

ACTAS  
IV CONGRESO SAAS  
Santiago de Compostela,  
marzo de 1999

# Travelling across Cultures / *Viaxes interculturais*

## The Twentieth-Century American Experience



EDICIÓN A CARGO DE  
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UNIVERSIDADE  
DE SANTIAGO  
DE COMPOSTELA

publicacións

Travelling across Cultures /  
*Viaxes interculturais*



CURSOS E CONGRESOS DA  
UNIVERSIDADE DE SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA

Nº 122



Travelling across Cultures /  
*Viaxes interculturais*  
The Twentieth-Century American Experience

ACTAS IV CONGRESO SPANISH ASSOCIATION  
FOR AMERICAN STUDIES (SAAS)  
Santiago de Compostela  
Marzo de 1999

**Edición a cargo de**  
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2000

UNIVERSIDADE DE SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA



SPANISH ASSOCIATION FOR AMERICAN STUDIES. Congreso (4º. 1999. Santiago de Compostela)

Travelling across Cultures = Viaxes interculturais. The Twentieth-Century American Experience : Actas IV Congreso Spanish Association for American Studies (SAAS), Santiago de Compostela, Marzo de 1999 / Edición a cargo de Constante González Groba... [et al.]. – Santiago de Compostela : Universidade, Servicio de Publicacións e Intercambio Científico, 2000. – 550 p. ; 24 cm. – (Cursos e Congresos da Universidade de Santiago de Compostela ; 122). – D.L. C-2174/2000. – ISBN 84-8121-840-5.

1. Europa-Civilización-Influencia americana. 2. América-Civilización-Influencia europea. I. González Groba, Constante, ed. lit. II. Universidade de Santiago de Compostela. Servicio de Publicacións e Intercambio Científico, ed. III. Serie. IV. Título.

008 (4:7/8)

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**Deseño da cuberta**

Alejandro Vidal

**Edita**

SERVICIO DE PUBLICACIÓNS

Campus universitario sur

**Imprime**

IMPRENTA UNIVERSITARIA

Pavillón de Servicios

Campus universitario sur

ISBN: 84-8121-840-5

Dep. Legal: C-2174/2000

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## PRESENTACIÓN

Presentamos en este volumen las conferencias y comunicaciones de los profesores e investigadores que “peregrinaron” a Santiago para participar en el IV Congreso de SAAS (24-26 de marzo de 1999).

El tema general, “Travelling across Cultures / *Viaxes interculturais*: The Twentieth-Century American Experience”, resultó atractivo y apropiado para un encuentro celebrado en las postrimerías del siglo que nos ha traído la “aldea global” y debates tan fructíferos sobre una realidad cada vez más multicultural y multiétnica. La reflexión sobre la identidad, que según muchos estudiosos dominará el debate intelectual y político del siglo XXI, se hace cada vez más complicada y fascinante, y la creación y el descubrimiento del yo están condicionados por una experiencia cada vez más híbrida y transcultural.

La enriquecedora diversidad de contribuciones al IV Congreso de SAAS vuelve a poner de manifiesto la pertinencia de hablar, no de una literatura o cultura estadounidense, sino de muchas, en unos tiempos en que la línea divisoria entre el centro y los márgenes es cada vez más endeble y borrosa. En el cambio de siglo que nos ha tocado vivir, nuestra labor como investigadores y docentes se ve ineludiblemente afectada por la paradoja de la coexistencia de políticas democráticas que invitan a aceptar una realidad cada vez más multicultural y multiétnica con la insistencia de los mejores estudiosos de la problemática de la identidad en el carácter convencional, poroso y proteico de las culturas y de las etnias. Puede que el modelo multicultural y multiétnico se acabe imponiendo, o que en un plazo no muy largo todo el debate que hoy nos apasiona se revele como mera nostalgia por unos rasgos distintivos destinados a convertirse en

irrelevantes en el incesante proceso económico y cultural de “destrucción creativa” que, según Philip Fisher, ha caracterizado desde sus orígenes a la joven nación americana, que continuamente borra el pasado y reinventa el futuro. Pase lo que pase, siempre existirá la fructífera tensión dialéctica entre una tendencia a subrayar lo que une e integra a los individuos y otra que prima lo que los hace diferentes, entre fuerzas centrípetas y centrífugas, entre el “melting pot” de Israel Zangwill y otras metáforas más en boga en nuestra época posmoderna (“patchwork quilt”, etc.).

Los editores queremos dejar constancia de nuestro agradecimiento más sincero a todos los autores de los trabajos que conforman este volumen, y a todas las personas e instituciones que colaboraron en la organización del IV Congreso de SAAS: Sociedad Española para el Estudio de los Estados Unidos, Auditorio de Galicia, Banco Central Hispano, Fundación Caixa Galicia, Concello de Santiago, Departamento de Filoloxía Inglesa, Secretaría Xeral de Investigación e Desenvolvemento (Xunta de Galicia), Facultade de Filoloxía, Ministerio de Educación y Cultura, Rectorado da Universidade de Santiago, United States Information Service, Vicerrectorado de Investigación e Terceiro Ciclo y Xacobeo 99.

CONSTANTE GONZÁLEZ GROBA  
*Presidente del Comité Organizador*



# **Lectures**





## Look Away, Beyond Dixie Land: Contemporary Southern Writers and the West

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In *New Westers: The West in Contemporary Culture*, Michael Johnson explores America's recent resurgence of interest in the American West, an interest manifested throughout American popular culture from Stetson cologne to the Marlboro man to line dancing to adobe architecture<sup>1</sup>. Although fascination with the West and its towering mythology – a mythology encompassing a rugged individualism, wide-open spaces, and a conquering spirit – has long been a shaping force of the American imagination, Johnson persuasively argues that in the mid-1980s Americans began imaginatively embracing the West with unusual intensity and nostalgia. No doubt the cultural dynamics of this shift are complex and myriad, but Johnson is probably right in suggesting that the recent imaginative lighting out to the Western frontier is in large part a response to what's perceived as the increasing dehumanization and homogenization of postmodern culture. Out West, the mythology goes, life is as stark and fundamental as the desert landscape;

<sup>1</sup> Michael L. Johnson, *New Westers: The West in Contemporary American Culture* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1996).

out in the desert, a person can make – or remake – oneself by one's own hand. Out West, too, as Wallace Stegner has noted, lies a "geography of hope", space where a person can leave the past behind and seek the wide-open future, driven by an optimism that configures the West into a land "where every day is payday, a Big Rock Candy Mountain where the handouts grow on bushes and the little streams of alcohol come trickling down the rocks".<sup>2</sup> Visions of a free and unencumbered life, even if not as fanciful as Stegner's characterization, no doubt undergird the imaginative needs and desires of those wannabe cowboys and cowgirls whom Johnson designates as "New Westers."

All right, but what does all this have to do with Southern literature and culture? A lot, actually. Certainly one of most intriguing developments in contemporary Southern fiction is that a number of Southern writers have in a sense become "New Westers", imaginatively forsaking Dixie for the West, writing fiction both of the contemporary West (particularly Montana) and of the bygone era of cowboys, Indians, and gunfights – that is, Westerns. Writers from the South who have looked West include Doris Belts, Barry Hannah, Cormac McCarthy, Madison Smartt Bell, Richard Ford, Rick Bass, Dorothy Allison, Barbara Ringsolver, Chris Offutt, Frederick Barthelme, Tim Gautreaux, and Clyde Edgerton.

This striking development raises a number of issues about the very designation "Southern fiction". Should we still call, for instance, Western fiction by Southerners "Southern"? Or should we call it Western? (as does a recent book on the literature of the West, which identifies four of the Southerners I'm talking about in this book as Western writers<sup>3</sup>). Or should we look for a new designation suggesting a blurring of regional boundaries, following the lead of the economists who talk of the South and West as the Sunbelt? Or should we, in these days of the global village and cyberspace, do away altogether with the designation "Southern" and stop worrying about literary classifications grounded in place and region? (In today's critical climate regionalism is by and large neglected as an issue for discussion. As Michael Kowalewski has observed, "the critical assumption seems to be that region or 'a sense of place' is not an imaginative factor that can be internalized and struggled with in the same literarily rewarding ways that writers struggle with issues of race, class, and gender."<sup>4</sup>).

<sup>2</sup> Wallace Stegner, *Where the Bluebird Sings to the Lemonade Springs: Living and Writing in the West* (New York: Random House, 1992), xv, xix.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Kowalewski, "Introduction," *Reading the West: New Essays on the Literature of the American West*, ed. Michael Kowalewski (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 4. The four writers Kowalewski identifies as Western are Cormac McCarthy, Richard Ford, Barbara Kingsolver, and Rick Bass.

<sup>4</sup> Michael Kowalewski, "Introduction," *Reading the West*, 7.

There are no easy answers to these questions about regional classification, and that there aren't suggests that Western fiction by Southerners fundamentally challenges the generally-accepted parameters of what we designate "Southern" and more generally "regional" fiction. Quite simply, contemporary Southern literature about the West represents a startling break in the Southern literary tradition, and it is this break which I want to explore here, focusing on what this literary border crossing suggests not only about the nature of contemporary Southern – and Western – literature and identity, but also about the cultural myths shaping America's conception of itself.

I want to begin with some background discussion which I hope will help illuminate the significance of the contemporary developments. Traditionally, Southern literature and culture have been so powerfully grounded in a sense of place that movement itself, in whatever direction but particularly westward, has characteristically been viewed with distrust and suspicion.<sup>5</sup> A Southern sense of place, of course, implies not mobility but stasis; one can only celebrate place if one is "in place," that is settled and rooted. A Southerner's nightmare thus might be Gertrude Stein's characterization of America: "Conceive a space that is filled with moving"<sup>6</sup>; and the ongoing Northern bias against the South no doubt in part rests in the Southern celebration of place, Americans associating freedom above all with mobility. In her classic essay, "Place in Fiction," Welty explores (from a decidedly Southern perspective) not only how place shapes literature but also more generally consciousness:

If place does work upon genius, how does it? It may be that place can focus the gigantic, voracious eye of genius and bring its gaze to point.

<sup>5</sup> African-American writers, I want to add here, for all I can tell, have not participated in this turn West. Although as Fred Hobson has observed, contemporary African-American writers appear at home with many of the traditional characteristics of Southern literature – a sense of place, community, etc. – no doubt their work reorients and repositions these forms. Certainly, for instance, "knowing your place" carries an entirely different meaning for African-Americans; moreover, from the perspective of the African-American experience in the South, being "in place" suggests less being settled than being restrained, both in terms of movement and more generally of freedom – being "in place" equates to being "kept in place." Rather than an East-West geocultural axis, African-American writers work along the North-South axis that has always played such a large part in the African-American experience, dating back to slavery and then later to the great migration. Although two significant Southern black writers now live in the West, Alice Walker and Ernest Gaines (at least for half a year), their most important work remains embedded in the South and in the Southern experience. If anything, African-American writers have looked further South – to the Spanish Americas – for inspiration, particularly in their use of magical realism, as seen in the work of Toni Morrison and Randall Kenan.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in Wallace Stegner, "Living Dry," in *Where the Bluebird Sings to the Lemonade Springs: Living and Writing in the West*, 72.

Focus then means awareness, discernment, order, clarity, insight – they are like the attributes of love. The act of focusing itself has beauty and meaning; it is the act that, continued in, turns into mediation, into poetry. Indeed, as soon as the least of us stands still, that is the moment something extraordinary is seen to be going on in the world.<sup>7</sup>

Standing still, staying put, putting down roots: such are the means to participate and to draw from the mystery of place. As Welty suggests, place and consciousness are in continuous dialogue and interplay; place interpenetrates and shapes human emotion while human emotion and perception continually reshape place's significance. To be in constant motion, on the other hand, is to experience only surfaces; to remain in place is to plumb depths.

Literature from the Southern literary renaissance (that literature written from approximately 1920 until right after World War II), for the most part explores Southern life in these settled places of which Welty writes, with an emphasis on individuals making do – or not making do – in tightly-knit Southern communities. Whereas fiction in the classic American tradition – or at least what was once deemed classic (I'm thinking of Melville, Cooper, Thoreau, Hemingway, and a few others) – tends to celebrate a solitary hero breaking out *from* a restrictive society and *into* a world of uncharted freedom, Southern fiction tends to celebrate those who don't leave the community but integrate themselves into it, while still maintaining their individuality and dignity – that is, without being completely subsumed by the community. A solitary figure breaking free from the community would, in the fiction of most Southern writers, be less a hero than a potential psychopath, a person tragically alone and isolated, cut off from the nourishing bonds of family and community. If the American pioneer hero sets out in a straight line away from society and into the wilderness, the Southern hero typically stays, establishes his or her position within society and shores up – rather than breaks free from – the boundaries separating culture from wilderness. Drawing upon a popular image from Westerns, American society might be understood – in very simple terms of course – as a wagon train moving progressively west; Southern society, on the other hand, is the walled fort the wagon train leaves behind.

The Southern opposition between place and movement – and particularly movement West – might also be understood as the opposition between place and time, between the circle of society and the straight line of time – a line always pushing into the future and ushering in change. Carl Degler appropriately entitles

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<sup>7</sup> Eudora Welty, "Place in Fiction", in *The Eye of the Story: Selected Essays and Reviews* (New York: Random House, 1978), 123.

his important study of the continuity of Southern history *Place Over Time*, his central point being that Southerners have long valued stability and continuity, exemplified in an unchanging place, over instability and discontinuity, exemplified in a forwardlooking time line.<sup>8</sup> Lucinda McKethan also has noted the Southern resistance to time, writing that Southerners have long been associated with “an ideology that exalts a sense of place in order to resist time and progress. Time and progress belong to the world outside, or so the myth goes; on the plantations or in the small, sleepy southern towns that are the popular images of the South, time is held back by the places themselves.”<sup>9</sup>

Perhaps no one has expressed the Southern tension between time and place better than Robert Penn Warren, who in *All the King's Men* describes the everyday social dynamics of a small Southern town:

In a town like Mason City the bench in front of the harness shop is – or was twenty years ago before the concrete slab got laid down – the place where Time gets tangled in its own feet and lies down like an old hound and gives up the struggle. . . . Time and motion cease to be. It is like sniffing ether, and everything is sweet and sad and far away.<sup>10</sup>

Warren's words here capture not only the power of Southern towns to resist time and change but also suggest the dangers inherent in that power. To stop time and motion is to live outside time – that is, outside the workings of historical change and development; as Warren says, it's like sniffing ether. Appropriately enough then, every time Jack Burden, the central figure of *All the King's Men*, confronts a crisis that he cannot handle, he retreats to his bed for weeks of endless sleep, what he calls the Great Sleep. In hibernating, Jack hopes the world will pass him by, just as “sleepy” Southern towns withdraw into themselves to resist incursions from a changing world.

Jack has another strategy for freeing himself from pressing problems and responsibilities: he flees West. When his discovery of Anne Stanton's affair with Willie sends him into an emotional tailspin, he immediately hits the road and drives West. “When you don't like it where you are you always go west”, he says.

<sup>8</sup> Carl N. Degler, *Place Over Time: The Continuity of Southern Distinctiveness* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977).

<sup>9</sup> Lucinda MacKethan, *The Dream of Arcady: Place and Time in Southern Literature* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980), 181.

<sup>10</sup> Robert Penn Warren, *All the King's Men* [1946] (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982), 52-53. All further citations to this novel are from this edition and will be cited parenthetically (AKM) in the text.

"We have always gone west" (AKM 309). For Jack the West is "the end of History" (AKM 311); that is, space unburdened by history, space where a person can begin entirely anew. At the heart of the West, Jack says, is the dream of the Great Twitch, a belief that defines life as being entirely biologically determined, human activity understood merely as electrical responses between nerves, synapses, and muscles. In its biological determinism, the Great Twitch frees a person from any responsibility for anything that he or she does, and for Jack that freedom is wondrously liberating:

[The Great Twitch] was the dream that all life is but the dark heave of the blood and the twitch of the nerve. When you flee as far as you can flee, you will always find that dream, which is the dream of our age. At first, it is always a nightmare and horrible, but in the end it may be, in a special way, rather bracing and tonic. At least, it was so for me for a certain time. It was bracing because after the dream I felt that, in a way, Anne Stanton did not exist. The words *Anne Stanton* were simply a name for a peculiarly complicated piece of mechanism which should mean nothing whatsoever to Jack Burden, who himself was simply another rather complicated piece of mechanism. At that time, when I first discovered that view of things – really discovered, in my own way and not from any book – I felt that I had discovered the secret source of all strength and all endurance. That dream solves all problems. (AKM 311)

The Great Twitch may temporarily solve Jack's ethical and moral problems but it does so by obliterating ethics and morality. It's a tactic at the other extreme from that of the Great Sleep: the Great Sleep, the dream of the traditional South, stops time and motion by retreating into a world of unchanging tradition; the Great Twitch, the dream of the West, destroys the past by embracing experience as endless motion in an eternal present.

In the end, Jack realizes that he must put aside both the Great Sleep and the Great Twitch. He recognizes the dangers both in wallowing in the past as if there is no present – geoculturally the South – and in moving freely about in the present as if there is no past – geoculturally, the West. He knows that he must somehow live on the border between those two dreams, or these two regions, drawing from both so that he remains aware of history but also of change and development, aware of individual freedom but also of community and commitment to others. As he says at the novel's close, he and Anne, now married, must leave the family home (emblematic of the closing off and turning inward of the Southern imagination – think of all those fictional Southerners who retreat into the home to defeat time and change, Faulkner's Miss Emily perhaps the most well



known) and must “go into the convulsion of the world, out of history into history and the awful responsibility of Time” (AKM 438). They must, in other words, depart from a place stagnating in history and move into the ever-changing historical present, accepting the burden not only of the past but also of the present.

Jack Burden’s flight West in *All the King’s Men* points to a striking geographical reorientation that took place during the 1920s and 1930s in terms of Southern identity. Before that time Southerners characteristically used a North-South orientation to define themselves, with the North and all it stood for (Yankees, industrialism, urbanism, etc.) standing opposed to the South and “Southernness” (the Southern belle and gentleman, agrarian life, leisure, etc.). But in the 1920s, a number of Southern writers shifted from a North-South to an East-West orientation, with the South now aligned as the East, characteristically described as a version of the settled society of premodern Europe, and with the North as the West, a manifestation of the forces of rapacious expansion, geographically in terms of imperialist exploration and discovery and economically in terms of industrial capitalism.

Nowhere is this geocultural shift more clear than in the work of the Nashville Agrarians, particularly in their 1930 symposium *I’ll Take My Stand*. Although *I’ll Take My Stand* is anything but a unified work, most of the writers, as acknowledged in the text’s “Statement of Principles,” “tend to support a Southern way of life against what may be called the American or prevailing way; and all as much as agree that the best terms in which to represent the distinction are contained in the phrase, Agrarian *versus* Industrial”.<sup>11</sup> Broadly speaking, the cultural opposition “Agrarian *versus* Industrial” breaks down something like this: Agrarian cultures are leisurely, non-acquisitive, backward-looking (their codes and values derived from history and tradition), and community-based; and they are always grounded in the soil (specifically in agriculturally-based economies but more generally in their organic growth from and adaptations to specific locales). Industrial cultures, in contrast, are fast-paced, acquisitive, forward-looking (their codes and values derived not from history and tradition but from doctrines of progress and expansion), and individual-based; and they are completely cut off from the soil (economies of finance capitalism exploit and commodify property – and place – reducing them to abstract units of value).

<sup>11</sup> “Introduction: A Statement of Principles,” *I’ll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition* [1930] (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997), xxxvii. All further citations to essays from this collection are from this edition and will be cited parenthetically (ITMS) in the text.



None of the Agrarians was a trained economist, though a few dabbled in the field when critics deemed them hopeless romantics and worse. Not surprisingly, then, their calls for an Agrarian society are based less on rigorous number crunching and economic analysis than on rhetorical strategies defending the traditional and attacking the modern. Here's where the East-West orientation comes in, as several of the Agrarians go to great lengths to establish the South as an embodiment of settled society linked with forces of the East – that is, Eastern settlement as opposed to Western expansion. A characteristic Agrarian analysis establishes the South as less American than European – not reflecting the Europe of the 1920s and 1930s, then in the throes of postwar upheaval and in route to a new war, but premodern, traditional Europe. How far back into the European past the Agrarians go to find their model depends on their subject: for politics, it's pre-French Revolution; for religion, it's pre-Reformation; for economics, it's pre-capitalism. In "Reconstructed but Unregenerate," John Crowe Ransom writes that "the South is unique on this continent for having founded and defended a culture which was according to the European principles of culture," explaining that the Europe of which he speaks is "the core of unadulterated Europeanism, with its self-sufficient, backward-looking, intensively provincial communities" (ITMS 3,5). Allen Tate, in "Remarks on the Southern Religion," goes even further, arguing that while the rest of America – and modern Europe, too – cut itself off from traditional European life by embracing a radical progressivism, the South stuck with its traditionalism and so *became* Europe. In his biography of Jefferson Davis, Tate argues that the split between the North and South that led to the Civil War was actually a conflict between East and West:

The War between the States has a remote origin, and it cannot be understood apart from the chief movements of European history since the Reformation. It was another war between America and Europe, and "America," in the second great attempt, won. The South was the last stronghold of European civilization in the western hemisphere, a conservative check upon the restless expansiveness of the industrial North, and the South had to go. . . . The War between the States was the second and decisive struggle of the Western spirit against the European – the spirit of restless aggression against a stable spirit of ordered economy – and the Western won.<sup>12</sup>

For the Agrarians the Western spirit of restless aggression threatened the modern South in the form of industrialism and its most terrifying manifestation – the modern industrial state. Industrialism was a modern-day manifestation of the

<sup>12</sup> Allen Tate, *Jefferson Davis: His Rise and Fall* (New York: Minton, Balch & Co, 1929), 301.

pioneering spirit that in pushing in ever westward first undid traditional societies in Europe and then later those of America. Rather than seeing explorers and pioneers as heroic figures of manifest destiny, as did most Americans of the day, the Agrarians found the pioneer as the embodiment of selfish individualism, destructive expansionism, and never-satisfied wanderlust – the embodiment, that is, of what they derogatorily deemed “progress”. Industrialism, as John Crowe Ransom writes, “is the contemporary form of pioneering; yet since it never consents to define its goal, it is a pioneering on principle, and with an accelerating speed.” To resist time and progress, Ransom calls for a “community of tough conservative habit” – a habit associated with traditional society and the East.

A similar opposition between East (that is, the South) and West and their imaginative manifestations – place and space, community and individualism, despair and hope, standing still and moving about, an unchanging past and the eternal present – can be found in much of the writing of the Southern literary renaissance. While most of the writers associated with the Agrarians, for example, privilege one pole of this opposition, virtually suppressing values associated with movement, other writers – typically, the major writers, including Faulkner – debate these issues more complexly. Most of those writers, as Warren did in his later work, look toward the borders of the two regions, if not literally then metaphorically, aware of the dangers of either extreme. Even Welty, the Southern writer perhaps most celebratory of the importance of place and placement, characteristically seeks to reconcile conflicting urges to stay put and to wander, exploring the dynamics between rooting oneself solidly in the community and lighting out from it. In Welty’s fiction, the worship of place always threatens to harden into uncritical provinciality, destructive in its stasis and inertia, as seen most obviously in all those ladies in her stories who flit about “policing” social mores and etiquette.

Opposed to those uncritically upholding the status quo are Welty’s wanderers, those who undertake journeys, literal and imaginative, beyond the borders of society and the socially acceptable. Always associated with movement and the crossing of borders, these wanderers are frequently specifically associated with the West and with westward movement. In *The Golden Apples*, for instance, King McClain’s wanderings become the stuff of legend, a legend of western sunsets and golden horizons. “I believe he’s been to California,” Fate Rainey says of King. “Don’t ask me why. But I picture him there. I see King in the West, out where it’s gold and all that”.<sup>13</sup> And when King returns to Morgana and lurks about

<sup>13</sup> Eudora Welty, *The Golden Apples* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1949), 11. All further citations to this work are from this edition and will be cited parenthetically (GA) in the text.

trying to see his wife Snowdie, Fate characterizes the town's efforts to keep him away from her (and thus out of his influence) by saying, "We shut the West out of Snowdie's eyes of course" (GA 14).

There's much that is undeniably glorious about King and those other "golden" figures who wander throughout Welty's fiction. They are independent and free-spirited, flaunting convention and restraint through joyous and uninhibited sensuality. They strive to live as intensely as possible. And yet for all their vitality and independence, the wanderers remain just that – wanderers, adrift in the world, restless and unsatisfied, incapable of nurturing long-term, meaningful relationships with others and of rooting themselves to a particular place. Welty's wanderers remain fundamentally alone, outside of a nurturing community, and thus have little to shield them from their loneliness and separateness. Those of large spirit, like Virgie Rainey and King, suffer grandly, passionately embracing their imaginative dreams at whatever cost; those of lesser spirit, like King's sons Eugene and Ran, who are haunted by their father's wanderlust but lack his joyous and glorious passion, suffer mightily, unable to be happy wandering or settling into place.

Can one indeed be a settled wanderer? Welty's true heroes and heroines are those who somehow are just that, living both "placed" and "at large," usually rooted to a place yet imaginatively wandering – by no means an easy task, I should add. One such figure is Cassie Morrison in *The Golden Apples*, who while not so creatively rebellious and inspired as Virgie and the other wanderers, nonetheless is more reflective and observant – that is, more at home in the world and more focused. As Louis Rubin observes, Cassie "possesses the vision that understands what lies in and under the surfaces of her experience without at the same time being so driven and distracted by that knowledge that she cannot live in a place."<sup>14</sup> Cassie, in other words, wanders while remaining situated on firm ground.

For Welty and other writers of the Southern literary renaissance, place counts, whatever the urge to wander and whatever the danger of becoming trapped in place and tradition. There's no getting free of groundedness, or at least, there's no getting free of it and remaining healthy and whole. Wendell Berry speaks for scores of Southern writers when he says that "if you don't know where you are, you don't know who you are".<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Louis D. Rubin, Jr., "Art and Artistry in Morgana, Mississippi," in *A Gallery of Southerners* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), 65.

<sup>15</sup> Quoted in Wallace Stegner, "The Sense of Place," in *Where the Bluebird Sings to the Lemonade Springs: Living and Writing in the West*, 199.

But what of writers coming after the renaissance, those writing from the 1950s and afterwards? Although it would be hard to prove absolutely, I think it is fair to say that since the end of World War II, with the South developing into a much more prosperous and urban – and suburban – region (the Cotton Belt becoming the Sun Belt), the significance of place has been losing its ground in the Southern imagination. This is not to say that Southern writers are no longer portraying Southern characters in Southern settings (of course they are), but it is to suggest that these writers by and large are not valuing the mysteries of place and the value of being rooted as strongly as the earlier writers; nor are they focusing so much on the uniqueness of the Southern scene and on the power of specific locales to shape identity.

Given these developments, it's no surprise that contemporary Southern writers have more and more been striking out on their own, moving away from the imaginative shape of "classic" Southern literature, so secure in regional place, history, and memory. And one of the most stunning moves many of these writers are making is the turning to the West for imaginative subject and renewal. Almost all of the Western work by Southern writers, be it Westerns (set in the frontier past) or work of the contemporary West, engages and interrogates foundation myths of American identity and purpose. It's that engagement and interrogation to which I want to look at briefly, first with the writers of Westerns.

Contemporary Southern writers who have written Westerns include Cormac McCarthy, Madison Smartt Bell, Barry Hannah, Clyde Edgerton (and I'm going to add James Dickey, whose *Deliverance* is a Western set in the South, representing the first step West in contemporary Southern writing). While these writers no doubt use the genre in order to explore problems of masculinity, honor, and violence characteristically found in Westerns, they also more significantly use the Western to explore anxieties about the origins and construction of American society, particularly the embedded ideologies that define "progress" and civility – and what those ideologies mask and suppress in society's definition of itself. America, as Richard Rodríguez has written, has throughout its history been conceived longitudinally; and the myth of the West and westward expansion, of course, has in many ways become the myth of America.<sup>16</sup> By writing Westerns, Southern writers interrogate that history and its mythic construction, a construction that, as Donald Worster has pointed out, is so overwhelmingly optimistic as to be blinding.<sup>17</sup> (Of course, these Southern writers are not by any means the first to

<sup>16</sup> Richard Rodríguez, "True West: Relocating the Horizon of the American Frontier", *Harper's*, 293 (September 1996): 44.

<sup>17</sup> Donald Worster, "Beyond the Agrarian Myth," in *Under Western Skies: Nature and History in the West* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 7.

write Westerns that interrogate American culture and ideology – Westerns are so ideologically loaded that they do that almost by definition – but these writers are the first Southerners to do it. The Western, I should add, continues to be popular in America, even in these heady postmodern days. Indeed, postmodernism's delight in subverting forms and genres – exposing their fictionality – has led to the increased popularity of what critics now call “anti-Westerns,” works which employ parody and metafictional techniques to comment upon – some would say to revitalize – the form from contemporary perspectives.<sup>18</sup> Contemporary Southern writers are participating in this process.

All of the Southern writers who write Westerns work broadly within the Western's fundamental shape, though often they revise and work against the formulae. Westerns are typically manifestations of the fundamental American frontier narrative, a narrative which expresses in Richard Slotkin's evocative phrase, “regeneration through violence.” Slotkin sketches the basic narrative: “The American must cross the border into ‘Indian country’ and experience a ‘regression’ to a more primitive and natural condition of life so that the false values of the ‘metropolis’ can be purged and a new, purified social contract enacted. Although the Indian and the Wilderness are the settler's enemy, they also provide him with the new consciousness through which he will transform the world. The heroes of this myth-historical quest must therefore be ‘men (or women) who know Indians’ – characters whose experiences, sympathies, and even allegiances fall on both sides of the Frontier”.<sup>19</sup> This blurring of the savage and the civilized in the frontier hero – and more generally throughout the frontier – becomes the primary focus of the Southern writers who write Westerns; all deliberately manipulate the Western's formulae in order to probe better the frontier's contested ideological battleground and the boundaries imposed by the forces of civilization. There's no better place from which to witness America's ideological construction – and destruction – at work; and no better place from which to critique that ideological enterprise.

In their interrogation of the American legend of the West, contemporary Southern writers focus primarily on the dark undercurrents typically masked in the optimistic versions of American expansionism, particularly the violent dispersal of Native Americans and the raw capitalistic enterprise that pillaged land and people and profit. Though anything but neo-Agrarians, these Southern writers nonetheless

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<sup>18</sup> For discussions of the anti-Western, see: Richard Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Atheneum, 1992); and Robert Murray Davis, *Playing Cowboys: Low Culture and High Art in the Western* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992).

<sup>19</sup> Richard Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation*, 14.

assume a vantage point not unlike that taken by the Agrarians to critique the American legend and America's destructive drive West. In this they bring to bear upon America's progressivist, forward-looking legends what C. Vann Woodward calls "the irony of Southern history," a perspective grounded in the Southern experience of poverty and defeat which stands diametrically opposed to the American legend of unlimited progress and success on the ever-moving frontier.<sup>20</sup>

Cormac McCarthy offers a good example. In *Blood Meridian*, McCarthy explores the violent origins of westward expansion which have been expunged from the national mythology celebrating the victory of civilization over savagery and the march of progress driving (and justifying) America's manifest destiny. McCarthy's interrogation explores the porous borders separating the civilized from the uncivilized, the human from the animal, stripping away the veneer of the civilized self, with characters devolving toward primal if not bestial identities.

Becoming bestial is indeed the fate of McCarthy's characters who cross the fragile boundary separating the civilized from the uncivilized, from the settled East into the unsettled West. One of *Blood Meridian*'s epigraphs is a 1982 newspaper citation reporting that "a 300,000-year-old fossil skull . . . shows evidence of being scalped".<sup>21</sup> The epigraph's significance for a novel about marauding scalphunters in the nineteenth century is clear: violence lies at the heart of humankind; it always has; it always will. With McCarthy's focus on the elemental nature of humanity, characters who roam about in his West often are described as creatures from long-lost, if not prehistoric, times; they're manifestations of our forebears, humanity in its original state. At one point, when Glanton and his men approach an army outpost, the lieutenant on duty notes their appearance: "Haggard and haunted and blackened by the sun . . . Even the horses looked alien to any he'd ever seen, decked as they were in human hair and teeth and skin. Save for the guns and buckles and a few pieces of metal in the harness of the animals there was nothing about these arrivals to suggest even the discovery of the wheel" (BM 232).

McCarthy's Western landscape is a vast wasteland, with only a few scattered towns and ranches marking humanity's presence. It's nature at its barest and most fundamental, described at one point as "desert absolute . . . devoid of feature" (BM 295). As Charles McGrath has noted, most of McCarthy's novels "describe a world that is, for all intents and purposes, either prehistoric or post-apocalyptic: a barren, hostile place in which civilization – and any recognizable notion of morality – is

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<sup>20</sup> C. Vann Woodward, "The Irony of Southern History," in *The Burden of Southern History*, rev. ed. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968), 187-211.

<sup>21</sup> Cormac McCarthy, *Blood Meridian; Or the Evening Redness in the West* (New York: Random House, 1985). All further citations to this novel are from this edition and will be cited parenthetically (BM) in the text.



scarcely discernible.” McGrath comments specifically on the blighted landscape of *Blood Meridian*, saying it is “straight out of ‘The Road Warrior’ – an end-of-the-road stretch in which ‘the ragged flames fled down the wind as if sucked by some maelstrom out there in the void, some vortex in that waste apposite to which man’s transit and his reckonings alike lay abrogate.’”<sup>22</sup> Indeed, two words – “void”, and “waste” – echo endlessly in McCarthy’s descriptions of the blighted landscape in *Blood Meridian*.

Given the blankness and emptiness of McCarthy’s West, the landscape at first glance could perhaps be understood as one of infinite possibility, maybe even a hopeful space for renewal and rebirth, a world clean of history and past failure. As soon becomes clear, however, McCarthy’s Western landscape is, recalling Wallace Stegner’s designation, less a “geography of hope” than a geography of terror, uncharted space described at one point as “stark and black and livid like a land of some other order out there whose true geology was not stone but fear” (BM 47). There’s no renewal and rebirth in *Blood Meridian*; there’s only death and destruction. While people can imaginatively configure the void of the West into whatever order and pattern they desire, that pattern is only a mirage, merely the stuff of dreams; and it’s a dream that lasts only until someone bigger and stronger comes along to impose a different order.

The American legend proclaims that people move West with hope, purpose, and direction; they want to start over, to feel vital, to remake themselves. There’s none of that in *Blood Meridian*, where those heading West are described as “itinerant degenerates bleeding westward like some heliotropic plague,” moving ever onward into the “bloodlands of the West” (BM 78, 138). To enter this wasteland is to wander about in unceasing motion, without purpose or direction other than to kill and keep from being killed. As Bernard Schopen has observed, the novel’s oft-repeated sentence, “They rode on,” underscores not only that the scalphunters are endlessly moving but “that destination is irrelevant, that the only activity of consequence is riding ‘on.’ So Glanton and his men seem to ride ‘to’ nowhere, to exist in a present in which the past is meaningless and the future imponderable.”<sup>23</sup> There’s no clear path to anywhere in *Blood Meridian*; at one point when two parties of men pass each other, they are described as each riding back “the way the other had come, pursuing as all travelers must inversions without end upon other men’s journeys” (BM 121).

<sup>22</sup> Charles McGrath, “Lone Rider” (Review of *The Crossing*), *The New Yorker* 70 (27 June 1994): 180.

<sup>23</sup> Bernard Schopen, “‘They Rode On’: *Blood Meridian* and the Art of Narrative,” *Western American Literature* 30 (Summer 1995): 189.

Crucial in McCarthy's representation of culture and legend is his narrative stance. As Dana Phillips observes, McCarthy writes with an "optical democracy", a perspective that foregrounds the immense history of the natural world; from this long view, the human is not privileged over the nonhuman – all existence stands equally in the same continuum. Matters of the spirit have little, if any significance, in this vast continuum. Phillips writes that "salvation history, which understands the natural world and man's travails in it as symbols of the spirit, has long been played out, as the ruined, eroded, and buzzard-draped mission churches in *Blood Meridian* suggest. Only natural history, which regards neither nature nor man as symbolic, is left."<sup>24</sup> Phillips goes on to argue that McCarthy's paradigm of natural history presents the contemporary world "as an ancient world not of myth but of rock and stone and those life forms that can endure the daily cataclysms of heat and cold and hunger, that can weather the everyday round of random, chaotic violence." McCarthy, Phillips concludes, "is not a writer of the 'modern' or 'postmodern' eras, but of the Holocene."<sup>25</sup> The repeated descriptions of Glanton's men disappearing into the landscape point to the disappearance of human significance from the narrative's immense perspective.

In scattering human existence into the vastness of geologic time, McCarthy's far-reaching perspective – one that takes a Southern interest in the historical imagination to its limits, to the beginning of time – underscores the flimsiness of culturally-constructed borders and boundaries, particularly those fundamental to a culture's understanding of itself, those separating civilized and uncivilized, human and animal, reason and madness, and so on. Rather than resting upon and establishing essential truth, these borders merely validate humanity's puny impositions upon a finally untamable and unfathomable world, point underscored in *Blood Meridian's* epilogue.

The epilogue describes a man punching a line of post holes into a prairie littered with bones, his effort described as seeming like "less the pursuit of some continuance than the verification of a principle, a validation of sequence and causality as if each round and perfect hole owed its existence to the one before it there on that prairie upon which are the bones and the gatherers of bones and those who do not gather" (BM 337). The hole digger's faith in sequence and causality is indeed just that – faith, not order itself. His effort to line the plain calls to mind the project of the Federal government to divide up the vacant lands west of the Mississippi in perfect grids of 160 acres each for homesteading, with no

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<sup>24</sup> Dana Phillips, "History and the Ugly Facts of Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian*," *American Literature* 68 (June 1996): 441, 448.

<sup>25</sup> Dana Phillips, "History and the Ugly Facts of Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian*," 452.



regard for the lay of the land, or anything else for that matter. The government's plan embodies the Enlightenment dream for perfect order, for nature and society ordered with geometric precision and beauty. This foolhardy graphing of the natural world, an action perhaps as crucial to the opening of the West as the savage Indian was described in the rest of *Blood Meridian*, leads in McCarthy's eyes not to an agrarian paradise but to the killing fields, prairies littered with bones, bones that the post hole digger ignores as he works to lay down his straight line. This line across the prairie is McCarthy's line of Western history, his blood meridian, a line following the dream of progress, a line pursuing order and empire that leads straight to chaos and mayhem.

In ways typically less violent and dramatic, Southern writers of the contemporary West also work with and revise fundamental American mythology, usually that of the Western dream of unlimited freedom and possibility. Driving the narrative in almost all of their work is the dream of stepping free from the confining nets of culture and of starting over with the past left tidily behind. Almost all of the works, in the end, make it clear that this dream is indeed just that – a dream, and one that taken to its extreme becomes a nightmare, calling to mind Bernard DeVoto's observation "that the only true individualists in the West had wound up on one end of a rope whose other end was in the hands of a bunch of cooperators."<sup>26</sup> For all their apparent turning from traditional Southern ideals of place and continuity, Southern writers writing about the contemporary West in the end embrace something very close to those very ideals, even if the place where their characters finally settle is often far from Dixie.

Structuring almost all of these works is a tension between the desire to bolt for freedom – a centrifugal force, flying outward – and the desire to settle within a community – a centripetal force, pulling in. If most of those works begin with a straight line heading West, the tension between these two forces characteristically pulls that line back into a circle, the two forces now taut and balanced around a center point of home and community. The completed circle represents not enclosure but balance – balance between freedom and responsibility, conscience and selfishness, remembering and forgetting. And so, as much as these works center on flight and escape, they end up being most fundamentally about settling in and establishing communities. Not that the flights West are meaningless; they're almost always necessary for breaking away from rigid and confining lives, but they're almost always finally abandoned for a life in place, not space.

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<sup>26</sup> Wallace Stegner, "Thoughts in a Dry Land," in *Where the Bluebird Sings to the Lemonade Springs: Living and Writing in the West* (New York: Random House, 1992), 50.

Barbara Kingsolver's three Western novels, *The Bean Trees*, *Animal Dreams*, and *Pigs in Heaven*, perhaps best exemplify this motion. In these works, Kingsolver revises the American dream of individual freedom into the dream of putting down roots, of building families, and of establishing communities. A review of *The Bean Tree* called it "the Southern novel taken west,"<sup>27</sup> and in many ways that's an apt description of all of Kingsolver's Western novels, particularly in their celebration of family and community. How fitting that in *The Bean Trees* the image Taylor discovers for the community she helps build in Arizona is the wisteria, that hardy Southern vine. She reads to her daughter Turtle about the rhizobia bacteria that nurture the wisteria's roots:

"There's a whole invisible system for helping out the plant that you'd never guess was there. . . . It's just the same as with people. The way Edna has Virgie, and Virgie has Edna, and Sandi has Kid Central Statio, and everybody has Mattie. And on and on."

The wisteria vines on their own would just barely get by, is how I explained it to Turtle, but put them together with rhizobia and they make miracles.<sup>28</sup>

The miracles of human community are exactly the subject matter of Kingsolver's novels.

In *The Bean Trees* and *Pigs in Heaven*, novels that follow the exploits of Taylor and her adopted daughter Turtle, Kingsolver suggests that the American experience of moving West has less to do with the dream of starting anew in a world of endless possibility than it does with being a refugee, with being displaced. This is what Taylor discovers in her flight from Kentucky to Tucson. Taylor has fled West to get away from the confines of her hometown, particularly the fate of early pregnancy and marriage; she wants to start a new life, entirely on her own, in a sense rootless.

At the end of *The Bean Trees* the once footloose Taylor realizes, primarily through understanding her own displacement and that of several Guatemalan refugees whom she has helped, the significance of having a place, of being part of a community, of having a network of friends and family for nurture and support. It's here that Taylor tells Turtle about the wisteria, and it's here that Turtle sings a new version of her vegetable soup song, now mixing in along with the names of

<sup>27</sup> Jack Butler, "She Hung the Moon and Plugged in All the Stars" (review of *The Bean Trees*), *New York Times Book Review*, 10 April 1988, 15.

<sup>28</sup> Barbara Kingsolver, *The Bean Trees* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 228. All further citations to this novel are from this edition and will be cited parenthetically (BT) in the text.

vegetables the names of all of her and Taylor's friends – a child's version of the American melting pot. It's America as melting pot, as a nation of displaced people who have come together to forge a communal identity which, as Meredith Sue Willis points out, "recognizes no foreigners and is flexible enough to make a place for everyone"<sup>29</sup> – rather than America as frontier society, a nation of people forever on the move – that Kingsolver celebrates. For her, regeneration comes not through violence but through reintegration – the reintegration into family and community which closes all three of Kingsolver's Western novels.

In its basic shape, the vision of community offered by Kingsolver and other contemporary Southern writers shares much with that held by the writers of the Southern literary renaissance, with both visions negotiating the borders of place and space. But the recent writers, in part because they break more dramatically and fully from the boundaries of the South (geographically, psychologically, and culturally), recognize more thoroughly the value of freedom of movement. That freedom of movement, by analogy, points toward a more pronounced freedom of thought which is less resistant to time and change and more open to cultural diversity and adaptation. Contemporary Southern writers know full well that place and space need each other for each to be fully present, on an individual as well as a cultural level. Their work embodies what geographer Yi-Fu Tuan tells us: "From the security and stability of place, we are aware of the openness, freedom, and the threat of space, and vice-versa."<sup>30</sup> And it also embodies what Eudora Welty knows: "Sense of place gives equilibrium; extended, it is sense of direction too."<sup>31</sup>

That contemporary Southern writers writing about the West (particularly those writing about the contemporary West) in the end revise, rather than completely dismantle, a characteristically Southern vision of community points to a striking, almost paradoxical, imaginative motion in their work: the decline in postmodern America of a Southern sense of place, enabling Southern writers to move imaginatively outside their homeland, ends up swinging the writers back toward a grounding in that very same Southern sense of place. "I think if I'd stayed in the South," Allen Tate once said, "I might have become anti-Southern, but I became a Southerner again by going East."<sup>32</sup> Contemporary Southern writers, in

<sup>29</sup> Meredith Sue Willis, "Barbara Kingsolver, Moving On," *Appalachian Journal* 22 (Fall 1994): 86.

<sup>30</sup> Yi-Fu Tuan, "Place and Culture: Analeptic for Individuality and the World's Indifference," in *Mapping American Culture*, ed. Wayne Franklin and Michael Steiner (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1992), 48-49.

<sup>31</sup> Eudora Welty, "Place in Fiction", *The Eye of the Story: Selected Essays and Reviews* (New York: Random House, 1978), 128-29.

<sup>32</sup> Quoted in Irv Broughton, "An Interview with Allen Tate," *Western Humanities Review* 32 (1978), 329.

their journeys West (not East), likewise become more aware of their Southernness, of their grounding in the Southern imaginative landscape. These writers don't become hard-line Southerners such as Tate became, but rather renewed Southerners, free and unhound Southerners, Southerners remade through their imaginative encounters with the West.

In their vision of community balancing place and space, contemporary Southern writers of the West in a sense merge Southern and Western mythologies, creating a new frontier mythology more humane and just than either the Southern or Western alone. No doubt these writers at times skirt over some tough matters (social and economic injustice, racial violence, etc.) of the larger Southern and more generally American societies in which their vision of community is embedded. Nonetheless, in their looking toward a more just and humane way of living, contemporary Southern writers of the West suggest a first step in the remaking of America and its mythologies.

Intriguingly, this blending of imaginative visions seems to be also at work in the Western literary tradition, which, as far as I can tell, has been lately becoming much more Southern in feel and vision. Not too long ago, Wallace Stegner, perhaps the West's greatest writer, wrote that Western literature is characteristically "not about place but about motion, not about fulfillment but about desire. There is always a seeking, generally unsatisfied."<sup>33</sup> In the past few years, however, that situation seems to be changing, with Western writing focusing more on staying put, on transforming space into place by grounding communities in shared histories. In *The Book of Yaak*, Rick Bass writes that "more and more the human stories in the West [are] becoming those not of passing through and drifting on but of settling in and making a stand."<sup>34</sup> It's a new Western vision. It's an old Southern vision. It's both. This wondrous imaginative confluence, reshaping both the Southern and Western literary imaginations, just may be voicing the new legend Americans need: a national myth centered in individuality *and* community, freedom *and* security, space *and* place. I don't want to call this new mythology the vision of the Sunbelt; I want to call it the vision of America, of America renewed and regenerated not through violence but through imaginative wonder – the wonder of nature, the wonder of home, the wonder of wisteria, the wonder of us all.

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<sup>33</sup> Wallace Stegner, "Coming of Age: The End of the Beginning" in *Where the Bluebird Sings to the Lemonade Springs: Living and Writing in the West* (New York: Random House, 1992), 138.

<sup>34</sup> Rick Bass, *The Book of Yaak* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1996), 13.



## Democracy and Culture

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Over a hundred and fifty years ago, Alexis de Tocqueville wrote in his study of *Democracy in America*: "I do not believe that it is a necessary effect of a democratic social condition and of democratic institutions to diminish the number of those who cultivate the fine arts, but these causes exert a powerful influence on the manner in which these arts are cultivated. Many of those who had already contracted a taste for the fine arts are impoverished...the number of consumers increases but opulent and fastidious consumers become rare.... The productions of artists are more numerous, but the merit of each production is diminished.... *In aristocracies, a few great pictures are produced; in democratic countries a vast number of insignificant ones.*"

These Delphic remarks, inscribed after a visit to our shores in the early years of the Republic by a foreigner who is still among the most prophetic commentators on American life, in effect defined the problems that serious or high culture would henceforth encounter in an increasingly massified and industrialized society. What Tocqueville prophesied was that among the things a political democracy might have to sacrifice to egalitarian needs would be a civilization of real importance. American culture, in his view, would become flooded with insignificant forms of expression, genuine works of art being rare and often unacknowledged, and artistic standards would be determined not by the the

intrinsic quality of the art but rather by the extrinsic size of the audience. Put another way, the evolution of American culture would be based on a continuing tension, and later on a state of hostility, between the minority expression called high art, subscribed to by a decreasing number of "fastidious consumers," and what constituted the culture of the masses.

Tocqueville, though an aristocrat himself, was highly partial to the new political experiment being tested in this country, but he yearned for a system that could join a democratic politics with a meritocratic culture. He correctly saw that, without access to the civilizing influence of great artworks, the voting majority in this country were bound to remain benighted. Only art and education could provide the synthesis needed to evolve a more enlightened and cultivated electorate. There were times when this synthesis looked achievable. In the 19th Century, certainly, high art and popular culture seemed to coexist in healthy, if often separate, compartments. Not only were Hawthorne and Emerson traded in the same bookstalls as penny dreadful novels, but travelling troupes performing Shakespeare, admittedly in bowdlerized form, attracted wildly enthusiastic audiences from the most primitive frontiers.

For a period in the twentieth century, high art and popular culture were even to enjoy a brief honeymoon. Certainly, serious American artists in the first half of this century drew great infusions of energy from indigenous American forms. Try to imagine Gershwin without the impact of black music, or Copeland without access to Mexican and Latin American dance rhythms, or Bernstein without the influence of jazz, cabaret, and rock. T. S. Eliot's metrics, like those of e. e. cummings, owe a lot to vaudeville and the music hall – his dramatic fragment, *Sweeney Agonistes*, even climaxes in a minstrel show. It is also true that most 20th Century American novels, beginning with those of John Dos Passos, have been deeply indebted, in their episodic structure and cinematic sweep, to Hollywood movies. And of course Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, Roy Lichtenstein, indeed virtually everyone associated with the Pop Art movement, have been obligated to such popular visual forms as cartoons, comic strips, newspaper print, and advertising.

And the channels of exchange have flowed in the other direction too. Neither American advertising nor the world of fashion would have generated many original ideas indeed without open access to the iconography of high art. No sooner does a new visual artist emerge in this country than his or her breakthroughs are appropriated by Madison Avenue and Seventh Avenue. Similarly, the history of the movies would have been sadly impoverished had studios been unable to feed off contemporary literature and theatre. So intimate were the relations between high and popular culture, in fact, that it was sometimes



difficult to determine whether an artist like Andy Warhol belonged more to Bohemia or Suburbia, whether his true home was a Greenwich Village Factory or the creative department of a Madison Avenue advertising agency. Then again such respected figures as F. Scott Fitzgerald, William Faulkner, Nathaniel West among countless other American writers – not to mention expatriate Europeans like Bertolt Brecht and Aldous Huxley – spent almost as much time huddling in script conferences in Hollywood as bending over writing desks in their studies.

The interdependence of popular and high art in our country had both positive and negative effects. One obvious advantage was economic. The commercial system subsidized a lot of needy artists whose royalty income would have normally been insufficient to pay for typewriting paper. It is true that the same system also distracted these artists from their real work, though less than is commonly assumed. Fitzgerald wasted his time writing such third-rate movies as *Winter Carnival*, but his motion picture studio experience also inspired a glorious Hollywood novel, *The Last Tycoon*. It could be argued that working with such popular forms as the detective novel, science fiction, and the screenplay, provided a stream of energy that kept high culture hard-boiled, vigorous and vital. Still, the relationship between the artist and the commodity culture was always uneasy. And it soon began to sour, curdled by a number of intellectuals who regarded the participating artist as a sell-out or, worse, a collaborator in a mass art that was having a brutalizing effect on American minds.

The fear that popular culture would absorb high art had always worried social commentators, from Tocqueville on, but that fear intensified during the culture wars of the fifties. At that time, some may remember, such crusading highbrows as Dwight Macdonald began protesting the power of “Masscult” and “Midcult” to debase and overshadow “High Cult” (even Macdonald’s terms were influenced by the mass media), while their opponents, usually representatives of the value-free social sciences, were defending popular or mass culture as the more democratic art. And more democratic it was if you measured culture by statistical instead of qualitative criteria – the commodities most often consumed by the masses.

A great poet like Walt Whitman was also capable of believing in the possibility of a democratic American art, but somehow it was more conceivable in the 19th Century to imagine democratic vistas without clouding their horizons. In our time, this has become increasingly difficult. The cultural wars of the fifties, raging in such periodicals as *Partisan Review* and *Commentary*, resulted in a hostile backlash against intellect, art, and high culture, eventually spreading, as we shall see, to include the whole construct of Eurocentric civilization and its dead white male artists and intellectuals, as they were scornfully identified. It was a time



when competing special interest groups were to clamor for recognition of their own forms of cultural expression, often identifying traditional and avant-garde art as “elitist,” to use the populist epithet that was henceforth to control the terms of this debate. This action culminated in a major retreat – the surrender of most of the standards and values that make a serious culture possible. I do not mean to suggest that inspired artists were no longer able to function in America, but rather that what was once a hospitable climate for their work turned mean and indifferent. Native talent may be as abundant as ever, but never in recent years has it been so inadequately evaluated, published, produced, disseminated, and supported.

Although the ongoing war on the arts contains important economic components related to the recession, its thrust has been mainly political. Anti-art forces advance by means of a three-pronged incursion – from the right, left, and center of the political spectrum, all claiming endorsement from the majority. One of the homes for these incursions is the National Endowment for the Arts – and that is curious and sad, since in its early years this agency did a lot to maintain and encourage artistic standards. Under the Johnson and Nixon Administrations, when the NEA was run first by Roger Stevens, later by Nancy Hanks, and the total budget never rose above \$100 million; the agency was not yet significant enough to be treated by Congress as a political foot-ball. After the Carter administration appointed the populist Livingston Biddle as Chairman, however, the emphasis of the Endowment shifted from the support and encouragement of serious American art to its “dissemination,” which is to say it shifted from the artist to the public. Simultaneous with this change, after the NEA budget began to inch towards the current \$176 million mark (where it has been flat or shrinking since 1980), the Congress began to make serious inroads into the decisions of the Endowment. Biddle explained his populist stance by announcing, “the voice of the constituent is the one most clearly heard by Congress,” which was his way of saying that instead of supporting the artist, the NEA was now courting the voter and those who represented him.

In short, the National Endowment for the Arts, in company with its sister agency the National Endowment for the Humanities, was now in process of being “democratized.” But this process went deeper than the intervention of pressure groups, vested interests, and meddling politicians. It was the very politics of consensus American democracy that was began to influence the policies and appointments of these federal agencies. Once fully professional and oriented towards the artist, the Endowments were beginning to spread their relatively meager moneys among educationalists, audiences, and amateurs as well. This change was inspired by the essentially political assumption that any resources

generated by the people should directly benefit the people, as there were not enough precedents – in medical, space, and scientific research – for identifying and supporting those best qualified to make advances in specialized fields. The concept of excellence and expertise – Tocqueville's meritocratic achievement within a democratic society – was perfectly in harmony with our founding ideals. Indeed, it informed the Constitutional notion of an Electoral College, a group of qualified and informed people elected by the voting majority to choose the Chief Executive. It was a concept now being abandoned in favor of such extra-artistic concerns as advocacy, arts appreciation, geographical distribution, dissemination through the media, and, later, multiculturalism and cultural diversity.

The democratization – more accurately *politicization* – of the Endowment exploded with full force after President Bush appointed John E. Frohnmayer as Chairman of the NEA. It was then that controversial grants to Robert Mapplethorpe and Andres Serrano, among others, aroused the fiery wrath of such paleolithic conservatives as North Carolina Senator Jesse Helms, who took the position that the Government should not fund any artistic work offensive to the majority. Such was Helms' power that he even persuaded Congress to impose content restrictions on grantees in the form of a new obscenity clause which all applicants were obliged to sign. To his eternal credit, the late Joe Papp was willing to sacrifice Endowment funding rather than endorse this document. And following a successful class action suit initiated by Bella Lewitzky and others, a Federal lower court in California threw out the decency test as a violation of free expression. In addition to its ruling, the court should have required Senator Helms to write the first amendment on the blackboard a hundred times.

Instead of letting the lower court ruling stand, President Clinton's Attorney General, Janet Reno, amazingly appealed this case to the Supreme Court. Perhaps she was reflecting the unthinking attitudes of an administration that has used the word "arts" as infrequently as the Reagan administration used the word "AIDS." Anyhow, instead of spanking Helms, the Supreme Court awarded him a gold star. The justices, in an eight to one decision last June, upheld the decency test in distributing arts grants through the National Endowment. This was the second bad decision the Court made in the past year having to do with relations between private behavior and public morality. In the first, the Court ruled that Paula Jones's civil case could proceed before President Clinton left office, on the reasoning that it would not interfere with his Presidency – a judicial blunder swiftly exposed by the events of the past few months. History will take a bit longer to demonstrate the folly of the Court's decision regarding the arts.

Some concurring justices, believing the 1990 statute contained only "advisory language," excused their decision by saying the clause was essentially

“toothless” anyway. Sandra Day O’Connor, for example, noted that the statute would violate the first amendment only if it actually imposed “a penalty on disfavored viewpoints,” implying that artists could always appeal to the legal system if they felt their speech rights had been infringed. That may be an option, but why open the door to more litigation when court calendars are already overcrowded with wasteful and senseless suits?

Other justices, I believe, interpreted the Court’s decision more accurately, if more ominously for the arts. Disputing O’Connor’s sanguine view, Antonio Scalia said that he would consider even an outright ban on Federal financing of indecent art to be constitutional. Clarence Thomas agreed. Only Justice David H. Souter recognized that such a statute, however interpreted or administered, was a form of content restriction, hence a clear instance of viewpoint discrimination, and should have been struck down.

None of the justices mentioned the really vexing question, which is how it ever came to be assumed that the public at large is the proper agency to decide on morality in the arts. The whole notion of “general standards of decency and respect,” otherwise known as “community standards,” has never been sufficiently debated in the United States, though this dubious concept has hitherto been eloquently denounced by many philosophers and artists, including John Stuart Mill, Frederick Nietzsche, Henrik Ibsen, George Bernard Shaw, Kierkegaard, Unamuno, Santayana, and H. L. Mencken, among others. It was “community standards” that for years banned works by D. H. Lawrence, Henry Miller, and, most notably, James Joyce, whose *Ulysses*, perhaps the greatest literary work of the century, could not get published in the United States until ten years after it was written because it was considered to be a “dirty book.” In a landmark 1933 decision, United States District Judge John M. Woolsey ruled that while “somewhat emetic, nowhere does [*Ulysses*] tend to be an aphrodisiac,” concluding that the book was therefore not obscene in the legal definition of the word, namely as “tending to stir the sex impulses or lead to sexually impure and lustful thoughts.”

This judicial squeamishness about “sexually impure and lustful thoughts” would have legally prevented us from buying books by Rabelais, Aretino, or Boccaccio, among other authors more erotic than cathartic. In his classic essay, “Pornography and Obscenity,” D. H. Lawrence ridiculed a British Home Secretary who favored a similar definition of obscenity. Outraged by some improper literature, that official had bellowed: “And these two young people, who had been perfectly pure up till that time, after reading this book went out and had sexual intercourse together!!!” – to which Lawrence jubilantly retorted: “One up to them!” Lawrence was hardly a proselytizer for promiscuity. He probably conformed to a

stricter moral code than any of his detractors (expressing the curious opinion, for example, that masturbation was "the most dangerous sexual vice that society can be afflicted with"). But Lawrence also knew that behind the foaming fulminations of the Comstocks and Grundys and Bowlders lurked a true obscenity, perhaps the basic *raison d'être* of pornography, namely "the grey disease of sex hatred," the desire to keep sex "a dirty little secret." (To him, the emancipated bohemians were not a whole lot better since, in killing off the dirty little secret through public exposure, promiscuity and group sex, they also managed to kill off whatever was dark, mysterious, and private in the erotic life).

Lawrence was even more passionate on the subject of "community standards." First of all, he wondered how a community can decide on an issue of "obscenity" when no one knows what the term means. Supposedly derived from the Latin *obscena*, meaning that which might not be represented on the stage, it is a word originally driven by the traditional Puritan hostility towards theatrical representation. Since we're not all Puritans, how does the entire society manage to arrive at a single moral standard? "What is obscene to Tom is not obscene to Lucy or Joe," Lawrence wrote, "and really, the meaning of a word has to wait for majorities to decide it." Majorities, majorities. Only what Yeats called "the mad intellect of democracy" could ever have devised the caprice that the mass of people corner wisdom in this matter. "We have to leave everything to the majority," Lawrence stormed, "everything to the majority, everything to the mob, the mob, the mob.... If the lower ten million doesn't know better than the upper ten men, then there's something wrong with mathematics. Take a vote on it. Show hands, and prove my count. *Vox populi, vox Dei.*"

The talented ten to whom Lawrence alluded have generally been scornful of this populist voice of God. "Who told you art is in the service of the *people*?" asks a character in Philip Roth's *I Married a Communist*. "Art is in the service of *art* – otherwise there is no art worthy of *anyone's* attention." Like his character Coriolanus, Shakespeare also had little respect for "the many-headed multitude." Mill, castigating "the tyranny of the majority," characterized public opinion as "collective mediocrity." Ibsen insisted that "the majority is always wrong." Shaw joked that "Forty million Frenchmen can't be right." Mencken inveighed against "boobocracy." In response to which contemporary populists and majoritarians everywhere would undoubtedly unleash their favorite epithet: "*Elitists.*"

The attack on the arts from the right of the political spectrum was basically moralistic. "If someone wants to write nasty things on the men's room wall, the taxpayers do not provide the crayons," said Helms whose disdain extended to all forms of modern art that didn't resemble the pastoral North Carolina scenes on the walls of his office. A letter signed by twenty-seven senators and written on the

stationary of Senator Alphonse D'Amato of New York endorsed Helms' position, saying: "This matter does not involve freedom of expression. It does involve whether taxpayer's money should be forced to support such trash."

"It is not the function of art," another political critic affirmed not too long ago, "to wallow in dirt for dirt's sake, never its task to paint men only in states of decay.... Art must be the handmaiden of sublimity and beauty and thus promote whatever is natural and healthy. If art does not do this, then any money spent on it is squandered." This comes not from the senatorial chambers of Jesse Helms or Alphonse D'Amato. It is from a speech made in Nuremberg by Adolph Hitler, inveighing against "degenerate" modern art. Clearly, those who pretend to speak on behalf of the "people" eventually end up thinking they know what the people should think.

Frohnmayr not only punished those institutions responsible for the Mapplethorpe and Serrano shows, but cancelled a grant for a New York art exhibit because he found the *brochure* too political (it was critical of legislators like Helms). Then an odd thing happened. As Frohnmayr matured in office, he was converted into a born-again civil libertarian, defending the rights of beleaguered artists so vigorously that President Bush, yielding to pressure from Pat Buchanan, fired him. Frohnmayr's temporary successor, Acting Chairwoman Ann-Imelda Radice, was, if anything, even more responsive to rightwing pressures on the arts. But despite her need to placate the Conservatives, it was under her brief regime that populist policies gained the greatest purchase at the Endowment. First she declared that the agency would henceforth be more responsive to majoritarian or popular demands when handing out money, thus tainting the originally counter-market strategy of the NEA with marketplace values. Then she made it official policy to fund every species of ethnic and racial expression, regardless of its intrinsic value as art.

The attack on the arts from the politically correct left proved just as disturbing in its way as that from rightwing minions of moral correctness. And it is significant that both sides claimed the endorsement of the democratic majority. For the Right, this usually meant those clean-cut Americans who sip vanilla sodas in Norman Rockwell paintings and Thornton Wilder plays, when they are not walking a dog named Spot down a brightly-lit Main Street. For the Left, the majority was represented not by white Protestant Anglo-Saxons, but rather by those previously excluded from the cultural banquet, a diverse mixture of racial, sexual, and ethnic constituencies summed up in the catchwords "multiculturalism" and "cultural diversity." What often occurs under the umbrella of these terms is less a widening than a narrowing of artistic possibility – "a violent turn," as one critic recently noted, "against Western liberalism and its tradition of rationality,

respect for individual rights, and affirmation of a common good that transcends the accidents of ethnic and racial identity.”

The cultural product of this tribalist approach could sometimes be regarded as art. More often, it was a form of handicrafts. A recent NEA brochure proudly boasts financial assistance to “Hmong needlework, coastal sea-grass basketry, southeast Alaska native dance, American Indian basketry and woodcraft, Pacific Island canoe building and Appalachian banjo playing.” I’m surprised it leaves out Yoknapatawpha Country bear hunting, Venice Beach snorkeling, or Hillbilly belly scratching.

Now no sensible person denies that we live in a diverse society, or that works of art can be created by people of every color and persuasion. It is essential that talented artists be honored regardless of origins; intercultural exchange can be a source of great artistic refreshment. Identifying and encouraging such talent is precisely what Martin Luther King meant when he said that people should be judged by the content of their character rather than the color of their skin. But he was talking about equality of opportunity not proportionate representation, for artistic achievement is not, like the right to vote, guaranteed to every American. It must be earned. Multicultural grantsmanship sometimes helps to increase the visibility of deserving minority artists, especially in artistic institutions, which is a highly welcome move. But indiscriminate awards, made without regard for quality, are an extension of our passion for social engineering. As H. L. Mencken wrote, “Every third American devotes himself to improving and lifting up his fellow citizens, usually by force; the messianic delusion is our national disease.” Trying to compensate for the failures of society in an area least qualified to be an avenue of social change, the multiculturalists threaten to sacrifice hardwon achievements for the sake of evangelical gestures.

What accounts for this confusion of realms? I believe it results from our incorrigible tendency to muddle art and politics. For a number of years now, American culture has been asked to shoulder obligations once considered the exclusive responsibility of the American political system, which is another way of demanding that the arts be “democratized.” This activist impulse in culture has increased exponentially in recent years, one suspects, because legislative solutions to the nation’s social problems have been largely abandoned or tabled. Instead of developing adequate Federal programs to combat homelessness, crime, disease, drug abuse, and racial tension, our governing bodies have responded with depleted federal subsidies, dwindling programs for the poor and unemployed, congressional boondoggles, and other instances of systemic inertia. Aside from the debates over competing health care programs, and a projected welfare reform plan that would reduce rather than increase payments, the most significant action



advanced for solving America's more urgent social needs has been to increase the cultural representation of minority groups.

This strategy for ignoring social problems clearly intensified during the Reagan-Bush administrations, with their neglect of economic inequities and indifference to social injustice. The powerful conservative revulsion against traditional liberalism led not only to a restructuring of national power but to a redistribution of the country's wealth, while the burgeoning deficit and a growing taxpayers' revolt frightened lawmakers away from passing any incremental social programs. Add to these political and economic retrenchments a new ideological vacuum created by the collapse of the Soviet Union. Not only was Marxist economic theory discredited by the failure of Communism, but so were the related though considerably milder platforms of Socialism, Liberal humanism, the Welfare State, the New Deal, the Great Society, perhaps even the whole construct of Democratic politics. For the first time in more than a hundred years, there exists no viable theoretical alternative to *laissez-faire* Capitalism with its unregulated greed and unequal income structure, no collective idealism to temper unrestrained individualism, no Marx or Keynes to dispute with Adam Smith or Milton Friedman, not even a radical national magazine (if we discount the intellectually impoverished *Nation* and *Village Voice*) that still gives voice to opinion on the Left.

This is not the place to debate the strengths and weaknesses of opposing political ideologies. What I am arguing, rather, is that the weakening of the political Left and the absence of a genuine political dialectic, has led to paralysis in an arena of social action usually serviced by legislation. It is because of this inertia that the non-profit cultural sector, which is to say high art, is being pressed into compensatory service, as a way of sustaining hopes disappointed by the political system. The result is a scene that would be comical were it not so disheartening – a limping gaggle of have-not geese honking loudly for the same small handful of feed. Not only is America's underclass crippled by poverty and hopelessness, but Federal money for artistic projects remains pitifully inadequate by comparison with other civilized countries, while the National Endowment for the Arts continues to stumble on the brink of extinction every time it invests two hundred dollars in a controversial grant. Staggering under massive deficits, and teetering on the edge of bankruptcy, our non-profit cultural institutions are nevertheless being asked to validate themselves not through their creative contributions to civilization but on the basis of their community services. It was once again Alexis de Tocqueville who described this condition when he predicted that serious art in the United States would always be asked to justify itself on the basis of utilitarian criteria: "Democratic nations," he wrote in *Democracy in America*, "will habitually

prefer the useful to the beautiful, and they will require that the beautiful be useful."

Current pressures on the arts to be useful cause funders to measure their value by outreach programs, children's projects, inner-city audience development, access for the handicapped, artists in schools, etc, in addition to demanding proofs of progress in achieving affirmative action quotas among artistic personnel, board members, and audiences. This social view of culture has some undeniable virtues, and there are unquestionably deep humanitarian impulses governing the new philanthropy. Given the limited resources available for both social and cultural programs, the civic-minded agencies that disburse grant money no doubt sincerely believe that a single dollar can fulfill a double purpose, just as many contemporary artists would prefer their works to function not only as a form of self-expression but also for the public good.

Looked at in the long perspective, however, the push to transform culture into an agency of social welfare is probably doomed to failure. To demand that creative expression be a medium for promoting minority self-esteem may seem like a thrifty way to respond to the urgent needs of the underclasses. But whatever the immediate effects of such well-meaning civic experiments, they are not longlasting. Culture is not designed to do the work of politics, nor will promoting inspirational role models even begin to compensate for the unconscionable neglect of arts education in our schools. No wonder inner city children prefer rap or salsa when no teachers have been employed by the system to expose them to serious theatre, art, or music. No wonder the infrequent visit of a performance artist or a dance company on a grant often leaves them baffled and sullen when no money exists for stimulating their imaginations. Anything short of daily arts education in the public school curriculum will register as little more than tokenism. Indeed, such cosmetic procedures may even be exacerbating the problem by varnishing its surface instead of probing its roots.

Whatever the fruitless impact on education, when philanthropy begins to administer non-profit funding by utilitarian rather than traditional aesthetic criteria, it is almost certainly likely to doom the arts as we know them. It is very ominous indeed that the word "quality," the standard by which art has habitually been measured, is now avoided in most funding circles, being considered a code word for racism and elitism. This is true not only in federal, state, and city cultural agencies, where politics dictates that the arts will be subject to populist and egalitarian pressures, but also in most private funding organizations. With a few lonely exceptions (most notably the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation), large and small private foundations now give their money not to general support as in the past but overwhelmingly to special programs conceived by the officers of the



foundation. Active rather than receptive in relation to the choices of artists and the programming of artistic institutions, the foundation world is now engaged in what we can only regard as coercive philanthropy. Artists and institutions are obliged to follow the dictates of officious program directors, or be exiled to an economic Gulag.

It is difficult to criticize this kind of philanthropy without being accused of insensitivity to minority artists. So at the risk of stating the obvious, let me once again emphasize my agreement that there is no shortage of truly accomplished talents of every race, sex, and ethnic background in the United States. On the other hand, I believe I speak on behalf of qualified artists of every race, sex, and ethnic background when I question the *criteria* under which such grants are being awarded. It may be just another form of plantation paternalism to bestow largesse on minority artists regardless of their abilities, to use different yardsticks for artists of color, to reward good intentions rather than actual achievements, for self-esteem is rarely achieved by means of abandoned standards. It may also be a serious error to assume that all the foundation dollars being poured into developing inner-city audiences are successfully democratizing American culture. What we need is some rigorous documentation regarding the impact of these grants.

Whatever its success in the community the new coercive philanthropy is having a demoralizing effect on artists and artistic institutions. The entire cultural world is bending itself into contortions in order to find the right shape for grants under the new criteria. And the most appropriate shape belongs in a Snyder's pretzel box. Recently, a report issued by the American Symphony Orchestra League threatened the constituency of this service organization with loss of funding if orchestra programs didn't start to "reflect more closely the cultural mix, needs, and interests of their communities." In order to accommodate cultural diversity, in short, these institutions were being pressured to include popular, folk, and racial-ethnic expressions in their classical repertoire, as if there were not sufficient outlets (and acclaim) for this music in the popular culture. No doubt in response to this offensive ultimatum, a "Diversity Initiative Consultant," hired by a major symphony orchestra management, recently issued a memorandum to that symphony's "family" in the form of a questionnaire designed to induce "cultural awareness" and "to elicit your perceptions of the organizational culture and diversity of cultures in your work environment."

The dopey questions were framed in a benevolent enough fashion ("Have you realized that your own upbringing was not the same as other races or cultures?" "Have you avoided people of a different or certain racial, ethnic, or cultural group?"). But I trust I am not alone in detecting a certain Orwellian cast to these diversity experts who roam the corridors testing everyone's sensitivity to

racial slights. When they enter the corridors of culture, they begin to inspire an atmosphere of fear, constraint, and mistrust. It may not be long before anxious employees, prodded by the batons of vigilant thought police, will be fingering fellow workers for neglecting to display sufficient "tolerance" or "sensitivity" as measured by such politically correct indicators.

It is only natural, at a time when tribalism has begun to shatter our national identity, when the melting pot has turned into a seething cauldron, that philanthropy should rush to the aid of racial, ethnic, and sexual groups clamoring for recognition through the agency of creative expression. But the thing about a group with special interests is that in order to achieve power, influence, strength and unity, it must display a common front. And this often means suppressing the singularity of its individual members and denying what is shared with others, neither good conditions for creating the idiosyncrasy and universality associated with great art.

What seems to get lost amidst this separatist clamor for cultural identity is that the most pressing issue of American democracy today is not race or gender or ethnicity but rather what it has always been – the inequitable distribution of the nation's resources, which is an issue of class. This makes our concentration on culture as an open door to equality and opportunity look like a diversion from the pressing economic problems that afflict our more indigent citizens. It reminds me of how, beginning in the fifties, our attention was distracted from the depredations of an unregulated economy, and focussed on the evils of network television.

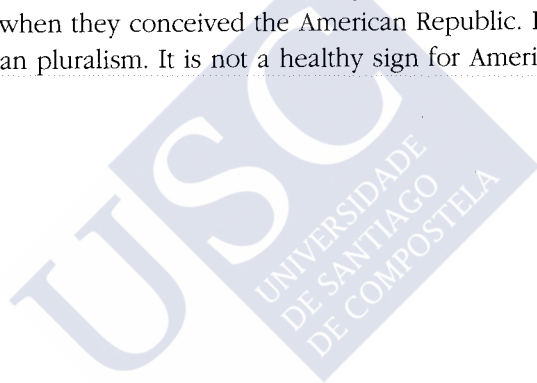
Much the same thing seems to be happening today, except that while we are still blaming the failures of our mass society on mass culture (consider the debates over TV violence), we are now asking what remains of high culture to compensate for the failures of our affluent society. But by forcing artistic expression to become a conduit for social justice and equal opportunity instead of achieving these goals through the political system, we are at the same time distracting our artists and absolving our politicians. But then it seems to be an American tradition to analyze a problem correctly, and then come up with the wrong solution.

The right solution, I believe, will only be formulated when we recognize that we are all members of the same family and that the whole society bears responsibility for the woes of its more indigent relatives. All this, of course, takes lots of money, but we Americans, for all our complaining, are presently the most undertaxed citizens in the Western world, and we are in a deepening crisis that needs attention. It will not be resolved by demolishing the fragile culture we still have.

But perhaps that culture has already been demolished. Certainly, the high cult and mass cult debates could not be held today. The once proud and confident

highbrow has fled the field, pursued by a hail of arrows shaped in the form of epithets. And the most cunning of these is the word "elitist," now shaped to mean aristocratic or exclusionary when its etymology simply refers to leadership. Without an elite in the arts, we have no leaders, which is to say we have no vision, which is to say we have no arts.

Is Tocqueville once again confirmed in his belief that a meritocratic art cannot survive in a democratic society? He is certainly right that the concept will always cause tensions. Each age chooses different weapons for its war on the serious arts, but the nature of the war remains the same. Have you ever noticed how the few remaining radio stations that broadcast classical music tend to be drowned out by the stronger signals of rock and roll? That seems to me a metaphor for the fate of high art in our democratic society. It is not what our Founding Fathers envisioned when they conceived the American Republic. It is not the way to celebrate American pluralism. It is not a healthy sign for American democracy.



## Hawaiian *Walden*? Memorialization in Garrett Hongo's *Volcano*

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What I know—  
the handful of stories,  
brief chronologies  
and photographs of documents—  
doesn't come from schools  
or even the few infrequent  
gatherings of the family.  
It's not talked about.  
Not shared.  
Something stopped the telling.  
Garrett Hongo, "Stepchild"<sup>1</sup>

As a child of the Asian diaspora, I felt that the master narratives of American were not open to me...would not easily incorporate stories that I knew except as addenda to the grander tales of Manifest Destiny, white settlement of the West, and the idea of "civilization" being

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Garrett Hongo, "Stepchild," in Garrett Kaoru Hongo, *Yellow Light* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1982).

brought to Hawai'i by Christian missionaries and planters. For most of my adolescence and early adult life, I felt there was no literary matrix in which I could address the histories of the imagination and plantation experience in Hawai'i, and my own stories went completely untold....I needed to repossess my own childhood, my own ethnic background.

"Introduction," Garrett Hongo (ed), *Under Western Eyes: Personal Essays from Asian America* (1995)<sup>2</sup>

I would fain say something, not so much concerning the Chinese and Sandwich Islanders as you who read these pages, who are said to live in New England; something about your condition, especially your outward condition or circumstances in this world, in this town, what it is, whether it is necessary that it be as bad as it is, whether it cannot be improved as well as not. I have travelled a good deal in Concord....

Henry David Thoreau, "Economy," *Walden* (1854)<sup>3</sup>

## I

Garrett Hongo: *yonsei* California poet and autobiographer of *Volcano: A Memoir of Hawai'i* (1995), whose genealogy threads from Hawaii into a Los Angeles childhood, an education at Pomona College, the University of Michigan and the University of California at Irvine, an expatriate Japanese interlude studying Buddhism, a deserved rise to acclaim with his poetry collections *Yellow Light* (1982) and *The River of Heaven* (1988) and, latterly, a life of family and academia as writer-professor in Eugene, Oregon.<sup>4</sup>

Henry David Thoreau: mid-nineteenth century Massachusetts civil dissident, naturalist, poet, Harvard graduate, and canonical diarist-anarch of *Walden* (1854) whose "home-cosmography" of Yankee transcendentalism as it evolves out of New England and a begetting Puritan ethos finds quite one its most enduring literary formulations.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Garrett Hongo, "Introduction," in Garrett Hongo (ed), *Under Western Eyes* (New York: Anchor/Doubleday, 1995), pp. 13-14.

<sup>3</sup> Henry David Thoreau, "Economy," *Walden* (1854). Rather than arbitrarily use any one edition of *Walden* all references are given by chapter heading.

<sup>4</sup> Garrett Hongo, *Volcano: A Memoir of Hawai'i* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), *Yellow Light* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1982) and *The River of Heaven* (New York: Knopf, 1988).

<sup>5</sup> "Home-cosmography" is Thoreau's phrase from his own poem in *Walden's* "Conclusion."

On first sight they make for an improbable pairing. Is not the one all Pacific island and West Coast, a scion of Japanese Hawaiian America and California? Is not the other all Eastern Seaboard and Atlantic, a New Englander of vintage Huguenot and WASP family stock? Yet in *Volcano* and *Walden*, Hongo's 1990s "showdown with the past" (p. 83) and Thoreau's 1840s "experiment in living" ("Where I Lived, And What I Lived For"), a striking affinity arises, quite the more so on account of its very unexpectedness.<sup>6</sup> For, in Emerson's historic phrase, they both put on offer unique "first person singular" works of place, of time, of quest and, most to immediate purposes, of memory.<sup>7</sup>

*Volcano*, as Hongo expresses it, deals in "a universe of associations" (p. 46) with his Hawaiian birthplace, the "HONGO STORE" of his ancestors within the township of Volcano, as "a kind of faith...a preserve of identity and consciousness" (p. 287). *Walden*, in Thoreau's celebrated wording, memorializes in textual form his vow to "live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and...to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms" ("Where I Lived, and What I Lived For").

This is anything but to claim *Walden* as some conscious antecedent for *Volcano*. Hongo mentions Thoreau only passing, never as some explicitly borrowed-from forerunner. Differences, too, of language, of temper, of vision, not to say of humor, are evident enough. Yet, across every kind of differing circumstance, both autobiographies give off a recognizable sense of overlap; self, legacy and place caught as an unfolding process of remembrance.

Nor does either work indulge in simply the backward glance, two American self-tellings which register only the parade gone by. "I'd walked on living rock" (p. 112) writes Hongo in "Volcanology." Walden Pond supplies "inexhaustible vigor" says Thoreau in "Spring." Neither author leaves doubt of procreative, cyclical geography – Pacific Island or Atlantic Pond as domains unremittingly busy in pulse and change.

*Volcano* dramatizes a Hawaii of anything but finished rock formation, lava, trail, bamboo, fern canopy, rainforest and lapping shoreline ocean. *Walden* inscribes a live, dioramic New England of greenery, fauna, tree, fish and pond. Both texts, abbreviating actual into symbolic calendar, so offer themselves as Books of Genesis, auto-journals of a turning seasonal year.

"Memorialization," then, and for both writers, involves not so much one as several linking interactions. A key lies in nomenclature. In *Yellow Light*, Hongo's

<sup>6</sup> Garrett Hongo, *Volcano: A Memoir of Hawai'i* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995).

<sup>7</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson's phrase "First person singular" occurs in his *Journal* for January-February 1827 as he lists what he terms "Peculiarities of the present Age."

1982 poetry collection, he has a poem entitled (and in his own spacing) "The Hongo Store 29 Miles Volcano, Hilo Hawaii *from a photograph*." In *Walden* Thoreau designates his hut as no more than "my abode in the woods" ("Where I lived, And What I Lived For"). The immediate effect in both is that of outline, sparseness. Yet each phrasing works as mnemonic, a working imagistic shorthand or *aide-mémoire* to be taken up and amplified in all the local remembrance within the text. "The ghosts are here" writes Hongo (p. 328). "A written word is the choicest of relics" offers a typically aphoristic Thoreau in "Reading."<sup>8</sup>

Neither writer implies, moreover, that memory, memorialization, signifies anything in the way of nostalgia, some merely picturesque revisitation of roots. Like *Walden* before it, *Volcano* explores memories which, if they affirm, do so even as they equally jolt and disturb. In the sequence he calls "Dragon" Hongo accordingly speaks of his "sailing back" to Hawaii as a life process nothing less than a challenge to his own previously assumed identity or its lack of "story":

I was not who I had thought myself to be, the nothing sprung from a nothing without history. I'd been born to an amazingly twisted line, to a dancer and a libertine, prodigal, and to a filial but orphaned father, each of us a descendant of shame, inheritors of no tangible patrimony. I had sailed back, but no tie but this ripped and jagged story bound me to the place. (pp. 69-70)

Thoreau, for his part, sees his challenge as that of how best to make his own brief moment in time the richest, the most replete:

In any weather, at any hour of day or night, I have been anxious to improve the nick of time, and notch it on my stock, too; to stand on the meetings of two eternities, the past and the future, which is precisely the present moment; to toe that line. ("Economy")

The stay by Walden Pond, and its remembrance, so, and nothing if not reflexively, becomes his bulwark to assure against the fear that "when I came to die, discover that I had not lived" ("Where I Lived, And What I Lived For").

*Volcano* and *Walden*, then, as two American scriptural theatres of memory. Memorialization in each serves, precisely, to give imaginative life to a "now" and "here" shaped by, and yet as much shaping, a "then" and "there."

<sup>8</sup> "The Hongo Store 29 Miles Volcano Hilo, Hawaii *from a photograph*" is how the title appears in *Yellow Light*.



## II

To invoke Henry David Thoreau in connection with Garrett Hongo is to underline, also, the more general intertextual flourish of *Volcano* as a whole. A memorial high literary ancestry is always present, yet however fondly so never other than discreet, carefully and purposively angled. Basho, Buson and Issa head a Japanese virtuosity in *haiku*. Other allusion runs from *The Tales of The Genji*, to the theatre of *No*, *Bunraku* and *Kabuki*, to the postwar fiction of Yukio Mishima and Kenzaburo Oe. No less than Thoreau, too, Hongo cites, and parallels, different classic traditions, whether *Three Hundred Poems of the T'ang Dynasty* or *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*.

An intimately memorized modern western canon also weighs – Shelley, Hawthorne, Yeats, Joyce, Kafka, Vallejo, Rilke, Naipaul and Pacific authors from Mark Twain to Robert Louis Stevenson. Even literary contemporaneity becomes remembrance, whether the Beats, or his own stern yet winning teacher-poet, C. K. Williams, or the John Berryman of *The Dream Songs*, or Bob Dylan. In none of these respects, however, does *Volcano* risk undue literariness; Hongo writes easefully and, where appropriate, with a surest command of his own time's vernacular slang and argot. Nor is this wider intertextuality to downplay Hongo's linkage into, and continuance of, specifically Asian American history and writing.

On the one hand *Volcano* offers a Mythical Kingdom ("Volcano seemed to me an exotic and slightly miraculous place that I associated with the Macondo of García Márquez, the Macchu Picchu of Pablo Neruda", p. 4), a Tropical Garden ("ferns, gigantic and prehistoric", p. 79), at once a seeming glimpse of Paradise one of whose images is the leafy *hapu'u* fern ("the most....intimate piece of botanical creation," p. 79) and of Inferno ("I imagined a current of lava like a gigantic, molten eel thrashing over my body", p. 115).

On the other hand, palpably, and just as interwovenly, this is an actual and historic Hawaii ("its first human settlers called it Hava-iti...or, more simply, "Paradise", p. 3); a historic Japan brought across the Pacific ("My grandfather had sold liquor and prepared food (mostly Japanese things like beef *teriyaki* and shrimp *tempura*)", p. 10); and a Japanese America, if but one of many ethnic Americas, at the same time wholly rooted in its own custom and identity ("there is a world of feeling and specificities among the cast and monolithic Other of race in America", p. 227).

Both kinds of memory, legend and non-legend, the text in turn draws into Hongo's *self*-remembrance: Hawaii as "my storehouse of natal memories" (p. 44), an "archive" (p. 45) and "storage" (p. 45). Hawaii, too, is remembered for far more than just its Japanese history. In his Prologue Hongo speaks of growing up amid

"lagoons of syntax" (p. x) in which "Mainland English" (p. x) acts as but one register along with his own Hawaiian pidgin and each Portuguese and Cantonese loanword and accent.

This "syntax" in fact gives Hongo's recognition to a Hawaii multiculturally possessed of other memory, of the native *kanaka*, of American mainlanders or *haoles*, of different "Euro" Hawaiians, and of an Asian diversity not only Japanese but Filipino, Chinese and beyond. The "Japan" of the Hongo line, thus, is to be placed within an overall heterogeneity.

Each detail builds into a gathering litany of association and recall. His wife Cynthia's *yukata* calls up Japanese dress code. The local *minka* roof designs suggest a migrancy of architecture. Pondered-over foodways (*kinako* or soy powder, *tempura* or batter) give an alimentary memory to the text. His father Albert is remembered as having attended "Tokyo High" in Honolulu. Each Hongo family joining and fissure adds its increment to this pathway of dynasty – the grandfather Torau's love affairs, the flight of his first wife Yukiko, the marriage to the onetime stockgirl Eveline.

Above all stands the HONGO STORE as memorial icon: at once a registry of family (the father Albert's vexed succession to Torau as merchant-proprietor, his itinerant move to California, Eveline's accession to the store, the memorial role of the two half-sister aunts Charlotte and Lily); of culture (language, song, dance); and of the daily round down through each turning gyre of time (mealtimes, shelf stock, income, even a label whereby Hongo discovers himself named Garrett for a brand of muscatel).

Nor, as the portrait of his lonely, ceremonial maternal grandfather Kubota and his mean, 1940s wartime investigation by the FBI bears out, does Hongo seek to sidestep the rankle and accusation of a larger Japanese American history: *issei* labor and Hawaii's sugar cane plantations; December 7 and Pearl Harbor; FDR's Executive Order 9066 with its Manzanar, Topaz, Poston, Minidoka, Tule Lake, Amache and other wartime internment camps and the "relocation" of 120,000 Japanese Americans with matching action taken in Peru and Canada.

But Hongo's is a quite different memorialization to those of, say, Jeanne Wakatsuki (and James D. Houston's) movingly evidentiary *Farewell to Manzanar* (1973), Yoshiko Uchida's child's eye *Desert Exile: The Uprooting of a Japanese American family* (1982), or Mitsue Yamada's bold, unsparing *Camp Notes and Other Poems* (1988).<sup>9</sup> If, inevitably, he calls up the memory of "9066" and the

<sup>9</sup> Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston and James D. Houston, *Farewell To Manzanar* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1973), Mitsue Yamada, *Camp Notes and Other Poems* (Berkeley, California: Shameless Hussey Press, 1976); and Yoshiko Uchida, *Desert Exile: The Uprooting*

camps and their aftermath, he also speaks outrightly to the issue of generational silence, the past "untelling" ("Stepchild") and "Stories...untold" (*Under Western Eyes*).

He actually acknowledges the way his own memorial "I" risks breaking with etiquette, with the balance of *bonne* (inner feeling) and *tatemaie* (outward show).<sup>10</sup> Without undue vaunting he sees himself positioned at a new, post-9066 point of memory. As he writes of a taboo early love: "I was acting outside history," "I could cross barriers" (p. 221).

In this respect, too, if mainstream American popular culture supplies its own memorial seam throughout *Volcano* (whether TV's "I Love Lucy" to "Star Trek" or the hit-parade's Roy Orbison to Janis Joplin), so, too, does both a native Hawaii (poi and papaya as foodways, ukulele, hula or "Portuguese *chang-a-lang*" (p. 129) as music) and a migrant Japan (from "Shina no Yoru" as imported 1930 hit song to contemporary *manga*, Godzilla and *yakusa* films). These filaments of remembering include, too, a gallery of Hawaiian locals, whether Paul Rodrigues as Portuguese-American plumbing contractor, Gabby Pahinui as Hawaiian jazz guitarist, the local postwoman (another deliverer of "the word") eased in her grief at a daughter's death of leukemia by reading Hongo's poem on a Japanese graveyard, or, like some *magus* or oddball spirit of place "Old Wierd Harold," the transvestite hitchhiker on the Volcano Highway. These, together with the island's volcanologists, geophysicists and biologists, Hongo fondly situates as a memory of "searchers, odd ducks, misfits, and derelicts." (p. 312).

*Volcano* also calls up Japanese America's own storytelling tradition. This embraces Toshio Mori's cyclical *Yokohama, California* (1949) with its remembrance of *issei* working class culture; a three-part memoir of 1930s sugar plantation life like Milton Murayama's *All I Asking For Is My Body* (1975); and a story like the lyric, Buddhist-influenced "And The Soul Shall Dance" by Wakako Yamauchi who, as he explains in "Self-Portrait," he comes to know personally and who teaches him "in an image collected from the past" (p. 198) the felt legacy of camp "relocation."

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of a Japanese Family (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982). A required history would be Michi Weglyn, *Years of Infamy, The Untold History of America's Concentration Camps* (New York: Morrow and Company, 1976). "Untelling" and "untold" are taken from the two prefatory quotations.

<sup>10</sup> In the case of women (and women-authored texts), and albeit it might be turned into its own strategic styles of articulacy, gendered silence has long been if not a requirement then an assumption. The classic study in this connection remains King-Kok Cheung, *Articulate Silences: Hisaye Yamamoto, Maxine Hong Kingston, Joy Kogawa* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).

Alongside Hongo remembers a further and ongoing authorly affinity with a 1960s Asian American gallery which includes Maxine Hong Kingston, Frank Chin, Shawn Wong, Lawson Inada and David Mura. They both give support, and yet remind him of his own working-back as effort, the seeming intractability of a past seized from the hold of the present.<sup>11</sup>

### III

*Volcano*, equally, both adds to, and invites its own comparison with, other Asian American autobiography. These could not be more sharply particular and yet contextual: memorial tellings at once the single life and yet belonging to the larger rite of passage whereby Asia in all its contradiction and variety of register folds into America.

Carlos Bulosan's *America Is In the Heart* (1946) frequently, and understandably, gets invoked as the exemplary radical-migrant text, full and authentic in all its first person Filipino worker memory. But how far is the "Bulosan" of the text, as against history, rather a reflexive silhouette, as much a figure of invented remembrance as truth? Not for a moment would that be thought in doubt in Jessica Hagedorn's *Dogeaters* (1990), a memorialization in which both "The Philippines" and "California" draw upon rare, and assuredly postmodern, ventriloquy. Which text, accordingly, Bulosan's or Hagedorn's, offers the "truer" memory?<sup>12</sup>

The play of self as both teller and tale is also given its acknowledgement in Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts* (1976).<sup>13</sup> Not the least part of why it has become one of the presiding Asian American texts, and in part why Frank Chin has attacked it, derives from its insistence upon memory as a dynamic in which a shifting and plural register is not only possible but inevitable. In "A Song for a Barbarian Reed", which rounds out the book, "Maxine" so contrasts her Chinese "I" with her American "I":

<sup>11</sup> Toshi Morio, *Yokobama, California* (Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton, 1949); Milton Murayama, *All I Asking For Is My Body* (San Francisco: Supa Press, 1959); Wakako Yamauchi, "And The Soul Shall Dance," 1966, reprinted in pp. 232-39, in Frank Chin, Jeffery Paul Chan, Lawson Fusao Inada and Shawn Wong (eds), *AIHIEEEEE! An Anthology of Asian-American Writers* (Washington DC: Howard University Press, 1974).

<sup>12</sup> Carlos Bulosan, *America is in the Heart* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1946); reprinted, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1973.

<sup>13</sup> Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts* (New York: Knopf, 1976).

I could not understand "I." The Chinese "I" has seven strokes, intricacies. How could the American "I," assuredly wearing a hat like the Chinese, have only three strokes, the middle so straight?

Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* (1989), accompanying, offers its own competing skeins of memory, Chinese and Chinese American remembrance as four dialogical pairings of voice – of mother and daughter, of a "China" both there and here. The mah jong table makes the perfect image: memory as history but also wager, as truth but also invention.

Mary Paik Lee's *Quiet Odyssey: A Pioneer Korean Woman in America* (1990), on appearance, was greeted as a "straight" diary of immigrant good faith set against an often grim nativist and racist mainstream social labyrinth. But Lee's uses of memory again gives off other, more complicating resonances. Do not her own divisions link into, and not so viscerally replay, those of Japan's colonization of Korea from 1910-1945 or the bifurcation of the country at the 38th Parallel?<sup>14</sup> Certainly that process has been seen to lie at the very heart of Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictée* (1982), often, and for good reason, dubbed the canonically absent text.<sup>15</sup> For in memorializing her "dictated" identity as child, woman, Korean, Korean American, visual artist, and writer, Cha ("Cha"), at the same time, paradoxically, and with quite stunning virtuosity of word and image, so "undictates" her life into text.

Tran Van Dinh's *Blue Dragon White Tiger: A Tet Story* (1983), however seemingly actual or *alter ego* the memorial self ("Minh" as against "Dinh"), develops yet another double seam: that of the America at war inside Vietnam displaced, but reiterated, in the Vietnam at war inside America.<sup>16</sup> A contemporary first person narrative fiction like Lan Cao's *Monkey Bridge* (1997) makes the point even more emphatic. The Vietnamese American life of its narrator, Mai Nguyen, a woman of "subverted interior" as she calls herself, becomes a sounding board of contradiction. Saigon, South Vietnam, gets memorialized into Little Saigon, Virginia. A family of secrets, past divisions, split loyalties, and wounds of mind as much as body, brings the one kind of "fall" in Vietnam into another in America. A dying mother, time and place crossed in her delirium, bids a closest but distant Vietnamese farewell to her American daughter.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Mary Paik Lee, *Quiet Odyssey: A Pioneer Korean Woman in America* (Seattle: The University of Washington Press, 1990).

<sup>15</sup> Theresa Hak Chyung Cha, *Dictée* (New York: Tanam Press, 1982).

<sup>16</sup> Tran Van Dinh, *Blue Dragon, White Tiger: A Tet Story* (Philadelphia: Tri-Am Press, 1983).

<sup>17</sup> Lan Cao, *Monkey Bridge* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1997).

Japanese American autobiography affords yet closer bearings. Monica Sone's *Nisei Daughter* (1953, 1979), for all that it invokes the Seattle waterfront memory of being born "Yankee and Japanese...two heads," with wartime internal deportation to follow, even so argues an assimilationist ethos.<sup>18</sup> Joy Kagowa's *Obasan* (1988) effects a voice of memory more divulgent of pain, more accusing. Threaded into the novel's resort to letters, private and government documents, each extract and cutting, remembrance takes on a far greater poignancy. In Naomi Nakane, Canadian Japanese child evacuee and the once would-be figure of silence like her Aya Obasan, memorialism becomes a slow, obstructed pathway into self-recovery of word. "You are your history" her aunt tells her. She comes to see herself as yet another "untold story." Memory, for Naomi, again works as a kind of contraflow: presentday (at least 1970s) unsilence as the inward, and never unparadoxical, route into, and then out of, past silence.<sup>19</sup>

David Mura's *Turning Japanese: Memoirs of a Sansei* (1991) offers remembering of yet another kind of about-face, that of an America, in the form in his own 1984 Creative Fellowship year, brought to Japan. Mura uses this transformation from Japanese American into American Japanese, temporary as may be, as two way mirror, spyglass, loop. The upshot reads as a trove of closely memorial, though for some readers often too self-regarding, reflections on, and of, the East-West making of his American identity.<sup>20</sup>

All these texts manifestly achieve their own discrete laws of motion and autobiographical focus. But they also supply a context, a larger sense of span or continuum. In this sense, and to enlarge upon a suggestion Hongo makes of his own "book of origins" (p. 26), each becomes, as it were, its own kind of *koan*, its own memorializing, of a life's contrariety.

"Speak Memory," the celebrated title phrase of Nabokov's autobiography (1951, 1967), perhaps supplies a best overall guide. Certainly Hongo makes no secret of how he has found such an injunction irresistible:

So many things I was seeing and hearing seemed like relics – either from a distant, almost mythological past or from my own dreams. I felt as if I were entering a book of my own life. (pp. 5-6).

In this, as in its like co-texts, *Volcano* can be said to point to a governing prospectus: memory, memorialization, as both agency and goal.

<sup>18</sup> Monica Sone, *Nisei Daughter* (Boston: Little Brown, 1953, Revised Edition 1979).

<sup>19</sup> Joy Ogawa, *Obasan* (Boston: David Godine, 1981).

<sup>20</sup> David Mura, *Turning Japanese: Memoirs of a Sansei* (New York: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1991)



## V

When I first came back to Volcano, I sensed it could become a beguilement that would be lifelong. There was enough beauty and mystery to capture my mind and all of its energy for torture and pain and transform it into something like love – a love for natural beauty, an attachment to a local habitation, an inheritance of a name, my own family's name. There was enough to try to find out – of family drama, of regional and natural history – to engage heart and intellect for a lifetime. Who could be bored? Even a poet would have insurance against ennui. (p. 256)

Hongo could not better summarize *Volcano* as simultaneously the memorialization of “family drama” and “regional and natural history.” Both thread through the text in their own right, and yet, at virtually every turn, cross and intertwine: dynasty with landscape, lineage with locale.

The note is struck at the very outset in *Ugetsu*, an opening chapter Hongo explains as meaning “a world of faery and imagination” (p. 16). Volcano may well mark Hongo's birth in the backroom kitchen of the general store “my grandfather built on Volcano Road” (p. 3). But at the same time it embodies “a big chunk of the sublime” (p. 4), “a stepping back in time” (p. 5), with the nearby Kilauea crater “a biblical scene cut from both Genesis and the Apocalypse” (p. 21). Here, as Hongo renders it, may be the ordinariness of a grocery, a place as it seems of “failed family” (p. 17). Yet Volcano, in all its composite force, also, and equally issues its memorial challenge as “my own mountain” (p. 26), a Yeatsian “Ben Bulben” (p. 26).

The “family drama” of *Volcano* is given as a series of linking sequences, each a mix of flashback, interlude, memory. “Natal” remembers Hongo's return three years after the first stay: a medley of presentday Volcano family and neighbor voices; Okamoto the postman who serves as Hawaiian griot; the helix or “dragon tail” (p. 59) of his own unravelling Hongo family as descended from the roguish Torau; and the store itself as a registry of past dynastic shifts and liaisons. “Ghost” specifically memorializes Torau Hongo, *samurai* descendant and yet migrant, handsome and yet finally weakened into death of cancer, both as “talking to me from the fog of thirty-five years” (p. 141) and as the rueful father's voice in Hongo's own poem “The Unreal Dwelling.”

Against these Hongo plays a line, a trajectory, of self-memory. In “Self-Portrait” he invokes parents hard put to find a right family balance in hypermodern California (a mother “indignant at my dreaminess”, p. 184, a father still Hawaiian in Los Angeles); schooldays among “sansei *kotonks*” (p. 215) – a name full both of



in-house derision and defiance; Regina as a first adolescent girlfriend, white, "out of bounds" (p. 220), and so his partner in a doomed cross-ethnic trysting; teachers like the Jewish Bert Meyers at Pomona College who gives unexpected remembrance to the 1940s Japanese American deportations; Hongo's own stern temple masters in his Japanese drop-out year in Kyoto and Hofukuji, Okayama; and, at a wholly opposite reach, not only his work running the Seattle theater group he had hoped to call, once more memorially, "The Asian Exclusion Act" (p. 198) but his interlude as a would-be Hollywood comic scriptwriter ("*you ain't funny, kid....You might as well do poetry,*" p. 207).

In "Self-Help" Hongo explores his own dips into melancholy using a Kiowa fable of how the imaginative spirit finds restoration along with the memory of hearing *katarimono*, or Japanese ballad, both as analogies to his own self-resurrectional storytelling. He also literally *sees* memory: his Grandmother Katayama, Torau's once fugitive spouse, performing to *shamisen* at more than eighty years of age and in modern Honolulu the stylized dance of her *geisha* youth. "Kubota" invokes the other grandfather, silent, wistful, always unreconciled to America yet unable or unwilling to return to Japan, and, ironically, dead after suffering Alzheimer's on "Pearl Harbor Day, December 7, 1983" (p. 277). Hongo imagines Kubota's legacy as one of illuminated lanterns, nothing if not memorially, strung across the sea with "the silvery names of all our dead" (p. 278).

Finally, in "Colonial" and "Mendocino Rose", Hongo writes two kinds of *envoi*. In the former Volcano is recalled as "a kind of faith" (p. 287), a life zone, within which to place the memory of his father's death and funeral, his own never unvexed sense of *dasein* or "being there", the birth of his second child as against the postwoman and the death of her child, and, as always, the iconographic, tenacious, enriddled *hapu'u* fern. In the latter the sight of a Mendocino rosevine again threads Hongo in memory back from California into Hawaii, a sense of spirit against dispirit, remembrance of past as remembrance of future. These, too, become memorial joinings for him: "I belong nowhere, I tell myself. And, *I belong in Volcano*" (p. 332).

As to Hawaii as "natural history," that Hongo memorializes in the four beautifully expressive sequences he designates "Volcanology." "*Ugetsu*" provides the Preface, the curtain raiser, Volcano as:

craters and ancient pit fire and huge black seas of hardened lava, the rain forest lush with all varieties of ferns, orchids, exotic gingers, and wild lilies, the constant rain and sun-showers... (p. 4)

Actuality elides into image, a domain of "steam devils" (p. 24) and "lantern ferns" (p. 71), "pythonlike" *ulube* (p. 80) and black lava tubing like "the carcass of

a gigantic slug" (p. 111). Closely recalled Nature in its own right this may be, but Hongo rarely depicts it without the implication of an oblique, near magical mirroring of his own inner creativity.

An early account of the *hapu'u*, for Hongo always a presiding reference-point ("part of Hawai'i's and the world's most primitive splendor", p. 78), is so given in all its own botanical complexity yet also as an implied larger music of creation:

The standing trunk is actually a bundle of fibrous stalks, radiating upward in successive growth-rays around a phloemlike core surrounded by an absorbent, spongy matting that knits everything together.....As you walk through a stand of them, you can imagine hearing the fronds thump and snacker with the bass thrummings of birth, a silent jazz and an uteral rending going on both at once. (pp. 72-3)

Likewise the near burn of live lava-flow, vivid enough on its own terms, gives Hongo's memorializing image of his own inner fires:

It flaked and made a grinding sound as I walked over it, building its heat up under my soft arches....I felt wrapped inside of a subtle shroud of birthing. The heat did not matter, not did the faint carge of acidic air annoying my breathing. The sting in my eyes seemed part of the awareness, the joy of feeling something new. (p. 112)

Hongo's own "something new," *Volcano: A Memoir of Hawai'i*, is utterly to be glimpsed in this episode. In each, too, of his traversings across other lava, whether old ("shaded like the flesh of the thoracic cavity", p. 119) or new ("slick red gutters of fast-moving streams", p. 233), he looks to an aptest image of his own will to make memory speak. Watching Mount Kiluea erupt into smoke "as if from ten thousand firecrackers" (p. 284) he says, again reflexively, of himself: "I stood on the shore of pure creation" (p. 285).

In "Natal" he recalls shopping on arrival with his family for groceries at a Haunani Road store which might, as it were, be the successor to that of his family. There, having passed by the original Hongo Store, and as he passes up and down the aisles, he sees in the name of almost every purchase a routeway back into the crossplied, hugely elusive time and place which has been his own making.

"Nothing was without its meaning or its memories" (p. 45), Hongo witnesses. It could hardly supply an apter gloss for all of the larger memory, and memorialization, which will be made over into the eventual text of *Volcano*.



## The American Experience of Stephen Vincent Benét, 1898-1943

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"I have lived. I have thought and labored, I have loved and possessed my love," Stephen Vincent Benét began the poem "Little Testament" which he wrote not long before he died in March 1943 of a massive heart attack at the age of forty four. He concluded, "Now the mind rusts into madness, the horses run without bit, the paltry body is nothing but mechanics of bone and skin." By the time he wrote the poem he had been as literarily productive as his talented contemporaries Ernest Hemingway and Scott Fitzgerald, while lacking their propensity for drawing attention to themselves. Benét had thought and labored over poetry, short fiction, novels, screen plays and radio dramas and had succeeded so well as to be considered a major literary figure. He had earned a Guggenheim fellowship; he had been elected to the prestigious American Academy of Arts and letters; he had served on numerous committees having to do with arts and letters; and he had won the first of two Pulitzer Prizes in 1929 for his long narrative poem *John Brown's Body*. The second Pulitzer Prize was awarded in 1944 for another narrative poem, "Western Star", published in July 1943. When Benét died Franklin Roosevelt asserted that "The world of letters has lost one of its most commanding figures." The following year a Liberty ship was named in his honor. In 1998 the Postal Service issued a commemorative stamp to mark the centennial of his birth. But for all that his reputation has declined, and he is one of a number of writers

whose various celebrations of America during the late teens through the 1930s – Edgar Lee Masters, Carl Sandburg, and John Dos Passos are other examples – no longer excite the literary taste makers as they once did.

His mind did not rust into madness nor did “the horses run without bit,” but he had every right to think so, plagued as he was throughout his life with rheumatoid arthritis so severe that in his later life his “paltry body” was bent like that of a much older man. However tough and disciplined his mind, his body betrayed him and drove him down repeatedly. Fatigue from his work on behalf of the United States Office of War Information during the early stages of World War II played a considerable part in his death; he simply could not maintain the pace of writing he set for himself to support America’s efforts in the war.

During his life Benét was a happy man, although he understood – knew – physical and emotional pain. He had a wry sense of humor that helped him to withstand most of the darkest moments, and he was loving and kind because he knew great love and kindness from others. Edward Weismiller, a poet who in 1936 won the annual poetry prize awarded by the Yale Series of Younger Poets which Benét edited from 1933 until his death, recalled him as,

a round man, with round glasses on a round face with round cheeks. He smoked non-stop, without ever taking his cigarette out of his mouth. The cigarettes were held precisely at the center of his pursed lips and bobbed as Benét spoke around them, the ash dribbling down the vest of his three piece suit. He smiled a lot, and it seemed to me that everything he said in his kind way was incredibly wise.

He understood himself well and had the good fortune to be genuinely modest. When John Farrar, his close friend and the publisher of *John Brown’s Body*, cabled him in March 1928 about returning to the United States in conjunction with the appearance of the volume, Benét immediately wrote back to thank him for the proposal but to decline it:

I don’t think my physical presence in America would do any good. There are some people whose personalities can arouse interest in their work. I am not one of them. My work is the best of me, and I would rather lie behind it, as perdu as possible. And experience has taught me that this is the best course I can follow. Writing should speak for itself – if it cannot, it is lost. And as for me – I am not even a foreign author. I do not speak Czechoslovakian, I never was bitten by a lion or caught a strange species of tortoise while flying over the North Pole....You can’t do much to me except to raise the remark “I didn’t know he’d been away.”

A quick glance at the requests received each year by Brandt and Brandt, the agents for Benét's literary estate, seeking permission to republish one or another of his works should disabuse anyone of the idea that Benét is forgotten, an author of period pieces which have little place as serious works in an era of high modernism. Excerpts from *John Brown's Body*, short stories such as "The Devil and Daniel Webster" and others in the mode of folk tales and legends, poems such as "The Ballad of William Sycamore," "American Names," any number of the poems in *A Book of Americans*, and poems such as "Litany for Dictatorships" and his "Nightmare" pieces are consistently reprinted, proof of the interest in the variety of tone and subject matter of Benét's Americana. *A Book of Americans* may be lighthearted, but not so the pieces he wrote from the mid-1930's on as he watched dictatorships prosper in Europe and elsewhere. Benét's work is unusually public; it is wide ranging, popular, and topical without being superficial. A patriotic New Deal liberal who fervently supported Franklin Roosevelt, Benét could write a poem about the Presidential election of 1940 and at about the same time write in an elegaic tone about freedom: "If this should change, remember the tree and the brook,/ The long day's summer, the voices clever and kind,/ The true verse that burned on the page of the book,/ The true love, body and mind.... These things were freedom. That is why they were good./ Remember that." In the poem, "If This Should Change," published in the *New Yorker* in June 1941, Benét with quick, broad strokes gathered an array of images – "Huge flowing Mississippi, under full moon,/ The giant landscape where the rivers crawl/ And the shabby apartment and the last year's tune..." – which are part of what we know to be freedom. The poem is direct and exhortatory, having an immediacy which gives it power. That Benét wrote such poetry was no accident. He and his two older siblings, the writers Laura and William Rose Benét, benefitted from their parents' love of literature. James Walker Benét, their father, was a career Army Ordnance officer as interested in prose and poetry as in his profession. After Stephen's birth, Colonel Benét was in charge of one or another government arsenal, in which capacity he and his family moved from Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, to Buffalo and then to Watervliet, New York, to Benicia, California, and to Augusta, Georgia by the time Stephen entered Yale University in September 1915.

His brother William recounted that Stephen's love of literature began unusually early: his mother discovered him as a small child reading to a mouse in the nursery – the book he held was upside down; he had not yet learned to read; and the mouse was dead, caught in a trap. The scene was promising. He was a frail boy, having rheumatoid arthritis from childhood and suffering also from the effects of scarlet fever. As a result, William noted, Stephen "did not go in very heavily for games, and began to lead an interior life of the mind. At the same time,

his taste in books was catholic enough." His older brother recalled Stephen's fascination with the Peck's Bad Boy stories among other boys' books, Alexander Dumas, *Men of Iron* by Howard Pyle, as well as the prose and poetry of William Morris. Their father enjoyed reciting poetry – both good and bad – and encouraged Stephen to read in "Rebellion [Civil War] Records" and "Battles and Leaders of the Civil War." Stephen recounted that his father:

taught me a great many things. For one thing, by example, precept and demonstration, taught me most of what I know about the actual techniques of English verse. He could do so because he knew it – and I do not mean by that that he had a gentlemanly acquaintance with the better-known poems of Tennyson and Browning. He knew it from Chaucer to Mary Anne O'Byrne, the Washerwoman poet of Watervliet, N.Y. and his knowledge was extensive and catholic. He introduced us to Beddoes and Stephen Crane, to the early poems of Robinson and the ballads of Father Prout. He could write any fixed form of verse with deftness, precision and tang. And if you came to him with a lame rhyme, a limping meter, an inchoate idea, he could show you, with the precision of a surgeon, just what was wrong.

If ever literature was a family affair, this was an example par excellence. The Benéts encouraged each other and delighted in each other's work. "Know All By These Presents," William wrote out elaborately,

That this is the early poetic work of Stephen Vincent Benét, prepared for the press by his brother William this four[teenth] day of February nineteen fifteen.

That at least four of these poems are not unworthy to be included in any book of poems he shall hereafter publish.

William then listed four poems and noted others which also had merit. Stephen would have to guard against "being spoiled by too easy successes or the praises of his admiring family." William closed with a flourish:

AND HEREUNTO WE SET OUR HAND AND SEAL THIS DAY THE  
FOURTEENTH OF FEBRUARY NINETEEN FIFTEEN, IN THE YEAR OF  
THE GREAT WAR, THE GREAT EARTHQUAKE, AND THE  
EFFLORESCENCE OF A GREAT POET.

He and their parents signed the good-humored document. In December 1915 Stephen's first book, *Five Men and Pompey*, was published and included one of



the poems William praised, "The Last Banquet." The other four in the volume Stephen wrote in Augusta, Georgia during the summer before he first went to Yale.

Given all this, it is easy to understand how Benét could be a modernist in his themes as in the "Nightmare" poems, but not modernist as are Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot, to take two poets whose hermetic work differs dramatically from Benét's in language, tone, form, and imagery. They were rebelling against almost everything American: their families, their education, American literature – or as they saw it, the lack thereof – and the country's materialism. Benét despised none of these things although he was deeply disturbed by America's excessive materialism, and they became grist for his literary mill.

He was no journeyman writer; rather he was transitional, writing well-shaped short stories which usually have a climax and resolution, and poetry which reflects, though hardly exclusively, the influence of nineteenth-century poets such as Tennyson, Browning, and his father's and his favorite, William Morris. He was brilliant, a prodigy whose work began appearing early in his life and continued to be published abundantly thereafter. In 1913 he won a three-dollar prize for his poem "The Regret of Dives," published in *St. Nicholas*. After the appearance of *Five Men and Pompey* in 1915 his work appeared regularly in magazines such as *Century*, *New Republic*, *Seven Arts*, and the *Yale Literary Magazine*, so that by 1918 he had enough poems for the Yale University Press to issue a collection entitled *Young Adventure*. While the poems are not revolutionary in style, they display his technical capabilities and literary imagination, as in "The General Public" and "Poor Devil." Two years later Henry Holt and Company published *Heavens and Earth: A Book of Poems*. These were for the most part written in 1918 and 1919 and ranged well beyond the work appearing in *Young Adventure*. No "Campus Sonnets" in the later volume; it ranged from "The First Vision of Helen [of Troy]" to her last vision; to narratives about "Chariots and Horsemen," poems about "The Tall Town" – New York City – and about "The Kingdom of the Mad," short insights into human character and the contemporary scene.

It is significant that the Yale Press volume included an introduction by Professor Chauncey Brewster Tinker, a well-known teacher and literary scholar at Yale. He was not an ardent admirer of "the New," and in his introduction – which at Benét's request made no specific reference to his work – Tinker spoke of passing "from the smooth-flowing imitations of Tennyson and Swinburne... into a false freedom that had at its heart a repudiation of all laws and standards. We may hope," he continued,

that the eager search for novelty of form and subject may have its influence in releasing us from our old bondage to the commonplace

and in broadening the scope of poetry; but we cannot blind ourselves to the fact that it has at the same time completed that estrangement between the poet and the general public which has been developing for half a century.

It is a strange, seemingly embittered introduction but telling in that Tinker found in Benét's poems something of what he sought in "the rebirth of poetry."

Tinker's distanced endorsement points to the problems with the poems for some critics. The work is not complex as is the metaphysical poetry which Eliot admired. The critic John Chamberlain had an intriguing explanation for why Benét's work is the way it is. Reviewing *Western Star* in *Harper's* shortly after Benét's death, he wrote:

Steve Benét went to Yale when Dos Passos and Cummings were at Harvard. I think the choice of college had something to do with his approach to poetry. Yale has never had a conscious literary tradition. When it fosters a talent, it does so in high innocence. And the talent itself takes on some of the overtones of that innocent mood. The point to be made here is that Steve Benét, in his plastic period, felt no pressure upon him to be anything in particular. There were no "aesthetes" around him. In a campus atmosphere of what has been aptly satirized as "muscular Christianity," he could be a simple poet following his own bent. Both those who were muscular and those who were excessively Christian left him alone.

Being left alone, he responded by developing his own essentially hopeful personality. He wrote a couple of "lost generation" novels – *The Beginning of Wisdom* and *Young People's Pride*. But they were like good coarse bread when stacked up against the spiced cake of F. Scott Fitzgerald.

Seventeen years after Chamberlain's assessment, a self-appointed priest of High Culture, Dwight Macdonald, felt compelled to denigrate *John Brown's Body* as an outstanding example of what Macdonald termed "Midcult." The "art" of "Midcult," in his opinion, was distinct from "Masscult," what is now termed "popular culture," but is art manqué in that it fails to meet the standards of High Culture (for which read Modernism). He called Benét's long narrative an "orgy of Americana, much admired in its day and still widely used in the schools as combining History and Literature." Macdonald could even admire the Invocation, but then the trouble began for him as Benét echoed Eliot, Homer, Kipling, and others. Benét was "a master of the built-in reaction," his work so unsubtle as

always “to identify the emotion he wants to arouse” and never to leave his readers “puzzled by the unexpected.” Macdonald was in a high dudgeon against “Midcult” and in the same essay attacked Hemingway’s novel *The Old Man and the Sea*, Thornton Wilder’s play *Our Town*, and Archibald MacLeish’s verse drama *J. B.* To be true Art, work for Macdonald had to be difficult; anything smacking of “Midcult” or “Masscult” simply could not meet the requirements.

More recently Judith Moffett, a scholar of Benét and also a creative writer, published an appreciation of Benét’s work, in particular, *John Brown’s Body*. “His affinities as a person and a poet,” she declared, “were to the nineteenth century; and the defining conflict for Benét was not the Great War, in which he had played no part, but the Civil War, which engaged his family and his imagination from childhood.” The early result was popular success; “ordinary Americans took him to their hearts, and the feeling was mutual.” But his fame “proved to be not much more lasting” than the money he earned from *John Brown’s Body* and lost in the Great Depression. Why did he develop “into a popular poet but not an enduringly important one”? Moffett supposed that “Benét was rewarded while still a schoolboy for writing stuff that was extraordinarily good *for a schoolboy*, and at college, where he edited *The Yale Literary Review*, he was the best and most prolific poet on campus.” Reflecting Dwight Macdonald’s dismissal of the popular, she believed that “there was no incentive to aspire for something higher.”

The point is not that he was a better writer than Moffett seemed to think because he was less facile than she recalls him being; it is that his demise as an author deemed to be of the first rank resulted from shifts in literary and cultural tastes. High modernism came to the fore in the 1930’s and has remained the dominant mode of serious expression ever since; Benét’s work drew on other sources. Then, too, he became an exuberant New Deal liberal and enthusiastically endorsed Franklin Delano Roosevelt and his policies in peace and war, while from early in the 1950’s at least until the 1980’s the intelligentsia – the tastemakers for serious art of every sort – were frequently at odds with government. World War II, which ended in 1945, was “the last good war,” as Studs Terkel noted. I strongly suspect that, had he lived, Benét would frequently have stood with the generations weaned on the Cold War, McCarthyism, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the struggles for civil rights and women’s rights – the list goes on. He did not survive, however, and remains locked in a position that seemed to the next generations to be out of step with their stances. His liberalism was not theirs. No matter, for him it was a badge of honor: “If you’re a liberal,” he wrote a friend in 1940, “that means you’re always out on a limb. It isn’t very comfortable, on the limb, but then God never intended liberals to be comfortable. If he had, he’d have made them conservatives. Or radicals.”

To assert that he was primarily a poet is in no way to denigrate his talent as a writer of prose. Some of his short stories are superb, going far beyond what one might today think of as the pat *Saturday Evening Post* variety. The magazine during Benét's lifetime was one of the chief venues for short fiction – and it paid better than most of the others. The writer John Marquand asserted that Benét “was the only one of us who could write a story for the *Saturday Evening Post* and make it read like literature.” Marquand's judgment was a bit severe – Fitzgerald was also around – but it is telling. Benét's skills grew remarkably during his career so that he moved beyond the neatly shaped tale to ones evincing ambiguity, open-endedness, and deeply serious themes – the qualities one finds in the work of a John Cheever, Raymond Carver, or Alice Munro and not in the sentimental stories of a writer such as O. Henry from an earlier period. Benét understood about shifts in taste, although he did not live to see his writing go out of fashion. In a lecture entitled “Some Contemporary Aspects of Literature” given late in his life, he discussed the great changes occurring in literature during the 1920's and 1930's, a period he recognized might be split into sections such as “the Jazz Age – the Age of Disillusion – the Age of Pound and Eliot and Joyce – and so on.” But literature “never fits very neatly into categories or ages,” he observed. Writers work even when what they do does not fit “the mood and fashion of the time.” The 1920's and 1930's were “a time of wide, diverse, and unceasing experiment,” he recognized. This did not just happen; it came about from “a wish on the part of many writers to start telling the truth.” That meant “enlarging the range of prose fiction so that it could deal with all sides of life – to bring back live words into poetry – [and] to bring back to the theatre something more than drawing-room comedy or the set ‘problem-play’ where a wise old friend of the family explained everything nicely in the last act.”

If we do not generally think of Benét as a champion of the new it is because of the style of much of his prose and poetry and because we do not think of his popular work with radio as innovative. At the time it was, and his uses of native idioms on occasion were as well. Benét understood and championed the new against the “singular deadness [that] afflicted all branches of American letters.” What was missing was “the saltiness, the vigor and the native energy that had given American letters its real character – the huge laughter mixed with as huge a bitterness of Mark Twain – the great voice of Whitman. . . . It was a period of the polite, the academic, and the small.” Young writers found “a jungle full of interesting and terrifying animals” beyond the walls of genteel Victorian estates, and in that jungle were “not only whole sections of human experience but whole regions and classes in this country unrepresented in letters.” The response to this new America, Benét went on, was not “a self-conscious movement.” Rather, “it

happened spontaneously and the writers came from all over. No three writers," he noted, "could be more different than E. E. Cummings, F. Scott Fitzgerald and Sherwood Anderson. Yet each, in his best work, was trying to say something true and to break new ground."

Benét was in a particularly advantageous position to champion a new generation of writers. Because of the remarkable success of *John Brown's Body* he was elected to the prestigious National Institute of Arts and Letters in 1929 when he was only thirty-one. Nine years later he was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters, a group of fifty eminences from among the two hundred and fifty person National Institute. Charles Fenton, Benét's biographer, remarked that "A young man like Benét, decent, gregarious, well bred, conventionally anxious to please his elders, might have been expected to slide gradually into a dulled acceptance of the prevailing Institute mores," but this was not the case. As a member of the Institute and then the Academy he was able to achieve recognition for new blood such as Archibald MacLeish, Carl Sandburg, Ellen Glasgow, and Walter Lippmann, despite the opposition of an old guard lodged intellectually in an earlier age. "Arrived hour late at the Institute," he noted in November 1933 in his diary, "where stuffed imbecile R[obert] U. [nderwood] Johnson & other incompetent old men try as usual to elect mediocrities and suppress ability." Benét worked tirelessly for the Institute, believing – correctly at the time – that it was the only organization in America which could help writers as a group. He served as chairman of the nominating committee for the Department of Literature, in which capacity he was instrumental in securing the elections of Thomas Wolfe, John Dos Passos, Stuart Chase, Ezra Pound, Joseph Wood Krutch, Charles Beard, William Faulkner, and John Steinbeck as well as others. After his election to the Academy he and others succeeded in wresting control from a distinctly old guard led by the crusty Victorian academic Nicholas Murray Butler. "Academy trying to put things over," he wrote in his diary in October 1939, and he saw it as "all due to the personal pique of Nicholas Murray Butler. Disgraceful exhibition of old-man pettiness." "Had he lived longer," Fenton concluded his detailed discussion of Benét's involvement with the Institute and the Academy, "Benét would have become president of the organization" which he helped mold into one that aided writers with grants and awards rather than being an inward-turning bastion for self-congratulation and substantial cronyism.

As if his committee work for the Institute and later the Academy were not sufficient, Benét in 1933 accepted an offer from the Yale University Press to serve as editor of its Yale Series of Younger Poets, which each year since 1919 had published what its editor judged to be the best volumes of poetry from those submitted. By 1933 the Press published the single best volume. Until Benét's tenure

the yearly number of submissions had been small and their quality generally modest. He was soon to change that; as George Bradley, a poet published in the Series in 1986, wrote in a superb introduction to *The Yale Younger Poets Anthology*, Benét “found the series a publisher’s hobby given over to inconsequential work, and he left it the most prominent venue for new poets in the country.” Bradley observed that previously the series had consisted of “faint imitations of standard styles. . . . By contrast, the work Benét ushered into print was usually up-to-the-minute in both manner and content.” It was no accident; Benét knew what he wanted and, as his lecture on “Some Contemporary Aspects of Literature” indicates, he had a wide-ranging knowledge of and appreciation for contemporary literature.

As soon as he was appointed editor he worked with Eugene Davidson of the Press to alter the format of the volumes, and in Benét’s typically generous, energetic way, he wrote many of his literary contacts to solicit submissions. The results were impressive. In 1934, for instance, the Press received manuscripts from James Agee, who won the prize that year, and also from Muriel Rukeyser, May Sarton, and Lincoln Kirstein. Benét’s generosity extended out beyond his artistic openness. He insisted that \$100 of his \$250 fee be given the winning poet, something that until then had never been done. And his diligence brought in many more manuscripts: in 1935 he read seventy-three submissions, the Press having sorted out approximately that many more as not worthy of consideration. In addition to the manuscripts received through the Press, Benét dealt with any number of other queries, submissions, and the like in connection with the Series, and he remained kind and fair always. He described it to one aspiring poet, noting that “As for kinds of verse – no particular kind of verse is preferable. All I’m interested in is good work of any kind.” Nine months later he wrote the poet again: “Thank you for sending me a copy of ‘Mushrooms.’ I should not advise, at present, your submitting your verse to the Yale Series of Younger Poets. Perhaps in a year or so.” Many another editor would not have been so circumspect.

“Mushrooms” was one of the manuscripts in 1935 that did not excite him, nor apparently, did any of the others, so he tracked down Rukeyser’s manuscript from the previous year and published it as the 1935 winner. Her volume, *Theory of Flight*, was the first “to exert significant influence on a subsequent generation of writers,” Bradley noted, adding that while Benét “could appreciate poetry that espoused art for art’s sake, . . . his own taste ran to verse that was willing to dirty its hands with the number – four gravel of this world.” In the politicized Depression 1930’s, his taste matched that of the reading public: five of the ten volumes he selected during his decade as editor had multiple printings and “sold in the thousands. . . . [His] final selection would sell over five thousand copies, making its author Yale’s best-selling poet for two decades.” The book was Margaret Walker’s



*For My People*, which Benét championed and had published in 1942 after she had submitted it repeatedly.

Whatever earlier successes Benét had achieved with the poetry collections *Young Adventure* and *Heavens and Earth* and the novels *The Beginning of Wisdom*, *Young People's Pride*, and *Jean Huguenot*, his great breakthrough as a writer came with the publication of *John Brown's Body* in 1928. He and his wife Rosemary had managed to travel to Paris in 1926 with the aid of a Guggenheim Fellowship, which eventually was extended for six months beyond its original year. Having settled on his topic he labored hard over the long narrative, not at all sure that he could come close to his goal, an epic about America.

He struggled with its form, deciding on "a prologue, eight books or sections, and an epilogue," as he wrote in his "Preliminary Report" to the Guggenheim Foundation. The action, he noted, was "continuous," and while it did not "follow history in the strict sense," it was "a poem, an attempt at an interpretation, not a history or a recital of events." While he was trying to keep "the epic quality" he intended to give them an immediacy unlike what one found in histories.

When John Farrar responded enthusiastically to the completed manuscript Benét sent in December 1927, he answered,

I am very glad indeed that you think so well of [*John Brown's Body*] – needless to say – and particularly glad if it seemed to you to be whole. You lose the feel of the whole, working on a thing that size for so long, and can see nothing but the parts. But I tried to put America in it – at least some of the America I knew. If I did so, some of it should stand till a better man comes along. I feel rather curiously about it myself. I think my best work so far, perhaps, is in it and yet it is more detached from me than anything I have done. It seemed to me that a thing of that sort ought to be tried. A poet of greater faculties would have avoided my failures in it and my superficialities – and there are many of both – but what I have done, I have done to the extent of such capacities as I have. At least I hope it has in it some of the landscapes, the sights, the sounds [and] the people which are American. I tried to put them there. I am tired – not of criticism of America, for no country can be healthy without self-criticism – but of the small railers, the conventional rebels. We also have a heritage – and not all of it is wooden money.

John Farrar sent galleys of *John Brown's Body* to E. A. Robinson, who found parts of it fine, but demurred from complete praise, declaring that "parts of it are as bad as possible." He altered the word "bad" to "mistaken," and Benét responded that



the comment was "very Robinsonian." Benét might have worked longer at the poem, he acknowledged, but that would not have served him well. He had done his "damnest" to make it flow, and ten years of work would not have removed the "prosier passages." He observed, "The fault there is not only in me but in the nature of both subject and medium." He was sure that he "could do no better, given such brains as I had. Now it is out of me and I am anxious to do something different and more disciplined."

Regardless of its faults, the long narrative poem was an instant and immense success, being picked up by the Book of the Month Club, which printed a large edition. When Benét heard about it he was ecstatic: "65,000! My God! What a lot of books! In fact it's still pretty hard for me to realize it." His fame was assured, and from that moment until his death he was one of America's most widely known figures, whose talents were in constant demand. Why was – and is – *John Brown's Body* popular? The reasons are many, no doubt, but chief among them is the subject: the Civil War. Benét attempted to and to a large degree succeeded in presenting the reader with a panoramic vision of the war from both the southern and northern points of view, although ultimately he sympathized with the northern, Unionist position. In a lecture he gave well after the publication of the poem, he spoke of having gone to school in Georgia and being told that "the South was entirely and absolutely right," and he pored through books and old volumes of *Century* magazine which carried a series called "Battles and Leaders of the Civil War." He developed a vested interest in the America he read about, so that "when I came to write the poem, the choice of the Civil War seemed inevitable. For it marked a turning point in our national history. Two systems of life had grown up side by side. . . ." His sources were wide and added a kind of authority to what he wrote: "I drew, of course, upon various histories and biographies, upon the official records and papers, and particularly upon letters, diaries, and reminiscences of the period." Since the publication of *John Brown's Body* a massive literature about the Civil War has developed, but in 1928 there was little that achieved the scope of his work.

Then, too, *John Brown's Body* appealed to readers because of its ease of style. In his "Preliminary Report" about the work in 1927 he told of employing "various metres and verse-forms in the writing and us[ing] various devices of interlude and change of pace in an attempt to keep the thing from growing monotonous." Still, the thing had "a foundation or backbone of rather rough blank verse combined with a dactylic or anapestic pentameter-form that takes the chief load and binds the whole project together." In an interview in 1933 Benét acknowledged writing in "various meters varying from a rather loose form of free verse and certain passages of rhythmic prose to a few incidental lyrics written in

the strict and traditional pattern.” He intended, he stated, to adapt the meter to the characters and situations. He spoke of inventing “a kind of rough form [of blank verse] that had a very decided beat that would carry certain names that I wanted to use that seemed more in key with the classic [forms of verse].” He cited as an example the opening of Book Three:

By Pittsburg Landing, the turbid Tennessee  
Sucks against black, soaked spiles with soil-colored waters.  
That country is huge and disorderly, even now.

He also cited the example of “American Names,” one of his best known poems, although there the meter is tighter than in the case above, while the rhyme is absolutely regular. The first stanza reads,

I have fallen in love with American names,  
The sharp names that never get fat,  
The snakeskin-titles of mining-claims,  
The plumed war-bonnet of Medicine Hat,  
Tuscon and Deadwood and Lost Mule Flat.

His use of a kind of vernacular – both in language and imagery – has a popular appeal, something noticeable in his shorter poems as well as in the long narratives. “Born in the mountains, lonesome-born,/ Raised runnin’ ragged thu’ the cockleburrs and corn,” goes a couplet in “The Mountain Whippoorwill,” and one stanza of “The Ballad of William Sycamore” reads,

The cabin logs, with the bark still rough,  
And my mother who laughed at trifles,  
And the tall, lank visitors, brown as snuff,  
With their long, straight squirrel-rifles.

The poem swings along, direct and clear, the themes very American ones of freedom, courage, independence, and admiration for the man at one with the land – “Go play with the towns you have built of blocks,” the last stanza asserts, “The towns where you would have bound me!/ I sleep in my earth like a tired fox,/ And my buffalo have found me.” And let us not forget the last line of “American Names”: “Bury my heart at Wounded Knee.” The true liberal Benét was no thoughtless celebrant of American expansionism and oppression; few Anglo-Saxon writers of his era wrote more compassionately about the plight of minorities.

Much the same thing can be said about his short stories: they are direct and clear, and in such well-known favorites as "The Devil and Daniel Webster" they celebrate American themes and legendary characters – in this case the famous politician and orator Webster. His stories about the present are less celebratory, more likely to be wryly presented vignettes, often poignant, about contemporary life and about people who sadly lacked insight into themselves. More and more in the 1930s Benét wrote the latter sort as he observed the effects of the Great Depression and as he experienced the malaise that could be a part of urban life. And as he watched dictatorships engulf Europe he turned to writing that was meant to warn his audience about them.

Earlier, in the wake of his first great success, he worked in Hollywood with D. W. Griffith on the production of what was to be an epic film about Abraham Lincoln. If anything contributed to his wry sense of things, it was this experience. While he admired Griffith, like many another writer who on the basis of new fame did a Hollywood stint Benét came to despise the machinations of the film industry. When he first arrived there in December 1929 he was amused by what he told Rosemary was a "madhouse," "Hollywood," he wrote her, "is one loud, struggling Mainstreet, low-roofed, mainly unskyscrapered town that struggles along for twenty-five miles or so, full of stop & go lights, automobiles, palm-trees, Spanishy – & God knows what all houses – orange-drink stands with real orange juice – studios – movie-theatres – everything but bookstores." Little seemed to be going on at his particular studio, and in all he was not entirely clear why he was being employed, but the money was good. A month later he was fit to be tied and told Carl Brandt that if he were ever signed up again for a twelve-week contract with the film industry "there is going to be a good deal of blood flowing around the Brandt office." He declared that "of all the Christbitten places and business[es] on the two hemispheres this one is the last curly kink on the pig's tail. And that's without prejudice to D. W. Griffith. I like him and think he's good. But, Jesus, the movies!" The people who swirled around the industry made him want to vomit, and while he had worked in advertising, "nowhere have I seen such shining waste, stupidity and conceit as in the business and managing end of this industry. Whoopee!" he added, making light of his thorough disgruntlement. Since he had arrived he had written four versions of *Abraham Lincoln*, at least one of which he thought was good. "That, of course, is out," he noted. "Seven people, including myself, are now working in conferences on a 5th one which promises hopefully to be the worst yet. If I don't get out of here soon I am going crazy." By the middle of February 1930 he was back in New York, delighted to have left Hollywood behind, that "indescribable place," as he told an editor of the *Yale Review* who wanted him to do a piece about films.

As the Depression deepened in the early 1930s and politics took on an immense seriousness, Benét responded with a new depth in his writing. To see this one has only to compare short stories from the 1920s such as "The Sobbin' Women" (the basis for the immensely successful film *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers*) and "Lucky Fist" – both published in 1926 – with later tales which focus on the pathos of character – "Among Those Present" (1938), "The Three Fates" (1941), and "Famous" (1942) are examples – and tales which attack totalitarianism – "The Blood of the Martyrs" (1936), "By the Waters of Babylon" (1937), and "Into Egypt" (1939). In poetry the same holds true.

When he died the encomiums poured in. One of the most moving tributes to Benét came from the writer Pauli Murray, who much later for her family memoir, *Proud Shoes*, would borrow from a line of his about the poet Paul Engle: "Here is somebody walking in America in proud shoes." In a letter to Rosemary she declared:

You cannot help but know there are thousands of lovers of literature today who feel a sense of personal loss with you, particularly those hundreds of struggling young students for whom Stephen Vincent Benét was an inspiration and a guide. His willingness to give personal attention to their needs, to offer words of encouragement, to read through their "stuff" and to write long letters of criticism and suggestion – all these brought him close to us. I am one of these.

One consoling thought occurs to those of us who have lost him. He has scattered fragments of his spirit among us, and many poets, writers and students will continue to be faithful to the great drama of American literature to which he gave himself. Many a younger poet will ply himself the harder that a master's work might go on. Benét is not dead – for the epitaph which he wrote for John Brown might well be his own, and the banner flung back for some of us to carry forward –

"And, if the heart within your breast must burst  
Like a cracked crucible and pour its steel  
White-hot before the white heat of the wheel,  
Strive to recast once more  
That attar of the ore  
In the strong mold of pain  
Till it is whole again, . . ."

And for us darker folk, particularly has he given a hope that cannot die:

"Oh, blackskinned epic, epic with the black spear,  
I cannot sing you, having too white a heart,

And yet, some day, a poet will rise to sing you  
And sing you with such truth and mellowness, . . .  
That you will be a match for any song  
Sung by old, populous nations of the past,  
And stand like hills against the American sky,  
And lay your black spear down by Roland's horn. . . ."

He spent a lifetime probing, rebuking, but always ultimately honoring his chosen land and its people.



## Traveling Routes and Circuits in California: Immigration Processes, Policies and the Mapping of Identities

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California is the site of multiple migration routes, resettlements, and circuits. In the nineteenth century it was the *Golden Mountain* of the Chinese, in the early twentieth century, the *El dorado* of the Filipino immigrants, and *el Norte* for the Mexican newcomers; today California has become a site, a new nexus of power, where migration processes locate themselves within the organic interdependence of the contemporary world political economy in the twentieth century.

The state's geographic position (on the Pacific Rim and just north of Mexico, Central and South America) is involving it in the global marketplace at a rapid rate and at infrastructural levels. Post World War II transformations have restructured our economy, the workplace, our daily lives, and our student populations, and have involved transnationals, immigrants, and the exiled at astonishing rates. These large-scale social processes, accompanied by political repressions, are driving forces in what has come to be known as the "new immigration," a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that has affected California more than any other state.

The 1990 census cited that 29.5% of all Californians were foreign-born. Eighty percent of our immigration is from Latin American or Asian countries. One-third of the refugee populations have resettled in California, specifically from Vietnam, Kampuchea, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, and from the former Soviet Union. This is in part due to the state's previously generous social benefits, but also economic opportunities, refugee support groups, established social networks as well as California's geographic position, landscapes, and temperate weather. California is now positioned that by 2001 it will be the most racially diverse state, with no racial majority.

The study of U.S. immigration uncovers contradictory investments in the American Dream. This paper presents the historical and demographic patterns of selected migrations to California throughout the twentieth century, with a focus on patterns from the Philippines and Mexico. The presentation discusses how the transnational global economy and the politics and policies of U.S. immigration restriction have shaped the ebb and flow of distinct migratory populations and patterns. What emerges at the end of the twentieth century are distinct migratory activities, new transnational routes and circuits, and diverse investments in the resources of the American Dream. These processes have raised the question of identity and positionality has led us to an understanding of how racial and ethnic formations articulate with other axes of stratification as class, gender, sexuality. It is a dynamic model that has complex negotiations.

### **Gatekeeping in the Twentieth Century: Linkages with Economic Processes and Circuits**

Migration patterns are rooted in historical relationships established between the United States and the principal sending countries – that is, the size and source of new immigrant communities in the United States today is directly related to the history of American military, political, economic, and cultural involvement and intervention in the sending countries, and to the linkages that are formed in the processes. These linkages open a surprising variety of legal and illegal migration pathways.

To understand the processes of documented and undocumented migration to the U.S., it is important to identify three specific trends in U.S. immigration “gatekeeping policies” over the twentieth century: the restrictionist racially-based policies of the first half of the century; the liberal policies of the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act, the Refugee Act of 1980, and Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1987; and in the 1990s, the restriction of immigrant rights and services and the steady militarization and closing of the border.



By the beginning of the twentieth century, Congress had set in place a number of racially-based restrictive policies which ebbed and eventually stopped Asian migration to the United States, particularly impacting California: the Chinese Exclusion Acts of 1882, 1902, and 1904 which suspended immigration of Chinese laborers to the U.S.; the 1907 Act which refused admission to Japanese laborers; the Immigration Act of 1917 further restricted immigration of Asian persons, creating the “barred zone” (known as the Asia-Pacific triangle). In 1924, Congress passed the National Origins Act, which preferred northern Protestant Europeans, eliminated any further Asian migration, and established the Border Patrol, to control the entrance of Asian and southern European migrants. This race-based legislation was in place, with a few provisional changes, until 1965.

The Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and 70s, which awakened the moral conscience of America, denounced racism in its various forms. The time had come for revising America's immigration policy and the old notions of who could become an American. The Immigration Act of 1965 permitted the annual admission of 120,000 immigrants from the Western Hemisphere; it reopened the gates to immigrants from Asia, allowing a quota of 20,000 immigrants for each country. Changes in U.S. immigration laws – in particular the amendments passed in 1965 abolished the national origins quota system and changed the preference system to give priority to family reunification over occupational skills – have often been singled out as the principal reason for the “new immigration” and the change in its composition (Reimers, 72).<sup>1</sup> This new law was not expected to make a drastic change in the composition of future immigrants. Yet this law, represented a sharp ideological departure from the traditional view of America as a homogeneous white society.

The 1980s saw the implementation of two liberal policies: the Refugee Act of 1980, establishing a systematic procedure for the admission and resettlement of refugees of humanitarian concern to the United States, and the Immigration and Reform Act (IRCA), which legalized 3.1 undocumented persons, 80% from Mexico. However, debates about immigration policies exploded into public consciousness in the 1990s. While policies continue to open the door to transnational capitalists, computer engineers and technicians, graduate students, artists, and athletes, the

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<sup>1</sup> The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 abolished the national-origins quota system and replaced it with a system that based eligibility on family relationships, skills, education, and occupations. The Act permitted the annual admission of 120,000 immigrants from the Western Hemisphere. Each country in the Eastern Hemisphere was allowed 20,000 immigrants. Exempted from quota limitations were the immediate family members of U.S. citizens and residents (specifically spouses, parents, and children under the age of sixteen).

undocumented and exiled populations find the door closing to them. Asylum seekers who enter without inspection (EWD) are now excluded from legal hearings. Refugee services are trimmed from 36 months to four months; the undocumented are criminalized. California's Proposition 187 denied education, health care, and social services to undocumented. The year 1994 enacted the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) opening the border to the free movement of goods and capital in North America; the same year Congress launched *Operation Gatekeeper* attempting to "seal off the border" to Central Americans and Mexicans. It increased border enforcement efforts, turning the 2000-mile U.S.-Mexico border into a war zone, deployed 3,000 new border patrol, blackhawk helicopters, heat sensors, night vision telescopes and electronic intrusion detection devices.

These laws and policies, however, are part of a larger economic-political process. The central role played by the United States over the past 30 years lies at the core of why people have migrated here in ever-increasing numbers. Sassen writes:

U.S. efforts to open its own and other countries' economies to the flow of capital, goods, services, and information created conditions that mobilized people for migration, and formed linkages between the United States and other countries which subsequently served as bridges for migration (14-15).

Since World War II there is a new global phenomenon in which millions of workers, skilled and unskilled, documented and undocumented, move from rural areas to urban areas, from one country to another, and from one continent to another, wherever there is a demand for their labor and services. The root of this labor movement can be traced to the economic disparity among nations in the rapidly integrated global economy and the shortage of labor among countries experiencing faster rates of economic growth than others. In the past decades, the relentless forces of global capitalism, especially the free flow of capital, technology and information across national boundaries, have set off a massive redistribution of labor and jobs worldwide. Immigration and labor laws, notably in the U.S., have been widely used to accomplish this end. Though often severely exploited, the immigrant laborers find higher pay and standard of living in their newly adopted countries still more attractive than remaining at home. Increased immigration, both documented and undocumented, is but a symptom of the phenomenon of economic globalization.

We shall now turn to two nations of major migration-sending to the U. S., the Philippines and Mexico, both of which have shared colonial legacies with

Spain, and trace their migration patterns to California throughout the twentieth century. Special attention will be given to demonstrate how immigration policies and processes have influenced who migrates and the negotiation of new identities in distinct periods.

## Philippine Migrations

Relations between the United States and the Philippine Islands first began with the Spanish-American War in 1892. After being under Spain's colonial rule for nearly four centuries, the Philippines was now a territory of the U.S., its inhabitants classified as "American nationals." The United States and the Philippines share a history of colonization in which the former acted as the colonizer, founding American-oriented schools in the islands in 1903, recruiting males for the military in the world wars, and since World War II establishing the Philippines as a major center for cheap labor for capitalist industries and for transnational trade. With these historical ties, it is not surprising that the Philippines is the second largest sending country of immigrants to the U.S.

*The First Wave (1898-1945).* The year 1903 marks the arrival of the first large group of Filipinos to legally come to the U.S. It consisted of 100 students chosen out of 20,000 applicants to participate in the educational development program. These *pensionados* (as they were often referred to because their expenses were paid by the U.S. government) returned to the Philippines by 1910 after completing their education in the U.S. universities. Filipino students continued to enter the U.S. through this program until 1938, their total number estimated at 14,000. While a majority returned to their home country, a few remained and worked mostly as unskilled workers.

Sixty percent (27,000) of Filipinos who came to the U.S. in the first wave, however, were not students, but unskilled males who were seeking employment. They were "recruited . . . to fill the farm labor vacuum in the Imperial, San Joaquin, Delta, and Salinas valleys of California" (Crouchett 32).<sup>2</sup> These immigrants were male, young, single, in the prime of their lives. Takaki writes,

In 1910, the mainland Filipino population was only 406, including seventeen in Washington and 109 in Louisiana – the descendants of Spanish-speaking Filipinos known as "Manilamen" who had deserted

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Numerous race-based immigration acts restricted Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Asian Indians who previously had been recruited for agricultural labor.

Spanish galleons in the eighteenth century. By 1920, there were 5,603 Filipinos on the mainland. Ten years later, their numbers had multiplied almost nine times to 45,208. ... Between 1910 and 1930, the Filipino population of California had jumped from five to 30,470 (Takaki, 315).

By 1930, another twenty-five percent of the Filipinos in the mainland (11,400 out of 45,000) found positions as service workers such as janitors, valets, kitchen helpers, pantry men, dishwashers, and all kinds of service boys – chamberboys, bellboys, hallboys, houseboys, elevator boys, yardboys, doorboys, and bus boys – unskilled jobs that many white workers would only take as a last resort (Takaki, 316). Filipinos found themselves desired as servants.

The predominance of Filipino male immigrants in the first wave is clearly evident from the 14/1 ratio of men to women. It is argued that this disparity is due to the preference of labor recruiters for men for agricultural work. But another consideration is the Filipino tradition in which men were expected to go out and earn a living while women stayed home to care for the family and other domestic concerns (Rabaya, 191).

Fueled by economic rivalry and racial discrimination, anti-Filipino hate and violence were most intense in California.

In early December 1929, the police saw a Filipino man with a white teenager girl and arrested him. He was released from jail after the girl's mother explained to the authorities that her daughter and the Filipino were engaged and their relationship had been approved. On December 5, 1929, the town newspaper, the *Evening Pajaronian*, published a photograph of the couple embracing each other. A month later, the chamber of commerce protested the presence of Filipino immigrants. In a resolution, the chamber declared that Filipinos represented "a moral and sanitary" threat and "a menace to white labor" (Takaki, 327).

To contextualize this racial prejudice, it should be noted that in 1880, California lawmakers had enacted legislation to prohibit the issuance of a license authorizing the marriage of a white person with a "negro, mulatto, or Mongolian." The 1948 California Supreme Court ruled that anti-miscegenation laws were unconstitutional.

Immigration to the U.S. became more difficult for Filipinos after the passing of the Tydings McDuffie Act of 1934. This legislation, specifically aimed at Filipino immigrants, allowed only 50 persons to immigrate from the Philippines annually. The passage of this law was mainly in response to anti-Filipino sentiments on the West Coast, to racial tensions and anti-Filipino race riots that began in 1928, the first of which took place in Yakima, Washington, then in four places in California.

A year later, in 1935, Congress passed the Repatriation Act, which offered free transportation to Filipinos to return to the Philippines, but only on the condition that they give up their right to reenter the U.S. Yet only 2,190 Filipinos took advantage of this offer, due to the poor social and economic conditions in the Philippines. "Advertise in a Manila paper and offer a job at 25 pesos a month, not a living wage in Manila, and you will get a thousand applicants," stated an editorial in the *Manila Times*. "Is it any wonder, then that the lure of pay four to ten times as great . . . in the United States draws the Filipino like a magnet?" (Mariano, 13).

*The Second Wave (1946-1964)*. Once the Philippines gained its independence from the U.S. in 1946, laws facing Filipino immigrants changed. The second wave of Filipino immigrants to California began during World War II and continued to increase throughout the next decade. Filipinos, along with other Asians who were permanent residents in the U.S., were allowed to apply for naturalization under the Nationality Act of 1946, as signed by President Truman. Citizenship meant that Filipinos could now apply for employment in the professions as well as petition to bring other immediate family members in the Philippines to join them in the U.S.

During the post-World War II period, the U.S. reinstalled two large U.S. military bases in the Philippines. The presence of Clark Air Force Base and Subic Naval Base had a direct impact on immigration, leading to numerous marriages between Filipino women and U.S. servicemen that made the former eligible to enter the U.S. as nonquota immigrants. It was the War Brides Act of 1946 "which allowed Filipinos who had enlisted in the U.S. Armed Forces as residents of the United States and had married during their service in the Pacific to bring their brides to emigrate to California. In addition, those Filipinos who had served in the Armed Forces as scouts in the Philippines were permitted to enter the United States with their wives and children" (Crochett 62). From 1951 to 1960, a total of 19,307 Filipinos were admitted to the U.S., of which 93.5% were nonquota immigrants and 70.9% were females (Boyd, 48-90).

From 1940-1960, the Filipino population on the West Coast doubled from 31,408 to 64,459. During this wave, Filipinos began moving from rural areas to cities as San Diego and San Francisco (Crochett 62).

*The Third Wave (1965 - present)*. The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 is often cited as the reason for the increase of Filipino immigration and demographical change since 1965. The demographic characteristics of Filipino immigration was divergent from the previous waves, particularly in terms of gender, education, and occupation.

In the late 1960s, about 45 percent of Filipino immigrants entered in the professional and 55 percent in the family unity categories. Within a few

years, however, family networks developed that enabled naturalized citizens to take advantage of reunification categories. By 1976 Filipino immigration in the occupational categories dropped to about 21 percent. And by 1990, just over 8 percent came from the occupational categories compared to 88 percent in the family categories (Hing, 316).

What marks its demographics is the predominance of newcomers who migrate for family unification, professional migrants, particularly women licensed in the nursing profession, and technological workers. More than seventy thousand foreign nurses entered the country between 1965 and 1988, most of them from Asia... the Philippines is by far the biggest supplier of nurses with approximately 25,000 who migrated to the U.S. between 1966-1985. In fact, many young women enter nursing colleges in the Philippines as "their ticket" to entering the United States in the future. Today the Philippines is the second largest migration sending nation to the United States, with many developing strong economic, political and social transnational linkages. It is only in the past decade that Filipinos have begun entrepreneurship businesses, a trend that is more predominant among Asian immigrants from Korea, China, Taiwan and Vietnam.

The population of Filipinos in the U.S. is now 1.4 million. In 1980, the U.S. Census reported 774,652.3 Filipinos; in 1990, 1,406,770, a growth of 632,118 (81.6%). The U.S. Census projects that the Filipino population will continue to grow over the next century: two million by the turn of the century, 4 million by 2020.

## El Norte

Knowledge of the interwoven nature of U.S.-Mexico history provides valuable insights into the migration patterns that go beyond the simple push-pull theories. Contemporary immigration flows reveal deep roots embedded in the fabric of both the United States and Mexico economies. Often portrayed as the logical trajectory of economically disadvantaged people traveling a route of geographic convenience in search of opportunities and a better life, the migration of Mexico's working poor contains elements of the quintessential American dream.

Since the 1850s, the U.S. has recruited temporary workers from central Mexico to work on the railroads, in the tanneries of Chicago, and in the mines of the Southwest. In 1943, Congress established the Bracero Program, to relieve U.S. labor shortages during World War II; men were employed primarily by California fruit and vegetable growers. The program, which issued five million bracero contracts from 1943-1964, targeted villages in western and central Mexico, in some



of the nation's poorest regions, and offered many villagers their first contact with a foreign land, forging new links between villages and labor markets. Even after the Bracero Program was disbanded in 1964, villagers continued to migrate to the U.S. When residents of a rural village or rancho develop a tradition of international wage labor migration, networks composed of kin and friends enable those with limited material resources to migrate, creating network-mediated chain migration. The basic forces driving migration – rural Mexico's economic distress, the need for workers in the Southwest and in urban garment industries, and social networks in the U.S. – grew stronger. These active recruitments of Mexican migrants has established not only a legacy of seasonal northern migration, but of an economic dependency on the U.S.

Residing or resettling in the U.S. has become more common among Mexican immigrants since the 1960s, while temporary, short-termed migration remains predominant (Massey, 161). California is the largest immigrant-receiving state of Mexicans; fifty percent of Mexicans list California as their intended state of residence (Heppel and Torres). Since 1983 Mexican migration has increased substantially, not only from urban areas as Mexico City and Guadalajara, but particularly from villages and towns of rural Mexico. Migration of indigenous peoples from southern states of Mixteca and Oaxaca mark this new wave.<sup>3</sup> The U.S. 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act, an amnesty program, offered a powerful incentive for family reunification, but also set other processes in motion. Now legalized residents, Mexican nationals travel to Mexico, extending and accelerating the circuit of transferring U.S. goods, ideas, and peoples across the border.

In the past decade, migration flows are marked by migration initiated by women as well as by individuals in the professional classes. Women, single mothers as well as married mothers, often leave their children with members of their extended families and seek employment in California as domestic workers or childcare workers, indicating that transnational processes are restructuring the family. This mother-initiated migration is also emerging among Central American, Caribbean and Filipino communities. Mexican professionals as teachers and doctors are reportedly being drawn to the U.S. because of unemployment in Mexico. According to a March 4 story in the Wall Street Journal, some teachers who could earn \$35 per week in Mexico prefer \$200 per week picking fruits and vegetables across the border in California.

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Mixteca and Oaxaca were hit especially hard by the extended economic crisis of the 1980s, the effects of which were heightened by the liberalization of agricultural and trade policies.



Over the past 25 years, the number of Mexican college graduates – licenciados – increased in all fields. Over 1.3 million Mexicans graduated from college in the 1980s, when there were only 300,000 jobs created for them, persuading some of them to emigrate for job. One Mexican dentist who graduated in 1986 reported that 25 percent of his classmates were working in the U.S. – usually not as dentists.<sup>4</sup>

What is emerging in immigrant literature today are the concepts of “transnational migrant circuit” and the immigrants’ “bifocality” introduced by Roger Rouse. Rouse researched the linkages of the Mexican community of Aguililla (Michoacan) and Redwood City (California) from 1940 through the 1990s.<sup>5</sup> He recognized through ethnographic work that the separate places of Aguililla and Redwood City become effectively a single community “through the continuous circulation of people, money, goods, and information. . . . they have come to contribute to a single community spread across a variety of sites” (14). “Transnational circuits,” as Rouse calls them, emplyify the kinds of complex cultural formations that are shaping individual lives and social networks.

It has become inadequate to see Aguilillans migration as a movement between distinct communities, understood as the loci of distinct sets of social relationships. Today, Aguilillans find that their most important kin and friends are as likely to be living hundreds or thousands of miles away as immediately around them. More significantly, they are often able to maintain these spatially extended relationships as actively and effectively as the ties that link them to their neighbors. In this regard, growing access to the telephone has been particularly significant, allowing people not just to keep in touch periodically but to contribute to decision-making and particiate in familial events from a considerable distance (Rouse, 1991:13).

Aguilillans become skilled “exponents of a cultural bifocality,” that is the interconnectedness of Redwood City, California and Aguililla, Michoacan necessitates “the chronic maintenance of two quite distinct ways of life.” They see their current lives and future possibilities are involving simultaneous engagements in places associated with markedly different forms of experiences” (Rouse, 14). Aguilillans have placed a heavy emphasis on creating and maintaining small-scale, family-run operations, based in land, offering them the strong family networks,

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<sup>4</sup> [http://migration.ucdavis.edu/By-Mouth/Migration News](http://migration.ucdavis.edu/By-Mouth/Migration%20News), vol. 3, No. 4 April, 1996.

<sup>5</sup> In the late 1960s Redwood City emerged as a “satellite community” of Aguililla. In 1980, the city’s population was 54,951.

values and dignities. However, Redwood City provides the economic resources to accomplish their goals. But their lives in Redwood City are marked as proletarian workers, submitting to the constant regulation of supervisors, the clock, and policing of their activities. We might consider Aguililla a window into the transnational processes of Mexican-U.S. migration. The processes of *transnational migrant circuits* and *bifocality* now typify social and economic linkages between the U.S. and Mexico.

Rural village financial dependence on the migrants has increased. One form of this dependency is in remittances or payments sent to Mexico. To demonstrate the level of economic dependence, in the Mexican village of Napizaro, seven out of ten families have members working in the U.S. It is estimated four out of ten dollars of family income now comes from remittances (Fletcher and Taylor, 11). U.S. remittances enable people to buy land, build two-story block homes, begin a business, send their children to school; *colonia dolares* have sprouted up. Fundraising activities in the U.S. are sent to enhance village fiestas to beautiful plazas. As Aguililla, which had sent so many migrants to the U.S. as early as the eighties, rural towns in Mexico are beginning to "serve as a nursery and nursing home for people working in wage-earning jobs in the U.S." (Rouse, 28). In some villages, 80% of the working-force men have migrated to the States.

Roger Rouse's research shows that transnational migrants are orchestrating lives that are truly bifocal, involved simultaneously in more than one culture while living fully in neither. They have subscribed to many of the trends of western urban culture while at the same time maintaining traditional values. They are in a transitive phase, occupying a liminal space.

Many trends indicate that migration from Mexico will only increase in as we enter the twenty-first century. Since December, 1994, Mexico is reeling from an economic crisis, the peso was devalued by 50%. Changes in the Mexican economy, in part due to the enactment of NAFTA,<sup>6</sup> over the next years will lead to 1.4 million rural people being displaced, 800,000 will migrate within Mexico; 600,000 to the United States. Government support for rural areas, price supports are being withdrawn; agricultural goods are being sold at reduced prices to the consumer. The U.S. can produce high quantities of corn and their exportation and selling at low prices will further undercut corn prices in Mexico. Thousands of *maquiladoras* situated along the border draw workers, specifically young women workers to the northern border. Sixty percent of Mexico's population is under 25

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<sup>6</sup> Mexico has become U.S. second most important trade partner after Canada, as the economies of both countries mesh more closely almost by day. Just last year, U.S. exports to Mexico rose 11 percent, to \$79 billion, or twice the pre-NAFTA levels.

years of age (Heppel and Torres). Many rural villages in traditional sending areas in Mexico are already highly dependent on remittances for their economic survival. In 1997 alone, \$5 billion was transferred from the U.S. to mother Mexico, the country's third largest source of income after oil and tourism. These trends, coupled by decades of immigration to the U.S. accepts migration to *el norte* as a plausible and acceptable response to economic hardship.

There is a shift from California being the primary site of multiple migrations, resettlements and migratory circuits. "Two remarkable things are happening," says Douglas Massey, a University of Pennsylvania specialist on Mexican migration. "Immigration has shifted from being a narrow regional phenomenon, where 75% of migrants went to California, to a national phenomenon involving every region." Many undocumented workers are no longer heading straight to California's Central Valley and other agricultural centers but to East Coast cities such as New York, Atlanta and Washington, where demand for low-skill labor is high. The other change, he says, "is the diversity of Mexican employment categories."<sup>7</sup>

*Central American Migration.* Though not a major focus of this talk, it is important to note the migration processes and policies which impact migrants from Central America, as they have become a significant number of refugees, asylees and undocumented in the recent two decades. Central American migration to the U.S., less than six thousand in the 1930s, jumped to more than twenty-one thousand in the following decade (possibly reflecting the recruitment of labor during the war years) and doubled again between 1951 and 1960 (U.S. INS 1978, t. 13). Qualitative and quantitative changes in Central American migration flows beginning in the 1960s and 1970s, particularly international migration, can be explained largely by events in the 1960s and 1970s.

Since the mid 1970s, war and political upheaval in Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala compounded by rapidly deteriorating economic conditions have resulted in massive dislocations in all three countries.

In Nicaragua, the Somoza regime countered the Sandinista campaign with massive repression, including extensive bombing of rural areas and finally the major cities, prior to the Sandinista victory in July 1979. In El Salvador, revolutionary movements that had developed throughout the 1970s coordinated forces and began a military offensive in the early 1980s. During the same period in Guatemala, a revolutionary movement emerged incorporating Indian and non-Indian (*ladino*) populations (Hamilton and Chinchilla, 106-107).

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<sup>7</sup> Joel Milliman. "U.S. Farmers Seek New Bracero Program," *The Wall Street Journal*, August 31, 1998, A1.

The large number of Salvadorans and Guatemalans coming to the U.S. in the 1970s and 1980s indicates that the U.S. immigration restrictions have had little impact on the number of Central Americans arriving. Many Central Americans living in Mexico and the United States assert that survival and personal safety are their primary motivations for emigrating. Although rural communities in Guatemala<sup>8</sup> and El Salvador have been the major victims of military violence, persons targeted for repression by death squads and security forces tend to be urban dwellers who are relatively well-educated, including labor and party leaders, students, and professionals. The U.S. refugee and asylum policies tend to reflect foreign policy concerns and thus have tended to discriminate against Central Americans with the partial exception of Nicaraguans, little evidence suggests that they have deterred immigrants from coming or from returning if deported. In turn, Central Americans have taken great personal risks in crossing borders into Mexico and the U.S. and resettling with undocumented statuses, usually in major urban areas.<sup>9</sup> As with other patterns of network-mediated migration, subsequent flows, often undocumented, now informed by economic necessity have established themselves, particularly from El Salvador and Guatemala.

In 1996, *Operation Gatekeeper* was established to “seal off the border” between Mexico and the U.S. But given the economic and social process set in motion, people continue to cross. As a result of more effective U.S. border patrols, the flow of illegal immigrants now has been diverted to more dangerous mountains and deserts. Thousands have died in the past few years trying to make the crossing. While the INS claims success with *Operation Gatekeeper*, in reality it has only displaced the flow of undocumented migration away from the new fortified San Diego-Tijuana border. This displacement eastward, into the harsh mountainous terrain of San Diego’s easy country has had the devastating ramifications for those attempting to cross “illegally”. From 1993 until 1996, at least 1,185 undocumented migrants died attempting to cross the border (Prodis, 1).

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<sup>8</sup> In Guatemala from 1978-1985, military attacks against the indigenous populations in the northern departments caused massive displacements, with those who could flee to Mexico or the United States. Some of those displaced within Guatemala were subsequently obliged by force or hunger to return to areas controlled by the military and to join civil patrols to help the counterinsurgency campaign of the armed forces.

<sup>9</sup> Salvadorans continue to represent the second-largest number of nonlegal immigrants apprehended by the INS (after Mexicans). The number of undocumented Salvadorans apprehended doubled between 1977 and 1981 from eight to sixteen thousand and reached seventeen thousand in 1985 (data from the INS). Most observers, noting the increased number of Salvadorans and Guatemalans in Los Angeles and other major U.S. cities, believe that the rate of increase has actually been much greater. One recent study estimates that three-quarters of a million to 1.3 million Central American migrants are living in the United States, two-thirds of them Salvadorans, and up to one-fifth Guatemalans (Ruggles and Fix, 45-47).

## Mapping Transnational Identities

From the early encounters, colonizations, and the establishment of the United States, policies defined people according to racial categories thus organizing and racializing people socially, politically and economically. Earlier models of immigrant identity construction developed in the early twentieth century often relied upon a simplistic paradigm of origin and tradition, or on a concept of individual adaptation and assimilation in a linear, bipolar fashion. These are no longer adequate models.

We have found that the migratory experience evokes, within its discursive strategies, negotiation undertaken by groups and individuals, many caught between poverty and repression in their homelands and the cultural dislocation and marginalization in the centers of power to which they flee (Perez-Torres, 1993-94, 185). In crossing national borders, immigrants encounter new hegemonic definitions: cultural dislocations, marginalizations, racializations, reconstructed gender roles, changes in the balance of power in families, new domestic groups and networks. The following poem articulates the cultural dislocation and marginalization viewed by an immigrant daughter.

today I realize dad's an orphan  
he seems small  
his back hunched  
just like the day he dragged our bags across the airport floor  
into the city of angels<sup>10</sup>  
and away from the things that made him big before.<sup>11</sup>

The troubled histories of economic displacement and political persecution provide strategies of survival in which a highly dynamic, fluid, negotiated form of social organization, cultural affirmation, and personal identification emerges (Perez-Torres, 1993-94, 177). Many border crossers find themselves caught in the process of transnational migration which is "the process by which immigrants forge and sustain simultaneous multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement" (Schiller, Basch and Blanc 48). Thus, immigrants now position themselves and their histories within the context of transnational migration and engage in new activities of social bonds and relations and in new forms of narrativity.

<sup>10</sup> "city of angels" refers to Los Angeles.

<sup>11</sup> Maria Poblet. "Poetry for the People," *The Diaspora*, African American Studies, University of California, Spring 1998, 4.

What is emerging is the concept of hybridization, or the increase in the range of personal and organizational options and cultural hybridization. The doors of imagined communities are opening up. Lisa Lowe's complexly layered article, "Heterogeneity, Hybridity, Multiplicity: Marking Asian American Differences," demonstrates new articulations of immigrant identity. Lowe suggests that cultural forms derive from a combination of vertical cultural transmissions intersected horizontally by specific historical, cultural, social and political circumstances. Her model multiplies the possibilities for identity and simultaneously historicizes these possibilities within concrete circumstances that often involve struggles. "Thus, rather than insisting on a reified cultural identity as primary in defining Asian American-ness, it opens up questions about the way gender or class or sexuality may also be variables that affect the historicized form that Asian American identity may take" (Luibheid, 1994, 12).

Lowe suggests that difference within the Asian American group is a positive resource that can open "political lines of affiliation with other groups (labor unions, other racial and ethnic groups, and gay, lesbian and feminist groups) in the challenge to a specific form of domination insofar as they share common features" (3). This model of difference offers a great range of personal and organizational possibilities of identity and community construction.

A specific phenomenon of immigration has been the increase of multi-racial marriages. Since 1960 the number of interracial couples in the United States has increased more than tenfold, to 1.6 million, which account for about 4 percent of U.S. marriages, a share that is expected to mushroom in the coming years, offering powerful evidence that many Americans are jettisoning old prejudices as never before.<sup>12</sup> Their bi-racial or multi-racial children embody in themselves emerging identities in the United States. Minority researchers emphasize "hybrid vigor" and suggest that mixed race people are "the children of the future – the natural bridges between the artificial boundaries that divide the humans of the world" (Nakashima).

Immigrants position themselves and their histories within the context of transnational migration and then engage in new forms of narrativity and new understandings of social bonds and relations – constructing a hybridization.

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<sup>12</sup> Michael A. Fletcher, "Interracial Marriages Eroding Barriers," in *Washington Post*, Tuesday, December 29, 1998, pg. A01. Today, almost one-third of U.S.-born Hispanics ages 25-34 are married to non-Hispanic whites. In addition, 36 percent of young Asian Pacific American men born in the United States marry white women, and 45 percent of U.S. born Asian Pacific American women took white husbands. Fewer than one in 10 black men and one in 25 black women aged 25 to 24 took white spouses, according to the 1990 census.



This hybridization is no ready answer, but it does release political reflection and collective action from the boundaries of nation, community, ethnicity, race and class. Fixities have become fragments and fragments realign as the kaleidoscope of collection experience in motion (Pieterse, 14).

Immigrants reconstruct themselves and their social networks within national and transnational contexts. This leads to an understanding of how racial and ethnic formations articulate with other axes of stratification such as class, gender, sexuality – a dynamic model that has complex negotiations. From these “webs of discourse” we can hear immigrants “author” themselves. i.e. reconstruct and affirm their own identities – past, present, and future.

In the twentieth century, particularly in the past thirty years, California has been the site of multiple migration routes, resettlements and circuits. It has been the site where migration processes and articulations have located themselves intensely. Immigration policies are favoring the well-educated, the monied; those who are forced to migrate by global economic and political processes, are finding themselves less welcomed, undocumented, and at times, criminalized. As we stand on the threshold of the twenty-first century, diverse documented and undocumented transnational migration circuits are maturing and fanning throughout the United States, establishing multiple sites of resettlement and circuits of movement with points of origin and diverse investments in the American Dream. These processes challenge us to rearticulate *American identity*, a dynamic, fluid model that has complex legacies and negotiations.

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## Hemingway, Faulkner, and the Nominatives

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One of William Faulkner's "Impressions of Japan," as recorded in a press release by the United States Embassy in Tokyo in 1955, is one of an "old woman vending peanuts beneath the gate" outside the Temple "for tourists to feed the pigeons with." He describes her this way:

A face worn with living and remembering, as though not one life had been long enough but rather every separate breath had been needed to etch into it all those fine and myriad lines; a face durable and now even a comfort to her, as if it had by now blotted up whatever had ever ached or sorrowed behind it, leaving it free now of the anguishes and the griefs and the enduring: here is one anyway who never read Faulkner and neither knows nor cares why he came to Japan nor gives one single damn what he thinks of Ernest Hemingway.<sup>1</sup>

There it was, he just could not get away from it. Out of his subconscious comes the name of his contemporary and competitor. Faulkner must have rued the time when his opinion of Hemingway had been public knowledge. Counting on the

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<sup>1</sup> William Faulkner, "Impressions of Japan," in *Essays, Speeches & Public Letters* (New York: Random House, 1965), p. 77.

popular notion that the best way to keep a secret is to tell it to students, he had spoken his off-the-cuff piece on Hemingway to a college class at the University of Mississippi in 1947. But that gets us ahead of the story.

The fact that for the greater part of his career Ernest Hemingway had been a larger-than-life public figure, traveling to Europe and Africa, living in Key West, Cuba and Idaho, pursuing more publicity than he needed or desired, makes especially poignant his mounting paranoia and increasing withdrawal from public scrutiny during his final decade. On the other hand, the fact that for much of his career William Faulkner had been much of a stay-at-home (even when working in Hollywood), complaining, sometimes publicly, that one of the more regrettable facts about life in modern America was loss of the American dream of privacy,<sup>2</sup> makes puzzling his increasingly frequent sorties into public life during his last ten to twelve years, not only with well-publicized stays at the University of Virginia and visits to West Point and other institutions, but with periodic State Department-sponsored trips to South America and Japan and the Middle East. As he said in 1956, "suddenly about five years ago and with no warning to myself, I adopted the habit of travel."<sup>3</sup> Interestingly, the personal truth and something of the public consequences of these role-reversals in Faulkner and Hemingway are evident in their Nobel prize acceptance speeches, delivered, respectively, by Faulkner in 1950 and by the American ambassador (on Hemingway's behalf) in 1954. Illness kept Hemingway from attending the ceremonies in Sweden, but the thrust of his message, that a writer works alone, makes it almost fitting that the honored writer not take time away from his work to cross the Atlantic for his honors. In contrast, Faulkner's speech was far from a writer's *apologia*, the newest Nobel laureate for literature choosing instead to give a rather uplifting prognosis on the future of humankind. In short, Faulkner chose to be more public, more expansive, certainly a role more in keeping with his increasing stature as a news-worthy figure beyond his earlier stature as an artist. This is evidenced by the fact that of the thirty-one public letters by Faulkner collected posthumously in 1965, twenty-six were written in the last dozen years of his life.

Hemingway, on the other hand, increasingly concerned with the impact that his injuries and illnesses were having on his ability to write as well as he had, is on the verge of complaining about intrusions on the solitude and loneliness endemic to good writing. Indeed, the juxtaposition of the Nobel Prize speeches by

<sup>2</sup> William Faulkner, "On Privacy: The American Dream: What Happened to It?" in *Essays, Speeches*, pp. 62-75. This piece appeared originally in *Harper's Magazine*, July 1955.

<sup>3</sup> William Faulkner, "On Fear: Deep South in Labor: Mississippi", *Essays, Speeches*, p. 101. First published in *Harper's Magazine*, June 1956.

Faulkner and Hemingway, arguably the two leading American writers of their generation, promotes speculation as to what each one would have made of the other's speech. After all, they had followed each other's work almost from the beginning, at least from the late 1920s.

Over the years Hemingway's attacks on Faulkner revealed a good deal about what was bothering him about his own life and work – or, perhaps, his increasing inability to work well in a sustained fashion. His complaints against Faulkner were twofold. One, he saw Faulkner as taking on the role of public authority on national issues and spiritual matters. He was becoming a public man, one whose travel and public persona must inevitably keep him from working. And two, he became more virulent in his charges that Faulkner was a heavy drinker and that his drink-influenced work was “shit.”<sup>4</sup> The pot was calling the kettle black. There was too much protest. Moreover, Hemingway might have sensed (though he could hardly have admitted it even to himself), that there was a kernel of truth in Faulkner's repeated charge that Hemingway took no great aesthetic chances in his work.

That Hemingway and Faulkner were rivals will come as no surprise to their readers. Hemingway was quoted as saying, “William Faulkner is the best living” American writer.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, when one reviewer interpreted Hemingway's references to *Death in the Afternoon* (1932) as “jibes” at Faulkner's expense, Hemingway was quick to deny that “there weren't any cracks against Faulkner.”<sup>6</sup> Here is what he had to say about the author of *Sanctuary* in an exchange with his Shandyeane “Old lady”: “My operatives tell me that through the fine work of Mr. William Faulkner publishers now will publish anything rather than to try to get you to delete the better portions of your works,” he wrote, “and I look forward to writing of those days of my youth which were spent in the finest whorehouses in the land amid the most brilliant society there found. I had been saving this background to write of in my old age when with the aid of distance I could examine it most clearly.”

<sup>4</sup> One interviewer recalled that Hemingway had reacted heatedly to the suggestion that he drank martinis while he wrote. “Jeezus Christ! Papa was incredulous. ‘Have you ever heard of anyone who drank while he worked? You're thinking of Faulkner. He does sometimes – and I can tell right in the middle of a page when he's had his first one.’” (Edward Stafford, “An Afternoon with Hemingway,” *Writer's Digest*, 44 [Dec. 1964], 18-22; quoted from *Conversations with Ernest Hemingway*, ed. Matthew J. Bruccoli [Jackson and London: University Press of Mississippi, 1986], p. 168)

<sup>5</sup> Mary Harrington, “They Call Him Papa,” *New York Post Week-End Magazine* (Dec. 28, 1946), 3; quoted from Bruccoli, *Conversations with Ernest Hemingway*, p. 44.

<sup>6</sup> Robert Coates, “Books: Bullfighters,” *New Yorker* (Oct. 1, 1932), 61; Hemingway's letter is quoted in Robert Coates, “Books: Style versus Stodginess,” *New Yorker* (November 5, 1932), 86.

*Old lady:* Has this Mr. Faulkner written well of these places?  
 Splendidly, Madame. Mr. Faulkner writes admirably of them. He writes the best of them of any writer I have read for many years.  
*Old lady:* I must buy his works.  
 Madame, you can't go wrong on Faulkner. He's prolific too. By the time you get them ordered there'll be new ones out.  
*Old lady:* If they are as you say there cannot be too many.  
 Madame, you voice my own opinion.<sup>7</sup>

Hemingway's denial that he was taking a jibe at Faulkner, if not disingenuous, is at least misleading. Already he has landed the first punch in what was still a phantom competition between him and Faulkner. Faulkner is prolific. He gets his next book out before you can read his last one. The implication is that Faulkner may be writing too quickly, too hurriedly, perhaps, to write artistically. He is, perhaps, not discriminating enough, somewhat undisciplined, perhaps profligate. Hemingway, of course, is none of those things. That Hemingway's comment comes in a book that is as close to an *ars poetica* as Hemingway ever came, that is full of comments on his own practices and theories about writing as well as assessments of other writers, gives this otherwise seemingly genial joking its edge. As far as I know, there was no answer from Faulkner at this time. His answer, when it came, would be made obliquely but it would be right on target.

As early as 1931 Faulkner had touted Hemingway as "the best we've got."<sup>8</sup> Scott Fitzgerald also thought so. In 1936 he put forth the proto-list ranking his contemporaries that Faulkner would take over and make his own a decade later. "Ernest Hemingway, I think, is the greatest living writer of English," insisted Fitzgerald. "Next comes Thomas Wolfe and then Faulkner and Dos Passos. Erskine Caldwell and a few others have come up just a bit after our generation, and they haven't done quite so well."<sup>9</sup> When Faulkner took over Fitzgerald's list, he made some changes in the ranking. In Faulkner's list of the five great writers of his time, with variants as to order and even makeup, remained constant in elevating Wolfe to the top and always listing Hemingway at or near bottom. Faulkner first presented his version of the list to students at the University of Mississippi in 1947:

<sup>7</sup> Ernest Hemingway, *Death in the Afternoon* (New York: Scribners, 1932), p. 173.

<sup>8</sup> *Lion in the Garden: Interviews with William Faulkner, 1926-1962*, ed. James B. Meriwether and Michael Millgate (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1980), p. 21. For Faulkner's variations on this list, see pp. 81, 90-91, 121-22, 179-80, and 225.

<sup>9</sup> F. Scott Fitzgerald, quoted in Michel Mok, "A Writer Like Me Must Have an Utter Confidence, and Utter Faith in His Star," in *F. Scott Fitzgerald in His Own Time: A Miscellany*, ed. Matthew J. Bruccoli and Jackson R. Bryer (New York Popular Library, 1971), p. 299. Mok's piece was first published as "The Other Side of Paradise," *New York Post* (Sept. 25, 1936).

"1. Thomas Wolfe – he had much courage, wrote as if he didn't have long to live. 2. William Faulkner. 3. Dos Passos. 4. Hemingway – he has no courage, has never climbed out on a limb. He has never used a word where the reader might check his usage by a dictionary. 5. Steinbeck . . ." <sup>10</sup>

Hemingway, on the other hand, usually restricted his attacks on Faulkner to comments in letters to friends, but this time, reacting directly to Faulkner's comments to the students in Mississippi, he wrote directly to Faulkner on July 23, 1947. "I know what you mean about T. Wolfe and Dos and still can't agree," he insisted. "I never felt the link-up in Wolfe except with the N.C. stuff. Dos I always liked and respected and thought was a 2nd rate writer on acct. no ear. 2nd rate boxer has no left hand, same as ear to writer, and so gets his brains knocked out and this happened to Dos with every book." <sup>11</sup> So deeply hurt was Hemingway, however, that he called on his friend Brigadier General Charles T. "Buck" Lanham to testify that he did not lack courage. On June 28, 1947, Faulkner replied to Lanham's letter:

The statement as you [re-quoted] it is not correct because apparently it was incomplete as you saw it, and in its original shape it had no reference whatever to Hemingway as a man: or to his craftsmanship as a writer. I know of his record in two wars and in Spain, too.

In April, on request from the English department of the University of Mississippi here (my alma mater) I met six English classes, answering questions about literature, writing. In one of them I was asked to rate the greatest American writers. I answered, I wouldn't attempt it since I believed no man could, but (after further insistence) I would give my own personal rating of my own coevals: the men whose names were most often connected with mine since we began to write. I named Hemingway, Wolfe, Dos Passos, Caldwell, I said:

"I think we all failed (in that none of us had yet the stature of Dickens, Dostoevsky, Balzac, Thackeray [*sic*] etc.). That Wolfe made the best failure because he had the most courage: to risk being guilty of bad taste, clumsiness, mawkishness, dullness: to shoot the works win or lose and damn the torpedoes. That Dos Passos was next since he

<sup>10</sup> Meriwether and Millgate, *Lion in the Garden*, p. 58. By 1955 Faulkner was dismissing Steinbeck as "just a reporter, a newspaperman, not really a writer" (91). See also Herman Prescott, "Hemingway vs Faulkner: An Intriguing Feud," *Lost Generation Journal*, 3 (Fall 1975), 18-19.

<sup>11</sup> Ernest Hemingway, *Selected Letters, 1917-1961*, ed. Carlos Baker (New York: Scribners, 1981), p. 623.



sacrificed some of the courage to style. That Hemingway was next since he did not have the courage to get out on a limb as the others did, to risk bad taste, over-writing, dullness, etc.”<sup>12</sup>

Faulkner sent Hemingway a copy of his letter to Lanham. On July 23, 1947, Hemingway wrote to Faulkner: “Awfully glad to hear from you and glad to have made contact. Your letter came tonight and please throw all the other stuff away, the mis-understanding, or will have to come up and we both trompel on it. There isn’t any at all. I was sore and Buck [Lanham] was sore and we were instantly unsore the minute we knew the score.” Then Hemingway brings up the vexing matter of Wolfe and Dos Passos – in a passage already quoted – before resuming his case for Hemingway the put-upon defendant. He argues that he took chances in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, for instance:

Like when they are fucking comeing back from making contact with the other outfit about the bridge, when the Pilar woman knows what the hell it is all about; again where she is talking about her man, before, and Valencia and the fun they had (which think will stand); where she is talking about smell of death (which is no shit) and all the part with her man who was in bull fight business and where we kill the fascists in the village. Probably bore the shit out of you to re-read but as brother would like to know what you think.

Having made his pitch for taking chances in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, Hemingway then turns to what distinguishes him from Faulkner.

Difference with us guys is I always lived out of country (as mercenary or patriot) since kid. My own country gone. Trees cut down. Nothing left but gas stations, sub-divisions where we hunted snipe on the prairie, etc. Found good country outside, learned language as well as know English, and lost it the same way. Most people don’t know this. Dos always came to us as a tourist. I was always making a liveing, paying my debts and always stayed to fight.<sup>13</sup>

The rest of the letter is replete with praise for Faulkner’s abilities – “you are a better writer than Fielding,” etc. In his own wily way, however, Faulkner continued to circle around the question of Hemingway’s bravery. To Malcolm Cowley, in

<sup>12</sup> *Selected Letters of William Faulkner*, ed. Joseph Blotner (New York: Random House, 1977), p. 251.

<sup>13</sup> Hemingway, *Selected Letters*, p. 624. Hemingway’s spellings are honored throughout.

1949, he wrote: "I saw the LIFE with your Hemingway piece. I didn't read it but I know it's all right or you wouldn't have put your name on it; for which reason I know Hemingway thinks it's all right and I hope it will profit him – if there is any profit or increase or increment that a brave man and an artist can lack or need or want."<sup>14</sup>

For his part, despite the reparations acknowledged in his letter to Faulkner, Hemingway continued to fret and burn over Faulkner's ranking of his contemporaries. In 1949, he was still answering Faulkner, this time in a letter to Malcolm Cowley. "Nelson Algren," he said, "has everything that the fading Faulkner ever had except the talent for magic and he makes Mr. Thomas Wolfe the over-bloated Lil Abner of literature look about how he always looked to us professionals."<sup>15</sup>

No doubt, Faulkner's list took on a notoriety that has continued long beyond the deaths of Hemingway and Faulkner. Faulkner was frequently asked about it and he tried to refine his explanation of what he had originally meant. In 1955, he explained the matter to Harvey Breit of the *New York Times*, the occasion being the recent publication of *A Fable*, Faulkner's ambitious novel about World War I. "The work never matches the dream of perfection the artist had to start with," he explains. "That's what I had in mind when I talked about Hemingway being a coward. . . . I had in mind this dream of perfection and how the best contemporary writers failed to match it." Faulkner then rehearses the list once again. "I rated Wolfe first, myself second. I put Hemingway last. I said we were all failures. All of us had failed to match the dream of perfection and I rated the authors on the basis of their splendid failure to do the impossible. . . . I rated Hemingway last because he stayed within what he knew. He did it fine, but he didn't try for the impossible."<sup>16</sup> Faulkner was getting his spiel down rather well.

The question kept coming up in Japan. Even when it did not come up directly, Faulkner's answers sometimes moved over the same matter and always drawing the same conclusion. Asked about the difficulties of his own style, he brings in Hemingway as an example:

Hemingway, who through instinct or through good preceptors learned that he could do better by holding to a supple, undeviable style. . . . trained himself not to be a stylist but to tell what moved him in that method which his preceptors said, "This is a good method." He has stuck to that. He was right to do it, probably, because what he's done

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<sup>14</sup> Faulkner, *Selected Letters*, p. 285.

<sup>15</sup> Hemingway, *Selected Letters*, p. 681.

<sup>16</sup> Meriwether and Millgate, *Lion in the Garden*, p. 81

is very fine. But the others, Wolfe, for instance, and myself, for instance, we didn't have the instinct, or the preceptors, or whatever it was, anyway. We tried to crowd and cram everything, all experience, into each paragraph . . . ,<sup>17</sup>

Even when Faulkner tried to praise Hemingway, something would go wrong. A case in point started out with Faulkner's letter to *Time* magazine backing up the British novelist Evelyn Waugh's defense of *Across the River and Into the Trees* against the critics who savaged the book. Seemingly out of the blue, Faulkner had taken it upon himself to defend Hemingway. The timing of the letter to *Time* must have puzzled Hemingway. He could not have known, of course, that his novel about a fifty-year-old man's love for a nineteen th-year-old woman had struck a lover's chord in Faulkner, who, then in his fifties, was covertly sweet-talking a twenty-two year old woman. He had even given this aspiring writer, in September 1950, just when *Across the River and Into the Trees* appeared, a story idea about "a young woman, senior at school, a man of fifty, famous – could be artist, soldier, whatever seems best. . . . she likes him, feels drawn to an understanding, make it wisdom, of her, of people, man, a sympathy for her in particular; maybe he will of a sudden talk of love to her."<sup>18</sup>

On the basis of Faulkner's having written to *Time* in Hemingway's defense, Harvey Breit of the *New York Times Book Review* was emboldened to ask Faulkner to review *The Old Man and the Sea*. Faulkner was not entirely sure that he could or, perhaps, should do it. When his editor Robert N. Linscott suggested that Hemingway be approached about writing a preface for a new edition of *The Sound and the Fury*, he demurred. "I am opposed to asking Hemingway to write the preface. It seems to me in bad taste to ask him to write a preface to my stuff. It's like asking one race horse in the middle of a race to broadcast a blurb on another horse in the same running field. A preface should be done by a preface writer, not a fictioneer; certainly not by one man on another in his own limited field."<sup>19</sup>

But he did accede to Breit's request. He sent his editor Saxe Commins a piece comprised of three rather puzzling paragraphs – to be forwarded to Harvey Breit at the *New York Times* if he were still working there. Breit, in turn, sent it on to Hemingway. Here is what Faulkner wrote:

<sup>17</sup> Meriwether and Millgate, *Lion in the Garden*, p. 107.

<sup>18</sup> Faulkner, *Selected Letters*, p. 307. The editor relates Faulkner's letter to Hemingway's novel. See also James G. Watson, *William Faulkner: Letters & Fictions* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987), pp. 146-47.

<sup>19</sup> Faulkner, *Selected Letters*, pp. 229-30.

A few years ago, I forget what the occasion was, Hemingway said that writers should stick together just as doctors and lawyers and wolves do. I think there is more wit in that than truth or necessity either, at least in Hemingway's case, since the sort of writers who need to band together willy nilly or perish, resemble the wolves who are wolves only in pack, and, singly, are just another dog.

Because the man who wrote the *MEN WITHOUT WOMEN* pieces and *THE SUN ALSO RISES* and *A FAREWELL TO ARMS* and *FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS* and most of the African stuff and most of all the rest of it, is not one of these, and needs no pack protection.

So he does not need even this from another writer. Maybe he doesn't even want it. So he gets this for free from one who, regardless of how he rated what remained, has never doubted the integrity of it, and who has always affirmed that no man will be quicker and harsher to judge what remained than the man who wrote *MEN WITHOUT WOMEN* and *THE SUN ALSO RISES* and *A FAREWELL TO ARMS* and *FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS* and the best of the African stuff and most of the rest of it; and that if even what remained had not been as honest and true as he could make it, then he himself would have burned the manuscript before the publisher ever saw it.<sup>20</sup>

Faulkner pretty much echoed comments he had made two years earlier in a letter published in *Time* magazine.<sup>21</sup> In that instance he had weighed in on the side of Evelyn Waugh, who had defended Hemingway against critics of the recently published novel *Across the River and Into the Trees*, calling Hemingway a man of "Decent Feeling," who "has an elementary sense of chivalry – respect for women, pity for the weak, love of honor."<sup>22</sup> I have not come across what Hemingway thought of Faulkner's letter of defense in 1950, but this time Hemingway found Faulkner's remarks offensive. He chose to read them – wrong-headedly, I think – as a frontal attack. He fired back a long letter to Harvey Breit on June 27, 1952:

Faulkner. . . did not forget what the occasion was that I wrote him that. He remembers it very well. In one of his rummy moments (I hope) he had said, flatly, that I was a coward. The Trib picked it up (the lecture was reprinted) and I sent it to Brig. Gen. C. T. Lanham, former commander of the 22nd Infantry Regt. We had been together a long time in 1944-5 and I let him write Faulkner. We both received apologies from Faulkner who wrote that I had not the courage to experiment or take a chance in writing etc. (See Requiem for a Nun on how to take a chance when rum dumb). No criticism on personal courage.

<sup>20</sup> Faulkner, *Selected Letters*, pp. 333-34.

<sup>21</sup> "Faulkner to Waugh to Hemingway," *Time* (Nov. 13, 1950), p. 6.

<sup>22</sup> Evelyn Waugh, quoted in "The Strenuous Life," *Time* (Oct. 30, 1950), p. 44.

I wrote Faulkner a friendly letter which he quotes and now says "resemble the wolves who are wolves only in pack, and singly, are just another Dog."

Figure that one out.

OK to continue with the record. He spoke well of me once, as you wrote me. But that was before he was given the Nobel Prize. When I read he had won that, I sent him as good a cable of congratulations as I know how to write. He never acknowledged it. For years I had built him up in Europe. Any time anyone asked me who was the best American writer I told them Faulkner. Everytime anyone wanted me to talk about me I would talk about him. I thought he had a rotten deal and I did everything I knew to see he got a better shake. I never told people he couldn't go nine innings, nor why, nor what I knew was wrong with him since always. . . . He is a good writer when he is good and could be better than anyone if he knew how to finish a book and didn't get that old heat prostration like Honest Sugar Ray [Robinson] at the end. I enjoy reading him when he is good but always feel like hell that he is not better. I wish him luck and he needs it because he has the one great and un-curable defect, you can't re-read him. When you re-read him you are conscious all the time of how he fooled you the first time. In truly good writing no matter how many times you read it you do not know how it is done. That is because there is a mystery in all great writing and that mystery does not dis-sect out. It continues and it is always valid. Each time you re-read you see or learn something new. You do not just see the mechanics of how you were tricked in the first place. Bill had some of this at one time. But it is long gone. A real writer should be able to make this thing which we do not define with a simple declarative sentence.<sup>23</sup>

"Criticism class is out," he promised. But he was not through, for in the postscript he returns to Faulkner: "I want no quarrel nor trouble with him and I wish him luck and hope Anomatopeio [Yoknapatawpha] county will last as long as the Sea. I wouldn't trade him counties. But he picked his. I feel cramped in a county, any county. But he has done a damned good job on his and I hope it always keeps him happy and satisfied."<sup>24</sup> As for himself, he was pleased with *The Old Man and the Sea*. "I would rather have written this last book with no shit and no compromise and know how many people will read it than anything I know," he wrote. "And I don't have to drink to have the feeling inside about it. What I want to do now is forget it and try and write a better one."<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Hemingway, *Selected Letters*, pp. 768-70.

<sup>24</sup> Hemingway, *Selected Letters*, p. 770.

<sup>25</sup> Hemingway, *Selected Letters*, p. 770.

Yet, two days later, he was still restive over Faulkner's statement. Again he wrote to Harvey Breit, a long and remarkable letter that deserves to be savored in its entirety, though I shall quote only part of it::

I get fed on that County sometimes. Anything that needs genealogical tables to explain it is a little bit like James Branch Cabell. Then if you need the longest sentence in the world to give a book distinction you might as well hire Bill Veek [Veeck] and have midgets. As a technician I would say that sentence was not a sentence. It was made of many, many sentences. But when he came to the end of a sentence he simply did not put in the period. It would have been much better if properly punctuated. As it was it was damned good but as always I felt the lack of discipline and of character and the boozy courage of corn whiskey. When I read Faulkner I can tell exactly when he gets tired and does it on corn just as I used to be able to tell when Scott would hit it beginning with *Tender Is The Night*. But that is one of the things I thought writers should not tell out-siders. But he did not understand about writers sticking together against out-siders. It is not a question of log-rolling or speaking well of each other. It is a question of knowing what is wrong with a guy and still sticking with what is good in him and not letting the out-siders in on *secrets professionnel*.<sup>26</sup>

Then there was the matter of "God." When *Shenandoah* asked him to review *The Old Man and the Sea*, Faulkner replied: "I may be a snob, but I am not literary at all. But I did do a 3 paragraph piece on Hemingway's new book, which was honest and (I thought) about right. I sent it to critic Harvey Breit, New York Times. Would you consider writing him for a copy of that, or had you rather have a fresh one? The reason I suggest this is, that one said it and I don't want to repeat."<sup>27</sup> Asked for a "fresh one," Faulkner responded with a single paragraph, which was published in the autumn 1952 issue of *Shenandoah*. *The Old Man and the Sea* was "his best," wrote Faulkner.

Time may show it to be the best single piece of any of us, I mean his and my contemporaries. This time, he discovered God, a Creator. Until now, his men and women had made themselves, shaped themselves out of their own clay; their victories and defeats were at the hands of each other, just to prove to themselves or one another how tough they could be. But this time, he wrote about pity: about something somewhere that made them all: the old man who had to catch the fish and then lose it, the fish that had to be caught and then lost, the sharks

<sup>26</sup> Hemingway, *Selected Letters*, p. 772.

<sup>27</sup> Faulkner, *Selected Letters*, p. 342.



which had to rob the old man of his fish; made them all and loved them all and pitied them all. It's all right. Praise God that whatever made and loves and pities Hemingway and me kept him from touching it any further.<sup>28</sup>

Hemingway was not having very much of this talk about God. On February 23, 1953, he wrote to Charles Poore, who was then compiling *The Hemingway Reader* (1953): "Now when Bill Faulkner talks about God as though he knew him intimately and had the word I would have to answer that I do not know. Do you know? I know I don't. Sometimes I have a few ideas but I do not know and sometimes I think it is like one time when an old Indian asked me, 'You Indian boy?' I said, 'Sure.' He said, 'Long time ago good. Now no good.'" <sup>29</sup> Three days earlier, Hemingway had written more expansively to Lillian Ross, who several years earlier had written a notorious profile of him for the *New Yorker*. "I cannot help out very much with the true dope on God as I have never played footy-footy with him; nor been a cane brake God hopper; nor won the Nobel prize," he explained.

It would be best to get the true word on God from Mr. Faulkner. . . . It is quite possible that Mr. Faulkner sits at table with him each night and that the deity comforts him if he has a bad dream and wipes his mouth and helps him eat his corn pone or hominy grits or wheaties in the morning. I hope Mr. Faulkner never forgets himself and gives it to the deity with his corn cob. It is nice to know he has good taste and judgement but, as one of my oldest friends, remember never to trust a man with a southern accent and never trust a God-hopper either North or South of the Macy-Dixie line. . . . Faulkner has always been fairly fraudulent but it is only recently that he has introduced God when he is conning people.

After these jabs at Faulkner as Benjy at breakfast and Popeye in the crib, Hemingway turns his attention to *The Old Man and the Sea*. "The Old Man in the story was born a catholic," he writes, "in the island of Lanza Rota in the Canary Islands. But he certainly believed in something more than the church and I do not think Mr. Faulkner understands it very well. He talks like a convert or a man afraid to die. Because I always joke do not take me seriously on this and please do not quote me in any way. I am going to make no statements about The Old Man and

<sup>28</sup> William Faulkner, "A Review," *Shenandoah* (Autumn 1952), 55; reprinted in *Shenandoah: An Anthology*, ed. James Boatwright (Wainscott, N.Y.: Pushcart, 1985), p. 123.

<sup>29</sup> *Kenneth W. Rendell Inc. Catalogue 185* (Newton, Mass., 1988), p. 24.



the Sea now or ever. Everybody can bring to that story what they have as baggage. But there are going to be no explanations." As for Faulkner, he adds, "I have no message to give to Mr. Faulkner except to tell him I wish him the grace of a happy death and I hope he will not continue to write after he has lost his talent. Don't give him that message either. But that is what I would really tell him."<sup>30</sup>

What seems not to have been sufficiently noticed about the Faulkner-Hemingway rivalry, however, is that it extended to their competition for the Nobel Prize. Faulkner, who received the Prize first, made oblique references to Hemingway in his acceptance speech, delivered in Stockholm on December 10, 1950. Faulkner lamented the fact that the young writer had "forgotten the problems of the human heart in conflict with itself which alone can make good writing because only that is worth writing about, worth the agony and the sweat." Such a writer "labors under a curse," but that they must turn to "the old verities and truths of the heart, the old universal truths lacking which any story is ephemeral and doomed – love and *honor* and pity and pride and compassion and *sacrifice*."<sup>31</sup> (For, as he would define it later, "truth was not where you were standing when you looked at it but was an unalterable quality or thing which could and would knock your brains out if you did not accept it or at least respect it."<sup>32</sup>) This is the writer's "privilege": "to help man endure by lifting his heart, by reminding him of the *courage* and *honor* and hope and pride and compassion and pity and sacrifice which have been the *glory* of his past."<sup>33</sup> Now, Faulkner had long been writing about the old verities of the heart – glory, sacrifice, honor, and courage (the words italicized above). But he could not have been unaware that he was also echoing Hemingway, whose take on those verities came in what is, perhaps, the most famous passage in all of Hemingway. It begins: "I was always embarrassed by the words sacred, *glorious*, and *sacrifice* and the expression in vain," and ends: "Abstract words such as *glory*, *honor*, *courage*, or hallow were obscene beside the concrete names of villages, the numbers of roads, the names of rivers, the numbers of regiments and the dates."<sup>34</sup> If what might be taken as an answer to Hemingway and Lieutenant Henry in Faulkner's Nobel Prize acceptance speech is a subtext in that speech, it is equally possible that Hemingway's own Nobel Prize acceptance speech had as one of its subtexts an answer to Faulkner.

<sup>30</sup> Hemingway, *Selected Letters*, p. 807.

<sup>31</sup> William Faulkner, "Address upon Receiving the Nobel Prize for Literature" [Stockholm, December 10, 1950], in *Essays, Speeches*, pp. 119-20.

<sup>32</sup> William Faulkner, "A Word to Young Writers: Address to the English Club of the University of Virginia [Charlottesville, April 24, 1958], in *Essays, Speeches*, p. 164. Emphasis added.

<sup>33</sup> Faulkner, "Address . . . Nobel Prize," *Essays, Speeches*, p. 120. Emphasis added.

<sup>34</sup> Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* (New York: Scribners, 1929), p. 196. Emphasis added.

Because Hemingway was still recuperating from serious injuries suffered in successive plane crashes in Africa, he did not travel to Stockholm in 1954 to receive his prize. He asked the American ambassador to accept the award for him and to read his acceptance speech. Notably, he turned his absence into a virtue, stressing that the writer lives what is at best a lonely life and that he does not become a “public” spokesman. He writes, in part:

Writing, at its best, is a lonely life. Organizations for writers palliate the writer's loneliness but I doubt if they improve his writing. He grows in public stature as he sheds his loneliness and often his work deteriorates. For he does his work alone and if he is a good enough writer he must face eternity, or the lack of it, each day.

For a true writer each book should be a new beginning where he tries again for something that is beyond attainment. He should always try for something that has never been done or that others have tried and failed. Then sometimes, with great luck, he will succeed.

How simple the writing of literature would be if it were only necessary to write in another way what has been well written. It is because we have had such great writers in the past that a writer is driven far out past where he can go, out to where no one can help him.

I have spoken too long for a writer. A writer should write what he has to say and not speak it.<sup>35</sup>

Hemingway offers herein several major, if implicit, criticisms of writers like Faulkner – especially Faulkner. He explains wherein a writer's courage really lies – not in using words that will send a reader to the dictionary but in doing what no one has attempted to do, or attempting it has not succeeded. He scores those writers who become adept at speaking what they have to say instead of writing it. Hemingway also seems to be answering Faulkner's strange statement (considered above) to the effect that it was Hemingway's belief that “writers should stick together just as doctors and lawyers and wolves do,” though Faulkner thought “the sort of writers who need to band together willy nilly or perish, resemble the wolves who are wolves only in pack, and, singly, are just another dog.”<sup>36</sup>

Since Faulkner survived Hemingway, he naturally had a final word. Visiting at West Point in the year of his own death, Faulkner was asked a point-blank question: “Sir, you said that, if you had fulfilled your ambitions as a writer, the only thing would be to cut your throat and quit. Do you believe this is the reason that Mr. Hemingway died? Sir, do you believe that he killed himself for this reason, or

<sup>35</sup> Ernest Hemingway, “Nobel Prize Speech,” *Mark Twain Journal*, 11 (Summer 1962), 14.

<sup>36</sup> Quoted in Hemingway, *Selected Letters*, p. 771 n.

do you believe that his death was an accidental death?" Faulkner's answer was just as straightforward. No, he did not consider Hemingway's death to be accidental. Hemingway had followed "a deliberate pattern. . . just as all his work was a deliberate pattern."

I think that every man wants to be at least as good as what he writes. And I'm inclined to think that Ernest felt that at this time, this was the right thing, in grace and dignity, to do. I don't agree with him. I think that no man can say until the end of his life whether he's written out or not.<sup>37</sup>

Note how Faulkner reaches out for the word "grace," which had become almost synonymous with Hemingway's ethic and esthetic, but note also that just as Hemingway was wrong, in Faulkner's opinion, for not taking chances in his writing, so too, according to his worthy contemporary and long-lived rival, was he wrong in denying himself any future by ending his life. The question of Hemingway's suicide came up again at West Point. Faulkner was asked why Hemingway after he seemed "to have regained his faith," would "then decide to take his life." Faulkner rose to the occasion. With all malice, rivalry, and pettiness gone, he included Hemingway into the pantheon of the writers who tried to say it all, get it all into a poem, a novel, or a play.

I would say that there was a certain point that Ernest reached where he said, "I can't do it, no man can do it, and there's nothing remains worth staying alive for." Or he could have been sick and in pain, and I think that that had something to do with it because he had spent a lot of time in the hospital. The last time I saw him he was a sick man. But I prefer to believe that he had reached that point that the writer must reach – Shakespeare reached it in *The Tempest* – he said, "I don't know the answer either," and wrote *The Tempest* and broke the pencil. But he didn't commit suicide. Hemingway broke the pencil and shot himself.<sup>38</sup>

Within two months, on June 4, 1962, Random House published *The Reivers*. It was Faulkner's last novel, an autumnal book – "a reminiscence," as he subtitled it. The principals had now left the field, The competition between Faulkner and Hemingway would now belong to their readers and critics, that is to say, to you, perhaps, and to me.

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<sup>37</sup> *Faulkner at West Point*, ed. Joseph L. Fant, III and Robert Ashley (New York: Random House, 1964), pp. 49-50.

<sup>38</sup> Fant and Ashley, *Faulkner at West Point*, p. 78.

Looking again at the assembled evidence, I find it painfully obvious that Faulkner and Hemingway were playing a mug's game. They settled on courage – a single virtue or nominative, if you wish – on which to center their personal battle for supremacy. Every charge, every carping remark, every brittle compliment, revolved around the question of courage: who had it? when did he show it? when was it the touchstone for a writer's virtue? Faulkner kept insisting that courage to experiment, to dare to fail, was the grandest quality a writer (at least in his time) could possess. Hemingway, on the other hand, stubbornly insisted on considering courage a trait that might just as readily, if not best, be measured in human actions. Hence his defense against Faulkner's charges that as a writer he did not risk trying to do anything other than what he knew he could do. If Wolfe and Faulkner had tried to do it all, as Faulkner insisted – get everything in – and Hemingway had always settled for what he knew how to do best, Hemingway single-mindedly saw Faulkner's charge as one leveled against his own personal qualities, his failure of nerve or his lack of courage. He was a courageous man, he insisted, and called upon others to testify to that effect. It was to the military commander in World War II that he appealed, getting him to write to Faulkner about Hemingway's displays of courage during the fighting in Europe. One of the ironies in all this is that Hemingway seems never to have suspected that the widely purveyed biographical information about Faulkner's fighting experience during World War I was spurious. Faulkner never made any move to correct the information that he had been wounded in a plane crash on the European side of the Atlantic. Of course it was all a sham and Faulkner could claim no evidence for his own possession of courage stemming from the war. But Hemingway obviously did not know the truth about Faulkner as warrior, for had he known it, it is inconceivable that he would not have used it, perhaps in a large public way. Consequently, it is sad to see how desperate he was to establish his credentials as a human being who had behaved courageously under enemy fire.

Even more sadly Hemingway found himself sniping at Faulkner for writing about the hunting of animals that seldom if ever pose a threat to the human hunter. Reacting to the publication of *Big Woods* in 1955, he carped that he would have more respect for Faulkner's kind of hunting if he hunted dangerous game – game that could “fight” back, perhaps. In *Death in the Afternoon* Hemingway had written admiringly about the courage displayed by the bullfighter in the bullring. And while it was in the same book, in 1932, that Hemingway made his first public remarks about Faulkner, when Faulkner chose to question Hemingway's lack of courage as a writer, it was Hemingway's African writing, which followed *Death in the Afternoon*, that Faulkner referred to. He mentions no titles but in his larger encomium he includes praise for “most of the African stuff.” Among that “African

stuff," of course, was "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber," a classic story of courage gained instantly and unexpectedly in the midst of immediate and perceptible danger. It is no surprise, then, that the one Faulkner hunting story that Hemingway singled out for praise was *The Bear*, the tale in which, for once, the hunted animal poses an enormous danger to dog and man alike. It is at this point in the story of Faulkner and Hemingway that *The Old Man and the Sea* makes an appearance. That Santiago, the luckless fisherman, goes out too far, way beyond where anyone else has gone to encounter his fish, makes him, at least in the context of our subject, an enactor of courage in the way that Thomas Wolfe, according to Faulkner, enacted the kind of courage that Faulkner chose to admire. And Faulkner's brief review of Hemingway's novella can be read satisfactorily as praise for Hemingway's achievement. But Faulkner brought God into the equation and said flat out that this time Hemingway had discovered God. Once again, now by pointed omission, Faulkner made his point while not backing down from his original position. He withheld his highest praise. He would not say that Hemingway had taken the greatest of an author's possible risks. And indeed, Faulkner's decision to omit any consideration of whether or not Hemingway himself had "gone out too far" in this work might even be seen as an act of kindness on his part, for it is so, as most of Hemingway's readers will acknowledge, that *The Old Man and the Sea* epitomizes certain admirable qualities that Hemingway had manifested over his long career. In theme and technique, in his novella about an aged fisherman fishing alone, Hemingway had done nothing really new. The narrative displayed, perhaps, the perfection of a certain style. Of course, Hemingway saw through Faulkner's evasions and complained a good deal about Faulkner's seeming to think he (Faulkner) had some sort of pipeline to God.

Faulkner's defense of Hemingway at the time of the publication of *Across the River and Into the Trees* and his remarks about *The Old Man and the Sea* transpired in the half dozen years between the awarding of the Nobel Prize for Literature, first to Faulkner in 1950 (for 1949) and to Hemingway in 1954. Hemingway professed to admire Faulkner's speech but mumbled that Faulkner could not reach that level again. Faulkner's performance in Sweden might have caused him some of his anxiety when he came to write his own speech of acceptance. Too ill to attend the ceremonies in Stockholm, Hemingway nevertheless managed to write his speech. He chose to talk about the loneliness of the trade he had chosen for himself, of the need to undertake the ordeal of writing each day. He never once mentions the word courage, but he is of course talking about it from first to last. In focusing on the need for a writer to withdraw to the places where he can do his writing, Hemingway, who had been the recipient (and victim) of the most press coverage of any writer of his time, seems

to take a swipe at Faulkner as one who since 1950 had become each year more and more a public figure of sorts, partly because he seemed to like the limelight, writing letters to national magazines and speaking out on issues such as civil rights and American diplomacy in the Near East. Faulkner's Nobel speech had emphasized the nominatives – courage and bravery and honor – Hemingway's speech focused on an almost ascetic, eremitic role for the writer. Whatever else it was, Hemingway's speech was his most thoughtful *apologia* for being the kind of writer he was: one who, according to his lights, tried to do well what no one before him had attempted or had done successfully. The first telling shot in the competition in which Faulkner and Hemingway found themselves in the last twenty-five years of their lives was Faulkner's, with his list in 1937. The last one, too, is Faulkner's. Asked about Hemingway's death, Faulkner insisted that Hemingway had taken his life because he had come to the conclusion that he could no longer write. But the fortuity of his having survived Hemingway permitted Faulkner the opportunity to judge Hemingway one last time. Shakespeare had broken the pencil when he discovered that he could not go beyond *The Tempest* but he did not commit suicide. Hemingway, too, had broken the pencil, but he had shot himself. And that – the suicide – was wrong. Doubtlessly, Faulkner knew about Hemingway's own stated views that all suicides were cowards, even if he refrained from quoting him to that effect. Let us conclude by quoting Faulkner on glory and the favorable opinion of colleagues and competitors, though let it not be said that he has the last word on the matter. To the secretary of the American Academy of Arts and letters, he wrote on June 12, 1950: "The medal received, also the transcription of Mr. [Archibald] MacLeish. It's very fine indeed to have these concrete evidences – the gold and the voice – of the considered judgment of one's peers. A man works for a fairly simple – limited – range of things: money, women, glory; all nice to have, but glory's best, and the best of glory is from his peers, like the soldier who has the good opinion not of man but of other soldiers, themselves experts in it, who are themselves brave too."<sup>39</sup> It does not take much imagination to hear in the background of these fine sentiments echoes and rumors of the decades-long war fought between the two giants, Faulkner and Hemingway, over the nominatives and who embodied them.

Gertrude Stein once told Hemingway that opinions are not literature. Perhaps so, but when those opinions are held by the likes of Hemingway and Faulkner, they are certainly a part of literary and cultural history. If the old woman

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<sup>39</sup> William Faulkner, Letter "To the Secretary of the American Academy of Arts and Letters," in *Essays, Speeches*, p. 206.



in Tokyo was oblivious to Faulkner, not to mention his opinion of Hemingway, literary history is not. Hemingway had given high profile, in *Death in the Afternoon*, to his contemporary and rival. There was no Batesian or Bloomian anxiety of influence at work here, merely the question of who was America's best writer of the generation born at the turn of the twentieth century? As Faulkner would later insinuate, with his talk of wolves and dogs, who would emerge as top dog? Or lone wolf? Faulkner went for the jugular, accusing Hemingway of a lack of courage, the one thing, perhaps, that Hemingway personally cared the most about, if one acknowledges that with courage comes, of course, honor. As he wrote in *Death in the Afternoon*, "Honor in the bullfighter is as necessary to a bullfight as good bulls and it is because there are a half dozen bullfighters, some of whom with the greatest talent, who possess the very minimum of it."<sup>40</sup> Hemingway, on his side, decided to view Faulkner as a drunkard, much like F. Scott Fitzgerald, claiming that he could tell just at what point in any given work Faulkner had continued to write when intoxicated.

Two final observations are in order. The first one is that, in this, the centenary year of Hemingway's birth, it can still be argued that whoever is placed third, fourth, and fifth on "the list" of the great writers of their time and country – one inaugurated by Fitzgerald but carried through by Faulkner – Hemingway and Faulkner remain at one and two. Take your pick. The second observation is that the argument over courage and honor and integrity that Hemingway and Faulkner conducted has meaning because they believed in their nominative reality as elements of character. One either possessed courage or lacked it. The matter was as clear cut as that. For them there was no explaining away of such universals as social constructs or knuckling under the easy talk of historical relativism.

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<sup>40</sup>Hemingway, *Death in the Afternoon*, p. 92.





## The Nostalgia of Multiculturalism in Cather, Faulkner, and United States Culture

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### 1. The American Nostalgia for Difference

An observation made by J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur, that in America "individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men, whose labours and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world" (70), was as prophetic in 1782 as it is troubling today. What of difference? What of the integrity of cultures? Crevecoeur predicted that difference would be supplanted by *indifference*, particularly regarding what was the most divisive social distinction of his time, religious sectarianism. In America "all sects are mixed, as well as all nations; thus religious indifference is imperceptibly disseminated from one end of the continent to the other, which is at present one of the strongest characteristics of the Americans. Where this will reach no one can tell," Crevecoeur muses; "perhaps it will lead to a vacuum fit to receive other systems" (76). Religious and ethnic indifference continue to mark United States culture, but that indifference has also led to another system of thought, one that reacts strongly to indifference and seeks to maintain, or to resurrect those distinctions which democratic indifference devalues. The current emanation to emerge from the vacuum of indifference is multiculturalism, which might be understood as something like an advance

nostalgia for qualities destined to become irrelevant in the United States. The famous lament by Henry David Thoreau echoes across the centuries in America: "They force me to become like themselves. I do not hear of *men* being *forced* to live this way or that by masses of men. What sort of life were that to live?" (403). It is an American sort of life, where the distinctions of culture are made irrelevant not only through the indifference of the state but by the leveling habits of its citizenry; and material rewards go to those who become indifferent – or tolerant – as well.

A seeming oxymoron, *advance nostalgia*, condenses a historical process and an ideological prerequisite. The process works this way: the particular ethnic identity is granted entry into the United States, sometimes through labor recruitment, sometimes by falling within immigration quotas. Based upon that status, certain stipulations or privileges may be conferred, such as visa limitations or affirmative action assistance. However, long-term acceptance into the culture – specifically, into middle class, consumer and corporate culture – requires the gradual loosening of the original ethnic identity (the language, the clothing, the religious practices, the family structure) and the assumption of various Americanisms. Faced with the feared dissolution of origins, a nostalgia for what is to be lost precedes its actual dissolution, and various forms of cultural assertiveness result. These cultural forms, known aggregately as multiculturalism, are attempts to maintain difference within an ideology of indifference. Thus, travelling across United States cultures, in any given year, in my hometown of Cranston, Rhode Island, one can attend the African-American celebration in January, the Irish parade in March, the Hispanic fiesta in April, Southeast Asian days in May, the Italian feast in August, the Greek festival in September, the Armenian celebration in October. July, though, is reserved for the Declaration of Indifference, I mean, Independence. The ethnic events do not look like funerals, but that is what they are: eulogistic celebrations of lost identities, to keep alive the memory of what was sacrificed to the new belief, America. These events originate in *advance nostalgia*, established by immigrant groups experiencing the pull of indifference and relegating their heritage to its acceptable place in the United States: as entertainment.

Two of the more famous characters in twentieth-century American literature are Jean Latour, the missionary priest in Willa Cather's 1927 novel, *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, and Isaac McCaslin, the "uncle to half a county" in William Faulkner's *Go Down, Moses*, published in 1942. The two men lead very different lives but each wrestles with the fundamental American dilemma of how to contemplate difference. The Archbishop's great desire is to build a Romanesque Cathedral in the American southwest and bring to the multitudinous variety of faiths and beliefs in existence in the region the universalizing mission of the

Catholic religion. However, Archbishop Latour discovers that some differences among peoples are immutable, and thus the universalizing mission of the Catholic church – a potential metaphor for the universalizing tendencies of American society – is thwarted by the intransigence of indigenous cultures. Specifically, the Archbishop builds his Cathedral, but its magnificence is haunted by its failure to incorporate Native American beliefs into its Catholicism.

In an important scene, Latour is with his guide, Jacinto, a Native American man and a member of the Laguna tribe, who explains certain Laguna beliefs to the priest. The Archbishop's thoughtfully frustrated response signals New World panic at the prospect that indifference might prove less powerful than difference.

The two companions sat, each thinking his own thoughts as night closed in about them; a blue night set with stars, the bulk of the solitary mesas cutting into the firmament. The Bishop seldom questioned Jacinto about his thoughts or beliefs. He didn't think it polite, and he believed it to be useless. There was no way in which he could transfer his own memories of European civilization into the Indian mind, and he was quite willing to believe that behind Jacinto there was a long tradition, a story of experience, which no language could translate to him. A chill came with the darkness. Father Latour put on his old, fur-lined cloak, and Jacinto, loosening the blanket tied about his loins, drew it up over his head and shoulders. (92)

We might identify that chill as the chill of insurmountable human difference, of distinctions hardened into rock which even the heat of living bodies cannot transcend. The experience tires Bishop Latour, and stands as a qualification of some magnitude to the universalizing faith of his calling.

Mitigating against despair, however, is Cather's own strong language of potentiality, where she claims that despite centuries of inhabitation, the southwest had yet to take the form of a comprehensive location. "The mesa plain had an appearance of great antiquity, and of incompleteness; as if, with all the materials for world-making assembled, the Creator had desisted, gone away and left everything on the point of being brought together, on the eve of being arranged into mountain, plain, plateau. The country was still waiting to be made into a landscape" (94-95). A major part of that landscape – the human part – will be the construction of Father Latour's cathedral. "The cathedral is very near to my heart, for many reasons" (242-243), Latour explains to his fellow priest, reasons not least of which, I would venture to say, is the establishment of a landscape on which history might commence. It is a familiar story on the U.S. frontier: for American civilization to take root, insurmountable human differences must be set back into the dust.

Isaac McCaslin, in *Go Down, Moses*, spends less time than Father Latour reading landscape and more time contemplating the historical record to determine how his vision may influence or reform institutions of human behavior. The landscape on which Faulkner's character exists is thick with the record of entangled experiences; the footprints of forebears are chronicled in the language of commerce in the ledger books held in the plantation, and now the tenant farm commissary. Unlike the world of Father Latour, in Isaac McCaslin's America it is not difference that astonishes but the depth of connection, the entanglement of human lives through the sexual, economic, and social exchanges of indifference.

As a child and even after nine and ten and eleven, when he had learned to read, he would look up at the scarred and cracked backs and ends [of the ledger books] but with no particular desire to open them, and though he intended to examine them someday because he realised that they probably contained a chronological and much more comprehensive though doubtless tedious record than he would ever get from any other source, not alone of his own flesh and blood but of all his people, not only the whites but the black one too, who were as much a part of his ancestry as his white progenitors, and of the land which they had all held and used in common and fed from and on and would continue to use in common without regard to color or titular ownership, it would only be on some idle day when he was old and perhaps even bored a little since what the old books contained would be after all these years fixed immutably, finished, unalterable, harmless. (256)

Whereas Father Latour knows there are differences between himself and the peoples of the southwest and fears that those differences are immutable, Isaac knows a commonality between whites and blacks on his land and discovers, when he finally reads the ledgers, the full and tragic implications of those genetic links to "not only the whites but the black" lines as well. Cather's landscape represents the unlimited potential of Latour's missionary purposes; it is, like the American West, a seemingly endless horizon, emblematic of the burden of the future. Faulkner's landscape, "which they had all held and used in common and fed from and on and would continue to use in common," marks the predicament created by human beings, the burden of the past.

Each burden, though – of the past and of the future – is constructed from the ordeal of human difference. Isaac McCaslin seeks to transcend difference in the name of what we would call today, "common ground;" his triumph is in his own transfer of allegiance – memory, belief, and value – from his white inheritance to ideas learned from Native American traditions. Isaac does what Bishop Latour says

is impossible: he transfers the memories and experience of another race into his consciousness when he accepts Sam Fathers as his ancestor. He ceases to identify himself with the culture of his heritage – his bloodline – and assumes affinity with a cultural tradition represented by the Native American hunter. Jean Latour, on the other hand, becomes more convinced as he grows older that “The Mexicans were always Mexicans, the Indians were always Indians” (284), and that such transference was exceedingly difficult to accomplish. Despite his efforts, he fears that the rock of such distinctions was made of harder stuff than the rock bestowed by Christ on St. Peter, the universality of the human spirit.

Nonetheless, the Archbishop’s vision of universality, his *faith* in transcendence, is very strong and fires his imagination, even when he fails, and provides him the strength to continue to attempt the impossible in America. Asleep in Santa Fe, Father Latour hears the nine o’clock Angelus Bell and experiences “a pleasing delusion that he was in Rome.” Before the nine bells have sounded, “Rome faded, and behind it he sensed something Eastern,” which may be his imagination of Jerusalem, “though he had never been there.” The experience of transference has Latour recall another time when “he had been carried out of body thus to a place far away,” when in New Orleans he felt he had been “dropped, cassock and all, into a garden in the south of France.” The sound of the Angelus bell “had carried him farther and faster than sound could travel” (43). Cather is profoundly ironic to set her narrative of American universalism among Catholic missionaries in the Southwest. The American dream of transcendence, to overpass national, geographic, and religious origins and achieve *e pluribus unum*, from many, one, may be imagined as a kind of secular Catholicism, demanding a faith no less strong than Father Latour’s to accomplish. Only partially conscious, in an out-of-body, spiritual experience, the sound of the Angelus is capable of taking Latour anywhere – Rome, Jerusalem, New Orleans, France – and he would still be *here*, in his partial consciousness, as the American Bishop, the universalist. It is clear that despite the Bishop’s experience of difference, his belief, his *faith* remains universal, Catholic, and his conclusions about the immutability of the cultural traditions that manifest through human life are failures of the flesh, not the spirit.

Isaac McCaslin believes also in a universalism, but that belief places him at odds with his time and place in Mississippi in the 1940s. He stands his ground through his entire life until, near the end of his life, like Latour, he realizes that the dream of universalism held implications that even he could not accept. “He had been asleep” (338), Faulkner narrates, in the moments before confronting the possibility that the racial division between blacks and whites, as well as the hierarchies of bloodlines that intersect among the white McCaslins and their black

cousins, the Beauchamps, may be untenable, that the differences are false in *actuality* as well as in theory, or belief. However, faced with the possibility that his transcendent, universalist beliefs may become flesh, Isaac panics. "*Maybe in a thousand or two thousand years in America* he thought. *But not now!*" (344). Isaac's long view is, ironically, quite Catholic, reminiscent of the historical vision held by the Cardinals at the Vatican, who open *Death Comes for the Archbishop* perched upon a shelf of rock, overlooking the hills of Rome. In both novels, then, there is a vision of universalism. In *Go Down, Moses*, that vision is set at odds with a social order that demands the maintenance of racial distinction, and it ultimately fails when the one human being who can see it loses sight of it. In *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, the dream of universalism is protested against by pockets of individuated resistance that seem doomed to extinction. Both novels, then, may be read as anguished and searching examinations of multicultural and multiracial nationalism, where the implications of American indifference are cast in the realm of the imaginary, testing the limitations of social existence that we would recognize as true enough in our own world.

We live today in an era that celebrates what Archbishop Latour lamented. His belief that "the Mexicans were always Mexicans, the Indians were always Indians" has profound implications for public policy in the United States. Nonetheless, national social pressure in the United States has, historically, been toward conformity. For all of its celebrations of *e pluribus*, the most striking thing about American society, to outsiders, is its *unum*. America's earliest oppositional thinkers and artists have railed against this pressure. From Thoreau's symbolic retreat into the woods of Concord, Massachusetts through the counterculture movement of the 1960s, individuals and organizations have arisen to accuse the social fabric of America of being what it is now a much-maligned cliché: a melting pot in which individual distinctions are shed like layers of snakeskin. I mix my metaphors with purpose. In order to describe what happens, over time, to people in the United States we must resort to poetic language because in every other part of the world, from Kosovo to Quebec, the reality of social existence is to the contrary. In these other places the snakeskin does not shed so readily and the pot seems to take ages to heat to a melting temperature. Those who do not employ metaphor to the evidence in the United States are likely to attach invective to what they see: conformity, leveling, rootlessness – and when such tendencies arise in other parts of the world, the term employed is an easy one: Americanization. People are Americanized when they trade indispensable aspects of their integrity – their ethnicity, their language, their religious affiliation – for American indifference: the standard, American attitude which judges all ethnicities, languages, and religions equally obstructive, and equally entertaining.



The most recent and most far-ranging effort to protest the melting of peoples into Americans in the United States goes by the name of multiculturalism. America, the multiculturalists argue, is (or should be) the place not where Crèvecoeur's "new man" is fashioned but where all the old ways are maintained with equal validity. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, processes of Americanization destroyed ethnic roots, making the children of Irish and Italian and Greek immigrants into standardized Americans who rolled off the public school assembly line like Ford automobile parts, interchangeably American except for hair and eye color and the peculiarity of last names. The automobile image is apt. Ford makes the Ranger and the Taurus and the Escort but they're all Fords, just as America makes Americans out of most anybody. Last names attach to Americans like model names on Ford automobiles: Look!, there's a Russian immigrant in a Ford Fiesta; there's a Hispanic-American in a Ford Ranger. Today, multiculturalists seek to revive lost ethnicities and to protect historic differences among peoples from an American melt-down. Classical ethnicity, like classic cars, have value. Stanley Fish describes "The politics of difference [as] the equivalent of an endangered species act for human beings, where the species to be protected are not owls and snail darters, but Arabs, Jews, homosexuals, Chicanos, Italian Americans, and so on" (Fish 382). We have a sense that unless we do something to protect distinction, human varieties will become, in the United States, no more than stops on a strip of restaurant chains: Taco Bell, Wai-Wai Chinese take-out, Tokyo Today, and Luigi's Italian kitchen.

Multiculturalism might thus be understood as the most recent expression of American romanticism, a perpetual nostalgia for the way we were – or the way someone was – before America, before politics. The role of the endangered species has been taken by a number of players in American history: the noble savage, the happy slave, the innocent child, the immigrant's ethnicity, and today, that which distinguishes me, that which makes me different. Multiculturalism is a nostalgic impulse, an attempt to freeze time and reverse the leveling of ethnic, religious, and ideological difference that occurs in the United States. The historical record of America is largely one of mixing and crossing, not maintaining division, and those who seek to resist the process must be prepared for an arduous struggle which may not be won until their death. Once they are dead they may be revered as heroes who stood against the pressures of conformity, and serve as compensatory inspiration for the vast majority who did not. However, even the voices of nonconformity in the literary tradition of the United States enforce a paradoxical uniformity. "Whoso would be a man must be a nonconformist," comes from the voice of Ralph Waldo Emerson, in "Self-Reliance" (265). "Why should not we have an original relation to the universe?" he asks in "Nature" (190). How can

*we all* be nonconformists, how can we all enjoy an original relation to the universe, unless we all, at some point, shed some prior, "unoriginal" quality that defines us? A nation of nonconformists is one in which each makes some private rebellion by which an allegiance is lost, and then lamented.

The Declaration of Independence states as fact the leveling impulse that is even today far from reality: "all men are created equal." Of course they are not, but we continue to assume, as a political point, that they are. Gregory Jay suggests that "The words of the Declaration have continued to haunt the moral and political life of America, and subsequent generations have both embraced and repudiated them." The Declaration contains "an ethically troubling contradiction between enabling fictions of universalism and stubborn realities of particularity and exclusion." Over the next two centuries, the words of the Declaration would be used by "those who were left out of the original Declaration," who would employ its "utopian terms both to challenge and to expand the practices of American democracy" (Jay 79). These challenges have not, however, resulted in a widening of the range of acceptable variations on what constitutes American identity or behavior, but a widening of personal types and bloodlines allowed to identify themselves and behave like Americans. Jay offers an economic reading of "multicultural" America: "Cultural identity in America, in its dominant form, is the identity of being a worker and a consumer in a capitalist marketplace. Ethnic or racial traits or practices will be preserved or destroyed insofar as they are judged conducive to profitable labor or susceptible to commodification. The celebration of diversity movement today seems inextricable, then, from the emergence of a consumer economy in which the marketing of ethnic commodities is a highly profitable way of opening new markets, creating new products, and fulfilling the need for incessant novelty" (122). The overriding priority in American civilization is profit, and the *sine qua non* of profit is market. People will spend money on what they do not have and so it follows that in a society that lacks an indigenous, majority ethnic heritage, people will be willing to commit resources toward acquiring or maintaining that which they perceive as missing from their lives. Difference in the United States resides, not in essence, but in spectacle, as marketable product, and ultimately, as nostalgia.

## 2. Planters and Missionaries

Isaac McCaslin is a planter; Jean Latour is a missionary. The United States may be considered, historically, as the crossing of (and at times the clash between) values dear to planters and to missionaries. Evoked by Isaac McCaslin and the

McCaslin-Beauchamp family is the tradition of planting oneself, as the Puritans said – planting oneself and one's family in a new land in order to establish a new world. The errand into the wilderness, from the city on a hill to the homesteading journey and the resettlement project, is invoked by the image of Lucius Quintus Carothers McCaslin arriving in Mississippi to begin his own agricultural and labor experiment. He came and he stayed put, and generations after him forged ties to the land as strong as any around the world. Isaac McCaslin is thus described on the first page of the *Go Down, Moses* as "the inheritor" who, by his own choice, would become "the bequestor" of that property which he permits to pass into his cousin's family. Though he repudiates his inheritance and dissociates himself from the historical significance of *McCaslin*, Isaac does not leave. He disavows his heritage but not his roots, which remain in the very soil of his relinquished property. He even takes charge of distributing the various \$1000 legacies to the descendents of Tomey's Turl, a McCaslin debt. The novel, *Go Down, Moses*, ends with the return of another man – or, specifically, of the man's body – a black man who attempted to leave and failed, and is brought home so his body may be returned to the land. "He must come home," is the Law evoked by the town's attorney, Gavin Stevens, who executes and enforces the edict he unilaterally declares (358). These are the American planters. The hold upon them wielded by the land over which they have sweated and died is cable-strong, as are the ties between the races themselves, denied though they may be by entrenched social convention. Lucas Beauchamp, to whom the McCaslin land should have gone if common law were more powerful than racial antipathy, is described quite simply: "he didn't leave" (106). A life transplanted will cling to its adopted soil, determined to never move again.

And then there are the missionaries. Father Latour reminds us that Americans do much more than plant themselves and prosper, they seek to transform the world into their image and to spread their faith in the mutable, transcendent nature of human identity. The history of national and cultural mutation in the United States stands as an affront to sustained ethnicity, producing a reactionary sense of lost identity – or a nostalgia, as I have termed it – and a longing for multi-culture rather than conformity to the corporate, industrious, and the seemingly solitary loneliness of nuclear America. The American missionary may take Lucas Beauchamp as text and say, *behold the descendant of the African slave who is now an independent farmer*. Or take Isaac McCaslin himself as text and say, *see the descendant of white slaveholders who has abjured his property, and taken on the identity of one who refuses to own property of any kind – land, houses, human beings*. In the United States, according to the missionary tradition, all such things are possible. The missionary takes to heart Emerson's admonition "to look

at the world with new eyes" (227) and consider no aspect of human existence immutable. Missionaries neither inherit nor bequest; they establish, they build, and they recruit others to that cause which animates their spirits. "Ah well," explains Latour's close friend and colleague, Joseph Vaillant, "that is a missionary's life; to plant where another shall reap" (39). Isaac McCaslin is inspired and consumed by what has occurred on the land; he is surrounded and nearly *drowned himself* in the commissary, reading the family ledgers. Father Latour is equally inspired by what his faith and vision might bring to pass, by the souls he may convert and the future he may affect. As he explains to Latour, "the Cathedral is not for us. ... We build for the future" (241).

It may be helpful to remind ourselves briefly of some very basic *exceptions* claimed by the United States, exceptions which, however unfashionable the term "American exceptionalism" may have become in the discipline of American Studies practiced in the United States, cannot be dismissed rhetorically. The term of identity known as "American" is a political, not an ethnic nationalism, and as such may be bartered, gained or lost, in the arena of public affairs. Identity in the United States is and has always been political capital, even if the historical endurance of the nation would imply that "American" may evolve – or devolve? – into an independent and viable ethnicity. As David Shumway reminds us, "the entire project of creating American civilization is political" (Shumway 339). I would add that the entire project of creating an *American* is equally political – it is not nature, ethnicity, or race, but ideology that makes "American" a legitimate world identity. While representatives of certain ethnic and geographical groups dominate the political and economic landscape in the United States, the significance of such positions is not hereditary and may alter over time, through political or economic change. We exist in such an era today, when groups traditionally in positions of power are claiming discrimination by policies created to affect the hierarchy. And more importantly, positions of power may be won by the maneuvering of identities – and here I refer to the politics of corporate capitalism as well as of the public sphere. If politics is understood simply as the process by which we decide who gets what, when, and how, it is an arena in which anything goes, potentially. In political struggle, men and women will play what cards they are dealt, as we say, employing what exists at their disposal for advancement, knowing that they will be judged more harshly on their performance than by their identity. In the opening narrative of *Go Down, Moses*, a card game is played to settle a property dispute, and a slave with much at stake in the game manages to place himself in the role of dealer. "Who dealt these cards?," asks one of the card players, the one who will lose the hand (28). Current generations of Americans are asked to emphasize aspects of their identities that previous generations were expected to

mute; they play cards in their hands that their parents and grandparents would not have placed on the table. The politics of multiculturalism, to finish the analogy, has much to do with deciding which cards can be played and which cannot.

Isaac McCaslin was born a white landed-inheritor in Northern Mississippi in 1867, the son of slave owners. He was to inherit the large plantation established by his grandfather and owned by his father and his uncle. However, Isaac chooses to repudiate his inheritance, and to escape its legacy. He is able to accomplish this act – an act which he admits is “heresy” (281) to his race, his family, and his cultural inheritance – because, in his own words, “Sam Fathers set me free” (286). Sam Fathers, the Indian hunter, marked Isaac “with something Sam had had in his turn of his vanished and forgotten people” (175), including the refusal to consider land as property. Thus, Isaac attempts to accomplish a prototypically American move, by abjuring a previous affinity – usually a birthright – for another. All Americans can trace their American identity back to a primal negotiation, where an original identity (Greek, Korean, British) was exchanged for American citizenship. The move also informs Cather's fiction; it makes Father Latour's missionary journey possible. When the Cardinals at Rome discuss who should be elevated to the office of Bishop of the new American territory, they agree that “it would be a grave misfortune if a native priest were appointed” (8), and that someone from elsewhere would be best at bringing a new sense of order and vigor. When we first meet the new Vicar Apostolic, he is lost, and reads his new landscape with care (and with faith) to find his way and commence his mission as Bishop.

Isaac McCaslin discovers the meaning of his identity while reading the commissary ledgers and he repudiates that identity over the objections of his cousin, Cass Edmonds. Isaac knows that even in removing himself from complicity with the ledgers, the ledger books would remain “as much a part of his consciousness ... as the fact of his own nativity” (259) – the same nativity he wishes to repudiate. Much the same as Father Latour, Isaac's vision of transcendence is in danger of coming unhinged by the nagging realities of experience. Cass Edmonds foresees the tragedy inherent in Isaac's decision, thinking “how much it takes to compound a man ... and of the devious intricate choosing yet unerring path that man's ... spirit takes among all that mass to make him at last what he is to be, not only to the astonishment of them ... who believed they had shaped him, but to Isaac McCaslin, too” (295). Whatever Isaac becomes, he will always remember what he was to have been had he not repudiated – and that memory, as anguish or as nostalgia, will become a vital part of who it is he at last becomes. In *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, Cather describes memory as “an indulgence [the two missionaries] seldom permitted themselves” (42). Memory is antithetical to messianic purposes, and Father Latour keeps his in check. He has his moments of

nostalgia (when he admits he is “a prey to homesickness for his own kind” [103]), but when he returns to Europe he finds he is equally prone to homesickness for the New World – nostalgic for his mission (272). Isaac is never homesick because like Lucas Beauchamp, he never leaves; Isaac remains a planter despite his cultural repudiation. Nonetheless, he succumbs to a form of advance nostalgia for the disappearance of whiteness, when his failure to envision a black McCaslin in the “Delta Autumn” episode (“*Maybe in a thousand or two thousand years in America he thought. But not now*”) invites the wrath of the woman who has borne their cousin's child.

### 3. The Politics of Becoming American

The planter Isaac McCaslin and the missionary Jean Latour exist within what we would call today “multicultural” environments, except that there is no assumption of equality among diverse elements. Latour encounters Mexicans, U. S. settlers, and Native Americans, and is himself a Frenchman whose last job was in Cincinnati. Isaac's environment is no less diverse, including whites, blacks, town and country people, and Native Americans. While both men attempt to transcend their nativity, they do so from very different starting points. Nonetheless, each man believes that he will be judged more by what he does than what he is, and that identity flows from action, or performance, and not from essence. Isaac McCaslin is “set free” because of what he decides to do with his inheritance – much to the astonishment of himself and others. Father Latour dies a glorious death because of the vast distance he had moved from his origins as a French priest to his end as an American Archbishop, and because of the Cathedral he had built. The question that arises, then, is whether identity in a multicultural environment is performative – the building of a church, the repudiation of an inheritance – or a birthright, the whiteness of McCaslin, the Frenchness of Latour. After all, only the white landowner can relinquish; only the French priest with orders from Rome can bring the universal church to America.

Other characters do not possess the same degree of maneuverability. Lucas Beauchamp, for example, in *Go Down, Moses*, the closest male descendant to Lucius Quintus Carothers McCaslin, is disinherited because he is also a Negro, and thus cannot own the white man's land. Lucius is a strong-willed figure, and is described as being “impervious to that blood” which crosses white and black in his body: “Instead of being at once the battleground and victim of the two strains, he was a vessel, durable, ancestryless, nonconductive, in which the toxin and its anti stalemated one another, seetheless, unrumored in the outside air” (101).



However, in the “outside air” of his time and place in America there is nothing Lucas can do to escape or repudiate his social identification as Negro working on Roth Edmonds’ farm. He may be known by Roth Edmonds to be a descendant of Old Carothers, a “better man” than any Edmonds (112) and “*more like Old Carothers than the rest of us put together*” (114), but none of these known facts changes his essential, racial identity in the eyes of all who see. The anguish of Lucas Beauchamp lies in the fact of his disinheritance and his sense of superiority; the anguish of Roth Edmonds, for whom Lucas works, lies in the knowledge that Lucas is right. The freedom that Roth (and Isaac and Jean Latour) possess is the freedom to invent themselves, the freedom from pre-definition. Lucas comes close. Faulkner says that Lucas Beauchamp “*fathered himself*,” and is nearly race-less, but not quite.

Walter Benn Michaels has charged that while “the move from racial identity to cultural identity appears to replace essentialist criteria of identity (who we are) with a performative criteria (what we do), the commitment to pluralism requires in fact that the question of who we are continue to be understood as prior to questions about what we do.” In other words, a purely performative set of criteria for identity is not possible. “Since, in pluralism, what we do can be justified only by reference to who we are, we must, in pluralism, begin by affirming who we are; it is only once we know who we are that we will be able to tell what we should do; it is only when we know which race we are that we can tell which culture is ours” (Michaels 14-15). Only Isaac McCaslin, inheritor, “uncle to half a county,” the grandson of Lucius Quintus Carothers McCaslin – only such a man could be in the position to “repudiate” his inheritance, and the inheritance he repudiates is the one into which he was born. One cannot repudiate what one does not have, and so McCaslin says nothing about repudiating the African-American side of his inheritance. Similarly, only Father Jean Latour, with portfolio from Rome, can disavow his national memories and commit himself to his dream of a universal church; we know he is unable to do the same with Native American experiences he gathers while on his mission. The philosophical issue raised by each narrative, approached from opposite ends of a spectrum, is whether individual acts of repudiation and vision can in fact overcome nativity – or do they simply substitute one nativity for another, or in the language of multiculturalism, one paradigmatic essentialism for another. As Cass Edmonds asked, what freedom does Isaac McCaslin acquire through Sam Fathers?

The Negro graveyard, in *Go Down, Moses*, contains markers “of a profound meaning and fatal to touch, which no white man could have read” (132). Similarly, Bishop Latour visits a mountainside “repository of Indian secrets,” including those most sacred which “no white man will ever see” (151). Observers of American



politics are sometimes perplexed by the moral tone of political discourse in the United States, and by the attention it pays to private matters and personal behavior. In a culture where identity is fluid, behavior rises inevitably to the level of political scrutiny and judgment is severe when conformity is breached without good cause. "The American experiment interests the world not just because it may ... cast doubt on the idea of a hierarchy of human varieties," according to one political scientist, "but also because it offers an alternative account of the primary source of differentiation in human affairs. The most important differences derive not from distinctions among biological varieties of man, but from differences caused by moral and political factors" (Caesar 57). As American society presses all peoples within its borders (and some would say, outside those borders as well) toward conformity, it values above all activities which are public and observable. That which cannot be observed and assessed threatens the only cohesiveness possible, cohesion established in the public realm of politics. Build a cathedral or repudiate an identity: judgment hinges on what is done and what is said about it. Secrecy fosters divisions that cannot be transcended, and so secrets must be made public.

As the identity *American* evolves, and claims to be a culture, scholars in the field of American Studies contemplate whether the nation can be said to have emerged as an ethnicity, or whether it maintains its historic status, or its *exception*, as a political contingency. If it is an ethnicity, then what we know today as multiculturalism would seem to be an attempt to establish a hierarchy of ethnicity within the borders of the United States. Thus, there would be the culture of this emerging national American ethnicity and there would be minority cultures seeking recognition for subculture, or parallel culture, status. However, if an American identity continues to signal a political contingency, which is its global hallmark, then multiculturalism is best understood as the most current strategy employed by those seeking to aggrandize their position relative to others. Discrete, recognizable ethnicities continue to erode within the United States, where ethnicity gives way to political, corporate, and economic identity. Multiculturalism makes political capital of romantic nostalgia. If the memory of cultural roots increases one's claim to economic and political rewards, then a 12<sup>th</sup>-generation Mayflower descendent is going to be at a disadvantage because he won't be able to remember when his family tree was not rooted in America, and his family will possess no vestiges of a traceable ethnicity. The rise of multiculturalism in the United States is thus rooted in *politics* more than ethnicity, and exists within a tradition of political struggle for the answer to Crèvecoeur's question, "What Is an American?" His answer, recall, melded the planter and the missionary into one continuous identity: "Men are like plants," he argued. "We are nothing but what we derive from the air we breathe, the climate we inhabit, the government we obey, the system of

religion we profess, and the nature of our employment" (71). What is an American? Look at what the Americans are doing and believing right now for your tentative answer. An American is what an American does – and politics, we might say, is the science of how we decide what to do.

Recall that the political struggle between Isaac McCaslin and his cousin, Cass Edmonds, centers on Edmonds' denial of Isaac's freedom and of the entire individualistic enterprise on which Isaac bases his refusal to accept his inheritance. Neither Isaac nor anyone else is "free," Edmonds argues, if freedom means repudiating nativity: "No, not now nor ever, we from them nor they from us," Edmonds asserts. "I am what I am; I will be always what I was born and have always been" (287). Cass Edmonds' response to the Adamic impulse in the U. S. (the impulse to "start over" at any time and wipe clean the slate of history) is present also in Cather's novel, apparent in Latour's lament that "The Mexicans were always Mexicans, the Indians were always Indians." In *Go Down, Moses*, the man who stands against essentialism is a social oddity; in *Death Comes for the Archbishop* he is a missionary priest. Nonetheless, each novel continues the politicization of ethnic and racial identity that is at the core of American civilization. In the American southwest in the mid-nineteenth century, Father Latour does not even know "the extent of this diocese, or this territory" (40); it is a "country ... still waiting to be made into a landscape" (95). At this point of origins Cather casts her narrative of universality, evoking the Dream of America as refuge, where all things are possible. In the American south of the 1940s, it seemed that very few things were possible and that the slate could never be wiped clean, that men acquired aspects of their identities neither "participated in or even seen" (3) but inherited, bequeathed, and descended. Within this context of confinement, characters struggle, like Lucas Beauchamp, "*who fathered himself, intact and complete, contemptuous, as old Carothers must have been*" (114-115), for a chance to participate in that original American promise of renegotiated nativity. Isaac McCaslin fumbles his way toward the same with poignancy, "because I have got myself to have to live with for the rest of my life" (275); and although he ultimately fails, his failure has become paradigmatic in the American literary tradition. Isaac McCaslin is the Ahab of multiculturalism, looking for something to kill – a bear, a grandfather, a legacy – in order to set himself free. His nostalgia leads him to repudiate the land. Why? "It was because there was exactly enough of it. He seemed to see the two of them – himself and the wilderness – as coevals ... the two spans running out together" (337) leaving him nostalgic well in advance of – but in time to repudiate – any loss.

Divisive political struggle is endemic to the United States, and at any time in its history, as one traveled within its borders, one crossed cultures. In Lawrence

Levine's words, "the United States harbored the kernels of division from the beginning and contained a multifarious population distinguished by race, religion, country of origin, philosophy, accent, language, class, and region. Even as the United States was becoming one nation, beckoning to the peoples of the world, expanding its territory, developing its resources, and building its economy, it also remained a divided nation." Rather than to deny this historic multiplicity, "we need to recognize it and attempt to understand how it functions. . . . The very strength of the United States – its size and diversity – inhibits if it does not make impossible the kind of conventional wholeness and stability that some of us seem to long for and even to invent historically so that the present is made to seem aberrant, and even culpable, for harboring the seeds of separatism and alienation when in fact those seeds have been present and have born fruit throughout our history" (Levine 119). The stability that some Americans long for produces a nostalgia for a nation that never existed, just as multiculturalism brings about a nostalgia for an experience that is passing away within the politics of indifference.

It is only through indifference to "race, religion, country of origin, philosophy, accent, language, class, and region" that the civilization of the United States is possible. Nonetheless, divisions of identity – divisions within Americans themselves, as citizens and as immigrants – are born of the unreconciled dilemma regarding origins. What happens to a shed self? Should it be allowed to wither away like dissolved political bands, or should it be protected, like an endangered species, or preserved somewhere for the entertainment of those willing to come by and have a look, or a taste? We can chart an evolution in social policy from permitting the survival of subcultures to the recognition that such survival is a legitimate end in public policy. "The demand ... was [originally] that we let cultures defend themselves, within reasonable bounds. But the further demand ... [now] is that we all *recognize* the equal value of different cultures; that we not only let them survive, but acknowledge their *worth*" (Taylor 64). The acknowledgment of such worth is emblematically romantic. The argument would scarcely need to be made if what was lost was not lost of necessity, or if recovery of the lost identity were politically expedient. The American South romanticizes the "lost cause" because it acknowledges the necessity of its passage. An adult acknowledges the value of his own youth because its passage enabled the emergence of the adult. Human memory is fired by what the self identifies as having been integral to its own making: we value the memory of our own becoming. Multiculturalism, then, is the product of a universal nostalgia for nativity. Within the civilization that has repudiated the very concept of ethnicity, a corporate universalism eventually presses indifference upon all who root themselves in it long enough. The United States is a nation of Isaac McCaslins, repudiating the ledgers and preparing, like

Jean Latour, to transcend even the most immutable of private anguish and memory in the name of what we must build for the future. American nostalgia flows readily for lost cultures, lost selves, and discarded identities – the baggage left at terminal points as one travels across United States cultures.

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# **Papers**

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## Defying Loss and Extinction: Women as Bearers of Ethnic and Family Heritage in Latina Caribbean Literature

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Among the various groups that constitute American ethnic literatures, the Latino community has produced in the last four decades inspired literary works that have been acclaimed by both general readers and the academy. Latino authors have spawned ideological and cultural issues that were compelled to be interpreted in the light of a particular postcolonial theory. Latino literature has expanded the ground of ethnic experience in American society from the position of "the Other," thus developing a new literary aesthetics within contemporary American letters.

In contrast to early Latino literature, which led Hispanic communities in the U.S. to *forge* an identity after years of politically-enforced assimilation<sup>1</sup>, recent Latino works seem to exhibit a change in perspective as regards identity issues.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, Chicanos' most urgent goal at the start of their literary movement in 1965, was to define a Chicano identity. Thus, identity became the touchstone in Chicano literary criticism, an identity that, according to Bruce-Novoa, "was not simply to be found, but to be *forged*, with attention to history and ideology" (my emphasis, 200).

Furthermore, differences in the developing of identity should be stressed among the various Latino groups in order to affirm the idiosyncrasies of the Hispanic peoples, each of which demonstrates a distinctive character due to different national origins, history, traditions and cultural wealth. The Chicano experience, for instance, has followed a specific path that does not parallel the one Caribbean writers have displayed. My study focuses on the Caribbean experience, particularly on the 'one-and-a-half-generation' writers<sup>2</sup> from the Dominican Republic and Cuba, since I consider that their works exhibit a distinctive ethnic mark springing from the authors' exile condition in the US. I have even restricted the scope of Dominican and Cuban authors to two women writers who seem to prove in their fiction that identity is as much a question of ethnicity as it is of family heritage and individual growth. In my opinion, both Julia Álvarez and Cristina García display in their fiction a hyphenated condition that celebrates doubleness. Moreover, they defy any possible loss or extinction of their ethnicity. This is achieved by perpetuating family history in their novels.

Before approaching the subject of ethnic/family perpetuation, Álvarez and García's own idea of ethnic identity should be made clear. Following Pérez-Firmat's distinction between immigrant, exile and ethnic literatures, Álvarez and García's works must be classified as ethnic. I take the term ethnicity as it is defined by the Cuban critic:

Ethnicity . . . consists of the non-conflictive cohabitation of dissimilar cultures. Notice that I say cohabitation rather than synthesis, for it is not clear to me that this cohabitation necessarily engenders a synthetic third term. . . . The ethnic accepts that his *patria* is not, nor can ever be, his *país*. And what is more, he is not disturbed by this split. Since identity does not interest him, he does not suffer identity crises. Instead, like the amphibian, he revels in his doubleness. (1987, 5)

Julia Álvarez fled the Dominican Republic at the age of ten, when her father, a member of the underground against Rafael Trujillo, sought political refuge in the U.S. for his family's safety. Cristina García was born in Havana and was likewise taken by her exiled parents to New York City. Both women have experienced a cultural doubleness which, according to different interviews and published autobiographical material, has conferred on them a wider sense of the

<sup>2</sup> The Cuban sociologist Rubén Rumbaut coined this term for the Cuban group living between the first and second immigrant generations whose members, according to Pérez-Firmat, are "born in Cuba but made in the U.S.A." (*Life on the Hyphen* 4). Given the similar migratory circumstances of Cubans and Dominicans, I extend this label to the Dominican group.

self, a meaningful substance to their hyphen. As members of the one-and-a-half generation, they are characterized by the balancing of two cultures, a biculturation that implies "not only contact of cultures . . . [but] a situation where the two cultures achieve a balance that makes it difficult to determine which is the dominant and which is the subordinate culture" (Pérez-Firmat 1996, 6).

When Álvarez was asked whether she thought of herself as a *gringa dominicana*, her answer pointed to this idea of balancing her doubleness:

The mixture is often a clash. It creates confusion and conflict that get worked into the writing, but my eye sees certain things because I'm that mixture. And the things that I see, that I'm caught by, are what I'll write about. I think a lot of the way I see the world has to do with being that combination, feeling slightly marginal in each place. So the things I observe – my consciousness of class and race – certainly come out of the fact that I'm the person that I *am*." (Rosario-Sievert 36)

García conceives her ethnic consciousness as a familial rather than a community product. She speaks of a bifurcated life, "a schizophrenic situation without the negativity that this implies" (Lopez 103). For her and her siblings the Spanish language, which comes hand in hand with the idea of Cubanness, turned out to be an irreplaceable ingredient that "instilled in us a sense of tremendous pride," giving her identity that feeling of balanced doubleness: "I didn't grow up sensing that I was inferior or that Spanish wasn't as good as English" (López 103). As a writer, she declares, the issue of ethnic awareness

is very important to me even though I didn't grow up as part of any Latin or Cuban community. For me, being Cuban was very much a family affair. My life was bifurcated in that sense. At home I felt very Cuban and that identity was very much instilled in me. Culturally and temperamentally and in every way I felt Cuban. This element was a strong part of my identity. (López 103)

Álvarez has published three novels up to the present date: *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents* (1991) and *¡Yo!* (1997), which are connected by subject matter, and *In the Time of the Butterflies* (1994), a fictionalized historical account that pays tribute to three Dominican heroines, the Mirabal sisters. García has published two novels, *Dreaming in Cuban* (1992) and *The Agüero Sisters* (1997). Both writers have earned popularity in a short period of time, giving Latina literature a fresh, free-spirited, and humorous tone. Álvarez and García's main concerns are family and culture; therefore, issues related to marriage, parenthood, kinship, ancestors, and female sexuality, are broadly negotiated within those

boundaries. They are interested in the individual as inseparable from her/his family circle, even when their members are geographically separated, or culturally and politically divided. In this crucial terrain of the family, which usually defines and marks the idea of ethnicity for the exile, there appears a more profound concern: that of the perpetuation of the clan. The fear of losing family alliance clearly springs from the sense of uprootedness and extinction brought on by the expatriate's experience.

In Álvarez and García's novels, it is always a female character who carries and preserves family history from a country of origin to the United States. As a general rule, Latina literature displays an interest in realistically portraying family and community experiences; those usually revolve around women's lives. The literary exposure of the female self allows Latina writers to lend a perspective different from the official male-centered history and also to use their specific feminine world as artistic material. The relevance of a female self within the Latino community is thus highlighted by women writers:

The Latina writer will often prioritize the lives of women who have, like themselves, carved an existence out of the immediate experience within a woman's space. More specifically, their recognition and celebration of what we call "a matriarchal heritage" can be expressed in remarks such as Ana Castillo's: 'We all have our *abuelita* poems.' This woman-context centers not only on the *abuelita*. In Latina writing, the entire extended family of women – mothers, daughters, sisters, aunts, cousins, godmothers, lovers, neighbors, fortune-tellers, *curanderas* (healers), midwives, teachers, and friends, especially girlhood friends – makes up a cast of characters. (Ortega and Sternbach 12)

The depiction of women as bearers of ethnic/family heritage is achieved by García and Álvarez not only through the subject matter of their novels, but also through their form, using literary devices such as the autobiographical style, epistle, and diary, as well as the multiple shifting of viewpoints and narrative voices. Their novels are not testimonial documents but elaborate narratives where some of the female characters need to rescue their family history in order to understand themselves. By articulating family stories, by arranging their family's history, those female characters eventually come to terms with their own self-definition. The novels of both Caribbean writers affirm their distinctive Dominican and Cuban heritage, as do other Latina texts written in the last decade: "rather than [a] supposed search for identity, . . . [they] specify a paradigm of self-affirmation in the Latina writer, a self-perception and a self-definition that stems from her rootedness in her heritage and in her historical circumstances" (Ortega and

Sternbach 3). In their works, Álvarez and García consciously fictionalize some of their biographical material as an attempt to understand themselves better. "I'm doing the writing because it's the way I understand my life" (Bing 39), Álvarez has declared. She justifies the use of biographical data:

A lot of the *García Girls* was based on my own experience – first novels usually are. But there is a lot of fictionalizing, using the material of your life but being primarily interested in making a good story. It's the combining, the exaggeration, the redoing, the adding on, that makes it original rather than autobiographical. (Rosario-Sievert 35)

Similarly, García answered in an interview that *Dreaming in Cuban* was "emotionally autobiographic," explaining that "those of us who kind of straddle both cultures are in a unique position to tell our stories, to tell our family stories" (López 107, 109).

In *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents* Álvarez creates a polyphonic discourse where multiple narrators, from their different viewpoints, tell stories common to the wealthy Dominican García de la Torre family. Third-person narration is used in the first part, shifting towards distinctive (collective or single) first-person narrators as the story develops in a backward temporal motion. Therefore, father, mother, and the four sisters alternate viewpoints in each chapter, as they narrate family events of their exile life in New York City and their former life in the Dominican Republic. We learn how the Garcías are forced to sacrifice their privileged life in the island and assimilate to the U.S. as middle-class citizens in the Bronx. Readers soon find out that one of the sisters, Yolanda, is given more prominence in the novel, but not until the very end of the novel is she identified as Álvarez's persona. In the last chapter Álvarez makes an abrupt temporal shift, from Yolanda's account of her childhood memories to her present life as a hyphenated writer. This is the moment when the author identifies herself with her protagonist, using a baby cat the young Yolanda took from its mother as a metaphor of her cultural transplantation to the U.S. The adult Yolanda then reveals her need to write about the Dominican culture that had to be left behind, a culture she understands by the women around her:

Then we moved to the United States. The cat disappeared altogether. I saw snow. I solved the riddle of an outdoors made mostly of concrete in New York. My grandmother grew so old she could not remember who she was. I went away to school. I read books. You understand I am collapsing all time now so it fits in what's left in the hollow of my story? I began to write, the story of Pila, the story of my grandmother. . . . I grew up, a curious woman, a woman of story ghosts and story

devils, a woman prone to bad dreams and bad insomnia. There are still times I wake up at three o'clock in the morning and peer into the darkness. At that hour and in that loneliness, I hear her, a black furred thing lurking in the corners of my life, her magenta mouth opening, wailing over some violation that lies at the center of my art. (*García Girls* 289-90)

Yolanda seems to speak for Álvarez as narrator of domestic stories – the story of her grandmother, of the Haitian housekeepers – and as the bicultural woman whose childhood trauma is precisely the seed of her writing.

*¡Yo!* offers the reader a variety of Dominican, Dominican-American, and Anglo characters through which we learn more about Yolanda, the former novel's protagonist. This time Yolanda, the writer, is forbidden both voice and viewpoint. Rather, relatives, friends, and acquaintances tell their version of whatever event links them to her. In the characters' account of their experiences with Yolanda, her behavior is subject to deep analysis and even harsh reproach. Members of her family, for example, direct their anger at Yolanda for the intimate details she reveals about them in her novel. This confirms both Yolanda as the writer in *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents* as well as Álvarez's identification with her heroine. Álvarez's appropriation of biographical material for her literary works further evidences her identification with Yolanda.

The writer's persona, Yolanda, with her frantic tales of fantasy and innate ability to tell stories, will be the person to preserve the Garcías' heritage. The novel closes with the father meditating over the forthcoming extinction of family history. It is extremely significant that the patriarch of the García clan, as he ages and fears the loss of his ethnic/family roots, passes on to his daughter the baton of their heritage in the New World:

And I say, "My daughter, the future has come and we were in such a rush to get here! We left everything behind and forgot so much. Ours is now an orphan family. My grandchildren and great grandchildren will not know the way back unless they have a story. Tell them of our journey. Tell them the secret heart of your father and undo the old wrong. My Yo, embrace your destino. You have my blessing, pass it on." (*¡Yo!* 309)

Therefore, the ethnic/family legacy is passed over from male to female hands, from the traditional masculine discourse to a new feminine discourse. Carlos García seems to represent men who recognize and honor the creative and literary capacity of women: "Sometimes I get confused as to what exactly

happened. I don't think it is only because I am now an old man. It's also because I have read the story of those years over and over as Yo has written it, and I know I've substituted her fiction for my facts here and there" (*¡Yo!* 299).

In her novel *Dreaming in Cuban*, Cristina García has attempted to reconcile two sides of the same family that are politically divided. One part of the family remained in Cuba, supportive of Castro's regime, and the other chose to live in exile in the U.S: "I wanted to very specifically examine how women have responded and adapted to what happened in their families after 1959. I also was very interested in examining the emotional and political alliances that form within the families" (López 106). Although García's male characters are less prominent than the female ones, they are often depicted as weak, ephemeral beings. In turn, women are fascinating beings who are driven by strong passions and instincts. García's is a more dramatic story than Álvarez's – yet infused with highly comical moments – concerned with how family bonds are biological and unavoidable, no matter how dangerous and harmful they prove to be. While they try to reconcile their past, García's wild, eccentric women openly transgress their conventional role, transcending their own existence and even risking their future.

The novel's narrative is composed of a heterogeneous discourse where correspondence and third-person and first-person narrations are woven together. Celia, the powerful matriarch, remains in Cuba sympathetic to communism. The unmailed letters that she has been writing for years to her Spanish lover, along with the contents of her granddaughter Pilar's diary, build the novel. Pilar detests her mother, Lourdes, who became an Americanized businesswoman after leaving the island. In turn, she enjoys a peculiar spiritual communication with her *Abuela* Celia despite geographical distance. Creative and rebellious, passionate and sensitive, Pilar scorns her mother's system of values and feels betrayed by her father's marital unfaithfulness – "the family is hostile to the individual" (134), she would declare. Pilar is the hybrid character in this novel who tries to establish her identity within ethnic and individual parameters. However, the familial fragmentation she experiences prevents her from understanding her ethnic doubleness. Her need to find her real self would take her on a trip to Cuba to reencounter her grandmother: "Even though I've been living in Brooklyn all my life, it doesn't feel like home to me. I'm not sure Cuba is, but I want to find out. If I could only see Abuela Celia again, I'd know where I belong" (58).

The author has chosen Pilar Puente to pass on the ethnic/family heritage that otherwise would be lost in the US. Pilar's role is first apparent through an omen from Celia, who "depends on Pilar to carry on the traditions of the women in the family" (López 1996, 44). In the first pages of the novel, Celia laments her



family's erratic destiny and thinks of Pilar as the family hope, the bearer of their family legacy:

Because of this, Celia thinks, her husband will be buried in stiff, foreign earth. Because of this, their children and their grandchildren are nomads. Pilar, her first grandchild, writes to her from Brooklyn in a Spanish that is no longer hers. . . . She knows that Pilar keeps a diary in the lining of her winter coat, hidden from her mother's scouring eyes. In it, Pilar records everything. This pleases Celia. (DC 6-7)

In her last letter, Celia writes to her lover: "The revolution is eleven years old. My granddaughter Pilar Puente del Pino, was born today. It is also my birthday. I am fifty years old. I will no longer write to you, mi amor. She will remember everything" (245). The coincidence in dates and in the granddaughter's symbolic full name is not accidental. Thus, Pilar will be the stock's supporting pillar as well as the bridge linking to the disintegrated del Pino family. Later, during her stay in Cuba, Pilar herself will find the key to her identity:

I've started dreaming in Spanish, which has never happened before. I wake up feeling different, like something inside me is changing, something chemical and irreversible. There's a magic here working its way through my veins. . . . And I love Havana, its noise and decay and painted ladyness. . . . I'm afraid to lose all this, to lose Abuela Celia again. But sooner or later I'd have to return to New York. I know it's where I belong – not instead of here, but more than here. (DC 235-6)

Pilar regains her ethnic/family heritage in Cuba, after meeting her Abuela Celia once again. Her "'Cubanness' is now taking place" (Vorda 75) as a *chemical and irreversible* force. Hence, Pilar comes to fulfill Pérez-Firmat's concept of *Cubanía*: "[It is] not a matter of roots but of routes; what defines us is not the place where we stop but the place where we step, not a land but a landing" (1987, 11-12). In this manner, García solves the question of the Cuban-American exile identity, one that allows Pilar to belong to a new genealogy:

. . . that makes us something *other* than Cuban and *other* than American – which is what I have called ethnic. For us, the hyphen is not a minus sign but a plus, a sign of life, a vital sign. For us, hyphenation is oxygenation – a breath of fresh air into a dusty and musty *casa*. (Pérez-Firmat 1987, 7)

Even though it is not made explicit in the novel, Pilar becomes the writing subject. The combination of letters and distinctive narrative voices seems to be

Pilar's own literary discourse, which she adjusts to the characters' respective selves. "Who chooses what we should know or what's important?" argues Pilar in the course of the narration. García herself answers to this question in an interview with Iraida López:

López: The writing, then, becomes a way of salvaging what's meaningful to these women: their history, their identity. . . .

García: Absolutely. Traditional history, the way it has been written, interpreted and recorded, obviates women and the evolution of home, family and society, and basically becomes a recording of battles and wars and dubious accomplishments of men. You learn where politics really lie at home. That's what I was trying to explore on some level in *Dreaming in Cuban*. I was trying to excavate new turf, to look at the costs to individuals, families, and relationships among women of public events such as revolution." (López 107)

In *The Agüero Sisters*, García also employs different discourses and viewpoints. Readers get involved in the mystery around a Cuban family whose only living members are two sisters, Constanca and Reina. We learn the facts from an autobiographical document written by the father, Ignacio Agüero. In accordance with his profession as a scientist, Ignacio gives a naturalistic account of his own life, which includes his parents, his marriage with Blanca, and his daughters. This first-person chronicle poses the mystery from the beginning of the novel, since Ignacio's text is ambiguous when referring to Blanca's fortuitous death. A third-person voice permeates the rest of the novel, taking the reader to the sisters' inner thoughts and memories. Reina, living in 1990s Cuba, and Constanca, exiled in the U.S., have been estranged for thirty years. Constanca is a fragile woman who, after her father's suicide, decided to emigrate to the U.S. and forget her past – "The past is a wilderness" (297), she would say. Quick to forget and consciously erasing any Cubanness remaining in her, Constanca grew up resentful of her mother. In the U.S., she exploits Blanca's image for her business, a cosmetic-line ironically called *Cuerpo de Cuba*. Reina, in turn, is a satisfied woman, freed from the burden of bitter memories, yet she knows the whole family history, even the infamous assassination of Blanca, having learned to forgive, to accept, and to love her heritage. She has given herself to the past without resentment or fear: "What we pass on is often as much a burden as a gift" (206), she states.

Far from idealizing her mother, to whom she feels closely attached, and respectful of her father's scientific accomplishments and wisdom, Reina decides to meet her sister in Miami. Purely Cuban, she incarnates the perfect personal

equilibrium; Constanica, in turn, represents the failed hyphenated woman. In this novel, ethnic/family heritage is not narrated by a woman, as in the case of *Dreaming in Cuban*. The narrating voice guides the reader through Reina, Constanica and Ignacio's different versions of their family history.

In her novel García demonstrates that female identity cannot be defined if the family's nature has not been comprehended. That is why Reina's daughter, Dulce, appears with no identity and lost between Havana and Madrid. Dulce has been denied family history – she does not know her grandmother's passions, the truth about the murder, her grandfather's inner world. "How close we are to forgetting everything, how close we are to not existing at all" (288), Dulce admits painfully. Hence, Reina's decision to join her sister challenges the fear that Cubans seem to feel: the fear of becoming an extinct species and of losing one's heritage due to family division, fragmentation, and an unawareness of family patrimony.

Even when we consider the clan rather than the nuclear family in Álvarez and García's novels, there is a strong emphasis on matriarchal lineage: women are seen as the legitimate carriers of blood and family name. No matter how divided, fragmented, or unsuccessful the family may become through time, women seem to perpetuate its history, which, at the same time, secures the preservation of ethnicity in Latina transcultural experience.

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## ■ Gay Nostalgia in Nick Carraway's Mythopoesis of the American Dream

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F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, first published in 1926, explores a distinctly American theme: a character's flight from a contemporary context which he considers tainted by materialism and corruption to a moment in the past that is idealized and in which the protagonist looks for a set of values associated to the creation and building of the American nation. Among these idealized values are the gift for hope and the vast energy invested in the pursuit of a destiny in spite of the fact that this destiny keeps eluding the pursuer. Implicit in this quest is the character's yearning for the reconstruction of a paradise that now is lost and maybe never even existed in the first place, and his nostalgia for the larger-than-life illusion that was behind the occupation of the American continent by the early European colonizers.

*The Great Gatsby* epitomizes this theme through the figure of its narrator. Nick Carraway's disapproval of the values he encounters in his first trip to the East Coast and his nostalgia for the social, cultural, and ethic values of the "true America" that he believes still persist in the Midwest meet the requirements that Jean Baudrillard lists in his *The Precession of Simulacra*: "nostalgia assumes its full meaning...when the real is no longer what it used to be" (Baudrillard, 347). The

origin of this nostalgia is to be found in a discrepancy between signs and the truth behind those signs. According to Baudrillard,

the transition from signs which dissimulate something to signs which dissimulate that there is nothing marks the decisive turning point. The first implies a theology of truth and secrecy (to which the notion of ideology still belongs). The second inaugurates an age of simulacra and simulation, in which there is no longer any God to recognize his own, nor any last judgment to separate true from false, the real from its artificial resurrection, since everything is already dead and risen in advance (347).

Baudrillard's essay illustrates how nostalgia is triggered off by the irrelevance of images. Simulators, which we had grown used to reading as corresponding with the real, are likely not to mirror the real, but to generate it, substitute it, or even hide the absence of the real. Nostalgia therefore stems from awareness that we can have a system based exclusively on signs with no reference. Few decades of the twentieth century have proved to be so illustrative of the type of crisis resulting in nostalgia that Baudrillard presents in his 1983 essay as the decade of the 1920s in the United States, a decade of social changes in which women's liberation and the increasing visibility of African Americans and immigrants from Eastern Europe were rapidly challenging the social order of Northern cities, and especially of the city of New York. Few authors reproduce this decade with the analytical skill of Scott Fitzgerald. In the society of *The Great Gatsby*, the relationship between the definition of images and the ultimate reality behind these images needs to be constantly renegotiated by the characters. In the 1920s, New Yorkers start gaining awareness that signs no longer sustain or even reproduce any reality they can count on to validate their experiences. Suburban drivers are left stranded in their misreadings of Dr. Eckleburg's eyes, a sign that literally means both a metaphysical absence and a commercial incongruence for the denizens of the Valley of Ashes. The people who attend Gatsby's parties try to inhabit the world of the Hollywood rich and idle or the absurd flappers of the jazz age, not fully aware whether the lifestyles they invent for themselves are either a reproduction of the movies they watch or a precession of the reality those pictures will shortly be reproducing on the screen. Signs are constantly misread or misinterpreted in *The Great Gatsby*. Goddard's racist pamphlet *The Rise of the Coloured Empires* passes for "scientific stuff; it's been proved" (18) for Tom Buchanan, Gatsby's "drug stores" have two different literal meanings for both Tom and Daisy. Jordan Baker's ambiguity between a young promise at golf and a professional cheater cannot be elucidated from "objective" newspapers, and



Gatsby's having spent time at Oxford is interpreted in three different ways by Nick, Daisy and Jordan. Even the 1919 World Series had been fixed by gambler Meyer Wolfshiem<sup>1</sup>. The 20s is the decade in which social reality and cultural representation merge at unprecedented levels in American history. The real is no longer what it used to be, and when signs cannot be taken at face value,

There is a proliferation of myths of origin and signs of reality; of secondhand truth, objectivity, and authenticity. There is an escalation of the true, of the lived experience; a resurrection of the figurative where the object and substance have disappeared. And there is a panic-stricken production of the real and the referential, above and parallel to the panic of material production: this is how simulation appears in the phase that concerns us – a strategy of the real, neo-real, and hyperreal, whose universal double is a strategy of deterrence.... (347) Simulation is master, and nostalgia, the phantasmal parodic rehabilitation of all lost referentials, alone remains. Everything still unfolds before us, in the cold light of deterrence (Baudrillard 372).

To a bigger or lesser extent, all the characters in *The Great Gatsby* show their nostalgic need to “rehabilitate all lost referentials” in their worlds by producing neo-real or hyperreal worlds they need to believe in. The Buchanans’ Georgian Colonial mansion fulfills Tom’s nostalgic attempt to rehabilitate an ancient social order based on racial and patriarchal hierarchies and in which the Pater Familias ruled over family, plebeians and slaves. Conversely, Gatsby’s mansion, “a factual imitation of some Hotel de Ville in Normandy” (11), shows his need to inhabit a European world of nobility based on ancestral origins in an attempt to dismiss the American gilded society in which a person could reinvent his or her origins and create new signs of identity from scratch. The nostalgia that moves Tom or Gatsby to rehabilitate an invented past in their contemporary reality is caused by the fact that – one more time I quote from Baudrillard’s analysis – “We need a visible past, a visible continuum, a visible myth of origin to reassure us as to our ends, since ultimately we have never believed in them” (350). If we contemplate the translatability of the type of crisis Baudrillard depicts in “The Precession of Simulacra” to the Long Island of the 1920s, the American equation has as its result the archetypal myth of American origin: the early American Dream, a quest poetically explicated by Nick Carraway in the last chapter of the novel. The

<sup>1</sup> The character Meyer Wolfshiem is based on the real character Arnold Rothstein, who had bribed the Chicago White Sox in 1919.

yearning for the beauty and staticism of the early American Dream as a negation of contemporary anxiety is a reaction that conforms a pattern in American culture. For Corey Kaplan and Ellen Cronanrose, this is the dream of "a stable, unchanging, primarily univocal and Anglo country in which the sonorous and ostensibly safe voices of the past never clash with the multivocal cacophony of the present" (5).

The one character in the novel who best exemplifies this longing for the early American Dream is the novel's narrator, Nick Carraway. His account of the summer he spent in the Eastern metropolis is tainted with nostalgia for a mythical continental past. As Keith Fraser has noted, "no longer tolerant of the excesses of others, Nick reaffirms his own puritanical heritage with an extreme desire to see "the world... in uniform and at a sort of moral attention forever" (68). And so Nick leaves the "riotous" East Coast and goes back to his place of birth, the "uncorrupted" Midwest, the hard-core of American self-idealized national identity, from which he can state: "So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past" (172). From the Midwest Nick Carraway remembers the summer he spent observing, admiring, and falling in love with Jay Gatsby. That this account is not only a personal journal, but a poetic rendition of the beauty of the American Dream has been noted by numerous critics. In the words of Frances Kerr, "Gatsby is not an appropriate objective correlative for the incorruptible American belief in possibility" (424). However, Nick assures us that "there was something gorgeous about Gatsby ... some heightened sensitivity to the promises of life ... an extraordinary gift for hope, a romantic readiness such as I have never found in any other person and which it is not likely I shall ever find again" (8). Nick admires Gatsby's ability to dismiss the present and his yearning to repeat the past. Gatsby has obliterated the real, older, selfish, careless, and full of apathy Daisy of the present and tries to turn back the time to the myth of timelessness and perfection he forged out of the young Daisy of five years earlier. In his nostalgia for "a visible myth of origin to reassure us as to our ends, since ultimately we have never believed in them" (Baudrillard, 350), Gatsby inhabits his dream for "the perfect woman, elevated by abstraction to sainthood, the quest for whom is associated with the quest for the holy Grail" (Wasiolek 17). In other words, Nick admires in Gatsby his romantic ability to dream and, through the use of his own lyrical descriptions, elevates the figure of Gatsby to the discourse of myth and turns Gatsby into a symbol not so much of American idealism, as most critics would put it, but of "American Desire" (Kerr, 425). What needs to be done now is to analyze the gender and sexual politics in Nick Carraway's use of the figure of Jay Gatsby as a symbol of the American Dream. Nick Carraway's empathy, disappointments, disapprovals and adamant commitments are crucial in the novel

as the vehicle through which other characters' actions are to be read and interpreted. In fact, it is only if we examine Nick's emotional attachments and even his sexual yearnings that we will understand his commitment to the figure of Gatsby and his utter deprecation of the world of the Buchanans towards the end of the novel. Whereas much attention has been paid to the "romantic readiness" (8) of the protagonist, few critics have analyzed the layer of meaning that is revealed in one of the most powerful subplots of the novel: Nick's anxious exploring of, and final commitment to, his own feelings towards other men, both at a platonic and at a sexual level. Only the filter of unconditional love in Nick's narration can turn a criminal in a pink suit who "had little to say" (63) into a symbol of America's "extraordinary gift for hope" and "romantic readiness" (8).

One of the questions that may arise is why a homosexual should identify with a heterosexual man's idealization of a woman and why this identification becomes a mythopoesis that necessarily transforms Gatsby – and therefore indirectly Nick himself – into a character larger than life. Critic Edward Wasiolek accounts for Nick's empathy with Gatsby by suggesting that Nick recognizes Gatsby as a fellow homosexual. For Wasiolek, Gatsby suffers from a "madonna complex" by which he forges idealized perfect women to keep at bay the reality of sexual women. For Wasiolek, "such a flight from the 'dirty' woman to the clean woman is a form of homosexuality ... Nick favors Gatsby because he favors what Gatsby is, feels so intensely for Gatsby because he feels what Gatsby feels. Put bluntly we are confronted with the sympathy of one homosexual for another" (18). Wasiolek's speculations about Gatsby's sexual tendencies are perfectly licit, but the truth is that there is not a single scene in the text in which Nick is not taking Gatsby's love for Daisy at full value for what it is: heterosexual love. Obsessive, childish, irrational, and non reciprocated, but heterosexual at all effects. And yet, Nick relates to the intensity of the emotions Gatsby feels while watching the green light at the end of Daisy's dock and equates that intensity to the intensity with which he believes the Dutch sailors must have held the sight of "a fresh, green breast of the new world ... the last and greatest of all human dreams" (171). In the following pages I will analyze Nick's homosexual – although closeted – identification with Gatsby's mythified heterosexuality and try to explain it by referring to two major strategies of the construction of a closeted gay subjectivity in the American literary canon. The first of these strategies is the projection of the gay persona on an alter ego necessarily heterosexual – in this case Jay Gatsby – on whom the implicit hierarchy between the two components of the binary masculinity/femininity is less stable than in the average heterosexual character. The second strategy is the use of a discourse endorsed by mainstream society – in this

case the discourse of the American Dream – to refer, in a coded way, to the homosexual prerogative, and therefore validate gay characteristics, feelings or experiences by borrowing a discourse that is central in the forging of an American national identity.

The projection of the gay character – by himself or herself – on an alter ego that is necessarily heterosexual is a strategy used by American writers who have wanted to express gay sensitivities and experiences in a publishing world that would automatically censor out things obviously homosexual. And it is a strategy that gay readers and gay-friendly readers have learned to detect and interpret, aware that they would sometimes be the only perceivers of a very coded message<sup>2</sup>. The gay character identifies with a straight character who conforms to society but at the same time slightly deviates from it by not fully adjusting to its constructs of masculinity or femininity<sup>3</sup>. Nick's identification with Gatsby is partly due to the femininity of this man who encompasses features, passions, and behaviors characteristic of both genders, and not just to the one ascribed to his biological sex. Gatsby's masculinity does not always correspond to the correlative terms that "masculine" elicits in Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's list of categories presented in a culture as symmetrical binary oppositions<sup>4</sup>. The binary masculine/feminine, according to Sedgwick's analysis, correlates in our culture with the binaries disclosure/secrecy, public/private, and sincerity/sentimentality. In *The Great Gatsby* Nick identifies with Gatsby, because, unlike Tom and Jordan, who are the clear exponents of masculinity and its attributes, he is characterized by features such as secrecy, privacy and especially sentimentality. Gatsby's extremely intense emotional life is kept secret through a good part of the novel, and is only displayed against his will and for practical reasons – i.e. meeting Daisy. Gatsby's feelings and longings have to remain in the realm of privacy at all moments, as opposed to that of Tom Buchanan, whose affair with Myrtle is openly displayed from the very first chapter and which requires an admiring audience and a stage – the apartment in Manhattan – for its confirmation. Gatsby's is the world

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<sup>2</sup> As a matter of fact, homophobic readers have also been able to detect the homoerotic element in the novel *The Great Gatsby*. One only needs to look at the ways in which Hollywood has detected, edited out or totally manipulated homoeroticism in its two adaptations of the novel. In Elliott Nugent's 1949 version, Nick Carraway is completely heterosexualized from the very first images of the film. A quarter of a century later, in 1974, Jack Clayton's film performed a not much more subtle censorship of the original text with the help of a very homophobic script writer, Francis Ford Coppola (in Carrión's interview with F. Coppola the latter's homophobia is very explicit).

<sup>3</sup> Readers of Melville, Cather or Williams must be familiar with this strategy.

<sup>4</sup> See Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Epistemology of the Closet*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.

of secret emotions, of vulnerability, of romantic excess, of loneliness, of fantasies and dreams, of imagination and desire, finally punished by the masculinity of Tom Buchanan. And if Gatsby is as violent and uncaring as Tom Buchanan and Jordan Baker are – he is a dangerous bootlegger, after all –, Nick chooses to obliterate those “masculine” aspects of Gatsby’s personality and focuses on his “feminine” spirituality and idealism, the vulnerable “femininity” soon to be destroyed by the very pragmatic and brutal instinct of survival of the powerful Buchanans. For Nick Carraway, whose masculinity differs from conventional standards – remember Daisy’s feminization of him: “I love to see you at my table, Nick. You remind me of a – of a rose, an absolute rose. Doesn’t he?” She turned to Miss Baker for confirmation: ‘An absolute rose?’ (19) – dignifying the very scorned at figure of Jay Gatsby involves the dignification of a man who, like himself, accommodates a more fluid relationship between those features traditionally ascribed to sex and those ascribed to gender. In this sense, Nick recognizes Gatsby not as a fellow homosexual, as Wasiolek would have it, but as a fellow maladjusted human being who needs to disguise his private “feminine” emotional intensity under a public display of “masculine” affective detachment<sup>5</sup>.

Another cause of Nick’s identification with Gatsby is the second strategy I anticipated earlier, which is the inclusion of a discourse about closeted homosexuality within a discourse which is not only accepted by mainstream culture, but that also shapes and even defines it. As opposed to the discourse of homosexuality, this larger discourse is fully accepted, since it stems from the collective consciousness of the people. Unlike the discourse of homosexuality, it is all-encompassing rather than exclusive, and gives cohesion to the collective, rather than marginalizes some of its individuals. The closeted gay character, seeking self-redemption and the dignification of his or her own prerogative, elevates his or her plight to mythified levels in order to dignify and beautify their personal quest. But whereas this strategy that closeted gay American literature has provided responds to the dynamics behind the epic poems of Antiquity, the mythified discourses we find in these texts are not so much tainted with self-aggrandizing and pride, but with nostalgia for the beauty of a world that existed but was bound to disappear. Melville’s world of the Noble Savage, Willa Cather’s world of the Pioneers, Tennessee Williams’s world of the South, they all create retreating spaces for the gay subject who feels alienated from the actual world around him or her. In the case of *The Great Gatsby*, the discourse of the collective

<sup>5</sup> The equations of femininity with emotional intensity and of masculinity with affective detachment are in no sense my own, but are based on Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s analysis in her *Epistemology of the Closet*.

that is used to mask the presence of the discourse of homosexuality is no other than the discourse of the American Dream. Nick Carraway's equating of Gatsby's quest for Daisy with the early, genuine American Dream – in the sense of the ability to wonder and dream before this dream became corrupted with money – is evident and consistent through the novel. This spiritual dream, however, is also the vehicle of sexual fantasies, as is evident in the imagery Nick uses throughout his narration. In chapter four, for instance, Nick presents Gatsby's quest as larger than life but, paradoxically, filled with sexual connotations: "Out of the corner of his eye Gatsby saw that the blocks of the sidewalks really formed a ladder and mounted to a secret place above the trees – he could climb to it, if he climbed alone, and once there he could suck on the pap of life, gulp down the incomparable milk of wonder" (106-107). And from this sexual imagery in Gatsby's quest, Nick starts exploring his own sexual quest disguised under the quest behind the formation of the United States as a country:

Through all he said, even through his appalling sentimentality, I was reminded of something – an elusive rhythm, a fragment of lost words, that I had heard somewhere a long time ago. For a moment a phrase tried to take shape in my mouth and my lips parted like a dumb man's, as though there was more struggling upon them than a wisp of startled air (107).

The sexual imagery is also repeated at the end of the novel when Nick Carraway is finally able to articulate the exact phrase he was reaching for: "And as the moon rose higher the inessential houses began to melt away until gradually I became aware of the old island here that flowered once for Dutch sailors' eyes – a fresh, green breast of the new world" (171). It is true that the American mythos has culturally constructed the European colonization as a phallic penetration into a feminine continent, and its poetic correlative, the American Dream as the "dream of attaining what Anson Hunter in "The Rich Boy" tries over and over to get – the girl" (Fraser 70). But it is also true that the gender-specificity of this quest has by now been more than questioned and even reversed. As early as in 1960, Leslie Fiedler contended that the sexual fantasy behind the American Dream was more than ambiguous and that, as a matter of fact, "the American *eros* has not really changed. We continue to dream the female dead, and ourselves in the arms of our dusky male lovers" (29). Nick Carraway's narrative mixes the collective memory of a homoerotic past with his own idyllic childhood in the pastoral of his romanticized prairies of the Midwest. The mythology of the American West as homoerotic male bonding in a trip towards freedom permeates each one of Nick's



recollections, as can be seen the one time when Nick looks at his own personal past with nostalgia and longing<sup>6</sup>:

One of my most vivid memories is of coming back West from prep school and later from college at Christmas time. Those who went farther than Chicago would gather in the old dim Union Station at six o'clock of a December evening, with a few Chicago friends, already caught up into their own holiday gaieties, to bid them a hasty good-bye... When we pulled out into the winter night and the real snow, our snow, began to stretch out beside us and twinkle against the windows, and the dim lights of small Wisconsin stations moved by, a sharp wild brace came suddenly into the air. We drew in deep breaths of it as we walked back from dinner through the cold vestibules, unutterably aware of our identity with this country for one strange hour, before we melted indistinguishably into it again... That's my Middle West – not the wheat or the prairies or the lost Swede towns, but the thrilling returning trains of my youth... I am part of that... I see now that this has been a story of the West, after all (166-167).

Male bonding is endemic of the America that Nick believes he belongs to. The actual frontier between male bonding and homosexuality becomes increasingly blurred in the novel and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's analysis of homosocial desire acquires relevance for an understanding of this passage: "Male homosocial desire': the phrase... is applied to such activities as 'male bonding'... To draw the 'homosocial' back into the orbit of 'desire', of the potentially erotic, then, is to hypothesize the potential unbrokenness of a continuum between homosocial and homosexual" (1-2). The homosexual nature of Nick's nostalgia has found its closeted expression in the ever-present discourse of America's diachronic trip across cultures that invites us, one more time, to "beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past" (172).

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<sup>6</sup> Note the coincidences between this passage and George's one memory of his youth in Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (p. 62). In the two passages, male bonding is a central element of the maladjusted character's own fantasy of a moment of integration within the collective American trip out West.



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## Decentering the Stage: American Theatre as a Mirror of Recent Social Shifts

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The 1970s were years of radical social and political changes, as well as, according to Michael Novak (1971:70), “the decade of the ethnics”, but this increasing movement towards “diversification of group consciousness and identification (was) based in not only ethnicity but also religion, class, gender and sexual orientation” (Wade, 1997: 72). When one compares the American theatre of the 1950s with its current condition, one realizes that there is no better mirror to analyze the societal changes of the last twenty decades. As Theodor Adorno (1969: 7) stated thirty years ago, “to a crisis in society corresponds a change in the theater.” Therefore the plays written in the following decades would reflect the ideological turmoil that had shaken moral and political values throughout the country and which had finally granted their own voice to the minorities that had been silent for nearly three hundred years.

The Negroes became blacks – and beautiful – as well as fully aware that their civil rights were still being denied to them. Through a number of organizations, and under the leadership of Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, or Angela Davis, American Blacks started a long march towards freedom. On their part, the American Indians claimed the lands that the US government had allegedly stolen from them. The Mexican American fruit pickers in California were engaged

in a strike against landowners for both a pay increase and better working conditions when Luis Valdez, a graduate from San Jose State College, with a group of friends began performing agit-prop plays wherever the strikers met. It was the birth of El Teatro Campesino. Women, on their part, became conscious that they were second class citizens in an oppressive patriarchal society and accordingly demanded, together with an equal pay, the right to use their bodies in the way they considered suitable. Consciousness raising groups (CRGs) soon arose among women, who were now becoming increasingly vocal about the misogyny of the male Left, to discuss the problems posed by their subordinate role. Some CRGs turned into small theater groups dedicated to the cause of feminism, such as the New York based *It's All Right to Be a Woman*. The personal became political. Since the sixties was a decade when both the cult for the body and a free sexuality were openly urged, homosexuals, who had been dismissed as "male deviants" and depicted as ineffectual and effeminate in the theater of the previous decades (De Jongh, 1992: 16-40), took the chance offered by the off-Broadway movement and began to address their problems openly, as could be seen at the flourishing *Caffe Cino* where the bohemia of Greenwich Village met.

Some of the older playwrights were dead. Eugene O'Neill had died in 1953 leaving an unproduced play, *Hughie* (1940), that anticipated certain features that would become outstanding characteristics of the "theater of the absurd" in the following decade. Others had been silent for several years, such as Arthur Miller, whose latest success had been *The Price* in 1968 while Tennessee Williams was trying to survive in a hostile theatrical environment which had ostracized him since *The Night of the Iguana* in 1961. During the last years of his life, he also wrote a number of plays which shared themes and formal structure with the European avant-garde. Such was the case of *The Two Character Play (Outcry)* (1973).

In the late fifties the younger generation seemed to be determined to break new ground for the theater both aesthetically and thematically. In the years following World War II, the economics of the theater had turned Broadway into the headquarters of an industry which neglected plays aiming at artistic accomplishment rather than at commercial success (Engle, 1993). After months of pleading with Actors' Equity about salaries and with New York City's Council about fire requirements, young playwrights, actors and directors managed to carry out their work in smaller premises located in the area around Washington Square which would soon be known as off-Broadway. It was here where LeRoi Jones, Edward Albee, Arthur Kopit, Jack Gelber, Kenneth Brown and many others had their first plays produced and where a number of seminal groups, such as the Open Theatre and The Living Theatre took the chance to show their work to a

minority of interested people. The influence of these playwrights and directors, that of Joe Chaikin and Julian Beck in particular, soon spread throughout the United States.

But the genesis for their inventiveness had arisen in Europe where an upsurge of new playwrights gave way to a frenzied theatrical activity in Paris. This would give birth to such a world-wide innovating movement, called "theater of the absurd" (Esslin, 1961), that the stage would never be the same again. Eugene Ionesco's *La Chantatrice Chauve* opened in 1950, with *La Leçon* and *Les Chaises* following suit, while Jean Genet's with *Les Bonnes* (1947) inaugurated the "theater of cruelty" (Artaud, 1958) that Artaud had dreamed, thrusting bitter attacks on conventional morality with *Les Negres* (1959), and *Le Balcon* (1960). Samuel Beckett had *Waiting for Godot* produced in 1953. Their plays reached New York in the mid-fifties and were produced off-Broadway by Alan Schneider who would also run the risk of producing Edward Albee's first plays. So when Jack Gelber's *The Connection* opened with Julian Beck as director, the critics said it was "the most exciting new play that off-Broadway has produced since the war". It dealt with a group of drug-addicts waiting for a fix while a band improvised jazz music and nothing much happened on the stage. Pirandello, Genet, Beckett and Artaud could be heard in the wings and despite the initial scandal, the play became an astounding success setting off-Broadway as a center for the attention of the critics.

This happened in 1959 when Sam Shepard was only fifteen years old. Five years later he had *Cowboy* and *The Rock Garden* (1964) produced by Theatre Genesis in New York while he was working as a waiter at the Caffè Cino. David Mamet was just out from high school at the time, and, like Shepard, was also a typical outgrowth of the aesthetic commotion of the early sixties. Mamet began writing one acts, such as *Duck Variations* (1972), a play divided into a hasty sequence made up of multiple of brief scenes by which two characters depicted by means of a highly stylized dialogue which would become Mamet's distinguishing feature. His plays, together with the scripts he has written for films, display an unrelenting preoccupation with the dehumanization of American society and its effects on the individual psyche. Mamet considers himself to be a social playwright and his milieu is urban but his characters are as desperate and lost as Shepard's. Although they do not verbalize the maniacal monologues that appear in the latter's plays, they engage themselves in a fluid exchange of commonplace statements that expose how language itself "motivates behavior rather than vice-versa" (Dean, 1990: 16). They are controlled by the discourse they have taken from television commercials or media news broadcasts. It is a second hand, devaluated language as in *Sexual Perversity in Chicago*.

Both playwrights, Shepard and Mamet, depict American individuals on the verge of collapse. The values embodied in the philosophy of the Jeffersonian agrarian society have been corrupted by the materialism of corporate America and the individual has become a commodity to be consumed by his fellow citizens. For both Shepard and Mamet the American dream has turned into a nightmare in which the family does not function as a site to bring up children, fathers no longer play the traditional role assigned to them by western society, male comradeship has been destroyed by a rough competitive social system where women are inconsequential objects of male desire and sex another commodity to consume. Love is wanting in most of their plays. Language is obscene and a weapon for aggression. Their characters lead lives based on fantasies that seem to be real enough as to deter them from taking any action forward. They inhabit inane worlds constituting locked microcosms from which there is no potential flight.

LeRoi Jones's plays were informed by the same aesthetic background as the rest of his generation but also bore the additional imprint of ethnicity. Until the late fifties, Black theater had showed little strength to reach the level from which it could be listened to by the critics who were mostly white. The only black playwright that had made it to Broadway was Lorraine Hansberry with *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959). It was a considerable success but unfortunately she died too young. In the times of social transformation of the sixties, however, the black minority soon realized how much they had to fight for. Forty years had passed since W.E.B. DuBois and Alain Locke had maintained their famous controversy on the long-run purpose of black theatre. While Hansberry had been an unconscious follower of Locke's aesthetics, Jones, after a visit to Castro's Cuba whose effect he described in *Home* (1966), decided to give up his career as a poet and began writing a series of plays that increasingly reflected DuBois's ideas about the political aims of black art. But the veiled violence of *Dutchman* (1964), his overwhelmingly inventive first play, was not enough. Plays had to stir the conscience of Blacks and then make them be proud of their race in order to empower them to fight for their rights. Jones embraced the Nation of Islam and changed his name to Imamu Amiri Baraka. He rejected the white avant-garde aesthetics he had previously supported and took up the type of agit-prop approach to drama that the Soviet theater sponsored after the October Revolution. Baraka's radical choice was the end of his promising career as a playwright but, in turn, it paved the way for a number of African American writers who followed his views. The plays Baraka wrote under his new name – *Slaveship* (1967) or *Four Black Revolutionary Plays* (1966) – were denounced by critics as pieces of black hatred but provided an effectual basis for a kind of drama that had not been put

to use since the Depression years. Plays had to show, teach, and educate. Hence language had to be simple, direct and effective. Characters had to become symbols so that unlearned audiences could grasp the meaning. Consequently plots turned into allegories depicting the incessant struggle of African Americans for their right to be free. In this way, Baraka became an essential part of the black movement, together with other individual artists, politicians and religious leaders, who jointly aroused black consciousness to such an extent as had not been witnessed in America since the times of emancipation. One of Baraka's multiple contributions to African American contemporary culture has been that of collecting and editing the poetry, drama and essays written by blacks. Likewise he published a seminal analysis of the influence of African music on Western culture with the title of *Blues People*. Ed Bullins, Minister for Culture of the Black Panther Party, was another promising playwright who co-operated with Baraka in founding The Black Arts Repertory Theatre/School (BARTS) in Harlem in 1965. But the true ripening of their teachings would only appear two decades later with the work of two leading voices of current African American theater: August Wilson and Ntozake Shange.

Wilson was born in a slum of Pittsburgh, dropped out of school at fifteen and self-taught literature in the local library. As a young man, he founded the Neighborhood Playhouse and then moved on to Minneapolis. A few years later his play *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* (1984) gained the support of the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center's National Playwrights Conference and made it to Broadway. He has not stopped writing plays ever since and has become the leading African American playwright. His plays share certain traits with Hansberry's: the use of realism, plots dealing with the troubled black experience in America, complete absence of white characters, a seemingly unpolitical approach... However, Wilson is writing after black consciousness had ceased to be an issue and his plays are informed by a postcolonial ideology. He claims his aim is to rewrite American history emphasizing developments significant for African Americans and from the point of view of African Americans. For white audiences his plays may deal with *la petite histoire* but Wilson's plots undoubtedly depict crucial moments for the black community: when jazz became *the* music, the admittance of black baseball players to the major leagues, or the reunification of black families after emancipation... Wilson's approach is therefore didactic since he is convinced that African Americans will not accomplish their real ethnic identity unless they are acquainted with their own history. Although his approach is rather similar to DuBois's theories it surely is not as unrestrained as those of Baraka's. He has been accused of being too soft on white mistreatment of African Americans, of drawing characters who are too meek in the face of racial injustice, of using a language which, despite the use of African American vernacular, is too pliant. Wilson's characters are in no way rebels, but



ordinary people trying to come to terms with years of inequality and the psychological problems that have subsequently beset them.

Yet there is another strong voice in the African American theatre because it is the voice of a fighter. After four frustrated suicide attempts, Ntozake Shange began to write poetry and fiction in order to understand the condition of a black woman in contemporary America. As her adopted second name means, she finally "came with her own thing", and wrote a uniquely original play with the remarkably long title *for colored girls who have considered suicide/when the rainbow is enuf*. Shange categorized her play as a *choreopoem*, because, as opposed to Wilson's realism, it is an innovative combination of different performing arts (music, dance, poetry reading...) within the framework of a circular structure. Shange has found in the Black experience a number of invaluable traits on which she can construe her world view as an African-American female: she has created her own version of current African American vernacular (abandonment of capitals, use of literal phonetic transcriptions... etc), has opted for free verse to bring the inner rhythm of the plot closer to the audience, has used music and dance in the tradition of African tribal ceremonies, and her characters are symbolic representations of selected gender experiences of colored women... I have deliberately used the term "gender" here because Shange is of course a belligerent feminist. Therefore she embodies a multi-faceted illustration of postmodernism by her blending of different stage arts together with the lack of a traditional plot structure in her *choreopoem*, her postcolonial focus on non Eurocentric traditions, her use of the vernacular, and lastly her feminist outcry for rebellion against patriarchal society and in favor of colored sisterhood. Ntozake Shange's approach is didactic but, unlike Brecht, she tries to involve the audience by means of arousing emotion. She wants young girls to know what to be black and female means and, by offering positive roles, hopes to ease their way into adulthood. Shange thinks that "being black and female is almost a metaphysical dilemma" (Shange, 1994: 45), and lays in the foreground precisely those issues which bother anonymous working class colored women, such as rape, one-parent families, prostitution, male defection and physical abuse.

Of course, Shange, as a feminist playwright, did not come out of the blue. American theater, although younger than all the rest of literary genres, has a long list of women playwrights: Mercy Otis Warren, who wrote plays for the rebels during the Revolution, Anna Cora Mowatt who wrote *Fashion* (1845), a comedy that is still being performed, Susan Glaspell, who would have shone in her own light had it not been for the overwhelming personality of Eugene O'Neill in the Provincetown Players for whom she wrote modernist psychological dramas, and Lillian Hellman, who, as we shall see later, was the first woman who dared to deal



with female homosexuality on the American stage in *The Children's Hour* in 1934. But, as with everything else, the sixties gave rise to an incredible number of women who began writing plays much with the same aim as African Americans when *consciousness raising groups* (CRGs) spread throughout the country. The oral narrations of their dilemmas soon began to turn into happenings, performances where women dramatized their problems in front of other women. Improvisation soon evolved into short plays that were performed by women and for a female audience. The problems under discussion were too private and gender-related for women to tolerate the *male gaze* in their meetings. In 1979 there were about one thousand feminist theater groups in the United States. Ten years later it had dwindled to one third (Wilmeth, 1993: 178-179). The basic reason is accessibility to playhouses. Megan Terry, a former member of Joe Chaikin's Open Theatre, wrote the first rock musical in the history of contemporary theater, *Viet-Rock*, and can be considered the mother of all feminist playwrights. In 1974, Terry joined Ann Schmidman's Omaha Magic Theatre, went on to write plays centered on women's problems, and was a founding member of the Women's Project and Productions, together with Adrienne Kennedy – the first black feminist playwright, Maria Irene Fornes and Emily Mann. Therefore Shange was not alone when she decided to explore the condition of women on the stage.

I have mentioned accessibility to mainstream theatres. This is not a problem for women alone. It concerns all experimental playwrights, including Shepard and Mamet, but it is particularly difficult for female artists, the basic reason being that male critics consider they have a "restricted vision". Even in the face of adverse circumstances some women have reached the Broadway stage, as is the case of Wendy Wasserstein, Marsha Norman and Beth Henley. Generally speaking, American feminism, as opposed to its British materialist version, is what academics in gender studies consider "radical", that is, women are a social minority that is solely plagued by the cultural values of patriarchalism. Class and economic oppression are not taken into account in their analysis. This fraction of feminist academics, while accusing male critics of having a limited point of view when examining the themes of women's theater, also reproaches these female playwrights for not being radical in their analysis of female problems. In their view women playwrights should propose "positive roles" as opposed to roles in which women trapped by the oppressive nature of patriarchy opt for suicide or see irony as the only possible way to cope with a harsh reality. This is the case of Norman's *'night, Mother* (1983), where Bessie, a divorced epileptic finds release from everyday misery by shooting herself at the end of the play. In *The Heidi Chronicles* (1989), Wasserstein tells the story of a woman, the typical product of the sexual revolution of the sixties, who reaches middle-age as a successful academic but

unmarried and childless, and unable to solve the contradictions between the values she adopted – and preached – at a younger age and the dilemma of being a super woman of the eighties. Henley's *Crimes of the Heart* (1981) is an ironic, almost gothic family tale concerning three sisters who meet in their Southern family home after their mother's suicide and are impelled to reconsider their own not so happy lives. These three plays achieved such a success on Broadway that they were turned into movies with female Hollywood stars in the leading roles. The fact is that despite feminist critical opinion these playwrights are trying to find a genuine female voice to express the dilemmas of contemporary, mostly middle-class, women trapped between the urgencies of post-industrial American society and their needs for individual fulfillment.

Native Americans, or the Peoples of the First Nations, lack a theatrical tradition as well as a written literature. Their tradition is mainly oral and their expressive form is dance. Oddly enough, the first (and probably the best) play about the injustice inflicted to Native Americans by white colonists was written by a white Harvard graduate, Arthur Kopit, a member of Albee's generation, in 1965. It was simply called *Indians* (1968) and opened in London, at the British National Theatre, directed by an outstanding member of the same group, Jack Gelber, with an all-star cast and excellent reviews from the English critics. It then transferred to the Arena Stage in Washington D.C. with lesser approval. *Indians* was an interesting play, using Brecht's alienation technique, and including music, pantomime, circus, the play-within-the-play device, and a circular structure. During the period of the American involvement in Vietnam, Kopit heard an appalling speech by General Westmoreland, then Commander in Chief of the American forces, on the extermination of Vietnamese guerrillas. Therefore, he decided to use the genocide of American Indians as a metaphor to clarify the physical imbalance between the invaders and the invaded. The Vietnam war also motivated Megan Terry to write her famous rock opera in which women were cast as Vietnamese soldiers to show precisely the same inequality that bothered Kopit so much.

Although there are a number of theater groups set up by different Indian Nations, only a few have been successful. The best known Native American playwright is Hanay Geiogamah, a Kiowa whose most popular play is *Body Indian* (1972), which deals with the problem of alcoholism among his people. His aim, as Shange's, is to show where the actual problem lies and then lead the audience towards collective ethnic identification. With this aim in mind, Geiogamah wrote a musical, *49* (1982), in which he used native music and folklore to create an environment through which both young and old Indians achieved this collective cultural recognition. He is also current director of the new intertribal American Indian Dance Theatre.

David Henry Hwang is the best known Chinese American playwright. His parents met when they both were graduate students in California, where he was born and grew up. English was his first language and only when he was old enough to realize that his obviously different physical outlook also implied a cultural difference, his preoccupation with his family background arose. He began by exploring the attitudes regarding identity that American born Chinese had by confronting them with those of the Chinese born overseas in plays such as *Fresh Off the Boat (FOB)* (1980), and *The Dance and the Railroad*, until he began using the stories his grandmother had told him when he was a child as theatrical material. The play that launched him into fame was *M. Butterfly* (1988), in which he rewrote the libretto of Puccini's famous opera by transgressing gender roles and rephrasing the story from a postcolonial approach. In Hwang's play, Pinkerton, the American Navy officer, becomes a French diplomat who falls madly in love with a Chinese opera singer, who, in the end, is not the naïve butterfly his Eurocentric ideology needs her to be but a male spy. It is the East which finally wins, causing Gallimard's public embarrassment and ultimate annihilation. Hwang, by turning the submissive suffering heroine into an assertive transvestite, tries to show up to what point Eurocentric cultural stereotypes are equivocal both for the oppressed and the oppressors.

Luis Valdez, founder of El Teatro Campesino in the late sixties, is probably the best known Latino personality in the theatre of the United States. When he decided to support the grape-pickers strike led by César Chávez in 1965 by adopting the type of street theater that grew during the Depression years, he won the support of well-known European artists, such as the British director Peter Brook, then Head of the Royal Shakespeare Company. Initially Valdez's approach was political. He simply intended to gain overall public support for the union's struggle. For that purpose he wrote several short plays, which included pantomime, commedia dell'arte and Brecht's alienation techniques, that he called *Actos*. They were written in a mixture of Spanish and English, such as *Las dos caras del patroncito*, *Quinta temprada*, *No saco nada de la escuela*, *Vietnam campesino*, *Soldado raso...* Later, he became involved in ethnicity issues related to old Aztec and Christian myths that he used to convey notions concerning cultural identity for Mexican Americans. Valdez has been directing versions of his works for PBS – the American public TV channel – since he attained worldwide recognition with his film *La Bamba*. The success of El Teatro Campesino, which toured Europe in the seventies, has stirred up the interest of Mexican Americans in the theatre and given rise to a number of smaller ensembles. Their problem is the same of most minority groups: access to mainstream theatres, a fact that is worsened by the use of Spanish in the case of Mexicans. There are also a few

female groups, such as Las Cucarachas in San Francisco, who have devised a peculiarly suitable form of theater, *teatropoesía*, reflecting their ethnic and historical position, but their work is hindered by the traditional submissive role of Latino women within their culture since they are, for the most part, illiterate in English.

Finally I would like to mention a minority group that has become increasingly assertive during the last couple of decades. Their vindication, like that of women's, is related to gender. The deliberate self-grouping of homosexual playwrights under the label of Gay theater asserts their radical change of attitude. Self-declared homosexuals, both as artists and as characters in plays, had been absent from world drama until the early seventies when a number of playwrights resolved to tackle the true nature of their problems. Until then homosexual characters had been an excuse for scorn or pity but after the sexual revolution of the sixties, gay characters became flesh and blood individuals, as seen in Harvey Fierstein's *The Torch Song Trilogy* (1983), a groundbreaking bitter tragicomedy about a gay transvestite whose dignity and integrity prevails despite personal distress. Tony Kushner's *Angels in America* (1991) achieved widespread acclaim when it opened on Broadway and is the best known American representative of a type of drama which, as *Bent* (1979) by Martin Sherman did a decade earlier, links homophobia to extremely conservative social and political ideas. *Angels in America*, as well as *Millenium Approaches*, the second part of Kushner's play, has become a kind of affirmation of gay sexual identity, playing to full houses wherever it has been produced.

Now, the question is: where is the theater going in the United States on the brink of the 21<sup>st</sup> century?. As Professor Robert Brustein, artistic director of the American Repertory Theatre, one of the most reputed non-profit avant-garde American companies, draws in *Reimagining American Theater*, the outlook now is very different from what could be expected after World War II. If off-Broadway, pushed by the mercenary interests of uptown producers, had to move off-off-Broadway in the early sixties, at the moment things in New York City have become so tainted by commercialism that most playwrights I have mentioned must look for producers as far from off-off-Broadway as Chicago, Cambridge in Massachusetts, San Francisco or Saint Louis. Broadway is basically concerned with importing hits from the London West End. A play is a curious form of art: it requires production to achieve its artistic goal and it must have an audience to be confronted with what is taking place on the stage. It is not a simple text to be read in solitude, as poetry or fiction are. Theatre is the most social of all arts. And even though some new plays manage to reach the stage, influential critics in general pay little attention to productions opening off-New York no matter how good the

reputation of the company. Some plays have try-outs in regional theatres and are taken to Broadway only if they are successful. An additional problem is that New York audiences are changing. Shepard may be interesting for smaller interested audiences in Chicago or San Francisco while, as it has often happened, his work fails in New York, where the current rage is gigantic productions of imported British musicals like *Cats*, *The Phantom of the Opera* or *Les Misérables*.

The benefit of this broadening of theatrical boundaries is that the group of playwrights I have discussed is, to say the least, working in a very stimulating direction. They share a number of postmodern features – vindication of ethnic and gender rights, search for a separate identity within the framework of white America, formal experiment as regards dramatic language and exposition, a rewriting of history... – all of which show in turn the multiplicity of contemporary American cultures. This is what Mikhail Bakhtin calls *heteroglossia*: the plurality of centrifugal voices and impulses marked by randomness, eruption and unconventional stylistic practices that tend to go against the canon by challenging the dominant culture and its legitimate discursive forms.

Most of these playwrights are aware that their work will not be part of the Western theater canon, precisely because they address their own ethnic or gender groups only in ways they consider adequate. If, “the theatrical life of a people takes on an immense importance, for the determinants of community are frequently couched in a network of images, myths and narratives depicted and purveyed in acts of performance” (Wade, 1997: 3), there are in the works of the playwrights we have analyzed a number of interesting and striking features that disclose the multiplicity of contemporary American experience. On the other hand, the majority of these playwrights show a larger disposition towards didacticism than the previous generation, simply because they are more concerned with minority individuals in an oppressive and dehumanized mass society. If, according to Simon During (Bhaba, 1990: 138), “the idea of nation resides in the ‘battery’ of social and aesthetic forms that define and ‘legitimate’ the polity” it can be perceived in the works of the playwrights we have discussed (and of many others that we have not had the time to mention) a rather different picture of today’s America. When Werner Sollors (1986: 20) wrote that “the 1970s marked the demise of assimilationist hope”, he was predicting the doom of the melting-pot ideology. The materialization of a variety of ideological assumptions arising from ethnic or gender groups as necessary tools to analyze social conditions also shattered the national tradition of the realistic theatre aesthetics that had contrived to the success of O’Neill, Miller and Williams a generation earlier. If their bitter though unified view of the world was not sustainable any longer, Broadway, on its part, was reluctant to continue rendering an increasingly fractured vision of the American dream.

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## ■ Cultura del bienestar y parámetros de irrealidad en los escritores del *New Yorker*: J. D. Salinger, William Maxwell y John Cheever

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Se ha hablado de la *Generación del New Yorker* con cierta reticencia. Con frecuencia la crítica académica ha desestimado su estudio en profundidad por considerar que se trata de una narrativa liviana, encaminada a entretener a lectores de clase media alta que hojean la revista distraídamente después de la jornada laboral, "...*New Yorker* fiction was a fiction of manners, and its purpose, classical from tip to toe, was to instruct as it delighted." (1982, 54). Sin embargo, se trata de un discurso preciso, extremadamente cuidado, cargado de matices, donde el alcance de los cuentos trasciende la expresión escueta de los hechos descritos, y así queda de manifiesto en escritos como "A Perfect Day for Bananafish," de J. D. Salinger, "The Pilgrimage," de William Maxwell, y "The Swimmer", de John Cheever.

En cada uno de los relatos, la realidad cotidiana aparece mediatizada por la particularísima visión de personajes que observan el progreso a distancia, sumergidos en su propio universo interior. El contraste entre ambos mundos, el real y el imaginado, incide en la crisis de los protagonistas, desvinculados de la vida real. El espíritu de Camus y de Sartre visitan los Estados Unidos, y podemos hablar de verdadero existencialismo americano.



Como dice Rof Carballo, “el hombre es un ser de encuentro,” la frustración del individuo imposibilita esa opción al ver reducida su actividad a empresas diminutas y banales, al tener que limitar su iniciativa a los modos y medidas de la sociedad materialista, la llamada *sociedad del bienestar*. Además, el vacío de los personajes recuerda la propia vulnerabilidad de los autores, que aparecen marcados por ciertas carencias de infancia. Ante tal malestar, el viaje de ficción supone una incursión en la intimidad, una azarosa aventura de continua y tenaz búsqueda de identidad. El silencio, la desolación o la sensación de vértigo al borde del suicidio son las distintas opciones de los protagonistas, que mimetizan el fracaso humano en un mundo difícil, a menudo hostil. Aún así, la percepción aparece amortiguada por ese talante *New Yorker* que a menudo se apiada de sus víctimas y *salva* momentáneamente a los personajes mediante una pirueta de la imaginación, la creencia en el milagro de la supervivencia que recuerda la fe de los antiguos pioneros, la épica del pueblo americano. Se añora la sencillez del pasado, el regreso a la inocencia y a la Naturaleza como únicas vías alternativas al progreso. La imposibilidad de desandar el camino de los tiempos envuelve a los protagonistas en singular zozobra o hermetismo. La expresión sucinta, estudiadamente contenida, calmada, subraya la actitud de los personajes y acentúa un mutismo desolador. En mayor o menor medida, dependiendo del autor, se advierten ecos minimalistas en la narración.

En “A Perfect Day for Bananafish”, la realidad contemporánea es la de la moda, el agobio publicitario, los Martinis, el coche viejo de los padres que hay que reparar a un precio desorbitado, el psicoanálisis y la posible visita al siquiatra. Muriel Glass soslaya como puede la agresión diaria con tareas anodinas que entretienen su momento de ocio:

She used the time, though. She read an article in a women's pocket-size magazine, called “Sex Is Fun – or Hell.” She washed her comb and brush. She took the spot out of the skirt of her beige suit. She moved the button on her Saks blouse. She tweezed out two freshly surfaced hairs in her mole. When the operator finally rang her room, she was sitting on the window seat and had almost finished putting lacquer on the nails of her left hand. (1991, 3).

Se trata de una víctima más de los tiempos, definida por su marido como “Miss Spiritual Tramp of 1948” (1991, 5), que mantiene el teléfono a cierta distancia para protegerse cuando la madre le advierte del peligro que corre junto a su marido, un personaje raro y emocionalmente imprevisible.

Muriel y Seymour Glass han viajado hasta la playa. La historia de Seymour es la del joven desencantado, recluido en su mundo, completamente

impermeabilizado del entorno, cuyo único contacto con la realidad consiste en acercarse a la pequeña Sybil Carpenter al borde del mar. La incoherencia de la niña al preguntar, "Did you see more glass?" (1991, 11), remite al mundo privado de la infancia. Sybil intuitivamente reconoce la fragilidad de Seymour Glass. Existe un hilo conductor entre ambos, los dos comparten un universo propio, ajeno al de los adultos, y son igualmente ilógicos en su expresión. A la espontaneidad de la niña, Seymour responde desde su privacidad. Cuando ella le advierte que la almohadilla en la que se apoya necesita más aire, él contesta también de forma incoherente, desde la distancia de su irrealidad, "You're right. It needs more air than I'm willing to admit" (1991, 12), y confunde el color amarillo del bañador de la niña, tomándolo por azul. La actitud de Sybil es la de cualquier niña, caprichosa, egoísta, sencilla y práctica, el alma gemela de la pequeña Phoebe en *The Catcher in the Rye*. Seymour adora su inocencia, como se advierte cuando intuitivamente la abraza por los tobillos. Ambos disfrutan de las mismas sensaciones y comparten la misma lectura, un cuento de niños donde seis tigres corren alrededor de un árbol.

Seymour insiste en que el día es único para pescar un curioso tipo de pez que se hunde en la arena para recoger el alimento, y muere al engordar en exceso y no poder salir del agujero. El símil ejemplifica la actitud del protagonista, una constante búsqueda insatisfecha, que le coloca al borde del suicidio:

They're very ordinary-looking fish when they swim in. But once they get in, they behave like pigs. Why, I've known some bananafish to swim into a bananahole and eat as many as seventy-eight bananas...Naturally, after that they're so fat they can't get out of the hole again. (1991, 16).

Toda la adoración y sensibilidad que Seymour manifiesta con la niña, se convierte en abierta hostilidad y roza la paranoia cuando de vuelta al hotel, ve a una mujer en el ascensor y se siente intimidado al creer que le mira los pies. Su mundo imaginado preside la realidad manipulándola. Se acerca a la inocencia y desconfía del artificioso mundo de los adultos, del peligro que adivina en presencia de una mujer. Una vez en la habitación ve a una niña dormida a su lado, saca la pistola y se suicida. Se ha alejado demasiado de la realidad y la imaginación impone su propia percepción, sus propias normas. También en "Teddy" el viaje conduce al suicidio. La imposibilidad de recuperar la inocencia en los demás ha hecho una mella trágica en su vida.

La actitud de Seymour Glass recuerda la propia aversión de Salinger por la sociedad contemporánea. Desde muy joven observa con desdén los rígidos parámetros educativos, y más tarde, la insensatez del mercado de las publicaciones

(1988, 128). La reclusión del escritor ante el mundo es la respuesta contundente del hombre que persigue la sencillez como única meta.

"The Pilgrimage" de William Maxwell narra el viaje por Francia de Ray y Ellen Ormsby, y la serie de peripecias que atraviesan hasta encontrar el restaurante de una estrella en la guía Michelin, donde sus amigos disfrutaron la mejor comida de su vida. La palabra *peregrinaje*, que da título al relato, acentúa el verdadero dimensionado del viaje, convertido en minúscula aventura. El progreso ha transformado la iniciativa del hombre en ridícula y febril degustación gastronómica. La decepción que Ray siente al comprobar que el lugar carece de encanto, le coloca mentalmente al borde del suicidio. Son evidentes los estragos del paso del tiempo "...mortality and the mutability of his world." (AL, 1995, 67). El mundo del protagonista refleja la banalidad de la vida contemporánea, y como ésta, se desploma al verse desprovisto de adornos:

...Ray looked slowly around the room. The "*élégante salle à manger*" looked like a hotel coffee shop. There weren't even any tablecloths. The walls were painted a dismal shade of off-mustard. His eyes came to rest finally on the stripped brown dado a foot from his face. "It's perfect room to commit suicide in," he said, and reached for the menu. (S, 1995, 52).

Sin embargo, Ellen consigue manipular la realidad de una comida mediocre hasta transformarla en la mejor cena de su vida, cuando baila con su esposo en la calle y juntos comparten el momento mágico de su universo común. Distanciados, continúan observando el lugar desde su privacidad, les parece antiguo, con sentido, un mundo en el que muy pocos necesitan ir al cine para ser felices: "[Ellen]... It's another civilization entirely from anything we're accustomed to. Another world." (S, 1995, 58).

Cuando se van a dormir, la voz imparcial, escueta, sucinta del narrador, describe la realidad que ellos ignoran, al poner de manifiesto la mediocridad del lugar, donde, como en todas partes, un gran número de personas continúan saliendo del cine. El tono reservado, contenido en todo momento, de la narración, utiliza palabras como *procesión*, *peregrinaje* o *maravilla*, que ante la nimiedad del viaje culinario y la vulgaridad de los tiempos, se convierten en verdaderos anacronismos, reminiscencias ajenas de un pasado olvidado. Ray y Ellen Ormsby continúan *dormidos* en un mundo de su invención y probablemente embellecerán el recuerdo del lugar, cuando se lo recomienden a otros matrimonios americanos.

Hay conmiseración hacia las víctimas del progreso, "...world as a cherished home..." (1989, 38), ante esa lucha inusitada por pasárselo bien y ser felices. La vida actual ha convertido la Constitución americana, *...and the pursuit of*

*happiness*, en un soberbio timo. Maxwell recuerda en *Ancestors*, el mundo de sus antepasados, pioneros del Oeste (A, 1995, 41), la casa de Ninth Street en Lincoln (Illinois) abandonada para siempre, asociada al recuerdo de su madre muerta. La expresión reducida al mínimo contiene el sentimiento de lo que calla “power under restraint” (BA, 1995, 71), el silencio, la pena, el vacío, la parálisis total del individuo, que nos remite a “The Trojan Women,” “Over by the River” o “The French Scarecrow,” y también a la prosa de Ann Beattie y Raymond Carver.

“The Swimmer,” de John Cheever, muestra un domingo a finales de verano. Los vecinos del conjunto residencial de Bullet Park retozan junto a la piscina, tras la habitual resaca del sábado. El mundo de matrimonios felices con hijos estupendos, aperitivos, barbacoas y ginebra helada se trastoca para Neddy Merrill cuando éste decide recorrer a nado las piscinas del vecindario para volver a casa. Como en el relato de Maxwell, la gesta se convierte en peregrinación, que Neddy denomina románticamente, Lucinda, por su esposa. Su antigua amante le enfrenta brutalmente a la realidad al espetarle: “Good Christ. Will you ever grow up?” (1965, 66).

La empresa que al principio comienza como divertimento, en seguida se convierte en travesía cargada de obstáculos. El narrador manipula el tiempo real y las características del escenario, introduciendo al lector sin previo aviso en el mundo interior del héroe. Pronto se advierten síntomas de que Neddy se encuentra muy alejado de la sociedad, cercado en su aislamiento, “...Ned felt a passing affection for the scene, a tenderness for the gathering, as if it was something he might touch” (1965, 57). Ha transgredido las normas cívicas más elementales al cruzar la calle en bañador, se ha saltado las reglas de la piscina pública, y paralelamente la condescendencia y amabilidad de los vecinos se torna en pesadilla.

Se acerca una tormenta, el cielo se oscurece, las hojas de los árboles advierten de un otoño precoz y hay indicios de abandono en muchas de las casas del vecindario, donde hasta hace un rato sólo había vida. Neddy se da cuenta de que ha viajado demasiado lejos y ya no puede volver atrás, “In the space of an hour, more or less, he had covered a distance that made his return impossible” (1965, 61). Toda la narración participa del mundo imaginado del héroe, que la lógica habitual impide reconocer:

The worst of it was the cold in his bones and the feeling that he might never be warm again. Leaves were falling down around him and he smelled woodsmoke on the wind. Who would be burning wood at this time of year? (1965, 63).

El matrimonio Halloran actúa como oráculo, al anunciarle que su familia le ha abandonado. Ya no queda rastro del tiempo real, y su viaje parece conducirle inexorablemente al invierno, donde le aguarda la desolación de su casa vacía.

Existe conmiseración hacia el hombre, que revestido de la ingenuidad de la infancia, quiere emprender la aventura singular. El recinto cerrado de los conjuntos residenciales ha reducido su empresa al Bautismo de las aguas cloradas de las piscinas y a los vasos de ginebra que ingiere durante el viaje. La artificiosidad de los líquidos parece ser el denotante de su singular visión del mundo. La vida, que parecía tan natural, se llena de dificultades, y al ostracismo social se une la patética visión de ser humano, cuando el protagonista, al querer cruzar la carretera en bañador, se ve sacudido por la oleada de desperdicios que muchos desaprensivos arrojan desde los coches. El viaje del nadador conduce a una soledad brutal. Cheever conocía idéntico sentimiento y en numerosas ocasiones participó del silencio del naufrago. Fue un hijo no deseado, se vio privado del hogar familiar en los tiempos difíciles de la Depresión, en la adolescencia le echaron del colegio, y toda su vida se vio condicionada por sentimientos de culpa de índole familiar, religiosa y sexual, que le aislaban de la sociedad, a la que íntimamente quería pertenecer y agradar (1985, 185). La marginalidad y el silencio se perciben también abiertamente en "The Scarlet Moving Van" y en la novela *Bullet Park*, ambos escritos ratifican la aterradora conclusión del nadador.

Salinger con la inmediatez de un escenario casi teatral, Maxwell desde la distancia cuidadosamente calibrada de su discurso elegante y preciso, Cheever con su inmediata incursión en las movedizas arenas de la imaginación, muestran ejemplos de incalculable valor narrativo. Se trata del retrato fidedigno de la vida real, de personajes que, como el lector medio, no consiguen saltar la barrera de sus limitaciones. Protagonistas de cuentos donde, a pesar del esfuerzo, la lucha por la identidad queda diluida en silencio, retraimiento, añoranza del pasado, apego a la tradición o muerte. Y aunque Neddy Merrill golpea insistentemente *la casa* de su desolación, la empresa se convierte en praxis imposible, desprovista de verdadera energía renovadora. Pueden *construir*, pero no *habitar* en el sentido *heideggeriano* del término, de crear vínculos. La tragedia de la sociedad del bienestar queda de manifiesto en esta prosa plena de recursos, que ocupa ya un lugar significativo dentro de las Letras Americanas.

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## ■ “There Is More to Be Told”: El mito postmoderno en *The Bingo Palace* de Louise Erdrich

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La novela *The Bingo Palace* (1994) de Louise Erdrich continúa con la saga de personajes nativos Chippewas de su novela más aclamada *The Love Medicine* (1984). El viaje hacia la reserva Chippewa en la frontera entre North Dakota y Minnesota nos aproxima a las vidas interconectadas de nativo americanos dentro de la reserva. Estas vidas, en realidad, podrían transcurrir en cualquier ciudad pequeña de Estados Unidos. La atmósfera que envuelve la narrativa de Erdrich, sin embargo, ha venido a ser considerada como mágica por la influencia de creencias y costumbres ancestrales tribales que contrastan con la sociedad y los valores culturales occidentales. La novela se debate entre ese choque de valores culturales sin una opción clara entre uno u otro. La dimensión social y política constituye un tema secundario frente a la realidad humana de sus personajes. En *The Bingo Palace*, por ejemplo, las diversas voces narrativas que componen la novela participan tanto de aspiraciones materiales como espirituales incluso a veces compartidas por los mismos personajes. Con todo, predomina la tendencia por parte de Erdrich de inclinarse hacia la narrativa lírica y es en ella donde encontramos las páginas más sugestivas.

El lirismo en *The Bingo Palace*, al igual que en otras novelas de L. Erdrich, se traduce en el entorno mítico de su narrativa. En realidad, la aproximación mítica

a la novela nativo americana es casi inevitable. Lo indio siempre está envuelto de un velo mítico difícil de evitar. Desde el conocido mito de la frontera en el que el indio constituía el otro cuya asimilación suponía el crecimiento de un país, hasta la asimilación de lo salvaje encarnado en el *cowboy*. De hecho, tendemos a identificar el mito como algo o alguien más primitivo. Para R. Slotkin (1986, 70) la mitología alude al conjunto de narrativas tradicionales que ejemplifica la ideología. Los mitos son historias, que parten de la historia, que han adquirido, a través del uso de muchas generaciones, una función simbólica central a la cultura de la sociedad que las produce. En esta línea, Barthes enfatiza la función simplificadora del mito (1957, 143). El mito elimina la complejidad de los actos humanos reduciéndolos a esencias. En la mitología del indio norteamericano existen pocos papeles, el de agresor, víctima y vengador y tampoco existen muchas opciones morales. Por ejemplo, dentro del juego entre indios y *cowboys*, la decisión parece clara, a *man's got to do what a man's got to do* (Slotkin 1986, 73). Este procedimiento tautológico parte de la autoridad del mito y, al rechazar cualquier intento de definición o análisis verbal, crea un mundo estático y sin vida. Esta es una de las características negativas del mito conservador de acuerdo con Barthes (1957, 152).

Consciente de los mitos, *The Bingo Palace* ofrece una multiplicidad de perspectivas que juegan con cualquier concepto monolítico de mito. La novela contiene muchos puntos de vista distintos, cada capítulo nos aproxima a una voz y cada una de ellas es una perspectiva de la vida en la reserva. Lipsha Morrissey, el personaje principal, nos aproxima desde dentro al fundamento de la vida comunitaria de la reserva, es decir, la supervivencia: "We're born heavier, but scales don't weigh us. From day one, we're loaded down. History, personal politics, tangled bloodlines. We're too preoccupied with setting things right around us to get rich" (1995, 17).

En el mito, *lo Otro* constituye un elemento exótico y se convierte en puro objeto, en espectáculo, además de privar al objeto de su historia. En *The Bingo Palace*, Lipsha aparece definido negativamente y, al rechazar todo tipo de definición, se evita su objetivización como ser exótico, "... there was no place the boy could fit. He was not a tribal council honcho,... not one of us... He was not the Chippewa with rings pierced in her nose... He was none of these..." (9-10). A su vez, Lipsha define la comunidad por su diferencia. Lipsha no encaja en la comunidad, aunque su función de narrador principal sugiere su importancia para el futuro de la comunidad.

Si por un lado Lipsha no responde al encasillamiento de indio/víctima, Lyman Lamartine rompe con este mito, puesto que representa al indio con valores occidentales. Lyman es propietario de un bingo y se identifica con la idea de

progreso y de avance económico para la reserva Chippewa. Sus ambiciones dejan de ser exclusivamente personales para aportar riqueza y bienestar a la comunidad. No obstante, la aspiración de Lyman choca con el mito ancestral que supone la tierra para la comunidad Chippewa. Este mito hace su aparición con la imagen de una de las figuras matriarcales en la novela, Fleur Pillager: "... Land is the only thing that lasts life to life. Money burns like tinder, flows off like water, and as for the government's promises, the wind is steadier" (148).

El bingo constituye un elemento central en la novela, y Lyman como propietario confía en su aportación a la comunidad. Lipsha, no tan convencido, lo utiliza para conseguir un trabajo que pueda ganar, al menos temporalmente, el amor de Shawnee Ray. De cualquier forma, el bingo conmueve los valores tradicionales de la reserva. El dinero que puede aportar no tiene raíces, y aunque no sería del todo correcto oponer los valores del pasado al bingo, sus ganancias no están basadas "on solid ground" (221). Lipsha, después de trabajar en el bingo, reconoce que el dinero no tiene un gran valor: "Money gets money, but little else, nothing sensible to look at or touch or feel in yourself down to your bones" (221). De acuerdo con Lipsha, para mantener la comunidad, el dinero no es suficiente y la tierra puede ser una obstinación de perpetuar la tradición. Lo más importante sería mantenerse vivo: "You have to stay alive to keep your tradition alive and working" (221).

El mito en *The Bingo Palace* tiene como objetivo la construcción de la cultura como una respuesta dinámica a la amenaza cultural occidental y también responde a un sentido más amplio de la realidad. No obstante, gran parte de la crítica feminista norteamericana atribuye el reciente crecimiento de temas míticos en la literatura de mujeres a ambivalencia política o escapismo. De esta forma se ha llegado a sugerir que el interés por el mito y la espiritualidad desemboca a menudo en *una mistificación de la feminidad y en una celebración abierta de la irracionalidad*, una vuelta *hacia atrás y hacia dentro* para escapar de la historia patriarcal de la cual las mujeres han permanecido excluidas (Smith 1997, 5).

Por otra parte, considerar el uso del mito como escapista llevaría a pensar que el punto de vista empírico es el verdaderamente correcto y *normal*. El antídoto del pensamiento mítico quizá no se encuentre en la más estricta racionalidad sino en la reescritura del mito. Y esta revisión se deriva de la comprensión de una serie de preguntas: ¿cuál es el origen de las reglas del juego en la historia?, ¿qué relaciones humanas y sociales esconden o distorsionan esas reglas?, y ¿qué consecuencias históricas se han derivado de ese juego? (Slotkin 1986, 73).

En la narrativa de Erdrich, los personajes son el resultado, a través del juego de la desmitificación, de una transformación hacia creaciones humanas.

Lyman, como propietario del bingo, debería sentirse satisfecho por contribuir al desarrollo económico de la reserva Chippewa. Sin embargo, él no está completamente convencido de que su única función sea tan sólo ganar dinero. Su personalidad, aparentemente simple, alberga también una cierta dosis de misterio: "There is a secret in his face that only someone who formerly possessed the touch can see. A secret" (103). Por otra parte, Lipsha, que parece responder al prototipo de indio/víctima, se desmarca del destino que parece perseguir su comunidad y que no es precisamente el éxito, "We are not programmed by it" (102), y se afirma definiéndose como una persona con suerte.

Este juego que rompe con cualquier modelo mítico tiene su origen a su vez en el arquetipo del *trickster*. De acuerdo con críticos como Alan Velie, Jeanne R. Smith o Gerald Vizenor, el arquetipo definido por C. Jung como un "ser cósmico y primitivo de naturaleza divina y animal" (Vizenor 1989, 205) se ha convertido en un elemento cómico y liberador en la narrativa nativoamericana. Para G. Vizenor, "Trickster is a healer in language games, chance and postmodern imagination; the trickster, as a semiotic sign, *denies presence and completion*, that romantic *vital essence* in tribal representations..." (192). Por lo tanto, si la narrativa nativa se había reducido con el estructuralismo a una colección de artefactos culturales consumibles, la visión postmoderna libera la imaginación y suscita una visión cómica del mundo (Vizenor 1989, 6).

En *The Bingo Palace*, la misión liberadora del papel de trickster es compartida por Lipsha y su tío Lyman. Sus visiones casi opuestas con respecto al mundo y al futuro de la comunidad constituyen un tema central en la novela. El argumento gira en torno al triángulo formado por ellos y Shawnee, la mujer que aman y, de forma paralela, en la lucha entre el tradicional apego a la tierra y su venta para el proyecto de un casino. No obstante, la relación entre Lipsha y Lyman no está marcada por la rivalidad. Al igual que su herencia nativa, esa relación no se puede clasificar en términos de amor/odio o celos/admiración. Detrás de cada posible tensión late la importancia de mantener la comunidad. En este sentido, por ejemplo, el egoísmo de Lyman se aprecia como algo positivo puesto que está estrechamente unido a su defensa de la comunidad y es capaz de crear beneficios reales en forma de dinero o empleos. Con todo, se deja llevar por la avaricia cuando en una convención de juego en Las Vegas, Lyman pierde la pipa de la paz de su padre.

La pipa de la paz es sagrada para la comunidad. Todo se puede poner en venta, menos este símbolo tan importante para su historia. Fue la pipa que se fumó cuando se llegó a un acuerdo histórico con el gobierno de Estados Unidos. Por este motivo, es una pipa que para algunos simboliza el error y que, para otros, debe de ser bendecida de nuevo. En cualquier caso, su relevancia para la comunidad no se pone en duda. Para Lipsha su importancia es doble: "It is a kind

of public relations pipe, yet with historical weight. Personal too" (39). Lipsha accede a entregar la pipa a Lyman cuando éste se da cuenta del prestigio que otorga su posesión. Y, principalmente, porque piensa que Lyman puede cambiar la pipa por Shawnee Ray. Si bien Lyman se deja llevar por la avaricia al desear y vender la pipa por dinero, Lipsha piensa que la puede cambiar por Shawnee. Paradójicamente, Lyman le recuerda que no se trata de un objeto: "Shawnee Ray doesn't belong to me, Lipsha" (87).

En la tradición literaria nativa, los elementos sagrados construyen un muro de resistencia frente a la cultura dominante. El promover la consciencia de la identidad tribal, las tradiciones espirituales y la conexión con la tierra y sus habitantes, ha sido una fuente de autenticidad cultural y existencial al igual que una mina de temas, mitos y símbolos para la literatura (Allen 1986, 53). La narrativa de Erdrich utiliza elementos tribales tan sólo de forma parcial e indirecta. La multiplicidad de perspectivas que exhiben sus personajes *trickster*, así como la ruptura con los modelos de género tradicionales, separan la narrativa de Erdrich de la cultura nativa y occidental. De acuerdo con P. Allen (1986, 82), los rituales de las mujeres en las narrativas tribales se centran en el nacimiento, muerte, alimentos, hogar, medicinas, en suma, todo lo que asegura el mantenimiento de la vida a largo plazo. Por otro lado, los rituales de los hombres tienen que ver con el riesgo, la muerte y la transformación, es decir, aquello que ayuda a regular y controlar el cambio.

La novela interrumpe el ritual del género y el efecto que produce es el de una irresolución total. El juego del bingo y el amor entre Lipsha y Shawnee son elementos similares que conducen a esa indefinición. Para C. Belsey (1994, 78-9), "Love and gambling are compulsive, unpredictable, thrilling, dangerous. What is at stake is a loss". Lipsha persigue a Shawnee desde el principio de la novela y se comporta como un amante postmoderno, es decir, escéptico e idealizador a la vez, y, por consiguiente inquieto, insatisfecho, desplazado y, finalmente, solitario (Belsey 1994, 91). Aunque Lipsha reconoce que su relación con Shawnee es improbable, la persigue porque ella representa para él "the best of our past, our present, our hope of a future" (13). Shawnee también es la comunidad y esa medicina del amor que puede salvarla. Por otro lado, para Lipsha, el esfuerzo por conseguir el amor es inversamente proporcional a su consecución: "Yet, the more I jump toward love the faster it flees. The more furious I throw my mental life into its capture, the more elusive it becomes, an animal that learns avoiding a trap" (97).

Si para Lipsha el amor es la mejor medicina, para Shawnee lo más importante es ir a la universidad. Es ella la que tiene un objetivo más claro. Y, aunque se enamora de Lipsha, decide renunciar a él. Finalmente deja también a Lyman porque para Shawnee, "To need men, to love men, was a great nuisance

and misery... Women made more sense, had their priorities in place..." (117). Siguiendo con el juego continuo que propone Erdrich, la novela termina con el deseo de Shawnee hacia Lipsha y con la incertidumbre del misterio.

A través de la indeterminación, Erdrich explora una narrativa de lo que G. Anzaldúa (1987, ix) denomina como literatura de frontera, del margen, es decir, una narrativa que mantiene intactas las identidades múltiples y cambiantes y la integridad. Erdrich quizá no establezca una ruptura radical con los grandes mitos que rodean lo tribal. Por el contrario, alude en su narrativa a lo que A. Ostriker (1981, 317) denomina como la otra cara del mito, es decir, ese material esencialmente íntimo, el tejido de los sueños, el deseo prohibido, la motivación inexplicable; en suma, todo lo que vive en la psique que para la conciencia racional es irreal, loco o abominable.

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## ■ A Last Voyage through American Culture: When Time Re-Runs in Vonnegut's Fiction

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In 1969 writer Ronald Sukenick, in his novella *Death of the Novel*, sustained that the time had come for a *post-realism* because all "absolutes had become absolutely problematic." At the time, the realist mimetic and the self-referential were again technical options that critics utilized in order to divide creative writers into two apparently irreconcilable factions, realists and metafictionalists. Clearly Sukenick was one among that group of US authors that frequently incorporated in their writings a large number of overt metafictional strategies that soon won them the qualification of *postmodern*. Other writers – frequently also literary critics and university professors – such as John Barth, Raymond Federman, William Gass or Gilbert Sorrentino also belonged to this group that, for a few years, appeared to be the typical and topical representative of the postmodern ethos,<sup>1</sup> with terms such as "surfiction," "metafiction," or "post-realism" as technical banners that expressed that condition. However, even if not yet nominated to become a

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<sup>1</sup> To such a point "postmodern" and "experimental" became interchangeable that even in the 1990s there are still some critics that suggest that only radical metafictional authors can be labeled as postmodernists. See, for instance, Linda Hutcheon 1991.



member of the postmodern *élite*, by 1969 Vonnegut had already written some very interesting “post-realist” fiction, such as his novel *The Sirens of Titan*. By that time he had also finished, at last, his remarkable novel about the destruction of Dresden: *Slaughterhouse-5*.

Leaving aside the issue of metafictional strategies, readers interested in the contemporary US novel can also argue that together with Thomas Pynchon, Kurt Vonnegut is one of the first American novelists to revise both American culture and the realist post-war novel in the light of the second scientific revolution of modern times. It is a well-known fact that he did not become a famous writer at once. On the contrary, many years had to pass till he was acclaimed as one of the greatest authors of contemporary America, something that only happened after the favorable critical and popular reception of *Slaughterhouse-5* in 1969, a novel that, as Vonnegut confesses in its first pages, he had been trying to write for over 20 years.

If anything seems quite clear in his literary work, it is the fact that he lived some experiences that were to favor his peculiar understanding of both fiction and US life in the last sixty years of the twentieth century. Born on November 11, in the modernist *magic* year of 1922, in Indianapolis, the son of a wealthy architect. His childhood, as he has sparingly commented, was happily spent within his very large family although the effects of the Great Depression dramatically changed his so far upper-class upbringing. And fortunately so, one may think, because his family's financial problems were likely to produce a deep influence in the political and social views the future writer was going to defend in his books.

Still in the 1950s, at the beginning of his career as an author, Vonnegut writes a large number of short stories that deal with the representation of post-war US middle-class and with the changes brought about by the new consumer's society: from the traditional large family Americans have now moved into a new type of family relation based on a nuclear unit of three or four members who are frequently forced to be on the move, in search for better job opportunities. But the analysis of manners in the USA will take soon the form of the disguised science-fiction ironic parable, the effective weapon of a remarkable analyst of American problems.

During his youth Vonnegut had spent three years at Cornell, mostly taking courses on chemistry and biology, a university education that he complemented, after the war, by enrolling at the University of Chicago's graduate program in anthropology where, between 1945 to 1947, he drafted and had rejected three theses. In 1951 he published *Player Piano*, a bitter dystopia about the replacement of human beings by machines that did not bring him much money till it was later released as a pulp-paperback and had its title changed to *Utopia-14*. In this book

his analysis of post-war life in the USA makes him anticipate that unemployment is soon going to be one of the biggest problems of post-industrial societies. In 1959 he publishes, in paperback form, a remarkable second novel, *The Sirens of Titan*, a book with which Vonnegut is consciously departing from the world of "serious writing." With the help of its cover (featuring semi-nude females), this novel relocated him as a science-fiction writer. His relocation in the canon literally creates Vonnegut's metafictional *alter ego* in the invented character of author Kilgore Trout, a figure that features in many of his novels up to date and that seems to impersonate Vonnegut's own fears to be a second-rate pulp-fiction writer for the rest of his life.<sup>2</sup> More novels followed in this ironic but socially committed tradition, including the remarkable *Mother Night* (1961), and in all of them readers could perceive the writer's new humanist stance and his often satiric comments about post-war American life and manners. But it is not till he finally completes *Slaughterhouse-5* in 1969 that he is recognized as a *serious* top writer and social analyst. Curiously enough, Vonnegut's entrance in the literary canon also coincides with the end of a period that has been strongly connected to the affluence of American post-war economy (Temperley & Bradbury, 302-21). By 1969 affluence and political conservatism are giving way to a postmodern ethos characterized by freedom, experimentation and technical saturation, and Kurt Vonnegut clearly fits into the new spirit of the times.

*Slaughterhouse-5* represents the beginning of the writer's aura as an experimentalist despite the fact that he had already introduced non-mimetic techniques and topics in his earlier fiction. But if anything was remarkable at the time of publication of the novel, it was the careful combination of the writer's scientific beliefs with his deployment of metafictional strategies in order to metaphorize those beliefs. The novel, Vonnegut seemed to think, could not be a simple depiction of the way in which human senses perceive reality. Realism – he seemed to agree with Sukenick or Barth here – was dead and the writer tried to provide the novel with new formulas for its replenishment. Together with his direct report, in the introductory chapter of *Slaughterhouse-5*, of the reasons why he decided to write a book about the destruction of Dresden, his plain style, easy-to-follow syntax, and the obvious defamiliarization of topics and events, became some of the main ingredients that explain the novel's success. If *The Sirens of Titan* had already meant the author's literary assimilation of quantum physics,<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Or such is the interpretation provided by Vonnegut's most eminent critic and biographer, Jerome Klinkowitz (1982).

<sup>3</sup> With the funny occurrence, among others, of having Rumfoord and his dog traveling in the space-time continuum as if they had actually become a wave/particle entity.

*Slaughterhouse-5* meant the metaphorization of space-time traveling. Furthermore, this Einsteinian notion was also accompanied by reports on historical events such as the destruction of Dresden itself, a fact that allows me to qualify Vonnegut's book also as a historiographic metafiction artifact, a notion typical of the postmodern ethos and that, as many critical readers know, Linda Hutcheon uses to refer to those novels that "are both intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lay claim to historical events and personages" (*A Poetics*, 5). Eventually this type of self-conscious but historical fiction discovers for its readers one of the most controversial arguments that can also be found in Derridean and Lacanian criticism: we are trapped in language and all knowledge is always mediated by human interpretation. By showing his hand in this new type of historiographic fiction, Vonnegut is then inducing his readers to think about the artificiality existing in any textual construct, be it *fictional* novel or *factual* historical report: both types of discourse now appear to have the same epistemological status and therefore belong into the same ontology, a new ontology that, as contemporary critics ceaselessly repeat (Smyth 1991, Hite 1991, Newton 1997: chapter XIII), is qualified by uncertainty and indeterminacy. Our interpretations of life are no longer trapped in a set of eternal or universal truths but simply and merely in the individual interpretation of the writer, be it a novelist or an historian. Correspondingly, historiographic-metafictional writers also suggest in their works that their interpretation of reality can be as valid as that of historians, but creative literature appears to be even the more honest because the metafictional novelist does not disguise his or her story as if it were a truthful report.

In this way, fact and fiction, remembrances and conscious invention go together in Vonnegut's celebrated novel to make readers think about the concept of historical truth: for many years the firebombing of Dresden itself had been erased from historical books and official documents, as the narrator abundantly points out while at the same time insisting on the direct report of his own persona, a witness of the destruction.

On the other hand, *Slaughterhouse-5* is also the product of a wise authorial way to deal with defamiliarization: Vonnegut connects this literary device to the feeling of the Absurd, an aspect typical of European existential thinking in the 1950s and 1960s. Readers of his famous novel may easily realize that the novelist presents very tragic events – he is mostly dealing with death and war – wrapped with a simple, plain, even irreverent style: the result is a defamiliarizing subversion of the seriousness with which Western society has traditionally treated death and human suffering. No wonder then that critics soon catalogued Vonnegut's novel as "black humor," a label that can be easily associated with the more traditional

definition of the *burlesque*.<sup>4</sup> *Slaughterhouse-5* also seemed to owe part of its character to the European feeling of the absurdity of existence, that well-known artistic tendency that, following the Second World War, came as a result of the sense of fragmentation and destruction in combination with the pessimistic views that modernism also brought about.

Interestingly enough, if we go to John Russell Taylor's definition of the Absurd in the *Penguin Dictionary of Theatre*, we are bound to find a definition that could be partly applied to Vonnegut's famous novel:

*Absurd, Theatre of.* Term applied to a group of dramatists in the 1950s who did not regard themselves as a school but who all seemed to share certain attitudes towards the predicament of man [*sic*] in the universe: essentially those summarized by Albert Camus in his essay *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942). This diagnoses humanity's plight as purposelessness in an existence out of harmony with its surroundings (absurd literally means out of harmony). Awareness of this lack of purpose in all we do [...] produces a state of metaphysical anguish which is the central theme in the writers in the Theatre of the Absurd... [In this Theatre] the ideas are allowed to shape the form as well as the content: all semblance of logical construction, of the rational linking of idea with idea in an intellectually viable argument, is abandoned, and instead the irrationality of experience is transferred to the stage... (cited by Hinchcliffe, 1).

In *Slaughterhouse-5* the ideas of existential absurdity that "are allowed to shape the form as well as the content" are reflected in a variety of strategies that can be listed as follows: the achronic presentation of the story (with a line of events frequently interrupted by the narrative voice), the metaphORIZATION of relativity and quantum theories in Billy Pilgrims's time traveling, the *mise-en-abyme* type of fiction written by the Tralfamadorians<sup>5</sup> and their satirical secondary

<sup>4</sup> In his little book *The Burlesque* John D. Jump provides readers with Richmond P. Bond's definition of the term in his *English Burlesque Poetry 1700-1750*: "Burlesque consists in the use or imitation of serious matter or manner, made amusing by the creation of an incongruity between style and subject" (3). Following this notion, Jump redefines the burlesque and comments about different tendencies within the genre: *High Burlesque*, he contends, characterizes an unimportant or silly subject that is presented in an elevated style; on the contrary, *Low Burlesque* shows an elevated subject presented in a comical or very plain style. Vonnegut's novel obviously belongs into this second group, despite the fact that we are not dealing with eighteenth-century poetry here: readers would agree, however, that there are moments in which Vonnegut's satire is not very distant from the type of criticism elaborated by Dryden or Pope.

<sup>5</sup> The reading of the following extract from *Slaughterhouse-5*, often quoted by Vonnegut's critics, is a clear example that the writer was in fact referring to the avant-garde type of novel

world, the repetition of linguistic tags that suggest the vicious and repetitive character of language ("so it goes"), or the announcement at the introduction of the novel of the words and ways in which the story itself begins and ends. All these devices created a new type of experimental fiction, paradoxically absurd but very readable and entertaining at the same time, that the writer kept on using in his later fiction, gradually dropping some of these *ingredients* and replacing them with new ones. More recently, by the end of the 1980s, Vonnegut published two novels characterized by surprisingly different existential tones: a certain optimism present in *Bluebeard* (1987) about the world of American abstract expressionism gave way to the tense but also first-person narrative of *Hocus Pocus* (1990), where the pessimism of the author becomes again more than evident. The publication in 1997 of what he affirms to be his last novel, *Timequake*, does not seem to clearly solve the author's existential plight but offers an interesting technical and cultural contrast with his celebrated *Slaughterhouse-5*: almost thirty years later Vonnegut is still the experimental and absurdist critic who, however, has been able to somehow modify techniques and beliefs in his science-bound ideology.

On November 15 1995 I was lucky enough to interview the writer in his Manhattan residence. Little did I know then that almost exactly one year later, on November 12 1996, Vonnegut would have concluded the writing of this, his last novel. In the interview (Collado 1996) I simply assumed that he was still working on *Timequake* and that the book was giving him some problems, something that in any case happens to many a good writer. He said then that he was attempting to create a novel where he could represent life in its complexity and mentioned, as exemplary metaphor of his attempt, the enormous picture, with 5219 people depicted on it, that Karabekian creates in *Bluebeard*. When I entered his house and saw that he was coming down the staircase to meet me I should have suspected that, up till that very moment, he had been working on his last book in the upper floor. Such assumption becomes clear now when I check his words in the interview with some of the themes he develops in *Timequake*. The love and the pride he took in his brother Bernard, his interest in the Law of Parsimony, his insistence that life is mostly time and luck, the lack of validity of Darwinian theory, and above all the belief that people are embarrassed with life were all aspects that

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he himself was actually attempting in his book: "The Trafalmadorian books were laid out – in brief clumps of symbols separated by stars [...] 'each clump of symbols is a brief, urgent message – describing a situation, a scene. We Trafalmadorians read them all at once, not one after the other. There isn't any particular relationship between all the messages, except that the author has chosen them carefully, so that, when seen all at once, they produce an image of life that is beautiful and surprising and deep. There is no beginning, no middle, no end, no suspense, no moral, no causes, no effects'." (62-63).

finally appeared printed in his novel and which anticipated the literary failure of Vonnegut's last enterprise: a failure because the author could not write his projected novel about the complexity of life but also his final success because *Timequake* ends up being a book where chaos theory approximates its author to an epiphanic revelation that he finally translates as "human awareness" or the condition of our mortality.

If *Timequake* is not the novel that finally depicts life as a complex whole, in any case the book represents one more turn of the screw in its author's literary and metafictional path: the novel ends up being a novel, *Timequake Two*, about the novel Vonnegut wanted to write and which he baptizes as *Timequake One*. The main premise of the first version is, as the author explains in the Prologue of the book, that there was

a timequake, a sudden glitch in the space-time continuum, [that] made everybody and everything do exactly what they'd done during a past decade, for good or ill, a second time [...] There was absolutely nothing you could say during the rerun, if you hadn't said it the first time through the decade. You couldn't even save your own life or that of a loved one, if you had failed to do that the first time through (xii).

Following this premise, Vonnegut plans the fictional timequake for February 13th, 2001,<sup>6</sup> when the space-time continuum will zap back to February 17th, 1991. The hero in the very few events he actually describes of this story is his literary alter ego Kilgore Trout, the old science fiction writer, now a bum, who – as his creator metaphorically does – dies at the end of the book. If we are to believe in his own words, literature is also over for Kurt Vonnegut. The real master however *dies* for literature in a double explosion of witticism: on the one hand, attentive readers will discover that *Timequake* is a book mostly about the author's rerun of his own life and American culture, it is his particular "timequake" in which he abundantly remembers many events of his past life and even imagines a future clam-bake party in which he is himself in the company of Kilmore Trout and of other people who remind him of old departed relatives and dear friends. Many emotional pages of the book are also dedicated to persons that were important in the writer's life, such as his sister Allie or his older brother Bernie who actually died of cancer when Vonnegut had finished the book, an event that motivated his writing of an Epilogue that finishes with the word "language." No wonder, one may think, that

<sup>6</sup> Readers may also realize the existence of an autobiographical pattern here: Dresden was firebombed on February 13th, 1945.



the book finishes with this word, being this after all a textual construct, a book about a book conceived by a master of metafictional strategies. But, on the other hand, *Timequake* is also an example of the interest the writer takes in chaos theory and its ultimate binary enigma: is life ruled by fate or played in freedom? are our lives marked by design or by chaos?

The motif of the timequake or re-run obviously suggests the rule of fate and universal design, an authorial choice that, however, is contradicted by many references to the interaction of time and luck in human experience. One of the most evident examples of the mysterious ways in which life evolves is provided by the unlucky composer Zoltan Pepper: he becomes paralyzed from the waist down when his wife accidentally lands on him in the swimming pool, an event that he will have to experience again during the re-run (32). At the precise moment the re-run finishes he is ringing the bell of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, where his wife works, and he is run over by a driverless fire truck: he is again in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Time and luck replace old Darwinian determinism in the pages of *Timequake*. Sharing the scientific spirit of the turn of this century, Vonnegut has decidedly moved into chaos theory to support his views on human stupidity. If there is any hidden pattern in random behavior and in complex systems,<sup>7</sup> we humans still have to find it, and story telling may become again Vonnegut's conscious contribution to provide his readers with the sense of a contemporary living that, however, he sometimes tries to deny. Although he may insist that humans are embarrassed by life and that we do not care for the planet's health, in his last book the metaphorization of chaotic elements is accompanied by the writer's old relish in the paradox of literary creation: "every book is a practical joke," he told me in 1995, "nothing in it is really happening, you can make somebody cry, or laugh [and Vonnegut laughed!], or be surprised, but absolutely nothing is going on! As you read, nothing is really happening, yet we writers found out that we can make you think that something is happening" (Collado, 482). And, in that sense, nothing *really* happens in *Timequake*: the book is a collection of remembrances, of observations, and of a few fictional events that frequently are none other than the metafictional summaries of non-existent short-stories written by the imaginary Kilgore Trout. But out of his private re-run Vonnegut still wishes for a meaning of life. Trout ends the novel by affirming, close to his death, that the Universe – he now realizes – is not only a conglomerate of the already old postulates defended by Einstein, energy, matter and time, but that it has a new

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<sup>7</sup> A clear and very entertaining explanation of the principles of chaotics may be found in Prigogine and Stengers, 1985.



quality: human awareness, "which exists only because there are human beings." "I have thought of a better word than *awareness*," he finally says. "Let us call it *soul*" (213-214). However, for the ones who might think that Vonnegut has finally turned into a sentimental "old fart" (as he has called himself more than once), the final Epilogue he writes for the book, after the death of Bernard Vonnegut in April 1997, appears as one more instance of warning for people fond of romanticizing or mythologizing life by means of scientific discourse. Einstein also said, Vonnegut reminds us, that "Physical concepts are free creations of the human mind, and are not [...] uniquely determined by the external world." The famous scientist's words were going to be repeated and rephrased in later decades by many poststructuralist critics, but they also became the ultimate and paradoxical call of humane attention in the writings of metafictional creators who, like Vonnegut, try to capture intimations of immortality through their literary creations even if realizing that, at the end, all they can offer is nothing but *language*. Or, as Kurt Vonnegut, the old magician of the American novel, finally puts it:

"A woman who knew Bernie for only the last ten days of his life, in the hospice at St. Peter's Hospital in Albany, described his manners while dying as "courtly" and "elegant." What a brother!  
What a language."

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## Two Intellectuals on Tour of Duty: The Vietnam Memoirs of Mary McCarthy and Susan Sontag

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Only by the late 1960s did mainstream media target the US government's rhetoric about the Vietnam War. But the complacent, conformist, or dubious views of informers and the body politic impelled a number of artists, writers, and dissident informers to offer a different viewpoint on the war. Among them, Mary McCarthy and Susan Sontag made the decision to visit the other side and put their experiences down into their writings. McCarthy's essays collected in *The Seventeenth Degree* and Sontag's "Trip to Hanoi" became not simple travel memorabilia, but journeys about their maturity as intellectuals and their despair as citizens who lived under a political system that cooped protest and even merchandized it – as the very books they wrote prove.

Up to the Tonkin Gulf Resolution of 1964, the body politic was unanimously affected by the so-called "Munich Syndrome," regardless of the position of each politician in any other issue. Genuine liberals used to believe that freedom was at stake in that remote region of the Third World. Thence McCarthy's perplexity at the apparently submissive attitude of reputed liberals of the period. She expresses her misgivings at "Kennedy intellectuals" like Arthur Schlesinger Jr, or members of the administration like vice-president Hubert Humphrey and advisor George Ball. Late in the decade both men publicized their dissatisfaction

with the way Johnson had run the US policy in Southeast Asia. For McCarthy, they had betrayed the ideals of freedom and justice, "such people, whatever I thought of them [...] were coterminous with my life, even if only for a little piece of the boundary" ("How it Went," p. 7). McCarthy reflects on the ideological limitations of individuals within the Establishment who had become vocal against the war. Maybe Senator William Fulbright displayed the most recalcitrant rhetoric against the US intervention. Although she does not break his discourse down deeply enough to find out his racist undertones, she dismisses Fulbright's hearings, held in 1966, as an example of consensus politics in action. She accurately places him along with Schlesinger and John Galbraith as Cold War liberals: "none of these people opposes the war. Or not enough to stop thinking in terms of <<solutions>>" that apparently see to it that the Vietnamese insurgents lose the war ("Vietnam," pp. 150-151). Sontag expresses her misgivings at the administration liberals in a more acute way: "they have nothing to lose by proclaiming their discontent and frustration. [...] Liberal intellectuals more naturally expect to influence the <<decisions>> of administrators than they do the volatile <<feelings>> of masses" ("What Is Happening to America," p. 198).

American intellectuals were divided about the war, as McCarthy attests. Those who opposed the government's policies were very vocal throughout the US intervention. Their ideological adversaries reached public and academic acknowledgment in the postwar years, and they foreboded the conservative mood of the 1980s. The intellectual climate of the 1950s had left a scar still visible in the mid sixties. Free speech existed, but according to McCarthy, it just underscored the capability of consensus to coopt opinion. As she remembered her despair in the beginning of American escalation,

Nineteen sixty-five blurs with 1966. I thought it was in the summer of 1965 that I did an interview with Edwin Newman in Paris during which I said that if Americans did not act against the war, put down some real stake, our case would not be too different from that of the "good" Germans under Hitler [...] It took me a whole year to say on television what I had been muttering to myself about Vietnam. That is, that talking while continuing your life as usual was not enough. Still, I could not see what else to do.

("How It Went", p. 10)

By deciding to visit the yet undeclared enemy of the US government in Vietnam, intellectuals like Mary McCarthy in 1967 and Susan Sontag in 1968 gained public disfavor, rekindled the anti-intellectual bias of American popular culture, and validated the official rhetoric on the war. Nor were they the only

individuals ostracized by the political Establishment. Other celebrities like Norman Mailer, the Fondas, Benjamin Spock or Noam Chomsky, shared the blame for exposing their daring views. They had refused to be wise persons in the service of the Establishment – the conformist sages who, according to Irving Kristol, should defend their government's foreign policy at face value (Kristol, 1967, *passim*; Chomsky, 1969: 323-366). McCarthy's and Sontag's replies were blunt: if the United States represented the summit of Western civilization in the second half of the Twentieth century "there must be something terribly wrong with Western white civilization," as Sontag had it ("What Is Happening to America," p. 202). She also proclaimed a most paradoxical thought, that "the White race is the cancer of human history; it is the white race and it alone – its ideologies and inventions – which eradicates autonomous civilizations wherever it spreads, which has upset the very existence of life itself" ("What Is Happening to America," p. 203). The way was being paved for the anti-Establishment thinkers to visit the "Others" in Vietnam and testify to how much havoc the war had brought to the natives – and to the hallowed ideal of the American promise.

Writing about his visit in Vietnam in 1968, Tom Hayden recollected that "it is a very strange thing to realize your country is bombing the city you are in" (Miller, 1987: 266; DeBenedetti and Chatfield, 1990: 168-170). Yet, McCarthy and Sontag conceded more relevance to the emotional price they paid for maintaining their political independence. They had placed their hopes in rescuing a private, libertarian, almost prelapsarian America, still untouched by the military-industrial-intellectual complex. As McCarthy recollected,

Patriotism, I had surmised, had played a large part in my decision to go, and this was true, as far as it went. I could not bear to see my country disfigure itself so, when I might do something to stop it. It had surprised me to find that I cared enough about America to risk being hit by a US bomb for its sake [...] But if I *were* killed, I argued, it might at least convince a few Americans that civilian targets were being aimed at. I was not a military objective. On the other hand, other Americans over their fresh-frozen orange juice would be saying "It served her right."

("Hanoi", p. 317)

So alienated were they from the US intervention that both of them ended up mystifying the Americans as the "Others" of the Vietnam War, and fell infatuated by Hanoi's Stalinist regime. Prostitution, underemployment, and hordes of refugees in the cities were the most obvious consequences of the ravages of the war in the South. But their comments transcended the misery generated by the conflict itself;

they directed their criticism to the very sources of American civilization. By referring to the Puritan ethos they criticized not just authoritarian undercurrents that can explain gory incidents in the war. They targeted the essence of American economic and political liberalism for the destruction provoked in behalf of the Free World, for the *sociocide* of Vietnam, as Telford Taylor had it (Knoll and McFadden, 1970: 82). Successive military operations aimed to eradicate the social support of the guerrilla brought forth the depopulation of the countryside and the abrupt end to the way of life of thousands of natives who lived in a preindustrial, even premodern, society. General William Westmoreland repeatedly justified his strategy of pacification on the grounds that in the long run would save American lives. After the war his words have been validated by conservative historians who hold that anyhow the pacification operations by no means obliterated the Geneva Convention on war procedures (Westmoreland, 1976: 152; Lewy, 1978; 1987, 225-226; Podhoretz, 1982: 183).

Mary McCarthy reflected upon the normal conditions in the refugee camps, and eventually saw through a Franklinesque intrusion in the plans the MACV had designed for the peasants displaced from their lands. She gave a scathing interpretation of the persistence of capitalism and puritanism as they were reproduced on the fringes of the Indochinese jungle, in 1967:

Opportunity was beckoning for these poor peasants, thanks to the uprooting process they had just undergone. They would have the chance to buy and build their own homes on a pattern and of materials already picked out for them; the government was allowing them 1,700 piasters toward the purchase price. To get a new house free, even though in the abstract that might seem only fair, would be unfair to them as human beings, it was explained to me: investing their own labor and their own money would make them feel that the house was really *theirs*. "The Lord helps those who help themselves" – the social worker's Great Commandment – is interpreted in war-pounded Vietnam, and with relentless priggery, as "the US helps those who help themselves."

("Vietnam", p. 80)

The pacification of the Vietnamese landscape generated refugees whose loyalty to the Free World was dubious at best. Due to the absence of economic alternatives their uprooting meant a ruthless, bewildering social translation from subsistence peasantry to the lumpenproletariat (Fitzgerald, 1972: 572; Olson and Roberts, 1991: 160 ff). The social toll was especially heavy on the children and the young, who took up informal occupations that American soldiers demanded in their spare time. We can point out that both McCarthy and Sontag antedated

Immanuel Wallerstein's center/periphery thesis – in their case between the US Army and the underemployed Vietnamese – and subverted the relation between producers and consumers of raw materials. Sontag underscored that the North Vietnamese had managed to build bells out of unexploded shells, and the craters made by the bombs rendered improvised fisheries:

An unholy dialectic is at work here, in which the big wasteful society dumps its garbage, its partly unemployable proletarian conscripts, its poisons, and its bombs upon a small, virtually defenceless, frugal society whose citizens, those fortunate enough to survive, then go about picking up the debris, out of which they fashion materials for daily use and self-defense.

("Trip to Hanoi," 255)

McCarthy moves this paradoxical situation to the South of the Seventeenth parallel. Among other postmodern layers in the Vietnam war, she finds that the former peasants-turned-into-the-lumpen unconsciously indulge in American Pop Art. Here the center/periphery model is at work again; only that the American forces have provided the homeless with the raw material to build – not decorate – their homes:

A form of Pop Art is spreading in rural Vietnam; new house fronts (not just in refugee camps) are made of flattened-out cans, sometimes in bright patterns, as with beer, ginger ale, Coca-Cola containers, and sometimes in plain old tin, as with corned beef and Campbell's soup. Yet even if every hut and hovel in Vietnam were faced with this new building material, it would hardly reduce the vast rubbish heap, the fecal matter of our civilization, we have left in the country. As our troops increase, there will be more and more.

("Vietnam", p. 111)

The ultimate oxymoron in the American military experience in Vietnam had a macroeconomic reading: the more destructive the US intervention was, the more lavishly Washington invested in the Republic of Vietnam, which would have ceased to exist but for the American protection of the military. The huge amount of money spent on the war did not revert into productive economic sectors – it provided menial occupations such as domestics in the American bases, or construction workers for the military complexes. For the antiwar movement indeed, the military had long dispensed with the "allied" communist Vietnamese – be they the soldiers of the corrupted army of the Republic or the displaced peasants. Their invisibility reached momentum in 1969, when the My Lai massacre



was disclosed. Literally speaking, the natives were invisible from the cockpits of the B-52s that bombed the countryside. But they had remained in a gradual and metaphorical obliviousness – so the argument of the critics went – each time a hamlet was uprooted, a village harassed, or the body count inflated with non-combatants.

The massacre at the village of My Lai in March 1968, validated the most irate comments of the antiwar activists, who had linked the gratuitous violence of the American intervention with the centennial celebration of violence in the US and the treatment of the Vietnamese as new Indians. Long before revisionism led historians, novelists and anchormen to ponder upon American violence in Vietnam, Mary McCarthy found her way to rationalize events like My Lai. They were likely to take place whenever the soldiers managed to dismiss the humanity of the Vietnamese: “The men were to murder a hamlet; on that point, the instructions were clear. A veil was drawn as to what was to become of the population. They were to be disregarded, just as though they did not exist. The next step, to conduct them from virtual to real non-existence, then became easy” (“Medina,” p. 347). For the participants and for the whole antiwar movement it became convenient to compare the rhetoric and the behavior of three US administrations – Kennedy’s, Johnson’s and Nixon’s – with that of the Nazi regime. Suffice it to remind McCarthy’s citation of “good Germans” as quoted above. The main difference is that totalitarianism in America is implemented not by state-originated violence, but by political cooption: “The illusion was encouraged by the use of terms like ‘pacification’, ‘rural development,’ ‘New Life hamlets,’ and by Johnson’s home oratory, in which he presented himself as the arch-non-belligerent” (“Medina,” p. 402).

To place Johnson alongside with Hitler may be an overstatement. But the strategy of a war of attrition in Vietnam surpassed the ability of the American military to keep the war as a low-intensity conflict. Lieutenant William Calley – held responsible for the My Lai massacre – paradoxically coincided with the antiwar movement when he pictured himself as “a finger, a member of this Frankenstein monster” (Bigart, 1971: 1). Like him, McCarthy and Sontag demoted the American mission in Vietnam. By default, they rehumanized the North Vietnamese. And none of the party members managed to win over the sympathies of Sontag and McCarthy as Ho Chi Minh had done.

Ho had been gifted with a special political ability to survive the historical episodes he had lived throughout his life. He and the politburo in Hanoi resorted to Stalinist propaganda to extol their cause in the West, especially among liberals and radicals in the United States (Lacouture, 1968: 264). His quotations of Jefferson and Lincoln did not go unnoticed for the American left (Warbey, 1972: 216). Both

McCarthy and Sontag alluded to Ho; but Ho eluded them. In "Hanoi" Ho is not a statistician; he has already become a legend. McCarthy accepts the facile official explanation that Ho was in a safe place in the countryside, "waiting for his country's need to summon him back" (p. 252). He had become a legend before his death, and in 1967 his relics were already exposed at the Museum of the Revolution. The personality cult indeed affected Sontag's perception of Ho and the Lao Dong Party as liberators of Vietnam. But in her narration they are legitimated, we seem to understand, because they share with her Western positive universals. What is more, they provide a more accurate interpretation of the American promise of collective freedom and human rights:

It seems to me a defect that the North Vietnamese aren't good haters. How else to explain the odd fact that they actually appear to be quite fond of America? [...] I suspect that the extent to which the Vietnamese are so interested in and well informed about American politics – as I learned answering some questions put to me in the last days about the Nebraska primary, about Lindsay's influence in Harlem, and about American student radicalism – isn't part of the policy of knowing your enemy, but springs from just plain fascination with the United States [...] People in Vietnam appear to take for granted that the US *is* in many ways the greatest country in the world: the richest, the most advanced technologically, the most alive culturally, the most powerful, even the most free.

("Trip to Hanoi," pp. 231, 265)

Political dissent by the late 1960s was secure enough for McCarthy and Sontag to continue their careers. Both writers understood on their arrival home that the *Establishment* expected them to be dissenters. Sontag recognizes that deep down "maybe I'm only fit to share a people's revolutionary aspirations at a comfortable distance from them and their struggle – one more volunteer in the armchair army of bourgeois intellectuals with radical sympathies in the head" ("Trip to Hanoi," p. 224). McCarthy was in Hanoi the day President Johnson announced in March 31, 1968, his decision not to be reelected. She naively evoked her taking part of a collective decision: "we had helped bring the war to an end" ("How It Went," p. 31). In 1972, however, when she wrote her review of David Halberstam's *The Best and the Brightest*, she was far more pessimistic. She had eventually come to terms with her being a loser in corporate America. As an intellectual she had been assigned a role – which she had fulfilled. Paradoxically McCarthy and Sontag had become "organic" intellectuals for a political system that primed free negotiation of ideas and protected their right to dissent. But that Establishment stood on a well-defined international division of labor, that required

a war in Vietnam to guarantee freedom of speech in the United States, even though it referred to conversations with the enemy.

By 1972 the tide began to ebb for the antiwar movement. McCarthy concedes that by then "writing about Vietnam was becoming a habit," ("How It Went," p. 40), the kind of meek exercise expected from legitimate dissent. Only Weatherman dared challenge the fate of the intellectual iron cage, but the result was politically disastrous. The defeat was monumental, and despite daring efforts like those by McCarthy, Sontag, as well as Chomsky, Mailer, Lippmann, etc, many more sages sided with Irving Kristol's assumptions. (Mahedy, 1986: 133 ff; Levy, 1995: 97-100). Eventually, the American left had to pay a heavy price for its political legitimacy and popular support. Sontag's and McCarthy's recollections of their visits in Vietnam hinted at the perils that lay ahead for American nonconformists, whose assumptions became strongly disfavored for more than two decades. In the long run their travelogues have assisted to our understanding of the rhetorical duplicity of the US administration in the post-Vietnam years. But McCarthy's and Sontag's travel memoirs of Vietnam transpired the powerlessness of the individual who felt the moral responsibility to confront an overpowering corporate state that had found a most serviceable place for its intellectuals.

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## Finding 'Poetic Truth': The Politics of Memory and Ethnic Transcreation in Contemporary Latina Autobiographies

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This essay is an attempt to unveil the complexity of self-representation by Latina writers in the United States. These writers are using the autobiographical genre in order to discover their ethnic identity by "writing themselves" on paper. However, their politics of representation frequently involves many complex discursive strategies due to their status as women and members of an ethnic minority. My purpose is to call attention to their autobiographical products as literary spaces of ethnic trans-creation of the self. I will be referring to recent theories on women's autobiography and on cultural and ethnic representation. To illustrate my point I will focus on two autobiographies by Puerto Rican writers: Rosario Morales and Aurora Levins Morales' *Getting Home Alive* and Judith Ortiz Cofer's *Silent Dancing. A Partial Remembrance of a Puerto Rican Childhood*. Both works are challenging and innovative in their own terms but they coincidentally address one of the issues I find most interesting about contemporary autobiographies by ethnic women: the interaction of fact and fiction, of memory and imagination, of lived and imagined ethnicity.

Due to space restrictions I have not included other well known autobiographical works which deserve a separate analysis because of their formal

and generic experimentation – as in the case of Gloria Anzaldua's *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* and Cherríe Moraga's *Loving in the War Years* –, or because of their ethnographic interest – as Esmeralda Santiago's *When I Was Puerto Rican*.

From classical times, autobiographies were used as historical texts relying on the author's records of events – an example of this is Cesar's *Commentaries*. From Saint Augustine's *Confessions* onwards, autobiographies reflect the rise of the individual already involved in self-analysis. During the 20th century and with the inception of psychoanalytical theories, the autobiography became a genre where the development of the self and its socialization through individuation could be represented as a *self in the mirror*. In general, we can say that autobiographies represent an attempt to know the self through 'consciousness' as Hegel observed, but this coming-to-knowledge of the self usually depends on complex discursive strategies involved in self-writing. Thus, writing and textual practices become a defining method of self-knowledge.

Postmodern and post-structuralist critical perspectives have questioned the myth of the self and its representation in literature. The relation between the autobiography and his/her author has suffered this postmodern commotion that could be illustrated in the following passage by Roland Barthes in "The Death of the Author": "Writing is that neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing" (143). Thus, in autobiography the writing process would inevitably estrange the author from her own subject matter creating a fictional *version* of her own self, a more or less approximate *representation* of the postmodern 'unknowable' self.

However, identity is not lost in the process, as Barthes claims, but it is created and reconstructed through the use of memory and imagination as we will see in the work of Latina women writers. Ortiz Cofer's statement "writing is not self expression, it's self discovery" (Bartkevicious 67) could be seen as the inverse process described by Barthes. The ethnic autobiographies we are going to deal with may not be a faithful account of true events and experiences but it provides an identity that is emotionally truthful for the writing subject. The 'true part' of these autobiographies plays an extraordinary role in giving voice to minority people whose experiences have been ignored and whose lives have never been represented in literature. Their political attitude requires the use of their lives as illustration of the problem they are combating. Ethnic autobiographies "often serve representative functions", "efforts to incorporate literatures of the cultural other, and efforts to expand the canon" (Bergland 130). Judith Ortiz Cofer, one of the Latina authors we will be dealing with, argues about minority autobiographies:



Autobiography plays a large part, but it's really a logical process . . . most everybody knows what it's like to be professional in middle-class America. Not many people know what it's like to be a Puerto Rican woman growing up in the 1960s. Why should I reach out and invent something, when my own life provides me with interesting material that is not readily available to the public? The minority writer has to take a political stand. Our lives are political. (Ocasio and Ganey, 145)

Many recent studies have criticized the essentialism of previous autobiographical studies which ignored women's presence and significance in literary tradition. Certainly, women's memoirs do not comply with pre-established conventions of the genre but present a non-individualistic conception of the self and a fragmentariness and nonlinearity in structure and content. Many contemporary critics are suggesting insightful methods of approaching women's autobiographies. Linda Anderson in the introduction to her volume *Women and Autobiography in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, parallels recent critical debate on women's autobiographical writing concerning the difference among women writers and their experience as women. Anderson warns against the danger of "speaking for other women", "repeating the very gesture which has traditionally deprived women of a voice" (4).

Nancy Chodorow's psychoanalytical emphasis on women's relational gender identity and Rowbotham's focus on collective consciousness also help us develop our analysis of autobiographies by ethnic women. According to Rowbotham, women have to fight against cultural representations about the female self. This self is not based in masculine individualism and alienation as the result of creating a self in language, as Lacan and Barthes suggested. On the contrary, the female self is based in a group consciousness, "alienation from the historically imposed image of the self is what motivates the writing, the creation of an alternate self in the autobiographical act. Writing the self shatters the cultural hall of mirrors and breaks the silence imposed by male speech" (Stanford, 41). In a similar mode, Chodorow argues that women's "experience of self contains more flexible or permeable ego boundaries ... The basic feminine sense of self is connected to the world, the basic masculine sense of self is separate" (169). The women's self is never completely separated from others but it finds consistency in the relationship with others. As an example we can mention the frequent presence of female relatives in women's autobiographies. Mothers in particular, are key figures in the development of a woman's self through the continuation of the mother-daughter bond as we will see in Morales' and Ortiz Cofer's autobiographical works.

Latina autobiographies reflect the particular development and representation of the female self that is doubly marginal for being a woman and a

member of an ethnic minority. They challenge traditional notions of autobiography focussing on family relationships and the community, offering a multi-perspectival, multi-generic text. Their use of collective and individual memory raises interesting questions about the nature of ethnic autobiographies by women. I maintain that the expected analysis does not need to be centered on fragmentation and other apparently female 'textual pathologies', but on women's creative representations of the self and on cultural and ethnic elements that facilitate a creative use of autobiographies where the concept of womanhood and ethnicity is renovated and transformed.

During the 20th century studies on autobiography have claimed their fictional quality. Though it is true that the 'written self' is an invented version of the 'true self' there exists a complex relationship between the remembered and the imagined. This issue is especially relevant in Latina autobiographies for the ever present interaction between the collective memory and the impulse for self-creation. Virginia Woolf already suggested that memories are not necessarily faithful elements of a life story: "As an account of my life they are misleading, because the things one does not remember are as important; perhaps they are more important" (69). But what is the woman writer supposed to do with that 'forgotten' part of her life/self when she wants to faithfully (de)scribe herself? And furthermore, what is an ethnic woman writer supposed to do to recover the ethnic background affecting her self-formation? The answer can be easily deduced from what we have said about language and writing: the autobiographer is free to either consciously or unconsciously transform and even "invent" memories in order to create a new ethnic self.

This process is what I have termed "ethnic trans-creation"<sup>1</sup> through memory and imagination in Latina autobiographies, a new ethnic identity or as Gloria Anzaldua calls it "a new *mestiza* consciousness" that emerges as a remapping of the previous divisions and dualities of the Latina/o self. This transformative process can take place thanks to the very nature of the ethnic signs that are "often intermittent, irregular, and weak" (Boelhower 85). This process is present but mostly future-oriented, as Anzaldua claims:

... 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 way we behave – *la mestiza* creates a new consciousness. (80)

<sup>1</sup> Juan Flores and George Yudice use this term, first coined for commercial purposes, to refer to a new alternative mode of Latino self-formation that is "more than a culture of resistance

Latina women belong to this new hybrid race, a product of many different cultures not belonging to any in particular. In the case of Aurora and Rosario Morales and Judith Ortiz Cofer, they do not feel Puerto Rican in the way people from the island feel. Their identities are something new that requires a different system of autobiographical representation. A first stage in this process of representation would follow the similar path of most women's autobiographies, that is, the realization of the necessity to represent their selves as gendered individuals whose voice has been either absent or underestimated in the history of the genre because of their lack of an appropriate discourse/language to describe a woman's life. A second stage would connect the personal and the collective memory, that in the case of ethnic women alludes to the ethnic community and history. A third and more advanced stage in autobiographical representation would include the creative manipulation of personal and collective memories thereby reconstructing the concept of ethnicity and representing a new ethnic feminine self.

The product of this autobiographical ethnic trans-creation is subjected to a politics of representation which does not pursue a factual truthful narrative but a "poetic truth," an emotional representation of the ethnic self, as Judith Ortiz Cofer points out in the preface to her autobiography: "in writing about one's life, one often has to rely on that combination of memory, imagination, and strong emotion that may result in "poetic truth" (11). Although Cofer acknowledges Virginia Woolf's influence on her idea of memoir writing, she clearly departs from Woolf because of the varied ethnic character of her memories, a common past shared with other ethnic women as she lived between two cultures and two spaces, Puerto Rico and the United States.

Ethnic memory plays a fundamental role in this process of ethnic trans-creation.<sup>2</sup> It is the main tool for the archaeological search for ancestors, for a past that influences the present of the ethnic woman who needs to design her ethnic identity in a society that encourages cultural assimilation (read cultural deprivation). As Michael M. J. Fischer argues, "ethnic memory is, or ought to be,

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... It confronts the prevailing ethos by congregating an ethos of its own, not necessarily an outright adversarial but certainly an alternative ethos" (74). In a cultural level, this term also parallels Angel Rama's use of "transculturación" in *Transculturación Narrativa en América Latina*, as a transformative process for all cultures involved with the resulting emergence of a new cultural reality and a new narrative expression.

<sup>2</sup> The function of memory in ethnic fiction has received greater attention in the last decades as can be observed by the appearance of studies like *Memory, Narrative and Identity*, and *Memory and Cultural Politics*, both edited by Amritjit Singh, Joseph T. Sikerret, Jr. And Robert E. Hogan.

future, not past, oriented" (201), because the concept of ethnicity itself is subject to continuous transformation:

ethnicity is something reinvented and reinterpreted in each generation by each individual . . . Ethnicity is not something that is simply passed on from generation to generation, taught and learned; it is something dynamic often unsuccessfully repressed or avoided. (195)

The Latina autobiographer's use of memory is certainly genealogical at first since it is a necessary reconnection with the past but it also becomes a means to liberation. This process of recollection of ethnic memories is much more complex than what it seems to be. On the one hand, the Latina writer who recovers a collective ethnic memory and subjectively translates that information to her autobiography, may be at risk of reducing her work to mere ethnography or anthropological account, with all the suspicious implications related to them.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, the imagination plays a fundamental role in the act of remembering as Boelhower remarks: "The whole process of ethnic seeing is as much an act of the imagination as it is an act of recovering lost origins" (83). Indeed, we have to bear in mind that for many Latina writers the experience of the "lost" heritage may be too scarce and even non-existent as in the case of immigrant daughters born in the USA or brought to the United States at an early age. That is the case of many Latina writers such as the Cuban writer Cristina García, and the Puerto Rican Rosario Morales and Sandra María Estevez with no personal experience of the island heritage until late in their lives.

The importance of memories and the problem of forgetting is constantly addressed by Latina writers. In *Getting Home Alive*, Aurora is haunted by the feeling of losing her memories of her childhood in Puerto Rico. As many immigrant writers, Aurora feels the ethnic anxiety of losing a precious part of her identity, her ethnic heritage: "For years after we left Puerto Rico for the last time, I would wake from a dream of something unbearably precious melting away from my memory as I struggled desperately to hold on, or at least to remember that I had forgotten. I am an immigrant, and I forget to feel what it means to have left" (22). Through a conscious process of recollection, these memories come back to her in the form of stories, dreams, pictures, smells, taste. She tries to recover her past Jewish heritage by remembering her grandmother and grandfather and her father's childhood in Russia.

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<sup>3</sup> Ethnographers have been blamed for their partiality emphasizing particular aspects in their representations of a culture. This has frequently led to a misunderstanding of the culture described favouring stereotypes and false assumptions.

Rosario, on the other hand, has lived with memories of Puerto Rico that are not her own because she grew up in New York. Rosario is able to recover that ethnic memory even when it was not hers. She knows this process of longing and remembering brings power to her mestiza identity. The power of ethnic information is present in the nostalgia she feels for her mother's Puerto Rico as we see in "Memory" and "Nostalgia":

I grew up with nostalgia for a place I did not grow up in . . . I grew up with nostalgia for green landscapes and tropical fruit, for broad leaves and red flowers, for the smell of coffee roasting, the sound of cocks crowing and hens scratching behind the house. I grew up wanting blue skies and rain falling in hard punishing drops. I grew up yearning for trees, yearning for trees. (87-8)

At this point, Rosario locates herself in a non-productive stage of the process, that of nostalgic longing. As Gayle Greene suggests, "'nostalgia' is the desire to return home, 'to remember' is 'to bring to mind' or 'think of again,' 'to be mindful of,' 'to recollect.' Both 're-membering' and 'recollecting' suggest a connecting, assembling, a bringing together of things in relation to one another" (297). Indeed, memory becomes the thread that facilitates the creation of a new home/self. When as an adult Rosario comes back to Puerto Rico she realizes the island is a nostalgic place that cannot be her true home. In "Puerto Rican Journal", both the mother's and the daughter's memories of home are oppositionally presented:

Home, I'm going home, I thought, and the happiness bubbled in me and spilled over . . . Photographs, someone else's memories and my vivid dreams as I grew up. Home? A place where I am never completely at home? . . . Aurora comes here and says, yes, this is still home. I come here and say this is too much like home for comfort. (76-80)

What seems at first mere nostalgia becomes 'remembering' at the end through the transformation of memories into a present component of her self. Even though she goes back to the US, her real home, Rosario will always carry that imagined heritage of Puerto Rico with her. The US may be her home now but Puerto Rico is in her as well: "I carry my island tucked inside and I'm going home" (76).

Her idea of Puerto Ricanness is in fact the Puerto Ricanness lived in New York, therefore quite different from her daughter's in Puerto Rico. Both mother and daughter have been aware that cultural and ethnic memories are the most

endangered part of their identities, constantly threatened by assimilation. As Gayle Greene points out, “memory is our means of connecting past and present and constructing a self and versions of experience we can live with. To doubt it is to doubt ourselves, to lose it is to lose ourselves” (293). Latina writers respond to the potential loss and instability of the self by transforming memories in creative spaces for the self. For Aurora and Rosario these memories of Puerto Rico help them create a strong sense of self. As they declare in a poem, they are “whole”, they have inherited all heritages and have profited from all of them. They have created themselves as if they were writing a script from dispersed “memories of being” by uniting all these identity components carried by memories. Both Aurora and Rosario acknowledge their invention in their life stories, transforming ethnic memories into present and future elements of their experience as Latinas. They discover their creative role becoming storytellers through their creative life-telling. Ethnic trans-creation is at work when the power of the imagination reconstructs an ethnic heritage and creates a new identity as we see in “1930” (Aurora):

My grandmother Lola, . . . tells me the story, tears and words spilling slowly. . . . The images, once heard, are unforgettable... This is a story I make up from the scraps my mother and grandmother have let fall, a story I tell myself over and over, embroidering it, filling in the missing details of wind and weather and smells . . . My mother is the infant in the picture, but this is not my mother's story. It is my story for her, told to myself as I invent the details of her history, the foundations of my own. (42-3)

In a similar way, Rosario's short story “I never Told my Children Stories” brings attention to the mechanism of writing/inventing a life story, the boundaries between fact and fiction are blurred and diffused by the postmodernist stance of the writer who calls her reader's attention encouraging her to fill in the gaps. Aurora and Rosario are creating their written selves by remembering and recreating a blurred, almost forgotten past where only primary and significant sensations, feelings remain. It is out of these feelings and sensations that have stayed, that they create a new identity through language and discourse:

Now me – I like the truth. I figured if I ever wrote any stories, they'd be true stories, things that happened to me, the real stuff of life, not all that airy invention. Of course, that was before I realized how much of my truth was embroidered. No, not embroidered exactly – just remembered in special ways . . . Before I began seeing *my* truth as the story I tell to let you know what I think I'm all about, to clue you in on what is *really* happening: how I'm pretty lucky, and about the rotten childhood I had, or how mean people have been to me. (167)



Rosario Morales confesses her own autobiography's fictionality but she also stresses the fact that this part of invention is necessary to understand her own self. The collective project and attempt at self-description is fairly obvious in *Getting Home Alive*, co-written by mother and daughter. Aurora and Rosario take this project to its maximum potential as part of Rowbothan's 'group consciousness'. Mother and daughter's allegiance refers to what Doris Sommer points out in her article on women's testimonial writing: "her singularity achieves its identity as an extension of the collective. The singular represents the plural not because it replaces or subsumes the group but because the speaker is a distinguishable part of the whole" (108). In their text the voices of both women are interwoven as an example of communal goals collaborating in the book's structure as well, where their memories, prose and poetry build a monument where memory and politics play an strategic importance. Their life-stories complement each other and acknowledge what Chodorow suggested about women's autobiographies as descriptions of relational gender identities where the boundaries of the self are blurred. Aurora and Rosario's lives and experiences as ethnic women answer affirmatively the question posed by Rita Benmayor: "Can personal memory and personal politics be turned into collective and constructive strategies?" (113). In their work, memory not only serves identity transformation and ethnic trans-creation but it also serves a political function.

Judith Ortiz Cofer's autobiographical work also stresses her fictionality from its very title: *Silent Dancing: A Partial Remembrance of a Puerto Rican Childhood*. Ortiz Cofer successfully uses the image of silent dancing to bring attention to an event where some components are missing. Her memories prove to be partial recollections, fragmented memories where the sound or other elements are missing. In *Silent Dancing* all stories are remembered from the perspective of an adult Puerto Rican woman living and teaching in Georgia, a well-educated woman who has found a comfortable home in the US. The word "partial" also makes us think of a fundamental aspect of all autobiographical writing: its partiality in reporting, in choosing those memories you want to remember and not others. The author herself calls her work "creative fiction" and she justifies her option: "my first step in writing *Silent Dancing* was to allow the memories to come and then shape them by using the techniques of fiction" (Bartkevicius 58).

In a formal level, Ortiz Cofer, like the Moraleses, mixes poetry and prose. Some of the prose sections like "Tales Told under the Mango Tree" are narrated as *cuentos*, stories she was told by her grandmother. Most pieces are direct accounts of her childhood experience and that of the people who surrounded her as we can see in "Some of the Characters." Ortiz Cofer, like Rosario and Aurora Morales, plays with the reader, putting into question the reliability of her account with the



use of “characters” that make us think of a fiction though they are described as real people as Ortiz Cofer claims in her prologue:

I faced the possibility that the past is mainly a creation of the imagination also, although there are facts one can research and confirm . . . I am not interested in merely ‘canning’ memories . . . I wanted to try to connect myself to the threads of lives that have touched mine and at some point converged into the tapestry that is my memory of childhood. (13)

Throughout the book, Ortiz Cofer continually wonders about the reliability of her memories. Her memoir seems to be a search for that “poetic truth” she mentions in her prologue, a truth that has nothing to do with factuality but with the emotional heritage brought by memories, a heritage that becomes a source for creativity in the present and future of the author. This poetic truth is what encourages the ethnic writer to recreate her own self through a redefinition of her ethnic heritage and a revision of her cultural memories. In *Silent Dancing*, Ortiz Cofer questions her mother about events she remembers differently but even so, she follows her memories, strongly tied to the emotions inspired by those moments. In “The Last Word”, the author brings attention to the unstable nature of memories depending as they are chosen in each person’s different version of a communal past: “I have my own memories about this time in my life, but I decide to ask her a few questions, anyway. It is always fascinating to me to hear her version of the past we shared, to see what shades of pastel she will choose to paint my childhood’s ‘summer afternoon’” (162). In Ortiz Cofer’s work, the mother-daughter bond is present as both women reconstruct their histories, sharing the communal experience of being women in a Puerto Rican family. Her mother becomes the “witness of my childhood, she has the power to refute my claims,” however, Judith remembers in a different fashion, defying her mother’s own memories: “‘That is what really happened?’ ‘*Es la pura verdad*,’ she says, ‘Nothing but the truth.’ But that is not how *I* remember it” (165).

As in the case of Aurora and Rosario Morales, the problem of forgetting or not remembering becomes an essential issue for Ortiz Cofer in *Silent Dancing*. Cultural and ethnic memories are the most endangered part of her identity, constantly threatened by assimilation, but she finds strength in the act of not forgetting as she confesses:

I found out that what I really needed to communicate were the basics in our culture. Language and memory became important, because I realized that memory was the treasure in my backyard. My education

has allowed me to become perceptive enough to be able to use memory plus imagination, to transform remembering into art. Not forgetting is a spiritual matter with me. It connects me to the reality of my life. (Kallet 68)

As we have observed, memory and imagination, fact and fiction are essential elements in Latina self-exploration in autobiographical works. These works reflect an inner process of ethnic trans-creation that provides a new ethnic identity, a new version of the self that is more appropriate for their situation as ethnic women in American society, living among cultural borders. As Alvina Quitana remarks about self-definition: "The tension between fact and fiction in some ways resonates with the anxieties generated by a bilingual, bicultural environment, in that they all ultimately revolve around issues of social construction and self-fashionings. How does one construct an identity in an alien environment?" (11). The creative use of memory that we have observed in three Puerto Rican women writers responds to the ways in which the self can be represented in a poetically truthful way. A new attitude towards ethnicity emerges, one that acknowledges a past heritage but which adapts it to the new situation of Latinas' life in the cultural borderlands.

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## ■ “Them and Us”: Alfred Kazin and Immigrant Autobiography

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UNIVERSIDAD COMPLUTENSE

In 1880 there were fewer than 100,000 Jews in USA, while in 1920 there were nearly 4 million. Such a mass exodus made America the major center of Jewish population. As for the Italians, New York was among the four largest Italian cities, rivaling Rome, Naples and Milan. Between 1890 and 1914 some 15 million newcomers came to America primarily from Italy, Russia, Greece, and Austria-Hungary. The two great turn-of-the-century Henries, Adams and James, knowingly expressed their fin-de-siècle fear of a shift from artificial order and unity to natural chaos and multiplicity,<sup>1</sup> and wisely turned their attention to a study of American relations.

These waves of immigration were more than enough to provide the raw materials for the birth of a new subgenre of Autobiography, immigrant

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<sup>1</sup> Like other important New Englanders, Henry Adams presents himself in his *Education* as an apostle of “Unity, Continuity, Purpose, Order, Law, Truth, the Universe, God” and tried with all his might to cope with the opposites: “Multiplicity, Diversity, Complexity, Anarchy, Chaos” (*The Education of Henry Adams*, 431). Henry James felt too “a sense of dispossession”, when he notes that in the Yiddish quarter of the East Side “multiplication was the dominant note”. For Adams, as for Henry James in *The American Scene*, the old order and the old pattern of identities were dead. See William Boelhower, “The Making of Ethnic Autobiography in the U.S.”.

Autobiography. The shift that was taking place in American culture in the period between 1880 and 1910 had found in ethnic Autobiography its corresponding new text-type, which proved to be the most suitable vehicle for presenting new versions of the American self.

Since that time, and in an age of increasing intercultural experience, writers face the new problem of expressing the self now as a conjuncture between languages and cultures. The new kind of American Autobiographer who has emerged is, thus, writing interculturally, trying to *conjoin*<sup>2</sup> the culture of the two languages; and similarly, scholars of the genre are turning their attention to this intercultural, multicultural and cross-cultural Autobiography. This focus on the development of the self on and across the borders of languages and cultures has introduced new elements into the debate on the nature of the autobiographical subject, and has reinforced postmodern notions of the multiple, fluid or fragmented self; simply because the subject of cross-cultural Autobiography discovers or unfolds itself through the encounter of two or more cultures.

In the traditional immigrant text, the trajectory was always similar: the writer, in our case, the Jewish writer, tried to solve the enigmas of American ways in order to succeed in the new culture, and leave the old ways behind. Just by looking at the titles of many immigrant/ethnic autobiographies we can see that the autobiographical game consisted in rewriting the received “from rags to riches” script of the well-defined American Adam: *Promised Land* (1911), by Mary Antin; *From Alien to Citizen* (1914), by Edward Steiner; *The Rise of David Lewinsky* (1917), by Abraham Cahan; *The Americanization of Edward Bok* (1920), by Edward Bok; *The Making of an American* (1924), by Jacob Riis; and *An American in the Making* (1917), by Marcus Ravage. That is, as expressed by Boelhower, “the infinite variations of ethnic autobiography” were always on a single theme: “a hyphenated self’s attempt to make it in America”,<sup>3</sup> and, like all initiation rites, the writing process required a stripping away of the “old” self.

One of the best known and most cherished of American Autobiographies is Alfred Kazin’s *A Walker in the City* (1951), which has become something of a classic account of the first Jewish-American-born generation. His story of escape from the constrictions of *shtetl* life and the discovery of broader, more exciting possibilities beyond, or of escape from Brooklyn to Manhattan, is, however, as much a story of escape as a story of return; as much a farewell to Jewish life as a need to go back to its deepest roots, as we shall see.

<sup>2</sup> Walsh Hokenson, Jan, “Intercultural Autobiography”: 92-113.

<sup>3</sup> Boelhower, William, “The Making of Ethnic Autobiography in the U.S.”: 133.

What Kazin's work shows, among other things, is that the first, second, and subsequent generation immigrants have been born in a different America, in which there is no longer a central ethos, or a social ideal to seek or emulate, but the blessings and terrors of multiplicity; a culture that splinters, fragments into multiple perspectives, identities, voices, and discourses. This reality is perceived and exemplified when young Kazin, in his urban wanderings, eventually walks into the Italians' streets, and smells Italian cheeses, or marvels at the mysteries that might await him behind the walls of the Catholic Girl's school, or feels "LA FORZA DEL DESTINO";<sup>4</sup> it is further exemplified when, walking up Fulton Street, he is taken into the German and Irish American neighborhoods (168) and feels the essence of those two kinds of Americans, so different from his own kinship. Indeed, Alfred's first Platonic love is Mrs Solovey, the drugstore seller, who only speaks Russian to her husband and fascinates the young boy because she is so distinct, so self-sufficient. Alfred gives her the invented name of Elizavéta, and imagines her to be the *Anna Karenina* of the neighborhood. When Mrs Solovey and Alfred become friendly, they decide to speak French to one another, because "To speak a foreign language is to depart from yourself" (127). Mrs Solovey goes on, at this point, to proclaim some considerations that would delight the staunchest defender of linguistic autonomy from the language of the empire:

Don't you think it is tiresome to speak the same language all the time?. *Their* language! To feel that you are in a kind of prison, where the words you speak every day are like the walls of your cell? To know with every word that you are the same, and no other, and that it is difficult to escape? But when I speak French to you I have the sensation that for a moment I have left, and I am happy (127).

And here we step into a recurrent theme of immigrant autobiographies: that of English versus native language. Indeed, most immigrant autobiographers, whether they be Jewish, Chinese, Chicanos or Italians, devote some pages to describing the badge of foreignness bestowed by the hated obligation to speak one's native language in America. For Mary Antin, for example, it is essential to divest oneself of the jargon of the kitchen and market place, Yiddish, in order to be accepted into *The Promised Land* (1912). Similarly, if Maxine Hong Kingston (*The Woman Warrior*) becomes dumb for a whole year, out of fear to speak English with a Chinese accent, Dominican-American writer Julia Alvarez gives her

<sup>4</sup> Kazin, Alfred. *A Walker in the City*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1951: 166. Subsequent references to this edition will appear inside the text, with the page number in brackets.

autobiographical novel the suggestive title of *How the García Girls Lost Their Accent*. In *A Walker in the City* once more, one of the strongest impediments against advancement lies in language; in the difficult marriage between the coarse Yiddish of household and ghetto, and the “refined, correct, nice English required at school”, the English that was “peculiarly the ladder of advancement” (22). Caught between these two languages, young Kazin also becomes a stammerer at school and feels that the word was his “agony” (23).

It is clear, in any case, that American writers are writing *at* this conjunction of cultures, working in the very “interzone”<sup>5</sup> where their different languages and cultural ideologies of self overlap, for it is there that identity must be discovered and a compromise negotiated. Julia Alvarez was quoted recently saying she is “exploring her hyphen”<sup>6</sup> – that is, not only her Caribbean culture and her American culture but, between them, her self. Well, that hyphen between the nationality adjectives “Jewish” and “American” is physically represented as Brooklyn Bridge in Kazin’s book; the bridge between Manhattan (“them”) and his native Jewish ghetto at Brownsville (“us”). Indeed, it can’t pass unnoticed to the reader that whenever Alfred gets into the subway to go back home from Manhattan, “something would automatically pull (him) out at Brooklyn Bridge for one last good walk across the promenade” (105). Similarly, one of the climatic moments of Alfred’s walking (and therefore, living), occurs on the Bridge. It happens in his early adolescence, when he feels the need to separate from his class, during a school excursion to the City Hall, and decides to go across the bridge alone. With a book in his hands suddenly he feels “lost and happy” while he asks himself “Where in this beyond are they taking me?” (107-108). In fact, he would spend the rest of his adolescence trying to understand that “single half-hour at dusk” of self-confrontation on the bridge; on the “interzone” of his bicultural existence.

Kazin has written three autobiographies: *A Walker in the City*, *Starting Out in the Thirties* and *New York Jew*, all of which he calls “personal history”, since he proclaims not knowing what autobiography really is. In his article “Autobiography as narrative” Kazin states clearly his belief that good autobiography is fiction – that is, a Narrative which has no purpose other than to tell a story, to create the effect of a story which asks to be read for its value as narrative:

The aesthetic effect that autobiographers consciously seek is the poetry of remembered happenings, the intensity of the individual’s strivings, the feel of life in its materiality.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Walsh Hokenson, Jan, 100.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 98.

<sup>7</sup> Kazin, Alfred. “Autobiography as Narrative”: 212.



In one of the clearest theoretical statements about the non-fiction genre, Kazin seems to be describing his own autobiographical acts when he argues that the difference between formal fiction and autobiography-as-narrative is not the difference between invention and truth, between the imaginative and the factual: the only difference is that autobiography is centered on a single person :

Autobiography is a history of a self and it is this concern with a self as character, as an organism, that makes autobiography the moving, tangible, vibratory kind of narrative that it can be (213).

Following in the line of his own description, *A Walker in the City* is lyric autobiography, a Whitmanesque affirmation of an open, exciting America, and a hymn to the history of a self that perhaps only such an America can provide. It is a celebratory work, spirited with the expectations of adventure beyond. "Beyond" in fact is its most repeated word, and signals the major directions of Kazin's intellectual and spiritual quest: beyond Brownsville, beyond the family home, beyond Talmud and synagogue, and into the World.

A recurrent metaphor in Jewish American autobiography is the journey to America; but America as a foreign country, as a far distant land to which the writer comes with the heavy baggage of parental inferiority complex and dream, and where he returns obsessively. Kazin also perceives this foreignness in the City of New York, which is miles away and many subway stations away from the Jewish ghetto:

I saw New York as a foreign city. There, brilliant and unreal, the city had its life, as Brownsville was ours. That the two were joined in me I never knew then (11).

And, like other Jewish writers, Kazin carries with him the burden of his parents' ambition:

It was not for myself alone that I was to shine but for them – to redeem the constant anxiety of their existence. I was the first American child, their offering to the strange new God; I was to be the monument of their liberation from the shame of being – what they were (21-2).

As Michael Woolf has noted,<sup>8</sup> the word "monument" implies that the child is both sacrifice and memorial elevated above and beyond the possibilities of the

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Woolf, Michael, "The Haunted House: Jewish-American Autobiography".

parents. The price of failure is the betrayal of their dreams; the price of success, the betrayal of their and the writer's own humanity. And hence, much Jewish-American autobiography is a record of liberation from the limitations of the parents' world. However, I don't agree with the common view that has appointed Kazin as a searcher of American modernity at the expense of his Jewishness, or that has considered his first autobiography as an "end-of-the-road book, a farewell to Jewish life".<sup>9</sup> On the contrary, *A Walker in the City* begins from the abandoned world of childhood in order to make an act of contrition, to pay homage to a past that cannot be painlessly discarded.

One of the big themes of the book is the dividing line; the unbridgeable distance between "*there and here, them and us, Gentiles and us, alrighniks and us...* the line had been drawn for all time" (99). Still, it is obvious that when he wrote *A Walker in the City*, Kazin had become one of *them*; one of America's most established literary spokesmen, after having written *On Native Grounds* (1942). Why does Kazin, then, have to return to the past? Because the final element of his victory over "them and us" is not only becoming one of "them", but rather, going back to "us", to his collective Brownsville history and his family's vague Russian history.

His book, which begins with an "Every time I go to Brownsville it is as if I had never been away", is, thus, a lyrical re-exploration of the past, an act of reconciliation with a now abandoned world. Kazin transmits the sense that to be a Jew in America is inevitably to remain in the place from which one has travelled, or to return to the landscapes of the past which inevitably summon us back: "Brownsville is that road which every other road in my life has had to cross" (8).

Like Kazin, many other Jewish-Americans are locked in a discourse with history, with ancestral voices: they can never shut out the witness of the generations who have gone before. As Michael Woolf has put it, "because of America's rejection of the past, of the fierce commitment to the notion that this land will start anew, the American Jew is pulled apart. To be a Jew is to remember. An American must forget".<sup>10</sup> The similarity of this thought with Lillian Hellman's denunciation of America's "amnesia" is striking:

We are people who do not want to keep much of the past in our heads. It is considered unhealthy in America to remember mistakes, neurotic to think about them, psychotic to dwell upon them.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Rosenfeld, Alvin H. "Inventing the Jew: Notes on Jewish Autobiography": 142.

<sup>10</sup> Woolf, Michael, 214.

<sup>11</sup> Hellman, Lillian. *Scoundrel Time*: 159.

Again, the dividing line, and the collective voice: "they" forget; "we", Jewish, must remember. However, we said that *A Walker in the City* is, above all, the story of an individual self. So, let's go back to this issue of the self. One of the most basic tenets of autobiographies is that they present two distinct selves: the author as author and the author as character – that is, as an earlier self. Walt Whitman, America's most autobiographical poet, and source of inspiration for Kazin, invents in "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" a speaker who is "A man, yet by these tears a little boy again" (line 18); a man who returns to the scenes of his childhood at the seashore. The poem, then, is a reminiscence in which a forty-year-old man recalls an experience of his childhood, and its eventual revelation arises from the difference between the boy and the middle-aged poet. The boy was too young to perceive the nature of his revelation at the time; therefore, it requires the mature man who, looking back, gives voice to that ultimate revelation.

It is arresting how similar a narrative technique does Kazin use in his autobiography. In one of the most lucid studies of *A Walker in the City*, John Hazlett argues how Kazin has complicated his autobiography by recreating two distinct earlier selves as characters: his child self and an adult self, the walker of the title.<sup>12</sup> And his autobiography is just as much about the efforts of the adult walker to recapture his past as it is about his earlier attempts to go beyond that self. That is, there is a double quest: the quest of young Alfred to achieve selfhood by identifying himself with an American place and a portion of American history, and the quest of the older Kazin to resolve some present unrest about who he is by recovering his younger self and the locale of his own past.

How do both Kazins achieve their respective quests?: through the solitary practice of walking. In *The Open Street* (1948) Kazin had already mentioned the significance of walking as the supreme act of self-definition: "walking became my way of personal meditation".<sup>13</sup> Each street, each shop, each corner, serves to spark a particular memory. And the smells, odors, sounds and long-forgotten sights of Brownsville and beyond become metaphors of self-discovery. That is, walking becomes a "metaphor of the self",<sup>14</sup> and Kazin aligns himself with "that long line

<sup>12</sup> Hazlett, John, "Repossessing the Past: Discontinuity and History in A. Kazin's *A Walker in the City*."

<sup>13</sup> Eakin, P. John, *Fictions in Autobiography*: 228.

<sup>14</sup> James Olney, in *Metaphors of the Self*, explains that the dominant trope in autobiography is metaphor, a word which in his extended usage includes all the world views, models, myths... by which the subjective consciousness gives order to itself, and to the objective reality. The autobiographer's chief means for bringing imaginative order and identity out of the welter of recollected experience is metaphor. From the events of a lifetime or a part of it, he selects

of solitary American walkers", his predecessors Roosevelt, Thoreau and Whitman. As we have already said, Whitman in particular becomes the prototype of the American identity Kazin seeks for himself, and the exploration of 19th century American history is yet another escape from the "mean present" (171).

Kazin's way was mainly through the pursuit of the intellectual life, through reading, which is another way of walking through the pages of other "aliens" (172). In fact, "culture will make you free" would be the slogan that, from Benjamin Franklin through the slave narratives, to present-day autobiography, is recurrent in most American life-histories:

I read as if books would fill my every gap, legitimize my strange quest for the American past, remedy my every flaw, let me in at last into the great world that was anything just out of Brownsville. (172)

Books become, then, a second bridge through which he could pass to a private, liberating romance with America. An impassioned attachment to history and later to literature, was his ticket out of Brownsville and into the promised land beyond. But always a return ticket, for his own book, *A Walker in the City*, took him back to where he had always been.

In conclusion, self-history in *A Walker in the City* is not continuous and linear, but spatial; the past is not a time, but a place. For the youth, it was a place from which he wanted to escape. For the adult, it is a place to which he fears but needs to return, in order to complete and renew himself; to culminate his act of self-definition. And Kazin's revelation, like that of the boy in Whitman's poem, has to do with the reconciliation of opposites; with the ultimate walking over that bridge which reconciles "them" with "us".

*A Walker in the City* derives its title, theme, and structure from walking, and the book is, indeed, about an American walking into the world and learning on his skin what it is like to be part of that world. This world expands in time and space to become the whole city of New York, with its streets, museums, cinemas, parks, libraries, neighborhoods, bridges, subways; and expands, moreover, to become America, the America of the present and of the past.<sup>15</sup> But the walk, like

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what Olney calls metaphors of the self – key images, tropes, symbols – which compress events into a pattern apprehendable to all readers and to himself. Here follows Olney's definition of the self: "The self expresses itself by the metaphors it creates and projects, and we know it by those metaphors; but it did not exist as it now does and as it now is before creating its metaphors. We do not see or touch the self, but we do see and touch its metaphors" (34).

<sup>15</sup> I am here paraphrasing Carson McCullers' words, as quoted in the back cover of the Harcourt Brace edition of the book.

autobiography, does not have a final full stop; it can only have an open conclusion. This is a key sentence of another immigrant autobiography, Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*:

I continue to *sort out* what's just my childhood, just my imagination, just my family, just the village, just movies, just living.<sup>16</sup>

A statement which is, again, notably similar to Kazin's thoughts in his final walk:

When we went home... with the lights of Jamaica Avenue spread before us, it was hard to think of them as something apart, they were *searching out* so many new things in me (176).

.... The "sorting out", "searching out" which is yet another never-ending story.

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## ■ “On the Other Side of the Looking-Glass”: Andrea Lee’s *Russian Journal*

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Migrant African American women have created a consistent autobiographical tradition within the African American literary discourse since slavery times. Within this framework, Andrea Lee in her work *Russian Journal* (1979) revises the previous tradition from a contemporary perspective exploring the “passage” that she experiences when travelling to Russia and the displacement that this voluntary and temporal exile means. However, her travel narrative could be regarded as exceptional and even anomalous, since her displacement caused by the confrontation with another culture does not answer expectations neither of a serious questioning of the value system of both countries – U.S. and Russia – nor of a revaluation of the role played by racism and male chauvinism within both seemingly diverging models. Although Russia seems to represent at first the “Other” of the U.S., a sort of dreamy paradise away from racial and sexual prejudice, and her newly-acquired status as a foreigner confers special privileges on her, the analysis of her cultural “passing” is soon complicated by the other kind of passing that takes place around her: the unconditional fascination for American culture on the part of the Russian population. This eagerness of identification with the privileged standard draws Russians to develop an obsession leading to internal divisions. The analysis of both kinds of passing confirms the protagonist’s sense of



the impossible fulfilment of any complete passage, sense that haunts this expatriate's account.

Coming from a long tradition of African American women travellers that started with slave narratives and spiritual autobiographies,<sup>1</sup> in which travel becomes, as Mary G. Mason acutely observes, "a metaphor for Afro-American women's life as journey" (337) rooted in reality, Andrea Lee's travel narrative at first seems to fit perfectly into place. Lee's journal recalls this tradition using her narrative as a device to explore her experiences in Russia in a series of sketches of Russian life that she recorded during the ten months she spent there with her husband. As she literally says in the foreword that opens the work, these sketches conform a "personal landscape" (viii) of her stay in Russia, then still the Soviet Union. However, right from these introductory remarks, a key seems to be out of tune when she further delineates her intention in setting down the personal memories of her trip:

I don't pretend – nor did I expect – that this journal might explain the character of a political system, or a people. Each entry presents a small piece of Russian reality as seen by an American whose vision, if not refined by study, was at least not much distorted by prejudice for or against Communism. (viii)

Her claim to political neutrality and objectivity in her account combined with her humble attitude with regard to the narrated events produces two opposite effects in the alert reader: on the one hand, it clashes with the traditional involvement of narrators in African American women's travel narratives and autobiographies; while on the other, it calls attention to Lee's conscious use of rhetorical devices employed even by slave narrators.<sup>2</sup> So it can be concluded that the positioning of the narrator appears contradictory right from the beginning.

<sup>1</sup> In slave narratives the journey motif is always present, either as a reality in the case of many slave women who escaped to the North, or as a device for freedom as in the famous instance of Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861). In Jacobs' narrative the trope for the impossibility of physical movement, since she is constrained to hide from her master in a closet for many years, allows for a metaphorical reading of her journey as her "quest for home" that William L. Andrews regards as the main purpose of the narrative (*To Tell* 239). In spiritual autobiographies the journey becomes a metaphor for "the soul's journey, not only from damnation to salvation but also to a realization of one's true place and destiny in the divine scheme of things" (Andrews, "Introduction" 10-1), and therefore, Andrews continues, these spiritual journeys document "the growth of authentic, individually authorized selfhood" (16).

<sup>2</sup> As Andrews argues, "the Afro-American autobiography was a genre chiefly distinguished by its rhetorical aims", used basically to address what he terms as "the crucial themes of identity and veracity" (*To Tell* 1). In fact, Lee's claim to objectivity coincides with the slave narrators' main role of "truth-teller", who transcribed the reality of black experience to white audiences eager to find out about the institution of slavery.

Therefore, placing Lee's diary within the female African American travel tradition raises specific problems, mainly related to the central purpose of the narrative. According to Mason, there seem to be two basic aims behind this tradition: the first one is what she herself defines as "action and commitment to social change" (339) and the second one is associated to a vision of the travel motif as "a metaphor for self-discovery" (342). The problematic aspect of Lee's journal is precisely the apparent lack of focus on any of them, since her political and personal allegiances are clear throughout the narration and she does not seem to address the issue of identity either. In a way, her version of Russia is greatly influenced by her American beliefs and ideas, up to the point that she seems to remain untouched by her experience there. Besides, her stance as an objective and neutral observer subverts the personal involvement of black women's travellers in their narratives, who traditionally use them to disclose their intimate selves and search for self-defined identities, showing an acute awareness of a duality, a split between private and public selves. This self-divided image, however, seems to be denied in Lee's case due to both her neutral positioning and her lack of personal involvement.

Regarding firstly her assertion to neutrality and objectivity, her political and social affiliation to America is even made explicit by the end of her narration: "As for me, I'm not particularly in love with the old or the newer version of America. Living in Russia, however, has made me more of a patriot than I ever, ever expected to be" (184). She constantly defines herself as American, especially in contrast to Russians and most of her comments seem to be prompted by some sort of patriotic spirit. For instance, she acknowledges her disappointment with Russia very early in the narration due to her persistent comparison to America: "... I was filled with an unconscious and devastating disappointment. Hardly realising it, as I walked around the city, I was looking for the constant sensory distractions I was accustomed to in America" (84). This attitude forces her to a sort of oblique approach to Russia, whereby Russia is seen as the exact counterpart to America, as if she were watching it, as she literally says in the foreword, "on the other side of the looking-glass" (viii). This interesting metaphor is sustained throughout the whole work by a speaker, who recounts her journey to Russia refusing to confront the political and social dichotomies emerging from the confrontation between the divergent value systems upheld by both countries, especially the quandaries of sexism and racism.

Lee's refusal to face these issues confers the journal an eerie atmosphere, almost as if it could be interpreted as a fairy tale. Actually, her depiction of Russia is often connected to her childhood memories of fairy tales, in which her "visions of Russia were of an infinite forest, dark as any forest that stretches through a

child's imagination, and peopled by swan maidens, hunter princes, fabulous bears, and witches who lived in huts set on chicken legs" (4). Russia becomes for Lee "a mysterious counterweight to the known world of America" (4). Her version of Russia thus seems to be strongly distorted by a somewhat singular perspective, characterized above all by idealistic and fantastic notions. Russia is represented as a sort of dreamlike paradise, a haven from racist and sexist practices in America. Despite this idyllic depiction, through the strategic reference to the "innocent" world of fairy tales, Lee problematises Russia as the "Other", the other side of the looking-glass, due to the fact that such a picture does not hold very long, contrasting strikingly with the actual Russia that she encounters in her tenth-month stay, where she faces many instances of racial and sexual prejudice that she does not fail to document. Nevertheless, she insistently refuses to acknowledge the import of those events in the name of objectivity and neutrality.

In fact, Lee's construction of Russia as the "Other" with respect to America is a constant source of anxiety in the text, since she appropriates the so-called "colonial discourse" to deal with it. This appropriation on her part is quite problematic placing her in an uncomfortable position that questions her validity as a neutral speaker, grounded on two main reasons: on the one hand, her positioning presupposes an extensive and profound knowledge of the subject, which she does not possess in the least, as she openly admits in the foreword above mentioned. Quite the opposite, she demonstrates an almost childish attitude in her approach to it, as noticed previously. On the other hand, and despite her ignorance, she constructs a certain image of Russia that follows the patterns of colonial rule, because, as Homi Bhabha argues, "the construction of the colonial subject in discourse, and the exercise of colonial power through discourse, demands an articulation of forms of difference – racial and sexual" (38), and she draws both coordinates of difference very neatly in her account, paying special attention to ethnic belonging and women's issues respectively. In this way, she is caught in an unsolvable dilemma seeking an almost neutral narratorial perspective that is continually hindered in the work by her unconscious use of a privileged colonizer position.

As far as ethnicity is concerned, she profusely comments upon the ethnic group that corresponds to individuals or communities. A clear illustration of this interest is her account of the freshmen that gather the first day of class at Moscow State:

I was surprised to find so few representatives of the various Soviet ethnic and racial groups. Most students were clearly Great Russian, the ethnic group that dominates Central European Russia and makes up most of the population of Moscow. (36)

The point of the quotation seems to be merely descriptive, although some direct implications can be derived concerning the racist practices that allow for this situation to take place, more so when she has previously detailed the expensive and complex procedure students must undergo in order to qualify for University. Therefore she does register this lack of balance in the student population, but is not willing to draw the evident conclusion from her picture. In the same line, she even evokes another occasion on which she was told by a Russian friend that racism did not exist in Russia, adding that he affirmed that "studiously ignoring the fact that we'd just heard a Russian woman cursing a 'filthy' African on a crowded bus" (15). Once more, in this case the reference does not go beyond a passing comment in her friend's description, as she stubbornly refuses to explore its significance with regard to either the Russian or the American contexts.

Moreover, she also deals with the issue of the women's liberation movement in Russia, transcribing a discussion in which Raiza, a Russian woman whom she teaches English to, articulates Russian women's complaints openly: "What kind of life is it to work all day alongside our men, and then to come home to cook, clean, and care for children while they don't even lift a finger?" (139). The answer comes from another Russian woman who expresses her wish to take her daughter to America because she does not "want her to have to endure what her mother and her aunts did" (140). So the image that Lee presents of Russian women is certainly bleak. Despite their beauty that she constantly prizes in her depiction, most of them are suffocating in their roles of mothers, workers and housewives and, as a result, they are "prematurely aged, or sallow and blemished by poor diet and the hardness of life in general" (56). As it happened with racial differences, the sexual ones are just stated and never analysed deeply. These differences become trivialized as a mere pretext to contrast Russian and American value systems, the colonized versus the colonizer, always in favour of the colonizer's standpoint.

Obviously, the unconvincing aspect of Lee's narrative lies not only in her use of colonial discourse to deal with the constructed "Other" and thus in her failure to engage in an active involvement for political and social change, but also in the apparent lack of the second purpose characteristic of African American women's travel narratives, namely, search for identity. In this case, however, the lack seems to be guided by a conscious effort on the writer's part to resist classifications and categorizations. This active resistance to being codified as black and woman becomes quite meaningful, because it undoubtedly implies a negation of the self. And this negation is at the heart of the difficulties encountered when dealing with the text's ideological framework, because negating the self or hiding the self complicates both the speaker's own position and her reading of Russia as the "Other" with respect to America.

To start with, her position in Russia can be certainly defined as equivocal, since she is an American tourist who lives like Russians. But she is also an African American woman that does not reveal her racial background until page 151 and then, only in passing, while describing Ibrahim, another character: "Toward me he showed the absolute lack of interest with which many Africans greet American blacks" (151). The postponement of this revelation could be simply justified as part of her wish to remain neutral and objective to her subject-matter. In spite of that desire, and within the travel convention, Lee's choice can be interpreted as either an act of defiance of the established codes, or more likely, as a device for self-erasure in her attempt to achieve a general representation of the American voice in Russia and, concurrently, to avoid one of the greatest conflicts in African American women's autobiography: the existence of colliding voices in the narration.

So deferring the acknowledgment of her race until half-way through the book, Lee purposely omits the racial bias from her arguments, pursuing a sort of universality, that focuses the attention on a clash between Russia and America at an abstract level and assumes the overall representation of Americans in Russia. This fact is shown in the identification she constantly feels with other Americans, for example in sentences like "in this country we're gods" (132), where the use of "we" is quite significant. Evidently, this representative position is directly associated to her status as an American in Russia that bestows upon her countless privileges, as she herself confesses:

We're rich in this country, richer than I ever would have dreamed possible. I realized this first at the peasant market, but now it is knowledge I live with every minute. We have what everyone wants: American dollars; clothes, especially jeans; books; records; cosmetics; appliances. (22)

As it was verified before, this privileged position becomes problematized, since it springs from an unmistakable willingness to take on what could be identified as "white privilege". Therefore, Lee seems to be "passing" consciously hiding her racial origins to take advantage of the favored life of Americans in Russia.

What is more, Lee is quite pleased with this life and she recounts different occasions on which she was treated with special favor just because she was American, as one of her Russian friends irritatingly puts it: "You are . . . almost nobodies over in your own country: just two young students. And over here, just because you're foreigners, you get to eat in special restaurants and go to special performances with celebrities!" (178). Stating the contrast between America and Russia, however, makes her life even more anomalous, since she occupies an in-between position between both countries and both value systems. She

insistently makes use of a privileged status to access to possibilities that are denied to Russian citizens, but simultaneously declares to live like all other Russians: "... we lived on rubles, stood in queues, and rode the metro with ordinary Russians" (viii). This insider/outsider dichotomy is actually at the core of the problematic nature of Lee's text. In a sense, she is both white (due to her privileged American status) and black, and therefore Russian, as it will be explained later on.

This dichotomy also helps her to bypass one of the most complicated points in the African American women's travel tradition, particularly the conflicting voices that coexist in these autobiographies. Mason clarifies that their existence is usually a reflection of "the censorship imposed on an author addressing a white audience, and sometimes the censorship imposed just for speaking as a woman" (353), and she concludes by affirming that in the end these voices "witness the particular difficulty black women have in asserting selfhood in the patriarchal white world as well as in the patriarchal black world" (255). Also here Lee seems to be subverting the conventional pattern making use of a third strategy, that is, self-denial. She denies her self by negating its involvement with the narrated facts, even employing this strategy almost like "passing" characters,<sup>3</sup> because she is simultaneously inside and outside. Being both black and white, Russian and American, she is neither, and thus, her actual self is denied voice and autonomy. She chooses to hide her black self to achieve universality as American, but in the process she loses her own identity.

Therefore, this method of combining self-erasure and "passing" at the same time calls attention to the impossibility of fulfilment that pervades Lee's account. Her closing remarks underline this impossibility talking concurrently about finding and losing the self. On the one hand, she documents the joy and freedom she and her husband felt when leaving Russia: "we felt released from a subtle and deadly confinement, which, we only now realized, had sapped our spirits for ten months" (234). Their celebration of returning to a free sense of self reflects Lee's conviction about the evil effects of her stay in Russia, presenting a last image of the country no longer as a paradise, but quite the contrary, as a sort of prison from which they have managed to escape. This depiction of Russia emphasizes once more her troubled position as narrator and her use of colonial typical stereotypes to deal with the dark "Other". On the other, however, she recalls another image that exemplifies quite vividly the complete antithesis personified in her friend Rima:

<sup>3</sup> "Passing" novels usually feature a mulatto protagonist who seems to be torn between black and white identities. This tradition that basically starts with slave narratives reaches its culmination during the Harlem Renaissance in the decade of the twenties, when many of the best "passing" novels were written, like Nella Larsen's *Quicksand* and *Passing*, published in 1928 and 1929 respectively.



"Rima – to whom I'd given nearly all my clothes – was wearing a dress of mine; for a moment it seemed that I had left myself in Russia" (234). This passage speaks of a clear sense of loss of self that Lee experiences on her departure, that contrasts with the celebratory tone of the previous quote. It is also one of the very few moments in the text in which Lee admits some kind of personal involvement with her narration. Once more, both passages can be summarized as another instance of Lee's contradictory and problematic attitude throughout the narrative enacted by means of a constant "passing" and denial, that accounts for her distancing from the conventional self portrayed in African American female travel narratives.

Finally, Lee's cultural and narratorial "passing" is complicated one step further by the other kind of "passing" that takes place around her: the unreserved fascination for American culture on the part of the Russian population. In a way, it seems that Russians are trapped by this fascination with the West, and concretely, with anything American. Many Russians feel the need to identify with what they consider to be the American way of life, in an effort to reject their own roots and, especially, their own value system. This unconditional admiration for America is continually stressed in the journal, according to which America is constructed as a paradise, reversing Lee's initial hierarchy. This constructed image is well illustrated in the case of the students Lee teaches English to who believe blindly in it. Obviously, this fact provokes irritation in Lee: "What unnerves me is the eager assumption in their voices and eyes that they are leaving not simply for a freer country, but for the blessed land of silver streets, God's kingdom on earth" (133). However, the artificiality of such an image is soon revealed by her friend Rima: "Right now they have to believe in America as a paradise, don't you see? They have to make up a dream to travel to. Otherwise they'd lose their nerve" (133). In this case, then, the trick is laid bare as the students' justification to be able to leave their country behind. Nevertheless, the fascination with America runs through the entire fabric of Russian society affecting all classes, even the supposedly Communist elite.

Indeed, this eagerness to identify with anything American develops into a kind of obsession to possess any object that looks American or any feature that seems American – from clothes to records, or even the English language itself. This obsession becomes even a cause of distinction among Russians, and within individuals themselves, amounting to a case of split personality, which is explained as follows by another Russian character who also wants to leave Russia:

There is one man in me that loves this country strongly, very strongly. I am, after all, a Russian. But there is another part of me that wants to live and cannot do so here. Life is too hard. I can't go on being divided like this. (142)



He senses the absolute need to leave the country in order to fulfill his life expectations but, at the same time, he also realises the internal division that is destroying his inner self. Images of self-division abound in the text, showing Russian characters who are torn between their allegiance to their country of birth and their attraction to an idealistic picture of America as the land of opportunity and freedom.

The most striking example of such division is the case of Valerii, who is said to lead "two lives, a Moscow State student whose situation is an example of the sometimes-fatal love affair many young Russians have with the West" (101). This internal duality becomes even dangerous for his life, since he takes advantage of his official position in the Communist party to obtain important privileges, while avowing to hate his own country. Lee applies to him a very adequate description using a sentence from 1984: "The clever thing was to break the rules and stay alive all the same" (102). In this way, Valerii stands for the internal struggle of most Russians that have to lead a double life, living simultaneously inside and outside the system. This schizophrenic sense of self is aptly termed by Valerii himself as "passing", that is even defined as "one of his greatest pleasures; when he describes it, his eyes flash with an almost hysterical brilliance" (102). In a sense, this last passage condenses the effects of such schizophrenia in Valerii, whose lack of fixed anchor almost drives him to insanity and self-hatred, as he himself points out: "We turn on to Western stuff and start to hate ourselves" (105). Then, the main result of this "passing" attitude, this divided self experienced by many Russians is a clear sense of self-rejection and self-hatred, very similar to feelings mulattoes experience in "passing" novels.<sup>4</sup>

Going one step further, however, it can be contended that this sense of divided self in Russians can be also equated to African Americans' lack of wholeness, well illustrated in the idea of double consciousness promoted by W. E. B. DuBois in his groundbreaking work *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), encapsulated in his oft-quoted passage:

The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife, – this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older

<sup>4</sup> The mulatto protagonists of many "passing" novels show an unmistakable self-division that, according to some critics, leads them either to insanity or self-hatred. For example, in the case of the mulatto protagonist of *An Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* by James Weldon Johnson (1912), Robert Fleming states: "Black self-hatred is another important theme employed by Johnson. Constantly told that he is a member of an inferior race, the black man may come to believe or fear that he really is inferior" (122).

selves to be lost ... He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of opportunity closed roughly in his face. (3)

Apart from the distances between both groups, Russians and blacks feel the same sense of internal partition and loss, being torn between two allegiances. In the case of Russians the feelings of love and hatred toward their own country constantly blend, producing much confusion and disorientation and leading them in many cases to a complete rupture with Russia and a keen wish to travel to America.

Ultimately, this image of self-division and loss of self parallels up to a certain point Lee's position in the journal. The two "passings" – Russians' and Lee's – demonstrate the impossibility to achieve a full sense of self, a complete passage to the other side. For Russians this means the continuous dilemma between the allegiance to their own country and the fascination with an imaginary West. For Lee such impossibility foregrounds the lack of validity of her position as neutral observer, since her rendering of Russia is undoubtedly biased. Russians wish to be Americans to take advantage of the opportunities of the West, and thus they deny their Russianness in their attempt to become Americanized. Lee assumes a status of white privilege to account for her displacement in Russia, and thus she denies and erases her black self. The final consequence is a sense of incomplete passage in both cases, as images of self-division and lack of wholeness are recurrent throughout the text. Lee's narrative thus tackles but fails to address fundamental issues such as racism and sexism that would have enriched her vision. In the end, the other side of the looking-glass remains on the other side and, therefore, unattainable.

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## ■ Agentes de una aproximación cultural: viajeros españoles en los Estados Unidos tras la Guerra Finisecular

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Desde mediados del siglo XIX el interés europeo hacia la sociedad estadounidense quedó patente en la magnífica obra de *La democracia americana* de Alexis Tocqueville. No fue este el único análisis de la nueva sociedad que se gestaba en Estados Unidos, pues pronto algunos españoles se interesaron por aquella que se estaba fraguando con ciertas peculiaridades. Es así como el relato de esa especificidad, sobre todo en algunos temas relativos al ordenamiento cívico y a la aparición de nuevos actores, también llamó la atención al español Ramón de la Sagra quien, en 1835, plasmó con descripciones minuciosas en su obra *Cinco meses en los Estados Unidos de América del Norte*, su opinión sobre la nueva sociedad estadounidense, a fin de darlo a conocer a España<sup>1</sup>. Años más tarde, otros españoles viajeros, o visitantes de la Exposiciones Universales celebradas en Filadelfia, 1876 y en Chicago, 1893, dieron testimonio de la emergencia de esta

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<sup>1</sup> Ramón de la SAGRA, *Cinco meses en los Estados Unidos de la América del Norte desde el 20 de abril al 23 de septiembre de 1835. Diario de viaje de ...*, Imprenta de Pablo Renouard, París, 1836.

sociedad como potencia regional en la que España mantenía fuertes intereses coloniales, económicos y políticos. Pero fue sobre todo al final del siglo cuando los Estados Unidos se convirtieron en un mito de desarrollo industrial y comenzaron a ejercer considerable fascinación sobre las sociedades Europeas de aquellos años<sup>2</sup>.

Ahora bien, las imágenes amplias y atinadas que intentaron crear los viajeros españoles del siglo XIX, en su esfuerzo por conocer y comprender los Estados Unidos, se diluyeron durante la coyuntura que condujo a los dos países al enfrentamiento bélico. Y así, entre 1895 y 1898 florecieron los estereotipos, se deformaron las imágenes, o surgió en el panorama cultural una contra-imagen, que sólo resaltaba aspectos negativos de la civilización norteamericana.

Nos interesa destacar en este estudio el espíritu de una serie de aquellos viajeros españoles que, a partir de 1899, intentan restituir una imagen más equilibrada sobre las características reales de la sociedad estadounidense, y describen fidedignamente las virtudes y vicios del pueblo estadounidense. Por este cometido se convierten en intermediarios culturales entre ambas sociedades. Los protagonistas de esta restitución de imagen, que aportan a la sociedad española un mejor conocimiento sobre los Estados Unidos, serán personas que han viajado por tierras americanas, y que manifiestan un interés por conocer con profundidad a la sociedad estadounidense.

Los escritos de algunos de esos viajeros españoles, que nos testimoniaron cuanto vieron y reflexionaron, tienen como propósito analizar y evaluar sus percepciones sobre los Estados Unidos, y paralelamente resaltar su contribución a un reencuentro entre ambas sociedades entre 1900 y 1914. Fue en esos años, por ejemplo cuando surgió un incipiente primero, y luego un pujante hispanismo en los Estados Unidos.

El proceso iniciado de restitución de la imagen de los Estados Unidos en España, en la primera década del siglo XX, se constata en la existencia de ese grupo heterogéneo de viajeros, que muestra el nuevo interés hacia los Estados Unidos, nacido entre las élites españolas. Su composición social, sus motivaciones ideológicas, sus intereses por conocer la sociedad estadounidense son elementos analizables. De este modo se podrán valorar los relatos de viajes atendiendo a lo que dicen, como y para quién los escriben. Son testimonios de intelectuales,

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<sup>2</sup> Al respecto véanse los trabajos de Isabel GARCÍA-MONTÓN G.-BAQUERO, "El ingeniero José Jordana y Morera: un visitante de la Exposición Internacional de Filadelfia, 1876". *Congreso Internacional de Historia de América*, 7º, Diputación General de Aragón, Zaragoza, 1998, II, pp. 1023-1030; y "Españoles en la Exposición Universal de Chicago, 1893". *Actas del III Congreso de la Sociedad Española para el Estudio de los Estados Unidos: Fin de siglo, crisis y nuevos principios*, Universidad, Secretariado de Publicaciones, León, 1999, pp. 137-147.

comerciantes, ingenieros e hispanistas, que fueron observadores desde diferentes ángulos. Los relatos de viaje que han sido seleccionados para este estudio muestran la evolución de las relaciones culturales entre España y los Estados Unidos, entre los años 1899 y 1914. El movimiento de aproximación de las sociedades es principalmente el viaje de negocios, turístico y cultural. Son precisamente estos viajeros quienes intentan modificar los prejuicios y las ideas tergiversadas, como consecuencia del conflicto bélico del 1898, ofreciendo sus experiencias y su información en sus notas de viaje<sup>3</sup>.

Ejemplos interesantes de estas manifestaciones de acercamiento se encuentran en los escritos del menorquín Esteban Amengual, marino y comerciante, que publicó, en 1899, *Sencillos recuerdos de mis 30 viajes y excursiones a los Estados Unidos*. En 1903 José Alemany y Milá relató su experiencia de viaje de turismo, en una obra titulada *Los Estados Unidos impresiones de viaje*. Dos años después Eduardo Maristany y Gilbert, ingeniero, escribió *Impresiones de un viaje a los Estados Unidos*, a su regreso del VII Congreso Internacional de ferrocarriles, celebrado en Washington. En 1913 el profesor universitario Luis García Guijarro nos da un excelente testimonio de su viaje de estudios a los Estados Unidos, en *Notas Americanas*<sup>4</sup>.

Centraré este estudio en algunos aspectos comunes de los escritos de estos viajeros, que fueron temas influyentes en la formación de la opinión pública de la sociedad española: la educación, la evolución del papel de la mujer en la vida moderna y, finalmente, el interés en los Estados Unidos por lo español y el florecimiento del hispanismo.

## La educación

La amplia difusión del conocimiento era uno de los requisitos, desde los Padres Fundadores, para el éxito de la experiencia republicana. A pesar de su lenta expansión a todos los niveles, a principios del siglo XX, ya se podía contar con una amplia escolarización gratuita, y un creciente número de escuelas

<sup>3</sup> Estos autores han sido seleccionados porque afirman que el objetivo de sus textos es brindar elementos que ayuden a restaurar la imagen de los Estados Unidos en la sociedad española.

<sup>4</sup> Esteban AMENGUAL, *Sencillos recuerdos de mis 30 viajes y excursiones a los Estados Unidos: con ligeras apreciaciones sobre aquel pueblo*. Imprenta La Catalana, Barcelona, 1899; José ALEMANY y MILÁ, *Los Estados Unidos impresiones de viaje*. Francisco Baxarías, Barcelona, 1903; Eduardo MARISTANY y GILBERT, *Impresiones de un viaje a los Estados Unidos*. Henrich y Cía., Barcelona, 1905, y Luis GARCÍA GUIJARRO, *Notas Americanas*. Imprenta de Fortanet, Madrid, 1913.



secundarias de carácter público en todos los Estados. La educación superior también tenía sus notables logros. En 1900 existían 500 Universidades, pero no todas podían llamarse instituciones de aprendizaje superior, ni todas eran sostenidas por fondos públicos. La disponibilidad de recursos para el financiamiento de las instituciones escolares variaba en cada región, por lo que se presentaba una gran disparidad regional. Nueva York y Massachusetts respaldaban con mayor generosidad su sistema escolar que los estados del Medio Oeste, y todas las demás regiones gastaban mucho más que el Sur, aunque también hay que decir que éstos mejoraron sus instalaciones a partir de 1900.

La visión que nos refieren nuestros viajeros refleja, por tanto, el funcionamiento de las instituciones educativas estadounidenses de los estados del Este, principalmente en la ciudad de Nueva York y el estado de Massachusetts, a los que ciñeron sus visitas. Sin embargo, también introducen comentarios referentes al sistema educativo general. Así pues, podemos sistematizar la información que se brinda en los relatos de viaje, atendiendo tanto a los aspectos generales, como a la generalización de la enseñanza, o lo más novedoso del sistema educativo, a la mirada de estos observadores españoles.

Estados Unidos era un país receptor de emigrantes a gran escala, y tenía una copiosa necesidad de “americanizar” a la masa migratoria, que serían sus nuevas generaciones por cultivar. Para entonces la población total de los Estados Unidos en 1910 era de 92.228.622 habitantes, de ellos correspondían al estado de Nueva York 9.113.614 y a Massachusetts, 3.366.416. La instrucción se hizo obligatoria para todos, y al mismo tiempo, sentó la base de la prosperidad material de las futuras generaciones pro hijadas, y de su desarrollo económico.

Ya García Guijarro recoge en su obra *Notas americanas* en el capítulo titulado “*El Alma Mater*” los fundamentos precedentes sobre la educación en los Estados Unidos, y señala la figura de los mecenas como un pilar fundamental, por su activa participación en la instrucción y en la museología. Reseña en especial la educación femenina en todas las escuelas, desde la instrucción básica a los altos estudios universitarios.

Incluimos algunos de los comentarios del profesor García Guijarro, sobre la repercusión en la mejora de la sociedad que conlleva la aplicación de un sistema de educación pública: *Con esta táctica la instrucción se hace obligatoria de hecho, por una necesidad del pueblo, como satisfacción del anhelo que todos los individuos sienten para mejorar su condición moral, base de la prosperidad material, sin verse obligados por la coacción del precepto legal, que si bien existe, rara vez ha de aplicarse*<sup>5</sup>.

Por otra parte, valora positivamente la participación de los capitales privados en la educación en la figura de los mecenas, al señalar algunos de ellos en su texto: ... *Los hombres han sido el origen de los grandes capitales: los Astor, Schaw, Vanderbilt, Carnegie... Despertóse en ellos la afición a la cultura y convirtieron sus expediciones europeas en viajes científicos ... se convirtieron en mecenas... comisiones científicas, contribuyen a las Universidades ...*, y reflexiona al valorar la colaboración del gran capital a la fundación y al desarrollo de las instituciones culturales y educativas, preguntándose: *¿Cuánto más provechoso para la Ciencia en general es un Museo, una escuela o una biblioteca aunque lleve el nombre de su protector?*<sup>6</sup> En su afán de dar cuenta de todo lo relativo al sistema educativo, este autor dedica un capítulo de su obra a analizar y criticar algunas de las características de los estudios superiores o universitarios. La Universidad, nos dice, se organizó a semejanza de las del Reino Unido, dando mucha importancia al deporte, al sistema tutorial, al espíritu de asociación, y al apoyo que recibían de los grandes mecenas del país. Además, dichas instituciones en aquellos años mostraban deficiencias denunciadas por García Guijarro como el escaso número de profesores para un numeroso alumnado, y la falta de tutorización de las actividades prácticas. Sus dudas sobre algunas innovaciones, contempladas por el sistema educativo en relación con el desarrollo físico como parte de la forma universitaria estadounidense se pueden apreciar en el siguiente párrafo: ... *durante su permanencia en el colegio se entrega casi en absoluto a los deportes, que demanda del alumno un entrenamiento que agota sus fuerzas y le privan del reposo necesario para el cultivo de las letras. En la elección de la Universidad el alumno atiende en gran parte a la preponderancia que en la misma tengan los deportes; las mismas autoridades de los colegios realizan la propaganda cantando las ventajas de la cultura física, llegando hasta a dar las condiciones del tipo universitario*<sup>7</sup>.

No obstante, en igual época, algunos viajeros destacaron la importancia de otros aportes a la instrucción pública española a partir del modelo estadounidense. Así, Alemany, en su estancia en Nueva York, coincidió con el doctor Casares, por aquellos años decano de la Facultad de Farmacia de la Universidad Central de Barcelona, que como delegado del gobierno de España estudiaba el sistema de instrucción pública. Ambos visitantes señalaron, tomando por referencia los de la ciudad Nueva York, que los Museos eran piedra capital de sistema educativo. Hicieron mención especial a los dedicados a las ciencias naturales y físicas como vehículos complementarios de la enseñanza. De igual modo, Maristany incluyó en

6 GARCÍA GUIJARRO, *Notas Americanas*, p. 28.

7 GARCÍA GUIJARRO, *Notas Americanas*, pp. 127-129.

sus notas de viaje reflexiones específicas sobre las Universidades y las bibliotecas a las que denominó “cuna de la intelectualidad y humanismo”<sup>8</sup>.

Una contribución especial en la instrucción estadounidense fue el movimiento de Chautauqua iniciado en 1874, que desarrolló las escuelas de verano para formar maestros de escuelas dominicales. Transformados más tarde en centros de formación para la educación de adultos, desarrollaron un sistema de educación por correspondencia y tutorías organizadas. García Guijarro visitó algunos de estos centros, entre ellos la escuela de verano Massawippi Scholl y los consideró una experiencia “curiosa” y digna de imitar por su propio contenido democrático<sup>9</sup>.

### Un nuevo actor social: la mujer

Por aquellos años, un fenómeno que despertaba ávido interés a los visitantes europeos era la incorporación de la mujer a todos los ámbitos de la sociedad. El protagonismo adquirido por la mujer estadounidense extrañaba a estos viajeros procedentes de sociedades con mentalidad mediterránea. En 1910 una quinta parte de la población activa de los Estados Unidos era femenina. La mujer luchaba por la legitimidad de sus derechos civiles, y su inserción plena en una sociedad dinámica e integradora en la que cabría dentro de los nuevos actores sociales. En esa época la formación de la mujer en Estados Unidos tuvo grandes progresos, ya desde la segunda mitad del siglo XIX. Hubo al principio amplios celos en el Este para aceptar la participación de la mujer en la universidad; pero el Oeste más avanzado y la fundación de universidades femeninas eliminaron estos prejuicios. Al finalizar el siglo, cuatro de cada cinco universidades ya estaban abiertas a las mujeres. Este movimiento femenino acabó presionando socialmente, y si no fue directamente, sí colaboró en el alcance del sufragio femenino iniciado en 1910 en algunos estados, y sancionado para toda la población femenina mayor de 21, en 1920. Así pues, el movimiento Reformista, en su desarrollo, fue indirectamente impulsado por mujeres ya preparadas intelectualmente.

Los relatos de viajes de esos años incluyen generalmente reflexiones sobre algunos aspectos de la mujer en la sociedad, y en otros casos, dedican capítulos específicos a relatar algunas de las particularidades de la mujer estadounidense en el ámbito de esa sociedad desarrollada y dinámica.

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<sup>8</sup> ALEMANY y MILA, *Los Estados Unidos impresiones de viaje ...*, p. 55 y MARISTANY y GILBERT, *Impresiones de un viaje a los Estados Unidos*, p. 299.

<sup>9</sup> GARCÍA GUIJARRO, *Notas Americanas*, pp. 159-163.

Un ejemplo interesante fue la visita de García Guijarro al Colegio de Wellesley, en New-Haven, institución para la educación superior de las jóvenes. Fue para él una experiencia nueva, pues no tenía referencia alguna sobre instituciones universitarias de carácter femenino. Wellesley era un colegio para mujeres y administrado por mujeres, donde podían alcanzar los grados de Bachiller en Artes y *Master of Arts*; la mujer podía dedicarse a cualquier clase de estudios “excepto a la medicina”. En ella los estudios filológicos gozaban de una marcada preferencia, se estudiaban por lo menos dos años, tanto lenguas clásicas como vivas, entre ellas el español. La enseñanza era en régimen de internado, pero no de “clausura”, al contrario, cerca de 1.200 alumnas gozaban de una amplia independencia<sup>10</sup>. García Guijarro reflexiona sobre la estructura y funcionamiento de esta institución: *¿Qué consideraciones hemos de hacer ante esa institución? ¿Puede achacársele la censura de ser un vivero feminista? ... Los mismos americanos se muestran divididos, y hay quien prefiere los Colegios pequeños..., no por la instrucción, sino por lo que sea atañe a la acción, carácter y resultados que la vida de esa gran familia pueda al espíritu de las alumnas*. En esta reflexión queda patente el temor de García Guijarro al asociacionismo que pudiera nacer de la agrupación de las mujeres universitarias, *¿Un vivero feminista?*, frase que predice la alarma por la incorporación de la mujer en todos los ámbitos de la sociedad, que, según el autor, iría en cierto modo en detrimento de su papel tradicional<sup>11</sup>.

Pero también existieron otras miradas, que aunque no fuesen de admiración hacia la mujer estadounidense, resaltaban otros aspectos sobre los rasgos sociales como son el trato respetuoso y sobre todo, la libertad de la que gozaban. El marino Amengual valora positivamente la consideración que la mujer recibía en la sociedad estadounidense, que él considera “digna costumbre”, y agrega el siguiente comentario: *Con las damas se tienen siempre toda clase de consideraciones ...*, y en la misma línea que el anterior autor, Alemany dedica comentarios elogiosos sobre el alto nivel de instrucción alcanzado por la mujer; dice así: *recibe casi como precepto reglamentario, una esmerada educación y demuestra su amor a la literatura y generalmente supera a los hombres en caligrafía*<sup>12</sup>.

No dejan de asombrarse los viajeros españoles de las costumbres y el espíritu de independencia que marca la vida de los estadounidenses, aspectos sobre los que Alemany recalca en la mujer: *Nótase también este espíritu de*

<sup>10</sup> GARCÍA GUIJARRO, *Notas Americanas*, pp. 75-79.

<sup>11</sup> GARCÍA GUIJARRO, *Notas Americanas*, p. 81.

<sup>12</sup> AMENGUAL, *Sencillos recuerdos de mis 30 viajes*, pp. 46-47, y ALEMANY, *Los Estados Unidos impresiones de viaje*, p. 99.

*independencia en la libertad que gozan las mujeres, así casadas como solteras. Unas y otras viven completamente emancipadas de la tutela y vigilancia de la familia, siendo cosa corriente en New York, el que las jóvenes solteras paseen y aun viajen en compañía de jóvenes solteros, incluso de su novio. Alégase en los Estados Unidos en pro de esa libertad, que si la mujer no sabe guardarse a sí misma poco hay que fiar en la vigilancia de los demás, porque también sabrá burlarla*<sup>13</sup>.

Estos comentarios extraídos de los relatos de viajes confirman que una de las manifestaciones más significativas de la sociedad estadounidense, a los ojos de los viajeros españoles, fue el protagonismo y los logros obtenidos por la mujer, y así los transmitieron a la sociedad española de su época.

## El interés por lo español: significadas demostraciones

Retomando la idea expuesta al inicio de este trabajo sobre la intermediación de estos viajeros como nexo de unión entre lo estadounidense y “lo español” de la época, habría que destacar la perplejidad que experimentaron todos ellos al conocer el interés en los Estados Unidos por lo español. Especialmente detecta este fenómeno el profesor García Guijarro, que realizó su viaje en 1909, cuando se estaban dando a conocer las primeras actividades públicas de la *Hispanic Society of America*, para la que tuvo grandes elogios porque se fomentaba y daba a conocer la cultura española en los Estados Unidos. La *Hispanic Society of America* y el *Museo español*, ambas instituciones con sede en Nueva York, fueron inauguradas oficialmente el 20 de enero de 1908. Este gran gesto de hispanofilia fue llevado a cabo gracias a la iniciativa de Mr. Archer Milton Huntington, y a la colaboración de unos cuantos amantes de España. Se constituye esta sociedad para fomentar, ya en el orden crítico de investigación, ya en el de información y de divulgación, los estudios y la cultura hispánica<sup>14</sup>.

En 1909, Huntington patrocinó las exposiciones de Sorolla y de Zuloaga en Nueva York. Tanto a estas muestras de pintura española como a la *Hispanic Society* se les otorgó el aplauso y el reconocimiento internacional. Durante su estancia en los Estados Unidos, García Guijarro coincidió con estas exposiciones que contribuyeron a poner un pilar fundamental de la imagen española en ese país, de las que hace una acertada y crítica crónica: *El triunfo de las exposiciones*

<sup>13</sup> ALEMANY, *Los Estados Unidos impresiones de viaje...*, pp. 110-111.

<sup>14</sup> Puede consultarse el Catálogo de la exposición presentada en Madrid y en Valencia que recoge una interesante bibliografía y documentación sobre: *Sorolla y la Hispanic Society. Una visión de la España de entresiglos*. Madrid, Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, 1998.

de Sorolla y Zuloaga, ha sido llamada *The Resurrection of Spain...* El éxito de la pintura española se ha extendido a un amplio sector de la sociedad estadounidense...<sup>15</sup>, y continúa páginas adelante exaltando la repercusión en la sociedad estadounidense de las exposiciones: *no hay familia en Nueva York, y aún me atrevería a decir del Este, que no conozca a estos dos hombres y haya visitado las exposiciones de sus obras, o por lo menos visto las reproducciones que de los principales cuadros publicaron los periódicos en las ediciones dominicales. Ellos son los pioneers o avanzadas de la reputación de una reputación gloriosa para España, presentando en sus lienzos trozos de Patria...* A Sorolla le dedica grandes elogios y describe con toda clase de detalles la gran muestra de su pintura en Nueva York. Completa su estudio crítico con una valoración de las corrientes artísticas en España para que los españoles reconozcan el valor de lo español, que está siendo avalado internacionalmente, e impulsado por estas exposiciones en los Estados Unidos, y a su vez se hagan partícipes del éxito de la pintura española en ámbitos internacionales<sup>16</sup>.

La exposición de Sorolla, que se realizó entre el 4 de febrero y el 8 de marzo, consiguió un éxito sin precedentes, y aunque exagera García Guijarro en el número de visitantes, datos más recientes confirman la asistencia de más de 160.000 personas<sup>17</sup>. Este triunfo le valió a Sorolla, en 1910, para que Huntington realizase el encargo de veintinueve paneles que representarían las regiones de España como decoración de la Hispanic Society, pilar fundamental de la imagen de España en la sociedad estadounidense. García Guijarro reconoce en Huntington al mecenas introductor de Sorolla y de Zuloaga que permitió al pueblo americano *contemplar las hermosas aguas de la Malvarrosa y las figuras mates segovianas, las dos tendencias más salientes en la moderna pintura española: el clasicismo y el impresionismo...*<sup>18</sup>. En su fervor y pasión por la defensa del interés y de la presencia de lo español en Estados Unidos, llena su relato García Guijarro con la descripción pormenorizada de las actividades editoriales y culturales de la *Hispanic Society*, así como de la relación de algunos miembros honorarios españoles: Menéndez y Pelayo, Menéndez Pidal y Bonilla San Martín<sup>19</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> GARCÍA GUIJARRO, p. 42.

<sup>16</sup> GARCÍA GUIJARRO, pp. 35-42.

<sup>17</sup> MITCHELL A. CODDING: "Archer Milton Huntington, paladín de España en América". *Sorolla y la Hispanic Society. Una visión de la España de entresiglos*. Madrid, Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, 1998, pp. 91-119.

<sup>18</sup> GARCÍA GUIJARRO, p. 28.

<sup>19</sup> García Guijarro destaca la publicación de la *Revue Hispanic* y las ediciones facsímiles de obras españolas del siglo XVI, también alude al éxito que tuvieron las conferencias de Menéndez y Pidal, sobre la epopeya castellana, y enumera los cuadros de autoridades y literatos que adornan la Hispanic Society: Menéndez y Pelayo, Cossío, Blasco Ibáñez, Beruete



La ponderación final que hace García Guijarro de la *Hispanic Society* estuvo acompañada de un cierto desánimo para su propio país, como lo manifiesta el siguiente comentario: *Esta es la institución que tanto honra a su fundador y a España, consuelo muy grato para los que la vemos denigrada y escarnecida por sus mismo hijos*<sup>20</sup>.

En otros aspectos culturales también se detectan relevantes gestos de hispanofilia. García Guijarro en el capítulo titulado “España en América”, nos ilustra la necesidad de los estadounidenses del idioma español: *siendo el inglés y el español casi los únicos idiomas hablados en ambas Américas, los americanos del Norte, estando en disposición política más tranquila y estable que las otras Repúblicas, al emprender su régimen expansivo y de penetración por la parte española, habían de hacerlo con ligeras insinuaciones, sin choques bruscos, adaptándose a las costumbres e idiomas de los pueblos penetrados, aunque a la postre implanten sus maneras y hasta su lengua. Y he aquí por qué el español figura en todos los currícula de los colegios y Universidades de los Estados Unidos... Pero lo que en sus comienzos fue un arma de penetración y simple instrumento mercantil, luego fue objeto de atento estudio y escrupulosa investigación, hasta el punto de que hoy pueden citarse muchos nombres como los de los profesores: Marden de John Hopkins University, (Baltimore); H. Lang, de Yale; Ford, en Harvard; R. Schewill, de Berkeley, ...*<sup>21</sup>.

La lectura es una de las costumbres más habituales en los Estados Unidos, en los relatos de viaje este tema se anota repetidamente como particularidad del pueblo estadounidense. Se lee tanto prensa como literatura, y sobre todo se señala que se realiza durante los largos desplazamientos por las grandes ciudades como Nueva York. Alemany nos aproxima al mundo del lector, y recoge una muestra de las lecturas preferidas, entre las que destacan importantes autores clásicos y contemporáneos españoles, que se ilustra con el siguiente comentario: *libros recreativos ... se venden con preferencia, las obras de procedencia inglesa, Dickens principalmente, las obras francesas de Dumas, Feuillet y Ohnet, y las españolas de Alarcón, Valera, Pérez Galdós, Palacio Valdés, Pardo Bazán, y algunos clásicos como Calderón, siendo de advertir que ninguna de las obras españolas están traducidas, a excepción de El Gran Galeoto, de Echegaray, que se representó con éxito en un teatro de Nueva York. Según Alemany el no estar traducidas limita su lectura, pues son rarísimos los americanos que hablan el idioma español, aunque*

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y Menéndez Pidal, brindando así el mayor número de datos y noticias sobre esta institución a fin de conseguir el encumbramiento de lo español para que los españoles puedan apreciar el reconocimiento por otras sociedades.

20 GARCÍA GUIJARRO, p. 48.

21 GARCÍA GUIJARRO, pp. 44-47.



*se enseña en las escuelas públicas desde la guerra con España*, e incluye en su relato una sugerencia que le hizo un importante librero de Nueva York para que la transmitiera a los editores españoles, animándoles a traducir al inglés las obras de los autores citados, dada la demanda de sus clientes por la novela española, superior a las obras de otros autores anglosajones<sup>22</sup>.

## A modo de conclusión

No conocemos bien la ideología de los diversos viajeros que nos ofrecen los testimonios que hemos analizado. Pero conviene resaltar la coincidencia de las impresiones que recogen, en aspectos sustanciales, con las imágenes favorables que sobre los norteamericanos habían forjado las fuerzas políticas españolas que admiraban más el modelo estadounidense, como era el caso de los republicanos federales liderados por Pi y Margall. La profesora Sylvia Hilton<sup>23</sup> ha mostrado recientemente cómo fue esa fuerza política la que en la crisis de 1895-1898 se distanció del resto del espectro político español, al ofrecer en términos generales una visión positiva de los Estados Unidos. Los federales españoles usaban sus órganos de prensa para elogiar diversos aspectos de la sociedad y el gobierno federal norteamericano. Destacaron principalmente sus logros en el campo educativo, en la ampliación de los derechos de las mujeres y su incorporación a la vida social, y su dinamismo económico. Pocos años después, según los testimonios de nuestros viajeros, estos logros eran reconocidos no sólo por un sector marginal del espectro político español, sino por cualquier observador libre de prejuicios, y mínimamente informado. Las relaciones entre los Estados Unidos y España se habían normalizado. Y a esta normalización contribuyó el despliegue del “hispanismo”, que empezó a desarrollarse en los Estados Unidos en la primera década del siglo XX. Esta nueva mirada hacia España y el mundo hispano, que está en el trasfondo del “hispanismo” estadounidense, fue bien apreciada por nuestros viajeros, y fue causa y consecuencia de la nueva dinámica de las relaciones que se entablaron entre las sociedades española y norteamericana tras la guerra de 1898.

<sup>22</sup> ALEMANY, pp. 68-70

<sup>23</sup> Sylvia L. HILTON: “Los Estados Unidos como modelo: los federalistas españoles y el mito americano durante la crisis colonial de 1895-1898”. *Ibero-americana Pragensis*, Praga, XXXII, 1998, pp. 11-29.



## ■ Abriendo puertas, cerrando heridas: la legitimación de la frontera como espacio de indentidad para la comunidad méjico-americana

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Chicanas neither forgive nor feel guilty. Despite of, or because of, the Virgin of Guadalupe they are sacrilegous and blasphemous. More than we (Mexicanas) they identify themselves with la Chingada. We are also chingadas, but prefer not to recognize it (Elena Poniatowska, 1996: 50).

Elena Poniatowska, en calidad de reconocida escritora mejicana contemporánea, ha admitido los logros alcanzados por las chicanas en su lucha por una identidad como mujeres, mestizas, y grupo minoritario en Estados Unidos, y ha señalado cómo en los últimos veinte años, las chicanas han ganado más batallas que las mejicanas en cien. Con frescura, con espontaneidad, con sentido del humor, las chicanas han descubierto su sexualidad, la han admitido libremente, y han rechazado los heredados modelos maternos de sumisión que habrían entorpecido su camino hacia la toma de identidad. Mientras tanto, al otro lado de la frontera, la mujer mejicana se ve ahogada en la nostalgia del pasado, de las tradiciones, de los lamentos, sin ningún signo de autoestima (Poniatowska, 1996: 44,46).

Ambos grupos de mujeres pertenecen al mismo pueblo, al mejicano. Pero aquellas cuyas familias, de origen mestizo, vivían al norte de Méjico, en la frontera con los Estados Unidos, vieron conquistadas sus tierras por el todopoderoso vecino norteamericano, y forzosamente se vieron formando parte de la nación vecina; otras familias emigraron voluntariamente en busca de mejores condiciones económicas, dejando atrás, en ambos casos, vínculos de sangre con los compatriotas que se quedaron en Méjico, con los “auténticos” mejicanos.

Se habla entonces de dos tipos de mejicanos, los de éste y aquel lado de la frontera marcada por el Río Bravo o Río Grande. Ahora, los mejicanos con pasaporte americano, los chicanos, son considerados como extranjeros en Méjico. Y más aún, si se trata de mujeres, éstas son consideradas traidoras al tradicional prototipo de mujer mejicana. Méjico parece haber abandonado a todos los mejicanos pobres. Y Los mejicanos consideran a los chicanos simplemente como trabajadores indocumentados, o como mejicanos de segunda categoría que sólo se preocupan de imitar a los americanos. Los chicanos se encuentran, pues, rechazados con expresiones como “You are a traitor, you are not Mexican, you chose the United States”, o “Pocho, pocha, go back to your own country, you can’t even speak Spanish well” (Poniatowska, 1996: 36).

La frontera es pues una realidad hoy tan vigente como a mediados del siglo pasado, cuando los méjico-americanos empezaron a tomar conciencia de su identidad en esa tierra de nadie, en ese espacio intermedio entre dos culturas, entre dos países, Méjico y USA. Durante muchos años, los chicanos han vivido en lo que en Méjico se llamaron “ciudades de paso”, como Tijuana (en cuyo Casino “Agua Caliente” Rita Hayword comenzó su carrera como cantante bajo su verdadero nombre Lola Cansino). Los chicanos, olvidados de la mano de Méjico, no tuvieron a nadie en quien apoyarse más que en sí mismos.

Ya desde el Tratado de Guadalupe Hidalgo a mediados del siglo pasado, en 1848, la frontera méjico-americana pasó a ser considerada una Tercera Nación. En este territorio de dos mil millas de largo y no más de veinte millas de ancho, el llamado tercer mundo ha irrumpido sobre el primero. Desde San Diego/Tijuana en territorio californiano-mejicano hasta Brownsville/Matamoros en territorio tejano-mejicano, la frontera está habitada por una mayoría heterogénea no anglosajona que rechaza la hegemonía de los WASP, y aboga por una diversidad cultural.

Con todo, se estiman también como fronterizos aquellos mejicanos que viven en Chicago o incluso tan al norte como en Seattle. Y esto es así porque la frontera como concepto no se limita únicamente a un espacio geográfico, sino que la frontera es una seña de identidad, un espacio intermedio cultural e ideológico que los chicanos llevan grabado en su conciencia, desde Texas hasta Seattle, desde California hasta New York.

Esa idea de frontera como hibridación, como espacio liminal, espacio no tanto geográfico como mental, esa conciencia de ser mestizo dondequiera que el chicano se encuentre será la que trataremos en nuestro estudio cultural-literario (una zona de contacto entre la antropología y la crítica literaria) apoyado con ejemplos sacados de la obra de dos escritoras chicanas, Sandra Cisneros y Helena Viramontes.

No es fácil sobrevivir en esa tierra intermedia dominada por dos poderes extranjeros, el de la ciudad de Méjico y el de Washington DC, y si no lo es para los chicanos, menos aún para la mujer chicana que se ha servido de la literatura para legitimar esa zona intermedia como propia, para sentirse orgullosa de pertenecer a ella, y buscar, no una rígida delineación de su espacio, sino una interacción entre su cultura y la de los dos grandes países que lo bordean. La libertad con la que escriben las chicanas habría de ser un modelo para las mejicanas, quienes, incluso ahora, muestran una imperdonable ignorancia sobre la creación literaria llevada a cabo por sus compatriotas al otro lado de la frontera. Las grandes escritoras mejicanas no proceden generalmente de la clase trabajadora, con lo que no tienen un contacto tan directo con la realidad de los campos y de las fábricas como sí lo tienen las chicanas, quienes usan ese material de primera mano como inspiración para sus novelas y obras de denuncia.

La realidad de la frontera, con toda su plena vigencia (ahora, en las postrimerías del s. XX), con toda la efervescencia creativa, cultural, política y social que trae consigo, ha llevado a los críticos a hablar de “borderlands”/la frontera como una nueva dinámica que, a su vez, ha dado un nuevo impulso a los Estudios Chicanos, ahora situados en línea no inferior sino paralela a los “American Studies”. Motivo por el que situaremos nuestro trabajo, el llevado a cabo en estas páginas, en un marco más amplio, el de “estudios de la frontera”, abordados, asimismo, desde la “border theory” o teoría de la frontera.

El carácter dinámico de esta teoría nos hace situarla dentro de una síntesis de desarrollo articulado que partiría del folklore disidente, de la etnografía, del feminismo, de los estudios culturales, y más recientemente de los estudios de género, del postcolonialismo, de la deconstrucción, de la polifonía bakhtiniana. En una palabra, la teoría de la frontera dentro de los Estudios Chicanos actuaría como un objeto discursivo contrahegemónico que apuntaría contra los osificados marcos críticos en los estudios humanísticos (Saldívar, 1997: xii).

Se trataría de deconstruir las oposiciones binarias, blancos/marrones (o “café con leche”, tal como los mestizos chicanos son considerados por los mejicanos), mayoría hegemónica/ minoría étnica, “everyday culture”/“high culture”, gente con cultura (“people with culture”) /gente entre culturas (“people between cultures”). Dentro del carácter dinámico que la gente entre culturas

otorga a la frontera, se trataría, asimismo, de socavar las pretensiones nacionalistas y coloniales encaminadas a conseguir un ser unificado, en términos completamente reduccionistas. Y, por el contrario, se trataría de poner el acento en la hibridación, en la liminalidad, en el “llegar a ser” (“becoming”) más que en el “ser” (“being”), como correspondería a una auténtica identidad postcolonial, en flujo constante (Soto, 1998: 135, 139).

En la misma línea, se trataría de ahogar la tendencia hacia la unificación monológica, hacia las voces únicas, y, por el contrario, ofrecer una diversidad polifónica, o lo que Bakhtin ha llamado un coro de voces, que tratan de buscar una orquestación en consonancia con la búsqueda de legitimidad del espacio intermedio de la frontera.

Así, trataremos de mostrar, en el caso de las chicanas, cómo el peso del mestizaje, del rechazo, de la condición de “puente” que han llevado a sus espaldas se va a convertir en un orgullo, en una legitimización, en un dinamismo e interacción positiva con las dos culturas que las discriminan, la norteamericana que las discrimina como minoría étnica, y la méxico-americana que las discrimina como mujeres.

Si la liminalidad o hibridación es teóricamente un espacio intermedio en el ritual trifásico de iniciación, consistente en: *separación*, *liminalidad* o transición en el camino hacia la asimilación, y finalmente la *incorporación/aculturación/asimilación*, para las chicanas o nuevas mestizas, especialmente, así como para la “border theory” la liminalidad no sería transición, sino un estado en sí mismo, algo que los chicanos llevarán siempre en sus mentes, interiorizado, dondequiera que se encuentren, ya que se refiere a su identidad – producto de la incorporación de sus raíces indias y mestizas a las culturas hispana y angla. En los ejemplos contenidos en las historias que analizaremos a continuación, se observará cómo las jóvenes protagonistas, antes de aceptar ese estado de liminalidad que viene con la madurez, han querido pasar en su juventud a una rápida aculturación para poder así huir de los opresivos patrones machistas de la cultura latina. No se han dado cuenta de que incluso esos patrones necesitan ser revisados, descentralizados e incorporados a ese nuevo estado liminal. Pero, de ningún modo habrían de ser rechazados, ya que tal rechazo también se haría extensivo a la familia.

Es en el ámbito urbano donde principalmente se desarrolla la vida cotidiana de la mujer chicana, y donde consecuentemente han situado sus historias las dos autoras que nos conciernen, Viramontes y Cisneros. Las historias que nos cuentan estas autoras pueden llegar a resultar más perceptivas que los ensayos de muchos teóricos del postmodernismo urbano a la hora de representar lo duro del devenir cotidiano en una gran ciudad. Estas experiencias urbanas en áreas

cosmopolitas contribuyen a intensificar la hibridación cultural, ya que la cultura es por naturaleza heterogénea y necesariamente actúa sobre un ámbito de fronteras. Dentro de ese ámbito urbano, Cisneros ha situado sus historias en Chicago, mientras que Viramontes ha elegido California para mostrar su crítica cultural de un submundo angustioso que coexiste con la glamorosa cultura postmodernista de Los Ángeles.

Son varias las historias incluidas en la obra de Viramontes *The Moths and Other Stories* (Viramontes, 1995: 9-125) que coinciden en el tema de la infancia, de los ritos de crecimiento de las niñas, con la premiada novela de Sandra Cisneros *The House on Mango Street* (Cisneros, 1984: 3-110). En ambos casos, nos situamos ante el crecimiento y proceso de madurez de niñas, hijas de mejicanos, pero nacidas en los Estados Unidos, y que tratan, primero, de romper con las tradiciones mejicanas heredadas, y luego, una vez alcanzada la madurez, de conciliar ambos mundos en un espacio híbrido intermedio, el de la frontera. Aquí es donde abiertamente pueden actuar como lo que son, como mestizas, como esa quinta raza o raza cósmica que, en opinión de Gloria Anzaldúa, abarcaría a las otras cuatro razas del mundo. En una palabra, para poder reivindicar la conciencia de mestizas, estas autoras y sus protagonistas de ficción han optado por reivindicar un pasado indio con sus tradiciones, supersticiones, ritos, incluso con su espacio físico, la tierra de Aztlán al norte de Méjico. Sólo de este modo, al re-escribir su pasado, al hacer presente el pasado se puede llegar a convivir sin esquizofrenia con dos culturas, la hispana y la angla.

Esperanza en *The House on Mango Street* es el nombre de la niña que, en primera persona, nos va contando en forma autobiográfica el lento proceso de despertar de niña a mujer, que llevaría consigo una mayor concienciación de su condición de chicana en los Estados Unidos. El sueño de Esperanza es el de tener una casa propia, alejada del barrio suburbano donde se han refugiado los emigrantes latinos, donde hay suciedad y ratones, donde las casas están pintadas de rojo y rosa como en Méjico, y donde familias como la suya sueñan con ganar la lotería para poder alcanzar el sueño americano de poseer una casa blanca, amplia y con jardines como en los barrios ricos.

Son varias las dualidades que Esperanza, como las protagonistas de las historias de Viramontes, tendrá que deconstruir y transcender para adquirir lo que Anzaldúa denomina la "nueva conciencia" de mestiza. Así, para empezar, observamos en capítulos como en "Born Bad" que Esperanza comienza a sentirse defraudada con la religión católica que profesan sus padres como buenos mejicanos. Una religión que discrimina a la mujer respecto al hombre considerando que o eres buena o eres mala, o has nacido, como la propia Esperanza, "on an evil day", en palabras de su madre. En su proceso de



concienciación como chicana, Esperanza cuestiona libremente que las cosas sean tan directamente decididas por Dios, o por la relación causa-efecto, acción-recompensa, sino que pueden ser obra de la casualidad. Lo mismo opina la protagonista, sin nombre, de "The Moths", la historia que da título a la colección de Viramontes *The Moths and Other Stories*, y quien, al igual que Esperanza, nos cuenta su historia en primera persona. Las órdenes paternas son las de asistir a misa todos los domingos, órdenes que la niña transgrede prefiriendo irse a casa de su abuela "... that if I didn't go to Mass every Sunday to save my goddamn sinning soul, then I had no reason to go out of the house, period. Punto final. He would grab my arm and dig his nails into me to make sure I understood the importance of cathecism. Did he make himself clear?" (Viramontes, 1995: 29). En uno y otro caso, la incipiente conciencia de chicanas, de fronterizas, lleva a una y otra niña a preferir la doctrina de las abuelas. La abuela será quien, con sus hierbas, reduzca el tamaño de las grandes manos de la niña en "The Moths", haciendo, de este modo, que la joven ya no se avergüence de su cuerpo, que, como mujer, habría de suponerse bonito y grácil, como el de sus hermanas. La abuela con su magia y sus pócimas se encontraría más cercana a la naturaleza, y ésta es la religión que sí le responde a la niña "so tired of unanswered prayers" (Viramontes, 1995: 28).

Se trata, en definitiva, de aceptar la parte indígena de la Virgen de Guadalupe, o en palabras de Gloria Anzaldúa, de reconciliarse con la serpiente, con Coatlolopeuh representante de la sexualidad e integrada en la primitiva diosa Tonantsi, la diosa madre de los antiguos Nahuas que dio a México la planta del Cactus para proveer a su pueblo de leche. A la diosa Tonantsi la despojaron los conquistadores católicos españoles de su sexualidad y la convirtieron en una Virgen católica, en la Virgen de Guadalupe. Una Virgen que o bien en su forma indígena o en la cristiana no ha abandonado a las chicanas, como tampoco lo han hecho sus otras dos madres: la chingada Malinche, o madre "raptada" por Hernán Cortés y a quien los mejicanos han abandonado por traidora, por haber actuado de traductora de su amante, Cortés, y por último, La Llorona, la madre que busca permanentemente a sus hijos perdidos. A esas madres es a quienes las jóvenes protagonistas de estas historias prefieren invocar, en una mayor identificación con lo Indio (siempre, a su vez identificado con la imagen de la madre) que con el padre hispano.

Si bien en opinión de destacados críticos como Gloria Anzaldúa la imagen angla del macho mejicano no es más que un constructo, que un estereotipo: "The modern meaning of the word 'machismo', as well as the concept, is actually an Anglo invention. For men like my father, being 'macho' meant being strong enough to protect and support my mother and us, yet being able to show love"

(Anzaldúa, 1987: 83), el méjico-americano, como hombre, en calidad de marido, de amante, de padre, sigue ejerciendo su autoridad patriarcal sobre la mujer méjico-americana o chicana, que trata de liberarse de ese papel pasivo y sumiso que le ha adjudicado la tradición hispano-latina. Sería, pues, éste un comportamiento en consonancia con su nueva conciencia de mestiza, de chicana, de habitante de la tierra media. Y así nos lo dejan ver Viramontes y Cisneros en el comportamiento que tienen las protagonistas de sus historias.

De todas formas, dentro de ese nuevo estado híbrido y liminal, donde se legitima el pasado indio y se trata de conciliar los dos mundos anglo y mejicano, la nueva mestiza no carga las tintas indiscriminadamente sobre el hombre chicano, sino que trata de restablecer un equilibrio, y devolver al chicano la dignidad de la que le han despojado los anglos quienes le consideran aún más autoritario que los hombres anglo-americanos. De este modo, la actitud de la nueva mestiza será una actitud postcolonial, de rebelión hacia el colonialismo interno a que los chicanos fueron sometidos por los anglo-norteamericanos.

Esperanza, en su rito de iniciación, observará a su alrededor comportamientos de discriminación hacia la mujer, y se promete a sí misma que ella no se quedará, como su abuela y bisabuela, mirando el mundo desde la ventana, sino que tendrá una participación activa, porque ser chicana, ser nueva mestiza, implica un proceso dinámico de interacción, no de estatismo. Para ello, Esperanza tendrá que reiventarse a sí misma, para así trascender las limitaciones que surgen de su identidad étnica.

Esperanza rechaza la salida con la que sueñan sus amigas, como la portorriqueña Marin, y que no es otra que la del matrimonio. De ahí que, Marin, como habría hecho la abuela de Esperanza cuando era más joven, se pase el día en el umbral de la puerta esperando atraer algún hombre para unirse a él en matrimonio, y llegar, con el paso de los años, a mirar el mundo no desde la puerta sino desde la ventana, como tantas generaciones de mujeres chicanas. Como mujer y como sujeto colonizado (portorriqueña en los Estados Unidos) Marin acepta la hibridación como asimilación, no como rebelión.

Asimismo, la historia de Alice, otra amiga de Esperanza, resulta bien significativa del patrón dominador masculino, que en este caso, a diferencia del anterior, la joven chicana trata de subvertir, deconstruyendo la oposición binaria dominador-dominada por medio del acceso a la educación.

Las raíces de las chicanas son mestizas, y están en Méjico. Será necesario tener presente la historia para poder reescribirla. Por eso, Olga, la protagonista de mediana edad de otra historia de Viramontes que lleva por título "Snapshots", se encuentra atrapada dentro de los límites que suponen las revistas, la televisión, las fotografías que la alejan de la realidad externa a la que no quiere enfrentarse. Esos

límites físicos serían metáforas de las limitaciones de la mujer en el mundo real, pero Olga se niega a romper con esos marcos. Al contrario que las protagonistas de otras historias, Olga siempre ha seguido un patrón establecido, el de la ideología dominante, y cuando viene su crisis de identidad no tiene a qué aferrarse, ya que ha seguido toda su vida un fiel proceso de aculturación. Ni siquiera es capaz de identificar correctamente las personas que aparecen en las fotografías. No hay comunicación con el pasado, porque ha estado toda su vida intentando perfeccionarse como ama de casa, y ahora no es capaz de salir de la depresión que la ha mantenido en cama desde el nacimiento de su hija. La televisión, las revistas, son mundos artificiales, enmarcados ("framed") que no ofrecen ninguna solución para enfrentarse al mundo real. La cultura sólo se puede cambiar si se preserva, y lo único que queda de ese mundo son unas borrosas fotografías que, en esos momentos de la vida de Olga Ruíz, únicamente captan el vacío.

El padre de Naomi en "Growing" está asociado a imágenes de violencia (como los truenos), y ejerce su autoridad patriarcal tratando de convencer a Naomi de que por ser mujer, ya no es de fiar:

It was Apá who refused to trust her, and she could not understand what she had done to make him so distrustful. TÚ ERES MUJER, he thundered like a great voice above the heavens, and that was the end of any argument, any question, because he said those words not as a truth, but as a verdict, and she could almost see the clouds parting, the thunderbolts breaking the tranquility of her sex (Viramontes, 1995: 36).

Es de observar cómo la imagen que se ofrece del padre es la de un Dios iracundo y furioso, con lo que, una vez más, se nos presenta la religión "oficial" como aliada del poder masculino. Las palabras del padre son como un veredicto, contra el que la joven no puede apelar. Y así se observa en el uso que hace el padre de términos jurídicos con el fin de imponer esas normas sobre su hija: "verdict", "major offense", "prison sentence", "there was no way out of the custom".

Del mismo modo, y tal como observa Norma Alarcón, es bien significativo que el padre pronuncie la frase "TÚ ERES MUJER" en español y no en inglés, ya que indicaría cómo se apoya en la fuerte tradición machista hispana para justificar su actitud (Alarcón, 1998: 147-59). De nuevo, nos encontramos con la oposición México (o cultura Latina) versus Estados Unidos, y Naomi, en este estadio de su crecimiento, desea copiar y tomar como modelo lo que ella considera una cultura más flexible: "... the United States is different. (...) Parents trust their daughters" (Viramontes, 1995: 35).

En efecto, el “code-switching” o cambio de idioma entre inglés y español se va a convertir en una de las armas más eficaces en manos de los chicanos y chicanas para legitimar su identidad. El español-chicano, como lenguaje, surgió de la necesidad de este pueblo de identificarse como diferente. Necesitaban un lenguaje con el que poder comunicarse, un “lenguaje secreto”. El lenguaje chicano será el que aglutine a los chicanos del sudoeste con los del medio-oeste en Chicago, o con los del este en Nueva York. El lenguaje español-chicano, como este mismo pueblo, es heterogéneo, y complejo, una mezcla de varios lenguajes: el inglés estándar, el inglés coloquial y de la clase trabajadora, el español estándar, el mejicano-español estándar, el dialecto mejicano-español del norte de Méjico, el español chicano de Tejas, Arizona, Nuevo Méjico y California con sus variantes regionales, el Tex-Mex, y el Pachuco o caló. Por toda esta variedad lingüística, el lenguaje del chicano se considera deficiente, una aberración lingüística, una pesadilla, un objeto de burla, un mestizaje lingüístico. Sin embargo, como sujetos híbridos, ahora, los chicanos reivindican el lenguaje como seña de identidad. En palabras de Anzaldúa, “Ethnic identity is twin to linguistic identity. – I am my language” (Anzaldúa, 1987: 59).

En todas las historias mencionadas, ambas autoras Viramontes y Cisneros han dado voz a la mujer, especialmente a las jóvenes, al ofrecerles una narrativa en primera persona. Pero también Viramontes ha dado voz a otras mujeres desfavorecidas por motivos políticos y económicos dentro de un discurso contrahegemónico. Así en “The Cariboo Cafe” se nos ofrece un mosaico de voces que nos ayudan a ver la realidad desde diferentes puntos de vista, y, al mismo tiempo, a desenmascarar la voz hegemónica del dueño del Café, quien, de forma carnalesca, en términos bakhtinianos, la disfraza de honestidad (“it never pays to be honest”), mientras señala que para sus hamburguesas no usa “pure beef”. Junto a la suya, obtenemos la voz de una niña emigrante, Sonya, quien junto con su hermano pequeño se encuentra perdida, literal y metafóricamente, en el submundo urbano (“the Zero, Zero place”, tal como se lee el nombre del Café al haberse borrado la pintura que cubría las primeras letras de Cariboo Cafe) donde se refugian los emigrantes, y donde la migra o la policía interviene diariamente para deportar a los indocumentados. A través de sus ojos vemos cómo en ese indiferente paisaje urbano su mayor aspiración será la de tener un “toilet of one’s own” (que contrasta claramente con la “room of one’s own” de Virginia Woolf, poniéndose, de este modo, de manifiesto, las diferencias entre un feminismo burgués y el de las minorías étnicas). Y la tercera voz será la de una mujer salvadoreña, emigrante indocumentada, que ha cruzado la frontera en busca de su hijo, y a la que persigue la policía. Esta polifonía de voces, nos ayuda a comprender la complejidad de la realidad en la frontera. De ahí que estas historias

o las novelas de escritoras chicanas hayan de ser leídas dialécticamente como determinadas por el contexto social. De este modo, en una lectura dialéctica se podrá observar, como en el caso del Cariboo Cafe, hasta qué punto el lenguaje y el discurso afectan la vida humana en formas determinadas por la historia social. Estas lecturas dialécticas nos ayudan a cuestionar verdades evidentes que, como normas, coaccionan el significado del texto y claman universalidad. En nuestra historia, la voz de la mujer salvadoreña se convertirá en la voz contrahegemónica.

El caso de la mujer salvadoreña que se gana la vida como lavandera nos sirve para entender mejor el carácter múltiple de la hibridación. Si hemos visto una hibridación como creatividad transcendente (en el caso de Esperanza y de Alicia, quienes van a optar por la educación y el estudio para poder transcender la estrecha realidad de su barrio y buscar su propia identidad), o como asimilación (en el caso de Olga, totalmente asimilada, y sin un pasado al que aferrarse como seña de identidad), también la hibridación llega a adquirir tonos más complejos cuando se le añade el elemento político. Así, las fronteras que tiene que cruzar la mujer salvadoreña no son sólo geográficas, históricas, culturales o económicas (como en el caso de los chicanos), sino también políticas, lo que hace de la periferia de la sociedad norteamericana una realidad heteroglósica, en términos bakhtinianos. Aparte de la frontera geográfica son, pues, múltiples las fronteras mentales que estos emigrantes tienen que cruzar hasta llegar a sentirse en la liminalidad/hibridación/frontera no como en un lugar de tránsito, sino como en un estado permanente.

La mujer salvadoreña no llegará a disfrutar de ese estado, ya que, como indocumentada, no tiene un trabajo asegurado, ni una familia, ni competencia en inglés, pero sí tendrá voz para llorar la desaparición de su hijo, en una versión del mito de la Llorona, y sí tendrá voz para gritar a la policía, cuando, denunciada por el dueño del Café, se resiste a ser arrestada y les tira el café hirviendo a la cara, antes de recibir el mortal disparo policial.

De este modo, se ha logrado contra-atacar la voz hegemónica del dueño del Café, quien, con sus palabras aparentemente inofensivas, está ofreciendo la razón que da la clase dominante para excluir a los “marrones” de la integración en los Estados Unidos. Sus palabras al referirse a esta mujer son “short”, “bad news”, “street”, “round face”, “burnt toast color”, “black hair that humps like a strait rope” (Viramontes, 1995: 99-100). Es decir, una discriminación basada en el color y en la lengua. No es un privilegio de clase el que permite al dueño del Café utilizar esos términos discriminatorios contra la salvadoreña, sino el hecho de ser un hombre blanco.

La historia de cruce de fronteras que nos ha presentado Viramontes se ha convertido, así, en una historia de vínculos, de vínculos entre hermanos latinos, y

de denuncia de la represión que sufren los indígenas y las víctimas de la persecución gubernamental a uno y otro lado de la frontera Sur-Norte.

El trágico anonimato de los inmigrantes latinos en Estados Unidos también está en la obra de Cisneros *The House on Mango Street* donde (en el capítulo titulado "Gerald No Last Name") se nos ofrece la imagen de un inmigrante anónimo que muere sin que su familia sepa nada, – ejemplo de la deshumanización en grandes ciudades, en las que se vive indiferente ante la tragedia ajena.

La chicana, como nueva mestiza, tiene pues una personalidad plural que opera de forma también plural. Por ello tendrá que hacer de la ambivalencia, de las contradicciones algo positivo y creativo. Si los norteamericanos critican las creencias de los mejicanos, y ambos las de los chicanos, es necesario resistir, y para ello, no han de olvidarse los orígenes. Esperanza abandonará Mango Street, pero, tal como le han aconsejado las simbólicas "tres mujeres" que aparecen al final de la novela, tendrá que volver, y hacer uso de la educación recibida para concienciar a las mujeres que han quedado atrás de que el futuro está en la ruptura de paradigmas, de oposiciones binarias, en la interacción dinámica. Para ello, se necesita poseer una identidad desde la que poder hacer frente al mundo con seguridad, con orgullo de pertenencia a ese espacio liminal, la frontera,

When you leave you must always remember to come back for the others. A circle, you understand?. You will always be Esperanza. You will always be Mango Street. You can't forget who you are (Cisneros, 1984: 105).

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## De los que quisieron cortarse el cuello y los que vinieron a verlos: Emma Goldman en la Guerra Civil Española

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En un artículo titulado “Cuando los españoles querían cortarse el cuello”, Javier Marías cita a varios escritores británicos y norteamericanos que, durante la Guerra Civil española, fueron preguntados en una encuesta sobre Franco, el fascismo y el gobierno republicano. Sabemos así que William Faulkner, Dashiell Hammett, Hemingway o Sherwood Anderson, entre otros, se oponían abiertamente a Franco y al fascismo, o que e. e. cummings ni siquiera se molestó en responder a la encuesta. También sabemos, porque sus escritos dejan constancia de ello, que muchos intelectuales de esa época comprometieron no sólo su pluma sino también sus vidas viajando hasta España y viviendo muy de cerca los acontecimientos del país en guerra. Es el caso de George Orwell, Ernest Hemingway, o John Dos Passos, por nombrar sólo a tres testigos de excepción. Cada uno vivió el conflicto de acuerdo con sus propios planteamientos ideológicos, su nivel de implicación en el mismo y su experiencia personal en tierra española.

En el caso de los dos escritores norteamericanos, la experiencia de Dos Passos, es quizá una de las más trágicas, y supuso un giro radical en sus

postulados ideológicos. Nada más llegar a España supo que su amigo y traductor José Robles había desaparecido, pero no en manos de los nacionales, sino de los republicanos. Desde ese momento, su lucha se redujo casi exclusivamente a la búsqueda de Robles. Luego, descubrir que había sido ejecutado en la zona republicana constituyó uno de los argumentos más poderosos para convertir a Dos Passos primero en un escéptico, y más tarde en un apologeta de la derecha norteamericana. Aun así, en el tiempo que permaneció en el país colaboró con Hemingway en el guión del documental "The Spanish Earth," dirigido por el comunista Joris Ivens. La experiencia de Hemingway fue más acorde con su carácter: se limitó a observar e informar como corresponsal de guerra, siempre interesado por lo que acontecía en el campo de batalla, más que por lo que se discutía en los foros políticos. No llegó a entender lo que él calificaba como una obsesión de Dos Passos por su amigo desaparecido, y aceptó la versión oficial de los hechos cuando se supo de la muerte de Robles; sería éste un punto de fricción casi irreconciliable entre ambos escritores. Una vez terminada la guerra, y sin dejar de lamentar la derrota, Hemingway sólo pensaba en volver a escribir, pues según él, esa era la obligación del escritor. *Por quién doblan las campanas* es un claro ejemplo de que cumplió con su obligación.

Pero no son las experiencias apasionantes de Dos Passos y Hemingway lo que concita mis comentarios aquí hoy. Quisiera resaltar la presencia de otra intelectual norteamericana en la Guerra Civil Española, con una labor comprometida en favor de la causa republicana. Me refiero a Emma Goldman (1869-1940), la activista anarquista de origen ruso, que había sido deportada en 1919 de Estados Unidos, un país que consideraba el suyo. Goldman, junto con Johann Most y Alexander Berkman, es considerada uno de los exponentes de la izquierda revolucionaria de principios de siglo en Estados Unidos, y es uno de esos personajes que, con sus discursos y la publicación del periódico *Mother Earth*, del que era editora, contribuyeron al mito de Greenwich Village.

En el momento en que comenzó el conflicto español Goldman estaba viviendo en Francia, y en agosto de 1936 recibió la invitación de la CNT-FAI para visitar el país, así como representar al movimiento anarquista español en Inglaterra. La veterana anarquista aceptó la propuesta, y en septiembre del mismo año cruzó la frontera francesa por primera vez después del golpe de estado; lo haría dos veces más antes de que el conflicto acabara en 1939. En los intervalos de esas visitas seguía muy de cerca los acontecimientos desde las oficinas londinenses de la CNT-FAI; allí se organizaba la propaganda internacional y se recaudaban fondos para ayudar a las fuerzas leales a la República.

Las opiniones de Goldman sobre lo que ocurría en España variaron casi tantas veces y fueron tan contradictorias como las de sus compañeros de la

CNT-FAI. Sin embargo, habría que destacar dos cuestiones de las cuales Emma Goldman tenía una certeza casi absoluta desde antes de llegar a España: la primera, que no se trataba sólo de una guerra para acabar con el fascismo, sino de la esperada revolución social; la segunda, que la presencia comunista en las filas republicanas traería más perjuicios que beneficios a esa revolución, pues los intereses de Stalin no se limitaban a la victoria republicana.

Las convicciones de Goldman sobre los efectos de la revolución se confirmaron en Barcelona, cuando pudo ver con sus propios ojos los “esfuerzos constructivos” que sus compañeros estaban demostrando en muchos aspectos organizativos de la vida social, principalmente la colectivización agraria e industrial. En cuanto a la doble intención de los comunistas, el paso del tiempo confirmó a Emma Goldman sus temores iniciales.

El primer evento destacable tuvo lugar dos meses después de la llegada de Goldman a Barcelona; por entonces ya había tenido la posibilidad de admirar los esfuerzos revolucionarios, compartir y cambiar impresiones con sus camaradas y analizar y reflexionar sobre lo que estaba aconteciendo. En noviembre de 1936 los líderes de la CNT-FAI se encontraron ante el dilema de aceptar o rechazar su participación en el gobierno de la República. Huelga decir lo difícil que se planteaba la situación para un colectivo cuyas raíces profundas se hundían en el rechazo total y absoluto al poder, pero cuyo objetivo último era la revolución social que condujera a formar una sociedad de individuos libres. El debate en la comunidad anarquista nacional e internacional fue evidentemente acalorado; finalmente los líderes de la CNT-FAI aceptaron cuatro ministerios que le habían sido ofrecidos. Esta decisión no dejó de ser motivo de conflicto para los anarquistas españoles, pues la convivencia con comunistas y socialistas en las tareas de gobierno fue tan complicada como lo habían sido sus relaciones a lo largo de la historia. Para Emma Goldman, cuya trayectoria política siempre se había caracterizado por su postura radical, resultó ser un momento especialmente conflictivo. Lo resolvió planteándole al resto de la comunidad anarquista que el fin en este caso particular justificaba los medios, ya que lo primordial en España era acabar con el fascismo; lo demás podía esperar – incluso los principios anarquistas.

Goldman se encontraba en Londres en mayo de 1937, momento en el que tuvo lugar uno de los sucesos cruciales y más difícilmente explicables de este conflicto. Se trata del asalto a la sede de la Telefónica en Barcelona, edificio que estaba en manos de la CNT-FAI y que fue asaltado por la policía gubernamental – es decir, por sus propios compañeros en las tareas de gobierno. El caos se apoderó de las calles de Barcelona en esos terribles días de mayo, que podrían ser calificados como una guerra civil dentro de la Guerra Civil. Todo acabó con la rendición de los anarquistas, a instancias de dos de sus ministros – García Oliver

y Federica Montseny, que se trasladaron desde Valencia para convencer a sus compañeros de que abandonaran las armas. La confusión de esos días es sin duda símbolo del caos en las filas republicanas; muchos de sus seguidores no llegaban a entender qué estaba ocurriendo exactamente frente al edificio de la Telefónica de Barcelona. Para la CNT-FAI, significó, como indica el historiador James Joll, mucho más que la muerte de algunos militantes, pues desde ese momento y hasta que acabó la guerra su papel en la toma de decisiones comenzó a ser menos importante.<sup>1</sup> Hubo cambios en el gobierno, que pasó a ser presidido por Juan Negrín, y del cual quedaron excluidos los cuatro ministros anarquistas. A partir de ese momento se desató la persecución de anarquistas y de miembros del Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista (POUM).

Entretanto, en Londres, Emma Goldman sólo deseaba volver a España. Su única posibilidad de enterarse de lo que estaba ocurriendo era a través de la prensa y de las cartas de los compañeros que se encontraban en Barcelona. Con esa información y su perspicacia natural no tardó en encontrar al culpable de los sucesos de la Telefónica. En un artículo publicado en *Spain and the World* el 4 de junio de 1937 afirmaba que España tenía enemigos dentro y fuera, y que tras la aparente solidaridad de Stalin se escondía la traición a la revolución que se estaba desarrollando en el país. Un claro ejemplo de esa estrategia era, según Goldman, el cambio del lema de la lucha a propuesta del líder soviético: en lugar de “defensa de la revolución” Stalin había sugerido el de “defensa de la democracia”.

En una carta fechada en noviembre de 1937 Goldman hacía referencia a la traición de las democracias occidentales a las fuerzas anti-fascistas que luchaban en España. Su crítica iba obviamente dirigida a la política de no intervención de países como Gran Bretaña, Francia o Estados Unidos, que había obligado a sus compañeros anarquistas a comprometerse más de lo conveniente con Stalin: “for it is certain that if the anti-Fascist forces could have freely purchased arms for Spain Stalin could never have laid his crushing hand on the Spanish Revolution (...) It was non-intervention, now exposed to the world in all its farcical and lying hypocrisy, and nothing else that forced our comrades to make the compromises that they have made”.<sup>2</sup>

Goldman regresó a España en septiembre de 1937, y encontró, lógicamente, una situación política muy diferente de la de su anterior visita.

<sup>1</sup> James Joll, *The Anarchists* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard UP, 1980), pp. 253-254.

<sup>2</sup> Emma Goldman, “A Camarada”, 11 de noviembre de 1937, citado en David Porter, ed., *Vision on Fire: Emma Goldman on the Spanish Revolution* (New Paltz, New York: Commonground Press, 1983), pp. 182-183.

Observó cómo las colectivizaciones seguían funcionando, a pesar de que el gobierno ya no les apoyaba, y visitó la zona de guerra, incluido el frente de Madrid. Allí pudo percibir el cambio en la organización de las tropas: las milicias voluntarias habían sido reemplazadas por un ejército más jerárquico, que los comunistas controlaban cada vez más.

Pero más decepcionante le resultó el descubrimiento de que las cárceles republicanas estaban llenas de compañeros del POUM, de la CNT-FAI, de las Juventudes Libertarias y de las Brigadas Internacionales. Emma Goldman insistió en visitar esos penales para llevar apoyo y consuelo a esos camaradas, muchos de ellos extranjeros, hombres y mujeres que no entendían por qué se les había privado de libertad. Oficialmente estaban acusados de trotskistas y de colaborar con Franco. Goldman regresó a Londres en noviembre de 1937 con el firme propósito de denunciar la situación de esas personas que, en su opinión, habían sido injustamente encarceladas. Bajo el título de "Persecución Política en la España Republicana" publicó el 10 de diciembre de 1937 en *Spain and the World* un artículo que le traería muchos problemas con los compañeros de la CNT-FAI. En ese momento de la lucha la confusión en las filas republicanas era patente en el sector anarquista, cuyos líderes se veían presionados por el gobierno de Negrín y habían adoptado la política de no criticar abiertamente a los comunistas, como Emma Goldman sí había hecho en ese artículo.

Las relaciones de Goldman con los anarquistas españoles se tambaleaban en ese terreno, pero esto no impedía que ella les defendiera y exculpara ante el foro anarquista internacional, en su gran mayoría opuesto a las decisiones tomadas por la CNT-FAI. En diciembre Goldman aceptó asistir al Congreso de la Asociación Internacional de Trabajadores (AIT) en París como representante de la CNT. Su discurso se basaba en la defensa de la gran mayoría de las decisiones de los anarquistas españoles, y en una llamada a la comprensión por parte de la comunidad anarquista internacional, a la que pedía evitar el dogmatismo contra sus camaradas. Goldman admitía en ese foro encontrarse defendiendo una postura centrista tras todo su pasado de revolucionaria "lirica".

Ese cambio radical que ella misma aceptó haber experimentado se debió a las circunstancias concretas del conflicto español, donde se cruzaba la crueldad de una guerra entre hermanos con la esperanza de poder alcanzar la revolución social con la que un amplio grupo de mujeres y hombres habían soñado durante mucho tiempo. Es esa confusión de personas como Goldman, Hemingway, Dos Passos y tantos otros que dejaron testimonio escrito de sus experiencias, esperanzas y desilusiones, la que hoy nos anima a intentar entender qué fue lo que ocurrió en aquellos años, qué hizo que el curso de la historia de nuestro país tomara los derroteros por todos conocidos. Poco hemos hablado aquí de los que ganaron esa

guerra, e intuyo que se debe a que muy poco tuvieron que ver en la victoria. Emma Goldman afirmó en una ocasión que la revolución española había sido traicionada por el mundo entero, y no se cansaba de culpar a Stalin y sus aliados en particular. Es muy difícil llegar a conocer con exactitud algo tan complicado, tan lleno de matices, pero merece la pena hacer un esfuerzo por acercarse al tema; probablemente estos tres intelectuales no se arrepintieron de haberse acercado al país cuyos habitantes “querían cortarse el cuello”, a pesar del sufrimiento que vieron o que padecieron.

En el artículo de Javier Marías mencionado anteriormente también se habla de otros escritores que opinaron sobre Franco, el fascismo y la Guerra Civil española. T. S. Eliot dijo: “Aunque naturalmente siento compasión, sigo aún convencido de que lo mejor es que al menos unos cuantos hombres de letras permanezcan aislados y no tomen parte en estas actividades colectivas.” Ezra Pound afirmó, entre otras cosas, que España era “un lujo emocional para una cuadrilla de diletantes bobos”. Norman Douglas, mostrando su interés exclusivamente en los individuos, comentaba: “Si los españoles quieren cortarse el cuello unos a otros y que los ayuden los alemanes y los rusos, ¿por qué no dejarlos? No es asunto mío”.<sup>3</sup> Sin embargo, sí fue el asunto de otros intelectuales, que al haber dejado constancia escrita de su experiencia en nuestro país nos han ayudado a conocernos más o, al menos, nos han hecho reflexionar sobre ese “capricho” que tuvimos de cortarnos el cuello unos a otros.

Antes de acabar la Guerra Goldman volvería a España en una tercera ocasión, y presenció el juicio al POUM en octubre de 1938 en Barcelona; fue otro de los muchos momentos, por incomprensible, absurdos. El 16 de enero de 1939 Barcelona fue tomada por las tropas franquistas, y tres meses más tarde, cuando ya la República había sido disuelta, Emma Goldman abandonaba Europa con dirección a Canadá, desilusionada y confusa, como toda una generación.

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## ■ Some 20th Century Spanish Views of the U.S

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The United States and American life have been written about by foreigners since the early years of the American experience. The country attracted people from many different parts of the world, and its rapid growth and expansion, and the emergence of a different society and a special way of life caught the interest of many foreigners, who then wrote about their perceptions of the American life.

Spaniards are no exception to this. This paper deals with the writings, descriptions, and analysis of Spaniards throughout the 20th century. A number of authors have been selected in seeking to cover every decade of the current century. These publications show the perceptions of those who travelled or lived temporarily in the US and felt compelled to write about American life. Reading these pages one can also perceive how Spaniards felt about their own country and how they compare life in Spain with the US. All of them described aspects they find different, aspects they admire, aspect they dislike. None of them fail to have a distant point of view, some sarcasm, even some humor in writing about their subject.

Some of them choose to speak about the whole country. Some choose a city, such as New York, like García Lorca and Julio Camba; some choose a state, like Alfonso Sastre's California.

Most of them lived and taught in the most international institution of the American life in the 20th century – the American university. Others are writers, journalists, intellectuals or artists, people well prepared to observe, describe and analyze. Some of them comment on how fast the US is growing or changing before their very eyes.

The publications in a variety of media, and in every decade of the 20th Century show the interest of the Spanish people in the subject. Articles in Spanish newspapers transmitted their views about the US to Spaniards of every decade. These writings also reflect their reactions to a society that was then very different from the Spanish society in which they lived. In reading such publications one can realize how American and also Spanish society has evolved, and how some aspects of U.S. society are now present in the Spanish life.

Authors selected are Spaniards who lived temporarily in the U.S. throughout the twentieth century and who wrote their views about the American life with the aim of publishing them in Spain and Latin America. Most of them had travelled extensively in Europe, and some had published articles on other countries.

From the admiration of the early writers to the call for independence of later writers, one can trace some common points they emphasize, in spite of the time difference and despite differences in time, situation and ideology of the writer.

By chronological order, the first publication is Ramón Pérez de Ayala's *El país del futuro. Mis viajes a los Estados Unidos (1913-1914; 1919-1920)*.<sup>1</sup> When Pérez de Ayala visits for the first time the U.S., he is already a well-known author, who has published several works, and is a frequent contributor to the Spanish daily press. Pérez de Ayala visits the U.S. to marry an American woman he met in Italy. As the title of the book clearly states, for Pérez de Ayala, the United States is *El país del futuro*. His writings are not experiences he recalls about the country, but rather he writes while in the country. "Y aquí estoy ya, casi con un pie en la escala del transatlántico, a punto de zarpar hacia el país de futuro. Cuanto (...) piense que es ejemplar y provechoso para España, procuraré trasladarlo a mis cuartillas precisa y lealmente."<sup>2</sup> Therefore, from the beginning, Pérez de Ayala has a positive attitude towards the U.S., and expects to find aspects of American life that can be not only of interest, but useful to Spain. The U.S. is the reference to "modernity." His reflexions during his first visit are published as articles in *La*

<sup>1</sup> Ramón Pérez de Ayala, *El país del futuro. Mis viajes a Estados Unidos (1913-1914, 1919-1920)*, J. García Mercadal, ed. (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 1959).

<sup>2</sup> Pérez de Ayala, *El país del futuro*, 17.

*Tribuna* and *El Imparcial*. Those of his second visit are published in *El Sol* (Madrid), and in *La Prensa* (Buenos Aires), two of the most influential Spanish language newspapers of his time.

A contemporary of Pérez de Ayala, the journalist Julio Camba, lived in the U.S. in 1916, and visited the country again in 1931. His humorous descriptions of the American life are reflected in articles in the Spanish press, and later published as chapters of his books *Un año en el otro mundo* and his famous work *La ciudad automática*.<sup>3</sup> Writer of many travel books, Camba wrote chronicles about many countries and many cities in Europe and the Americas. His fine sense of humor and irony, and his intelligent perceptions make him a first-rate witness of his time.

Far from any humoristic purpose, like Camba's, and with a pre-conceived hostility towards both English and American values, the Spanish thinker Ramiro de Maeztu wrote *El sentido reverencial del dinero*, after his visit to the United States in 1925. Regarding his purpose, he clearly states:

Tambien a mi me fastidian lo anglómanos. Sin la guerra de 1898 no hubiera sentido el menor deseo de estudiar a los anglosajones .... No mis preferencias, sino la necesidad de quien plantea a los pueblos hispánicos, el problema anglosajón. Y lo triste del caso, me observaba recientemente un hispanoamericano, es que no conocemos a los anglosajones lo bastante para defendernos de ellos.<sup>4</sup>

He saw the U.S. in terms of its expansion at the expense of Latin countries (first Spain, in 1898 and then the Latin American countries). Yet, after his trip to the U.S. in 1925 Maeztu appreciates the pragmatism and efficiency of the Anglo and American way of life. The title of his book (again, the chapters were published first as articles in the Spanish dailies *El Sol* and *ABC*, and also in the Cuban press) is *El sentido reverencial del dinero*. According to his thesis, "El sentido reverencial del dinero" in the U.S. is just the opposite to the "sensual sense of money" in Latin countries. This theory was created by Maeztu as a result of his contacts with the English and North American life and literature, especially after he came back from his trip to the U.S. in 1925. Maeztu complains that some contemporary authors (among them Julio Camba) did not understand his thesis about the "worshipful" and the "sensual" sense of money.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Julio Camba, *Un año en el otro mundo*, (Buenos Aires, Espasa-Calpe Argentina) 1 edic. 1947; 2 edic. 1955). Also by Julio Camba, *La ciudad automática*, (Madrid, Espasa-Calpe, 1970, 7ª edic.; 1 edic. Madrid, 1942). The publication dates of both books are much later when actually written, because they were first published as newspaper articles.

<sup>4</sup> Ramiro de Maeztu, *El sentido reverencial del dinero*, (Madrid: Editora Nacional, 1957).

<sup>5</sup> Maeztu, *El sentido reverencial del dinero*, 7-8.

A few years later, in 1929, another Spaniard, Antonio Heras visited the U.S. and decided to publish a book about his experiences. He had already published several books (novels, poems), and then decided to write a travel book. Heras did not seek to create a philosophical theory about American values; he simply wanted to transmit his impressions and descriptions of the land, the people and their cities that he observed during his travels. He calls them "impresiones frívolas." A second visit to the United States resulted in Heras' new book about the U.S., again a travel book entitled *De Nueva York a California*.<sup>6</sup>

Completely different from any of the above – either analysis, philosophic theories, descriptions or opinions – is the extraordinary *Poeta en Nueva York*, written by Federico García Lorca in 1929, when he spent a few months at Columbia University. For many critics, these poems are among the most creative, mysterious, and original of Lorca's works. New York City inspired these cryptic pages which show Lorca's fascination with New York: power, anguish, and energy.<sup>7</sup>

The Spanish Civil War and its long postwar period caused a hiatus in the succession of books about the U.S. published in Spain. While García Lorca was a victim of the Civil War, perhaps Julián Marías is a victim of the postwar attitudes towards independent intellectuals. Like many others, Marías did not have the chance to develop a full academic career in Spanish universities. Yet he pursued his academic and intellectual activities both in Spain and abroad. One of the countries he visited as an academic was the United States. Marías' first visit in 1956 resulted in the book *Estados Unidos en escorzo*, a fresh chronicle of his impressions about a society very different from Spain's during the 1950s. Freedom, efficiency, abundance, opportunities, a society where most people belonged to the middle class. Yet, Marías is not totally taken in by the comparatively easier life in the U.S. He is very interested in the country, but he analyzes it from the perspective of a European intellectual.<sup>8</sup>

Fifteen years later Marías returns to the U.S. and publishes another book, *Análisis de los Estados Unidos*, with a different aim than the previous one. While *Estados Unidos en escorzo* was a spontaneous, fresh book which has both Marías' descriptions about what he saw, and his analysis to interpret these descriptions, the second book is more ambitious, as it does not aim to describe or transmit impressions but rather to analyze the country and its society. Marías feels

<sup>6</sup> Antonio Heras, *De la vida norteamericana. Impresiones frívolas*, (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, S.A., 1929). Also Antonio Heras, *De Nueva York a California. Nuevas impresiones norteamericanas*, (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, S.A. 1953).

<sup>7</sup> The edition of Federico García Lorca, *Poeta en Nueva York* used is the 1998 edition published by Losada (Barcelona: Losada, 1998).

<sup>8</sup> Julian Marías, *Los Estados Unidos en escorzo* (Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores, 1956).

compelled to write about the U.S.: *Hay lugares y países que me obligan a escribir sobre ellos (...) Los Estados Unidos movilizaron mi pluma – seamos exactos – mi máquina de escribir – desde las primeras semanas. Tenía conciencia de que no podía saber qué eran los Estados Unidos.*<sup>9</sup> As in the case of other authors, the content of Marías' book appeared first as articles published in the Spanish press, primarily in *El Noticiero Universal* of Barcelona. Again, this shows the interest of the Spanish people in the U.S. The late '60s and the early '70s are times when the Spanish society shows an interest in the outside world, after the isolation and the heavy censorship of the '40s and '50s.

This interest of the Spanish people may account for the success of Fernando Díaz-Plaja's *Los siete pecados capitales en los Estados Unidos*.<sup>10</sup> The best selling *The Spaniards and the seven deadly sins* was followed by a series of books about the sins in other countries and other societies. Díaz-Plaja had lived in the United States as a university professor, as had other Spaniards during the '60s and the '70s. He knew American life well, and had a skillful, journalistic style that made his articles and works a good read. With a sense of humour, an unpretentious approach, Díaz-Plaja's descriptions were a success. Spanish people had not travelled abroad in large numbers. To many of them, this was a way to know other societies. Díaz-Plaja's previous, more scholarly analysis of the US had not been as widely read.

The world of the Spanish academics in the United States during the 1970s is analyzed by Alfredo Gómez Gil in *La Vuelta de los Cerebros*. Gómez Gil describes and analyzes the university life. He also interviews key Spanish scientists, writers and academics, who discuss their professional lives in the United States, and how the institutions and organizations in which they work in are different or similar to ones in Spain.

For the '80s, again a book by a Spaniard visiting scholar in an American university, Alfonso Sastre. He transmits his views about the U.S. (particularly California) to a Spanish newspaper, *Egin*. Sastre deals with similar topics to most of the other authors, yet he deals in a greater deal with the social problems in California, and specially with the minorities.<sup>11</sup>

The '90s are represented by another journalist, Vicente Verdú. His book *El Planeta Americano* won a literary prize, became a best seller, and is currently in its 9th edition.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Julian Marías, *Análisis de los Estados Unidos* (Madrid: Ediciones Guadarrama, 1972), 13.

<sup>10</sup> Fernando Díaz-Plaja, *Los siete pecados capitales en los Estados Unidos*, 1967, 8th edition.

<sup>11</sup> Alfonso Sastre, *Historias de California* (Hondarrubia: Aritaletxe HIRU, S.L., 1996).

<sup>12</sup> Vicente Verdú, *El Planeta Americano* (Barcelona: Editorial Anagrama, 1996).

Here are thoughts about the US from Spaniards throughout the 20th century. Their travel and contact with the U.S. made them think and write about the U.S. and the American way of life. Over and above ideologic and other differences among these authors, several topics are found to be covered in almost all.

The “enchantment” of the U.S. Several authors mention the power of the U.S. to attract and “enchant” people. For example, Pérez de Ayala explains this feeling in the following words, *Cuando estuve por primera vez en los Estados Unidos recibí una profunda sensación de paz, seguridad y libertad; era como si me reconociese dueño de mi mismo*.<sup>13</sup> Julio Camba confesses that he feels an irresistible attraction for New York. Alfredo Gómez Gil stated, “Es necesario corregir la falsa creencia de considerar a la Universidad americana como la tierra de Jauja”.<sup>14</sup> Gómez Gil describes the difficulties in the U.S. Academy for foreign scholars during the 70s, the nostalgia for the “good old days” when universities in the US had plenty of resources, and were a magnet for academics from all over the world, including Spain. Alfonso Sastre considered that life in America was more a dream than in any other place. He added that he was stricken by the “sweetness of the American dream.” Vicente Verdú described this “enchantment” with the following words, “America is so fascinating (...) this fascination is as contagious as a virus.”<sup>15</sup>

The American city is a topic that most authors dealt with, be it the concept of city in the U.S., in general, or a specific city. One cannot fail to mention that New York City inspired one of Federico García Lorca’s most avant-garde and rich poems. New York, for Federico, is a “city that never sleeps”, in the poem “Ciudad sin sueño (Nocturno del Brooklyn Bridge).” For Julio Camba, the City of New York is “The Automatic City,” the title of his book about New York, a city that attracts him, and also irritates him, a city that compels him to take any opportunity to visit it. “A city as romantic city, as excessive.”<sup>16</sup> For Camba, New York is “the present,” “only New York is able to represent our times (...) New York attracts us because we cannot live outside our time, and it repels us because of the enormous stupidity of the times we live in.” It is the city of speed and noise. New York, he said, is not a city, but a system, a theory.<sup>17</sup> Camba reflects a city full of activity and energy, yet Camba did not fail to transmit its idiosyncracies and some of the problems he perceived.

<sup>13</sup> Pérez de Ayala, *El país del futuro*, 184; Julio Camba, *La ciudad automática*, 9.

<sup>14</sup> Alfredo Gómez Gil, *La vuelta de los “cerebros”* (Barcelona: Plaza & Janés, 1977): 9

<sup>15</sup> Sastre, *California*, 44; Verdú, *Planeta americano*, 12.

<sup>16</sup> Julio Camba, *La ciudad automática*, (Madrid: Espasa-Clape, 1970, 7th ed. First edition, 1942), pag. 9; also page 16.

<sup>17</sup> Camba, *Un año en el otro mundo*, 16; 21.



Pérez de Ayala is probably the most positive towards the American city, *Viví entonces la mayor parte del tiempo en una pequeña ciudad ... Las calles bullían de actividad y tráfico; Pues de dónde se origina – me pregunté – esa emoción de quietud, de tranquilidad arcádica de equilibrio, de normalidad, en medio de tantos hombres impacientes y apresurados? Procuré atribuirlo al aspecto de las casas, como chalets, muy lindas y hospitalarias, emboscadas entre árboles y asentadas aisladamente en medio de irreprochables praderas, de suerte que las calles de la ciudad eran más bien avenidas de un gran parque o veredas entre jardines. Sí, en la vida de la ciudad había algo semejante a la emoción de la Naturaleza.*<sup>18</sup>

Pérez de Ayala reflects his experience in a small eastern city during the 1920s. He ignores the problems American cities, large or small, had. Ayala chooses to present only part of the reality.

Antonio Heras criticizes the opinion about the uniformity of the American city, *“Hay quien dice muy en serio que en América el que ha visto una calle o una manzana conoce una ciudad, y el que ha visto una ciudad puede decir que conoce todo el país. Pero nosotros seguimos observando con curiosidad todo lo que nos rodea.* In fact Heras found many American cities fascinating. For him Chicago is *La enérgica palpitación de esta urbe activa y turbulenta ... los ruidos de Chicago, que parecen hablarnos de un ideal de lucha continua, de energía siempre creciente y cada vez más dominadora, de ambición insaciable; de una idea, en fin, que tiene mucho de admirable y de horrible al mismo tiempo.* While New Orleans is *a charming city, new and old at the same time.*<sup>19</sup>

As for Julio Camba, in *La ciudad automática*, New York is a city that attracts him, and also irritates him, a city that compels him to take any opportunity to visit it.<sup>20</sup> Marías also considers New York a symbol of fast development, and modernity: *Lo que en otras partes son siglos, en Nueva York son decenios.*<sup>21</sup>

Camba is not only interested in New York, but in other American cities, as well. Here is his vision of the dichotomy between San Francisco and Los Angeles, and how he interprets it: *Que diferencia entre Los Angeles y San Francisco (....) San Francisco es una ciudad católica, Los Angeles es una ciudad puritana, y si hay en EEUU dos ciudades diferentes la una de la otra son, ante todo, estas son ciudades rivales. Por mi parte declaro que San Francisco me entusiasma, y que mi opinión respecto a L.A. esta influida por este entusiasmo, y es, como todas las buenas opiniones, enteramente parcial.”*<sup>22</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Pérez de Ayala, *El país del futuro*, 184.

<sup>19</sup> Heras, *De la vida norteamericana*, 11; 13; 19; 265-267.

<sup>20</sup> Camba, *La ciudad automática*, 9.

<sup>21</sup> Marías, *Estados Unidos en escorzo*, 205.

<sup>22</sup> Camba, *La ciudad automática*, 100.

Los Angeles is also dealt with by Alfonso Sastre, who does not consider it a city, at least, he admits, *si se trata de entenderla desde un modelo nuestro de ciudad. En realidad aquí hay kilómetros y kilómetros de un continuo urbano de aspecto un tanto rural: casas de una o dos plantas y grandes centros comerciales, que son, cada uno, una achaparrada y distante excepción en el paisaje. Y desde luego, el fluir de automóviles por las carreteras y autopistas (freeways) que lo surcan todo, es continuo. Como continuo es el trazado ciudadano.*<sup>23</sup>

The value of money and materialism is another topic that every author discusses. As was mentioned above, for Ramiro de Maeztu, the American and the English civilizations have a *sentido reverencial del dinero*. According to him, "The spirit of piety, united to that of work produces wealth, both in Catholic and in Protestant countries, but the sensual sense of money results in misery for a whole country." Maeztu praises the fact that saving is in the base of the American people. And he adds: *La idea norteamericana de considerar el negocio mismo como un servicio social, superior a cualquier otra actividad política (solo existe en los Estados Unidos).*<sup>24</sup>

To Antonio Heras in no other country is the saying *tanto tienes tanto vales*, as true as in the United States and he adds, that this is present in a country where resources are "unlimited."<sup>25</sup> Pérez de Ayala comments that in the United States it is customary to value people depending on their wealth, and he expains: *Se suele decir: Fulano is worth vale tantos dólares; Cervantes aquí valdría cero.*<sup>26</sup> Camba also comments the same expression: *"Aquí no se dice nunca que un hombre tiene, sino que un hombre vale tanto o cuanto dinero. Cada uno vale lo que tiene. De donde resulta que aquí el dinero se ha convertido en la medida de todos los valores... Y quí, además, no se reconoce en el hombre más que una capacidad: la capacidad de hacer fortuna ... Todo tiene aquí un común denominador, que es el dinero.*<sup>27</sup>

Díaz-Plaja finds Americans extremely generous, however he considers them guilty of the deadly sin of greed. And he tries to explain this contradiction as follows: *Si por avaricia entendemos la falta de generosidad, los EEUU no saben lo que es ese pecado. Si por avaricia entendemos la obsesión por el dinero, supervalorado en lo material, entonces los EEUU de América es el pueblo más avaro*

<sup>23</sup> Alfonso Sastre, *California*, 18-20

<sup>24</sup> Maeztu, *El sentido reverencial*, 15, 242-243 (also published in *ABC*, December 17, 1933); Maeztu, "El oro yanqui", *El Sol*, January 29, 1926.

<sup>25</sup> Heras, *De la vida norteamericana*, 232

<sup>26</sup> Pérez de Ayala, *El país del futuro*, 245.

<sup>27</sup> Camba, *Un año en el otro mundo*, 26-27.

*del mundo*. Díaz-Plaja states that the great value of money in the American society is evident in the protection of private property. He adds that the interest in money is general in this country, among both the rich and the poor.<sup>28</sup>

Verdú devotes an entire chapter to discussing "the love of money" in American society. More than a simple currency, the dollar is, according to Verdú, a heraldic symbol, high finance culture and popular culture. Expressions such as "I feel like a million dollars" or "it is beautiful as a million dollars" are popular expressions which show the Americans' dreams.<sup>29</sup>

The work ethic of the American people is a characteristic underlined by all authors. Pérez de Ayala described a scene that he considers representative of the American life: *Las calles bullían de actividad y tráfico; todo el mundo se empleaba en sus quehaceres; no había esos paseos públicos de las viejas ciudades europeas, en donde los desocupados van y vienen, todo era trabajo y movimiento*.<sup>30</sup>

Both Díaz-Plaja and Verdú emphasize the fact that Americans work harder and harder despite their material wealth. Díaz-Plaja expresses this idea as follows: *Esta obsesión trabajadora no termina, como en otros países, cuando la situación económica del individuo lo permite. Por el contrario, cuando más se sube en la escala social, más se labora. El portero del banco puede permitirse el lujo de salir a las cinco de la tarde, pero no el banquero*. Verdú points to the same idea by using statistics of American material achievements, and percentages of work hours: *Los americanos son trabajadores acérrimos en busca de su prosperidad individual. No sólo no trabajan menos a medida que crece su renta, sino que cada vez trabajan más*.<sup>31</sup>

All authors who deal with the American life emphasize the importance of religion in the United States. As Heras put it: *Todo americano que se respete o todo extranjero que aspire a americanizarse debe hacer inevitablemente dos cosas durante la mañana del domingo: ir a la iglesia y leer el periódico. Aquí, para vivir en paz con Dios y con los hombres es preciso ir a la iglesia. Lo de menos es que seamos católicos, luteranos, bautistas, unitarios, episcopales, metodistas, judíos, mahometanos, budistas*.<sup>32</sup>

Authors as different as Maeztu and Sastre, Verdú and Heras, consider the United States a profoundly religious society. According to Verdú, *No hay nación en todo el mundo con mayor porcentaje de práctica religiosa, ni país con más*

<sup>28</sup> Díaz-Plaja, *Los siete pecados capitales en EEUU*, 99; 111; 116.

<sup>29</sup> Verdú, *El planeta americano*, 46.

<sup>30</sup> Pérez de Ayala, *El país del futuro*, 184.

<sup>31</sup> Díaz-Plaja, *Los siete pecados capitales*, 258-259; Verdú, *Planeta americano*, 47-48.

<sup>32</sup> Heras, *De la vida norteamericana*, 29; Sastre, *California*, 44, Verdú, *Planeta americano*, 29-34.

*parroquias por habitante. Si existe un pueblo en el que la vida pública se encuentra empapada de religiosidad, ese pueblo es Estados Unidos.*“ Verdú considers religion in the United States even more important for the American identity than the English language and even the dollar: *Más allá del idioma común o el mismo dólar, lo que congrega al pueblo norteamericano es un sueño espiritual que echa raíces en la religiosidad de los pioneros y que se decantó con el ‘republicanismo’ en la enseñanza moral de las escuelas.*” And he adds, *A diferencia de lo que sucede en el Viejo Continente, la religión no se ha considerado en los EEUU como una fuerza retardataria sino como un factor de progreso.*

Finally, the writers attempted to define the United States. To Ramón Pérez de Ayala, the U.S. is “the country of the future,” as his book title shows. He considers that one of the main characteristics of the Americans is their “inventing genius.” Moreover, the multiethnic society of the U.S. during the first decades of the 20th century might result in “a new humanity.”<sup>33</sup>

Ramiro de Maeztu has a much simpler definition. For him, the reason behind the birth of the U.S. is that the American colonists were capitalists who did not want to pay taxes. He adds that this reason is not present in any of the declarations of independence of the Latin American republics.<sup>34</sup>

Camba considers the Americans of New York the most daring and energetic in the world, and nothing is impossible for them.<sup>35</sup>

To Heras, who witnessed the American society during the twenties, the United States was the country of propaganda: in favor of women suffrage, against alcoholic beverages; in favor of americanization, in favor of church attendance on Sundays.<sup>36</sup>

Julián Marías considers the United States “one of the most striking historical developments.” And he defines the American society as a civil society opposed to the important presence of the military or religious leaders in other countries. American life, according to Marías, is civilian life, the substance, the backbone of America.<sup>37</sup>

To Verdú, the U.S. is made of salespeople. The Americans have sold their political, economic and cultural system to the rest of the world. Still more, he adds, the Americans keep improving their commercial skills. Their ability to sell.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Pérez de Ayala, *El país del futuro*, 91; 274.

<sup>34</sup> Maeztu, *El sentido reverencial del dinero*, pag. 204.

<sup>35</sup> Camba, *Un año en el otro mundo*, 19.

<sup>36</sup> Heras, *De la vida norteamericana*, 30.

<sup>37</sup> Marías, *EEUU en escorzo*, 130-132.

<sup>38</sup> Verdú, *Planeta americano*, 48.

The authors inevitably compare the American life and values with those in Spain or Europe. For Pérez de Ayala, *en todo lo que se refiere a perfeccionamiento y facilidad de la parte mecánica de la vida de los EEUU, aventajan con mucho a todas las naciones europeas*. The same author states how different Spanish and American people are: *Un yanqui es un espécimen humano perfectamente distinto de un español. No diré si superior o inferior, sino distinto a secas. Y es distinto (...) porque sus puntos de vista (...) sus categorías fundamentales para la vida acerca de lo divino y humano, son perfectamente distintas de las de un español normal*.<sup>39</sup>

Maetzu points out the different concept of money between Americans and Spaniards: "Porque es curioso que vivamos en 1926, pero (...) el sentimiento que todos los españoles tenemos actualmente del dinero, es anterior al capitalismo. Nosotros no vemos el dinero sino como una posible satisfacción de necesidades o como un manantial de placeres (...). Naturalmente que en este último caso el dinero es algo condenable, reprochable, por lo menos." In contrast, Maetzu explains that Americans have a positive, useful, pragmatic concept of money: "La idea de Franklin es muy distinta. El mira el dinero desde el punto de vista de la posibilidad que tiene de aplicarse al trabajo, a la producción, y de reproducirse y multiplicarse."<sup>40</sup>

Vicente Verdú compares life in the Mediterranean Europe with that in the United States. According to him, *en el Mediterráneo la esperanza de vida es más alta que en América (...) pero (...) Estados Unidos es el territorio para crear empresas. Unos países son, en el propio sentir de los ejecutivos norteamericanos, mejores para disfrutar del ocio y las relaciones humanas, pero Estados Unidos es superior en su afán de logro*.<sup>41</sup>

Yet, while Pérez de Ayala considered the Spaniards and Americans during the first decades of the 20th Century to be so different, at the close of the century Verdú is observing how Spaniards, along with the rest of the world were becoming part of a *planeta americano*. He explains that by saying that although the American way of life is not necessarily best for other people, it seems to him that the rest of the world is imitating many aspects of the American life.

Some of the authors realize that they were approaching the United States with standards from someplace else, like the following conclusions by Camba: *Pero a la larga, uno comienza a sospechar que si en América faltan muchas cosas, acaso sea porque los americanos quieren prescindir de ellas. Es decir, que tal vez no se trate de una civilización defectuosa, sino de una civilización distinta a las*

<sup>39</sup> Pérez de Ayala, *El País del futuro*, 31-32.

<sup>40</sup> R. de Maetzu, *El sentido reverencial del dinero*, 212

<sup>41</sup> Verdú, *Planeta americano*, 47.

civilizaciones del viejo mundo. Y, si ello es así, nosotros cometeríamos un error al juzgar la civilización americana por comparación a la nuestra.<sup>42</sup>

A similar thought is expressed by Marías: *Para el europeo que contempla los EEUU sin abandonar su punto de vista propio, los días transcurren en decepción constante. Ante todo, porque en los EEUU faltan muchas cosas que el europeo busca y no encuentra – cafés, tertulias, lugares donde pasear, “vida literaria”, periódicos con artículos al estilo francés, español o hispano-americano .... En segundo lugar porque las cosas que hay son otra cosa.* And he adds that *En Europa (existe) una idea inexacta y desenfocada, esquemática y tópica, pintoresca y pobre a la vez. Los EEUU están mal “contados” a los europeos (...) Las dos fuentes principales de información son el cine (que deforma) y los viajeros (que escriben sobre éstos confirmando prejuicios previos).*<sup>43</sup>

Alfonso Sastre is less ambitious in trying to define the United States society. He deals with many topics of American life, and concludes that *éste es un mundo muy complejo y contradictorio, ello es sin duda verdad; pero verdad de la buena.*<sup>44</sup> Perhaps Julián Marías expressed a feeling that is common to most of them – *when somebody speaks about the USA (it is difficult), to know truly what he or she is speaking about. Certainly, it is worth it. I mean, to speak about the USA, and, of course, to know what you are talking about.*<sup>45</sup> To all these authors, it was worthwhile to write about this topic.

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<sup>42</sup> Camba, *Un año en el otro mundo*, 10.

<sup>43</sup> Marías, *EEUU en escorzo*, 148; 62-64 .

<sup>44</sup> Sastre, *California*, 98.

<sup>45</sup> Julián Marías, *Estados Unidos en escorzo*, pag. 315.



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## Misioneras y feministas.

### La empresa educadora de Alice Gordon Gulick

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En el último tercio del siglo XIX se produjo en España un incremento de la labor de misioneros protestantes norteamericanos. Por un lado, la Constitución democrática española de 1869 recogía el principio de libertad religiosa y, por otro, en los Estados Unidos renacían con fuerza algunos de los principios del *Destino Manifiesto*, que habían justificado el expansionismo territorial norteamericano a mediados del siglo XIX. Efectivamente, de nuevo la fe en la superioridad de la civilización y de la “raza anglosajona” que era capaz de generar instituciones educativas, culturales y políticas estables, organizadas bajo los principios de igualdad, libertad y, por lo tanto, destinadas a la consecución de la felicidad, estaban detrás de muchas de las reflexiones teóricas norteamericanas. Esa superioridad explicaba el “deber moral” que tenían los Estados Unidos de trasladar no sólo sus instituciones políticas sino también sus creencias religiosas más allá de sus fronteras.

La llegada a España de misioneros congregacionistas norteamericanos a finales del siglo XIX no sólo supuso el reforzamiento del credo protestante sino, también, la introducción de nuevas prácticas educativas, que eran esenciales para su práctica misionera. Analizar la influencia que la acción educadora de las misiones protestantes de Nueva Inglaterra tuvo en España, es el objetivo de este texto.

## Hacia las tierras papales

Desde 1810 se había creado en Estados Unidos la *American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions*, una asociación de misioneros congregacionistas cuya función era la de centralizar y organizar de manera eficaz la acción misionera congregacionista fuera de las fronteras norteamericanas. Con sede en Boston, la acción misionera de la *American Board* a lo largo del siglo XIX, se había centrado en cristianizar a comunidades paganas ubicadas en China, Japón y el Pacífico, sobre todo, en el archipiélago de Hawái<sup>1</sup>. Sólo a partir del renacer de algunos de los principios del *Destino Manifiesto*, se produjeron cambios en los objetivos de los misioneros congregacionistas norteamericanos. En 1871 la *American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions* decidió que debían iniciar acciones misioneras en tierras papales. Ya no eran comunidades no cristianas las que había que evangelizar, sino que serían los antiguos países de tradiciones católicas el nuevo objetivo de sus desvelos. Los primeros enviados a España fueron dos jóvenes misioneros William y Luthey Hasley Gulick que iniciaron la travesía por el Atlántico en 1871 acompañados por sus mujeres, también misioneras<sup>2</sup>.

Los hermanos Gulick eran hijos del reverendo congregacionista Peter Johnson Gulick, quien en 1829 había abandonado Boston para iniciar su labor misionera como miembro de la *American Board* en Hawái. De sus ocho hijos siete fueron misioneros. También Alice Gordon Gulick, mujer de William Gulick era misionera. Su padre, James M. Gordon, había sido tesorero de la *American Board* durante muchos años y Alice creció en un ambiente muy religioso. Cuando su marido aceptó iniciar su labor en España ella le acompañó pero logró que la asociación de mujeres congregacionistas vinculada a la *American Board*, la *Woman's Board of Missions*, la reconociera como su representante en la católica España<sup>3</sup>.

La pequeña expedición misionera norteamericana a tierras papales llegó a San Sebastian en 1872 iniciando un largo viaje por España para entrar en contacto con las distintas comunidades protestantes. En Valladolid, Avila, Madrid, Zaragoza y Barcelona, visitaron las iglesias y las escuelas primarias creadas por comunidades británicas y alemanas. También conocieron los pequeños núcleos protestantes que

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<sup>1</sup> Samuel Colcord BARLETT, *Historical Sketches of Missions of the American Board*, Nueva York: Arno Press, 1972.

<sup>2</sup> Edward T. JAMES, *Notable American Women 1607-1950. A Biographical Dictionary*, Volume II, Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, pp. 102-103.

<sup>3</sup> Elizabeth Putman GORDON, *Alice Gordon Gulick. Her life and Work in Spain*, Nueva York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1917. pp. 32-37.

existían en Levante y Andalucía, muy vinculados a empresas mineras y ferroviarias explotadas y dirigidas por técnicos ingleses. Así Valencia, Alicante, Cartagena, Málaga, Granada, Gibraltar, Cádiz, San Fernando, Jerez de la Frontera, Sevilla y Córdoba, fueron las paradas que realizaron en su larga travesía. Conocida la realidad protestante española decidieron instalarse en San Sebastian, pero las Guerras Carlistas se lo impidieron por lo que fijaron su residencia en Santander<sup>4</sup>.

## Misionera y educadora

La mayoría de los misioneros congregacionistas tenían una educación superior recibida en Seminarios, Universidades y Colleges de gran prestigio, casi todos situados en la costa Este de los Estados Unidos. Los Gulick no fueron una excepción. A pesar de que William y Luthy Hasley habían crecido en Hawaii realizaron sus estudios superiores en el Seminario de Andover, cantera de misioneros de la *American Board*. Alice Gordon Gulick había estudiado en uno de los centros pioneros de educación superior femenina. El todavía Seminario de Mount Holyoke estaba fuertemente vinculado a las comunidades congregacionistas.

Fueron mujeres relacionadas con los movimientos de reforma románticos y, por lo tanto, con la primera oleada del movimiento feminista, las instigadoras de la educación superior para las mujeres norteamericanas. Profundamente religiosas, como todas las reformistas norteamericanas, crearon instituciones que pretendían mejorar la educación femenina como único medio de lograr la regeneración moral de las mujeres norteamericanas<sup>5</sup>.

Desde principios del siglo XIX se habían abierto las puertas de instituciones de educación superior para las mujeres de Nueva Inglaterra. El Seminario Bradford admitió mujeres en 1803 y desde 1836 se convertía en un centro de educación exclusivamente femenina. Le siguieron muchos más. En 1824 se fundaba la

<sup>4</sup> Para conocer las vicisitudes del protestantismo en España, veáanse John David HUGHEY, *Religious Freedom in Spain*. Nueva York: Books for Library Press, 1955; Juan B. VILAR, *Intolerancia y libertad en la España Contemporánea. Los orígenes del protestantismo español actual*, Madrid: Itsmo, 1994, y *Un siglo de protestantismo en España* (Aguilas-Murcia, 1893-1979). *Aportación al estudio del acatolicismo español contemporáneo*, Universidad de Murcia, Murcia, 1979; José Maria de OLAIZOLA, *Historia del protestantismo en el país Vasco. El reino de Navarra en la encrucijada de su historia*, Estella: Pamiela, 1993. También Marcelino MENÉNDEZ PELAYO, *Historia de los heterodoxos españoles*, 2 volúmenes, Madrid: B.A.C., 1987.

<sup>5</sup> Carmen de la GUARDIA, "El Gran Despertar. Románticas y reformistas en Estados Unidos y España", en *Historia Social*, 31 (1998), pp. 3-25.

Academia Adams para mujeres, en 1828 el Seminario Ipswich, en 1829 la Academia Abbot y en 1834 el Seminario Wheaton. Pero para muchas reformistas estas instituciones eran elitistas y además no impartían una buena educación para las mujeres. Mary Lyon, mujer religiosa e implicada en varios movimientos de reforma, buscó el apoyo de la iglesia congregacionista para crear una institución que impartiera una educación tan buena como la que recibían los varones para las mujeres de clase media norteamericana. “Mis pensamientos, sentimientos y juicios están dirigidos hacia la clase media. Para esta clase quiero trabajar y me considero bien equipada para hacerlo”, afirmaba Mary Lyon<sup>6</sup>.

Mount Holyoke no recibió el apoyo institucional de la iglesia congregacionista pero sí el de muchos de sus miembros que aportaron los fondos suficientes para su puesta en funcionamiento. La educación impartida, repleta de valores protestantes, tenía la calidad que buscaba su fundadora. Sirvió además como modelo para futuros Colleges femeninos como Smith y Wellesley<sup>7</sup>.

Alice Gordon Gulick había estudiado y enseñado en el Seminario de Mount Holyoke. Como todas las alumnas había recibido una educación que pretendía no sólo la formación intelectual de las discípulas sino, sobre todo, la formación moral. El estudio se combinaba con la oración. También eran importantes las clases de educación física y de música. Mujeres sanas, cultas y cristianas era el objetivo buscado por Mary Lyon.

Cuando en 1867, Alice Gordon Gulick se graduó en Mount Holyoke los principios de la institución habían arraigado en ella. De 1868 a 1870 impartió clases de filosofía en el Seminario abandonándolo para profundizar en sus estudios musicales. Su matrimonio y el inicio de su labor misionera en España le alejó aunque sólo físicamente de Nueva Inglaterra<sup>8</sup>.

Desde su llegada a Santander, Alice Gordon Gulick, estaba impresionada por la falta de educación intelectual y moral de las mujeres españolas. Muy impregnada, como la mayoría de los misioneros norteamericanos de finales del siglo XIX, de los principios que habían hecho renacer la cultura del *Destino Manifiesto*, consideraba que existían profundas diferencias entre las “razas”. Las mujeres españolas tenían, para Alice Gordon Gulick, “un temperamento pasional” que debían corregir. Siguiendo siempre ejemplos del mundo natural, los Gulick afirmaban “que en la combinación de las razas, si se siguen principios correctos,

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<sup>6</sup> Citado por Carmen de ZULUETA, *Cien años de educación de la mujer española. Historia del Instituto Internacional*, Madrid: Castalia, 1992. p. 36.

<sup>7</sup> Sobre los Colleges de mujeres veáse Patricia Ann PALMIERI, *In Adamless Eden*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995. También Carmen de ZULUETA, *Cien años de educación de la mujer española...*, pp. 31-39.

<sup>8</sup> Elizabeth Putman GORDON, *Alice Gordon Gulick...*, pp. 24-31.

se logra una raza más fuerte y mejor”. Así estaban convencidos de que a través de la Señora Gulick y de las profesoras de cultura norteamericana asociadas con ella, se podría crear gradualmente un nuevo tipo espiritual y moral. “Las mujeres españolas pasionales y amantes de la comodidad y el lujo” – afirmaba Elizabeth Putman Gordon en su biografía de Alice Gulick – “contendrían esas características con las de fortaleza, equilibrio y espiritualidad de las mujeres americanas”<sup>9</sup>. También el matrimonio Gulick, como muchos de los seguidores del renacer de los principios del Destino Manifiesto que se produjo en Estados Unidos a finales del siglo XIX, compartía la certeza de haber sido elegidos para redimir al otro. “La creencia de que yo había sido elegida por mi Padre Celestial – escribía Alice Gordon Gulick a su hermana Elizabeth – para trabajar por la mejora de toda una nación, a través de la educación de las jóvenes españolas, era dulce, emocionante y gratificadora”<sup>10</sup>. Fue esta idea de misión y, sobre todo, que el objetivo de la misión fueran las mujeres lo que diferenció la labor misionera de los Gulick de la del resto de los misioneros protestantes en España<sup>11</sup>.

Al igual que en las otras misiones protestantes la actividad religiosa de los misioneros norteamericanos siempre fue acompañada de funciones asistenciales y educativas. Casi todas las misiones contaron con escuelas gratuitas donde se impartían clases que, desde luego, eran renovadoras para la tradición pedagógica española, escribía Alice Gordon Gulick a su hermana:

Fuí un día a una escuela primaria municipal para ver con mis propios ojos como eran cuidados los pequeños, detrás de la puerta había una habitación grande y oscura donde alrededor de unos ciento cincuenta niños correteaban. Una mujer armada con un largo palo forzaba a los niños a salir al patio para el recreo. Miré hacia el interior de la clase y no había ni espacio ni pupitres suficientes para todos los alumnos y después de preguntar nos dimos cuenta enseguida que se les impartía una instrucción muy insuficiente...la profesora francamente nos dijo que lo único que podía hacer era mantener a los estudiantes tranquilos...desde luego...era muy distinta de las soleadas, limpias y bien organizadas escuelas que encontramos en Boston<sup>12</sup>.

La escuela fundada por los Gulick en Santander reprodujo el modelo de las escuelas públicas de Estados Unidos a finales del siglo XIX. Un espacio claro,

<sup>9</sup> Elizabeth Putman GORDON, *Alice Gordon Gulick...*, pp. 109-110.

<sup>10</sup> Elizabeth Putman GORDON, *Alice Gordon Gulick...* p. 79. También citado por Carmen de ZULUETA, *Cien años de educación de la mujer española...*

<sup>11</sup> Sobre la idea de misión en la historia de los Estados Unidos véase Frederick MERK, *Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995.

<sup>12</sup> Elizabeth Putman GORDON, *Alice Gordon Gulick...* pp. 72-86.

aireado, amplio y un mobiliario adecuado, fueron el complemento ideal a clases prácticas, teóricas y de educación física. Si hacemos caso a los Gulick, el éxito de la escuela protestante entre la clase media de Santander fue grande. “Comenzando con una clase sólo de diez...enseguida alcanzamos una matrícula anual de doscientos cincuenta o trescientos niños y niñas, casi todos pertenecientes a familias liberales católicas romanas”, escribía Alice Gulick<sup>13</sup>.

Pero además de la escuela primaria vinculada a la misión congregacionista, Alice Gordon Gulick quería crear una institución que beneficiara a las mujeres españolas. Siendo una antigua alumna de Mount Holyoke su sueño era crear una institución similar. Debía por lo tanto ser un internado, en donde se otorgase no sólo una educación intelectual y física a las alumnas, sino también una formación moral. Desde el principio buscó el apoyo de su organización, la *Woman Board of Missions*, pero fue un soporte insuficiente. Sí contó con la simpatía de reformistas americanas todas ellas vinculadas a los *Colleges* femeninos. La escritora Katherine Lee Bates, autora de la letra de uno de los himnos patrióticos más populares en Estados Unidos y de un excelente libro que narra un viaje por España realizado en 1899, titulado *Spanish Highways and Byways*, y Alice Freeman Palmer, presidenta de Wellesley College desde 1881 hasta 1887, fueron desde el principio grandes colaboradoras en los Estados Unidos<sup>14</sup>.

Desde 1877 hasta 1881 el internado estuvo en Santander, en la casa de los Gulick. Tenía sólo cinco alumnas que recibían una educación fundada en los principios de Mount Holyoke pero con muchos menos medios. Alice Gordon Gulick contó con la colaboración de dos profesoras, la española Joaquina Martínez de Castilla y la inglesa H. Louisa Green-Armytage. En 1881 llegó otra misionera norteamericana, Susan Richards. Además de las niñas internas acudían a las clases algunas externas. Estudiaban la Biblia, aritmética, álgebra, historia, geografía, inglés, francés y música<sup>15</sup>. Desde 1881 el matrimonio Gulick y sus hijos lograron la autorización de su organización para trasladarse a San Sebastián, ciudad que consideraban más cosmopolita que Santander y por lo tanto un lugar donde la acción misionera protestante podía obtener mejores resultados. Dejaron, eso sí, a discípulos españoles para mantener su obra de Santander.

<sup>13</sup> Elizabeth Putman GORDON, *Alice Gordon Gulick...* p. 72.

<sup>14</sup> Nos referimos al himno “America the Beautiful”. El libro de Katherine Lee BATES, *Spanish Highways and Byways* (Nueva York: Macmillan Company, 1900), es imprescindible para conocer la visión que los protestantes americanos tenían de España a finales de siglo. Sobre Alice Freeman Palmer véase George Herbert PALMER, *The Life of Alice Freeman Palmer*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1910.

<sup>15</sup> El Archivo del International Institute for Girls in Spain se conserva en 53 cajas en Smith College, Estados Unidos. Su catálogo se inicia con una pequeña historia de la labor educativa de Alice Gordon Gulick que he utilizado en este trabajo. Véase también Elizabeth Putman GORDON, *Alice Gordon Gulick...* p. 89.



## El Colegio Norteamericano de San Sebastián

El ambiente de San Sebastián fue menos opresivo para los Gulick que el de Santander. Lograron integrarse con éxito en los círculos liberales vascos y contaron con el apoyo de los institutos públicos. Además los Gulick informaron de sus actividades a la familia real que veraneaba en la ciudad.

También en San Sebastián los Gulick crearon dos centros educativos. La escuela primaria misionera para niños y niñas y el Colegio Norteamericano, un internado centrado en la educación femenina. Un mayor apoyo de la *Woman's Board* permitió que el internado fuera mayor que el de Santander. En el año 1883 había dieciocho internas y dos externas, en 1884 veintidós internas y 14 externas y en 1886 había ya cuarenta alumnas internas. Procedían de comunidades protestantes de toda España, sobre todo, de Andalucía y Asturias. Las clases y la forma de vida seguían el modelo de las escuelas en los Estados Unidos. Además de los estudios bíblicos, las alumnas daban clases de matemáticas, ciencias naturales, historia, geografía, inglés y francés. No se descuidaba la formación musical y las veladas musicales del Colegio Norteamericano se hicieron famosas. Los Gulick otorgaban un diploma al acabar los estudios que capacitaba a las alumnas para enseñar en las escuelas privadas protestantes. Pero la ambición de la fundadora de que su Colegio se convirtiera en un centro de educación superior para las mujeres estaba todavía lejos. El primer problema que tenía que solucionar era el de conseguir títulos oficiales de bachiller para sus alumnas. Sin ellos nunca podrían acceder a la educación universitaria. Desde 1888 se creó una biblioteca abierta en el colegio, siguiendo el modelo de las bibliotecas norteamericanas, y desde 1890 las alumnas del Colegio Norteamericano, después de muchas gestiones de la fundadora entre los círculos liberales donostiarras, iniciaron su preparación para realizar los exámenes de bachillerato y poder así acceder a la universidad. Contaron con el apoyo de nuevas profesoras, Catherine Barbour que había estudiado en Mount Holyoke, Anna F. Webb, licenciada de Wellesley y la profesora de francés Dora Zerk. El 9 de junio de 1891, catorce alumnas del Colegio Norteamericano pasaron con éxito los exámenes de bachillerato que eran públicos y orales en el Instituto de San Sebastián<sup>16</sup>. Durante los ocho años siguientes las alumnas del colegio se presentaron y los resultados fueron excelentes obteniendo muchas de ellas la máxima calificación de Matrícula de Honor.

Los éxitos alcanzados hicieron que la labor de Alice Gordon Gulick para implantar su Mount Holyoke español se incrementara. Por un lado invitó a

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Elizabeth Putman GORDON, *Alice Gordon Gulick...*, pp. 110- 113.

reformistas norteamericanas a visitar su Colegio en San Sebastián. “Hace muchos años tuve el placer de visitar el Colegio de Chicas de San Sebastián – afirmaba Jane Adams, la fundadora de Hull House en Chicago – la escuela con su prometedora y vigorosa vida contenía ya la profecía del espléndido colegio para mujeres que la Señora Gulick fundó en Madrid”<sup>17</sup>. Por otro, incrementó la propaganda de su labor no sólo en Estados Unidos sino también en Hawái. De 1890 hasta 1892 Alice Gulick residió en los Estados Unidos, realizando un pequeño viaje a Hawái, ocupada en buscar financiación para su proyecto. Aprovechando las actividades hispano-norteamericanas organizadas por la conmemoración del Cuarto Centenario colombino, realizó una actividad imparable. Conferencias, reuniones y artículos en la prensa, hicieron que todos los reformistas norteamericanos conocieran su obra educativa en España. También obtuvo mucho éxito entre los misioneros de Hawái. Los fondos conseguidos, así como la legislación española, que prohibía a comunidades protestantes adquirir propiedad en España, motivaron su decisión de fundar en 1892 la Corporación del Instituto Internacional, con sede en Boston, aconfesional e independiente de la American Board of Missions<sup>18</sup>.

### El Instituto Internacional

Desde el primer momento, representantes de las tres grandes universidades femeninas de Smith, Mount Holyoke y Wellesley estuvieron presentes en la corporación de Boston. Profesores, pastores protestantes y educadores fueron el resto de sus miembros. La finalidad era la de llegar a construir y financiar un centro de educación universitaria para mujeres españolas. Mientras se lograban los fondos necesarios, continuaron apoyando el internado de San Sebastián que cada vez obtenía resultados más espectaculares. Algunas de las alumnas que habían logrado el grado de bachiller decidieron regresar al colegio para preparar por libre la licenciatura de Filosofía y Letras.

La legislación española no impedía a las mujeres la obtención de títulos universitarios, aunque la presencia en las aulas de mujeres era algo excepcional. Los contactos de los Gulick con profesores universitarios, miembros a su vez de

<sup>17</sup> Elizabeth Putman GORDON, *Alice Gordon Gulick...*, pp. 105-106. Sobre la figura de Jane Adams véase Allen F. DAVIS, “Jane Adams and American Urban Reform” en *Revista de Estudios Norteamericanos*, 4 (1996), pp. 29-33, así como el libro también de DAVIS, *American Heroine: The Life and Legend of Jane Adams*, Nueva York: Oxford University Press, 1973.

<sup>18</sup> Carmen de ZULUETA, *Cien años de educación de la mujer española...*, pp. 107-111.

la Institución Libre de Enseñanza, les permitieron informarse de los programas de los que las alumnas se iban a examinar. Esther Alonso y Juliana Campos, preparadas por mujeres americanas protestantes, lograron el título de Licenciadas en Filosofía y Letras en 1897<sup>19</sup>.

El estallido de la Guerra Hispano-Norteamericana sorprendió a Alice Gordon Gulick en Estados Unidos en plena campaña para lograr fondos para su empresa. Durante algunos años el Instituto Internacional de San Sebastian se trasladó a Biarritz, donde continuó su labor educativa con alumnas españolas. Curiosamente la Guerra entre España y los Estados Unidos fue favorable para la labor de la señora Gulick. Muchos de los reformistas norteamericanos no estuvieron de acuerdo con la actitud bélica norteamericana. Muy vinculada a la posición de los institucionistas españoles, Alice Gulick consideraba necesaria la modernización de España, coincidiendo con ellos en la importancia que la educación debía tener en ese proceso. Defendiendo la necesidad de comprar un edificio donde crear una institución moderna para la educación de las mujeres españolas, logró un apoyo sorprendente entre los reformistas americanos que simpatizaban de alguna manera con las clases populares españolas cuya imagen les llegó por multitud de publicaciones salidas a la luz durante la contienda. También la señora Gulick obtuvo las simpatías de las autoridades españolas durante la Guerra. El gobierno norteamericano consideró que Alice Gulick era la persona ideal para atender a los prisioneros de guerra españoles recluidos en Camp Long, una base naval situada en la isla de Seavy. Actuó como intérprete entre los médicos y los enfermos, de intermediaria entre los prisioneros y las autoridades y, sobre todo, coordinó la ayuda que los reformistas americanos recogían para los prisioneros. Terminada la guerra Alice había reunido los fondos aportados por misioneros y educadores norteamericanos, para comprar un solar y edificar su proyectado centro de educación femenina. Por consejo de sus amigos institucionistas, Alice consideró que el lugar adecuado era Madrid, sede de la mayor universidad española, la Universidad Central<sup>20</sup>.

En 1901 la Corporación del Instituto Internacional compró un edificio en Madrid. El edificio, situado en la calle Fortuny, necesitaba obras para parecerse a un centro de educación superior norteamericano. En 1902 se compró un segundo solar en la calle Miguel Angel y un año después se trasladaron las

<sup>19</sup> Esther Alonso y Juliana Campo fueron de las primeras mujeres españolas en obtener el título de licenciadas. Sólo 19 mujeres lo habían logrado antes que ellas. Véase la nota biográfica de las licenciadas españolas en Consuelo FLECHA GARCIA, *Las primeras universitarias en España*, Madrid: Narcea, 1996, pp. 227-36.

<sup>20</sup> Carmen de ZULUETA, *Ni convento ni College. Historia de la Residencia de Señoritas*, Madrid: C.S.I.C., 1993, pp.73-89.

alumnas y profesores desde Biarritz a Madrid. Pero en 1903, Alice Gordon Gulick, enferma de tuberculosis y agotada por su incansable actividad educativa, falleció<sup>21</sup>.

La muerte de la fundadora ocasionó problemas entre los misioneros de la escuela evangélica y el colegio dedicado a la educación de mujeres. En 1910 el colegio evangélico se trasladó a Barcelona quedando en Madrid el centro de educación femenina. Su nueva directora, Susan Huntington, le dió un nuevo impulso. Susan había trabajado con los Gullick en San Sebastián y Biarritz. Licenciada en Wellesley College, pertenecía a una generación de mujeres universitarias más profesionales y menos vinculadas a la labor misionera protestante. Consideraba imprescindible que el Instituto fuera una institución aconfesional para poder atraer a más mujeres españolas de clase media. Susan Huntington estrechó también los lazos con los institucionistas. Convencida de la convergencia de sus objetivos, mejorar la educación de los jóvenes españoles para lograr la modernización del país, colaboró estrechamente con José Castillejo, secretario de la Junta de Ampliación de Estudios, sobre todo, desde la fundación, también en la calle Fortuny, de la Residencia de Estudiantes, vinculada a la Junta, en 1910<sup>22</sup>. En 1915 se creó, también por la Junta de Ampliación de Estudios, el Grupo de Señoritas que se instaló en los locales que la Residencia de Estudiantes tenía en Fortuny y que había abandonado al trasladarse a los edificios de los Altos del Hipódromo. Poco después, en 1918, la Junta creaba el Instituto Escuela, escuela experimental que comenzaba con párvulos y terminaba con el último año de bachillerato<sup>23</sup>.

Desde 1917, en plena Guerra Mundial, las relaciones entre la Junta de Ampliación de Estudios y el Instituto Internacional se formalizaron al firmar un acuerdo de colaboración. La comunicación entre España y Estados Unidos era difícil durante la contienda y repercutía en el normal funcionamiento del Instituto Internacional. Los profesores americanos tuvieron dificultades durante la contienda para atravesar el Atlántico e incorporarse al centro educativo madrileño. También la entrada en Guerra de los Estados Unidos en 1917, hizo descender la cantidad de donativos. La vida en Madrid se encareció y los gastos del Instituto Internacional aumentaron, ello contribuyó a que el Comité Directivo del Instituto reunido en Boston decidiera ofertar a la Junta de Ampliación de Estudios el

<sup>21</sup> Elizabeth Putman GORDON, *Alice Gordon Gulick...*

<sup>22</sup> Carmen de ZULUETA y Alicia ALONSO, *Ni convento ni College. La residencia de señoritas*, Madrid: C.S.I.C, 1993.

<sup>23</sup> "Memorandum sent by la Junta de Ampliación de Etudios to the International Intitute for Girls in Spain", Archivo de la Residencia de Señoritas.

alquiler de sus dos edificios de Madrid con la única condición de que lo dedicasen a la educación de la mujer española. La Junta de Ampliación de Estudios, tras largas negociaciones aceptó y dedicó el Instituto a dos de sus instituciones: la Residencia de Señoritas y el Instituto Escuela. Profesoras norteamericanas, vinculadas al Instituto Internacional, según el acuerdo, participaron como profesoras de inglés, de gimnasia y de juegos en las dos instituciones<sup>24</sup>.

Las relaciones entre el Comité de Boston y la Junta no siempre fueron fáciles. El comité de Boston no aceptó la presencia de alumnos varones del Instituto Escuela en sus recintos por lo que, unido a una labor incesante de María de Maeztu, directora de la Residencia de Señoritas, se llevó a cabo la venta, por parte del comité de Boston, del edificio de Fortuny para ser ocupado por la Residencia de Señoritas y a la propuesta de que el edificio de Miguel Angel 8 se dedicara "a la educación superior de la mujer española con carácter universitario". La propuesta que María de Maeztu hizo a la Junta de Ampliación de Estudios en 1828, fue la de convertir el edificio en la sede de un auténtico College siguiendo el modelo de las instituciones de educación universitaria norteamericanas. "Las personas delegadas por el Instituto Internacional de acuerdo con la directora de la Residencia proponen utilizar el edificio de la siguiente manera. La planta baja...se destinará a la biblioteca...se reunirán los volúmenes que actualmente posee el Instituto Internacional (seis mil), los que posee la Residencia de Señoritas (cinco mil) y los que ha ofrecido la Carnegie Foundation...esta biblioteca será dirigida por una bibliotecaria norteamericana...el primer piso se destinará a las clases de Idiomas, Letras, Filosofía y Pedagogía que se establezcan", afirmaba María de Maeztu en su propuesta al presidente de la Junta<sup>25</sup>.

Del proyecto de la directora de la Residencia de Señoritas sólo cuajó la creación de una biblioteca surgida de la fusión del Instituto Internacional con la de la Residencia de Señoritas, que funcionó siguiendo el modelo de las bibliotecas universitarias norteamericanas. Nunca se logró crear un *College* femenino en Madrid<sup>26</sup>.

A pesar de que el proyecto de Alice Gordon Gulick de crear un Mount Holyoke en España nunca llegó a realizarse, el esfuerzo de las primeras misioneras congregacionistas norteamericanas, iniciado en pleno renacer del *Destino*

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<sup>24</sup> "Memoria del Grupo de Niñas", Curso 1922-1923. Archivo de la Residencia de Señoritas, 5/2/1.

<sup>25</sup> Archivo de la Residencia de Señoritas. 9/1/16. Sobre la polémica figura de María de Maeztu existe una biografía escrita por Isabel PÉREZ VILLANUEVA TOVAR, *María de Maeztu. Una mujer en el reformismo español*, Madrid: U.N.E.D., 1989.

<sup>26</sup> Catálogo del Archivo del International Institute for Girls in Spain, Smith College.

*Manifiesto*, obtuvo sus frutos. Lograron mejorar la situación educativa de muchas mujeres españolas y, sobre todo, influyeron en uno de los proyectos de renovación pedagógica más importantes de la España contemporánea, el desarrollado por la Junta de Ampliación de Estudios y todas sus instituciones.



## ■ 'Baloncesto, coches y seven-elevens': el relato de Sherman Alexie 'The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven' y la identidad cultural nativo-americana en los noventa

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Quizás la ciudad que mejor haya encarnado la mentalidad de los años noventa en Estados Unidos haya sido Seattle, una metrópolis joven y dinámica que ha experimentado una profunda transformación ligada a fenómenos como la aparición de grupos de música "grunge" como Nirvana o Pearl Jam o la eclosión de empresas como Microsoft, Amazon Books o los ubicuos Starbuck Cafes. Esta Seattle postmoderna y plural ha sido asimismo testigo a lo largo de la década de la fulgurante irrupción de una de las voces más originales y estimulantes del panorama literario estadounidense en la actualidad, el escritor nativo-americano Sherman Alexie.

Ya en 1996 Alexie despuntaba con sólo treinta años como el segundo autor más joven de entre los veinte seleccionados por la revista *Granta* para un número especial titulado "The Best of Young American Novelists", que incluía a otros escritores de prestigio como Mona Simpson, Ethan Canin o David Guterson. Alexie, que nació en el seno de una familia de sangre Spokane y Coeur d'Alene en una reserva del estado de Washington, ha logrado desarrollar en apenas unos



años una carrera tan vertiginosa tanto en el campo de la poesía como en el de la narrativa que en alguna ocasión se le ha tachado de demasiado prolífico<sup>1</sup>.

Su relato "The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven" (incluido en la colección del mismo título) constituye una muestra representativa de los parámetros por los que se rige el universo ficticio de Alexie. En un texto relativamente breve como éste, el autor logra ofrecer una reflexión sobre los innumerables problemas a los que su pueblo ha de enfrentarse hoy día en Estados Unidos, debido tanto a su doble identidad cultural (ligada al concepto emersoniano de la "double consciousness" que DuBois elaborara para teorizar sobre la raza afroamericana) como a su pertenencia a la minoría étnica más oprimida de todo el país, con los índices más elevados de alcoholismo, suicidio y desempleo, un grupo silenciado a lo largo de la historia de Estados Unidos.

En vez de aferrarse a las tradiciones ancestrales de su pueblo, Alexie está más interesado en demostrar que – como Edward Said asegura en *Culture and Imperialism* – en la sociedad postmoderna actual "all cultures are involved in one another; none is single and pure, all are hybrid, heterogenous, extraordinarily differentiated, and unmonolithic" (xxv). Lo ineludible de este sincretismo cultural en una sociedad multiétnica como la estadounidense queda reflejado a la perfección en su novela *Reservation Blues*, cuyo título constituye ya de por sí toda una declaración de intenciones por parte de Alexie<sup>2</sup>.

Al igual que el resto de los relatos contenidos en la colección del mismo título, "The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven" está escrito en un estilo que logra armonizar de forma magistral dos tendencias aparentemente antitéticas. En primer lugar, una innegable vena lírica que sin duda deriva de la labor de Alexie como poeta; no en vano, en uno de los contados estudios críticos

<sup>1</sup> El escritor Reynolds Price aseguraba al final de su reseña de *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*: "a question that arises in the presence of any writer who not only is very young but who is publishing rapidly: Has Sherman Alexie moved too fast for his present strength?" La carrera de Alexie se inicia en un año tan significativo como 1992 con la publicación de un volumen de relatos y poemas titulado *The Business of Fancydancing*, al que pronto siguieron títulos como la colección de relatos *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven* (1993) o las novelas *Reservation Blues* (1995) e *Indian Killer* (1996). Además en la edición de 1998 del Sundance Film Festival se estrenaba con éxito la película *Smoke Signals*, presentada como la primera producción íntegramente hecha por nativo-americanos y con guión del propio Alexie basado en varios relatos suyos.

<sup>2</sup> A este respecto Ella Shohat afirma: "In a multiethnic society communities are necessarily implicated – economically, historically, politically, and *culturally* – in one another, subjected to *permeable* boundaries of identity," 216 (cursivas añadidas). Arnold Krupat, Kenneth Lincoln y otros autores de los artículos que conforman un reciente monográfico de *Modern Fiction Studies* dedicado a la literatura nativo-americana inciden en esta misma idea.

publicados hasta la fecha sobre su obra Jennifer Gillan afirma: "the prose-like quality of Alexie's writing often makes it difficult to differentiate between his stories and his poems" (92)<sup>3</sup>. Gillan alude asimismo con acierto a lo que ella denomina "a minimalist approach to character and setting" (93), y ésta es precisamente la segunda característica crucial del relato desde un punto de vista formal, una economía narrativa extrema que en ocasiones recuerda a la desnudez de autores como Raymond Carver; una analogía que se ve además reforzada por el hecho de que en ambos casos se hace especial hincapié en los aspectos más sórdidos de la realidad cotidiana actual.

De hecho, "Lone Ranger" gira en torno a un joven nativo-americano que narra en primera persona su incapacidad para ubicarse tanto en la ciudad de Seattle como en su propia reserva, que si bien supone una mejora notable con respecto a la atmósfera urbana, está lejos de ser un paraíso donde poder solventar sus dilemas existenciales. En la sociedad estadounidense contemporánea que Alexie retrata predominan sentimientos tan inequívocos como la soledad, el desarraigo o la falta de comunicación<sup>4</sup>.

Dos son las alternativas que el anónimo protagonista del relato contempla para combatir la insoportable soledad de la ciudad por la noche, sobre todo después de haber comprobado por enésima vez que su tormentosa relación con una chica de raza blanca está abocada al fracaso, en un claro reflejo de la difícil convivencia entre las dos razas tras siglos de enfrentamiento y opresión. La primera de estas alternativas es conducir de forma compulsiva sin rumbo fijo a modo de terapia con la vana esperanza de encontrar algo, quizás un sentido a su vida: "Sometimes. . . I would forget where I was and get lost. I'd drive for hours, searching for something familiar. Seems like I'd spent my whole life that way, looking for anything I recognized" (4); en la sociedad estadounidense tecnocrática de finales del siglo XX el automóvil se ha convertido en un sucedáneo mecánico de los caballos sobre los que antaño se cabalgaba.

La segunda forma de mitigar la soledad en el Seattle postmoderno de los años 90 es acercarse al Seven-Eleven más próximo y gozar de la compañía del pobre chico blanco que tiene la desgracia de trabajar allí, otro paria de la sociedad por el que – por encima de las diferencias de raza – lo único que siente el protagonista es lástima: "I looked him over. . . he wasn't ugly, just misplaced and

<sup>3</sup> La hipótesis de Gillan queda demostrada si se tiene en cuenta que, como ya hemos señalado, varios libros de Alexie contienen tanto textos en prosa como en verso.

<sup>4</sup> De forma análoga, los autores de *The Empire Writes Back* destacan que "the dialectic of place and displacement" constituye uno de los pilares básicos del discurso literario postcolonial, 9.

marked by loneliness. If he wasn't working there that night, he'd be at home alone, flipping through channels and wishing he could afford HBO or Showtime. . . . There was something about him I liked, even if it was three in the morning and he was white" (5). Un establecimiento tan representativo del 'American way of life' como un Seven-Eleven termina erigiéndose en un templo al consumismo de bajos vuelos y en el refugio de los parias de la noche, sean de la raza que sean.

Sin embargo Alexie – en lo que sin duda constituye uno de los mayores aciertos de toda su obra – opta siempre por presentar la realidad más cruda de una forma lúcida y original, desde una óptica tragicómica en la que la ironía y el humor son estrategias discursivas esenciales. Su visión lo deforma todo y a menudo se aproxima al absurdo e incluso al surrealismo, lo cual le permite evitar caer en un tono de victimismo y autocompasión que habría resultado demasiado obvio y simplista y que ha sido rechazado con su vehemencia habitual por el propio autor, que ha sido definido como "[A]n Indian Without Reservations" (Egan).

Hay que recordar que el humor constituye uno de los pilares básicos de la tradición nativo-americana. Según Vine Deloria a la población blanca le cuesta aceptar que dicha cultura no puede ser concebida sin tener en cuenta el humor, mientras que al abordar el tema recientemente John Lowe llega a la conclusión de que "in addition to inspiring action, uniting the people, providing sheer play and laughter, humor frequently works to heal and unite" (202), y luego añade una afirmación que resulta crucial para entender el discurso de Alexie:

Humor, always present in the oral narratives, has taken even more important dimensions in the ongoing Native American literary renaissance; in a postmodern age, it helps man analyze the absurdities, contradictions, and injustices in what sometimes seems to be a nightmare world, an image that has plagued Native Americans since the white man landed on this continent. (203)<sup>5</sup>

De entre los diversos episodios cómicos que se suceden a lo largo del relato, hay uno que demuestra el potencial bajtiniano de la risa como feroz instrumento de crítica y subversión, sobre todo en manos de minorías oprimidas. En una humillante muestra de racismo, un policía le pide al protagonista que pare su coche y explique qué hace conduciendo por una zona residencial blanca de lujo: "you should be more careful where you drive, . . . [Y]ou are making the

<sup>5</sup> En su libro *Beyond Ethnicity* Werner Sollors hace hincapié en la función que el humor desempeña como elemento de caracterización étnica al afirmar que lo que él denomina "communities of laughter" constituyen "an ethnicizing phenomenon," 132.

people nervous. You don't fit the profile of the neighborhood" (4). Fiel a sus principios ét(n)icos y gracias a su dominio de la concisión y el eufemismo, Alexie le saca el mayor partido a una situación de alcance tan aparentemente limitado dado que, plenamente consciente de la relevancia histórica que estas palabras provenientes de un representante de la autoridad blanca tienen para él, como miembro de un pueblo vinculado de forma ancestral al continente americano, el protagonista admite con resignación: "I wanted to tell him that I didn't really fit the profile of the country but I knew it would just get me into trouble" (4). Con una afirmación de este calibre Alexie pone de manifiesto que la mejor protesta no es siempre la que se formula en un tono tenso y crispado; en cierto sentido, este ingenioso comentario constituye una reescritura paródica de un monólogo de un autor mucho más corrosivo que Alexie, el cómico Lenny Bruce, en el que un nativo-americano lamenta la suerte de su pueblo de forma parecida: "Oh Christ! The white people are moving in – you let one white family, and the whole neighborhood will be white" (cit. Shohat 245).

Con frases tan demoledoras Alexie ilustra a la perfección un comentario del protagonista del relato de innegables resonancias metaliterarias, según el cual las palabras (veneradas en una cultura tradicionalmente oral como la nativo-americana) pueden hacer más daño que los puños<sup>6</sup>. En un poema suyo titulado "The Farm", Alexie incide en esta misma idea cuando asegura: "Silence is the thing / We must learn to fear." De hecho, la obra de Sherman Alexie y de los demás autores nativo-americanos actuales puede ser interpretada como una de las formas más efectivas de reivindicar en público los derechos de su raza, aunque paradójicamente lo hagan en el idioma impuesto por la cultura dominante. Este espinoso tema ha generado un intenso debate en el que entre otros han tomado parte Elaine Showalter, quien resume la cuestión con un interrogante de difícil resolución: "Is the dominant language adequate to express the experience and reality of muted or marginal groups?" (7)<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> Significativamente – y en un singular caso de sincretismo cultural – Alexie escoge como referente para probar esta teoría a Mohammed Ali, uno de los miembros más destacados del otro grupo étnico históricamente oprimido a lo largo de la historia de Estados Unidos, el afro-americano, estableciendo un vínculo directo entre ambas minorías que Alexie exploraría posteriormente a fondo en su novela *Reservation Blues*.

<sup>7</sup> Para la propia Showalter la solución al espinoso dilema de la relación entre lenguaje y poder radica en que – tal como hace Alexie en sus textos – "minority or post-colonial cultures appropriate and subvert the language of the dominant. . . . Such writing is always double-voiced," 7. El escritor nativo-americano Simon Ortiz apunta en la misma dirección cuando afirma: "indigenous peoples of the Americas have taken the languages of the colonialists and used them for their own purposes. . . . [They] have creatively responded to forced colonization. And this response has been one of resistance," 34.

Otro de los problemas más acuciantes a los que han de hacer frente los autores nativo-americanos hoy día es el de denunciar, resistir y por último subvertir los rígidos estereotipos raciales que el discurso dominante blanco ha construido de forma incesante a lo largo de siglos, ya que algún historiador asegura que “the American Indian has probably been the most stereotyped figure in the history of American cultural representation” (Brookeman). Por ello, y al igual que sucede en el resto de sus textos, en su relato “Lone Ranger” Sherman Alexie hace especial hincapié en lo cruel que le resulta a un nativo-americano tener que enfrentarse diariamente a estereotipos creados sobre todo por los medios de comunicación de masas; estas imágenes, que Gerald Vizenor ha definido como “hypotragic impositions” (11), pueden dar lugar a numerosas contradicciones, paradojas e incluso traumas. Como sujetos colonizados política y culturalmente, minorías como la nativo-americana se encuentran expuestas a una multiplicidad de discursos mediáticos con los que difícilmente pueden llegar a identificarse, pero por los que de todas formas se sienten atraídos en una situación sumamente ambigua<sup>8</sup>, por lo que deben intentar adoptar una postura similar a la de ese “resisting reader” que Judith Fetterley elaborara desde un prisma feminista.

Títulos como *Reservation Blues* o “Because my father always said he was the only Indian who saw Jimi Hendrix play ‘The star-spangled banner’ at Woodstock” demuestran con rotundidad que uno de los rasgos que más diferencian a Sherman Alexie del resto de autores nativo-americanos y que dan a su obra un cariz netamente dialógico es el papel central que ocupan en sus textos expresiones de la cultura popular como el cine, la música o la televisión; en su mundo un ritual centenario como el pow-wow convive con el frenético discurso postmoderno de MTV.

A raíz del estreno de la película *Smoke Signals*, Alexie afirmó en una entrevista: “I want to write books and make films that will change the world’s perception of Indians” (Egan). Esto es sin duda lo que pretende hacer con un título tan original como “The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven”, cuestionar el rol marginal al que los nativo-americanos se han visto relegados tradicionalmente en Estados Unidos por medio de personajes como Tonto, un nombre cuyas connotaciones peyorativas resultan obvias para cualquier hispanohablante. En 1998 Alexis publicó en el periódico *Los Angeles Times* un interesante artículo titulado “I Hated Tonto (Still Do)” en el cual explicaba lo

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Esta misma cuestión ya había sido analizada en 1970 por Toni Morrison respecto a la minoría afroamericana en su primera novela, *The Bluest Eye*.

contradictorio que le resultaba ya desde niño disfrutar de películas en las que irremediamente los vaqueros siempre eran 'los buenos' que se alzaban con la victoria: "despite my hatred of Tonto, I loved movies about Indians, loved them beyond all reasoning and saw no fault with any of them. . . . I watched the movies and saw the kind of Indian I was supposed to be."

Las figuras legendarias de The Lone Ranger y de Tonto sintetizan a la perfección la imposible convivencia en términos iguales de ambas razas en el imaginario cultural estadounidense, construido en gran medida gracias al género del western cinematográfico, contra el que lógicamente Alexie arremete a menudo en sus textos, en especial contra John Wayne, icono por excelencia de la ideología nacionalista y supremacista blanca tanto dentro como fuera de la pantalla. Uno de los dos jóvenes nativo-americanos que protagonizan *Smoke Signals* le dedica una cancioncilla sarcástica: "John Wayne's teeth / John Wayne's teeth / Are they plastic? / Are they steel?"; el propio Alexie ha subrayado la relevancia que el legendario actor ha adquirido en su obra al declarar: "My career is based on dissing him .... I'm interested in honest archetypes"<sup>9</sup>.

En el relato que nos ocupa, Alexie deconstruye con su sarcasmo habitual los estereotipos negativos del nativo-americano generados durante siglos. Ante el pánico del dependiente blanco del Seven-Eleven a ser atracado por el protagonista, éste comenta en tono irónico: "He knew this dark skin and long, black hair of mine was dangerous. I had potential. . . . I wanted to whistle low and menacingly but I never learned to whistle" (4). Dado que en la sociedad tecnológica actual es virtualmente imposible escapar al impacto de los medios de comunicación Alexie, que reconoce sin rubor que la primera lectura de su vida fue *Superman* y que disfruta con Stephen King o la serie de televisión *ER (Urgencias)* tanto como cualquier blanco, intenta articular estrategias de resistencia que le permitan a cualquier nativo-americano mantener su dignidad y su amor propio ante el incesante bombardeo de imágenes negativas. Estos estereotipos logran penetrar en todos los hogares y perpetuarse gracias al más masivo e influyente de los medios de comunicación actuales, la televisión, otro de los temas recurrentes en la obra de Alexie, cuyos personajes malgastan sus vidas delante de la pequeña pantalla viendo de forma obsesiva programas tan marcados racialmente como la serie *The Brady Bunch*, sobre la que Alexie introduce algún guiño paródico en el relato. En los diálogos de *Smoke Signals* Alexie incluye una frase demoledora que refleja las nefastas consecuencias que esta práctica puede tener: "The only thing

<sup>9</sup> Jennifer Gillan estudia con acierto la carga simbólica que Wayne como icono cultural tiene en la obra de Alexie al analizar un relato de éste titulado "My Heroes Have Never Been Cowboys", 97-102.



more pathetic than an Indian on TV . . . is an Indian watching an Indian on TV” (cit. Egan)<sup>10</sup>.

Como resultado de la postura escéptica de Alexie, el relato termina sin llegar a ofrecer solución alguna al cúmulo inacabable de contradicciones y paradojas en el que el pueblo nativo-americano se ve inmerso en la sociedad estadounidense contemporánea. Sin embargo, tras abandonar Seattle, el protagonista de “Lone Ranger” halla en la reserva – después de varias semanas de parálisis total delante del televisor – una forma de dar rienda suelta a toda su rabia y su energía y de rehacer su vida, jugar al baloncesto recordando con nostalgia tiempos pasados: “I’d been a good player. . . . But I’d been too out of shape from drinking and sadness to ever be good again. Still, I liked the way the ball felt in my hands and the way my feet felt inside my shoes” (8). Como queda de manifiesto en este fragmento, en el universo eminentemente masculino que Alexie construye en sus textos el jugar al baloncesto no es en absoluto un pasatiempo trivial, sino que muy al contrario supone todo un rito que genera los únicos héroes a los que admirar hoy día en las reservas<sup>11</sup>.

Incluso en el crucial episodio del partido de baloncesto, el único en todo el relato en que el protagonista muestra una actitud positiva y a raíz del cual parece experimentar un leve proceso de regeneración, la visión tragicómica de Alexie termina por imponerse una vez más, dado que la única persona que logra vencerle en la cancha no es un miembro de su tribu, sino el hijo del jefe local del Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), el organismo mediante el cual el gobierno estadounidense ha gestionado a lo largo de los años sin demasiado éxito los asuntos concernientes a las tribus nativo-americanas. Hasta en esta simbólica recreación actualizada de los sangrientos combates del pasado entre las dos razas los blancos terminan consiguiendo la victoria. Desde el prisma tragicómico de Alexie no se vislumbra posibilidad alguna de tregua o de reconciliación ni a corto ni a largo plazo entre las dos culturas, como ya se subraya desde el simbólico título de la obra.

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<sup>10</sup> Sobre el peculiar papel que el pueblo nativo-americano desempeña en la televisión estadounidense, Gillan afirma: “Overtly present in westerns, American Indian characters are absent in melodramas or TV sitcoms, erased from the site of American normalcy – the single-family suburban home. Because Anglo America is perceived as the American national norm, the Indian does not even appear absent – except, of course, to American Indian spectators,” 99.

<sup>11</sup> La recurrencia del baloncesto en la obra de Alexie es una nueva muestra de sincretismo y de mestizaje cultural, dado que es un deporte inventado por un blanco en Massachusetts a finales del siglo XIX que se practica habitualmente en las reservas y del cual se han apropiado por completo los afro-americanos hasta convertirlo en una de sus señas de identidad cultural más acusadas.



En definitiva, en su relato "The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven" Sherman Alexie demuestra con rotundidad por qué se ha convertido en una de las voces más sugerentes no sólo de la literatura nativo-americana actual, sino de la literatura estadounidense en su conjunto. Desde una perspectiva original, desenfadada e iconoclasta en la que resultan fundamentales expresiones de la cultura popular como la música, el cine o la televisión, Alexie logra articular un lúcido análisis de las tremendas contradicciones y paradojas a las que ha de hacer frente la minoría nativo-americana hoy día en una sociedad multicultural como la estadounidense, en la que imperan unos estereotipos raciales contruidos a través de los siglos y perpetuados hasta la saciedad por los medios de comunicación de masas, unas imágenes negativas que resulta sumamente difícil no ya subvertir, sino incluso resistir.

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## ■ Exploitation and Self-Discrimination in Immigrant fiction: Pietro di Donato's *Christ in Concrete*

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Otherness *does* persist, whether one likes it or not – powerfully so among the offspring of immigrants who have attempted Emersonian self-trans-formation only to experience both the skepticism of the long-entitled and the return of the culturally repressed.

Thomas J. Ferraro, *Ethnic Passages*.

Curiously enough, this paper did not originate in a literature classroom but in a writing seminar I taught to a group of twenty-four English majors at Deusto three years ago. One of the topics that we covered in that seminar was the relationship we kept with our elders and the kind of impact that they had on our personality. The piece of prose I gave my students to read in order to elicit some initial responses was an essay from Richard Rodríguez's well-known autobiographical collection *Hunger for Memory* (1982). To my surprise, instead of taking an interest in the ambivalent feelings that Ricardo shows toward his parents, my students proved much more concerned with the kind of difficulties that the I-narrator faced in adapting to the Anglo-world into which he had been transplanted early in his life. In our next class session, the reason for this displacement in what

I thought would draw their attention became evident. Fifteen out of the twenty-four young men and women in that class belonged to families that had moved to the Basque Country from other regions of Spain one or two generations before and had, therefore, gone through experiences similar to those they were reading about in Rodríguez's text. As is usually the case in a composition classroom, the instructor had to act in short order to try to make the most of this unexpected shift in interest. What seems most significant for my purposes here, however, is that there was a dramatic change in my perception of the problems encountered and the various solutions found for them by the second-and third-generation sons and daughters of immigrant families. As a matter of fact, my in-class discussions of literary works such as Rodríguez's autobiography, M.H. Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* (1976), or Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* (1989), were thereafter deeply affected by what I learnt from my students' reports on their firsthand experience of an "alien" and frequently discriminatory culture.

Perhaps the element in their compositions that first struck me as subverting some of the axioms that I believed were fundamental for the advancement of the immigrant selfhood was a kind of disaffiliation from any programmatic critiques of the dominant society in which they were living. For some years I had been teaching working-class and minority texts, convinced that only an attitude of resistance and constant struggle could prevent a complete segregation of these disenfranchised communities. Furthermore, I had repeatedly argued that any feeling of empathy toward the dominant class or race should be promptly quenched since, while they remained, the danger of a wholesale assimilation into "the other" always loomed. Nevertheless, my students' contributions contended that these belligerent tactics could not but perpetuate our history of cultural ethnocides as little consensus could be achieved by polarizing the positions of the groups involved. Shocking as their assaults on my partisan stance were, what most surprised me was their habit of turning a critical eye on their parents' cultural background (be it Andalusian, Galician, or Castillian) as something that had thwarted their chances of an easier and more natural passage into a society different from their own. At first, I read this reaction as the logical aftermath of their outrage at being constantly reminded of their "otherness." But my work has brought me into contact with other – allegedly, more authoritative – voices holding similar views on the immigrant writer's attitude, although for very diverse reasons:

Even before pen goes to paper, the aspiring writer has been through a fight, but the fight has been directed not so much against the cultural monopoly of the mainstream as against the cultural hermeticism of the ethnic group. (Ferraro 110)

As was to be expected, these striking revelations, which I gathered primarily from my students' essays but, in later years, also from other sources, have complicated my readings of works of fiction such as the above mentioned. Besides estranging me from the often far-too-commodified militant positions, they have taught me, more importantly perhaps, to look much more deeply into the particular existential dilemmas that each one of these writers dwells upon and tries to convey in his/her novels.

By its very nature, the immigrant experience erects huge barriers to the human understanding. When people move to a foreign land, their identity needs to be reworked as a consequence of the cultural, ideological, and linguistic gaps that they come to face. How these gaps are filled makes all the difference in the kind of hyphenated selfhood that the immigrant will ultimately generate. It is not surprising in this regard that while a number of cultural critics have characterized the immigrant/ethnic experience in the U.S. represented in their literature as "prototypically American" (Sollors 8), for others what best defines it is its assertiveness in opposing the ideologies of the dominant culture and in marking their differences with respect to it (see Anzaldúa). Paradoxically, however, works of fiction by immigrant authors very rarely pledge complete allegiance to either of these two factions, for they seem to grant as much relevance to the aptitude to integrate into the new community as to the preservation of those elements of their heritage that are still usable in the foreign land. Kingston's memoirs offer a highly enlightening example of this balance in that, as Rocío Davis has observed, a vital part of her development "is the reconciliation of the communal Chinese 'I' with the individualistic American 'I', as these different signifiers entail different ways of composing the self" (92). Most pieces of contemporary immigrant fiction display this complex intertwining of the distinct cultural strands in the writer which provide him/her with an invaluable opportunity to renegotiate his/her identity in utterly new terms. Had this scholar to decide on the greatest achievement to be found in these literary works, it would very likely be their refusal to be easily categorized as "ethnic," "assimilationist," "mainstream," or "marginal." Wolfgang Karrer and Hartmut Lutz have rightly noted on this point that:

Rather than strictly applying outside definitions, it is more illuminating to listen to what the people say about themselves, how they, as individuals, belonging to one or several racial [and social] groups, see themselves in relation to their world and the people surrounding them. (12)

This is especially true of immigrant authors in whose writing questions of class, race, and gender constantly intersect, making it difficult for the reader to choose any univocal response to the kind of worldview they are representing.

My choice of Pietro di Donato's *Christ in Concrete* (1939) to illustrate some of the points I have made in my introductory disquisitions is, in my opinion, doubly justified. On the one hand, this Italian-American novel was published at a time when immigrant authors were still struggling to come to a nascent political consciousness of their economic and cultural position and, consequently, the novel reflects in their purest state the values and principles that they considered more central to their attempts at self-definition. Not having the advantage of the "equal rights" that many contemporary ethnic writers enjoy, these artists were likely to end up as part of the broader movement of radical proletarian fiction that dominated the 1930s. Nevertheless, owing to its intuitive preoccupation with the spirit of immigrant/ethnic life in his community, di Donato's autobiographical novel remains to a great extent free from the revolutionary doctrines of the period. As Arthur Casciato and other critics have pointed out, di Donato rejected "the prescribed literary posture of the day in which the writer would efface his or her own class and ethnic identity in order to speak in the sonorous voice of 'the people'" (qtd. in Gardaphé xi). On the other hand, although *Christ in Concrete* does raise a forceful protest against the injustices and exploitation that immigrant laborers suffered at the hands of a ruthless capitalist system, the novel is not devoid of a sense of guilt that comes from the victims' realization that their "cultural baggage" had hindered a smoother incorporation into the dominant society. If "Job" – without the article and beginning with a capital letter, as it is spelt in the novel – should be blamed for the poor and hazardous conditions in which the *paesanos* live and toil, their Catholicism, sexist attitudes, and excessively sentimental vision of reality do not help them in any way to integrate and improve their situation in what they see as "the Promised Land." It is interesting to underline at this point the fact that the main focalizer throughout most of the novel is Paul (or *Paolo*), a young boy born to Italian immigrants, who, like my students, is as conscious of the unfair discrimination against his parents on the part of the power structures of the American society as of their incapacity to move beyond the limitations produced in them by their religiosity, sexual politics, timorous nature, or sentimentality. Since *Christ in Concrete* has already been variously discussed as a novel of socioeconomic and political protest by several scholars (see Coles or Diomedes), I have decided to focus my assessment on those cultural features that the implied author portrays as diminishing the Italian immigrants' chances of pulling out of their plight.

The novel takes us to the Lower East Side of New York City just before the Great Depression of the late 1920s. There, near the waterfront, the Italian immigrants live in run-down tenements and work in the construction trade for extremely low wages. The narrative opens with the dramatic demise of the central

character's father, Geremio, shortly before they quit work at three o'clock on Good Friday. Geremio, a foreman and former bricklayer on the construction sites, leaves behind a pregnant wife and seven offspring with little more than the clothes they are wearing. The rest of the novel tells us about Paul's premature journey into manhood as he is compelled by circumstances to take over his father's role. Throughout this journey, Paul learns, above all, about the coldness that institutions and bureaucracies show toward his impoverished family and, similarly, he experiences a "painful awakening to the fact of exploitation, the theft of the proud power he has nurtured as a direct inheritance of his father" (Coles 27). These themes, which could have turned the novel into the perfect epitome of the radical fiction produced during that era, are compounded, though, with more ideational concerns related to the aspects of their native culture that foster an inexplicably acquiescent and submissive response to the oppression the immigrants are suffering. The latter part of the novel traces Paul's inner and outer changes from the traditional humility of the *paesano* to a bitter defiance of both the "American Dream" that has been at the root of his father's destruction and the Christian hope which has blinded his mother to their true condition for so long. Di Donato is particularly skillful in choosing the most suitable speech rhythms in the Italian-American dialect to present this metamorphosis of the hero throughout the narrative. In connection with this idea, Fred Gardaphé has explained: "As mediator between the Italian culture of his parents and the American culture he was born into, di Donato masterfully effects our understanding of both through his unique linguistic representations of both" (xii). Let me look now in some detail at the type of linguistic registers that the author uses to expose the various psycho-cultural burdens that the immigrants bear.

Chapter 1 of the novel is fraught with expressions of the construction workers' mixed feelings for Job. Firstly, there is of course the sense of outrage they show against "the worn oppression and the despair" (8) resulting from their realization that their life is being left on brick piles. The Lean, Geremio's fellow worker, is especially explicit in the articulation of their anger: "Sons of two-legged dogs ... despised of even the Devil himself! Work! Sure! For America beautiful will eat you and spit your bones into the earth's hole! Work!" (3). Yet, the hatred they feel for the "great God Job" (8) seems insignificant in comparison with their fear of being laid off. Dangerous as their daily occupation may be, the workers establish a very intimate relationship with the buildings, which is sometimes described even in sexual terms. This bond between worker and work is very much a consequence of the overemphasis that Geremio and his workmates give to their role as *paterfamilias* and breadwinner. Not even when he is assailed by ominous premonitions of the final outcome of his present job does Geremio conceive of a



situation in which he would not be providing for his large family: “Annuziata speaks of scouring the ashcans for the children’s in case I didn’t want to work on a job where ... But am I not a man, to feed my own with these hands?” (9). It is difficult to miss a note of sexism in this comment and several others which make it clear that Geremio can only think of his wife as a mother to their children and a “soft full breast” (6) on which to rest his head (Cf. Salvatori 45-46). By taking upon himself the dominant role in the family, he is not only – as the following chapters of the novel demonstrate – constraining and undervaluing his wife’s and children’s potential, he is moreover giving up a great deal of his personal freedom and identity. As Nicholas Coles has remarked, “for Geremio, the ideal of man as provider, and also as prolific father of mouths to feed, is one of the strands that bind him to his exploitation” (26). From this perspective, it is not strange that Paul should dream of his deceased father as some sort of “traitor” in the closing sections of the novel. When Paul calls him and asks him why they have thrown themselves into the deadly arms of Job, “his father eyes his brickwork and does not listen” (225). Engrossed as Geremio is in his own enactment of the role of “savior” of his family, his destiny is to end up a “Christ in concrete” under the rubble of the Job that he had so much loved and hated.

While in the public sphere the construction workers’ voices are full of “the sound and the fury” that their oppressed and yet virile condition demands, they utterly change when they refer to the domestic domain. “Home” is represented in the novel as the warrior’s rest and the location where he can build up the dreams that he is denied in his profession. When Mike the “Barrel-mouth” and Tomás make fun of Geremio’s constantly expanding family, he retorts: “Laugh, laugh all of you, but I tell you that all my kids must be boys so that they someday will be big American builders. And then I’ll help them to put the gold away in the basements!” (4). There is little need to clarify that Geremio’s romantic dream of his descendents’ success story in the New World soon turns into their – especially Paul’s – nightmare as the “American Dream” becomes for them a perpetual and inescapable impossibility. Yet, hope does not disappear altogether since that masculine ideal is soon replaced in the novel by a sense of community and family sentiments that sustain the immigrants’ spirit in the cruelest circumstances. In this regard, M. Diomede has noted that “the sense of a shared communion of difficulties in the Italian family is characteristic of Annunziata, as well as the other women of the community” (82). Thus, although Geremio’s wife is left “a stricken widow with hungry brood” (42), her last son is welcomed into the world by her and her friends with moving enthusiasm. Hear, for instance, Katerina’s sing-song words when she pulls the baby from Annuziata’s womb:

"Kick and swing your tiny jigger-limbs, load and fire your one-note opera ... sing and live, live and sing – his mother's little man – her little rose ..." and kissing him with little frenzy of woman-love she sang, "... And the sweet little blessed cock of his own mother true!" (39)

The compelling and hopelessly sentimental tone that pervades most of the passages describing life in the gloomy tenement shows not only the immigrants' resilience but also their incomprehension of their actual situation. When Paul eventually begins to awaken to class-consciousness, he realizes that these parallel lives in the domestic context are mere acts of self-deception to make existence a bit more bearable (Cf. Esposito 52):

So different were people, thought Paul in his bedroom darkness. After the show of day, after all the incidents and faces and voices and smells, what was he to think? Did they not all live one atop the other and feel and taste and smell each other? Did not Job claim them all? With what all-embracing thought could he bless Amen today? (105)

The fact that *Christ in Concrete* is framed by two deaths – those of Paul's father and his godfather – in the annihilating arms of Job and that both episodes are preceded by the characters' attempts to escape in their minds to more idyllic places is the best evidence of the undesirable consequences that may result from their habit of romanticizing their life.

But if there is a myth in his ancestors' tradition that di Donato most heavily criticizes in his novel, it is the one advanced by the Catholic Church. As a matter of fact, the protagonist's rites of passage into adulthood are characterized primarily by his progressive estrangement from his parents' faith. Still early in the novel, right after his father's metaphorical crucifixion, Paul invariably joins his mother in her prayers for the preservation of the family in their dire straits:

God of my fathers, God of my girlhood, God of my mating, God of my innocent children, upon your sacred bosom I lay my voice: To this widow alone black-enshrouded, lend of your strength that she may live only to raise her children. God of my life, death, and spirit ... Amen. (50)

Both Annunziata and Paul place themselves at the mercy of Divine providence. Not just this, but they can only find some relief to the pain caused by the patriarch's absence by going to a medium, "the Cripple," who allows them to "contact" Geremio in the beyond. Faith in religion and even superstition is for a while their sole consolation, but one for which they pay a high price. As Gardaphé

has cogently explained, “this is a trust that has led many immigrants to accept poverty as their fate and passivity as their means of survival in a world bent on turning them into disposable tools of the rich” (xiv). Two incidents, however, drastically change Paul’s views of the Church as an institution and a faith. First, when he goes to their parish in search of assistance, Father John tells him that he has “nothing to do with Charities” (59), while the boy sees behind the priest that:

through the great door from which he had come out with napkin around neck of rick black cassock of his round body was a long table reaching away beautifully lit with slim candles throwing warm glow on shiny porcelain plates containing baked potatoes and cuts of brown dripping lamb and fresh peas and platters of hot food hard food soft food ... (58)

Paul is deeply affected by this rejection, but his religious beliefs only begin to be shaken after he has several long conversations with his Jewish friend Louis Molov. Louis and his family are “survivors” of the Russian Revolution and they have learnt the hard way that one can depend only on oneself and one’s kin in the struggle against the hidden mechanism of institutionalized myth. Thanks to his friend’s advice and, above all, to his experiences as a bricklayer, Paul comes to see that he should never let others take control of his life, nor should he try to avoid the responsibility of making his own decisions. His final argument with his mother on the existence of a world beyond, after which Annunziata dies in his arms – in a sort of inverted *Pieta* –, proves that the young man has become mature enough to accept the fact that he is his own god: “I want justice here! I want happiness here! I want life here!” (230).

To sum up, I hope that my brief discussion of di Donato’s *Christ in Concrete* has demonstrated that the novel offers much more than a critique of the capitalist system that oppressed his people. Like most immigrant narratives, it explores in its very idiosyncratic voice the confused and painful feelings generated by the newcomers’ eagerness to expand their lives and opportunities in a new world and, at the same time, their wish to retain as much as they can of their rich cultural background. Other writers, such as Anzia Yezierska (1925) and Henry Roth (1934) had previously tried hard to articulate this new form of “American consciousness,” but I firmly believe that di Donato’s first novel remains among the most representative of its kind. My sincere gratitude to him and to my Composition students, who provided me in their writings with most of the ideas that I have dealt with in this brief contribution.

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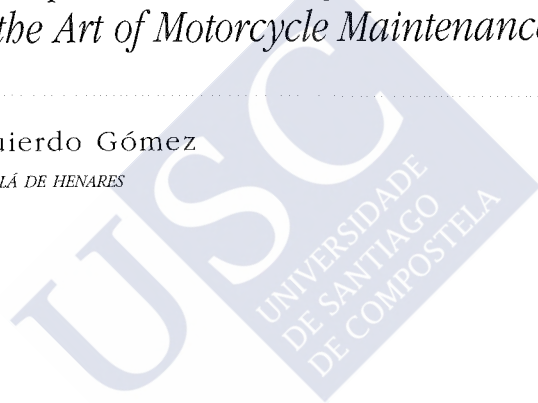
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## The Journey that Broadens Our Mind: The New Experience of Being in Robert Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*

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More to travel than to arrive anywhere is what Pirsig accomplishes here, at least not geographically speaking, although he does get somewhere at the end of his book. Travelling broadens one's mind, and makes one experience reality in a way not perceived until now. The hereness and nowness of things is something that has been lost in the last years. We see things and feel there is something wrong, and yet we don't see them perhaps because we are not trained to see it.

The frame of the journey is the landscape around Pirsig, his son Chris and a couple who rode up with them initially up to Montana. Running on a cycle you don't make great conversations, instead you spend your time being aware of things and meditating on them. Pirsig starts to show there is something we have not found yet, and begins to speak in terms foreign to the Western mind. He clearly states what he wants to do:

What I would like to do is use the time that is coming now to talk about some things that have come to mind. We're in such a hurry most of the time we never get much chance to talk. The result is a kind of endless day-to-day shallowness, a monotony that leaves a person wondering

years later where all the time went and sorry that it's all gone. Now that we do have some time, and know it, I would like to use the time to talk in some depth about things that seem important. (7)

From the very start, Pirsig unravels the method of analysis he intends to follow to escape that state of uneasiness that haunts him – the reader senses it immediately, and does it in a figurative, fable-like manner (style that he uses constantly throughout the rest of the book to expose his theory): when travelling, the main thing is to keep from getting lost, that is, to know which roads to ride on. That is his problem and nobody else's, not until he and the rest become aware of it, and it needs to be very clearly stated. The navigation is by dead reckoning, and deduction from the clues we find on the way, knowing that the researcher will go through overcast days when the sun will not show direction. With these tools and lack of pressure from outside to get somewhere, that is, to prove anything “we have America all to ourselves” (6). The way Pirsig calls such a method of enquiry is Chautauquas:

...like the travelling tent-show Chautauquas that used to move across America, this America, the one that we are now in, an old-time series of popular talks intended to edify and entertain, improve the mind and bring culture and enlightenment to the ears and thoughts of the hearer. The Chautauquas were pushed aside by faster-paced radio, movies and TV, and it seems to me the change was not entirely an improvement. Perhaps because of these changes the stream of national consciousness moves faster now, and is broader, but it seems to run less deep. (7)

The starting point for his Chautauqua is the disharmony between Pirsig and his friends, The Sutherlands, in a situation so down-to-earth as it is the maintenance of the motorcycle, and the bottom line he seems to reach is that some people simply cannot cope with technology, that has made people strangers in their own land. Anything that has to do with valves and shafts and wrenches is part of that dehumanised world they would rather not think about: they do not want to get into it. And here is where Pirsig begins to introduce his own point of view by means of the time he spends meditating about it during the journey, meditation based on the Eastern cultures and religions such as Zen:

I disagree with them about cycle maintenance, but not because I am out of sympathy with their feelings about technology. I just think that their flight from and hatred of technology is self-defeating. The Buddha, the Godhead, resides quite as comfortably in the circuits of a digital computer or the gears of a cycle transmission as he does at the top of



a mountain or in the petals of a flower. To think otherwise is to demean the Buddha...which is to demean oneself. That is what I want to talk about in this Chautauqua. (16).

The journey gets started and so does the Chautauqua. They cross the prairies, enduring cold temperatures, and the memories of the past self of the narrator seem to crop up. He talks about the attitude of the 20th century man, saying that there is a separation between what the man is and what he does. This is due to the lack of care for what he does and the hurriedness with which he does things. Pirsig is devoted to find where he and contemporary man have gone wrong. The disharmony is extended to the relationship with his son, who shows traces of an incipient mental disease, and the first recognitions of the narrator's former self whom he calls Phaedrux, and who had not been buried right.

Thus, it is a twofold journey. Firstly, the writer-narrator has the inner urge of burying right that other self, and the only way of doing so is to reopen his case and see what he was working on, and how he was misunderstood by his attempt to come to terms with technology, leading him to insanity. Secondly, the Chautauquas will guide us readers to a full understanding of the dilemma the writer is immersed in, stating the conflict Phaedrux perceived in a society that holds two visions of the same reality, namely, one of immediate artistic appearance and the other one of underlying scientific explanation. The journey provides the scenario for that broadening of the mind and that new experience of being that it consequently brings along. We are travelling.

A dichotomy arises from this outline, and it is the division of human understanding between classic and romantic. The former proceeds by reason and by laws, whereas the latter is primarily inspirational, imaginative, creative, intuitive, where feelings rather than facts predominate. And this is the source of the trouble, as people tend to think and feel exclusively in one mode or the other, and in doing so they underestimate what the others do. There does not seem to be a meeting point between these two modes, and a huge split has developed between a classic culture and the romantic counterculture – two worlds growing alienated, a house divided against itself.

Phaedrux sought an understanding that rejected neither of them nor their methods and united them into one new mode that encompassed the totality of the sources from where they both were fed – the landscape that supported the journey. He was a knower of logic and very systematic in the way he worked, and his primal objective was to pursue the ghost of rationality. He wanted to destroy it because the ghost was what he was and he wanted to be free from the bondage of its own identity, and in a strange way, this freedom was achieved. His method

of analysis took him by means of inference and deduction to the discovery of who Phaedrus was and how he became the man he is now.

It was explained to him that Phaedrus had been assassinated by a Court order, enforced by the transmission of high-voltage alternating current through the lobes of his brain in a process known technologically as “Annihilation ECS”. Paradoxically, his personality had been liquidated by the society who estimated that his thought could be harmful for the well-being of the community, and carried out by its right hand – technology. This insanity that was diagnosed to Phaedrus was simply for defending something that was only in his mind, something that the others could not see.

The method he used to find his way through all the hierarchies of the systems of rationality created its logic, which can be of two kinds: induction, reasoning from particular experiences to general truths; and deduction, which starts with general knowledge and predicts a specific observation. When problems get too complicated, as the one Phaedrus tackled, you must follow an interweaving of methods which are formalised in a scientific method. The logical statements that should be entered into a notebook in order not to get lost are: (1) statement of the problem, (2) hypotheses as to the cause of the problem, (3) experiments designed to test each hypothesis, (4) predicted results of the experiments, (5) observed results of the experiments and (6) conclusions from the results of the experiments. The purpose with all this is precise guidance of thoughts that will fail if they are inaccurate. This method of analysis, which seems taken from a lab notebook, is the one Pirsig uses in the beginning of his enquiry towards a new metaphysics he calls of Value to outline this new experience of being that he develops into a full theory in his sequel novel *Lila* (1991), contraposed to the subject-object metaphysics that has commanded the Western cultures from the Greeks till the present.

The creation of hypotheses is the stage that holds more mystery, as it is the phase whose results are not obtained from tests and it always depends on the researcher and his capacity for an open-mind towards the unknown. Any problem can have an infinite number of hypotheses – as many as one can conceive of, which is a disproof for the scientific method. The validity of any hypothesis is just a matter of time, until another one rises that explains better the problem and they are obviously not a dogma, something for the eternity. In this twentieth century, the scientific truths seem to have a much shorter life-span than those of the last century because scientific activity is now much greater. What shortens the life-span of an existing truth is the volume of hypotheses offered to replace it.

Through multiplication upon multiplication of facts, information, theories and hypotheses, it is science itself that is leading mankind from single absolute

truths to multiple, indeterminate, relative ones. The major producer of the social chaos, the indeterminacy of thought and values is none other than science itself, and this can be seen everywhere in the technological world today. Our current modes of rationality are not moving society forward into a better world, quite on the contrary.

Although everybody felt there was something not right, they all showed a sort of apathy towards the problem. From the late fifties and the beginning of the sixties groups like the hippies and the beatniks started to live in their own world of feigned happiness, not wanting to face the ominous reality that surrounded them. It was this that provoked Phaedrus' fall; he had to abandon all the standards and the university which had been his refuge for some years could no longer keep him. And he began to drift. The train of his abstractions became so long that he had to have the surroundings of silence and space to hold it straight. He felt that institutions tended to direct thought for ends other than truth, for the perpetuation of their own functions, and for the control of the individuals in the service of these functions.

At first, Phaedrus began to pursue lateral knowledge, which is "the knowledge that's from a wholly unexpected direction. Lateral truths point to the falseness of axioms and postulates underlying one's existing system of getting at truth" (106). From that behavior in isolation, he changed his mode of thinking, as he saw that was the only alternative left and went to the Orient to have contact with the Oriental philosophy. He came across a book written by N.S.C. Northrop called *The Logic of the Sciences and Humanities*, which meant the springboard for the end of his drift. He accepted the notion of the undifferentiated aesthetic continuum as the basis of his future metaphysics.

He realised that the only way to find a solution to the problem was to enter the realm of philosophy, as science could not aim any higher. He then began his journey to the high country of thought, where few people dare to travel. He realised that the key to the resolution of the problem is the expansion of reason to handle the technological ugliness: old forms cannot deal with new experiences.

He thought that one path leading to the high country was the one of Quality, something we all know what it is but we are incapable of defining. After many attempts he decided it was best to leave it undefined, bridging the gap between the two worlds so distant one from the other. Both worlds use the term and know what it is and have to use it undistorted without any definitions.

The world according to Phaedrus was composed of mind, matter, and Quality. He saw Quality was not related independently with each other subject or object, but could only be found in the relationship of the two with each other. It is the point at which subject and object meet. Quality is not a thing, it is an event.

Reality is always the moment of vision before the intellectualization takes place. There is no other reality. The preintellectual reality is what Phaedrux felt he had properly identified as Quality. And this is what Northrop defined as the undifferentiated aesthetic continuum. He stopped the duality and created his own reality and experience of being. People differ about Quality, not because Quality is different, but because people are different in terms of experience. Any explanation of Quality will be true and false at the same time because it is an explanation, an analytic process which is no more than a process of breaking down subjects and objects. Quality is simple, immediate, and direct; the central generator of everything, the same way the Tao is the generator of Oriental religions.

The Western world has seen the presence of irrational elements crying for some assimilation that creates the bad quality, the chaotic, the disconnected spirit of the men and women in the twentieth century. This calls for an expansion of reason, reason that is based on the correct functioning of the exact sciences which have suffered a deep crisis in its foundations since the beginning of this century. For years, scientific truth had been beyond the possibility of a doubt; the logic of sciences was infallible.

All the reasoning is based on facts, which give order to the universe. As it happened when we talked about hypotheses, with facts we must choose from an infinite number of them. The task of any researcher is to select which facts are the ones that will provide an answer, and for this the only answer we get is simply the capacity of creativity and ability. No set explanations are given. This is where science cracks.

The perception felt by many people from different cultures in this century, that sense of hopelessness towards technology, is caused precisely by the absence of Quality or care, which is the external aspect of Quality. Pirsig works all this theory into practice with the maintenance of his cycle – what example more down-to-earth than this one – and the stuckness into old forms or incapability of finding a solution is consequence of rationality's insistence upon objectivity, doctrine that holds the divided reality.

We said above that the only way to bridge the gap in this divided reality was an extension of rationality to admit all the unanswered questions that trouble us. Thus, the first step to avoid that stuckness produced by the old forms is the concept of a dynamic reality, where forms are capable of change. The stuckness should never be avoided. It is the physic predecessor of that real understanding that yields to the expansion of knowledge.

From this, we can derive that the ugliness found in technology is not inherent to it, because technology is just a way of making things. The real ugliness

is between the people who use it and what they use. To solve this conflict between human values and technology is not to run away from it, but to break down the barriers and obtain a fusion of nature and human spirit into a direction that transcends both. One needs peace of mind to attain the awareness of Quality. The order in which to work out this expansion of the experience of being is to start to improve one's own heart and head and hands, and then outward from there.

If somebody achieves Quality through this means, is filled with what Pirsig calls "gumption": "it's an old Scottish word, once used by a lot of pioneers, but which, like 'kin', seems to have all but dropped out of use... The Greeks called it *enthousiasmos*, the root of 'enthusiasm', which means literally 'filled with *theos*', or God, or Quality. See how that fits?"(272). A person with gumption is somebody who feels an itching for solving the problems and not merely sits and complains about how bad things are. This enthusiasm is the fuel that keeps mankind evolving, despite the numerous traps laid on the way that discourage the traveller; low-quality situations that destroy the enthusiasm, and make one infuriated, frustrated. However, this can also be a positive situation if you are well aware of it. They can be positive in the sense that they first produce an indeterminate answer – which makes people furious; but if you stop long enough to think about it, it means two things: that your procedures are not doing what you think they were or that your understanding of the context of the problem – and therefore of reality – needs to be enlarged. Check the method and then restudy the problem. Don't ignore those traps; they are the ones on which one's own experience grows.

Phaedrus strove restlessly to convince the faculty members at the university of Chicago of the breakthrough between the Eastern and Western philosophy he had ascertained. He had been so caught up in his world of Quality metaphysics he couldn't see outside it anymore, and since nobody understood this world, he was already done for" (311). He pursued his idea of Quality so far that he felt he had to leave the Western *mythos* that governs the rationality of our contemporary culture, to dare into the *terra incognita* of the insane. From here, and in a matter of days, he woke up to find himself in a mental asylum until he recanted from his thoughts to be admitted in the society of the "normal".

The clearest symptom of the disharmony that Phaedrus diagnosed and tried to make aware of is the loneliness felt by many Americans. They blame technology for all this, as loneliness is associated with the newer technological devices, but it was made plain that the real evil is not the objects of technology, but the tendency of technology to isolate people into lonely attitudes of objectivity. It is the dualistic way of looking at things that produce the loneliness. And it is here where Quality must be used to destroy the objectivity, and Pirsig does it with the use of technology in the example of the maintenance of motorcycles.

With the time and the confrontations with the professors at university, he obliviously began to define Quality, and in so doing it stopped being Quality, falling again onto the dualism he rejected from the start. This was the unchaining of his insanity.

After recognising the narrator that Phaedrus and him are the same person, tension begins to rise in the relationship with his son Chris, something that he has been putting off to face but he knew it was inevitable. He says:

I can't imitate the father he is supposed to have, but subconsciously, at the Quality level, he sees through it and knows his real father isn't here. In all this Chautauqua talk there's been more than a touch of hypocrisy. Advice given again and again to eliminate subject-object dualism, when the biggest duality of all, the duality between me and him, remains unfaced. A mind divided against itself. (363)

Tension goes *in crescendo* until the last pages of the book where reconciliation is reached with Chris. Insanity is acknowledged by both father and son and the long lost harmony is regained. They ride on till the end of the last journey – the physical one; arriving in the Frisco Bay. Without the experience of travelling Pirsig would not have been able to accomplish the tasks he had assigned to himself: the communion with himself, with his son and with society. The journey would have been incomplete, had he not reached the communion in all three parts, as they all have the same value, the same quality.

To bring this paper to an end I just want to reflect very briefly on the success of this book back in the seventies, and see how still nowadays is a reference for those who go beyond the surface of things and wonder why things are what they are. When this book first appeared, the hippies were trying to find an alternative to that sense of frustration one could feel in the air, and to the American dream that still was believed and pursued by many. But still, they gave no answers. The success of the book came for what the very same author calls as "culture bearing" book, it simply offered what people were looking for: an alternative as an expansion to the meaning of success.

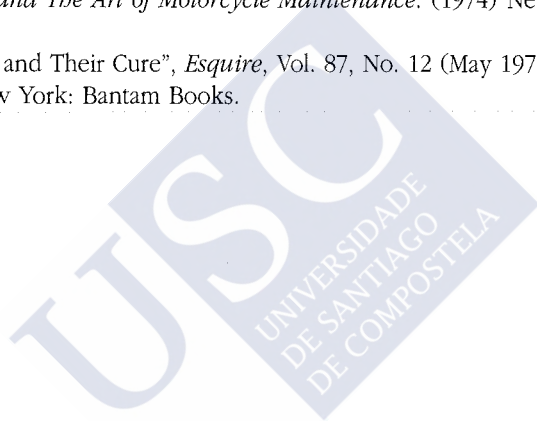
Surprisingly, this book has not reached far beyond the borders of the country where it saw the light, and I think there are several reasons that we should ponder as the reason for it. I will simply throw some questions to the air for further discussion and meditation, and are these: is the problem stated by Pirsig not applicable to other cultures out of the boundaries of the American culture? Is society such a "monster" that swallows that which might stir the consciousness of the individual? Are we Spaniards so well installed in the commodity of our everyday lives that we do not want to be disturbed by a "madman" who comes



along and says out loud what we all know or feel but nobody dares to say? We could also put to the test his very metaphysics of Quality following the model of the rhetoricians. I believe it is not the time or the place to do so, but at least the lid has been removed from the box for others to start to think things over.

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## Across August Wilson's Four B's: Creating Theater with: Blues, Bearden, Baraka and Borges

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The critical and commercial successful playwright August Wilson has always been very clear stating his influences, which may seem a surprise if not unusual, but what is most surprisingly and unusual is when Wilson explains who he is not influenced by. Specially when he claims not having read nor seen any plays of the major and traditional playwrights such as: Miller, Shaw, Ibsen, O'Neill, Tennessee Williams or Lorraine Hansberry. Why he is interested in doing so may have different reasonable answers, and the aim of this paper is to try to find a reason to this.

First, let's very briefly look at his admitted influences: Blues, Bearden, Baraka, and Borges:

Wilson has repeatedly stated that his major influences have been four, what he has called his four B's, that is, the blues music, the painter Romare Bearden, Amiri Baraka, and the Argentinian writer Jorge Luis Borges. Of all four, blues is Wilson's primary influence.

The blues is very important in Wilson's plays as, according to himself, the blues contains the Afro-American's response to the world, and, as Baldwin, Wilson finds his voice and his history in the cultural medium of this music. The blues has helped the Afro-Americans to confront reality. Through the language many

thought patterns are given; there is an entire thought and cultural process behind the language and in the blues Wilson has found the questions and ideas of the Afro-American culture that has been transmitted orally through the years. The blues contains not only a social vision but there is an entire mythological, philosophical, historical and social organization that is transmitted through lyrics and the music. Wilson discovered the blues in 1965 and recalls:

It was a watershed event in my life. It gave me a history. It provided me with a cultural response to the world as well as the knowledge that the text and content of my life were worthily the highest celebration and occasion of art. It also gave me a framework and an aesthetic for exploring the tradition from which it grew (Wilson, *Romare Bearden* 8).

Through the blues he discovered his relation to the world and it becomes an inspiration for his work. With the discovery of Bessie Smith, Wilson began to look at and understand life differently:

I had never heard anything like it. I was literally stunned by its beauty. (...) There was an immediate emotional response. It was someone speaking directly to me. (...) this was something I could connect with that I instantly emotionally understood (Moyers p. 168).

Through the blues music Wilson understood the Afro-American's aesthetics that had been passed on through the music. The stories that are told through the blues' lyrics are a way of passing information, which also is evident in Wilson's plays where the story telling is revealing the past experiences. The blues becomes, as Wilson has said, "the sacred book" (Livingstone 32) and he elevates it "to biblical status" (Wilson *Three Plays*, X) and it constitutes an entire ontology for him. Furthermore, Ralph Ellison, in *Shadow and Act*, defines Bessie Smith as a "priestess, a celebrant who affirmed the values of the group and man's ability to deal with chaos" (257). Wilson finds a reference and a world that contain the Afro-American's values and the nobility of their lives, the blues helps to order the chaos the Afro-American people feel. In the blues there is a cultural response of a nonliterary and oral tradition. The blues is "the flag bearer of self-definition" (Wilson *Three Plays*, x). Wilson finds, in the blues, new strategies to confront life providing the Afro-Americans with a frame and reference as it is a cultural response to the world. The blues becomes an oral transmission of the Afro-American philosophy, and a metaphor for the differences between blacks and whites. The blues is a major element in Wilson's plays as in *Seven Guitars* or in

*Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, where Ma Rainey expresses the Afro-American's cultural history, she says:

White folks don't understand about the blues. They hear it come out, but they don't know how it got there. They don't understand that's life's way of talking. You don't sing to feel better. You sing to cause that's a way of understanding life (Wilson pp. 82-83).

The blues for Wilson is a black legacy and an important part of the Afro-American's life, and therefore also an important part in his plays. As an example of this all of Wilson's plays are full of blues references, for instance, the title of *Joe Turner* comes from a W.C. Handy song, *Ma Rainey* was a real Mother of Blues, *Two Trains Running* is a Bessie Smith song, and *Fences*, *The Piano Lesson* and *Seven Guitars* contain numerous allusions, epigrams, lyrics and references drawn from different blues songs. Music is a way of approaching life, and the blues is full of images and themes that offer cohesion to the Afro-American community, which is central to Wilson's plays.

The second B is Romare Bearden (1912-1988), the painter. Both grew up in Pittsburgh although on different times and conditions. It was in 1977 that Wilson discovered Bearden's work, and he soon adopted Bearden's principle: "I try to explore, in terms of life I know best, those things which are common to all cultures" (Wilson in *The New York Times*). This principle is one of the reasons for Wilson's success as a playwright, as he (and as Bearden did) speaks through barriers of race because he explores archetypal themes that are universal to all human beings. Bearden, using a formal artistic visual language always has the Black experience as his subject matter. Bearden has influenced Wilson with his capacity of transmitting ideas through images, lines, mass, shadows, shapes and colors. The way the painter approaches the themes through the visual language was what caught Wilson. Wilson was impressed not only by the mode of representation, but also by the way the black experience is presented through Bearden's paintings and collages. Through the blues had Wilson learned the Afro-Americans' aesthetics and philosophy, but he still felt unsure of how to express or manifest these thoughts and feelings. He had difficulties in expressing and linking all the elements of his culture in his writings. What Wilson felt was difficult, and even almost impossible to express, Bearden presented as easy and simple:

What I saw was black life presented on its full terms, on a grand and epic scale, with all its richness and fullness, in a language that was vibrant and which, made attendant to everyday life, ennobled it,

affirmed its value and exalted its presence. It was the art of a large and generous spirit that defined not only the character of black American life, but also the conscience (Wilson *Romare Bearden* 8).

Through Bearden, Wilson discovered a new visual language and a mode of presentation through the collage. A parallel that can be drawn with the “collage” the Afro-American people and their history represent, which is a collage full of blendings, distortions and contradictions. Using Ellison’s words, Bearden is a “combination of technique is in itself eloquent of the sharp breaks, leaps in consciousness, distortions, paradoxes, reversals, telescoping of time and surreal blending of styles, values, hopes and dreams which characterize much of Negro American history” (165). Wilson has said that in the process of writing he is a collagist, taking “little scraps and pieces of things and how out of them I discover and build the world of a play” (Shafer, 165). With Bearden, Wilson discovered how to combine, relate and to put different images together. Wilson and Bearden, have some similarities in the method of creation, as both combine everyday events and objects forming a coherent composition. Both feel a compromise between their identity as members of a social minority and their freedom as artists. Neither one looks for self-pity nor complains of the Afro-American’s situation in the United States, they rather infuse fresh sensibilities and reveal universal elements of the human condition through their works. Both, Bearden and Wilson, are very inspired from the blues conceived as images, patterns and symbols; in their art we find a world full of rituals, trains, parades, guitar players, conjure women, funerals, ghosts, ... They combine and connect non-naturalistic elements moving away from Western forms and traditions, and connecting Africa and America and presenting some of the Afro-Americans’ cultural contributions. Both speak through racial and cultural lines in their creations, and both understand and value the importance of music as an extension of the African story telling and as a cultural transmitter. Bearden works with collage, with strips of papers to create a world of colors and shapes that reassert the Afro-American values and history, just like the blues. In Bearden Wilson found an artistic mentor, and we see that in *Joe Turner’s Come and Gone* or in *The Piano Lesson*, both plays were inspired in two of Bearden’s paintings, and some of Wilson’s characters got their names from different painting of Bearden, as *Miss Bertha* and *Mr. Seth* that belong to Bearden’s *Joe Turner* series.

Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones) is the third B. Baraka is important to Wilson not as much for his drama as for Baraka’s political ideas, for his revolutionary theater of the sixties that influenced Wilson. Baraka’s influence has less to do with the way that he writes and more to do with the ideas that he exposed in the ‘60s as a black nationalist: “ideas that I found value in then and I still find value in” (Shannon

554). Baraka that searched for post Western and post white forms, confronted the white man, as Wilson does, although the forms and attitudes have obviously changed since the sixties. Some of these ideas that Wilson still finds value in are the search for one's racial identity, (which is also present in the blues and in Bearden), or the importance of ritual dance in which racial history and personal experience converge. Wilson became socially conscious and discovered a different way of affirming his own racial identity and self-respect through Baraka and the black movements. With Baraka and the black cultural nationalism, blacks began to be seen as coming from a long line of honorable people with a strong and valuable history and with a different culture. A culture that should be preserved and promoted, and a theater that should force changes; to heighten the social contradictions was necessary to deconstruct the value system. These ideas of self-determination, self-respect, and self-defense of their own and unique Afro-American culture were what influenced Wilson. Wilson is not interested in showing hate, anger or violence toward the white man, as he is not interested in showing his characters as victims of an unjust oppression. In Wilson's plays there are no violent confrontations with the white man or the white society, Wilson is much more interested in showing the indirect cost of racism. Wilson is interested in presenting and claiming a clear and sure Afro-American identity. Wilson looks for a more inward exploration of themselves, to understand who they are and where they come from, to understand their relation to the society, and to ultimately change this relationship.

Borges is the fourth and last B. The Argentinian writer Jorge Luis Borges (1899-1986), inspires Wilson with his capacity of creating suspense and intrigue, to maintain the attention and expectation of what is going to happen next:

I am fascinated with the way Jorge Luis Borges, the Argentine short story writer, tells a story. I've been trying to write a play the way he writes a story. He tells you exactly what is going to happen, even though the outcome may seem improbable. He'll say the gaucho so and so is going to end up with a bullet in his head on the night of such and such. When you meet the guy, he's washing dishes, and you go, 'This guy is going to be the leader of an outlaw gang?' You know that he's going to get killed, but how is this going to happen? And he proceeds to tell the story, and it seems like it's never going to happen. And you look up, without even knowing it, and there he is. He is a leader of an outlaw gang (Shannon 554).

Wilson is interested in the how, in the way the story is presented, piece by piece, little by little, suspending the story the exact amount of time to make us

curious of how the different events will turn out. It is the suspense that has to do with the how, of how the plot unfolds itself, of how something will happen but without being too obvious to become boring. This is clear in Wilson's last play, *Seven Guitars* which is a sort of murder mystery in which the play opens with a group of people returning from Floyd Barton's funeral. Throughout the play and with a flashback, we get the information that he was murdered and the circumstances in which this happened. Wilson works in this play with the suspend, and the information is given little by little having the audience intrigued through the play with how and the circumstances in which Floyd Barton died. What is also important with Borges is the way he manages to win over the reader through the called *Borgesian* manner, which is a blend of the marvelous, of the fantastic, and the detective in which he presents the experience of discovery, which can be a true turning point within the course of the story (Barrenechea, 22-23). Wilson's plays include this *Borgesian* manner of blending the fantastic and the experience of discovery. Wilson's characters are in the quest of discovering their song, their identity and their place in society, as Loomis in *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*, Troy and Cory in *Fences*, or Bernice in *The Piano Lesson*, and at the same time the audience is trying to discover the reasons to the characters actions, and what makes them act and react to the situations in they are being presented. Wilson is interested in the slowly discovery of the plot and the way the story is built up through the narration. What also interested Wilson in Borges is the process of storytelling, the unreal and magic surroundings, and the importance of myths, which are also very characteristic to the Afro-American tradition.

Of these four influences at first glance there seems to be an odd one: Jorge Luis Borges. Borges is the only white and clearly Western influence. Why? Because Borges represents Wilson's link to the Western literary tradition, Wilson is not interested in, and cannot be intellectually honest if he did not admit some Western influence, and that problem is solved with Borges being the forth and last B. Obviously Wilson has to have some Western literary tradition because the Afro-American's cultural history is precisely a blend, as said before, a compound of many different cultures being the Western part of this complex Afro-American culture.

As it can be seen, it is from these four influences that Wilson creates theater: Music and rhythm in the dialogue, as well as the similarities of the presentation of a drama: exposition, complication or climax, and denouement, and the resembled structure with a piece of music: the different characters are engaged in conversation, and each has a solo turn to tell his or her story. They talk about their past and their experience and the climax is slowly but steadily being built up as the music builds a crescendo.



The visualization, the theater as a window or a picture with motion, and the importance of the scenography. The backdrop and set on stage that suggests to the audience the surroundings in which the play takes place. The significance and the connotations of the nonverbal forms and colors and the language of the "objects" is very important in theater as in any other visual art form.

The ideology of the characters and their motivations, that is, the reasons to the character's actions. Because for drama to be effective the audience must believe plausibly and justified the character's actions given what they know about him or her. The ideology of the work as a whole is equally important because Wilson's drama not only entertains, it serves the Afro-Americans so that they can recognize their own identity as different but equally valid. Wilson tries to alter the shared expectations Afro-Americans have of themselves through the stage. The purpose of communicating blackness as a positive force is within his art and what he claims. Wilson believes that Afro-Americans have a clear need to root themselves in Africa's cultural past and in their common American past.

Lastly, the foreshadowing that helps to create the air of suspense, the sense of tension aroused by the audience's uncertainty about the resolution of the dramatic conflicts is very important to maintain the attention of the audience. It is what maintains the viewer's attention to how the plot unfolds which is obviously very important, not only in drama, but in any spectacle or it will fall to pieces.

As said at the beginning of this paper, the aim was to try to find a reason for Wilson's clear manifest of those writers and artists that have not influenced him. First it is important to make clear that even when critics can make plausible and possible parallels between Wilson and his "unread authors," that is a problem I will not enter as I personally do not think it leads too far. Returning to the initial question of why August Wilson is so clear in stating who he is not influenced by, two reasons can be found. On the one hand it may seem understandable that Wilson tries to take 'advantage' of being an artist that dropped out of school in eighth grade and left the formal education and from then became self-taught. This way, free from canons and other classic and traditional syllabus, he chose what to read and when to read. This will inevitably link Wilson to Baraka and the Black Arts and Theater Movement, that were searching for black liberation, looking for establishing and designing a true black aesthetics away from western theories and stereotypes. Away from white man's stereotype of blacks to reconstruct a clear African-American identity. Furthermore this would perfectly fit into Leslie Catherine Sander's approach of the history of black theater "as the process of creating a black stage reality, of freeing black figures of their metaphoric burden and making the ground on which they stand as their own, and at the same time, of transforming conventions borrowed from white European culture into forms

appropriate to black artists and audiences" (2). Wilson's characters are in a desperate need to remake the ground on which they stand as their own, to find their own clear identity, to reconstruct their identity. They are suffering a cultural uprootness and they need to reconstruct their own identity. To do so the ideas of self-determination, self-respect, and self-defense are absolutely crucial, and Wilson tries to demonstrate the black culture and its specific and unique perspective and world view.

Wilson has repeatedly said that he purposely did not want to read any of Miller's, O'Neill's, Tennessee Williams' or Lorraine Hansberry's plays so that he wouldn't be talking with a 'borrowed' voice:

When I began writing plays I said, "I don't want to step around for eight years trying to find my voice", so I said, "No I'm just going to do it this way". Whatever my idea was of doing it that is *Ma Rainey*, that is what you get. It's structured differently than the conventional structured plays (Jensen 16).

This way, Wilson makes a clear distance from the traditional playwrights, and claims his to some extent "influence free" and focuses the attention on his own methodology. This further underlines his theory of the Afro-American way of doing things, different from the western way, but equally valid. That it is equally valid has been proved with the commercial and critical success he has had as a playwright so far.

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## May Sinclair's *Life and Death of Harriett Frean* as a Catalyst of Imagist Techniques

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This paper will illustrate in which ways May Sinclair's psychological novel *Life and Death of Harriett Frean* (1920) shows the influence of Imagism. This literary movement had its origins in the U.S. in the early 1910s and was soon accepted in England, where it had a wide influence. A brief analysis of Imagist poetry and its theoretical formulations will enable us to identify the influence of this poetic doctrine on *Harriett Frean*. Imagism refers to the theoretical principles and practice of a group of poets who, between 1912 and 1917, rebelled against what they saw as the careless technique of much nineteenth-century verse. Imagism meant a special attitude towards the nature and function of poetry. In the spring of 1912, Ezra Pound discovered the work of Hilda Doolittle and Richard Aldington and, after studying some of their poems, he announced to them that they were *Imagistes*. By 1914 Pound was explaining Imagism in terms that involved the ideogram. Drawing a parallel between Chinese and Imagist poetry he defined the former as "a verbal medium consisting largely of semipictorial appeals to the eye"<sup>1</sup>. Some of the Imagist principles formulated by F. S. Flint were:

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<sup>1</sup> Pound, Ezra. "The Renaissance." *Poetry*. 5 (1915). Quoted by Coffman, Stanley K. *Imagism. A Chapter for the History of Modern Poetry*. New York: Octagon, 1977, 157.

1. Direct treatment of the "thing," whether subjective or objective.
2. To use absolutely no word that did not contribute to the presentation.
3. As regarding rhythm: to compose in sequence of the musical phrase, not in sequence of a metronome<sup>2</sup>.

In "A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste" Flint defines the Image as "that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time"<sup>3</sup>. For him concreteness was strongly demanded against the dangers of abstraction. In 1915 Amy Lowell published an anthology called *Some Imagist Poets* that contained more principles of this poetic doctrine:

1. To use the language of common speech, but to employ always the *exact* word, not the nearly-exact, nor the merely decorative word.
2. To create new rhythms – as the expression of new moods – and not to copy old rhythms, which merely echo old moods. We do not insist upon "free-verse" as the method of writing poetry. We fight for it as for a principle of liberty. We believe that the individuality of a poet may often be better expressed in free-verse than in conventional forms. In poetry, a new cadence means a new idea.
3. To allow absolute freedom in the choice of a subject. [...]
4. To present an image (hence the name: "Imagist"). We are not a school of painters, but we believe that poetry should render particulars exactly and not deal in vague generalities, however magnificent and sonorous. [...]
5. To produce poetry that is hard and clear, never blurred nor indefinite.
6. Finally, most of us believe that concentration is the very essence of poetry.

Richard Aldington, like Pound, placed considerable emphasis on the kind of poetic language defended by Imagism. He said that all great poetry was exact and did not contain "portentous adjectives and idiotic similes." For him, Imagist poets should use as few adjectives as possible and they should consider that syntax or vocabulary unsuitable to prose had no place in poetry. Finally, Aldington shared Pound's admiration for the principle of "hardness" in poetry.

<sup>2</sup> Flint, F. S. "Imagism." *Poetry*. 1 (1913): 199. Quoted by Coffman, Stanley K. *Imagism. A Chapter for the History of Modern Poetry*. New York: Octagon, 1977, 9.

<sup>3</sup> Flint, F. S. "A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste." *Poetry*. 1 (1913): 200-01. Quoted by Coffman, Stanley K. *Imagism. A Chapter for the History of Modern Poetry*. New York: Octagon, 1977, 10.

Some articles written by May Sinclair on Imagist poets like Richard Aldington, F.S. Flint, Ezra Pound and, especially, H.D. reveal Sinclair's awareness and sympathy for the Imagist movement. In these articles Sinclair defends the Imagist poets against criticism and shows a sympathetic attitude towards their principles, that she sees guided by Romantic doctrines. Thus, for her, "Wordsworth's aim and the Imagists' is to restore the innocence of memory as Gauguin restored the 'innocence of the eye.'" She highlights Flint's decisive and final break with tradition and the effectiveness of his *vers libre*<sup>4</sup>. She also compares Aldington to a Romantic poet: "Richard Aldington is possessed by the sense of beauty, the desire of beauty, the absolute emotion, as no single poet since Shelley has been possessed, with the solitary exception of H.D."<sup>5</sup>. Finally, in another of these articles dedicated to Imagist poets, Sinclair praises Ezra Pound for his discovery of the old literatures of China and Japan and the "clearness", "vividness", "precision" and "concentration" that result from their influence<sup>6</sup>.

Sinclair's special preference for H.D. among the group of Imagist poets makes it essential to look closely at the opinions she expresses on this poet's work in order to understand the ways in which *Harriett Freaen* could be influenced by her Imagist techniques. H.D. searched for the singing line of a pure lyric and for the truth that was behind associations without logical connection. She preferred natural speech rhythms to traditional artificial ones<sup>7</sup>. Her poems reveal her gift for concise and direct visual description. She frequently used a natural object to stand for a human mood or an emotion in the manner of the Imagist poets. Amy Lowell defined H.D.'s short concentrated poems as "fragile as shells, and as transparent, but their modelling [...] as carefully done as that of a statue of Parian marble." She considered them "exquisite cameos and intaglios" and highlighted their "bordering on preciousity" and their "rare and finely-wrought beauty"<sup>8</sup>. It is extremely revealing that these appreciations of H.D.'s poems as careful pieces of workmanship are parallel to similar judgements of *Harriett Freaen* in some reviews that will be considered below. H.D.'s "purity and hardness and coldness" were praised by Joseph Riddel, who considered her work "a world of stark, pristine

4 Sinclair, May. "The Poems of F. S. Flint." *The English Review*. 32 (1921): 7.

5 Sinclair, May. "The Poems of Richard Aldington." *The Little Review*. May 1921, 398.

6 Sinclair, May. "The Reputation of Ezra Pound." *The English Review*. April 1920, 330 and *The North American Review*. 211 (1920): 663.

7 For an account of H.D.'s life in relation with other modernists see Hanscombe, Gillian and Virginia L. Smyers. "H.D.'s Triangles." *Writing for Their Lives. The Modernist Women 1910-1940*. London: Women's Press, 1987, 14-32.

8 Lowell, Amy. " 'H.D.' and John Gould Fletcher." *Tendencies in Modern American Poetry*. 1917, 256- 57. Quoted by Bloom, Harold. gen. ed. *The Chelsea House Library of Literary Criticism. Twentieth-Century American Literature*. Vol. 2. New York: Chelsea, 1986, 1087.



beauty”<sup>9</sup>. Sinclair considered H.D. “the first, the perfect Imagist.” Her description of H.D.’s Imagist poems in her article “The Poems of H.D.” could also be applied to her novel *Harriett Freen*.

In all of them, [H.D.’s poems] passion, emotion, reflection, and the image, the sharp vivid image that does the work of description are fused together in the burning unity of beauty. [...] H.D. invariably presents her subtlest, most metaphysical idea under some living sensuous image solid enough to carry the emotion. [...] Everywhere she cuts clean, she finishes. No loose ends, no blurred edges<sup>10</sup>.

In this article Sinclair also highlights the “sheer beauty of [...] form” of H.D.’s poems, their “lucid and sharp simplicity” and their “radiant”, “crystalline”, and “austere ecstasy”. These qualities were also pursued by Sinclair herself in *Harriett Freen*. In another article on H.D. and Imagism, Sinclair defines this movement as “the naked representation of a thing [...] in no case is the Image a symbol of reality [...] it is reality [...] itself. You cannot distinguish between the thing and its image”<sup>11</sup>. H.D.’s optimum use of flowers in her poetry, pointed out by H.R. Sievert, is something she shares with the Symbolists. Moreover, Susan Stanford Friedman also stresses that H.D. anchors “the poem in the concrete world with images of flowers [...]” achieving, thus, clarity and simplicity in her poetic line and precise shape in her images<sup>12</sup>. H.D.’s use of colour “as an accent, a single ray of warming colour in an otherwise monochromatic landscape”<sup>13</sup> reminds us of Sinclair’s scanty use of colour in *Harriett Freen* where only three colours predominate – blue, red and white in the egg-shaped workbox, the campion flowers and the hospital scene respectively –.

Once a general view of Imagism and Sinclair’s reaction to it has been presented, we can analyse the ways in which *Harriett Freen* can be considered an embodiment of Imagist techniques. Sinclair’s *Life and Death of Harriett Freen*,

<sup>9</sup> Riddel, Joseph N. “H.D. and the Poetics of ‘Spiritual Realism’.” *Contemporary Literature*. Autumn 1919, 447-56. Quoted by Bloom, Harold. gen. ed. *The Chelsea House Library of Literary Criticism. Twentieth-Century American Literature*. Vol. 2. New York: Chelsea, 1986, 1088.

<sup>10</sup> Sinclair, May. “The Poems of H. D.” Rev. of *Hymen*, by H. D. *The Dial*. February 1922, 203.

<sup>11</sup> Sinclair, May. “Two Notes. I. On H. D. II. On Imagism.” *The Egoist*. 1 June 1915, 88.

<sup>12</sup> Stanford Friedman, Susan. “Introduction.” *Psyche Reborn*. 1981, 7-14. Quoted by Bloom, Harold. gen. ed. *The Chelsea House Library of Literary Criticism. Twentieth-Century American Literature*. Vol. 2. New York: Chelsea, 1986, 1096.

<sup>13</sup> Sievert, Heather Rosario. “H.D.: A Symbolist Perspective.” *Comparative Literature Studies*. March 1979, 48-57. Quoted by Bloom, Harold. gen. ed. *The Chelsea House Library of Literary Criticism. Twentieth-Century American Literature*. Vol. 2. New York: Chelsea, 1986, 1093.

published in 1920, is the negative counterpart of *Mary Olivier: A life*, a novel Sinclair had published in 1919. *Harriett Freen*'s condensation means a development in the experiments Sinclair had introduced in *Mary Olivier*, her previous psychological novel<sup>14</sup>. Moreover, this quality of concentration is precisely one of the essences of Imagist poetry.

Both *Mary Olivier* and *Harriett Freen* tell the life of their female protagonists from their early childhood to their maturity. Their main difference is that whereas *Mary Olivier* is open-ended and its protagonist still faces the possibility of fulfilment, *Life and Death of Harriett Freen*, as the title suggests, leaves its protagonist at the gates of death, not offering her the possibility of liberation. The reason is that whilst Harriett thoughtlessly submits her will to parental authority, Mary fights her mother's will and rejects her attempts to turn her into a selfless woman<sup>15</sup>. In this sense, *Harriett Freen* could be called a negative counterpart of *Mary Olivier*.

Some of *Harriett Freen*'s early reviews evince an insightful understanding and appreciation of its qualities, such as its condensation and the use it makes of the "new psychology." *The Times Literary Supplement* praised it as being "packed tight . . . and carved with minute precision" against other "stories of dull, uneventful lives [that] have been allowed to struggle over hundreds of pages"<sup>16</sup>. Critics'

<sup>14</sup> T.S. Eliot opposes the psychological novel represented by Sinclair's *Harriett Freen* to the old narrative method of writers like Wells and Bennett. He argues that in her book "a method seems to have been carried about as far as it will go" and doubts "whether even Miss Sinclair can carry it much further." (Eliot, T. S. "London Letter. The Novel." *The Dial*. 73 [September 1922]: 330.)

<sup>15</sup> Jean Radford points out that the heroine of *Harriett Freen* recalls Maggie Tulliver in *The Mill on the Floss* and argues that the novel can be read as a delayed response to Maggie's question: "Is it not right to resign ourselves entirely, whatever . . . may be denied us? I have found great peace in that for the last two or three years – even joy in subduing my will." The answer *Life and Death of Harriett Freen* provides is "an emphatic 'No'." Radford concludes that "*Harriett Freen* is a moral fable about the narrow and pernicious life which results from self-repression, and the pernicious social effects of a deluded sacrifice." Underneath the novel runs a strong current of psychoanalytic and idealistic streams. Radford has highlighted its Freudian notions of repression and sublimation in May Sinclair's following words: "... the psycho-analysts, Freud and Jung and their followers, have been abused like pickpockets, as if they offered us no alternative but license or repression; as if the indestructible libido must either ramp outrageously in the open or burrow beneath us and undermine our sanity; as if Sublimation, the solution that they do offer, were not staring us in the face." (*May Sinclair*, 1916). Thus Radford concludes that whereas *Mary Olivier* is a study of sublimation, *Harriett Freen* is a study of repression. (Radford, Jean. Introduction. 1980. *The Life and Death of Harriett Freen*. By May Sinclair. London: Virago, 1995, i-ii.)

<sup>16</sup> "Mother-Complex." Rev. of *The Life and Death of Harriett Freen*, by May Sinclair. *The Times Literary Supplement*. 2 February 1922: 73.

complaints about such novels – where many words and many chapters seem to overflow their scope – seem to justify the idea of *Harriett Frean* as an exquisite and perfect piece of workmanship that is repeated in other reviews<sup>17</sup>. This concept of the novel as a unity where every element has its function in the overall pattern of its structure seems to derive from the theory developed in Henry James's story "The Figure in the Carpet"<sup>18</sup>. The novel is described as "admirably concentrated" with "few superfluous words in it and . . . no superfluous episodes or descriptions"<sup>19</sup>. These reviews highlight that all the elements in the novel – words, chapters and even descriptions – seem to fit perfectly, like the pieces of a precise machine. As it has been pointed out before, there is a striking similarity between the reviews of H.D.'s poems and those of *Harriett Frean*. Both are compared to a cameo to refer to their acute concentration.

*Harriett Frean's* brevity and its evocation of a poetic style call for a more detailed analysis. The layout of the pages in the novel recalls those special arrangements required by poetry. The font's size is considerably larger than that used in other Sinclair's novels, the margins are remarkably wide – especially the superior and inferior ones –, and the lines seem to be double-spaced. The expected result of these arrangements is not only a mere substantial physical expansion of the text, but also an evocation of the lyricism and concentration typical of Imagist poetry. The text calls attention to its disposition, intended to highlight its subject matter and give it a suitable form. Symbolism has to be studied in this context of the novel's parallelism to poetry. The recurrent appearance of symbols contributes to give the text a special rhythm, tone and texture. The use of imagery provides thus a poetic texture to ordinary events and uncongenial characters. The novel's unity of design also depends on the repetition of similar phrase and sentence rhythms. As some critics have shown, *Life and Death of Harriett Frean* is full of symbols that direct meaning and the drift of the story from

<sup>17</sup> Thus, the novel is compared to handmade pieces of craftsmanship: "Every word is chosen and fits like a stitch set in a piece of embroidery." (Scott, Dawson C. A. "Miss May Sinclair's New Novel." Rev. of *The Life and Death of Harriett Frean*, by May Sinclair. *The Bookman*. 61 [March 1922]: 266.) *Harriett Frean* is "a cameo portrait cut with delicate precision and satanic insight." (Hunt, Una. "Harriett Frean." Rev. of *Harriett Frean*, by May Sinclair. *The New Republic*. 26 July 1922: 261.)

<sup>18</sup> In fact, an early reviewer mentioned Henry James's influence on *Harriett Frean's* technique: "Miss Sinclair has added to her difficulties by adopting the Jamesian device of telling the story, not indeed in the first person, but only as seen by the eyes and as reflected in the mind of one character." (Mortimer, Raymond. "Miss Sinclair Again." Rev. of *The Life and Death of Harriett Frean*, by May Sinclair. *The Dial*. 72 [May 1922]: 533.)

<sup>19</sup> Affable Hawk. "Current Literature. Books in General." Rev. of *The Life and Death of Harriett Frean*. *The New Statesman*. 11 February 1922: 532.

the opening to the close<sup>20</sup>. Such saturation of images, typical of *Harriett Freen*, has its origin in a much more timid use of imagery in *Mary Olivier*, and it contributes to the concentration of the novel<sup>21</sup>. Symbolism also entails that the reader is not restricted to Harriett's view. Penny Brown has defined *Harriett Freen*'s style as economical, taut and impressionistic, and, as a result of this, "the imagery and the symbolism make an immediate and lasting impact on the reader"<sup>22</sup>. It is in this context of the novel's poetization where the Imagist influence plays a relevant role. Thus, among the Imagist principles that can be identified in *Harriett Freen* one could mention the direct presentation of persons, events and things, achieved from the first pages of the novel, and the absence of superfluous words. Moreover, phrases in this novel are musical and they are arranged in such a careful way that they seem to be part of a poem.

The short fifteen chapters that compose *The Life and Death of Harriett Freen* give an account of more than seventy years of Harriett's life. They display a high degree of thematic coherence and are structurally independent of each other. Meaning is progressively conveyed in chapters by means of symbolism and new topics are introduced inside them by means of a blank space. The first chapter takes the reader directly into Harriett's childhood world. A nursery rhyme about a pussycat opens the novel and sets its tone. Its symbolic and structural significance will only be realized at the end of the novel, when the reader finds that the whole novel is an expansion of the meaning of this rhyme. The pussycat goes to London to see the Queen and ends up missing her because of a mouse that distracts its attention. Harriett will also miss life and fulfilment by living in the past and denying herself happiness in the name of selflessness and self-denial. This is revealed in the last pages of the novel, when Harriett is in a delirious state after being operated on, and she recites the rhyme to herself in a distorted way.

<sup>20</sup> Boll, Theophilus Ernest Martin. *Miss May Sinclair: Novelist. A Biographical and Critical Introduction*. Rutherford, Madison and Teaneck: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 1973, 274.

<sup>21</sup> Zegger reads *Harriett Freen*'s imagery as a criticism of Victorian values. Two images stand out in her analysis: the egg-shaped workbox and the red campion flowers Harriett is forbidden to approach as a child. The workbox represents domesticated Victorian fertility and sex, hollow and unfruitful; the red flowers represent passion and sex (Zegger, Hrisey Dimitrakis. *May Sinclair*. Boston: Twayne, 1976, 123-24). Penny Brown considers Harriett's symbolic burial of one of her dolls "a sad but perversely satisfying infliction of pain on herself" that symbolises "the burial of her own individuality and sexuality" (Brown, Penny. "May Sinclair: The Conquered Will." *The Poison at the Source. The Female Novel of Self-Development in the Early Twentieth Century*. Houndmills: Macmillan, 1992, 38).

<sup>22</sup> Brown, Penny. "May Sinclair: The Conquered Will." *The Poison at the Source. The Female Novel of Self-Development in the Early Twentieth Century*. Houndmills: Macmillan, 1992, 36.

Concreteness is the predominant Imagist principle in *Harriett Freen*, and it is reflected in the language used, which is precise and devoid of abstraction. Words are neither blurred nor indefinite, but “hard and clear” and this choice of “exact” words is also typical of Imagism. In the first chapter two key images are presented: “the blue egg” and “the wax doll”. The third crucial image of the novel, red campion flowers, is introduced in the second chapter. These images concentrate most of the notes of colour that can be found in *Harriett Freen*. Red and blue are diluted in the last pages of the novel into the white colour that reigns in the hospital where Harriett is operated on. Whereas blue and red represent tamed and natural sexuality respectively, white stands for Harriett’s sterility and impending death.

The negative effects of self-sacrifice have a clear effect on the disintegration of Harriett’s personality once her mother dies. Living for and with her parents, she has not allowed herself to live her own life and develop her own personality. When her parents are gone and her point of reference in life is lost she tries to reassert herself by clinging to them: “she was more than ever the fastidious daughter of Hilton Freen”<sup>23</sup>. Memory is the only satisfactory way she finds of giving meaning to her life, but living in the past means bringing her life to an end. She realises that she has had no identity to call her own, as she has always been dependent on her mother.

If only she could have remembered. It was only through memory that she could reinstate herself. . . . She clung to the image of her mother; and always beside it, shadowy and pathetic, she discerned the image of her lost self. (*Harriett Freen*, 110)

In a letter to Sinclair Lewis, May Sinclair described *Life and Death of Harriett Freen* as an experiment in condensing a whole life into a short narrative and in welding the stream-of-consciousness technique to more traditional narrative methods in order to create an aesthetically unified novel. Her frequent use of traditional omniscient methods of narration helped her overcome the fusion between the author and the protagonist. This enabled her to reveal the difference between reality and the way things appear to the protagonist<sup>24</sup>.

An omniscient narrator discloses Harriett’s subconscious or repressed thoughts when there is a discordance between her feelings and her actions. One

<sup>23</sup> Sinclair, May. *The Life and Death of Harriett Freen*. 1920. London: Virago, 1995, 109. All the references henceforward will be taken from this edition and placed in brackets after the quotations.

<sup>24</sup> Quoted by Zegger, Hrisey Dimitrakis. *May Sinclair*. Boston: Twayne, 1976, 124-25.

of such occasions takes place when Robin, her rejected suitor, tells her of his wife's paralysis. At that time Harriett's self-deception is so evident that she tries to convince herself that she is sorry when she is actually relieved.

Harriett did not cry. The shock of it [Prissie's paralysis] stopped her tears. She tried to see it and couldn't. Poor little Prissie. How terrible. She kept on saying to herself she couldn't bear to think of Prissie paralysed. Poor little Prissie.

And poor Robin—

Paralysis. She saw the paralysis coming between them, separating them, and inside her the secret pain was soothed. She needed not think of Robert married anymore. (*Harriett Frean*, 68-69)

Harriett's expression "Poor little Prissie" is repeated many times after this passage, and it hides her subdued "wrong" feelings. Her customary repression of her emotions is indicated by means of the adjective "secret". Pleasure and pain are intimately mingled in her to the point that one implies the other: "Her pity was sad and beautiful and at the same time it appeased her pain" (*Harriett Frean*, 73). Harriett's self-deception is also expressed in the repeated references to her "beautiful behaviour". The adjective "beautiful" appears already at the beginning of the novel, when her parents expect her "to behave beautifully" (*Harriett Frean*, 23) and there are other paradoxical references to this adjective. Beauty is associated with goodness – "Being naughty was . . . doing ugly things. Being good was being beautiful like Mamma." (*Harriett Frean*, 15) – but red campion flowers, the symbol of sexuality, are also said to be beautiful: "Look Hatty, how *beautiful* they are. Run away and put the poor things in water" (*Harriett Frean*, 20).

A clear example of the intervention of an omniscient narrator to explain Harriett's subconscious thoughts takes place when Prissie tells Harriett of the death of her baby. "Harriett was aware of a sudden tightening of her heart, of a creeping depression that weighed on her brain and worried it. She thought this was her pity for Priscilla" (*Harriett Frean*, 75).

Harriett will eventually have to acknowledge what lies behind her "beautiful behaviour". Robin's niece, Mona, teaches Harriett a lesson when she tells her that she had been selfish not to have married Robin: "She thought of herself. Of her own moral beauty. She was a selfish fool" (*Harriett Frean*, 144). However, Harriett arrogantly replies that she has acted correctly: "I was brought up not to think of myself before other people" (*Harriett Frean*, 145). Harriett's previous self-assurance about her way of acting is undermined by Robin's niece, that makes her look at her life with different eyes.



Harriett's physical decline seems to be precipitated by the collapse of her moral values. The effects of time start to be too evident on her aging body, and even her elevated idea of her own goodness seems subject to disintegration. Physical illness accelerates Harriett's decay and provides her with the perfect excuse to return to her childhood, to surrender herself to Maggie as her mother figure. Her comfort in being treated as a child is such that she chooses to continue her dependence on Maggie even after her convalescence.

Summaries of the quick passing of time are frequent in the novel and they contribute to its concentration. Time begins to go away quickly already in the second chapter, where we find short accounts of past events like: "three years went ..." and "She passed through her fourteenth year sedately" (*Harriett Frean*, 24, 26). Harriett's life is characterized as a repetition of domestic situations: "Every afternoon, through the hours before her father came home, she sat in the . . . drawing-room reading *Evangeline* to her mother" (*Harriett Frean*, 26). In the following passage the reader is made aware of time in its slow passing, concentrated on Sundays, and the poetic rhythm of this sentence – achieved with repetitions – contributes to highlight that meaning. Routine is a way of forgetting about time and clinging to the past, trying to pretend that nothing changes.

And the long, long Sundays spaced the weeks and the months, hushed and sweet and rather enervating, yet with a sort of thrill in them as if somewhere the music of the church organ went on vibrating. (*Harriett Frean*, 40)

In chapters five, eight and twelve there are summaries of time where the increasing speed of its passing is highlighted. The similarity in the construction of these summaries conveys a sense of routine and repetition in Harriett's life. The parallelism in these constructions is evocative of poetic language and could also be ascribed to fairy tales.

Two, three, five years passed, with a perceptible acceleration, and Harriett was now thirty. (*Harriett Frean*, 67)

Months passed, years passed, going each one a little quicker than the last. And Harriett was thirty-nine. (*Harriett Frean*, 99)

The years passed. They went with an incredible rapidity, and Harriett was now fifty. (*Harriett Frean*, 148)

When Harriett is told that she has developed her mother's illness she only feels "a strange, solemn excitement and exaltation" in being raised to "her mother's eminence in pain" (*Harriett Frean*, 178). The simple and effective description of



Harriett before the operation is evocative of poetic language. Moreover, this passage presents a typically Imagist “hard and clear” scene where objects are sharply differentiated: “She lay in her white bed in the white-curtained cubicle. Lizzie was paying for the cubicle. Kind Lizzie. Kind. Kind” (*Harriett Frean*, 179). The first sentence, with the two prepositional phrases and repetition of the adjective “white”, has to be ascribed to the narrator. Then Harriett’s point of view seems to come into the passage as her gratitude to Lizzie is expressed in the reiteration of the adjective “kind”, without syntactical coherence. The moments previous to the operation are also described with a similar language that expresses Harriett’s point of view with a poignant sense of anxiety.

. . . She walked down . . . on her way to the theatre, very upright in her white flannel dressing-gown, with her chin held high and a look of exaltation on her face. . . . Her exaltation mounted.

She came into the theatre. It was all white. White. White tiles. Rows of little slender knives on a glass shelf, under glass, shining. A white sink in the corner. A mixed smell of iodine and ether. The surgeon wore a white coat. Harriett made her tight lips tighter.

She climbed on to the white enamel table, and lay down, . . . (*Harriett Frean*, 180-81)

Harriett’s walk to the operating theatre is presented as a dramatic event. She tries to keep her dignity in front of the other patients, but her “exaltation” is suggestive of her fear and apprehension. The paragraph beginning with “She came into the theatre” has a very simple syntax that conveys Harriett’s impressions in an Imagist-like manner. A lot of impressions are conveyed by rapid descriptive flashes by using short clauses and repetitions. Two succinct sentences introduce and close the paragraph, framing an enumeration of objects and impressions dominated by white colour. The sentences placed directly before and after this enumeration link it in a smooth way with the first and last sentences of the paragraph. This careful arrangement of words would be adequate for an Imagist poem if the sentences and phrases were laid out in separate lines, as shown below.

She came into the theatre.  
It was all white.  
White. White tiles.  
Rows of little slender knives on a glass shelf,  
under glass, shining.  
A white sink in the corner.  
A mixed smell of iodine and ether.  
The surgeon wore a white coat.  
Harriett made her tight lips tighter.

Meaning is condensed in this passage by means of its concentrated poetic language. The enumeration of the objects perceived by Harriett in this moment of tense fear has the effect of giving shape to her panic. Harriett's agitated state of mind is revealed in this passage in her visually clinging to the objects she sees. The tension mounts up between the moment she comes into the theatre and the instant when she climbs on to the table. Her subsequent loss of consciousness is represented by the five separated dots that occupy a line:

. (Harriett Frean, 181)

The atmosphere of this poem-like passage recalls the third line of T.S. Eliot's "The Love Song of Alfred J. Prufrock": "Like a patient etherised upon a table"<sup>25</sup>. The directness that Sinclair praises in Eliot's poetry is also present in the lack of superfluity that characterizes Sinclair's previously analysed passage. The goal they both pursue is also the same: to unveil the mind of a person, to depict thought as it flows in moments of agonizing anguish. The poem-like passage that has been analysed could be taken as an epitome of the influence of Imagist techniques on *Harriett Frean*. The presence of Imagism, also manifest throughout the novel, becomes intensified in this paragraph as a final compromise to this poetic doctrine.

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<sup>25</sup> Eliot, T. S. *Selected Poems*. 1954. London: Faber and Faber, 1990, 11. In fact, Sinclair had written an article on this poem where she defends Eliot's "elusive . . . disturbing . . . [and] difficult" genius. For Sinclair Eliot "does not see anything between him and reality, and makes straight to the reality he sees." She characterizes his method as startlingly direct, he is after "reality stripped naked of all rhetoric, of all ornament, of all confusing and obscuring association". Eliot has just removed "the covering from Prufrock's mind: Prufrock's mind, jumping quickly from actuality to memory and back again, like an animal, hunted, tormented, terribly and poignantly alive" (Sinclair, May. "'Prufrock and other Observations.' A Criticism." *The Little Review*. Dec 1917: 8-14.).

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## Travelling across Identities: The Native American C(h)ase<sup>1</sup>

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The fascination with exotic cultures and the crossing of cultural boundaries provides some of the most striking ways in which a colonising culture articulates its self-identity and asserts its authority.

(G. Ching-Liang Low, 1996)<sup>2</sup>

As the millenium draws to a close, the state of our culture following the transformations which have so much altered our lives, we find the world becoming one of shifting identities – of peoples unified and divided by such distinctions as nationality, ethnicity, race, and colonial status. The subject of this paper is to explore the articulation and construction of these distinctions in narratives dealing with America, especially when those narratives move across the very cultural, national and racial boundaries that they seem so indelibly to inscribe; especially when those stories are the makers of the world, not its mirror.

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<sup>1</sup> This essay is part of a research project financed by the University of the Basque Country (UPV 103.130-HA068/98).

<sup>2</sup> Gail Ching-Liang Low (1996). *White Skins, Black Masks*. New York: Routledge.

Columbus' vision will be our first. Is it by chance that his identity remains a mystery to this day? Spanish, Italian, Portuguese? Does it matter?<sup>3</sup> His was a traveler's life indeed! Crossing cultures, languages, oceans, ... his very name deserves close attention, for it seems to have been elected and/or invented. Besides, his (mis)naming of the natives as Indians, not only was an invention, but also signals future symbolic processes in which the American natives are attributed imagined identities. Curiously enough, it has been acknowledged that America had been invented before it was discovered, for it existed in the European imagery, and the same applies to the European notions of the savages or primitive peoples. But now, thanks to Columbus, maps could be chartered and territories and borders outlined, and maps, as Geoff King claims, "create rather than represent the ground on which they rest" (1996: 3).<sup>4</sup> Columbus, and therefore Europeans, developed the stereotypes and myths which could fulfill their expectations, then their prejudices just followed. In a matter of identities J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur is one of those names which also comes to our minds. His question "What is an American?", was posited at the most suitable moment, when the colonists, now freed from the British crown, needed a "national identity". Interestingly enough, though, his narrative, displayed along the pages of his *Letters from an American Farmer*, is caught up in networks of desire and power, allurements and fear, for the "Age of Reason" in which he wrote also created its own monsters, shadows and dark corners. The also called "Enlightenment" drew shades and darkness enhanced its sunny spots; white clearings which obliterated the shadowlands. Let me start by mentioning a detail which I believe will mark this writer's life and work, and that is a freely chosen, or rather given, identity. Born Michel-Guillaume Jean de Crèvecoeur in France, he will change his name to Hector St. John, later expanding it to St. John de Crèvecoeur and adding an initial. Apparently this transformation in name did not bring any great turning point, at first. It will not be until he becomes a gentleman farmer that his new identity seems confirmed. Indeed, farming will be used in all *Letters* to express civilizing powers that help one become a man: "as long as we keep ourselves busy in tilling the earth, there is no fear of any of us becoming wild . . . [and] adopt savage customs"<sup>5</sup> (663), which certainly provides a highly idealised vision of farm life. Nevertheless, what plunges

<sup>3</sup> Yes, for who should celebrate the centennials of his discovery?

<sup>4</sup> Geoff King (1996). *Mapping Reality: An Exploration of Cultural Cartographies*. London: MacMillan Press.

<sup>5</sup> J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur. *Letters from an American Farmer, Letter XII. Distresses of a Frontier Man*. NAAL, vol.I. New York: W.W. Norton, Fifth Edition. Further references are taken from this edition.

deeply into the reader's consciousness is this idea of becoming, the possibility of transformation, of attaining a new identity. In fact, this transformative power obliterates two significant issues. First, the settlers of European descent (the *real* Americans in Crèvecoeur's perspective) were expected to divest themselves of any traces of their ethnic and linguistic origins, except, of course, if they happened to be of English ancestry<sup>6</sup>. Secondly, only white males are given the chance to "become Americans", Blacks and Indians cannot. It is true that he speaks in favour of the former and ventures to criticise slavery<sup>7</sup>, whereas his treatment of the latter deserves a closer attention.

The Indians are mentioned in most letters. In spite of having acquainted them, in *Letter III* ("What is an American?") he does not hesitate to describe the Indians as "wild inhabitants of these venerable woods . . . of which they (the colonists) are come to dispossess them" (645). As Vivian, the main character of Louise Erdrich and Michael Dorris' novel *The Crown of Columbus*<sup>8</sup>, herself a Native Indian, claims, this very sentence makes clear who the "real Americans" were, the only true proprietors of the American soil. But, according to Crèvecoeur, you become American once you attain a certain rank, a certain kind of citizenship, that of a certain European acculturation or assimilation which is closely tied up to a life attitude and characteristics he exemplifies through his description of what being an American means. Although its definition is linked to a cartography, his, this map is only American after it has been colonised and imposed European manners and laws. Those who do not wish to accomplish and accept the new rules, vision and industry cannot become "American". Therefore, he seems to be indicating that this new identity is not immediately acquired by being born in a certain place, but it is either chosen or assumed. Apparently, there is only one way of being an American, "this new race of men" (643), for "The American is a new man, who

<sup>6</sup> "He is an American who, leaving behind him all his ancient prejudices and manners, receives new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced, the new government he obeys, and the new rank he holds" (643).

<sup>7</sup> *Letter IX* titled "Description of Charles-Town; Thoughts on Slavery; On Physical Evil; A Melancholy Scene". On one of his trips to South Carolina, Crèvecoeur beheld a scene which caused him to question the validity of his vision of America as a land of unlimited economic opportunity for those who were willing to work hard to obtain it. After commenting on the affluence of the planter caste in South Carolina and the luxury in which they lived, he contrasts it with the suffering of their slaves: "the daughter torn from her weeping mother, the child from the wretched parents, the wife from the loving husband, . . . arranged like horses at a fair, they are branded like cattle, and then driven to toil, to starve. . ."(656), but defended by the planters "because it (is) not repugnant to human nature . . . because it has been practised in all ages and in all nations. . ." (657).

<sup>8</sup> Louise Erdrich & Michael Dorris (1992). *The Crown of Columbus*. Vintage Press.



acts upon new principles. . . must entertain new ideas, and form new opinions" (644). Curiously enough, those ideas are openly European, and the language they all have to adapt is that of English. Therefore, we can conclude, it is the way in which identity is appropriated and defined which is caught up in this interplay of desire and power.

The identity Crèvecoeur is defending is environmental and socially constructed rather than biologically determined and evokes a problem of representation, self-representation and representing others. His is not a neutral representation but one tied up to his history and his positioning as a subject. He was a colonist/coloniser and as such he pictures colonised identities, when he participates in his *Letters* in what Sarah Harasym expresses as "the worlding of a world on a supposedly uninscribed territory" (1990: vii)<sup>9</sup> which is implied by any imperialistic project which assumes that the earth that is territorialised [is] in fact previously uninscribed and therefore identityless, we could add. The new cartographies produced by Crèvecoeur himself – as Columbus had done before – in his multiple experiences as traveler and mapmaker allow us to understand the close interrelation between (re)naming territories and defining them in a new way and for new uses. Crèvecoeur's description of what American identity is or how it can be obtained illustrates extremely well the ways in which, according to Françoise Lionnet, a concept "comes to create a reality that is then ossified into an object of study urgently requiring reading and interpretation if it is to retain its usefulness as a category" (1995: ix).<sup>10</sup>

Can and are identities colonised? If so, we should first become aware of it so as to be able to dismiss them and construct new ones we should not impose but negotiate with the others. Crèvecoeur's proposal was that of an homogeneous identity which led to much ethnic denial and forgetting. In fact, this repression of the ethnic past was complicated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by nativist hostility to new immigrants. Ironically enough, the "Americanness" of those who assimilate their new identity is constantly being tested. Furthermore, nowadays, any sense of American homogeneity is further undermined by complex patterns of real but diffused ethnicity by which Americans of mixed ancestries and others choose ethnic identification as a marker of values, tastes, styles, and attitudes. Fortunately, the fact that the question: "What is to be an American" remains unanswered proves identities cannot be fixed except in the field of our desire but its power is such that we should always keep an interplay between domination and resistance.

<sup>9</sup> Sarah Harasym, ed. (1990). *The Postcolonial Critic*. New York: Routledge.

<sup>10</sup> Françoise Lionnet (1995). *Postcolonial Representations*. Ithaca: Cornell U.P.

Crèvecoeur insists through his *Letters* that nature influences our doings and that it is by subduing the wilderness that human nature becomes both “civilized” and “americanized” as if nature could finally be dominated and not everchanging as it is. In fact, what Crèvecoeur is doing is signalling two issues which have marked the construction of the “American identity”. On the one hand, the taming of the wild, mainly represented by the Indian to whom he felt both attracted and afraid and, on the other hand, by a need of closure and of consensus. Concerning the former, in *Letter XII* he exposes his forced exile, due to the American war against the British, which will compel him to abandon his farm and live among the Indians:

Behold me under the Wigwam; I am so well acquainted with the principal manners of these people, that I entertain not the least apprehension from them. . . My youngest children shall learn to swim and to shoot with the bow, that they may acquire such talents as will necessarily raise them into some degree of esteem among the Indian lads of their own age; . . . but I dread lest the imperceptible charm of Indian education may seize my younger children and give them such a propensity to that mode of life as may preclude their returning to the manners and customs of their parents. I have but one remedy to prevent **this great evil** (emphasis mine); and that is, to employ them in the labor of the fields as much as I can. . . . As long as we keep ourselves busy in tilling the earth, there is no fear of any of us becoming wild (663).

Attraction and repulsion, the two main responses to Indianness, a necessary marker in the construction of American identities.

Before the American revolution the relationships between the colonists and the Indians underwent several stages and were highly diverse, although mostly negative for the Indians, for some tribes in particular. In this context, we might not be surprised when reading Benjamin Franklin’s nativist defense of the English culture and language, or when he uses the good manners of the Indians to criticize the bad manners of the British. In fact, Indianness can be deployed in various interested ways. In *Playing Indian* Philip J. Deloria shows to what an extent American Indians and American identities are inextricably linked: “Savage Indians served Americans as oppositional figures against whom one might imagine a civilized national self” (1998: 3).<sup>11</sup> Actually, he claims, playing Indian is a persistent tradition in American culture,

<sup>11</sup> Philip J. Deloria (1998). *Playing Indian*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

a practice which has clustered around two paradigmatic moments – the Revolution – which rested on the creation of a national identity, and modernity, which has used Indian play to encounter the authentic amidst the anxiety of urban industrial and postindustrial life (1998: 7).

Deloria takes the moment when the colonials dressed as Indians – the Mohawk Indian disguise adopted by Tea Party rebels which will mark the beginning of the revolution –, for to associate with “savages” was the signal of total rebellion. In addition, “Indians were the first and original Americans, and taking on Indian identity was in fact a moment of no return, . . . but Indianness went hand in hand with the dispossession of conquest of actual Indian people” (1998: 181).

In Cheryl Walkers’s words, “Borders are more than just porous. Cultures are mutually defining. The fault of European cultures was to believe that they are not” (1997: 7).<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, she adds, “the literature of dominance attempted to capture the Indian with words. . . . And “the nation” – understood as the United States – inevitably developed in opposition to “the tribes” (1997: 9). Native American writers have reacted, however, as Gerald Vizenor in *Manifest Manners: Postindian Warriors of Survivance* (1994) in which he states that against the destructive simulations of nationalist dominance which he names “manifest manners”, postindian warriors construct a “counter word culture” by seizing the terms of the dominant discourse and redeploying them. Other critics also mention Gerald Vizenor’s postmodernist trends. Thus, in *American Contradictions: Interviews with Nine American Writers* we are told that his work presents social and cultural groups as being fluid and identities as being the result of choice, chance, and discursive construction rather than being racially or ethnically determined, and that he favors transformation and liberation from all kinds of dominance, for he sees Native American literature in a line with international postcolonialism rather than with some kind of mainstream American culture (1995: x). Interestingly enough, his reaction to the Columbus quincentennial, in which he insisted that the time of merely feeling victimized was over and that the moment had come for a less defensive and more future-oriented attitude with respect to self and other (1995: xv)<sup>13</sup> coincides with that expressed by Vivian, the main protagonist of *The Crown of Columbus*.

Several Native American writers agree in considering Indian identities as transformational, always in process, and highly creative, not so much imagined as

<sup>12</sup> Cheryl Walker (1997). *Indian Nation: Native American Literature and Nineteenth-Century Nationalisms*. Durham: Duke University Press.

<sup>13</sup> Wolfgang Binder and Helmbrecht Breining, eds. (1995) *American Contradictions: Interviews with Nine American Writers*. Hanover: Wesleyan U.P., University Press of New England.

performed. Actually, even though acculturated Native Americans such as Arthur C. Parker, Charles A. Eastman or Sun Bear “found themselves acting as Indians, mimicking white mimickings of Indianness, . . . they shifted, altered, crossed, and recrossed cultural boundaries” thus demolishing those boundaries, “rendering their own identities slippery and uncertain in the process” (Deloria, 1998: 188).

Indians and nature have been linked analogies to be tamed, submitted, yielded, both physically (Indian=land) and spiritually (man’s nature, identity) fixed, secured, closed by safe dominant closed systems – be they grammatical, political, economic, etc. – but it was like the false security of realism, for it did not take into account the fact that American identity is not a product but a process and that, as John Kouwenhoven claimed in “What’s ‘American’ about America?” (1996: 50)<sup>14</sup>, as an “organic system” man cannot, of course, expect to achieve stability or permanent harmony, though he can create the illusion of them.

Boundaries are not eternal, stable entities but are constantly changing and evolving. They’re part of a historical process comprised of widely shared, intensely debated, collective fictions that are continually reinvented. We may agree with Deloria in thinking that “as many native people have observed, to be American is to be unfinished” (1998: 191), for new boundaries will be there to be crossed.

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<sup>14</sup> John Kouwenhoven (1996, 1956). “What’s ‘American’ about America?” Taller de Estudios Norteamericanos, Universidad de León.



## ■ Chicano Literature and the Border

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There exists a clear, thin line which separates the U.S. from Mexico. Like a good and conventional story it has a beginning, middle and end. A similar line, and similarly policed, separates Spain from Africa. It is a liquid line which varies with tides and clear nights; it becomes slightly thinner in the summer and widens in the winter, but like the US-Mexican border, equally separates presumably distinctive nationalities. The border, as Alfred Arteaga has eloquently argued, is an infinitely thin line which truly differentiates the U.S. from Mexico, the haves and havenots, those who are supposedly legitimately rich from those who are (also legitimately) poor of their own accord. The absolute certainty of this discrimination, as Arteaga clarifies, instils confidence in national definition, national identity and national narration. The thinner the border the clearer and more acute sense of nation it defines and isolates (92-94). But this heavily policed ideal line has always been porous; the line is not a line but the site of cultural interactions.

Contemporary Chicano (and in general Latino) literature relativizes this presumably thin and impenetrable border to reveal its porous quality. Further, Chicano writing reveals that there exists not a Border with capital B but unpredictable boundary encounters which show how the border repeats itself in

different locations and times. There is a physical border, as Anzaldúa explains in the preface to *Borderlands*, but

The psychological borderlands, the sexual borderlands and the spiritual borderlands are not particular to the Southwest. In fact, the Borderlands are physically present whenever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle and upper classes touch . . . (Preface)

This “repeating border,” to use Antonio Benítez Rojo’s terminology in *The Repeating Island*, is paradoxically different but also simultaneously the same in its diversity. The limits of the border extend beyond the actual U.S.-Mexico Border and can reach the outskirts of a big city as in Sandra Cisneros’ *House on Mango Street*, a decadent Cafe in Helena Viramontes’ “The Cariboo Cafe,” or a stadium at night in Viramontes’ *Under the Feet of Jesus*. The border repeats itself in stories, poems and novels as an abyss suddenly opens between the characters. Its effects are immediate: it transforms refugees and workers into dangerous illegals who put national security at stake.

Pat Mora’s poem “Immigrants” shows what we can term anxiety over the border:

wrap their babies in the American flag,  
feed them mashed hot dogs and apple pie,  
name them Bill and Daisy,  
buy them blonde dolls that blink blue  
eyes or a football and tiny cleats  
before the baby can even walk,  
speak to them in thick English,  
hallo, babee, hallo,  
whisper in Spanish or Polish  
when the babies sleep, whisper  
in a dark parent bed, that dark  
parent fear, ‘Will they like  
our boy, our girl, our fine american  
boy, our fine american girl?’ (214)

The parents of the new born wrap him/her with what appears as a seamless coating of Americanism, feed the baby all American food, give him/her a name to pass for American, instil in him/her what Toni Morrison would call “the bluest eye” as they give him/her a blond doll to play with. All in universal monolingual English. But “that dark parent fear,” the fear of the border, of the seams in the coating remains.



The unexpected appearance of the border is clear in Helena Viramontes' "The Cariboo Cafe": "The police, or 'polie' as Sonya's popi pronounced the word, was La Migra in disguise and thus should always be avoided" (3084). The fear of the border, of the migra, is ever present; more so when the two children, Sonya and Macky get lost in the maze of streets and end up at the Cariboo Cafe. Another character, a woman who has escaped the violence of central America after her child has been tortured and murdered, also seeks refuge at the same cafe. For this grieving mother Macky becomes her lost son, Geraldo. Like these characters the reader also searches for signs of continuity in the maze of narrative voices. But the border dislocates continuity both in the narrative and in the characters' lives. Far from offering refuge the Cariboo Cafe turns into the unexpected border where illegals are captured. The border-cafe elicits a sudden transformation or fracture and nightmare ensues: the workers at the illegal garment warehouse become handcuffed enemies; the woman refugee becomes a dangerous criminal and ends up brutally murdered; Spanish becomes an illegal language. The logic of the border works on the assumption that no matter how convincing your coating of Americanism is, "a round face, burnt toast color [and] black hair" always hides the same essence, the potentially criminal identity of the illegal. In Viramontes' writing the border effects what can be termed "magical terrorism": individual and elusive identities are homogenized into the fixed and changeless signifier of the illegal. The violence of the border in "The Cariboo Cafe" actualizes other instances of brutality such as the repressive regimes of Central America (which have tortured and murdered Geraldo), as well as the carnage of colonial times, as in *Under the Feet of Jesus*. The problem is that in this disorienting narrative there are no stable references and like the characters, the reader loses her/his bearings and can't remember whether s/he is in Central America or in a big U.S. American city. The end of Geraldo, or Macky is similar in both cases.

The border is again a constant theme in Viramontes' novel *Under the Feet of Jesus*. Like in "The Cariboo Cafe" "La migra" can appear any minute. It is specially moving to see how when Estrella, the young protagonist, sees the lights beaming on a playing field she immediately thinks of the border patrol and runs away: "She startled when the sheets of high-powered lights beamed on the playing field like headlights of cars, blinding her. The round, sharp white lights burned her eyes and she made a feeble attempt to shield them with an arm. The border patrol, she thought, and she tried to remember which side she was on and which side of the wire mesh she was safe in. The floodlights aimed at the phantoms in the field. Or were the lights directed at her?" (60). The distance between the legal and the illegal, between the Southern border and the stadium, is cancelled in this vision which reveals the simultaneity of identities, times and spaces. Petra, Estrella's

mother, understands that feeling of insecurity very well and advises Estrella not to run scared: "You stay there and look them in the eye. Don't let them make you feel you did a crime for picking the vegetables they'll be eating for dinner... you tell them the birth certificates are under the feet of Jesus" (63). Another instance of the repeating border appears in what I think is the highlight of the novel. One of the workers at the camp, Alejo, has fallen from a tree and has been poisoned with pesticides while stealing peaches at night. There is, I think, an interesting allegory here: workers toil from sunup to sundown but still are not allowed into the inner border of the garden where succulent, tempting fruit grows. When it becomes clear that Alejo is not going to recover from his fall and the "daño of the fields," as the workers call it, Perfecto (Estrella's father) and the rest of the family take him to a clinic. The confrontation between the nurse and the rest of the family shows further aspects and details of "the border". The nurse wants to charge \$10 for the visit just to send them to Corazon Hospital, and won't barter the fee for a few repairs, as Perfecto suggests. But for the family the change is gas money they need just to drive to the hospital. After handing over the money Estrella pulls up the courage to claim it back, and threatens the white nurse with a crowbar, a tool which confirms the border and the abyss between the middle class nurse and the illegal workers. For Perfecto Estrella's violence marks their end. He expects the *migra* will come and get them, perhaps unleashing the dogs, much in the same way the Indians were hunted down by the Spaniards in the New World. Once more Viramontes sets up a disturbing juxtaposition of identities (illegal workers and Indians), locations (Central and South – politically repressed America – and North – presumably liberal – America), and times (colonial times and contemporary U.S.). With her troubling and dislocated narrative Viramontes is unique at revealing and exposing the actual fear and the nightmare of the border. Her writing reassembles the fragments of the lives crossed and divided by the border and presents them to us unmediated; border means discontinuity, dislocation, and above all the right to repress the linguistically, culturally and ethnically different.

Other contemporary writers such as Ron Arias and Ana Castillo share with Viramontes the use of a dislocating narrative, the elusive and changing identities, as well as the simultaneity of times and spaces. Rather than expose the traumatic effects of the border these writers engage in the subversive transgression and crossing of geographic, linguistic, cultural and literary boundaries. For the border, as Guillermo Gómez-Peña states in his artistic manifesto "The Border Is" (1993), "means boycott, ilegalidad, clandestinidad, contrabando, transgresión, desobediencia binacional . . . But it also means transcultural friendship and collaboration among races, sexes, and generations. It also means to practice creative appropriation, expropriation, and subversion of dominant cultural forms"

(Qted. Edna Acosta-Belén & Carlos E. Santiago 36-37). Gómez-Peña, like Gloria Anzaldúa, has eloquently explained border culture as a site of cultural and literary negotiation and interaction. Border artists, to paraphrase from Anzaldúa, put together the fragments of cultures, identities, times and literatures and create new assemblages ("Chicana" 165). The "rich gene pool" of Anzaldúa's "Mestiza consciousness" (*Borderlands* 77) is easily applicable to this hybrid cultural and literary progeny of the border. Just as the process of hybridity results in a "new *mestiza* consciousness," the cultural interactions of the border give rise to a "*mestiza* literature" or, as Homi Bhaba explains, "to something different, something new and unrecognizable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation" (Qted. in Antonia Darder 211).

Ron Arias' *The Road To Tamazumchale* is an excellent example of how Chicano literature suggests forms of transgression and border crossing. Arias Fausto explores the different layers of his being and the simultaneity of his identities as at the beginning of the novel as he starts to peel his own skin: he is a colonizer with an uncertain mission before the viceroy, but he could also be a pilgrim and a courtier, a merchant or an emissary (34). Ron Arias plays with an elusive and decentered identity, freed from the chain of linear time, which is naturalized and explained as part of the painful postmodernity inherent to senility. The writer dives into the rich literary gene pool of western and Latin American to create a new *mestizo* Faustian hero. Just as Marlowe's Doctor Faustus transgresses the limits of human knowledge and goes beyond the limits which circumscribe man, Fausto crosses traditional categories and boundaries: what is real as opposed to what is imaginary; the world of the living as opposed to the world of the dead. Just as Doctor Faustus was able to travel to the top of Olympus "even to the height of *Primum Mobile*" as the Chorus tells us (III, i, 10), Fausto can make his way to Perú, México or L.A. with the same casualness that Marcelino, the alpaca shepherd, strays from Perú and finds himself in a valley full of lights which turns out to be L.A. But *TRTT* is also placed in the Mexican and Latin American literary tradition. Like Rulfo in *Pedro Páramo* Ron Arias explores the unlimited narrative space of death. The dead and the living, past and present, the real and the imaginary simultaneously share the novel's narrative space. Like Johnny Carter in Cortazar's *El perseguidor*, Fausto rejects the idea of a measured sense of time to explore the "always implicit in the now." Fausto is also "un Perseguidor" who immerses himself in a different level of reality which is alien to the "real" characters of the novel like Carmela or Jess. For him, like for Johnny Carter, the world and reality itself is full of holes (173). These "holes" in Arias' text create a multiplicity of discourses and histories. And it is precisely this coexistence of discourses and world views that creates the magico realistic quality of the novel.

Implicit in Fausto's journey is also a literary crossing: from Doctor Faustus' magic to Fausto's magical realism. Arias places this intrusive "realism" in what used to be separate and well distinguished categories. Whereas Marlowe differentiates between the reality of Doctor Faustus' existence and his magical powers in raising and conjuring up spirits, in Arias' novel the magic and the real create a seamless texture. Although Doctor Faustus embarks on a magical journey to transcend the limits of his existence, he remains the same real, frustrated and desperate character. In contrast, Fausto embarks on a magical realistic journey to attain another level of consciousness where dichotomies dissolve in a new encompassing reality. Whereas through necromancy Doctor Faustus seeks after self aggrandizement and "reign sole king of all the provinces" (I, i, 93), Fausto's aims are social (like bringing the *mojados* across the US-Mexican border). History also works differently for each character. For Doctor Faustus history materializes in sudden apparitions such as "the Great Alexander" and his Paramour or Helen of Greece, but he always remains a detached spectator that never immerses himself in the levels of history conjured up by historical characters. Present and past, reality and magic remain distinctly apart. Conversely Fausto has a more dialectic relation to history and engages critically with it, as his comments on Ponce, who "wasn't very smart", demonstrate. As he tells Marcelino, "the first Europeans in the Americas actually thought some of the people they saw on the shore had tails and lived in trees" (68). By alluding to the Chronicle genre in the pretextual quotation from López de Gómara's *History of the Conquest of Mexico* and by incorporating in Fausto's comments, Arias touches on the fictionality of history (Cf. Nieto 241) and the historicity of fiction, thus crossing the boundaries between history and fiction, past and present. There was, as Fausto suggests, already "magic" in the presumed realism of the Chroniclers (Márquez qtd. by Martínez 10). The finished quality of the epic, of history and of the written word is questioned and relativized in Arias' new area of negotiation. Arias introduces difference into the old and creates new meanings and characters within restrictive literary spaces.

If the Anglo invasion brought "the border", Ana Castillo's *So Far From God* attempts to break down that border (linguistically through the use of English and Spanish; culturally and literally dismantling the border between the epic and the non epic, the magical and the real, the natural and the supernatural, the religious and the sacrilegious). The novel includes (revised) folklore, recipes and remedies. Following the epic mode, perhaps of New Mexico's founding (late) epic, *La Historia de la Nueva Mexico* by Gaspar Pérez de Villagrà (1610), Castillo uses the heroic format with the long headings preceding each chapter to tell the story of Sofi and her four daughters, La Loca Santa, Fe, Esperanza and Caridad. Like in the

epic the third person narrative does not try to be neutral nor impartial; s/he is simply confiding a story to the reader, another comadre.

There is also in the narration an echo of Irving's "Rip Van Winkle". *So Far From God* is about a woman and four daughters who, as the narrator tells us, have been abandoned by the father, a good-for-nothing gambler who returns many years later when his daughters are in their twenties. But *So Far From God* does not tell us of Rip's misfortunes in his hen-pecked household but rather of Sofia's heroic efforts to raise her daughters, and keep her sanity in what seemed at first a chaotic household. When Sofia's husband returns, he does so to a changed household. A certain revolution awaits him; not the outcome of American Revolution, as in Irving's short story, but Sofia's own small scale revolution: she asserts herself before her husband, decides to become Mayor of Tome, since there is no mayor at all, and starts "Los Ganados y Lana Cooperative", an enterprise which aims to save the community from destitution and gringo encroachment. Within the limits of these examples of high and male literature Ana Castillo, like Arias, creates a new assemblage and a new, hybrid area of negotiation of meaning and representation. Castillo breaks down the boundaries of domination in "Rip Van Winkle," where Dame Van Winkle is silenced by the partial narrator, reduced to the role of virago and termagant wife (1346), and plainly exiled from the dream of the young nation. Instead Castillo negotiates a more positive representation of the abandoned wife, and creates a hard-working Sofia (Wisdom), who struggles to get her daughters into adulthood. Unlike Dame Van Winkle, Sofia does not die while her husband is gone; not that she awaits him either. Both in her use of the heroic/epic tone and in her rewriting of "Rip Van Winkle," Castillo uses a carnivalesque technique: the domestic becomes heroic; the silenced become outspoken; the abandoned, aggrieved wife asks her husband to leave in a bottom-up act of challenging and displacing.

All these examples of Chicano-Mexican fiction show how the border is not an impenetrable line but the site of cultural interactions, of a constant process of hybridity and mestizaje. These literary and cultural crossings create that rich "literary gene pool" which is the basis for a *mestizo* consciousness and a *mestiza* literature; a literature that breaks boundaries of domination and the limits of old structures to create a new terrain of meaning and representation.

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## Fausto Tejada or the Journey of a Hero

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*Mixcoac was my village. Three nocturnal syllables,  
A half-mask of shadow across a solar face.  
Clouds of dust came and ate it.  
I escaped and walked through the world.  
My words were my house, air my tomb.*

*Epithaph for no stone (Octavio Paz).*

Different literary critics such as Carlota Cardenas de Dwyer, Eliud Martinez and Eva Margarita Nieto among others have been largely exploring the Quixotesque role of Fausto Tejada in *The Road to Tamazunchale*. Likewise, connections with main characters of well-known novels, including *Dr. Faustus* by Marlowe and Goethe have been extensively studied.

However, in my opinion, other literary sources influence and are evoked in this short Chicano novel. There is, for instance, a lack of critical essays considering the novel a journey towards the deformation of reality and the clear transformation of an antihero into a hero well in the level of *Luces de Bohemia* by Valle Inclán. I consider this novel to be an important source for the creation of the atmosphere and the characters of *The Road to Tamazunchale*. Besides, a reference to *The Aeneid* must as well be made since it is from Virgil and formerly Homer



that the great epics come. *The Road to Tamazunchale*, from my point of view, universalizes the experience, the pilgrimage of a human being towards death to such an extent that it becomes an epic narrative, although the challenge is no longer life as it was in classical times but death. What Homer did for Greece, Virgil for Rome and Whitman for mainstream American literature, Ron Arias has done for Chicano literature. It is the vision of a national epic, which would define the Chicano character, his attitude towards death, thus, becoming the basis for a national culture. As Virgil was trying to create a connection between the ancient Greece and the new Roman Empire to justify the god-like origin of Romans, so Ron Arias creates a link between Chicanos and Mexicans so that his people do not forget their origins.

My purpose consists on analysing the way in which *The Aeneid* and *Luces de Bohemia* are necessary references when studying this Chicano epic which is *The Road to Tamazunchale*. In order to justify its inclusion in the category of an epic narrative, some definitions like epic and hero have to be examined.

*The Oxford Anthology of English Literature* defines epic or heroic poetry as:

an oral narrative delivered in a style different from that of normal discourse by reason of verse, music and heightened diction, and concerning the great deeds of a central heroic figure, or group of figures, usually having to do with a crisis in the history of a race or culture... (Glossary, page 2319)

Kurt Spang's definition in *Géneros Literarios* takes another direction:

La epopeya primitiva documenta una estrecha vinculación entre el hombre y la naturaleza; presupone la existencia de una capa social dirigente aristocrática conviviendo en una unión política suelta cuya existencia está marcada por la lucha y las acciones bélicas; de ahí que el valor del individuo dependa de su procedencia y de los esfuerzos realizados. (page 115)

According to the definition of "epopeya", an epic hero:

no puede esquivarse, puede tener miedo, pedir auxilio, pero tiene que seguir adelante inexorablemente. Tiene algo paradójicamente pasivo; a pesar de que lucha y supere dificultades, permanece víctima de su condicionamiento externo. La capacidad de lucha es lo que más se destaca en el héroe épico, el hombre demuestra su valía luchando y así se realiza; la vida es lucha. (Spang, 116-117)

Joseph Campbell provides a new definition in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*: “the hero is the man/woman who has been able to battle past his personal and local historical limitations to the generally valid, normally human forms”. This statement implies that the hero is the model for everyman to follow and his experience through life and death, the same everyone has to experience. If this model can be applied to any hero, therefore, the division into different stages that Campbell makes of the journey of the hero accounts also for every epic narrative:

1. Departure of the hero
  - 1.1. The call to adventure
  - 1.2. The Crossing of the First Threshold
2. Initiation
  - 2.1. Woman as the Temptress
3. Return
  - 3.1. Refusal of the Return
  - 3.2. Rescue from Without
  - 3.3. The Crossing of the Return Threshold
  - 3.4. Master of the Two Worlds
  - 3.5. Freedom to live.

Beside the main stages of separation/departure, –initiation–journey–reintegration into society/return, Fausto's journey towards death seems to adapt to this structure as well as Aeneas' and Max's although some subdivisions may be absent in any of them.

Fausto prepares for his journey, for his departure in the very first chapter, he leaves his old life behind by means of a ritual: getting rid of his old skin. Then, he decides he must leave to Cuzco:

He would leave at once... He could hardly wait. Should he send a message to the viceroy? Surely news of his coming would bolster morale of the Cuzco garrison.  
(chapter 2, page 13)

The garrison, the troops, introduces the background of war included in Spang's definition of epic. Fausto is somehow an officer preparing for battle just like Aeneas, a warrior who has to battle and fight in order to found the new city of Rome:

Across the lands and waters he was battered  
 Beneath the violence of High Ones, for  
 The savage Juno's unforgetting anger;  
 And many sufferings were his in war—  
 Until he brought a city into being  
 And carried in his gods to Latium; (Book I, 5-10).

The reader ignores the reason why either Fausto or Aeneas are ready for war or the tasks they have to accomplish since both narratives start *in media res*. In the opening scene of *Luces de Bohemia*, Max decides to battle against Zaratustra and the injustices of publishers who have ruined him economically. He does not hesitate to abandon his home, but, there is a difference with the other two narratives: the reader knows the reason for his departure. His journey, apparently, is a quest for money:

MADAMA COLLET: Max, no debes salir  
 MAX: El aire me refrescará. Aquí hace un calor de horno.  
 DON LATINO: Pues en la calle corre fresco.  
 MADAMA COLLET: ¡Vas a tomarte un disgusto sin conseguir nada, Max!  
 CLAUDINITA: ¡Papá, no salgas!  
 MADAMA COLLET: Max, yo buscaré alguna cosa que empeñar.  
 MAX: No quiero tolerar ese robo. ¿A quién le has llevado los libros, Latino?  
 D. LATINO: A Zaratustra.  
 MAX: ¡Claudinita, mi palo y mi sombrero!  
 (Scene 1, page 53 )

In short, all three have departed from their houses and seem to be prepared to overcome any obstacle they encounter in their journey.

They have felt the call to adventure, which will take them to the unknown. Aeneas travels to foreign lands where he stays as a guest, for example, Carthage. However, the most useful book of *The Aeneid* for this analysis is Book VI, due to the visit to Avernus, the land of the Dead, or Hell. Aeneas visits “the Fields of Mourning”, a land of sorrow and pain very much in the style of Madrid in *Luces de Bohemia*. This place resembles very much the vision of Madrid and Los Angeles portrayed in *Luces de Bohemia* and *The Road to Tamazunchale*. The noisy streets of Madrid, which stereotyped characters roam, are transported to Los Angeles preserving their essence: the drunkards are still drunk, the prostitutes continue practicing their old job and women keep being the civilizing force of society. Max and Fausto enjoy parks and walking through dark, narrow streets. The situation of

the Spain portrayed in *Luces de Bohemia* does not differ very much from the situation of Chicanos in the US. Valle Inclán refers to the action of his play as taking place in "...un Madrid absurdo, brillante y hambriento (page 44). In some sense, Max and Fausto are also traversing the land of the Dead, travelling through the underworld in their common journey towards death.

The hero needs a guide to instruct him how to avoid danger and to show him the right direction to follow. The Sybil that drives Aeneas in this visit to the underworld is represented by Ana, resemblance stressed by the fact that she shows Fausto his own death, alternating with Mario and Marcelino in *The Road to Tamazunchale*. Evangelina, the dead wife can also be considered a guide, and, more than that, a supernatural aid and an advisor such as those the classical heroes usually have. As well as Fausto has male guides, D. Latino may represent that function in Valle Inclán's play even though he drives Max to face danger instead of helping him to avoid it. Although Max lacks this female guide, he also experiences the visit to hell embodied in the already alluded to streets of Madrid.

After the hero has crossed the first threshold, that is to say, he has entered the regions of the unknown with the personifications of his destiny to guide and aid him (as Campbell calls the guides), adventures start: the stage of initiation begins. Aeneas looks for his father and in his way he recognizes the souls that he encounters walking through the different halls and stages of his journey through the underworld. He stops, talks to them and learns of their sorrows. Max and Fausto meet many souls in their journey towards death, they get to know about their troubles and in many cases try to help them.

Aeneas, finally reaches "the Fields of Gladness" where his father rests and he is told of the many events that would happen to him and his people after his visit to the underworld, so he is ready to return to the world transfigured and teach the lesson he has learned of life renewed:

And so they wander over all that region,  
across the wide and misted plains, surveying  
everything. And when father Anchises  
has shown his son each scene and fired his soul  
with love of coming glory, then he tells  
Aeneas of the wars he must still wage,  
of the Laurentians, of Latinus' city,  
and how he is to flee or face each trial (Book VI, 1183-1190).

Max and Fausto's visits do not seem to end so satisfactorily from the common reader's point of view. They have numerous adventures during their visits, they even encounter the woman presence that tries to distract the hero from his

ultimate goal and both overcome successfully that obstacle: Fausto refuses to couple with Ana and Max avoids contact with La Lunares:

Fausto palmed his thinning hair and shook his head.  
 "You don't want to do this, do you?" Ana said flatly.  
 "I don't think so. I've got a headache."  
 "I'll take it away, let me try".  
 "No, I'm tired."  
 Ana kicked off her sandals, unbuttoned her blouse and began to pull her arms out of her sleeves.  
 "I just want to lie down," Fausto said as her skirt dropped to the floor.  
 "If you want, you can rub my temples"  
 "Alright, old man, lie down. I'll rub your temples." (chapter 2, page 16)

LUNARES: ...No lo pienses más y vamos. Aquí cerca hay una casa muy decente.  
 MAX: ¿Y cumplirás tu palabra?  
 LUNARES: ¿Cuál?. ¿Dejar que te comas el pan de higos ? ¡No me pareces bastante flamenco! (Scene 10, page 117)

However, these adventures will drive them to exhaustion and disease, a disease from which they will not recover but die, although it is important to understand that it is their own will, their choice to abandon life. They somehow are refusing to return to the real world, so they both choose death instead of life, a decision which had been previously announced several times. Max wants to commit suicide from the very beginning of the play, and in Scene XII he tells D. Latino that he is dead and asks him to intone a solemn dirge:

MAX: Latino, entona el gori-gori.  
 DON LATINO: Si continúas con esa broma, te abandono.  
 MAX: Yo soy el que se va para siempre.  
 DON LATINO: Incorpórate, Max. Vamos a caminar.  
 MAX: Estoy muerto.  
 DON LATINO: ¡Que me estás asustando! Max, vamos a caminar.  
 Incorpórate, ¡no tuerzas la boca, condenado! ¡Max! ¡Max! Condenado, responde! (Scene 12, page 127)

Fausto, after watching his own death in the second chapter of the novel, doesn't answer Carmela's calls because he thinks he is dead.

"Tio, why are you playing dead?"  
 After a moment Fausto opened his eyes. "I'm hungry", he said in a tired voice.

"You scared me. You weren't asleep, were you?"

"No, mijita. I thought I was dead." Fausto sat up. "It happens, you know, From one day to the next, poof! Al otro mundo." (Chapter 3, page 20)

Later on, he hides in a coffin and plays dead in the battlefield, which is really a movie. Thus, death can be felt prior to actually happening in these narratives, the characters foresee their final destiny. What characterizes both novels is the desire to reach death, the acceptance with which Fausto and Max embrace the life of the world to come. Once they have realized that they cannot remain young forever, death is the best solution. They come back to the world of the living only as a ritual prior to joining the world of the dead. They cross the return threshold and retract their steps, they have become masters who enjoy freedom to pass back and forth across the world division. Max through his literature has become eternal and Fausto has reached immortality through the memory of the Chicano community. Once he joins his wife, he wants to demonstrate his friends that he is still with them:

Later in the afternoon, when almost everyone had become a shadow, Fausto returned and plugged in the cord. "Just so you'll know I'm still around" he said, then disappeared into the cloud to join his wife. (Chapter 13, page 105)

These urban heroes of the 20th century confront death in a happy way, they have overcome the fear that humans feel; that is their true heroic deed: accepting death as the destiny in everyman's pilgrimage, main reason why they become heroes. They leave the passive attitude apart and shape their own destiny. Max and Fausto, indeed, embody the figure of the anti-hero if we compare them with the classical heroes. They are neither mythological or legendary nor physically strong; on the contrary, they are common people belonging to lower classes. As for ability, Max is unable to get any of his writings published and Fausto retired when he did not sell a book in two weeks. They are unsuccessful characters, not favored by the gods at all and ironically in the autumn of their lives. They had no achievements to be admired for and are even portrayed in shameful moments: Fausto gets diarrhoea and Max is left drunk alone lying on the ground. Actually, they seem to be just the opposite of the classical heroes, but their courage lies in the way they have been travelling towards death, in how their journey has been from the very start a quest towards death. Max himself admits that their tragedy is the grotesque, which is no more than the classical hero's reflection in concave mirrors. The most beautiful images become absurd ones in a concave mirror.

MAX: La tragedia nuestra no es tragedia.

D. LATINO: ¡Pues algo será!

MAX: El Esperpento.

...

MAX: Los ultraístas son unos farsantes. El esperpentismo lo ha inventado Goya. Los héroes clásicos han ido a pasearse en el Callejón del Gato.

D. LATINO: ¡Estás completamente curda!

MAX: Los héroes clásicos reflejados en los espejos cóncavos dan el Esperpento. El sentido trágico de la vida española sólo puede darse con una estética sistemáticamente deformada.

(Scene 12, page 123)

Therefore, Fausto and Max are conscious distortions of the classical heroes to adapt them to a new era and a new kind of society demanding a different type of heroes. Ron Arias himself in "El señor del chivo" highlights this relationship between *Luces de Bohemia* and *The Road to Tamazunchale* stating that reality can be distorted if we look at it from the warped mirrors of a funhouse and reach imaginary worlds which is what he tries to reflect in his "novelita": "Again, it's the image that counts, and maybe we'll recognize ourselves. Most people do when they stand before the warped mirrors in the funhouse" (page 59).

He implies in this statement that the image of these mirrors is a strange, surreal image of ourselves but part of reality as well. Max and Fausto are heroes brave enough to face the distortions produced by warped mirrors and recognize themselves in them.

Thus, it is not surprising that Roland Walter includes Valle Inclán as an influence in his overview of Magical Realism, the narrative mode to which *The Road to Tamazunchale* fully belongs. It is clear, then, the role that Valle Inclán's grotesque satire and the mirrors in the fairground play within Magical Realism.

Even though the narrative techniques, starting from the genre seem to differ, a play and a novel, they will fuse at the end of the novel with the appearance of a performance in which all the characters take part. It is the big theatre of life, in Calderón's words, in which the characters of *Luces de Bohemia* are trapped. Fausto Tejada and Max Estrella are the representation of a 20th century urban antihero who just because of his lack of heroism becomes a hero. Max and Fausto abandon this world once they have become leaders for someone to follow, examples of the right way to await death.

As the experience of Max and Fausto is a universal one, the role of the reader is an active one; he is invited to join the characters on the stage, to take part in the farce of life and death because everyone is walking that road to



Tamazunchale. Max and Fausto have become the best leaders to follow on that Road, on that pilgrimage, they have settled an example of courage and struggle, which can perfectly be equated with the adventures of classical heroes narrated in epics. They are indeed the model of nobleman to imitate, having surpassed the category of anti-heroes that they had acquired through their appearance.

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## Viajeros norteamericanos en la Amazonía peruana a comienzos del siglo XX<sup>1</sup>

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El imparable ascenso de los Estados Unidos como potencia continental, provocó reacciones encontradas en los países latinoamericanos. La admiración por su proceso de crecimiento económico y su modelo político tuvo contrapartida en el rechazo a su política imperialista, plasmada en el desarrollo de la Doctrina Monroe.

El proceso acometido por los EEUU en la expansión hacia el oeste, fue seguido con atención por repúblicas que como la Argentina o Chile acometieron su propia política de “frontera” a partir de la incorporación al Estado de enormes espacios considerados “vacíos”. Los gobiernos de sesgo liberal buscaron en la legislación sobre inmigración, apropiación-explotación de tierras y relación con los pueblos indios, posibles pautas de legislación y actuación. Las tesis de Frederick J. Turner, que al cerrar el siglo tratan de explicar el significado de la frontera, son conocidas en los círculos científicos de muchas repúblicas. En un trabajo pionero sobre el uso oficial de la selva en el Perú republicano, Charles Walker analizaba

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<sup>1</sup> Este trabajo forma parte del Proyecto financiado por La Comisión Interministerial de Ciencia y Tecnología PB-94-1568, Ordenación del Territorio y Desarrollo regional en la Amazonía Andina (1850-1960).

la incidencia de las propuestas de Turner en los círculos intelectuales, concluyendo que contribuyeron a convertir a la Amazonía en un tema de interés (Walker, 1987)<sup>2</sup>.

Ningún marco general resiste el envite de las particularidades de cada uno de los casos. En este trabajo la atención se polarizará en un tiempo y un espacio, y en el marco de lo que es una investigación en curso, atendiendo a la propuesta general del tema de este congreso. El marco cronológico será el de apogeo y crisis de la República Aristocrática (1895-1930)<sup>3</sup>. El espacio, Loreto, departamento peruano desde 1866, el más extenso de todo el país y en su totalidad amazónico. Son años de auge del caucho, producto de gran demanda por parte de los países más industrializados y del que los Estados Unidos, a la vanguardia de la fabricación de automóviles, sería uno de los grandes consumidores.

El estado de la investigación permite avanzar algunas observaciones. Hay que precisar que la creciente presencia de los EEUU en el Perú no está especialmente vinculada al caucho, ese “oro verde” que levantó ciudades de la nada y creó sueños de grandeza que rememoran, con todas las salvedades del caso, a lo que fue la fiebre del oro en California en la década de 1840. El centro cauchero de Loreto, Iquitos, se convirtió en una Babel en la que se dieron cita inmigrantes de muy variadas procedencias y en la que los norteamericanos apenas se hicieron notar. Tampoco fueron sustanciales los intereses económicos en la región<sup>4</sup>.

De otro lado, en este periodo la Amazonía era la “frontera peruana”, en la acepción turneriana. El interés por su “colonización” creció como respuesta a distintas motivaciones. Las élites empeñadas en la modernización del país entendieron que era preciso incorporar los territorios amazónicos. Desarrollo económico, vinculación a través de vías de comunicación, poblamiento mediante la inmigración, implantación de instituciones civiles y militares, eso era

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<sup>2</sup> Walker después admitiría que había sobredimensionado la incidencia de las tesis turnerianas. De hecho sólo menciona a un intelectual de prestigio, Víctor Andrés Belaunde, que conoció directamente y utilizó la obra de Turner.

<sup>3</sup> La expresión República Aristocrática, aceptada de forma generalizada por la historiografía peruanista, fue acuñada por Jorge Basadre. Manuel Burga y Alberto Flores Galindo la retomaron en *Apogeo y Crisis de la República Aristocrática*. Lima, Rikchay, 1980, una obra considerada clásica sobre esta etapa.

<sup>4</sup> Las relaciones entre los Estados Unidos y el Perú recibieron un impulso sustancial después de la Guerra del Pacífico (1879-1883). Desde entonces no se produjeron convulsiones especiales, desde el punto de vista oficial, hasta 1930. Los sucesivos gobiernos peruanos aceptaron la autoridad de los Estados Unidos en materia de arbitraje en los conflictos con los países vecinos, y se mostraron fieles aliados de la potencia del norte en cuestiones de política internacional tales como la cuestión del Canal de Panamá, la Primera Guerra Mundial y el posicionamiento posterior (Liga de Naciones) (Carey, 1964; Saint John, 1975).

“colonizar”<sup>5</sup>. Los Estados Unidos eran un modelo a considerar. Además Loreto era un departamento limítrofe y un tema recurrente fue la afirmación de la soberanía frente a las aspiraciones amazónicas del Ecuador, Colombia y Brasil. Los Estados Unidos se erigieron en mediadores y Washington fue el escenario de la firma de diversos tratados.

Por último, la Amazonía fue desde la conquista un referente en el horizonte de viajeros y científicos occidentales. Allí se escondía el perseguido El Dorado, y su naturaleza ofrecía posibilidades sin límite a los avances de las ciencias. Sin la frecuencia de los europeos, los norteamericanos también la recorrieron y dejaron sus testimonios en obras que han quedado como documentos históricos a considerar para abundar en el conocimiento del Oriente. Este trabajo rescatará la experiencia y la obra de alguno de ellos.

### Viajeros “oficiales” y viajeros “científicos”

La Amazonía peruana no fue un espacio privilegiado por los norteamericanos ni para reconocer ni para asentarse. La historiografía que se ha ocupado específicamente de viajeros al Perú apenas puede rescatar algún nombre para la etapa que aquí se considera (Dávila, 1985; Núñez, 1974 y 1989; Palacios Rodríguez, 1990). Es más que probable que haya casos de los que no han quedado testimonios, otros que sí pueden ser constatados documentalmente han tenido una proyección desigual y en cualquier caso han sido tratados con una metodología y objetivos distintos a los que aquí se pretenden.

El término viajero es demasiado vago y plausible de ser acotado en función de propósitos y perspectivas específicos. Ateniéndonos al Perú y a estudios monográficos, hay que mencionar a Estuardo Núñez que en sus trabajos sobre viajeros extranjeros se mueve en coordenadas generales. Aunque toma como referencia de origen a los europeos, su propuesta puede ser aplicable a los de otras procedencias, por cuanto caracteriza al viajero como el individuo que se mueve desde centros de civilización donde la frescura de la vida se ha marchitado y se desplaza hacia el Oriente y hacia América. En el Nuevo Mundo la naturaleza

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<sup>5</sup> El proyecto en que se inscribe este trabajo ha dado como resultado varias publicaciones. Entre las más recientes, Pilar García Jordán y Nuria Sala i Vila (coord.), *La nacionalización de la Amazonía*. Barcelona, Universitat de Barcelona, 1998; Pilar García Jordán (ed.), *Fronteras, colonización y mano de obra indígena en la Amazonía andina*. Lima, Pontificia Universidad Católica-Barcelona, Universitat de Barcelona, 1998.

está impoluta y se abren grandes posibilidades para desarrollar nuevas concepciones científicas. El Perú fue para los viajeros renacentistas, ilustrados y románticos el país del mito de El Dorado y de las milenarias culturas prehispánicas. El horizonte del viajero se cierra en el siglo XIX con el Romanticismo, después el realismo y naturalismo recortan la imaginación y simultáneamente América va perdiendo la atracción por lo desconocido. En el siglo XX surge el turista para el que el viaje es un fin en sí mismo, un pasatiempo (Núñez, 1989:16-43). También Mariana Mould de Pease establece las diferencias, ofreciendo, a través de testimonios seleccionados, un original contrapunto entre los viajeros de ayer y los turistas de hoy. Los primeros recorrieron diversas regiones del Perú republicano, tomándose su tiempo, interesándose por el paisaje y las gentes al tiempo que se preocupaban por la historia y la realidad del momento. Mould reivindica el rescate de su legado, que con observaciones negativas y positivas, realistas e idílicas, ofrece la dimensión de un Perú intercultural que ellos han dejado en herencia a los viajeros actuales, y también a los turistas que van deprisa, buscando apurar nuevas sensaciones sin detenerse a reflexionar ni a conocer en profundidad (Mould de Pease, 1997).

En esta línea se inscribe esta propuesta, la de recuperar testimonios de norteamericanos que en el cambio de siglo se acercaron a la Amazonía peruana y, a veces con posterioridad por la edición tardía de su obra, han contribuido, desde la visión “del otro”, a proyectar una realidad ignota, aún para la mayoría de los peruanos. Los “viajeros” que aquí se seleccionan se acercaron a la región movidos por varios resortes. Están los “viajeros oficiales” que llevaron a cabo alguna misión de carácter diplomático-oficial, y los “viajeros científicos”, con objetivos arqueológicos, antropológicos y naturalistas, o impulsados por una curiosidad especial mediatizada en cualquier caso por su formación.

### Viajeros oficiales: George Converse y Miles Poindexter

Para ilustrar este apartado se han tomado dos ejemplos. El primero se incluye en la política emprendida desde el primer gobierno de Leguía de acudir a misiones norteamericanas<sup>6</sup>. En 1906 se inició la contratación de técnicos para

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<sup>6</sup> Augusto B. Leguía, ministro de Hacienda en el gobierno de Manuel Candamo y en el primer gabinete de José Pardo, fue un decidido partidario del acercamiento a los Estados Unidos. Durante sus períodos presidenciales (1908-1912 y 1919-1930) favoreció el desenvolvimiento de los negocios privados y firmó contratos con distintas misiones, en ocasiones con implicaciones oficiales, que pusieron a sectores estratégicos peruanos bajo gestión norteamericana. En 1920 las legaciones diplomáticas ascendieron a la categoría de Embajada.

ocuparse de las obras de saneamiento e higiene de una serie de centros urbanos. Iquitos entró en el proyecto cuando en 1912 el Congreso aprobó un préstamo de 200.000 libras peruanas para tal fin. En el mes de mayo el Secretario de Estado de los Estados Unidos, Philander C. Knox propuso al cirujano George Converse, miembro del Servicio de Salud Pública. Él mismo sintetizó su labor en un trabajo titulado *El Saneamiento de Iquitos* que apareció en una publicación regional, *La Guía de Iquitos* de 1914. De contenido eminentemente técnico, proporcionaba información de primera mano acerca del estado sanitario de la ciudad, las principales enfermedades y las medidas que estaban tomando para atajarlas. Adicionalmente aporta descripciones de la capital del caucho peruano, y datos muy apreciados, habida la carencia de información, como son la existencia de 3.098 casas en las que habitaban en julio de 1913 unos 12.500 habitantes (Converse, 1914).

Los medios de la época recogieron con gran eco la visita que en 1923 realizó por diversas regiones del país el embajador de los Estados Unidos Miles Poindexter. Era el primer diplomático norteamericano de alto nivel que demostraba con la práctica interés por conocer el Perú y lo incluyó en su agenda durante los primeros meses de su gestión. Su viaje a la selva, que duraría tres meses, arrancó internándose en ferrocarril hasta La Oroya, en la sierra central. De ahí a la Merced y a Puerto Yesup en el río Pichis. Luego por canoa a Puerto Bermúdez desde donde tomó la lancha de la flotilla naval, "Contanamara", para surcar el Pichis y el Pachitea. Tras un cambio de embarcación, llegó a Iquitos en la "América" (Variedades, 1923). De regreso navegó el Huallaga hasta Yurimaguas y de este puerto al río Schinisu. A pie alcanza Tarapoto y Moyobamba. Luego a La Rioja, Molino-Pampa, Chachapoyas, Balsas, Celendín y Cajamarca hasta Chilate para dirigirse por ferrocarril a Pacasmayo y por vapor al puerto del Callao. Un posterior recorrido lo llevaría hacia el sur, a Arequipa, Puno y el Cuzco. En los círculos gubernamentales se consideró una prueba de amistad y buena disposición y varios ministros de Relaciones Exteriores del Perú lo reseñaron en sus memorias oficiales (Perú. Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores. Salomón, 1923; Elguera, 1924:CIV-CV; Rada y Gamio, 1928:3-6)<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> Miles Poindexter estaría al frente de la Embajada de los Estados Unidos desde 1923 hasta 1928 en que presentó su renuncia para tomar parte en la política de su país. Natural del estado de Washington, se doctoró en Jurisprudencia por la Universidad George Washington. Fiscal y juez de la Corte Superior, fue representante de la Cámara de Representantes y del Senado. El 4 de marzo de 1923 el presidente Harding le nombró embajador en el Perú. Su gestión fue considerada muy positiva por ambas partes. Calvin Coolidge le designaría junto a John Pershing miembro de la legación norteamericana en las celebraciones del Centenario de Ayacucho en 1924.



### Viajeros científicos: William Curtis Farabee y H.J. Mozas

A lo largo de la República Aristocrática fueron varias las misiones de científicos norteamericanos que tuvieron como destino el Perú. A las de los educadores contratados por los gobiernos de Leguía para reformar el sistema de enseñanza<sup>8</sup>, se sumaron otras de carácter institucional auspiciadas por universidades y organismos entre los que sobresalió la National Geographic Society. Una vez más la costa y la sierra fueron las áreas preferenciales.

Entre los científicos que desarrollaron sus trabajos en la Amazonía durante este período, el más sobresaliente por el alcance de sus resultados fue Hiram Bingham, descubridor de Machu Picchu en la selva del Cuzco<sup>9</sup>. Aunque sus trabajos editados son fundamentalmente arqueológicos, en algunos, como en *Inca Land. Explorations in the Highlands of Peru* se recrea en el entorno aportando descripciones y referencias históricas (Bingham, 1922).

Menos publicitados fueron los viajes de William Curtis Farabee y H.J. Mozas que aquí se han seleccionado. Farabee inició en 1906 por cuenta del Peabody Museum un largo recorrido de once meses por la selva amazónica. La expedición a “una región virgen y llena de promesas”, estuvo compuesta por los etnólogos Farabee, John Walter Hastings y Louis J. de Milhaud y el cirujano Edward Franklin Horr, y fue recibida por el Presidente Roosevelt que les entregó cartas para los diplomáticos norteamericanos y las máximas autoridades peruanas. En Lima fueron presentados oficialmente al Presidente José Pardo y al entonces Ministro de Hacienda Augusto B. Leguía. Siguieron hasta tres itinerarios distintos tomando como base de operaciones el observatorio Harvard de Arequipa.

Los dos primeros cubrieron la selva sur; el tercero, el más largo y provechoso, es el que les condujo a Iquitos. En su ejecución se cruzó oportunamente un proyecto oficial. El gobierno peruano estaba interesado en la extensión del ferrocarril de Cerro de Pasco hasta algún lugar navegable del Ucayali

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<sup>8</sup> En 1909 el gobierno de Leguía acudió a un grupo de expertos encabezados por Harry Edwin Bard, que seguiría trabajando para él durante su segundo periodo presidencial. Entre los norteamericanos más destacados se encontraba Albert Giesecke, que terminaría siendo Rector de la Universidad del Cuzco.

<sup>9</sup> Hiram Bingham llevó a cabo exploraciones por América del Sur entre 1906 y 1912 bajo el auspicio de la Universidad de Yale y la National Geographic Society. En el Perú el gobierno de Leguía le dio respaldo oficial proporcionándole un contingente de soldados que le sirviera de apoyo logístico. Recurrió a colegas y compatriotas, entre ellos al Rector de la Universidad del Cuzco, Albert Giesecke, que le dio acceso a contactos sociales y a infraestructura. En julio de 1911 descubrió Machu Picchu, no sólo gracias al azar y a la suerte, porque Bingham llevaba años estudiando y leyendo obras de viajeros que describían la región (Mould de Pease: 35-45).

e invitó a los miembros de la expedición a acompañar al grupo de ingenieros encargados del reconocimiento y localización preliminares. La propuesta venía a la medida a los objetivos etnológicos de la expedición, porque se trataba de atravesar territorios desconocidos y supuestamente habitados por tribus salvajes. La ruta partió de Cerro de Pasco vía el camino del Pichis a través de Tarma hasta el río Pachitea. Descendiendo por él hasta el Ucayali el grupo embarcó en una lancha del gobierno hasta Iquitos. Farabee aprovechó su comunicabilidad para enviar a Nueva York a través del Brasil el material hasta entonces reunido. Desde la capital de Loreto se desplazaron a Tabatinga en la frontera con Brasil. El retorno siguió el curso de los ríos Amazonas, Ucayali, Urubamba, Mishagua, Manu y Madre de Dios.

Las condiciones fueron difíciles. Según Milhaud viajaron en tren, embarcaciones a vapor, caballo, mula y a pie. Comieron de todo y tuvieron como compañeros asiduos a los insectos. Pero el éxito coronó la expedición, gracias en buena medida a la habilidad de Farabee y a las buenas relaciones entre el Perú y los Estados Unidos<sup>10</sup>. En 1922 la Universidad de Harvard publicó los resultados etnológicos de la expedición, *Indian Tribes of Eastern Peru*, un trabajo de gran altura que entraba de lleno en el estudio pormenorizado de distintas tribus y se apoyaba en un sólido aparato crítico que incluía las obras de hombres que como Jorge von Hassel, Joaquín Capelo, Manuel Antonio Mesones Muro trabajaban entonces por incorporar científica y políticamente al Oriente al Estado peruano, lo que muestra la amplitud de miras de Farabee. Un mapa de elaboración propia y fotos de indígenas, de sus casas y utensilios refuerzan la calidad de la obra (Farabee, 1922: V-IX)<sup>11</sup>. No sería la última incursión de Farabee por la Amazonía. Entre 1913 y 1914 la Universidad de Pensilvania le financiaría otra, esta vez por el Brasil que en 1914 se convertiría en encrucijada de caminos que reunió a tres importantes misiones científicas, la del propio Farabee, la del inglés Henry Savage Landor y la del ex-presidente Theodore Roosevelt.

Las “veleidades” científicas de Roosevelt remiten a las actividades amazónicas del otro viajero seleccionado, y que ha resultado todo un descubrimiento historiográfico. Se trata de H. J. Mozans, pseudónimo bajo el que se escudó el franciscano John A. Zahm. Roosevelt prologó el libro editado en 1912

<sup>10</sup> Más tarde Farabee sería nombrado miembro honorario de la Universidad de San Marcos de Lima y en 1921 fue designado por el presidente Harding Enviado Extraordinario a la celebración del Centenario de La Independencia del Perú.

<sup>11</sup> En la introducción a *Indian Tribes of Eastern Peru* Milhaud hace una interesante contextualización de la expedición. Las semejanzas hacen pensar que se basó en ella Melitón Carvajal, presidente de la Sociedad Geográfica de Lima, que en la Memoria presentada en 1927 daba cuenta de la misión (Memoria Sociedad Geográfica de Lima, 1927: 209).

en el que Mozans volcaba su experiencia peruana, *Along the Andes and down the Amazon*. Revelaba que su amistad se basaba en que compartían la admiración por Dante y la atracción por parajes desconocidos, le consideraba embajador idóneo de los Estados Unidos y elogiaba su capacidad para interpretar al vecino del sur. Recordaba que Mozans le visitó en 1908 y le invitó a acompañarle en un siguiente viaje a través del río Paraguay y los ríos de la Amazonía brasileña, pero que en esos momentos, en la recta final de su administración, él ya preparaba otra expedición por Africa. El proyecto se materializaría años más tarde, cuando en la primavera de 1913 Roosevelt aceptó las invitaciones de los gobiernos de Argentina y Brasil para dar conferencias en instituciones culturales y se le ocurrió aprovechar la ocasión para organizar junto con Zahm (Roosevelt siempre utiliza su nombre verdadero) y autoridades del Museo Americano de Historia Natural un trayecto que les llevara desde Buenos Aires a la selva brasileña, escenario principal de sus intereses naturalistas. Son 16 meses de expedición (del 9 de diciembre de 1913 al 7 de mayo de 1914, aunque Zham abandonaría al grupo a comienzos de febrero) que Roosevelt plasmó en el libro *En las selvas de Brasil*, editado en 1914<sup>12</sup>. Los propósitos estrictamente naturalistas primaron sobre la preocupación por el entorno que es francamente limitada.

Mucho más amplias fueron las miras de Mozans. *Along the Andes and down the Amazon* está a la altura de los mejores trabajos editados sobre la Amazonía en los años de la República Aristocrática. Son muchas las razones que justifican su selección. La misión, que realizó en solitario, no estuvo auspiciada por ninguna institución, ni se programó con objetivos específicos. Zahm era un franciscano de Ohio, formado en la Universidad de Notre Dame de Indiana, atraído por rescatar la labor de los misioneros en la América colonial. Se propuso reandar los caminos abiertos por los religiosos, y elaboró una obra que sobrepasó los límites de la crónica para alcanzar los niveles del trabajo científico. Como hizo Farabee, avaló sus comentarios con citas de autoridades, no sólo autores coloniales, entre los que destaca a los misioneros, sino también peruanos que estaban produciendo en esos momentos. Pero además llama la atención su capacidad y lucidez para sacar a la palestra los problemas fundamentales que se movían en torno a la colonización del Oriente. Fue constante la preocupación por que las relaciones entre Estados Unidos y el Perú se intensificaran, y se permitió señalar en qué dirección y sobre qué supuestos. Mozans-Zahn contó, como su colega Farabee, con apoyo oficial del gobierno de José Pardo (1904-1906) que se tradujo en la movilización de las autoridades regionales, desde los gobernadores a los prefectos, que acudieron a

<sup>12</sup> La edición consultada para seguir el viaje de Roosevelt y Mozans ha sido la brasileña, *Nas selvas do Brasil*, 2ª ed., Río de Janeiro, Serviço de Informação Agrícola, 1948.

recibirle, le acompañaron y le proporcionaron información preciosa sobre las regiones bajo su mando. *Along the Andes and down the Amazon* conjuga la percepción de una realidad, llena de desajustes y carencias con la transmisión de una imagen optimista del Perú cuya notable estabilidad política habría de propiciar la entrada de capitales norteamericanos.

La ruta al Perú de Mozans siguió una de las vías más frecuentadas: Panamá, Quito y Guayaquil. En el Perú arribó al puerto de Paita (Piura) y de ahí a Lima desde donde arrancó su largo recorrido con dos circuitos. El primero por el sur: Mollendo, Arequipa, Puno, Cuzco, Lima. El segundo le llevó en una singladura pausada hasta la selva amazónica. Las decisiones que tomó en Lima para elaborar su itinerario prueban el sentido que Mozans daba a su viaje. Cuando el presidente Pardo le recibió en audiencia le recomendó que siguiera la ruta más segura, la que a través de la vía central le conduciría al Pichis y Ucayali para acceder a Iquitos y puso a su disposición dos lanchas recién construidas. Mozans reflexionó, uno de los motivos que le habían llevado al Perú era seguir la ruta de los conquistadores, como ya había hecho en Venezuela<sup>13</sup>. En una fiesta privada que le ofreció la Peruvian Corporation en el Club Nacional encontró a dos ex-prefectos de los departamentos de Amazonas y Trujillo que le animaron a seguir su plan personal que finalmente antepondría a las facilidades y, emulando a Pizarro y Ursúa, optaría por adentrarse en la selva por Trujillo y Cajamarca. Pardo le proporcionó una escolta militar, “no porque haya peligro por parte de los indios” sino para que pudiera concentrarse en el viaje, teniendo resuelto todo lo relativo a infraestructura (Mozans, 1912: 267). Era, según testigos, el primer escritor norteamericano que viajaba del Pacífico al Amazonas a través de Cajamarca y Moyobamba.

Las riquezas arqueológicas que tuvo ocasión de conocer no le impresionaron más que la desmesura con que la naturaleza se presentaba en la Amazonía. Ni la sensación que le produjo el Gran Cañón es comparable con la contemplación del Marañón desde las cumbres. Mozans admite su predisposición favorable hacia “el Paraíso Perdido” que se aprestaba a recorrer. Como un alquimista mezcló en dosis precisas las imágenes “color rosa” (son sus palabras) con detalles precisos.

En su obra sobresale la generosidad en las descripciones de gentes y paisajes, la medición escrupulosa del tiempo, de las distancias, y de las condiciones climáticas. Aportación especial supone la presentación de los habitats,

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<sup>13</sup> H. J. Mozans. *Up the Orinoco and down the Magdalena*. New York and London, D. Appleton and Company, 1910. Es una reivindicación de las empresas de los descubridores y conquistadores, a los que asemeja a los cruzados medievales. Su interés es también el de su país y anuncia que prepara la publicación de *Along the Andes and down the Amazon*.

desde las cabañas a los núcleos urbanos de los que registra el número de habitantes, de centros educativos y, siguiendo sus intereses personales, el número de iglesias. Chachapoyas, “lugar de hombres fuertes”, se fundó en 1536 bajo el nombre de “ciudad de frontera”, tiene 6.000 habitantes y cuenta con catedral. La Rioja, antes Santo Toribio, tiene 3.000 habitantes y cada casa es una pequeña factoría en la que se producen sombreros de paja. Entró entonces en la montaña, “que comprende la totalidad del Perú oriental, y a la que se refiere como “Un Paraíso Peruano”. En Moyobamba, que es con Iquitos el gran centro regional, permanece una semana y tiene tiempo de visitar chacras y trapiches. Balsapuerto, el siguiente estadio, es una pequeña villa de 200 o 300 habitantes que tiene como señas de identidad el estar en el camino de Moyobamba a Yurimaguas. Esta ciudad, cuyo nombre procede de antiguas tribus poderosas que tuvieron que movilizarse hostigados por la persecución de cazadores de esclavos portugueses, es la segunda en importancia de Loreto con una población de 4.000 habitantes y la fundó un misionero. Su posición estratégica la convirtió en cabeza de navegación a vapor y en capital de Loreto desde su creación como departamento en 1866 hasta el desplazamiento por Iquitos, “ciudad agradablemente situada a la orilla izquierda del Amazonas” (p.488) a la que atribuye entre 12 y 15.000 habitantes, además de una importante población flotante. Es el segundo puerto del Perú tras El Callao y una ciudad cosmopolita donde conviven gentes de todo el mundo de las que destaca a los chinos y, sobre todo, a los “Morocco Jews”, “los peores judíos del mundo” según le cuenta un hebreo con el que coincide en el viaje a Manaos y que representa a un colectivo de hombres que, atraídos por la llamada del caucho, se enriquecieron y arruinaron en la vorágine de especulación y delirio que generó. Cinco días por el Amazonas le sitúan en Manaos, principal núcleo cauchero del Brasil. Dice adiós al Perú con la impresión nostálgica y grata de “haber pasado alguno de los días más felices de su vida” (p.490).

Desde la perspectiva del otro, es capaz de reconocer los grandes problemas que afectaban al Oriente, de diseccionarlos y aportar posibles vías de solución. Sus propuestas entraban de lleno en lo que era en esos años motivo de debate y de actuación política.

Siguiendo una estructura temática cabría comenzar con la denuncia que hace Mozans de lo que era un secreto a voces: la República había marginado a la Amazonía que era en el siglo veinte menos conocida que durante la colonia. Una de las razones era el retroceso de la empresa misionera que había florecido en los siglos XVII y XVIII y languidecido primero con la expulsión de los jesuitas y después debido a la retirada de las órdenes religiosas por razones políticas. Recuerda que fueron los misioneros los que realizaron los primeros y más firmes trabajos de exploración y divulgación. El primer mapa de valor de la Amazonía fue

el del jesuita padre Fritz, pionero en explorar el Amazonas desde el nacimiento a la desembocadura (pp. 451-459).

Uno de los elementos clave de la colonización fue la relación con la población aborigen. El Mozans franciscano planteó una serie de puntos que ponían el dedo en la llaga. En primer lugar, encomiaba la política de la Corona española: “se diga lo que se diga contra los españoles, los indios de la montaña estaban mejor bajo España que lo han estado nunca bajo las repúblicas sudamericanas” (p. 453). Las distancias entre la actuación hacia los indígenas en Estados Unidos y la América española eran abismales: “En lugar de nuestra vacilante y contradictoria política hacia los indios de tratarlos como naciones soberanas e independientes, con los que se han hecho casi 700 solemnes tratados y convenios, que fueron rotos nada más ser firmados, o de considerarlos enemigos o pensionistas o lunáticos, ellos los reconocieron como hijos de un mismo padre y actuaron hacia ellos con una consideración que estaba en marcado contraste con la crueldad e injusticia que caracterizó nuestro trato con ellos en nuestra tierra de renombrada libertad e igualdad” (p. 445). Enfatizaba la buena disposición de los indígenas allí por donde pasó. En la Amazonía incluso los indios jíbaros, lejos de la imagen estereotipada que se había forjado de ellos, le habían recibido amablemente. De nuevo los Estados Unidos salían mal parados de la comparación: los indios amazónicos eran pobres pero no estaban descontentos mientras que los “pieles rojas” vivían del gobierno, dependientes del whisky (p. 429).

En su recorrido amazónico los campos de maíz, los viñedos, los trapiches de azúcar y los pastos parcheaban un paisaje del que se enseñoreaban los grandes ríos y el caucho. Mozans transmitió con realismo lo que estaba suponiendo el caucho para la Amazonía y hacía un diagnóstico preciso: su explotación constituía a la vez la riqueza y miseria del Oriente. Los cauchales extendían sus dominios por las selvas del Huallaga, Ucayali, Napo, Javari, Tigris y sus incontables tributarios. El Amazonas era surcado por botes y canoas cargados de caucho y otras mercancías que confluían en Iquitos, (ciudad a la que comparaba con Leadville en Colorado: mientras que en ésta todos hablaban de plata, en la segunda del caucho). Todo era jaleo y vorágine: ingleses, alemanes, españoles, chinos e indios de muchas tribus gritaban y gesticulaban reproduciendo en sus lenguas toda la confusión de Babel. El árbol máspreciado es la “hevea brasiliensis” que da la vida y la muerte a esta parte del mundo. Mozans se aventura a dar cifras: el caucho que se exportaba anualmente de esa región a los mercados de Estados Unidos y Europa alcanzaba un valor de \$50.000.000 (pp. 489-490).

Los beneficios y la especulación que generó el caucho explicaban que se descuidaran la agricultura y otras industrias. La montaña no era sólo tierra de caucho. Miles de millas cuadradas, todo el espacio comprendido entre el Ucayali,



Huallaga y Marañón, eran tierras fértiles que no estaban explotadas debido a la falta de brazos. Los indios y cholos se contentaban con la subsistencia. Para activar los recursos potenciales era imprescindible contar con los inmigrantes, que en su criterio debían ser europeos.

En el trasfondo de todos los problemas subyace uno, el fundamental, el aislamiento del Oriente. Para que la Amazonía sea conocida, para integrarla políticamente, para explotar y comercializar sus riquezas y para favorecer la llegada de brazos, para colonizarla, en definitiva, había que comunicarla. En distintos momentos, y por distintos motivos, Mozans abordó lo que consideraba el fondo de la cuestión.

El acceso al corazón de la Amazonía peruana seguía el curso de los ríos mediante la navegación a vapor. Iquitos se comunicaba con el Pacífico a través de la Vía Central (camino al Pichis) y después por el Pachitea y Ucayali en un viaje largo y lleno de dificultades. Dos compañías peruanas controlaban el tráfico. La ruta más seguida, que se utilizaba para la comercialización del caucho era la que desembocaba en el Atlántico a través de Manaos y Pará y estaba dominada por intereses británicos. Como alternativa para arribar a Iquitos desde Lima se hacía escala en Panamá y Nueva York para entrar por la desembocadura del Amazonas. Esta vía, como acertadamente indicaba Mozans, era todavía la preferida por las autoridades que se desplazaban a Loreto.

La República Aristocrática buscó conectar el Atlántico con el Oriente y para ello reactivó antiguos proyectos e impulsó otros nuevos. El ferrocarril entró con fuerza en los planes oficiales. Mozans se sumó con entusiasmo al sueño de los caminos de hierro. En el debate que generó en los medios peruanos la construcción del ferrocarril del norte, tomó partido por el que uniría Payta con San Borja, puerto de la orilla izquierda del Alto Amazonas cerca del “celebrado Pongo de Manseriche” con una longitud de menos de 400 millas y que permitiría hacer el viaje de Lima a Iquitos en 4 o 5 días. Coincidió con la propuesta que en 1843 había hecho el peruano Rudecindo Garrido y exponía las razones. A la altura de Payta existía una depresión en los Andes que parecía haber sido designada providencialmente al efecto. El ferrocarril atravesaría regiones de grandes recursos agrícolas y minerales, especialmente hierro, cuyas reservas bastarían para abastecer durante siglos a toda América del Sur. Se añadía una cuestión estratégica: el ferrocarril sería el mejor medio de defensa contra posibles incursiones de parte de los vecinos del norte y del este y sería más eficaz para dirimir las disputas de límites “que todas las cédulas a las que puedan acudir las naciones rivales”. Además, rompería el aislamiento: “Cuando el ferrocarril Payta-Amazonas se complete, y sólo entonces, las gentes que han estado durante tanto tiempo separadas por los Andes del resto del Perú sentirán que realmente constituyen una



parte integral del una vez vasto imperio de los Incas". La mayor ventaja, y asumía los intereses económicos de su país, sería poner la inmensa cuenca del Amazonas, con sus incontables recursos, al alcance fácil de los grandes centros comerciales de los Estados Unidos. Cuando se abriera el Canal de Panamá, "se podría ir de Nueva Orleans a Payta en 6 días y a Iquitos, el mayor centro comercial del Perú en la Amazonía, en 9 días, mientras el tiempo requerido ahora para hacer el viaje desde Nueva York es de un mes, al menos" (pp. 117-118). Los gobiernos norteamericanos deberían contemplar la posibilidad de invertir y contrarrestar el predominio de la británica Peruvian Corporation.

La despedida de Mozans de las tierras peruanas aunaba la nostalgia y los recuerdos placenteros. Había "contemplado maravillas y disfrutado de la hospitalidad de gente encantadora y generosa". No tenía fundamento la leyenda de que la Amazonía era peligrosa, al contrario sus habitantes indios, blancos y mestizos fueron sumamente amables. Termina con unas reflexiones acerca de lo que eran y lo que debían ser las relaciones de los Estados Unidos con los vecinos del sur. Y el nexo lo proporcionaba la situación de la Amazonía, una región inmensamente rica de la que se estaban aprovechando ingleses, alemanes, franceses e italianos. Los Estados Unidos tenían en el Perú una presencia muy limitada circunscrita a la costa y la sierra. El comercio era "deplorablemente inactivo"; en todo su viaje sólo se topó con un barco de bandera norteamericana. Atribuía el estado de las cosas en parte "al hecho de que nuestra gente todavía ignora los maravillosos recursos de nuestras hermanas repúblicas" (p. 519). En una visión optimista, rayana en lo ingenuo, hacía una semblanza de la estabilidad que reinaba en Sudamérica, donde el militarismo que había sido preponderante "está dando paso al gobierno justo del pueblo por el pueblo". Como consecuencia muchos países estaban recibiendo inmigrantes y capital extranjero. Auguraba a la región un desarrollo en el siglo XX tan importante como lo fue el de los Estados Unidos en el XIX.

Se alinea en lo que ha sido la política de su país, en la que destacaba a tres puntales: Blaine, Roosevelt y Root. Blaine fue el impulsor del primer Congreso Panamericano; Root realizó un viaje en 1906 para dismantelar los prejuicios sobre "el peligro yanqui" y defender el verdadero sentido de la Doctrina Monroe; Roosevelt luchó por la independencia de las últimas colonias españolas y emprendió la construcción del Canal de Panamá. El momento psicológico era favorable para los Estados Unidos que debían orientar sus capitales hacia el sur donde todo estaba por construir. La gran apuesta estaba en un ferrocarril que uniera Nueva York con Buenos Aires. Mientras tanto las metas inmediatas eran reforzar el tejido empresarial y financiero y afianzar la autoridad de los Estados Unidos como agente de paz continental a través de los Congresos Panamericanos y de la Unión Panamericana con sede en Washington.

Farabee, Roosevelt y Mozans estuvieron vinculados a la National Geographic Society y sus actividades encontraron espacio en el seno de la Sociedad Geográfica de Lima. El 12 de marzo de 1919 Genaro Herrera, uno de los miembros más destacados de la élite loreana, firmaba un artículo para el *Boletín de la Sociedad Geográfica de Lima* en el que rendía homenaje a Roosevelt con motivo de su fallecimiento. Tenía una excelente opinión de un hombre al que consideraba “pionero del progreso de su patria y del orbe civilizado. Su desaparición “ha acarreado un luto universal siendo su muerte no un simple duelo de Norteamérica, sino también de todo el Cosmos cultural”<sup>14</sup>. En 1927 Melitón Carvajal, presidente de la Sociedad Geográfica, alababa en su Memoria los logros de la expedición Farabee (Carvajal, 1927). No eran hechos anecdóticos sino que demostraban el dinamismo e interacción de los circuitos científicos de aquellos años, representados en las Sociedades Geográficas. Estas instituciones respondían en Europa y América a los nuevos desafíos que presentaba el orden internacional. A lo largo del siglo diecinueve y primer tercio del veinte se fundaron más de 200. A través de sus órganos de expresión (solían contar con una publicación periódica), de la celebración de conferencias y de la labor de corresponsales se convirtieron en espacios privilegiados para el avance de una ciencia que incorporaba capital humano cualificado y medios técnicos a la exploración de territorios, levantamiento cartográfico, estudios de historia natural, antropología, demografía y otras ciencias en expansión. La participación de las Sociedades europeas en lo que fue la colonización de África y Asia tuvo su contraparte en el Nuevo Mundo. La Sociedad Geográfica de Lima, fundada en 1886 a partir de iniciativas oficiales y privadas, fue una de las más activas y abiertas a sus homónimas en otros países, entre ellas la National Geographic Society de Nueva York<sup>15</sup> (Martínez Rianza, 1998; Palacios Rodríguez, 1988).

Las experiencias reseñadas son prueba de la gestación de una comunidad científica que, con las limitaciones que imponían los nacionalismos de la época, era capaz de saltar barreras y contribuir al progreso global de un mundo ávido de conocimientos.

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<sup>14</sup> Genaro Herrera, “Teodoro Roosevelt, desde el punto de vista geográfico”. *Boletín de la Sociedad Geográfica de Lima*, T. XXXV, trim. 1-2. Lima, 30 de junio de 1919, pp. 89-94. Trata además su vertiente viajera por África y América y hasta conoce la polémica que Roosevelt sostuvo con el británico Henry Savage Landor respecto a la localización de ciertos ríos caucheros.

<sup>15</sup> A través de la Embajada en el Perú, la National Geographic Society de Nueva York pidió la colaboración de la Sociedad Geográfica de Lima para la elaboración de un mapa de América del Sur a escala 1:1.000.000. La respuesta se tradujo en el envío de una colección de mapas parciales que iban a conformar el Atlas General del Perú y que aún se encontraban inéditos (Carvajal, 1927:212).

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## ■ Quilts as Cultural, Social and Self Time–Travel. Alice Walker’s “Everyday Use” and Bobbie Ann Mason’s “Love Life”

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Both Alice Walker’s “Everyday Use” and Bobbie Ann Mason’s “Love Life” deal with a similar thematic aspect, namely, the fusion of the artistic and the domestic spheres by *re-presenting* family tradition. Both short stories’ guiding *thread* is the formal and thematic integration of everyday home-life self-*ex-pression* and feminine art. In fact, one of the narrative devices these tales are focused on is the image of *quilts* as metaphors standing for feminine domestic culture. Quilting design involves a way of projecting women’s selves. A patchwork quilt implies the gathering and combination of fragments of fabric, so that they form a geometrical pattern. This suggests a structural analysis of the narrative functions of *texts*. It also encourages us to make some research into the quilting-writing relationship.

Piecing appears as a marker of female difference from the patriarchal literary tradition. The quilt is a moral artifact, an emblem of the deliberate ordering of women’s separate cultural lives as well as fictions, and of the writer’s control over her materials ... Allusions to the structure and design of the pieces become more explicitly related to

narrative problems. And in contemporary writing, when quilts have been raised to the levels of high art [...], the quilt stands for a vanished past experience to which we have a troubled and ambivalent cultural relationship. (Showalter 1986, 228)

Stated thus, quilting is artistic *textmaking* functioning at two simultaneous levels, i) written literary texts, and ii) reassemblage of dis-membered and disintegrated female selves through domestic tasks. In Walker's "Everyday Use", these signals of female closure and self-control through home art appear literally, as opposed to Mason's short story, where weaving activities involve self-destructive repression deriving from a patriarchal tradition that thwarts women's personality.

Housekeeping is not only the unspoken, unvalued routine by which a patriarchal regime is maintained. It is also the center and vehicle of a culture invented by women, a complex and continuing process of female, domestic art ... Quilts [...] illustrate this doubleness in domestic ritual. (Romines 1992, 14)

In this sense, the theme of quilts from the past as major forms of present creative expression for black women in the South appears in Walker's "Everyday Use"; whence the concept of *heritage* as a key-term within Walker's narrative. As a consequence, "for Walker, the pieced quilt is an emblem of a universalist, interracial, and intertextual tradition. It brings together elements from American and African-American history" (Showalter 1991, 20).

Walker's "Everyday Use" establishes a clear-cut contrast between two sisters, Dee, bright and *self-confident*, who has left home and has managed to learn fast how to create her self: "Hesitation was not part of her nature ... At sixteen she had a style of her own ..." (Walker 1994, 47; 48), and the younger daughter Maggie, who has stayed at home and been confined to everyday domestic tasks, "hopelessly in corners, homely [...], eyeing her sister with a mixture of envy and awe [...], chin on chest, eyes on ground, feet in shuffle ..." (45; 47). The mother-narrator and Maggie are waiting for Dee, the daughter-sister that apparently has achieved self-completion, in the *yard* "that Maggie and I made so clean and wavy yesterday afternoon. A yard like this is more comfortable than most people know. It is not just a yard. It is like an extended living room" (45). In fact, this *Edenic Garden*, this Paradise-like yard, will be threatened by Dee's return, a chaotic, freaky and displaced personality coming from the outside in the shape of a snake surrounded by fire (it is suggested that Dee herself has burnt the family's former house).

I hear Maggie suck in her breath. 'Uhhnnh,' is what it sounds like. Like when you see the wriggling end of a snake just in front of your foot on the road. 'Uhhnnh.'

Dee next. A dress down to the ground, in this hot weather. A dress so loud it hurts my eyes. There are yellows and oranges enough to throw back the light of the sun. I feel my whole face warming from the heat waves it throws out. Earrings gold, too ... (49)

Dee comes back to claim what she considers to be her *folk art* heritage, namely, the benches made by her father, the butter churn whittled by her uncle, and, above all, the quilts pieced by her female ancestors: "She'd [Maggie] probably be backward enough to put them to everyday use," Dee asserts (54). Hers is a mere nostalgia for ancient artifacts. For her, they re-present nothing. Moreover, she has utterly refused her recent past by changing her name and her clothes. This is why she has changed her name into an older African name, namely, Wangero. She even eats new *fashionable* food: "[Dee] is dead .... I couldn't bear it any longer, being named after the people who oppress me." (50) As Houston A. Baker Jr. and Charlotte Pierce-Baker have remarked, "'Art' is, thus, juxtaposed with 'everyday use' in Walker's short story, and [...] Dee [...] is revealed as a perpetuator of institutional theories of aesthetics" (Baker 1985, 716-717).

In Walker's essay "In Search of our Mothers' Gardens," published in 1974, a year after "Everyday Use," she proposes a backward glance to ancient female folk creativity as the genesis of the current definitions of African American art.

These grandmothers and mothers of ours were not Saints, but Artists ... They were Creators, who lived lives of spiritual waste, because they were [...] rich in spirituality – which is the basis of Art ... Our mothers and grandmothers have [...] handed on the creative spark, the seed of the flower they themselves never hoped to see; or like a sealed letter they could not plainly read. (Walker 1974, 41; 47)

For Dee, however, quilts are "*priceless*" (54), "old fashioned and out of style" (54), aesthetic objects only to be displayed, as opposed to Maggie, who is able to see the genealogical process and continual renewal that everyday use entails. She "knows how to quilt .... It was Grandma Dee and Big Dee who taught her how to quilt herself" (54). This is why the short story is dedicated to "your grandmama," to those grandmothers who began the family line and, consequently, the craft of converting patches into works of art to be re-membered through time.

Maggie knows how to deal with those patches society considers useless. She re-creates those fragments from the past, thus projecting the survival of her self and the community's into the future. Her sister, however, is not able to see



quilting as an individual and *textual* process of building up one's self. And, obviously, Dee does not perceive quilt-making as a family and social institution forging bonds among women. Not surprisingly, the reader is told that "she put on some sunglasses that hid everything above the tip of her nose and her chin" (55). In fact, Dee can be said to be "psychically conflicted as a result of wanting to be part of mainstream American life" (Christian 1994, 7). This is why she fails to integrate into her family's past. In other words, Dee's *fashionable* style fits the contemporary artistic trends among African Americans. This character is a perfect representative of the so-called Black Power ideologues (Afro hair styles, African clothing, change of *slave names* into older African names) as opposed to Western canons (Christian 1994, 10-11).

The mother-narrator does undergo re-velation. Some epiphanic light touches her and makes her change her attitude regarding her daughters. Dee was the energetic, admired daughter. Maggie replaces her now (54-55). Eventually, the mother and the re-discovered daughter, Maggie, return to the yard and "sat there just enjoying, until it was time to go in the house and go to bed" (55). As a matter of fact, the yard becomes the domestic setting *par excellence* within the whole narrative: "The convergence between physical labor and artistic creativity is [...] suggested by the *connection of the house with the natural world and by the twin creativities of garden and sewing room*" (Levy 1992, 7; emphasis mine). The tale goes back to the beginning, to the home-place that ensures self development and continuity, both communal and individual. This circular structure suggests a return to the peace and the order that have been disrupted as a result of Dee's visit, which brought chaos and disorder.

Bobbie Ann Mason seems not to believe in the *domestic past* as the sole possibility for individual and social regeneration. In order to achieve self-renewal one must also cope with the *messiness* of present life. "Love Life" is focused on a dialectical connection between past and present by emphasizing the differential process between the old ways of family and community and contemporary minimalistic life. Mason heightens the symbolic bond between present everyday life details and history in order to enrich and comprehend the disorder of contemporary experience. History does not offer anything to individuals. Survival lies in the effort to overcome isolation and alienation. Historical roots are not vital any longer (Brinkmeyer 1987, 21).

"Love Life" opens with a masterful paragraph containing the main symbols and themes to be dealt with in subsequent passages. It depicts the confusion and isolation of an individual in a world gone awry. Opal, a retired teacher from a small town in western Kentucky, struggles to adapt to contemporary life by living in a continuous present, without history. Rather than looking back to tradition, to

communal wisdom from her elders, she turns for guidance only to contemporary culture. She suffers from modern *angst*, an anxiety connected here with urban and highly industrialized existences. She is tired physically, mentally, and spiritually. She has lost her faith in self progress, in the idea of accomplishing one's future. In spite of having worked hard and kept up with the times, she has not succeeded. The static, non-dynamic, nature of Opal's life is referred to by being related to "her recliner" (Mason 1989, 1) and commercial items; whence trade names instead of types (Kleenex, Coke, Coors, MTV).

This fiction is *fin-de-siècle* stuff ... It is a literature of rural America strained away from history and tradition. Its men and women are adrift from any meaningful regional identification and have become dazed objects of a mass culture that is too accessible, that is by nature amoral and throws [...] emotions." (White 1988, 72)

Opal's state of mind is revealed through an accumulation of synecdochic details that substitute the whole for the parts. The focus is on fragmentation rather than on wholeness and integral identity, since, like many other characters in contemporary minimalistic short fiction, she has managed to "survive without protesting in a world with reduced economic and emotional possibilities" (Hening 1989, 690). But it is a disenchanted survival, magnificently depicted in the aforementioned first paragraph. Jenny, Opal's restless young niece, a rebel "against small-town conventions" (3), undergoes a similar feeling of rootlessness and aimlessness:

In the South, the shimmer of the heat seems to distort everything, like old glass with impurities in it. During her first two days there, she saw two people with artificial legs, a blind man, and a man with hooks for hands, and a man without an arm. (3)

She only perceives broken, fragmented selves. Despite the apparent generational opposition, both women feel trapped by social conventions. Furthermore, the girl singing in the bar suffers from a limp. She is also a victim of an arbitrary and patriarchal social system that reduces women to "wives" or "girlfriends"; functional roles or... Nothing. And so, "[Jenny] felt odd. She was neither type" (4). These three women's physical stiffness in their knuckles and joints equals spiritual injuries. Like the girl in the video-clip, both aunt and niece feel chased by artificial laws. The difference is that, presumably, they will not glide away from them "waving a smiling goodbye" (1).

How do quilts enter into the lives of these female characters and what is their function here? Those conventionalized, fragmented lives are also illustrated by the Coors cap Opal is wearing at the beginning, an artificial *prop* that may be related to Dee's (Wangero) mental colonization. In a sense, this *textual*, machine-made fabric symbolizes the social oppression that has thwarted the characters' true *love life* in the past. Romantic love has ceased to exist (*versus* marriage as a social and economic contract).

Jenny is obsessed with contemplating a particular quilt, the family *burial* quilt. Opal wonders: "Did Jenny come back home just to hunt up that old rag? The thought makes Opal shudder" (3). Moreover, Jenny's aunt "hides all her nice stuff, like she's ashamed of it .... She is getting a little weird. All she does is watch MTV" (5). She does not want to be linked to the past. Her niece's attitude, however, implies the opposite. She seems to be looking for a shelter in traditional family history. All she wants is a "remote place where she can have a dog and grow some potatoes" (5), as her ancestors probably did. In a way, she is a slave of her past, of a former society based on myth and tradition. She misses *verandas*, which imply "a history of some sort ... But Opal does not tell [...] stories" (8) any more. For Jenny's aunt, quilts re-present blindness, "a lot of desperate women ruining their eyes" (10) on those "crazy quilts" (10), "all those miserable, cranky women, straining the eyes, stitching on those dark scraps of material" (15). Nevertheless, Jenny insists on studying and continuing the family's genealogical tree and history, something that leads her aunt to refer to quilt-making as a "plague" (15). "Don't you go putting my name on that thing" (Mason 15), she asks Jenny. In fact, when Jenny brings the story of her past love affair up to the present, Opal says, "Don't look back, hon" (17).

The implied author suggests that neither Opal's attitude nor Jenny's constitute the best turn of action. The truth is that an obsession with history, either by deeply rejecting, refusing, or missing it, is not worth being worshipped. Times have changed, and in a world of constant flux where people live cut off from the traditions of family and community, coming to terms with the past seems a rather complex individual task. The point is that denying one's history means losing perspective and *self structure*. The dichotomy between the way things used to be and the way things are now is particularly troublesome for these female characters. Both remain anchored to their past, not letting their selves be projected in the future. None of them appears to be rewarded with a fullness of vision that will carry them forward to further self growth. The failure (Opal) or excess (Jenny) of historical perspective enslave individuals. No future exists for Opal, for instance: "Opal loses track of time" (17). No future exists for Jenny, either: "I could learn to quilt" (15). The author suggests that the existential key-attitude may be found in a

dialectical interchange between history and present in order to achieve a healthy future:

I'm not sure those qualities of the old South were all that terrific [but] I'm not nostalgic for the past. Times change and I'm interested in writing about what's now. To me, the way the South is changing is very dynamic and full of complexity. (Wilhelm 1988, 37)

As far as characters and structure are concerned, storytelling through quilts becomes a way of defining domestic feminine heritage and selves by means of reenacting the past; hence the parallelism between individual and collective memory and patches. Quilts and literature are linked by storytelling as a way to enrich the characters' selves. Mrs. Johnson (Walker's grandmama) and Opal (Mason's retired teacher) are related to oral art; hence the importance of storytelling and memory as part of quilting aesthetics, which must be preserved and handed down from generation to generation in order to achieve self-definition by recycling the *patches* from the past. Likewise, quilts are woven from *squares* of women's conversations and generational relationships between women. Moreover, these *quilt-fictions* somehow articulate some sense of interracial feminine creativity and aesthetics, though "the subversive element of quilting, of textual control and linguistic authority, of women's relationships with each other, are often only implied" (Tate 1994, 197).

To a certain extent, the message that Art, both literary and domestic, can be used as an expressing device through which past events can be placed at a distance from (black) people's present is also depicted through the image of quilts. Walker's "Everyday Use" and Mason's "Love Life" are complementary. The travel motif implies the claim that one must regard the time gone by, the events and phenomena that have existed or have happened at some earlier time as simultaneously present and absent, especially those aspects that are thought to be of a shameful, embarrassing and worrying nature, to the extent of endangering one's present and future life; whence the importance of quilts as textual replicas coming from the past, but recreated in the present in order to be remade in the future.

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## Identity 'Third Space' in Ana Castillo's *Loverboys*

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It would be very difficult to deny that one of the on-going debates among academics in the U.S. and abroad is the eternal question of identity. For some, this is a typically American obsession, that started with the Puritan confessional accounts and is still troubling, at least, part of the scholarly world. In our postmodern and post-colonial times, some would perhaps say post-postmodern, the discussion has experimented an important shift. The "master narratives", those that seem impossible to avoid in the academic discourse, that apply to a generality of peoples, are no longer fashionable and the emphasis on locality and the particularities of the different cultures within the U.S. has given the so called fragmentation of the self a political "raison d'être". For some, normally traditional or right wing scholars, say Arthur Schelesinger in his *The Disuniting of America* (1991), this tribalisation is bound to erode the very basis of the modern, democratic consensus that is the basis of the existence of the United States as a nation-state. Others, generally found among the ranks of multiculturalists or postmodernists and of interdisciplinary programs like culture, ethnic, gay or feminist studies base their localist attacks on a sense of justice, on a need to defend their cultural particularities that have been excluded in order to assure the narratability of the U.S. identity master narrative. Although one feels the internal contradiction in this aggressive attack to any master narrative appealing to the

“discourse of rights”, which is, in fact, a “universalist medium” (Ferenc Fehér, 42), one also acknowledges the fact that this is perhaps a kind of necessary methodological position in order to make yourself understood within the institutional world of modernity. As Arnold Krupat states, from a post-colonial perspective to forget Europe “is not possible, nor indeed, would it be useful” (137).

This unresolved debate has not remained at a purely academic level and by transcending its realm it has reached the literary level. As Bill Brown suggests, the 1990’s “remains an era wherein the difficulty of identity formation – above all, the difficulty of experiencing the disjuncture between, on the one hand, national identity, and, on the other, identities of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality - vitalizes American fiction” (165).

These difficulties and tensions between this multiplicity of identities extensively informs the fictional writings of the Chicana Ana Castillo. In her first novel, *The Mixquiahuala Letters* (1986), two women of Hispanic descent (a Chicana and a Latina) visit Mexico with the idea of running away from the alienation they feel within American society only to find themselves equally “othered” in that country due, basically to gender reasons and sexual discrimination; in *Sapogonia* (1990) Castillo invents a fictional country, whose name coincides with the one of the novel, that is “a distinct place in the Americas where all mestizos reside, regardless of nationality, individual racial composition or legal residential status” (5). This invented territory, that stands for South America in general, suffers from all the known illnesses denounced by post-colonial critics and, as a consequence, “The Sapogón is besieged by a history of slavery, genocide, immigration, and civil uprisings” (5). The novel’s antihero, Máximo Madrigal, is a Sapogón that will immigrate to the U.S. and who will fail in his racial, sexual and gender identity negotiation as a consequence of the corruption created by his belief, within the context of 1980’s economic boost, in the American dream understood solely in material terms.

Ana Castillo’s *Loverboys* (1987), her latest book and only short story collection, also deals extensively with questions of identity. However, the emphasis on transnational and border crossing identity matters than can be found in her previous work, seems to have shifted in her first collection of short stories. In this occasion, the thematical cohesion of the stories included in the volume is provided by a topic that is extremely common in the history of literature but not so much in fiction dealing with identity issues. This topic is “Love”. Perhaps a quotation from the few introductory words provided by the publishers, W.W. Norton and Company, would clarify the matter: “here is the experience of love captured in its wildly varying modes, from rapturous beginnings to melancholy middles to bittersweet ends, and in its equally varying configurations – man and



woman, man and man, woman and woman" (1). As we can see, the short story form offers Castillo the chance of multiplying the subjective positions of the characters in one aspect that is not usually considered as far as the negotiations of identity formation and configuration are concerned.

"*Loverboys*", the story that both inaugurates the volume and gives a title to it, is a good example of this negotiation of identity. The story is told by a somewhat cynic first person woman narrator that has experienced an unsuccessful love affair with a "an existentialist Catholic pseudo-poet "manito" fifteen years younger than me" (17). This would sound pretty conventional, if you discard the difference in age, if it wasn't for the fact that our narrator is a lesbian that runs a book store that was meant to be feminist but turned out to be "spiritual" and regularly attends "Women's music festivals, feminist symposiums, women of colour retreats and camp-outs, women's healing rituals under the full moon, ceremonies of union and not so ceremonious reunions, women only panels and caucuses at conferences, en fin, women ad infinitum" (11-12). Although our narrator's cynical voice, extremely well crafted by the author, turns bitter and challenging for the reader, it also informs her of how the protagonist, far from displaying a fixed identity as lesbian, has crossed a gender border and lets herself be infatuated by this conventional man that finally leaves her due to the prejudices of his traditional family. This negotiation of identity through apparent contradictions, that is at the heart of the story, becomes evident from the very beginning of the narrative when the narrator has been contemplating two "loverboys" making out. One of them stands up to get a drink and she makes the following comment:

This is the way my life is these days or maybe it's a sign of the nineties: a white boy with a picture of Malcolm X on his T-shirt and me, sitting here in a gay bar trying to forget a man. (11)

Either a sign of the 1990's, when mainstream culture seems to have developed techniques to incorporate and render harmless previous revolutionary discourses, or a personal, temporal situation, it is easy to observe how the narrator, by her apparently contradictory sexual option, is seeking a kind of third space of the type displayed by Gloria Anzaldúa in her book *Borderlands / La Frontera: Towards a New Mestiza* (1987) where, apart from being a place where countries and cultures are in contact (and in conflict), it is also an area where "the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy" (I). However, this third space as a site of identity construction that can be found in *Loverboys* does not totally coincide with Anzaldúa's as in Castillo's short story the link between identity and a homeland has been intentionally erased. In *Loverboys* there is no harking back to a rural past

anywhere in the Southwest as the story takes place in an indeterminate city where the existence of a market for the very specific merchandise that our protagonist sells in her spiritualist book shop and feminist activities is more possible and credible.

Another important difference with Anzaldúa's seminal work, and with the way that identity politics have been traditionally developed within Chicano/a studies, is the inexistence of any reference to naming as a strategy of empowerment. For Anzaldúa naming is extremely important as "she has this fear that she has no names that she has many names that she doesn't know her names. She has this fear that she's an image that comes and goes clearing and darkening" (43). In fact, the lesbian protagonist does not call herself Chicana at any time although she does intercalate Spanish in her prose and makes references to her Mexican descent. This has certainly been done on purpose as "many women of Mexican descent in the nineties do not apply the term Chicana to themselves seeing it as an outdated expression weighed down by the particular radicalism of the seventies" (*The Massacre of the Dreamers*, 10). As we understand from Castillo's essay book *The Massacre of the Dreamers* (1993), she has adopted, in order to incorporate those women who do not see themselves included in the Marxist-nationalist agenda that popularised the term "Chicano", the term "Xicanisma" that is basically intended to mean Chicana feminism.

Another intellectual discourse that is rejected in this short story is that of existentialism. The fortuitous encounter that marks the beginning of the failed love affair that the story describes has to do with the desire, on the "manito" poet to buy Albert Camus' *The Rebel*. As he finds that he has not got enough money for it, he decides to buy *The Stranger* and a causal quotation from this last book on the part of our narrator triggers the love affair. Her lover's final rejection of her due to family pressures denotes existentialism's misogynist tendencies and a certain relish in adolescent masochism.

Another story in this collection that deals with identity issues is "Who was Juana Gallo". In this story, in which Ana Castillo deals with a classic theme in Chicano literature, the Mexican Revolution, we also find a first person male mestizo narrator that tries to unveil the reader the mystery of the "true Juana Gallo", a famous anti-Porfirista woman soldier (a soldadera) in the Mexican Revolution. He claims authority in this matter because "I am the only one left who knew her" (23). The story, in which this very old narrator digresses in several occasions, does not describe her psychological or physical characteristics in a straight fashion. Instead he revises all the "wrong" representations made of this historical character. First, the one usually presented by the Mexican film industry, in which the womanly competition for a man (a military officer in Porfirio Díaz's

government) and her defence of the church are taken to be the central features of her life. Our "authorised" narrator refutes this representation as wrong because "of the Ten Commandments, I think that the most popular stories about her conduct had Juana Gallo breaking at least eight" (26) and he sees no logic in Juana Gallo falling in love and competing for a man who fought in the opposite side. Our old mestizo narrator also refutes the other version, the popular one of the local people of Zacatecas, that portrays Juana Gallo as a manly lesbian who hated children, got pregnant and aborted. For him "the truth is that Juana Gallo was a woman, plain and simple, and a plain and simple woman" (31) who supported the agrarian reform and, "yes, it is true, picked up a rifle for a time and travelled with the revolutionaries. When Juana Gallo came back she had earned the name of Juana Gallo" (31). We can see, therefore, how Juana Gallo is a "real" name but an acquired one, by virtue of her participation in the Mexican Revolution as a Zapatista. It is a new identity that has been purposefully distorted by the media and one that Castillo is reclaiming as a model of empowerment for women of Mexican descent.

The significance of this is important within the context of Chicano literature as the heroines of the Revolution became prominent figures in literature. The participation of women in the Revolution has been traditionally silenced although historically proved and, as far as Chicana feminism is concerned, "it is clear that an identification exists between the Revolutionary fighter for justice, land, and food and contemporary writers who believe that the pen and the sword are related" (*Women Singing in the Snow*, 57). An important part of that politically oriented task, rests in a revising and re-reading of the popular culture representations of women that usually, as is the case with this soldadera, have suffered important distortions due to the patriarchal necessity of setting their behaviour in a predetermined framework.

There is, however, an important danger in carrying out this task: that of fixing identity, of presenting an essentialized, ahistorical portrait of the revised item. This is what the peculiar narrator of "Who was Juana Gallo?" gets very close to doing through his insistence on his authority in this particular matter of Juana Gallo's identity. How does Castillo avoid fixity in this occasion? How does she search for that "third space" for identity that we referred to when considering the previous short story? This question has two possible answers. In the first place, the characteristics of the narrator who is presented as a voiceless Indian whose only function in life is to be "a burro, a mere beast of burden that has only one function in life, and that is to serve" (28). In him we have a voice from the margin that serves as a counterdiscourse to the mainstream one conformed by the distorted media representations. On the other hand, this narrator, who initially claims for

objectivity in his “true” representation of Juana Gallo, finally, in the last two lines of the short story proclaims the following:

The only thing I know for a fact is the following: I loved Juana Gallo.  
Yes, I loved her with all my heart. (31)

This final confession of romantic devotion strongly contradicts and disclaims any possible appeal to objectivity and fixity. What was intended to be known as a “true” identity due to first hand knowledge cannot possibly be so as we are suddenly aware of the partiality of his testimony. Juana Gallo’s identity has been revised in a way that avoids fixity, placed in a “third space of flux and negotiation between the colonized and the colonizer” (Yarbro-Bejarano, 66).

Although this analysis could be extended to other short stories, also included in this volume, that also deal with questions of identity from different perspectives, we cannot do so for temporal and spatial reasons. However, the two opening stories analysed in this paper, that normally set the pattern for those to come, place the identity search in a typically post-modern fragmentary frame and try to avoid, at all costs, the disadvantages of fixity and essentialism at both the private and public levels, at the levels of sexual or social interaction.

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## ■ “Complexity Is Not a Crime”: Marianne Moore’s Cultural Poetics

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The experience of reading Marianne Moore’s poetry is, undoubtedly, an enriching and complex cultural adventure. The extraordinary erudition Moore displays of other cultures proclaims, overtly, her resistance to reproduce certain inherited values of the American culture she belongs to. Throughout her active life of poet and suffragist, Moore manifested her refusal of authoritarian attitudes and of the preponderance of the materialistic spirit in all facets of life. In a 1945 interview, the poet was asked on the aspects she most disliked of the American society to which she replied:

I detest our tendency to glorify American virility and our unwillingness to sacrifice comfort in small ways, – our demanding luxurious food, clothes and commodities, and our unwillingness to save materials for the war<sup>1</sup>.

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Marianne Moore, “WNYU Brooklyn Public Library Interview” broadcasted on January 30, 1945 in the Rosenbach Museum and Library.

Obviously, the interview was broadcasted a few months before World War II was over and Moore was visibly concerned about one of the paradoxes this international conflict revealed: on the one hand, the struggle for survival in almost all European countries, and on the other hand, the abundance and waste of goods which characterized American society in a historical period of scarcity and suffering. Moore's commentary is a profound critique on American society's incapacity to abandon a policy of "excess" but, especially, on the values represented by a patriarchal society. When Moore manifests her abhorrence of the "American virility" she is also claiming other radically different social tenets which privilege values like solidarity, tolerance and cultural diversity (Piñero 1995: 225-232).

Marianne Moore's poetry is the artistic representation of the values she wielded all her life. Her poetical voice emerges as a culturally decentered one, allowing her immense amount of research on art, biology, history, geography, philosophy and popular culture to resist the insular dream of American society. Moore's claim of cultural authority allows her to analyze, to assess, to appropriate all culturally active representations of women and men. The exploration of other cultural milieus enables the poet to consider marginalities parallel to the female with pervasive allusions to race, exiles, ethnicities, and stereotypes which appear posed in class terms. Moore's depicting of the ignored or the outcast, as valuable and powerful, shows her commitment to the "otherness" of society. This poetical interest in the social pariahs was deeply intertwined with Moore's own vision of herself when she was a young female poet: "I was rather sorry to be a pariah, or at least that I had no connection with anything" (Moore 1961: 260). The feeling of alienation which can be inferred from Moore's words has nothing to do with her internal awareness of not belonging to any particular poetical movement but to the external assumptions which implied that an artist had to belong necessarily to a specific movement to validate his/her work.

One of Moore's early poems which shows her commitment to discuss marginality by means of identifying the foreign as feminine is "Sojourn in the Whale" (1917). This quasi-autobiographical work associates historically the colonization of Ireland with that of the female, and explores the feelings of the poet exiled from the masculine literary tradition, as well as the difficulties faced by those who have to struggle against domination and exploitation (Piñero 1996: 51-61). The poem is articulated in an indirect dialogue between the feminine Ireland "you" and the masculine Britain. In my view, the "sojourn in the whale," as a metaphorical voyage with those who are deprived of freedom, is, above all, a literary and a social manifesto:

love better than they love you, Ireland—

you have lived and lived on every kind of shortage.

You have been compelled by hags to spin

gold thread from straw and have heard men say:

"There is a feminine temperament in direct contrast to ours,

which make her do these things. Circumscribed by a

heritage of blindness and native

incompetence, she will become wise and will be forced to give in

Compelled by experience, she will turn back;" (90)

Moore poses, in the last stanza of the poem, a proud and subversive assertion of the real force of the feminine by the ironical smile her fictive persona, Ireland, shows when the metaphor of the water in motion demonstrates the unavoidable truth of its power:

"water seeks its own level":

and you have smiled. "Water in motion is far

from level." You have seen it, when obstacles happened to bar the path, rise automatically. (90)

Marianne Moore's resistance to accept the racial clichés, which were rather prevailing in the America of the Jazz Age, was one of the most important poetical concerns she contended when she moved from the small town of Carlisle in Pennsylvania to the glamorous city of New York in 1918. Moore's attitude is, undoubtedly, a critique on the important reappearance of racism and xenophobia which arose as a violent reaction against the mass immigration to the United States and the vast migration from rural areas to the city. The decade of the 1920s was very fruitful for the young artist and her allusiveness to other cultures pervades almost all the poems written during this creative period. One of the most interesting works which manifests her compromise to denounce America's awareness of Anglo-Saxonism is "The Labors of Hercules" (1921). This surprising poem shows Moore's determination to denounce the traditional racial stereotypes of the conservative America:

to teach the patron-saints-to-atheists

that we are sick of the earth,

sick of the pig-sty, wild geese and wild men;

to convince snake-charming controversialists

that one keeps on knowing

"that the Negro is not brutal,



that the Jew is not greedy,  
that the Oriental is not immoral,  
that the German is not a Hun." (53)

The obstacles a woman poet faces, when trying to dismantle the hackneyed statements mentioned in the poem, are depicted by such an expressive title as "the labors of Hercules." In other words, eradicating prejudicial stereotypes is a task of heroic proportions for the young poet.

It is essential to point out that the last four lines of the text were uttered by Reverend J.W. Darr in a sermon – as Moore's note to the quotation explains. The textual strategy of quoting other people's words displaces Moore's poetical authority as her allusiveness to other cultures disperses her cultural authority as well. In "The Labors of Hercules," Moore brings to the text oral utterances that provide her the opportunity of unmasking the profound racism which lies under the commonly heard expressions she undermines in her poem. Cristanne Miller, in her seminal book *Marianne Moore. Questions of Authority*, analyzes Moore's use of the literary allusion in terms of authority, and she correctly contends that "Moore speaks as compiler, for and from a community of heterogeneous voices, as herself a reader and listener of extraordinary intensity and interest rather than as 'author' or personal authority. . . . She prefers the stance of grateful, enthusiastic, and judicious collector. She arranges texts, or voices, to assert her own" (5-6). In a sense, therefore, Moore's poetical voice becomes an invisible one in the middle of what she called her "flies in amber," referring to her quotations. The effect of this polyphony is fundamental to achieve Moore's poetical vision about the complexity of articulating the exterior world in her poetry. Particularly, in the depiction of the complex interaction of different cultures in the United States. In her early poem "In the Days of Prismatic Color," Moore claims that "complexity is not a crime, but carry/it to the point of murkiness/and nothing is plain" (41). Clearly, the poet is broaching the perils of oversimplification when approaching representation, and in the case of her multicultural poetry, she posits a poetics of complexity to bring into play the subtle and intricate aspects of culture.

Throughout Marianne Moore's work, it can be perceived that for the artist the act of writing poetry involved a double and challenging task: on the one hand, the re-vision of tradition and on the other, the retrieval of women's experience in history. In Liz Yorke's *Impertinent Voices*, the author argues that one of the subversive strategies in contemporary women's poetry is, precisely, that of re-inscription of the old narratives, stories, scripts and mythologies. She also asserts that women poets have to re-write their experiences, their bodies, and that means the construction of a new relation between women and men:

I argue that re-visionary mythmaking, as a poetic of disruption, involves a thoroughgoing critique of established definitions, values and ethics relating to the representation of women – in theory, as in artistic representation. Through its pleasurable rehabilitation of what is heterogeneous to patriarchal systems of meaning, poetry can be thoroughly undermining to the logic of the social contract. (2)

Liz Yorke's assertions refer to contemporary women poets and Moore was, so to say, a modernist writer. Nevertheless, we regard Moore's poetry as radically contemporary in its commitment to a re-visionary poetics and its definite search for a feminine writing.

In "Virginia Britannia" (1935), Moore's particular re-vision of American history, the poet examines once again the issue of race by means of the ironical observation of the foundational myth of the United States from the colonial period. Needless to say, Moore explores deeply the first confrontations the Anglo-Europeans had with the native Americans but she states explicitly that the latter did not possess the land, on the contrary, they were part of it. The representation of an Indian princess surrounded by an astonishing variety of flowers and animals points out the perfect symbiotic relationship these aboriginal peoples maintained with their natural environment:

.... Even the gardenia-sprig's  
dark vein on greener  
leaf when seen  
against the light, has not near it more small bees than the frilled

silk substanceless faint flower of  
the crape-myrtle has. Odd Pamunkey  
princess, birdclaw-ear-ringed; with a pet raccoon  
from the Mattaponi (what a bear!). Feminine  
odd Indian young lady! Odd thin-  
gauze-and-taffeta-dressed English one! (109)

The repetition of the word "odd" three times focuses the description of the female Indian princess and the English lady on the cultural relativity and its complex value assessments. It also presents the concept of difference by the double vision we are given on the conventions of clothing.

"Virginia Britannia" depicts, through the fauna and flora catalogues, the impressive exuberance the first pilgrim fathers saw for the first time. This paradisiacal vision of harmonious coexistence between the American Indians and

nature contrasts ironically with the arrogance of the colonial imperialism which transformed that paradise in a mirror of the European societies:

The live oak's darkening filigree  
of undulating boughs, the etched  
solidity of a cypress indivisible  
from the now agèd English hackberry,  
become with lost identity,  
part of the ground, as sunset flames increasingly  
against the leaf-chiseled  
blackening ridge of green; while clouds, expanding above  
the town's assertiveness, dwarf it, dwarf arrogance  
that can misunderstand  
importance; and  
are to the child an intimation of what glory is. (111)

The last image of the poem is an echo of William Wordsworth's "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood" (1807)<sup>2</sup>. The evocative vision of the child refers to the innocence of an age which collapsed with the advent of the colonial rapacity. But though the image of the child's innocence concludes the poem, it may be inferred that it has been the main metaphor on which the description of the paradisiacal Colonial Virginia has been developed.

Moore explores the problem of imperialism and its consequences not only from a historical past but also from the standpoint of its importance as a contemporary political issue to be analyzed. Similarly, the poem poses the human conflicts derived from the colonial abuse, significantly, through the early victims of the Anglo-European imperialism: the American Indians and the African Americans. For the latter, Moore offers a rather idealistic commentary in "Virginia Britannia," "... the Negro, / inadvertent ally and best enemy of / tyranny" (109). These words confirm Moore's resolution to stand firmly by the side of those who are segregated

<sup>2</sup> Marianne Moore acknowledged the allusion to Wordsworth in a lecture she gave at Sarah Lawrence College in May 1940:

"I did not care to use the word 'intimation' because it suggested to me Wordsworth's Ode, INTIMATIONS OF IMMORTALITY and one naturally respects first rights, but after rejecting it a number of times, I still came back to it and felt I must, so I finally kept it. This in itself is of no importance, but it suggests to me what does seem to be important – that one must overcome a reluctance to be unoriginal and not be worried too much about possible comparisons and coincidences."

Typescript headed "Sarah Lawrence College, May 1, 1940," in the Rosenbach Museum and Library Archives in Philadelphia.

by the mistakes of history and her efforts to overturn racial stereotypes that dominated intellectual and political thought around the turn of the century.

In this manner, the artist unmasks the two most important and visible elements of social discrimination, that is race and gender. According to the critic Cristanne Miller:

Moore marks race and gender in two ways: through a directly political attempt to overthrow widespread hierarchical stereotypes (generally through negation: "The negro is not brutal"), or through an indirectly political (occasionally romanticized) attempt to create new space or recognition for stigmatized people and qualities. (1989: 807-808)

An outstanding example of Moore's multicultural and anti-stereotyped poetry is the poem "Tom Fool at Jamaica" (1953). The main problem this work poses is the apparent lack of connection between the four statements which are unfolded while the author introduces elusive commentaries in order to link them. The poem elaborates these four thematic sequences, which are fully documented, by the accurate description of its sources offered in the final notes. The first statement of "Tom Fool at Jamaica" is Jonah's biblical story whose relationship with the rest of the thematic sequences is established by the meaning the words "statesman" and "detain" introduce:

Look at Jonah embarking from Joppa, deterred by  
the whale; hard going for a statesman whom nothing could  
detain,  
although one who would rather die than repent. (162)

If we re-read Jonah's story in the Bible we will discover that the Old Testament prophet considered himself infallible and manifested a systematic opposition to God's wisdom. As a consequence of his behaviour, Jonah was cast overboard during a storm sent by God and later swallowed by a big whale and finally vomited up after having spent three days in its belly. Therefore, line three of the poem –"hard going for a statesman whom nothing could / detain"– confirms Jonah's arrogance as destructive, and it contrasts dramatically with the second statement of the poem: the Spanish schoolboy story which is valued as a model to be followed:

Be infallible at your peril, for your system will fail,  
and select as a model the schoolboy in Spain  
who at the age of six, portrayed a mule and jockey  
who had pulled up for a snail. (162)

The narrative Moore reports in the previous stanza has to be carefully analyzed because it has deep political implications, as we will see. First of all, it would be illuminating to read Moore's note to the Spanish schoolboy's story which also includes the drawing:

A mule and jockey by "Julio Gómez 6 años" from a collection of drawings by Spanish school children. Solicited on behalf of a fund-raising committee for Republican Spain, sold by Lord Taylor; given to me by Louise Crane. (248)

The naive drawing shows a mule reigned in sharply by a jockey boy to avoid a tiny snail. The image expresses more than the words because it is a visual metaphor that indirectly alludes, as well as Jonah's story, to the political episode that occasioned the Spanish Civil War. It is well known that General Franco's military rebellion overthrew the democratic government of the Spanish Republic which eventually caused the fratricidal civil war. Moore was not aloof from the socio-historical debates of her time, on the contrary, she was ideologically involved in artistic and historical issues as her declarations in a 1938 interview show:

I am for the legal government and the people of Loyalist Spain; against Franco, against fascism; against any suppression of freedom by tyranny masked as civilization. (*Writers* 43)

The episode of the small Julio and the snail exemplifies the power of adaptation and flexibility against the obstinate arrogance and inflexibility that provoked Jonah's failing and indirectly serves as a subtle authorial commentary on the attitudes that precipitated the Spanish Civil War.

The third statement in the poem is the description of a race horse, Tom Fool and its jockey Ted Atkinson. Through metaphor and metonymy, the race horses and their riders are depicted in terms of qualities to which the competitive struggle, and its result in victory or defeat, are irrelevant:

Tom Fool "makes an effort and makes it oftener  
than the rest" – out on April first, a day of some significance  
in the ambiguous sense – the smiling  
Master Atkinson's choice, with that mark of a champion, the  
extra  
spurt when needed. Yes, yes. "Chance  
is a regrettable impurity"; (162)

Tom Fool's description focuses the story on the surprising characteristics of a splendid race horse instead of portraying the whole image of a race which includes, obviously, the jockey. The stanza ends with a cryptic quotation from the alluring book of the *I Ching* – an ancient Chinese text that has fascinated Chinese and Westerners alike<sup>3</sup>. The inclusion of an aphorism from this book that remarks, "Chance / is a regrettable impurity," introduces to the poem a thinking process which was one of the main characteristics to the *I Ching*. That is, this divination book expressed its philosophy with a thoughtful-provoking language, thus allowing the reader a great freedom in interpreting its significance. The inclusion of the Chinese proverb signifies, at this point, a poetical declaration because it expresses the same idea which has been developed throughout the poem; that is to say, the flexibility in interpreting the aphorism and in the concentrated thought which is behind the opposing images. In this light, the Americanist and Sinologist scholar, Lina Unali, points out that Moore "makes the whole of Chinese culture explain its meaning with softness. She grasps both its secrecy and its epiphany. She is also ready to forget her cultural insights and discoveries, to turn to something else, never to fix herself on concepts which do not carry life within" (212).

Moore closes the poem with a quick mention to the play of porpoises about the prow of a ship, the acrobatics of Lippizan horses and a monkey riding a greyhound<sup>4</sup>. Following these concise images the work's final statement is the fleeting description of three black jazz musicians who were remarkable for their unconformity as great improvisers:

Of course, speaking of champions, there was Fats Waller  
with the feather touch, giraffe eyes, and that hand alighting in  
Ain't misbeavin'! Ozzie Smith and Eubie Blake  
ennoble the atmosphere; (163)

The depiction of the Afro-American musician Fats Waller presents, once again, the issue of racial prejudice in so far as this outstanding pianist could not develop a classical music career due to his race, as it has been suggested. But Moore tributes an homage to Jazz music and to its versatile musicians who sometimes were not given the intellectual credit of the so called classical music, even though it was probably the best expression of the vernacular American music.

<sup>3</sup> See David Hsin-Fu Wand, "The Dragon and the Kylin: The Use of Chinese Symbols and Myths in Marianne Moore's Poetry," *Literature East and West* 15 (1971): 470-484.

<sup>4</sup> For a detailed study of the use of animals in Marianne Moore's poetry see Chapter III of my dissertation titled "Imaginary gardens with real toads in them': la antiespecularidad del jardín zoológico de Marianne Moore."

The juxtaposition of the different statements in "Tom Fool at Jamaica" is a testimony of Moore's artistic compromise to incorporate radically different visions of culture which have been traditionally ignored or neglected. For Moore the Jonah-story, the Spanish schoolboy's drawing, the race-horse, the jazz musicians, the *I Ching*, and the Circus animals are connected in so far as they represent cultural diversity and resist an archetypal vision of American culture.

In conclusion, Moore's poems "Sojourn in the Whale," "The Labors of Hercules," "Virginia Britannia" and "Tom Fool at Jamaica," among others, demonstrate, with a clear and critical resistance to a culturally hegemonic society, her search for other cultural sources and images to identify with. Therefore, Moore's multicultural poetry is a locus of diversity and complexity where all the margins of society converge in a decentering and enriching process.

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## Diplomáticos, espías y propagandistas: norteamericanos en la España de Franco durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial

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### Introducción

La historia de España durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial es un argumento tratado muy a menudo, pero que está lejos todavía de completarse. La obra del profesor Morales Lezcano es un interesante estudio de un periodo concreto de la guerra, aquel en el que España abandona la neutralidad y se declara “no-beligerante”<sup>1</sup>. El profesor Marquina Barrio se ha ocupado también de la posición de España durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial en su obra sobre el papel de España en la política de seguridad occidental<sup>2</sup> y en diversos artículos<sup>3</sup>. Tienen

1 MORALES LEZCANO, V.: *Historia de la no-beligerancia española durante la segunda guerra mundial* (VI, 1940-X, 1943), Las Palmas, Mancomunidad de Cabildos, 1980.

2 MARQUINA BARRIO, A.: *España en la política de seguridad occidental. 1939-1986*, Madrid, Ejército, 1986, sobre todo pp. 21-124.

3 MARQUINA BARRIO, A.: “Conspiración contra Franco: el ejército y la injerencia extranjera en España: el papel de Aranda, 1939-1945”, en *Historia* 16, n. 72, abril 1982; “La etapa de Ramón Serrano Suñer en el Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores”, en *Espacio, Tiempo y Forma*, Serie V, tomo 2, 1989 y “La Península ibérica y la planificación militar aliada”, en *Revista de Occidente*, n. 41, octubre 1984.

algún interés también las actas del seminario interdisciplinar celebrado en Córdoba en noviembre de 1989 y publicadas al año siguiente<sup>4</sup>. Dedicado, eso sí, a aspectos de la vida interna española durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial fue el V Coloquio de Historia Contemporánea de España dirigido por Manuel Tuñón de Lara<sup>5</sup>. Recientemente el profesor Tusell ha publicado una espléndida obra sobre el argumento cuyo último capítulo está además dedicado específicamente a los Estados Unidos (Cap. 6: “La benevolencia hacia los Estados Unidos. Agosto de 1944-verano de 1945”)<sup>6</sup>. No queremos dejar de mencionar la obra de Luis Suárez, bien fundamentada y que recoge documentos del archivo de la familia Franco pero claramente tendenciosa para justificar la actitud del régimen en aquellos años<sup>7</sup>.

También se ha estudiado desde el punto de vista del espionaje. La obra de Pastor Petit sobre el espionaje en la Segunda Guerra Mundial es un voluminoso trabajo carente, por desgracia, de aparato crítico, lo que dado el argumento que trata suscita perplejidad. Además el título es engañoso pues se trata de un “potpourri” de historias y anécdotas sobre espionaje en el que las referencias a la actuación en España de los beligerantes son mínimas, aunque sí se trata el caso de los más conocidos agentes españoles que trabajaron para ambos bandos en la Segunda Guerra Mundial<sup>8</sup>. Dentro de distintas historias de la “Office of Strategic Services” hay siempre algún capítulo dedicado a la península Ibérica o específicamente a España<sup>9</sup>. Naturalmente también hay una amplia referencia a España dentro de lo que denomina “The Secondary Neutral Countries” en el informe oficial que resume toda la actividad de la OSS elaborado por varios autores bajo la coordinación de Kernit Roosevelt (Chief, History Project) entre 1946

<sup>4</sup> AA. VV.: *La postguerra española y la II Guerra Mundial*, Córdoba, Adisur, 1990.

<sup>5</sup> GARCÍA DELGADO, J.L. (ed): *El primer franquismo. España durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial*, Madrid, Siglo XXI, 1989.

<sup>6</sup> TUSELL, J.: *Franco, España y la II Guerra Mundial. Entre el eje y la neutralidad*, Madrid, Temas de Hoy, 1995.

<sup>7</sup> SUÁREZ, L.: *España, Franco y la Segunda Guerra Mundial. Desde 1939 hasta 1945*, Madrid, Actas, 1997.

<sup>8</sup> PASTOR PETIT, D.: *Espionaje: la Segunda Guerra Mundial y España*, Madrid, Plaza & Janés, 1990.

<sup>9</sup> SMITH, R.H.: *OSS. The Secret History of America's First Central Intelligence Agency*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1972, sobre todo pp. 74-82; y también, SMITH, B.F.: *The Shadow Warriors. O.S.S. and the Origins of the C.I.A.*, Nueva York, Basic Books, 1983, sobre todo pp. 187-189 y 218-222. Véanse también, aunque sus referencias a España son mínimas: ALSOP, S. & BRADEN, T.: *Sub Rosa. The OSS and American Espionage*, Nueva York, Harcourt, Brace & World, 1963 y KATZ, B.M.: *Foreign Intelligence. Research and Analysis in the Office of Strategic Services 1942-1945*, Cambridge (Mass.), Harvard University Press, 1989.

y 1947 y publicado en 1976<sup>10</sup>. Tiene también un cierto interés lo escrito por la condesa de Romanones, que fue agente de la OSS en España dentro de una obra colectiva que recoge las actas del Congreso sobre la OSS celebrado en 1991<sup>11</sup>. Los servicios secretos norteamericanos y británicos llegaron a sostener en algunas ocasiones, aunque no siempre, una estrecha relación en nuestro país. En algunos estudios sobre estos hay alusiones a la actividad de los norteamericanos en este campo<sup>12</sup>.

Son abundantes también las memorias de españoles y extranjeros que vivieron aquellos tiempos o fueron sus protagonistas<sup>13</sup>.

Desde el punto de vista de la prensa, la información y la propaganda, sólo conocemos un estudio dedicado a la prensa española durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial<sup>14</sup> y la interesante obra autobiográfica de Martínez Nadal sobre su trabajo en la *BBC* con el famoso seudónimo de Antonio Torres<sup>15</sup>. Hay además dos estudios interesantes sobre Portugal y México en el mismo periodo<sup>16</sup>. Además de otras obras sobre aspectos particulares o relaciones con países como Francia, Alemania o Italia durante el periodo a las que no nos referimos ahora, no

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- <sup>10</sup> BROWN, A.C. (ed.): *The Secret War Report of the OSS*, Nueva York, Brandt and Brandt, 1976. Este informe elaborado para uso interno y depositado en los "National Archives" es obra de varios autores, algunos de ellos ex miembros de la OSS y fue coordinado por Kermit Roosevelt.
- <sup>11</sup> ROMANONES, A., Countess of, "The OSS in Spain during World War II", en CHALOU, G.C. (ed.), *The Secret War. The Office of Strategic Services in World War II*, N.A.R.A., Washington D.C., 1991, pp. 121-128.
- <sup>12</sup> BRISTOW, D. & BRISTOW, B.: *Juego de topes. Memorias del jefe de la sección española del servicio secreto británico*, Barcelona, Ediciones B, 1993; MASTERMAN, J. C.: *The Double-Cross System in the War of 1939 to 1945*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1972 y PUJOL, J. & WEST, N.: *Garbo. The Personal Story of the Most Successful Double Agent Ever ...*, Londres, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1985, entre otros.
- <sup>13</sup> Sería interminable citarlas todas aquí, pero algunas son indispensables, así las de los diplomáticos norteamericanos: BEAULAC, W.L.: *Career Ambassador*, Nueva York, MacMillan, 1951 y HAYES, C.J.H.: *Wartime Mission in Spain*, Nueva York, The MacMillan Company, 1946. O las de otros embajadores como: HOARE, S.: *Ambassador on Special Mission*, Londres, Collins, 1946; PIÉTRI, F.: *Mes Années D'Espagne (1940-1948)*, París, Librairie Plon, 1954. Sin olvidar, desde luego, el interesantísimo testimonio del responsable de la propaganda norteamericana en España durante la guerra: HUGHES, E.J.: *Report from Spain*, Nueva York, Henry Holt, 1947.
- <sup>14</sup> GARCÍA ALIX, C.: *La prensa española ante la segunda guerra mundial*, Madrid, Editora Nacional, 1974.
- <sup>15</sup> MARTÍNEZ NADAL, R.: *Antonio Torres y la política española del Foreign Office (1940-1944)*, Madrid, Casariego, 1989.
- <sup>16</sup> TELO, A.J.: *Propaganda e guerra secreta em Portugal (1939-1945)*, Lisboa, Perspectivas & Realidades, 1990 y ORTIZ GARZA, J.L.: *México en guerra. La historia secreta de los negocios entre empresarios mexicanos de la comunicación, los nazis y E.U.A.*, México, Planeta, 1989.

queremos dejar de mencionar una obra excelente recientemente publicada en Italia de un jovencísimo profesor y apoyada en un abundante y cuidado aparato crítico<sup>17</sup>.

Tiene interés también una curiosa obra publicada en el veinte aniversario del final de la Segunda Guerra Mundial y que funde en un sólo libro dos textos publicados respectivamente en 1946 (*Política intercional de España. El caso español en la ONU y en el mundo 1945-1946*) y en 1947 (*España rumbo a la postguerra. La paz española de Franco*). Este último texto tiene sobre todo interés porque además de algún que otro documento y artículos publicados en su momento por su autor, Agustín del Río Cisneros, recoge un ramillete de “consignas” de las que envió la Delegación Nacional de Prensa a los periódicos españoles para orientar su línea en función de los intereses de la política internacional del régimen durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial<sup>18</sup>.

Sobre las relaciones entre Estados Unidos y España durante la guerra, además de las memorias a que nos hemos referido, hay varios estudios que merecen nuestro interés, sobre todo la obra de Feis, numerosas veces reeditada, que se ocupa de la situación del régimen de Franco en relación con todas las potencias en guerra<sup>19</sup>. Tiene también interés el capítulo que el Embajador Hayes dedica al asunto en su ensayo sobre las relaciones entre Estados Unidos y España publicado en 1951<sup>20</sup>. Pero hay que referirse sobre todo al excelente trabajo, todavía inédito, de Watson, que además se ocupa también de cuestiones de propaganda<sup>21</sup>.

Sin embargo uno de los trabajos que mayor interés puede tener, pues analiza la presencia de España en la prensa y en la opinión pública norteamericanas durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial, es también una obra inédita que data de 1959 y cuyas fuentes son sobre todo los periódicos norteamericanos<sup>22</sup>.

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17 GUDERZO, M.: *Madrid e l'arte della diplomazia. L'incognita spagnola della seconda guerra mondiale*, Florencia, Il Maestrale, 1995.

18 RÍO CISNEROS, A. del: *Viraje político español durante la II Guerra Mundial, 1942-1946. Réplica al cerco internacional 1945-1946*, Madrid, Ediciones del Movimiento, 1965.

19 FEIS, H., *The Spanish Story. Franco and the Nations at War*, Nueva York, W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 1966.

20 HAYES, C.J.H., *The United States and Spain: An Interpretation*, Nueva York, Sheed & Ward, Inc., 1951, pp. 135-172.

21 WATSON, B.A., *United States-Spanish Relations, 1939-1946*, Tesis doctoral inédita, George Washington University, 1969, Washington D.C.

22 BEGNAL, Sister S.C.: *The United States and Spain: A Study in Press Opinion and Public Reaction*, Tesis doctoral inédita, Forham University, Nueva York, 1959.

En ambas guerras mundiales la propaganda dirigida a los países neutrales se valió de múltiples medios, uno de los cuales fueron, naturalmente, los servicios diplomáticos, dentro de los cuales los agentes de propaganda trabajaban de manera más o menos enmascarada. Sobre la propaganda dirigida a los países neutrales durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial falta un estudio dedicado al caso americano, pero existe uno sobre el caso británico que desgraciadamente no dedica mucho espacio a España<sup>23</sup>.

### Orígenes y funciones de la “Office of War Information” y de la “Office of Strategic Services”

La primera experiencia de una organización de carácter oficial dedicada a la información y a la propaganda en los Estados Unidos se había dado durante la Primera Guerra Mundial con el “Comittee on Public Information”, dirigido por el periodista George Creel, que se disolvió al acabar la guerra. Estaba integrado por los secretarios de Marina y Guerra, además del Secretario de Estado y, por supuesto, Creel quien era el responsable de toda la actividad de propaganda interior y exterior<sup>24</sup>.

Durante el periodo de entreguerras la propaganda política va a sufrir una transformación profunda a raíz de la experiencia de la Primera Guerra Mundial. En ese periodo se consolida el recién nacido sistema soviético; Mussolini funda en Italia su estado totalitario fascista y Hitler llega al poder en 1933. Estos tres sistemas totalitarios se basan fundamentalmente en la actividad de propaganda. Sin embargo, las democracias occidentales que habían puesto en pie complejos aparatos de propaganda durante la Gran Guerra los disuelven al acabar ésta.

El término propaganda que tenía ya, por su origen en la Contrarreforma, un cierto contenido negativo, se identifica con el totalitarismo. Si las democracias occidentales, incluido Estados Unidos, la utilizan sin empacho entre 1914 y 1918, sus connotaciones negativas y su identificación con los totalitarismos harán que en la Segunda Guerra Mundial se evite casi por completo.

En Estados Unidos el comité presidido por Creel, que no era otra cosa que un “ministerio de propaganda” se autodenominaba con el eufemismo “Public

<sup>23</sup> COLE, R.: *Britain and the War of Words in Neutral Europe, 1929-45. The Art of the Possible*, Londres, MacMillan, 1990.

<sup>24</sup> Véase: PIZARROSO QUINTERO, A.: *Historia de la Propaganda. Notas para una estudio de la propaganda política y de guerra*, Madrid, Eudema, 1993 (1ª ed., 1990), pp. 248 y ss. y la bibliografía y fuentes allí citadas.

Information". También en Gran Bretaña se hablaba del "Department of Information" (enero 1917) y luego de "Ministry of Information" (febrero 1918). Del mismo modo va a ocurrir en la Segunda Guerra Mundial con el nuevo "Ministry of Information" británico, el "Political Warfare Executive" también británico, o el norteamericano "Coordinator of Information" y luego "Office of War Information". Sin embargo, aunque en el trabajo del día a día y en muchos de los documentos que vamos a manejar el término propaganda comparece muy a menudo, lo cierto es que se evita mucho menos en la Primera Guerra Mundial que en la Segunda. En ésta la propaganda es una actividad del enemigo, mientras que en Estados Unidos o Gran Bretaña se habla sólo de información.

En el caso norteamericano en el periodo de entreguerras nadie puede negar que Franklin D. Roosevelt fue un maestro en el arte de la propaganda<sup>25</sup>, lo que demostró también en la Segunda Guerra Mundial. Sin embargo y frente a los organizados aparatos de propaganda de los totalitarismos de la época no encontramos nada de eso en la democracia americana.

La administración Roosevelt ya había establecido antes de la Segunda Guerra Mundial algunos canales con carácter oficial dedicados a acercar al público el significado y las conquistas de la política del "New Deal", pero éstos sólo jugaron un papel limitado en los años treinta. En cualquier caso no faltaron acusaciones contra Roosevelt en ese sentido.

En septiembre de 1939 fue creada la "Office of Government Reports", que englobaba la actividad de los programas de información pública de los años del "New Deal". Esta oficina fue muy criticada por la oposición republicana en el Congreso, y no fue reconocida por las Cámaras hasta 1941. A medida que se hacía más previsible la intervención de los Estados Unidos en la guerra, el país iba preparando una política de defensa más compleja, de la que no estaba ausente la política informativa. Nació así, en marzo de 1941, la "Division of Information of the Office of Emergency Management", luego la "Office of Civilian Defense" y en octubre de 1941 una sección de ésta última se convirtió en la "Office of Facts and Figures", a cuyo frente estuvo el poeta y director de la "Library of the Congress" Archibald MacLeish<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> Véase: WINFIELD, B.H.: *FDR and the News Media*, Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1990.

<sup>26</sup> Educado en Yale, abogado en Boston, vivió en Francia en los años veinte publicando una serie de libros de poemas con clara influencia de Ezra Pound y T. S. Eliot. En los años treinta tomó clara postura contra la amenaza del fascismo en política internacional y apoyó a Roosevelt. En 1939 fue nombrado director de la Biblioteca del Congreso. Durante la guerra trabajó en diversos puestos para la OWI. Entre 1944 y 1949 ocupó varios puestos en la administración americana para terminar como profesor en la Universidad de Harvard. Nació en 1892 y murió en 1982.



La OFF (cuyas siglas se prestan a obvios juegos de palabras) fue muy criticada por la prensa, a pesar de que MacLeish defendió desde ella la “strategy of truth”. Aunque la OFF debía canalizar toda la información oficial hacia los medios de comunicación, el mismo Roosevelt pareció ignorarla en muchas ocasiones.

Por otra parte, ya en el terreno de la propaganda exterior, el 16 agosto de 1940 Nelson Rockefeller fue nombrado “Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs”, para contrarrestar la propaganda nazi y fascista en Iberoamérica.

Así pues, tras la experiencia del “Creel’s Committee” en la Primera Guerra Mundial, las primeras organizaciones oficiales dedicadas a la propaganda y a la información en Estados Unidos van a nacer con la Segunda Guerra Mundial. Sólo cinco meses antes de la entrada en guerra de los Estados Unidos, Roosevelt establece, mediante una “Military Order” de 11 de julio de 1941, la “Office of the Coordinator of Information” (COI). Tenía ésta dos funciones: por un lado, de “Intelligence” (recogida y análisis de información de cualquier fuente, incluida la militar), por otro, de información (transmisión de información y propaganda hacia el exterior, excepto para Iberoamérica, terreno reservado a Rockefeller). Al frente de la oficina del COI fue nombrado el coronel William J. Donovan (“Wild Bill”)<sup>27</sup>. Para llevar a cabo la segunda función del COI, mucho menos definida que la primera, se creó el “Foreign Information Service” (FIS), bajo la dirección de Robert Sherwood<sup>28</sup>, quien había sugerido a Roosevelt la creación de una organización de esas características.

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<sup>27</sup> Abogado y militar nacido en 1883, participó en la Primera Guerra Mundial obteniendo la Medalla de Honor del Congreso. En los años veinte fue fiscal en Nueva York y en los treinta volvió al ejercicio de la abogacía. Roosevelt le llamó para organizar un servicio de inteligencia centralizado en 1940. En 1941 fue nombrado “Coordinator of Information” y en 1942 dirigió la recién creada “Office of Strategic Services” (OSS). Ascendió a general en 1943 y a pesar de que después de la guerra fue uno de los impulsores de lo que iba a ser la CIA, cuando ésta se creó en 1947, declinó ser su director. Fue embajador en Tailandia en 1953-54. Murió en 1956. Véase: BROWN, A.C.: *Wild Bill Donovan, the Last Hero*, Londres, Michael Joseph, 1982.

<sup>28</sup> Autor de teatro y periodista, nacido en 1886, se alistó voluntario en un batallón canadiense en la Gran Guerra. Crítico de teatro de *Vanity Fair* en 1919 y 20. Pasó después al semanario de humor *Life* (no el *Life* de Luce, fundada en 1936) hasta 1928. Desde 1927 estrenó varias obras, entre ellas *Abe Lincoln in Illinois* (1939), que ganó el premio Pulitzer de teatro y fue llevada al cine en 1940, a raíz de lo cual intimó con Eleanor Roosevelt y luego con el propio presidente, del que pasó a ser “speechwriter” y consejero. En 1940 era consejero del Secretario de Guerra. En 1941 pasó a dirigir el FIS y luego la “Overseas Branch” de la OWI. En 1945 fue también asistente del Secretario de Marina. Murió en 1955. Es autor de *Roosevelt and Hopkins. An Intimate History*, sobre la presidencia en los años que él la conoció.



El FIS, en cuyo equipo se reunió un nutrido grupo de periodistas con experiencia internacional, figuras literarias y también hombres del cine<sup>29</sup>, – así como el CI-AA – inició sus primeras campañas de propaganda a través de la radio, sobre todo desde *The Voice of America* cuando se fundó en 1941.

Poco después, ambas funciones del COI iban a dar lugar a dos organismos diferentes: por un lado, se crearía la “Office of Strategic Services” (OSS), a cuyo frente permanecería Donovan; y el 13 de junio de 1942, la “Office of War Information” (OWI) – la oficina del CI-AA fuera de la OWI, seguirá manteniendo sus competencias –. En la OWI se integrarán diversas agencias (OFF, OGR y OEM), que constituirán fundamentalmente su “Domestic Branch”, y el FIS, que constituirá su “Overseas Branch”<sup>30</sup>.

Director de la nueva oficina será nombrado Elmer Davis<sup>31</sup>, y al frente de su “Overseas Branch” permanecerá Robert Sherwood hasta 1944 en que pasará al servicio del Secretario de Marina y le sucederá T. L. Barnard. Sin embargo, “the order creating OWI did not clearly establish a division of responsibility between it and OSS for the conduct of psychological warfare”<sup>32</sup>. Así nos describe la situación Daugherty:

During the first year of OWI's existence the domestic-information activities of OWI were dominant. The Overseas Branch continued until late spring or summer of 1943 much as FIS had in COI – as virtually an autonomous unit. During the period of time from the establishment of OWI, in June 1942 until 9 March 1943, three important factors were to influence the character of the organization that emerged from the war experience. First, the overseas activities of both OWI and OSS were vaguely defined. Second, the psychological warfare organizations – OWI, OSS, and CIAA – were all rent with interagency and intragency

<sup>29</sup> Entre ellos el ex-consejero de Roosevelt James P. Warburg, Joseph Warnes (ex-corresponsal de Moscú y Berlín del *New York Herald Tribune*), el productor de cine John Houseman y figuras como Thornton Wilder y Stephen Vincent Benet.

<sup>30</sup> Sobre la propaganda del “Domestic Branch” cara a la población de los Estados Unidos, véase: BLUM, J.M.: *V Was for Victory, Politics and American Culture During World War II*, Nueva York, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976. Y sobre la actividad en general de la OWI, véase: WINKLER, A.M.: *The politics of propaganda, The Office of War Information 1942-1945*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1978.

<sup>31</sup> Periodista y escritor nacido en 1890. En 1939 comenzó a trabajar para la CBS y para el *New York Times*, lo que abandonó en 1942 para dirigir la OWI. En 1945 volvió al periodismo profesional en la cadena radiofónica ABC oponiéndose abiertamente al senador McCarthy. Murió en 1958.

<sup>32</sup> DAUGHERTY, W.E., “US Psychological Warfare Organization in World War II” en DAUGHERTY, W.E. & JANOWITZ, M. (eds.), *A Psychological Warfare Casebook*, Baltimore (MD), The John Hopkins University Press, 1958, p. 128.

disputes. Third, although the major efforts of the top-echelon leaders in OWI were largely concerned with the OWI domestic program, OSS under the dynamic leadership of General Donovan developed far-reaching plans for the conduct of psychological warfare in connection with the then forthcoming military campaigns. These plans were not accepted by Robert Sherwood, Chief of the Overseas Branch, or Elmer Davis, Director of OWI<sup>33</sup>.

Este solaparse de competencias en lo referente a “psychological warfare” pareció inclinarse hacia la OSS en la primera operación militar en gran escala de tropas norteamericanas, la operación “TORCH” (desembarco en el norte de África), lo que provocó una reacción en contra de Donovan de Davis y de Rockefeller, que se dirigieron directamente al Presidente. En efecto, la OSS, como agencia dependiente de la “Joint Chiefs of Staff” fue encargada de “to plan, develop, coordinate and execute the military program of psychological warfare”<sup>34</sup>.

El 9 de marzo de 1943, cuando ya se estaba preparando la invasión de Sicilia, Roosevelt determina que en lo referente a “psychological warfare” “all plans and projects (...) should be subject to the approval (...) of the theater commander”<sup>35</sup>, con lo cual se reducía enormemente el ámbito de las competencias de la OSS.

Por parte militar existía ya un “Special Warfare Branch” en el “Navy Department”, dentro de la oficina de “Naval Intelligence”, y en el “War Department” se creó, en junio de 1941, un “Special Studies Group” a cuyas instancias se constituyó, dentro de la JCS, un “Joint Psychological Warfare Committee”, con las siguientes funciones:

... to initiate, formulate and develop psychological warfare plans (...) (and) under the direction of the Joint Chiefs of Staff committee to coordinate psychological warfare of other US governmental agencies and to collaborate with interested nations to the end that all psychological warfare is in accord with approved strategy<sup>36</sup>.

Este “Psychological Warfare Committee” o “Psychological Warfare Branch”, como también fue conocido, estaba encabezado por el coronel Oscar Solbert. La relación inicial entre este grupo militar y la recién creada OWI no fue en absoluto

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 128.

<sup>34</sup> Citado en *ibidem*.

<sup>35</sup> “Executive Order n. 9312”, citado en *ibidem*, p. 129.

<sup>36</sup> Citado en *ibidem*.

de colaboración<sup>37</sup> y, poco después de la invasión del norte de África, en la que el grupo militar apenas tuvo participación, éste fue disuelto<sup>38</sup>.

En el norte de África, Italia y el resto de Europa las fuerzas norteamericanas actuaron de manera integrada con las británicas y de otros aliados dando lugar a organizaciones de propaganda integrada anglo-norteamericanas, como veremos. En la guerra del Pacífico no se produjo esta integración, excepto un intento frustrado en el Sureste Asiático. La propaganda de guerra, dependiente de la autoridad militar, adoptó diferentes formas de organización en las distintas áreas. En el Pacífico Sur, el almirante Halsey rechazaba todo lo que tuviera que ver con la actividad propagandística, obstaculizando la actuación del poco personal que, procedente de la OSS y de la OWI, tenía asignada.

En el Pacífico del Suroeste, con el general MacArthur, se constituyó, en junio de 1944, en su cuartel general, una "Psychological Warfare Branch"; fue el único comandante del Pacífico que comprendió la importancia de las operaciones de propaganda y favoreció la colaboración entre el personal militar y el civil procedente de la OWI. En el Pacífico Central, bajo el mando del almirante Nimitz, se dió una situación intermedia, pero sólo se estableció en su cuartel general una "Psychological Warfare Branch" cinco días antes de la rendición incondicional del Japón. Por otra parte, la OWI desplazó una importante sección a Honolulu, que daba soporte logístico a las operaciones de propaganda en las distintas áreas. El personal que trabajaba en estas actividades estaba seleccionado fundamentalmente por su conocimiento de la lengua japonesa.

La OWI editaba para consumo interior y exterior una revista llamada *Victory*<sup>39</sup>, que fue acusada, tanto por miembros del partido republicano como por algún sector del partido demócrata, de ser un instrumento más para la promoción personal de Roosevelt. Además de *Victory* se publicaron otras revistas de propaganda como *USA* o la que en español se titulaba *En guardia*. Todas ellas se distribuyeron en España, como veremos.

El partido republicano ganó las elecciones a la cámara de Representantes de noviembre de 1942, y desde 1943, aliado con los demócratas del sur, controlaba

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<sup>37</sup> Cfr. WINKLER, A.M., *Op. cit.*, p. 113.

<sup>38</sup> Cfr. "Words and Bullets in Battle: The Beginning of PWB", Chapter V of "Final Report of the OWI Historian", pp. 4-5 (largo manuscrito inédito elaborado por Edward P. Lilly que se conserva en los National Archives en Washington) y también WINKLER, A.M., *Op. cit.*, pp. 112-114.

<sup>39</sup> En realidad el primer nombre propuesto para esta publicación fue el de *Freedom*, sin embargo parece que se prefirió la alusión a la victoria final antes que a la idea de libertad en función de posibles acuerdos con poderes no democráticos como de hecho sucedió con Darlan en el norte de África o con Badoglio en Italia. Cfr. BLUM, J.M., *Op. cit.*, pp. 42-43.

el Congreso. Comenzó entonces una campaña contra la forma que había tomado la propaganda de guerra en el interior del país, a la “mayor gloria” de Roosevelt. La Cámara de Representantes votó, por 218 contra 114, la abolición del presupuesto de la “Domestic Branch” de la OWI. Para 1944, ésta sólo dispuso de tres millones de dólares gracias al voto del Senado y después de que Davis amenazara con dimitir. Por el contrario, para la propaganda exterior la OWI dispuso de veinticuatro millones de dólares en 1944. Es decir, que la propaganda interior americana vivió en un clima de dificultades y de contrastes políticos en un país que no sufría la guerra directamente en su territorio.

La “Overseas Branch” de la OWI que, como hemos visto, procedía del FIS tuvo un funcionamiento bastante independiente a pesar de que el propio Elmer Davis se ocupó muchas veces personalmente de cuestiones referentes al exterior. Sherwood era un hombre de grandes ideas pero no tenía ninguna experiencia de trabajo burocrático, lo que causó no pocos problemas<sup>40</sup>. De todos modos, siguiendo la conocida “strategy of truth”, Sherwood articuló una magna campaña de propaganda exterior dirigida a aliados, enemigos y, sobre todo, neutrales:

The propaganda effort took a variety of forms. Many of the methods and media used on the domestic scene were employed in different ways abroad. News formed the backbone of the campaign, for Sherwood, early in the war, had decided to avoid emotional appeals on the assumption that the people abroad, deafened by the years of enemy propaganda, would respond best to a sober presentation of the facts of war. Spot news, therefore transmitted over the air as soon after the fact as possible, made up much of the output, but it was supplemented by feature stories and interpretive pieces that helped place events in the framework of the war<sup>41</sup>.

La OWI se articulaba en el exterior con oficinas vinculadas a las respectivas embajadas que se denominaban “Outpost”, generalmente el responsable de éstas era a su vez el Agregado de Prensa de la embajada. Así sucedió en España. Para coordinar todo este trabajo en los distintos países la “Overseas Branch” de la OWI organizó en Londres en julio de 1942 una “Overseas Operational Base” dirigida por Archibald MacLeish y James Warburg. También contaron con Percy Winer quien, en colaboración con Wallace Carroll (entonces corresponsal de la *United Press* y que llegaría a ser jefe de la oficina londinense de la OWI), comenzó a elaborar las directivas de propaganda que debían acompañar el ataque al norte de África,

<sup>40</sup> Cfr. WINKLER, A.M.: *Op. cit.*, p. 77.

<sup>41</sup> WINKLER, A.M.: *Op. cit.*, p. 78.

controlado por el gobierno francés de Vichy<sup>42</sup>. También desde Londres llegaron numerosas directivas de propaganda a los países neutrales, entre ellos España.

### Diplomáticos y propaganda: el “Outpost” de la OWI en Madrid

Claude G. Bowers había sido embajador de Estados Unidos en España desde junio de 1933 hasta 1939. En enero de 1939 fue llamado a Washington para consultas, abriendo así paso al reconocimiento por parte de Estados Unidos del régimen victorioso de Franco<sup>43</sup>.

Una vez reconocido el nuevo régimen fue nombrado embajador Alexander W. Weddell, que se mantuvo en España durante los primeros dos años de la guerra mundial mientras Estados Unidos todavía era un país neutral<sup>44</sup>.

Desde noviembre de 1941, poco antes de la entrada de Estados Unidos en guerra, y durante aproximadamente seis meses el responsable de todas las tareas de prensa y propaganda en la embajada fue el tercer secretario Earl T. Crain, conocido por todos como “Tom”. Desgraciadamente enfermó de tuberculosis y abandonó España en la primavera de 1942.

Tres meses después de la entrada de Estados Unidos en guerra el Departamento de Estado parece que toma conciencia de la importancia de España como país neutral dentro de la guerra. En diciembre de 1941 el embajador Weddell fue llamado a consultas a Washington donde aprovechó para someterse a una operación quirúrgica. Quedó entonces en Madrid Williard L. Beaulac como Encargado de Negocios<sup>45</sup>. Weddell presentó su dimisión por razones de salud a finales de marzo. Roosevelt necesitaba entonces para España un embajador de una cierta talla, que pudiera mantener la neutralidad española o incluso contribuir a que España se inclinase hacia el bando aliado.

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<sup>42</sup> Cfr. CARROLL, W.: *Persuade or Perish*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1948, p. 12 y pp. 27-29.

<sup>43</sup> Sobre esto véase: BOWERS, C.: *My Life. The Memoirs of Claude Bowers*, Nueva York, Simon & Schuster, 1962; y del mismo autor: *My Mission to Spain. Watching the Rehearsal for World War II*, Nueva York, Simon & Schuster, 1954.

<sup>44</sup> Sobre su periodo como embajador, véase: HALSTED, Ch.R.: “Diligent Diplomat: Alexander W. Weddell as American Ambassador to Spain, 1939-1942” en *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 1974, 1, pp. 3-38.

<sup>45</sup> De su paso por España Beulac ha dejado testimonio en una obra autobiográfica ya citada y en un interesante estudio: BEAULAC, W.L.: *Franco Silent Ally in World War II*, Carbondale, Southern Illinois University Press, 1986.

Roosevelt y el vicesecretario de Estado Sumner Welles ya habían entrado en contacto con Carlton J. H. Hayes, que aceptó el encargo el 25 de marzo y fue nombrado embajador el 2 de abril. Probablemente detrás de todo ello estaba la larga mano de Donovan, a la sazón “Coordinator of Information”, cuyos informes de Madrid no eran demasiado favorables sobre el trabajo de Weddell en España<sup>46</sup>. A principios de 1942, según las informaciones de Donovan los embajadores chileno y argentino en Madrid intentaban implicar a España y Portugal en la formación de un bloque de neutrales. Lo que Donovan, interpretaba como un intento español de obstaculizar la conferencia de Río auspiciada por los Estados Unidos<sup>47</sup>.

El sábado 16 de mayo de 1942 Carlton J. H. Hayes llegó a Madrid. Hayes no era un diplomático de carrera ni un político profesional, sino un profesor de Historia de la Universidad de Columbia, católico y buen conocedor, aunque no especializado, de la Historia de España.

Cuando el vicesecretario de Estado, Sumner Welles, entabló los primeros contactos con Hayes, acababa de empezar a trabajar con él en la Universidad de Columbia un joven que se había graduado en Princeton con una tesis titulada *The Churchs and the Liberal Society*, que sería publicada al año siguiente y que recibiría el premio anual del “Catholic Book Club” en 1944. Este joven de origen irlandés y católico como Hayes no había cumplido todavía los veintidós años. Era Emmet John Hughes.

Sólo once días después de su llegada, el embajador Hayes envía un telegrama al coronel Donovan, a quien hace llegar sus necesidades en materia de propaganda tanto en cuanto a personal como a fondos y equipo. Así le solicita un hombre conectado con la industria del cine “who could obtain the proper films and show them here, and also contact the people in the movie industry of this country”. Pide también la presencia de un periodista con experiencia y buen juicio, a ser posible católico, aunque eso no fuera indispensable. En todo caso “this man should have as assistant a deeply sincere Catholic who could become intimate with Church elements”, y afirma luego que “Emmet Hughes ought to be the assistant, with COI pay of a thousand over and above compensation as clerk at the Embassy”. Así Hayes pudo traer a Madrid a su alumno<sup>48</sup>.

<sup>46</sup> Cfr. GUDERZO, M.: *Op. cit.*, pp. 204 y ss.

<sup>47</sup> Cfr. GUDERZO, M.: *Op. cit.*, p. 211 y las referencias allí citadas.

<sup>48</sup> Cfr. Telegrama del embajador Hayes al coronel Donovan (in person) de 27 de mayo de 1942 en National Archives-Washington (en adelante, NAW), Record Group – 208 (en adelante, RG), Entry 380 (en adelante, E.), box 19 (en adelante, b.).



Hughes llega a Madrid y comienza a trabajar bajo las órdenes de Earl T. Crain:

Mr. Hughes showed great interest in the work, and unusual ability, especially for a young man of his age. When Mr. Crain became ill with tuberculosis, resulting largely from overwork, Mr. Hughes took charge of the press section and developed it into an even more effective organization<sup>49</sup>.

Así Emmet Hughes ocupa de hecho el puesto de Agregado de Prensa de la Embajada. La OWI está a punto de nacer como tal, pero todavía todas las tareas de propaganda exterior dependen del FIS, que a su vez depende del COI, es decir, de Donovan.

Hayes contaba también para este trabajo de propaganda con los periodistas:

The Associated Press's Mr. Foltz would function as our informed cooperator and the Times (N. Y) might be influenced into stationing a special representative here to do the same. Mr. Crain, a secretary in the Embassy, who has started up publicity here in an excellent manner, would serve for liaison and also direct and supervise in general<sup>50</sup>.

Carlton Hayes abandonó Madrid el domingo 14 de enero de 1945; en marzo de ese mismo año llegó su sucesor Norman Armour. La guerra en Europa estaba a punto de acabarse. De los dos años y medio cruciales que pasó en España, el embajador Hayes nos ha dejado un testimonio precioso en su obra *Wartime Mission in Spain*, editada en 1946 y traducida y publicada en España ese mismo año.

Se hace inevitable la comparación con otra obra fundamental, *Ambassador on Special Mission*, del embajador británico Sir Samuel Hoare, publicada también en 1946. Mucho más aguda y crítica con el franquismo, no fue traducida en España en aquellos momentos. José María de Areilza publicó en 1947 su obra *Embajadores sobre España* en la que critica duramente a Hoare y salva en todo momento a Hayes, en un capítulo que titula nada menos que "Carlton Hayes dice la verdad"<sup>51</sup>. El libro de Areilza está prologado por Gregorio Marañón y quizá en este prólogo encontramos algunas alusiones muy significativas, como cuando

<sup>49</sup> Carta del embajador Hayes al Secretario de Estado de 7 de agosto de 1943 a la que se adjunta un memorandum donde se critica el trabajo de William Patterson al frente del "Outpost" de la OWI en Madrid, en NAW, RG 59, b. 87 (Department of State 103.916602/1423 GS AW).

<sup>50</sup> Telegrama del embajador Hayes al coronel Donovan (in person) de 27 de mayo de 1942, cit.

<sup>51</sup> Véase: AREILZA, J.M. de: *Embajadores sobre España*, Madrid, Instituto de Estudios Políticos, 1947 (cap II, "Carlton Hayes dice la verdad", pp. 67-99).



califica al libro de Hayes como “la obra, digna, veraz, respetuosa, aunque un tanto ingenua, que corresponde a un profesor de Historia”. Mientras que de la obra de Hoare dice que “ha producido estupefacción entre los propios ingleses, aun entre aquellos cuya hostilidad hacia la España actual está fuera de dudas”.

La animadversión que el que fue alcalde del Bilbao recién ocupado por los franquistas en 1937 y luego director general de Industria demuestra hacia Sir Samuel Hoare y la complacencia con lo escrito por Hayes hace casi que huelgen otros comentarios.

Hayes justifica en todo momento su trabajo en España, no sin razón, pues España no sólo no entra en guerra sino que al final de la guerra adoptó una actitud benevolente hacia Estados Unidos. Hombre católico y conservador, no plantea una actitud excesivamente crítica con el régimen imperante en España. La considera un puente necesario para las relaciones de Estados Unidos con Hispanoamérica, donde afirma que España no tiene pretensiones políticas que puedan contrarrestar la influencia estadounidense. Sostiene que hay menos diferencias entre España e Hispanoamérica que entre Inglaterra y los Estados Unidos. Llega a afirmar que tanto los países hispanoamericanos como España tienen una tendencia a recurrir como solución política a la dictadura militar.

En todo momento defiende una política de no ingerencia en los asuntos internos españoles. Es consciente de que la opinión pública en los Estados Unidos no deja de ver en el franquismo un régimen demasiado parecido a los del Eje y llega a sostener que el Gobierno Federal y el Departamento de Estado deberían influir en la opinión pública y en los medios de comunicación para evitar toda injerencia:

As the United States projects its worldwide leadership into post-war reconstruction and the organization and maintenance of international peace and security, it becomes all the more desirable that our Government, particularly our Department of State, should greatly strengthen and make much more effective its liaison with the American press and other fashioners of American public opinion and thereby contribute actively toward making and keeping that opinion well and wisely informed. This, I hope, would apply to our relations with Spain and other countries<sup>52</sup>.

Su visión de España no deja de ser muy tolerante con el régimen, ninguno de cuyos aspectos más negativos critica en ningún caso. Acepta la situación de hecho como buen diplomático y sostiene que la amistad con España, sea cual sea

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HAYES, C.J.H.: *Wartime Mission in Spain*, cit, p. 309.

su régimen, e independientemente de la opinión que de él se tenga en los Estados Unidos, es esencial para la política europea de la que ya se perfila como una superpotencia mundial.

Hoare y Hayes convivieron en Madrid con los representantes diplomáticos del Eje y los de otros muchos países. El tejer y destejer de la actividad de todos esos diplomáticos en la España más o menos neutral de la Segunda Guerra Mundial es un aspecto que no podemos tratar desgraciadamente aquí. Ya hemos citado la excelente obra de Massimiliano Guderzo, *Madrid e l'arte della diplomazia*, que se ocupa con rigor y abundancia de fuentes de estas cuestiones.

En el momento de crearse la OWI (13 de julio de 1942) Hughes, con un cargo no muy definido todavía, pasó a organizar el “Outpost of the Office of War Information” en Madrid. De todos modos, poco después de su llegada a Madrid, Hughes consiguió permiso para alistarse en el Ejército del norte de África. Allí fue asignado a la “Office of Strategic Services” (OSS).

En diciembre de 1942 William D. Patterson llega a Madrid para encargarse de las actividades de prensa y propaganda como “Chief Representative of the OWI in Spain”. En algunos documentos figurará también como agregado de prensa.

En ningún momento llegó a entenderse con el embajador Hayes:

Ever since Mr. Patterson's arrival in Madrid, last December, I have had difficulty in ascertaining from him exactly what the press section was doing. On numerous occasions he has given evasive and inaccurate replies to my questions in the matter. I persevered over a period of many months in endeavoring to obtain concrete information from him and in endeavoring to induce him to instil a little order in the press section, but without results<sup>53</sup>.

Hughes volvió a Madrid probablemente en febrero de 1943 y asumió de nuevo su tarea bajo las órdenes de Patterson como “Assistant Representative OWI in Spain”.

Patterson concebía su trabajo al parecer como algo volcado al exterior, una especie de relaciones públicas muy poco preocupado de la organización que dirigía:

Mr. Patterson has shown considerable interest in his work. In his own way he has worked hard. However, he is by nature an “outside man”.

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<sup>53</sup> Carta del embajador Hayes al Secretario de Estado de 7 de agosto de 1943 a la que se adjunta un memorandum donde se critica el trabajo de William Patterson al frente del “Outpost” de la OWI en Madrid, cit. En esta carta se hace mención al telegrama número 1995 de 31 de julio de 1943 en el que Hayes solicita al Departamento de Estado que Patterson abandone Madrid. No hemos podido localizar el telegrama.

While insisting on carrying on the work of administrating the office, he absents himself from the office during a great part of the working day, during which time he naturally neglects office routine and is not available for consultation by persons whose obligation it is to see that that routine, which is fundamental to the production of the various bulletins and to the distribution of all informational material, is carried out. I, myself, have great difficulty in communicating with Mr. Patterson./ Mr. Patterson has made a number of interesting contacts in Madrid, most of which, however, have been at the expense of the proper administration of the press office./ (...) Mr. Patterson has shown a remarkable lack of frankness in his reports to OWI. He systematically exaggerates the accomplishments of the press office and conceals its failures./ He has shown a similar lack of frankness with me. As I said in my telegram referred to, I can not accept as accurate or true anything he tells me<sup>54</sup>.

..... Patterson abandonó Madrid a principios de agosto de 1943, y desde el 13 de septiembre de 1943 Emmet J. Hughes figura como "Acting General Representative OWI in Spain"<sup>55</sup>. Desde mayo de 1944 firma todos sus documentos como "Press Attaché"<sup>56</sup>. Hayes se había salido con la suya y su protegido, católico irlandés como él, asume desde entonces toda la responsabilidad de prensa y propaganda.

The conduct of a press office in a country like Spain is an important and delicate task requiring complete honesty and capacity for close cooperation with the Embassy. Mr. Patterson has demonstrated that he possesses neither of these qualities, and I have therefore requested his recall./ We are fortunate in having Mr. Hughes in Madrid, since he has demonstrated an ability to direct this outpost in a thoroughly satisfactory manner, when given proper authority. I should like to emphasize the importance of leaving Mr. Hughes in charge (...) <sup>57</sup>.

<sup>54</sup> Carta del embajador Hayes al Secretario de Estado de 7 de agosto de 1943 a la que se adjunta un memorandum donde se critica el trabajo de William Patterson al frente del "Outpost" de la OWI en Madrid, cit.

<sup>55</sup> Hughes fue nombrado "Acting General Representative of the OWI" en Madrid por carta de Sherwood de 8 de septiembre de 1943. Su nombramiento fue efectivo en Madrid el 13 de septiembre. Cfr. "Operations Report-September and October" de Hughes a Sherwood de 1 de noviembre de 1943, en NAW, RG 208, E. 367, b. 347.

<sup>56</sup> De todos modos en febrero de 1944 Hughes abandonó su cargo temporalmente siendo sustituido en sus tareas por Gordon F. Wise bajo la supervisión de uno de los secretarios de la embajada, Haering. Aunque su ausencia fue breve llegó a pensarse en nombrar un sucesor para lo que Hayes exigía ser consultado por la OWI. Cfr. carta del embajador Hayes a la OWI de 5 de febrero de 1944 en NAW, RG 59 (DS 124.526/259).

<sup>57</sup> Carta del embajador Hayes al Secretario de Estado de 7 de agosto de 1943 a la que se adjunta un memorandum donde se critica el trabajo de William Patterson al frente del "Outpost" de la OWI en Madrid, cit.

En Washington y Nueva York causó sorpresa y cierta perplejidad la insistencia de Hayes tanto en que Patterson abandonara Madrid como en que Hughes se hiciera cargo de sus tareas. En un "Memorandum of conversation" del Departamento de Estado firmado por W. E. DeCourcy se informa de que T. L. Barnard ("Associate Chief, Outpost Service Bureau, OWI") "in view of the Ambassador's strong feeling in the matter, Patterson should be removed from Madrid". Sin embargo, también se da cuenta del desacuerdo de Barnard y del propio Sherwood sobre Hughes tanto por su juventud como por su vinculación personal al embajador que le dominaría por completo. Y se recomienda buscar un nuevo responsable para Madrid<sup>58</sup>.

El asunto debió tener incluso mayor repercusión, pues un simple ciudadano del estado de Nueva York que se dirige al Departamento de Estado quejándose de la publicación por parte de la Embajada de Madrid de *El Mundo Católico*, a lo que nos referiremos luego, llega a afirmar que el embajador Hayes, "a member of the Roman Church, had the American press attaché at his Embassy removed because he objected to a policy which conflicted with the American doctrine of separation of state and church"<sup>59</sup>. No hemos encontrado otros documentos oficiales que se hicieran eco de este aspecto del enfrentamiento entre Patterson y Hayes. En cualquier caso, Hughes siguió en Madrid y asumió toda la responsabilidad de la OWI tal y como recomendaba Hayes.

El temperamento del embajador Hayes y lo delicado de su misión en España creó en él una cierta obsesión por el control de toda actividad que directa o indirectamente se relacionase con la embajada. No sólo tuvo problemas con la OWI y Patterson sino que también los tuvo, como no podía ser menos, con la OSS, de lo que nos ocupamos luego.

Hayes temía que tanto una actividad de propaganda que pudiera entrar en contradicción con su actividad diplomática como las labores de espionaje, pudieran empañar su tarea. Creía que la posición de la Estados Unidos en España durante la guerra – y también previsiblemente en la posguerra – pasaba sobre todo por acuerdos e intercambios económicos<sup>60</sup>.

Al menos ante las autoridades españolas, el cargo de Hughes era el de Agregado de Prensa, como figura en todos los membretes. Sin embargo en parte

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<sup>58</sup> "Memorandum of Conversation" entre T. L. Barnard y W. E. DeCourcy de 4 de agosto de 1943, en NAW, RG 59, b. 87 (DS 103.916602/1407 GS AW).

<sup>59</sup> Carta de S. Miles Bouton (Ashville, New York) al Secretario de Estado de 1 de febrero de 1944, en NAW, RG 59, b. 732 (DS 124. 526/ 258).

<sup>60</sup> Cfr. GUDERZO, M.: *Op. cit.*, p. 273. También sobre la actividad de la OSS en España en 1943, véase *ibidem*, pp. 271-273.

de la correspondencia dirigida a los Estados Unidos figura como “Acting Chief Representative OWI in Spain”. En cualquier caso era el encargado de todo lo referente a cuestiones de información y propaganda. Probablemente fue el soldado raso que tuvo una más alta responsabilidad de todo el ejército norteamericano. No abandonaría su cargo hasta 1946<sup>61</sup>.

Como acabamos de ver la OWI no existe como tal hasta bien entrado 1942. En España no comienza a funcionar hasta mediados de agosto de ese mismo año. Sus primeras armas fuera de los Estados Unidos las hará durante la invasión del norte de África, momento en el que precisamente Hughes entra en contacto con ella.

El “Outpost” de la OWI tenía pues un carácter relativamente independiente. En octubre de 1942, antes de la operación “Torch”, Hughes prepara un informe dirigido a la OWI sobre “Organization and Operations of Madrid Outpost” donde se describe la puesta en marcha de esta dependencia de la Embajada. Durante el verano de 1942 se había trasladado de la sede de la Embajada a Don Ramón de la Cruz n. 5 (Byne House), que empieza a ser conocida como La Casa Americana. El edificio cuenta con cuatro plantas y Hughes lo considera excelente para desarrollar su trabajo. Éste se organiza en cuatro divisiones: “Editorial Division”; “Publication Division”; “Distribution Division” y “Photographic Division”. Esta organización tiene inicialmente un carácter provisional y se hará más compleja con el tiempo. Así describe las ideas esenciales que configuran el carácter de la nueva organización:

1. This organization, while in separate quarters and an outpost of an independent government agency, is part of the American Embassy – in the sense that it is part of the single, unified political effort here directed by the Ambassador. It is, at the same time directly and alone responsible to the ambassador./
2. An obvious axiom is that our broad

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Hughes estuvo en España hasta 1946 y publicó un libro sobre la España de Franco en 1947 (*Report from Spain*). En 1946 pasó a dirigir la oficina de *Time-Life* en Roma, de donde pasó a Berlín en 1948 con el mismo cargo. En 1949 volvió a Nueva York como director de colaboraciones (“articles Editor”) de la revista *Life*. En 1952 el partido republicano recurrió a la ayuda de Henry R. Luce, director de *Life*, y aunque Hughes era de convicciones mucho más liberales que Eisenhower, colaboró con la Administración Eisenhower y le preparó algunos de sus más importantes discursos durante la campaña y la presidencia, pero abandonó la Casa Blanca en septiembre de 1953. Eisenhower recibió su ayuda para la reelección y en algunas otras ocasiones. Sobre su experiencia con el presidente Eisenhower publicó en 1963 *The Ordeal of Power*. Antes había publicado *America the Vincible* (1959), donde no dudó en criticar aspectos de política exterior y defensa del general Eisenhower. Por otro lado siguió trabajando siempre en el imperio periodístico de Luce, hasta marzo de 1960, en que pasó a trabajar para la familia Rockefeller como director de relaciones públicas. En noviembre de 1962 pasó a trabajar para *Newsweek* y el *Washington Post*. Murió en 1982, a los sesenta y un años de edad.

purpose here is the betterment, to the maximum, of relations between Spain and the United States, and the simultaneous strengthening of the anti-Fascist forces within Spain. To achieve this end, propaganda and "cultural relations" are logically affiliated instruments. They are consequently linked in the new "center", which will house them both./ 3. While the two methods of action cited are in many ways proximate in character, one or the other is necessarily of greater force at different times and under different conditions. Today this balance weighs heavily in favor of propaganda – an informational and proselytizing program *which is a war program*, immediate in its war objectives and swift in the service of those objectives./ 4. As a consequence, the "center" which is now being organized signifies a propaganda center where the work of propaganda has unqualified priority, and where peripheral activities may be conducted to further this end but never to obscure or impinge on it<sup>62</sup>.

Meses después el trabajo había ido organizándose. La estructura originaria no varió sustancialmente pero se fueron definiendo cada vez mejor los fines específicos y las metas a las que pretendía llegar. Con fecha 17 de marzo de 1943 un documento de la Oficina describe así sus propósitos respecto a España:

1. To increase respect and regard for the United States and the other United Nations, to promote confidence in our total victory over the Axis, and to convince the Spanish people that the historical continuation of Spain as a nation depends on a United Nations victory.
2. To prevent Spain from willingly becoming a base for military operations by the Axis against the United Nations.
3. Considering the possibility of Germany's invading Spain against her will, to stimulate the Spaniards – all classes of Spaniards – to make the path of the invader as difficult and dangerous as possible<sup>63</sup>.

En julio de 1944, ya liberada Roma y mientras las tropas aliadas avanzan en Italia hacia Toscana y en Francia hacia París, las actividades de la OWI en Madrid están en plena efervescencia. De Hughes depende un complejo organigrama que desarrolla tareas en múltiples campos. Así describe él mismo su tarea en ese momento:

As Press Attaché and Acting Chief Representative for OWI, I have as my administrative responsibilities the following: (a) application and

<sup>62</sup> Informe de Emmet H. Hughes a la OWI de 28 de octubre de 1942 ("Organization and Operations of Madrid Outpost"), en NAW, RG 208, E. 387, b. 726. El subrayado en el original.

<sup>63</sup> Texto recogido en un amplio documento mecanografiado, de 75 folios, firmado por Alicia Gallagher, con fecha 28 de octubre de 1944 y titulado *Basic Report. Madrid Outpost*, en NAW, RG 208, E 6J, b. 4.



implementation of policy prescribed by my superiors in OWI in Washington and the Ambassador in Madrid; (b) assisting in the shaping of the policy in consultation with the Ambassador in Madrid personally and with OWI Washington by cable and letter; (c) general supervision of the OWI office in Madrid as a whole (not in its several divisions); (d) maintenance of relations and correspondence with appropriate Spanish Government officials; (e) maintenance of relations with other agencies of our Government in Madrid; (f) maintenance of relations with appropriate agencies of foreign Governments, especially British and Italian Press Sections, as well as Press Attaches of Latin American and neutral nations; (g) maintenance of relations and correspondence with 12 American Consular offices in Spain and any of 33 Allied consular offices acting as distribution centers for our material; (h) personal relations with appropriate Spanish journalists and professional leaders, apart from officials and including political dissidents from present Spanish regime; (i) correspondence by cable and letter with OWI Washington and preparation of Monthly Operations and Other reports for OWI<sup>64</sup>.

Parece obvio que los servicios de prensa de la embajada americana sostuvieran relaciones especiales con sus homólogos británicos e hispanoamericanos. Pero también lo hacían con los italianos, sobre todo cuando después del armisticio de septiembre de 1943 la embajada italiana, encabezada por el embajador Paulucci di Calboli estuviera en la posición de co-beligerante con los aliados. Mientras tanto la “Repubblica Sociale Italiana”, no reconocida por Franco, mantenía en España una representación oficiosa protegida por los más radicales falangistas<sup>65</sup>.

La OWI en España operaba bajo la cobertura de la oficina de prensa de la Embajada americana en España, pues el Gobierno español no permitía de ningún modo la actividad de “agencias” extranjeras de estas características fuera de los canales diplomáticos. Algo parecido pasaba con el “Ministry of Information” británico y, desde luego, también con los alemanes.

Desde el momento en que Hughes se hace cargo, definitivamente, de las actividades de la OWI en España, comienza a elaborar unos informes mensuales

<sup>64</sup> Carta de Emmet J. Hughes, “Press Attaché”, a Edward Barrett, “Acting Director, Overseas Branch, OWI” de 13 de junio de 1944 en NAW, RG 208, E 387, b. 731.

<sup>65</sup> Sobre la propaganda italiana en España hasta el armisticio, véase: PIZARROSO QUINTERO, A.: “Propaganda italiana en la España franquista durante la segunda guerra mundial (hasta el 8 de septiembre de 1943) en *Comunicaciones presentadas al II Encuentro de Investigadores del Franquismo* (2 tomos), Alicante, Institut de Cultura “Juan Gil Albert”, 1995, tomo II, pp. 213-222. Véase también GUDERZO, M.: *Op. cit.*, sobre todo pp. 324-329 y 385-390.



de actividades que remite regularmente a Nueva York. Estos informes son una fuente preciosa para conocer las actividades de propaganda en España en todos sus aspectos. En ellos se puede seguir día a día la evolución de la distribución de medios impresos, material filmado, control de audiencias de radio, etc., etc. Su estructura es variable pero dedica siempre un epígrafe al "Publications Program", otro al "Motion Pictures Program", "News and Features Program", "Photographics & Radiophoto Program", "Advertising Program in the Spanish Press"<sup>66</sup>. A ellos nos referiremos cuando nos ocupemos de los distintos medios o canales de propaganda.

Nos hemos referido más arriba a la actuación de los británicos en este campo y a la colaboración que llegaron a mantener en numerosas ocasiones con los norteamericanos. Sin embargo, y no sólo por las distintas opciones políticas que sus gobiernos llegaron a sostener respecto a España, las actividades de propaganda de ambos aliados en nuestro país tuvieron unas diferencias que el propio Hughes señala en su primer informe mensual fechado el 1 de noviembre de 1943:

At this point, it might be pertinent to point out a basic difference between our present organization and the British. In the face of limitations imposed by the political situation here, the British Press Office has, to this date, concentrated on a specialized, relatively small audience for its material. We, on the other hand, have never restricted ourselves in this fashion and have endeavored to strike a compromise between the carefully specialized type of distribution and the *en masse* campaign which could only be properly effected through the normal, in the past closed, public channels. Stated differently, we have tried to the maximum to compensate by our own distribution for the outting off of those normal channels. The specific result of this difference in the British and our systems is the fact that we distribute approximately 5 to 10 times larger quantities of material than the British./ The British system has been predicated on the assumpt which virtually made it axiomatic that the only proper targets to be reached were the political leaders of the moment who found themselves in a strategic position from which they might affect the immediate course of Spain's policy. We have recognized the importance of that type of work—an importance dictated by the fact of Spain's great military significance in relation to

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<sup>66</sup> El primero de estos informes comprende los meses de septiembre y octubre de 1943 ("Operations Report-September and October"). Continúan después con el título, ya fijo, de "Operational Report for month of ...", en algunos casos se agrupan dos meses. El último que hemos manejado es el correspondiente a mayo de 1945. Todos ellos en NAW, RG 208, E. 387, b. 729, 730, 731, 732.

Allied operations of the last year. However, we have not restricted either production or distribution in the manner or degree to which the British Press Office has. To do so would, I believe, have been to confuse (a) diplomatic pressure or political warfare, necessarily aimed at a restricted target, with (b) informational and propaganda operations, which by definition operate on a more popular, vastly less restricted level<sup>67</sup>.

La actitud británica respecto al régimen de Franco, aunque esencialmente era análoga a la norteamericana, fue siempre más dura. Es decir, los británicos practicaban la no injerencia, aceptaban el régimen de Franco como un poder de hecho, buscaban también el mantenimiento de la neutralidad. Pero el gobierno nunca llegó a tener hacia ellos la actitud benevolente que sí llegó a tener hacia los norteamericanos y por tanto las fricciones fueron mayores. La propaganda británica buscaba, como la norteamericana, espacios en los medios de comunicación españoles pero los encontraron mucho menos que los americanos. La *BBC* fue más dura que la *The Voice of America* con el régimen franquista, lo que provocó muchas veces el enojo del embajador Hoare; además los británicos buscaron siempre el contacto con minorías cara a una posible restauración monárquica con su apoyo una vez acabada la guerra<sup>68</sup>.

En cuanto al personal, el "Outpost" de la OWI en Madrid contó con un alto número de dependientes que aún creció con el tiempo hasta que en las postrimerías de la guerra el propio Hayes instó a su reducción. En 1943, todavía bajo la dirección de Patterson trabajaban en la Casa Americana un total de unas cuarenta personas incluidos el propio Willian Patterson ("Press Attaché and Director") y Emmet J. Hughes ("Assistant Director"). La "Editorial Division" a cargo del propio Hughes contaba con Francisco Ugarte ("Assistant chief and chief of all Spanish personnel"), un "photoeditor" (Adolfo Bramtot) que también hacía funciones de traductor y José Méndez Herrera, traductor; además tres secretarías y una telefonista. La "Production Division" estaba encabezada por William Derganc ("Technical Supervisor"), otros dos americanos y cuatro españoles, además de otros once españoles que trabajaban en la "Distribution Section". La esposa de Charles Foltz dirigía la "Social Division" además de la biblioteca de la Casa Americana con la colaboración de dos españolas; de ella dependía también la sección de "Motion Pictures" que contaba con Diego Ramírez como operador y montador y otro español. Este staff de la Casa Americana contaba además con dos

<sup>67</sup> "Operations Report—September and October" (de Hughes a Sherwood) de 1 de noviembre de 1943, en NAW, RG 208, E. 387, b. 729.

<sup>68</sup> Sobre la propaganda británica en España véase: COLE, R.: *Op. cit.*, pp. 133-146.

señoras de la limpieza, tres mensajeros, un conserje, un portero y un portero de noche<sup>69</sup>.

En junio de 1944, el personal del "Outpost" de la OWI constaba de trece norteamericanos y aproximadamente ciento veinte españoles, contratados como ayudantes, traductores, bibliotecarios, recepcionistas, mensajeros, operadores cinematográficos, etc. Su organización se basaba en el siguiente organigrama: un Jefe ("Chief", E. Hughes), un departamento editorial ("Editorial Board", de cuatro miembros todos ellos jefes de división), una oficina administrativa (con un director y seis miembros) y seis divisiones operativas.

Éstas eran las siguientes: "Radio and Propaganda Analysis", "News and Features" (con dos secciones: "News" y "Features"), "Motion Pictures", "Distribution" (con tres secciones: "Mail", "Files" y "Messenger"), "Social-Cultural" y "Reproduction" (con dos secciones: "Production" y "Photo").

El 1 de julio de 1944, y después de una larga negociación, el embajador Hayes consiguió que FET y de las JONS desalojase el edificio del Instituto Nacional para Señoritas (calle Miguel Ángel) que fue alquilado por la Embajada por cinco años para instalar su sede. El momento coincidió con una reorganización de la Embajada y de toda la presencia norteamericana en España dado el curso de la guerra<sup>70</sup>. Acabamos de ver que en ese momento la actividad de la OWI en Madrid estaba en su apogeo. Sin embargo, coincidiendo con el cambio de sede de la Embajada, el embajador Hayes se plantea una disminución en las actividades de prensa y propaganda, lo que, naturalmente, afectaba al "Outpost" de la OWI en Madrid:

(...) We no longer had to wage psychological and propagandist warfare against the Axis in Spain. We had already won it, and all Spain knew that the unconditional surrender of Germany was approaching. There was no need, I thought, of our continuing to spend large sums of money on the printing and distribution of war propaganda. Our large staff at the Casa Americana should be drastically reduced. at the same time I perceived long-term advantages in maintaining and developing offices of a Press Attaché and of a Cultural Relations Attaché, which would continue within the Embassy and under the State Department after such and emergency wartime organization as the OWI should have disappeared. To this end, I dispatched to the State Department in September a fairly elaborate report, containing specific recommendations. With these, Mr. T. L. Barnard, the Overseas Director

<sup>69</sup> Cfr. "Staff of Casa Americana", anexo a la carta de William Patterson a James Linen ("Outpost Bureau, Overseas Branch, OWI") de 28 de mayo de 1943, en NAW, RG 208, E. 387, b. 727.

<sup>70</sup> Cfr. HAYES, C.J.H.: *Wartime Mission in Spain*, cit., pp. 265-66.

of OWI who visited us at Madrid in early October, expressed himself as being in agreement. It was accordingly arranged that, while Mr. Emmet Hughes and a few other members of the local OWI Outpost would remain for a time, their functions would be gradually curtailed, and the Outpost would be subordinated to a Press Attaché chosen from among Foreign Service Officers in the Embassy. To this post, I appointed First Secretary Philip Bonsal in October. He proved, I believe, a happy choice<sup>71</sup>.

Naturalmente la actividad de la OWI no se desarrollaba sólo en la capital. A través de los consulados establecidos, su material, tanto impreso como fotográfico o cinematográfico, se distribuía también en las distintas provincias españolas. Se guardan en los archivos informes de los cónsules referentes a estas materias de propaganda e información.

En junio de 1943 se abrió una oficina de la OWI en Barcelona dirigida por John Caragol, que contaba con cinco funcionarios. Trabajaban también para la OWI dentro de los respectivos consulados y sobre todo para distribuir publicaciones algunas personas en Valencia, Sevilla, Bilbao y Vigo:

The media employed for the OWI activities in Spain have included, principally, radio, recordings, cable wireless news, pictures, radiophoto, exhibits, film strips, features, publications, motion pictures a lending library, and social entertainments<sup>72</sup>.

La oficina de prensa de Barcelona actuaba bajo la dirección del "Outpost" de la OWI en Madrid. Contaba con una "listening room for American and British Broadcast", una "motion picture room" que programaba semanalmente proyecciones. Como el resto de los otros cinco consulados, era fundamentalmente un centro de distribución de las publicaciones que se producían en Madrid o que se importaban de Estados Unidos<sup>73</sup>.

## Espías americanos en España

Madrid, como toda capital de un estado neutral que mantiene relaciones diplomáticas con ambos bandos contendientes, era un nido de espías.

<sup>71</sup> HAYES, C.J.H.: *Wartime Mission in Spain*, cit., p. 267.

<sup>72</sup> *Basic Report...*, cit., p. 26.

<sup>73</sup> Cfr. *Basic Report...*, cit., pp. 67-68.

Ya hemos visto hasta qué punto pueden llegar a confundirse las tareas de la información pública y la propaganda con las de “inteligencia”. A pesar de todo tienen una diferencia esencial. El propagandista intenta transmitir una información a un determinado objetivo, generalmente lo más amplio posible. Para ello necesita conocer muy bien el terreno. El espía, en cambio, es aquel que recoge esa información, la selecciona y la analiza.

Muchos informes sobre la situación española, que elaboraba la Oficina de Prensa de la Embajada americana o cualquier otro servicio de la misma embajada, eran procesados y analizados en Estados Unidos por la OSS. Muchas de las directivas de propaganda que llegaban al “Outpost” de la OWI en Madrid se basaban en los informes que sobre España elaboraban agentes de la OSS.

Los informes sobre la situación política española que indicaran hasta qué punto España podía o no entrar en la guerra o qué relaciones económicas mantenía con las potencias enemigas, etc. tenían tanto valor muchas veces como los puramente militares, es decir, la cesión de bases navales españolas para uso de submarinos alemanes o cualquier otra cosa.

El propio Donovan antes de ser nombrado “Coordinator of Information” estuvo en España como enviado especial de Roosevelt para pulsar la situación española en febrero de 1941. En Madrid se entrevistó, naturalmente, con el embajador Weddell y con el embajador Hoare. Estados Unidos todavía no estaba en guerra<sup>74</sup>. En marzo de 1941 también fue enviado a España el Tte. Col. Robert Solborg que después con Donovan sería uno de los fundadores de la OSS. Procedía del norte de África y, en contra de la visión de los británicos que preveían una inminente penetración alemana en España, informó que ésta no era previsible inmediatamente<sup>75</sup>. Solborg fue el primer representante del COI en Portugal. Llegó a Lisboa en febrero de 1942. Organizó por su cuenta contactos en Madrid y sobre todo en el Marruecos francés, donde prometió armas y apoyo de los Estados Unidos a oficiales franceses, lo que hizo que Donovan lo expulsase de la OSS<sup>76</sup>. De todos modos el Estado Mayor Americano lo mantuvo como Agregado Militar en Lisboa, desde donde controló una red de agentes en la Europa ocupada y también en España. Su conflicto con Donovan coincidió con el conflicto de la OSS en España con el embajador Hayes al que nos referiremos a continuación<sup>77</sup>.

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<sup>74</sup> Cfr. SMITH, B.F.: *Op. cit.*, p. 47 y SMITH, R.H.: *Op. cit.*, p. 77.

<sup>75</sup> Cfr. SMITH, B.F.: *Op. cit.*, pp. 58-59.

<sup>76</sup> Cfr. SMITH, B.F.: *Op. cit.*, pp. 145-146.

<sup>77</sup> Cfr. TELO, A.J.: *Op. cit.*, pp. 124-125.

La OSS estaba organizada en distintas secciones<sup>78</sup>. Los agentes sobre el terreno en los países neutrales provenían del “Secret Intelligence Branch”. En buena medida los agentes de la OSS en España y Portugal actuaron coordinadamente<sup>79</sup>. De todos modos se simultaneaban operaciones de distinto carácter. Así, desde Estados Unidos, y más tarde desde los cuarteles americanos del norte de África, se planearon acciones de las que los agentes de la OSS en Madrid no tenían la menor información y mucho menos el embajador Hayes.

Hayes no sólo tuvo problemas con Patterson como jefe del “Outpost” de la OWI en Madrid, también los tuvo con los agentes de la OSS. El embajador Hayes pretendía controlar y centralizar toda actividad que de una manera u otra implicase la imagen de su embajada y en general de los Estados Unidos. Hayes tampoco llegó a entenderse nunca con Di Lucia, que dirigía las actividades de espionaje de la OSS en España y Portugal bajo la cobertura de la agregaduría comercial en la embajada americana en Lisboa. Tampoco con otros agentes como Jack Pratt, Frank Ryan o Gregory Thomas.

Hayes temía que tanto una actividad de propaganda que pudiera entrar en contradicción con su actividad diplomática como las labores de espionaje, pudieran empañar su tarea. Creía que la posición de la Estados Unidos en España durante la guerra – y también previsiblemente en la posguerra – pasaba sobre todo por acuerdos e intercambios económicos<sup>80</sup>. Los problemas entre la OSS en España y el embajador Hayes comenzaron poco después de su llegada a Madrid:

As early as August 1942, the ambassador complained to the State Department that “a great deal of the so-called ‘information’” being sent to Washington by O.S.S. men in Spain was “little more than hearsay”. In late 1942, the ambassador and Donovan managed to smooth out some O.S.S. personnel problems, but Hayes soon recommended that the whole O.S.S. organization in Spain be placed under the authority of the embassy’s military attaché. When Washington failed to act on this suggestion, the volume and tempo of Hayes’s complaints about O.S.S. increased. By the early spring of 1943, the ambassador had given up hope of trying to work with the American subversive warfare organization and, while collecting evidence to support his distaste for O.S.S., was biding his time until the right moment arose for an all-out attack on Donovan’s organization<sup>81</sup>.

<sup>78</sup> Véase: BROWN, A.C. (ed.): *The Secret War Report of the OSS*, cit., sobre todo el cap. 2 (“The Structure of the OSS”), pp. 62-133.

<sup>79</sup> Sobre la OSS en Portugal, véase: TELLO, A.J.: *Op. cit.*, pp. 122-145.

<sup>80</sup> Cfr. GUDERZO, M.: *Op. cit.*, p. 273. También sobre la OSS en España en 1943, véase *ibidem*, pp. 271-273.

<sup>81</sup> SMITH, B.F.: *Op. cit.*, p. 189 y las referencias allí citadas.



Una de las operaciones de la OSS de la que no tuvo información el embajador Hayes y que provocó el llamado “incidente de Málaga” y culminó en enfrentamiento de la embajada con la OSS fue la organizada por Donald Downes<sup>82</sup>.

A principios de 1942 Donald Downes, que había trabajado como agente del “American Naval Intelligence” en los Balcanes y el Próximo Oriente y en el británico MI6 en Estados Unidos comenzó a trabajar con Donovan. Uno de sus primeros proyectos fue el organizar un grupo de españoles exilados para futuras operaciones de espionaje en España. Para ello se puso en contacto con Julio Álvarez del Vayo, a la sazón exilado en los Estados Unidos y con José Aguirre del PNV, quienes a su vez le pusieron en contacto con el gobierno republicano español en el exilio en Ciudad de México.

En noviembre de 1942 Downes disponía ya de un equipo en el que había también algunos ex-miembros de la Brigada Lincoln. Después del desembarco en el norte de África Downes y su equipo de unos veinte hombres partieron para trabajar en la “Intelligence Division” del V Ejército de Marck Clark. Downes amplió su campo de alistamiento en los campos de concentración argelinos donde sobrevivían numerosos republicanos españoles.

Cuando tenía preparado un amplio grupo no le fue concedida la solicitud de liberarlos, pero él organizó su fuga e instaló su base bajo la cobertura de una falsa estación meteorológica unos 70 Km. al sur Oujda en Argelia. En principio se preparaban para infiltrarse en el Marruecos español caso de una invasión alemana de éste u otra eventualidad. También se planeó con el apoyo explícito del propio Donovan infiltrar a gente en el mismo territorio español metropolitano.

En junio de 1943 Downes mandó a su primer destacamento a Málaga en una barca de pescadores. Entretanto Downes se había entrevistado con Juan Negrín en Inglaterra, quien, con demasiado optimismo, le garantizaba un levantamiento general en España contra el régimen de Franco. Poco después mandó otro grupo a Cádiz. Ambos grupos disponían de armas ligeras y equipo de radio, y estaban coordinados también con los servicios secretos británicos. El grupo de Málaga fue capturado por la policía española que, tanto por el material intervenido como por las confesiones arrancadas bajo tortura, podía probar la directa implicación norteamericana.

El incidente provocó una protesta formal del Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores al embajador Hayes. También hubo terremoto en Washington donde Donovan afirmó desconocer la operación aunque terminó aceptando que la

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Para describir de manera sucinta esa operación seguimos fundamentalmente a SMITH, R.H.: *Op. cit.*, pp. 74-82.



había impulsado y que había sido aprobada por la sección de Inteligencia del V Ejército.

Este incidente reforzó la posición de Hayes en su exigencia de limitar y controlar las actividades de la OSS en España. Desde abril de 1943 el nuevo jefe de la misión de la OSS en España era Gregory Thomas, que tampoco fue santo de la devoción del embajador. Hayes llegó a enviar un despacho al secretario de Estado Hull en el que criticaba abiertamente toda la actividad de la OSS en la península Ibérica y tachaba de incompetentes a su agentes<sup>83</sup>.

Probablemente uno de los momentos en los que España tuvo mayor interés estratégico para los aliados fue en los meses anteriores a la operación “Torch” y luego a la consolidación aliada en el norte de África hasta la caída de Túnez en 1943. Así describe el historiador oficial las tareas de la OSS en España:

(1) The securing of all information, military, political and economic, about a possible Nazi coup or invasion; (2) the securing of intelligence regarding Spanish aid, economic and otherwise, to the Axis, to the end that such assistance might be exposed or blocked; and (3) the amassing of the sort of background material which would be vital to the Allies if the Iberian Peninsula became a battlefield (including the recruiting of agents who could be counted on in such an eventuality)<sup>84</sup>.

Desde febrero de 1943 todas las operaciones de la OSS en la península Ibérica estuvieron bajo el control directo de Eisenhower. En el momento de la operación “Torch”, el servicio de “Secret Intelligence” (SI) de la OSS contaba con ocho agentes en España y Portugal, incluidas las Islas Canarias. Éstos no estaban al tanto de operaciones como la organizada por Donald Downes.

Además de este tipo de operaciones la OSS disponía en Madrid de distintos grupos de agentes dedicados a una tarea mucho más callada, recoger y procesar información. Estos grupos recogían muchas veces información análoga a la de los servicios diplomáticos pero obviamente pretendían llegar más allá. También organizaban redes en las que entraban en contacto con las organizaciones de los vencidos en la Guerra Civil, a pesar de que eran conscientes del riesgo que suponía este tipo de actividad.

Los informes que remitían estas redes llegaban por distintos conductos hasta Washington. En los archivos de la OSS se conservan todo tipo de informes sobre fortificaciones, movimientos de tropa, de material, etc. en España. No faltan

<sup>83</sup> Despacho (n. 991) del embajador Hayes al secretario de Estado de 16 de junio de 1943 en NAW, RG 226, E. 146, b. 192, citado en GUDERZO, M.: *Op. cit.*, p. 272.

<sup>84</sup> BROWN, A.C. (ed.): *The Secret War Report of the OSS*, cit., p. 157.

en esos informes los croquis, dibujos y mapas. Hay también informes sobre la situación en Alemania obtenidos de combatientes de la División Azul de regreso a España<sup>85</sup>. Llegaban también otros informes de más obtención como por ejemplo una lista de “Spanish Radio Stations”, es decir, todas las EAJ<sup>86</sup>. También llegaban informes sobre las organizaciones de Falange en el norte de África y sus relaciones con los servicios alemanes de espionaje<sup>87</sup>, incluso se da cuenta de una operación preparada para desarticular la red alemana en Melilla<sup>88</sup>. Ya en las postrimerías de la guerra, en 1945, se multiplican los informes sobre alemanes que se asientan en España<sup>89</sup>.

Estos agentes, muchas veces anónimos, son excelentes informadores. La lectura de sus informes en español se vuelve algo delicioso y merecería un estudio en el cual no podemos detenernos ahora. Naturalmente los nombres con que son conocidos no son sus verdaderos nombres. Así figura Valle, Pepín, Concha, Conde, Polar, y tantos otros. Valle, cuya identidad no hemos podido localizar, controlaba una amplísima red cuyos informes eran muy apreciados, conocida como “Valle’s Chain”<sup>90</sup>.

En general estos grupos o redes funcionaban al margen de la embajada que, a pesar de los esfuerzos de Hayes, no podía controlarles completamente. Entre ellos puede mencionarse también el trabajo que realizó Aline Griffith.

De enero de 1944 hasta el final de la guerra, Aline Griffith trabajó en Madrid al servicio de la OSS<sup>91</sup>. Su trabajo se desarrollaba bajo la cobertura de la “American Oil Mission” que formalmente dirigía Frank Ryan, que había sido “Chief of SI for Spain and Portugal” en Washington. Gregory Thomas seguía siendo “Chief of Station” en Madrid.

En estas oficinas se mantenía un horario normal para no levantar sospechas. Y de hecho en ellas se cumplía con parte del trabajo que utilizaban

<sup>85</sup> Muchos de estos informes procedentes de España pueden verse en NAW, RG 226, E 97, b. 18, b. 19 y b. 20.

<sup>86</sup> “Spanish Radio Stations” en NAW, RG 226, E. 97, b. 20 (f. 344).

<sup>87</sup> “Spanish German Espionage System in North Africa” en NAW, RG 226, E. 97, b. 24 (f. 410).

<sup>88</sup> “Operation vs. German-Spanish Group in Melilla” en NAW, RG 226, E. 97, b. 35 (f. 618).

<sup>89</sup> La mayoría de estos informes en NAW, RG 226, E. 127, b. 1.

<sup>90</sup> La mayoría de los informes de Valle y sus agentes pueden encontrarse en NAW, RG 226, E. 127, b. 2 (f. 11) y b. 3 (f. 14). Los informes de otros agentes de distintas provincias en NAW, RG 226, E. 127, b. 15.

<sup>91</sup> Esta joven americana, graduada en Mount St. Vincent College en 1943, después de trabajar para la OSS en España pasó a Francia y sirvió después de la guerra en Suiza. Abandonó el servicio para casarse con el conde de Quintanilla en 1948 con el que tuvo tres hijos. Se licenció en la Universidad de Madrid en 1952 y volvió a trabajar para la CIA desde 1958 hasta 1980. Es autora de una novela de espionaje basada en su experiencia en España, *The Spy Wore Red*.

como cobertura. Disponían de un aparato emisor de radio para enviar y recibir mensajes codificados. El trabajo de los agentes consistía en reclutar a otros sobre el terreno para obtener información y para mantener viva una red que pudiera ser utilizada en caso de cualquier emergencia:

Most of us organized chains (agents nets), as we had been taught, as soon after arrival as possible, and we had been trained to keep all our activities secret from each other. For the head of my chain I used a Spanish Communist who had been the private secretary of one woman in whom she would have total confidence, since her life depended on this, and that woman would select another, and so on, until 15 women had been recruited. That way I knew only one other member of the chain, the last woman only knew one; the others knew two, but no more, so that if one were to be caught the chain would not be uncovered in its entirety. These women were chosen to be located inside suspects' offices as charwomen, secretaries, or maids<sup>92</sup>.

Además de las coberturas que hemos mencionado se valieron de muchas otras. Disponían de locales, oficinas camufladas o pisos que no sólo eran viviendas. Las oficinas del "Secret Intelligence" de la OSS en Madrid estaban situadas en Alcalá Galiano número 4, 2º piso. Más tarde se trasladaron a un ático sobre la residencia del embajador americano en la calle Eduardo Dato, por razones de seguridad, pues así estaban amparados por la inmunidad diplomática.

Los agentes de la OSS en Madrid recibían instrucciones para evitar familiaridad y relaciones de amistad con el personal de la embajada, pues éstos carecían de entrenamiento de seguridad. Aunque también podemos suponer que la desconfianza de Hayes respecto a la OSS era mutua.

La actividad pues de la OSS en España pudo alguna vez interferir con los designios diplomáticos que pretendía llevar a cabo Hayes y el Departamento de Estado a través de todos sus instrumentos, incluida la propaganda. En este último caso podemos afirmar que no hubo solapamiento entre ambas actividades.

La OSS y sus agentes en España pretendían poner a punto potenciales operaciones de guerra psicológica caso de una entrada de España en el conflicto y, siempre, recoger la mayor cantidad de información de las actividades enemigas en España tanto en el terreno militar como el político y diplomático.

La actividad de la OWI en España transcurría por canales fundamentalmente públicos y pretendía difundir entre los españoles la posición

<sup>92</sup> ROMANONES, A., Countess of, *Op. cit.*, pp. 125.

de los Estados Unidos y dar la mayor cantidad de información favorable a la causa aliada.

La contradicción mayor estaba en que uno de los ejes de la propaganda americana en aquella España franquista consistía en asegurar al régimen su supervivencia siempre y cuando se mantuviese verdaderamente neutral, mientras que la OSS debía preparar el escenario de una España franquista combatiendo junto a las potencias del Eje.



## ■ Writing at the Crossroads: Postmodernism and Identity Politics in 20th Century African American Theater

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At the beginning of the twentieth century, W. B. DuBois described the experience of being a “negro” in the United States as a problem in the other’s eyes. Seventy years later, in the 1970s, that very same experience could be said to be primarily characterized by a conflict of interests between the sealed boundaries of identity politics and Postmodernist aesthetics.

In the seventies, a group of African American artists formed what was called the Black Arts Movement in an attempt to restore theater to its social function and create a new aesthetics that would give the audience the essential role that it had played in ancient times (Barrios 8)<sup>1</sup>. Adrienne Kennedy was one of the playwrights who participated in this movement. But Kennedy was from the beginning a controversial figure, accused of treating blackness as a sickness instead of working to promote revolution through her works<sup>2</sup>. These accusations

<sup>1</sup> For a further elaboration on the aspects that contributed to the dawn of the Black Arts Movement see the quoted article by Olga Barrios.

<sup>2</sup> See “Adrienne Kennedy” at: <http://www.umich.edu/eng499/people/kennedy.html> on 11-26-98, 19:31:21.

made her peer black playwrights and critics refuse to see her work as representative of the African American experience and exclude her from anthologies, reviews, and criticism. But what is there in Kennedy that has relegated her to a double ex-centricity, i.e. an ex-centric within the ex-centrics? Her ostracism seems to be symptomatic of the clashing of interests between the function of self-representation within the African American community and a postmodernist aesthetics that avoids a self-representative function through the use of fragmentation and the construction of the audience as critical, and detached subjects.

As David Mikics argues, African American theater has been traditionally dominated by a need to offer positive role models and a requirement that texts openly show their political uses, displaying an attractive, easily accessible communal optimism. This characteristic is what has favoured plays such as *Shange's for colored girls who have considered suicide when the rainbow is enough* over much obscure ones, such as Kennedy's (8). In this same fashion, other writers such as Ishmael Reed have been doffed by "the demand that African American literature incarnate a positive representative function, praising the strength of cultural continuity and communal values" (Mikics 8). This aspect seems to be especially relevant in relation to Adrienne Kennedy. She does not offer optimistic views about the black community, nor does she portray it as a source of strength, especially for female characters. The refusal to display such images is grounded on her personal stance as regards her work, rejecting any label that automatically classifies her. In refusing to be pigeonholed as a 'political', 'feminist' or 'African American' playwright, Kennedy has struggled not to be identified with what most black playwrights have been assumed to be writing in advance, i.e. didactic, militant message plays about race (Solomon xiii). Kennedy's "non-representative" function of her plays also shows an attitude of resistance towards fixing meanings in advance. The accusation of not being representative of the African American community rests on a set of assumptions of what a "proper" representative should be, making a playwright into a spokesperson for the community on account of race. Thus, Mikics has noted how "the black writer is bound to a representative goal: bound, that is, to present encouraging or correct portraits of his/her culture" (8). This essentialist conception of an African American playwright as having to perform a representative function has complex historical roots, "often involving the burdensome obligation imposed on black writers to legitimize black life for a white audience" (Mikics 8). Thus, while not denying the material conditions that have prompted such a function within the African American community, the conflict between political self-representation and artistic freedom is also shaped by a widening gap between identity politics and

Postmodernist aesthetics. David Mikics has also referred to this confrontation and its development into the 1990s:

[i]n the 1990s., the wish for the representative is an anachronism, a symptomatic reaction against postmodern conditions in which, despite the continuing social and economic racism of American society, late capitalism has produced a diversity of intra- and interracial roles that erode cultural uniformity in black America, as elsewhere. Since multifarious and contradictory modes of African American life now exist on an unprecedented scale, any demand for representative description is bound to fail (8).

Mikics' articulation of the dated wish for an essentialist, global representation of the African American community is appealing from a postmodern perspective. However, it does not take into serious consideration the so many voices that claim representation for political purposes. While I do not share identity politics' premises, I think that their claims have to be considered as a first step towards less essence-centered positions. Not much is to be gained from the theorizing of postmodern claims of eradication of identity and a unitary representation if we do not acknowledge the claims towards self-representation that coexist with postmodernism. After all, the wish for representation may not be an "anachronism" in that the claim for an identity has proved to be very useful for political uses<sup>3</sup>.

Kennedy's distance from identity politics' demand that what was shown on stage should construct the audience as a group of unified subjects was further reinforced by her use of fragmentation as a means to avoid identification of the audience with the play. Her plays make constant use of fragmented, contradictory plots and characters that baffle the audience. *Funnyhouse of a Negro* is possibly one of the best examples, since it is a clear instance of what Catherine Belsey has termed as an "interrogative text", a text that, in opposition to the "classic realist text", "disrupts the unity of the reader by discouraging identification with a unified subject of the enunciation ... it does literally invite the reader to produce answers to the questions it implicitly or explicitly arises" (92). *Funnyhouse* also "tends to employ devices to undermine the illusion, to draw attention to its own textuality. The reader [audience] is distanced, at least from time to time, rather than wholly interpolated into a fictional world. Fragmentation has traditionally been considered

<sup>3</sup> For a parallel situation with gay identity politics and queer theory see Rodrigo Andrés' "Feminismo y Queer Theory" to be published by Centre Dona i Literatura, Universitat de Barcelona.



as offering an alternative to realist modes of narrative which construct readers and spectators as coherent individuals. As Jeanie Forte has argued,

realism . . . supports the dominant ideology by constructing the reader as a subject (or more correctly, an "individual") within that ideology. It poses an apparently objective or distanced viewpoint from which both the narrator and the reader can assess the action and ultimate meaning of the text, a pose which makes the operations of ideology covert, since the illusion is created for the reader that he or she is the source of meaning or understanding, unfettered by structures of culture (115).

In the same line Catherine Belsey has further argued that the "classic realist text" also presents the subject as fixed and unchangeable, showing possible action "as an endless repetition of 'normal', familiar action" (90) while at the same time, this kind of text conforms to the declarative function of language, i.e. "imparting 'knowledge' to a reader whose position is thereby stabilized...." (91).

However, fragmentation has not only been considered as a way to distance oneself from classic realism but it has also been very much discussed in feminisms of all kinds, especially in discussions of a specific theatrical feminine aesthetics. It has been usually seen as the definite form that a feminine aesthetics takes in theater, a kind of *écriture féminine* that poses an alternative to the traditional dramatic practice which is seen as male, even structured on male sexuality: "[t]he structure of traditional Western drama, an 'imitation of action', is linear, leading through conflict and tension to a major climax and resolution....One could even say that this aggressive build-up, sudden big climax, and cathartic resolution suggests specifically the male *sexual* response" (Reinhardt. Qtd in Schroeder 71). While the feminist critique of such universal models of narrative originally formulated by structuralists and formalists has proved to be useful in denouncing the gender bias of the models, the question of a female aesthetics remains problematic. As Michele Wandor has stated,

[t]here is not much to be gained from assuming that drama is per se some kind of 'male form', and that when women write, they write in a totally different form which has never been invented before and which is common to women. Emotional, aesthetic, and structural styles are very varied among women writers....It is the combination of the content and the writer's approach to it which produces the form which she thinks or feels is most appropriate" (Wandor. Qtd in Schroeder 73).

Schroeder also argues in a similar line that the assumption of a feminine dramatic form rests on the assumption of a bipolar opposition between men and women

and that the search for a distinctive female form based on biology suffers from essentialism at the same time that it entails the reproduction of an hegemonic model in a feminist context, i.e. it becomes the dogmatic center. As she goes on to argue,

These views of linearity as 'masculine' and circularity as 'feminine,' the belief that women are innately different from (if not better than) men, become especially problematic if one accepts the principle – as many feminists do – that the gender categories 'masculine' and 'feminine' describe not a fundamental dichotomy, but social roles created by the interaction of biology, history, personal experience, and culture (72).

Thus, seeing fragmentation as a specific feminine form supposes an essentialist predetermination. Alternatively, fragmentation in relation to Kennedy's theater and especially in *Funnyhouse* can be read as a formal strategy that reflects the disruption of narrative centers of authority and at the same time foregrounds a self-reflexive quality by drawing attention to the formal construction of the play and thus, achieve an effect of alienation on the audience.

In the same way, postmodernism can also be a powerful tool for African American criticism. It has precisely been the ex-centrics who have most strongly celebrated the de-centering of the universal and the validation of the margins. As Carol Boyce Davies has argued, "[p]ostmodernism offers a disruption of metanarratives of all sorts and it is primarily at that level that one can see how that deconstruction of race or gender discourses which assume totality, can be activated by Black feminist critics" (51-52). While recognizing the initial potential of postmodernist discourse in its questioning of universal centers of authority that actually hide a white, Western, male perspective, there have also been many accusations against postmodernism, especially in those areas concerning subjectivity. One of them is that postmodernism is a masculinist discourse that perpetuates gender-blindness and excludes those who do not share a complicated jargon. bell hooks has powerfully voiced this accusation:

[d]isturbed not so much by the "sense" of postmodernism but by the conventional language used when it is written or talked about and by those who speak it, I find myself on the outside of the discourse looking in. As a discursive practice it is dominated primarily by the voices of white male intellectuals and/or academic elites who speak to and about one another with coded familiarity (23-24).

Postmodernism has been systematically accused of avoiding and excluding the work of women and African Americans even though, as Hutcheon acutely notes,

"female (and black) explorations of narrative and linguistic form have been among the most contesting and radical" (17).

But the main aspect under discussion affects the different conception of identity and subjectivity that postmodernism shows on the one side and the conception that identity politics shows on the other. Thus, many of the formulations on the side of those in favor of identity politics have been deeply suspicious of the fact that it is precisely at a time that subjugated people are finding a voice, an identity, that they are being asked to give it up for a postmodern de-centered, non-essential subjectivity. These positions see the postmodernist critique of the subject as threatening and silencing those discourses which are just now gaining a voice. Thus, the plead for the importance of identity politics in the face of the de-centering of subjectivity is a way to attempt to retain a specificity of experience. Betsy Erkkila has denounced the postmodernist and poststructuralist premises about the notions of subjectivity, authorship, experience, and representation: "[w]hereas Foucault dismisses the questions of identity, subjectivity, and authorship as matters of indifference, these questions are still at the very center of the work of blacks, Chicanos, Asian-Americans, women, gays, and other minority scholars in the United States" (565).

But, is there a way to reconcile both positions without excluding any of them? Carol Boyce Davies for instance, argues for a kind of "selective activation"

... talking with an entrenched 'old/new' critic, traditionalist, who wants to maintain the canon as it is, it is impossible not to activate some postmodernist positions. Or listening to an attack on a female colleague for her assertions into male space, can activate a feminist position. A nationalist, anti-imperialist position has to be articulated when black students are under attack. In other words, each position is deployed when each necessitates its own specific critique and one journeys accordingly or activates them simultaneously (53).

This model of what I have called "selective activation" poses some problems. First of all, the starting point is a supposed center of neutrality where no positioning is established and this center activates a "persona" depending on the interlocutor so that it becomes basically a response to an external stimulus and the discourse is mainly aimed at a dialectical contestation without a strong political agenda or any hope for real transformation at the social level.

bell hooks also attempts to bridge the gap between postmodernism and identity politics by exposing the benefits of a critique of essentialism for African Americans:

[e]mploying a critique of essentialism allows African Americans to acknowledge the way in which class mobility has altered collective black experience so that racism does not necessarily have the same impact on our lives. Such a critique allows us to affirm multiple black identities, varied black experiences. It also challenges colonial imperialist paradigms of black identity which represent blackness one-dimensionally in ways that reinforce and sustain white supremacy (28).

While many of the formulations behind identity politics just make the margins into the center and riskily run into essentialist terrain, I also think that the claim for identity politics cannot be disdained right away. As Chris Weedon argues, "there may be strategic needs for identity politics, defined by shared forms of oppression and political objectives" (176) in the same way that the first of the second wave feminist movement was largely based on a monolithic essence of 'woman' that as the movement gained momentum was questioned and narrowed down to more specific material conditions by the ex-centric discourses of the very same movement. hooks also argues that "[g]iven the pervasive politic of white supremacy which seeks to prevent the formation of radical black subjectivity, we cannot cavalierly dismiss a concern with identity politics. Any critic exploring the radical potential of postmodernism as it relates to racial difference and racial domination would need to consider the implications of a critique of identity for oppressed groups" (26). hooks' conclusion on this aspect is that "[a]n adequate response to this concern [the unwillingness to critique essentialism on the part of many African Americans] is to critique essentialism while emphasizing the significance of the 'authority of experience'" (29). This position, while being an attempt to formulate and bridge the gap, seems to me to be still unsatisfactory because it remains ambiguous. Retaining an 'authority of experience', as its name suggests, is to privilege experience over any other aspect. Therefore, in hooks' formulation, experience remains the ultimate source of truth and most important to my own specific critical practice, I, as a critic of African American literature become a kind of second-rate critic because I am not myself black. But I see this formulation equally reductive if applied to an African American critic, since it assumes a certain set of presuppositions on the part of a black critic that pre-date his/her critical practice and restricts his/her range of options to "black matters". Chris Weedon has written about this gap in what seems to me to be the most satisfactory way of theorizing the way in which postmodernism can be a useful tool for political ends: "[a]s postmodernists, we can use categories such as 'gender', 'race' and 'class' in social and cultural analysis but on the assumption that their meaning is plural, historically and socially specific (178).

Is a negotiation possible between the two seemingly opposed positions? It may not be the case yet, but a combination could be more effective both at a socio-political and at a theatrical level.

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## ■ El impacto multicultural de la Guerra Civil española en los Estados Unidos (1936-1939)

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### Introducción

Los anarquistas norteamericanos reaccionaron al estallido de la guerra civil con la puesta en marcha de un dispositivo de propaganda que excedía las posibilidades de un movimiento tan reducido como disperso. La pieza clave fue el lanzamiento en agosto de 1936 de *Spanish Revolution*, el principal órgano de propaganda del anarcosindicalismo español en los Estados Unidos. Simultáneamente se constituyeron las United Libertarian Organizations (ULO), con el fin de hacerse cargo de la publicación y financiación de *Spanish Revolution* y de coordinar la propaganda anarquista por España. En el verano de 1937 se creó la sección estadounidense de Solidaridad Internacional Antifascista (SIA), la central de ayuda internacional fundada por los anarquistas españoles. Su implantación vino a complementar la labor de las ULO. Frente al carácter multiétnico de éstas, la audiencia de SIA fue sobre todo hispana. La propaganda de ULO y *Spanish Revolution* se caracterizó por su fervor revolucionario y sus críticas a los comunistas; el discurso de SIA, más atemperado y con tintes humanitarios, pretendió anteponer la unidad antifascista al enfrentamiento político.

De la multitud de pequeños comités de ayuda al bando republicano surgidos en la comunidad hispana al margen de SIA, Sociedades Hispanas Confederadas (SHC) fue la organización más importante y la única de ámbito nacional. El deseo de muchos emigrantes de ayudar a los trabajadores españoles en general y los bajos niveles de activismo político y sindical de la comunidad hicieron que en el seno de SHC colaborasen, al menos durante una primera etapa, socialistas, anarquistas y comunistas con una mayoría de miembros sin ideología definida. Surgida para centralizar el envío de fondos, tuvo que educar a los emigrantes acerca del valor de la propaganda. Éstos eran lógicamente reticentes a la idea de que una parte de sus donaciones, en vez de llegar a sus familiares o conocidos en España, se utilizase en financiar panfletos, periódicos y programas radiofónicos. SHC cooperó con organizaciones frentepopulistas como MB&NACASD o ALAWF. Se abstuvo de identificarse con cualquier grupo o facción española en pro de la unidad antifascista, pero no logró, como pretendía, monopolizar la ayuda hispana a la República. En Tampa, por ejemplo, el Comité Popular Democrático de Socorro a España realizó al margen de SHC actividades de propaganda y recaudación con resultados espectaculares.

### **Las United Libertarian Organizations y Solidaridad Internacional Antifascista**

Las ULO surgieron en Nueva York en agosto de 1936, a iniciativa del representante de la CNT en Norteamérica, el español Maximiliano Olay. Pronto quedaron configuradas como una coalición de grupos anarquistas y de varias ramas del sindicato Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), situados, en su mayoría, en el este del país. Su fin último consistía en formar un frente unido libertario para difundir en los Estados Unidos el punto de vista de la CNT y la FAI acerca de la guerra de España y ensalzar sus logros revolucionarios y bélicos. Los anarquistas deseaban contrarrestar la propaganda frentepopulista y comunista, y competir con el CPUSA y sus satélites en la captación de ayuda internacional a través de la movilización de la conciencia obrera. Cuando se formaron las ULO, el anarquismo norteamericano era un movimiento minoritario articulado en torno a comunidades dispersas de inmigrantes que contaban con publicaciones propias en sus lenguas respectivas. Es dudoso que la labor de agitación de los integrantes de ULO durante la guerra civil reportase al movimiento la adhesión de nuevos miembros. Pero sí es cierto que las ULO significaron el primer intento de cooperación formal y duradera entre las agrupaciones libertarias de los Estados



Unidos y, por añadidura, un paso adelante en el esfuerzo por americanizar su talante que propugnaba Emma Goldman. Su propaganda, dirigida a audiencias anglófonas, enriqueció el discurso de las publicaciones anarquistas étnicas que ya existían.<sup>1</sup>

Entre los miembros de ULO se encontraban la Jewish Anarchist Federation, que publicaba *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*; la Federación Rusa, con *Dielo Trouda*; una federación de grupos hispanohablantes con su órgano *Cultura Proletaria*; Carlo Tresca y sus seguidores con el periódico *Il Martello*; el Freedom Group y sus miembros más jóvenes, promotores del mensual *Vanguard*; el Spanish Labor Press Bureau de Olay; y grupúsculos aislados de Canadá y Nueva Inglaterra. También estaban afiliadas varias ramas de los IWW o “Wobblies”: la federación italiana con su semanario *Il Proletario*, el General Recruiting Group y la Marine Transport Workers Union. Esta última hizo un llamamiento en el verano de 1938 a los estibadores y marineros para que se negasen a transportar mercancías con destino a la España de Franco. El llamamiento obtuvo eco, fundamentalmente, entre tripulaciones escandinavas, y sólo en septiembre de 1938 se produjeron tres huelgas. La afiliación de IWW se explica porque en su seno existía una importante tendencia anarcosindicalista liderada por inmigrantes de habla hispana que habían sido rechazados por la American Federation of Labor. Su presencia era predominante en el sudoeste del país y en los sindicatos marítimos de la costa este. Existían importantes núcleos de “wobblies” de procedencia española en varias ciudades de Nueva Jersey como Newark. Dolgoff destaca la militancia anarquista de Frank González en *Cultura Proletaria* y SIA, Marcelino García como editor de *Cultura Proletaria*, Manuel Rey, José López Río y el propio Maximiliano Olay. Este último, un asturiano que había comenzado su militancia anarquista cuando trabajaba como cigarrero en Tampa, lideraba el Free Society Group de Chicago cuando la CNT lo designó como su representante oficial en Norteamérica. También colaboraron con las ULO organizaciones no afiliadas como la sección de los Progressive Miners of America de Gillespie, Illinois, que efectuaba donaciones con regularidad.<sup>2</sup>

Además de publicar *Spanish Revolution*, las ULO editaron panfletos y organizaron mítines, conferencias y fiestas para recolectar fondos. Entre los panfletos distribuidos estaban *The truth about Spain* y *The tragedy of Spain* de Rocker, *The Revolutionary Movement in Spain* de Dashar, *The Life and Work of Buenaventura Durruti*, *The tragic week in May* de Augustin Souchy y álbumes de

<sup>1</sup> *Spanish Revolution* (SR), 5 de septiembre y 25 de noviembre de 1936; BLACKWELL, R.: “Introduction”, en *Spanish Revolution* (1968); y DOLGOFF, S. (1986), pp. 17-21.

<sup>2</sup> *Spanish Labor Bulletin* (SLB), 29 de julio, 16 de septiembre y 14 de octubre de 1938; DOLGOFF, S. (1986), pp. 43, 76-78, 139; y BUHLE, M. et al. (1990), pp. 354-359, 745-746.

fotografías y acuarelas de Sim sobre la “lucha y reconstrucción revolucionarias”. La mayoría de los mítines tenían lugar en el Irving Plaza Hall de Nueva York y solían contar con la presencia de anarquistas – Carlo Tresca, Maximiliano Olay –, “wobblies” – Sam Weiner, Pio Monaldi – y periodistas o voluntarios recién llegados de España como el socialista Liston M. Oak, Marcelino García o Douglas Clark. ULO suministraba oradores de habla inglesa o extranjera gratuitamente a petición de grupos anarquistas de fuera de Nueva York. En esta ciudad organizó mítines callejeros semanales que, ocasionalmente, culminaron en enfrentamientos físicos con comunistas. En cuanto al envío de voluntarios, en España lucharon no más de dos docenas de anarquistas estadounidenses –excluidos los de origen español. Su presencia fue ignorada por la prensa comunista y liberal, que en cambio glorificó a los miembros del Batallón Lincoln.<sup>3</sup>

Después de los sucesos de mayo ULO organizó campañas intensivas a favor de la liberación de aquellos que habían sido encarcelados bajo la acusación de ser “espías fascistas”, Russell Blackwell entre ellos. La liquidación del proceso revolucionario y, en particular, del POUM, actuó como un revulsivo incitando a los anarquistas a cooperar con otros grupos radicales norteamericanos. Si hasta mayo de 1937 los mítines de ULO tuvieron como fin propagar la existencia y logros de la revolución española e incluyeron sólo a oradores libertarios, a partir de entonces se convocaron contra la represión gubernamental y en defensa de la revolución, y participaron socialistas, comunistas disidentes y otros miembros de grupúsculos marxistas. En algunas ocasiones se unieron a las protestas y discusiones los miembros más jóvenes del movimiento Catholic Worker, muchos de los cuales se autodenominaban “anarquistas católicos”.<sup>4</sup>

Aunque el principal foco de actividades de las ULO estuvo en Nueva York, Chicago no le fue a la zaga. El Free Society Group protagonizó en esta ciudad la agitación por la revolución española. A partir del verano de 1938 contó de nuevo con la presencia de Maximiliano Olay, que siguió editando desde allí el *Spanish Labor Bulletin*. Fuera de estos dos núcleos urbanos la mayoría de las actividades de ULO surgieron de forma descentralizada y espontánea, allí donde existía un grupúsculo libertario, y rara vez lograron reunir una audiencia numerosa.<sup>5</sup>

En el verano de 1937 se creó la sección estadounidense de Solidaridad Internacional Antifascista (SIA), la central de ayuda internacional fundada por los anarquistas españoles con el objeto de contrapesar el control ejercido por el comunista Socorro Rojo Internacional sobre la captación y uso de la ayuda

<sup>3</sup> DOLGOFF, S. (1986), p. 19; SR, 23 de diciembre de 1936 y 2 de julio de 1937; PORTER, D. (1983), p. 324n; y EBY, C. (1969), p. 104.

<sup>4</sup> DOLGOFF, S. (1986), pp. 74-75, 96.

<sup>5</sup> DOLGOFF, S. (1986), pp. 39-41, 64-65.

internacional a España. Su implantación vino a complementar la labor de las ULO. Frente al carácter multiétnico de éstas, la audiencia de SIA fue sobre todo hispana. Mientras que la propaganda de ULO y *Spanish Revolution* se caracterizó por su fervor revolucionario y sus críticas a los comunistas, el discurso de SIA, más atemperado y con tintes humanitarios, pretendió anteponer la unidad antifascista al enfrentamiento político.<sup>6</sup>

Con el fin de satisfacer la doble ambición de recaudar fondos en el extranjero y concienciar a los trabajadores del papel de la CNT y la FAI en la revolución española, se utilizaron medios de propaganda similares a los de otras organizaciones de ayuda a la República. La propaganda anarquista presentó a SIA en los Estados Unidos como una organización de ayuda humanitaria de carácter “no partidista”, dedicada a ayudar a “todas las víctimas del Fascismo sin distinción de afiliaciones políticas, ideas, religión, etc.”; y que además se distinguía por una mayor eficacia en la administración de los fondos recaudados. En realidad, la labor propagandística a escala nacional de la central de SIA – con sede en el Libertarian Center de Nueva York – fue modesta en comparación con la de otras organizaciones prorrepúblicas, las ULO incluidas. Produjo panfletos y carteles en español y en inglés, pero no creó ninguna publicación periódica. Entre sus actividades no editoriales podemos destacar la campaña que organizó a finales de 1938 bajo la denominación de “Semana de los niños”. Organizó la gira, entre otros propagandistas, de Avelino González Mallada, que intervino en Nueva York el 20 de febrero de 1938. La mayor parte de sus actividades surgieron de forma autónoma en el seno del medio centenar y pico de delegaciones con que contaba. Una decena de personas eran suficientes para constituir una de esas delegaciones, que solían formarse en torno a núcleos de emigrantes españoles. A pesar de que, en principio, su objetivo era llegar al conjunto de la opinión pública, SIA obtuvo un eco notable dentro de la colonia de habla hispana pero pasó casi inadvertida para el resto de los estadounidenses. Todos sus miembros fueron emigrantes españoles o hispanohablantes, si exceptuamos una rama anglófona en Nueva York y una mixta en Chicago. Su propaganda convirtió esta limitación en un triunfo, pero lo cierto es que tampoco SIA llegó a ser la organización de mayor calado en la comunidad hispana. Las Sociedades Hispánicas Confederadas, organización que abordaremos en un epígrafe posterior, recaudaron entre mayo de 1937 y marzo de 1939 4,5 veces la cantidad reunida por SIA a partir de finales de julio de 1937.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> PORTER, D. (1983), p. 22n; SR, 19 de octubre de 1936 y 8 de noviembre de 1937.

<sup>7</sup> THOMAS, H. (1988), pp. 392-393; PORTER, D. (1983), p. 76, 76n, 138 y 138n; SLB, 20 de enero, 15 de julio, 19 de agosto, 9 de diciembre y 27 de diciembre de 1938; 24 de marzo de 1939; SR, 8 de enero de 1937 y 24 de enero de 1938; y NA, 852.48 RELIEF/184.

La CNT logró, a través de SIA, centralizar buena parte de la recaudación de las agrupaciones y publicaciones anarquistas de los Estados Unidos; pero no consiguió imponer una estrategia o unos contenidos de propaganda uniformes al estilo frentepopulista. En primer lugar, por la debilidad del movimiento anarquista estadounidense, marcado por su escasez numérica y disensiones internas. En segundo lugar, por la relativa modestia de los logros de SIA, cuyas actividades, como hemos visto, no trascendieron fuera de la colonia de habla hispana. En tercer lugar, porque existió en el seno de SIA un enfrentamiento entre los dirigentes de la CNT-FAI, partidarios de desenfatar los aspectos revolucionarios de la guerra y de suavizar las críticas a los comunistas; y aquellos otros que, liderados por Emma Goldman, cabeza de la sección británica de SIA, pensaban que esas “tácticas colaboracionistas” eran contraproducentes de cara al exterior. Mariano Vázquez Ramón, secretario general de la CNT, y Pedro Herrera, de la FAI, amonestaron en enero de 1938 a Goldman por su artículo en *Spanish Revolution* en denuncia de las persecuciones políticas dentro del bando republicano. Creían que las críticas de Goldman a los comunistas y al gobierno de Negrín dañarían la lucha antifascista de CNT-FAI “al alienar el entusiasmo del proletariado internacional”. Goldman replicó diplomáticamente, pero con firmeza, que no podía ya guardar silencio, pues el papel desempeñado por los comunistas era tan público como notoria la indignación entre las filas revolucionarias. No había que temer el abierto reconocimiento del giro contrarrevolucionario por parte del gobierno, sino la influencia sin contrapeso de la propaganda comunista sobre los “periódicos supuestamente liberales”. El curso de la guerra no lograría sino extremar una y otra postura. Ambas posiciones tenían parte de razón: Goldman estaba en lo cierto al asegurar que las persecuciones eran de dominio público, al menos en los Estados Unidos; y Vázquez y Herrera no se equivocaron al afirmar que su difusión “desinflaría” el activismo de los trabajadores anarquistas.<sup>8</sup>

Los escasos panfletos editados por SIA en los Estados Unidos se ajustaron, por su talante humanitario y no ideológico, a la estrategia de propaganda propugnada por los dirigentes de la CNT-FAI. Por el contrario, los restantes panfletos y publicaciones periódicas anarquistas estadounidenses, encabezados por la propia *Spanish Revolution* a partir de enero de 1937, estuvieron más próximos a la línea de Emma Goldman que a la propugnada por los dirigentes anarquistas españoles. Utilizaron como estandarte los logros de la revolución social, deploraron la colaboración de los anarquistas en la tarea de gobierno – mostrándose menos comprensivos que la propia Goldman o Rudolph Rocker – y, a partir de un determinado momento, criticaron sin concesiones a los comunistas.

<sup>8</sup> *SLB*, 19 de agosto de 1938; y PORTER, D. (1983), pp. 115-119, 190.

Para ellos la revolución se malogró porque CNT-FAI claudicó en pro de una falsa unidad contra el fascismo. En definitiva, los propagandistas estadounidenses estuvieron más próximos a los planteamientos de grupos radicales dentro del anarquismo español – como las juventudes anarquistas, los “amigos de Durruti” y otros grupúsculos dentro de la FAI – que a los dirigentes nacionales de la CNT.<sup>9</sup>

### Sociedades Hispanas Confederadas y otras organizaciones hispanas prorrpublicanas

No se dispone de datos suficientemente desagregados sobre la población emigrante en los Estados Unidos de los treinta que permitan determinar con exactitud las dimensiones de la comunidad de origen español durante la guerra civil; y mucho menos diferenciar su origen regional. Sí sabemos que la comunidad no era numerosa. En 1930 vivían en los Estados Unidos 59.362 personas nacidas en España y 52.305 personas nacidas en los Estados Unidos de uno o dos progenitores españoles. En 1940 la primera cifra había descendido a algo menos de 48.000 personas y la segunda se había incrementado hasta 61.700. En cuanto a las condiciones sociales, laborales y económicas de la comunidad, Rueda agrupa al 19% de la población activa llegada a los Estados Unidos entre 1873 y 1929 bajo “clases medias”, y al 81% restante como “clases bajas”, de las cuales sólo un tercio eran trabajadores cualificados. Estos datos no difieren demasiado de los que proporcionan los diplomáticos españoles para el conjunto de la comunidad española ya establecida. Según uno de sus informes, en 1933-34 el 70% de la comunidad estaba compuesta por “jornaleros de la industria, la agricultura y actividades marítimas”, el 15% eran comerciantes e industriales establecidos por cuenta propia y el resto estaba constituido por “empleados y otros servicios”. Las ocupaciones laborales predominantes entre los miembros de las “clases bajas” eran las de obrero industrial, minero, empleado de las fábricas de tabaco, trabajador de la marina mercante, camarero, pastor, oficinista y contable. Entre las “clases medias” prevalecían los pequeños comerciantes, estando en absoluta minoría los profesionales. En cuanto al grado de instrucción de los emigrantes, era muy superior a la media de los españoles de su época. Antes de la guerra civil se habían movilizado en alguna ocasión con el fin de recaudar fondos para una causa española, como por ejemplo la Revolución de Asturias de 1934. Sin embargo, no

<sup>9</sup> MARTÍ IBÁÑEZ, F.: *Niños en España*; MONTSENY, F.: *International Antifascist Solidarity*; y BLACKWELL, R.: “Introduction”.

se habían agrupado ni política ni sindicalmente ni habían surgido líderes entre ellos, excepto en Tampa (Flor.) y en el caso de una minoría de anarquistas activa dentro de IWW.<sup>10</sup>

¿Por dónde discurrió la línea divisoria de la comunidad durante la guerra civil? A partir de diversos relatos autobiográficos y de las publicaciones de propaganda creadas con motivo del conflicto se desprende que la clase socio-económica fue el principal criterio a la hora de decantarse por uno u otro bando. En Nueva York los fundadores de la franquista Casa de España eran los antiguos dirigentes de la Cámara de Comercio. Muchos pequeños comerciantes, sin embargo, optaron por la República y se anunciaron en las páginas de *Frente Popular* y *El Antifascista*, no sabemos si debido a sus convicciones o al temor de ver boicoteado su negocio. Las publicaciones de propaganda prorrepblicana se dirigieron de forma insistente a una audiencia de trabajadores, y estimaron reiteradamente a los partidarios de la República en torno a un 95% de la comunidad, aunque no se había realizado ningún sondeo de opinión en ella. Ese cliché perduró, y los testimonios posteriores de miembros de la comunidad hablan también de un 96% o 98% de simpatizantes de la República. Aunque se trata de cifras exageradas, está fuera de toda duda que una mayoría de los emigrantes que tomaron partido lo hizo por el Gobierno. Ante un acontecimiento español tan preñado de connotaciones políticas e ideológicas como la guerra civil, la mayor parte de las “clases bajas” de la comunidad pasó a engrosar – al menos de palabra – el movimiento radical de izquierdas que, aun siendo minoritario, se hizo oír con especial intensidad en la América de los años treinta. Por otro lado, su pertenencia a una minoría más amplia, la de los hispanohablantes, no pasó inadvertida para los propagandistas. Una porción de los latinos residentes en los Estados Unidos recibió la propaganda por añadidura a través de canales de comunicación compartidos como las propias SHC, prensa, sociedades benéficas, sindicatos, iglesias, barrios, etc. Por esta razón nos referiremos con frecuencia a la comunidad hispana o de habla española.<sup>11</sup>

El 25 de julio de 1936 se constituyó el Comité Antifascista Español de los EE.UU. de Norte América (CAE) en Brooklyn (NY). Su objetivo era agitar las conciencias de los emigrantes españoles y obtener sus donativos para la República. La progresiva adhesión de otros grupúsculos prorrepblicanos de habla hispana fuera del ámbito de la comunidad neoyorquina se tradujo en la primavera

<sup>10</sup> Bureau of the Census: *Historical Statistics of the United States. Comunal Times to 1970*, series C 228-295 y C 195-227; RUEDA, G. (1993), pp. 141-142, 148-154, 158-175, 187, 203, 259-308; y *España Nueva*, enero de 1935.

<sup>11</sup> RODRÍGUEZ CASTELAO, A. (1961), p. 249; *SLB*, 19 de agosto de 1938 y 9 de enero de 1939; y RUEDA, G. (1993), pp. 204-205.



de 1937 en una federación de alcance casi nacional, bajo la denominación de Sociedades Hispanas Confederadas de Ayuda a España (SHC). El CAE subsistió como órgano coordinador de las SHC y como responsable de su órgano, *Frente Popular*. A finales de ese año SHC se consolidó como la principal organización hispana prorrepblicana. Centralizaba los envíos de ayuda y coordinaba las labores de propaganda de un conjunto de grupos y asociaciones españolas, latinoamericanas y portuguesas, situadas en su mayoría en la costa este. A mediados de 1937 eran 73 las sociedades afiliadas a SHC, y en enero de 1938 sumaban 123; 72 de ellas con sede en el estado de Nueva York. Por supuesto, muchas de las afiliadas no pasaban de la treintena de miembros, pues surgían a partir de comités locales y de barrio allí donde había un núcleo de emigrantes de habla hispana partidarios de la República. En cuanto a su origen y naturaleza, podrían agruparse en las siete categorías siguientes:

- sociedades de beneficencia y recreativas preexistentes: Mutualista Obrera Mexicana de New York City; Sociedad Española de Beneficencia de New York City; Sociedad de Socorros Mutuos “La Nacional”; Club Benéfico Hispano del Bronx, Nueva York; etc.
- agrupaciones regionales o étnicas preexistentes: en Nueva York, por ejemplo, Centro Andalúz de Brooklyn, Círculo Valenciano, Centro Montañés, Centro Asturiano y Grupo Vasco.
- agrupaciones regionales creadas con motivo de la guerra, como el Frente Popular Antifascista Gallego y el Comité Catalá Antifeixista de Nueva York.
- grupos creados *ad hoc* bajo denominaciones como “frente popular”, “comité antifascista” o “pro ayuda a España”: Comité pro Democracia de Niágara Falls (NY), Grupo Antifascista del Bronx (NY), Frente Popular Español Antifascista de Filadelfia (Penn), Comité Antifascista Femenino de Brooklyn (NY), etc.
- agrupaciones sindicales y clubes obreros: IWO de Mt. Carmel (Penn.), Unión de Tabaqueros, Local 273 (NY), Unión de Cocineros, Local 89 (NY), Agrupación Obrera Hispana del Bronx (NY), Alianza Obrera Hispano Americana (NY), etc.
- partidos políticos y agrupaciones político-ideológicas: Bureau Hispano del CPUSA (NY), Agrupación Socialista Española (NY), Club La Pasionaria (NY), Acción Libertaria de Jersey City (NJ), Grupo Acracia de Newark (NJ), Cultura Proletaria (NY), etc.
- agrupaciones culturales, artísticas o deportivas: Grupo Artístico “Teatro del Pueblo” de Brooklyn (NY), Ateneo de Educación Social de Newark (NJ), Foot Ball Club de Brooklyn (NY), Sociedad Naturista Hispana (NY), etc.



La guerra tuvo efectos ambivalentes sobre las sociedades regionales y benéficas preexistentes. Por un lado, las condujo a cooperar por vez primera de forma organizada y duradera. Por otro lado, se dividieron y politizaron internamente en un grado inédito hasta entonces. Fuera del ámbito de las sociedades obreras y sindicales, la única agrupación regional con fines políticos que existía antes de la guerra era el “Grup Separatista Català”.<sup>12</sup>

Las SHC celebraron su primera conferencia nacional en noviembre de 1937 en Pittsburgh. Los temas estelares fueron la propaganda y la unidad de las organizaciones hispanas partidarias de la República. Moderaron la conferencia Antonio García Vallín del Centro Asturiano de Nueva York, Mario Lamar del Bureau Hispano del CPUSA y el socialista José Castro de la Sociedad Española de Beneficencia de Nueva York, como presidente. Actuaron como secretarios Daniel Alonso, secretario general de SHC y José Castilla, secretario de Propaganda. Se discutieron los logros y deficiencias de la propaganda de SHC y cuál debía ser la porción – y origen – de los fondos destinados a tal fin. Como fue el caso de otras organizaciones prorrepúblicas, en SHC el afán propagandístico derivó del objetivo inicial de enviar ayuda a España, y topó con la resistencia de parte de sus bases a ver empleadas sus donaciones en la elaboración de panfletos o periódicos. Los dirigentes de las Sociedades insistieron en explicar la relación causa-efecto entre la producción de “obras de teatro, música, folletos, revistas, periódicos, fiestas culturales, mítines, etc.” y la generación de ayuda para España:

... si se ha logrado recaudar \$200.000 sin hacer gastos considerables, gastando algo más en la propaganda nuestros ingresos hubieran sido mucho mayores, y el beneficio lo habrían recibido en España.

El tesorero, el secretario de Propaganda y otros cargos abundaron en la necesidad de destinar más fondos a la propaganda para alimentar la “revolución moral” que estaba operando en el seno de la comunidad, unida por vez primera. Según Alonso:

... siendo todos nosotros antifascistas, somos revolucionarios, y no se explican las actividades revolucionarias sin una buena y extensa propaganda.

Finalmente, se aprobó una resolución para intensificar la propaganda a través de la radio, de la aparición semanal de *Frente Popular* y de la creación de

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<sup>12</sup> Memoria del Congreso Nacional; *Frente Popular*, 19 de julio de 1937, 1 de enero de 1938 y 10 de marzo de 1939; *España Nueva*, diciembre de 1936; y correspondencia de la autora con John Montllor.

un grupo de oradores. Se recomendó además el establecimiento de un “carnet antifascista” que, además de servir a su titular “como testimonio de su contribución a la Causa Antifascista”, contribuiría a financiar los gastos de propaganda. Alonso atribuyó a las SHC la representación del “90 por 100 de la Gran Comunidad de Habla Española” gracias a la ausencia de inclinaciones “por sectores políticos determinados”. Otros delegados, no obstante, reconocieron las dificultades para mantener la unidad, como “organismo integrado por elementos de opiniones distintas”. Pero todos coincidieron en señalar la necesidad de esa unidad interna y expresaron su voluntad de amalgamar a “toda la Comunidad de Habla española de los Estados Unidos... en una sola y poderosa Organización Nacional que encauce y dirija el movimiento de solidaridad con España en todo el país”, en colaboración con otras organizaciones estadounidenses e internacionales. Como veremos, ninguno de estos anhelos se plasmó en la realidad pues SHC distó de imponer la unidad en su seno y, aunque fue la única organización hispana de ámbito nacional, existieron otras que, al margen de ella, consiguieron resultados espectaculares, como el Comité Popular Democrático de Socorro a España de Tampa. En la sesión de clausura, el embajador Fernando de los Ríos se dirigió a los presentes como “un compañero que hace 21 años es miembro de una Organización Obrera”, e insistió en las ideas de intensificar la propaganda y perseguir la unidad. La Conferencia declaró su apoyo incondicional al gobierno español, “sea el gobierno que sea”, y a las organizaciones obreras españolas. Se enviaron telegramas, entre otros, al gobierno de Valencia, al general Miaja, a la CNT y la UGT, al presidente de la AFL, a Roosevelt – “pidiéndole que influya para anular la Ley de Neutralidad por considerarla un acto antidemocrático de este hermoso país donde vivimos honrando con nuestro trabajo la protección y garantía que América nos ofrece” –; y al Pueblo Ruso – “en saludo por el 20 aniversario de su grandiosa revolución y en testimonio de agradecimiento por su ayuda al Pueblo Español” –. Leopoldo González interpretó el himno americano, el himno de Riego, la “Internacional” y su composición “¡No Pasarán!”. A pesar de la importante presencia anarquista en SHC y de la proximidad de los sucesos de mayo, no se suscitó debate alguno al respecto durante el congreso, al cual no asistieron delegados de agrupaciones libertarias.<sup>13</sup>

SHC recogía ropa, víveres, medicinas, plomo y todo tipo de materiales que pudiesen ser de utilidad para los republicanos, y los enviaba a Valencia junto con

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<sup>13</sup> El coruñés José Castro fue uno de los fundadores y miembros más activos de las SHC y del Frente Popular Antifascista Gallego. Sirvió, tras la entrada de EE. UU. en la Segunda Guerra Mundial y durante la primera posguerra, en la sección española de la Voz de América, GONZÁLEZ LÓPEZ, E. (1990), pp. 318-320; y *Memoria del Congreso Nacional*.

otros productos adquiridos con las donaciones en efectivo, como cocinas de campaña o tabaco, para su distribución “a cargo del Comité Conjunto C.N.T., U.G.T. y Gobierno”. También giraba fondos vía París, aunque prefería enviar ropa y alimentos antes que dinero, con la esperanza de que fuesen distribuidos entre los refugiados procedentes del norte de España que se encontraban en Cataluña. Entre el comienzo de la guerra y el fin de 1937 envió ocho ambulancias y financió la compra de otras tantas por el MBASD. Un repaso a las páginas de *Frente Popular* revela un ritmo frenético de organización de acontecimientos festivos para recaudar ayuda. El CAE organizó seis festivales entre septiembre del 36 y marzo del 37. Durante el mes de enero de 1938 aparecen en torno a seis convocatorias distintas por número, sólo en Nueva York. A las fiestas organizadas por la central se sumaron los bailes, picnics, veladas teatrales y partidos de fútbol patrocinados por las sociedades regionales y otras afiliadas. Además de movilizar simpatías y reunir dinero, el departamento de propaganda de SHC se propuso realizar una labor de adoctrinamiento de la comunidad más amplia. Pretendió educar a los emigrantes acerca de “los diversos problemas que uno tras otro día confronta toda la especie humana”, para lograr su “superación cultural”. Al final de la guerra se mostró satisfecho de los resultados:

Nuestras estaciones de Radio, nuestra tribuna, nuestra prensa, nuestras publicaciones, nuestros cuadros de declamación y nuestras Jiras Artísticas y Culturales, han operado el milagro de la profunda metamorfosis que se ha realizado en el interés del conocimiento de las cosas, por parte de la Comunidad Hispana en Estados Unidos.<sup>14</sup>

La última campaña iniciada por SHC antes del fin de la guerra fue la destinada a financiar el viaje a México de mil refugiados republicanos “recomendados” por miembros de la organización, previsiblemente por sus lazos familiares. Con el fin de organizar el embarque, partieron hacia Francia el 11 de marzo de 1939 dos delegados de SHC, José Castro y Marcos C. Mari. Los resultados de la campaña, a las alturas del mes de julio, no podían ser más desalentadores, pues sólo se había logrado la salida de dos centenares de recomendados. José Castro atribuyó el fracaso de la campaña a la desorganización y el sectarismo imperantes en el Servicio de Evacuación de Republicanos Españoles (SERE). Según él, la mayoría había sido vetada por no contar con el amiguismo de los “incondicionales” de Negrín. Esta denuncia coincidía en lo fundamental con la

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*Memoria del Congreso Nacional*; NA, 852.48 RELIEF-REGISTRATION, Lirón: *Bombas de Mano*; y ALBORNOZ, A. y TORYHO, J.: *En los Caminos de la Libertad*.

formulada por Largo Caballero un mes antes ante el líder sindical y presidente del Trade Union Relief for Spain, David Dubinsky.<sup>15</sup>

SHC enfocó la guerra como una lucha de clases con connotaciones religiosas, “provocada, contra los trabajadores del músculo y del cerebro, por ese brutal amasijo, integrado por banqueros, sacerdotes y generales”. Su propaganda contribuyó a la batalla dialéctica que, en ese sentido, se reprodujo en la comunidad neoyorquina. Batalla que en ocasiones trascendió el ámbito de lo verbal para derivar en enfrentamientos físicos entre los partidarios de uno y otro bando. Las arengas de SHC a través de *Frente Popular* para el boicot de los establecimientos comerciales que se mostraban partidarios de Franco – o que se negaban a contribuir al mantenimiento de la revista –, sobre la base de que vendían “productos fascistas” o estaban regentados por “fascistas”, fueron, en buena medida, responsables de la radicalización de las posturas. El piquete de SHC instalado a partir de septiembre de 1938 ante el ultramarinos de la familia Moneo, en la calle Catorce, fue el detonante del choque más conocido. Las denuncias del propietario, un católico, ante el sacerdote Edward Lodge Curran, presidente de la International Catholic Truth Society, la policía y el alcalde La Guardia, fueron acompañadas de textos en *Frente Popular* y *La Voz* donde se animaba al mantenimiento del piquete y se anunciaba la participación de organizaciones americanas como la ALPD o la sección juvenil del NACASD. En diciembre, según la narración de los perjudicados, la coacción se transformó en agresiones verbales y físicas a los compradores del ultramarinos. El día 12 la procesión de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, que discurría por delante de la tienda, fue saludada puño en alto por los piquetes; y seis días más tarde el ultramarinos y la iglesia próxima amanecieron pintados con la hoz y el martillo. La prensa católica denunció lo que consideraba como “el primer ataque contra una iglesia católica en América” y calificó la escalada como “una orgía de acontecimientos comunista”. Los españoles de los Estados Unidos no pudieron permanecer al margen, a pesar de la distancia, de los odios viscerales desatados por la guerra.<sup>16</sup>

SHC fue, probablemente, la organización prorrepública más heterogénea en lo político – que no en lo social – y más abierta a la cooperación con otros grupos de nacionalidad e ideología diferentes. Entre sus afiliadas estuvieron el Buró Hispano del CPUSA, agrupaciones socialistas y entidades anarquistas tan activas como Cultura Proletaria. Cooperó con organizaciones frentepopulistas

<sup>15</sup> *Frente Popular*, 10 de marzo de 1939; GONZÁLEZ LÓPEZ, E. (1990), pp. 318-320; CASTRO, J.: *La obra de Sociedades Hispanas Confederadas en torno a los refugiados españoles*; y carta, Francisco Largo Caballero a David Dubinsky, 30 de junio de 1939, Ernest L. Cuneo Papers, FDRL.

<sup>16</sup> ALBORNOZ, A., y TORYHO, J.: *En los Caminos de la Libertad*; y DOHERTY, John: “Red Spain Tactics on Fourteenth Street”.

estadounidenses como la ALAWF – a cuyo Congreso Nacional de 1937 envió dos delegados – y, sobre todo, el MB&NACASD. En colaboración con éste organizó los mítines conmemorativos del comienzo de la guerra civil celebrados en el Madison Square Garden el 19 de julio de 1937 y 1938. Pero también colaboró con los anarquistas de ULO y SIA. La publicidad del CAE fue acogida en las páginas de *Spanish Revolution*. Existe constancia de que, al menos al principio de la guerra, las ULO donaron al CAE una pequeña parte de lo recaudado por ellas. SHC puso a disposición de ULO su sede en el Ateneo Hispano del 59-61 de Henry Street, Brooklyn, para alguno de sus mítines. SHC quiso cimentar la unidad de los hispanos en pro de la República sobre la solidaridad de clase, y en los primeros tiempos del conflicto confió en que lo lograría:

Hemos hecho mucho, porque dentro del ambiente en que vive el obrero español actualmente en Estados Unidos, bregando duramente por la vida en su mayor parte, es verdaderamente notable el haber recogido tan grandes sumas. Porque hay que reconocer y decir bien alto que en SOCIEDADES HISPANAS CONFEDERADAS DE AYUDA A ESPAÑA no hay gentes acomodadas... Todos nosotros somos obreros... y estamos unidos... El sentido de solidaridad, aunque alguna vez haya tambaleado un poco, ha prevalecido siempre en nuestros actos... Liberales, republicanos, anarquistas, sindicalistas, socialistas, comunistas, todos hoy trabajamos por un solo fin: aplastar la amenaza fascista.

No obstante, a pesar de los reiterados llamamientos a la unidad, efectuados sobre todo desde las filas comunistas, las SHC no lograron superar la diversidad de intereses ideológicos y regionales representados en su seno. Las divisiones se hicieron más evidentes a medida que la guerra avanzaba. Ante la proximidad de la derrota republicana, las críticas a su comité ejecutivo arreciaron, y el riesgo de disgregación se convirtió en realidad. SHC se vio obligada a admitir el “ruidoso fracaso” de los frentes populares “por la diversidad de matices y aspiraciones que posibilitaban sus existencias”. A diferencia de las organizaciones frentepopulistas norteamericanas, cuya unidad fue posible gracias a la infiltración comunista, la ausencia de debate ideológico y a una amplia base de clase media liberal; en las SHC existió una presencia mayoritaria de socialistas y anarquistas entre la porción de miembros politizados, y el debate ideológico, aunque en ocasiones subterráneo y confuso, nunca desapareció.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Memoria del Congreso Nacional; El 19 de Julio en Nueva York; *Spanish Revolution*, 6 de noviembre de 1936, 9 de diciembre de 1936 y 25 de febrero de 1938; *Frente Popular*, 3 de marzo de 1938; “Editorial: La única línea de S.H.C.”, *Frente Popular*, 24 de marzo de 1939; GONZÁLEZ LÓPEZ, E. (1990), p. 319; y PÁMIES, T. (1974), p. 110.

SHC fue la principal, pero no la única, organización hispana de ayuda a la República. Sus principales competidoras fueron SIA, el Comité Popular Democrático de Socorro a España de Tampa (Flor.) y organizaciones aisladas de la costa oeste. SIA se disputó con SHC las donaciones de los españoles simpatizantes de la CNT y la FAI, aunque ambas cooperaron ocasionalmente. En Tampa – y más concretamente en Ybor City, la zona obrera de la ciudad – se localizaba desde principios del siglo “la más sólida concentración de trabajadores procedentes de España”. La mayoría trabajaba en las fábricas de tabaco y en buena parte procedía de Asturias. Los niveles de afiliación a sindicatos, huelgas y militancia política superaban con creces a los del resto de la comunidad. De la veintena de periódicos en español publicados en la ciudad a partir del 1900 y hasta 1950, dos fueron anarquistas, mientras que otros cuatro

reflejan un tipo de ideología parecida a la de algunos periódicos socialistas en España: informaciones sindicales; huelgas y otras formas de lucha obrera, resistencia, condiciones de trabajo, ideología, un anticlericalismo notorio contra la jerarquía católica y los clérigos, aunque respetando el espíritu y la doctrina.

Estos factores explican la hiperactividad prorrepblicana de la comunidad de Tampa durante la guerra civil. Según sus informes ante el Departamento de Estado, el Comité Popular Democrático de Socorro a España de Tampa recaudó hasta marzo de 1939 145.091 dólares; casi un 40% de la cantidad reunida por las SHC durante idéntico período de tiempo. El Comité estaba constituido por organizaciones benéficas y sindicales latinas – en especial españolas, cubanas e italianas – y entre los destinatarios de sus fondos se encontraban la Cruz Roja de Valencia, el MBASD, los FALB, Victoria Kent y la Cruz Roja de Tampa. Sus colectas semanales para España se centraban en Ybor City, y los nombres de aquellos trabajadores, comerciantes o profesionales con clientela latina que se resistían a contribuir eran publicados incluso por *La Gaceta*, el diario en español de mayor tirada, republicano moderado, con el fin de que reconsiderasen su postura. Varios periódicos del sur de Florida denunciaron las colectas por considerarlas una sangría de fondos hacia el exterior sobre una comunidad empobrecida y beneficiaria de ayudas de la WPA.<sup>18</sup>

La mayoría de las afiliadas a SHC se concentró en la costa este, en concreto en los estados de Nueva York, Nueva Jersey, Pennsylvania y Virginia Occidental.

<sup>18</sup> RUEDA, G. (1993), pp. 198-203; Department of State: *Press Releases*, 1936-1939; y cartas de 29 de diciembre de 1937 y 5 de enero de 1938, Charles W. Bartlett al Departamento de Estado, NA, 852.48 RELIEF-REGISTRATION.



En California fueron especialmente activas las agrupaciones de Acción Demócrata Española de San Francisco, Pittsburg, Vacaville, Monterrey y Winters. Contaron con la colaboración de entidades asistenciales como la Benéfica Española o la Unión Española de California, que les prestaron sus locales para la celebración de actos por la República o participaron a través de delegados en su organización. Excepto Acción Demócrata de Pittsburg, afiliada a SHC, las demás distribuyeron lo recaudado entre destinatarios varios como NACASD, MBASD y Central Spanish Relief Committee de Washington, D.C. La mayoría de estos grupúsculos se disolvieron hacia el fin de la guerra.<sup>19</sup>

Existió una delegación vasca en Nueva York durante la guerra, encabezada por Manuel de la Sota, mas no hemos hallado indicios de que realizase actividades de propaganda por cuenta propia. La comunidad catalana se integró en SHC a través de la afiliación del Comité Català Antifeixista de New York City, pero también hizo propaganda y “lobbying” fuera del marco estricto de las Sociedades y canalizó parte de sus fondos de forma exclusiva hacia la Generalitat. Dispuso de dos publicaciones periódicas propias, ambas editadas en Nueva York: *Catalonia*, en catalán, y *Catalonian Correspondence*, en inglés. Presidido por Francesc Pina, con Joan Gibernau como secretario y Josep Gelabert como encargado de propaganda, hizo del antifascismo y del nacionalismo catalán un único objetivo. En su primera etapa, *Catalonia* llevó el subtítulo *De la Generalitat o Al servicio de la Generalitat*. De hecho, el Comité hizo las veces de representante del Comisariado de Propaganda de la Generalitat en Nueva York. En su local social se recibieron todas las publicaciones del Comisariado y buena parte de la prensa de Cataluña. Jaume Miravittles, comisario de Propaganda en Barcelona, mostró especial interés en captar las simpatías institucionales norteamericanas. El 15 de mayo de 1937 envió a Roosevelt varias publicaciones del Comisariado acompañadas de una estatuilla de un niño con la inscripción “Del Catalán más Joven al Presidente Roosevelt”. Se trataba de uno de cinco ejemplares de una edición exclusiva de “El més petit de tots” – la mascota de la revolución catalana creada por el escultor Miquel Paredes –, y portaba en una mano la bandera catalana y en otra la estadounidense. En la carta adjunta, Miravittles afirmó:

I hope they will convey to you, the highest representative of the great American people, the spirit of our small Catalan nation which, shoulder

<sup>19</sup> RUEDA, G. (1993), pp. 208, 220; *El Antifascista*, 15 de febrero de 1938 y 15 de enero de 1938; y ALBORNOZ, A., y TORYHO, J.: *En los Caminos de la Libertad*.



to shoulder with the Spanish Republicans, is fighting for the ideals of Democracy which your country and ours share in common, against the aggression of the international coalition of fascism.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Correspondencia de la autora con John Montllor; *Butlletí*, Comité Català Antifeixista de Nova York, febrero de 1938; *Diccionari dels catalans d'America. Contribució a un inventari biogràfic, toponímic i temàtic*, *Catalonia*, marzo-abril de 1938; ARMERO, J. (1976), pp. 82-83; memorándum, M. A. LeHand al Departamento de Estado, 9 de junio de 1937, OF 422, FDRL; carta, Miravittles a Roosevelt, 15 de mayo de 1937, OF 20, FDRL; y FONTSERÉ, C., pp. 326-328.

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## ■ ...y no se lo tragó la tierra: Tomás Rivera en busca de la identidad chicana

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Bartolo pasaba por el pueblo por aquello de Diciembre cuando tanteaba que la mayor parte de la gente había regresado de los trabajos. Siempre venía vendiendo sus poemas. Se le acababan casi para el primer día porque en los poemas se encontraban los nombres de la gente del pueblo y cuando los leía en voz alta era algo emocionante y serio. Recuerdo que una vez le dijo a la raza que leyera los poemas en voz alta porque la voz era la semilla del amor en la oscuridad. (Rivera 1993: 71)

....la voz era la semilla del amor en la oscuridad, la voz dando forma a palabras que no son más que ropajes del pensamiento, y, en *Tierra*, de las ideas, no sólo del protagonista, del narrador o del escritor, sino de la raza, de la comunidad chicana. Un pueblo sin voz y sin palabras que, a pesar de todo, sí tiene ideas y pensamiento como demuestra Tomás Rivera con esta serie de relatos llenos de la hermosura de la vida sencilla, de la palabra cristalina y de la intensidad del sufrimiento.

Podríamos decir que el autor se sirve de un modo de contar sus historias “neocostumbrista”<sup>1</sup> mediante el cual intenta que renazca el pasado histórico de la

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<sup>1</sup> Aquí empleamos el término “neocostumbrismo” para aludir a la obra literaria de Rivera ya que sus peculiaridades y finalidad son muy diferentes a las del género decimonónico.

comunidad a que pertenece. Un pasado cercano que se ve amenazado por el olvido en el que fácilmente cae todo lo que no es patrimonio cultural del poderoso, haciéndose invisible e imperceptible para sensibilidades intelectual y culturalmente estandarizadas. Parece evidente que es imprescindible tomar una nueva conciencia y recuperar el pasado histórico, antes de actuar de forma más dinámica con el fin de superar la situación de opresión y discriminación que sufre el pueblo chicano. Pero esto no es todo, en *Tierra* nos enfrentamos a una reflexión sobre la realidad chicana y las posibles maneras de cambiarla en todas sus dimensiones.

Así pues, con *Tierra* Tomás Rivera atraviesa de forma audaz e inteligente distintas fronteras en varios niveles de apreciación. En el plano ideológico, su obra supone una avanzadilla tremendamente eficaz para los autores chicanos posteriores al erigirse en portavoz de la realidad chicana, reivindicando sus tradiciones, sugiriendo la revisión tranquila de algunos aspectos característicos de su idiosincrasia e impulsando a los chicanos hacia la superación de los límites que la sociedad receptora de su cultura, el mundo fuera de sus fronteras, les impone. El autor se vale de un método tradicional chicano para estructurar y dar forma a la narración, cruzando las fronteras del canon establecido para el ámbito de la novela en el mundo occidental. Asimismo, Tomás Rivera utiliza la metáfora del *bildungsroman* y el paso de la frontera de la madurez para el personaje protagonista, con el fin de plasmar implícitamente la transición de la comunidad chicana, avocada de manera irremisible a un futuro de lucha, pacífica pero sin tregua, en el que habrán de ir cruzando las distintas fronteras de índole físico, psicológico, ideológico y estructural que surcan su camino. Y es acerca de estos aspectos principalmente sobre lo que desarrollaremos nuestro estudio. En nuestro análisis intentaremos ver hasta qué punto la obra de Rivera puede ser considerada formal y estructuralmente como "novela", trataremos de descubrir cuál es la función de esta estructura dentro de la obra. Revisaremos con detalle también las lecturas de la estructura de *Tierra* como *bildungsroman* e iremos enlazando nuestro estudio con las cuestiones que permean toda la obra y le confieren a la vez su identidad como son la oralidad, la función del escritor, la historia del pueblo chicano que se reescribe.

Vamos a centrarnos, en primer lugar, en afirmar la cualidad novelesca de *Tierra*, una obra que en una primera impresión podría inducirnos al error de clasificarla como conjunto de historias cortas o relatos. Es innegable que la novela realista ha servido a los escritores como medio de expresión y también es cierto que las características del género en lo que se refiere a la fluidez de la estructura narrativa y a la caracterización psicológica han permitido a los autores dramatizar su búsqueda de la identidad personal. Pues bien, *Tierra* cumple las condiciones

establecidas para poder ser emplazada dentro del marco conceptual de la novela a pesar de que a primera vista su forma y la estructuración de sus contenidos puedan conducirnos a tener una visión engañosa de la misma; en ella se distinguen elementos clave como una presentación crítica de un tipo de creencias, una secularización de la experiencia humana y un claro énfasis en el individuo singularizado.

Siguiendo la tradición novelesca, la obra comienza con una escena de nominalización en la que el joven protagonista intenta responderse a sí mismo, a su propio nombre. Esta división de la identidad del personaje entre el yo y el otro podría inducirnos a pensar que nos encontramos frente a una obra en la que, a través de una serie de transformaciones ya tópicas dentro del argumento, se recorre el trecho que lleva desde la fragmentación hasta la afirmación de la identidad del individuo. Sin embargo Rivera se aleja de los lugares comunes del género novelesco en situaciones análogas y satisface el deseo de autorealización ("completeness") de su personaje mediante un modo narrativo que no es en absoluto individualista y que alcanza su cénit con un momento de reconocimiento, no sólo de la identidad personal, sino también de la colectiva, sin la cual la primera no lograría la ansiada plenitud.

Así, en los últimos tramos de la obra, el narrador omnisciente en tercera persona y el narrador en primera persona se unen a las voces de otros personajes gracias a la técnica del monólogo interior, desplegada en este caso de modo impersonal. Rivera consigue con este dispositivo que el lector logre evocar la relación que se establecía entre los cuenta-cuentos de la tradición oral y su audiencia (acerca de lo trascendental de la tradición oral en esta obra de Rivera hablaremos más adelante). Así pues, el protagonista sin nombre encuentra su identidad dentro del grupo gracias a la memoria, al recuerdo de la gente que ha construido su propia historia, a pesar de que se nos presentan los rasgos culturales chicanos, sus normas de conducta y costumbres con la intención velada de que el juicio que se emita tras su consideración sea negativo. De esta manera Rivera construye un final muy efectivo desde el punto de vista retórico e ideológico, ya que no podemos dejar de lado el hecho de que el lector debe tomar parte activa en el proceso de reconstrucción de dos piezas periféricas (la primera y la última), doce cuentos cortos y trece fragmentos interpolados de forma que se constituyan en un argumento unificado. No cabe duda de que Rivera consiguió con éxito modificar los dispositivos literarios típicos de la narrativa individualista para satisfacer las necesidades de su comunidad.

Además, su estructura narrativa nos permite presenciar las transformaciones históricas que se estaban llevando a cabo y el nacimiento de una nueva identidad de grupo. En palabras de Héctor Calderón, la novela *Tierra* es una estructura de

signos informada decisivamente por contextos ideológicos e históricos. Pero la novela es mucho más que una representación literal o denotativa de un período porque, en virtud del carácter fragmentario de su argumento, los lectores nos vemos obligados a reconstruir y dar forma a una lógica histórica a la vez que se nos invita, de forma velada, a personarnos en situaciones en las que no podemos evitar emitir juicios acerca de la cultura tradicional chicana; una interacción fundamental a la hora de cumplir su objetivo social.

No cabe duda de que uno de los aspectos más llamativos e interesantes de la novela, como ya hemos dejado entrever, es su estructura y la fragmentación que presenta. Pocas obras dependen tanto de su estructura para transmitir su mensaje de forma inequívoca. Por ello, de aquí en adelante, vamos a revisar distintos aspectos de la estructura de *Tierra* que nos revelarán algunos de los valores principales de la obra, nos ayudarán en su comprensión, y también nos desvelarán cuál era el fin último perseguido por Tomás Rivera a la hora de su composición.

Aunque los muchos temas de la obra se expresan por boca de una combinación de narradores, unos en tercera persona y otros en primera persona, en un marco de narraciones fragmentarias, cada una completa en sí misma, *Tierra* presenta un diseño formal nítido. Dos fragmentos que se centran en el joven protagonista, “El año perdido” y “Debajo de la casa”, constituyen el marco que encuadra los doce cuentos y las trece anécdotas que se intercalan entre ellos. Los cuentos, que nos presentan un coro de personajes anónimos, crean una impresión de desarrollo y unidad formal entre ellos que se ve acentuada por su disposición lineal, marcada claramente en el orden que siguen tres piezas significativas: el primer cuento del grupo, “Los niños no se aguantaron”, seguido de la narración central de la novela simbólica y literalmente, “Y no se lo tragó la tierra”, y por último “Cuando lleguemos” que concluye la secuencia de los cuentos. Estas tres piezas se concentran de manera específica en los avatares de los campesinos en el ámbito de sus lugares de trabajo. La muerte del niño campesino en los campos de cultivo donde trabaja, con que se abre el primer cuento, debe leerse tomando en consideración el despertar de la conciencia del campesino adolescente del relato central, y su acto de rebeldía ha de interpretarse en relación con la muda expresión de esperanza de los campesinos del camión del último cuento.

Por otra parte, el núcleo central compuesto por los tres cuentos “La noche estaba plateada”, “Y no se lo tragó la tierra” y “Primera comunión”, narra momentos cruciales de expresión de rebeldía y transgresión cultural en la vida de un adolescente. Pues bien, a través de su temática de identidad personal, estos tres cuentos remiten al lector, por un lado, al fragmento inicial “El año perdido” y, por otro, lo guían hacia el último tramo de la novela, donde se desencadena la sensación de que todos los personajes, los cuentos y las anécdotas forman un todo



unitario en un momento catártico de grandiosidad narrativa. En este sentido, también cabe señalar que, curiosamente, los títulos de los fragmentos inicial y final conformarían una frase completa con un matiz irónico, “El año perdido debajo de la casa”, circunscribiendo aún más la novela dentro de la arquitectura estructural diseñada por Rivera (que es lo que ocurre en realidad, porque el protagonista había estado rememorando los incidentes que había experimentado a lo largo de un año y que creía perdidos; sin embargo posteriormente descubre que lo que ha sucedido es que ha ganado la experiencia de un año).

Así pues, se puede afirmar que esta novela a trozos anima al lector a concebirla como un todo por medio de un argumento entretejido cuidadosamente que tiene la peculiaridad de ser lineal y circular, estático y a la vez dinámico. Los lectores de *Tierra* deben ser capaces de discernir el marco referencial general de la obra, esto es, la preocupación por la identidad dentro de una colectividad, que estructura no sólo el principio y el final de la novela, sino también la participación del propio lector. Del hecho de que los doce cuentos aparezcan enmarcados por un par de fragmentos interpolados se sigue que el papel del lector surge de los espacios vacíos que quedan y que han de ser completados para lograr la continuidad temática y estructural de la obra. El desarrollo del argumento se basa así en una serie de relaciones varias que se han de establecer entre la obra y el lector. El texto va, en efecto, desvelando ciertos detalles que permiten que se llegue al entendimiento necesario para que la interacción lector-texto sea efectiva y se logre una aprehensión completa del mensaje de la obra a través de la finalización del argumento. Quizás sea en la fase final de la novela donde Rivera da al lector la pista más clara, al dar rienda suelta a sus opiniones acerca de la función social del arte mientras ellas mismas informan, al mismo tiempo, el propio acto de la lectura.

En este punto vamos a prestar atención al último fragmento interpolado que aparece en *Tierra* y con el que he considerado oportuno encabezar este ensayo. Se trata, sin duda, de una anécdota muy significativa en la que el autor describe la responsabilidad que el artista tiene para con su público: el artista ha de dar un verdadero sentido a la noción de comunidad, debe lograr, a través de la palabra, unir al grupo y darle sentido como tal. Rivera, en su retrato del artista, Bartolo, incluye una referencia nítida a la función social de su actividad de contar historias. Las palabras de Bartolo recrean la experiencia de la gente y proporcionan placer e instrucción a la vez, ajustándose al ideal Horaciano del “utile et dulci” del arte. A través del relato de estas experiencias comunes a la comunidad, el artista consigue conformar una cultura de grupo y Rivera parece implicar que es en un contexto oral donde la voz humana erige un monumento en memoria de su cultura, con el fin último de perpetuarla.



En este sentido, Alejandro Morales afirma que *Tierra* debe mayor parte de sus peculiaridades, incluyendo la estructura, a la tradición del cuento oral que a la tradición de lo escrito. En su opinión, la novela conserva una serie de parámetros característicos de una oralidad primaria, que se manifiestan en un ritual de recuerdo al que se llega a través de un proceso de aprendizaje escuchando, repitiendo, componiendo y cantando. Rivera pudo aprender, gracias a esta cultura oral chicana, la importancia de recordar, el valor de la palabra y de la comunicación que se establece, a través de ella, en una comunidad.

Para Rivera, Bartolo era el modelo, y la estructura que empleó para construir *Tierra*, si nos fijamos, es la misma que la estructura de la producción oral de Bartolo. Al igual que Bartolo, Rivera compone un canto basado en la estructura de la narración oral tradicional, que va entrelazando canciones. La estructura externa de *Tierra* guarda una gran similitud con la rapsodia oral de Bartolo. Tradicionalmente, el trovador entraba en una ciudad y anunciaba su presencia; por lo general, comenzaba con una introducción en la que esbozaba a grandes rasgos el contenido de su composición oral. En ocasiones, tras esta introducción, el trovador hacía una pausa, comentaba algún aspecto relevante de la ciudad o introducía una anécdota y/o un preámbulo a su primer gran bloque narrativo, seguido de otra anécdota o preámbulo y nuevo bloque narrativo y así sucesivamente, encadenando una serie de relatos que finalizaban con una especie de epílogo, a modo de síntesis, de toda la composición. Cada fragmento (bloque narrativo y anécdota y/o preámbulo) podía ser más o menos extenso y tratar de distintos temas relacionados con la gente, la ciudad y la región en la que el trovador se encontrase en cada ocasión. Esta fragmentación, e incluso inconsistencia a veces, de la estructura externa delata la economía que el proceso y el método de composición oral imponen al arquitecto de las palabras.

Morales señala que este modelo narrativo nos descubre nueve características e influencias de la tradición oral en la estructura externa de *Tierra*: 1) la estructura es aditiva, no subordinada; 2) no analítica, sino que los bloques van agregándose uno tras otro (acumulativa); 3) redundante; 4) conservadora o tradicionalista; 5) cercana a la experiencia humana en el mundo real; 6) con cierto tono agónico; 7) con dosis de empatía y participación en vez de mostrar un distanciamiento objetivo; 8) homeostática; 9) situacional en vez de abstracta.

Rivera sistematiza la estructura externa de su obra de forma acumulativa reiterando la fórmula: Anécdota + Núcleo narrativo extenso. Al igual que Bartolo, Rivera se limita a encadenar ambos elementos para crear un canto acumulativo. Se puede percibir claramente cómo, gracias a este procedimiento creativo, cada anécdota y cada historia que el autor va agregando gana significado e importancia, a la vez que van conformando un todo bastante homogéneo por capricho del

autor. En este sentido, es claro que el texto presenta una de las principales características de la tradición oral, es acumulativo (en este caso que nos ocupa más en cuanto a estructura física que en cuanto a los elementos lingüísticos). Así, mediante esta fórmula, Rivera recrea los procesos ligados a la memoria y al recuerdo, pues al comunicar la información de este modo, el lector sigue caminos que le son familiares para el procesamiento de todos los datos y su fijación en la memoria.

Una consecuencia directa de esta estructura acumulativa, que se hace patente en *Tierra*, es la redundancia. El autor repite el patrón simple de fragmento corto seguido de historia más larga con el fin de conseguir una continuidad en el pensamiento y confianza en sus lectores y audiencia, pues les presenta una fórmula con la que estaban familiarizados gracias a la tradición oral de su cultura. Además, es interesante apuntar que casi un 30% del texto está en blanco, siendo estos espacios y páginas en blanco el equivalente a las pausas dramáticas que el trovador utiliza para preparar lo que va a cantar a continuación y para obligar a su audiencia a seguir atentamente su narración oral, creando expectación y avidez por conocer la continuación del relato.

Hemos dejado traslucir anteriormente que el enfoque de Rivera en cuanto a la composición de su novela es tradicional. En realidad, lo que hace el autor no es más que perpetuar un conocimiento, comunicando oralmente o de forma escrita, pero siguiendo el patrón del discurso oral, unos relatos que contienen la historia, el pensamiento, las creencias y las costumbres de su pueblo. En las culturas orales primitivas el conocimiento y los conceptos que no se repiten desaparecen con suma facilidad; por lo tanto, las sociedades con tradición oral deben esforzarse por conservar lo que se ha venido aprendiendo durante siglos. De esta dificultad manifiesta que existe para adquirir sabiduría y conocimiento se deriva el hecho de que estos pueblos tengan en gran consideración a aquellos que, dentro de su comunidad, se ocupan de conservar lo aprendido y que son capaces, como Bartolo, de contar en el momento presente las historias de antaño. Precisamente esa necesidad que existe de conservar su sabiduría, lo que impone un modelo marcadamente tradicionalista, que inhibe, de alguna forma, los procesos de experimentación intelectual. Con todo esto no hemos querido sugerir, en absoluto, que Rivera, por recurrir a este método basado en la tradición oral para construir su novela, no sea original. La originalidad de Rivera se manifiesta en su modo de recontar o reescribir los fragmentos e historias que componen *Tierra* y en la interacción que su obra logra establecer con el lector.

La novela comunica una serie de hechos que se estructuran por medio de referencias directas a la vida real, y un punto muy importante es que asimila lo extraño y distante, el mundo objetivo, a la interacción inmediata y familiar de las

personas. *Tierra* reúne nombres de personas y de lugares y los sitúa formando parte de una estructura externa, que se configura como una lista de acontecimientos y situaciones importantes de la vida, humanizados por la presencia de seres de carne y hueso que apelan a la sensibilidad del lector. Una consecuencia más de la estructura narrativa de corte oral de *Tierra* es que la obra despliega un sistema de comunicación de tono agónico. Esto se explica porque Rivera, al presentar el conocimiento inmerso en el mundo real, lo sitúa inevitablemente dentro de un contexto de lucha por vivir y de sufrimiento. Es imposible, por lo tanto, que el lector pueda escapar de ese escenario real y así, no puede hacer otra cosa que involucrarse en el contenido de *Tierra*, en el mundo en el que los seres humanos intentan sobrevivir.

También es una característica de las culturas de tradición oral la descripción de la violencia física, una violencia que, como Rivera insiste en *Tierra* por medio de distintos dispositivos, incluyendo los estructurales, es consecuencia directa de las penurias físicas que han de soportar día tras día los personajes de la obra, ignorantes de la verdadera causa de su condición. Parece claro que los lectores sí son conscientes del hincapié que hace Rivera en señalar que la violencia nace del contexto social y resulta bastante irónica la relación que se establece entre el lector consciente y los personajes situados al margen de dicha consciencia. Esta relación refuerza, sin duda alguna, el tono agónico de toda la obra en su desarrollo sostenido.

Por otra parte, el ejercicio de alabanza, opuesto a la llamada agónica en las culturas orales o residualmente orales, también tiene cabida en *Tierra*. Estas loas aparecen al final de la narración. Se percibe fácilmente que a medida que la narración avanza la violencia va desapareciendo estructuralmente hasta el punto en el que se produce un cambio bastante radical en cuanto al centro de la acción. Éste deja de ser exterior para convertirse en interior, constituyéndose en una condición del individuo.

Otra de las características propias de culturas orales, que se pone de manifiesto en la estructura de *Tierra*, es su cualidad empática. Para los narradores del texto que nos ocupa el proceso de aprender o de acumular conocimientos consiste en conseguir una identificación cercana, empática y comunal con lo conocido. En este sentido, se puede señalar que *Tierra* capta la relación de empatía que se establece cuando se produce una proyección de la personalidad del narrador en la personalidad de los personajes, de la comunidad y de Bartolo. Esta relación es de participación, activa, puesto que el narrador participa en, y comparte con otros, un discurso que él mismo ha creado acerca de ellos y de sí mismo. Sin embargo, en este punto surge una especie de paradoja ya que a través del propio acto de la escritura Rivera separa a su narrador del objeto, creando así

una cierta distancia entre ellos. De este modo, al final del texto, el narrador, que ha sido física e intelectualmente apartado del objeto, aparece alejado de los personajes, de la comunidad y de Bartolo.

Esta relación entre la condición de empatía y de participación, típica de la cultura oral, y el factor de distanciamiento objetivo que todo texto escrito, por el mero hecho de ser escrito, lleva consigo, da lugar a la consideración del carácter homeostático de *Tierra*. En términos generales, se puede afirmar que *Tierra* es un texto homeostático por cuanto que trata de convertirse en cronista que intenta preservar y mantener vigentes las estructuras narrativas tradicionales de la comunidad chicana, claramente amenazadas por los modos de codificación externa contemporáneos (medios de comunicación en general, prensa, radio, televisión, cine, publicidad). Siguiendo en esta línea, otro de los factores que confieren a *Tierra* un carácter homeostático es la habilidad del autor para mantenerse en perenne contacto con el pasado, resucitando los recuerdos más significativos y desechando, progresivamente, aquellos que han perdido ya su relevancia. Como se puede apreciar, este proceso no es otra cosa que una reconstrucción selectiva de una historia. Finalmente, el hecho de que Tomás Rivera mantenga el lenguaje propio de los chicanos, el español, con su léxico y estructuras narrativas de marcado cariz oral, constituye también una función homeostática del texto. La obra presenta un modelo de dialéctica dinámico, no sólo dentro de una lengua, el español, sino también entre distintas lenguas. Hay una clara interacción entre la lengua inglesa y la española en el texto.

Para terminar con este repaso a los rasgos estructurales de *Tierra* que la ligan a la tradición oral, tenemos que subrayar que esta novela es situacional y no abstracta. Las culturas de tradición oral tienden a hacer uso de conceptos dentro de un marco referencial muy poco abstracto, en el sentido de que nunca se alejan de la vida del mundo real. Y, en último término, se podría afirmar que el texto de Rivera se configura como una experiencia personal e íntimamente ligada a un contexto específico.

Hasta este punto hemos considerado aspectos generales de la estructura de *Tierra*, y también hemos interpretado el significado de esa estructura a la luz de sus conexiones con la tradición oral. A continuación, vamos a proceder a analizar la arquitectura estructural de la obra como expresión de un proceso ritual que mantiene muchas similitudes con el *bildungsroman*.

En palabras del propio Rivera, el acto de escribir puede considerarse como un ritual personal, un medio que nos posibilita establecer, en todo momento, un contacto con la humanidad y con los propios orígenes. Este ritual es sencillo pero a la vez complejo, al igual que la propia forma de escribir de Rivera que, en *Tierra*, emprende un camino de búsqueda del ser, de la identidad y de la forma de

expresión que se caracteriza por su sutileza y complejidad. Thomas Vallejos afirma que *Tierra* es un relato panorámico, basado en experiencias de la infancia del propio Rivera, que documenta y explora muchas facetas de la vida de los campesinos chicanos a través de una serie de historias.

Pues bien, muchos críticos han coincidido en señalar que un rasgo estructural de importancia, puesto que confiere unidad a la obra, sería el rito de pasaje. Tendremos en cuenta, a partir de este punto, las distintas visiones sobre la concreción estructural de este aspecto en *Tierra* y las diferentes interpretaciones que hacen críticos como Thomas Vallejos, Erlinda González-Berry, Tey Diana Rebolledo sobre el particular.

Vamos a comenzar refiriéndonos a Arnold van Gennep. Van Gennep señala que hay tres estadios en todo rito de pasaje: separación, transición y reintegración. Parece claro que en el caso que nos ocupa nos enfrentamos a un rito de pasaje de adolescencia o pubertad y Victor Turner apunta que en este tipo de ritos de pasaje la primera fase sería una separación del niño de sus progenitores. Una vez que se consuma dicha separación, comienza la segunda fase, de transición, llena de conflictos que sólo hallarán solución en la última fase del rito, el regreso del individuo, transformado ya, a la familia y al ámbito social de los que se había apartado.

La descripción que Mircea Eliade hace del proceso ritual en términos de una muerte y un renacer simbólicos también pueden ser de utilidad a la hora de interpretar estructuralmente *Tierra*. Desde este punto de vista, la fase intermedia de Van Gennep y Turner sería un período de oscuridad y reclusión en el interior de un vientre o de un sepulcro de carácter simbólico, mientras que la fase final del ritual supondría un renacer tras un momento de iluminación.

Teniendo en cuenta todas estas consideraciones, una lectura atenta de *Tierra* nos sugerirá múltiples similitudes con el proceso del ritual de pasaje. En efecto, se observa cómo el joven protagonista anónimo de la novela pasa por episodios de soledad y de caos que le apartan de su propia familia (1ª fase del ritual). Nuestro protagonista se revela ante las creencias religiosas tradicionales, que su familia conserva, y rechaza su actitud de aceptación incondicional y de sumisión ante esos valores. Este rechazo hace posible que el joven protagonista alcance, con su empeño creativo, un nivel de existencia más elevado, donde logrará dar vida a su propia historia.

Esto lo consigue en el último relato, "Debajo de la casa", que culmina el proceso del ritual de pasaje (3ª fase). La culminación del ritual en esa historia lleva consigo la realización de dos instintos genuinamente humanos, que se encuentran en conflicto, y, a la vez, concuerdan el uno con el otro en determinados aspectos. El instinto de autoconservación lleva aparejados el aislamiento y la discrepancia

con el resto de los mortales para asegurar la propia supervivencia física e intelectual. El segundo instinto al que hemos hecho referencia es el deseo altruista que Rivera describe como el sentimiento más humano que el hombre posee: el deseo de amar a sus semejantes, a los demás.

A la luz de estas consideraciones, cuando por fin, en el último relato de la novela, el joven se une a su familia en la lucha colectiva por la supervivencia que mantiene la comunidad, Rivera hace que esos dos instintos, en principio contrapuestos, se reconcilien. Este efecto lo logra Rivera a través de un mecanismo, que queda patente en la estructura de la novela, de sustitución de la ética del individualismo por la unidad de la colectividad. Este final no debe extrañarnos pues, para Tomás Rivera, el hogar, la comunidad y la lucha son tres elementos constantes en lo que él mismo denominó el ritual de la literatura chicana.

Así pues, tras la fase de rechazo de los valores sustentados por la célula familiar ("Lo que nunca supo"; "¿Para qué van tanto a la escuela?"), incluso de separación física y real de la familia ("La mano en la bolsa") el protagonista se aísla, reflexiona, concluye sin prejuicios tras momentos de crisis ("La noche estaba plateada"; "...Y no se lo tragó la tierra") en su afán de autoafirmación y autoconservación. El ritual se completa de forma exacta en "Debajo de la casa", en el momento clave en que el protagonista se ve inundado por un impulso irrefrenable de amor por su raza. El joven ha estado aislado en el sepulcro simbólico de debajo de su casa, desarrollando una actividad puramente intelectual, atravesando momentos críticos y, al final, resucita de esa muerte simbólica después de haber alcanzado una visión nítida de su existencia y de la de su comunidad.

Abundando un poco más en esta interesante lectura de la estructura de *Tierra*, esta novela se ha caracterizado también como el relato del paso de la infancia a la madurez y la autoconciencia de un joven protagonista por medio de la aceptación de una serie de símbolos, acontecimientos y circunstancias del pasado. Gracias a la integración y unificación de todos estos elementos se logra conformar el destino del individuo. En este tipo de literatura, el llegar a una determinada edad, al límite de la madurez, significa conquistar el reino de la conciencia, del legado de los antepasados y de la propia identidad.

Entre las características de este *bildungsroman* masculino cabe señalar: 1) el héroe abandona su hogar o va a la escuela ("Es que duele"; "La mano en la bolsa"); 2) es sometido a una serie de pruebas por sus semejantes ("Es que duele", "La mano en la bolsa", "Primera Comunión"); 3) es aceptado o, si no, aprende a desenvolverse en las situaciones que se le presentan ("La mano en la bolsa", "Primera comunión"); 4) supera la adversidad ("...Y no se lo tragó la tierra"); 5) sale victorioso de algún acto entendido como heroico ("La noche estaba



plateada”, “...Y no se lo tragó la tierra”); 6) descubre quién es él mismo, como individuo y dentro de la sociedad (“Debajo de la casa”); 7) al final de la novela ha logrado integrar su conciencia, alcanzando su propia definición como persona, y se ve capacitado para enfrentarse al mundo tal como es (“Debajo de la casa”). Así pues, al final de un *bildungsroman*, el héroe se perfila como un ser que experimenta una sensación de completa libertad e integración en su comunidad. Esta es, exactamente, la sensación que nos produce la lectura de la última historia de *Tierra*.

De acuerdo con Erlinda González-Berry y Tey Diana Rebolledo, lo que unifica la estructura narrativa de *Tierra* es el proceso mental, el pensamiento consciente de un joven que al final de la narración se ha convertido en un adulto. Rivera nos mantiene en suspense hasta el Epílogo que es cuando podemos darnos cuenta de esto. El énfasis que el autor pone en la cualidad de adulto y de madurez del personaje queda explicitado en el pasaje en el que un niño dice ver salir a un viejo de debajo de la casa. Esta alusión a un viejo, cuando en realidad todos sabemos que tiene que tratarse de un joven, es fuente de una cierta ambigüedad. Sin embargo, esta ambigüedad se despeja con facilidad si consideramos dos niveles de lectura en la historia. Por un lado, estamos ante la historia de un niño que busca refugiarse y anhela un lugar de reflexión donde poder recordar y poner su vida en orden. Por otra parte, esta historia funciona como una metáfora del proceso de escritura y la figura del joven protagonista (niño) y la del narrador/autor (hombre) se funden cuando el niño que lo ve salir de debajo de la casa grita “Aquí está un viejo”.

El libro de Rivera, por lo tanto, representa, no sólo la maduración del protagonista y el reencuentro de la parte adulta e infantil del narrador, sino también las narraciones colectivas de distintas experiencias chicanas y de las injusticias que llevan asociadas. Estas historias tratan de la represión, consecuencia de unas creencias religiosas tradicionales, del racismo, del sufrimiento, de las alegrías y las penas del pueblo chicano, en suma, de todo lo que forma parte de la vida cotidiana de esta comunidad, que es la del narrador. Todas las historias en *Tierra* son completas en sí mismas, pero están interrelacionadas y conforman una unidad gracias al narrador, hombre o niño, que está debajo de la casa, inmerso en el laberinto de la memoria, recordando, sintetizando, creando. En este caso, como en otros textos chicanos, la casa se erige en el símbolo de la conciencia y tiene un estatus representativo de la memoria colectiva, del laberinto arquetípico. Se ha de entender como una estructura protectora en la que el niño (en este caso debajo de ella) adquiere un sentido pertinente de sí mismo.

Podemos afirmar que en esta novela el protagonista busca, como narrador, y regresa, como autor, a su barrio que es, indudablemente, fuente inagotable de



material histórico y humano para elaborar sus historias. Unas historias en las que se retratarán los miembros de la raza, esas gentes a las que en un sueño, o quizás en un reino de ficción Rivera desea abrazar al final de *Tierra*. Es más, por el mero hecho de reunir a toda esa gente en las páginas de su libro, Rivera es capaz de darles así el deseado abrazo y es que para el autor escribir sólo tiene sentido si se concibe como un acto de amor hacia su pueblo.

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## ■ Success and Stress in America: Monique Urza's *The Deep Blue Memory*

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In 1977 Richard W. Etulain, one of the most distinguished scholars on western American literature, published a brilliant article analyzing the major literary treatments of the American Basques. He concluded his article with a series of general observations about the traditional role of the Basques in these writings:

. . . too many fictional works have dealt only with the Basque as a herder. [...] Because authors of belletristic writing have concentrated on the herder, they have tended to omit the experiences of Basque women and urbanites and the affairs of the second and third generation. Too little has been written about problems of assimilation and Americanization. (16)

To these references to the weaknesses and limitations in the fictional portraits of the Basques, Etulain added a very meaningful remark: "No American Basque, except Robert Laxalt, has written significant imaginative literature about his ethnic heritage." (16)

Sixteen years later Monique Urza, Robert Laxalt's daughter, published *The Deep Blue Memory*, a novel that may be viewed as the perfect response to the

challenge posed by Etulain in his article. First of all, this book meant a shift in perspective from the first-generation Basque shepherd to his descendants in America. This shift, which had already been anticipated by Robert Laxalt's *The Basque Hotel* (1989), displays exceptional features in Urza's novel such as her emphasis on younger generations (particularly on the third generation, the grandchildren of immigrants) or her use of a female perspective to portray the conflict between loyalty to one's ethnic heritage and Americanization. Apart from this, *The Deep Blue Memory* became a highly remarkable literary event because it provided the Basque-American community with a new voice to describe and explain their experiences in the New World. Urza's novel may also be regarded as an ideal companion to his father's books due to its ability to portray a similar world from a different point of view. As William A. Douglass has noted,

. . . read in tandem, father's and daughter's works, in addition to providing a satisfying literary experience of the highest order, provide the reader with a social commentary on "becoming American" that is quite unique within the literature on the nation's immigrant heritage. (1993: 6)

*The Deep Blue Memory* draws upon the experiences of the writer's own family to describe the way in which different generations of a Basque family in Nevada come to terms with the immigration experience. The narrator of this story never reveals the surname of this family, but the family identity is not at all disguised in the book. In fact, any reader familiar with the story of the Laxalt family may notice an important number of similarities between the main characters in the novel and different members of this prominent Basque-American family. For example, it is possible to establish a correspondence between the narrator's immigrant grandparents and Urza's own ones, or between the narrator's father (Anthony, a brilliant writer) and Robert Laxalt, or between Uncle Luke and Paul Laxalt, Robert Laxalt's brother, who became Nevada governor, served two terms in the U.S. Senate and ran for the presidency in 1988. And, of course, the reader may also trace significant common points between the narrator and Monique Urza herself. However, we cannot forget that the book is a novel, a work written as a piece of fiction, as we may read at the very beginning of *The Deep Blue Memory*, just before the epigraph. In fact, Monique Urza has always insisted on this idea when asked about the importance of autobiographical elements in her novel:

I didn't want the book to be like a biography of the Laxalt family or something like that. And in the editorial process I had to stand up for myself on that point [...] I didn't use the Laxalt name at all in the book,

even in my name. Definitely an important part of the book is autobiographical. However, I did fictionalize certain things. [...] I would describe the book as psychologically autobiographic. People have a need, an inherent human need to take their own life and express it in some concrete way. (Río 1996: 5-6)

In *The Deep Blue Memory* Urza portrays the complexity of the immigration process through different generations of the same family. She will resort to a juxtaposition of a series of images to show the clash between modern American ways and ancient Basque values. This clash is also exposed through the conflict between the rewards brought by assimilation into American society and the price to be paid for integration and success. It is a conflict which each generation has to deal with in its own terms.

The first generation of immigrants is represented in the book by the narrator's Basque grandparents, who settled down as sheep ranchers in Nevada. They are reluctant to lose their ethnic identity in exchange for integration and acceptance, though they are aware that their descendants may have to follow a different path. This generational gap is illustrated in the book by the attitude of their five children, the second generation. They are immigrant kids who will work hard to overcome prejudice and achieve professional success and recognition in America. Their acceptance of American standards cannot be interpreted as a rejection of their heritage, but this will be inevitably affected by the overwhelming impact of the process of Americanization at the level of the second generation. Then, their children, the nineteen cousins mentioned in the book, will be subject to contradicting influences, illustrated in the book by different images related to the New World and the Old Basque Country respectively. Again, there is a generational gap because these grandchildren of immigrants do not feel an urging pressure to be successful. In fact, the American Dream has already become true for the whole family through their parents' efforts. So, the members of this third generation, in spite of their full integration into American society, look backward, to their roots, to an invaluable heritage that they are afraid of losing through Americanization. In this sense they feel closer to their grandparents' generation than to their parents' one. Finally, the fourth generation, represented in the book by the narrator's own children, seems to symbolize the accomplishment of the immigration process. The past is no longer so important for them once they feel at home in America. These great-grandchildren of immigrants may become proud of their heritage. However, they do not feel its presence as a psychologically central factor to develop their own sense of reality. As the narrator says at the end of the book, they do "not need the view down on the deep blue jewel and the pale blue expanse beyond it to see clearly." (156)

In *The Deep Blue Memory* Urza shows the achievement of the narrator's family in America through the brilliant careers of the five children of the immigrant Basque sheep ranchers. Although the five brothers manage to obtain important rewards in their professional lives, it is Uncle Luke the one who best embodies the success story of this Basque family. His meteoric political career, first as Nevada governor and later in the U.S. Senate, represents the rise to power of the descendants of immigrants, of the second generation bent to achieve their American Dream. Through Uncle Luke's success, the narrator's family goes from obscurity and immigrant prejudice to arguably the most prominent family in Nevada. Even the narrator's grandmother, a character who seems to remain absolutely detached from the intrigues of the political world, obtains recognition, being chosen *Mother of the Year* in Nevada. So, the rewards of this achievement for the whole family are obvious, but the novel also shows that the price to be paid for success turns to be too high: the violation of the treasured privacy of the Basque family.

In Urza's book the reader is offered a brilliant description of the transformation produced by political success in the narrator's family: they go from private citizens to public property. With Uncle Luke's visibility, the whole family becomes an open target to the public, and both the candidate and his relatives have to face a common ordeal in politics: personal attacks on the mass media coming from rivals. This situation is represented in the book by "the allegation that was black in color" (92). So, the meanness of politics not only breaks the family privacy, but it also puts into question its respectability. In fact, we can view Uncle Luke's rise to power as an initiation process for the whole family whose name is put constantly on the ballot.

The story of this Basque family in Nevada also provides us with a very meaningful perspective on another important consequence of the immigrant success: the sacrifice of a genuine identity. This sacrifice is directly connected in the book with Uncle Luke's rise to power, which provokes the need to explain in public a series of private symbols, often linked to the family roots and background. Thus the family name, its immigration story and its Basque traditions become public property. But it is not just a matter of vanishing privacy, but also of increasing artificiality, particularly notorious when these symbols are politically marketed. This idea is perfectly represented in *The Deep Blue Memory* by the book written by the narrator's father, "the deep blue book" (14 et al.) dealing with the story of her grandfather and her family heritage, which will be used to help Uncle Luke to win a seat in the U.S. Senate. So, we can sense that the genuine characteristics of the narrator's family are gradually subordinated to success and recognition by American society, becoming more and more artificial as its public

notoriety increases. The new prominence of the family imposes on its members a commitment to a specific identity which is no longer a private matter, but a question of public image.

*The Deep Blue Memory* may also be analyzed as a masterful account of the tensions between loyalty to the family group and the individual's natural process of searching for his/her own identity. It is a conflict between the concern for the family group and its heritage and the desire to develop one's own personality, a subject that also plays a pivotal role in Robert Laxalt's Basque-family trilogy: *The Basque Hotel* (1989), *Child of the Holy Ghost* (1992) and *The Governor's Mansion* (1994). Even we can resort to the terminology used by Werner Sollors in *Beyond Ethnicity* (1986), and refer to Urza's novel as an exploration of the tensions between "descent" and "consent" relations, between ancestral or hereditary bonds and self-made or contractual identity.

Urza's book evokes the power of family bonds among the Basques and emphasizes the unity of the narrator's family as the key factor to understand its success in America. "The creature called family" (27 et al.) is portrayed as a closely knit unit, whose survival is entrusted to each of its members. It is a sacred circle, "a fortress," to use the narrator's own words (67), where each individual contributes to the betterment of the whole group. In fact, family devotion appears as a fundamental element for immigrants bound to overcome prejudice and achieve success in America. The immigrant family remains intact mainly out of necessity. And this unity turns to be essential when the family has to face the negative dimensions and turmoil of the political world. Thus, Uncle Luke represents in the novel the underdog who has to fight against powerful rivals, "against money and connections that went three generations back" (65). His campaigns should be viewed as a family effort where individual members subdue their personal views and aims in order to contribute to a common goal: the political success of Uncle Luke, and therefore, of the whole family. It is a self-imposed discipline of duty to the family group, which cannot be conceived as a temporary effort, but rather as a permanent commitment because success may also bring several risks for the family: internal divisions and attacks coming from the outside. As the narrator remembers, "the *stronger* the family, the more valuable it is, the more *vulnerable* it is, the more needful of protection" (113).

Although Urza's novel may be viewed as a celebration of the power of family, we cannot forget that *The Deep Blue Memory* also shows that the secure frame of family may work as a hindrance to the personal development of its different members. The book portrays the family as a fundamental source of strength for the descendants of immigrants, but it also underscores the importance of consent-based relations for their proper development as individuals. In fact, it



is possible to say that the unity of the Basque family has to compete in the novel with the traditional American devotion to the individual's personal features.

The book reveals the potential damage of an overemphasis on the family, on descent relations. When too many experiences are reflected through the family, when its individual members breathe as one, they run the risk of losing their own personal identity. This idea is closely linked in the novel to the increasing success and public notoriety of the narrator's family. The different members of the kin have to sacrifice a part of their individuality to contribute to the common well-being of the family. The price to be paid turns to be particularly high when they have to defend themselves from a serious allegation made against the family, first by a political opponent and later by a rival newspaper. The tragic end of this episode, symbolized by Aunt Sondra's suicide, illustrates the risks of a commitment to family that undervalues individual feelings. When respectability – a glowing, radiant family name –, is given priority over the family itself, its individual members may lose their own sense of reality and even their emotional stability. Therefore, loyalty to the family group and devotion to its heritage should not become an obstacle for the individual's natural desire to choose his/her own destiny. One's search for identity should be always based on personal freedom, as symbolized at the end of the book by the narrator's new awareness of his son's face:

I looked at the young face and suddenly I knew that I had never looked at it before, the face that bore nothing of the dark earth, the face that was as open, as unrestrained, as free as these desert hills. (156)

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## A Travel from *Ethos* to *Pathos*: Some Symbolic Designs in Cummings' Literary Works

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When Cummings arrived in Paris as a soldier, he thought: "Now, finally and first, I was myself: a temporal citizen of eternity". These words reveal the importance that the travel experience had for Cummings as a way to achieve a fulfillment of the self full of Gnostic overtones. This essay will analyse the symbolic designs of Cummings' narratives and poems based on the topic of travel, relating them to the rest of his poetic production.

The specialists in Seneca maintain that the famous thinker was never very keen on travelling. The following words seem to confirm this hypothesis:

What travel will give us is familiarity with other nations: it will reveal to you mountains of strange shape, or unfamiliar tracts of plain, or valleys that are watered by ever-flowing springs, or the characteristics of some river that comes to our attention. We observe how the Nile rises and swells in summer, or how the Tigris disappears, runs underground through hidden spaces, and then appears with unabated sweep; or how the Meander, that oft-rehearsed theme and plaything of the poets, turns in frequent bendings, and often in winding come close to its own channel before resuming its course. But this sort of information will not make better or sounder men of us. (Seneca CIV:199)

These words have never been so radically true as they are now. Today, we travel on business, on holidays, preferably covered by our credit-card and travel insurance. We travel requiring the strict observance of a prefixed timetable. We travel with the hope that once we finish our journey we will keep some gratifying memories about it, several good photographs and an interesting story to tell our colleagues. Less important is the concept of travelling as a metaphor for life, as a way in which the individual has to face his own fears and hopes. Yet from the *Odyssey* to *Don Quixote*, from the mystic path to the romantic sea, travelling in literature is essentially a spiritual adventure: a journey towards the fulfillment of the self.

As many writers of his generation, Cummings saw Europe and War-World I as the appropriate place and event to acquire those experiences and emotions that would shape him as a person and as an artist. What led him abroad was a strong desire to meet other people, nations and writers. He felt that only through future adventures, free from paternal and local ties, could he discover his inner self. He described his arrival in France as follows:

While (at the hating touch of some madness called La Guerre) a once rising and striving world toppled into withering hideously smithereens, love rose in my heart like a sun and beauty blossomed in my life like a star. Now, finally and first, I was myself: a temporal citizen of eternity; one with all human beings born and unborn (*i Six* 53).

Taking all this into consideration, I would like to argue that in order to achieve a reasonable understanding of Cummings' writings about travelling and his experiences abroad, it is necessary to penetrate their imaginative dimension and fantastic texture so as to overcome a strictly literal and referential reading of these works. Only in this way can we detect the universal echoes of Cummings' journeys and ultimately disclose the origin of their most essential poeticism.

On April 17, 1917 Cummings joined the Norton-Harjes Ambulance Corps, convinced that a change of scene would do him good<sup>1</sup>. In a letter to his father, he wrote the day after his enlistment: "It will mean everything to me as an experience to do something I want to, in a wholly new environment, versus being forced to do something I don't want to & unchanging scene"<sup>2</sup>. Cummings never went into

<sup>1</sup> For an account of the the Corp, for which some American writers volunteered, see Blazek.

<sup>2</sup> A Summary of this letter can be found in Kennedy, 1994a 137. For further information concerning this aspect, see in this same book the chapter "The Pacifist Warrior"; also the chapters "The Poet at War" and "The Enormous Room" in Charles Norman's biography of Cummings, *E.E. Cummings: The Magic Maker*.

battle, yet the war provided him with an exciting and cruel experience: prison. Bored in the usual inactivity of the retaguard, Cummings and his friend, William Slater Brown, wrote to the French aviation under-secretary volunteering their services but expressed their reluctance to kill any German. The strange offer alerted the French censors, who from that moment on, watched their mail carefully. After several unfortunate and naïve comments on the situation of the front made by Cummings and Brown, the French authorities decided to arrest them on account of their potential dissent. Cummings was imprisoned in 'La Ferté' where he remained for a period of three months.

Already at home, Cummings decided to write a diary of his experiences in France. Yet *The Enormous Room* is not a war book, but rather a work that uses war as a context to explore the individual. As Cummings himself recognised in the prologue: "When this book wrote itself, I was observing a negligible portion of something incredibly more distant than any sun; something more unimaginably than the most prodigious of all universes—/ Namely?/ The individual" (7). The writer denounced in these pages the inhumanity of the penitentiary system using, for example, scatological imagery and making references to the overcrowded and unhygienic conditions of prison. All this said, the most disturbing thing for the writer is not the physical consequences of confinement, but the psychological ones: the capacity of prison to neutralise the individual by means of a calculated and imposed homogeneity. This is illustrated by the first impression of the protagonist when he enters the enormous room:

These eyes bubbling with lust, obscene grins sprouting from contorted lips, bodies unclenching and clenching in unctuous gestures of complete savagery, convinced me by a certain insane beauty. Before the arbiter of their destinies some thirty creatures, hideous and authentic, poised, cohering in a sole chaos of desire; a fluent and numerous cluster of vital inhumanity. As I contemplated the ferocious and uncouth miracle, this beautiful manifestation of the sinister alchemy of hunger, I felt that the last vestige of individualism was about utterly to disappear, wholly abolished in a gambolling and wallowing throb. (85)

Much to his surprise, the author discovers that even under such conditions certain people are able to retain their individualism with unyielding dignity. Cummings devotes several chapters to the portrayal of these characters in detail. He presents them as genuine human beings, as opposed to their captors, whom he describes as mere mechanisms of the system.

Cummings chose *Pilgrim's Progress* as a model for organising *The Enormous Room*<sup>3</sup>. As a result, both works demonstrate a few but undeniable parallelisms. Inspired by the English allegory, Cummings conceived his imprisonment as a spiritual adventure, as a journey from darkness to light. In *Pilgrim's Progress*, Wordly-Wisemen warns Christian of the perils that await him along his way: "Thou are like to meet with in the way which thou goest, wearisomes, painfulness, hunger, perils, nakedness, sword, lions, dragons, darkness, and in a word, death, and what not?" (Bunyan 19). Similarly, the cummingnesque pilgrim has to experience his own hell, in this particular case, the repression and corruption in La Ferté, symbolised in the figure of its director and the "Three Wise Men" of '*la commision*'. Therefore, it is highly significant that Cummings entitled the first chapter of his book "I begin a pilgrimage" and ended it with his return to New York, the 'Celestial City' for which he yearned:

The tall, impossibly tall, incomparable tall, city shoulderingly upwards into hard sunlight leaned a little through the octaves of its parallel edges, leaningly strode upwards into firm, hard, snowy sunlight; the noises of America nearingly throbbed with smokes and hurrying dots which are men and which are women and which are things new and curious and hard and strange and vibrant and immense, lifting with a great ondulous stride firmly into immortal sunlight... (269)

This is not the only time that Cummings employs a symbolical design to organise his work. *Eimi*, a diary in which the writer narrates his travels in Russia, is structurally modelled after the *Hell* of the *Divine Comedy*. As was usual among many artists of his time, Cummings sympathized with the Soviet regime. In 1930, and encouraged by his friend Dos Passos, the writer made up his mind to travel to Russia in order to test *in situ* the communist achievements. Unlike Dos Passos, Cummings returned to the United States very disappointed in what he saw: a country in which finding a lodging, getting a visa or just a train ticket was quite a difficult task. He was horrified by a system which, through repression and propaganda, could neutralise the individual, transforming him into an anonymous

<sup>3</sup> Kingsley Widmer maintains that the relationship between these two texts should not be emphasised (3-8). David Smith (1965) and Samuel Pickering (1978) on the contrary, assert that there exist clear parallelisms between *The Enormous Room* and *Pilgrim's Progress*. Paul Headrik, on his part, suggests that there is a clear connection between both works but on the basis of a parodical inversion: "*The Enormous Room* is a parody, working, as Linda Hutcheon defines it, as 'a form of imitation, but imitation characterized by ironic inversion, not always at the expense of the parodied text'. The target of Cummings' parody is, indeed, not *Pilgrim's Progress* – there would be little point for Cummings in 1922 to be attacking the values of Bunyan's allegory – but the legacy of Puritanism..." (49).

member of a collective mass<sup>4</sup>. He decided to write an extensive satire against communist Russia entitled *Eimi*, which in Greek means 'I am'. The work is in the form of a diary, divided into three sections. While not achieving the quality of Joyce's *Ulysses*, *Eimi* exhibits a language of its own, daring and exciting, which demands an attentive reading<sup>5</sup>. It is, undoubtedly, one of the most noteworthy American narrative works in the 20th century. Surprisingly enough, the book has been unfairly neglected by both critics and academics alike.

For Cummings, the acronym of the Soviet Union stands for: "U for un- & S for self S for science and R for -reality" (413). In other words, a system which favours rationality over emotion, objectivism over imagination and collectivity over individuality. The following words from *Eimi* perfectly illustrate Cummings' opinion about the Soviet Revolution:

What is an idea? Idayn, a pattern. Superficial because incited. Instinct: the fundamental, the what you call Is; the inciting power, the instigating force...I believe that the Russian revolution was founded, not upon any mere idea, but upon an instinctive need. I believe that in that revolution a fundamental human wish expressed itself. I believe that the wish was the wish to be free. So far, so good: and what resulted from that revolution? Tyranny. Boss government. Boss Mussolini, boss Stalin – do slogans matter? they do not. Freedom is what matters, because the only freedom is happiness. (251)

Once again, the author's main concern of is not politics, but selfhood: "*Eimi* is the individual again; a more complex individual, a more enormous room" (*The Enormous Room* 8). The individual prevails over any ideology or institution and is described, at times, according to emersonian standards:

"no but don't you really think–"  
 "down with thinking. Vive feeling!"  
 bitterly "the world needs thinking!" her unself insists

<sup>4</sup> Many other American artists of the time (20's and 30's) shared Cummings' disappointment with Soviet Russia, a dissatisfaction which followed a previous feeling of enthusiasm when they considered communism a promising ideology which would successfully fight American bourgeois society in time (see Aaron).

<sup>5</sup> Richard Kostelantetz described it as "a spectacular prose work that has long been out of print" (240). He is altogether right. Actually, *Eimi* develops much of the linguistic experimentation that Cummings employs in his most acclaimed experimental poetry (see Kennedy, *Dreams* 330-1).

“are you the world?”

defiantly “I’m a part of it!” and contemptuous “–but you’re really not!”

“quite so. Actually, the world is a part of me. And – I’ll egocentrically tell the world – a very small part”. (*Eimi* 212)

Cummings follows the *Divine Comedy* in organising *Eimi*<sup>6</sup>. Russia is Hell and his journey across the country is a further recreation of the symbolic passage from darkness to light. This may account for the fact that *Eimi* begins with the word SHUT and ends with OPENS. In this hell, Cummings finds two Virgils that accompany him in his journey and meets Beatrice, a friend that helps him on several occasions. In the centre of this underworld lies Lenin’s mausoleum. Notice how the writer iconically describes his advance through a long queue towards the tomb:

facefacefaceface

facefaceface

faceface

Face

                  :all (of whom-which move-do-not-move numberlessly) Toward  
the

Tomb

Crypt

Shrine

Grave.

The grave.

Toward the (grave.

All toward the grave) of himself of herself (all toward the grave of  
themselves) all toward

the grave of Self. (241)

Dante relates his departure from hell as an ascent to the stars and to light. Similarly, Cummings remarks when leaving Russia: “...under me a month of hell!/over me are stars” (402).

This is not the only case in which Cummings uses symbolic schemes of *falling* and *rising* in his work. In *No Thanks*, he tries once more to loosely adapt the structure of the *Divine Comedy* with a symbolic descent to hell and a

<sup>6</sup> Cummings got familiarised with the work of the Italian writer during his five-year period at Harvard. See Metcalf.



subsequent climb towards life and love. This is the design of the book as imagined by the author (fig. 1):

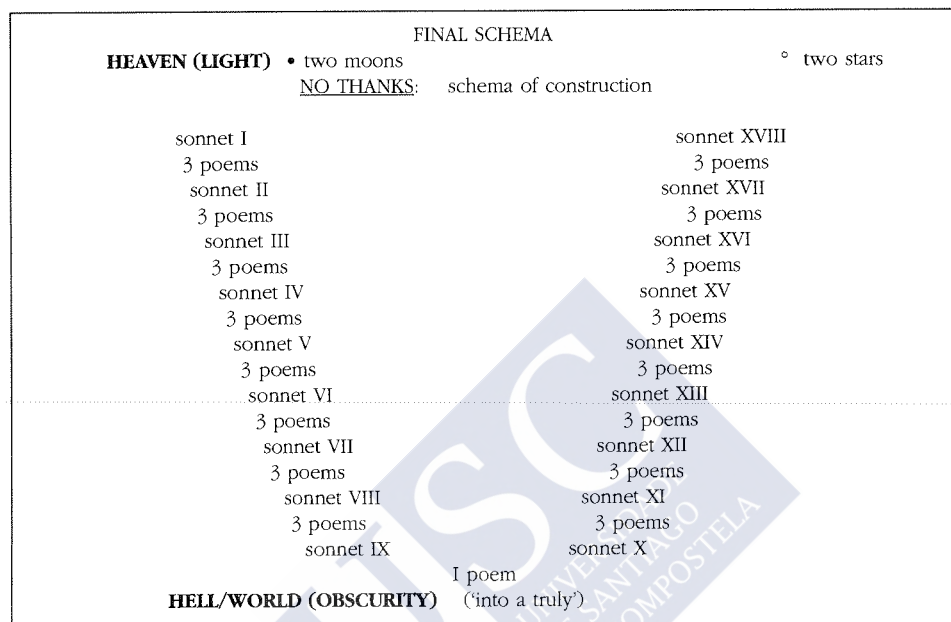


fig. 1

As Luis García Montero put it: “the city is the great journey of modern poets; their itinerary often turned into a walk” (16) [our translation]. It is a journey to which Cummings adds a symbolic structure, as I previously mentioned. Accordingly, the first part of this book describes a dark night during which the protagonist encounters the sewers and miseries of the city. This accounts for the presence of satires of American society in general (“o/pr/gress”, CP, 392))<sup>7</sup>, the fashionable literary circles (“let’s start a magazine”, CP, 407)), as well as for the inclusion of several unpoetical pictures – such as the description of public toilets (v. CP, 387) or the report of a boxing fight (v. CP, 388).

Nonetheless, *No Thanks* contains some poems that develop telluric imagery as a way to capture a particular spot in nature as faithfully as possible. The winter landscape in “emptied” (CP, 416) is probably a symbol of defeat. Yet the poet seems more interested in underlining the rhythm of the snow as it falls. Similarly, the poem (“snow)says” (CP, 417) creates a daring typographical layout aimed at

<sup>7</sup> I quote from the 1994 edition, *Complete Poems 1904-1962*. New York. Liveright. I use the abbreviation CP.

capturing the movement of the descending snowflakes. The turning point comes in "How dark" which describes how the tide progressively swallows up a beach which seems resigned to its fate: "how sincere large distinct and natural/he comes to his disappearance; as a mind/full without fear might faithfully lie down/to so much sleep they only understand" (CP, 418). The lyrical subject correlates with this picture and his disappearance from the public literary scene. It is a social death that shall nonetheless bring him a long desired inner peace: "meanwhile this ghost goes under, his drowned girth/are mountains; and beyond all hurt of praise/the unimaginable night not known". *No thanks* finishes with a beautiful and transcendental chant dedicated to a star. The author puts a luminous and promising end to a book dominated by a sentiment of frustration: "morsel miraculous and meaningless/secret on luminous whose selves and lives/imperishably feast all timeless souls" (CP, 456).

In *73 Poems*, Cummings uses the journey to Hell not as an overall design for book, but as a topic in itself in a particular poem:

now does our world descend  
the path of nothingness  
(cruel now cancels kind;  
friends turn to enemies)  
therefore lament, my dream  
and do a doer's doom

create is now contrive,  
imagined, merely know  
(freedom: what makes a slave)  
therefore, my life, lie down  
and more by most endure  
all that you never were

hide, poor dishonoured mind  
whose thought yourself so wise;  
and much could understand  
concerning no and yes:  
if they've become the same  
it's time you unbecame

where climbing was and bright  
is darkness and to fall  
(now wrong's the only right  
since brave are cowards all)  
therefore despair my heart  
and die into the dirt

but from this endless end  
 of briefer each our bliss—  
 (where lips forget to kiss)  
 where seeing eyes go blind  
 where everything's nothing  
 —arise, my soul; and sing (CP 834)

The poem develops the old *topos* of the 'world upside down' in the form of 'doomsday'<sup>8</sup>. I should note how the poet does not turn to visionary or dantesque images in order to describe this infra world. Rather, he emphasises his neutralising power over every pleasant and positive reality, and his strength to alter the essential nature of things and beautiful beings. From now on, freedom will be paradoxically defined as that which enslaves ("freedom: what makes a slave") and everything will be defined as nothing ("everything's nothing"). These lines contain some expressions of mystic resonance. Notice, for example, the similitude that the following words establish with the mystic mortification of the senses: "seeing go blind", "lips forget to kiss". Notice the desire of annihilation of the self in a dark night of the soul: "therefore lament ... lied down ... and more by most endure ... and die to the dirt"; also, the shadowing of the intellect and the rejection of the worldly pride: "hide, poor dishonoured mind/whose thought yourself so wise...it's time you unbecame". The poem concludes nonetheless with a brief but energetic allusion to a victorious climb: "arise, my soul; and sing".

We have seen so far how Cummings superimposes a symbolic design related to travel in *The Enormous Room*, *Eimi* and *No Thanks*. These works thus acquire mythical resonance deeply rooted in our culture. Viewed from this angle, we can affirm that Cummings is travelling across Culture, in other words, travelling across classical texts (*Divine Comedy*, *Pilgrim's Progress*) filled with ancient echoes. I am convinced that Cummings' appeal to the 'cultural imaginary background' originates from a need to overcome the first referential stage of the travelling experience, as well as from a desire to create a symbolic construction which may translate his most vital experiences.

This we should take into account as we approach Cummings' writings on his travels and experiences abroad. We should examine his works essentially as spiritual adventures, as unique opportunities for the individual to re-discover his self by means of a necessary passing through pain, loss and obscurity. Cummings

<sup>8</sup> For further information on the *adynaton* and the *topos* the 'world upside-down', cf. Cocchiara; Coon; Curtius; Grant and Simpson. Cummings makes use of those topics in "who knows" (CP 202), "what if a much" (560), "when serpents" (620), "because" (782), "if seventy" (798), among other poems.

took advantage of his imprisonment in France and turned it into a valuable experience which made him fully realise the importance of the individual and his inherent incompatibility with public institutions. In Russia, Cummings reaffirms his convictions. Later, in his transcendental poetry Cummings deeply explores the concept of selfhood. In these poems, Cummings inquires his most essential subjectivity through such themes as nature and love. Both of these topics are well suited to render a sense of solitude and a retreat from society. These are essential conditions for self re-discovery. In this voluntary process of isolation, Cummings feels a need to overemphasise his role as an artist. In the preface to *Is 5*, for example, he writes: "Ineluctable preoccupation with the Verb gives a poet one priceless advantage: where nonmakers must content themselves with the merely undeniable fact that two times two is four, he rejoices in a purely irresistible truth (to be found, in abbreviated costume, upon the title page of the present volume)" (CP, 221). Again, he claims in his book *New Poems*: "The poems to come are for you and for me and are not for mostpeople – it's no use trying to pretend that mostpeople and ourselves are alike...You and I are human beings; mostpeople are snobs" (CP, 461). Similarly, he remarked in one of his lectures at Harvard: "Every artist's strictly illimitably country is himself" (*i six* 69). Finally, two further examples can be found in his open letters to young artists: "Somebody number one is a poet. Actually he is alive. His address is: Now. All the other somebodies are unpoets"; "To be nobody-but-yourself – in a world which is doing its best, night and day, to make you everything else..." (*A Miscellany* 12-3).

Only by means of this isolation and retirement from society can the artist find his inner force, that "own splendour" described by Ralph Waldo Emerson:

These are the voices which we hear in solitude, but they grow faint and inaudible as we enter into the world. Society everywhere is in conspiracy against the manhood of everyone of its members...(*Self-Reliance* 1047). To go into solitude, a man needs to retire as much from his chamber as from society. I am not solitary whilst I read and write, though nobody is with me. But if a man would be alone, let him look at the stars (*Nature* 994)<sup>9</sup>.

It is not infrequent that Cummings describes his essential "I" in clearly emersonian terms<sup>10</sup>. In the following lines, for example, the artist's destiny is depicted as a path of solitude; as a perpetual travel to his potential divinity:

<sup>9</sup> Taken from *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*. Vol. 1. N.Y.: The Norton & Company, 1994.

<sup>10</sup> Bloom places this essential and Gnostic Self in the centre of the American spirituality: "The American self is not the Adam of Genesis but is a more primordial Adam, a Man before there

this whyless soul  
 a loneliest road  
 who dares to stroll  
 almost this god (CP 441)

Still, this auto-anagnorisis requires from the subject a high cost that Cummings is not willing to evade, namely: the passage through obscurity, disintegration, pain and scepticism. This is what Harold Bloom, *mutatis mutandis*, refers to as *Ethos* (in his own words): "Fate, Limitation, and Nature, but Nature in its most alienated or estranged aspect" (*Wallace Stevens* 5). To suggest this process, Cummings adapts symbolic designs which he borrows from classical texts (*Divine Comedy*, *Pilgrim's Progress*), which, in turn, follow ancient myths and stories (*Odyssey*, Arthurian quest-romances, etc.). This background provides us with fantastic constructions not far from reason. As Antonio García Berrio put it: "They do not, therefore, move in the essential psyche's terminal zones, where the anthropological and unconscious knowledge of absolute poetic imagination is produced" (354). Nonetheless, there exists a deeper and more primary level to our fantasy, that of the anthropological structures of the imagination upon which the different myths and symbols take shape:

The basic spatial designs, as producers for anthropologico-imaginary orientation, constitute primary schemes with respect to which the semantic-temporal incarnation of symbols and myths appears as a derived and secondary structure. For example, I've indicated frequently how the linear and spatial, positive and negative forms of spatialization of semantic realizations schematically dominate as a whole the plurality of their symbols and their mythic incarnations: hence, for example, Icarus, Phaeton, etc. are seen as variations of the drives of spatial orientation of ascent and fall (García Berrio 359).

This deep level is frequently organised according to basic forms of a binary nature which respond to our most vital emotional drives: ascension and fall, light and darkness, expansion and collision, good and evil, etc. Only when attending to these basic forms can we properly relate the symbolic designs of *The Enormous Room*, *Eimi* and *No Thanks* to the whole of Cummings' lyrical production. Thus,

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were men and women. Higher and earlier than the angels, this true Adam is as old as God, older than the Bible, and free of time, unstained by mortality ... No American pragmatically feels free if she is not alone, and no American ultimately concedes that she is part of nature" (*The American* 15). See also *Omens* and his essays on American literature in his books *Figures of Capable Imagination*, *Agon* and *The Ringers in the Towers*.

the pattern of 'fall' as an imaginary drive opposed to diurnal plenitude, can be traced in several Cummings' poems. In "enter no", for instance, the lyrical subject wishes the winter to descend upon him, entering thus a stage of disintegration and retreat:

...autumn has gone: will winter never come?

o come, terrible anonymity; enfold  
phantom me with the murdering minus of cold  
—open this ghost with the murdering knives of wind—  
scatter his nothing all over what angry skies and

gently  
(very whiteness: absolute peace,  
never imaginable mystery)  
descend (CP 839).

The protagonist banishes any sense of panic from these lines. Rather, he welcomes the terrible emptiness of winter, as it will bring him an 'absolute peace': the necessary repose of the senses and the intellect.

Unlike the protagonist in the above poem, the protagonist of the following example is already settled in the night and its chaotic dimension:

into a truly  
curving form  
enter my  
soul

feels all small  
facts dissolved  
by the lewd guess  
of fabulous immensity (CP 419).

It is precisely from this vacuity that the subject has to climb as he recognises himself, celebrates his solitude and rejoices in his own splendour. Making use of Bloom's terminology I would argue that the first part of this poem is dominated by the trope of *Ethos*, and the second, by the trope of *Pathos*<sup>11</sup>. Once more, the

<sup>11</sup> Rushworth Kidder interprets this ascension as the triumph of the artist over society and its miseries: "The salvation here ... is probably less religious than poetic: the 'form' of poetry carries the spirit along and is guided by it. Leaving behind the mundane world (where critics devour poets), the narrator is now ready to ride through any roughness on the ship of poetry filled with 'soul' and 'spirit' — on poetry that deals, as his increasingly does, in metaphysics" (15).

writer has chosen the metaphor of travel, together with the image of the ship, to translate the subconscious drives of anthropological origins:

breathing height eating  
steepness the  
ship climbs  
murmuring silver mountains

which  
disappear (and  
only  
was night

and through only this night a  
mightily form moves  
whose passenger and whose  
pilot my spirit is (CP 419).

The protagonist in "at dusk" goes out for a night walk: "...i begin/to climb the best hill,/driven by black wine" (CP 434). The poem begins realistically. Nevertheless, as the protagonist makes his way up the hill, we are tempted to recognise some images as symbolically motivated insofar as the whole scene acquires a spiritual dimension: "my spirit you/tumble/climb/and mightily fatally". Accordingly, the lark, with its violent and continuous ups and downs, suggests to us the eventual organic unity of earth and heaven. The references to the clock, followed by the image of a cemetery, acts as a reminder of the passing of time and our unavoidable mortal nature. The path faces the protagonist with the darkest side of existence, yet he does not feel discouraged. The presence of a shining candle, which traditionally symbolises the human soul, encourages us to view the end of the road as the joy the protagonist experiences when re-discovering his heroic nature which prevail over any Fate:

at the Ending of this road,  
a candle in a shrine:  
its puniest flame persists  
shaken by the sea

The poem number 5 of *73 Poems* employs again the topic of a journey: "the first of all my dreams was of/a lover and his only love,/strolling slowly (mind in mind)/through some green mysterious land" (CP 777). Most of the images of the poem may be grouped within the nocturnal domain. Both autumn and winter symbolise dissolution and lethargy: "until my second dreams begin-/the sky is



wild with leaves; which dance/and dancing swoop (and swooping whirl/over a frightened boy and girl)". As usual, Cummings ends his poem with a brief but energetic allusion to spring and ecstatic life: "she quickly dreamed a dream of spring/—how you and i are blossoming". The symbolical design of the seasonal cycle keeps reappearing in numerous poems. Even the book *1x1* consistently follows this telluric organisation, as M. Kidder rightly says:

The sixteen poems of the first section begin with images of autumn and loss and continue with satires and diatribes against what man has made of man...The second section, introduced by a poem about snowflakes, develops a winter imagery, but treats winter less as a season of harshness than of stillness, recuperation, and consolidation...the mood here turns toward contemplative introspection...the third section, which opens with a poem about a tiny white-petaled plant, embraces spring, birds, flowers, and greenness. (154-55)

Penetrating into the symbolic depths of Cummings' literary works proves to be a highly rewarding exercise insofar as it reveals invaluable findings. Without this tracing it is altogether impossible to find a link that may properly relate Cummings' lyrical production to his narrative work. My intention is not to force any gratuitous parallelism, yet it is nearly impossible not to perceive a subtle connection among these works. In all of them, the protagonist has to experience a crisis that shall lead him into the darkest and most terrible domains of human existence in order to reach, subsequently, the reign of his own splendour. The attitude of the poet in regards to this crisis ranges from a resigned acceptance to a nearly Dionysian celebration of death – a defeat which is in itself a victory, a sublime emptiness:

what if a dawn of a doom of a dream  
bites this universe in two,  
peels forever out of his grave  
and sprinkles nowhere with me and you?  
Blow soon to never and never to twice  
(blow life to isn't: blow death to was)  
—all nothing's only our hugest home;  
the most who die, the more we live (CP 560).

One of the most recurrent reproaches to Cummings' poetry in the last sixty years concerns its insufficient tragic character. Strictly speaking, Cummings is, to a great extent, a poet of light, spring, victory and ecstasy. Those who pay attention

only to this side of Cummings, I contend, get a wrong impression of his literary production. The writer realised very early in his career that in order to reach the victory of his gnostic self-discovery it was necessary for him to experience a previous and momentary defeat. The "Delectable Mountains" in *Pilgrim's Progress* foreshadow the "Celestial City" for which Christian yearns. Much to his surprise, Cummings finds "Delectable Mountains" in *The Enormous Room*, that is to say, those prisoners that maintain their individuality in such a hostile environment. Cummings imagines, for a moment, a time when it would not be necessary to experience darkness in order to discover the Adamic man we all carry inside: "In the course of the next ten thousand years it may be possible to find Delectable Mountains without going to prison...it may be possible, I dare say, to encounter Delectable Mountains who are not in prison" (*The Enormous* 250). At the present time, however, it is necessary for the artist to embark on a journey which is itself a pilgrimage.

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## ■ City and a Chicano Evolving Hybridity: Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca's and Gary Soto's Creation and Discovery

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Chicano autobiographies provide insight into the continuing evolving hybridity of the community, which for them began with the 1500s conquest of the Americas. The 21<sup>st</sup> century approaches and the dynamics that began in the 1500s continue to affect how people struggle to redefine themselves and give meaning to their world. This means autobiographies which entail creation and discovery can assist in (1) understanding the current Chicano cross-cultural experience and in (2) reflecting on the coming century with a sense of what skills one has in order to control events. In addition, this demands the consideration of a 1500s autobiography that deals significantly with the cross-cultural developments of Chicano identity and meaning.

I will examine the attempts to orchestrate voices in Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca's 1542 *La Relación* in connection with Gary Soto's *Living Up The Street* (1985) in order to gain insight into the multiple and significant legacies of a colonial experience that has marked Chicanos and to understand the continuing hybridity of Chicano development. Using Mikhail Bakhtin's concepts of dialogical environment and voice, this paper examines the attempts to orchestrate voices in these two autobiographical texts in which the evolving state of inbetweenness is

crucial in understanding Chicano questions about allegiances, boundaries, and identities. This will involve the discussion of how the image of “city” reveals issues of contested space, consciousness, and issues of meaning in a cross-cultural experience.

Autobiographical narratives deal with an important demand of the form: an autobiography is a confession; it is an accounting to oneself and to an audience. Though the history is edited, events reinterpreted (some events pushed to the foreground, some pushed to the background, some excluded), nevertheless, there is a claim to valid history. The strong “I” of the narrative implies and/or connotes authority (after all, the narrator claims he/she experienced this and not you the audience). The textual order of things and created symmetry of the narrative are important, for they are part of the orchestration of voices in the narrative: the order, the timing. But the autobiographer’s construct is *not* open to all possible orchestrations. The context determines to a large extent the range of available materials, perspectives, styles, and arrangement of voices. Along with context, the demand for *accountability* to an audience also powerfully affects the orchestration of voices.

The voices (speaking consciousnesses) in Cabeza de Vaca’s narrative testify to new and traumatic events in the Americas. The discourse in the text presents the process of a cross-cultural experience in which the contested social space, evolving consciousness of identities, and—along with this—the recognition of a reshuffling or recreation of meaning can be discerned by focusing on the image of “city,” which is made to carry much cultural weight.

Cabeza de Vaca’s cross-cultural experience is in the background of Soto’s discourse. After all, Soto acknowledges his *mestizaje* and the unresolved tensions of inbetweenness, whose roots go back to the conquering experience Cabeza de Vaca narrates. Cabeza de Vaca’s work attempts to orchestrate voices into supporting an imperialist endeavor but these voices can not subdue the hybridity the conquering process triggers. Gary Soto’s narrative confronts the difficulty of defining identity in a continuing inbetweenness. He attempts to orchestrate voices that present childhood, adolescent, and adult trials. They turn out to be attempts at recollecting shifting meaning in a cross-cultural experience which, just like Cabeza de Vaca’s attempts to recollect, end up revealing the dynamics that can allow new possibilities in the future. In this particular case, the image of “city” presents one with narrative terms of social space, consciousness of who one is, and the creation of meaning.

Both Cabeza de Vaca’s and Soto’s narratives deal with an evolving inbetweenness—a hybridity, a *mestizaje*—which makes the city an important cultural image. This is so because, as the attempt to orchestrate the voices is made,

the evolving hybridity reveals contradictions and the elements that show identity is a constructed process.<sup>1</sup> Cabeza de Vaca in his narrative presents himself as a conqueror, as an official of the emperor, as a slave, as a trader, as shaman, as a redeemer. He strives to reassert a unified, closed world that speaks with the emperor's voice, but—instead—the narrative's demand for *accountability* reveals the problematic issues contained in the image of city. To what city is Cabeza de Vaca referring to with each role he takes on in the narrative? This becomes problematic for Cabeza de Vaca, for the voices that are heard can not be reconciled with the city of the emperor. They speak of the golden city, but what connotations does this create for Cabeza de Vaca's identity? He seeks virtue—but as what? He calls out as a knight, but that ceases to have meaning when he is a captive. He calls out as a Christian, but that ceases to have clear meaning as he enters the inbetweenness of cultures and becomes a shaman. He is forced to create and discover from what is at hand and ends up seeking for a city of redemption, which may or may not be what he imagines. But here Cabeza de Vaca establishes the continued need to find a home, a continuing Chicano concern as Soto reveals, but whose process leads to new identities.

Soto's narrative strives to portray stability through a voice that seeks virtue, but—instead—the narrative's demand for *accountability* also shows the problematic issues contained in the image of the city. Soto shows a child, an adolescent, an adult who is not sure of his place in this environment. He is a student, a brother, a wrestler, a fighter, a thief, an artist. The hybridization process continually opens up the attempts at closure and challenges the meaning of the world Soto tries to understand. But one effect of his attempts to orchestrate the voices in the text is to legitimize the diversity of culture and discourse that make him. Soto creates and discovers from what is at hand, which never ceases to lead him into a new stage of hybridization.

Cabeza de Vaca's 1542 narrative describes the Narváez expedition's march (1527-1536), of which he was a member, into the Americas where supposed kingdoms, cities of gold, waited to be cleansed through conquest, whose consequence would be cultural redemption, renewal, and regeneration.<sup>2</sup> In the

<sup>1</sup> Cultures always interact. A dominant culture always interacts with other cultures and subcultures; it does not remain static. Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 175, 176.

<sup>2</sup> Language and ceremony established the Spanish act of taking possession. From the Spanish perspective, the legitimacy of the Spanish empire in the Americas was originally based on Pope Alexander VI's 1493 *Inter caetera*; then after 1512 legitimacy was served by the *requerimiento*, which was replaced in 1573 by the Instrument of Obedience and Vassalage. The *requerimiento* was to be read aloud to the Indians on all occasions before military

narrative, Cabeza de Vaca appears in the image of the conqueror, the warrior rooted in the crusades, in the *Reconquista* and intertwined with the romance character Amadís.<sup>3</sup>

Bakhtin observes that an author “does not invent the content of his work; he only developed that which was already embedded in tradition.”<sup>4</sup> Some of the textual influences of *La Relación* are the chivalrous *Amadís* tales, which echo strongly in interpretations of Cortés’ conquest of Tenochtitlan, a place described by Bernal Díaz as “an enchanted vision from the tale of Amadís. . . . It was all so wonderful that I do not know how to describe this first glimpse of things never heard of, seen or dreamed of before.”<sup>5</sup> Manuel Durán shows how Díaz bridged his work to his readers through connections to the romance novel, noting how the description of Tenochtitlan echoes back to Book I, Chapter XI, of *Amadís de Gaula*.<sup>6</sup> The *Amadís* castle on the water becomes the description of the city that is unknown to the Spaniards.<sup>7</sup> This was the faraway land where the great hero struggled and succeeded.<sup>8</sup> Cabeza de Vaca also seeks the golden city. For him it is Apalachen. The voices that are heard in connection to this establish a journey from potential virtue to real, proven virtue. In Soto’s narrative, there are Fresno and Glendale, California, and Mexico City and Cuernavaca in Mexico, places which echo the journey from childhood to manhood in cities that shape or rather confirm what he is not.

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operations were undertaken against them by calling on them to submit peacefully and receive the Christian faith. This did not mean in practice that the native had to actually hear the reading nor understand it. The act of reading it established legitimate authority over people. The question of natives having rights of possession was negated outright or not considered at all.

<sup>3</sup> The *Reconquista* (718-1492) was a centuries-long struggle to retake the Iberian Peninsula from Muslims which made warfare and the subjugation of non-Christians a way of life that forged an ethos that glorified the warrior.

<sup>4</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *Speech Genres & Other Late Essays*, trans. Vern W. Mcgee (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), p.166.

<sup>5</sup> Bernal Díaz, *The Conquest of New Spain*, trans. J. M. Cohen (New York: Viking Penguin, 1963), p. 214.

<sup>6</sup> Manuel Durán, “Bernal Díaz del Castillo: crónica, historia, mito,” *Hispania*, Vol.75, No. 4 (October 1992), p. 798.

<sup>7</sup> Rodríguez de Montalvo, Garci, *Amadís de Gaula*, Vol. I, ed. Juan Manuel Cacho Bleuca (Madrid: Catedra, 1987), pp.332-334.

<sup>8</sup> This impression of success was created through the promotion of certain established images of and interconnections to chivalrous narratives. But Bodmer points out, “Cortés’s fifth letter can be seen chronologically as the first text of the narrative mode that I have called the discourse of failure.” Beatriz Pastor Bodmer, *The Armature of Conquest*, trans. Lydia L. Hunt (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), p. 117.



The failure of the Narváez expedition forced Cabeza de Vaca to reinterpret the type of being who symbolized redemption, renewal, and regeneration by altering the narrative of vigor, power, and fortune.<sup>9</sup> Without such reinterpretation, he could not fit into the Spanish imperial environment. At one important level, Cabeza de Vaca is not asking “who am I” in the narrative, but “how do I image myself?”<sup>10</sup>

Inevitably, this occurs because the narrative has to inscribe positive meaning onto the failed Narváez expedition. The men of the Narváez expedition (with the exception of the slaves, such as Estevanico), who kept dwindling in numbers and eventually wandered about naked, experienced hardships but never gave up their previous conception of the Americas as being a land that offered vigor, power, and fortune. This is illustrated by the fact that, despite their hazardous experiences, many of those who survived sought to remain or return to the Americas and continue their search for the golden city: a cultural assumption, reflecting how “a sign is defined as the ‘image’ of a ‘perceived object.’”<sup>11</sup>

Cabeza de Vaca eventually presented himself as the ascetic (pilgrim) who conquered. Since the expedition was clearly a failure, Cabeza de Vaca could not simply take Narváez’s place as the knightly warrior, for he had given that role up.<sup>12</sup> He instead becomes the pilgrim (the ascetic)—a redeemer. Falling back on the Christian tradition of the ascetic saint, that character provides an apt metaphor for his situation: hardship and suffering for a purpose are the main elements of the type. The original Christian model is the Jesus of the Gospel. Asceticism provides Cabeza de Vaca with the condition that affirms his success as a Spanish conqueror. The hardship he experiences is given meaning, for the trials are united with the “idea of crisis and rebirth.”<sup>13</sup> He becomes a hero being tested whose “great suffering” appears to have an intelligible cause.<sup>14</sup> Emphasizing the ascetic/healer however does not lead him to merge with the “other.”

<sup>9</sup> A. Pagden points out that “Until the second half of the seventeenth century, all attempts to represent America and its people constituted, at some level, an attempt to resolve this tension between an appeal to authorial experience and the demand of the canon.” Anthony Pagden, *European Encounters With The New World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 56.

<sup>10</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *Art And Answerability*, trans. Vadim Liapunov (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), p. 151.

<sup>11</sup> Michael Bernard-Donals, “‘Discourse In Life’: Answerability In Language And In The Novel,” *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (Spring 1990), p. 49.

<sup>12</sup> Álgar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, *La Relación* (Zamora: Augustín de Paz & Juan Picardo, 1542), sig. C4r.

<sup>13</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, trans. M. Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), pp. 388, 389.

<sup>14</sup> Roland Barthes, “The World of Wrestling,” in his *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: The Noonday Press, 1972), p. 19.

In *La Relación*, certain chivalrous expectations were transferred to the ascetic Cabeza de Vaca, specifically in seeking out the golden city (which at times is connected to the Jerusalem of the Crusades). As an ascetic, he could embrace the chivalrous ideal of religious duty and the pilgrimage to a Jerusalem. Chivalrous tales suggested redemption, renewal, and regeneration through the metaphor of the Golden City. Cabeza de Vaca in *La Relación* continued to work with the metaphor of the golden city and its suggestions of renewed vigor—both personal and cultural.

During the North American wandering, a change occurred. Cabeza de Vaca no longer sought renewal and regeneration in the city of the “other” but back in a Spanish city. Ultimately, Mexico City became the site of redemption, renewal, and regeneration. As an ascetic, Cabeza de Vaca echoed back to the New Testament idea of Christian life as estrangement from the world. St. Augustine in *The City of God* describes a person’s earthly journey as being that of a pilgrimage: the journey of a stranger in the midst of the ungodly. And a pilgrimage was endorsed as a worthy form of asceticism. So the ascetic Cabeza de Vaca wandered among the barbarous tribes in strange country seeking the land of the Christians.

The city of the “other” is subordinated to the Christian city. Although Cabeza de Vaca appears to be juggling two types of cities, he is actually subordinating one to the other. The Spanish city is the realization of the themes. Tenochtitlan had been the “other’s” city. But after being cleansed, there then rose Mexico city, the Spanish city. The chivalrous ideals of struggling against vice, of practicing virtue, and most importantly of religious devotion are described by Cabeza de Vaca in the process of seeking Christian lands, specifically Mexico city. But the unified and centralized Spanish imperial verbal-ideological world, claiming the notion that Bakhtin calls “the one language of truth,” can not maintain.<sup>15</sup>

Gary Soto states, “I was eager to reinvent my childhood, to show others the chinaberry tree, ants, shadows, dirty spoons—those nouns that made up much of my poetry.”<sup>16</sup> He wants to reinvent a process that leads to virtue: redemption, renewal, regeneration. But like Cabeza de Vaca’s attempts, the dialogic environment—that dynamic process in which many voices develop meaning—which is presented through an orchestration of voices does not present a unified whole.

Gary Soto attempts to orchestrate voices for a useable past, but which he immediately questions: “We were terrible kids, I think.”<sup>17</sup> As Heiner Bus observes,

<sup>15</sup> Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, pp. 270, 271.

<sup>16</sup> Gary Soto, *Living Up The Street*, (San Francisco: Strawberry Hill Press, 1985), p. 139.

<sup>17</sup> Soto, p. 9.

Soto "cannot define his loyalties in the maze of his longings for identification and the necessity and reality of detachment."<sup>18</sup> The child becomes a man who the narrative structure warps out of shape as the orchestrated voices in the text reveal uncertainty about degrees of accuracy or appropriate interpretation of events. The city of Fresno seems to have the double meaning of islands of stability and ruptures that continually create questions of identity. The cities in Mexico he talks about offer new openings but in painful and unsecured terms. Shifting social formations, conflicts, and contradictions force Soto to voice his attempt to transcend the constraints of cities that make him question his allegiances, his sense of boundaries, and his identity.

At one point, he is forced to question the dream of the golden city. He works at the Valley Tire Factory in Glendale, California, and his identity is defined by an inbetweenness: he is a pocho and he is a Mexican. But both terms have negative connotations at this point. As pocho, he is seen as incomplete culturally, lacking a voice. And yet the pocho is a product of the hybridization experience of the Chicano. The "dark fate" he fears, though, is "[t]o marry Mexican, work Mexican hours, and in the end die a Mexican death, broke and in despair."<sup>19</sup> His evolving consciousness leads him to consider the unspoken but acknowledged accusations within that context.

As artist, Soto seeks to bring the fragments of that world together and give them meaning. One orchestration of voices points out that his instincts are those of an artist as a child: for instance, the Campbell's soup can he altered. Later, as an adult, he is poet who writes about the city he knows. But the voice that brings forward that role cannot bring the fragments together. First, because life in U.S. cities lacked a sense of acceptance of him in his role of redeemer: being an artist. He voices his lack of recognition as a "prize-winning poet, with another book on the way, growing useless before binds of dead vegetables."<sup>20</sup> Second, when in Mexico's cities, there is a sense dislocation and direction, as he notes: "I am unsure about where we will be in a year."<sup>21</sup> As artist, he can not stabilize the shifting cross-cultural experience, but a range of discourse possibilities emerges. For if there is one thing that continues to give meaning to his situations, it is the recognition that the artist exists.

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<sup>18</sup> Heiner Bus, "Sophisticated Spontaneity: The Art Of Life In Gary Soto's *Living Up The Street*," *Americas Review*, Vol. 16, Nos. 3-4 (Fall-Winter 1988), p. 18.

<sup>19</sup> Soto, pp. 119, 120.

<sup>20</sup> Soto, p. 142.

<sup>21</sup> Soto, p. 153.

This forces a recognition that community plays an enormous role in defining values and how voices when contesting social space and historical time set the conditions through which human consciousness comes into contact with existence. Soto in the last part of his narrative allows a blind musician in Cuernavaca to speak, to tell a story. Here is the voice of a man who could not see, yet could identify the wooden structure of a harp, a musical instrument, which once whole could be played by an artist, creating harmony. The key to the power of this musician is his memory. He recognized the piece of wood because as a child his “uncle played one, a very beautiful one inlaid with ivory and all glittery. That’s when [he] could see and didn’t need [his] hands.”<sup>22</sup> This is the voice of the humble musician who tells Soto and his companion to be proud: “Be Mexican and good.”<sup>23</sup> The issue of identity ends up being unstable. Soto leaves with people who are close to him at that moment, describing fluttering leaves and humming sounds—but making no defining judgment about his identity. But there is one thing that becomes important and that is the demand to remember.

Cabeza de Vaca seeks cities that will define him as a conqueror; Soto seeks cities that will embrace him as an artist. They both end up in ambiguous roles. The voices in their texts do not harmonize. But they open up a crucial understanding in the dynamics of a hybrid evolution. Both end up emphasizing memory, the power to remember. Both recognize the importance of the past. But it is the future they are after—with the help of a useable past—one that can only come about through a dynamic process in which many voices develop meaning: one in which one can say—we create meaning.

From a colonial past emerged the Chicano, and without the study of this period, an appropriate and insightful framework can not be offered in Chicano Studies. Cultural change and persistence, diversity, plurality, the discernment of voices and communities, cultural legitimacy and historical significance, these and other crucial issues—related to the cross-cultural experience—are tied with the study of the Spanish conquest of the Americas. Hybridity stands as a way to examine Chicano narratives, revealing the creation and discovery of oneself in a continuing cross-cultural experience. The direction and chance, that affect autobiographies, reveal/present a dialogical environment and voices that offer choices and opportunities—but that go hand in hand with struggle.

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<sup>22</sup> Soto, p. 159.

<sup>23</sup> Soto, p. 159.

## Lyric across Culture: Vendler and the Voice of Lyric

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If one were asked to select a single adjective which might best describe the state of contemporary American lyric, one might well choose *multitudinous*. The adjective appears triply apt, for it accords with the prefixally coincident *multilingual* and *multicultural* while pointing, on its own semantic terms, to the dazzling volume of poetry published in the United States today. Yet if few scholars would dispute the historically multilingual composition of American society, and if fewer educators than ever resist the legitimate scope and widening sweep of multicultural studies, one is left perplexed, in contemplating the tail end of twentieth-century American lyric, by vastly numerous publications bearing widely divergent aesthetics.

A recent edition of *Poet's Market*, subtitled straightforwardly *Where and how to publish your poetry*, evidences the sheer volume of poetry appearing. Arranged alphabetically, the guide details more than 1700 reviews, journals, and presses publishing poetry in the United States today. Prestigious, long-established reviews, such as Chicago-based *Poetry*, in which T.S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" first appeared in 1915, stand alongside journals of briefer existence, such as, selected at random from among the guide's entries, *Kalliope, a journal of women's art*, or the seemingly misnamed, or at least olfactorily uninviting, *Sulpher River Literary Review*. Never in the history of American letters has so much poetry appeared at once.

Amid the dizzying array of lyric in print, it is not surprising that critics, scholars, editors, and poets agree on little. Agreement often briefly converges in the truism that American poetry began when Americans ceased looking, with differing degrees of assumed inferiority, across the Atlantic to England for its literary models, standards, and sensibility. Following the successive editions of Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, whose opening chant, in revolutionary rhythms, announces, "My tongue, every atom of my blood, form'd from this soil, this air" (Parker 22)<sup>1</sup>, American poets began to look no further than to their own souls, neighbors, circumstances, and habits of speech for inspiration. The distinguishing tolerance of difference in Whitman, moreover, elicits consensus by leaving no poet out in the cold; far from the scoffing and accusatory ridicule of most aesthetic debate, Whitman's words, having nourished many, prophetically ring in chant 22: "My gait is no faultfinder's or rejecter's gait, / I moisten the roots of all that has grown" (Whitman 46).

Following agreement on Whitman, a sort of prism through which American poetry passes and then separates into many-hued light, disagreement speedily takes over. Indeed, the plurality of aesthetic perspectives today is so great, and the differences among them so large, that one is at a loss to describe reliably the variegated scene. Helen Vendler, however, A. Kingsley Porter University Professor at Harvard University and the most perceptive reader of lyric presently writing in the United States, offers astute clues with which to piece together one version of the puzzle. In her recent books *The Music of What Happens* and *Soul Says*, Vendler identifies several formal tendencies providing a common aesthetic ground on which much American lyric of the twentieth century may stand. In the pages to follow, these tendencies guide the close reading of two brief lyrics published during the last half century. So as to propose the reach of Vendler's common ground, the lyrics, differing significantly in vision and technique, have been selected from among the writings of two poets who, though ethnically alike, differ in sex; to favor an impartial first hearing, neither author nor date of publication will initially be revealed. The two lyrics, in addition, ought not to be quickly identified, and the sequence in which they appear discussed need not be chronological. The listener here will thus be left, until concluding identification of

<sup>1</sup> The reader of Whitman's first 1855 edition of *Leaves of Grass* does not find the quoted phrasing. As Malcolm Cowley observes in his introduction to the 1855 edition, Whitman waited 26 years to include it, when in 1881 the poet "took eight lines from 'Starting from Paumanok,' which was written in his beatnik days, and inserted them at the end of the first chant" (xxxiii). A further crucial revision taking place in 1881 involved the lengthening of the volume's opening line from "I celebrate myself" to "I celebrate myself, and sing myself," the latter markedly iambic and notably more sonorous in its consonant /s/.



author and date, with titles and the singular conduct of words appearing just under them.

The first lyric, entitled iambically "The Distant Drum," reads:

I am not a metaphor or symbol.  
 This you hear is not the wind in the trees  
 Nor a cat being maimed in the street.  
 I am being maimed in the street.  
 It is I who weep, laugh, feel pain or joy,  
 Speak this because I exist.  
 This is my voice.  
 These words are my words, my mouth  
 Speaks them, my hand writes.  
 I am a poet.  
 It is my fist you hear beating  
 Against your ear.

There is much that a reader is tempted to say *first* about this taut lyric. One sees that the poem's title *The Distant Drum* and final line *Against your ear* share the same iambic contour; one notes the slow materialization of possessed power in the sequence linking *my voice* to *my words* to *my mouth* to *my hand* to *my fist*; one observes a polysemous confluence of meaning in the present participle *beating*, allied both to *fist* and to *Drum*; one hears the opening *I am not a metaphor or symbol* engage in impeccable trochaic pentameter, thereby expressing in a canonical metrical verse an *I*'s indication of what it is *not*; one's ear also hears, as the trochees in line two give way to the galloping anapaests of *in the trees / Nor a cat being maimed in the street*, a phonetic similitude, underscoring semantic divergence, in *trees* and *street*, while a complementary semantic coincidence echoes in the concluding *you hear . . . your ear*; one senses the mutilating violence of the repeated participle *maimed*; the urgent demonstrative signallings *This you hear*, *Speak this*, *This is my voice*, and *These words are my words* immediately catch the eye; immediacy inheres verbally in the poem's staying in and never straying from the present.

Rather than respond to these initial claims to attention atomistically, one takes the cue from Vendler in seeking to discern how they create a centripetal pulling in so as to push forth at the poem's close with extraordinary force<sup>2</sup>. The

<sup>2</sup> The adjective *centripetal* informs Vendler's attempt to distinguish "the inner organization of parts" constituting "the openly fictive genres (drama, novel, and poetry) and the apparently nonfictive genres (homily, criticism, the philosophical essay)" (*Music* 13). Taking the example of Henry James, Vendler continues: "Fictive genres are at least in part *centripetal* [emphasis



inward motion owes in part to the poem's belonging, as Vendler puts it, to "the genre of 'here' and 'now'" (*Soul* 5), these spatiotemporal axes tending to intersect in lyric as in no other species of verbal art. If narrative prose has much to do with recollected *sequence*, lyric plays its part with known *simultaneity*, for the act of utterance and what it names neatly coincide; in this specific lyric, they do so literally, the *hereness* of hearing owing to a *nowness* of articulation: *These words are my words, my mouth / Speaks them, my hand writes*. Binding "The Distant Drum" together like a waterdrop, the lyric's verbal energies, from the opening *I am* to the concluding *beating / Against your ear*, inhabit an enduring present.

If, like a plucked string, the taut poem owes its resonance in part to simultaneity, the tautness owes as well to a juxtaposition of pronouns and to their inherent abstraction. Addressing initially an unspecified *you*, the *I* in "The Distant Drum" begins by negating all that a *you* might mistakenly believe. The phrasing *I am not a metaphor or symbol* renounces the conceiving of an *I* not for what s/he is but for what s/he represents figuratively, through the displacement of substitution, in the mind of a beholder. Such erroneous conceiving yields immediately, in the sphere of the senses, to mistaken *hearing*, the initial *This you hear is not the wind in the trees* standing corrected by the final *It is my fist you hear*. Responding, in view of the verbs *maimed*, *weep*, *feel pain*, and *beating*, to what must be grievous consequences to these errors, the *I* engages in a vigorous claiming of language, a decisive telling of who one is, in lieu of being told. Pronominally patent in the three repetitions of *I am*, in *It is I*, in *I exist*, and in the five instances of the abovenoted possessive *my*, the claiming of language is lexically evident in the terminological staples *metaphor* and *symbol*, in the twofold repetition *you hear*, in the unmistakable *These words are my words*, in the articulatorily iterative *Speak this* and *my mouth / Speaks*, in emphasis on *my voice*, and in the portrayal of writing as *my hand writes* and *I am a poet*.

Despite the unequivocal self-articulation, however, a striking aspect of the *I* and *you* lies in how little one textually knows about them. Reflecting, after more than four decades of impassioned observation<sup>3</sup>, on the pronominal behavior of lyric, Vendler writes: "It is now clear to me how completely the traditional lyric desires a stripping-away of the details associated with a socially specified self in order to reach its desired all-purpose abstraction" (*Soul* 2-3). The absence of

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added]; nonfictive ones are more likely to be linear. By some such structural principle, and not by any remarks about language, we recurrently distinguish the essay from the poem – just as we distinguish the James of the Prefaces from the James of the novels" (*Music* 14).

<sup>3</sup> In the essay "The Function of Criticism," Vendler writes in this regard: "Analysis is, so to speak, admiration methodized" (*Music* 19).

explicit personal specificity, what is more, extends beyond pronominal abstraction to the pivotal notions of voice and genre, as Vendler persuasively argues:

In lyric poetry, voice is made abstract. It may tell you one specific thing about itself – that it is black, or that it is old, or that it is female, or that it is celibate. But it will not usually tell you, if it is black, that it grew up in Atlanta rather than Boston; or, if it is old, how old it is; or, if it is female, whether it is married; or, if it is celibate, when it took its vows. That is, the range of things one would normally know about a voice in a novel one does not know about a voice in a lyric. What one does know, if it is socially specified at all, is severely circumscribed. (*Soul* 3)

In view of such absent delimiting social detail, freeing the voice and bearing on genre, lyric holds the singular ability to arc, like a crystalline sky, over numerous peoples and points of view. “The all-purpose pronouns ‘I’ and ‘you,’” Vendler asserts, “are tracks along which any pair of eyes can go, male or female, black or white, Jewish or Catholic, urban or rural” (*Soul* 2).

The second lyric up for initially anonymous hearing is entitled “Geometry” and reads:

I prove a theorem and the house expands:  
the windows jerk free to hover near the ceiling,  
the ceiling floats away with a sigh.

As the walls clear themselves of everything  
but transparency, the scent of carnations  
leaves with them. I am out in the open

and above the windows have hinged into butterflies,  
sunlight glinting where they’ve intersected.  
They are going to some point true and unproven.

This lyric’s title, its opening *I prove* echoingly hidden in the concluding *true and unproven*, and its evocations of *a theorem*, of objects having *intersected*, and of *some point* send one running off to the library to recall all one has forgotten about *Geometry*. Recollecting a fraction of the learning lost, yet perceiving the outlines of a branch of mathematics dealing with the nature of space and of objects in space, one returns to this second lyric doubly intrigued, for the *Encyclopædia Britannica* states that, apart from “the classical study of flat surfaces (plane geometry) and rigid three-dimensional objects (solid geometry),” even “the most abstract thinking and imaginings of people might be represented and developed in geometric terms” (“Geometry”). It is in this latter sense that *the poem* “Geometry”

evidences the *abstract thinking and imaginings* of lyric. An opening certainty in one discipline (*I prove a theorem*), offset by subsequent instability in another (*the house expands*), gives way to an image of concluding geometric convergence: *They are going to some point true*. Far from following the deliberate steps of mathematical exposition, as proving theorems would imply, “Geometry” explores the peculiarly pliable nature of lyric imagining<sup>4</sup>.

Surfaces demarcating space lexically populate the poem from start to finish; the initial *windows that jerk free to hover* and the twice-mentioned *ceiling that floats away* yield to *the walls that clear themselves of everything / but transparency* in stanza 2 and to the transformed *windows that have binged into butterflies* in stanza 3. Attention to these surfaces, all assignable to *the house that expands* at the poem’s outset, subtly signals and spatially frames the movement of the lyric *I* from inside to outside, from seeing *the ceiling* to being *out in the open*, able to glimpse *sunlight glinting* on windows turned into butterflies. The *I*’s movement, like the fleeing roofs, appears to defy gravity, as if *the house* were slowly peeled away, leaving the speaker suspended in air. Viewed allegorically, the unusual home might represent the thought structures we inhabit to make sense of experience; in peeling away their geometric surfaces, one is left with lyric imagining. Perhaps only amid this peculiar thought could the rigid three-dimensional object known as one’s *house* expand and – its ceiling gone, its windows *free to hover*, its walls transparent for all to see through – be a source of rapt seeing rather than of consternation.

Tracing lyric’s *thinking and imaginings*, Vendler affirms in the essay “Looking for Poetry in America” that the “referentiality of language in a poem is more inward than outward, even when the topic of the poem is a civic or ethical or mimetic one” (*Music* 40). Visual attention in “Geometry” to *transparency*, to the twice-named *windows*, and to *sunlight glinting where they’ve intersected* intimates referential clarity and sees it yield to light. An inward-pointing signalling explains in part how the second lyric’s single-word title, as if a dictionary entry to be followed by a definition, introduces a poem that strays far from the discipline it initially names. Akin to the centripetal motion observed above in “The Distant Drum,” the inward referentiality of “Geometry,” sharing as well the former poem’s spatiotemporal presentness and inclusive first-person *I*, amply exemplifies

<sup>4</sup> In *The Given and the Made: Strategies of Poetic Redefinition*, Vendler sees “Geometry” as dealing with “the coherence and beauty of the logical principles of spatial form” and with “what geometry and poetic form have in common” (67). For brief discussion of the poem in question, see pages 67-68 of the above-cited text. For extended discussion of the poet in question, see chapter 3 of *The Given and the Made* and chapter 14 of *Soul Says*.

Vendler's engaging dictum: "Art does not mimetically resemble nature, any more than cider mimetically represents apples. But without apples there would be no cider; without life there would be no hieroglyphs of life" (*Music* 125). As pressed *cider* rather than originary *apples*, the postulates of lyric, impenetrable to empirical measure or proof, stand *true and unproven* at this second lyric's close.

Issues of mimesis and referentiality, of pliable imagining, of pronominal abstraction, and of spatiotemporal presentness stand crucial in lyric, over and above their individual significance, in that they inform notions of *voice*. The *I* speaking in lyric often strays far from the circumscribing confines of a single self or autobiography, as in: "I've known rivers: / Ancient, dusky rivers. / My soul has grown deep like the rivers" (Hughes 4). In this regard, Vendler enumeratively details what Langston Hughes intuitively knew:

The virtues of lyric – extreme compression, an intense and expressive rhythm, a binding of sense by sound, a structure which enacts the experience represented, an abstraction from the heterogeneity of life, a dynamic play of semiotic and rhythmic "destiny" – *all are summoned to give a voice to the "soul"* [emphasis added] – the self when it is alone with itself. . . . (*Soul* 7)

The voicing in solitude proper to lyric dovetails smoothly with "the portion of life it undertakes to represent, the life that the soul lives when it is present to itself and alone with its passions" (*Soul* 6).

In view of these voiced tendencies toward abstraction and inclusion, lyric stands as the literary form best suited to harbor the extraordinary range of writing taking place in the United States today. "The Distant Drum" by Calvin Hernton, published in 1976, and "Geometry" by Rita Dove, published in 1980, differ greatly in temper and topic, yet their shared lyric characteristics leave them equally accessible to a reader risking "self-investiture in any poetic 'I'" (*Soul* 3).

Vendler's astute clues in piecing together this version of the lyric puzzle do not exclude other clues or versions; on the contrary, her vision remains "confident in its attachment to poetry, but conscious that the art of poetry is far larger than any single description of its powers" (*Music* 6). Lyric reflects the multiplicity of individual experience; the multitudinous volume of poetry appearing ought thus to seem salutary, its multilingual nature, to engage, its multicultural seeing, to mirror the composition of contemporary American society.

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## ■ 'Astonishing Progress': An American View of the Brazilian Republic in the Early Twentieth Century

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In October 1913 Theodore Roosevelt left New York for Rio de Janeiro to give a series of public lectures in Brazil, Uruguay and Argentina. The ex-president had long desired to visit South America and was especially interested in exploring the Amazon region of Brazil. Consequently, after delivering his lectures Roosevelt travelled from Argentina to Paraguay in early December to embark on what he called 'the scientific part of my trip.'<sup>1</sup> In keeping with his advocacy of the 'strenuous life,' the venture was not intended to be a brief tourist diversion but a full-scale scientific and geographical expedition in which Roosevelt was accompanied by his son, Kermit, a small group of American explorers and naturalists and a full complement of local guides and porters. At the border between Paraguay and Brazil the expedition was joined by the celebrated Brazilian explorer, Colonel Cândido Rondon. 'The Brazilian Government desires him to go with us,' explained Roosevelt, 'as they want to make my trip not merely a success but a success of note.'<sup>2</sup> Starting on 9 December 1913 from Asunción, Paraguay,

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<sup>1</sup> Roosevelt to Henry Cabot Lodge, 12 December 1913, cited in *Selections from the Correspondence of Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Cabot Lodge, 1884-1918* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2 vols., 1925), II, p. 443.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

the journey involved travelling by boat and canoe hundreds of miles up the River Paraguay to the state of Mato Grosso in Brazil and then following little-known and, in some cases, uncharted rivers leading eventually on 30 April 1914 to the city of Manaus in the Amazon basin. The party subsequently proceeded to Belém where Roosevelt took a steamship to return to New York.

The expedition was described by Roosevelt in articles which appeared in *Scribner's* and were later collected together and expanded into a full-length book entitled *Through the Brazilian Wilderness* which was published in 1914.<sup>3</sup> The activities of the ex-president were always newsworthy, but an American expedition into the Amazon was a relatively rare event and attracted public interest and curiosity. Much of *Through the Brazilian Wilderness*, therefore, is a straightforward travel account which highlights the exotic and exciting aspects of adventure and exploration in the interior of Brazil. Roosevelt relates his encounters with native peoples, the hunting of unusual animals such as the jaguar, the dangers from poisonous snakes on land, from swarms of flying insects in the air and from blood-thirsty piranhas in the rivers. Most of the early part of the expedition was spent in passively meandering along rivers and viewing 'forests of palms that extended for leagues, and vast marshy meadows, where storks, herons, and ibis were gathered.'<sup>4</sup> The last stages, however, were extremely arduous and physically exhausting. The journey to Manaus required the navigation of the fast-flowing currents and rapids of the River Amazon and was described by Roosevelt as 'seven weeks of hard and dangerous labor.' In fact, Roosevelt lost more than 50 pounds in weight and his health never completely recovered. 'The Brazilian wilderness stole away ten years of his life,' one of his biographers sadly remarked.<sup>5</sup>

While *Through the Brazilian Wilderness* was intended primarily as a book on travel, it is interspersed with brief sections that express Roosevelt's 'progressive' ideas<sup>6</sup> and particularly his confidence in the success and relevance of the American historical experience. Despite its exotic flora and fauna, Roosevelt treats

<sup>3</sup> See Theodore Roosevelt, *Through the Brazilian Wilderness* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1914).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 327; William R. Thayer, *Theodore Roosevelt: An Intimate Biography* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1919), p. 394. Thayer describes the expedition as the 'Brazilian Ordeal' and notes that Roosevelt 'had never again the iron physique with which he had embarked the year before.' *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> The 'Progressive Movement' or 'Progressivism' dominated American politics at the beginning of the twentieth century and resulted in the passage of numerous political and economic reforms. An excellent guide is Arthur S. Link and Richard L. McCormick, *Progressivism* (Arlington Heights: Harlan Davidson, 1983).



Brazil not as a foreign country but as virtually synonymous with the United States of an earlier period. This is exemplified by the common historical experience of the frontier. Like the United States in its formative years as a republic, Brazil is also perceived to be a frontier society because it offers a vast 'wilderness' to be conquered and settled. Indeed, the Brazilian frontier appears as the next vital stage, if not the culmination of a historical process involving the worldwide movement of peoples. 'Every now and then some one says that the "last frontier" is now to be found in Canada or Africa, and that it has almost vanished,' remarks Roosevelt and he adds: 'On a far larger scale this frontier is to be found in Brazil – a country as big as Europe or the United States – and decades will pass before it vanishes.'<sup>7</sup>

In another direct parallel with the American past Brazil is portrayed as a land with great economic potential and opportunity. Sailing up the River Paraguay Roosevelt is reminded of the Mississippi and the development of the Mississippi Valley. 'In the not distant future,' he predicts that the River Paraguay and its hinterland 'will witness a burst of growth and prosperity much like that which the Mississippi saw when the old men of today were very young.' Moreover, the steady influx of settlers which had occurred in the Mississippi Valley would be replicated in Brazil. While acknowledging that the remote state of Mato Grosso was popularly referred to and feared as 'the great wilderness,' Roosevelt argues that it is 'a fertile land, pleasant to live in' and 'offers a fine field for immigration.'<sup>8</sup> Just as in the United States, he is confident that immigrants would not be deterred and that the Brazilian frontier would promote self-reliance and individualism. He also hopes that the Brazilian government will adopt homestead legislation similar to that of the United States. 'The small home-maker who owns the land which he tills with his own hands,' he believes, 'is the greatest element of strength in any country.' Indeed, Roosevelt's observations during his travels in Brazil convinced him that communities of 'pioneer settlers' were already established and that they possessed the motivation, capacity and energy to emulate the American experience and tame the wilderness thereby ensuring the victory of civilization: 'In short, these men, and those like them everywhere on the frontier between civilization and savagery in Brazil, are now playing the part played by our backwoodsmen when over a century and a quarter ago they began the conquest of the great basin of the Mississippi.'<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Roosevelt, *Brazilian Wilderness*, pp. 333-4.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 57, 99.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 332-3.

The result according to Roosevelt would be an industrial boom in Brazil similar to that of nineteenth-century America. Like the United States, settlement and economic development would be greatly stimulated and advanced by the railroad. The image is of a country crisscrossed with railroad tracks. 'When railroads are built into these interior portions of Mato Grosso the whole region will grow and thrive amazingly – and so will the railroads,' he predicts.<sup>10</sup> In common with the history of the American West, Roosevelt also notes that the region would be quickly opened 'if Colonel Rondon's anticipations about the development of mining, especially gold mining, are realized.'<sup>11</sup> In the United States, the cattle bonanza had followed the mining frontier. Roosevelt foresees a similar development in Brazil especially on the plains of Mato Grosso which he describes as offering excellent prospects for cattle-ranching. Over time, no doubt, the same pattern as in the United States would be repeated as settlers and farmers displaced the miners and cowboys.

In presenting Brazil as a land of opportunity, *Through the Brazilian Wilderness* was typical of travel accounts written by Americans on Brazil at the beginning of the twentieth century. The businessman, Frank Carpenter, wrote in 1903 that Brazil was 'in the infancy of its development' and 'will some day support a hundred people where it now supports one.' The journalist, Nevin Winter, stated in 1910 that 'Brazil to-day possesses the greatest amount of undeveloped fertile land that is still to be found in the world.' But these travellers also stressed the difficulties of the climate and especially the risk of disease. 'Brazil has a great future,' summed up Roger Babson in 1918, 'but this future is a long distance away.'<sup>12</sup> To Roosevelt, however, the development of the interior of Brazil presented only exciting challenges and opportunities. Any obstacles would be easily overcome and even turned to advantage. 'The very rapids and waterfalls which now make the navigation of the river [Amazon] so difficult and dangerous,' he enthuses, 'would drive electric trolleys up and down its whole length and far out on either side, and run mills and factories, and lighten the labor on farms.' The result would be to transform Brazil into a prosperous economy and a replica of the contemporary United States. 'This country and the adjacent regions, forming

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 156.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 217.

<sup>12</sup> Frank G. Carpenter, *South America: Social, Industrial, and Political* (Akron: Saalfeld Publishing Company, 1903), p. 594; Nevin O. Winter, *Brazil and Her People of To-Day* (Boston: The Page Company, 1910), p. 352; Roger W. Babson, *The Future of South America* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1918), p. 316. A similar ambivalence was evident in nineteenth-century visitors. See Charles G. Hamilton, 'English-Speaking Travelers in Brazil, 1851-1887,' *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 40 (1960), 532-47.

the high interior of western Brazil,' he asserts, 'will surely some day support a large industrial population' and 'will be a healthy home for a considerable agricultural and pastoral population.'<sup>13</sup>

While other American travel accounts discussed how immigrants should adjust and conform to the prevailing values and customs of Brazilian society, this subject was ignored by Roosevelt. Indeed, the new Brazil which he envisaged would not necessarily be created or controlled by Brazilians. While praising Brazilian explorers such as Colonel Rondon for dutifully serving their nation, Roosevelt stresses that they were also performing a wider service on behalf of civilization in opening 'this great and virgin land to the knowledge of the world.'<sup>14</sup> In fact, he believes that there is an obligation not only for Brazilians but especially for Europeans to settle and develop the Amazon region. 'Surely such a rich and fertile land,' he asserts, 'cannot be permitted to remain idle, to lie as a tenantless wilderness, while there are such teeming swarms of human beings in the overcrowded, overpeopled countries of the Old World.'<sup>15</sup> The portrayal of the interior of Brazil as an attractive place for immigration and settlement is therefore directly aimed at a European audience. 'Surely in the future this region will be the home of a healthy highly civilized population,' asks Roosevelt and he adds: 'Any sound northern race could live here; and in such a land, with such a climate, there would be much joy of living.'<sup>16</sup> The implication is that the Europeans are a superior race to the local Brazilians.

Roosevelt, however, shows a friendly and generally admiring disposition towards Brazil and its people. Indeed, during his presidency he had often singled out Brazil for praise in contrast to the critical and superior attitude that he frequently displayed towards the other Latin American countries.<sup>17</sup> The fact that Brazil had become a republic in 1889 by peaceful means was a matter for particular congratulation and indicated that by avoiding political violence the Brazilian people displayed a particular virtue. 'Brazil,' believes Roosevelt, 'has been blessed beyond the average of her Spanish-American sisters because she won her way to republicanism by evolution rather than revolution.' In his opinion, the Brazilian republic has made 'astonishing progress' and is to be highly

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., pp. 217, 299.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 217.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., pp. 298-9.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 181.

<sup>17</sup> See Joseph Smith, *Unequal Giants: Diplomatic Relations between the United States and Brazil, 1889-1930* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1991), pp. 52-4. Roosevelt also placed Argentina and Chile along with Brazil in a separate category of Latin American nations.

commended for adopting 'progressive' ideas.<sup>18</sup> 'Brazil possesses the same complete liberty in matters religious, spiritual, and intellectual as we, for our great good fortune, do in the United States,' he sums up.<sup>19</sup>

In keeping with the 'progressive' ideas and priorities of the time, Roosevelt is pleased to discover that the federal and state governments of Brazil are active in advancing educational reform. 'The government in each of these commonwealths,' he reports, 'is doing everything possible to further the cause of education.' Moreover, Roosevelt is especially impressed by 'the tendency to treat education as peculiarly a function of government and to make it, where the government acts, non-sectarian, obligatory, and free' and considers this to be not only 'a cardinal doctrine of our own great democracy' but also 'sound Americanism.' In conversations with Colonel Rondon he is gratified to learn that 'in school matters the colonel [Rondon] has precisely the ideas of our wisest and most advanced men and women in the United States.'<sup>20</sup> A practical example of how a single individual could implement government policy and stimulate change and reform is cited in Cáceres in Mato Grosso where 'a fine new government school has been started, and [where] we met its principal, an earnest man doing excellent work, one of the many teachers who, during the last few years, have been brought to Mato Grosso from São Paulo, a centre of the new educational movement which will do so much for Brazil.'<sup>21</sup>

The success of government in advancing knowledge and education in Brazil had also been evident to Roosevelt when he had visited the Instituto Serumthérápico at São Paulo prior to starting his expedition to the Amazon. The Institute specialized in medical research on poisonous Brazilian snakes. 'I know of no institution of similar kind anywhere,' Roosevelt remarks and is particularly impressed by 'the fine modern building, with all the best appliances.' He commends Brazilians 'in their warfare against disease and death bearing insects and microbes' and for their 'most extraordinary work' in attempting 'to make the tropics the home of civilized man.' With the confidence typical of the 'progressive' period Roosevelt asserts that developments in medical knowledge would help to control the scourge of tropical disease so that the 'fear of danger to health would vanish.'<sup>22</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Roosevelt, *Brazilian Wilderness*, pp. 348-9.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 52. The attitude of tolerance in Brazil in religious and intellectual matters was often commented upon by American travellers. See Lilian E. Elliott, *Brazil: Today and Tomorrow* (New York: Macmillan, 1917), p. 90.

<sup>20</sup> Roosevelt, *Brazilian Wilderness*, pp. 59, 156.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 132.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., pp. 14, 42, 209.

Just like the United States, Brazil's achievement and progress at the beginning of the twentieth century was visibly reflected in the growth of large cities. American visitors invariably singled out the considerable changes and improvements that had taken place in the national capital of Rio de Janeiro. But foreign visitors rarely travelled to the Amazon. Roosevelt is therefore able to report on the less well-known but significant urban developments which were occurring elsewhere and cites Manaus and Belém as 'very striking examples of what can be done in the mid-tropics.'<sup>23</sup> Manaus is judged by Roosevelt to be 'a remarkable city.' From 'a nameless little collection of hovels,' it had been transformed in half a century into 'a big, handsome modern city, with opera-house, tramways, good hotels, fine squares and public buildings, and attractive private houses.'<sup>24</sup> On the route from Manaus to Belém he notices 'many thriving growing towns' and comments approvingly that 'everywhere there was growth and developments.' The port of Belém is similarly impressive and regarded as 'an admirable illustration of the genuine and almost startling progress which Brazil has been making of recent years.' Moreover, the city is considered 'not merely beautiful' but is also economically prosperous and dynamic. 'The docks, the dredging operations, the warehouses, the stores and shops, all tell of energy and success in commercial life,' Roosevelt remarks. Indeed, Belém is held up for high commendation as a model of 'progressive' virtue: 'It is as clean, healthy, and well policed a city as any of the size in the north temperate zone.'<sup>25</sup>

Roosevelt's praise for the achievements of the Brazilian republic is qualified by the fact that the economic developments observed on the journey from Manaus to Belém are attributed to the activities and work not of native Brazilians but of the 'large European, chiefly south European, immigration.' While acknowledging the 'mixed blood' of many of the inhabitants of the region he contends that 'the dominant blood, the blood already dominant in quantity, and that is steadily increasing its dominance, is the olive-white.'<sup>26</sup> In the frontier battle in Brazil between civilization and savagery Roosevelt desires and expects a repetition of the

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., pp. 346-7. Roosevelt does mention that Rio had been 'converted from a picturesque pest-hole into a singularly beautiful, healthy, clean, and efficient modern great city.' See *ibid.*, p. 349.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 343.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., pp. 345-6.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 345. In marked contrast to most American travel accounts about Brazil, there are only a small number of references to blacks in *Through the Brazilian Wilderness*. In fact, Roosevelt was intrigued by the social acceptance of blacks in Brazil. See Theodore Roosevelt, 'Brazil and the Negro,' *Outlook*, 106 (1914), pp. 409-11 and George Reid Andrews, *Blacks and Whites in São Paulo, Brazil, 1888-1988* (Madison: Wisconsin University Press, 1991), p. 130.

American historical experience in which the white immigrants drawn from Europe will ultimately be victorious.

Despite the references to the importance of white immigration, Roosevelt's expedition was in so remote an area of Brazil that the people it mostly encountered were native Indians rather than white Brazilians or Europeans. Indeed, the fact that the Amazon region was known to contain Indian tribes, some of whom were hostile, was one of its attractions to an intrepid explorer such as Roosevelt. It was only during the 1890s largely as a result of the work of Colonel Rondon that personal contact had been made for the first time with some of the tribes. Partly Indian by descent, Rondon was not only an officer in the Brazilian Army but had also been appointed head of the newly-created Indian Protection Service in 1910. He was regarded as a friend and champion of the Indian. Consequently, his presence meant that Roosevelt's expedition received visits from a number of local tribes most notably the Paresi and the Nambikwaras.

From his past experiences in the American West and his world travels Roosevelt was well acquainted with indigenous peoples. His first impressions of them in Brazil were generally favourable. The Paresi are described as 'exceedingly interesting' and 'an unusually cheerful, good-humored, pleasant-natured people.'<sup>27</sup> The Nambikwaras had only recently come into contact with whites and were known to be 'exceedingly hostile and suspicious.' But the sight of Colonel Rondon was reassuring and made them 'very friendly and sociable.' Their appearance, however, was startling. 'Nowhere in Africa did we come across wilder or more absolutely primitive savages,' remarks Roosevelt. On the other hand, he judges that 'these Indians were pleasanter and better-featured than any of the African tribes at the same stage of culture' and were 'a laughing, easy-tempered crew.'<sup>28</sup>

Roosevelt was impressed by the good behaviour of the Paresi men at a dance which was held to celebrate the expedition's visit. A notable feature was their almost total absence of clothing: 'For this occasion most, but not all, of them cast aside their civilized clothing, and appeared as doubtless they would all have appeared had none but themselves been present. They were absolutely naked except for a beaded string round the waist.' Ironically, the virtual nudity of the Indians prevented pilfering.

'They would have liked to pilfer,' Roosevelt remarks, 'but as they had no clothes it was difficult for them to conceal anything.'<sup>29</sup> The reference to pilfering shows that the members of the expedition were mindful that the Indians were

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<sup>27</sup> Roosevelt, *Brazilian Wilderness*, p. 196.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 222.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 206, 241.



'savages' and uncivilized. An outwardly friendly but cautious attitude was adopted particularly in relations with the Nambikwaras. 'In spite of their good nature and laughter, their fearlessness and familiarity showed how necessary it was not to let them get the upper hand,' notes Roosevelt. Indeed, Rondon had insisted as a precautionary safety measure that the Indians leave all their weapons behind in the jungle before entering the encampment. Roosevelt agreed that this was a sensible measure because the Nambikwaras 'are much wilder and more savage, and at a much lower cultural level, than the Paresi.'<sup>30</sup>

On a few occasions in *Through the Brazilian Wilderness* Roosevelt reveals a sympathetic attitude towards the Indians. He respects their skill in making baskets, bows and arrows. 'When people talk glibly of "idle" savages,' he states, 'they ignore the immense labor entailed by many of their industries, and the really extraordinary amount of work they accomplish by the skillful use of their primitive and ineffective tools.' Roosevelt also recognizes the hardships of their daily lives and considers that this shows 'the folly of those who idealize the life of even exceptionally good and pleasant-natured savages.'<sup>31</sup>

Nevertheless, Roosevelt firmly believes that the Indian belongs to a primitive and inferior race and will inevitably be displaced and assimilated. He sees the answer to the 'Indian problem' not as extermination but the adoption by government and white society of measures to improve and civilize the Indians.<sup>32</sup> Colonel Rondon, partly descended from Indians himself, provides the ideal model of a 'progressive' in action. The colonel had 'an exceptional knowledge of the Indian tribes' and had been able to persuade some of the 'wild tribes of the region' to begin 'to tread the road of civilization.' In so doing they had taken 'the first steps toward becoming Christians,' a decision which, in Roosevelt's opinion, represents 'the indispensable first step upward from savagery.'<sup>33</sup> Moreover, Roosevelt reported that Rondon, just as he did on the vital issue of education, held 'the exact view that is taken in the United States by the staunchest and wisest friends of the Indians.' That view aimed at preparing the Indians to be citizens and treating them in the meantime 'with intelligent and sympathetic understanding, no less than with justice and firmness.'<sup>34</sup>

Roosevelt considers that Rondon's policy has been very successful. In the first place it had brought peace to the region by moderating inter-tribal rivalries.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 225.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., pp. 203, 209.

<sup>32</sup> For a perceptive discussion of Roosevelt's attitude towards Indians see Thomas G. Dyer, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Idea of Race* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980), pp. 69-88.

<sup>33</sup> Roosevelt, *Brazilian Wilderness*, pp. 51-2.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 157.



'It has been his mixture of firmness, good nature, and good judgment,' Roosevelt approvingly notes, 'that has enabled him to control these bold, warlike savages, and even to reduce the warfare between them and the Paresi.' He is impressed to see that the Paresi received the colonel 'as a valued friend and as a leader who was to be followed and obeyed.'<sup>35</sup> In marked contrast to the rubber-gatherers who often exploited and mistreated the Indians, Rondon had rejected the policy of coercion and violence in favour of 'kindly and understanding treatment' which had made the Indians 'the loyal friends of the government.' Roosevelt also compliments Rondon on the way that he was directing the Indians to be economically independent and productive in cultivating fields of manioc, beans, potatoes, maize, and other vegetables. The colonel was even attempting to introduce cattle-raising. Most of all, Roosevelt is pleased to report that Rondon was proceeding carefully and 'raising them [the Paresi] by degrees – the only way by which to make the rise permanent.'<sup>36</sup>

Contrary to Roosevelt's optimism, the Indian problem would not be easily resolved in twentieth-century Brazil. Nor would the interior of Brazil experience a massive influx of settlers and flourishing economic development. While *Through the Brazilian Wilderness* is a readable and accurate account of Roosevelt's travels in the interior, its comments on Brazilian politics, economy or society are often superficial and unrealistic. Other travel accounts by contemporary American visitors to Brazil also acknowledge the country's great natural resources and future potential, but they invariably include a discussion of geographical and engineering obstacles, complaints about widespread political corruption and especially the Brazilian habit of delay and prevarication in business transactions.<sup>37</sup> Roosevelt simply or conveniently ignores such problems. For him the interior of Brazil is the American frontier of a century earlier. Brazil is a land of opportunity and the best way to achieve its great potential was precisely to imitate the United States and encourage immigration from the northern hemisphere. If these people worked hard and were assisted by a 'progressive' government, the success story of the American West would be repeated. *Through the Brazilian Wilderness* is therefore a book reflecting the 'progressive' ideas of its time and also the personal philosophy and 'Americanism' of Theodore Roosevelt. In its review of *Through the Brazilian Wilderness*, the *Times Literary Supplement* perceptively summed up: 'It is a very interesting story, told with all the cheerful optimism – or trick of looking on the bright side of things – which has always distinguished its author.'<sup>38</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., pp. 196, 225.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 196.

<sup>37</sup> For example see Clayton S. Cooper, *The Brazilians and Their Country* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1917), p. 19.

<sup>38</sup> *Times Literary Supplement* (London), 10 December 1914.

## ■ 'Tickets, please!': Tracing John Ashbery's Surrealism Back to France

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John Ashbery has long been hailed the quintessentially American poet due to both his command of the postwar American idiom and modern concerns. This popularity, however, did not come overnight; in fact, his poetry has often been accused of being "too French" (read 'surrealist'). Ashbery's travel indeed lacks the nowadays fashionable orientation toward the West, the native spirituality. Rather on the contrary, he chose the Old World roots, France, where he lived and wrote art criticism as well as poetry for a decade.

This experience of immersion in another language naturally surfaces in his work, but his poems do not just reflect this cultural syncretism; traveling becomes a major poetic motif. This is, in turn, a very American source of inspiration: travel as process, as action, and finally as an end in itself.

This paper is intended as a revision of the – often prejudiced – state of affairs regarding Ashbery's surrealist incursions. Exploring his adoption of a very specific, non-automatic surrealism, we can understand his aesthetic sensibility much more satisfactorily.

Much has been written about the relationship between John Ashbery's poetry and avant-garde art, particularly the painting of the Abstract Expressionists. Since the 1980s critics have considered not only Ashbery's use of *objets d'art* as

starting motifs for his poems but also the painterly quality present in much of his poetry itself. That the mid-century booming collage aesthetic has been a major influence on him is beyond doubt, and the only controversial issue nowadays is probably the negative shade still cast upon his surrealist experiments. Openly hostile critics seem to find a particular relish in making him fit into the vague category of post-surrealist surrealism. Ashbery himself has shaken off the label with remarkable energy at times, most likely out of boredom, and certainly tired of the reductionist connotations the term has – sadly enough – acquired. Lack of consensus has long prevented critics from venturing dangerous pronouncements, and the handy label “surrealist experiment” remains there for the less adventurous. This paper focuses on some poems that have deserved so far little critical attention and, indeed, shows how these are touched by surrealism, but in a way that has little or nothing to do with the mainstream movement (“hard-core surrealism” according to Ashbery).

Ashbery's poems are plagued by disjointed narrative and descriptive fragments which Alan Williamson has exposed as deliberate interruptions used by the poet as elements in a collage (120-22). Our aim is to give coherence to a clearly defined group of these whose inspiration seems to have been the characteristic iconographic catalogue of the Italian painter and poet Giorgio de Chirico, co-founder of the school of Pittura Metafisica and precursor of surrealism. In the endnotes to *The Double Dream of Spring*, for example, Ashbery himself explained that his title was borrowed from one of de Chirico's paintings.

In fact, it is little wonder that Ashbery has felt attracted to de Chirico's work, since they share a wide range of obsessions. Traveling and the passing of time have become not only major preoccupations for both, but they have related them in a very similar way. Spatial and temporal movement are thus intrinsically connected, the traveling impulse having a cathartic function against the burden of passing time. But at the same time our wandering stands for the permanent sense of loss, the typically metaphysical anxiety.

These affinities of approach and treatment are reinforced by Ashbery's adoption of metaphysical imagery for *Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror* and especially *Houseboat Days*. In the latter volume a good number of poems feature passages where the voice seems to inhabit a metaphysical landscape/dreamscape, as if it belonged to one of the passengers of de Chirico's trains, embedded in his own thoughts but also looking sporadically through the window and thus interrupting the flow by letting the landscape intrude (Ashbery wrote *The Vermont Notebook* during a bus tour of Massachusetts). Naturally, and given the connotations of metaphysical landscapes, this happens in those appropriate moments when the poem's mood is already (or wants to become) nostalgic or

melancholy. A long list of items could be extracted from *Houseboat Days* to match de Chirico's favorite choices in such famous paintings as *Mystery and Melancholy of a Street* or *Mélancholie d'une rue*: towers, trains, stations, clocks, statues and pedestals, plazas, shadows, arches, maps, ramparts, spires, machicolations, flagpoles, battlements, etc.

But they also share techniques. Richard Howard has shown how Ashbery often slips unmediated remarks, generally about the poem's own process of becoming (Howard 26-27). De Chirico's canvas *The Double Dream of Spring* is an apt example of the same technique, representing a painting within the painting (echoing the title's suggestion of dreaming within a dream), and thus giving away the circumstances of artistic creation.

Ashbery's poem "All and Some" (SPCM 64-65) is a similar case in the way it advances the mood and the aesthetic of the following volume by introducing metaphysical imagery and touching upon those concerns that will become crucial in *Houseboat Days*. The scenario is that of a valediction, putting an end to a love story. The opening lines emphasize change and departure from previous habits, which adds to the departure of the lover. The nostalgic mood later adopted in the poem will suit the inclusion of de Chirico's imagery.

The poem is also representative of Ashbery's "hat tricks" with language and the readers' expectations. The opening line "And for those who understand:" seeks to establish a complicity with the reader, based not only on the *in medias res* beginning but also on the apparently selective implications of the statement. Charles Molesworth, in a less celebratory attitude, has written that "the author-reader contract is a conspiratorial one for Ashbery" (170). It is. We want to be "those" who deserve the confidence of the poet.

Another unmediated phrase in the poem is that "But what I mean is . . ." (line 22). It is another trick played on the reader, for what follows is hardly an explanation of anything. Structurally it recalls those "tips" by magicians who announce they will teach the audience how to do a trick at home and end up by complicating it even more.

It is in the second half of "All and Some" where we can find a profusion of elements from de Chirico's landscapes. Returning to the properly nostalgic tone of the valediction, the actual place where it probably happened acquires an intensely evocative power. And so it is remembered by the poet in these terms:

No one  
Cares or uses the little station any more.  
They are too young to remember  
How it was when the late trains came in.  
Violet sky grazing the gray hill-crests.

With similar melancholy de Chirico wrote “The Song of the Station” to one of those minor train stations almost always present in his paintings:

Little station, little station, what happiness I owe you. You look all around, to left and right, also behind you. Your flags snap distractedly, why suffer? Let us go in. . . . Beneath the porticos are windows. . . . Little station, little station, you are a divine toy. . . . on this square – geometric and yellow. . . . your little flags crackle together under . . . this luminous sky. (“Paulhan Ms.” 208)

The sense of a happier past and the relevance of the role played by the station in that past are conveyed in very similar ways. In Ashbery’s passage the station is not the source of happiness, as it seems to be for de Chirico, but as the scenery of the valediction it is charged with an ambiguous nostalgia (for the same reason it could have inspired the poet with nothing but irrational aversion). The poem evolves into increasingly positive feelings for the station, until it stops abruptly:

It is impossible to picture the firmness  
Of relationships then. . . .  
.....  
Everything was useful. People died  
Delighted with the long wait,  
Exhaled brief words into the afternoon, the hills:  
Then sweetness was knocked down for the last time.

The first two lines can be read with a double meaning. At the level of the love affair they remember the former security, no longer even conceivable. But at the implicit level of evocation of de Chirico’s canvases the lines reflect on the paradoxical coherence of his metaphysical landscapes, where chance associations enjoyed an uneasy – yet convincing – solidity. Ashbery finds “impossible to picture” the firmness of the relationship between artichokes and cannonballs, statues and trains, arcades and piazzas, as portrayed by de Chirico.

He does not just aspire to reproduce it; in fact the description is made in pictorial terms. Ashbery gives away his source of inspiration through the accuracy with which he conveys the feeling of nostalgia, and the language reflects the visual quality of the original medium in which he found it. “Violet sky grazing the gray hill-crests” shows the importance of color, while phrases like “exhaled brief words into the afternoon” endow the afternoon with a materiality it would not have outside a painting, an opacity one could understand when applied to the (darkness of the) night.

Many other poems feature passages like this, recreating a metaphysical landscape seen from a train ("Pyrography"), or a deserted square ("And Others, Vaguer Presences"). "Pyrography" is a remarkable example of the image of Ashbery as passenger in one of de Chirico's trains:

They agree, and soon the slow boxcar journey begins,  
.....

The land wasn't immediately appealing; we built it  
Partly over with fake ruins, in the image of ourselves:

The vision of those "fake ruins, in the image of ourselves" is very apt to share the feeling evoked in metaphysical paintings. Not ruins as criticism of the decay of modern civilization, but "fake ruins" as a gratuitous demonstration of disdain for functionality, and a further concession to aestheticism. But the introduction of such a landscape is not for aesthetic purposes only, and the metaphysical potential of the ruins triggers Ashbery's imagination into one of his typical reflections on time and what attitude we should adopt to face its passing:

How are we to inhabit  
This space from which the fourth wall is invariably missing,  
As in a stage-set or dollhouse, except by staying as we are,  
In lost profile, facing the stars, with dozens of as yet  
Unrealized projects, and a strict sense  
Of time running out, of evening presenting  
The tactfully folded-over bill? ("Pyrography," HD 8-9)

As "All and Some" approaches its end, another major concern surfaces. Time and its passing provoke two different reactions in people. The degree of awareness divides mankind into two groups:

... those few devoted  
By a caprice beyond the majesty  
Of time's maw live happy useful lives  
Unaware that the universe is a vast incubator.

Happiness becomes a matter of ignoring the passing of time – if you can afford or pretend to do so – whereas awareness is just an obstacle. However, the coupling of "happy" and "useful" is problematic enough for us to suspect some Ashberian irony. The image of the incubator is very accurate here, suggesting that the eggs must be hatched and so we cannot expect youth/innocence to last forever. The ambiguity is brilliantly achieved, for the image of nurturing warmth will eventually trigger the process of decay.

Beyond the elemental connotations of loss, the reference to the empty pedestal in "All and Some" is another clear evocation of de Chirico's statues, especially *Le rivage de la Thessalie*, where the man and horse seem to have become alive and abandoned the pedestal. This is rather a positive reading, but in Ashbery there is an extra tip:

Do you remember how we used to gather  
The woodruff, the woodruff? But all things  
Cannot be emblazoned . . .

"[A]ll things / Cannot be emblazoned" implies that the beloved is a living creature who may not want to remain forever on a pedestal.

Finally, the frequent apparition of trains in Ashbery's poems – as in de Chirico's canvases – suggests the way in which he seems to relate them to his obsessions. Speeding trains or trains in stations; scenes seen from trains or inside other trains, even words read on the windows of passing trains. For both Ashbery and de Chirico the timetables of train services seem to be simultaneously reliable and somewhat flexible. Trains constitute an alternative timing system and at the same time they are subject to human delay. It is a very fitting treatment of the motif: both need to feel that there is a chance for human control of time, but they know this feeling of control is only illusory:

The train comes bearing joy;  
For long we hadn't heard so much news, such noise . . .  
As laughing cadets say, "In the evening  
Everything has a schedule, if you can find out what it is." (ST)

The train brings joy, and the possibility of a universal logic and harmony. Its own schedule seems to endow life with a meaning yet unrevealed to us. On the other hand, it is laughing cadets, representing unexperienced and playful youth, who voice the statement. Whether the message is reassuring or merely intriguing is a matter of readers, and that is exactly Ashbery's point. The message does nothing but mirror the predetermined attitude of the reader, at its best opening new possibilities but not aimed at conversions.

We hope to have made it apparent that John Ashbery's poetry has repeatedly suffered the influence of de Chirico's plastic and literary work. And this shows through his adoption of the Italian's metaphysical aesthetics whenever his mood matches the melancholy, nostalgic tone evoked by these scenes. This paper hopes to have contributed to the clarification of passages that otherwise would be thrown carelessly to the surrealist bin. They *are* surrealist in origin, so far as we



can call de Chirico a surrealist, but we wanted to know why and to what extent, since most likely what attracted Ashbery to de Chirico was his distance from surrealism, not his membership in the movement. Better than a collection of souvenirs, this is part of the cultural baggage Ashbery took with himself on his way back to New York.

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## The Russian Native American Jew of *The People*: Ethnic Multiplicity and Symbolism in Bernard Malamud's Posthumous Novel

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In what was to become Bernard Malamud's last and unfinished novel,<sup>1</sup> *The People* (1989), the author created perhaps one of his most singular characters, a symbolic incarnation of his last hopeful vision of man, very different from earlier works of social realism largely dominated by racial, cultural, ethnic and denominational tensions and oppressions, such as *The Assistant*, *The Fixer* or *The Tenants*. Although there is some of this in *The People*, since the novel is set in the years of colonial expansion and consequent displacement and repression of American Indians in North America (1870), what the work mainly highlights is the capacity of its protagonist, Yozip Bloom (later Jozip) to embody a multiplicity of identities which enables him to adopt the role of an interracial redeemer: as a Jew, as a Russian socialist and as an "American", in the two senses of the term: as a member – later leader – of the American Indian tribe named the People and as a

<sup>1</sup> When Malamud died in 1986, he had written a first draft of sixteen chapters, totalling 95 pages, and had left brief notes for the remaining five (17 to 21). The novel was published in 1989 by Farrar, Straus & Giroux in a joint volume which bears the title *The People and Uncollected Stories*.

U.S. citizen. The intricate ways in which Malamud symbolically interweaves all of these ethnic and cultural identities of Yozip's proves to be one of the most striking aspects of the novel and will be the main topic of this paper.

*The People* opens by presenting Yozip, a Jewish immigrant peddler recently come from Russia, in search of assimilation to the young nation:

After escaping military service in the Old Country, [Yozip] worked a year and bought the vehicle in St. Louis, Missouri. Yozip wore a Polish cap and trimmed his reddish beard every second week. Yet people looked at him as if he had just stepped out of steerage. An officious Jew he met in Wyoming told him he spoke with a Yiddish accent. Yozip was astonished because he now considered himself to be, in effect, a native. He had put in for citizenship the day after he arrived in the New World, five years ago, and figured he was an American by now. He would know for sure after he had looked through the two or three official documents his cousin was keeping for him when he got back from wherever he was going. (*The People* 3)

Malamud's use of the terms "native" and "American", although they make reference, at face value, to Yozip's U.S. citizenship, also covertly foreshadow his involvement with the People, the actual *native American* tribe he is to become involved with and lead. Thus the duplicity of meaning of "being American" is already hinted at in this opening paragraph of the novel. When Yozip is kidnapped by the People and thrust into the role of their representative/intercessor with the whites, he protests, "But how can I be an Indian if I was born in Zbrish, in Russia?... I live now in America, and also maybe I am by now a citizen" (*The People* 15). Yozip again alludes to his assimilation,<sup>2</sup> which he sees at odds with becoming "an Indian". But what is again being hinted at is that the protagonist is being chosen as an American in a deeper and truer sense of the term, as a Native American. Yozip's involvement with the cause of the People, who elect him as their intercessor with the whites, will distance him from his assimilative ambitions: on his return from his visit to Washington D.C. as the People's spokesman in defense of their valley, Yozip remembers that "...he had meant to stop in Chicago to have a look at his citizenship papers... but he forgot" (*The People* 33). In this respect, he does conform to a familiar pattern in Malamud's fiction, since "like most Malamud heroes, Yozip does find a new life, although not in the terms he envisioned" (Ochshorn 1990: 318).

<sup>2</sup> There are two other references in the novel to Yozip's assimilationist ambitions: "America was a fine country. Who had ever heard of such opportunities for an uneducated man?" (*The People* 18); "[Yozip] had once led a Fourth of July Parade" (*The People* 20).

However, Malamud had planned Yozip to eventually become a U.S. citizen at the end of the novel, after his failed attempt to exile the People to Canada. In the section "Author's Notes", appended to the novel, editor Robert Giroux comments on Malamud's notes for the ending of *The People*: "In the notes for chapters 18 through 21, Jozip has left the reservation and turned up in Chicago..." where he "...becomes a U.S. citizen, and enrolls in night school to study law in order to help the Indians fight persecution and injustice" ("Author's Notes", *The People* 98-99).

In spite of Jozip's failure to bring off the People's exile successfully, his redemption of the People is not ultimately presented as a failure; he is obliged, by historical circumstances, to refocus his approach to it, from his new status as U.S. citizen; Malamud's notes for chapter nineteen read: "Jozip wants to become a lawyer for the Indians" ("Author's Notes", *The People* 98-99). The sketched ending clearly reveals a vision of hope in interracial redemption and communion, as Malamud's son Paul points out in the introduction to the book: "The notes and outline show that Malamud wished to conclude with a vision of hope: Jozip was to plead the cause of the People before a nation rapidly becoming more civilized" (*The People, Introduction*, xiii).

Yozip's involvement with the People, which begins by his initiation into the tribe in chapter 4, follows with his election as spokesman before the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in chapter 5, and culminates with his replacement of the old Chief Joseph under the new name Jozip in chapter 6, is related to a further duplicity, that of the word "red" in symbolic terms. Already in the course of the introductions between Yozip and the chief of the People, the following dialogue takes place:

"Where do you come from?" asked the chief.

"I come from Russia. I am a socialist."

"What is socialist?"

"We believe in a better world. Not to hurt but to help people."

"These are our words too," said the old chief. "We are the People."

(*The People* 14)

In this short but sharp exchange, Malamud is bringing together Yozip's identity as a Russian socialist with his future role as leader of the People: the term "people" is obviously the cornerstone of socialism as a political theory. Furthermore, the theoretical basis of socialism and the Native American way of life share the essential idea of upholding the preeminence of the community over that of the individual and ignoring the notion of private ownership. But the equation between socialism and Native Americans goes further, and is related also to the above mentioned duplicity of the word "red": a term used by WASPs both as a

racial denomination for Native Americans during the colonization period –“Red Indians”– but also as a pejorative term to refer to individuals with leftist or anti-establishment ideas, as the McCarthy era clearly illustrates.<sup>3</sup> So it is fitting that the chief of the People should announce to Yozip: “If our tribe accepts you... you will be a red man of this tribe... When you see yourself in a silver glass you will see your true color” (*The People* 15). As a “red,” both in the racial sense of the term as a Native American/Indian, and in its derogatory political sense as a believer in socialism, Yozip represents the “People”, also in two senses: specifically, the American Indian tribe featured in the novel, but also in a universal sense with reference to humankind.

Yozip's multiplicity of identities is further complicated by the fact that he is, inevitably, a Jew. Malamud presents him very much like he does the Bober couple in *The Assistant*, consistently using Yiddish-English syntax (i.e. “This I don't like to do,” *The People* 41), but also with a Yiddish accent which is frequently conveyed orthographically. At intimate moments, Yozip automatically lapses into Yiddish or alludes to familiar Jewish concepts and terms, such as “bar-mitzvah” (*The People* 19) or “chutzpa” (*The People* 55). The theme of language is relevant in connection with ethnicity, since it functions both as an element of communion, in his relationships with the American Indians, but also as a tool of oppression, in relation to the colonizing WASPs: “[Yozip] speaks with a Yiddish accent that is recognized by the whites but not by the Indians” (Abramson 1993: 139). When in order to avoid being made a member of the tribe, Yozip alleges his Yiddish accent as a handicap for the role of spokesman, the Indian chief replies, “I do not hear this accent. It does not say any words in my ear” (*The People* 14). By contrast, the whites do immediately detect his Jewish speech: “Sounds like Jew talk to me” (*The People* 46), says the American cavalry colonel after hearing Jozip's later speech in defense of the People. Almost at the end of the book, Jozip will finally claim, “I speak the tongue of the People better than I do the tongue of the whites” (*The People* 88).

That Malamud should use a Jewish protagonist in his last novel as a model of brotherhood, morality and goodwill is hardly surprising: in this respect, Yozip follows the familiar pattern of his predecessors Morris Bober in *The Assistant* or Yakov Bok in *The Fixer*, and, like them, he fits in the author's vision of the Jew as a modern Everyman which has been so widely and repeatedly observed by Malamud criticism.<sup>4</sup> Yet the significance of Jozip's Judaism in *The People* goes

<sup>3</sup> This double reference is also implicit in the dying American soldier's cry in chapter fourteen: “You'll get yours, you red bastards” (*The People* 79).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Solotaroff, T.: 1962; Alva Hoyt, C.: 1964; Mandel, R.B.: 1965; Goldman, M.: 1965 and Alter, R.: 1966, all in Field & Field eds. 1970. Cf. also Stern, M.: 1963; Goodman, O.: 1970; Mesher, D.: 1977 and Vogel, D.: 1986 in various periodicals.

further, and is particularly significant in connection with his leadership and redemption of the People: under pressure from the American army who has warned Jozip and the People that they will be shortly expelled from the valley into a reservation, Yozip decides to elude the Americans by deciding on an exodus to Canada: the last five completed chapters (11 to 16), almost a third of the projected novel, narrate this exodus. Malamud is obviously paralleling here the biblical Exodus led by Moses, as is proven by several striking analogies: like the Israelites who return to Israel, Jozip leads the People to Canada, defined in the Indians' tongue, as their "...grandmother's country" (*The People* 59 and 61), from where the tribe originally descends; both the biblical Exodus from Egypt to Israel and that of the People from the U.S. to Canada follow a northbound direction; and just as the Israelites are closely pursued by the Egyptians, Yozip and the People are closely pursued by the American Army, who eventually catches up with them in a remarkably similar setting and circumstances to those of the encounter by the Red Sea, in *The People*, "a wide river":

One day in September, the People, still moving northward... beheld a body of galloping troops across a wide river. The Americans, a cavalcade of sixty horsemen, had discovered the Indians and were moving against them at a crossing point of the river. (*The People* 93)

The description of the Egyptians' sighting of the Israelites in Exodus is strikingly similar: "But the Egyptians pursued after them [the children of Israel], and all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen, and his army, and overtook them encamping by the [Red] sea..." (Exodus 14:9).

Yozip's multiplicity of identities is explicitly highlighted at three points in the novel: firstly, as a cause for scorn in his visit to Washington D.C., where the Commissioner of Indian Affairs mocks Yozip's mention of "ancestors" by saying, "When you refer to 'ancestors' do you refer to American Indians or to Hebrews?" (*The People* 32) and then calls him a "...half-ass Hebrew Indian" (*The People* 33). Secondly, as a source of wonder, as Jozip himself recalls the Old Chief's belief in his worth as their redeemer, in that he is ideologically closer to "red" – in its two senses discussed – than to "white":

Jozip reminded himself he was white. "I am white but I think like I am red. The old chief told me this when I went in his tribe, that I was an Indian. I said if you think so; then he asked me who I was and I couldn't answer him with the right words. When I told him this he said to me, 'I will tell you that you are a red man. Feel your face,' and when I felt my face I felt it was a red face. But I said, 'I am an Indian who is a Jew.' 'And I understand that too,' he said. (*The People* 75)



The third reference to this issue follows the tribe's disastrous confrontation with the American army. Jozip is blamed by two warriors of the People for having taken the wrong decision and their scorn is based precisely on their rejection of Jozip's duplicity in ethnic terms:

"You were a fool to think you are the equal of an Indian," Indian Head said. "This trek to Canada has destroyed many of the People."  
[...]

"Indian Head should be our true chief," argued one warrior. "Now our medicine is bad because our chief is a stranger to us." (*The People* 82)

Apart from these explicit references to Yozip's hybrid identity, Malamud also conveys Yozip's double ethnicity as Jew/Indian in a symbolic way, in the comical description of Yozip's initiation into the People's tribe, narrated in the somewhat erratic chapter "The Tribesman" (pp. 16-26). In the course of one of the skill tests Yozip must pass, involving a William Tell sort of contest, Yozip's nose gets accidentally cut by the arrow of one of the braves:

The arrow, shot high in the air, eventually descended before [Yozip's] face; he felt it cut the tip of his nostril as the apple fell off his head. Yozip was slightly wounded by the barbed edge of the expiring arrow, and thus a bit of flesh was snipped from the tip of his long nose.

Blood streamed from the wound.

A cry went up from the braves in the tribe.

The chief called the blood a magic sign.

"Your nose is pierced but you are not wounded."

(*The People* 23)

This comical rite of passage has also symbolic implications: by losing "the tip of his long nose" (*The People* 23), Yozip becomes a little less clearly Jewish; but at the same time he becomes more clearly Indian, since Malamud is also alluding here to the *Nez Percé* tribe, who corresponded geographically with the general area where he places the People. In the introduction to the volume, editor Robert Giroux comments: "While living and teaching in the Northwest... [Malamud] did research on the Nez Percé tribe, also called the Shahaptin or Chopunnish, whose territory was eastern Oregon, Washington and central Idaho" (*The People*, Introduction xii).

And Bernard Malamud's own projects for what was ultimately to become his last novel further substantiate this idea: "What I see as possible is another variation of the comic-mythological – possibly working out the Chief Joseph of the Nez Percé idea..." (*The People*, Introduction xii).

In *The People*, it is Yozip/Jozip's embodiment of a multiplicity of interconnected identities which Malamud upholds as the key to making interracial redemption possible: the protagonist is a Jew, he is a "red", as a socialist and as an Indian, he is an American, both as a native and as U.S. citizen. The protagonist's multiplicity of identities extends even to the alteration of his name from "Yozip" to "Jozip" in a symbolic allusion "...both to Chief Joseph and to the Joseph of the Bible, both of whom attempted to save a group of people... undergoing great tribulations" (Abramson 1993: 139).

That a Russian Jewish immigrant should end up fighting for the rights of American Indians as a U.S. citizen after leading their exodus to Canada is, to a large degree, a parable, in the pattern of an earlier story on interracial redemption between blacks and Jews, "Angel Levine" (*The Magic Barrel*). But Malamud's intricate use of ethnic symbology and multiplicity goes much further in *The People*, even allowing for the obvious drawback that the novel is not complete. But even as it is, unfinished and unrevised, the raw power of its main theme, Man's capacity to embody a multiplicity of identities in a redeeming role towards fellow Man, reveals not only Bernard Malamud's mastery in portraying different cultures and ethnicities, and in suggesting the symbolic associations between them, but also his constant stress of the ethical aspects of humanity:

...the book contains a... message that Jews – though really, all human beings – ought to be at least a little like the admirable Jozip. ("Not to hurt but to help people.") Malamud... always wrote out of a strong attachment to humanist values, and his firm, restrained compassion figures strongly in this last novel. (Howe 1989: 117)

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