation could recognize, reflect, and represent itself. He imagined the persona of Doña Bárbara as a means by which “a dramatic aspect of the Venezuela in which [he had] lived [might] become visible, and so that in some fashion her imposing character [might] help us remove from our souls that part of her that resides in us” (qtd. in Skurski 632).

In my view, however, Gallegos—wittingly or not—chooses instead to carry on “that part of her that resides in us”—this is to say, her barbarism—via a language that is broken down into the poetry, the metaphors, the symbols, and the primary tropes of the Vichean primitive man, thereby suggesting an inherent desire to embrace and elevate the barbaric elements that form the national population. Form and content coalesce here in the creation of both nation and national literature. If “las cosas vuelven al lugar de donde salieron” in *Doña Bárbara*, it is only fitting that this national narrative stems from, returns to, and creates its unique Venezuelan landscape by means of its sonorous language (364). Gallegos effectively underwrites his political project with a very real—though often subtle—formal strategy. Yet, it is this very formalistic representation of land that has gone understudied in Venezuela's national novel. Because critics tend to center on the novel's allegorical function, I believe that we should go beyond the national allegory reading—a reading, we might add, perpetuated by none other than Gallegos himself—without, however, rejecting it.

The question of national allegory in Latin American narrative of course evokes the name of Doris Sommer. Indeed, perhaps the most venerated reading of *Doña Bárbara* in recent years comes from Sommer in her landmark study *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America* (1991). In an attempt to understand the Boom

writers' rejection of nineteenth-century texts, the literary critic and professor returns to the novels of that very century (although she opts to employ a rather heterogeneous corpus, including *Facundo*, for example) to determine the various explanations of why. By means of a cross between Foucault's theory of sexuality and Anderson's theory of the nation, passing through Jameson's and above all Benjamin's notion of allegory, Sommer proposes the idea of "national romances" achieved by the relationship between personal narratives, heterosexual love, the collective, and love for country, all resulting, in effect, in the marriage between Eros and Polis.

The identification between these two does not stem, according to Sommer, from parallelism but rather from metonymy: it is not that one is valued more than the other so much as it is that both are inextricably linked and the one presupposes the other: "Instead of a metaphoric parallelism, say between passion and patriotism, that readers may expect from allegory, we will see here a metonymic association between romantic love that needs the state's blessing and political legitimacy that needs to be founded on love" (41). In certain canonical works of nineteenth-century Latin America that Sommer denominates "foundational fictions" (in the double sense that they found—or as a minimum they help to found—the nation and at the same time a national literature) there is, to begin with, a heterosexual passion. Through the amorous union between the protagonists of the romance—or, sometimes, by means of its impossibility—the reader is obliged to imagine an ideal state in which such a union is possible, beyond regional, class-related, or racial differences: it is a national state that attempts to found a homogenous state through a non-violent consolidation between distinct factions, thus resulting in the resolution of internal conflicts. *Doña Bárbara*, then, proves to be the populist reincarnation of the national romance.

Such is the amorous union, contends Sommer, between Santos Luzardo and Marisela—the abandoned daughter of Doña Bárbara and Luzardo's cousin, Lorenzo Barquero—one in which Santos's "offer of legal and loving status to the disenfranchised *mestiza* shows Gallegos trying to patch up the problem of establishing a legitimate, centralized nation on a history of usurpation and civil war" (289). As if in response to this heterosexual, incestuous, and interracial passion, Doña Bárbara's jealousy flares, her dominion disintegrates, and she thus passively abandons the *llano*, tail between legs, down the same, barbarous, alligator-filled Arauca from where she first arrived; Sommer reads this departure as the elimination of barbarism from the novelistic and, as such, nationalistic sphere: "The only solution was to eliminate barbarism by filling in the empty space, by populating. In the conjugal instrumentalism of populist romance, civilization was to penetrate the barren land and to make her mother" (281).

Though acute in many regards, Sommer's reading unquestioningly accepts Gallegos's presentation of Doña Bárbara's allegedly passive departure as the allegorical elimination of barbarism. Rather than bestow any semblance of agency upon Doña

Bárbara—who, to my mind, actively escapes, nearly in a blaze of glory, money in hand, and thus ensures the survival of barbarism—Sommer acquiesces to Gallegos’s wish to create a national myth, to fashion a didactic tale for Venezuelans such that they might, and I reiterate, “remove from [their] souls that part of her that resides in [them]” (qtd. in Skurski 632). And this removal, so it seems, entails accepting her elimination as fact as opposed to interpreting and exploring the ambiguity behind her departure.

Interpretation, after all, is precisely the word Roberto González Echevarría condescendingly places in quotation marks in his study of the novel. Preceding Sommer’s famous national romance reading by nearly a decade, his book *The Voice of the Masters: Writing and Authority in Modern Latin American Literature* (1985) certainly accepts the notion of the novel as an allegory, but at the most superficial, blatant level:

The allegory of *Doña Bárbara*, at the most visible and at the same time most abstract level, consists of the opposition of two forces that together make up Latin American reality: the presumed clash between civilization and barbarity, put forth by Sarmiento in *Facundo*. This conception is evident in the text, which contains enough material put into the words of the narrator to legitimize such an “interpretation.” I put interpretation in quotation marks to emphasize that we are not dealing with a possible meaning extracted by the reader, but with a meaning inscribed in the text itself. The allegory on this level—which is not so much an ideological one as one of the social and political doctrine—carries with it its own implicit reading. (47)

For González Echevarría, the novel fulfills the prerequisites of allegory, as dictated by Paul de Man—“allegory consists of saying or interpreting more than what has actually been said; it is a supplement of meaning that escapes the intentions and rules imposed by the text itself” (*Masters* 47)—yet it does so in order to create a new Latin American literary reality, one presented by the author in a rather direct manner, a Barthesian *readerly* text, if you will.

Though González Echevarría correctly notes that the allegory of *Doña Bárbara* is perhaps self-evident, I would like to push against his reading by arguing for the *writerly* undercurrents flowing through the novel. That is, I believe that there is indeed “possible meaning [to be] extracted by the reader,” meaning far from fixed or inscribed upon the novel by the author himself. Because the allegorical reading is one already elaborated by Gallegos, I ask that we look to the vast horizons of his Venezuelan *llano* where there surfaces a quality and intensity of writing that begs to be meticulously analyzed past the superficial level.

That the novel can be superficial is not, however, an observation limited to González Echevarría. Indeed, that Gallegos’s nature-based symbols, metaphor, and allegory are a tad too self-evident and that its quest to concretize Latin American authenticity forces narrow readings are criticisms harking back to the novel’s original reception and, evidently, existing until present day. Even the most generous of critics, D. L. Shaw, reveals his impatience with the tactic in his analysis of the novel, though substantially buttressing it against praise:

While there is perhaps a trifle too much symbolism worked into *Doña Bárbara*, so that in the end it becomes rather obtrusive, the fact that all but a couple of the basic symbols are borrowed from the reality of the *llano* itself increases the effectiveness of the method. What could otherwise have been a hollow rhetorical device instead serves to knit the *llano* into the texture of the narrative, presenting it not as a passive picturesque background, but as an active force with a genuinely functional role. (74)

While the *llano* is undoubtedly knit into the texture of the narrative, that very texture of the narrative simultaneously weaves together the fabric of the *llano*; the language does not simply borrow from the reality of the *llano*, but rather creates it. In other words, instead of merely drawing from nature to create his symbols, metaphors, and allegory, Gallegos *constructs* the actual nature and a very specific geography—that is to say, the interrelation between man and land—by means of his poetic language. If, as Terry Eagleton notes, “nature’ [...] is a term which hovers between fact and value, the descriptive and the normative” (4), then Gallegos, I think, attempts to navigate between these designations by allowing his language to exceed descriptive imitation of the land and instead enter the realm of conceptualization—his navigation, then, begs the question: can there be a concept of nature apart from man?

To invoke Marxist discourse again, I turn to Marx himself, who contends in his *Paris Manuscripts* that “taken abstractly, for itself—nature fixed in isolation from man is *nothing* for man” (qtd. in Heyer 80). Certainly, for Marx, nothing exists apart from nature and man, and “that man’s physical and spiritual life is linked to nature means simply that nature is linked to itself, for man is a part of nature” (qtd. in Heyer 77). Departing from this schematic, then, nature—in this case, the Venezuelan geography, the relation between man, land, and nation—ceases to exist without man’s (this is to say, Gallegos’s) active participation in its construction, in which it is taken from the abstract and the descriptive to the concrete and tangible.

This process of navigation between varying levels of transfer—from land to language and from language to land—might best be thought of in terms of mediation. It is here, then, that I turn to Frederic Jameson, for this process of navigation between the aesthetic (poetry) and the social (geography) requires the concept of *mediation*. We find in Jameson’s *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (1982) the vehement declaration that all literary interpretation should seek a political entrance, for politics should be, in the critic’s words, “the absolute horizon of all reading” (17). The ability to enact a political interpretation, however, requires that readers actively engage with and expose the oft-veiled role of the political unconscious. Upon appropriating Freud’s thought that each individual’s unconscious functions as a locus of repressed desires, Jameson argues that to answer “What does [the text] mean?”, readers must approach interpretation with regard to the unconscious or, at the very least, “some mechanism of mystification or repression in terms of which it would make sense to seek a latent meaning behind a manifest one” (58, 60). Only via literary

interpretation—this is to say, excavation through the literal—can readers mine to the core of the political unconscious: the history of class struggle (20).

In order to surface the realities of this volatile history, Jameson resorts to what Marxist thought deems “mediation,” a term crafted to explain the interrelations between two differing levels of reality: social life and literary language. While mediation requires the invention of a code that “can be applied equally to two or more distinct objects,” the objects themselves are necessarily mediated though not obliged to invoke similar messages or perform similar acts (225). Rather, the mediating codes allow interpretation because they are intermediaries employing the same conceptual terminology to treat disparate registers; by melding difference with similarity, mediation promotes coherence and continuity, thus reinstating “the lost unity of social life” (226). The objective point of mediation, in Jameson’s words, is “the possibility of reading a given style as a projected solution, on the aesthetic or imaginary level, to a genuinely contradictory situation in the concrete world of everyday social life.” The practice of mediation allows us to read a writer’s “will to style” as a socially symbolic act (225).

Here, mediation between the social (in other words, geography, or the study of relations between man and land) and the aesthetic (that is, the poetic language employed to represent that land) serves as an intermediary between these two otherwise incongruent spheres; the mediating code rests in the arena of national consolidation, what Jameson would refer to as “political domination” (266). I argue, on the one hand, that both geography as ideological production and poetry as aesthetic production in *Doña Bárbara* must first be understood vis-à-vis the concrete situation to which they are both responses: that of national consolidation in early twentieth-century Venezuela. On the other, I contend that Gallegos may best be located in history if we recognize his stylistic practice as the literary and textual equivalent of the geographical strategies belonging to Humboldt. In layman’s terms, then, I maintain that in order to effectively contemplate national consolidation in Venezuela as explicated by Gallegos, we must first accept his intellectual context—that is to say, Humboldt and geographical discourse—and, subsequently, his aesthetic appropriation and rendition of that discourse. In so doing, we might think two distinct realities (language and geography) together in a meaningful way.

II

Like his grandiose and singular quest to create a national myth *and* construct a national landscape *and* represent “a dramatic aspect” of the nation through an “imposing character,” Gallegos’s novel does not balk at limits, but instead acknowledges the rhetorical fodder already accessible in its own geographical space;

its writer, accordingly, looks past the undefined horizons that so intrigue him, and thus, wittingly or not, produces the seminal Latin American novel (116–17). These undefined horizons appear on the pages of *Doña Bárbara* on multiple occasions (136, 159, 193, 266, etc.), effectively illustrating the limitless potential of both Venezuela's lands and literatures. Vastness is the ubiquitous trait of the country: "¡Ancho llano! ¡Inmensidad bravía! ¡Desiertas praderas sin límites, hondos mudos y solitarios ríos!" (129).

This profundity of nature glides into the language of the text as we witness a rhetoric that takes upon and also creates the immensity of the land. Gallegos's rhetorical landscape of punctuation, anaphora, polysyndeton, analogy, personification, simile, and metaphor consistently returns to the geographical space of the continent—to its nature. His constant hyperbole emulates and, by consequence, constructs the enormity of the *llano* while his long sentences, semi-colons, and rhetorical questions provide form to the never-ending character of the open country. Time is halted in the Venezuelan *llano*, where everything moves slowly, where you can see the horizon for miles on end as you meander on. It should come as no surprise, then, that Gallegos would lean toward a rhetorical style that is slow and steady, replete with devices similar to the land.

It is in this vein that I see the necessity to read between Gallegos the poet's lines and paragraphs and chapters and sections, to read between the "ands" in this hybrid text that, if it does indeed maintain one consistency, it is within its poetry. While the poetic qualities of Gallegos's writing have been privy to superficial study, to my knowledge no critic has enacted a proper poetic explication of his novels—perhaps because prose, generally speaking, does not beckon poetic analysis. Orlando Araujao's deceptively titled book-length study *Lengua y creación en la obra de Rómulo Gallegos* (1955), however, certainly alludes to a proper analysis of Gallegos's formal writing qualities, as do his text's first two sentences:

Las novelas de Rómulo Gallegos se inspiran en la tierra propia, de ella toman su gran fuerza poética y el impulso vital que las libra de todo artificio y las acerca a las obras perdurables creadas por el hombre. Esa obra no se queda, sin embargo, en la poética contemplación del paisaje, sino que refleja también la vida de las gentes que lo habitan y expresa las ideas, los sentimientos, los conflictos y las pasiones que sacuden el alma de esas gentes. (Araujao 19)

The study, nevertheless, only offers vague plot summaries and broad generalizations regarding Gallegos's "gran fuerza poética," and thus leaves readers wanting. Want not, for poetic devices, to my mind, flourish in Gallegos and allow the political impulse of his most famous text to resonate with distinct tones. My intention, then, is to depart from Marx's adage that "as every society has its own peculiar nature, so does it engender its own peculiar natural man," so as to highlight the peculiarities first in Gallegos's poetry of the land, then in the poetry of its people, and lastly in the poetry of the land and the people combined (qtd. in Heyer 124).

POETRY OF THE LAND

Within the opening lines of his first chapter, one ominously titled “¿Con quién vamos?” as if to immediately hint to readers the land’s constant threat, Gallegos introduces the *llano* under perhaps the most negative of lights—that is, the sun:

Un sol cegante, de mediodía llanero, centellea en las aguas amarillas del Arauca y sobre los árboles que pueblan sus márgenes. Por entre las ventanas, que a espacios rompen la continuidad de la vegetación, divísanse, a la derecha, las calcetas del cajón del Apure—pequeñas sabanas rodeadas de chaparrales y palmares—, y, a la izquierda, los bancos del vasto cajón del Arauca—praderas tendidas hasta el horizonte—, sobre la verdura de cuyos pastos apenas negrea una que otra mancha errante de gamado. En el profundo silencio resuenan, monótonos, exasperantes ya, los pasos de los palanqueros por la cubierta del bongo. A ratos, el patrón emboca un caracol y le arranca un sonido bronco y quejumbroso que va a morir en el fondo de las mudas soledades circundantes, y entonces se alza dentro del monte ribereño la desapacible algarabía de las chenchenas o se escucha, tras los recodos, el rumor de las precipitadas zambullidas de los caimanes que dormitan al sol de las desiertas playas, dueños terribles del ancho, mudo y solitario río. (118–19)

So as to highlight the *llano*’s power at once, Gallegos begins his description with a sun that blinds one into submission. The sun’s demanding presence resonates through the alliterated “s” appearing in “sol,” “cegante,” “centellea,” and “sobre,” placing its bright—and thus blinding and awe-inspiring—glare as the spotlight that consistently shines from above the novelistic stage. On this stage appears the *llano* and all that accompanies it, such as the yellow waters of the Arauca and the trees that compose its border. Gallegos underscores and aligns these elements into one astounding *mise-en-scène* by means of the assonated “a” that sounds in “llanero,” “aguas amarillas del Arauca” and “árboles que pueblan sus márgenes” as well as the consonance of the “ll,” which lyrically connects the *llano* (llanero) with the sparkling sun (centellea) and yellow waters (amarillas).

The brief sentence flings its content at readers like the sun that it depicts, and this abruptness is markedly underlined when seen in contrast with the punctuation-halted rambling that follows. The subsequent five-line sentence creates the density of vegetation, the immensity of the Araucan basin, and the limitlessness of the vast green pastures through its very expanse of length complemented by commas and dashes. The punctuation strategically allows Gallegos to break the continuity of the vegetation by interrupting the textual landscape with commas and, then, divide (“divísanse”) the riverbanks into a right and left bracketed by dashes. These dashes first enclose the Apure basin within a circle of chaparral and palm trees and, afterward, limit the horizons of the prairie so as to expose the dappled specks of black herds in their endless fields. By employing a staccato rhythm with the mono- and disyllabic words “una que otra mancha,” as well as the hard patter of the consonated “n,” Gallegos

further emphasizes the dotting effect of the animals upon the plain. Separated, interrupted, and dotted though it may be, the *llano* is nevertheless an open and complete space that includes both the Arauca and Apure rivers and their respective basins; this unity is underscored via the continued assonance of the vowel “a,” a sound that bears double importance as the first letter of both rivers.

While the rivers may have different origins, their final confluence demonstrates their unification. Such unification becomes a thread that Gallegos weaves through the novel in order to allude to a unified nation, one that comes together despite racial differences. The land reflects this integration, where, we learn in Santos’s interior monologue, a strong race loves, endures, and hopes in harmony, and where, regardless of the thousand different paths, there is only one final destination:

[E]staban diciéndole que no todo era malo y hostil en la llanura, tierra irredenta donde una gente buena ama, sufre y espera. Y con esta emoción, que lo reconciliaba con su tierra, abandonó la casa de Melosio, cuando ya el sol empezaba a ponerse, rumbo de baquianos a través de la sabana, que es, toda ella, uno solo y mil caminos distintos. (164)

This tributary of a comment aside, I return to the aforementioned passage. Until the third line, Gallegos avoids any mention of the surrounding sounds despite employing lyrical devices to engage readers’ perceptions of the land. Almost as if to complement the blinding sun, he leaves readers deaf to the *llano*’s sonority. He breaks this silence, however, after explicitly mentioning it by means of a diction that is as heavy, polysyllabic, and burdened as the silence described: “profundo,” “resuenan,” “monótonos,” and “exasperantes” each exude a cacophonous depth and monotony that suggest pain. Unfortunately, the only accompaniment to this sonorous lack is that of the boatmen’s tread on the deck of the boat, which Gallegos quietly pats out with the alliterated “p” in “**p**asos,” “**p**alanqueros,” and “**p**or,” as well as the consonance of the “b” in “**b**ubierta” and “**b**ongo.” But, even the sound of the patrón’s conchhorn is weak and groaning—“bronco y quejumbroso”—and it, thus, comes to an untimely death in the surrounding silence. To replace it, an even more disagreeable sound appears, that of the “desapacible algarabía de las *chenchenas*,” whose name’s onomatopoeic effect intensifies with the repeated “ch” that is heard in “*escucha*.” And, then, as if to imitate the diving to the end of the sentence, Gallegos picks up the scene’s tempo with the alligators’ “precipitadas zambullidas,” only to slow it down, drowsily, under the scene’s sun like the alligators themselves, with the heavy alliterated “d” of “**d**ormitan,” “**d**esiertas,” and “**d**ueños” counterpoised with the solitary and mute river, which they lazily own.

Whereas the sounds and silence of the novel’s first pages bear heavily on readers due to both their presentation and their poetic effects, Gallegos’s contradictions quickly come to the fore within this specific sphere. The burdened, weak, and painful sonority presented early on transforms within a smattering of chapters into a light, nearly

festive return to the land, to the days of Santos's childhood, to the peaceful silence of the country:

Y entretanto, afuera, los rumores de la llanura arrullándole el sueño, como en los claros días de la infancia: el rasgueo del cuatro en el caney de los peones, los rebuznos de los burros que venían buscando el calor de las humaredas, *los mugidos del ganado en los corrales*, **el croar de los sapos en las charcas de los contornos**, la sinfonía presente de los grillos sabaneros, y aquel silencio hondo, de soledades infinitas, de llanos dormido bajo la luna, que era también cosa que se oía más allá de todos aquellos rumores. (174)

Instead of the cacophony of the *chenchenas* and the overwhelming silence of the alligators, Gallegos's auditory imagery reveals the pleasance of donkeys braying, of frogs croaking, and of crickets chirping. Manmade sounds, moreover, limit themselves not just to the monotonous scraping of the paddle against the canoe, but rather include the rhythmical strumming of guitars. And, lastly, Gallegos's heavy, fraught silence in the former passage metamorphoses into an equally weighty—perhaps even mighty—silence in the latter, one whose presence is constant and, therefore, comforting as opposed to cumbersome.

These transformations, however subtle or obvious they may be, allude to the contradictions residing at the very core of Gallegos's own perception of civilization and barbarism. His poetic force in constructing the nature of the first passage indicates a desire to laud the presumably negative, and this latent desire gradually becomes more manifest as he explicitly tweaks the novel's aural atmosphere. Gallegos's language, finally, both stems from and creates the Venezuelan nature; his is a mimetic process that allows him to harness the energy and contradiction of the land in order to subsequently imbue its power within the textual landscape.

POETRY OF THE PEOPLE

The aforementioned contradictions, dialectics, and binaries continue to run rampant in the second section that I would like to address. That is, while in one moment Gallegos deplors the open and monotonous expanse of the *llano*, in the next he attributes the state's unity and indivisibility to that very *llano*, one to which there exist "uno solo y mil caminos distintos" (164). These peculiarities reflect a discourse of a consolidated state faced with the challenge of penetrating—by means of its sovereignty—the barbarism of this allegedly "empty" space, one in which houses can be moved with the slight of the hand (as for the Mondragones) or in which fathers and daughters subsist on meager means in appalling conditions (as for Lorenzo and Marisela). Clearly, however, this space is far from empty, and for this reason I turn to the poetry of the people, and by people, I specifically mean the *llaneros* than inhabit the *llano*.

Gallegos devotes a substantial amount of novelistic space to the *llaneros'* intrinsic abilities to dominate nature and, in particular, to dominate animals. Through three separate scenes of breaking (the horse), castrating (the bull), or killing (the alligator),

the Venezuelan author appears to express utter disdain for these horrific acts, in which man assumes the barbarism of the land. I would argue, however, that the poetry he employs to depict these barbaric scenes effectively reflects his divisive stance.

Consider, for example, the diction Gallegos utilizes in describing the horse to be broken: “brioso,” “fino de líneas,” “de gallarda alzada,” “brillante el pelo,” “la mirada fogosa,” elevate the beast to levels of grandeur that seem nearly insurpassable, yet within moments, “[e]l mostrenco se debatía encabritándose, y cuando comprendió que era **inútil** defenderse, se quedó **quieto**, tetanizado por **la cólera** y bañado en sudor, bajo la **injuria** del apero que nunca había sufrido sus lomos” (197–99). The sudden explicit change in diction leaves the beast resigned to domination at the hands of man; indeed, though Pajarote lacks the city’s standards of civilization, he is nevertheless entirely capable of conquering the horses, and this, Gallegos seems to suggest through his language, is commendable.

Yet another remarkable moment of domination appears chapters later with the roping and castrating of the bull, where Gallegos simultaneously condemns and praises these events through his language. His initial portrayal deprecates the violent and barbaric acts as such, but upon analysis, I would argue that his rhythmic writing bestows upon them a sense of rituality—that is to say, a cadence to accompany what is, for the *llanero*, a ritual performance:

En seguida, Santos *paró en seco* el caballo para **que** templara; pero se *trataba* de un *toro* de gran poder, que necesitaba más de una *soga* para ser derribado, y cuando ésta se *tezó*, vibrante, al formidable envión del orejano, la *bestia*, brutalmente *tirada* la cola, se *sentó* sobre los corvejones, lanzado un gemido estrangulado, y ya el *toro* se *revolvía* contra ella, cuando Antonio, Carmelito y *Pajarote* lanzaron sus *lazos* a un mismo tiempo, y un *triple grito* al *verlo caer* los *guernos*. (292)

Gallegos invokes the bull primarily through the repetition of disyllabic words ending in “o” (like “toro”), which appear highlighted above. The bull’s strangled breathing, too, spatters through the sibilance of the repeated “s” and “z” sounds, and his strength and anger are intensified via the hard consonance of the “c,” “t,” and “b.” The assonance of the “i” at the passage’s end emphasizes the triple, simultaneous scream, echoing not only their victory but their continued surprise regarding it. The series of twelve commas, moreover, lilt and pause the sentence in order to construct first the *llaneros* tugging in one direction and then the beast tugging in another. However, the sentence comes to a fitting end, which is, in effect, the bull’s end as he falls to the ground, defeated and with rope around his horns.

This conscious or unconscious, manifest or latent, obvious or subtle act of poetics to depict man’s barbaric domination of nature reflects, to my mind, a resigned respect or all parties involved in this performance, barbaric man and nature alike. Certainly, Gallegos’s lauding suggests that the *llaneros’* tendency to defy and subdue nature inherently develops the consciousness of individual consequence and superior ability, leading to the

heightened nationality and vanity intrinsic to the Venezuelan personality: the *llanero* arrogance in the face of beast has provoked, Gallegos seems to think, independence in this sphere of Latin America, an arrogance that can only contribute to Latin American singularity.

As the Venezuelan author scorns the barbarism behind the *llaneros'* abilities with horses, bulls, and alligators and contrasts it with their inabilities with intellect—they are, after all, barbaric non-readers, like Marisela prior to her home-schooled education. His writing shines light on an underlying respect for the beauty and necessity of the act; Gallegos appreciates that physical nature yields human nature, and this appreciation escapes through his rhetoric, through his rhythm, through his repetition.

POETRY OF THE LAND AND THE PEOPLE

This poetic appreciation allows me to segue into the third section, that of the poetry of the land *and* the people. Because Gallegos continuously alludes to man as being a product of his land—a mindset that certainly stems from his deterministic and materialistic surroundings—his emphasis on metaphor and simile is of importance. Like Marisela who is represented as a horse needing breaking, we also read of voices that are like the sticky mud of the land: “El hombre lo mira de soslayo y luego concluye, con una voz que parecía adherirse al sentido, blanda y pegajosa como el lodo de los tremedales de la llanura (119). These allusions gradually become explicit, as seen at the novel’s end, where we read that the the singer’s ballads stem from his geographic location (the *llano*) and from his racial composition:

Algo de esto lo dejaban traslucir las coplas donde el cantador llanero vierte la alegría jactanciosa del andaluz, el fatalismo sonriente del negro sumiso y la rebeldía melancolía del indio, todos los rasgos peculiares de las almas que han contribuido a formar la suya, y lo que no estuviese claro en las coplas y Santos Luzardo lo hubiere olvidado, se lo enseñaron los pasajes que fue oyendo contar mientras compartía con ellos los duros trabajos y los bulliciosos reposos. (358)

Passages like this one suggest that Gallegos’s pen not only wishes to civilize the vast, untamed landscape, but also grasp the beauty of barbarism in order to create, at once, a harmonious land in tune with the promise of new, racially-integrated nations.

In view of this quest for harmony, we see that the geography interspersed through the novel’s three parts undoubtedly—and, as Hegel might assert, inevitably—impacts the social and human sphere. Hegel insists that human kind and geography are inextricably connected; in order to achieve Freedom and Spirit (*Geist*), there must be a relationship between the people and the land, thus he writes that “Nature is the first standpoint from which man can gain freedom within himself, and this liberation must not be rendered difficult by natural obstructions” (80). In *Doña Bárbara*, the language and the people are a production of the land itself. Human nature develops vis-à-vis the

nature in which we are immersed, as evident in Santos Luzardo's perception of Doña Bárbara midway through the novel:

Santos Luzardo volvió a experimentar aquel impulso de curiosidad intelectual que en el rodeo de *Mata Oscura* estuvo a punto de moverlo a sondear el abismo de aquella alma, recia y brava como la llanura donde se agitaba, pero que tal vez tenía, también como la llanura, sus frescos refugios de sombra y sus plácidos remansos, de improviso, aquellas palabras que eran, a la vez, una confesión y una protesta. (301–02)

Based on this schematic, then, Doña Bárbara is civilization while Santos Luzardo is barbarism—*Pajarote* is animal, as are the aptly named Mondragones brothers: “Eran los Mondragones, oriundos de las llanuras de Barinas, a los cuales por su bravura y fechorías apodaban: *Onza, Tigre y León*” (204). And, yet again, we return to metaphor.

III

Thus far I have attempted to explicate Gallegos's own rendition of geographical discourse, one markedly literary in its unification of form and content, in its appeal to metaphor. The writer and statesman strives to outline the parameters of a national literature by looking to its land. Only through the land might readers understand the national man. It is important to note, however, that this man—the Venezuelan *llanero*—exudes barbarity at its highest form. He is primitive, violent, and savage. Yet, I would argue that Gallegos elevates this barbarous figure—wittingly or not—by extension of his poetic language; poetic representation of the negative alludes to potential respect for that very negativity. In this vein, then, I turn to Vico's notion of Poetic Logic in order to hypothesize that in his embracing of poetry, Gallegos actually embraces the language of primitive man—this is to say, the barbaric man. His poetic process begins, incidentally, with metaphor.

Metaphor is indeed powerful. In his essay “The Tropics of History: The Deep Structure of *New Science*,” Hayden White asks, “What is the nature of the creative power of language?” (203). He contends that the answer stems not from Vico's concepts of poetic imagination but instead from his theory of *metaphor*, which is developed in the context of, and as the key to, his discussion of poetic logic. For Vico, poetic logic refers to the manner in which forms, as comprehended by primitive man, are signified. Because barbarians lacked the ability to analyze and apprehend abstraction, they had to resort to their fantasy to understand the world. Vico contends: “poetic wisdom must have begun with a metaphysics which, unlike the *rational* and *abstract* metaphysics of today's scholars, sprang from the senses and imagination of the first people” (144; emphasis added). Therefore, Vico asserts that the first men's knowledge of things was not “rational and abstract,” but rather felt and imagined, and, in this vein, he seems to denounce the metaphysics—the focus on the rational and the abstract—of his contemporaries. He states:

The countless abstract expressions which permeate our languages today have divorced our civilized thought from the senses, even among the common people. The art of writing has greatly refined the nature of our thought; and the use of numbers had intellectualized it, so to speak, even among the masses, who know how to count and reckon. [...] We are likewise incapable of entering into the vast imaginative powers of the earliest people. Their minds were in no way abstract, refined, or intellectualized; rather, they were completely sunk in their senses, numbed by their passions, and buried in their bodies. [...] We can barely understand, and by no means imagine, the thinking of the early people who founded pagan antiquity. (147)

Denouncing both his precursors Aristotle and Plato, as well as his contemporaries Patrizi, Caesar, and Castelvetro, he claims that, “unlike them, we have discovered that poetry was born sublime precisely because it lacked rationality” (149).

Poetry, thus, is a primitive necessity, a result of curiosity that “sprang naturally from their ignorance of causes” (Vico 144). Consequently, “the earliest people of the pagan nations” could only create by resorting to their imagination, which was “grossly physical,” indicating an embodiment of language that the philosopher suggests “made their creation wonderfully sublime.” Vico describes the giants’ reaction to the first “frightening thunderclaps and lightning bolts,” recounting that in their ignorance, “[the giants] imagined the heavens as a great living body, and in this manifestation, they called the sky Jupiter.” He proceeds with the definition: “Jupiter was born naturally in poetry as *divine archetype or imaginative universal*.” The concept of “imaginative universal” appears to be the predecessor of the metaphor. Jupiter is sky. Achilles is bravery. Form and content are indistinguishable. Vico declares that in Greek, “poet” means “creator,” and in order to create, the first men perceived all of nature “as a vast living body that feels passions and emotions” (145–46).

Returning to Gallegos, then, might we posit that he (the poet and creator) perceives in the immense Venezuelan landscape the spirit—that is, the passion and emotion—of a nation and a national literature? By returning to the land, he returns to metaphor, to a primitive necessity that can only be located in the barbaric elements of this dichotomous land. And, in his Humboldtian throwback, he consistently travels from the particular to the universal, from the part to the whole, allowing a semblance of the modern day “imaginative universal”—the metaphor—to appear in his narrative. With his emphasis on the poetic, Gallegos ultimately succeeds in applauding the barbaric through what appears, at least on the surface, to be a civilized mode of representation. In reality, however, it is an appeal to the rivals of civilized man, to the poetics of the *llanero*. With this appeal, he again upholds his original tendency to flit back and forth between deprecation and elevation. Yet, as he poetically gives form to the Venezuelan landscape, his linguistic admiration only propels his political project, one in which the barbaric remains, in Luiz Costa Lima’s words, “indispensable to national literary expression” (169).

We see, then, that Gallegos's novel brings to the fore more than one problematic that surges in *Facundo* and continues, though in distorted fashion, in *Os Sertões*. The forces of civilization and barbarism again engage in their epic battle, though this time in the confines of a proper novel, one appearing later in the chronology of national consolidation. In *Doña Bárbara*, the contradictory impulses of national discourse come to a head: on the one hand, Sarmiento, da Cunha, and Gallegos write national narratives so as to pose a challenge to colonial and imperial domination. Herein lies their elevation of the barbaric. Yet, on the other, their discourse didactically encourages their national inhabitants to undergo a makeover, one that will bestow upon their society the stamp of international progress. From here emerges civilization. I strive to demonstrate the progression of these impulses as they appear in the representation of a politicized land, for their reconciliation, or lack thereof—that is, to embrace the land's barbarism or to banish it in pursuit of Western modernity—lies at the heart of Latin American narrative.

NOTES

¹ That Latin American writers appropriated the discourse of science and thus followed in suit of European travelers cannot be denied. Yet, I would argue that González Echevarría, in his commendable effort to neatly categorize the influential discourses with their respective epochs—juridical/sixteenth century, scientific/eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, anthropological/twentieth century—falls short of identifying the exact discourse nourishing the writers of this generation. Like Humboldt, and, as such, like Sarmiento, da Cunha, and Gallegos, perhaps we should consider a move from the general (that is, the discourse of science) to the particular (in other words, the field of geography) when considering the discursive practices influencing eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Latin American narrative. Put plainly, then, I argue that we take González Echevarría a step further; to do so, we should look beyond “science” as the hegemonic discourse, thereby homing in on geography as the more specific force of authorization.

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THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN CONTEMPORARY SPANISH IMMIGRATION FILMS

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The following investigation explores the role of women in contemporary Spanish immigration films and their representation as immigrants or natives interacting with immigrants. There has been a recent explosion of legal, transplanted immigrants into Spain within the last decade following the installation of democracy in the 1980s and the country's entrance into the European Union in 1986. Recent films, such as *Cosas que dejé en La Habana* (Manuel Gutiérrez Aragón, 1997), *Bwana* (Imanol Uribe, 1995), *Flores de otro mundo* (Iciar Bollain, 1999), particularly shed light on Spain's struggle to redefine and reposition itself at the subnational (urban and regional), national, and transnational (EU) levels with its new multicultural population. Through a combination of film analysis, literary criticism, and cultural studies, we propose to address the following questions: How does the emerging multicultural population influence the social, economic, and cultural roles of native Spanish women regionally, nationally, and transnationally? What strategies do Spanish women employ to negotiate the new challenges of increased diversity? How do these strategies vary as we move from region to region or from an urban to rural setting? How do Spanish women interact with the new immigrant populations? How do they relate to immigrant women? We aim to explore the current redefinitions of feminine identity following the recent surge of immigrants, using the three films as case studies.

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

Since the expulsion of the Moors and the Jews in 1492, Spanish immigration has been minimal, during which period “ha mantenido durante centurias la fantasía de una concepción binaria del mundo, donde se han manejado los términos de inclusión y exclusión, cualquiera que fuera considerado el Otro” (Urioste 45). However, the problem of binarism is that the Self asserts itself simply through comparison with the Other, thus posing the problem of identity when the Other changes. The Self must also readjust and regroup its perception of itself and the Other. Spain currently is encountering many Others with the inundation of immigrants, causing an identity crisis at various levels: subnational, national, and transnational. With a strong economic boom in the 1980s and its position on the border with Africa, Spain attracted many North African immigrants, especially from Morocco, Equatorial Guinea, Senegal, and

Gambia (Corkill 51). This influx of African immigrants revived centuries-old prejudices against “los moros,” especially since the recent reestablishment of Spain’s imperial view during Franco’s era. During the cruel dictatorship of Franco (1939–1975), the national propaganda imposed uniformity and intolerance towards anything anti-Spain, reviving the language and symbols of the Reconquista and breeding xenophobia towards outsiders. As David Corkill states, “the ‘other’ was not just limited to the regime’s opponents, but embraced any manifestation of cultural pluralism and difference. Hence, all aspects of regional identity (linguistic, cultural and political) were ruthlessly repressed by the Madrid-based central authorities who regarded Spain’s essential character as Castilian” (50). To purify the country, there was intolerance towards even regional communities in order to form a central, Castilian identity. The Spanish society ignored any groups of “color” with different customs, culture, or anything considered to be foreign: “Opuestas a la ‘invisibilidad’ de la identidad blanca, las identidades ‘de color’ han sido sometidas a una serie de procesos de categorización y de tipificación” (Santaolalla, “*Otros*” 15). The dominant white majority categorizes the people of “color” and perceives them as “el otro.” The complexity involved with how to relate and reposition the Self with the Other is not easy, and can even result in violence and racial discrimination, but when embraced, the changes can bring an even more robust, creative, colorful, and global Spain. Parvarti Nair explores the altering concepts of identity at the subnational level:

These shifts occur not only for those who migrate from one part of the world to another. They also take place in terms of the local, forcing adaptations in practices and perspectives in previously isolated communities that have been weakened by modernity’s urban drifts. As the experience of migration renders identity plural, a multi-sited and multidimensional imaginary evolves, presenting both fragmentation and possibility. As encounters with otherness increasingly become the cultural norm, distinctions between Self and Other are clearly blurred or complicated. (40)

Shifts in identity and reassertion of the Self are evident at multiple levels, from small communities like Santa Eulalia in *Flores de otro mundo*, to isolated regions, like the Andalusian beach in *Bwana*, to cities like Madrid in *Cosas que dejé en La Habana*. The relative success and outcome of the interaction and integration between the Self and Other depend on the characters as well as the environment. Cinema is particularly an insightful tool to examine contemporary Spanish identity in that it is a recognized form of media disseminating cultural and political ideology to the general public.

We will explore the idea of the new Spanish female identity from the experiences of the native Spaniard and the transplanted immigrant in recent Spanish cinema. We will study and probe the concept through examination of the body, as it becomes objectified and exploited, from the initiative of the immigrant herself (Ludmila, Patricia, Milady) to the conquest of the native Spaniard female (Azucena, Marirrosi, Dori) over the male immigrant body (Igor, Ombasi). Then, we will analyze and “chew”

the second concept, food, which is fundamental to the makeup of a culture and one's identity, and examine how the Self and the Other are forced to "eat" together and work out differences. As anthropologist Paponnet-Cantat has researched, food has "social-cultural acts of significations," creates a sense of the "collective self," and "culinary traditions translate a sense of national belonging making food an active shaper as well as a marker of collective identity formation" (11). Given the importance of women as traditional carriers of biological culture, the experiences of both immigrant and native females are imperative to understanding Spanish social intergration. Studying and comparing the interactions and dialogue from the female perspective sheds light on Spain's struggle for national identity and the challenges of overcoming prejudices and xenophobia.

The increasing number of films featuring women as central characters reveals the gradual acceptance of Spanish society in the representation of women in films as well as films directed by women (*Hola, ¿estás sola?* [Iciar Bollaín, 1995]; *Poniente* [Chus Gutiérrez, 2002]; *Extranjeras* [Helena Taberna, 2003]; *La vida secreta de las palabras* [Isabel Coixet, 2005]).¹ As Rikki Morgan-Tamosunas and Barry Jordan state: "A substantial number of these films offer an encouraging indication of changing realities and perceptions of women in contemporary Spain. Many of them have been widely viewed [as] popular successes and represent a significant shift towards more progressive representations of women by constructing positive images focused on equality and independence, recognising and celebrating difference, and increasing the range and presence of female subject positions on the cinema screen" (125).² The Spanish audience is increasingly becoming tolerant and even encouraging of females portrayed as assertive, independent, and resourceful women. Nari suggests that female directors have been instrumental in casting strong female characters, stating: "Bollaín joins an increasing number of women film directors in Spain, whose works have contributed to a growing awareness of female subjectivity and experience" (48). Female directors add a singular voice to female characters, as seen especially in *Flores de otro mundo*, a film with three strong female protagonists. In an interview about the film, Bollaín states: "Mi intención es hablar de parejas, son tres parejas [...]. Aunque se cuenta la historia de los dos lados, hombre y mujer, creo que ellas arriesgan más que ellos [...]. Las mujeres de las películas son más valientes" (qtd. in Valerio-Holguín 91).³ Like the female protagonists portrayed in their films, these female directors have had to overcome many obstacles and continue to do so today. As Bollaín comments: "Whenever it's time to make films, doubts arise. In reality, the doubts appear when they see our tits. I mean when they see that we are women directors; because when they see a tail on somebody, I mean male directors, nobody asks anything about anything" (qtd. in Pérez Millán 55). These female directors have had to assert themselves in the competitive film industry and prove themselves, much like their characters that battle for survival and space within the patriarchal society.

SUCCESSFUL INTEGRATION: A POSSIBILITY?

In the film, *Cosas que dejé en La Habana*, three Cuban sisters, Rosa, Ludmila, and Nena seek a better life in Spain and stay with their aunt who immigrated herself several years earlier. While waiting anxiously for official “papeles,” each of the sisters finds her own way of integrating into society. The eldest sister, Rosa finds contentment and security in her domestic role of cleaning house, preparing food, and taking care of her sisters and aunt. The middle sister, Ludmila seeks marriage as security and uses sexual advances to seduce Javier, the homosexual son of her aunt’s friend. While the aunt attempts to set up a marriage between Nena and Javier, Nena refuses and instead pursues her dream of becoming an actress. She becomes involved with Igor, a Cuban immigrant who eventually gets caught without legal documents. Though the movie does not show what happens to Igor (he is likely sent back to Cuba), the impossible relationship between Igor and Nene is over. The three sisters continue on to accomplish their goals, suggesting a successful integration: Rosa continues to live with the aunt; Ludmila and Javier unite in marriage, symbolically representing the union of Cuba and Spain, further portrayed with national flags crowning their wedding cake; and Nena secures a full-time job as an actress. However, beneath the surface, the sisters and even the aunt, despite her many years of residence in Spain, continue to experience trials and difficulties of immigration daily and yearn for their homeland.

IMMIGRANT WOMEN’S CAPITALIZATION OF THEIR OWN BODY

To integrate into the new culture, immigrant women commonly resort to capitalizing on their own bodies through prostitution, either illegally or under the more socially legitimate form of marriage. Calling for nations to facilitate immigrant integration, the Catholic Church recognizes that immigrant women are particularly at an disadvantage who have to resort to “not infrequently elements of degeneration, such as the drug trade and the scourge of prostitution [...]” (John Paul II). In *Flores de otro mundo*, Milady, a single and twenty-year old Cuban immigrant, becomes entangled in a manipulative and abusive relationship with Carmelo, a wealthy Spaniard who offers her a ticket out of Cuba. Their destructive relationship continues in Santa Eulalia until finally physical abuse by Carmelo impels Milady to go on her own. The immigrant woman not only has to struggle with racial integration but also with *machismo*, or male dominance and superiority, resulting in sexual inequality. The *machismo* suffered by Milady “es consecuencia inequívoca de un desequilibrio económico que hace posible las relaciones dominantes. Es decir, Carmelo reproduce con Milady la misma relación de propiedad que establece con cualquier otro de sus bienes y posesiones” (*Flores de otro mundo*). In the eyes of Carmelo, Milady is reduced to a prized object, emphasized ironically by her Spanglish name: “Mi-lady,” or my woman. Carmelo’s expectations

of her are clear in the initial orientation of the house: the kitchen and the bedroom. Milady's defiance is immediately evident when she keeps her pants on while gyrating her hips against Carmelo's to satisfy his sexual desire. She struggles not only with asserting independence but also in enduring loneliness and solitude, as highlighted by several vast landscape shots of Milady alone in the middle of the desolate countryside and endless highway. As a recent immigrant, she straddles both nostalgia for the past (treasuring photos and phone calls from her Cuban boyfriend) and restlessness to continue on with her future.

Patricia, also from *Flores de otro mundo*, adapts to the patriarchal society of Spain (not so different from her native country when her ex-husband returns and demands money), arguably resorting to a different form of prostitution through marriage to a Spaniard. She seeks stability for her two young children through citizenship and answers an ad for wives in the Castilian town of Santa Eulalia, marrying Damián, a stoic farmer living with his traditional mother. When Damián finds out about her first (and still legal) husband, Patricia angrily and tearfully convinces him that she is separated from her husband and has no other option but to marry a Spaniard. She expresses her frustration and desperation for work and legalization, a common problem for many immigrants. She wants to work and is a hard worker, "Yo no le tengo miedo al trabajo, yo estoy mirando por mis hijos, ¿entiendes?, por tenerlos cerca... Tampoco pienso en mí," as she says to Damián. But, that is not enough; marriage presents itself as a plausible loop hole and realistic answer to securing an immigrant's future, particularly for women. She admits to Damián that initially her sole motive to marry him was to provide a house for her children and herself: "¿Te crees que me hubiera casado contigo si hubiera podido tener casa, trabajo y a mis hijos?" Her rhetorical question suggests the impossibility to provide for one's family as a female immigrant and her willingness to live with a man that she might not even love.

Also a Cuban immigrant, Ludmila in *Cosas que dejé en La Habana*, resorts to a form of prostitution that leads to an acceptable marriage. She seduces Javier, a prosperous furrier, into marrying her after her younger and more beautiful sister Nene rejects his marriage proposal. Ludmila is willing to do whatever it takes to secure her future in Spain and not have to return to Cuba, even if it is to love a homosexual and be legally bound in marriage.⁴ While gays are also marginalized, Javier is accepted in society because he outwardly plays the Spaniard traditional role. Surprising Javier at his house, Ludmila explains the purpose of her visit is "para entretenerse." Slowly unbuttoning her blouse, she guides his hand to her breasts, softly whispering "somos Cubanos," and infers that she, as an immigrant woman, knows how to please men. With her "Cuban" power of seduction, she convinces him to become a straight male and agree to marriage. Representing misplaced members of society, Javier and Ludmila have anxiety in their self-identities and reconcile their inward tensions through

marriage. His character as a homosexual indicates how *Cosas que dejé en La Habana* and recent Spanish films aim to create a plural Spanish identity. The “phenomenon which critics do not hesitate in seeing as ‘interesting and outstanding,’ that can be explained away within the demands of plurality and the need not to exclude anyone is the ‘gay boom’” (Triana-Toribio 146). The inclusion of gays and women in film portrays the reconfiguration of the Spanish identity with the Other, although this representation of Javier is tremendously problematic from an identity point of view. While Javier identifies with his masculinity, Ludmila acquires the identity as a legal Spaniard citizen. Ironically, it is in her submission to him that she gains power, and through marriage, she secures her citizenship and future in Spain.

NATIVE SPANISH WOMEN’S CAPITALIZATION OF THE OTHER’S BODY

As a Spanish native, Azucena provides a counter role to the Cuban women in that she has the means to essentially buy an immigrant’s body by providing lodging and food in exchange for an amorous relationship. Prosperous and upper-class, the regal blonde welcomes the immigrants as service and a source of good, cheap labor: “el extranjero es un servicio o fuente de placer estético (servicio doméstico barato, comida y costumbres exóticas) que no compromete su libertad. Como patrón, cliente o consumidor, tiene siempre el control y decide cuándo se produce el encuentro con los extranjeros y cuándo termina” (Bauman 71). Azucena positively views immigrants and benefits from their service unlike the poor, working class who see the immigrants as a threat and “un competidor” in the labour market (72). Azucena purposely and frequently attends the Cuban bar to find island men to satisfy her sexual desires. Igor understands his inferior role and fulfils the stereotype of “haciendo felices a las españolas,” while he has an ulterior motive to find “una mujer española que tiene una casa, un coche y dinero.”⁵ As the prized woman, Azucena accepts his need for temporary security while she exploits her power in their relationship, as he is not the first immigrant to quench her flames of passion.⁶ She is not so different from the Spanish women portrayed in *Las cartas de Alou* and *Said*. As observed by Cecilia Romero-Hombrebueno: “[E]n ambas películas sus protagonistas inmigrantes se enamoran de dos españolas que les ayudan desinteresadamente, pero en vez de facilitar con este hecho su integración y comprensión dentro de la sociedad, lo que consiguen es más rechazo e incluso brotes violentos de xenofobia, como en el caso de *Said*” (30). Azucena is not interested in helping Igor secure citizenship or a legitimate employment; rather, he represents the exotic (as an immigrant) and is an easy lover (acquiescent due to his financial difficulties).

Also a native Spanish woman, Dori sees the male immigrant body in sexual terms. Like Azucena, she takes advantage of the immigrant men, “el otro,” to satisfy a passion piqued by their mystery, sensuality, and masculinity. Because the Spanish men cannot fulfil the women’s sexual desires, suggesting their weakness and inferiority, the

women seek and even prefer the immigrant men. Dori dreams about Ombasi touching her and arousing her. Ombasi sits across the campfire from her with his chest bare and his eyes closed, vulnerable to her exploitation: “Ombasi no sólo es sujeto sino también objeto del deseo de la madre” (Ballesteros 226). To quench her passion, literally heightened with the heat from the campfire, Dori transfers her sexual desires from the mysterious, unknown immigrant to her husband who she awakens. Isabel Santaolalla distinguishes between the gaze and the look as related to power. Initially, “the black man [is able] to gaze at the white woman in desire, only to reveal subsequently that Dori is, after all, the bearer of the look, and that the sexual encounter takes place in her own fantasy” (“*Otros*” 119). Instead of innocently looking as an acceptable form of knowledge, Dori gazes at Ombasi with complete power and control, reconstructing him as the passive receiver and oppressed subject.

Another Spanish native, Marirrosi represents the wealthy, middle-class Spanish woman who actively seeks the companionship of men. Needing to escape the loneliness of the city of Bilbao, Marirrosi joins the caravan of women to the countryside. In contrast to the women of color, she is not dependent on men because she has a house, car, and job. While she develops a relationship with Alfonso, the elite Spaniard maintains control and initiates the break-up, not compromising to his desire to remain in the plains. Luis Martín-Cabrera analyzes the time lapse of the Franco-era and post-dictatorship and suggests the possibility of dialogue of repressed memories of colonization. “The time of the city represented by Marirrosi, the colonial time represented by the black female immigrants, and the time of the Spanish countryside represented by the mostly masculine community of Santa Eulalia are irrevocably entangled in the heterogeneous narration of *Flores de otro mundo*” (48). The movie allows dialogue of the past as a colony, gives women the chance to speak for themselves, and includes the forgotten countryside. Santa Eulalia represents the classic case where the rural village is left desolate and depopulated as a result of “urban flight” to the city for the hopes of a better life and employment. As Parvati Nair observes, Iciar Bollain has been one of the few to offer a cultural analysis on the effects of modernity on the country (39). While Milady and Patricia represent the previously colonized Latin American world, Marirrosi stands for the new, modern Spain as a prosperous Spanish divorcée with a successful career. The three immigrant women bridge the lapse of time between the city and the countryside, which also has been excluded from the dialogue of modernity. Alfonso, Damián, and the other male inhabitants in the small Castilian town have a chance to voice their experiences and pass on their heritage through the future made possible by immigrant women.

The immigrant and native Spanish women employ their bodies in different ways to achieve what they want. While Ludmila, Milady, and Patricia have to use their bodies to entice the Spanish men, Azucena and Dori are in control and take advantage

of the immigrant men. The two Spanish women “reconquer” their colonial men, taking possession of what was historically “theirs” from the beginning. The role reversed, the immigrant women must attract the men by actively travelling to their space, whether it be Madrid in Ludmila’s case or the Castillian countryside for Milady and Patricia. While encountering *machismo* similar to that of her native country, Patricia chooses to battle the patriarchal society in Spain: “La guerra que Patricia (paradójico nombre) tiene que librar no es en su ‘patria’ sino en España” (Valerio-Holguín 91). Milady and Patricia, as her name symbolically suggests, dupe the men of the “patria” while dangling their bodies as bait in order to secure their legalization through living accommodations or marriage. Even Nene displays her body to a certain extent every time she performs on stage. While Marirrosi, the third Spanish woman, seeks primarily social companionship, she also has superiority in her relationship with men by playing hard to catch. During the town’s welcome party and dance, she does not play along with Alfonso’s flirtation and refuses to be disrespected. She leaves him in the middle of the dance, foreshadowing her ultimate decision to end the relationship.

WOMEN’S RELATIONSHIP TO FOOD

The Spanish and immigrant women approach the challenges of integration not only through their relationship with Spanish and immigrant men, but also in their approach towards food customs. Food, from its preparation to its consumption, is an integral part of cultural identity, especially for women who have historically been the preparers and servers of food for their families. Transplanted in another country, immigrants are reminded daily at each meal that they are in an unfamiliar territory and have yet another challenge in terms of adaptation. In *Cosas que dejé en La Habana*, there is a direct comparison between two scenes of the Cuban and Spanish way of eating. The obese Cuban wife of Igor’s recently arrived friend, “la gorda,” eats an entire chicken with her hands, presenting a savage-like gorging. The very next scene demonstrates a more proper, civilized way of eating with the aunt instructing her nieces on the correct, proper, and above all, Spanish style, with fork and knife, and in sequences. When Nena grabs a piece of fruit, the aunt reprimands her, saying that fruit is now only to be eaten at the end of the meal, according to Spanish customs. The aunt adapts to the Spanish culture of eating and attempts to forget any past Cuban customs, as seen with another encounter between the two cultures of food. This juxtaposition of eating styles highlights the importance of food to one’s national identity and ingrained food habits and tastes, the latter becoming evident in a later scene. The oldest sister, Rosa prepares a spicy stew with *ají*, a highly flavourful and traditional Cuban dish. The aunt immediately barks at her to never serve the stew again as they are in Spain now. Ironically, *ajivaco* is a colonial dish representing cultural

blending, as researched by Paponnet-Cantat: “As the contents simmered away and were depleted, new and perhaps different ingredients were added. The *ajiaco* is seen metaphorically by Ortiz not as conveying ethnic diversity, but as a blending of culture” (22).⁷ Despite the aunt’s strong determination to be Spanish, she reheats the spicy stew and ravenously eats it directly from the pot in the middle of the night. She has been repressing her native culture to the extent that she finally explodes and loses self-control. Her hair, usually tightly bound in a bun, is literally let down and falls around her shoulders. Through scenes such as these, the title comes to mind in reference to the loss of culture felt by immigrants and a craving for their identity.

Furthermore, the cultural clash between the immigrants and the native culture is evident in the kitchen scenes of Patricia and the mother of *Damián*. Preparing rice and beans for dinner, Patricia is questioned critically both by the mother and *Damián*, “¿Dónde está el caldo?” with the mother adding, “siempre hay caldo con frijoles.” Sitting side-by-side at the head of the dinner table, the two women symbolically battle for the matriarchal role of the family. They eventually reconcile their differences, ironically at the cemetery (a symbol of the past), when the mother realizes that the future happiness of her son depends on Patricia. Nair points out that it is paradoxically the mother, initially hostile and resentful of any newcomers, who is key to Patricia’s final acceptance into the family and the village. As Patricia and her children prepare to leave, the mother asks *Damián*: “¿Tu familia se va...? ¿Tú quieres que se vaya?” Through the mother’s use of the word “family,” Nair explains that “it is *Damián*’s mother, supposedly inflexible in her view of otherness, who opens up the notion of community by extending its basic building block, the family, to the ‘other’”(42). Even the very traditional, stubborn village women are capable of changing identities and must for the village’s future success.

In *Bwana*, the aspect of food also provides insights into the attitude between the Spanish society and the immigrants. At night around the campfire, the family hungrily watches *Ombasi* cook the *coquinas* that they had recently caught. When *Ombasi* offers them some shellfish, the family must overcome their discrimination towards *Ombasi*, who meets the stereotype of the ignorant African from the colonial days. As Ballesteros suggests: “los estereotipos sobre el ‘salvaje’ son los mismos que en el imaginario colonial: infantilismo, animalización, canibalismo, falta de higiene, incivilización y exotismo” (223). Ironically animal-like, the Spanish “conquistador” Antonio only accepts the food because he cannot control his physical hunger. Yet, *Dori* refuses, preferring to go hungry and not be contaminated by his bacteria: “¡A saber lo que tiene en la navaja! Estos negros están llenos de microbios, Antonio. Lo dicen to’s los días en la tele.” By rejecting his food offering, she negates his humanity based off of her understanding of “negros” represented through popular media. She remains superior in sexual terms over *Ombasi*, as she has the power to initiate any erotic encounters

during her dream or deny any sexual offerings, as represented by the *coquinas*, “shellfish (e.g. *almeja*) being terms often used in Spanish to refer to the female sexual organ” (Santaolalla, “Close Encounters” 118). The Spanish woman’s fear and distrust change into sexual desire and erotic admiration over night.

THE MIXED REPRESENTATIONS OF INTEGRATION OF THE FILMS

The films conclude with a mixed portrayal of the successful integration and adaptation of immigrants (Nene, Ludmila, Patricia) and of failure due to legal circumstances or xenophobia (Igor, Ombasi). Representing a compromise of maintaining her past tradition, yet adapting successfully, are Nena, Ludmila, and Patricia. These women do not forget their native heritages, yet they are able to adapt to Spain with a successful career as an actress (Nene) or a stable marriage with a Spaniard (Patricia, Ludmila). While the women’s struggles are evident (Nena wanting to play her original role from Cuba instead of the new artificial representation, Patricia hosting a traditional Dominican meal to the fury of her hostile mother-in-law, Ludmila having to accept being second pick), they do manage to incorporate their original roots and customs while adjusting to a different society. The wave of immigrants and changes in Spain have no near end in the future, as suggested in *Flores de otro mundo*, when the bus that initially brings the women to Santa Eulalia re-enters the town at the conclusion, completing the circle. Greeting the bus with happy cheers, the mixed racial group of children, including Patricia’s two black children, sit and play together, suggesting a future population and growth of “flores” in the town. While identifying the film’s message of inclusion and multiculturalism, Luis Martín-Cabrera suggests that “a new cosmopolitan model is necessary to avoid racial violence on a global scale” (54). With the recent emergence of immigrants, Spain has the opportunity to project a “new cosmopolitan model,” or anti-racist political parties that mitigate further acts of violence. An anti-racist party would certainly advance the successful integration of immigrants; however, in the meantime, modern films by Bollaín, Gutiérrez Aragón, Uribe, etc., are immediate ways to make society think and question its attitude towards the Other.

CURRENT DEBATE OF IMMIGRATION IN THE SPANISH PRESS

The Spanish press reflects the current debate towards immigration and the continual struggles of integration for immigrants. The national paper, *El País*, features stories regularly of the unsuccessful and often fatal attempts of immigrants, in particular North Africans, to enter the country with *cayucos*, or raft boats. As recent as July 2008, for example, an African immigrant died in a hospital in the Canary Islands after travelling two weeks and five days without food and water across the treacherous

sea in a *cayuco* from La Gomera, North Africa (“Fallece”). The difficulties encountered by immigrants when crossing the border into Spain reveal the resurgence of the centuries-old prejudices against the Africans or “Moors” and suggest discrimination towards the different groups of immigrants. As Ballesteros notes: “según el grado de apreciación de los españoles hacia los extranjeros, el grupo más aceptado es el de los ciudadanos de la Unión Europea, y que los sudamericanos y africanos negros disfrutaban de mejor posición que los norteafricanos y gitanos” (212). With the historical background, similar language, and desire to foster allegiance, current Spanish society favors Latin American immigrants while expressing the least sympathy towards North Africans. Attempting to bolster the suffering Spanish economy through increases in immigrant populations, former President Aznar developed policies preferential to Latin Americans. For example, “in an initiative nicknamed ‘Operación Ecuador,’ a number of agreements were signed with the government of Ecuador in 2001 to give special facilities to illegal Ecuadorean immigrants in Spain to reapply for visas and work permits” (Balfour 191). Revealing discrimination towards other groups of immigrants, the cultural filter favors Latin American immigrants for the reason of “greater social cohesion,” revealing the current state of social and political thinking in Spain.

In addition, the nuances of the country’s attitude towards immigrants are evident with their elite athletes. Another prominent and equally influential newspaper, *El Mundo* featured a pertinent article about female immigrant athletes and national identity. In preparation for the summer Olympic Games in Beijing, *El Mundo* published a special edition in June 2008 on five promising immigrant female athletes representing Spain in a range of sports from track and gymnastics to swimming and ping pong. While born in other countries, the athletes also identified themselves as Spaniards, raising the question as to what defines nationality. Residing in Spain for eleven years, the track star, Glory Alozie, expresses her dual identity and feels “española y nigeriana a la vez” (Moreno and Martín 34). While her roots are Nigerian, she lives and loves her Spanish family and friends who accept her as one of their own. While these immigrant athletes belong to a privileged class of immigrants with sponsorship and government support, successful integration stories such as Glory Alozie’s will assist Spain in forming and developing a national, multicultural identity.

CONCLUSION: MULTICULTURAL CONTEMPORARY SPANISH WOMEN

The Spanish female identity synchronizes the traditional with the diversity offered by immigrants into a strong, multifaceted, multicultural, independent woman. Exchanges of knowledge and experience particularly occur with the body and the essential cultural component of food. These films show the difficulties of integration from the perspective of the native and the diasporas, while illuminating obstacles of being a woman in a patriarchal society. Initially blocked by sexism and destitution, the

women confront and successfully overcome their dependence, liberating themselves from the patriarchal power. With the diverse portrayal of immigrants, from Cuba to the Dominican Republic, the films reveal the lingering post-colonial issues present in Spain. Representing the peripheral history of Spain, the island women embody the repressed memories that are now included in the discourse of modernity. While initially discriminating the immigrants' color because it blemishes the "purity" of Spain, the natives welcome and even seek the immigrants for relationships, families, and fulfilment of sexual desires. Revealing a huge shift in attitude following the isolationist and uniformity of Francoism, contemporary Spanish society enthusiastically receives these films that feature controversial characters of race, bisexual identity, and different culture, suggesting their receptiveness towards a national identity of multiculturalism. While the Spanish female identity is constantly reconfiguring and adapting, the future female identity lies in the successful integration and adaptation of the immigrant women and Spanish women working, living, and raising families together in cooperation and trust.

NOTES

¹ Not to be overlooked are the female directors belonging to the “Boom of the 1990s”: Rosa Verges, Maite Ruiz de Austri, Azucena Rodriguez, Marta Ballethó, Dunia Ayaso, Eva Lesmes, Mónica Laguna, Yolanda Garcia Serrano, María Ripoll, Ana Belén, etc. (Pérez Millán 53).

² Each was internationally and nationally recognized: *Cosas que dejó en La Habana* in Valladolid: “Espiga de Plata,” 1997; *Bwana*, nominee, Goya Awards: “Mejor actor revelación,” “Mejor dirección,” “Mejor película,” 1996; *Flores de otro mundo*, Festival Internacional de Cannes: “Mejor largometraje,” 1999, Festival Internacional de Cine de La Mujer, Francia: “Mejor interpretación femenina,” “Mejor guión,” “Premio del público,” 1999; etc.

³ Valerio-Holguín cites from Iciar Bollaín, “Entrevista.” *El Siglo* 9 Jul. 1999: 8C.

⁴ *Cosas que dejó en La Habana* is the preliminary inclusion of gays in Spanish national cinema as part of the plural “Spanishness” identity. As Nuria Triana-Toribio points out: “[Pedro] Almodóvar’s portrayals of questions of homosexuality and the transnational audience’s welcome reception of his representation and subsequent identification of it [is] part of a ‘plural’ Spanishness” (146). The audience enthusiastically receives works of mixed identities by directors such as Pedro Almodóvar, a renowned Spanish director for his dialogue on transvestites and gays in films such as *Todo sobre mi madre* (1999) and *La mala educación* (2004).

⁵ In addition to the model of integration of the immigrant women, Igor in *Cosas que dejó en La Habana* represents the male Cuban immigrant adapting to the Spanish culture. He initially fulfils the Cuban stereotype of dancing, singing, and history as a soldier, yet he changes throughout the film. He no longer wants to play the role expected of him and decides to become authentic. The scene immediately following Igor’s realization portrays the same conflict of authenticity and survival in the production of the play within the film. The metafiction emphasizes and plays out the difficulties of integration of the immigrants.

⁶ Azucena’s previous lovers include immigrants from Marruecos as well as Eastern Europe.

⁷ Paponnet-Cantat cites from Fernando Ortiz, “Los factores humanos de la cubanidad.” *Revista Bimestre Cubana* 2 (1940): 53–157.

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TRAPIZONDA:
READING IMPRINTS OF THE PAST
IN A BOLIVIAN VIDEOGAME

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Isabel Mesa de Inchauste's Bolivian children's novel *Trapizonda: Un video juego para leer* develops the relationships among fossils, footprints, children, and technology. Within its pages, the distinction between past and present (the imagined and the real) blurs as a videogame magically transports a Bolivian child (Mateo) and an Italian paleontologist (Santalucca) into a prehistoric world. Mateo and the scientist must work together, dodging dinosaurs, until Mateo's friends can win the game and bring them home.

My paper is part of a larger investigation of the ambiguous terrain of the construction of indigeneity and the role of children in the formation, recuperation, and interrogation of indigenous identity, specifically in Andean literature. In the case of Mesa's *Trapizonda* (2006), dinosaurs become the symbol of a pre-historic indigeneity. Following W. J. T. Mitchell's conclusion that the dinosaur is an "emblem of the process of modernization" and of the "fate of the human species within the world system of modern capitalism" (67), I propose that dinosaurs in this children's story are "thoroughly modern monsters" (Mitchell 11), representing the threat of globalization as well as a collective anxiety about the loss (through depletion, extinction, or pillage) of national natural resources, particularly natural gas and cultural memory.

The dinosaurs in Mesa's novel are prehistoric ghosts that haunt the present. As ghosts, the dinosaurs are dead. At both its beginning and ending, the novel reminds readers that the time of the dinosaurs has passed. The book opens with a teacher's lesson about their extinction: years of eternal night, darkness, and death follow a meteorite crashing into earth. This is the end of an era. Lesson's over. Class dismissed. Similarly, the novel concludes with a catastrophic event. Mateo and Santalucca are still trapped in the videogame as a meteorite approaches earth. They run to complete a mission that will send them home and right when they reach the portal to the real world, the videogame cord is accidentally unplugged. The screen goes blank. The book ends. The humans appear to be just as doomed as their primitive predecessors. The novel comes full circle, resurrecting dinosaurs only to eventually destroy them.

Although the extinction scenes place dinosaurs at a safe distance from the present, the story also resurrects and animates the dead. The dinosaurs are not only

specters, but are monsters that threaten the integrity of the line separating reality from virtual reality, the past from the present. Similar to the resurrection of the dinosaurs through the videogame, Mesa provides readers with three optional endings, allowing for the revival of the story's characters (particularly Mateo and Santalucca who have been literally shut-off from the world). Through such cycles of destruction and resurrection, *Trapiçonda* presents dinosaurs as at once extinct and alive. They are digital images and are real creatures, magical and scientific.

With this ability to cross borders, the dinosaur becomes a cultural symbol of a past that can be understood, controlled, and transported to the present. This dinosaurian past, which the children can only access through modern technology (the videogame), displaces a colonial history and creates a common ground that the children can share. These are not cookie-cutter *Jurassic Park* dinosaurs. They are South American—Bolivian.

Distinguishing the dinosaurs that Mateo and Santalucca confront from their North American counterparts, Mesa designates local dinosaurs as constitutive of Bolivian national identity. These dinosaurs are bigger and fiercer than any other. Santalucca exalts the size of South American dinosaurs: “[E]l ambiente del cretácico en América del Sur permitió el desarrollo de verdaderos gigantes, dinosaurios mucho más grandes de los que conoces” (72). He also tells Mateo and his friends to forget about the “estrellas de Hollywood,” like the T-rex and velociraptor (67). While the novel constantly tries to separate Bolivian dinosaurs from their more famous cousins, it also depends on these Hollywood stars for inspiration. Several descriptions in the novel seem strangely similar to scenes in *Jurassic Park*. One of the more obvious examples is the line, “Tal como supusimos... los dinosaurios se mueven en grupos” (75), which parallels Dr. Grant's enlightenment, “They're moving in herds. They do move in herds.” The novel plays off of a global industry of dinosaur reproduction, but also desires to mark itself as authentically Bolivian.

The landscape also gets caught in a global/local polarity. Santalucca reminds the children that during the Cretaceous period “[n]i Bolivia ni Chile ni Argentina ni Brasil soñaba existir” (67) and that “los continentes estaban todos unidos formando una sola masa de tierra” (174). During the prehistoric world (much like the postmodern, late capitalist world), globalization reigned. Nevertheless, the maps in the videogame, which the book depicts, defy these descriptions. The South American continent appears as it would on a contemporary map, carved into distinct, labeled countries. In addition, references to South American cities (95) and Bolivia place-names (65, 100, 201) locate the dinosaurs in a contemporary political space. Mesa's novel is caught in its own *trapiçonda*.

The placement of Mateo and Santalucca in Bolivian sites, while at the same time implying that these places did not exist during the time of the videogame, illustrates

the arbitrary nature of indigenous identity. A Bolivian news article reporting the publication of *Trapizonda* explains that this novel relates to Mesa's other books "en mantener la línea de dar a conocer parte del patrimonio cultural boliviano." The article then quotes Mesa, saying, "[P]or qué este es importante, por qué la necesidad de proteger [el patrimonio cultural boliviano] y crear la conciencia de que al conocerlo los chicos se empapan de parte de la historia de Bolivia para de ese modo asumir una identidad" ("Isabel Mesa"). By being part of the videogame, Mateo experiences first-hand the power of Bolivia's cultural heritage. But what can he and his friends learn about contemporary Bolivia by traveling back 65 million years? What does such a distant history devoid of humanity mean to them and their identity?

Mesa is not the first to associate prehistoric bones with national heritage. In the eighteenth century, Thomas Jefferson claimed that North America had been home to the "largest of all terrestrial beings" (qtd. in Mitchell 113). As Mitchell explains in *The Last Dinosaur Book*, with Jefferson's promotion, the mammoth became "the first symbolic 'political animal' of the United States, an emblem of Jefferson's vision of an ever-expanding continental empire of small farmers and artisans [...]. [H]is vision [...] would provide a frame within which all parties could cooperate" (119). The fossils and footprints embedded in the land come to embody an essence of the nation under which all can unite.

Mesa's and Jefferson's interest in the ghosts of the continents' oldest inhabitants underscore the problem of establishing national identity in America. Leaping over colonization, the discourse of "symbolic political animals" evades the displacement and devaluation of native peoples. Jace Weaver discusses the colonizer's desire to "rewrite the past" "in an effort to prove his own indigeneity" (228). *Trapizonda* replays the Cretaceous period, rewriting it through a videogame that connects dinosaur *huellas* to a distinctly Bolivian history.

Ironically, Italian scientists teach the children about this Bolivian past and a cybernetic global community resurrects it. At the climax of the novel, a peculiar laugh interrupts the game. The mysterious voice taunts the players, identifying itself as "el Espíritu de los video juegos" (240). It remains unclear if this voice is a trick, designed to slowdown the players, or if it is the villain who has created the game from his "maravillosa mente cibernética." The Spirit claims that he has constructed the game from "todos los conocimientos sobre paleontología que están en las computadoras del mundo entero" (242). The prehistoric world, through which Mateo and Santalucca move, is thus a global construction. Although the dinosaurs are part of a local cultural heritage, they are also tied to (universal) world knowledge.

A local/global binary also divides the dinosaurs inside the videogame. Mateo and Santalucca quickly discover two varieties of virtual dinosaurs: one that is natural and one that is foreign. The natural dinosaurs are part of the game's environment.

All the characters assume that these dinosaurs are real and that observing them is scientific research. Throughout the story, Mateo's friends—Sebastian and Rebecca (who play the game after school and pause it in the morning and at night)—work on a project about dinosaurs, compiling what they have learned into a computer file. In one of the optional endings, Sebastian questions the authenticity of the data they have collected and Santalucca immediately responds: “El video juego ha construido sus escenarios en base a todo el conocimiento paleontológico que está en las computadoras, por lo tanto es real” (264). Following this logic, the information in Mesa's novel is also “real” because it also draws from scientific knowledge. The book even includes an illustrated glossary, a timeline, and a list of “obras consultadas” (267–80). These appendices work to legitimize and scientize what I refer to as the “natural” dinosaurs in the videogame.

While the natural dinosaurs are dangerous, they are predictable. The real threat comes from the atypical, foreign dinosaurs. Mateo and Santalucca cannot escape these monsters without the assistance of their friends; they can only move when manipulated by someone in the real world. Rebecca operates Mateo from Bolivia and Professor Lombardi controls Santalucca from Italy. In order for Lombardi, Rebecca, and Sebastian to communicate and work together, they must play the game online. This means that people all over the world can enter the game. When they do, they appear as dinosaurs and their goal is to destroy the humans. These foreigners mimic the game's natural dinosaurs, but have strange traits that indicate they are outsiders. For example, when the first global player enters the game, Sebastian notifies his friends that “el intruso [es] un tailandés” (76). The Tai player camouflages in a group of dinosaurs, but his odd behavior and laser eyes give him away.

The two brands of dinosaurs in Mesa's novel hold different symbolic meanings. The ambivalence of these prehistoric creatures corresponds with Mitchell's conclusion that the dinosaur is “a figure in constant symbolic motion, shuttling between science and fantasy, nature and culture, the image of the other and a mirror of the self” (74). Published in a country where over half of the population identifies with an indigenous group, it is notable that the book evades any mention of *human* indigeneity. Mateo's ignorance of the Aymara word *Umajalanta* (“caída de agua”) illustrates his disconnect with the indigenous population (100). In addition, Mateo and Santalucca traverse the country, visiting sites in the orient as well as the occident. The contemporary conflicts between the Andean and lowland regions disappear. Despite racial and regional differences, Bolivians can unite under a shared heritage embedded in the land.

Mateo and his friends can assume an identity by interacting with the natural dinosaurs, but must try to outwit the interlopers. The foreign players represent the

external threat of globalization; they enter the game seeking to destroy Mateo and Santalucca. Mitchell believes that as “modern monsters,” dinosaurs do “many of the same things for us that dragons did for medieval culture.” Just as “[d]ragons were the guardians of buried treasure; dinosaurs are associated with that quintessential modern form of buried treasure, fossil fuels” (Mitchell 88). Published around the time of Evo Morales’s election and the nationalization of gas, the book reflects a communal anxiety about the place of transnational corporations within Bolivia. This fear stems from a long history of exploitation, but also from the turmoil following Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada’s neoliberal and privatization policies. Two years before Mesa’s book hit the shelves, “80% of [Bolivian] voters in a decisive referendum favoured the nationalisation of the country’s energy resources” (Rochlin 1329). Mesa wrote her novel during a time of political protest when the public sought greater government control of gas reserves. The videogame implies that the natural dinosaurs are indigenous to Bolivia. Therefore the products of their remains—*huellas*, bones, gas, and petroleum—also belong to the country and its people.

Not only do the dinosaurs symbolize a national anxiety about control of natural resources, but also reflect a concern about the transference of knowledge and memory. *El Espíritu de los juegos* claims that technology dominates humans (242). Electronic memory has replaced a human, local memory. Who will educate the children and what is the origin of the knowledge being transferred? Mesa seems to dialogue and debate with Jesús Martín-Barbero, who claims that in “América Latina la irrupción de [nuevas] tecnologías se inscribe en todo caso en un viejo proceso de esquizofrenia entre modernización y posibilidades reales de apropiación social y cultural de aquello que nos moderniza. ¡Se informatizan o mueren!, es la consigna de un capital en crisis, necesitado con urgencia vial de expandir el consumo informático” (251). This statement also reflects the fear that humans in the modern capitalist world system may face a fate similar to the dinosaurs.

The technology in *Trapizonda* symbolizes a universal, globalized network of information that threatens to displace local, cultural knowledge. As Martín-Barbero remarks, “en nombre de la memoria electrónica nuestros pueblos se están viendo abocados a renunciar a tener y acrecentar su propia memoria, ya que en la disyuntiva entre atraso y modernidad la memoria cultural no cuenta, no es informáticamente operativa y por tanto no es aprovechable” (253). Cultural memory cannot be *real* in the way that Santalucca believes the dinosaurs in the game are real. It does not work “con ‘información pura’ ni por linealidad acumulativa [...] su ‘función’ en la vida de una colectividad no es hablar del pasado, sino dar continuidad al proceso de construcción permanente de la identidad colectiva” (Martín-Barbero 253). The fact that

Mateo can be trapped for a week in a videogame without his family being concerned illustrates that these children lack a domestic community from which they can construct a collective identity. Information mostly comes from Santalucca. The videogame has dubbed him the “Conocimiento” and he provides information if it is asked for or not. Additionally, when Mateo suffers a serious wound, Rebecca and Sebastian go to Google for advice.

I would like to conclude by noting Mesa’s response to the precarious condition of children’s literature in a world dominated by technology. As I mentioned earlier, her novel presents reference material alongside fiction. In addition, it mimics videogames and computers; it is interlaced with graphics, emails, videogame notices, and digital images. By copying the technology that threatens the extinction of her writing, Mesa provides a space to read and rewrite history through technology. However, similar to the book’s inconclusive ending, Mesa’s novel leaves the anxieties embodied in her dinosaurs—tensions between the global “mundo actual” and local, cultural memory—unresolved (Mesa de Inchauste 12).

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ÁNGELA'S ESSAY:
RELIGIOUS UNCERTAINTY IN
SAN MANUEL BUENO, MÁRTIR

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In his “The Essay as Form,” T. W. Adorno suggests that the essay “is a single effort to express necessary and compelling perceptions about men and their social relations which science can simply not match” (156). When science with its definitive conclusions cannot supply the desired answers of life, the work to arrive at conclusions becomes circular and more elusive. The essay emerges as a genre that presents questions and discussions on such issues, recognizing the weaknesses of science. In early twentieth-century Spain, Miguel de Unamuno struggles with questions fitting the category of non-science. A man of education and logic, he recognizes that his questions about God, immortality, and the essence of the human soul evade empirical certainty. However, he cannot dismiss his inner desire for answers to these issues, and so he has to reconcile the difference between logic and illogic.¹ As he writes, Unamuno’s questions emerge through all genres: essay, poetry, theater, and narrative, consistently incorporating an essayistic tone as he addresses precisely an aspect of life that Adorno places beyond science: religion. In addition to Adorno, Lukacs also discusses the genre of the essay that provides insight into Unamuno’s writings and focus. Both discuss elements emphasizing the effort to arrive at truth rather than actually arriving at that truth. Their insights open up Unamuno’s writing as he also seeks to understand, but is consistently unable to embrace logic wholeheartedly because of a hope for faith.

Unamuno’s short novel, *San Manuel Bueno, mártir*, narrates the story of a dissident priest who leads the people to the Catholic Church without believing himself. As an atheist, he appeases the people in his village parish to foster their personal happiness—defined by believing—while accepting that he can never believe such doctrine. This work is frequently connected biographically with Unamuno. Panico points to scholarship that views the work as Unamuno’s confession of (justified) deceit “since he has raised questions in the mind of the reader which were very real ones for him” (471). Howard Mancing summarizes prominent lines of scholarship that place Don Manuel within Unamuno’s biography “because the fictional Don Manuel Bueno and the historical Don Miguel de Unamuno share many of the same philosophical concerns, many—probably the majority of—readers have equated the two, assuming and affirming that Don Manuel is Unamuno’s alter ego, the spokesperson for his most profound beliefs” (347).

As we look deeper at Don Manuel, however, we realize that the relationship is not as clear as it initially appears. While the priest denies the existence of God as if with scientific precision, Unamuno never cedes to any form of conclusion. Instead, unlike Don Manuel, he constantly seeks some existence after death while he suffers with the possibility of finding nothing. This search permeates his life, works, and philosophy, though he constantly recognizes the impossible telos. Paul Descouzis addresses this “conflicto entre una razón y una fe” as a characteristic element in Unamuno’s work, linking it, because it is an impossible journey, with Unamuno’s interest in the *Quijote* (735–36). Even though Don Manuel does not explicitly relate to Unamuno’s quest, as I suggest here, his *San Manuel* still holds an important place in his life essay. Besides the title character who is plagued with the conviction of unbelief, the narrator, Ángela, exhibits a religious uncertainty and quest that closely resembles Unamuno’s as she embarks on a journey to resolve her questions. Her story compares to Unamuno’s essay on religion, “Mi religión,” through which Ángela emerges portraying Unamuno’s ideas on religious anxiety. Indeed, it is Ángela who more accurately works out the essayism of Unamuno’s life: she strives for knowledge, never able to declare certain conclusions, but never giving up the quest.

Before approaching Ángela and the plot of Don Manuel, the context in which Unamuno’s religious anxiety emerges first requires a brief introduction. I will begin with a note on the Generation of ’98, the literary group to which Unamuno belongs. These authors generally, and Unamuno specifically, incorporate many of the essayistic tendencies that I will discuss through the theories of Adorno and Lukacs. Next, I will address Unamuno’s essayistic tendency in his religious and metaphysical concerns using his *Del sentimiento trágico de la vida*, *La agonía del cristianismo*, and “Mi religión,” in which works his approach to the question of life and immortality relates to Adorno’s and Lukacs’s idea of essay as a quest. For the last half of the paper, I focus on Ángela and how she also resembles Unamuno’s essayistic views. Contrary to the traditional view that links Don Manuel to Unamuno, I will show that when Unamuno’s metaphysical concerns and essayism are applied to this narrative, Ángela is more of a biographical character than Don Manuel. While both characters reject blind acceptance of religious doctrine, Ángela poses the quest for knowledge, while Don Manuel tries to stunt the effort. She, like her author, truly represents the quest for truth, an impossible yet essential effort that, according to Adorno’s and Lukacs’s perspective, characterizes essay.

Miguel de Unamuno belongs to the Generation of ’98, a school of writers in an array of genres who converge in one area: a concern for the failing identity of Spain and national strength. Beginning in the seventeenth century, the Spanish empire begins to lose its grip on imperialism as its colonies and territories one by one slip away, culminating at the end of the nineteenth century when the last of the American colonies gain their independence. With the Spanish-American War of 1898, the United

States assists Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Philippine Islands to escape from peninsular control, returning Spain to its 1492 territorial boundaries when its prominence had just begun to escalate. Coming full circle in a cycle of grandeur and decadence, Unamuno and the writers of '98 attribute this decline to the social and economic failures of the Spanish people. Furthermore, in the realm of modernity and post-modernity, the writers "recognized the collapse of previously accepted absolute values and traditional modes of thought on which the stability of individual and social life had been supposed to depend" (Shaw 7). As a result, Unamuno and his literary kinsmen witness what they consider a universal meltdown in their society. For them, Spain "seemed to be in a state of complete ideological disarray which stood in marked contrast to her overwhelming national tradition of collectively accepted religio-political beliefs and absence of dissenting minorities" (7-8). With the very roots of the Spanish culture disintegrating, they question what it means to be Spanish in a search of a new national identity. Disillusioned at the destruction of the grandiose empire, combined with an insecure future, Unamuno and the generation of '98 beckon toward "a new age of doubt, anxiety, and even anguish" (7).

In response, and as a mode of reform, Unamuno turns to writing. Instead of standard economic and social solutions, the writers of '98, according to Shaw, "called for spiritual reconstruction as the first priority" (9). He further suggests that Unamuno in particular abandons those usual methods of reform because "he located the root of the problem in the national mentality [...] and specifically in the absence within that mentality of [...] a positive ideological or spiritual consensus" (8). Likewise, Descouzis suggests that Unamuno looked to "conmover a sus compatriotas y llamarles la atención sobre objetivos que consideraba deber de labor patria no solamente señalar sino también fomentar. El más importante, a su parecer, en la arena del espíritu, se centraba en el resurgimiento del intelecto español" (738). The key to social reform is a new national identity, a new "spirit of Spain" which can redefine the Spanish people and reclaim an individual grandeur that was lost with the empire. While the political and economic problems fade to the background, they are still related as Unamuno hopes to successfully improve the spiritual crisis; the rest will mend as well. Consequently, one of the main arenas of his focus is religion: it embodies the individual spiritual search that clashes with the sociopolitical institution behind the fall. According to Oscar Fasel, Unamuno sees the Church in Spain as the symbol for this social regression. For the writer, "proud and self-assured, the clergy represented an ecclesiastical institution that constituted a political, social and economic power" (33). With such social clout, the ecclesiastical influence destroys the individuality of the people, for "[the Clergy's] religious training was of a certain kind which left no room for independent existence [...]. It was satisfied with a rigid and correct fulfillment of church laws and regulations

[and] it asked the people to react in very much the same manner” (33). As a result, the Church adds to, if not causes, the public demise, for “it did not allow the religious problem to be taken up in a really worthy manner, one which recognized the individual to be important, indeed indispensable. It did not permit the religious question to be decided on the basis of moral standards which allow any man the right to freedom. It condemned because the church ruled so” (33).

Michael A. Weinstein suggests that this concern for the individual leads Unamuno to resist “all theories about everyday life, because each one of them attempts to reconcile the person to his social position” (55). In terms of religion and faith, Paul Descouzis shows, as does Fasel, that Unamuno specifically moves toward a personal and individual perspective, “un nuevo concepto de fe profana, centrada en la confianza del [individuo] en el poder creador de su intelecto” (735). Unamuno seeks a personal spiritual redefinition, and the Church, politically, economically, and socially, prevents such an effort. Thus, the writer’s goal for his people, is “confianza y procurar favorecer su desarrollo, su florecimiento, con el fin de liberarle del poder de influencia de un grupo que consideraba paralizador” (738). As a result, Unamuno frequently questions religion and beliefs in an attempt to open the gates for a spiritual rebirth.

Unamuno fills his essays, narrative, and poetry with this quest for awakening. In his longest and perhaps best known work of philosophy, *Del sentimiento trágico de la vida en los hombres y en los pueblos*, Unamuno focuses on existential questions. Mancing considers the work “a protoexistentialist meditation on precisely these matters” (346), in which, as Higuero explains, “se subraya sobre todo, el conflicto entre las exigencias ineludibles de la razón, abocadas a constatar el fatídico acoso de la muerte, y el anhelo apremiante de inmortalidad, nunca desaparecido por completo” (45). Weinstein adds that the work “is focused on the concrete human being struggling to reconcile a yearning for immortality with the requirements of his reason” (47); again, a struggle between faith and reason. Unamuno asks questions, the Church answers the questions, but he resists conclusions as he investigates, searches, and inquires, but never confirms. The focus is the search—the effort—and not the telos. According to Shaw, this characteristic is present not only in Unamuno, but in the Generation of ’98 in general. This group seeks an evasive truth, for which

writing was seen, not as primarily concerned with the creation or expression of beauty, but rather as a method of investigating man’s existential situation, a means of access to truth, with potentially valid results. The *noventayochistas* aimed not so much at reflecting or refining reality as at exploring it purposively, with the hope, that is, of illuminating some corner of it which concealed an answer to their problems. (14)

This method is essentially essayistic: embarking on a search, asking questions, discovering enlightenment in the process, but not the conclusion. Unamuno, as he investigates religion in both essay and narrative, engages a similar vein of writing. In the essay, it is

he as philosopher, in the narrative the characters, but in both genres Miguel de Unamuno posits the questions of existence in an essay on life.

Unamuno studies the essence of man and the human soul as the principle element of existence. In *Del sentimiento trágico de la vida*, he discusses mortality founded on the basic human tendency: the prolongation of life. In his opening chapter, “El hombre de carne y hueso,” Unamuno puts forth this basic premise: “[Q]uereamos no morirnos nunca y que este nuestro anhelo de nunca morirnos es nuestra esencia actual” (7: 113). This inherent desire to exist pits man against death. Ironically, as man must constantly resist his end, death is perhaps the only constant and absolute truth in life—we all must die; he is destined to lose his struggle. Unamuno, recognizing this dichotomy, sees faith as the only possible solution to this inevitable end. Because all must die, Unamuno views hope in the possibility of recovering life through an immortal soul. While this approach is not at all new, and even though resisting death is particularly appealing, the idea that our existence depends on an improvable premise—God—complicates the effort to live by forcing Unamuno not only to prolong mortality, but to account for a mystic spirituality. His journey to justify an eternal element in man leads him to a dispute between God and reason.

In another collection of essays, *La agonía del cristianismo*, Unamuno posits that the natural and spiritual efforts against death define life. He opens the first chapter defining “la agonía” as “la lucha” (7: 310). Physically, man must live in an existential effort both against death as well as against reason to establish an eternal element for man. Therefore, it is the struggle itself, the agony that allows man to live. Weinstein explains that this struggle is essential to Unamuno’s philosophy given that he “believes that suffering, agony, tragedy and anguish are normal, if not actually desirable, states of being.” Weinstein’s reasoning rests on the premise that in such a state, the person does not become complacent, and that Unamuno resists “attempts to reconcile the person to his social position” (55). Unamuno’s interpretation of the world in his essays and narrative extends from this basic tenet of struggle: “[N]uestra filosofía, esto es, nuestro modo de comprender o de no comprender el mundo y la vida brota de nuestro sentimiento respecto a la vida misma” (7: 110). As a result religion becomes a resistance to death and an essential question of man’s existence, “del único verdadero problema vital, del que más a las entrañas nos llega, del problema de nuestro destino individual y personal, de la inmortalidad del alma.” Unamuno’s position follows a specific line of logic: because man wants to live, he must believe in a life after death. Therefore, God must exist, because “para sustentar esta inmortalidad aparece Dios.” He reverses the traditionally accepted foundation for immortality: if the soul is to be immortal, there must be a God to direct the afterlife. The resistance to death reversely accounts for God: deducing “Dios de la inmortalidad del alma, y no ésta de aquélla” (7: 111).

The struggle for life, thus, becomes a struggle for the truth about God and religion. Unamuno's idea of agony connects his religious anxiety to life itself: fighting death ultimately gives life. This relationship closely resembles Lukacs's notion of telos in the genre of essay in which truth is an unachievable goal and the journey is the key. His truth, which is quite compatible with Unamuno's concept of truth and religion, is more universal than scientific or "natural" truths: "[W]e are not speaking here of ordinary truth, [...] but of the truth of the myth by whose power ancient tales and legends are kept alive for thousands of years" (12). By tackling the veracity of God and the immortal soul, Unamuno questions one of the oldest myths to both Spain and Europe: Christianity. Similar to Lukacs, his existential inquiries attempt to arrive at a conclusion, yet the result is irrelevant. Lukacs explains: "[I]t is true that the essay strives for truth: but [...] the essayist who is really capable of looking for the truth will find at the end of his road the goal he was looking for: life" (12). Unamuno, who shares the same goal, namely life, teaches that this result occurs because of the search. Unamuno lives because of the struggle, both physical and religious, each of which gives life through the quest. This search requires a questioning and a struggle through his "agonía" for knowledge itself: "[E]l modo de vivir, de luchar, de luchar por la vida y vivir de la lucha, de la fe, es dudar. [...] ¿Y qué es dudar? *Dubitare* contiene la misma raíz, la del numeral *duo*, dos, que *duellum*, lucha" (7: 311). As with Lukacs, the end is less important than the effort. The search for religious truth regarding the immortal soul eventually provides life.

Because the goal is only possible in the struggle, Unamuno rejects the clear tenets that religious dogma sustains. He cannot prove definitively the existence of God and the validity of religion, and, therefore, his effort must continue as long as life itself. Descouzis, while looking at the role of paradox in Unamuno's texts, explains that this quixotic quest for religious answers in the realm of reason provides continuity and "unidad en su obra; y respaldó su afirmación con palabras de tono evangélico: 'buscad, y encontraréis'" (735). Unamuno addresses this common thread throughout his works and specifically in one of his better known essays, "Mi religión," in which he rejects his placement within a dogmatic box. Growing up, receiving his education, and working in Catholic Spain, Unamuno is exposed to religious dogma throughout his life. When he goes away to school, however, he begins to question the validity of God and immortality. Later, he embarks on a religious quest when a friend asks him to clarify his core beliefs; however, he still resists religious labels rather than confine himself to a specific denomination. Faced with his friend's question—"Y bien, en resumidas cuentas, ¿cuál es la religión de este señor Unamuno?" (3: 259)—Unamuno must defend himself against such categorization and a socially confined perspective on God; religion is not as precise as those who invent the creeds pretend. According to Fasel, in Unamuno's Spanish society, religion is not a mere choice but an essential part of life:

“We have to see Spain as a nation where a social, political and religious order of life policed the life of the individual. [...] It asked [Unamuno] to surrender his independent thought in order to accept the orders of the authoritarian state” (33). Unamuno, as a reaction to this environment, sees in his friend’s question an attempt to put him in a box:

Ésos, los que me dirigen esa pregunta, quieren que les dé un dogma, [...] buscan poder encasillarme y meterme en uno de los cuadrículados en que colocan a los espíritus, diciendo de mí: es luterano, es calvinista, es católico, es ateo, es racionalista, es místico, o cualquier otro de estos motes, [...] que les dispensa de pensar más. Y yo no quiero dejarme encasillar. (3: 260)

As discussed previously with Fasel and Discouzis, Unamuno looks to an independent faith that resists institutionalization, which he demonstrates in his resistance of dogmatic labels. Adorno addresses a similar concern in his article on the essay: the social ideology that dictates thoughts. He suggests in his “Essay as Form,” that the student of philosophy at best “will pick up information ready culled from whatever modish philosophy and more or less arbitrarily slapped on to the content of works currently under discussion” (157). In Unamuno’s case, institutionalized religion represents an ideology to which each cannot submit. However, rather than accepting this limitation, Unamuno writes his manifesto in a way that questions socially constructed limitations. Unamuno’s resistance to imposed definitions directly relates to Adorno’s idea that essay, and the search for truth, “denies any primeval givens, so it refuses any definition of its concepts” (Adorno 159), which “shakes off the illusion of a simple, basically logical world that so perfectly suits the defense of the status quo” (163).

Unamuno’s solution to this ideological box is a religion of skepticism. His advocacy of doubt along the road to truth also defines his idea of religion: the abandonment of dogmatism for a belief in skepticism. For Unamuno, however, a skeptic is not one who rejects, but one who is not satisfied with a definite answer: “[E]scéptico no quiere decir el que duda, sino el que investiga o rebusca, por oposición al que afirma y cree haber hallado” (3: 259). In the quest for religion and immortality, religious answers are elusive and thus resist conclusions, leaving the search itself as the only truth to which he can adhere. But the essayistic life will continue to seek a telos of truth. This effort composes his religion: “[M]i religión es buscar la verdad en la vida y la vida en la verdad, aun a sabiendas de que no he de encontrarlas mientras viva; mi religión es luchar incesante e incansablemente con el misterio; mi religión es luchar con Dios desde el romper del alba hasta el caer de la noche” (3: 260). He recognizes that an absolute knowledge of God is impossible, yet he must continue “sin cuidarme de la victoria” (3: 260). Where he questions and analyzes the evidence, he does not produce a solution, only possibilities. This distance from finite conclusions is essential to the essay. Adorno, for example, sees in the essay a center within an exploratory,

non-linear journey: “[D]iscontinuity is essential to the essay; [...] what the over-arching concept merely pretends to accomplish, the essay’s method recognizes as insoluble while nevertheless attempting to accomplish it” (164). From the beginning of Unamuno’s article, instead of precisely describing a core of personal beliefs, he writes as a skeptic, as “el que investiga o rebusca” (3: 259). Ultimately, he can conclude only that truth is inconclusive: “No sé, cierto es; tal vez no pueda saber nunca, pero «quiero» saber. Lo quiero, y basta” (3: 261). And these words become the core of his lifelong existential essay that permeates his writings on the essence of the human soul.

As Unamuno steps from essay and into his fictional story of *San Manuel Bueno, mártir*, he transforms his “religion” of the continual search into narrative. This narrative confronts the same concern as his essays: the struggle for truth and life. In this work, Ángela returns from school to her village of Valverde de Lurcerna, hoping to resolve religious inquietudes through Don Manuel, the local, yet famous, priest. His renown has spread because of his saintly service and enormous success in teaching and bringing great felicity to the parish. He personally assumes a child’s task to search for a lost cow in a snowstorm; he arranges marriages by teaching his parishioners to overlook past faults; and he consoles his followers through a saintly celebration of Christ where all feel that he has led them closer to deity. It is he to whom Ángela looks for answers. His greatest miracle occurs when Don Manuel converts Lázaro, Ángela’s progressive brother who returns from Latin America with a small fortune. Upon arrival, he initially sets out to expose the fraudulent nature of religion and, consequently, Don Manuel, but ends up accepting the first communion from the priest, convincing the people that the spiritual leader is truly a saint. However, the irony of the priest’s potential sainthood surfaces when Lázaro discloses to Ángela that the conversion is false, done only to appease the parish, and that Don Manuel is actually an atheist who maintains a façade in order to provide happiness in ignorance. From this point on, Lázaro becomes a prodigy for Don Manuel, a convert and cohort in the mass illusion, enlisted to the cause of “bliss.” As such, he spends most of his time with the saint where together they teach a religion which Don Manuel considers a lie in order to keep others from questioning. Instead of advocating the essayistic voyage for life and truth, he undercuts it. Don Manuel is an atheist who fosters denial and the acceptance of falsehood. Ángela, on the contrary, illustrates convincingly Unamuno’s own ideas: she searches for truth, unable to succeed yet unable to yield.

Considering Don Manuel as an enemy of Unamuno’s quest for life in its pursuit, the priest destroys any quest for knowledge, thus becoming the antagonist to Ángela’s personal search. His purpose is to abolish the struggle and appease the people, ultimately refusing to lead to either questioning or truth; rather, he provides false dogma: “[H]ay que creer todo lo que cree y enseña a creer la Santa Madre Iglesia Católica,

Apostólica, Romana. ¡Y basta!” (2: 1137). This belief results in the simple happiness that he wants the people of his village to have in life, an ignorance that will end in bliss: “[Y]a sé que uno de esos caudillos de la que llaman la revolución social ha dicho que la religión es el opio del pueblo. Opio... Opio... Opio, sí. Démosle opio, y que duerma y que sueñe” (2: 1146). He knows that the dogma is false; not caring for the validity of the Church, he only wants the people to believe to be consoled “de haber tenido que nacer para morir” (2: 1142). Don Manuel represents precisely the sort of person who Unamuno sees as a detriment to the search for truth. Because he resists the question and rejects the possibility of a religious truth, Don Manuel snuffs out the life that Unamuno would have everyone struggle to find. Unamuno’s spiritual reform requires an individual effort for truth and discovery, resulting in vitality. Don Manuel, on the other hand represents a class of non-believers that Unamuno highly criticizes. Armand Baker explains that as a part of “Unamuno’s strong rejection of the idea of disbelief,” Unamuno himself refers to assuaging liars as slaves of reason suffering from an affective stupidity (43).

Don Manuel’s sin arises when in exchange for truth he extends the illusions of religion to the parish so that they do not question. For him, ignorance truly is bliss. Not only does he suffer from denial of the soul, but, in an ignominious error, he prevents others from seeking. In “Mi religión,” Unamuno denounces those who feed complacency: “No espero nada de los que dicen: «¡No se debe pensar en eso!»; espero menos aún de los que creen en un cielo y un infierno como aquel en que creíamos de niños” (3: 261). This childish belief is precisely what Don Manuel attempts to feed the people in Valverde de Lucerna. Avoiding Ángela’s inquiries, he instructs her to ignore such anxieties (2: 1136–37). Then, attempting to further deflect Ángela’s doubts, he comments, “Angelina, tú crees como a los diez años, ¿no es así? ¿Tú crees?” (2: 1143). He truncates her inquiries, thus destroying the struggle that, for Unamuno, allows life. In the classifications of men that we find in Unamuno’s writings, Don Manuel is the worst. He is, according to Mancing, of the class of tyrants “that paternalistically want to tell you what is good for you rather than have you decide for yourself. [...] Don Manuel wants not to liberate others so that they can tell their own story, but wants instead to give them a story, one that is for him a fiction” (359). As Mancing carries this characterization further, he suggests that it is among willing ignorant people such as the parishioners in Valverde, “that dictators and demagogues recruit their massive followers [...] who, like Don Manuel, prepares the way for a Hitler or an Osama bin Laden” (361). Unamuno wholeheartedly rejects the idea of feeding lies of appeasement. Weinstein explains that “Unamuno himself did not follow Manuel, but attempted, instead, to awaken people to anguish” (56), allowing them to think and question for themselves. The true hero in *San Manuel*, rather than the title character, is Ángela, because she searches and opens the way for others to do the same.

Ángela, the narrator, writes the account as a memoir in which she seeks to resolve the fundamental problem—immortality of the soul—with Unamuno-like skepticism. After returning from her “liberal” education outside of Valverde, Ángela embarks on a journey to resolve her internal conflict with religion. Throughout the course of the novel, the thematic lines in her spiritual anxiety and Don Manuel’s atheism develop simultaneously, the latter complicating and feeding the former. She resembles Unamuno’s religion of doubt: “[D]esde muy niña alimenté, no sé bien cómo, curiosidades, preocupaciones y inquietudes, debidas, en parte al menos, a aquel revoltijo de libros de mi padre” (2: 1130). Because she reads, researches, questions, and explores, she develops concerns that nourish her and push her forward. As she goes away to school, prodded by her brother’s attempt to free her from the rural simplicity of Valverde, these curiosities develop into an existential and religious unease. Her education leads her to doubts resembling Unamuno’s skepticism of “el que investiga o rebusca” (3: 259). Thus, she carries on where Don Manuel cannot with regards to Unamuno’s “único verdadero problema vital” that plagues us: “la inmortalidad del alma” (7: 111).

Because of Don Manuel’s convincing charade as a saintly priest, Ángela hears of his greatness and hopes he can help resolve her questions. Once again at home, she approaches him with “mis inquietudes, mis dudas, mis tristezas” (2: 1136), concerns where the true nature of her anxiety arises. Ángela explains: “[U]na vez que en el confesionario le expuse una de aquellas dudas,” and then asks: “¿[E]s que hay Infierno, don Manuel?” (2: 1137), essentially inquiring: Is there an afterlife? Is the soul immortal? She has grown up in the religious town and has studied in the Catholic school, but she finds imprecision in the dogma. Don Manuel’s atheism is still hidden from Ángela, and so he evasively instructs that she innocently accept doctrine and ignore doubts. Ángela embodies Unamuno’s position as she navigates the plot: “[N]o sé, cierto es; tal vez no pueda saber nunca, pero ‘quiero’ saber. Lo queiro” (3: 261). Though the author writes these lines, they reflect her essence perfectly. Later, once she discovers Don Manuel’s secret, her source for truth is shaken. Yet, she persists, fueled by his rejection of truth, incessantly attempting to believe.

After learning that Don Manuel cannot help her, Ángela looks inward as she continues to investigate her own anxieties, using her confessions with the priest as internal analysis. Fully aware of his doubts, she persists in meeting with Don Manuel to resolve her own concerns where she inquires: “¿[P]ero en qué [cree], padre, en qué? ¿Cree usted en la otra vida?, ¿cree usted que al morir no nos morimos del todo?” (2: 1143). She cares less for what he truly accepts of immortality than for affirmation to support what she wants to believe. While she may truly care what Don Manuel believes, Ángela’s questions are designed to confirm or refute what she desires to know regarding a real immortality. His characteristic response only fuels the struggle:

“¡[M]ira, hija, dejemos eso!” (2: 1143), yet she cannot leave her unease alone. She begins to prod Lázaro for teachings that Don Manuel may have shared in private, but only learns that her brother's disbelief is rooted deeper and deeper within Don Manuel's façade. After failed attempts at a conclusion, Ángela is ultimately left alone with her anxiety after both Lázaro and Don Manuel die. At this point, with no spiritual guide to whom she can direct her concerns, Ángela's questions shift from the doctrine toward what she believes as truth. In her final statement concerning Don Manuel and Lázaro's beliefs, she hopes that in the end they had deviated from their firm atheism: “[C]reo que Dios Nuestro Señor [...] les hizo creerse incrédulos. Y que acaso en el acabamiento de su tránsito se les cayó la venda” (2: 1152).² This belief rests on unknowable information. She cannot possibly know what has happened in the final moments of their lives. As with the rest of her quest, this conclusion is improvable, and merely functions to give her the hope that they have truly come to a conclusion, though she cannot. Her efforts must continue, for she lives on.

Ángela takes hope that Don Manuel and Lázaro can no longer reject the idea of an immortal soul. As for herself, on the other hand, she still cannot conclude either way. Following her optimistic judgment toward their final state, Ángela concedes a revealing introspection: “¿[Y] yo, creo? (2: 1152). Ángela's final question accentuates all of her confessions with Don Manuel as she exclaims that her life of searching has remained inconclusive. In the final moments of her memoir, Ángela's existential and spiritual uncertainties reach their apex:

Y yo no sé lo que es verdad y lo que es mentira, ni lo que vi y lo que soñé—o mejor lo que soñé y lo que sólo vi—, ni lo que supe ni lo que creí. [...] ¿Es que sé algo?, ¿es que creo algo? [...] ¿Seré yo, Ángela Carballino, hoy cincuentona, la única persona que en esta aldea se ve acometida de estos pensamientos extraños para los demás? ¿Y éstos, los otros, los que me rodean, creen? ¿Qué es eso de creer? (2: 1152–53)

She is at the end of her life and has been unable to conclude anything precise. The only telos she has witnessed is additional questions—more than when she began. Instead of failure, however, this makes her noble in the eyes of Unamuno: “Sólo espero de los que ignoran, pero no se resignan a ignorar; de los que luchan sin descanso por la verdad y ponen su vida en la lucha misma más que en la victoria” (3: 261). Ángela, for Unamuno, is the opposite of Don Manuel. While he desecrates the search for knowledge with illusion and dissuasion, she never yields, characterizing her life by the search.

The memoirs that she writes, the novel itself, is her account of the struggle for truth, committing Ángela's life to an essay on religion and the immortal soul. Ángela's essay consists of her efforts to ossify her questions into a particular conclusion, but with constant frustration, interruption, and incompleteness. Throughout her search, the clarity between true and false disintegrates into an impossible battle, identical to when Unamuno declares: “Y yo quiero pelear mi pelea sin cuidarme de la victoria”

(3: 261), rendering victory unattainable, but she pushes on, focusing on the effort. As mentioned previously, Ángela's experiences with Don Manuel call her entire essence into question as she asks: "¿Es que sé algo?, ¿es que creo algo? [...] ¿Qué es eso de creer?" (2: 1152–53). There no longer remains any essence of a truth base. Ángela reflects Adorno's idea of the essayist and her memoirs form an essay. Citing Max Bense in his "Essay as Form," Adorno instructs that

[H]e writes essayistically who writes while experimenting, who turns his object this way and that, who questions it, feels it, tests it, thoroughly reflects on it, attacks it from different angles, and in his mind's eye collects what he sees, and puts into words what the object allows to be seen under the conditions established in the course of writing [...]. (164)

Ángela prods both the potential saint and her brother for answers and conclusions. She witnesses their actions, their contradictory words, and their apparent emotions in an attempt to arrive at some solution to her existential concerns; yet in the end, she can only ask what she, after all, believes. True to her essay, she does not arrive at any conclusion regarding her original intent. She writes because the Bishop desires to beatify the priest of Valverde de Lucerna and while she adds to the process through conversations and interviews with the bishop, she does not give him her memoir: "[C]onfío en que no llegue a su conocimiento todo lo que en esta memoria dejo consignado" (2: 1153). She presents evidences to the bishop regarding Don Manuel's potential sainthood; however, the priest's destiny remains undecided and her opinion on the matter remains elusive.

Because she rejects any conclusion regarding whether Don Manuel's achievements merit sainthood—the original purpose in creating her tale—her work continues to solidify as an essay in that it resists finality. In her discussions with the bishop regarding the potential saint, she, knowing his truth, cannot take a position for or against his canonization. Instead, she writes, "aquí queda esto, y sea de su suerte lo que fuere" (2: 1153). Therefore, her memoir mixes with this other genre, whose "concepts," as Adorno suggests, "are neither deduced from any first principle nor do they come full circle and arrive at a final principle" (152). Instead, both Ángela and Unamuno provide options, each resisting final conclusions. These possibilities challenge readers to think independently and search for their own interpretations. Unamuno declares:

Y yo [...] les diré que si quieren soluciones, acudan a la tienda de enfrente, porque en la mía no se vende semejante artículo. Mi empeño ha sido, es y será que los que me lean, piensen y mediten en las cosas fundamentales, y no ha sido nunca el de darles pensamientos hechos. Yo he buscado siempre agitar, y, a lo sumo, sugerir, más que instruir. Si yo vendo pan, no es pan, sino levadura o fermento. (3: 263)

Longhurst suggests that this focus to inspire questions appears in much of Unamuno's narrative. He forces his readers to "rethink their interpretation" which "requires the reader to revise or reconsider his or her views" (751), thus forcing even his audience to share in his quest, embarking on the essay for truth and life. Unamuno wants others to

question, but Don Manuel gives no truth, directly contradicting the author's purpose. Ángela, on the other hand, still desires to believe. Concluding her work while the Don Manuel's sainthood and her beliefs remain unresolved, she stimulates the readers' thoughts. In assisting with the beatification of Don Manuel, Ángela follows his final request that she carry on the façade. However, she cannot consciously maintain his falsehood. Caught in the dilemma of the ignorance in the village, she fears that directly telling the truth would prove fruitless: "[S]i intentase, por locura, explicárselo, no lo entenderían. El pueblo no entiende de palabras; el pueblo no ha entendido más que vuestras obras. Querer exponerles eso sería como leer a unos niños de ocho años unas páginas de Santo Tomás de Aquino [...] en latín" (2: 1151). However, she also resists the social opium of "information ready culled from [society's] modish philosophy" (Adorno 157). For her to maintain silent regarding the true Don Manuel would constitute advocating his false appearance. Unamuno, in his famous encounter with Millán Astray, asserts that "at times to be silent is a lie. For silence can be interpreted as acquiescence" (qtd. in Thomas 502). Thus, she writes this story to expose the secret attributes of the priest to all those who can read Saint Thomas Aquinas in Latin. Ángela, refusing to follow Don Manuel's lead and support ignorance, reveals the truth behind his masquerade through her memoir. Her document does not provide sufficient evidence for definitive conclusions, but that is never the goal, and those who truly desire to discover truth have one more tool to push them onward. Likewise, the blissfully ignorant can remain content while she can still provide the leavening for those who desire the struggle. In this final effort, Ángela Carballino resembles Unamuno's notion of a truly saintly person, one who inspires questions and uncertainty: "Es obra de misericordia suprema despertar al dormido y sacudir al parado, y es obra de suprema piedad religiosa buscar la verdad en todo y descubrir dondequiera el dolo, la necedad y la ineptia" (3: 263). On one hand, she assists Don Manuel's fraud, but unable to maintain its project, she exposes his secret in her memoir.

Ángela's story is Unamuno's essay. She accomplishes through her account and persona what Unamuno proposes his writing should do: make others think. His characters in *San Manuel Bueno, mártir* cause others to question, but it is Ángela who questions the issue of the immortal soul. Don Manuel denies it, and he fits the construct that Unamuno despises. Returning to a key passage cited earlier, here it shows how little clout Unamuno grants to one with Don Manuel's attitude:

No espero nada de los que dicen: '¡No se debe pensar en eso!'; espero menos aún de los que creen en un cielo y un infierno como aquel en que creíamos de niños, y espero todavía menos de los que afirman con la gravedad del necio: 'Todo eso no son sino fábulas y mitos [...]'. Sólo espero de los que ignoran, pero no se resignan a ignorar; de los que luchan sin descanso por la verdad y ponen su vida en la lucha misma más que en la victoria. (3: 261)

In contrast, Ángela's inquisitiveness undermines Don Manuel's propagation of blindness. Her words lead to life in the struggle for truth. Don Manuel attempts to hide the secret, but it is her essay—Unamuno's essay—that exposes the fraud. Her questions

inspire the public, and her memoirs expose the priest's true character. In the end, Ángela disseminates her manuscript, she also destroys her silence, reveals Don Manuel, and allows for others to question in the same manner that she has. Ángela is Unamuno's saint in Valverde de Lucerna, not Don Manuel.

NOTES

¹ Marie J. Panico briefly discusses two schools of criticism in which either Unamuno makes up the religious doubt to “achieve fame which would provide him with the immortality he so coveted; or that, in fact, he never doubted, he simply did not believe” (471). Panico develops the latter idea in her study, focusing on his poetry as evidence.

² Here Panico relates Don Manuel biographically with Unamuno, suggesting that Ángela reveals that “at times, he himself doubted that he doubted” (474). I maintain that the two are not linked by ideology, and this is Ángela’s hope that there is a conclusion to the search. Again, if there is a character that represents Unamuno, it is Ángela.

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BARE-SKINNED NEGRESSES AND
ETHIOPIAN BEAUTIES:
OY! WHAT ARE THEY DOING IN THE FICTION
OF PHILIP ROTH AND SAUL BELLOW?

RACHEL NISSELSON
Vanderbilt University

*"Short Hills [New Jersey]
I could see [it] now, in my mind's eye,
at dusk, rose-colored,
like a Gauguin stream" (38).*

So says, without a hint of irony, Neil Klugman—Philip Roth's protagonist in his 1959 novella *Goodbye, Columbus*. Neil is a recent graduate of Newark Colleges of Rutgers University and still resides in Newark with his working-class aunt and uncle. Short Hills—a mere 10 miles from Newark—is home to the Patimkins. Ever since an encounter at an exclusive country club pool in Short Hills, Neil has pined for Brenda Patimkin, a student at Radcliffe and daughter of an upper-class Jewish family that has achieved assimilation and the American dream. The Gauguin reference in this quotation alludes to Neil's identification with a Black boy he meets in the Newark Library who escapes from a harsh and monotonous daily existence by metaphorically traveling to the faraway places evoked by Gauguin's paintings. In fact, Gauguin provides a means of escape from Newark for both Neil and the boy. Though Neil travels only a short distance from Newark to Short Hills, in imagining Brenda's town as a paradise on Earth, he leaves far behind him the traditional Jewish values embodied in his Uncle Max and his overbearing Aunt Gladys. But as we shall see, Neil's exoticization of Brenda and her environs acts as more than just an escape mechanism. This psychic move also serves as an attempt to compensate for Neil's lower social and economic status. In painting Brenda as an exotic Gauguin figure, Neil racializes her, defining her as Other, while casting himself as a White European conquistador.

In this paper, I examine the function of racialized women—female characters upon whom a racial quality or context is imposed—in two texts by Jewish American male authors: Philip Roth and Saul Bellow. Though questions of race are more central to Roth's *Goodbye, Columbus* than to Bellow's short story "A Silver Dish" (first published in *The New Yorker* in 1978), Woody Selbst's international sexual escapades in "A Silver Dish" provide an interesting counterpoint to Neil's monogamous and New Jersey-

bound relationship.¹ Rather than metaphorically transforming the White women that surround him, as does Neil, Woody travels far and wide to encounter and dominate the exotic. Throughout my discussion of these two works, I explore Neil and Woody's complicated relationships to race, the body, gender, and religion. I argue that both of these Jewish male protagonists use racialized relationships to pinpoint their nebulous positions in society, positions fraught with the competing influences of family members, religious leaders, and sexual partners.

Roth introduces the theme of Neil's ambiguous relationship to race within the first few pages of the novella. As foretold by Neil's first phone conversation with Brenda, in which he describes himself as "dark," Neil identifies with the Black characters that surround him. The first to elicit this feeling of kinship is the young Black patron at the library mentioned earlier. Neil feels protective of the boy—who is quite aware that the other employees at the library know that he does not belong—due to their shared outsider status. Later in the story, after being assigned the domestic task of babysitting Brenda's younger sister, Neil identifies with Carlota, the Patimkins' Black maid, though he admits not feeling as comfortable as she within the family context. In expressing his kinship with these characters, Neil notes that his role in Short Hills is that of a visitor, not a native.

During his week-long stay at the Patimkins', Neil has a dream that extends the aforementioned Gauguin simile. The dream features Neil as the captain of a boat, with the Black boy as his first mate and only companion. As they near an unspecified island in the Pacific, they can see the "beautiful bare-skinned Negresses" on the shores (74).² Suddenly, and against their will, their ship starts moving away from the island, and the Negresses, in an ironic un-Siren-like fashion, call out repeatedly to them "Goodbye, Columbus" (74). Despite their greatest efforts, Neil and the boy cannot reverse the ship's path. The two would-be conquistadors are refused access to the island and its inhabitants. (And, no, the humor of casting a Jew and a Black boy as colonizers is not lost on Roth.) In this dream we see both an exoticization and a racialization of Brenda, though these phenomena have important distinctions. The combination of the novelty of Brenda's wealth, her overt sexuality, and the lavishness of the Patimkins all result in an inevitable exoticization of Brenda. This is a manifestation of the common theme of the traveler seduced by the distant and foreign land. Neil's racialization, or blackening, of Brenda is a power play, akin to his demand that she get fitted for a diaphragm "for the sake of [his] pleasure" (79). Neil imagines himself as the colonizer of a foreign land and his pliable girlfriend as a native in need of taming.

Another possible explanation for this phenomenon is that, by blackening Brenda, Neil renders her more culturally authentic. In the middle of the twentieth century, Jews, as a group, moved from a race to an ethnicity and assimilated into

middle-class WASP culture. In her book entitled *Blacks and Jews in Literary Conversation*, Emily Budick notes that Roth views Blacks' inability to assimilate as an advantage over Jews. She writes that "What Jews, therefore, can discover from the Black experience is [...] a kind of authenticity available within the Jewish world" (145). In acquiring wealth and achieving the American dream of owning a suburban home, the Patimkin family has transformed from Other to White. At various points throughout this process, the family has lost, hidden, or removed nearly all of their cultural markers. Neil's Aunt Gladys comes to this conclusion when she asks: "Since when do Jewish people live in Short Hills. They can't be real Jews believe me" (58). Unlike Neil's aunt and uncle, the Patimkins speak unaccented English and do not pepper their speech with Yiddish expressions or intonation. The way in which the Patimkins observe Judaism is uninformed and superficial. For example, for Mrs. Patimkin regularly attending an Orthodox and not, Heaven forbid, a Conservative or Reform synagogue is more important than understanding the principles of Jewish philosophy.

In imagining Brenda as Black, Neil forcibly returns her to her Other status. By "recoloring" Brenda, the protagonist bestows her with a visible physical difference that she will not be able to remove with plastic surgery as she did the bump on her nose. In redefining Brenda as Other, Neil attempts to convince himself that she is different from the other "princesses" he observes whose "hair would always stay the color they desired, their clothes the right texture and shade." In comparison to these other women, whose "fates had collapsed them into one," Neil hopes, but is not entirely convinced, that "Money and comfort would not erase [Brenda's] singleness" (96). Eventually, Neil realizes that Brenda is just like the other "princesses," which leads him to reject the superficial lifestyle of Short Hills in favor of Newark's authenticity. Representing both the archetypal Jewish American Princess and the Tahitian maiden, Brenda is racialized both as a Jew and as a Black.

In "A Silver Dish," Woody's relationship to the racialized women that he seeks out during his trips abroad mirror Neil's relationship with Brenda in several significant ways. First, much like the manner in which Neil's trips to the exotic Short Hills are an escape from the norm represented by his life in Newark with Aunt Gladys and Uncle Max, Woody, too, regards his journeys to out-of-the-ordinary places like Africa and Asia as escapes. Woody, however, does not flee a traditional Jewish upbringing as does Neil. Though he is biologically Jewish, the familial duties from which Woody occasionally takes flight are not Jewish in the least. (In fact, as I will discuss later, because of Woody's odd physical connection to his Jewish father, his trips to Africa and Asia serve in some sense to reconnect him to his Judaism.) Although the two protagonists' trips share the theme of escape, Woody's higher socio-economic status lends a unique quality to his journeys. Neil is able to enjoy the lavishness of Short Hills

only when invited; he depends on others' generosity. Conversely, Woody, who is older and a successful businessman, can pay his own fare. In fact, when he goes on vacation, spending large sums of money is one of his goals.

The theme of socio-economic status is related to another similarity between Woody and Neil's racialized relationships—the colonial theme. Like Neil, who is able to reverse his inferior position vis à vis Brenda by imagining himself a conquistador, Woody—a White American male with dollars to spare—is automatically in a position of power over the “natives” he encounters in Africa and Asia. Woody need not metaphorically apply pigment to his sexual partners—they are already “colored.” However, in essentializing these women as representatives of their gender, race, and nationality, Woody is, in effect, racializing them.

Bellow's protagonist uses and abuses his power as a rich White American. In Kenya, where he teaches “certain American obscenities to a Black woman so that she could shout them out during the act” (139), we can imagine that the Kenyan woman does not understand the words Woody teaches her and that she may not comprehend that he is taking advantage of her. Though he treats an “Ethiopian beauty” more compassionately, washing her “with his broad, kindly hands” (139), we must question to what extent either of these women gives consent to Woody. Does Woody feel, as the colonizer, entitled to use and take everything within his grasp?

Of course, the characters' shared impulses to racialize their partners constitute the most significant similarity between the two men. In both cases, these relationships provide opportunities for Woody and Neil to reflect on their identities as Jewish American men, and, in some cases, to reverse the inferior position that, in their minds, their heritage forces them to occupy. As we have seen, for Neil, initially, part of Brenda's attractiveness is the way in which he believes her to be different from the other Jewish American princesses. In blackening Brenda, Neil attempts to forcibly return Brenda to visible Otherness, thus ensuring her cultural authenticity. In the end, however, Brenda chooses a life of superficiality and sterility, while Neil returns to his Jewish, working-class roots in Newark. Woody, oddly enough, reaffirms his Jewish roots by traveling to Africa and Asia. Of course, in Woody's case, we must recognize that he pursues relationships with women who, most likely, aren't able to distinguish what others regard as his “curved” nose from any other “White” facial features; they see him only as White. In the context of Africa and Asia, Woody's American passport is his most prominent feature.

In order to fully understand Woody's complex relationship to the exotic and to religion, we must review his religious upbringing. Woody grows up surrounded almost entirely by Christians. His mother is a Christian convert, his sisters are fundamentalist Christians, and even Halina, his father's girlfriend, is Catholic. Only Woody's father, Morris, maintains bits and pieces of his Jewish identity, namely reading the Yiddish

newspaper and a desire to be buried in a Jewish cemetery. Though the expression of his Jewishness is limited, the other characters, namely Aunt Rebecca (a Christian), identify Morris as having a stereotypical Jewish physique. Woody has inherited this look—one that Aunt Rebecca associates with evil (119). The narrator recounts: “Whenever [Aunt Rebecca] looked at [Woody], he knew that she was seeing his father. In the curve of his nose, the movements of his eyes, the thickness of his body, in his healthy face, she saw that wicked savage Morris” (121).

Though Woody is far from a wicked person, he feels closest to his father when engaged in mischievous, physical, and sexual acts. Woody’s relationship with Morris is explicitly Jewish—he wonders if he makes “more Jewish observations than he would otherwise” in his father’s presence (130). His father’s Judaism, however, is entirely secular; Woody even describes Morris’s behavior as being the antidote to religion. “Mischievous was where Pop came in [...] bent-nosed and broad-faced [...]. Pop was physical; Pop was digestive, circulatory, sexual [...]. Pop was elemental. That was why he gave such relief from religion and paradoxes, and things like that” (128). When read in the context of what precedes and follows it—a discussion of Woody’s disillusionment with his childhood experience of religion—we may assume that this quotation refers to Morris as an antidote to the specific sterile and dogmatic form of Christianity personified by Aunt Rebecca and Woody’s mom and sisters.

In Woody’s travels to Africa and Asia we see an affirmation of his father’s way of life. These trips have a strong link to the body; Woody experiences physical extremes—sleeping on the floor Japanese style and bathing “in scalding water”—and seeks out sexual encounters (139). In fact, in pursuing physical relationships with women, Woody is acting on the bizarrely amusing and entirely preposterous explanation of breast cancer that Morris once gave him: that it is due to sexual neglect. “It’s an exceptionally smart man who isn’t marked forever by the sexual theories he hears from his father,” the narrator explains, “and Woody wasn’t all that smart [...]. Personally he had gone far out of his way to do right by women in this regard. What nature demanded. He and Pop were common, thick men, but there’s nobody too gross to have ideas of delicacy” (123). Despite the narrator’s assessment of Woody as not “all that smart,” it seems unlikely that Woody actually subscribes to this theory (123). Rather, he appears to choose to believe in his father’s message: men possess something essential to women’s health transferable only through intercourse. Returning to the colonial theme, one might wonder if Woody, rather than saving the souls of the indigenous people of the non-Western world by converting them to Christianity, believes he is assuring the indigenous women’s good health by having sex with them.

One aspect of Woody’s trips that does differentiate him from his father, however, is that the protagonist manages to find a spiritual element that was absent in his father and align it in some way with his physical acts. In Japan, for example, Woody does not

only see the “dirtiest strip show on earth,” he also visits the “holy places and the temple gardens” (139). In fact, these exotic trips are not the only occasion for Woody to attain a spiritual satisfaction through corporeal acts. The narrator refers to the same phenomenon when describing Woody’s time spent as a coolie during the World’s Fair, saying “he used to receive [...] his religious experience while he trotted” (140). Woody’s “religious” experiences are certainly outside of the bounds of what we would normally define as sacred; but, somehow, whether it be vacationing in Asia or working as a coolie in Chicago, the influence of the East seems to allow Woody to bridge the gap between the physical and the spiritual. And although Morris had provided very little spiritual guidance in Woody’s life (other than a strong aversion to Christianity), strangely, it is through a connection to his father, in a pursuit of “religious” acts including relationships with racialized women, that Woody attains a sense of spirituality.

Though they work in different ways, the racialized women in both *Goodbye, Columbus* and “A Silver Dish” function as a mirror, allowing the secular male Jewish characters to gain a clearer understanding of themselves and of their place in the world. In both works, the protagonists’ racialization of their sexual partners allows the Jewish men to connect with and to distance themselves from their Judaism. By “blackening” Brenda, Neil metaphorically marks her—and himself by association—as Other. In this way, Neil harkens back to a period when Jews lived outside of the boundaries of White America and were differentiated by their dress, their food, their accents, and their worship. Neil recognizes that he identifies more closely with the Black Others of Newark than with the “White” Jews that are moving ever closer to assimilation and inauthenticity. While a life of religious observance does not attract Neil, a life devoid of any ethnic authenticity is even less palatable. At the same time, in fancying himself a conquistador with free reign over the natives, Neil reverses the stereotypically subservient and impotent image of the Jewish male. Woody, too, compensates for his submissive position by imposing his will over the indigenous women of foreign countries, though he seems to have no qualms about playing the role of the White American. On the other hand, Woody maintains his connection to his Judaism, and to his Jewish father, by engaging in physical acts.

An implicit theme in both works is that of the Jews as a people without a home. Roth seems to propose that, for modern Jews residing in a place that is not their own, there is no happy medium between cultural inauthenticity and marked Otherness. Though Bellow does not disparage secularized Judaism, his protagonists’ connection to Judaism as a set of beliefs that would condone taking advantage of others, is problematic. Nevertheless, both authors also raise positive aspects of the Jews as a Diasporic people. Through Neil, Roth highlights the Jews’ ability to co-exist with others and to identify with outsiders. In Woody, Bellow underscores the Jews’ aptitude for survival, even in the face of proselytizing Christians, wacky fathers, or worse.

NOTES

¹ Since “A Silver Dish” is perhaps the least controversial of Bellow’s works in terms of its discussion of race, there is little scholarship on this particular subject. For discussions of Bellow’s treatment of race in “Looking for Mr. Green” (1971), *Henderson the Rain King* (1959), *Mr. Sammler’s Planet* (1970), *To Jerusalem and Back* (1976), see Ethan Goffman, *Imagining Each Other: Blacks and Jews in Contemporary American Literature*.

² Significantly, Neil falsely categorizes these Pacific Islander women as Black. One possible explanation for this mistake is that it is merely a result of his identification with the Black library patron. Alternatively, this may indicate that Neil regards all people of color as being the same color—Black. The later interpretation is particularly intriguing when we recall Neil’s self-description as “dark.”

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MARÍA LUISA BOMBAL: EL MUNDO ALUCINADO COMO MEDIO DE SUPERVIVENCIA

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*Lo misterioso para mí es mundo en el
que me es grato entrar, aunque sólo sea
con el pensamiento y la imaginación.*

~María Luisa Bombal

La crítica feminista a partir de la década del 70 se ha debatido largamente sobre la filiación del gótico con el género femenino, puesto que desde sus principios se ha asociado este tipo de literatura con un público lector compuesto mayoritariamente de mujeres. Tampoco es accidental, como señala David Punter, que los autores más reconocidos del gótico de los últimos dos siglos—Radcliffe, Shelley, Dinesen, Carter—hayan sido mujeres (*Literature of Terror* 411). Esta silenciosa alianza también podría entenderse como una mutua identificación entre dos sectores subestimados: el gótico como estética y la escritura/el público lector femenino. En palabras de Jacqueline Howard, la preferencia de esta estética por las escritoras mujeres se plantea como una opción comprensible para aquel que escribe desde la otredad y desea hacerlo en un tipo de discurso fuera del alcance de la ley paterna, en este caso extensible al canon y a la academia (54).

En este sentido, el interés de este estudio es el de debatir el gótico desde las cuestiones del género. Se verá, entonces, cómo desde un mundo espectral y alucinado, María Luisa Bombal narra en su novela *La última niebla* (1934) la historia de una mujer que huye de la represión buscando la concreción no sólo sexual sino también social que reclama la mujer moderna. En torno a la comunicación de estas ansiedades, esta autora se sirve de recursos del gótico—los espacios lúgubres y claustrofóbicos, las presencias y persecuciones fantasmagóricas—entre otros elementos que analizaré y discutiré en el presente trabajo.

El Chile de la década del treinta provee en un contexto socio-económico e histórico todavía dirimiéndose entre la adaptación a la modernidad y la resistencia de antiguas tradiciones. En el país trasandino, así como en Argentina y Uruguay, también las primeras décadas del siglo XX marcaron un momento de transición y de grandes cambios. Han transcurrido treinta años desde el comienzo de un nuevo centenio; sin embargo, la industrialización, como explican los sociólogos Armand y Michelle

Mattelart,¹ “no ha sido un fenómeno total en la medida en que su intensidad, demasiado débil, no ha logrado las bases de un proletariado obrero, como el que ha producido la revolución industrial europea” (20).

La industrialización no ha podido completarse debido a que los grupos dominantes, tanto política como económicamente, han aceptado sus efectos económicos, pero se han negado a que ella transforme toda la estructura social debido a los efectos sociales que esto podría traer aparejado; por ejemplo, la posible pérdida de privilegios de los que gozan las clases dominantes. Como aclaran más adelante estos estudiosos del tema:

La adaptación a la modernidad se ha realizado por consiguiente dentro de una circunstancia bien particular y ha dado origen al “tradicionalismo urbano contemporáneo”. El “tradicionalista urbano” actúa de manera aparentemente moderna—es decir, participando de los símbolos y consumos de la modernidad—, pero intenta preservar ciertos valores éticos y algunas concepciones relativas a la naturaleza de la desigualdad social. (21)

Sobre todo la alta burguesía, tan aferrada desde siempre a las tradiciones, motivo que le permite un doble privilegio: el de seguir siendo parte de las esferas del poder sin ceder lugar a la demanda de las clases trabajadoras emergentes y el de asegurarle a su descendencia el mismo lugar dentro de la escala social.

María Luisa Bombal nace en el seno de una familia de la alta burguesía chilena de Viña del Mar, por ese entonces un exclusivísimo centro turístico en la costa del Pacífico. Debido a la muerte de su padre cuando ella tenía doce años, deja este lugar y se establece en París, ciudad donde permanecerá por nueve años. Allí concurre a clases y adopta el francés como segunda lengua, demostrando una inclinación desde joven por las letras. Posteriormente ingresa a La Sorbonne donde se gradúa de la carrera de literatura francesa. De sus lecturas e influencias por aquel entonces, Lucía Guerra-Cunningham resalta las siguientes:

Durante los años de su adolescencia, leía con frecuencia *Victoria* de Knut Hamsun y las novelas de la escritora sueca Selma Lagerlöf. En estos autores nórdicos, la joven admiraba la penetración de los conflictos sociológicos y la creación de una atmósfera de irrealidad, dos aspectos que posteriormente elaborará en sus obras. (12)

Esta influencia determinará significativamente la afinidad de Bombal con un conjunto de posiciones éticas y filosóficas, sobre todo las de las vanguardias, de auge precisamente en ese momento. Comprender las vanguardias y los motivos de su surgimiento, por ende, son dos puntos clave para entender la obra literaria de la escritora chilena.

El vanguardismo representa una profunda cesura en la trayectoria del arte. Se opone principalmente al sistema positivista ya en crisis, que había definido al hombre como un ser racional en busca de un progreso ilimitado. Surge entonces el existencialismo, cuyos representantes comienzan a plantearse la solitaria y angustiosa existencia del ser. Martin Heidegger, uno de los principales pensadores de esta vertiente, define esta

soledad ontológica como “el estado de yecto”, lo cual según Cunningham “modifica sustancialmente las formas y contenidos de la literatura del siglo XX”. Dentro de esta nueva tendencia, apunta esta crítica: “El ambiente social ampliamente descrito por la novela realista o naturalista, por ejemplo, pierde toda importancia para dar paso a la dimensión interior de un personaje que se debate consigo mismo” (16).

Bajo esta influencia y este ambiente nace la Bombal escritora. De vuelta a Chile, hacia 1931, se encuentra con un ambiente literario similar, puesto que los conceptos y postulados vanguardistas ya habían encontrado eco en Latinoamérica. Muy pronto, además, viajaría a la Argentina, se radicaría en Buenos Aires y escribiría la novela en discusión. En esta ciudad comparte horas de escritura, lectura y crítica con su compatriota Pablo Neruda. Más tarde, entraría en contacto con el grupo de literatos en torno a *Sur*, dirigida por Victoria Ocampo. Además de las tendencias de vanguardia, esta conocida revista también centraba su foco de atención y análisis en la mujer y su rol en la sociedad. Esta ideología, al parecer de Cunningham: “[R]esulta importante en la comprensión de aquellas obras escritas por María Luisa Bombal durante su estadía en Argentina pues *La última niebla* (1934), *La amortajada* (1938) y ‘El árbol’ (1939) presentan una visión de la mujer que coincide con las ideas predominantes en dicho ambiente y época” (20). Las ideas vendrían de la lectura y la revolución social-sexual que provoca “A Room of One’s One” (1928) de Virginia Woolf, que fuera traducida al español por Ocampo y publicada en *Sur*, con el título de “Un cuarto propio”.

En *La última niebla*, confluyen temáticas respecto a la sexualidad de la mujer abordadas desde una óptica femenina que marcada por las tendencias de vanguardia, renueva el estilo literario utilizando la técnica de *fluir de conciencia*. La protagonista anónima de esta novela es una mujer burguesa, como Bombal y como la mayoría de las protagonistas por excelencia de las historias góticas, que vive atrapada en el tedio de un matrimonio en el que no hay amor de pareja. Esta insatisfacción lleva a esta mujer a buscar la felicidad en otros lugares y con otro hombre. Pero quien la seduce y la lleva a la plenitud sexual es un amante imaginario que ella misma ha creado. De esta manera, Bombal explora, a través de este personaje y de una novela de tipo psicológica con matices góticos, las frustraciones amorosas y personales de mujeres de una clase acomodada, quienes encuentran la satisfacción erótica y emocional en el espacio de la soledad, fuera del alcance o la mirada masculina.

Esto último remarca la situación de las mujeres casadas y de cierto status social en el Chile de aquella época y que se hace extensivo a las demás sociedades conosureñas. Las mujeres debían seguir una serie de preceptos para ser consideradas respetables y mantener sus deseos reprimidos dentro de los límites de su hogar, o bien, crearse una fantasía como la mujer de esta novela, en un espacio al que el hombre no tiene acceso: sus propios pensamientos. Allí, es libre de hacer lo que quiera y entonces puede encontrar

lo que le hace falta para sentirse plena y feliz en la vida real. Ante la inflexibilidad del sistema patriarcal en torno a su sexualidad y la de las mujeres en general, este personaje encuentra un intersticio para satisfacer sus deseos carnales/amorosos, aunque sólo sea posible dentro de su imaginación. En este punto, la autora marca una inversión feminista al servirse de un tópico del gótico—la representación de un deseo ya sea a través de un vampiro/a o de un fantasma—pero trastocando el orden al postular a la mujer como sujeto y al hombre como su objeto de deseo y motivo principal de sus fantasías.² Esta inversión es destacable y tan transgresora como el propio género con el que se afilia: el gótico.

Como se ha sugerido con anterioridad, tradicionalmente la mujer ha sido relegada al espacio privado. No quiero sólo significar el espacio interno del hogar, sino todo lo que conlleva: la pasividad, la desinformación, la represión. Desde el punto de vista de la geógrafa Nancy Duncan: “It is clear that the public-private distinction is gendered. This binary opposition is employed to legitimate oppression and dependence on the basis of gender; it has also been used to regulate sexuality” (128). Dentro de estas regulaciones se encuentran, por ejemplo, la negación al conocimiento de su cuerpo y de sus placeres, a su sexualidad, al erotismo y al goce. Esta clase de sociedad condena a aquellas mujeres que pretenden una vida sexual plena y les destina un lugar seguro dentro de los límites del matrimonio, base sobre la que se asientan los valores sociales que se quieren continuar y reproducir de generación en generación. Con el control de las mujeres se asegura el de la familia, institución fundamental de una sociedad de tipo capitalista y patriarcal.

Desde un principio y como lo señala Elizabeth Garrels, esta novela plantea un ambiente y un clima claramente góticos: “En un comienzo digno del género gótico, con el cual tiene mucho que ver nuestro texto, *La última niebla* abre con la llegada de una recién casada a una ‘vieja casa de campo’ que antes fue habitada por una primera esposa, ahora muerta” (84). Una esposa muerta que, a la manera de las mujeres enfermizas de los textos de Edgar Allan Poe, responde al tópico de la “bella enferma”, mujer joven que parece predestinada a morir sin motivo o explicación. La narradora se refiere a ella al relatar su llegada a la casona en ruinas mientras piensa que su marido habría hecho ese mismo recorrido sólo un año antes junto a la otra: “[A]quella muchacha huraña y flaca a quien adoraba, y que debiera morir tan inesperadamente tres meses después” (*La última niebla* 9). La protagonista-narradora es contundente en su afirmación (“debiera morir”) acercándose en este sentido al narrador masculino de novelas conosureñas con matices góticos publicadas sólo unas décadas atrás.³ Este tipo de narrador recurriría a este tópico, entre otras razones, para desplazar a la mujer, quien queda rendida y sin vida, restituyéndole así el poder al hombre. Otra lectura posible podría ser la paródica. Bombal estaría recurriendo muy inteligentemente a un estereotipo del género para remarcar su desgaste y su carácter de cliché no exclusivo ya para un narrador/autor masculino.

Las primeras líneas de la novela son determinantes para la construcción del resto de la historia, así como para entender las frustraciones de ambos, la protagonista y su esposo Daniel, y la creación de un mundo alucinado como medio de supervivencia. Ambos acuden a una figura fantasmal para remediar un presente que repudian. Daniel insiste en la necesidad de que su nueva esposa imite en todo a la primera, a la tan perfecta que muriera injustamente. Así, propone a la protagonista una competencia desleal entre ella y el fantasma del recuerdo: inalcanzable, idealizado.

En este punto la protagonista sin nombre de la novela de Bombal se acerca bastante al personaje de la segunda esposa (curiosamente también sin nombre) de Mr. De Winter en *Rebecca* (1940), el clásico film de Alfred Hitchcock, cercano temporalmente a la obra de la escritora chilena. Sin embargo, en la película será el ama de llaves la que pondrá a la segunda esposa a competir con el fantasma de la primera, aunque finalmente triunfará el verdadero amor de los nuevos esposos y el espectro finalmente desaparecerá. En *La última niebla*, en tanto, el rol de los fantasmas es distinto, puesto que cubren los espacios vacíos que deja el frío vínculo que mantiene la pareja. Así sucede, por ejemplo, con el fantasma que crea la mujer, especie de amante imaginario, quien le proporcionará todo aquello que su esposo le niegue. A diferencia de las ficciones góticas clásicas, donde el fantasma es un ser rechazado y temido, en el gótico de Bombal éste se vuelve necesario en la vida de los esposos, y así se legitima su presencia.

Desde el comienzo, entonces, asistimos al anuncio de un matrimonio que se presenta fracasado. El lugar donde conviven los recién casados también suscita el ingreso a un espacio completamente decadente, lúgubre, en ruinas, tal como pronto lo será el fallido enlace. El deterioro físico de la vieja casona materializa este hecho y lo hace aún más tangible al lector, quien siguiendo pautas familiares a los lectores de la ficción gótica, se prepara para ser testigo de la gran caída. La protagonista de *La última niebla* ya no es aquella doncella del gótico clásico que huye despavorida entre los laberínticos pasillos de un viejo castillo medieval ante la amenaza de una violación, un secuestro o una muerte violenta. Si huye, en cambio, hacia el exterior y se introduce en un bosque nebuloso, entre real y soñado, que le propone una aventura, una promesa de libertad.

El lugar físico de la fuga puede ser distinto, pero el motivo es el mismo: no caer en el encierro, desafiar la claustrofobia típica de la ficción gótica que en esta novela viene acompañada del símbolo de la niebla que en un principio rodea la casa; luego, comienza a azotarla cada vez más de cerca, hasta sentir que se mete por las ventanas y que comunica el interior con el exterior:

A medianoche me despierto, sofocada [...]. Me ahogo. Respiro con la sensación de que me falta siempre un poco de aire para cada soplo. Salto del lecho, abro la ventana. Me inclino hacia afuera y es como si no cambiara de atmósfera. La neblina, esfumando los ángulos, tamizando los ruidos, ha comunicado a la ciudad la tibia intimidad de un cuarto cerrado. (18)

En otras palabras, lo que comienza siendo un determinante exterior del clima asfixiante de los alrededores, que además provoca una sensación de aislamiento de la casona, de repente se constituye en un elemento que se cuelga en el interior, propiciando el ahogo del personaje femenino que ya no puede resistirse a huir.

Sin embargo, este instinto escapista de la mujer no la liberará finalmente del control masculino. Éste la seguirá de cerca con su constante “mirada fálica”, como señala Garrels, y que, en mi opinión, terminará por devolverla al orden con su intento de suicidio interrumpido a manos de Daniel hacia el final de la novela. Según expresa Garrels:

En ningún momento la protagonista se libera del dominio de la mirada fálica [...]. (Su casamiento es un caso clásico de endogamia oligárquica: son primos; han crecido juntos), ella buscará someterse a la mirada de un hombre a quien define como el ‘desconocido’. El episodio central de la ficción romántica que la misma protagonista se construye en un entramado escapista de sueños y ensueños es el polo opuesto al matrimonio: en la fantasía sexual del coito anónimo—sin nombres, sin obligaciones, sin consecuencias. (85)

La salida que busca la protagonista, por ende, es la menos riesgosa. Su *affaire* no sucede en los márgenes de lo considerado real, de lo condenable. Por tanto, no puede ser tomado como un verdadero engaño hacia la institución matrimonial. Con esta noche ensoñada en medio del ahogo de la niebla y un marido ausente, ella construye una realidad paralela que la conforta, y así recuerda: “Yo tuve una hermosa aventura, una vez... Tan sólo con un recuerdo se puede soportar una larga vida de tedio. Y hasta repetir, día a día, sin cansancio, los mezquinos gestos cotidianos” (23).

Una vez construida la alucinación, la narradora comienza a vivir su plenitud, como señala Óscar López Castaño:

Al aceptar por verdadero lo que es pura representación, logra evadir el tiempo presente, el de la cotidianeidad. En adelante los sucesos se detienen, nada corre en el sentido de las manecillas del reloj. La vida de casada se torna tolerable porque la mente permanecerá enajenada a un recuerdo, a un amor intenso, único, sin edad, tanto que lo disfruta puliendo las imágenes con elementos naturales “su carne huele a fruta, a vegetal”. (90)

Alienada de sí misma, vive sumida en esta realidad paralela en la que su amante, como verdadero fantasma, la sigue muy de cerca, hasta hacerle sentir su respiración, su voz: “Ignoro cuáles serán los proyectos de mi amigo, pero estoy segura de que respira muy cerca de mí. La aldea, el parque, los bosques, me parecen llenos de su presencia. Ando por todos lados con la convicción de que él acecha cada uno de mis pasos. [...] Ayer una voz lejana respondió a la mía: ‘¡Amooooor!’” (28).

El fantasma de la primera esposa, por su parte, también se hará presente, pero a diferencia del amante-fantasma, éste será una especie de alucinación compartida entre Daniel y la narradora. Ambos pueden sentir su presencia. Para el hombre ésta es vital, aunque no lo reconoce abiertamente. Para la protagonista, cada aparición es

una nueva señal de su fracaso como esposa, de su ineptitud para transformarse en la muerta, de apoderarse de su espíritu y reencarnarla. De esta manera, mientras comparten los esposos una noche de sexo después de mucho tiempo ignorándose, la protagonista relata:

Mi cuerpo y mis besos no pudieron hacerlo temblar [...]. Como hace años, lo volví a ver tratando furiosamente de acariciar y desear mi carne y encontrando siempre el recuerdo de la muerte entre él y yo. Al abandonarse sobre mi pecho, su mejilla, inconscientemente, buscaba la tersura y los contornos de otro pecho [...]. Oh, nunca, nunca, su primera mujer lo ha poseído más desgarrado, más desesperado por pertenecerle, como esta tarde. Queriendo huirla nuevamente, la ha encontrado, de pronto, casi dentro de sí. (29–30)

En este sentido, la presencia de los fantasmas se vuelve esencial, el elemento que sostiene este matrimonio basado en el desamor. Daniel, a pesar de intentar deshacerse del fantasma del recuerdo, no lo logra, el duelo no termina de elaborarse y es la manera de sentir que su amada no lo ha dejado solo: “Cuando era niño, Daniel no temía a los fantasmas ni a los muebles que crujen en la oscuridad durante la noche. Desde la muerte de su mujer, diríase que tiene siempre miedo de estar solo” (10). Abrazado a su duelo, Daniel sobrevive; aferrada al recuerdo de su encuentro con su amante imaginario, la narradora también sobrevive y el círculo se completa. En consecuencia, ambos se alejan nuevamente de los clásicos personajes góticos, tan temerosos y alertas siempre de una presencia fantasmal. El símbolo del fantasma es invertido por Bombal, quien lo asimila más a los propios deseos y angustias que a un factor externo.

De esta manera y como señalan Andrew Bennet y Nicholas Royle: “Ghosts are paradoxical since they are both fundamental to the human, fundamentally human, and a denial or disturbance of the human, the very being of the inhuman” (citado en “Spectral Criticism” 260). Es decir, los fantasmas se vuelven paradójicamente fundamentales para la vida humana a la vez que sustentan una negación o una alteración a la cualidad del ser humano, puesto que propician, en este caso particular (aunque puede hacerse extensible a otros casos), la situación perfecta para que los esposos se conviertan en seres alienados, abstraídos, incapaces de vivir y sentir fuera de la fantasía del mundo espectral y alucinado. Dolores Castrillo Mirat, retomando las ideas de Freud, desarrolla también esta idea:

El fantasma aún cuando en su presentación más evidente parece fundar negativamente la realidad, Freud nos mostrará que es aquello que soporta la realidad del sujeto e impregna su vida entera. [...] Esta fijeza está asociada a la dimensión fundamental del fantasma y al hecho de que éste le procura al sujeto una significación absoluta. Es decir que tanto lo pasado, como lo presente, como lo futuro, está modulado y modelado por la función del fantasma. (1)

En definitiva, estos no-humanos completan la existencia de la pareja, le dan corporeidad a sus deseos reprimidos, a sus penas, a sus fracasos, y se convierten en el motivo fundamental para continuar soportando una vida que de lo contrario sería aún más monótona, como afirma contundentemente la narradora: “Mi amante es para mí más que un amor, es mi razón de ser, mi ayer, mi hoy, mi mañana” (37).

Sin embargo, pareciera que la existencia de estos fantasmas, al menos la del amante, pueden mantenerse siempre y cuando quede en secreto. En otras palabras, la narradora nunca le revela a Daniel, hasta casi el final de la novela, que ella fantasea con un hombre imaginario. Éste era su secreto y parte de su encanto. El hecho de hacerlo público lo disuelve: queda expuesto a la explicación racional que busca su esposo para que ella se deshaga del espectro. Con esto comienza lo que podríamos denominar la deconstrucción del fantasma por parte del orden real y establecido por el dominio del hombre, ser racional por excelencia, frente a la mujer, la apasionada, fabuladora que crea una apariencia para no sentirse tan sola: “¡Estás loca! Debes haber soñado. Nunca ha sucedido algo semejante... [...] ¿No te hablé? Ya ves, era un fantasma...” (33). En el razonamiento lógico de Daniel se puede apreciar la idea del fantasma como algo irreal, separando claramente los planos de la realidad/irrealidad que la narradora se había encargado de fusionar y hasta confundir. Su fácil resolución ante un hecho sobrenatural contrasta con la lógica de la narradora quien no puede definirse y continúa dudosa.

Más adelante y como parte de la deconstrucción del amante fantasma, Daniel agrega un dato oculto al lector: la noche del supuesto encuentro con el amante, ambos esposos se habían emborrachado: “—Recuerda. Fue una noche de niebla... Cenamos en el gran comedor, a la luz de los candelabros... —¡Sí y bebimos tanto y tan bien que dormimos toda la noche de un tirón!” (33). Este último dato aportado, de gran importancia en la historia, se nos ofrece al final. Se confirma la filiación del texto con la ficción gótica, en la que se esconden indicios relevantes hasta el punto donde son necesarios para resolver la trama con el fin de crear mayor intriga en el lector y la ambigüedad típica del género. Sobre este punto, López Castaño analiza este diálogo revelador a partir del silencio: “Las justificaciones interiores que vive PN⁴ conforman una lucha en que están definiéndose los dos tiempos de su vida. La dialéctica del doble sentir de las emociones la precipita a romper con la que había sido la clave de su apogeo: el silencio” (93).

Decepcionada y despojada de la ilusión de su amante, la narradora, no obstante, se empeña en su último intento de confirmar la existencia del espectro y vuelve a recorrer el lugar de los hechos:

Con la vaga esperanza de haberme equivocado de calle, de casa, continúo errando por una ciudad fantasma. [...] Quisiera seguir buscando, pero ya ha anochecido y no distingo nada. Además, ¿para qué luchar? Era mi destino. La casa, y mi amor, y mi aventura, todo se ha desvanecido en la niebla; algo así como una garra ardiente me toma, de pronto, por la nuca; recuerdo que tengo fiebre. (42)

Sin embargo, la tenue esperanza que la llevara a buscar las pruebas necesarias para confirmar su aventura termina evaporándose junto a su amante-fantasma. La ciudad que recorre ahora, en el presente, es una “ciudad fantasma”; todo lo que la rodea,

incluso su amor, están fundidos con la niebla, ya nada puede distinguirse. El delirio que la fiebre le provoca confirman lo que ella no desea: la inexistencia de su amante.

No obstante y a pesar de esta confirmación que termina por imponer el orden de lo real por encima de lo (en)soñado, la presencia de estos fantasmas remite a una realidad mucho más amplia y que incluso trasciende los límites ficcionales. Al decir de Avery F. Gordon:⁵

The ghost is not simply a dead or a missing person, but a social figure, and investigating it can lead to that dense site where history and subjectivity make social life. The ghost or the apparition is one form by which something lost, or barely visible, or seemingly not there to our supposedly well-trained eyes, makes itself known or apparent to us, in its own way. (8)

Aplicado a nuestra novela, estas presencias, aunque involuntarias, secretas y a veces vergonzantes, señalan un mundo reprimido que a pesar de los esfuerzos por esconderlos detrás de una fachada de buenas tradiciones, continúa ahí, latente y capaz de manifestarse en cualquier momento, al más mínimo descuido. El hecho de que un deseo tome forma de amante imaginario o que el dolor por una pérdida se filtre en la piel de una nueva pareja, son pruebas de ello. El fantasma de esta narradora sin nombre (lo cual le da un tono de universalidad) es el de muchas otras mujeres y, por qué no, hombres, acorralados por una vida que se supone correcta pero que no puede dominar totalmente las pasiones humanas. Después de todo, podemos preguntarnos junto con Jacques Derrida al hablar sobre los espectros de Marx: “What is a specter? What is its history and what is its time?” (125).⁶

A pesar de que la narradora haya sido arrastrada de vuelta por su marido hacia la realidad de la que reniega, la sola existencia de ese fantasma, y hasta su creación le han dado la posibilidad de conocer un mundo distinto. La protagonista ya no será la misma después de esta ingenua aventura. El orden de su pequeño mundo burgués ha sido alterado y reconoce su mandato social de fiel esposa; sin embargo, su ironía final confirman su nueva madurez: “Lo sigo para llevar a cabo una infinidad de pequeños menesteres; para cumplir con una infinidad de frivolidades amenas; para llorar por costumbre y sonreír por deber. Lo sigo para vivir correctamente, para morir correctamente, algún día” (44). La protagonista-narradora de *La última niebla* retorna a su mundo anterior pero no reniega de sus sueños y pasiones. Será la esposa ideal en la esfera real pero podrá ser la amante apasionada de su imaginación. Ha aprendido que ni su marido ni la sociedad machista que la rodea están preparados para reconocer sus deseos, sus fantasmas. Sin embargo, sí puede hacerlo siempre y cuando sostenga el silencio, convirtiéndose así en la guardiana de un nuevo sueño, de un nuevo fantasma.

NOTAS

¹ Estos dos sociólogos realizan un interesante estudio exploratorio acerca de la situación e imagen de la mujer en Chile.

² La inversión feminista postulada por Bombal también es notable en la poesía de la uruguaya Delmira Agustini, quien se adelantaría también a su época invirtiendo este tópico considerado tabú en favor de la mujer.

³ Los ejemplos que pueden surgir en este caso son las novelas del escritor argentino Atilio Chiáppori (*Borderland* [1907] y *La eterna angustia* [1908]) y del uruguayo Horacio Quiroga (*El hombre artificial* [1910]).

⁴ El autor del artículo propone la denominación de PN (Prima-narradora) para referirse a la protagonista de la novela.

⁵ Este estudio se dedica precisamente a analizar los fantasmas que subyacen en el imaginario colectivo y que se asocian con historias del pasado que se retoman en el presente. El centro del análisis del libro se basa en el tema de la esclavitud en los Estados Unidos y los desaparecidos de la última dictadura argentina.

⁶ Jacques Derrida retoma constantemente estas preguntas en su libro *Specters of Marx* y se relacionan con la esencia del espectro, el cual indicia una visibilidad, que paradójicamente no es visible.

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FIVE THESES ON REGIONALISM AND TWO THEORIES ON REGIONAL TRANSFORMATION

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It is perhaps no coincidence that three of the most important books in the history of globalization theory, Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980), Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1991), and Hardt and Negri's *Empire* (2000), chart the decline of the dominance of the static, unitary nation-state; this has long been an axiom of globalization studies. Perhaps more surprising is their shared assertion that, as the nation-state wanes, the significance of the region increases, either as the site from which global force-lines proceed or as a potential site of resistance to those same forces. This paradigm shift has extended to literary studies as well. Robert Jackson, in *Seeking the Region in American Literature and Culture* (2005), has alluded to the "increasingly dissatisfying and problematic" results of nationalizing perspectives on literature, suggesting that regionalism is a more appropriate framework for addressing some of the same issues (25). No less could be said of David Jordan's claim, in his introduction to *Regionalism Reconsidered* (1994), that regionalism offers a "counter-voice" to the "cries of alienation and despair" that accompany widespread capitalist development, or Francesco Loriggio's denotation, in the same volume, of the assessment of literary regionalism as "a major project of our *fin-de-siècle*" (xv; 3). Given this resurgence of the region, the lack of a theoretical consensus toward addressing regionalism in literature and the dearth of simple definitions of the same is, frankly, stunning; there seems to be no clear, cohesive agreement on the nature, origins, or even continued existence of regionalism as an entity, and even its ontological status is uncertain (Is it a theme? A genre? Or something less quantifiable?). To this end, it seems appropriate to advance several foundational ideas on the history and nature of the concept. These theses are not intended to be either proscriptive or iconoclastic, but rather to open the possibility of further coherent studies of the region and its characteristics.¹

REGIONALISM IN ITS SIMPLEST SENSE IS A FETISHIZATION OF A LOCALE

Fetishization, in this sense, largely means the attribution of manifold characteristics to a region that do not strictly fall within the realms of physicality, politics, culture, demographics, etc., ephemeral and intangible values that add "hidden" significance to

the land. The nature of this hidden significance is fundamentally unstable. Louis D. Rubin, for example, has written that the characters of *Ulysses* need not be merely *in* Dublin, but *of* Dublin, a process that he describes as “like building a bridge, or creating a platform that will reach out from a recognizable substantial place into what until then has been empty air” (19). Joyce’s locale is undeniably real, yet it is comprised of more than its streets, buildings, and bridges; it bears some indelible and intangible stamp that makes it, in Rubin’s phrase, “not only geography and history,” but “a way of looking at the world” (17).

Rubin’s wording, insofar as it suggests that regionalism is *not only* a mundane set of criteria, but *something* else in addition, is a common rhetorical move among regionalist critics. In the same volume of essays, George Core suggests that “place is not *mere* setting in the sense of a static background but an essential constituent in what Andrew Lytle deems enveloping action” (11; emphasis mine). Similarly, George Garrett finds in the writing of Southern regionalists in particular “something else to offer,” something “beyond the ritual celebration of the flora and fauna” (45). It is this “something else,” with all of its nebulous baggage, that many mid-twentieth century critics were likely attempting to access when they attributed human agency to geographical locations in works such as *Ulysses*, marking Dublin as a character in Joyce’s narrative. Leigh Anne Duck has linked the critical tendency to fetishize place with the accompanying tendency to anthropomorphize place, stating that “those who want to speak of place as a character” are likely wanting to prove that “place is not merely a matter of ‘background’ or ‘setting’—that it is in some sense an active presence in a literary work” (qtd. in Romine, “Southern Literature” 48).

Duck’s commentary on the “character” of place intersects strongly with the vanguard of regionalist criticism, in which it is easy to detect a bifurcation of regionalist typologies: a purely “descriptive” mode of addressing the region opposed to a “symbolic,” or fetishized, methodology; though it is difficult to pinpoint the tenor of this symbolism, it is clear that it offers *something* that “mere” description lacks. Likewise, Peter Nicholls has distinguished, in *Locations of Literary Modernism*, between Pound’s conception of representations of the world as “something static, which might be felt to ‘contain’ and perhaps immobilise the mind” and those that signify “something ‘beyond themselves’” (163). In theory and criticism, this division has often been framed as the opposition between place and “space,” place and “background,” place and “setting,” or place and any number of other bland, unvarnished nouns. Frederick Hoffman writes: “[I]t is only when scene is identified with place that the full powers of the literary imagination are challenged and used” (qtd. in Core 4).² “Place” here is space with value added, or rather, space represented in such a way to inspire “imagination.”³

However, though the region may absorb intangible valences, for the most part it grants them only a local habitation, not a name; the region is not the abode of spirits,

at least not visible ones. William Cronon has suggested, in Wordsworth's wilderness poems, themes "akin" to those of "the Old Testament prophets as they conversed with their wrathful God" (74); this I do not argue, but I would like to underscore Cronon's qualifying "akin" by suggesting that, even if the Romantics and later poets found these themes, they were similar, not equivalent, to the tangible manifestations of divinity in holy doctrine. Thus, I arrive at the basic definition of regionalism on which the remainder of these theses will depend: that which *sanctifies without naming*.

REGIONALISM HAS ITS ROOTS IN POST-ENLIGHTENMENT RECONCEPTIONS
OF THE LOCATION OF SPIRITUAL FORCES

I should remark here that this claim might appear overly contentious to both critics of Enlightenment thought and those who study regionalism as a genre, which by consensus seems to have arisen at a distinct period in the nineteenth century, in the writings of Sarah Orne Jewett, Twain, Stowe, Chesnut, and others.⁴ Yet these writers are by no means the first to deploy the locale in the manners that I have outlined above; nor are they even the first to compose literature that deals with specific, bounded regions in detail. Leo Marx, for instance, has traced the "pastoral strain" in American literature back to Virgil's *Eclagues* owing to its "symbolic landscape, a delicate blend of myth and reality" that proved relevant to the "American experience" (19). Even so, Marx acknowledges that a "fully articulated" pastoral idea did not arise in the United States until the end of the eighteenth century.⁵ This is attributable, Marx claims, in large part to "the great revolution in science and technology we associate with Sir Isaac Newton," which in turn led to "a massive shift in prevailing ideas about man's relations to nature" (74). Later critics would pinpoint the Enlightenment as the era in which, as Greg Garrard theorizes, ideas of "the organic universe," and the planet's role as "nurturing mother" to the human race were abandoned in favor of "a universe reducible to an assemblage of parts" (61–62). Indeed, the opposition between broad scientific and fetishized local systems of knowledge is a remarkably persistent idea, one that steadfastly refuses to vanish from critical discourse. Scott Romine finds in the rhetoric of the Southern Agrarians the notion that "scientific representation of the South amounted to, in effect, an apostasy against their theory of mythic emergence," while the editors of *Caribbean Literature and the Environment* lament that "the systemization of natural history" during the eighteenth century "contributed to the erasure of indigenous knowledges" (29–30; DeLoughray, et al. 7). Mankind gained natural science during the Enlightenment, but lost something else, these authors imply: something intangible, perhaps only accessible through poetry and other humanistic arts.

Thus, with the advent of the idea of nature as an immense, interconnected system, able to be quantified, observed, and altered according to static rules, the door to a symbolic conception of the region was opened. The land *itself* now had "moral,"

“metaphorical,” or even “spiritual” significance, but these effects were not conveyed to it by a higher power, or by visible spirits. These significances appear in Marx’s account of the “poetic metaphors” of the New World, “imaginative constructions which heighten meaning far beyond the limits of fact,” as well as David Jordan’s description of United States regions during the nineteenth century as “symbolic ground upon which forces of conquest were rationalized” (43; *New World* 5). Thus, the rise of science encouraged the birth of the region as it would persist in literature: not as evidential of divine forces or the uncertain home of supernatural entities, but as a locus for the play of symbolic properties.

Yet, regionalism did not simply arise as a reactionary counterpoint to new scientific discourses. The Enlightenment provided not only an ideal of demystification against which regionalism could argue, but an ideological germ for conceptions of fundamentally mystical relationships between individuals and the land. I am thinking in particular of Montesquieu’s *The Spirit of the Laws* (1748), specifically books 17 and 18, in which the author studies the relationship between climate and government and agriculture and government, respectively. Montesquieu’s analysis takes as given the fact that “political servitude does not less depend on the nature of the climate than that which is civil and domestic,” as well as the notion that the fertility of the soil naturally encourages “subjection and dependence.” Though such musings do reflect, as Francesco Loriggio terms it, a “rigid positivist determinism,” in which individual action and effort is determined by the conditions under which the subject lives, they can also indicate “a more loose and more complex interactive symbiosis between individual and ecosystem” (14). In other words, though Enlightenment climatological discourse outlined a perhaps unsatisfactory one-to-one correspondence between natural causes and political effects, the concept that the land acted in manifold and oftentimes mysterious ways upon the ideals of its people in an unquantifiable manner proved remarkably persistent. Thus, the first regionalist texts dealt either with the myriad (and oftentimes nebulous) ways in which the region “cultivated” its inhabitants or how it transformed, again in ways that were not always easily definable, its immigrants, visitors, and tourists.

REGIONALISM NEED NOT BE
CONFINED TO RURAL LOCALES

Of the critical axioms regarding regionalism I have cited thus far, the most persistent are the assertions that regionalism’s proper bailiwick is the rural locale, and, as such, the movement primarily concerns itself with, as Cleanth Brooks writes, “the minority culture of the province” combating “the dominant rootless civilization” (35). Such an argument rests primarily on the historical aspects of regionalism, arising as it did against the backdrop of large social and technological developments. David Jordan,

for example, follows long-standing theses of literary modernism when he notes the “divisive force” of Great War technologies that “alienat[ed] individuals and communities from the land they inhabited,” and the contrastingly beneficent forces of regionalism that offered “an antidote to the prevailing mood of alienation and despair” (*Regionalism* xi). The implication, in these theories, is that overwhelming modernization eradicates rural areas, or, more to the point, the regionalist values associated with those areas, and naturalistic regionalism itself must be mobilized to counter it.

Yet, it is not immediately clear why the region, if it need not necessarily be confined to a given setting, must absolutely conform to a given *theme*. Moreover, though I have noted already that regionalism involves a fetishization of locales and, more specifically, a mediation between the values of urban and rural locales, it would be impossible to regard any of the values in question as emanating from any source beyond that of the regional subject. When authors write of values that are “inherent” to the landscape, it should be clear to the attentive reader that said values are anything but; rather, they arise only through the medium of the author, and even then, usually, only through long (and deeply subjective) contemplation. The same landscape that is vivid and evocative in one account may become hostile and abstract in another. The attribution of regenerative values to a particular landscape must be simply another fetishization of that landscape, with the ostensibly “intrinsic” origins of those values being merely an intensification of, rather than an exception to, this axiom; nature, and the regenerative valences attributed thereof, is simply what its observers make of it. Such, at least, was William Cronon’s central contention in *Uncommon Ground*, which caused considerable unrest in ecocritical circles upon its publication in 1995, owing to its suggestion that, *contra* the long-standing environmentalist assumption that nature is “an uncontested and transcendent category whose appeal is so compelling that no right-thinking person could resist it,” we might better conceive of it as “a human idea, with a long and complicated cultural history which has led different human beings to conceive of the natural world in very different ways” (20). Yet, perhaps all that the dissonance between Cronon’s repeated claims that nature is “profoundly a human creation” and, for example, Helen Tiffin’s insistence that “the ontological existence of nature-in-itself is an indisputable fact” shows is that it is impossible to take any claims of overarching values attributed to nature for granted, even the seemingly unimpeachable axiom that “nature” as a category does not depend on these claims (69; 199). The ostensibly curative aspects of the region are no exception.

REGIONALISM IS A STYLE, NOT A THEME

This thesis should follow naturally from the principles I have thus far established—the lack of a governing theme or set of themes for regionalism, the relativism of the locale, and the subjectivity of its modes of expression. Yet, the term

“regionalism” is almost universally acknowledged to denote thematic, not stylistic, creating the ideal of a work of literature that is concerned with or “tied to” the region rather than dealing with a variable subject in a regional *manner*. By a “regional manner,” I want simply to suggest that regionalism as an entity is less topical than methodological, the “certain way” of reading and relating of Antonio Benitez-Rojo’s *The Repeating Island* (1992), for example. Benitez-Rojo defines Caribbean cultural production as founded on “performance,” or “the execution of a ritual” in which the “certain way” in which actions are performed is more important than the thematic focus of those actions (11). I wish to make something of the same argument with regard to the necessity of a regionalist style in general. As I have already suggested, thematic and locational criteria for defining the region are fundamentally inadequate, and to avoid abandoning the term to circular discursivity, we must uncover aspects of regionalism that do not depend entirely on subjective judgments.

Castig regionalism as primarily a style has some critical precedent.⁶ Scott Romine, for example, has implicitly made something of the same argument in his suggestion that “‘sense of place’ often seems to imply being located not merely in a distinctive region, but in a distinctive way” (“Southern Literature” 23).⁷ Romine’s conception of regionalist styles largely derives from reactionary, postnational assertions of enduring regional identity that attempt to create “a condition of pure textuality impervious to material, ideological, or even cultural content,” such as the popularity of grits among upper-middle class consumers (37).⁸ In the same camp are Amy J. Elias’s comments on “Southern living,” the “stylization” of which she believes “substitutes for heritage as an index of southern identity,” linking southerners to the South not by “family history,” “residence,” or “employment,” but by participation in a Southern “lifestyle” (257). Though both Romine’s and Elias’s ideas are deeply rooted in the specificities of the era of globalization, inasmuch as they deal with stylistic regionalism as a response to the dissolution of regional specificity that endures such vicissitudes as the increased relativity and subjectivity of globalized regions, their ideas have broader applications to literary regionalism in general. If we are to forge a meaning of the term “regionalist” that relies neither on exclusivist thematic or material guidelines, nor fundamentally vague interpretive strategies that are construed as communal, we must turn to the realm of stylistics.

REGIONALISM IS NOT OPPOSED TO NATIONALISM OR GLOBALISM

My final thesis is at odds with much extant regionalist criticism; even the most basic configurations of regionalism as a genre *or* as a style usually take *a priori* the notion that the region, whatever it might encompass, is not contiguous with the nation.

Duck notes that “even studies focused on regional transformation” have traditionally positioned the United States South “in a different framework from national or global change, elucidating a specifically southern version of the tension between modernity and traditionalism” (9). The nation and the region, Duck suggests, require different interpretive schemata owing to their irreconcilable differences. Duck is not alone in this assertion. Barbara Ladd also attributes considerable importance to the origins of the word “regionalism” as a “response to the centralizing discourse of state-sponsored nationalism,” while Richard Gray has commented that the term is largely a measure of the extent of any given “deviation from the national norm” (51; xiv). Others have cast the national/regional divide in the South particularly somewhat more unkindly, usually suggesting, with C. Vann Woodward, that “nationalism sweeps everything else before it,” leaving those with regional attentions “oppressed” by their own “unimportance” (63).

However, though Duck acknowledges the old dichotomy between the “backward South” and the “enlightened nation,” she also notes that this model does not hold up under scrutiny, failing to “incorporate a conceptual structure for assessing an ongoing conflict between prominent cultural and political models of national affiliation” (3). The final term—affiliation—is key to Duck’s argument, and though she somewhat uneasily acknowledges that such an approach might serve to “idealize regional cultures,” she contends that ideological constructions of the region/nation distinction must necessarily rely upon “the idea that the nation-state and its regions mobilize fundamentally different and temporally coded forms of affiliation” (4–5). Though these differing “modes” need not necessarily be harmonious, they also need not be oppositional. The most profitable means of regarding the relationship between nation and region, then, may be one of symbiosis: while the region relies on the nation to govern general, coded means of affiliation, as well as, I may venture to say, overarching moral and ideological systems (such as democracy), the nation relies on the region to embody *uncoded* patterns of affiliations against (or through) which it may define itself.

The relationship between regionalism and globalization, at first glance, seems no less adversarial than that of regionalism and nationalism. Scott Romine, for instance, in *The Real South* (2008), has noted in the titular region a “recursive retreat to the local” in order to combat “the homogenizing pressures of a global economy” (1). At first glance, it is indeed difficult to avoid regarding such abominations as mainstream country radio, NASCAR, and Larry the Cable Guy as anything other than polemic and somewhat hackneyed stabs at developing reactionary shibboleths to maintain the gap between regional culture and that of the nation as a whole. Yet, Romine’s view is somewhat more optimistic. Though he notes that territorial regionalisms tend to rely on Benjaminian patterns of cultural reproduction insofar as they posit the destruction of intangible regional qualities (such as we have already seen) by pernicious modern

(or global) forces, he finds in those same forces the potential for reinventions of the region. He concludes by stating that regional “essences, central themes, and nationally resonant dramatic roles” do not become obsolete with the advent of new technologies, but rather become the new “materials out of which cultural reproduction proceeds, if in less totalizing ways than in more homogeneously territorial projects of culture” (233). In Romine’s interpretation, as with the discourses between regionalism and nationalism I have cited, as in, to return to an earlier thesis, the intersection of regionalism and modernism (or industrialism), we see ostensibly oppositional forces acting on regionalism in ways that are less destructive than transformative.

Originatory Transformation

Thus, rather than focus on the region’s regressive reactions to forces of globalization that I have noted above, it may be more productive to suggest methods by which it revises itself to incorporate ideological shifts over time, as essentialist and exceptionalist narratives decay and the region realizes that its elaborately constructed fetishizations may not hold. The primary reaction is schizophrenic. The region, threatened with the loss of its center—that is to say, its unique, intangible qualities—frantically searches for other, more fortified, centers to appropriate. In their most simplistic forms, these new centers are more isolated, more specific, and generally more resistant to change than their predecessors. Romine suggests that regional difference is preserved through “multiple efforts to carve out symbolic territorialities of ever-increasing specificity” (*Real South* 230). Although Romine’s point is salient, I might remark that this strategy of vouchsafing regional distinction seems a bit like attempting to escape a sinking steamer by standing on the smokestack; to assert that any extant region is immune from the secularizing forces of science, modernity, or globalization simply by virtue of its innocuousness within the greater spectrum of those forces is quixotic at best. Yet, Romine is not incorrect; his only error is in not extending the aforementioned chain of ever-increasing specificity to the individual. The ultimate result of progressively microcosmic visions of literary regionalism is not a minute region but an indivisible, individuated apprehension of the region. In the originatory mode of transformation, the site of fetishization moves from the region to the author, and the landscape does not produce or exude special significances; rather, they emanate from the author’s unique apprehension of that landscape.

The return of regionalist focus to the author has attained prominence in recent years largely because this approach allows for mediation of, rather than outright opposition to, the forces that are ostensibly destroying the region. Romine has found in Tony Horwitz’s *Confederates in the Attic* (1998) and V. S. Naipaul’s *A Turn in the South* (1989) a certain admiration for “the redneck, the tobacco farmer,

Civil War reenactors, country music singers, and rebel flag warriors” owing to the fact that they “provide access to a foundational culture story” by “filter[ing] out disorganized data as white noise” (62). As Romine’s argument proceeds, it becomes evident that it is the role of the individual—implicitly, the author—to not only filter out this unnecessary data, but also to mine existing traditions for data that is relevant. “Closer inspection,” he suggests in regards to Naipaul, will “ensure the legibility of the old frontiers and their identitarian effects” (82). Thus, the particularist mediation of extraregional encroachments is not a nullifying but a reappropriating force, adapting global elements for use within the region.

Epistemological Transformation

The second mode of regional transformation that I would like to address overlaps with the first inasmuch as it seeks to redefine the criteria used by demystifying forces to assert the dissolution of the region, yet its methodology is quite different. Contrary to originary transformation, epistemological transformation aims to change the way that the region is conceived by using the language and logic of that region’s rivals, namely, the matrix of globalized, decentralizing forces that insist on a lack of regional determinism, with the aim of preserving the region’s continued existence. Within the framework of globalization, this preservation largely becomes equivalent to fungibility; if the region can be quantified, revalued, and “traded” in a manner that preserves its original fetishized mystique, it becomes immune to global forces that seek to commodify (and, implicitly, destroy) that mystique.

Such an approach may be anathema to contemporary ecocritical trends that attempt to actively resist global commodification of the region, but these same efforts are not immune to commodification themselves, only reinforcing the necessity of revaluing the region. Cautionary examples of this process can be found in the writings of such canonical American environmental figures as Emerson and Muir, whose “quasi-religious” sentiments toward the wilderness, Kenneth Olwig has found, eventually “are used to adorn the interpretive sepulcher of many modern national parks” (401). For Olwig, the Parks Service is synechdochal for larger trends of commodification of wilderness spaces insofar as it portions out and demarcates certain areas as fit for consumption by the public at large. Such is at least partially the case, as the Service’s list of criteria for designating national parks asymptotically approaches subjective valuations of natural aesthetics and other ephemeral values, yet eventually insists upon static values for individual areas (“Criteria”). The region, in Parks Service rhetoric, is folded into the “resource,” a term that is never fully defined, yet applies, in part, to any “outstanding site” that illustrates the “characteristics of a landform or biotic area,” whether that area is “still widespread” or “a rare remnant.” Subsequent criteria include the area’s possession of rare plants or animals, endangered

species, and abundant fossil deposits. Though the Parks Service's list of criteria does suggest inherently subjective aesthetic values, including "outstanding scenic qualities" and "spectacular vistas," not to mention more ephemeral criteria for determining "cultural areas" such as "feeling" and "association," it also packages those values for consumption within the framework of the "resource."

Many contemporary critics have begun to regard the region-as-resource more favorably in recent years. Gordon Sayre, for example, while complaining of the Sierra Club's extortion of donations using "aesthetically composed photographs taken at moments of ideal lighting and weather," nonetheless acknowledges that the "aesthetic pleasure" deriving from such tactics is more "broadly appealing" than an ecological claim to "the importance of a tract of wilderness habitat" (103). Likewise, Rick Van Noy has suggested that categorical and cartographic portionings out of natural space stretching back as far as the nineteenth century makes the land "less awesome and sublime" to individual subjects, but, in "shift[ing] the focus of the sublime from the feelings inside the perceiver to an aspect of the landscape itself," such efforts open the possibility of static valuations and eventual preservation of that landscape (183). Thus, we can conclude that epistemological transformation is essentially a process of reinscribing the fetishized, inherently subjective values attached to the region within ostensibly static, objective value systems, systems that can appropriate the rhetoric of globalization.

CONCLUSION

As a coda to these ideas of regional transformation, I might note that both originatory and epistemological transformation rely on inherently individualistic, oftentimes literary, apprehensions of the region, yet in asserting the legibility and endurance of that region in the face of globalizing imperatives, they must necessarily elide such subjective assessments by either elevating the subject to the role of communal myth-maker or rewriting the region itself as a site of communal consumption. Or, put perhaps more kindly, such desubjectification opens possibilities for conceiving of regional literatures comparatively, as interacting with the literatures of other regions. Djelal Kadir has suggested that any narrative that enacts "projective fetishization of landscape and economic desire" can fall into the trap of forbidding "corroborative or disconfirming reference to anything concrete outside itself" (17). To avoid such solipsisms, regionalism must objectify itself, adopting a mode of self-reference that can enact profitable exchanges with other such modes. The methodology of globalized regionalism is, thus, largely a process of normalizing and, ultimately, effacing the particulars of the subjective literary experience.

NOTES

¹ The term “region” itself, like “regionalism,” has a troubled ontological history. The OED traces its origins back to the early fourteenth century, with the earliest usages deriving from “regerere,” or “to rule”—these associations (of the region with the nation) have proven somewhat troublesome for regionalist critics, as I will later show. However, in succeeding years, and especially with the advent of theories of internationalism and globalization, the term “region” has come to mean a more general social or cultural affiliation independent of physical or governmental divides. For the purposes of this study, I adopt “region” as an index of subjective assignation: the region is what results when a physical space of indeterminate quantity (the “area” or “locale”) becomes subject to individual imagination or interpretation. Thus, the region, as I argue in the upcoming section, becomes space with value added.

² Running counter to the latter-day critical return to regionalism is the persistent anachronism of the term “place.” Harry Harootunian, for one, has noted that, even amidst the present-day reemphasis on the power of the region, there is nonetheless an “increasing contemporary turn toward space and the resulting strategies of this move based on the elucidation of spatial categories” (23).

³ Notwithstanding the importance of imaginative spatiality, these categories are not exclusive; it is not essential that a given area be unanimously designated “space” or “place” in the same sense that the immutability and exclusivity of Mircea Eliade’s “sacred” and “profane” spaces act to “obtain a fixed point and hence to acquire orientation in the chaos of homogeneity, to ‘found the world’ and to live in a real sense” in terms of ordered human civilizations (23). Rather, “place” and “space,” being discursively created, act to delineate and texture broad, subjective interpretive zones.

⁴ See Dainotto, *Place in Literature* (27–28).

⁵ See Marx, *The Machine in the Garden* (73). Marx’s comment on a 1787 letter from Thomas Jefferson to an associate are instructive in this regard; Marx states that Jefferson’s belief that a ploughman will give a better answer to a moral question than a professor relies on “a somewhat obscure metaphysical link with ‘nature’” that is similar to the fetishization of place I have already discussed. What is more intriguing, however, is Marx’s observation of how the “unspoiled American landscape” is “peculiarly conducive to the nurture of the ‘moral sense’” (130–31). This suggests that morality stems from the land’s relationship to its inhabitants, not the other way around.

⁶ Here, and elsewhere in this work, I will largely be discussing the US South as my fetishized region *par exemple*, the scope and extent of the South’s repeated insistence upon fetishized generalisms as constitutive parts of its identity make it an ideal subject. Michael Kreyling has noted that “students and critics of southern literature” have been vigorously “schooled” in the belief that their subject “is not invented by our discussions of it but rather is revealed by a constant southern identity” (ix).

⁷ In something of the same vein, Dainotto has made the case for regionalism as a mode of reading rather than a self-contained genre, claiming that regional reading, so to speak, is a strategy for mining existing pastoral works in search of curative values that might counteract the assorted crises of modernity. See Jackson, *Seeking the Region* (6).

⁸ For Romine's meditations on whether these forms of "content" still exist vis-à-vis the South, see his most recent work, *The Real South* (2008). Note that much of Romine's theoretical underpinning is derived from Benedict Anderson's assertion that communities are distinguished less by any objective criteria than by the "style" in which they are imagined.

⁹ Owing to the Parks Service's imperative of consumption and public use of resources, among other reasons, many ecocritics find Aldo Leopold's term "land ethic," in *A Sand County Almanac* (1949), altogether more attractive for establishing standards of valuation for natural landscapes. For more on the clash between radical environmentalism and the Service in particular, see Edward Abbey's *Desert Solitaire* (1968).

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THE AUTHORITY OF EXPERIENCE AND CHOICE: LETTERS OF MEXICAN NUNS TEACH MODERN READERS HOW SPACE INFLUENCES LITERARY CREATION

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Nearly every text consists of layers of meaning; those from the colonial period in particular emphasize the multi-faceted interpretations which can be drawn from a single text. The intended audience, the level of education and social rank of the author, and the genre chosen all influence the meanings communicated through the actual words on the page. Criticism addressing texts such as Hernán Cortés's *Cartas de relación* and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz's *Respuesta a Sor Filotea* emphasize that these reveal more than what the authors explicitly state that they intend to record or communicate. Others, however, which critics have long excluded from the literary canon, also follow this pattern. Though they do not represent "official" or formal histories, the every-day writings of Carmelite nuns living in colonial Mexico communicate details outside of those explicitly proposed by the authors. Letters written by Carmelite nuns in the *virreinato* period in Mexico demonstrate multiple meanings similar to those found in other texts of the period. The authors of all of these letters resided in the convent at San José in Mexico City. Each was a nun, though they occupied different positions within the convent community. The genre, authorial voice and register, and content of the two letters that I will discuss not only reflect their immediate, explicitly-outlined purposes, but also communicate to the reader the self-representation of the authors as they present themselves to society. The way these women depict themselves through letters teaches a modern reader about what these writers' believed their audiences expected in terms of self-presentation.

It is no secret that Spanish society of the colonial period limited the options available for women. Indigenous women, because of the requirements of *pureza de sangre*, could not become Carmelite nuns even if they desired to do so. In his history of the establishment of a Carmelite presence in Mexico, Manuel Ramos Medina notes that if we "juzgar por los apellidos, podemos pensar que realmente fue un lugar destinado de manera preferente a una elite de la sociedad blanca y urbana" (197). A young woman of Spanish heritage in colonial Mexico had a simple choice in considering a future, honorable position in society: marriage or the convent. Society placed restrictions on young women based upon the idea of *honra*. Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano partially explains the practice of enclosing girls and women when she addresses this issue of *honra*:

“a woman is ‘honrada’ if she protects her husband’s honor and rights of private sexual ownership through the practices of enclosure and self-effacement prescribed by the feminine virtues of chastity and silence” (16). While Yarbrow-Bejarano’s idea reflects upon the husband, the same observation applies to the family in general, and specifically to the father. Fathers seeking suitable arrangements in terms of an “honorable” life for their daughters relied on the envisioned ideal of perfection based on these virtues of chastity and silence. In an interesting parallel, the characteristics of the perfect wife align with the vows of obedience and chastity taken by Carmelite nuns. Margarita de San Bernardo, one of the authors of interest here, and her sisters all chose to adopt this social position as an “honorable” option. Given these similarities, the distinction between convent and marriage covenant is not so stark.

These women found an alternative to marriage and family in entering a convent. Though isolated from the outside world, they did suffer scrutiny. Cloistered communities led to sisters who commented on the behavior of other nuns with whom they lived, and to both interdependence and factionalism (Kirk 35–36). Aside from this internal self-analysis, nuns faced the vigilance of the bureaucracy of the Catholic church. Many confessors encouraged or even required an autobiographical *Vida* from the nuns to whom they administered and over whom they exercised authority. Kathleen Myers notes the importance of these biographies in the eyes of New World society: “Local holy people were depicted in Spanish American hagiographies for a dual purpose: they served as models to emulate and as symbols for the building of a local history and identity” (5). The prevalence of this requirement led to the establishment of a tradition with certain forms that the women who created these narratives were expected to follow. Nuns recorded the events of their lives as they remembered them, but also as society expected them to present themselves; or at least as they perceived society’s expectation. This tendency, evident within the *Vida* genre, carries over into the epistolary genre as well. Any writing which addressed an outsider, usually a superior, required a specific self-representation based upon humility, inferiority, and self-deprecation. For example, in her *Vida*, Santa Teresa begins by saying that “tener padres virtuosos y temerosos de Dios me bastara, si yo no fuera tan ruin, con lo que el Señor me favorecía, para ser buena” (119). The humble, self-critical manner in which members of convent communities present themselves reflect their preoccupation with the perceptions of the outside world directed toward them.

The particular influence which the convent exerts on the women who write from within it makes the space itself deserving of at least a brief mention. Once a sister had taken such care to establish herself in an honorable position and within the space the convent represented, the desire to maintain this position would have shaped any writing she produced. The convent at San José was founded in 1616, and eventually came under the protection of the Carmelite order because the nuns who founded it

desired a more stringently ascetic lifestyle. Convent culture created a different dynamic than that under which secular authors operated. The age at which young women left the outside world for the convent limits their exposure to certain elements of worldliness; Ramos Medina cites the average age of Carmelite nuns entering the convent as between sixteen and twenty (202). However, their dependence on rich patrons gave at least some of these women a keen understanding of the dynamics of power and politics of which women in other circumstances might remain ignorant. The letter of Margarita de San Bernardo demonstrates this social savvy and appeal to an intercessor with more authority; the letters co-authored by groups of nuns and directed to the *virrey* demonstrates the recognition that these women had of their need to present themselves in an appropriate light, with a proper tone and register, in order to maintain their position. The limitations occasioned by requirements for prayer and contemplation on the allocation of time as a resource limits the genre of literature that women writers choose to create. Margarita de San Bernardo and her companion sisters wrote letters out of necessity or concern for religious fervor. The complex network of interactions with other women who occupied the same space also comes into play. Carmelite nuns took either a white or black veil, and the respect accorded to each differed. Those who signed the co-authored letters included any separate titles or identifiers (such as *subpriora* or *clavaria*) with their signatures. Despite sharing some stratified characteristics with the external world, the convent, and the choice which women made to live within its restrictions, does not serve as a sort of microcosm. Instead, it represents a unique space which influences the authors who write from within it.

The author of our first letter creates her account for a pragmatic purpose. This letter demonstrates the need for external intervention in favor of maintenance of the Carmelite way of life. Margarita de San Bernardo wrote to the vicereine, duchess of Alburquerque in order to complain about the overbearing behavior of an archbishop toward the members of her community. While the form of address shares commonalities with other letters from persons of inferior social position to members of a social elite, the author employs an unusual salutation for this situation. Rather than adopting a humble position from the outset, Margarita calls her patron “Señora de mi alma.” Many writers of the same period place similar adoring addresses into the mouths of lovers. Margarita’s choice to address the duchess in this manner demonstrates at very least a friendship between the two women, and quite possibly indicates an intimate acquaintance and strong identification. An appeal from a friend evokes much more compassion than an appeal from a common subject or admirer. The tone in this letter, though following the tradition of humility and deference toward a superior, also maintains an aspect of friendship or at minimum solidarity. The author begins with words designed to strengthen the object of her letter—intervention on the part of her friend and patron in the convent’s behalf.

Margarita follows the salutation with a very interesting bit of Baroque flattery: she tells her patron that “después de Dios, nuestro único amparo y consuelo no hay otro sino el tener propicia la grandeza de Vuestras Excelencias” (Ramos Medina 268). Placing her patrons second only to God certainly fulfills the requirement for recognizing the superiority of the rank of nobility. The seeming exaggeration befits a time period when people valued ornamentation; Margarita uses words to embellish her patrons the way other poets chose words for their poetry. She indicates the suffering caused by the unjust behavior of the prelate she complains of, but her suffering does not form the focus of the letter. She lists the offenses of the prelate (forbidding the sisters to take communion, threatening any confessors who attempt to absolve the sisters, and censoring behaviors not worthy of censure) without actually asking her patron to do anything about them, calling them a “secret” which could only be trusted to such a worthy source as the vicereine. Classifying the information which she includes in this letter as a secret appears to be a contradiction, because the only reason to communicate the prelate’s actions would be the hope of some change. However, this confidential trust expressed through carefully chosen words further reinforces the idea of friendship and solidarity. Margarita de San Bernardo increases the likelihood of action on the part of her patroness by strengthening the appeal based on the relationship she indicates in her salutation.

The second letter I will address differs from the first not only in its addressee, but also in its form. It still shares, however, characteristics which demonstrate the influence of convent life on the way these women wrote. This letter is the result of a coordinated effort of a group of women, rather than a single voice appealing to a wealthy patron. The simple act of signing their names together in a common petition reflects the solidarity possible in convent life. Twelve sisters, with Margarita de San Bernardo as their coordinator or principal authority, signed a letter addressed to the viceroy, duke of Albuquerque. Their explicit object reflects the same purpose as Margarita de San Bernardo’s letter to the vicereine. They list the offenses of the prelate and his motives in hopes that the viceroy can intervene in some way to their benefit. The differences in authorship, tone, and content do not undermine the unity of purpose of these two letters or the similarities of genre.

The distinction of multiple authorship immediately differentiates this letter from the first. Any collaborative effort reflects the voices of each author and requires concordance and compromise. The appeal to a friendship relationship present in the first letter is completely absent from the letter to the viceroy. The sisters use a more distant tone in creating this letter than the one used by Margarita de San Bernardo in drafting hers. In place of the appealing salutation, the authors focus on the superiority of their addressee, calling him “Excelentísimo Señor.” In the course of the letter, the sisters credit the viceroy alternately with greatness, piety, charity, honor,

and astuteness of observation, repeating several of these descriptions. They address him through direct petition, an approach that is absent in Margarita's appeal to the viceroy's wife: as a worthy vassal of the king, the viceroy "se sirva de informar a Su Majestad de las calamidades que pasamos" (qtd. in Ramos Medina 271). Their justification for the viceroy's (and by extension, the king's) intervention, appeals to Myers's assertion regarding the importance of convents to local identity in Mexico. The sisters indicate that their request to be governed by friars and secular clerics who also belong to disalced orders finds its basis in Santa Teresa's establishment of the order. They state that "en lo que ponemos la mira es sólo en conseguir el fin que nuestra Santa Madre tuvo en la fundación de sus conventos, y que no sea menos éste de México" (qtd. in Ramos Medina 271). Appealing to the desire of authorities in the New World to share a strong identity with those in Spain presents a particularly persuasive argument to their audience. These differences indicate the influence of multiple authors on any literary creation, as well as the circumstances wherein persons of inferior social position appeal to members of the nobility.

The content of this letter, while similar to the one written by Margarita de San Bernardo alone, marks another difference between the two. While the vicereine receives a petition based on injustices which the author of the letter classifies in an almost personal fashion, the sisters addressing the viceroy list grievances with monetary, political motives. As in Margarita's appeal to the vicereine, they note the difficulties they suffer as a result of the archbishop's refusal to allow them to participate in communion. They mention that the archbishop denies the last rite of confession even to dying sisters. This image, in a society which placed so much importance upon religion and maintaining good standing with God, certainly represents a powerful tool for making a case against an unjust religious figure. However, they also note that he says that "aunque tuviese diz cédulas reales había de replicar en todos" (qtd. in Ramos Medina 272). These sisters employ a brilliant strategy upon bringing into play the additional, political rebellion displayed by the archbishop. An appeal to a political figure carries more weight when based upon a political problem; while a religious problem conjures up sympathy, a political one creates unease. This group of authors demonstrates their capacity to alter the tone and change the content of their letters based upon their circumstances, as well as the audience to whom they address themselves. These differences serve to distinguish the two letters, but also to display how a literary form as restrictive as a *carta de relación* still allows for adaptation and diversity within the genre.

The options open to women in Mexico in the colonial period led some of them to choose to enter the convent. Once there, the space these women occupy exerts an inescapable influence on them for the rest of their lives. The authoresses who penned texts that seemed to be "non-literary" letters and *Vidas* clearly demonstrate this influence for modern readers, even when this exposition is not the explicit purpose of their writing.

Though these women do not share the same social background or life experiences, their writing shares some characteristics. These common attributes not only group their letters and petitions together as “women’s writings” or “religious writings,” but also bring to light shared traits with texts written by other authors of letters and *relaciones* at the time. Generic constraints dictated the form for letters, the address which writers used, and to some extent, the content. Despite the fact that their letters fit well into the context of those written by Cortés or Sor Juana, the structure under which these women lived led them to adopt a distinct tone, choose unique content, and, ultimately, create an individual self-representation. The simplicity of speech with which they address their benefactors parallels the austere conditions in which these sisters lived. The content of their letters reflected their limited range of influence and experience, focusing on spiritual travails and problems linked to confessors. The self-representation which these particular nuns create for themselves, possibly the most interesting aspect of these letters, differentiates them from other authors of their time. It brings into focus the fact that these women, writing as the independent protagonists of their own lives and fates, were unwilling to present themselves as such to an outside reader. Their position depended on maintaining society’s depiction of them, and, thus, they crafted letters which served their individual purposes without undermining this perception.

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MIGRATION, INCARCERATION, AND DEPORTATION: PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTIONS FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY CONVERSATIONS

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Even though philosophy frequently tries to respond to social struggles and political injustices, students of philosophy sometimes find that their work barely, or only obliquely, touches upon the “real world” problems that worry and inspire us. In order to bring our ideas closer to reality, we often find ourselves translating ourselves, code-switching from jargon to ordinary language, and losing much in the process. Interdisciplinary conversations provide a kind of middle ground upon which to test the practical intelligibility of our work with thinkers who do not share our disciplinary commitments. For that reason, I am very pleased to present my work in this forum. I hope that, after trying to demonstrate one way in which theory might make critical contact with practice, the benefit of this contact will not prove overestimated.

I

The main thought I want to present is that migration control is vital to the sovereignty of the contemporary state. This is not an unfamiliar claim, but here I want to develop out a new way to understand it. To fully appreciate the importance of migration control to today’s states, one needs to strip the concept of state sovereignty of some of its early modern baggage.

When heads of state, diplomats, political scientists, or social theorists refer to the sovereignty of a particular state, they usually invoke an ideal of political organization that first emerged toward the end of the European middle ages. According to this ideal, which was formalized in the Treaties of Westphalia and is embodied in the modern state, sovereignty is supreme or final authority within a territory. Sovereign authority, in other words, is exercised over the interiors—but bounded by the borders—of determinate geographical spaces. This “sovereign territorial ideal” became predominant in sixteenth- through eighteenth-century Europe (Murphy 82), with the effect that, even according to contemporary political thinkers, “sovereignty is almost inextricably linked to territoriality” (Ansell 7). Today, the modern ideal of territorial sovereignty remains fundamental to political thought and practice concerning citizenship, human rights, military intervention, global trade, migration, and political self-determination.

However, some social scientists and theorists—as well as political leaders, businesspersons, and activists of all stripes—argue that the link between sovereignty and territory is now dissolving, thanks to new forms of globalization that are gradually and unevenly disconnecting citizenship, state functions, and political authority from their former territorial markers.¹ I will not examine such arguments here, other than to say that they become more compelling when a prevalent oversimplification is resisted. It is all too easy to regard the diverse processes and tendencies that we group together with the umbrella term “globalization” as purely opposed to the territorial sovereignty of the nation-state. This perceived opposition almost seems tautological: the modern interstate system depends upon the persistence of discrete and bounded centers of sovereign power, but globalization undermines, instrumentalizes, or overwhelms the boundaries that distinguish sovereign polities; therefore, territorial sovereignty and globalization are opposed to one another, and states can either be the victims or conquerors of globalization.

Such a view (which is rarely articulated, but often underlies or informs otherwise sophisticated understandings of international trends) fails to consider the ways in which territorial nation-states have themselves actively contributed to the globalizing tendencies that now trouble the territorial ideal of sovereignty. As Saskia Sassen writes in *Territory, Authority and Rights*:

The territorial sovereign state, with its territorial fixity and exclusivity, represents a set of capabilities that eventually enable the formation or evolution of particular global systems—itself a partial condition—that require neither territoriality nor exclusivity [...]. There is indeed a growing gap between globalization and the confinement of the national state to its territory. But it is inadequate simply to accept the prevailing wisdom that, wittingly or not, presents the national and the global as two mutually exclusive domains for theorization and for politics. (21, 308)²

It is easier to understand the deterritorialization—or reterritorialization—of sovereign political authority once one acknowledges the active roles that states play in these processes. Globalization does not just happen to states (at least, not to all of them); rather, states globalize some of their functions, some of their bases, and some of their resources. In so doing, however, they begin to abandon territory as the *sine qua non* of sovereignty.

I mention these points because I want to argue that migration control is vital to state sovereignty even apart from notions of sovereignty that focus on territorial integrity. A state’s prerogative to control its borders and regulate migration could be—and for a long time has been—understood as a means of securing sovereignty by securing territorial spaces and the resources, opportunities, practices, and histories that they contain. According to such an understanding, efforts at migration control are secondary to, and motivated by, an interest in preserving the link between geography and authority that is essential to territorial sovereignty.

However, in order to understand contemporary forms of migration control—and especially the anxiety with which the United States now polices its borders—we need to consider the regulation of cross-border movement as itself a primary locus of sovereignty, independent of the modern preoccupation with territorial integrity. In the face of contemporary forms of globalization, migration, and migration control techniques, we need to consider whether the means that have traditionally served territorial sovereignty—the regulation of movement into and out of territories—are not now becoming divorced from, and possibly replacing, their traditional end. In other words, as engaged theorists, academics, and activists, we need to ask ourselves whether the mobilities, bodies, identities, ideologies, and lives of actual migrants have replaced territory as a primary site and stake of state sovereignty.

In order to make this thought compelling, I will quickly sketch a framework for understanding state sovereignty in terms of a relation between identity and authority, neither of which need be understood in relation to territory. I will then argue that states control migration in order to secure otherwise potentially unstable constellations of identity and authority. In the context of neoliberal globalization, this is not so much a matter of accepting some persons into, and keeping others out of, relatively enclosed polities. Rather, it is a matter of constantly displacing unwanted persons and forms of life so that they are nowhere at home.

II

Apart from the traditional focus on territoriality, sovereignty can be understood as supreme or final authority within a political community. This definition is compatible with both modern and emerging “post-modern” forms of sovereignty, because the political community can be territorially defined, but it need not be. What is essential, however, is that sovereignty has boundaries. Boundedness is a necessary condition for sovereign authority’s claim to supremacy or finality, and the boundaries of such authority coincide with the limits of the entities over which it is exercised. If sovereign authority is exercised over a community defined by geographic space, the boundaries of authority coincide with the borders that mark, distinguish, and constitute that space. Similarly, if sovereign authority is exercised over a political community defined by a group of individuals who all share a particular heritage, or engage in a particular practice, the boundaries of authority coincide with the constitutive limits of that group. Sovereignty and subjection share a bounded jurisdiction.

Although sovereignty and subjection require a shared, determinate jurisdiction, the boundaries of this jurisdiction are the prerogative of the sovereign rather than of the subjects.³ For contemporary states, this means that governments identify the political community within which state authority is final and supreme; this, in turn, is largely a matter of differentiating between members and non-members. In other

words, by maintaining the boundaries of the political community, sovereign authority identifies “the people” over which it rules. State sovereignty is a kind of authority that constitutes its own subject.

However, sovereignty is the exercise of absolute authority, not the exercise of absolute power, and this means that the sovereign is always, to a degree, beholden to the authorization, legitimation, investiture or complicity of its own subjects. By authorizing—or refusing to authorize—exercises of authority, the subjects play an agential role in determining the limits of sovereign jurisdiction. For contemporary states, this means that members have at least some practical input—even when there is no democratic process for institutionalizing this input—over criteria for state membership, as well as over other operations of government. Thus, by enabling and limiting the authority of the sovereign, “the people” have some say in their own identification. State sovereignty, as a kind of political authority, is constituted by its own subjects.

Bringing these observations together, we can see that the boundedness required for sovereignty implies a paradoxical interrelation of acts of identification and authorization. In order to effectively identify the people, the sovereign must already be authorized as sovereign, but in order to authorize the sovereign, the people must already be effectively identified as the people.

This mutual constitution of sovereign and subject, as well as the tangled interrelation of authority and identity that animates it, have been central concerns of Western political philosophy since Machiavelli and Rousseau. Founding a just and stable polity requires accomplishing two tasks—identifying the people and authorizing the sovereign—each of which is the condition of the other. To complete these tasks, as Rousseau suggested, “the effect [of constitution] would have to become the cause” (71). This apparent paradox calls out for philosophical resolution. However, the apparent circularity must also be negotiated in political reality—in the everyday affairs of states. It is in this apparently impossible negotiation that the theoretical observations I have just outlined make contact with practical questions concerning immigration policies, border controls, and citizenship criteria, as well as other state apparatuses designed to mark and police the boundaries of political communities.

III

In order to be sovereign, states have to constantly re-found themselves as such. This requires a continual reinscription, rearticulation, or redefinition of the identity of “the people” who are subject to state authority. At the same time, it requires a continual resecuring and re-legitimation of that authority. These tasks are performed in various ways, some fundamental and others superficial. However, in the United States at least, migration control is one of the most important ways that the state continually

reconstitutes itself as sovereign. I want to support this claim by suggesting the ambivalent effects of migration on US national identity and political authority, and then by considering migration control as a means by which the state continually resolves this ambivalence and rearticulates its sovereignty.

By national identity, I intend to denote two interrelated things. First, I mean the overlapping sets of citizens and residents that make up the national population—who the nation is. Second, and more importantly, I mean the abundant identity claims, tropes, stereotypes, and self-perceptions used to narrate into existence the “imagined community” of the nation.⁴ These acts of imagination give content to the abstract quality of “American-ness” that inheres in hegemonic conceptions of American citizenship, culture, and way of life.

It is probably obvious that migration stands in an ambivalent relation to US national identity. Since the creation of the United States, migration has kept its population in flux, and it both contributes to and prevents a settled notion of national identity. On one hand, migration is frequently celebrated as essential to a national sense of self, as when the “melting pot,” “salad bowl,” or “nation of immigrants” tropes are trotted out to indicate the diverse heritages and ways of life embodied by US citizens, or to signal the country’s real and imagined history of welcoming refugees, granting asylum, and providing opportunity to newcomers. This discourse reminds us that the United States cannot be understood without acknowledging that its national identity is rooted in the movement of people across borders. The discourse risks becoming ideological, however, if it does not admit that forced movement, both within and across borders, is also essential to US national identity.

On the other hand, migration—especially undocumented immigration—has also been a source of social and cultural anxiety, as various immigrant groups have been perceived as direct threats to hegemonic senses of national identity and the religious, cultural, racial, and class values encoded in them. By describing these opposing tendencies as ambivalent, I don’t mean to suggest that migration sometimes compliments dominant conceptions of US national identity and then, at other historical moments, works to unsettle them. Rather, these moments are simultaneous. The US experience with migration constantly affirms and troubles hegemonic articulations of its collective national identity by highlighting the processes of “melting” that have created abstract unity out of concrete diversity, while also signaling the perpetual incompleteness, fragility, and contestability of that unity.

I think that something similar—and potentially less obvious—is true as regards the relation between migration and US political authority. From the founding of the United States onward, the legitimacy of governmental authority has frequently been articulated in terms of a contract or other act of consent, in which individuals freely pledge allegiance to the nation and its government in return for protection,

liberty, opportunity, or some other benefit. For most residents and citizens, the contractual foundations of US political authority are fictive or metaphorical, and consent is thinly tacit.

Migration plays an ambivalent role in regard to this narrative of authorization. On one hand, immigration to the United States provides a material and literal basis to the contractualist or consent-based conception of legitimate political authority: steady streams of newcomers, documented and undocumented alike, choosing to reside in the United States for the opportunities this nation offers (Honig 75–77). This narrative of implied authorization is completed by the ceremony of naturalization, in which individuals explicitly pledge themselves, presumably freely and rationally, to the laws of the nation and the authority of its government. The ideological effects of these scenes of refounding can be both wide and deep. As Bonnie Honig writes:

The liberal consenting immigrant addresses the need of a disaffected citizenry to experience its regime as choiceworthy, to see it through the eyes of still-enchanted newcomers whose choice to come here also just happens to reenact liberalism's [...] fictive foundation in individual acts of uncoerced consent. (75)

In this way, immigration affirms and partially realizes the myth of contractual legitimacy that underwrites US political authority.

Conversely, migration can challenge the legitimacy and the effectiveness of established authority. If the discursive figure of the “good” naturalizing immigrant works in favor of political authority, the trope of the “bad” illegal resident—the foreign scofflaw—may work against it. Undocumented entry, after all, begins with a legal infraction, and undeclared residency perpetuates it. When suspicions of illegal presence are paired with easily transposable stereotypes of various immigrant groups as criminal, dangerous, untrustworthy, or backward, the fact of immigration itself can be discursively constructed as a failure of state authority to protect its law-abiding citizens. US history abounds with moments where popular consciousness, gripped with anti-immigrant sentiment, associates the mere presence of real or imagined foreigners with a laxity of laws, weakness of government, or failure of leadership.⁵ This is especially true when the perceived foreignness of immigrants—even when they are legal citizens—is overlaid with suspicion of their political activities.⁶

Thus, the political authority of the US government, just like the national identity of its polity, is both bolstered and shaken by the social and political valences of trans-border migration. In short, “The foreigner who shores up and reinvigorates the regime also unsettles it at the same time” (Honig 76).

In order to deal with this ambivalence, the United States—like many states—attempts to control migration so as to turn it toward the actual confirmation, rather than possible contest, of hegemonic forms of authority and identity. It does so

negatively, through entry prohibitions and quotas, waiting periods, temporary incarceration, and deportations that target persons whose identity or ideology are perceived as a possible perversion, subversion, or dilution of—or threat to—US national identity and political authority. The United States also positively controls cross-border movement, by incentivizing immigration, extending entitlements, or accelerating citizenship for those whose presence is perceived to benefit, support, or complement normalized conceptions of collective identity and authority. Through such processes, the state defines and delimits “the people” from whom its authority emanates. It thereby continually refounds itself as sovereign.

IV

If all of this is correct, then the identities, ideologies, and forms of life of persons moving across borders may be replacing—or may have already replaced—geographic territory as a primary site and stake of state sovereignty. This conclusion reverses the priority of modern understandings of sovereignty. Whereas before, migration control was understood as a means with which to protect the integrity of territorial authority, today the marking and guarding of territory is a means to control migration. The movement of people, and not the land they move over, is now “inextricably linked” to sovereignty.

I want to close by suggesting how this thought might enable us to make sense of recent developments in border security, deportation practices, and carceral techniques. For a long time, the policing of social and political communities has been understood in terms of dichotomies between inside and outside, entry and removal, or inclusion and exclusion. On such understandings, persons deemed “unfit for society” are to be kept out of, or forced to exit, the presumably closed spheres wherein others enjoy the benefits of their own sociality. This way of thinking, I suggest, is a holdover from conceptual frameworks in which territory—a bounded space—was the model for self-defined communities. It is no longer adequate to a world in which controlling movement trumps controlling place.

It is true that today we still police borders, deport so-called aliens, and lock away felons; in fact, the United States now performs these operations of sovereignty more than ever before. But, it is becoming clearer and clearer that these practices are unable to keep people in their “proper” places. If borders, deportation, and prison are meant to enforce distinctions between inside and outside, they are tremendous failures. They succeed terrifically, however, in constructing cycles of movement in which, for example, migrants cross borders illegally, are exploited economically and politically, and then are deported—only to be replaced by other undocumented workers or to return illegally themselves. Or again, cycles in which felons are imprisoned, exploited

economically and politically, and then are released—only to be replaced by others or to be reimprisoned themselves. In short, the state apparatuses that now police sovereign communities do not keep unwanted persons or forms of life out of anything. Rather, they constantly displace unwanted persons. In so doing, they reinforce the hegemonic articulations of national identity, and the entrenched forms of political authority, whose preservation constitutes the sovereignty of the state.

NOTES

¹For arguments of this kind, see Benhabib, *Another Cosmopolitanism*, Brenner, “Beyond State-Centrism”; Maier, “‘Being There’: Place, Territory and Identity”; Ruggie, “Territoriality and Beyond”; and Sassen, *Territory, Authority, and Rights*. The uniqueness, details, meanings, and consequences of contemporary globalization are widely debated. See Held and McGrew, *Globalization Theory, The Global Transformations Reader*, and *Globalization/Anti-Globalization* for overviews of these debates.

² See Neil Brenner, “Beyond State-Centrism?” for a similar argument; see also Hannes Lacher *Beyond Globalization* for a complicating, but—on this point at least—ultimately confirming view.

³ Except, of course, where these are one and the same, as in cases of popular sovereignty. Even then, however, it is as sovereign that the people or *demos* gives limits to itself. This, however, invokes a particular form of the paradoxical circularity that I discuss below. See Gould (39–41) and Benhabib (35, 167). The circularity that I identify is more general—and I believe more fundamental—than those that concern Gould and Benhabib.

⁴ See Anderson (6–7) for an introduction to the concept of imagined communities. Notice Anderson’s emphasis on limitation and sovereignty.

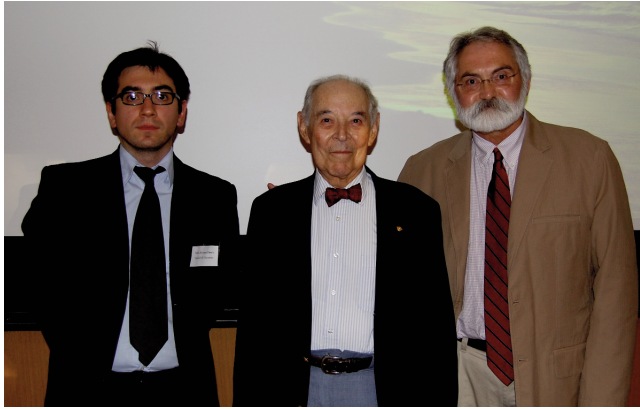
⁵ See Kanstroom, *Deportation Nation* and Zolberg, *A Nation by Design*. For an enduringly relevant social-psychological exploration of the same themes, see Adorno et al., *The Authoritarian Personality*.

⁶ Consider the Palmer Raids of 1919–1921, which were originally prompted by public outcry and resulted in legal gymnastics like the rendering “alien” of US political dissidents so that they were eligible for deportation. Consider also the intersecting perceptions of foreignness and political threat that, after 9/11, engendered new justifications for the surveillance or prosecution of political activists, academics, journalists, charities, and religious organizations.

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Pablo Martínez Diente, Gregory Rabassa, and Earl E. Fitz



Cathy L. Jrade greets Gregory Rabassa



Gregory Rabassa signs a book for James R. Krause



Rosie Seagraves, Emily Tobey, and Anna-Lisa Halling



Cast and crew for *La dama boba*



Scene from *La dama boba*



BORDER CROSSINGS:

**Boundaries of
Cultural Interpretation**



OCTOBER 16-18

Keynote Speaker: *Professor Gregory Rabassa*

Keynote Address:

Friday October 17, 4:30 p.m.

Buttrick Hall 101

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