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Identity & Otherness in the Romance Literatures

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SANTA TERESA: CUATRO EXTRAÑAS EN UNA MISMA. UN CASO DE
ALTERIDAD ASIMILADA



Ana Benito
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La presente investigación se propone examinar los términos en los que Teresa de Ávila resultó ser una extraña, una “otra” para los contemporáneos de su siglo, atendiendo a cuatro puntos fundamentales: su carácter de mujer, de escritora, de mística y de introductora de elementos simbólicos de otras religiones en sus escritos. Por otro lado, veremos cómo el carácter distintivo de la santa surgió poco a poco de sus esfuerzos por defender su propia identidad.

Como muy bien señala Edward Said (4) la teoría literaria en la América de hoy ha aislado la textualidad de sus circunstancias, acontecimientos, y, a menudo, incluso de sus propios autores. Seguimos en nuestra exposición su principio de que los textos son, hasta cierto grado, acontecimientos en sí mismos, parte del mundo social y de la vida humana y, por supuesto, del momento histórico en que están localizados y son interpretados.

Para caracterizar a Teresa de Ávila no contamos más que con sus textos, su epistolario y otros documentos de la época que la mencionan. Sería imprudente tratar de aislar estas producciones de la vida de Santa Teresa, principalmente porque gran parte de ellas tienen un marcado carácter autobiográfico y en ningún momento fueron concebidas como obras de ficción, a pesar de que pudieron haber tomado referencias intertextuales de algunos géneros. Es innegable, por otro lado, que fueron escritas con un objetivo muy claro, el de formar e instruir, principalmente a las monjas de su congregación. El *docere* prevalece en la mayoría de los casos sobre el *delectare*.

Sobre el oficio de escribir, se puede decir que la historia de la literatura española hasta nuestro siglo no es precisamente prolija en la documentación de las mujeres escritoras. Cabe preguntarse en nuestro caso sobre las circunstancias que condujeron a Teresa-mujer a pasar a la acción en su doble

condición de mujer y escritora. Gillian T. W. Ahlgren señala como origen del destino de Teresa de Ávila la situación de la ortodoxia española en el siglo XVI. En opinión de Ahlgren (6-7) los procesos que la Iglesia dirigió contra varios grupos de "otros" religiosos, como judaizantes, luteranos y alumbrados, marcaron la naturaleza y práctica del catolicismo en la España de esa época. Santa Teresa contaba con una ascendencia conversa, pero el caso que más le afectó fue el de los alumbrados. En concreto, se acusó a los alumbrados de ser falsamente iluminados a través de la oración y la meditación. La campaña dirigida contra ellos tuvo un doble objetivo: en primer lugar redefinir la oración como esencialmente vocal y no como un proceso mental y en segundo lugar desposeer a sus practicantes de toda autoridad en cuanto al pretendido conocimiento espiritual que se adquiriría. Al mismo tiempo, se animó a los clérigos a insistir más ampliamente en su papel de mediadores entre los creyentes y Dios y a ejercer cierto control sobre la vida espiritual de sus fieles, especialmente a través de la confesión.

Al colocar la autoridad espiritual en manos exclusivas del clero masculino, la Contrarreforma Católica denegaba a la mujer el poder de ejercer cualquier papel como líder espiritual. Tal como señala Paul Smith (20) la mujer no puede considerarse con un papel marginal dentro de la sociedad medieval y renacentista, sino estructural, se convierte en objeto simbólico en cuestiones como linaje, matrimonio, propiedad, y, en nuestro caso, doctrina. Aunque no de manera explícita, se crearon modelos de ideología adecuados a cada uno de los dos sexos. Sirva como ejemplo la obra de Martín de Córdoba *Jardín de las nobles doncellas*, del siglo XV, cuyo autor sostiene que las mujeres son incapaces de controlar sus pasiones porque son inferiores en razón a los hombres. De este modo, se asumía la inferioridad intelectual del género femenino y se consideraba que las mujeres eran presa fácil de confusión y autoengaño en sus experiencias visionarias o revelatorias.

Teresa, no obstante, no renunció a su papel de guía espiritual, y como consecuencia, fue llamada a declarar ante la Inquisición repetidas veces para defender la legitimidad de sus experiencias místicas, de su reforma en la Orden Carmelita y en última instancia, las diferencias de su personalidad respecto al modelo que la sociedad patriarcal del siglo XVI había determinado para las mujeres. A medida que fue tomando

conciencia de que ciertas críticas se basaban en asunciones misóginas, Teresa dedicó sus esfuerzos también a defender a la mujer en general reivindicando un papel más amplio de sus representantes dentro de la tradición cristiana. En *Camino de Perfección* hallamos claras referencias a los prejuicios contra las mujeres:

No basta, Señor, que nos tiene el mundo acorraladas e incapaces para que no hagamos cosa que valga nada por Vos en público ni osemos hablar algunas verdades que lloramos en secreto, sino que no nos habíais de oír petición tan justa? No lo creo yo, Señor, de vuestra bondad y justicia, que sois justo juez, y no como los jueces del mundo, que como son todos hijos de Adán y, en fin, todos varones, no hay virtud de mujer que no tengan por sospechosa. (4:1)

En la misma obra critica los prejuicios contra las mujeres religiosas haciendo alusión al pasaje bíblico de la carta de San Pablo en la que se les prohíbe predicar: "Pues todas hemos de procurar de ser predicadoras de obras, pues el Apóstol y nuestra inhabilidad nos quita que lo seamos en palabras". (15:6)

No debe olvidarse que los modelos imperantes para las mujeres se remitían a la Virgen María y otras mujeres santas en las que prevalecía la humildad y la obediencia. Las mujeres que osaban hablar a otros sobre sus experiencias místicas a menudo fueron acusadas de arrogancia espiritual. Como señala Ahlgreen (23), una de las formas de controlar la desbordada espiritualidad de algunas de ellas fue la creación de conventos de clausura. La reclusión y casi absoluta incomunicación con el exterior a la que se sometían, ofrecía un mecanismo altamente adecuado para su control.

Teresa de Ávila desarrolló, tal como veremos, ciertos mecanismos estratégicos básicos que le permitieron sobrevivir en el seno de la Iglesia Católica. El primero y más efectivo fue su repetido acatamiento a las reglas de la ortodoxia. En innumerables ocasiones a lo largo de sus obras reitera su voluntad de cumplir las órdenes de sus superiores jerárquicos, argumento que también utiliza en sus defensas en las al menos seis ocasiones en las que fue denunciada a la Inquisición. El segundo mecanismo fue una demostración de humildad que encajara con el modelo femenino que la época había impuesto. Sin embargo, no se resignó a la inmovilidad física de un convento de clausura sino que viajó por muchas ciudades de España para crear nuevos conventos o impulsar su reforma y de ningún modo renunció a expresar sus

vivencias espirituales, aunque tuviera que modificar y rectificar sus escritos para satisfacer a la censura inquisitorial. En ambos casos reclamó un poder de acción más amplio para su condición de mujer y de intelectual y consiguió persuadir a las instituciones imperantes de su deseo de no salirse de las normas, de no ser “otra” más allá del papel que la sociedad patriarcal había dispuesto para una mujer santa.

Sabemos que Teresa comenzó a escribir a los cincuenta años, con bastante posterioridad a su época de dos años y medio de éxtasis. Cabe preguntarse el porqué de esta dilatada tardanza entre sus experiencias místicas y su documentación escrita. En opinión de Ahlgreen (34-35) la vocación de escritora de nuestra autora tiene su causa directa en la ausencia de literatura mística disponible en la época.

La formación espiritual de las nuevas carmelitas descalzas dependía en gran medida de la posibilidad de poder contar con tratados místicos que guiaran su inmersión en la oración contemplativa. Sin embargo, el panorama literario español en este aspecto era desolador. El *Índice de libros prohibidos* elaborado por el inquisidor general Fernando de Valdés y publicado en 1559 prohibía la lectura y difusión, entre otros libros, de varias obras místicas fundamentales: *Libro de la Oración*, *Guia de Pecadores* y *Manual de Diversas Oraciones* de Luis de Granada, *Audi, Filia* de Juan de Ávila, *Enchiridion* de Erasmo, *Luz del Alma* de Juan de Cazallas y *Via Spiritus* de Bernabé de Palma. La ausencia casi absoluta de tratados de contemplación causada por el Índice de Valdés puede haber sido uno de los motivos que llevaron a Teresa a escribir su *Vida* y otras obras, de modo que las carmelitas pudieran contar con libros adecuados para su desarrollo espiritual.

Por otro lado, el Índice de Valdés animó a establecer una diferencia lingüística dependiendo del tipo de audiencia de un libro: los libros destinados a la instrucción y los tratados morales debían escribirse en lengua vernácula, mientras que los de materia teológica debían ser escritos en latín. Como consecuencia, sólo los teólogos ordenados, que habían aprendido latín, tenían acceso a los tratados teóricos religiosos. Esta limitación tuvo efectos fundamentales para las mujeres, que no tenían acceso a la universidad ni al aprendizaje del latín. Se les negó, de este modo, la posibilidad de una fuente directa de textos y vocabulario necesarios para describir sus experiencias en términos ortodoxos.

Tanto en *Camino de Perfección* como en *Vida* Teresa criticó la prohibición de textos fundamentales para el desarrollo espiritual.

Esta ausencia de fuentes directas condujo, sin embargo, a la búsqueda de un nuevo lenguaje que sirviera de expresión a la experiencia mística. Aunque Teresa de Ávila era "iletrada", en el sentido de que no dominaba el latín, sin embargo sí contaba con el bagaje cultural suficiente como para intentar con éxito este nuevo lenguaje místico.

Su estancia en el convento de Santa María de Gracia, una especie de colegio para jóvenes con recursos, le había dado la formación religiosa necesaria como para interpretar sus experiencias espirituales dentro de los límites de la ortodoxia católica. Además, había realizado una lectura extensa de textos espirituales clásicos y otras lecturas profanas que pudieran haber contribuido a la imaginación de su lenguaje.

Parece que Teresa se dió cuenta con prontitud de las posibles sospechas que su escritura podía despertar en los inquisidores, una prueba más de su conciencia de "otra". Una vez más podemos mencionar mecanismos estratégicos utilizados por la santa para eludir estas suspicacias de la censura. Siguiendo a Ahlgreen (30) se pueden establecer tres mecanismos de autodefensa fundamentales: su lenguaje se volvió tan preciso como era posible; sin poseer un entrenamiento formal en teología, no intentó utilizar ningún término técnico, pero sí persiguió explicar sus experiencias místicas tan extensa y apropiadamente como le fue posible, es decir, escribe desde la posición de la "otra" con respecto a los teólogos. En segundo lugar, fue muy cuidadosa mencionando fuentes literarias y religiosas. Se sabe que muchos de sus libros favoritos estaban incluidos en el Índice de Valdés y siempre existía la posibilidad de que otros fueran añadidos en el futuro. Practicó una eficaz autocensura y, sobre todo, desarrolló ampliamente su papel de mujer humilde.

Alison Weber (35-50 y 72-76) señala la humildad de Santa Teresa como una estrategia retórica destinada a presentarse a sí misma como un elemento no amenazante para la sociedad. Después de todo, ninguna mujer había sido condenada por humildad excesiva, mientras que la arrogancia había enviado a la hoguera o la excomunión a algunas de ellas. Entre los mecanismos retóricos destinados a producir este efecto se pueden citar los siguientes: el estilo coloquial que sugería más una conversación que la enseñanza formal de una doctrina, su reiterada afirmación

de que escribía sólo porque así se lo habían ordenado y sus repetidos y explícitos deseos de someter su doctrina al juicio de los teólogos.

Otro recurso retórico empleado por la santa es el uso de “me parece” en ocasiones en las que describe materia controvertida. En *Vida* (10:1) por ejemplo, lo emplea al describir el papel del entendimiento en la suspensión mística del alma--un punto delicado porque aparecía también en la doctrina de los alumbrados--, o en *Moradas* donde declara la intención de este uso:

Siempre en cosas dificultosas, aunque me parece que lo entiendo y que digo la verdad, voy con este lenguaje de ‘que me parece’, porque si me engañare, estoy muy aparejada a creer lo que dijeren los que tienen letras muchas. (5:1:7)

Para muchos de los hombres contemporáneos de Santa Teresa, la lucidez de esta mujer sólo podía explicarse como un hecho de inspiración divina, como producto de sus estados de extásis. Aunque algunas veces este fuera el caso, como atestigua la carmelita María del Nacimiento (Ahlgren 78), existen pruebas inequívocas de la voluntad de estilo de Teresa. García de la Concha (100-101) demuestra que la autoconciencia de Teresa como autora llegaba a tal punto que la exasperaba cualquier cambio de una palabra realizado por copistas en sus obras. En testimonio de Ana de Jesús, una de las monjas que testificaron en el proceso de canonización:

Cuando venían a sus manos, decía: Dios los perdone a mis confesores que dan lo que me mandan escribir; y ellos por quedarse con ello trasladánlo y truecan algunas palabras, que ésta y ésta no es mía, y luego las borraba y ponía entre renglones de su letra, lo que le habían mudado.

Esta voluntad de estilo aparece patente incluso en un género que tal vez exigiría menos formalidad, como el epistolario. Pilar Concejo realiza un análisis retórico de las cartas de Santa Teresa y concluye (289-90) que Teresa conocía y usaba los manuales epistolares de su época, aunque utilice de nuevo el pretexto de ser mujer ruin y sin letras. Las cartas descubren un estilo y un dominio de las fórmulas sociales que va mucho más allá de la ignorancia que confiesa.

Ya hemos visto como Teresa debió recurrir a fuentes expresivas nuevas al no circular en el panorama español libros de meditación y mística. Esta revolución en el lenguaje incluye un número de símbolos ausentes o poco utilizados en la imaginería

española. Según las investigaciones de varios autores, parte de esta simbología pertenece a las tradiciones de lo que se puede considerar “el otro” en la cultura española desde la Edad Media hasta el siglo XVIII: nos referimos a la presencia judía y árabe en la península.

La crítica actual reconoce como bien probada la ascendencia judaizante de la familia de Santa Teresa, sin que por ello se menoscabe la sinceridad de su práctica católica. No está demostrado que ella recibiera enseñanzas de la religión judía de sus parientes, pero de este modo, existiría al menos una conexión entre Teresa y las tradiciones hebraicas. Así mismo, se han señalado como posibles vías conectoras entre Teresa y estas tradiciones, los elementos incorporados a la tradición folklórica española a través de la convivencia con población judía y conversa y la influencia de otros autores previos o de sus confesores, algunos de los cuales tenían un conocimiento directo del saber cabalístico.

Catherine Swietlicki ha estudiado la influencia de la Cábala hebrea en la producción de varios autores contemporáneos de Teresa. En su caso concreto, encuentra un amplio número de símbolos cabalísticos en la estructura y referencias de las *Moradas del castillo interior*. La imagen de un castillo interior de siete moradas o palacios ha sido relacionada con la tradición de la novela caballerescas, y sabemos que este tipo de novela se incluía entre las lecturas de Santa Teresa joven. Sin embargo, en opinión de Swietlicki (52), esto no explica la estructura tan peculiar con que Santa Teresa dotó a esta obra. En la Cábala como en las *Moradas* hay siete mansiones o palacios a través de los cuales el aspirante debe pasar antes de conocer los secretos de la cámara última. En ambas obras los palacios están hechos de piedras preciosas, especialmente zafiros. Como los cabalistas, Teresa se refiere a la divinidad residiendo en un palacio y siendo Dios mismo un palacio, a la vez que existe, para la divinidad, la posibilidad de residir en el palacio espiritual de las almas humanas. Por otro lado, Asín Palacios (184) y Luce López-Baralt (90-142) relacionan esta misma imagen con el saber místico de los Sadilíes musulmanes (184). Asín señala como varios años antes de la publicación de las *Moradas*, Teresa ya había utilizado el mismo símil del palacio o castillo interior del alma, que aparece en el texto árabe de los Nawadir. En concreto, el símbolo aparece en el capítulo XLVII del *Camino de Perfección*.

La concepción del hombre hecho a imagen y semejanza de Dios, el macrocosmos reflejado en el microcosmos, puede haber sido una influencia del Neoplatonismo renacentista, pero Swietlicki argumenta (58) que las conexiones con el Zohar hebráico son más evidentes. En él se habla de “las siete formas sagradas de Dios”, cada una de las cuales corresponde a una parte del cuerpo humano.

Otros símbolos presentes en ambas obras son la luz y el espejo. El símbolo de la luz expresa el poder y la gloria de Dios. Esta luz emana del palacio-morada central, como en la Cábala. El símbolo del espejo es empleado como reflejo de la capacidad del alma para recibir los dones divinos. Cuanto más se ha avanzado en el camino de la perfección espiritual, más claro es el espejo, más puede reflejar y recibir la gracia divina. En la tradición cabalística las emanaciones divinas de Dios, el sefirot, son también comparadas con un espejo.

Una de las imágenes que más han llamado la atención de los estudiosos en Santa Teresa es la del gusano de seda. En las *Moradas* se utiliza a este animal como símbolo de la transformación del alma imperfecta e impura que a través del desarrollo espiritual llega a ser una hermosa mariposa, alma unida a la divinidad. En la Cábala, el gusano es usado como símbolo de los trabajos interiores de la divinidad, que son más tarde puestos en paralelo con el universo como un todo. Otro símbolo común es la imagen del árbol de la vida, en la que el alma es un árbol regado por Dios (el hortelano) que va creciendo. En la Cábala, las emanaciones de la divinidad, el sefirot, tienen la forma de un árbol que crece hacia abajo desde sus raíces en los primeros estadios: Keter, Hokhman y Binah. La misma autora también menciona la posibilidad de que las imágenes del gusano y del árbol de la vida se deban a influencias árabes a través de los místicos sufíes.

Si como Kristeva concluye, el extranjero es un alter-ego que vive dentro de nosotros mismos (186), dentro de Teresa de Ávila existían al menos cuatro, con la particularidad de que ella no provenía del exterior geográfico de su propio país. La otredad de Teresa consistía en una amenaza a varios de los fundamentos de la sociedad patriarcal de su época. Fue en primer lugar mujer y como tal se identificó y reivindicó un papel más amplio de sus congéneres en la sociedad. No cejó en su empeño de crear para las mujeres conventos en los que pudieran realizarse en su progreso

espiritual y de reafirmar la capacidad intelectual de las mismas. Fue, en segundo lugar, mística, con la consiguiente sospecha que tal dedicación despertaba entre los altos estamentos de la Iglesia, puesto que amenazaba su exclusividad y autoridad en la transmisión de la doctrina. Tampoco los místicos masculinos, una especie de privilegiados o iluminados espirituales, gozaban de la absoluta consideración de plenamente integrados en su sociedad, pero una mujer mística resultaba mucho más amenazante.

No se puede olvidar su carácter de otra como escritora, tanto por la calidad de sus obras como por la autoconciencia de pertenecer a esta categoría. Como hemos visto, para disfrazar su "otredad" hubo de desarrollar un conjunto de sutiles estrategias para poder seguir ejerciendo como tal, lo cual remarca más si cabe su identificación personal con este aspecto. Por último, su carácter de introductora de elementos del "otro étnico-religioso"--en su caso de la tradición judaica y la islámica-- en la corriente de aceptación de la mayoría.

Lo extraordinario en Teresa de Ávila fue su voluntad de encajar en las corrientes dominantes. Se asimiló a la cultura patriarcal incluso cuando la desafió. Su actuación no corresponde exactamente a la del "outsider" que se reconoce diferente, desprecia las jerarquías dominantes y busca un camino alternativo fuera de las instituciones. Teresa se propuso luchar desde dentro de esas instituciones, para ampliar las estrechas dimensiones en las que se intentaba encasillar el papel de la mujer intelectual y espiritual. La batalla por su integración fue árdua y prolongada. No fue sino hasta 1622, cuarenta años después de su muerte, que fue canonizada y, por tanto, aceptada, en un proceso no exento de detractores. Paradójicamente, la mujer-mística-escritora-marginal, fue forzada a convertirse en una de las autoras que más profundamente representan la ortodoxia católica y quedó, por tanto, despojada de su "otredad". Para ello, la jerarquía eclesiástica deformó la personalidad global de la santa y eliminó la subversión de papeles sexuales que su influencia había pretendido en la sociedad de su siglo. Su imagen fue aceptada en cuanto representante de la inferioridad social y teológica de la mujer, se enfatizó su caso como una excepción dentro del conjunto de las mujeres y se remarcaron los aspectos de obediencia y humildad para restablecer el papel de la mujer en la Iglesia Católica dentro de los parámetros oficiales de la Contrarreforma. De este modo, la mujer resultó apta únicamente para papeles subordinados dentro

de la Iglesia.

Lo que resulta innegable es que su identidad o la búsqueda de su identidad como mujer ha tenido muy diversos significados para las mujeres posteriores. Ahlgren (171) considera que su ejemplo enseñó a las mujeres más sobre cómo sobrevivir en el seno de la iglesia que cualquier otra cosa; Irigaray (238-52) cree que la escritura de Santa Teresa y su vida constituyen la genuina expresión de la identidad femenina: experiencia subjetiva que rechaza el racionalismo pero no prescinde del discurso público y una preocupación por lo afectivo que, sin embargo, no permite el sentimentalismo.

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RECUPERATING THE DISTANCE FROM THE MARGINS TO THE
CENTRE: ELSA MORANTE'S *LA STORIA*, THE STORIES THAT BUILD
HISTORY.



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“...so there is something very powerful in stories, something that gives you security and a sense of identity and meaning..” (bell hooks quoting W. Wenders)

If according to Hannah Arendt: “*Who* somebody is or was we can know only by knowing the story of which he is himself the hero” (186), then each human being -- each life lived -- has a story. This story is unique, it distinguishes individuals from each other and from the collective; however, this story, along with the identity that it narrates, disappears in the discourse we call History. In the face of an authoritative discourse such as History lived, experience and subjectivity become marginalized, and identity -- the multiplicity of stories that relay lives lived -- has no place to tell its tale. History as ‘master-narrative’ of the center denies the individual in the collective a sense of self.

In order to ask the question “who?” The following work turns to literature to hear the stories of lives lived, to visit the possible worlds of different subjects and selves and most importantly to investigate new discursive sites where identity can be re-claimed by individuals. The possibility for thinking identity anew lies in ‘fiction’ and it is narrative (that painfully unhistorical verbal structure) that recovers the stories overlooked by the discourse of History. Elsa Morante’s *La Storia* is a literary work that exemplifies the potential for cultural production to create a space for identity by subverting authoritative discourses. Morante’s novel borrows the traditional structure of History and works from within this structure to problematize the conventions of historical discourse. The structure, style, and content of *La Storia* work together in the novel to open a space for the

stories forgotten by History and in so doing recuperate the distance from the margins to the center created by History within the social structure of a Nation.

A quarter of a century has passed since the appearance of *La Storia* in 1974, when the novel hit the bookstands directly in paperback form, at the mere price of 2,000 lire. It was strategically marketed as a novel for the people by Einaudi conforming to the author's wish that her work be readily accessible.¹ The novel reached record sales in its first year,² with particular success in the masses.³ While the text was selling out in bookstores nation wide, it simultaneously ignited a wildfire of critical debate in the press amongst journalists, scholars, and authors. The immediate and fervent responses to Morante's novel, both positive and negative, suggest that something about Morante's work incited passionate reaction and consequently opened a new discursive space. Morante's 'chronicle'⁴ conveys an authenticity of historical existence, a type of existence that Raymond Aron suggests "[when] experienced brings into conflict individuals, groups and nations..." (97). In fact, such a conflict was created by Morante's novel, a conflict that infused the Italian press for nearly two years.

La Storia became the focal point for the exchange of opinions and ideas, it forced society to stop, be critical, and think. This exchange of thought manifest in dialogue is what Arendt would call *action*: "the central and unique feature of the human being". In her work *The Human Condition*,⁵ Arendt emphasizes that action is what distinguishes humans from animals. Furthermore, it is action that allows "Men in the plural, that is, men in so far as they live and move and act in this world, [to] experience meaningfulness, only because they can talk and make sense to each other and to themselves" (4). Arendt's study traces the disappearance of the *polis* in the modern age, a disappearance that she equates with the demise of action. Following her argument it is only artifice – narrative and especially poetry – as reifications of true life, that offer recourse to the meaningfulness of a life lived. The critical debates surrounding *La Storia* suggest from the outset that there is a living quality to this novel – a meaningfulness that not only forces its readers to stop and think about the stories it offers forth, but it also forces them to act, to become the actors of new stories.

La Storia has continued to receive notable attention over the past 25 years: it has been analyzed as part of the Morantian

corpus, it has been explored as a center for ideological conflicts, and it has been pillaged as a goldmine for the application of psychoanalytic and feminist theories.⁶ In contrast, the following analysis will proceed with a slightly different approach to the novel. Focusing primarily on the way in which the text is constructed, this analysis will investigate how the text works between two discursive registers: those of Historical discourse and narrative, in order to recuperate lost identities by giving them a space to tell their story.

The combination of various textual elements: structure, content, and narrative technique work together in the novel to deconstruct the accepted historical standpoint of the novel's given temporal frame. In the space left by the crumbling historical edifice, the individual realities of the varied beings that make up the society Morante describes can emerge and be recognized. The novel validates the subjective or individual realities (stories) of society's marginal elements or "others" that had previously been absorbed and neglected by the traditional discourse of History. Firstly, the novel breaks History down into its constituent elements - date, fact, and story. Secondly, its structure separates the first two components of History from the latter whereby a space is created for the neglected identity of society's others' stories in order to re-validated their existence.

The structural separation produces a novel that is doubly structured and narrated, paradoxically creating two mutually exclusive worlds that are juxtaposed throughout the entirety of the text. Each world is demarcated by its own discourse; yet one clearly exists within the other and there are points of intersection – the lived years recorded by dates and historical facts – which open each of the nine chapters. Historical knowledge is immediately put to question by the text, even though it is ironically privileged as a general preface to the novel and to each of its chapters. What becomes apparent is that the text is constructed by a series of layers that create an intricate multiplicity of meanings that work throughout the text to de-stabilize the reader. The semantic ambivalence of the title, which in Italian could mean either History or story is the first paratextual device that empowers the indeterminacy that continues throughout the novel. The reader is faced with two discursive modes that somehow relate while being simultaneously antithetical, and the text forces the reader to constantly be aware of his/her meta-discursive position.⁷

La Storia opens with three quotations and a dedication, which transport the reader from the present through the threshold of language into the archives of time or what documented objective reality calls History. The text begins with the first of a series of chronological timelines of events and dates that comprise the plenitude of shelved information in the closet of History. The time line represents what historiography would commonly call the annals form: a list of vertically ordered dates and events with no narrative structure. The date line is objective, third person, past-tense discourse – History, and it functions as an internal frame within the text, a common thread that links the paratext or exterior world to the text proper the interior world – essentially the force that links the individual to the collective.

Moving through this collection of information, through the little closet of facts and numbers, the reader turns the page and falls through a hidden door into a “Narnian” otherworld. Morante’s omniscient narrator welcomes us and becomes our guide in a parallel world that has its own time and space ornamented by a tapestry of its own immortal stories. The narrator and his/her third person objective discourse initially poses a problem; however as the novel proceeds the narrator alternates between the first and third person, making his/her account multiple and inclusive rather than a dictum from a privileged point of view. The narrator’s discourse or perhaps narrative is further complicated by the interruption of yet another discursive layer – the direct discourse of the characters - the dialogues between people. The narrator is one of them, allows them to tell their stories, and if they cannot tell them the narrator does it for them. The individuals slowly materialize through their stories from within the various levels of discourse that build this text, and it is these dialogues that lay at the heart of the novel waiting to be heard.

The narrative itself covers the temporal period from 1941 through 1947. There are nine chapters in total, one to narrate the events for each year and two ‘historical’ chapters that precede and concluded the text. Each chapter is prefaced by a date-line similar to the one mentioned above, followed by the chronicle of the life of Ida Raimundo, protagonist/victim of *History/The Story*, as time unfolds over the corresponding year. Ferdinando Camon discusses the text’s indeterminacy and suggests it that it is an anomaly:

Il libro si apre in maniera anomala, e conserva questa maniera sino alla fine. L'anomalia consiste nella suddivisione in due piani: uno di storia generale, uno di cronaca particolare. A rigore è questa seconda parte che forma il romanzo. L'altra costituisce il tentativo di continuamente innalzare e far sparire la materia del romanzo dentro la Storia: come dire, il particolare nel tutto. (186)

The indeterminacy figured as anomaly works both inside the novel as Camon points out but also has an extra-textual effect. The anomaly acts upon the reader creating yet another force, which counters the tension that binds the poles of the two different discourses that make up the text. The anomaly forces an imminent awareness of the constructed nature of discourse. Moreover, the reader as interlocutor of story and descendant of History becomes (by virtue of his/her very reading) complicit in a process that works to slowly undermine the historical truth claim. The dateline begins to appear cold and inhuman while the "story" appears real and its characters become appealing. Camon suggests that the story is what forms the novel, and what he calls the second part (the dateline) continually attempts to sublimate the story. The reader as an outside force faced with this tension quickly becomes internalized by the text, that is, the stories need to be heard and the act of reading keeps the story and its characters alive in the face of the larger discourse that threatens its existence. The act of reading becomes a hermeneutic act wherein the dateline is perpetually re-signified in a literary exegesis, making it more than dates and facts, but lives lived. The structure of the novel is the first textual element that points directly to the precarious fate of story, which is always in danger of melding into the edifice of History, and losing its autonomous identity.

The narrative techniques and stylistic choices of the novel further the work of its structure. Returning briefly to the debates that followed the release of the novel it is interesting to note that there was unanimous agreement that *La Storia* was a resurrection of the long since rejected realist style of the 19th century naturalist novel. Although many features of the realist novel are quite evident in Morante's text and this supposed return to an outdated model was the basis for much of its condemnation⁸, the text is highly nuanced and perhaps far less 19th century than it initially appears. Some critics were more discriminating picking out subtle features Morante weaves into her narrative technique. A technique which in the end does not privilege the authoritative

discourse of the realist genre and its third person narrator, rather a technique that perpetually challenges the notion of a privileged or authoritative discourse by using specific textual elements to point to the artifice of language.

The Marxist critic Alberto Asor Rosa, in his contribution to the series of questions about *La Storia* asked various Italian intellectuals and published by the journal *La Fiera letteraria*, addresses Morante's choice of language. Asor Rosa asks: "...cosa significhi di per se 'un linguaggio comune e accessibile a tutti' secondo Elsa Morante?" He continues "A mio giudizio..1) descrivere ogni aspetto della realtà...in modo così completo,...da non lasciare al lettore nessun margine per una propria autonoma reinvenzione ed estensione della parola dell'immagine...2) deformare al tempo stesso l'immagine della realtà...per suscitare nel lettore...una reazione emotiva."(7). Asor Rosa suggests that through language Morante is able to fix the world she is representing and evoke an emotional response from the reader. Initially it would seem that Morante is simply repeating the same tyrannical discourse as History; however, if this use of language is understood in light of the larger structure of the text, its force and affect can be understood as strategic – as constructed in direct opposition to historical discourse.

A second important point made by both Camon and Asor Rosa regards the question of genre. *La Storia* defies classification in a specific genre, and when examined closely it becomes apparent that some of the techniques Morante uses are not uniquely literary. As Asor Rosa points out "queste tecniche letterarie inaugurate dalla Morante non [sono] di origine direttamente letteraria, ma...filmica..."(8). The realist genre resuscitated by Morante can be discussed as something more than literary. Both the neo-realist and the American Kolossal film inspire the narrative voice and structure of the text according to Camon who compares the characteristic elements of the Kolossal film with the Morantian text. The grandiose scenes of the Kolossal as well as its success in the masses are characteristic of *La Storia* (188), not to mention the grandeur of the project itself. Each event it stages has a scene wherein its story unfolds. Scenes like the bombing of the San Lorenzo apartment or the women running after the flour in the streets are narrated almost as if they were pan-shots. These scenes overflow their textual space, they flood the frame as they grow becoming larger than time: "sono allargate

continuamente fino ad occupare..tutto il mondo e...tutto il futuro”(Pupino, 187).

Morante’s nuanced 19th century novel is in fact the result of a deliberate series of choices that work strategically to enhance the power of the stories they excavate from the archive of History. One could almost suggest that Morante’s pastiche of past literary forms with more contemporary filmic structures coincides with the literary tradition of the “narratori”,⁹ and embodies both fictional and historiographic post-modern tendencies. Having established that the structure and style of Morante’s text are by no means haphazard, it is interesting to see how the narrative proper (the stories) are developed within this frame.

Plummeted into the waters of the bellicose Italian society, and riding the wave of the timeline the reader finds him/herself asking: what comprises the force of this momentum? Giovanna Rosa reminds us to return to the paratext: “Come sempre nelle opere morantiane, la cornice del testo offre informazione illuminante”(211). It is only in light of peritextual elements, the quotations that preface and conclude the work, the dedication and the subtitle, that the purpose of the stories as they work themselves out through the course of the narrative take on a greater significance. The second epigraph from the *The Gospel of Luke*: “...hai nascosto queste cose ai dotti e ai savi e le hai rivelate ai piccoli...perché così a te piacque” along with the dedication to the illiterate give to each story a double sense, a doubling that respects the doubled structure. Firstly each ‘little’ person has a knowledge or understanding that has not been revealed to the wise or the learned. Secondly the text is written for them, as both a testament to their lives and as a vehicle through which they can live, be heard, and share their wisdom. The story belongs to the ‘little people’; whereas, History is the great creation of the wise and the learned.

The story begins at two o’clock on a January day in 1941, in the quarter of San Lorenzo in Rome. The time and dimensions of the otherworld are immediately imposed on the reader, paralleling the chronological superstructure that prefaces it. There is no doubt that a certain ideology motivates the way in which the “stories” of the text are offered and valorized; however, to what extent this ideology finds its sources in Marxism, Anarchism, Theology, Fantasy or all of the above is not within the bounds of this limited analyses. Following Ida through the events of her life,

we stop to recognize the machinations of the text as it works to open new spaces for discourse regardless of how this understanding is ideologically inflected.

Through analepses and prolepses the reader fills in the background of what becomes Ida's story, and as the diachronic narrative continues, the stories of the otherworld or "l'altra Roma" come to life. In 1941, Ida Raimundo, is a 37 year old widowed schoolteacher, mother to an only child. She is tormented by her matrilineal Jewish roots, which she has hidden from the world around her. The first 'event' of the story, Ida's surrealistic rape by the young, melancholic German soldier Gunther, leaves her pregnant, and this is where the action begins.

Taveling with Ida through the chronicles of historical time the otherworld reveals to the reader its many different constituent elements. Ida's pregnancy becomes a secret she must conceal at all costs leading her to the Jewish Ghetto to seek solace in a midwife prophetically known as Ezikiele. Ida's visits to the Ghetto introduce us to the first of the many microscopic social structures that will ornament her narrative - the world of the Roman Jew. Every character in this novel has a story, and every story is given a beginning and an end. There are, however, two characters/identities whose stories have no proper denouement and the narrator, the third person chronicler returns to these characters and concludes their stories for them and us. It is this act that most distinguishes the discourse of History from the narrative of story in the text, this commitment to give everyone a story. The plight of the Marrocco's son Giovanino, as he freezes to death in the Russian backwoods and the violent account of the rapes and murders of Mariuolina and her mother at the hands of the Germans, are not neglected. The end of the stories in most cases is tragic, but powerful, it fixes the tale and memory of these, even, marginal characters in the reader's mind.

The events of the war carry Nino, Ida's older and legitimate son, off to battle and have left Ida unemployed and forced to leave her apartment in San Lorenzo, after its destruction in an air raid. Ida, along with her bastard child Useppe, takes refuge in the borgate of Pietralata. The first story to come to an end is that of Nino's treasured pet Blitz, the raggedy street dog adopted by the Raimundo family. Blitz's untimely demise in the destruction of the San Lorenzo flat is the first incident, where 'historical fact' intersects with individual story. The air raids on Rome are noted

in the dateline; however, it is not until the destruction of Ida's home and the death of Blitz that this event bears meaning. The world of little Useppe is shattered, his trauma: "vedendo la disperazione di Useppe che ancora andava chiamando il suo *Bi* con voce sempre piu smorzata e fioca..."(172), his sadness, and his devastation, have no consequence, they go unnoticed, for only events are chronicled.

Each of the plentiful characters that Ida will continue to encounter throughout the narrative is slowly validated as a constituent element of the nation. The different groups and/or entities of 'l'altra Roma' can be understood functionally as microcosmic Habermasian 'public sphere(s)'. The concept of the 'public sphere'¹⁰ stems from a 1962 work by Jürgen Habermas, wherein - the practices of social discussion, and open exchange of views regarding issues of importance to society work to formulate an essence of 'public'. This notion of public is not unlike Arendt's *polis*; however both ideas are based on an exclusionary model, where participation in the public presupposes literacy or the ownership of property. Drawing from this concept the idea of 'public' or centers of public exchange over common issues is useful, if the notion is expanded to include a less uniform participation.

The various different groups that Ida encounters can all be said to circulate within their own public sphere; be it the partisans that frequent Remo's establishment, the Jews of the Ghetto, the Mille of Pietralata, or the various people inhabiting the world of casa Marrocco. *La Storia* is the world of the 'decentralized public sphere', where interchange and dialogue become action, and the novel is there as artifice to tell the story. Each of these groups has a similar yet distinct social condition that colours its concern with various issues of social importance. These 'random' elements of *La Storia* are in fact 'public spheres' in and of themselves, contributing in their everyday communications and existences to the substance of the social fabric. In this respect Morante's text almost marginalizes the center, by re-centering the focus on the margins - on centers of marginality, slowly making the idea of center obsolete.

The inclusion of jargons in the novel exposed Morante to further criticism. However, the dialects, the fantastical languages, and the jargons dispersed throughout the text are in fact quite important. The different languages serve to cement the

autonomous value of the different peoples that Ida encounters, ratifying through their language a unique form of identity, and personalizing their stories. The refusal to valorize one language over another corresponds with the structural layering of the text, and further points to the intimate connection between subjectivity and language. The dialects become part of what Sharon Wood calls: "Morante's ... dialectic between versions of history [a dialectic] which elides the distinction between objective record and subjective memory, between the social and the individual." (162). The language Morante gives each and every person catalyses their dialectical function by strengthening their identity and emphasizing their subjectivity. Each person in the novel has recourse to speech, thought, and action through a language that does not need to be valorized by an external force.

"Not man or men but the struggling, oppressed class itself is the depository of historical knowledge"¹¹, says Walter Benjamin. This aphorism along with Morante's second epigraph, suggest that knowledge -- specifically historical knowledge, must be sought out in various places. History can no longer be the indisputable epistemic discourse that recounts or rather fails to recount lives lived. Morante's novel becomes a space wherein these struggling oppressed classes reveal themselves as the depository Benjamin refers to -- the stories of lives lived. David Segre perhaps best exemplifies these characteristics. David, a young, bourgeois Jew of anarchist beliefs, is tormented by the truths of History. He finds his only solace to the "piaga maligna che infetta la Storia..." (576), in the semi-conscious state induced by narcotics. David's story is tragic, a committed anarchist who cannot escape the violence of society, David becomes yet another individual defeated by the force of the collective, but his story is a testament to the experiential lived dimension of History.

Morante's characters represent the diversity of the Italian nation. They come to the Roman otherworld from the northern and southern parts of the country they are young, and old, male and female, partisans and soldiers. They are the "other" that does not find its way; however integral it may be, into the documents of History. Morante's novel is a testament to the lives of the people of a nation forgotten by History. For Homi Bhabha the "space and time of the modern nation is embodied in the narrative culture of the modern novel" (5). Morante's novel although perhaps not modern *per se*, gives us characters and stories --

witnesses to the forgotten "space and time" of the modern nation.

A novel conveys -- it is an historical document, and its author according to Elsa Morante, has a certain responsibility to communicate an experience and its historicity.

Uno vero romanziere, insomma-qualunque sia la vicenda o il destino, soggettivo, individuale o collettivo, che offre pretesto ai suoi romanzi-comunicherà sempre necessariamente, alle generazioni contemporanee e future, anche le più sicure verità sul 'luogo geografico' e sul 'tempo storico' nel quale ha vissuto la propria esperienza umana. (61, "Sul Romanzo")

Each life lived can find dates and events in History, but it is History in order to be meaningful that needs to remember lives lived. Two years after the publication of *La Storia*, Elsa Morante, who had kept silent throughout the entire time her novel was discussed in the press, made a statement. In 1976 when her novel was censored in Spain Morante responded publicly:

Trovandomi alle soglie della vecchiaia, sentivo di non potermene partire da questa vita senza lasciare agli altri una testimonianza dell'epoca cruciale nella quale il destino mi aveva fatto nascere (*Corriere della Sera*, May 15, 1976)

La Storia was not simply the story of the other who had no voice, but Morante's story, her war time experience an experience that unless reified would forever go unheard. The novel for Morante is more than a genre, a literary pastime, the novel – *La Storia* in particular challenges the structures of society, as they fail to account for individual realities.

History finds its stature at the expense of stories -- the identities of individuals as they existed or expressed themselves in society. Morante's text, rather a function we have recognized in the text, deconstructs History in a slow motion rewind fashion. *La Storia* identifies and validates the smaller and indistinguishable lives that make up the nation. It allows them their space within the chronology of time to tell their stories. Morante's narrative/narratives open to the reader the world of the other. With Ida Raimundo we encounter varied individuals and their respective stories, and it is through this journey that the text forces us to ask the question "who?" as the distance from the margins to the center is momentarily recuperated. It is this recuperation that reconfigures the bounds of the center recovering identity, and forever altering the paradigm of History. "...e la Storia [le storie] continua [continuano]..." (656).

NOTES

¹ The dedication : "*Por el analfabeto a quien escribo*" leaves no question that it is the "other" that Morante writes to, for, and about.

² Morante's novel in 1974 alone sold over 100,000 copies and reached sales close to 600,000.

³ There is a clear distinction between mass and popular success which is underlined by Pupino in his introduction to "*La Storia è o non è un capolavoro?*" "I motivi del successo di massa (che non significa popolare)..."(5).

⁴ The term chronicle in the historiographic sense refers to one of the three types of historical discourse. According to Hayden White "the chronicle... often seems to wish to tell a story...but typically fails to achieve it" (9). See White, H. "The Value of Narrativity." *Critical Inquiry*. Autumn 1980. When using the term chronicle to refer to Morante's novel, I am suggesting that Morante has appropriated this historical form and re-signified it. Morante's chonicle is a narrative with a definite beginning middle and end.

⁵ Arendt's work traces the loss of political space, the space of active life, plurality, and inter-subjectivity, a loss that has led by consequence to the loss of thought in the modern age.

⁶ For specific thematic analyses see: Rosa, and Garboli. For psychoanalytic and ideological criticism see: Boscaglia.

⁷ This tension between the two levels of the text recurs at the beginning of each chapter, with every new date-line that introduces the year to come.

⁸ One of the first outright criticisms of *La Storia* was written by Nanni Balestrini a prime advocate of the burgeoning "neo" avant-garde. Balestrini attacked Morante for resurrecting an outdated genre, and saw her work as running against the more progressive trends of the time.

⁹ Tabuchi, the leader of this group, had already published his first novel in 1972.

¹⁰ Habermas' theory idealised the 18th century coffee house as an example of the 'public sphere', wherein the dimension of public was limited to a very elite class of literate individuals, who could afford both luxury and leisure time.

¹¹ For an interesting comparison of Morante's story with Benjamin's work, See: Boscagli, Maurizia. in works cited.

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RAIMBAUT D'AURENGA'S RHETORIC OF SELF-DEFENSE



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Raimbaut d'Aurenga was a name that made headlines both in historic documents (Pattison, 10-7) as well as in the poetic entourage of his days. Hostile to changes and innovations¹, Raimbaut strove to keep alive an obsolete aristocratic establishment and its reactionary values².

Raimbaut passionately entered poetic disputes³, and would often reply to his contemporaries with ferocious parodies, condescending tone, and a highly complex style. Each poem was endowed with a strong sense of authorship and superiority. In spite of a disparaging attitude towards an audience sometime defined as a 'band of fools,' the troubadour was fully aware that his supremacy was less than ever a given⁴. Moreover, since his intention was to reestablish his authorial worth, he was obligated to convert his audience to his beliefs, and defend his values.

The Count d'Orange was an aristocrat with the name and the arrogance of a powerful lord, but also with the consciousness of his almost anachronistic position in a world that was slowly being taken over by the bourgeois, by a new class claiming a new leadership and new values.

Raimbaut, who did not intend to give up his superiority, replied to his world by standing firm in his aristocratic beliefs, but also yielding to the language of his day. While the man of the past defended aristocratic and chivalric values, the man of the future debated with his contemporaries and employed a rhetoric of persuasion with a language that exploited ethics, dialectic and the language of the market.

Raimbaut, who could not count on the superiority of his rank, nor of his wealth, entered poetic dispute to prove the ability of his craftsmanship but, more importantly, his superiority of mind ; the true difference between his aristocracy and the 'base born men' ⁵. For Raimbaut, knowledge was the feature of true distinction, which was accessible only through a love guided by

the intellect. The Count of Orange was the first one, in vernacular literature, to define the supremacy of the individual by means of intellect, knowledge, and rhetoric. In this paper, I will demonstrate how Raimbaut employed knowledge as the hallmark of his superiority and as a form of defense of his values.

In the twelfth century the appearance of a monetary economy, of communes, and of commerce created a new vision of time, space, judicial relations and ethics that in turn effected philosophical thought, and, more importantly, language.

Language had revealed itself to be not a secure system of references, but a metalinguistic structure where *res* and *nomina* were not in an unequivocal dependable relation; instead *nomina* imperfectly reflected the reality they signified. Peter Abelard, who dedicated his philosophical investigation to language, had learned from the experience of his day that the true metaphysical problem of human kind was not the etiological research but the means of expression. Most of all, language was split between the reality it indicated, and the actual meaning that each speaker attributed to the signifier. Abelard had found that reality could not be controlled by language, thus language had no meaning unless the triad of *vox*, *intellect* and *res* were joined in the effort of signification⁶.

Raimbaut, who was aware of his intellectual milieu⁷, had understood that in the duality of *res* and *vox*, it was the intellect to play a key role in the process of knowledge. The intellect was the obligated way both to a reality that could not be ignored, and to a language that needed to be informed with his personal message. Understanding the strict interaction between thought and language, Raimbaut chose the *parole* of poetic experience to express his values, and the superiority of intellectual virtue to attain knowledge. It was clear to Raimbaut that in the cacophony of the many empty *voces*, the voice of his intellectual prowess would rise above.

For Raimbaut the love experience constitutes the most direct way to knowledge. His own is one quite individualistic and aristocratic. His ability to love *finamentz*, is emulation of the Supreme Intelligence. Love as supreme principle has a mediating power in the process of knowledge⁸ because:

“Aimer, c’est demander l’aide de l’Intelligence transcendante pour atteindre à cette Joi, à cette Sagesse. [...] Cette voie d’amour se distingue alors d’une quête qui s’appuie sur la

connaissance dans une voie où l'être cherche à réaliser ce qu'il connaît, c'est-à-dire à comprendre d'une façon effective." (Hapel 11)

Love must, in fact, lead to some kind of effective knowledge, it must provide wisdom.

Authentic love is connected with reality; it is not a fantasy or a dream. Polemically opposing as 'dreamy' the typical love and song inspired by nature, Raimbaut proclaims that his Joy and Song are born within and prosper while he is awake and lucid (XIV, 5-7)⁹. This is the sign of their genuineness:

[...] Jois e Chans
E creis en veillians
Car no.m ven com sol somnejans
Car a midonz atalanta
qe.m loing dols (XIV, 5-9).

The poet's love and song are conceived in his mind, thus capable of escaping the control of contingency; "Tan lieus com eu sui, q'el test / Me'es la joia q'eu cercava" (XIV, 17-8). The imperfect of the verb, which gives the sense of a previous erratic quest, sharply highlights the present tense of the found happiness. But this happiness must be maintained by more than just the desire for it; an act of will is necessary: "Q'en als cors non col qu'eu m'eslans" (XIV, 28).

Love manifests itself through the utterance of truthful words, its epiphany is possible only by means of *paraula sana*¹⁰. A single syllable can, almost evangelically, be saving:

Mas per dig d'una sillaba
Er mantenen reconogut
Tot so q'az Amor convenge (XIII, 44-7).

And not surprisingly, the act of love, through God is intertwined with the act of speaking. As in Saint John's Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word; the Word was in God's presence, and the Word was God."¹¹

The utterance and its ability to be connected to love has a very high place in Raimbaut's poetry. It makes its appearance in highly 'rational' contexts. The activity of speaking always has a priority and does not undergo the restrictions imposed by the suffering of loving.: "S'il cors e pres, la lengua non es preza" (XXXII, 1).

Speaking is very precious and should not be wasted. Speaking too much, for example, is the sign of foolishness and of sinning: “lengua, non mais! que trop parlars / Fai que pechatz criminans” (XX, 54-5). Since speaking is a gift, it should be used properly, and valued in its rationality. The worst divine punishment, invoked by the lover as a curse on his enemies, is the confusion of the language. Against the *lauzengiers* the lover shouts:

E confonda Deus la lenga
Que diz a frau ni sabut
Re per qu’amdui siam perdut (XIII, 30-32).

False words can ruin the lovers and love, just like reality, can be more fragile than a cup made of glass: “Q’anc no frais copa de veire / Plus tost q’Amor frainh e ron” (IV, 26-7), and can be easily ‘broken’¹² by the gossips of the *lauzengiers*.

Not so the intellect. The *lauzengiers* are those who are not able to argue, or to choose what is best. They are those with a faulty intellect who cannot tell what is valuable from what is worthless; in fact their desire is *cans*.

In *Pos trobar plans* Raimbaut parodies, among other things, the lack of will, the inability to think, the lack of rationality, namely, all the characteristics of his attackers. As a great actor he impersonates the fool, the same object of his attack. He claims that while obsessed by a wretched desire, *Mos volers cans* (XVI, 33), he mistakes *futz es pan* (XVI, 35)¹³. Unable to restrain himself he wants everything he sees: “Tot voll cant vei” (XVI, 39). It is evident in Raimbaut’s ferocious parody that there is no sign of virtue in a man who cannot restrain himself from coveting everything he sees.

On the contrary, a proper activity of the mind is sign of virtue because: “virtus est habitus mentis bene constitutae” (Boethius PL 64.1188). The idea comes directly from Boethius but the concept of virtue as philosophical definition is found in Abelard’s:

To Boethius habit (*habitus*) was one of the categories, and in [...] the twelfth century there developed a greater interest in the philosophical discussion of natural as distinct from theological, catholic virtue, the latter being supernatural virtue or gift of God (Luscombe 53).

Virtue becomes an action of will and not only a divine gift

of God through Abelard's elaboration: "virtue is the very best habit of mind and vice the worst; habits are not naturally situated in the mind, but are acquired by deliberate effort [...] Virtue and vice require a lasting commitment of the mind and will to be properly virtue or vice" (Luscombe 54).

There is a great deal of weight placed upon the 'deliberate effort' of the individual. Man is at once *artifex* of his own salvation and held responsible for it, according to his free choices. This freedom and call to responsibility do not leave anything for granted. The lasting commitment of mind and will is what is constantly found in Raimbaut's poetry.

The frequent use of comparisons and the constant mocking of those who seem to choose faulty avenues over true virtue testifies that Raimbaut intends to make full use of his 'intellectual' ability. The gift of the intellect is not to be wasted; the ability to discern must be exercised in imitation of God, the supreme Wisdom, he who "Ben saup lo mel de la cera /Triar" (III, 25). The two terms are used by Raimbaut with the intention to underline the difference, between the two apiary products, in terms of virtue and knowledge. Wax and honey look alike but they are diametrically opposed in value. In the Bible, wax is connected with the concept of nullification: "As wax melts before fire" (Ps 68:2)¹⁴. But honey is always connected with preciousness, wealth, blessing: "A land flowing with milk and honey" (Ex 3:8).

The issue of intellectual activity as personal virtue is largely illustrated in *Cars, douz e fenhz*, where we find interwoven love, knowledge, and language. The poem reflects the quest of virtue as 'habit' of the mind, the 'deliberative' effort to seek what is good over what is evil. *Cars douz e feinz* is representative of Raimbaut's attitude as it mainly focuses on his *Pretz* (here to be understood as virtue), its damage, its detractors, its loss, and its recovery through rebirth on behalf of the poet/lover¹⁵.

Stanza V witnesses the impotence of the lover: He is not watchful, not awake, and the slanderer is reinvigorated. The lover cannot defend himself from them because he does not have a sword, and because the slanderers wound joy / the father with a dart, so that the son / lover has to suffer and endure the blows of Evil. The lover must recognize his failure; he has been attacked by vice and because of it, he experiences the *no-poder* of stanzas IV, V, and VI. The main effect of this evil is manifested in the power to transform the lover's will and his ability to discern. From now on,

he will not be able to recognize a true lady/love. Unable to stay vigilant, to protect himself, to fight back, almost mortally wounded and close to death, the lover is victim of intrigue and betrayal. The will that has yielded to vice manifests its effects in stanza III, where the lover's heart blackened by rust, causes the poet's words to be dark and stained. Both heart and words suffer from a mind that is not clear but *pensius*¹⁶. But the lover will fight back by cleaning his heart and then by 'teaching a lesson' to *pretz*, by reestablishing a clear, pure will. His file is not used to clean and square words according to the typical image, but the rusted heart. Once virtue is reestablished the poet will not need any tool to compose. In fact, he does so: *ses regl'e ses linha* (II, 3). The only prerequisite is a strong will: "Pos mos volers s'i apila" (II, 4). The battle for virtue, for the Abelardian deliberative effort toward good, is expressed by the verbs *enquier* and *eserc*, the effort in *pogues*. Once the virtue is reestablished the triumphant lover can take leave of his audience presenting himself as the victorious "que fa'l vers." Stanza VII, and the last *tornada*, show *pretz* connected with one of the main concerns of Raimbaut; his name. *Pretz* and *Joy* appear associated and dependent from his *noms*. His name *s'enlaira* high and light like the wind, thus *Pretz* and *Jois* can literally sprout up and live again. Following an almost syllogistic structure the second *tornada* proclaims the triumph of the poet by repeating that *Pretz* will blossom again while the term *noms* is replaced by the name: *Raimbaut*.

Despite the moralistic tone of the song, and the theme of personal virtue, the composition is also making reference to the economic and artisan language, according to Perugi. In verse 55, silver, symbol of *pretz*, is declared to be refined. Silver could stand for the lover's pure heart, or as Perugi suggests, for a humorous allusion to his financial situation. In both instances, we have the image of silver being purified and growing in value by means of the same artisan tools. The lover/Raimbaut responds to the market by increasing the *pretz* of his value. As Perugi explains: "chi riceve martellate o frustate non è l'autore in prima persona; al contrario è lui che infligge una punizione correttiva al *pretz*, assimilato all'argento o allo scolaro [...] [cresc] non resta che intenderlo come sostantivo [...] sotto i colpi del maglio l'argento raffina" (Perugi 111-2).

After the will has cleaned up the rusted heart, virtue will shine again like silver, and with God's blessing, as the second

tornada comes back to the verb *aerde* (*m'aerc;s'i aderga*), of the first stanza, with *Dieus aerga* in the strong position. A sense of lightness, connected to an aristocratic attitude, comes from the two following expressions: *ses fuesc gresesc* and *ses esca*; respectively in stanza II and in the first *tornada*. They indicate that where there is true virtue, there is no need for device.

The claim to do things without tools is an aristocratic way to overcome contingency. For example: the poet's love is a fire that is kindled without sparkle (I, 67). His heart is still filled with joy, despite the fact that the lady has not given him concrete signs of acceptance: "Car nuls hom mais per plivensa / Non estet en aitan gran gaug" (V, 39-40). His loving is not of an ordinary kind: "Mou cor, que ses aigua pesca" (V, 51), because "pos ieu cresc / sobre totz, c'als q'en fol pesc" (XXI, 23-4). In imitation of God who "Sap lieu soudar ses plom" (V, 29-30) the poet can "Bastit ses regl'e ses linha."¹⁷ A *vers* is not a product of refining file, but of a working mind: "Dirai un vers que m'ai pensat" (XXXVII). Still the lover/poet does not refrain from using a hammer, *lo goire*, to refine his *Argenz-Pretz*, as much as he will use a file for his tarnished heart.

Raimbaut would often use the language of the marketplace to indicate his enemies, the slanderers: the concreteness of the market is used to condemn their stupidity and dangerousness. The entire song XXXVII, for example, is an attack on the world of merchants, and on the devastation they can cause. They are accused of being responsible for damaging the nobles (15-17) their treacherous actions are *mercat* and *barat*. Even if the slanderers think highly of themselves, they have only an illusion of superiority, which Raimbaut sarcastically condemns with the term *guazanhat*. In stanza VII, continuing the scolding, Raimbaut employs an impressive market-like lexicon, a true *mercadura*, in connection with the image of low-born, uneducated people:

Tal cug'esser cortes entiers
 Que'es vilans dels quatre ladriers
 Et a'l cor dins mal ensenhat;
 Plus que feutres sembla sendat
 Ni cuers de bou escarlata (43-8).

The words *feutres*, *sendat*, *cuers de bou*, and *escarlata* are all related to the activity of the artisan, and are terms of comparisons following one of the poet's favorite images. They belong to the life of the city, of commerce¹⁸, far away from the rural feudal world.

Song XXXVII plays entirely on economic connotations, as it focuses on the actions and evilness of slanders who are base-born, even if they think of themselves as gentlemen. They are men who trick good knights, and break friendships. The song, in *coblas unissonans*, hammers in all stanzas the rhyme *-ata* which Appel, as Pattison reminds us, defined rare and difficult in Old Provençal (Pattison 193). It is noteworthy that the 'rare' rhyme brings about a weaving of market words like *malserva barata* (7)¹⁹, *desbarata* (63), *deliurata* (56); of fight like *combata* (12) and *mata* (14) *trabata* (54)²⁰; of argument: *debata* (64, 69); of very common, base words: *rata* (26), *sabata* (66, 67). The rhyme, playing in so many different contexts, calls the attentions to the various points of Raimbaut's argument. Again dispute and market are tied together in the *-at* rhyme of: *mercat* (18), *barat* (20), *guazanhat* (32), *comprat* (62) *parlat* (4), and *glat* (10)²¹ Finally, in this market-like song, the verses are compared to merchandise ready to be taken to the market: "D'aquest vers ompli tos paniers/E porta" (XXXVII, 58-9).

Raimbaut does not only resort to commercial jargon to shape his persuasive discourse, he also employs dialectic. We have some explicit references to dialectic as the art of discourse²², in *A mon vers dirai chanso* where the poet claims his proficiency and high expertise in love matters. He recognizes that 'everyone has the right to discuss the matter, but he who explains well conquers the truth.' And he uses perfectly reasonable/truthful words: "Mas vers venz qui despo / ez ieu dic paraula sana (22- 4). The reiterations of sincerity, the abundance of verbs indicating discussion (*dirai, tornon in tenso, m.platz a devezir, n'aug dir, torn en ochaizo, qui q'en sermo, e dirai en mais?*), and expressions remarking truthfulness over falsehood (*paraula sana, ieu sai, ez es vertaz, tals motz per me ses mentir, paraula certana*) indicate that the verb *despo* stands for more than the classic *expositio*. Raimbaut is set for a demonstration of truth as proven by his remarks against the stupidity, illusion, false pretenses, and treacherous appearances of his detractors. Raimbaut fears and disparages appearance and common opinion, the voice of the majority versus the word of the few, because it displays the predominance of *episteme* over *doxa*.

Dialectic, because of its focus on and search for *episteme*/truth, is aristocratic by nature. This search tends to "lead one away from the crowd and the multitude [...] it takes "away from the 'majority' the right to judge [...] Whence an aristocratic connotation" While rhetoric is seen as a way to please

the crowds, "dialectic aims to discontinuity and discreteness" (Barilli 7).

But Raimbaut is quite aware that his truth is not a generally accepted premise, his virtue will not conquer the audience without battles. To this end Raimbaut chooses to open his poems with widely accepted ideas, with the intention to take his listeners, by means of dialectical argument, from a general accepted premise to his final personal truth. (Barilli, 14 and 10) The connection of knowledge, truthful speaking, rhetorical persuasion, dialectic exposition and aristocratic attitude is made manifest in *Ab nou cor, ab nou talen*²³.

The poem is written in simple style. *Coblas dissolutas, capfinidas* and rhyme words lead the listener from stanza to stanza in order to demonstrate the supremacy of both lover and poet.

The *incipit* is a promise: Whoever is able to understand his *vers*, which stems from a new heart, desire, wisdom and knowledge, will be renewed. The poet does not ask his public to take his word for it, since he engages in a demonstration which bridges poetic structure and ideology.

The poem revolves around six terms: *nou, novel, amar, amors, rire, gaug*, and *Domna*. Each stanza, except the last one, is identified by one of the aforementioned terms. In each stanza, six of the seven lines bear the refrain word for that given *cobla*, while the last line introduces the refrain word of the following one. Stanza VIII, summarizes and condenses all the rhyme words of the poem, that is, all the themes introduced, while presenting the thesis of the syllogistic argumentation, the merchandise to be sold: "I want all of you to sing my new *vers*."

In a constant crescendo the poet moves from the novelty of his message *nou and novel* to his unsurpassed ability to love *am* to the sovereignty of love in his life *Amors* to the joyful loving laughing heart, *rire*, to 'gaug', an abundance of a joy enough to be shared with all those who are in need of it, and finally to *domna*, the cause and acme of this ascendant movement. Stanza VIII, similarly to *Car douz*, brings back the notion of poetic composition: the spreading of this song will be the real means of renovation. And as in *Car douz*, with its, *Deus aerga*, the *Deus sol gart mon Jonglar*, shows that the blessing of God includes not only the perfect virtue of the lover but also the craftsmanship of the poet.

Ab nou cor is a combination of new and old, of old values and new means. It presents a new offer as reiterates themes

brought about in other compositions. On the one hand, it looks like a presumptuous *gap*, in which the poet assumes the tone, especially in stanza VI, of a new Messiah offering comfort to anyone seeking it. On the other, it appears like Raimbaut is adopting the technique of the rising *ars praedicandi*.

The validity of the promise is guaranteed by the reassurance of sincerity: *no.i met cuidar; Dieus m'abais [...] s'ieu men* (19;53). The claim of sincerity is not only an artistic device, but a clever move in the game of persuasion. Raimbaut, who continually professes his sincerity, is addressing the suspicion in his day towards anyone involved with persuasive discourse such as lawyers and merchants. In *De arte praedicatoria* Alan de Lille warns against the new oratores, namely the lawyers, and specifies that the true orator must be "provided with truth and be ardent in charity, so that falsity shall not cloud his reason" (Alan de Lille, PL vol.210 [Col.0187B]). Raimbaut with the promise of a good new song follows Alan's advice not to prostitute his speech and by offering to share his joy, he also proves his charity. In addition, he does not transgress the precept not to sell the gift of knowledge, since he offers it for free: "E qui vol gaug sai l'an queren (40)" Raimbaut's joy is perfect, *entiers*, because it comes from his lady with whom he has become one (48-9) this perfect level of unity testifies to the arrival of his quest for knowledge. In fact, there is a hidden kinship between erotic and epistemological discourse [which] is explained by Cassirer: The act of knowledge and the act of love have one and the same goal, for both strive to overcome the separation in the elements of being and return to the point of original unity. The kinship then appears to be based on the fundamental monism [...] In this light, it is easy to see how knowledge could be considered a kind of love. [...] 'Cogito nihil est aliud, quam coitio cum suo cognobili' (Murphy 147-8).

The zenith of Raimbaut's joy is reached when his heart "m'e ri", when the smile of the lady has become his own heart which now smiles filled with joy. The smiling lady is a *topos* in Provençal literature, but our poet has taken it a step further. In his case his heart laughs almost independently from the lady. The 'cor mi ri' shows with the reflexive verb, the spontaneity and natural virtue of the lover. Moreover, this heart laughs even at night, the typical time of tears and temptations. With this image Raimbaut demonstrates another step in the attainment of perfection; for him, the biblical *tempus ridendi* has become a permanent status.

But the Count does not enclose himself in an abstract paradise. The laughter of the lady is opposed to the concrete reference of four hundred laughing angels, and the thousand doleful men. Very prosaically Love is praised for not doing what the merchant does; that is storing away (*estojar*) his profit (*ops*). Raimbaut skillfully proves that he is the man of *caritas*, the bearer of virtue, not the new bourgeois. He is the generous man capable to share his possession; a lover so perfect to be capable of being as good as God is.

The outrageous images used by the Count are not an exaggeration of the author. Raimbaut just echos his cultural milieu. The *risus* theme, for example, was one of the latest news. Christ's human nature had been stressed by Alan de Lille as a way to show his closeness to his creatures, and a way to show God's love for men. God, whose identity is not split, gives to the humanity a Christ who not only experiences his divine nature, but more importantly, his human experience. Alan writes that Christ has taken on himself this nature. God with his laughter makes himself more human. As Alan de Lille explains *Arisibilitas inest Christo, et non secundum divinam naturam: ergo secundum humanam* (PL, 210 [0676A]).

Raimbaut's choice to develop this theme meant to enter the debate of his day, and also reconfirm his pride in his *humanitas*. His virtue does not know challenge, his heart is pure, his condescending tone, expressed again by his favorite comparisons ("others' laughter seems crying to me") shows how superior his virtue is. The laughter of his lady, which is so perfect and has become part of him (*cor m'e rir*), seems to him the divine laughter. By saying so Raimbaut acknowledges a God who makes himself human, as a confirmation of his perfection, and a lady's smile which can be easily mistaken for God himself ('so it seems to me' justifies Raimbaut)²⁴.

In this poem Raimbaut showed his vast ambition and the intention to reach a larger audience. But he also demonstrated to be a very receptive reader and listener. While the attitude of the Count was conservative and obsolete, the troubadour on the contrary, proved to be able to keep up quite well with the pace of his time.

Raimbaut faced the challenges of the second half of the twelfth century aware that his battle ought to take place outside the fortified walls of his castle. He had learned from the new

society that personal virtue was not *valor*, but *pretz*, which appropriately to its milieu had to be earned. His eloquence, moving past the marcabrunian John The Baptist image, had to become the one of the merchant of the marketplace, who must use the language of the square to sell his merchandise for the highest possible price.

NOTES

¹ See, for example, the exchange between Giraut de Borneil and the same Raimbaut in the tenso *Ara.m platz*

(XXX). This and all subsequent references to Raimbaut's songs are from Pattison's edition, except for *Cars dous e feinz* reported in appendix.

² Raimbaut is especially polemic in *Aissi mou* (XVIII) and *Pos trobar plans* (XVI).

³ I believe this is made clear in the kind of tone and response that Raimbaut uses in replying to the inquires of the older, but inferior in rank, Peire Rogier. *Peire Rotgier* (VI).

⁴ 'Que'es vilans dels quatre ladriers' (XXXVII, 44).

⁵ Maria Teresa Beonio-Brocchieri Fumagalli, *The Logic of Abelard* (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: D. Reidel Pub. Co., 1970) pp. 28-41. The question of the role of intellect in language was studied by Peter Abelard in his *Dialectica*. For the logician the issue of meaning was directly connected to the intellectual activity. The intellect was not only a mediator between reality and sign, but the principle that informed the same signifier. *Significare* meant to generate understanding.

⁶ Maria Teresa Beonio-Brocchieri Fumagalli, *The Logic of Abelard* (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: D. Reidel Pub. Co., 1970) pp. 28-41. The question of the role of intellect in language was studied by Peter Abelard in his *Dialectica*. For the logician the issue of meaning was directly connected to the intellectual activity. The intellect was not only a mediator between reality and sign, but the principle that informed the same signifier. *Significare* meant to generate understanding.

⁷ “Ainsi parler de L’Amour, c’est parler du Principe suprême et des puissances médiatrices qui nous y transportent.” Bruno Hapel, *L’ésotérisme des Troubadours* (Paris: Guy Tredaniel, 1992) p. 10.

⁸ The song *Ara non siscla* opens with a long sequence of negations tied together by an high frequency of legal terms which give a strong sense of reality.

⁹ Here the meaning is to be understood as ‘truthful’ (XXX, 24).

¹⁰ Saint John 1,1.

¹¹ Compare the broken/breakable love with: *mos ditz es sans* (XVI, 8).

¹² Marcabru renders the same concept with ‘Lo pan del fol’ (XVI, 16). Marcabru, *Poésies complètes du troubadour Marcabru*. Ed. J. M. L. Dejeanne, (Firenze: Biblioteca dell’Archivium Romanicum, 1954).

¹³. Marcabru renders the same concept with ‘Lo pan del fol’ (XVI, 16). Marcabru, *Poésies complètes du troubadour Marcabru*. Ed. J. M. L. Dejeanne, (Firenze: Biblioteca dell’Archivium Romanicum, 1954).

¹⁴. The negative image for wax is first found in Marcabru in poem 18: *Pos del mel triet la cera/ Anz sap si pelar la pera* (32-3). In the entire corpus of Provençal poetry only four occurrences are found with *cera*. The tradition started by Marcabru was followed by Raimbaut, Raimon de Miraval (I, 23), and Arnaut Daniel (X, 16).

¹⁵. Maurizio Perugi, “Una rima che non esiste e un testo di Raimbaut d’Aurenga non del tutto incomprensibile.” *Saggi di Linguistica Trovadorica* (Tübingen: Stauffenburg Verlag,, 1995) 103-20. Central to my illustration is the edition of the song provided by Maurizio Perugi who brought to light a style loaded not with *trobar clus*, but with dialectisms of the Rhone area. The text that emerges is a more coherent composition than the one presented by previous emendations (in particular, Pattison’s, and Marshall’s) and reveals a heavy use of profit economy lexicon connected with issues of gain, loss, price, and fame. I report the text emended by Perugi in the appendix.

¹⁶ Song III, 34-7 remarks the difference between *pensar* and *coisir*; the latter leads to a meaning of reflection, the former hints to a sense of numbness which, in the case of Song I seems to signify a confused mind.

¹⁷ It is interesting that when Raimbaut does make reference to the file in song II, it is to outline the destructive behavior of people who, with their ill-speech, damage and destroy: “falsa genz qe lima /e dech’e ditz” (II, 11-12).

¹⁸ *Escarlata*, was a type of fabric produced in Montpellier (Pattison, 194).

¹⁹ Pattison fails to highlight the commercial meaning of the word, but remarks that it contains a fundamental “idea of trickery” (Pattison, 192).

²⁰ Even if Pattison prefers *abata*, I believe that the original meaning of *trabata* is the only possible, and makes the most sense. Appel constructed following Mistral, with *trabatre* ‘strong beating’ according to the Delphinat dialect. Considering that Perugi in his edition recognizes the Delphinat as the dialect underlying Raimbaut’s lexicon, it makes sense to go back to Appel’s suggestion. Also, the image was not unfamiliar to Raimbaut as *Car douz* shows (Pattison, 194).

²¹ For a detailed discussion of these terms, and their philological analysis, see Pattison’s edition. Pattison, 192-5.

²² Jan Ziolkowski, *Alan de Lille’s Grammar of Sex: The meaning of Grammar to a Twelfth -Century Intellectual* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Medieval Academy of America, 1985) pp. 77, 81. Grammar, rhetoric and dialectic were the artes sermocinales, the arts of discourse.

²³ The full text, from Pattison’s edition is available in the appendix.

Maurizio Perugi, “Una rima che non esiste e un testo di Raimbaut d’Aurenga non del tutto incomprensibile.” *Saggi di Linguistica Trovadorica* (Tübingen: Stauffenburg Verlag,, 1995) 103-20. Central to my illustration is the edition of the song provided by Maurizio Perugi who brought to light a style loaded not with *trobar clus*, but with dialectisms of the Rhone area. The text that emerges is a more coherent composition than the one presented

by previous emendations (in particular, Pattison's, and Marshall's) and reveals a heavy use of profit economy lexicon connected with issues of gain, loss, price, and fame. I report the text emended by Perugi in the appendix.

²⁴ The lady and her love are a manifestation of God (Hapel 13).

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APPENDIX

I

	Car douz e feinz	Del be<e>resc
	m'es sos bas chanz,	vas cui m'aerc,
	c'ab joi s'espan,	viu enoire,
	el temps que grill	pres del siure
5	chanta<n> el mur	jos lo caire

que s compassa e s'escaira
 sa vos, ch'a plus que siura:
 e ja us non s'i aderga,
 ma l grils, e la bederesca

II

10	Car jois e gienz	ses fuec gresesc
	els paucs enfanz	pasc' e codere,
	que nul enjan	no. i enploire,

mas en brazil	no m'aus pliure	
don me rancur	que. l blanc-vaire	
Fas[a a]mistat pic-vaira:		15
savis er fols qui s'i pliura,		
que greu er qu'e leis conderga		
fis jois ses flama grezesca		

III

Car brus e tenz	motz entrebesc:	
pensius pensanz	enquier eserc	20
consi lima<n>	pogues roire	
l'estraing roil	ni l fer tiure	
don mon escur	cor esclaire:	
tot can Jois jenseis esclaira		
Malvestatz roill'e tiura,		25
et enclau Joven eserga		
per qu'Ir'a Joi entrebesca		

IV

Car naus ni lenz	ni flums on pesc	
no m'es enanz	car vei Joi berc,	
anz vau troban	com vis d'oire	30
que mon'el sil	al fol iure:	
tan vei Pretz dur,	per que laire;	
lauzengiers conten e laira		
e sos avars ditz eniura		
Pretz, per que Jois fraing e berga:		35

qui s vol critz, qu'el pren e pesca

V

C'aur es enpeing<z>, qan no m'espresc
Vidal Costanz, Martin Domerc:
no.mpuesc ses bran d'els decoire,
40 per que m coril c'ab un guiure
de mal[argur] nafro.l paire,
 don lo fils sofris e paira
 Malvestat que.l nafr'e l guiur[a]
 e fas Costanza Domerga
45 de domnas Jois l'espresca.

VI

C'[a] petit menz que non paresc
als paucs semblanz del menor derc,
que van doptan aur per coire;
car al peril on [ie.m] liure
50 veg un tafur que n'er fraire:
 que l nesi-malvestaz s'afraira
 lai on lo francs-fis se liura,
 e non cre Jois plus aut derga,
 que.l crims nais ans qu'el paresca

VII

55 C'aur con argenz esmer'e cresc
ab durs ver[janz], con hom fai clerc,

vau castian	Pretz, lo goire,	
mas per un fill	pot reviuire	
vas cui m'atur,	de bon aire:	
si co.l venez va sus, <s'> enlaira		60
lo sieus noms, viu e reviuira		
Pretz e Jois: que monges clerga		
Diuz prec c'aital baron cresca.		

VIII

Cel que fa'l vers s'acompaira		
ab leis que ja non [esquiura]		65
que non tem correg ni verga		
lo fuecs que.s conpren ses esca.		

IX

Raimbautz torn'e repaire		
lai on Prez viu e reviuira,		
al comte cui Dieus aerga		70
Barselon'e onor cresca *		

* Maurizio Perugi, "Una rima che non esiste e un testo di Raimbaut d'Aurenga (389, 22) non del tutto incomprensibile," *Saggi di linguistica trovedorica* (Tübingen, Germany: Stauffenburg Verlag, 1995) pp. 115-6.

Ab nou cor et ab nou talen

Ab nou cor et ab nou talen

Ab nou saber et ab nou sen

Et ab nou bel captenemen

Vuoil un bon nou vers commensar;

Ils en deu renovellar

II

Qu'ieu renovel mon ardimen

(Qu'ai novel ab veil pessamen.)

10

Franc de novel ab ferm parven,

E chantem al novel temps clar

Que.l novels fruitz naisson desen

E.l novels critz on Jois s'empren

E.ill auzeill intron en amar

III

15

Domn'am que me fai alegrar

Qu'iei am plus c'om non sap pensar

Tant ben cum ieu am, ni comtar;

Qu'ieu **am** la gensor ses conten-

Si Dieus m'am!- e no.i met cuidar

20

C'ad ops d'amar la.m saup triar

Amors quan nos ajostet gen

IV

D'Amor mi dei ieu ben lauzar

Mais c'ad Amor guizerdonar
Non puosc, qu'Amors m'a si.m ten car.
Da.t Amors per per son chاوزimen 25
Mais qu'Amors non pot estojar
A sos ops, Amors, ni donar
Ad autrui don ai cor rizen

V

Rire dei ieu si.m fatz soven
Que.l cor mi ri neis en dormen, 30
E midonz ri.m tant dousamen
Que ris de Dieu m'es vis, so.m par,
E si.m ten sos ris plus gauzen
Que si.m rizion catre cen
Angel que.m deurion gaug far 35

VI

Gaug ai ieu tal que mil dolen
Seriont del mieu gaug manen,
E del mieu gaug tuich miei paren
Viuron ab gaug ses manjar;
E qui vol gaug sai l'an queren, 40
Qu'ieu ai tot gaug entieiramen
De midonz que ben lo.m pot dar

VII

Dompna, d'als non ai a parlar

Mas de vos, dompna, que baiser
45 Vos cuig, dompna, quand aug nomnar
Vos, dompna, que ses vestimen
En mon cor, dompna, vos esgar;
C'ades mi.us veig inz dompn'estar
Vostre bel nou cors convinen

VIII

50 De mon nou vers vuoill totz pregar
Que.l m'anon de novel chantar
Alieis c'am senes talan var.
Dieus m'abais, et Amors, s'ieu men;
C'autre ris mi semblon plorar,
55 Si.m ten ferm en gaug ses laisser
Midonz, c'autre drut non cossen

IX

Ja Dieus mais dompna no.m presen,
Sol gart ma dompn' e mon Joglar!

X

Dieus gart ma dompna e mon Joglar
60 E ja mais dompna no.m presen**

** Walter Pattison, *Life and Works of the Troubadour Raimbaut d'Orange* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 1952) pp. 184-5.

MOORISH WOMEN AND SEXUAL CONQUEST: THE ROLE OF THE
MORA IN THE RHETORIC OF RECONQUEST



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The Moorish or Saracen woman depicted as the “Other” in medieval literature has received a fair amount of critical attention in the French tradition, from F.M. Warren’s 1914 study, “The Enamoured Moslem Princess in Orderic Vital and the French Epic,” to Jackeline de Weever’s recent book, *Sheba’s Daughters: Whitening and Demonizing the Saracen Woman in Medieval French Epic*. The same theme, though, has received scant critical attention in the Spanish tradition: the first chapter of Louise Mirrer’s book, *Women, Jews, and Muslims in the Texts of Reconquest Castile*, “Of Muslim Princesses and Deceived Young Muslim Women” being one of the only such studies. While in both medieval Iberian and French literature the Moorish woman is an exotic Other to be conquered, her exact nature is portrayed differently in the two traditions, and this study is designed to examine the differences between the Iberian and French literary portrayal of the Arab woman, as well as to explore the designation of these works as medieval examples of “literary Orientalism,” a reading suggested by, amongst others, Sharon Kinoshito and Jacqueline de Weever.

The aggressive, deceptive *mora* so well-developed in the French *chanson de geste* does not emerge from the early Iberian works, which instead teem with aggressive and rapacious Christian men. In the Iberian legends, *romances* and epic texts in which she does appear, the Moorish woman’s character is seldom developed in a positive light. In both traditions, though, the *mora*, as object of sexual desire, is an element of the rhetoric of Christian domination, and a representation of the “Other,” and as such embodies the forbidden pleasure of the inaccessible woman/inaccessible territories of the enemy. However, in the Iberian tradition, instead of being a willing, often assertive accomplices to the Christian invader, as she is depicted in the French *chansons de geste*, she instead remains hostile to his advances, or at best a passive figure, who accedes to the

Christian's sexual desires only in order to satisfy the wishes of her own male relatives.

Almançor's sister, the mother of Mudarra in the *Siete Infantes de Lara*, is an example of the passive and obedient Moorish woman, and her role as tempting exotic "Other" is subordinated in the text to her function as of the hero of the second part of the epic. As his name indicates, Mudarra is of mixed descent, and as such is an excellent candidate as a Spanish culture hero--embodying the two major cultures of medieval Iberian society. The epic subtly depicts the incorporation of Mudarra into Christian society in its portrayal of his return to Christian territories, which he does at the urging of his mother, Almançor's sister, in order to seek vengeance for the murder of his step-brothers, the Siete Infantes de Lara. Interestingly, the real conflict in this epic is not that between Christians and Moors, but an internal power struggle within the royal family of Castilla and Aragon, in which the Moor, Almançor, is tricked by the evil uncle, Ruy Velázquez, into killing his seven nephews, and it is this action which eventually results in Mudarra's return and vengeance. The role of the Moor is ambivalent, Almançor unknowingly helps the uncle because they are allies, but once the father of the men he has killed becomes his prisoner and he gets to know him, he comes to respect him and, to console him for the loss of his sons, offers him his own sister:

Almançor mandó llamar una infante, su hermana, que era muy hermosa e muy mançeba, e era donsella virgen, e fablava muy bien e muy apuesta mente, e díxol' Almançor: "Hermana, si me vós amades, entrad en esa casa do yas ese christiano que es ome de alta sangre e yase muy descoradao ante sí, e vós, mi hermana, conortatlo con muy buenas palabras e yo gradescer vos lo he mucho, e faredes me en ello grant plaser." E ella dixo: "Así yoguiesen agora todos los christianos de España." E él le dixo: "En toda guisa conortatlo si quisierdes mi amor, si non set ende çierta que non faredes vustro pro, ca si él muriere mandarvos he cortar la cabeça." (225)¹

As Louise Mirrer has pointed out (24), the woman's protest, "Oh that all the Christian men of Spain might now be thus," (i.e. on the point of dying) make it clear this *mora* does not want to comfort Gonzalo. However, her brother's threat to behead her if the Christian captive dies obviously indicates she has much invested in pleasing Gonzalo Gústioz, whether she really wants to or not. The terms used to describe their union further

underscore her passivity, and the Christian's aggressiveness:

. . . e lançó por ella mano, e yogo con ella, e así tovo Dios por bien que de aquel ayuntamiento fincase ella preñada de un fijo que después llamaron Mudarra Gonçales, que fue después muy bien christiano e a servicio de Dios, e fue el más onrado ome que ovo en Castiella, afuera del conde don Garçi Ferrandes . . . (226)

Louise Mirrer claims that here the Moorish princess is raped, and that this exploitative relationship is symptomatic of the Spaniards' relationship with the Moors: "the *Crónica* makes it clear, through its description of the woman's rape, that Mudarra is the product of a hideous, but presumably necessary and legitimate, Christian violence against the infidel" (25).

In contrast to the later depiction of the sexually voracious *mora*, the *romances fronterizos* in which images of the female Moor are developed consistently portray her as rebuking the Christian's advances, and as remaining loyal to her own people. Unlike the *Siete Infantes* in which Almançor and his sister function more as intermediaries, unwillingly involved in the family feud, the encounter between the man and the *mora* in these *romances* underscores the confrontational and hostile aspects of the relationship between the Christians and the Arabs of the Iberian Peninsula. Moraima, the Moorish woman in the *romance*, *Yo m'era mora Moraima*, is one such *mora* tricked in her own home by a Christian man pretending to be a Moor seeking refuge after having killed a Christian (334-335).²

Another image of the loyal Moorish woman is developed in the *romance*, *Abenamár Abenamár*. This *romance* tells of the Spanish king, Juan II's arrival at the gates of Granada, where he blackmails the Moor, Abenámar (who is really only half Moorish, being the son of a Moor and a Christian woman who was taken captive) into telling what castles he sees in the distance. He threatens to kill him if he refuses but offers to free his captive son if he tells him the truth. Abenámar, of course, agrees to tell him, explaining that the castles he sees are the Alhambra and Granada itself:

El Alhambra era, señor, y la otra es la mezquita,
los otros los Alixares labrados a maravilla;
el moro que los labró cien doblas ganaba al día
y el día que no los labra de lo suyo las perdía;
desde que los tuvo labrados el rey le quitó la vida
porque no labre otros tales al rey del Andalucía.
La otra era Granada, Granada la noblecida

de los muchos caballeros y de la gran ballestería.
(vv. 16-23 190-191)

Juan II, confronted by the beauty of the city, turns from Abenámar to speak directly to the city, asking for Granada's hand in marriage:

--Granada, si tú quisieses, contigo me casaría;
dart'he yo en arras y dote a Córdoba y a Sevilla
y a Jerez de la Frontera que cabo sí la tenía.
Granada, si más quisieses, mucho más yo te daría.—
(vv. 25-28 191)

Granada, the discreet *mora*, rebukes Juan II, telling him she is a married woman, not a widow, and that her *moro* will protect her:

--Casada so, el rey don Juan, casada soy que no viuda;
el moro que a mí me tiene bien defenderme querría.—
(vv. 30-31 191)

In typical *romancero* form, *Abenámar Abenámar* poetically condenses all of the essential elements found in longer versions of the encounter with Moorish woman, such as seen in the *Siete Infantes*, into its essentials: Christian man, female Moor and territory. In this case the woman and the land have been fused into one entity--the city-kingdom of Granada. This metonymy--the Moorish woman as symbolic representation of Moorish lands--is not unique to the Iberian tradition, but is also true of the French *chansons de geste* where the Saracen women who happily marry French invaders legitimize the Frankish conquest. Although referring to Orable, the queen of Orange in the *Prise d'Orange*, Kinoshito's observation that: "each a metonym for the other, the city and its queen are virtually indistinguishable," applies well in this case where city and woman are literally one and the same. When Juan realizes he can win neither with his love, he resorts to violence, ordering to have his catapults brought:

--Echenme acá mis lombardas doña Sancha y doña Elvira;
tiraremos a lo alto, lo bajo ello se daría.-- (vv. 33-34 192)

After having his marriage proposal rebuffed by the city, he opts for a full on attack with the assistance of his heavy artillery, curiously named for Christian women of the Spanish epic, doña Sancha and doña Elvira. The *mora* may be seductive and exotic, but she will have nothing to do with the Spanish king, whereas Christian women, represented by the arms bearing their name, come through for the king in the end. This *romance* exemplifies the "congruence of love-as-war, and of war-as-seduction" that underlies the theme of the Christian man's encounter with the

Moorish woman, as Sharon Kinoshito has discussed in relation to the *Prise d'Orange* (267). For Kinoshito the knight's role as lover compliments his military role as epic conqueror, and in this *romance* Juan II plays both roles, one right after another.

The themes of love and violence are also foregrounded in the Reconquest narrative of *Miragaia*, one of a series of narratives in the Portuguese *Livros de Linhagens*, which were meant to be a type of chronicle relating the history of the world, the histories of the most distinguished Portuguese families, and any other tales worth remembering. *Miragaia* is from the *Livro Velho* (1285-90), and tells the story of Ramiro II's abduction of the Moorish king, Alboazar Alboçadam's sister, and his subsequent estrangement from his own wife. The beginning of the story emphasizes Ramiro's heritage as a *matamoros*, relating him to dom Afonso o Catolico, who, according to the text, was the first to begin to recover the lands lost by the last gothic king, Rodrigo: "Este rei Ramiro, o segundo, decendeo da linha direita d'el rei dom Afonso, o Catolico, que cobrou a terra a Mouros, depois que foi perdida por rei Rodrigo" (66)³. Ramiro, like Guillaume in the *Prise d'Orange* falls in love upon hearing of the beauty and noble blood of the *moura*:

"Rei Ramiro, o segundo, ouviu falar da fermosura e bondade de ~ua moura, e em como era d'alto sangue e irmãa d'Alboazar Alboçadam, filhos de dom Çadam Çada, bisneto de rei Aboali, o que conquereio a terra no tempo de rei Rodrigo." (66)

This Moorish woman is also related to the original fall of Spain at the hands of Rodrigo, and the stage is set for Ramiro to avenge this defeat by "reconquering" what was lost. Although Alboazar Alboçadam refuses to allow Ramiro to marry his sister, despite the latter's insistence that his marriage can easily be dissolved by the Church given he and his wife are actually relatives, Ramiro takes the woman anyway. Once he gets her to Leon, he baptizes her and changes her name to Artiga. This compulsory conversion and renaming is a frequent topic of the French *chansons de geste*, as for example the conversion of Orable in the *Prise d'Orange*, as well as that of Bramimonde at the end of the *Chanson de Roland*.

Although the *mora* appears here at the beginning of the tale, she is not mentioned again until the end, and the central narrative, although it takes place at Alboazar Alboçadam's palace, is essentially that of the adulterous behavior of Ramiro's wife and her subsequent punishment (she is killed). The narrative returns to Artiga at the end, as

Ramiro, now that his wife is

out of the way, is free to marry her with the support of his court:

Rei Ramiro foi-se a Leom e fez sas cortes mui ricas, e falou com os seus de sa terra, e mostrou-lhes as maldades da rainha Alda sa molher, e que ele havia por bem de casar com dona Artiga, que era d'alto linhagem. E eles todos a ua voz a louvarom e o houverom por bem, porque dissere por ela o grande estrologo Aman que ela era pedra preciosa antre as molheres que naquele tempo havia. E ainda disse mais que tanto havia de seer boa cristãa, que Deus por sua honra lhe daria geerçom de homees boos e de grandes feitos e aventurados en bem . . . Este rei houve ~uu filho en dona Artiga . . . Este chamaron por sobrenome Cide Aboazar, porque naquel tempo fez muitas lides com Mouros . . .
(72)

Not only does she prove to be a good Christian, she also gives Ramiro an heir, who distinguishes himself in fighting against Moors. The reference to the title "Cide" as indicative of a *matamoros* further stresses this tale's relation to the literature of Iberian Reconquest, relating Ramiro's son to the Cid. Just as Mudarra in the *Siete Infantes de Lara* was able to incorporate himself in Christian society and distinguish himself as a Christian man at arms, so too does Cide Aboazar.

The reference to the last Gothic king of Spain, Rodrigo, at the beginning of *Miragaia* would not simply have underscored this narrative's relation to other Peninsular legend and/or epic material related to the Reconquest, it also would have called to mind the theme of abduction and betrayal, as Rodrigo lost Spain not because he was inept at arms, but because he raped his own vassal's daughter. Although Rodrigo is the subject of a few *romances*, and is mentioned in many of the Spanish chronicles, scant evidence of an Iberian epic dealing with the fall of Spain to the Moors remains. There is however, a French *chanson de geste* dealing with the Rodrigo tale, *Anseis de Carthage*. In this *chanson de geste* Rodrigo has been transformed into a nephew of Charlemagne and one of the twelve peers, who Charlemagne establishes as provisional king over the Iberian Peninsula. This *chanson* picks up where the *Chanson de Roland* leaves off, but in this version, the Moors had been chased back not just to Zaragoza, but all the way off the Peninsula.

As in the Rodrigo legend, Anseis betrays his vassal by sleeping with his daughter, but in the French version, the daughter, Morilgane, is portrayed as seducing Anseis, not being victimized by him. Ysores, the father, is actually in Morocco

arranging Anseïs' marriage to the King of Morocco's daughter, Gaudisse, when Anseïs and his daughter have their tryst. As soon as he arrives home and finds out what has happened, he immediately returns to Morocco, converts to Islam, allies himself with the King, and asks for Gaudisse's hand in marriage for himself. The king, Marsiles, refuses to marry Gaudisse to him until he becomes a king himself. Ysores thus decides that in order to marry Gaudisse as well as to avenge himself of Anseïs, he will attack Spain with Marsile's assistance and make himself king there.

Gaudisse is, from the beginning, described as a beautiful, well-behaved woman:

“Anseïs sire, ja ne vous ert chelee;
Jou en sai une, tant bele ne fu nee,
Jovene puchele, cortoise et bien senee;
Par droit doit estre roïne coronee;
Corone d'or li ert el cief posee;
Fille est Marsile d'outre la mer salee;
Ele est plus bele ke seraine ne fee;
Ja ne l'ares, si ert cier acatee.”

Li rois l'entent, s'a la coulor muee. (vv. 156-67)

Throughout the work, in fact, Gaudisse is consistently described as beautiful and well-behaved, even though she becomes increasingly bold--displaying many of the same characteristics that Ramiro's wife had, the same aggressiveness and underhanded dealing with the enemy which, in the case of Ramiros' wife, led her to be cursed not only by the Moor whom she was helping, but to be killed at Ramiro's hands. In *Anseïs*, and in fact in most of the other French *chansons* with aggressive Saracen women who actively assist the Christian invader at the same time they betray their own family and people, these Moorish women are depicted as images of loveliness and exemplary behavior--seemingly the lesson being that female betrayal or aggressiveness in and of itself are not to be censured, but instead that the ends to which they are applied determine their moral value: a very dubious lesson for the epic. I would argue that this contradiction, the obvious double standard of conduct applied differently to *moras* and Christian women, illustrates the problematic nature of the Moorish woman in Romance epic, and reveals the conflictive nature of the multiple discourses in the text. Here the “colonial” discourse of domination, which favors the active participation of the Moorish woman in order to

legitimize the Christian's presence, comes into direct conflict with the discourse of medieval misogyny, which defines a "good" woman as a passive and obedient one. In the Iberian tradition the *moras* betrayal of her family is either left undeveloped (as in *Moragaia*), or does not occur (as in the resistance put up by the *moras* in the *romances*), but in the *Siete Infantes* the tale seems to want it both ways, and the solution, having the Moorish king give his own sister to the Christian, seems implausible. The French *chansons*, however, consistently portray the Saracen woman as aggressive and clever, and Gaudisse reflects this depiction.

Gaudisse and her mother manage to convince Marsile to bring them to Spain to join the men on their campaign. Once set up in the Moorish camp, Gaudisse and her mother do not hesitate in sending a messenger to Anseïs. Although she has been provisionally promised to Ysores by her father, Gaudisse has no intention of marrying this old man, and she actively pursues Anseïs, who, although he too is in love with her, is suffering from a paralytic depression, caused by his folly with Morligane. The first half of *Ansis* is essentially the story of Anseïs and Gaudisse's love--both having fallen in love upon hearing of each other during the initial marriage arrangements--and it is the Moorish woman, Gaudisse, who consistently takes the initiative to bring them together: she manipulates her family in order to have them bring her to the Peninsula, she then risks her own life, and that of her retainers by sending Anseïs messages across enemy lines. Gaudisse takes the initiative and sends Finaglore to tell Anseïs she's come to Spain for him, and he better come get her, or she'll have to marry that old man--Ysores:

Ma damoisele, ki tant a de biautes,
Par moi vous mande salus et amistes;
A vous est tous ses cuers et ses penses;
Ele est venue pur vous en ches regnes;
Or le vuet prendre li veillers Ysores

...

Pour dieu vous prie, ke vous le secours (vv. 6159-63, 6167)

This message spurs Anseïs into action, and he goes to help her. Obviously Gaudisse is not a silent, passive Moorish woman. Both she and her mother consistently manipulate the men in the work to get what they want, and they are successful. Both Gaudisse and the queen end up with the Franks in their castle. Gaudisse converts, is baptized, and marries Anseïs, and then bears him two sons.

Gaudisse has many of the same characteristics as Orable, the Saracen queen of Orange in the *Prise d'Orange*. Just as Gaudisse is engaged to the much older Ysore, Orable, too, is betrothed to the old, and absent Emir Tiebaut. Like Gaudisse, Orable, in love with the Frankish intruder from the beginning of the poem, is also a very active and aggressive help-mate to him. She protects Guillaume from her protector, Arragon, the son of Tiebaut, by not only arming him so he can kill those Saracens attacking him, but also by giving him refuge in her private tower, Gloriete (reminiscent of Gaudisse's tent). Like Gaudisse, she too, converts to Christianity, and marries Guillaume, thus legitimizing the Franks political domination of the city. In addition to Gaudisse and Orable, other accomplished, assertive Saracen women are developed in *Mainet* and *Fierabras*, and are analyzed in relation to the *Prise d'Orange* in Knudson's study.

An interesting example of the sexually aggressive Moorish woman that has not received critical attention is the figure of Bramimonde developed in the Provençal *Rollan a Saragosse*. In this version Roland attacks Zaragoza by himself, and as he is approaching the city, the audience learns that Braslimonda sent Roland her glove ten days before, and has been desperately waiting for him to come:

E Braslimonda si lo vay desirant,
 Am sas donsellas gent disent e parlant:
 "Donnas, fayt ella, ben soy meravilhans,
 Be-m meravilh del palayn Rollan:
 Ben ha .x. jors qu'ieu l'enviyey mon gan,
 Anc pueys non vi .I. message dels Franx."
 Una donzella vay la dona appellant,
 Si-l comanda an sus el palays veser de Rollan,
 Per unas estras nizellades d'arjant,
 Et la donzella vay fors son cap gitant,
 Esgardet ves Mont Negre e vi venir Rollan
 Que-n davalla am son destrier brocant,
 E la senhiera vay lo duc desplyant.
 Li donzella vay alla donna e dis en robeyant:
 "Per ma fe, donna, yeu vech venir .I. Franc
 que porta richas armas, mena destrier corrant;
 Ben sembla chivallier al sian captenemant."
 Cant l'auzsi Braslimonda, tot lo cors cap gitant,
 Esgardet ves Mont Negre e vi venir Rollan (328-350)

The text does not further specify the exact nature of Braslimonda's role in Roland's invasion, but it would seem to imply she

invited him, thus, similar to Gaudisse and Orable, Braslimonda betrays her own people because of her love for the Frankish knight. Before entering the city, Roland kills a Moorish king outside the walls. Braslimonda witnesses the whole thing, and in her comments praising Roland's God, she reveals her Christian leanings:

Dis Braslimonda: "Yeu en sabia aytant:
si d'aytals reys trobava .C. Rollan,
ja lur dieus non lur seria garans.
Bon fon lur senhor, que van tot jorn pregant;
e-l rey Marcili vay atrestal fazant,
a cada jor li uffre .I. bezant;
per tal ho fay que lo gardi dels Francs;
laycha l'alier, a Baffon lo comant." (387-394)

Once Roland has penetrated the city, Braslimonda goes to meet him alone. She takes the reins of his horse and jokingly tells him he is now her prisoner, recalling the motif of the Christian prisoner found in several of the texts thus far examined. Roland playfully returns her advances, claiming he will be the best prisoner ever:

"Vous etes pris, vous ne repartirez pas."
So dis Rollan: "Ben mi ven a talant.
Ben penres mielh que nulh home vivant (vv. 582-84)

Thus Braslimonda in this later version of the Roland story, dated by Carlos Alvar to the end of the 12th century, the surviving version recorded in a 1398 manuscript (13), becomes yet another version of the sexually aggressive Moorish woman, who will betray her family and her religion out of love for the Christian knight.

While the aggressive, frisky Saracen princess may be common in French *chansons de geste*, this portrayal does not correspond to the depiction of the *mora* in medieval Iberian literature as we've seen. There definitely is a difference in the portrayal of the Moorish woman in the two traditions: the Spanish versions portray a submissive, secondary character, or, as is the case in the *romances*, *Moraima* and *Abenámar Abenámar*, a woman hostile to the advances of the more aggressive Christian male. In the Portuguese tale, *Miragaia*, Ramiro not only kills his wife, but also exiles his son, in order to pursue his relationship with Artiga. The situations depicted in these works suggest that the real threat was not the seductive Arab woman nor the aggressive Moorish

warrior, but the Christians themselves, as Heath Dillard has pointed out:

Certainly the seizure of women took place alongside the capture of livestock during the endemic warfare between the medieval Christian north and Al-Andalus, but the need to shield women from abduction did not arise solely or even primarily as a result of marauding Muslims. Christian men were the prevailing menace. (Dillard 146)

Perhaps the difference in the portrayal of the "Other" in the Iberian and French traditions reflects the different social realities of the two societies. Moors, while definitely being the "Other," were, not, however, as exotic on the Iberian Peninsula, where in many ways they constituted a part of everyday life.

The aggressive, sexually forward Saracens described in the French *chansons de geste* seem to be more of a "romanticized" version of the exotic "Other," i.e. a projection of the Christians own fantasies onto the figure of the Moorish woman, rather than a reflection of real situations faced by Frankish Crusaders. Such descriptions, would, though, be useful in attracting new recruits to go on Crusade, with its idealized depiction of beautiful Moorish women just waiting for Christian men to come satisfy their sexual cravings, and to convert them to Christianity.

It is clear, however, that the Moorish women depicted in these texts, are more than incidental leitmotifs, and that they do in fact reflect the major concern not only of the epic and frontier works in which they appear, but of the society of the time: the legitimization of Christian conquest in the Moorish territories of the Iberian Peninsula and the Holy Land, and thus the identity of medieval Christendom. Like *Aucassin and Nicolette*, these texts present their audience with "much more than an incidental or exotic marker of difference," and they are in fact placing themselves, "squarely in the midst of the most vibrant and consequential Self-Other conflict of [their] day and [their] century" (Menocal 509).

NOTES

¹ All citations from the *Siete Infantes* are from Carlos and Manuel Alvar's edition of the *Crónica de 1344* in *Epica medieval española*.

² All romances cited are from Díaz-Mas' *Romancero*. She gives here the version from the *Cancionero general* of 1511.

³ All citations from *Miragaia* are from Hélder Godinho edition in *Prosa medieval portuguesa*.

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LA MIRADA SOCIAL Y EL TESTIMONIO DE LA FORMACIÓN DE UNA
NUEVA IDENTIDAD ESPAÑOLA



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Las coordenadas políticas que se disponen como base para la organización de la sociedad española a partir del final de la Guerra Civil en 1939 ubican en posiciones antagónicas al estado de Franco y a los intelectuales que continúan, de una forma u otra, aquel duelo ideológico que se había iniciado a partir de la caída de la segunda República. Los años inmediatamente posteriores a esta contienda bélica se describen, en términos culturales, como una época en la cual la producción literaria presentaba un serio cariz de emergencia, intentando reaccionar ante tan traumatizadora experiencia (Pope 10). En el caso de la novela, en la década de los años cuarenta y cincuenta se cultiva una narrativa que tenía como fin estético un realismo objetivo que pudiera, a través del fiel reflejo de ciertas escenas sociales, despertar una conciencia crítica acerca de la situación social y política en la cual debían subsistir los españoles.

Mientras tanto, en el ámbito de la producción cinematográfica, el cine, que si bien era utilizado por la dictadura para fines propagandísticos, también empezaba a servir como un espacio discursivo desde el cual se enunciaban voces de crítica contra éste.¹ En España, los directores de cine abrazaban la noción de la autoría cinematográfica, idea que empezaba a ser aceptada en los círculos fílmicos en Francia, Inglaterra y los Estados Unidos, y que le otorgaba un parentesco directo con la mitologizada figura del heroico escritor intelectual en constante lucha contra la dictadura franquista (D'Lugo, *Films* 9). Estas posiciones de compromiso político, según Castellet, se habían convertido en una necesidad, en un "instrumento de lo que no existía: una vida política consciente, de combate, de lucha civil eficaz contra el Régimen" (141).

La narrativa que se produce desde esta mentalidad de protesta y denuncia es lo que hoy conocemos como "novela social."² Para Vázquez Montalbán, esta disposición del escritor

constituye en sí una especie de "vanguardia estética," ya que dentro de los parámetros permisibles de la realidad política española intenta, por medio del realismo crítico, superar su función descriptiva para presentarse como propuesta de transformación de lo real a través de la literatura (128-9). Sin embargo, este compromiso político, alimentado en un momento por el movimiento intelectual invocado por Sartre,³ queda estancado en sus tanteos estéticos y pierde su impulso inicial alrededor de los años sesenta. Este fracaso ocurre como consecuencia de la rápida transformación social y económica por la cual está atravesando el país, e irónicamente, observa Jordan, "the figure of the revolutionary writer and intellectual was rapidly being made redundant by the very reality he had set our to transform" (176).

El inicio del período de apertura socio-económica por el cual atraviesa el país a finales de los años cincuenta plantea, consecuentemente, nuevas interrogantes que aparecen como resultado de la industrialización y urbanización de la sociedad española, y la revisión de las previas premisas artísticas.⁴ Esta re-evaluación, junto a los nuevos tanteos estéticos resulta, quiero demostrar, en dos testimonios sobre la posición del individuo frente a la sociedad. Para este propósito me interesan dos de estos ensayos, llevados a cabo desde la narrativa de Juan Goytisolo, y el cine de Carlos Saura, donde la práctica de la crítica deja entrever, de mayor o menor grado, una toma de conciencia y la aparición de una subjetividad que registra algunas de las características de la identidad moderna. Si bien estos dos intelectuales son muy diferentes --Goytisolo, quien intenta a través de una evolución personal en el exilio romper con todo lo que significa España, y Saura, quien permanece en el país y participa hasta hoy en su escenario cultural-- lo que me interesa ver es cómo en el discurso de ambos hay una ruptura de la narración lineal, y cómo el cambio que se produce en el punto de vista objetivo asumido en nombre del realismo, deja entrever un sujeto, un "yo," y una respectiva toma de conciencia.

Juan Goytisolo, quien en sus primeras tentativas literarias había seguido las proposiciones del realismo social con obras como *Juego de manos* (1954) y *La isla* (1961), emprende un trayecto de renovación literaria con la publicación de la novela *Señas de identidad* en 1966. Descrita como una obra de transición, ésta parte de la tradición del realismo social de posguerra para iniciar una

radical experimentación literaria (Herzberger 611). La composición de las siguientes dos novelas, *Reivindicación del Conde don Julián* (1970) y *Juan sin tierra* (1975), completa una trilogía en la cual, según Ugarte (1982), se intenta, a través de la contaminación textual, utilizar el veneno lingüístico para destruir la misma lengua española, y todos los significados que ésta conlleva, incluyendo los personales y culturales (2).⁵

Entre los rasgos textuales que presenta la novela *Señas...*, los más estudiados son la intertextualidad y la autoreferencialidad del lenguaje, aspectos relevantes por la variedad de discursos que aparece en la novela, entre ellos, el lenguaje literario, el discurso oficial, panfletos, programas, diferentes idiomas, etc.⁶ Brevemente repasado, el argumento de la novela se desenvuelve alrededor de un exiliado, Álvaro, quien regresa por un espacio de cuatro días a España para asistir al entierro de un antiguo profesor, y de los numerosos *flashbacks* que le ocasiona el renovado contacto con antiguos conocidos y miembros de familia. El análisis textual, desde el punto de vista formal, indica una ruptura que complica no sólo el argumento, sino incluso el recuento que se hace de los eventos del pasado, entre ellos el anterior activismo político del protagonista y sus elementos biográficos --los cuales coinciden con los del autor--, deshaciendo la narración lineal y lógica que cultivaba el discurso realista anterior.⁷

Aunque este texto todavía conserve mínimas partículas de una cierta pureza argumentativa, el ajetreo lingüístico y la mezcla de discursos resulta en la escisión de una línea narrativa, que no sólo atañe al argumento sino también a la recepción visual de la obra. Es decir, las manipulaciones de la puntuación, el uso de lenguas diferentes junto con el empleo arbitrario de mayúsculas y letras en bastardilla, transforman la textura de la página. Entre estas variaciones surge el abandono de la narración en tercera persona, junto con la premisa de una objetividad discursiva, para dar lugar a las narraciones de un "yo" y un "tú," y el comienzo de un diálogo íntimo que intercambia de forma privada y acusatoria las huellas que constituyen el retrato de la identidad de un individuo.⁸ La experiencia de la lectura de este texto permite al lector testimoniar la destrucción de los andamios racionales que sostienen una lógica estructura lingüística, y el surgir destructivo de un nuevo discurso, violento, indómito e ilegítimo, pero también a la vez instintivo y brutalmente honesto.

El contexto que rodea la creación de esta obra, según como

lo describe el mismo autor, explica esta ruptura y la violencia textual que empieza a palpase en ésta:

Al estallar la guerra civil española, casi todos los intelectuales y escritores más valiosos arrinconaron sus obsesiones y problemas personales y pusieron espontáneamente su pluma al servicio de la causa republicana. (...) Pero cuando esa fe y esperanza colectivas se debilitan o desaparecen --por haber cambiado las circunstancias, por falta de perspectivas o, pura y simplemente, por cansancio-- y el escritor no experimenta ya la urgencia y sinceridad del encargo social, colectiva, [y] tiende a ceder el paso a la problemática individual del artista. (297)⁹

La apatía que empieza a inspirar aquella postura de “encargo social” deja espacio para la experimentación de la subjetividad, que en el caso de la novela *Señas...* resulta en el recuento del “proceso de extrañamiento de un intelectual (...): la exposición de la herida moral de un hombre de [la] generación --al que le ha tocado vivir uno de los períodos de paz sepulcral más largos de la historia de España--” (289).

El examen del pasado al que se somete el protagonista señala, según Dehennin, “una identidad conflictiva, escindida, malquerida, repudiada por los suyos, exiliada, heterodoxa, de la cual va tomando conciencia con una rebeldía creciente” (63), y que obliga al individuo a enfrentarse al bagaje cultural y social que le impone un determinado momento histórico. El resultado, en el caso de Goytisolo, es el comienzo de un trayecto literario y personal que viene de una re-lectura de los eventos que lo empujan hasta este punto de ruptura. Si bien la formación de la identidad de un sujeto parte de la construcción de los significados que uno le da a la vida a través de las previas representaciones de sus “yo”s, en el caso de Goytisolo, éstas son destrozadas para que éste pueda tomar conciencia de una nueva posición frente al contexto histórico y personal que le corresponde.¹⁰

Las circunstancias que llevan al individuo a confrontar su pasado, y la toma de conciencia que ocurre a raíz de ello, se ven también representadas en las películas de Saura,¹¹ quien en *La caza* (1965) y *El jardín de las delicias* (1970), estipula las pautas necesarias para desarrollar el argumento que plantee esta situación. Incapaz de revelar directamente la vida en España a causa de la censura, Saura utiliza una sintaxis complicada junto a la técnica de Buñuel, el surrealismo, para retratar indirectamente la realidad y así criticar el régimen de Franco (Higginbotham 77).¹² En contraste a la obligada simpleza estilística de la novela

social y la previa influencia neorrealista del cine italiano, el nuevo cine español adquiere de esta manera, un discurso literario altamente simbólico.

Dentro de esta estrategia representativa, Saura presenta al sujeto español enfrentado a su historia en una tensa relación, en la cual el referente de la guerra civil sirve para señalar el origen de los problemas del país y que atañen también a la identidad individual y nacional (D'Lugo, "The Politics..." 46). En *La caza*¹³ y *El jardín...*,¹⁴ los argumentos de ambas películas ponen en evidencia esta relación de antagonismo entre el sujeto y la ideología franquista, y según D'Lugo, pueden ser considerados como:

...efforts to initiate an account of the subject of cultural representation at (...) decisive moments in the history of that subject's evolving consciousness of his own relation to the cultural institutions which have determined his social identity.
(47)

Así, en ambas películas, los personajes son obligados a encarar el pasado que les precede y a tomar conciencia del presente, en el cual el sujeto se convierte en depositario de la responsabilidad de reconocer su situación social e individual y determinar el curso de sus acciones.

En *La caza*, el tema del pasado aparece de forma ausente a causa de la censura, es decir, por medio de referencias indirectas, y lo que no puede aludirse textualmente adquiere mayor fuerza de expresión en el paisaje y el contexto de la película, como sucede en el caso de la innominable Guerra Civil. La interacción de los tres viejos amigos trae a colación no sólo las experiencias bélicas que un día compartieron, sino también la transformación de éstos en seres egoístas, materialistas e inevitablemente cínicos. El único joven del grupo es, según apunta D'Lugo, un producto total de la ideología franquista, y la declaración de éste de que "Yo no tengo que depender de nadie," señala una de las características de la nueva generación en la cual la memoria de la guerra se ha disipado y la situación social en la que vive se ha aceptado como parte de una normativa ("The Politics..." 49).¹⁵ Sin embargo, en la película, Enrique empieza a comprender mejor su presente a medida que va descubriendo los yugos del pasado a través de los intercambios entre los tres amigos, y se convierte, sugiere D'Lugo, en "the on-screen interrogator of all the social and discursive gaps which others have become conditioned to ignore" (ídem).

La importancia de esta interacción con el

pasado es que la memoria de éste obliga al sujeto a reconocer su posición dentro de la historia y a tomar conciencia de las implicaciones que ha tenido en la formación de su presente situación. Para D'Lugo, el propósito de Saura es representar, a través del personaje de Enrique, una forma de amnesia cultural que aqueja a la joven generación española que parece tener sólo una vaga noción de los antecedentes que originaron la sociedad en que vive. Así, "he gradually leads the audience to share his own awareness of the constrained and finally fraudulent impression of the world that he has for so long accepted as natural" (*Films* 58).

Juan Goytisolo, al referirse a la dictadura franquista y la experiencia de haber vivido en ella, había dicho que se trataba de "una situación anómala de envejecer sin haber conocido juventud ni responsabilidades (...) el pueblo español vive en una perpetua minoría de edad desde el primero de abril de 1939" ("Entrevista" 289), refiriéndose al control autoritario que ejercía el estado sobre el individuo. Sólo una toma de conciencia que permita el reconocimiento de una subjetividad capaz de determinar y juzgar la condición social en la que uno existe puede, por fin, romper con esa situación en la cual el individuo queda desconectado de la realidad y se pierde en las prácticas sociales de la ideología franquista.

Esta forma de alienación social y la incapacidad del individuo aparece retratada en *El jardín...*, en la cual el protagonista, paralizado y amnésico en su silla de ruedas, queda representado como un niño que no puede hacer nada por sí mismo. Pero el montaje de las escenas que hace su familia de su pasado para devolverle la memoria, arranca de Antonio sólo las memorias de su niñez, y este enfrentamiento con el pasado, ya sea a través de las perspectivas de los diversos miembros de la familia y las de él mismo, le hace rechazar todo lo que ha contribuido a la formación de su antigua identidad. Una vez más, la presencia de los elementos del pasado es lo que obliga a una toma de conciencia y el rechazo de los diversos aspectos que conforman la identidad de un sujeto. Los espectadores, a través del punto de vista del protagonista, examinan el pasado de éste y el de uno mismo, llegando a reconocer, según Valleu, la decadencia en la cual se halla la España moderna detrás de su apariencia de vitalidad (126).

Además de la observación de que la parálisis que afecta a todos los personajes al final de la película, sirve para señalar la

apatía y la desesperanza de los españoles con respecto a la situación política del país,¹⁶ lo importante en este film es, como en el caso de *La caza*, la constante reiteración de la relevancia del pasado histórico sobre el presente. En el caso de *El jardín...*, el pasado se indaga desde la subjetividad, y el "yo" del individuo está obligado a re-evaluar su trayectoria personal al mismo tiempo que cuestiona su propia identidad. En esta exploración interna también queda reflejada la evolución del propio régimen franquista, desde la Guerra Civil hasta un presente de aparente paz y prosperidad económica, pero una vez que el individuo comprende el pasado violento que antecede a éste, reconoce sus faltas y termina rechazándolo, a pesar de su incapacidad para cambiarlo.

Así, por un lado, Goytisolo ofrece en su novela *Señas...*, una trayectoria íntima que apunta a la asunción de una nueva identidad personal y literaria, y por consiguiente, el rechazo de otras, mientras que Saura, señala en sus obras el problema del sujeto y su identidad en la sociedad de posguerra. Si los cambios socio-económicos de los años sesenta influyen en la ruptura de Goytisolo con el realismo social, y le permite optar por explorar las interrogantes de su propia subjetividad, en el caso de Saura, estas transformaciones no lo alejan de su posición de compromiso político. Es decir, si bien éste también rechaza el discurso realista en el cine --el neorrealismo italiano-- y adopta un punto de vista subjetivo, Saura continúa presentando desde esta nueva estética su mirada crítica de la sociedad franquista.

De esta manera, el discurso fílmico de las películas mencionadas gira alrededor del individuo en relación a su situación social, y el planteamiento de estos temas toca consecuentemente el problema de la identidad. Primero, el de la nueva generación española en cuya memoria la guerra es parte de una niñez vagamente recordada, y la generación anterior, que queda completamente marcada por esta experiencia histórica. En ambos casos, la identidad de estos individuos se convierte en un espacio en el cual deben coexistir codo a codo el trauma del pasado junto al afán progresista del presente. A partir de las exploraciones sobre la historia, el pasado y el presente desde la mirada de un "yo," Saura intenta, justamente, lograr la representación de aquel individuo que pueda asumir una nueva identidad, en la cual éste sea capaz de tomar conciencia de su pasado y encarar el presente con sentido crítico, porque

únicamente así podrá sobrevivir el tiempo histórico que le toca vivir a él y a sus contemporáneos españoles.

NOTAS

¹ La implementación y práctica de la censura ejercida por el gobierno franquista era especialmente dura con el cine por su naturaleza conspicua y capacidad de distribución. Así, Higginbotham describe: "Censorship under Franco lasted so long and was so rigid that young filmmakers who wanted to comment in their works on current life in Spain or express opinions critical of the regime were forced to develop a countermyth whose highly metaphorical and convoluted syntax, known as the *estética franquista*, was not immediately decipherable by censors" (x). Los directores de cine que fundan el cine español de posguerra y originan esta práctica son Juan Antonio Bardem y Luis Berlanga.

² Para una definición y caracterización detallada de la 'novela social,' resulta útil el trabajo de P.G. Casado, quien en 1973 publica su estudio sobre ésta titulada *La novela social española (1920-1971)*.

³ "In France, in the late 1940s and against a background of an intensification of the Cold War and the emergence of political movements demanding European neutrality, Sartre developed the notion of *engagement*. In *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?* (1948), which constituted his polemical treatise on the writer's role in the advancement of socialist revolution, Sartre saw literary commitment as crucially dependent on the ability of language to communicate, of writing to speak" (Jordan vii).

⁴ La autarquía practicada por el gobierno franquista había servido durante los años posteriores a la guerra civil para disminuir importaciones y expandir la producción doméstica, pero el bajo nivel tecnológico de España limita la habilidad para estimular un rápido crecimiento económico, por lo que éste se ve obligado a adoptar nuevas estrategias económicas. Así, indica Graham, "the change of course was formalized in 1959 in the 'Stabilization Plan' – a national belt-tightening exercise as a prelude to liberalization of the economy and stimulating growth"

(68).

⁵ Declara Ugarte: "...the main conflict in Goytisolo's later prose (1966 to the present) is a conflict between texts, an intertextual struggle among voices, codes, and diverse form of writing" (2). En relación a *Señas de identidad* concluye que es el texto donde se ve la "...transformation that initiates an aggressive and violent process of textual contamination" (51).

⁶ Las experiencias del protagonista sirven para desplegar, según la lectura formalista de Herzberger, dentro del texto narrativo, un lenguaje en el cual se mezclan el lenguaje literario y no-literario, cotidiano --por ejemplo, el de los reportes de los policías, fragmentos de conversaciones en bares, el lenguaje de un abogado, conversaciones en catalán y en francés, programas de eventos y panfletos turísticos--. Esta mezcla de un lenguaje no-poético dentro de un contexto literario abre un discurso de disidencia, en el cual el lector es consciente de la parodización de éste, por lo que esta narrativa se convierte en un instrumento de desmitificación del lenguaje oficial (614-15).

⁷ La complicación por los saltos narrativos y temporales de la obra es tanta que muchos críticos todavía debaten sobre la cantidad de días que ocupa el desarrollo de ésta. Para un estudio comprensivo de la cronología de esta obra resulta útil el trabajo de Jaime Martínez-Tolentino titulado *La cronología de Señas de identidad de Juan Goytisolo* (1992).

⁸ Este diálogo interno entre el 'yo' y el 'tú' continúa en la trayectoria literaria de J. Goytisolo, y aparece en su autobiografía *Coto vedado* (1985) donde claramente desafía la narrativa del 'yo' biográfico en el proceso de su representación y la revisión acerca de los años formativos de la identidad del autor.

⁹ Entrevista hecha por J. Ortega en 1971.

¹⁰ La definición acerca de la formación de la identidad personal deriva de los planteamientos teóricos de Cristina Peña-Marín, quien escribe: "Subjective identity may be understood as the construction of the meaning of one's life which unifies its different "I"s and its different self-representations into one coherent image. Autobiographical narratvivo, through which subjects select certain events from their biography and organize them as a unified succession of events, plays a fundamental role in

this construction of identity carried out by the subject themselves. Retrospective construction of the character through an autobiographical report inserts itself in the retelling of the character's life as one of the stages in the process toward identity" (132).

¹¹ Carlos Saura (n.1932) forma parte de la nueva generación de cineastas, aquellos que experimentaron la guerra durante la niñez, y es uno de los máximos representantes del "nuevo cine español," término impuesto por Juan Francisco de Lasa para aquellas películas que trataran temas y problemas contemporáneos utilizando narrativas realistas (Higginbotham, 61).

¹². Sobre la censura durante el franquismo documenta Gubern et al. (1995): "Al estallar la Guerra Civil, las autoridades franquistas dictaron múltiples disposiciones de represión cultural, que también afectaron al cine. En diciembre de 1936, una orden declaraba ilícitos 'la producción, el comercio y la circulación de periódicos, folletos y toda clase de impresos y grabados pornográficos o de literatura socialista, comunista, libertaria y, en general, disolvente.' Las confiscaciones de publicaciones, carteles, discos y películas fueron una práctica obligada del ejército de Franco en su ocupación de las ciudades enemigas, desde antes de que se instaurase oficialmente su censura cinematográfica especializada en marzo de 1937" (13).

¹³ El argumento de la película consiste en el encuentro de tres viejos amigos y compañeros de guerra, José (Ismael Mayo), Paco (Alfredo Mayo) y Luis (José María Prada), y el cuñado del primero, Enrique (Emilio Gutiérrez Caba) para pasar el día cazando conejos en las tierras que pertenecen a la mujer de José. Éste, quien se ve necesitado financieramente en su negocio, y del cual es socio Luis, intenta agraciarse con Paco para que le dé un préstamo. Ante la negativa de éste y otros eventos que empeoran la relación entre estos antiguos amigos, la película termina trágicamente cuando éstos se matan mutuamente delante de un horrorizado Enrique.

¹⁴ Antonio Cano (José Luis López Vázquez), es el rico protagonista de esta película, quien queda paralizado y amnésico después de un accidente de coche mientras viajaba con su amante. El padre (Francisco Pierrá) con la ayuda de los otros miembros de

familia intenta, a través de la re-creación de escenas del pasado que hayan marcado momentos importantes en la vida de Antonio, intentan que éste recupere la memoria para poder obtener la secreta cuenta bancaria que tienen en Suiza. El esfuerzo resulta en vano y la película termina en una escena surrealista en la cual aparecen todos los personajes en sillas de ruedas.

¹⁵ También es significativa para la caracterización de esta "juventud" la canción que toca la radio en un momento de la película, "Loca juventud."

¹⁶ Para Valleu, lo significativo de la película es que demuestra "...that Franco's victories were hollow because although the country has prospered economically, the Spanish people have had to become like amnesiacs in order to survive" (135).

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DISTANCE AND SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS IN SAMUEL BECKETT'S PROSE
WORKS



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The two Beckett texts I will be considering here, *L'Innomable* and *Company*, share an obsession with a self-perpetuating self-conscious monologue, where the speaker produces a narrative trying to figure out whether or not he is a subject, a person, and an "I." These monologues take us through the twists and turns of subjectivity, especially the link between pre-subjective consciousness and subjectivity itself. My paper revolves around this distinction between consciousness and subjectivity: where consciousness is a phenomenological state of mind or thought; whereas subjecthood is a completed process where consciousness calls itself "I" and considers itself, and is considered by others, as a stable self-sufficient entity. Departing from the argument that this state of subjecthood is in fact a constructed fiction acquired somewhere on the way to language, or sociability (depending on which theoretical school one subscribes to), I am interested in attempts to represent the consciousness that lies beneath and before it. Beckett's texts are excellent examples for such a representation of consciousness, because in his texts, subjectivity is primarily represented as self-conscious: where the speaker steps back from himself and observes himself with objective distance. This distance parallels the distance of a framed representation, in that Beckett's characters frequently create fictive selves that they then treat as other, framed in the third person. This distance, of course, is then challenged and questioned. Beckett's challenge to the power of art to represent, and thus to be distinct, framed, and bounded, is interwoven with his challenge to subjectivity itself as distinct, framed, and bounded.

L'Innomable is often seen as an earlier and less sophisticated attempt to elucidate the problems of subjectivity that

Beckett develops in *Company* and other late works. It comes at the end of Beckett's prose trilogy, and seems the most sparse and minimalist of the three. Made up exclusively of a first person monologue, it nonetheless leaves us at a loss as far as identifying who is speaking, and whether there can even be said to be a subject behind the voice. The monologue consists of the speaker describing various manifestations of himself -- for instance, a bald man displayed in a jar -- but there seems not to be an identifiable subject that provides any continuity. One of the central stories told is the speaker's uncertainty over whether he is in fact an "I", or whether "I" is a fiction forced on him. He posits a fearsome They who force him into speaking, imposing the very words we read on the page: "Croient-ils que je crois que c'est moi qui parle? Ca c'est d'eux aussi. Pour me faire croire que j'ai un moi à moi et que je peux parler, comme eux de leur." (98) As a result, The Unnamable claims that he has no voice that is properly his own: "Elle n'est pas la mienne, je n'en ai pas, je n'ai pas de voix et je dois parler, c'est tout ce que je sais." (34) As a result, The Unnamable often refuses to call himself I, referring to himself instead in the third person: for instance, "Ce n'est pas moi, je suis lui..." (192) Referring to himself in the third person provides the detachment of otherness: he can see himself as other, and thus can avoid merging selves into a coherent "I" upon which They insist, and which would mark his entry into subjecthood.

Beckett seems to argue that subjecthood arises with the acquisition of language, or the ability to say "I." The Unnamable can't seem to decide whether he is in fact speaking, or remains in silence:

je suis en mots, je suis fait des mots, des mots des autres, quels autres, l'endroit aussi, l'air aussi....je les suis tous, ceux qui s'unissent, ceux qui se quittent, ceux qui s'ignorent, et pas autre chose, si, tout autre chose, que je suis tout autre chose, une chose muette dans un endroit dur, vide, clos, sec, net, noir, où rien ne bouge, rien ne parle... (166)

Critics have used these indications of silence to posit the Unnamable as a pre-lingual inner being, unspeakable and unrepresentable. Such a reading, however, has then to confront the question of who it is that is producing the words on the page. Can a pre-lingual subject speak after all? Or is it perhaps Beckett speaking, creating a stylistic equivalent or representation of an in fact silent unspeakable pre- subject? In this sense, the

book can be seen as an instance of language working against itself to express what is beyond, or before, language. While this argument seems compelling, it is necessary to trace through the steps of it and unpack some of its mimetic presuppositions. Let us turn to a sample reading in that vein, from Leo Bersani and Ulysse Dutoit's book *Arts of Impoverishment*.

Bersani and Dutoit in fact criticize *L'Innommable* for this purported aim of expressing pure non-being, unmediated by the distancing and divisive effects of language. According to them, this sort of representation hopes to subvert language in order to get at the pre-lingual subject:

....and yet *Molloy* and *The Unnameable*, for all their magnificent originality and complexity, are perhaps somewhat naive in their assumptions about the sympathy that literature can provide to a straightforward defense of prelinguistic essential being.....they do suggest that literature can be engaged primarily in the repudiation of its own existence, an existence that is nothing but articulation. (51)

In order to attain this representation, Beckett must bypass language and fictionality, which presumes a possible invisibility of language: "Beckett seems finally to make a desperate effort to resolve certain questions without mediating them through dramatic imagery -- as if the subject of his fiction existed in some pure version with which the fiction constantly interferes." (58) In this reading, Beckett subscribes to the mimetic convention of a text functioning as an analog or formal representation of some external reality, in this case silence or the pre-lingual subject. There *is* a referent: a pre-lingual pre-subjective consciousness. This referent cannot be represented directly; instead, Beckett uses the mimetic tools of fiction to create an analogy of this unrepresentable. A theory of representation of this sort I call "mimetic": it is based on a static resemblance between text on one hand and referent outside of the text on the other.

There are two immediate inconsistencies between such a reading and Beckett's texts. First of all, this model of representation presumes a transparency of language. That is, it assumes that language can be stylistically undermined into disappearing and leaving in its wake a "representation" of silence. Intuitively one might sense how foreign this assumption is to Beckett's texts, which grapple ceaselessly with the impossibility of escaping language. Secondly, it ignores the challenges to mimetic

representation that Beckett himself has launched throughout his career. Beckett has consistently argued that art does not refer to anything outside itself, most notably in his famous dictum: "...there is nothing to express, nothing from which to express, no power to express, no desire to express, together with the obligation to express." (Bair xvii)

According to Bersani and Dutoit, however, this claim of Beckett's simply repeats a conventional mimetic distinction between art and reality: "The assertion that expression is impossible is not the basis of a new definition of art; rather, it merely restates an old definition pessimistically." (54) The rationale here, is that Beckett continues to subscribe to the clear division between art and reality, reversing only the possibility of art to mimetically represent reality into an impossibility. One way to read Beckett's comments is as asserting the independence of art as a non-relational realm, which does not try to represent the outside world. However, I would like to suggest that Beckett's failure refers to the failure of this separation between art and reality; in short, of a failure in the frame of representation.

The notion of representational frames largely structures the terminology and framework used here. Reexamining the preceding discussion in the explicit vocabulary of frames will help clarify the workings of representation in Beckett, especially as we move towards *Company*. In the analysis above, we found problematic a critical approach which asserted that Beckett's texts were mimetic representations, in language, of pre-lingual core being. Looking more closely, we can detect a deep-rooted paradox in the way mimesis works that can give rise to such a reading. A work of art can be defined as what is set apart as a representation by these frames, which mark it as "not real," as derivative or mimetic. Thus, art can represent something that it, intrinsically, is not: for instance, a piece of canvas can represent a pastoral landscape. Similarly, a piece of text can represent silence. Our ability to look beyond the material nature of the work and see simply what it represents indicates a transparency of the frame, where we lose consciousness of what the work actually is (a canvas, a piece of text) and see only the content of the representation. However, the paradox arises from the persistence of frames, indeed their very indispensability to this mimetic sleight-of-hand. While in one way we need to forget about frames, it is the frames themselves which set up this clear

opposition between life and art which gives art its representative capacity. The overarching convention operating here is that art can *be* an imitation of the world to begin with; that there is such a realm as art apart from "the world" which can be other than itself and represent the world instead. The assertion that language can be used to subvert language, for instance, assumes that a text can be other than itself, can be a representation and thus a framed-off space where mimesis is permitted.

When Bersani and Dutoit criticize Beckett for reproducing the firm divide between art and reality, they are understanding Beckett's "failure to express" to mean a renunciation of reference: refusing to let the art inside the frames refer to a world outside. However, it might be possible to see it instead as a renunciation of the bounded structure of representative frames, especially insofar as frames purportedly divide representation from reality. In this sense, art fails to be separate; and, in no longer being separate and bounded, it is no longer a signifying system referring to an external reality.

Our theoretical conclusions about problems of frames and representations have so far dealt with the work of art and the question of representing silence in language. However, the outcome of these debates is intertwined with the actual method by which Beckett does represent consciousness in his work, especially his use of self-consciousness. It is this method, most notable in the text of *Company*, which will link the structure of representation to the structure of consciousness. This link is alluded to in a passage by Bersani and Dutoit, where they reword Beckett's famous dictums about the failure of art: "'I have nothing to show you' could be reformulated as: 'I have never taken that distance from the real which would have allowed me to move possessively toward it.'" (5) That distance from the real is the distance guaranteed by frames. It is also a distance of self-consciousness. Self-consciousness, as we shall see, is a sort of representative structure, in that it involves self-representation: positing within consciousness both a commenting subject and an observed object.

Beckett's infinite regression of self-consciousness turns around the fact that any self conceived as "I" can also conceive of her or himself as "s/he," and then conceive of that conceiving self as "s/he," and so on. Analyzing oneself involves taking a step back from oneself, occupying a vantage point one step back and

then considering oneself as an object of analysis. It is a sort of spectacle on the inside of consciousness, with a posited audience and object. As defined by R.D. Laing, self-consciousness is 'an awareness of oneself as an object of someone else's observation.'" (Levy 13)

In *Company*, Beckett provides us with a complex and insightful model for the workings of self-consciousness. The plot, insofar as there can be said to be one, posits a speaker who starts by being or imagining himself to be alone on his back in the dark, and a voice starts speaking in the second person and recounting various stories that took place in the childhood of this presumed "you." The speaker starts to ruminate on whether or not he is actually alone, and evolves for himself a whole network of "company," imagined selves and others and voices. The text's very first sentence introduces this multiplicity of voices and positions: "A voice comes to one in the dark. Imagine." (7) This line produces several characters: the voice, the being on his back in the dark, the voice speaking this line, and the presumed audience who is being told to "imagine." This structure contains a great deal of potential instability and infinite regress, both of which produce the company, or multiplicity, of possible beings or speaking positions, which give the work its title. As in *L'Innommable*, there is a persistent question of "who speaks?" : "And whose voice asking this? Who asks, Whose voice asking this? And answers, His soever who devises it all....The unthinkable last of all. Unnamable. Last person. I. Quick leave him." (24) As in *L'Innommable*, there is a hesitation in saying "I"; "I" is always some sort of performative act with undesirable implications. Though the text does at some point discuss this last person, or deviser, we are told right away that he is in no way *the* "last person"; rather, he is "Deviser of the voice and of its hearer and of himself. Deviser of himself for company. Leave it at that. He speaks of himself as of another. He says speaking of himself, he speaks of himself as of another. Himself he devises too for company." (26) Thus, the structure of self-consciousness and self-representation is always dynamic, and can always move back another step with another reframing, or the positing of another self and self-conscious voice.

In *Company*, the dynamic of self-representation is abstracted to the point that it reveals the blurs and confusions in the seemingly clearly bounded system of frames I defined earlier.

It is in these blurs and crossings that, I think, Beckett locates his representation of consciousness. One of the speaker's central difficulties in *Company* is an inability to figure out what role he plays in the world he imagines. When he imagines or hears a voice coming to "one" in the dark, he realizes that he can't be sure that it is actually himself whom the voice is addressing as "you". It might be addressing another who is also on his back in the dark: "If the voice is not speaking to him it must be speaking to another. So with what reason remains he reasons. To another of that other. Or of him. Or of another still. To another of that other or of him or of another still." (11) One can imagine an infinite number of others sharing the space with him, any of which might be the actual intended addressee of the voice's "you." This matter becomes more interesting when one considers the content of the address. "You" is being told its memories; short vignettes or episodes from childhood, birth, first love, and the like. These episodes are told as stories, but in the second person; for instance: "A small boy you come out of Connolly's Stores holding your mother by the hand." (10) In a sense, these episodes are framed representations of the life of "you." Critics have pointed out the near anonymity of these episodes, where the purpose seems to be less their content and more their imposition on a pre-subjective consciousness in order to forcibly form subjectivity.

The confusion arises from the fact that, while the second-person form of address does specify a listener, it does not specify which listener. Our hearer is uncertain whether he is the addressee of the second-person voice, or whether he is actually the audience or eavesdropper of others' conversation. In a sense, the hearer is unsure which frame he is in. He might be in the frame of the second-person address, whereby he hears stories told about him. In this interpretation, he himself is the character in these stories, with those particular memories -- it is he who is being represented. Or, he might be out of that frame, looking at someone else's stories or memories -- which are representations of an other. The crucial thing to note is that there is an unresolvable oscillation between these possible positions. The hearer is both self and other, occupying different roles in the mental space of self-conscious representations. We saw in our discussion of spectatorship that self-consciousness produces a variety of roles -- self as object or representation and self as analyzing viewer. Normally these two positions are kept apart by the frame of

representation, where one self is clearly marked off as the self under observation, or the self which is being represented as such. However, as we just saw, there is a constitutive uncertainty about which position is occupied. The uncertainty of being the represented object or being a viewer of another's representation is, I believe, at the root of Beckett's particular definition of consciousness. While a traditional understanding of frames would try to locate the hearer's supposed pre-lingual subjectivity on a particular side of the frame; i.e. within the frame of a representation of unrepresentability or silence, Beckett instead locates pre-subjecthood in the wrenching process of a consciousness unable to define its boundaries.

Consciousness, then, does not have clear representative frames because it itself exists in between frames. This sort of limbo reminds one of a notable passage in *L'Innommable* which expresses a similar definition of consciousness:

c'est peut-etre ca que je suis, la chose qui divise le monde en deux, d'une part le dehors, de l'autre le dedans, ca peut etre mince comme une lame, je ne suis ni d'un coté ni de l'autre, je suis au milieu, je suis la cloison, j'ai deux faces et pas d'épaisseur, c'est peut-etre ca que je sens, je me sens qui vibre, je suis le tympan, d'un coté c'est le crane, de l'autre le monde, je ne suis ni de l'un ni de l'autre... (160)

Here we see the Unnamable as a liminal space between silence and speech, between pre-lingualness and subjecthood.

In both *Company* and *L'Innommable*, the speakers eventually have to confront the possibility that they might be subjects, and therefore must say "I." For both, this state seems to be imposed by some (possibly imagined) external They. Whereas the consciousness represented in these two prose works existed in the fluidity of frames, the step towards subjectivity involves a necessary solidification of them. Ultimately, what is necessary is the deliberate construction of the frames and, correspondingly, of the traditional binaries between self and other, inside and outside. When the Unnamable imagines himself a subject, he imagines all the accompanying trappings of division:

je ne suis pas dehors, je suis dedans, dans quelque chose, je suis enfermé, le silence est dehors, dehors, dedans...il faut des murs, il m'en faut, bien épais, il me faut un prison... (206)

These frames, once established, permit the myth of pre-lingual

silent being, which is shown to be created as an afterthought, an imagined origin after the acquisition of subjecthood.

I'd like to conclude with some speculative ruminations on directions which this reading suggests. I think where we're ending up with Beckett's non-mimetic art is with a sort of aesthetics of pure presence. That is, if these texts do not represent something other than themselves, they in fact represent themselves, what they are, not what they are not. This might be reminiscent of the theater of Artaud in many ways, and open to the same criticism of attempting an escape from representation and the sort of absence or evasion it entails. I think it would be useful to think, however, about the fact that the presence that Beckett's texts may claim to be, is a presence of representation. In other words, in representing none other than what they are, these texts represent representation. It remains to be untangled, then, whether Beckett can successfully transform a structure of representation and absence into a moment of presence, or whether he is simply placing an artificial last stop on the infinite cycle of regression in which his texts themselves engage.

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LA POÉSIE DE L'IMPOSSIBLE



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On comprend désormais qu'il ne faut pas
donner les livres de Duras aux lectrices
fragiles... (Kristeva, 235)

La "C'était un livre très difficile à faire. Il n'y avait pas de plan possible pour dire l'amplitude du malheur parce qu'il n'y avait plus rien des événements visibles qui l'auraient provoquée. Il n'y avait plus que la Faim et la Douleur." (Duras, *Ecrire* 33) Comme s'il fallait "des événements visibles" pour provoquer la Douleur. Et la Faim. Comme un dieu méchant--présente partout, visible nulle part--la réalité déchirante de la faim fait exploser la complexité des rapports entre les personnages du récit durassien: la mère, sa fille et son enfant "près d'être achevé." La faim c'est un cordon ombilical qui les unit dans une grande et insupportable douleur du récit. Parmi ces trois, liés par la faim, la jeune fille semble sentir son fardeau dans toute son impossibilité: la faim et la douleur sont "trop grandes pour elle."(19)

Pour partager le poids de la faim et de la responsabilité la fille-enfant, chassée de la maison paternelle à cause de sa grossesse, s'accroche instinctivement à la mémoire de son exil derrière lequel apparaît invariablement la figure accusatrice de sa mère. Deux mois de vagabondage, les affres de la faim ont appris à cette petite misérable à se défendre. La naïveté de son reproche à sa mère est désarmante--elle l'accuse d'ignorance: "*Si elle dit connaître cet âge encore, savoir, elle ment...* Sous le ciel autour de Pursat, *sais-tu* qu'il y a de la boue qui peut se manger... Elle reviendra pour lui dire, à cette *ignorante...*" (20-21) Se console-t-elle de se voir chasser par ignorance? Sa mère, ne l'aurait-elle pas bannie si elle savait à quelles souffrances elle condamnait sa fille? S'agit-il de vouloir comprendre la cruauté inhumaine de la mère--un être, seul capable d'amour inconditionné? Ou ces accusations sont des manifestations de la révolte,--à laquelle la jeune fille a été

poussée par une très grande faim,--contre l'autorité, indiscutable jusqu'à ce moment, de sa mère.

Cette révolte, elle la tient en vie, la mendicante. Cinq futurs simples dans le petit paragraphe de sept phrases durassiennes. En partant de l'incertain "je te les raconterai *peut-être* un jour" (20), à travers l'autosuggestif "*car* je te reverrai, *j'ai l'âge* de te revoir" (20), elle arrive à l'oubi, à une souffrance en moins: "Elle reviendra pour lui dire ... "je t'ai oubliée." (21) Ces futurs simples parmi la maigreur du présent dans lequel se fait la narration font saillie comme le ventre de la mendicante: c'est ce qui relie le présent de la jeune fille à son futur douteux. Elle reverra sa mère puisqu'elle a "*l'âge* de la revoir." (20) Il n'y a plus de force, plus de haine, mais il y a toujours sa jeunesse--"quatorze, dix-sept ans" (20)--et insistant sur cela elle peut persévérer dans ses efforts à surmonter l'impossible. Conformément aux lois de la nature, les parents ne survivent pas à leurs enfants, si tu existes toujours, ma mère, je dois être parmi les vivantes, "puisque nous sommes en vie, toi et moi?" (20) Mais celle qui dénature ces lois et qui repousse son enfant, voudra-t-elle respecter le droit de succession de son enfant? C'est ce qui alarme la jeune fille, ce qui la fait mettre un point d'interrogation après une phrase formellement affirmative ("...nous sommes en vie, toi et moi?"): un doute sur ce que la réponse de la mère soit positive, un doute sur l'emplacement de la mendicante par rapport à la vie et la mort, un doute sur ce qu'on puisse surmonter l'impossible.

Mais qu'est-ce qu'elle a appris, "cette vieille enfant enceinte" (10), de quel droit accuse-t-elle sa mère d'ignorance? Elle a appris des façons différentes de se perdre: faire de "faux départs" et "des marches hypocrites" (13), "traverser les villages sans être remarquée" (16), "oublier les origines." (20) Mais son acquis le plus important est, sans doute, la faim--celle qui, inspirant des rêves hallucinatoires, détruit sa personnalité et la fait se perdre dans des visions irréelles, "elle a presque été du riz chaud, cette poussière" (22); et envoûtantes, "*sous le ciel autour de Pursat, sais-tu qu'il y a de la boue qui peut se manger?*" (20) La poésie insupportable de cette dernière phrase... La connotation poétique du substantif "le ciel" colorie les alentours vides de Pursat en couleurs exotiques ou féeriques. Sous cette lumière "la boue qui peut se manger" apparaît comme un objet des errances, motif des contes populaires dont les héros font de longs périple afin de retrouver les prodiges d'outre-mer: "Sais-tu que loin d'ici, dans

un pays étranger, il y a ... qui peut ...” Celui qui possède cet objet gagne le pouvoir magique. Les allitérations visibles et les assonances presque rimables transforment la phrase “sous le ciel -- Pursat -- sais-tu -- la boue” en une formule incantatoire connue d’un peuple choisi. Choisi par la faim.

Ainsi la faim, représente-t-elle une mesure d’expérience, de savoir, de maturité. Le savoir de la misère suprême--“la boue qui peut se manger”--assure la supériorité indiscutable de la mendicante sur l’ignorance révoltante de sa mère. Serait-elle restée enchantée ou paralysée à contempler, jusqu’à l’oubli d’elle-même pendant “des jours et des semaines, heure après heure, minute après minute” (20) sa “nourriture absente” (20), c’est-à-dire, irréelle, imaginée, voire fantastique; si “la faim de son enfant” (21) ne l’avait chassée de son enchantement pour partir à la recherche de la nourriture présente--le poisson. Vu la géographie du récit, il serait justifié de rappeler que dans l’iconographie orientale, les poissons représentent un symbole d’union. Accolés en sens inverse et reliés par “une sorte de cordon ombilical”, deux poissons du signe astrologique symbolisent “la communauté de tous les hommes de la terre comme la goutte d’eau agrégée à l’océan.” (Chevalier, 775) Par les caprices du sort, le symbolisme du poisson réunit dans le passage tous les personnages principaux de la vie de la mendicante.

La mention du poisson nous renvoie au père de la jeune fille qui, pêcheur comme tous les hommes du pays, lui apprend à survivre près des “eaux poissonneuses” (12) du Tonlé-Sap. Il ne lui profère pas de menaces de mort en cas de désobéissance, il semble ne pas participer au destin de sa fille aux mêmes titres que sa mère. Il approuve l’exil de sa fille enceinte avec un accord indifférent. La même insensibilité pour la douleur de la jeune fille se manifeste dans la réaction de l’homme qui la croise à la sortie de Pursat: “Elle court, l’homme rit. Elle rit avec lui *de ce ventre.*”(21) L’indifférence perce dans les mots de cet étranger qui est son père: “si je me souviens bien...” (10) Cette insouciance est reprise à la suite par l’étranger de Pursat: “l’homme dit qu’il en a entendu parler.”(21)

Le fait que l’image du père (par référence au poisson) peut doubler (père--homme de Pursat), tripler (père-pêcheur--voisin-pêcheur--homme de Pursat), se multiplier (pêcheurs-mâles) lui ôte son unicité et efface son importance en tant que pilier affectif de sa vie. Ses relations avec les hommes sont réglées par son

pragmatisme. Elle en appelle à son père pour obtenir un conseil pratique: il lui suggère de rejoindre son cousin dans la plaine des Oiseaux, de suivre les eaux poissonneuses du Tonlé-Sap. La mendicante se vend aux pêcheurs pour recevoir de l'argent, de la nourriture (poisson) ou des allumettes. Elle envisage la possibilité de la conversation avec l'étranger sur le marché à condition qu'il n'attende pas à sa nourriture, "elle se rassure, ce n'était pas pour le poisson qu'il lui a parlé." (21) L'agressivité masculine semble ne pas affliger la petite mendicante: elle rit avec l'homme de son ventre; cogne avec les pêcheurs contre son bébé; violée, elle tombe enceinte "sans se faire de mal." (20) Seul le crime de sa mère est rapproché pour sa monstruosité de la cruauté dévastatrice de la famine: "La nourriture absente je la préfère à toi maintenant." (20) Pourquoi?

L'amour paternel, qui lui était distribué avec la distribution du poisson par son père pêcheur, peut être identifié avec cet aliment. Cet amour se mérite: on peut apprendre à chasser le poisson. A la rigueur, on peut le voler: la fille pique le poisson salé au marché, fait l'amour avec le voisin-pêcheur *dans la forêt* (en cachette, en volant), se vend aux pêcheurs *dans la carrière* (en cachette, comme dans la forêt). L'amour du père qui se mérite, comme la nourriture qu'on peut obtenir par ses propres moyens, est un amour conditionné. L'amour maternel est inconditionné. Mais son manque est irréparable. L'absence d'affection maternelle, unique et indépendante des mérites, fait souffrir la pauvre mendicante plus que "la nourriture absente": "A qui d'autre que toi raconter, qui m'écouterà et qui ça intéressera..." (20) En quête éternelle de la chaleur perdue, la mendicante préfère *le poison* dans le riz maternel *au poisson* des eaux paternelles: "...je veux retourner à Battambang pour un bol de riz chaud, ensuite je repartirai *pour toujours*." (22)

Symbole de fécondité, associé à la naissance et la reproduction cyclique, le poisson s'identifie à l'enfant de la mendicante: "L'enfant lui grouille dans le ventre de plus en plus: bataille de poissons dans son ventre, jeu sourd et comme gai de l'intolérable enfant." (12) Ascendant de cette famille effrayante où la monstruosité du crime de la grand-mère rivalise avec la laideur monstrueuse de sa mère, ce petit se comporte en monstre. Comme les harpies dantesques le font de pauvres suicidés, il se nourrit du corps de sa maman: "nuit et jour l'enfant continue à la manger, elle entend le grignotement incessant dans le ventre..." (18) On

croit même qu'il est capable de dévorer la faim-même. L'existence de ces trois-- mendiante, enfant et faim--est loin d'être pacifique. Ils cherchent inlassablement à s'exterminer: la mendiante veut à tout prix se débarrasser de son enfant: "elle vomit, s'efforce de vomir l'enfant, de l'*extirper*"(18); son enfant chasse la faim: "sa faim à elle il ne l'a pas (encore?) mangée" (18); la faim tombe sur la mendiante: "la faim revient et *écrase*" (19); enfin, la mendiante s'évertue à tromper la faim: "elle dort." Mais "un jour" (21) ces trois monstres--la faim, l'enfant et la mendiante qui les abrite-- se mettent d'accord pour agir en commun et *au coucher du soleil* (suspense) les comploteurs sortent de la carrière. La portée de ce moment est comparable à l'importance d'atteindre les eaux du Tonlé-Sap: "Un matin un fleuve est devant elle." (11) Ces "*un matin*" et "*un jour*" sont deux jalons pendant son long et monotone périple, deux compléments circonstanciels qui marquent un changement temporel par rapport à la monotonie des "elle"-sujets avec lesquels s'ouvrent d'habitude les paragraphes: "elle marche"(9), "elle le fait"(9), "elle reconnaît"(9), "elle rejoint"(10) etc. Mis en relief par l'article indéfini et sa position dans la proposition, "un jour" sort d'une chaîne de jours indivisibles et de marches interminables, et devrait marquer un événement peu ordinaire: "Ce soir la faim de l'enfant va se jeter sur ces lumières." (21)

La proie de ces êtres affamés, un poisson salé, devient cet événement peu ordinaire. Par une ironie méchante, la mendiante cache le poisson, symbole de fertilité, entre ses seins, symbole de maternité: les deux (poisson et seins) déséchés, sans eau ni lait qui s'associent d'habitude à ces deux objets, et grâce auxquels ces images assurent leurs significations. Évoquant la sécheresse et l'aridité, le sel du poisson anticipe sur la stérilité de la mendiante. Ainsi que sur sa folie qui est de même nature: une incapacité à la procréation, cette fois, intellectuelle. Une insensibilité à la douleur, payée par dix ans de supplices. Il se peut que dans dix ans le même poisson sorte des mêmes seins infertiles pour effrayer Charles Rossett. La scène au bord de la lagune (204-205) reproduit la scène de "la vente" de l'enfant (55-56): le poisson, comme l'enfant, s'offre. La fille refuse de prendre la piastre de la femme à laquelle elle donne son enfant, tout comme la monnaie de Charles Rossett, qu'il lui tend en espérant par ce geste se débarrasser de la bonzesse sale et terrifiante. La fille rit, crie le même mot, poursuit "les blancs" jusqu'à ce qu'ils se cachent dans leurs abris. Devenue

stérile, elle "donne" des poissons comme elle donnerait des enfants: par plaisir d'effrayer ou par plaisir de se venger ("faire payer" en d'autres mots) de sa mère, "cause de tout." (25) Ainsi se révolte-elle contre les lois du commerce ("donner" pour "faire payer", sans accepter l'argent) et contre les instincts maternels.

Mélangé avec la poussière, lavé par les larmes, le sel du poisson symbolise l'expérience amère de la vie errante de la mendicante. La scène de l'engloutissement du poisson reconstitue le parcours de la mendicante du moment où elle tombe enceinte, "elle tombe" (22), jusqu'à la reconnaissance de sa propre inadaptation à la vie indépendante, "elle bave, elle n'a plus eu de sel depuis longtemps" (22), de sa petitesse par rapport à la faim et la douleur, "c'est trop, c'est beaucoup trop." (22) Mais elle sait que malgré l'amertume, elle doit manger. Au moins pour pouvoir marcher. Marcher sur la route qui va l'éloigner de celle qui l'a condamnée à toutes ces épreuves, sur la route "de l'abandon définitif de sa mère." (28)

Même si, comme le dit Duras, les événements qui provoquent la faim et la douleur sont invisibles, son écriture les rend tangibles. Cette tangibilité est dans l'aridité de la syntaxe, dans la monotonie exténuante des constructions, dans les sonorités déshydratées. Le manque, évoqué au niveau thématique--la nourriture absente et la chaleur perdue, par rapport auxquelles se situent les objets dans la réalité douloureuse de la mendicante--est multiplié par la rétention au niveau d'expression. Par contre, les phrases qui font exception à cette économie stylistique, qui se trouvent subitement sonores ou riches en subordonnées, nous surprennent et nous font chercher scrupuleusement la portée de ces saillies stylistiques. En plus, la discrétion des moyens d'expression, traduisant l'intensité des émotions, fait augmenter l'importance de chaque élément textuel, le rend plus informatif, pourvoit certains éléments formels d'un caractère sémantique. À partir de quoi le texte durassien commence à fonctionner comme un texte poétique. Mais si la poésie en général se définit comme excès par rapport à la norme--nous partons de l'axiome que la forme primaire de la parole organisée est la prose--la poésie du texte durassien se définit comme excès par rapport à ce manque, qui est la norme de la réalité durassienne. Cette poésie ne fait qu'hyperboliser le manque et sa laideur. Alors il ne s'agit plus d'un excès, il s'agit de l'accès--au sens "paroxystique" de ce mot--de maladie, de faim et

de douleur.

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