



BOSTON COLLEGE

Department of Romance Languages and
Literatures

Eduardo Arroyo

Spanish Interior: Madrid, January 31, 1967, The Student Rafael Guijarro Jumps from the Window of His Home as the Police Arrive, 1970.

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ROMANCE REVIEW



Graduate Student Literary Review

*Romance Languages
and Literatures*
BOSTON COLLEGE

*Volume XI
Fall 2001*

*Cover art-work:
Eduardo Arroyo*
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New York/VEGAP, Madrid

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Romance Review

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The *Romance Review* is a refereed journal of literary and cultural criticism published annually by the graduate students of the Boston College Department of Romance Languages and Literatures. Articles prepared for submission must first be presented at the *International Graduate Conference on Romance Studies* held annually in March at Boston College.

The *Romance Review* is listed in the *MLA International Bibliography* and *Index of Periodicals*.

Annual subscription rates are \$5 for individuals and \$15 for institutions. Address all submissions and subscriptions inquiries to: Editor, *Romance Review*; Department of Romance Languages and Literatures, Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA 02467, Tel. (617) 552-3820, Fax: (617) 552-2064, romrev@bc.edu, or visit our web site at www.bc.edu/romrev

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Languages & Literatures
BOSTON COLLEGE
Chestnut Hill, MA 02467
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ISSN 1524-7112
Printed in the
United States of America



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EDITOR'S NOTE

This edition, "*Construction, Transgression, Destruction*", marks the start of a new millennium, the *Romance Review*'s twelfth year of publication, and the beginning of its process of deconstruction and (re)creation based upon a triumphant last decade of research, which form an impressive record of collective endeavor --one that has been marked by increasing rigor, specificity, and diversity in approaches. Further improvements in the empirical quality and theoretical relevance of the *Romance Review* can be expected in the years to come.

These seven essays constitute an issue of diverse styles and methods reflecting the very own premise of our new direction.

William Reyes-Cubides
Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts

CORTÁZAR: TRANSLATOR OF POE

Daniel Bautista

Brown University

As a young man Julio Cortázar spent two years of his life translating all of Edgar Allan Poe's short stories and much of his critical writing. In an interview years later, Cortázar recounted an amusing anecdote while answering the question of what he had learned from the experience:

Many, many things. To begin with, I explored his language, which is highly criticized by the English and the Americans because they find it too baroque, in short they've found all sorts of things wrong with it. Well, since I'm neither English nor American, I see it with another perspective. I know there are aspects which have aged a lot, that are exaggerated, but that hasn't the slightest importance next to his genius. To write, in those times, "The Fall of the House of Usher"—that takes an extraordinary genius. To write "Ligeia" or "Berenice," or "The Black Cat," any of them, show a true genius for the fantastic and the supernatural. I should say, in passing, that yesterday I went to a friend's house on the rue Edgar Allan Poe. There is a plaque where it says, "Edgar Poe, English writer." He wasn't English at all! I wanted to point that out because they should change the plaque. We'll both protest! (Weiss 73).

The number of times Cortázar repeats the word 'genius' here should give a good sense of his high esteem for Poe, but the passage is even more interesting for what it suggests about Cortázar's views on nationality and what might be called the politics of translation. To start with, Cortázar's appreciation of Poe seems based on a contradiction. As opposed to the commonly held view that only native speakers can fully appreciate the literature written in their language, Cortázar suggests that he appreciates Poe's writing precisely because he is *not* English or American. Why should this be? One cynical answer might be that Cortázar does not know the language well enough to be able to recognize its ill use, but this is obviously not what Cortázar wishes to express. Rather, Cortázar's position as a non-native translator gives him another perspective, a kind of special insight that allows him to see past stylistic qualities of Poe's writing that might embarrass the native reader. His position as translator

allows him, as it were, to cross the borders of national prejudice to recognize the essential quality of Poe's writing.

There has not been much written on the fact that Cortázar was a translator. Yet translation was an important part of his career. It was as a translator that Cortázar was first able to escape Peronist Argentina and visit France, where he remained in voluntary exile. In the years before he became famous for his writing, Cortázar worked as an official translator for UNESCO, a job he kept throughout most of his life. Cortázar also translated a number of literary texts written in English and French, including such things as Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, André Gide's *L'immoraliste* and of course the Poe works already mentioned above (Alazraki 6-9). The exercise of translation undoubtedly had an effect Cortázar's own development as a writer, but his position as translator also created another perspective on his views about literature and nationality. Poised at a point of contact between different literary traditions, the translator facilitates the movement of ideas across national borders. However, differences in the theory and practice of translation reveal a lot about the attitudes that have informed the relationship between different cultures. This paper will look at some of the problems surrounding Cortázar's own views of translation, and how they relate to larger issues of national and literary identity.

In this context, the anecdote Cortázar recounts about his concern over the plaque mistakenly identifying Poe as English deserves some attention. The rue Edgar Allan Poe is located in Paris, of course, which adds to the humor of the situation. The passage presents us with a confusion of nationalities, an international incident of literary proportion: Cortázar, an Argentine exile, recognizes that Poe, an American, has been mis-recognized by the French, as English. There is a certain irony to this situation that was probably not lost on Cortázar. For a long time Edgar Allan Poe was only grudgingly allowed entry into the American canon by the arbiters of literary and national identity (critics, professors, and other authors for example). In the words of one critic, Poe has

often been left out of synthetic interpretations of American literary culture. [...] The critical dismissal of Poe has followed from Poe's own seeming disengagement with American culture, as if Poe and his critics had silently agreed to turn their backs on one another (Rosenheim and Rachman ix).

That Poe first found true appreciation in France due to the efforts of Baudelaire, is a well-known fact. Yet to some extent the point of Cortázar's anecdote seems to be that even the French have misplaced Poe. Just as the Americans and the English may have failed to recognize Poe's genius, the mistaken plaque on the rue Edgar Allan Poe in Paris suggests that the French mis-recognize Poe as well. The moral of the anecdote might be stated as such: The Americans, the English, the French -- they all get it wrong somehow. Cortázar in his role as translator, on the other hand, truly knows where Poe belongs. He recognizes Poe's proper nationality.

That Cortázar should demonstrate a concern for properly placing Poe is interesting considering that Cortázar himself has not always found an easy fit in his own literary tradition. Because of the type of literature he wrote and his residence in France, Cortázar was also attacked by critics who accused him of betraying his identity as an "Argentine" or "Latin American" writer. One critic recently described the situation as follows:

[...] Cortázar's voluntary exile is somehow felt to foreground his writing in a way that, for example, the cosmopolitan location of a García Márquez or a Vargas Llosa (both of whom have maintained legal residences in Europe) does not. Yet even if this residency requirement is waived, questions remain about Cortázar's Latin American 'identity' as they do not in the case of practically any other major figure of twentieth-century Latin American literature, Borges included (Larsen 66).

Cortázar was clearly bothered by such criticisms during his lifetime, and he questioned the notions of national and literary identity that they depended upon. In his writing and other interviews, Cortázar made various efforts to defend himself. The following example comes from an interview Luis Harss and Barbara Dohmann conducted with Cortázar:

Like Borges and a few others, I seem to have understood that the best way to be an Argentine is not to run around broadcasting the fact all the time, especially not in the stentorian tones used by the so-called autochthonous writers. I remember when I moved to Paris, a young poet who is a very well-known critic and essayist in Argentina today bitterly

reproached me for leaving and accused me of an act that sounded a lot like treason. I believe that all the books I've written from Paris have resoundingly disproved him, because my readers consider me an Argentine writer, even a very Argentine writer...I think there's a deeper way of being an Argentine, which might make itself felt, for instance, in a book where Argentina is never mentioned. I don't see why an Argentine writer has to have Argentina as his subject. I think being an Argentine means to share in a set of spiritual and intellectual values, and non-values of all sorts [...] It has nothing to do with sophomoric notions of patriotism. In Argentina there continues to be a grave confusion between national literature and literary nationalism, which are not exactly the same thing. In any case, the Argentina that appears in my later books is largely imaginary, at least where concrete references are concerned. [...] In other words, I don't require the physical presence of Argentina to be able to write ("Julio Cortázar" 53).

Cortázar's defense here can be read as a struggle over how to define 'authenticity.' Cortázar argues against the idea that one must live in or write about the country in order to be authentically Argentine. In fact, Cortázar suggests that the very refusal of these terms is what proves his own authenticity. The incessant "broadcasting" and "stentorian tones" of the "autochthonous writers," on the other hand, suggests that they are the ones pretending to be something they are not. Cortázar's defense also depends on a questioning of the very notion of "autochthony." Rejecting the need for any concrete attachment to Argentina, Cortázar recasts Argentine identity as a set of more abstract qualities, such as the shared spiritual values and the recognition of the readers he refers to. As such, Cortázar seems to reject any simplistic definition of a national literature or identity.

Yet as Neil Larsen has argued, Cortázar condemns himself with his own words when he invokes the recognition of his readers, for obviously there would be no need to mount this defense if it were not precisely for the fact that some readers had refused to recognize his authenticity as a Latin American author (68). Moreover, while Cortázar denies a certain nationalism as the basis for identity and literature with one hand, it may be that he ushers it back in with the other. In the same interview, we find the following curious passage about translation:

Language must be a constant preoccupation of the writer [...] in a literature still so deficient in this respect like our own. Cortázar attributes the linguistic difficulties of Latin-American literature in part to the bad influence of translations. The language of translations is an abstraction without idiomatic base, a type of dead jargon that reduces all styles to a common denominator (Harss and Dohmann, *Los nuestros* 287: translation mine).

The passage represents a significant reversal of values. Cortázar, who has himself been criticized for not being enough of an Argentine writer, turns that criticism around here and accuses Argentine literature as a whole of suffering from a similar deficiency. Foreign translations threaten Argentine literature, it would seem, because they are not specific to the land; they are an “abstraction without idiomatic base.” Their influence presumably introduces a note of falsity, a certain inauthenticity, into Argentine literature. By referring to translation as a “dead jargon” Cortázar implies the existence of a living language, a vital native tongue with specific and concrete ties to place which would represent translation’s opposite. Yet clearly this reasoning depends on a discourse of the most traditional nationalism, one based on seeing a country’s language as the organic product of its soil. As such, this point of view is difficult to reconcile with Cortázar’s statement about not needing the physical presence of Argentina in order to write. But the crowning irony of this statement, of course, is that Cortázar himself was a translator. How and why is it that such a condemnation of translation should come from the mouth of a translator?

It is possible to put Cortázar’s statement about translation in a larger historical context. In *Theories of Translation*, a collection of essays edited by Rainer Schulte and John Biguenet, certain attitudes towards the practice of translation can be traced. In one essay, Hugo Friedrich points out that translation, which has been known since the time of the Romans, initially involved the appropriation of ideas from the original, without any real concern about the source language or its stylistic idiosyncrasies. According to Friedrich, “translation meant transformation in order to mold the foreign into the linguistic structures of one’s own culture” (12). Schulte and Biguenet see a similar attitude in theories of translation popular through the Renaissance:

the translators in both the Roman Empire and the Renaissance considered the act of translation a rigorous exploitation of the original in order to enhance the linguistic and aesthetic dimensions of their own language. Whether a translation distorted the meanings inherent in the original text was of minor concern to the translator (2).

The politics of translation expressed in such theories are hard to miss. Translation literally involved looting the work of other cultures, a kind of linguistic colonialism that is well expressed in the military metaphor apparent, for instance, in this quote from St. Jerome: "The translator considers thought content a prisoner which he transplants into his own language with the prerogative of a conqueror" (Friedrich 12-3).

However, Schulte and Biguenet suggest that as translation theories developed through the late 18th into the 19th and 20th centuries, attitudes about how the translator should treat the source language also changed significantly. With Diderot and D'Alembert there begins to be a sense that other languages should be considered as equal rather than inferior forms of expression. Accordingly, a greater concern to adjust and adapt to the foreign becomes the hallmark of the accuracy or authenticity of translation. Yet despite this difference, there is a certain continuity between Roman and modern theories of translation. Translation is seen by both as a source of material that invigorates or improves the target language. Schulte and Biguenet summarize that view as follows:

Two distinct impressions can be drawn from these essays: (1) the transferal of the foreign from other languages into our own allows us to explore and formulate emotions and concepts that otherwise we would not have experienced; and (2) the act of translation continuously stretches the linguistic boundaries of one's own language. In that sense, translation functions as a revitalizing force of language. Translation can foster the creation of new words in the receptor language and influence the grammatical and semantic structures of that language. In short, translation should be seen as a form of linguistic and conceptual enrichment (9).

How different the sense of translation we get from Cortázar's own assertions. Instead of helping or teaching them new forms of expression, translations impoverish the Argentine writer according to

Cortázar. The “bad influence of translations” threatens to reduce “every style to a common denominator,” thus erasing the difference that a real national literary tradition presumably depends upon (Cortázar). Translation becomes a figure for the worst kind of inauthenticity.

To some extent Cortázar’s position is understandable. Indeed, his argument has much in common with the views of economists and politicians of many countries who struggle to bar foreign product from crossing their borders. This attitude is often based on the fear that cheap foreign imports will overwhelm native production. In the area of culture these views inform the efforts of French filmmakers to legislate the specific number of screens in their country that must be reserved for French films, to give just one example. Yet at the same time Cortázar seems to demand a certain “authenticity” here that he criticizes elsewhere. This notion of “authenticity” is apparent in comments Cortázar makes in the same interview about the current state of Argentine literature:

“In a country with a rich literary tradition, where the reader’s cultural evolution includes an exposure to the entire history of his own language, as can occur in Spain, France, or Germany, the aesthetic sensibility, the demands of the ear and formal standards are very high. But in Argentina we lack this” [...]. The writer [...] “repeats on a cultural plane the contrary attitude of the man without culture, semi-illiterate, who, when faced with the task of writing a letter, believes it necessary to employ a language completely unconnected with his everyday speech, as if he were struggling against some physical impediment, or conquering a series of taboos” (Harss and Dohmann *Los nuestros*, 287: translation mine).

That literature must reflect the history of the language in one country is again, a somewhat traditional nationalistic point of view. As such it would seem that a real Argentine literature would require a direct connection with Argentina and its “everyday speech.” Yet Cortázar defends his writing against charges of inauthenticity by playing down his own need for any direct contact with Argentina. It is as if Cortázar wants it both ways. On the one hand he rejects any simplistic notions of literary and national identity that have been used to attack him. But at the same time, his own defense draws on a notion of authenticity that ultimately may not be very different from that used by his detractors.

At the same time that it offers him a special perspective on literature, translation seems to function as a scapegoat for Cortázar's own anxieties about nationality. Yet by turning against translation, Cortázar seems to accept, if only implicitly, the construction of national literature and identity offered by his critics. As such, Cortázar's views on translation reveal certain contradictions in his own conception of literary and national identity. What alternative is left for the Argentine writer, after all, according to the logic of Cortázar's argument? One alternative would be not to read literature in translation, restricting the writer to the literature of his or her own country. However, considering that Cortázar's criticism of Argentine literature is itself based on a knowledge of other literatures, the Spanish, French, and German literature that Argentine writing is compared unfavorably to, this kind of parochialism seems untenable. The other alternative for the Argentine writer would be to read the literature of other countries in the original language. This second alternative was clearly Cortázar's choice, allowing for a more cosmopolitan knowledge of literatures while avoiding the dangers of translation. Yet not everyone has Cortázar's knowledge of languages. Moreover, what would become of Cortázar's own translations if everyone read in the original language? What of those translations of Poe he spent years preparing? Cortázar may know the place of Poe, but the place of his own translations seems more uncertain. It would be interesting to look at the history of those translations, why they were created, and how they were received in the different countries where they were published. Perhaps then we could develop a better sense of where both Poe and Cortázar belong.

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VIOLENT IMAGES IN CLAUDE SIMON'S *LA BATAILLE DE PHARSALE*

Robert Buch

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ORDER AND DISINTEGRATION

“Reprendre, ordonner. Premièrement, deuxièmement, troisièmement.”¹

Claude Simon's novel *La Bataille de Pharsale* (1969) is marked by a tension between the attempt to establish order, to suggest an organized structure -- not only in the novel's many disparate and discontinuous scenes, but also in the explicit organization of its material (cf. the titles of the different chapters, especially “Lexique” and “Chronologie des Événements”) -- and the disruption of such order, the invasion of chaos, of emotionally and physically overwhelming forces, inundating characters and readers alike. Narrative strands which are continuously broken off to be resumed, reiterated and reorganized at later moments of the novel reflect a desire for structure, but also generate an overall sense of confusion and disorientation. Meticulous descriptions convey a need for accuracy and precision but often the very meticulousness, the sheer detail of the descriptions is carried so far that its referents -- a landscape, a piece of fabric, a painting etc. -- disappears in the abstract visual patterns the heightened sense of perception discovers. Another way in which the desire for clarity, ultimately for “objectivity”, produces the opposite effect is the proliferation of similes, often taking the descriptions of “ordinary” phenomena into unexpected directions and making the point of departure vanish under a thick layer of metaphors and similes. Finally, the meticulously arranged scenes, modeled according to strict geometrical patterns also collapse because of the multiplication of perspectives cast upon them. The text itself invokes a “mobile” (186), a moving artwork, an object that is continuously reconfiguring its elements and shape, as the model of its own movements.

It is tempting to describe *La Bataille* as an “autopoetic” artifact, as a dynamic movement of emerging and collapsing forms. Indeed, this is the first and prevailing impression as one reads the book (and many other novels by Simon). Such a description is also in keeping with the author's numerous poetological statements and his refusal to commit his writing to any metaphysical or ideological project². But the sense of absorption and disorientation is not only a formal or structural characteristic of this writing. The narrator's relationship to his past is

marked by the same profound ambivalence. Although the different plot lines of the novel are difficult to discern, *La Bataille de Pharsale* tells the story of a relentless attempt to understand and come terms with an evasive and epistemologically unstable past. But as evasive and resistant to clear organization as this past may be, it is also intrusive and traumatic. As elusive as it may be, the past is also haunting the narrator. In the moment in which the narrator succeeds in retrieving this past, -- far from providing closure -- the catastrophic experience reemerges overwhelmingly, reigniting the past pain.

In the following, I would like to single out one of the novel's most climactic moments which assembles many of the its characteristic techniques and effects. One of the most prominent features of Simon's writing is at the center of the passage: *ekphrasis*. The narrator's traumatic war experience is re-evoked through the contemplation of a number of paintings in which the text itself assumes a kind of delirious quality. The analysis of these *ekphrases* will resonate with and come back to many of the aspects outlined above. In the last section of this paper, I would like to draw some general conclusions about Simon's relating of "image" and "history".

"BATAILLE": "INTRUSION D'UN DÉSORDRE"³

The battle scenes depicted in the section entitled "Bataille" of Simon's novel (101–122) revolve around the two opposite poles of dynamic movement, on the one hand, *and* stillness or motionlessness, on the other hand (and concomitantly, life *and* death, animation *and* petrification or paralyzation, as well as endless, empty spaces *and* confined, crowded spaces) which coincide in the text in ways which the following reading attempts to analyze. The first part of my description will focus on the increasing complexity of the text itself. The second part looks at the narrator's increasingly dynamic experience of the artworks he studies as well as of the past memories these paintings conjure up. The final part is devoted to the opposite pole of the impression of dynamics, i.e. frozen time and halted movements which inform the text throughout and which signal the traumatic nature of its images.

TEXTUAL DELIRIUM

The passage "Bataille" is marked by an increasing complexity. What does it consist of? Which narrative techniques lead to this impression? While at the outset, the referential status of what is described – a painting? a real-life scene ('real-life' within the narrative) – remains ambiguous, a little farther on in the text, the reader is able to distinguish different referential levels of the text. Four planes are most

clearly discernible: A description of a painting of a battle scene (in fact, of several different paintings)⁴, memories of an ambush in Flandres in 1940 -- the narrator O. was part of the cavalry-unit destroyed in this incident --, an act of lovemaking, quotes and insertions from Proust, Caesar, Plutarch, Lucan, Apuleius and Titus Livius⁵. After the initial undecidability and the gradual, subsequent clarification, the text embarks on a renewed blurring and ultimately suspension of the distinction of these different planes (and more are added). The most apparent cause for this blurring is that the use of italicization, which had been the major indicator of switches from one level to the other (and back to the previous ones), becomes more and more inconsistent. This transgression of the distinctness of the different planes, which now extend well beyond the limits marked by italicization, creates an effect of superposition that contrasts the prior, clearly demarcated juxtaposition. A second important cause of this superposition or rather intricate intertwinedness⁶ lies in the greater frequency with which the narrative focus switches from one plane to the next (and on to the next or back to previous ones), culminating in a kind of simultaneity. This simultaneity effect -- not simultaneity proper, but something relatively close -- is also due to the reappearance of certain elements on the four major planes. Apart from the common denominator of all scenes, "battle" in its most generic sense, there are also concrete objects that circulate -- horses, gear and weapons --, markers such as the "maintenant" repeated four times on two pages near the end (cf. 120–121) and the noise or absence thereof which seems to pervade and connect all different scenes in the very end.

A DELIRIOUS NARRATOR

While the previous remarks aimed at providing some clues as to how an increased complexity occurs on the level of the text, as one reads it, this section will focus on how an increase of pace (having to do both with a fast alternation of focus and with the suggestion of perceptual overflow) culminating in chaotic turbulence, -- "tourbillonnant" (116) maybe the best expression the text itself has to offer for this -- unfolds *within* the text. For this purpose it is helpful to look at the narrator's different positions in relation to the paintings he describes -- inasmuch as the text allows us to discern his presence.

The beginnings of the first three ekphrastic descriptions (cf. pp. 101, 105, 112), particularly the very first one, convey scenes of calm in which the beholder and narrator seems present himself. Otherwise it would be impossible for him to come to the detailed account of the light, the wind (!), the cloud formation, and other aspects of the atmosphere and the surroundings -- flying and chirping birds for instance --,

comprised of rather precise sensual perceptions. The sense that the narrator is present, that he describes a landscape in which he finds himself is reinforced by temporal indicators, like “maintenant” (101, 105), “pendant la nuit” (101) and “jusque-là” (112) which organize his rendering of the ongoing atmospheric changes he observes. Despite subtle hints -- the movement of the clouds, or the motion of the wind, is so imperceptible that the cloud formations seem almost “immobiles” (102) --, it will take readers a while to realize that the scene unfolding before them is a painted one. But even after the artificial, painted character of the depicted scene is established through the mention of the use of colors and the paint brush (cf. 102), a sense of animation prevails. In fact, the narrator’s/ beholder’s main interest seems to lie in describing and understanding this sense of animation and movement. On the one hand, he does so by pointing to the use of colors and certain compositional features of the paintings. The focus of these remarks, showing a keen art-historical sensitivity, is on the progression from rather flat surface in Piero della Francesca (first painting) to a growing spatial depth in Ucello, Brueghel and Poussin and, accordingly, from limited movement in a very confined space⁷ to an all-encompassing “maelström” (116) in the end.

On the other hand, besides the quasi professional, art-historical interest in the techniques employed by the painters⁸, the attempt to provide an idea of the kinds of movements on the paintings triggers a production of images and similes -- often marked by “comme” or “comme si”⁹-- in the narrator which, at times, almost conceal the original. This proliferation of mental images reaches a sort of climax with the third painting, Brueghel’s *Suicide of Saul* (1562) where O. first assimilates a forest of spears (“la forêt des lances”) to wheat stalks balancing in the wind¹⁰, to then suggest another image for the same kind of movement -- this time in parentheses¹¹ --, to supplement these approximations to the dynamic, the clashing and confusion of the armies on the painting by yet more images, that of the contractions and detractions of intestins or of two reptiles intertwined in a struggle¹², to bubbles on a turbulent surface of black water, to a maelström and so forth (cf. 114).

Both the somewhat detached gaze of the art-historical expert at the paintings’ dynamic effects as well as the production of further images transmitting a sensation of the same effects are considerably less at work when it comes to the last painting. Here, where the events hitherto kept apart seem to converge, to merge even, the beholder is drawn into the painting: “et moi non plus étranger, spectateur regardant les élégants et barbares condottieri aux armures d’azur [...] mais maintenant au centre

même de ce maelström” (116). O. is now so much part of the precipitated chaos -- on the painting, in the moments and in the aftermath of the ambush as well as in his jealous picturing of his wife’s adultery -- that a distinct and distanced description or a metaphorization seems impossible. His involvement is such that even his ability to form complete sentences, his syntax is lost for a moment

*et moi au centre flanc rouge acajou l’ardillon de la
boucle de cuivre me déchira la paume je ne souffrais pas
poils collés par la sueur sombres joues contre l’odeur
acide reflet mauve puis mordoré courant sur l’encolure
plissée l’herbe poudrée grisâtre du talus la coquille du
sabre heurta mon casque fracas éclatant dans ma tête
cloche emplie par le furieux désordre Achille immobile*
(117–118; italics in text).

While the overwhelming force of the painting, the depth effect of which absorbs the beholder, makes him re-experience a loss of language -- as brief as it may be --, another kind of loss has been underway throughout the whole passage: that of the sense of time. In the turbulent superposition of the actions on the painting, the moment of attack in the ambush and the climax of the act of lovemaking, time is suspended creating the sense of simultaneity pointed to above.

HALTED MOVEMENTS

The counterpart to the evocation and instantiation of increasing complexity and accelerated pace is halted movement. Gestures stopping short of being accomplished, progression without advancement, temporal disorientation, a loss of time which ultimately informs a feeling of the endless repetition of the same events. The different events superposed seem to occur in a timeless space or rather at all times and without ending. Let me reiterate some of the instances that lead up to this final image.

Throughout the text the beholder had shown a particular interest for the indicators of time on the paintings. This starts with the recurrent attempt to determine the time of day on the paintings in the beginnings of each description (101, 105, 112, 116). Although in one instance a quote from one of the classical authors provides us with a precise date and time -- “*le combat avait commencé le 9 août au lever du soleil*” (105) --, the attempt to conclude the daytime from the position of the sun, the cloud formations and the light, this quasi a-chronological or ‘natural’ determination of time ultimately leads to the image of one indeterminate,

never-ending day: “le soleil arrêté dans cette phase de son déclin où le jour s’attarde, se traîne, n’en finissant plus, s’éternisant” (117). Despite these recurrent attempts to determine the time on the paintings at an earlier point the narrator had wondered whether the notion of time was appropriate at all for the description of the paintings, whether the action unfolding on them did not occur in a timeless space rather – a feeling very much his own in the aftermath of the ambush.

l’étouffante lourdeur de ténèbres à demi nocturnes, intemporelles [...] peut-être le temps est-il une notion je ne savais pas depuis combien de temps je courais il me semblait qu’il devait y avoir des heures peut-être n’y avait-il même pas une minute il me semblait qui n’a pas sa place ici que cette voie de chemin de fer ce ballast ces traverses qui venaient lentement à ma rencontre non plus que celle d’espace d’air surgissaient d’un vague néant sans dimension dans l’espace ou le temps comme ces choses qu’on voit en rêve ou plutôt dans les cauchemars se détachant sur un fond incertain d’une obscurité terreuse où je courais sans avancer, peut-être arbalétriers, fantassins, cavaliers, écrasés sous ce ciel obscur, sont-ils condamnés, oubliés là, à se battre, s’entretuer jusqu’au dernier sans espoir de fin, de lendemains, d’aubes (105–106, no italics added).

The two sensations, to be lost in time and space and of a progression without advancing, are repeated in two more instances. After the attack the narrator discovers that his watch is broken¹³. The horse which he tried to stop gallops in the distance: “De dos s’éloignant il semblait rebondir sur place sans avancer” (109).

But the climax of this kind of paralyzation occurs at the center of the “maelström” (116). It is an image of someone being pulled off his horse by the impact of the attack (a familiar scene from *La Route des Flandres*) to remain suspended in the air, the expression of terror on his face: “sa bouche grande ouverte sur un cri mais pas de son” (118). Like in a photographic snapshot, the image captures a moment we can’t possibly ever perceive¹⁴. The ‘tuning out’ of any noise -- starting a little earlier even: “le tapage figé à ce niveau paroxysmique où il se détruit lui-même, immobilisé lui aussi dans le silence” (ibid.) -- endows the scene with a hyperrealist intensity while denying the event any meaningful interpretation. And the moment, presumably occurring in less than a fracture of a second, is prolonged into an eternity: “le soleil jaune

toujours immobile arrêté plus d'heure pas le matin pas le soir le temps arrêté pas hier pas l'année dernière il y a dix ans aujourd'hui." (ibid.) The colon at the end of this quotation, which also marks the end of the paragraph, seems to reinforce this sense of prolongation – into the present, "aujourd'hui", and beyond. However, this moment, frozen in time forever as it seems, is undone in the next line starting a new paragraph with a prosaic, matter-of-factly "maintenant il tombe". This is the "maintenant" mentioned above which parallels or superposes four different scenes, all beginning with the same "maintenant": the horseman hitting the ground, another warrior on the ground with an arrow in his back, the act of lovemaking, O. running for his life under the bullets. This oscillation between a state of halted movement and its sudden transition to a sequence featuring dynamic action and vice versa, from paralyzed acts to exalted movements characterizes the text as a whole.

While in most of the novel the painful experiences which constitute its secret center are kept at bay or merely alluded to in sentences that remain incomplete, in the contemplation of the painting the past is unleashed in all its force. And while the leitmotiv-like and elliptic *je souffrais comme...* (25, 40, 75) and *je ne savais pas que la mort...* (34, 35, 94) seemed to insist on the irretrievability of the past experience, signaling the impossibility of finding 'le mot juste', the right simile that would complete the comparison -- "comme..." --, it is the excessiveness of this suffering itself that is 'pictured' in the ekphrastic passages. 'Pictured' less in the paintings' subject matter than in the perceptual overflow which moves and paralyzes the beholder at the same time.

IMAGES OF HISTORY

"Geschichte zerfällt in Bilder."¹⁵

Claude Simon's interest in the visual arts is well-known. As a young man, he had even wanted to be a painter rather than a writer. His first literary success, *La Route des Flandres* (1960) which won him the first of many literary prizes and whose original title had been "Description fragmentaire d'un désastre", revolves around a painting and two engravings which trigger the protagonist's fantasies. His 1981 *Les Géorgiques* which brought its author the Nobel prize begins with a detailed description of an unfinished portrait of the two main protagonists; a sculpture of the main character circulates through the whole novel. Throughout his work the devastating historical experiences -- of the Spanish Civil War as well as of World War II -- are accompanied, reflected but also fragmented and rendered opaque through a confrontation with works of art. This correlation of spatial objects

(paintings, sculptures) and historical experience must come as a surprise. Even if we are not any longer in possession of a unified theory of history and narrative, it is difficult *not* to think these two concepts together. Indeed, as Hayden White's work has shown, our notion of 'history' heavily depends on narrative concepts¹⁶. At the same time, the historical catastrophes of the twentieth century have made the notion of 'narrative' seem inadequate to account for them. But if one were to abandon 'narrative' in our dealings with 'history', it is hard to imagine where to turn. Claude Simon's oeuvre represents one answer to this predicament. Obviously his take cannot provide an ultimate answer to a question the scope of which is much too broad to ever be treated in any conclusive way. Simon's writing does invite us to think about the relation of "image", "history" and "narrative" though. Let me end this paper by considering some of the implications of his choice of "image" over "narrative". (The concept of "image" is supposed to cover both the literal images, i.e. the novels' depiction of paintings at the center of the analysis above, as well as mental images, images of memory which abound in Simon's texts).

At first glance, the framed and static character of images, and especially of paintings, seem to be at odds with historical goings-on that unfold in time and which we consequently are used to conceive of as successive. But one of the reasons for Simon's choice of images is precisely to evoke a simultaneity of events rather than a consecutive and causal order. The experience of war is too manifold to allow for any hierarchical organization. For obviously a "narrative" has to distinguish between important and less important aspects of an event or of a chain of events. On the other hand, the segment of reality which an image shows is also always limited – how could the totality of war experience possibly be condensed into an image? I believe it is this putative disadvantage of the medium which makes "images" interesting for Simon. He uses this "disadvantage" to expose the limitation of any perspective that we cast on an event. Once one is aware of this limitation the aspects which make up an event multiply and both its coherence and givenness hitherto taken for granted become dubious. Curiously enough, the emphasis on "images" thus points to the constructivist character of "history". Now, narrativistic approaches in historiography (such as Hayden Whites) have always been quite aware of this fact. Moulding historical events into a "narrative order" need not mean to "naturalize" history. If we nevertheless have this impression it is because narratives often tend to conceal their own constructivist character. Simon foregoes this risk not only by keeping us aware of the fact that texts are written artifacts and always mediated by the writer's craft but also by not establishing any

causal links between the different images of his novels. His texts are comprised of series of images rather than of events that are connected in a meaningful syntagmatic sequence. The novels' order of images is associative and affective rather than logical. This is what prevents the images from serving as allegories. If the author's privileging of images challenges historical accounts that rely on narrative, his novels which proceed "par tableaux détachés" (Flaubert)¹⁷ also imply a critique of a specific brand of historical painting, namely nineteenth-century *Historienmalerei*. *Historienmalerei* singles out historically decisive moments -- often the foundational moments -- in the development of a nation and depicts these moments in a monumental and glorifying fashion. While Simon's obsessive concern with historical experience (first and foremost his own, but 1940 was of course traumatic for the French nation as a whole and so was the Spanish Civil War for the European Left) seems to share the idea of the historical conditioning of the present, i.e. the idea that there exists an important bond between past and present, in his accounts this relation is far from salutary or edifying. Much on the contrary: Simon's *ekphrases* in many ways claim the opposite of what *Historienmalerei* at least implicitly claims to accomplish. Nineteenth-century historical paintings aim to provide the present with a heroic image of itself drawn from the past. In Simon's view the past is not a given but the result of the selection and recombination of specific elements. Moreover, the tableaux and images of Simon's novels put into question whether any moment can be isolated without precisely dissolving the event to be captured. In view of the overwhelming disintegration which is the principal experience of Simon's narrators and protagonists, his anti-heroes prove to be unable to perform the synthetic steps necessary to produce a complete "picture" of the past. Not only are there no aspects of the past less or more conspicuous than others, these moments also defy any integration into a coherent whole. Where Simon's anti-heroes single out other, previous representations of the past -- as often in the confrontation with paintings which the novels thematize --, it is only to yet again reencounter their own disruptive past experiences. Whether the paintings contemplated or the mental images (the images memory conjures up) -- instead of presenting a conclusive view of what happened, these images restage, albeit for brief moments, the past to then surrender to new images. Thus the images conjured up by memory are essentially unstable. The characters' imagination constantly transposes images onto other images creating the temporal confusion so characteristic for Simon's novels. It is impossible to create any sense of order, to stabilize the past or impose clear-cut distinctions between past and present. The past is not an

ordered space out of which a subject could retrieve specific moments at its will to consolidate an identity (whether as an individual or as a nation state) but rather an entropic “magma”, to use one of Simon’s favorite metaphors¹⁸, that both feeds and destroys his characters’ visions of history. Hence the unrelenting dynamic of construction and destruction which I tried to delineate in the analysis presented above. Claude Simon himself opens one of his novels, *Histoire* (1967), with the following lines by Rilke which express the same in a much better fashion:

*Cela nous submerge. Nous l’organisons. Cela
tombe en morceaux
Nous l’organisons de nouveau et tombons
nous-même en morceaux.*

NOTES

¹ Claude Simon, *La Bataille de Pharsale* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1969), 184; all page numbers incorporated in the text refer to this edition.

² Cf. Claude Simon, “Roman, Description et Action”, *Studi di Letteratura Francese VIII. Il romanzo in discussioni* (Florence, 1982).

³ Cf. *Bataille*, 184.

⁴ For an identification of the paintings see K. W. Hempfer, *Poststrukturelle Texttheorie und narrative Praxis* (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1976), 153 as well as Jean Rousset, *Passages. Échanges et Transpositions* (Paris: José Corti, 1990), 168–169. The paintings can be identified from certain allusions in later parts of the novel – cf. 153–155, 160, 171, 190, 200, 228, 229.

⁵ Cf. Hempfer, 153 and Rousset, 168; on intertextuality see also Claudia Hoffer Gosselin, “Voices of the Past in Claude Simon’s *La Bataille de Pharsale*”, in Jeanine Parisier Plottel, Hanna Charney (eds.), *Intertextuality: New Perspectives in Criticism*, (New York: New York Literary Forum, 1978), 23–33; Mary Orr, “Literature in Literature in Claude Simon’s *La Bataille de Pharsale*”, in *Romance Studies* 12 (1988), 65–76; Françoise van Rossum-Guyon, “Ut pictura poesis. Une lecture de

La Bataille de Pharsale”, in Winfried Wehle (ed.), *Nouveau Roman* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1980), 361–375.

⁶ At one point the text describes the embeddedness of two armies clashing in the surrounding landscape as “étroitement imbriqué” (113, cf. also “encastré” 104) which may be the best term for its own embedding and mirroring of one plane of narrative in the other(s).

⁷ Cf. “le tout dans un espace si réduit [...] que les mouvements [...] ont un caractère heurté, arythmique et privé d’élan” (103), “ces gestes sans ampleur et forcément un peu raides”, “tout espace, donc, intégralement rempli” (104).

⁸ Cf. “les lignes de fuite suggèrent la notion d’espace et de profondeur de même que le dessin de quelques-uns des objets, particulièrement les chevaux, non plus représentés seulement de profil mais, certains, gisant à terre ainsi que leurs cavaliers, dans des positions postulant une troisième dimension” (108) or “effet recherché (fuite, profondeur) étant obtenu au moyen d’une habile disposition scénique qui relie ce groupe au décor peint” (109).

⁹ Cf. “comme si elles [les étendards] étaient suspendues à des cintres invisibles par d’invisibles fils qui les maintiendraient au dessus de la mêlée des combattants”, “comme sur les pistes de danse” (103), “On dirait des gens obligés...”, “comme ces animaux ou ces objets enfermés dans un bloc de plexiglas” (104), “comme celui [...] d’un terrain de jeu, d’une place ou d’une scène de théâtre” (105).

¹⁰ Cf. “à la façon des épis dans un champ de blé sous les poussés du vent qui les fait tour à tour ployer et se redresser, le mouvement se propageant de proche en proche” (113).

¹¹ Cf. “(comme ceux qu’exécutent sur les scènes des music-halls ces bataillons [!] de girls levant et abaissant leurs jambes – ou leurs bustes – l’un après l’autre de sorte que de longues vagues semblent courir le long du front des cuisses nues, des sourires figés et des coiffures emplumées)” (ibid.).

¹² Cf. “l’ensemble des deux armées dans une confuse mêlée agitée de contractions, de lentes et sinueuses convulsions comme celles qui

reserrent ou dilatent les intestins ou ces inextricables nœuds de reptiles emmêlés dans ces combats mortels où dans les replis compliqués des anneaux il est impossible de reconnaître l'un ou l'autre" (ibid.).

¹³ Cf. "le soleil était déjà haut je me demandais quelle heure il pouvait être le verre de ma montre était brisé il ne restait plus qu'une aiguille la petite arrêtée [...] plus tard de nouveau je me demandai alors arrêter de se demander je ne pouvais même plus me rappeler depuis quand ça avait commencé depuis quand nous avançons sur cette route bordée de morts blessés des siècles peut-être" (115–116; italics not mine).

¹⁴ Cf. "que l'oeil [...] perçoit seulement, mais en réalité ne regarde jamais" (183); on this theme in *La Route des Flandres* cf. Irene Albers, "'The Shock of Photographs, the Weight of the World': Photographic War Memories in Claude Simon's *La Route des Flandres*", in Thomas Wägenbaur (ed.), *The Poetics of Memory* (Tübingen: Stauffenburg Verlag, 1998), 231–248.

¹⁵ "History is segmented into images." Walter Benjamin, *Das Passagen-Werk* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1983), 595.

¹⁶ Hayden White, *Metahistory. The historical imagination in nineteenth-century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1973).

¹⁷ *Discours de Stockholm* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1986), 26.

¹⁸ Cf. Preface to *Orion Aveugle* (Geneva: Skira, 1970), no pagination.

MESTIZAJE, VIOLENCIA Y DIALOGISMO EN *DON ÁLVARO*¹

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Desde su estreno en 1835, *Don Álvaro*, del duque de Rivas, ha suscitado una viva polémica y generado diversas lecturas. El mayor énfasis, sin embargo, ha recaído en torno a la importancia del *sino* como elemento clave para la comprensión integral de la obra. Descartada una primera hipótesis—defendida entre otros por Peers—que abogaba por el carácter inconsistente del personaje y de la obra misma, la crítica ha tratado de delimitar el eje conceptual básico en el cual el drama cobra sentido y coherencia. Así, por ejemplo, desde Cardwell es común aludir al carácter simbólico de la obra, viéndonos obligados a reconocer “the underlying metaphysical problem” (564) de una figura como la de don Álvaro. En el caso de Cardwell la llamada injusticia cósmica estaría en el centro de la cosmovisión de la obra, y cualquier intento de entenderla pasaría necesariamente por el cabal reconocimiento de la misma.²

En el presente trabajo se tiene como meta profundizar en un aspecto fundamental que comúnmente ha sido minimizado u obviado en las interpretaciones del drama de Rivas. Me refiero al hecho de que don Álvaro es un mestizo, hijo de un virrey rebelde y de una princesa inca. De tal modo, a los conflictos típicos inherentes a un drama romántico, se le superponen aquellos generados por el bagaje étnico y socio-cultural que ostenta el personaje. Con el propósito de desarrollar este aspecto, se acudirá en principio a un planteamiento crítico afin a esta preocupación, el mismo que fue elaborado por Pattison en su artículo “The Secret of don Álvaro”. Para Pattison resulta factible, y aconsejable, referirse a las fuerzas sociales, y ya no a las sobrenaturales, como las causantes del *sino* adverso de don Álvaro.³ En respaldo de su argumento, encuentra una diferencia básica respecto al héroe romántico “tradicional”; dicha diferencia estriba en que, según Pattison, en el héroe romántico tradicional es el destino el que se encarga de ocultar el carácter noble de su origen, mientras que en el caso de *Don Álvaro*, es el propio héroe quien se inhibe de dar a conocer su origen noble a los demás a pesar de la alta estima en que tiene a su alcurnia. “Why then does he not speak out?, Why does he conceal his great nobility?” (68) se pregunta Pattison con inquietud.

Lo que se procura hacer, desde una perspectiva más acorde a las preocupaciones de la reflexión crítica contemporánea, es retornar

a las cuestiones básicas que apuntó Pattison en su ensayo hace ya más de treinta años. En primer lugar importa señalar que no se piensa que esta lectura en particular ofrezca la clave definitiva para entender el drama de Rivas, o que nos aproxime a una "verdadera lectura" del mismo. Se entiende, sí, que es necesario reevaluar una línea de argumentación que ha sido más bien reducida al mínimo en beneficio de pesquisas críticas inclinadas a dilucidar el nivel simbólico al que ya se ha hecho referencia. En tal sentido son otras las preguntas que interesan formular aquí, verbigracia: ¿Por qué la Otredad de don Álvaro moviliza en torno a sí tantas inquietudes y desencadena tanta violencia? ¿por qué los demás, y ya no don Álvaro, se ven en la necesidad de enfatizar su condición de mestizo y de indagar respecto a ella? ¿por qué a la revelación de su origen le sigue el reproche, cuando no el escarnio? Asimismo existe un aguzado perspectivismo (vinculable con los efectos del dialogismo) que redundará en la apreciación que podamos tener sobre don Álvaro, y que responde a diversos motivos que serán comentados más adelante. Por ahora resultará útil completar el razonamiento de Pattison y resumir las conclusiones que ofrece.

Después de repasar las sucesivas escenas en que don Álvaro desaprovecha la oportunidad de revelar su origen, Pattison concluye que:

don Alvaro's fate is directly dependent on his mixed blood. His tragic flaw is his inability to rise above Spanish society's attitude toward the offspring of racial intermarriage, for in his subconscious mind he accepts society's judgment and suffers from a great inferiority complex (74).

Este último aserto le ha valido para que su postura sea fácilmente refutada, y en cierta medida simplificada al extremo, tal como lo demuestran los comentarios de Cardwell o Shaw.⁴ Sobre todo al diagnosticarle al personaje un gran complejo de inferioridad, el mismo Pattison formula una conclusión que socava la interesante argumentación que despliega en otras partes de su ensayo. La preocupación central de la tesis de Pattison, sin embargo, continúa siendo válida en la medida que retornemos a la cuestión que la motiva, y que nos olvidemos de sus dictámenes insostenibles acerca de la psicología de don Álvaro. Decir como lo afirma en otro párrafo que "He is driven not by the force of the fate, but by the force of circumstances" (74), es reencontrarse con un elemento muy importante que merece ser atendido con mayor detalle.

Ya en la primera jornada se tiene una indicación inequívoca del carácter complejo de la representación del héroe. Don Álvaro es según indicación del habitante primero en la escena segunda "un advenedizo" (66) que sin embargo es exaltado fervorosamente por el oficial y por Preciosilla, la gitana que desde su condición marginal, resalta con entusiasmo la nobleza de don Álvaro. El mismo canónigo, quien claramente representa al *status quo* en esta escena, enfatiza sobre todo la cuestión estamental y la incertidumbre de su origen:

CANONIGO. Fuera de Sevilla nacen también
caballeros, sí señor; pero. . . ¿Lo es don
Álvaro? . . . Sólo sabemos que ha venido de
Indias hace dos meses y que ha traído dos
negros y mucho dinero . . . Pero ¿quién es? . .

HABITANTE PRIMERO. Se dicen tantas y tales cosas de él
. . . (67).

HABITANTE SEGUNDO. Es un ente muy misterioso.

El aura misteriosa del personaje se corresponde con los atributos del héroe romántico, tal como lo ha explicado Praz. Al origen desconocido bajo el que se esconde un noble linaje, se le sumará su naturaleza apasionada y su fortuna adversa, muy en la línea de caracterización de "the Fatal Men" (Praz 59) del romanticismo. Al respecto, Francisco LaRubia Prado arguye de manera sugestiva que el misterio de don Álvaro hay que entenderlo desde otra perspectiva. Para este crítico don Álvaro encarna el tabú según lo explicado por Freud y de allí el misterio y el peligro que rodea a su persona (10).⁵ Volviendo al diálogo previo, se advierte cómo su linaje "inca", es por el momento apenas motivo de curiosidad por tratarse todavía de un rumor. La etnicidad del personaje no queda al principio planteada directamente, o al menos cede en esta instancia temprana al tópico del origen misterioso del héroe. Resulta significativo advertir aquí el hecho de que don Álvaro haya venido de las Indias no sólo con mucho dinero, sino también con dos esclavos negros. Esta potestad de tener esclavos a su servicio no sólo resalta su condición de señor, sino también constituye un índice visible de la sociedad colonial y multiétnica de la que él mismo proviene.

En la jornada tercera el misterio del personaje empieza a aclararse un poco. El propio don Álvaro alude a su origen—aunque sin revelarlo directamente—en su famoso monólogo en la escena III:

DON ÁLVARO. Amor y ambición ardiente
me engendraron de concierto,

.....
Entre bárbaros crecí,
y en la edad de la razón,
a cumplir obligación
que un hijo tiene acudí [. . .] (935-36, 941-44).

Hasta el momento sólo se sabía que don Álvaro era un indiano, un “advenedizo” a los ojos de los Calatrava, y un “superhombre”⁶ a los ojos del pueblo. Ahora entra a tallar un nuevo elemento, su condición de “bárbaro”. Haber sido criado entre bárbaros, no implica un demérito en la autovaloración del héroe. Indica más bien un hecho concreto de su historia personal, que no vicia, y que por el contrario, eleva aun más ante sus ojos su estatuto de nobleza. En don Álvaro, no se percibe una valoración negativa en este recuento. Todo lo contrario. Es probable, como lo trae a colación Busquets, que el tópico del “buen salvaje” también tenga resonancia en este drama. Sobre todo en la significación positiva que el propio don Álvaro le otorga al hecho de haber sido criado entre bárbaros. En este sentido no resultaría aventurado asociar a don Álvaro con el ser puro e incorrupto del discurso ilustrado. Pero, y como será explicado con mayor detalle más adelante, es evidente que los Calatrava juzgan a don Álvaro desde una postura muy distinta ya que para ellos su proximidad con la barbarie lo sitúa en los temidos márgenes del orden impuesto por el imperio colonial español.

Otra cuestión relevante aquí es la continuación de este perspectivismo que se notaba ya en la jornada primera. Sin duda don Álvaro goza del favor popular, y es conocido nada menos como “la prez de España” (985). Sin embargo, esta cualidad superlativa se derrumba en su enfrentamiento con don Carlos en la jornada cuarta. La admiración de don Félix por don Fadrique, que es la misma que siente el pueblo hacia su héroe, obviamente se esfuma una vez que se entera que bajo la persona de Fadrique se oculta nada menos que don Álvaro, el infamador de la honra familiar. La venganza, y el odio, como lo ha apuntado casi con unanimidad la crítica, están en primer término, viciando cualquier relación fraternal o actitud compasiva hacia el Otro. La pugna entre ambos se ve claramente reflejada en el siguiente intercambio:

DON ÁLVARO. cuando a conocer lleguéis
mi origen excelso y puro.
Al primer grande español
no le cedo en jerarquía:
es más alta mi hidalguía

que el trono del mismo sol.
DON CARLOS. ¿Estáis, don Álvaro, loco?
¿Qué es lo que pensar osáis? (1590-7).

El diálogo es a todas luces imposible. Don Álvaro está “loco” porque para los Calatrava es simple y llanamente imposible reconocer nobleza alguna en un ser como don Álvaro. Este abismo que separa a ambas partes, impidiendo toda comunicación efectiva, va a llegar a su representación culminante en el enfrentamiento con don Alfonso en la jornada quinta.

Antes del encuentro decisivo con don Alfonso y de la aclaración total del “enigma” tenemos un revelador pasaje puesto en boca del hermano Melitón. Ante todo, no se niega el carácter cómico que tiene este personaje. Melitón, efectivamente, semeja en mucho a la figura del gracioso de la comedia del Siglo de Oro. Sin embargo, su condición de gracioso no impide que leamos con atención sus palabras, más aún cuando, en ambas ocasiones, recalca con insistencia que lo dicho a don Álvaro fue expresado en son de broma. Primero observa Melitón (por broma) que don Álvaro “parece un mulato” (160); y líneas más abajo dice en esta misma vena ligera (también “por broma”): “al verle yo salir sin cuidarse del aguacero ni de los truenos, que hacían temblar estas montañas, le dije por broma que parecía entre los riscos un indio bravo, y me dio un berrido que me aturulló [. . .]” (160). Tradicionalmente, se interpretan los comentarios del hermano Melitón en relación con el efecto negativo que producen en don Álvaro. La “mala” reacción de don Álvaro, confirmaría en esta lógica su fragilidad psicológica y su “inseguridad social”, cuando no la dimensión de sus complejos irresueltos.⁷ En este análisis se entiende que en las alusiones del hermano Melitón a las características raciales de don Álvaro hay que atender a otras cosas. Indican, en primer lugar, la relevancia de esta condición en la representación del Otro (reducido en este caso al estereotipo fetichista del discurso colonial, según lo formulado por Bhabha) y evidencian simultáneamente un sesgo racista, aunque velado por la “broma”, expresada por un sujeto vinculado al clero.⁸ Estas apreciaciones no están lejanas a aquellas reproducidas por Benedict Anderson cuando a propósito de la emergencia de mestizos en las Américas como grupos socialmente visibles, anota: “Their emergence permitted a style of thinking to flourish wich foreshadows modern racism” (59).

Finalmente, todo lo esbozado anteriormente cobra dimensiones inequívocas en el episodio culminante que enfrenta al final a don Álvaro con don Alfonso. Don Alfonso le apostrofa el ser

hijo de un virrey traidor que levantó a “los indios salvajes” (2199) y de una princesa Inca. Don Álvaro, por el contrario, exalta la nobleza de su alcurnia mestiza, y la ve, ingenuamente, ahora que ha sido revelada, como un factor que reactiva su esperanza.

DON ALFONSO. Tú entre los indios creciste,
como fiera te educaste,
y viniste ya mancebo
con oro y con favor grande,
a buscar completo indulto
para tus traidores padres.

.....
DON ÁLVARO. ¿Veis lo ilustre de mi sangre? . . .
¿Veis? . . .

DON ALFONSO. Con sumo gozo veo
que estáis ciego y delirante.

.....
Y porque sea más completa,
te digo no te jactes
de noble . . . Eres un mestizo
fruto de traiciones . . . (2212-17, 2245-48, 2269-71).

Opina Cardwell al respecto que: “His upbringing in the wild has stamped Álvaro as an exile and outsider” (563). Ciertamente, a la luz de lo reproducido en los pasajes previos, se trataría de algo más complejo que esto. Los Calatrava, son, como se ha podido ir apreciando, los representantes de un orden viejo tanto en lo moral como en lo religioso y lo económico-social. Al punto que en su título nobiliario evocan a la célebre y rancia orden militar de Calatrava, la cual fue instituída en 1164 para luchar contra los moros durante la Reconquista. El que ellos participen de esta valoración negativa no significa ninguna sorpresa, y deviene del todo coherente dentro del espíritu de casta que los anima así como de la la concepción estamental que defienden.⁹ Ellos no pueden ver en don Álvaro a un noble, por la sencilla razón de que su sangre está mezclada con la india. Este factor termina por anular definitivamente cualquier duda respecto a los impedimentos previos. Los Calatrava se adhieren desde esta perspectiva a la llamada tesis de la desigualdad sustentada por cierto sector del clero español a raíz de la conquista de América. Como lo ha explicado Todorov,¹⁰ con esta doctrina la diferencia del Otro se reduce a la simple y llana inferioridad. Don Álvaro no es un semejante (y por tanto no es objeto de compasión cristiana, ya que no refleja al sujeto dominante), es un inferior. La “fiera” a la que hace referencia

don Alfonso tiene su correlato en los juicios de valor usados para denigrar al sujeto subalterno: “bestia”, “no civilizado”, “bárbaro”. El que tales concepciones puedan ser esgrimidas a mediados del siglo XVIII—período en que está ambientado el drama—no es un hecho sorprendente, ni hay que descartarlo como un anacronismo. Todo lo contrario, resulta perfectamente coherente dentro del discurso colonial y ultra conservador que defienden los Calatrava. Tampoco sorprende si lo pensamos en relación con los postulados de la Ilustración y su proyecto modernizador, en donde el buen salvaje provee una variante benigna pero no menos paternalista del sujeto colonizado.

En la leyenda que rodea la génesis del drama de Rivas, se hace mención a la figura del Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, hijo natural de una princesa inca y de uno de los primeros conquistadores, cuya tumba acaso alguna vez visitara Rivas en Córdoba.¹¹ Si revisamos la profusa historia de rebeliones contra la opresión colonial, otro nombre y otras circunstancias vienen a la mente: se trata de la figura de Túpac Amaru II, noble indígena que encabezó el levantamiento más vasto (y más sangriento) en los Andes del antiguo virreinato del Perú, y que fuera salvajemente ejecutado en 1781. No hace falta, sin embargo, extremar los paralelos al respecto. Como dato general basta recordar el estado de desigualdad jurídica que sufren los nacidos en América durante la colonia (agudizada, por supuesto, en las poblaciones mestizas y nativas), para comprender la posición subordinada que por su origen le corresponde a don Álvaro.¹² Como se puede observar, este singular héroe romántico no escapa al férreo marco que el discurso colonial depara para los sujetos bajo su dominio.

Si bien noble y rico, son demasiadas las “señas de identidad” de signo adverso en don Álvaro como para pasarlas por alto: la oscuridad de su piel, el hecho de haber nacido en tierra de bárbaros, lo marcan indeleblemente con los significantes de una otredad amenazante cuya diferencia se concibe como negatividad. Inclusive, gran parte de la irracionalidad romántica del héroe puede ser entendida en función de las categorías con las que el Otro aparece comúnmente codificado. Salvaje, satánico e inescrutable, el silencio al que está sometido el subalterno no pocas veces estalla en episodios de la más cruda violencia como los que recorren de principio a fin el drama de Rivas. Sostener, pues, como lo hace Shaw que “el que don Álvaro sea un mestizo no significa sino otro obstáculo que el destino pone en su camino” (25) es simplificar en exceso la dimensión que tal condición cobra en el personaje. Se espera con lo comentado anteriormente haber ilustrado el modo en que su condición de mestizo-americano

aparece imbricada con su *sino*, y cómo no es posible aludir a uno de estos factores sin que intervenga el otro.

Ha de tenerse presente, por tanto, que la cuestión del mestizaje en *Don Álvaro* no obedece ni mucho menos a un mero afán de exotismo, y que entendida de manera orgánica se convierte en uno de los ejes centrales en el drama de Rivas. En la caracterización de don Álvaro, la mirada interior, expresada por el héroe en sus monólogos y diálogos, es tan importante como la mirada exterior que se proyecta sobre él. Es decir, resulta imposible no reparar en el hecho de que la figura de don Álvaro es asimismo construida por la mirada y la voz de los otros. La llamada "psicología" del personaje, o mejor aún, su representación social, se configuran en el intercambio o pugna dialógica, en el sentido que este concepto cobra en Bajtín.¹³ En este contexto el héroe de Rivas adquiere un rango conflictivo que lo acerca al carácter contingente del héroe moderno. De ello se infiere que la "modernidad" y la vigencia del drama de Rivas se deben en gran medida a este logro plural, cifrado en la capacidad de proyectar a partir de la figura de don Álvaro una verdadera lucha dialéctica, que si bien es interior, tiene también un claro correlato exterior. No existe un don Álvaro unidimensional; por el contrario, su figura está atravesada por voces y miradas diversas que hablan de la gran complejidad, y no de la inconsistencia del personaje. Por eso resulta estéril y repetitiva la insistencia en reducir al personaje a los límites estrechos del monologismo de una interpretación ortodoxa que se imponga al drama.

La visión que podamos tener de la ideología en conflicto en la obra, no contradice el evidente nivel simbólico (o alegórico) que se plantea, aunque ciertamente postula otra manera de leer el texto. Ambos aspectos son de suma relevancia y no existe la necesidad de supeditar jerárquicamente uno respecto al otro. Habría que entenderlos, más bien, como dos niveles que se relacionan y se explican mutuamente, sin necesidad de sugerir la dependencia del credo metafísico sobre la estructuración social. Afirmar que el mestizaje de don Álvaro es un elemento que en buena medida explica y ayuda a entender el *sino* del personaje no desmerece la importancia que en el drama tienen la providencia, la injusticia cósmica, la predestinación, la racionalidad ilustrada, la estructura edípica o la fatalidad griega.

NOTAS

¹ A continuación se esboza un apretado resumen del argumento. Don Álvaro es un misterioso indiano quien a su arribo a Sevilla pretende a doña Leonor, hija del marqués de Calatrava. Por accidente, don Álvaro propicia la muerte del marqués y huye perseguido por los hijos, don Carlos y don Alfonso de Vargas, a quienes posteriormente dará muerte en sendos duelos a los que es provocado. Luego de servir en la guerra y de escapar de la cárcel, don Álvaro se refugia en un convento donde finalmente lo encuentra don Alfonso. Herido de muerte por don Álvaro, don Alfonso alcanza a ultimar a su hermana, doña Leonor, quien vivía recogida como una ermitaña y vuelve a aparecer aquí en escena. Enloquecido, don Álvaro se suicida arrojándose a los abismos no sin antes proferir expresiones de condenación ante la mirada aterrada de los frailes.

² En esta misma línea Donald Shaw pone énfasis en la importancia de la clave simbólica—y no realista—de la obra: el *sino* en *Don Álvaro* se expresa en función de un rechazo de la interpretación providencialista de la existencia que supone un designio de vida benevolente (Shaw 20). Navas, a su turno, cataloga al héroe de “Edipo moderno y cristiano” (49); mientras que para Ermanno Caldera, el eje de la obra funciona en relación a la oposición de lo que él distingue como la ley del amor y la ley del honor (43). Otros críticos, como Carlos Leal, consideran que en el drama de Rivas hay una tensión básica entre el amor, afiliado a una concepción cristiana de la vida, y el honor como principio caballeresco que se opone al anterior. Para John P. Gabriele, en cambio, el *sino* del héroe le sugiere “el concepto de predestinación dentro de un contexto dogmático cristiano” (228). En este sentido don Álvaro aparece “predestinado” por un plan divino en el cual la perdición—y no la Gloria—aparece estipulada. En contraste a lo anterior, hay quienes como Loreto Busquets, ven en don Álvaro ya no a un rebelde, un noble orgulloso o un “predestinado”, sino a un ilustrado. Don Álvaro es en la concepción roussoniana desde la que lee Busquets “el buen salvaje”, y por tanto está próximo a la “razón natural” que se sitúa al lado de la verdad. Esta “verdad” racional se opone a la impostura religiosa (Busquets 62-63). Finalmente, Kevin Larsen vuelve sobre el tema del *sino* para señalar esta vez el

parentesco de la obra de Rivas con el *Oedipus Tyrannus* de Sofócles. En ambos casos, apunta Larsen, es posible rastrear una maldición familiar; igualmente la cuestión de la *harmatia*, o falla esencial ocurre en ambos textos. En el caso de don Álvaro su mayor error está asociado, según este crítico, con una defensa vana de su honor.

³ Pattison resume de la siguiente manera esta convicción: “ In *Don Alvaro* we certainly have faith in the first sense: we see the working out of don Alvaro’s ‘portion.’ This is determined by the circumstances of don Alvaro’s birth and attitude of both the hero and society toward these facts, not by some external supernatural force” (68).

⁴ Ver en Cardwell (560) y en Shaw (25, 40).

⁵ La tesis del ensayo de LaRubia Prado, quien rechaza la noción de “injusticia cósmica”, se basa en lo que en su lectura identifica como “el drama edípico” que se entabla entre los representantes de la ley, los Calatrava, y la figura filial de don Álvaro (7) .

⁶ Adapto aquí la expresión usada por Lovett para referirse al tipo de “super-Romantic play” (69) en el que ubica al drama de Rivas.

⁷ Pattison ni siquiera menciona la “anécdota”, y para Lovett esta referencia sirve también para confirmar que “he has a certain sensitivity to his social background [which] cannot be denied” (72-73).

⁸ Bhabha elabora los planteamientos que se recogen aquí en el capítulo “The other question. Stereotype, discrimination and the discourse of colonialism” (66-84).

⁹ Balibar (325-26) ejemplifica la formación y los efectos del “racismo clasista” a partir de la persecución de los judíos después de la Reconquista española.

¹⁰ Todorov desarrolla estos conceptos sobre todo en los capítulos 3, 4.

¹¹ Pattison (75-78) acoge esta versión hacia el final de su ensayo y le otorga un lugar preeminente en sus conclusiones. Siempre amparado bajo la premisa del “complejo de inferioridad” que atribuye a los mestizos, escribe: “the essential elements of don Alvaro's character are all present in Garcilaso—his feeling of inferiority owing to his acceptance of Spanish society's attitude toward *mestizos* and his over-compensation by boasting about his exalted line and the grandeur of the Inca's past” (76).

¹² Ver en Anderson “Creole pioneers” (47-65).

¹³ Ver especialmente los capítulos 1 y 2.

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FROM IMPERIAL CHARACTERS TO LITERARY COMMUNISM IN *NOUVELLES ORIENTALES* BY MARGUERITE YOURCENAR

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Wrought in historical and discursive conditions that complicate notions of an original, inscribed in modalities and inflected with multivalent, gendered voices, and comprised of temporal and discursive subtleties, Marguerite Yourcenar's *Nouvelles Orientales*, particularly "Comment Wang-Fô Fut sauvé" provides a cultural praxis for identity formation; iterations of an interwoven Taoist Chinese and Japanese classic are what the story signifies.¹ Translation from classical Chinese into a twentieth century French lyrical prose mode reiterates the theme of multivalent identity in translation, which for Yourcenar involves listening to a voice, "l'écoute d'une voix."² This voice distant in terms of language and time, but necessary for thinking, since clear thoughts are those which have already, but only if we are able to comprehend by means of translation. While providing a new approach to these tales, Yourcenar's modern translation, seen as within a community of other modern versions revises and refines recent theoretical approaches to translation. The dynamic relationship of texts and authors located in differing times and places articulated here impacts not only reading and translation, but also the politics of reading and writing.

It matters that the periods to which Yourcenar was most drawn in other works of her oeuvre, classical Greece, the late Hellenistic Roman Empire, the late middle ages and the nineteenth century in northern Europe, were are all moments of increased literacy, hence the need for translation. In this particular act of translation into a modern idiom, we have more than a parody or pastiche. Yourcenar's work enacts a process that Renaissance humanists termed *translatio imitatio*—imitation between faithful copying and complete transformation.³ The suspension of the present is translated into a rhetorical generality (*un ton historique*) that, Yourcenar suggests, befits a work, whose appearance is a temporal rupture in the normal course of time. While doing this, Yourcenar interrogates commonplace notions of time and aesthetic creation in terms of a dichotomy between real and the imaginary by means of a rhetorical crossing of the arts, painting and narrative. Yourcenar often uses painterly metaphors and signals toward acoustical space in her idea of translation and artistic production as hearing a voice, "l'écoute d'une

voix.” Painterly metaphors and lyric become associated with narrative voice and this corresponds to the effort of translating writing to other artistic forms, showing Yourcenar’s unwillingness to indulge in a strictly narrative construction of aesthetic experience. That the work of literature does not take place according to the time of the everyday, whose chief marker is the immediacy of the present, is what I hope to show the succeeding analyses of the tale. There occurs a temporal rupture, or opening of time, I argue, by which we might approach an understanding of textual community.

“Comment Wang-Fô Fut suavé” is based on a Taoist apologue about an aging painter sentenced to death by the emperor of the Kingdom of Han for having created a world of such great beauty that empirical reality seems to the “Celestial Dragon” who reigns, a pale reflection. The tale ends with the escape of Wang and his disciple Ling into the painting that he is commanded to finish by the emperor.

In my view, the tale consists of two major parts: the life of the painter and the life of his artwork, that is, the painting itself. These two converge, as do the eternal and the transitory, and the rhetorical crossings between the arts, narrative and the visual arts. Consider the final scene where we have the supernatural disappearance of Wang and his disciple into the painting. In this disappearing act, we witness the crossing of suspended time, eternal and the transitory which becomes condensed it into a single visual image: [...] et le peintre Wang-Fô et son disciple Ling disparurent à jamais sur cette mer de jade bleu que Wang-Fô venait d’inventer.”⁴ The disappearance of the painter and his apprentice in the painting amounts to an escape into a realm somewhere “between” the seascape and the painting, between a dream world and the empirical world. If one returns back to the world outside the painting what one finds there is an indictment of the artist. Consider for example, the passage in which the emperor accuses Wang of willful deception in the art he has invented:

Tu m’as menti, Wang-Fô, vieil imposteur: le monde n’est qu’un tas de taches confuses, jetées sur le vide par un peintre insensé, sans cesse effacés par nos larmes. Le royaume de Han n’est pas le plus beau des royaumes, et je ne suis pas l’Empereur. Le seul empire sur lequel il vaille la peine de régner est celui où tu pénètres, vieux Wang, par le chemin des Mille Courbes et des Mille Couleurs. Toi seul règnes en paix sur des montagnes couvertes d’une neige qui ne peut fondre et sur des champs de narcisses qui ne peuvent pas mourir.⁵

If one takes the emperor's word for it, then, it is the life represented in painting that comes to hypnotize one, to sink down into non-knowledge by dint of an excess of nuance, shades of meaning and distinction because of proliferation of elements, a heterotopy endlessly proliferating and disseminating. It leads one to blur the boundary between inside and outside painting, living and non-living. The speech of the celestial dragon goes so far as to say that the art of Wang causes one to interrogate not only the question of "things" but human identity itself and the foundations of power, expressed by his realization "je ne suis pas l'Empereur." In all this violence we might ask, where does transformation of the external world come in? Is the aesthetic realm simply an escape, or the expression of a narcissistic self, "dans un champ de narcisse," as the emperor claims? Does creation breed destruction from which it provides its own escape? What kind of destruction does it provoke and what that has to do with history?

These questions I consider from the perspective of Yourcenar's conceptions of time and aesthetic creation, both of which conform to and deviate from models of Renaissance humanist discourse of *imitatio*, which took as its model classical antiquity. Seemingly without a past, and with their future a blank slate, the painter Wang-Fô and his disciple Ling come to occupy an undefined space of passage, an un-real phase of existence. It is here--a punctual space of the present, a non-time, or a space of pure crossing and passage--that there occurs a metaphoric translation. On the level of rhetorical comparison, a gradation or step exists from the disappointment of painting to the *a peu pres* of writing. The step or gradation between the two terms is accomplished by means of two images: snow and sea. The white of the "neige éternelle" on the mountains painted by Wang evokes total absence, and there we recognize the compulsion toward *non-écriture* of Mallarmé; the whiteness of the eternal snow equals the whiteness of the empty page reminding us that writing like painting sometimes attempts to transcend its own limits by staging its own disappearance. The space of painting, painting as space, or *le vide* is what is opened up. In the absence of color the artist has achieved only a partial success: the eye can recognize snow, but in absolute terms, what we have here is a failure; one can never attain the coldness of snow by this means, a coldness that touches all the senses. Are we then left only with the image of white snow--the virtual snow of the painting, and a metaphor signifying the failure of words and their incapacity to communication sensation? The story ends with a description of the sea whose color is described as "bleu-jade." No longer left with the absence of color and incompleteness signified by snow, we now have a color produced by textual means, a phenomenon that exceeds

the limits of the visual. We are for this reason bound to reconsider the neo-platonic superiority of pictorial representation over writing. Among the arts of imitation, painting—a transposition of images from real life into images of another sort—is traditionally understood as more direct, and thereby less susceptible than writing to error, deception, and fragmentation of reality. Perhaps Yourcenar, wanting to show the futility of every attempt at communicating the experience of artistic creation from the vantage point of the artist, chose to begin her *Nouvelles Orientales*, and end this particular tale with an evocation of the imperfection of pictorial representation with the reproduction of a textual sea of *bleu-jade*. Even as an imperfect illusion, this textual sea remains within the realm of the possible for Wang who, distressed by the death of his disciple Ling who has been beheaded for attacking the emperor, is transfixed by the bloodstain of Ling on the jade-blue floor. In the chiasmus created between red blood and the blue of the floor, what will become the *bleu-jade* of the ocean in to the painting, there exists a means of escape.

Painting however is only a partial means of escape for Wang. The Chinese painter lives distant from a world of attachments, wandering from place to place. Wang's disciple Ling leaves his wife and children at Wang's behest and is taught by Wang the stoic virtue of seeing the world "as it is" without fear. The first lesson comes when Wang teaches his disciple to contemplate the beauty of a thunderstorm: "Un coup de vent creva la fenêtre; l'averse entra dans la chambre. Wang-Fô se pencha pour faire admirer à Ling la zébrure livide de l'éclair, et Ling, émerveillé cessa d'avoir peur de l'orage".⁷ Then Wang teaches the lesson of inconsequence of a life lost, that of Ling's wife. If Wang is a painter, he is just as integrally a man of philosophy, a man whose curiosity and passion for the world checks his productivity and personal attachment to things considered worldly or human.

What remains to be seen is how to understand the connection between artistic creations both within time as it is experienced in everyday life and in a certain respect outside of time. A recurrent trope in the tales found in the collection is the disdain for historical calendars and the determination to bend time to the will of the individual. In this respect Yourcenar uses the Greek ideal of self-mastery and places it in another context, as a trope.⁸

I will now show how time in the *Nouvelles Orientales* takes on an oddly plastic character shaped by the artist in one passage that conveys Wang's dreams of finding a perfect model for his art:

Depuis des années, Wang-Fô rêvait de faire le portrait d'une princesse d'autrefois...Aucune femme n'était assez irréaliste pour lui servir de modèle..Aucun jeune homme du temps présent n'était assez irréel pour lui servir de modèle [...]⁹

What the artist is looking for is a model “homme du temps présent,” or to the unreal existence outside of time altogether. In this, Yourcenar resembles André Gide who once stated that an artistic rendering of the past, particularly myth, was an attempt at finding an “équilibre hors du temps.” We notice the relationship between the aim of a transcending time, and efforts at self-expression, which is the effacement of the self into time itself, just as it led to effacement into the painting. What we have staged is the elocutionary disappearance of the artist in the temporal sphere. This relates to Yourcenar’s suggestion in her essay “Ton et Langage dans le Roman Historique,” her richest treatment of the relationship between history and literature, that the “wound” of history is inscribed on the ruin of artwork. She writes,

Parfois l'érosion due aux éléments et la brutalité des homes s'unissent pour créer une apparence sans exemple qui n'appartient plus à aucun temps: sans tête, sans bras, séparée de sa main nouvellement retrouvée, usée par toutes les rafales des Sporades, la Victoire de Samothrace est devenue moins femme et davantage vent de mer et du ciel. Un faux aspect d'art moderne naît de ces transformations involontaires de l'art antique [...]¹⁰

Given the nature of time, at once funereal, definitive and inexorable but also fleeting and having to do with flux, the effort to give a sense to time seems inevitable; this attempt at giving a sense to time and history seems to happen at the expense of a fully integrated subjectivity, one that expresses itself as a unity.

The paradox suggested here is that while the initial impulse is to fix an artwork to a particular moment and space, time can free an artwork of its initial particularity, leaving aside the stamp of an individual resulting in the creation of a more universal, abstract composition. Forces associated with time can destroy completely or create a mosaic of something like the Victory of Samothrace.

Also implied in this portrait of art and time is seeing history as a wound, an opening that serves as a zone of mediation, or a border across which cultures, as well as time periods (ancient and modern) interface. Yourcenar enacts this mediation in the appropriation of a classical tale regarding a Chinese painting, whose pictorial technique, a visual

presentation of space, can be said to pertain to an otherness unrelated to the Western methods of art. The "Otherness" is appropriated into a Western context. Yourcenar's textual rendering of the artist as other highlights the way in which the experience of the artist is always already mediated by or contaminated by the observer's language and cultural codes. Interpretation is always an imperfect translation, as seen in the crossing of one medium into another, but a successful interpretation exposes the break or flaw that appears in a reading that exposes the wound or fractures that lies more or less hidden in every text. The fate of the artwork, Yourcenar believes, is there from the inception suggesting a collapse of the normal chronology of evolution, or devolution of time on the work. Given what we have seen about the aesthetic dimensions of Yourcenar's work with her awareness of the limits of formal coherence what can be the success of modern art? In the tale, "seeing things as they are" in an attempt to exceed the limits of everyday life in our limited conception of it this can only be done by the artist. Even here there are limits to poetry and painting in the modern age. In the tale, the problem of modern appropriations of artworks becomes underscored in the temporal predicament of having to paint (and to narrate) a non-existence within dream-like temporality of a reality as a present moment that appears to repeat itself to infinity. The destruction of the object, found in ruins, or as Yourcenar understands it, the wound of history, becomes the source and model for abstract modern art. Yourcenar writes,

Un torse décapité tournant sur son socle fait penser à un Despiau ou à un Maillol. Ce que nos sculptures imitent par volonté d'abstraction, à l'aide d'un habile artifice de plus, est ici intimement relié à l'aventure de la statue elle-même.¹¹

The effect of a work fallen to ruins is a double movement whereby the specific content of an artwork is lost but what remains is an empty form, prompting formalistic observation known to be of central importance in the interpretation of modern art. It seems that art is lost in this process of history, where it is raised so that it can be redeemed at the level of some philosophical concept. The relationship between the history of art and the history of the philosophy in our post-modern condition is a complex one that I cannot hope to exhaust. I concentrate specifically on this relationship in Yourcenar's works in terms of what for her are the problems of collective memory of a civilization and aesthetic creation. Thought about art is filtered by memory and emotions, dissolving action, but not so radically as to make empirical history negligible. Though art does not reflect a stable reality Yourcenar seems to suggest the

possibility of a “world- picture.” Language and consciousness are grounded in the “relics and traces,” which means that one can strive toward a capturing wholeness of being, but never succeed in attaining unmediated presence. Sensuous particularity and non-identity appear only as trace. In other writing about history and the artwork, Yourcenar stresses the necessity of either discovering not by creating *ex nihilo*, but by means of a *bricolage* of a vast amalgam of sources possessed in some inner coherence:

De notre temps, le roman historique, ou ce que, par comodité, on consent à nommer tel, ne peut être que plongé dans un temps retrouvé, prise de possession d’un monde intérieur.¹²

The progression of time takes place in a schismatic division—in a cleft between terminologies of interiority (sinking oneself, entering into, deepening) and of exteriority (liberation, representation, differentiation, expression). We should not let the apparent simplicity of this description deceive us into foreclosing the possibility of going beyond a dichotomy of speech as an interior, self-present immediacy, and delay/mediation into the externality of signs and inscriptions on the world. Rather, the dichotomy consisting of the external manifestation of signs and inscriptions on the one hand and the temporary submersion in the world of the artwork on the other, is no dialectical synthesis, but a fundamental non-coincidence or destruction. When examining another dichotomy, nature and creation, creation understood in one sense or another as artifice, the tendency for humanists of the Renaissance was to collapse this dichotomy, since in imitating the ancients, who attained such a high level of achievement and purity, the humanists believed that they *were* getting at nature, and thus truth was only a question of how closely one could get to imitating their predecessors. For neo-Humanists such as Yourcenar, art is not sufficient to art itself entirely, though by the crossing of the visual and plastic arts, as well as poetry, an essential part of experience could be taken up by narrative. What is missing in this discussion it seems is the power of art to transform the empirical world.

The form of aesthetic understanding I am trying to develop in the story of Yourcenar resembles that of figures such as Derrida, Heidegger, and Nietzsche insofar there is a hope of world-making in art that enables a breaking apart, and expanding of the aesthetic to embrace the whole of reality. Usually employed, the word *aestheticism* denotes an enclosure within a self-contained realm of aesthetic objects and sensations, and hence also denotes a separation from the “real world” of non-aesthetic objects. I am using aestheticism as Alan Megill uses it, to refer not to the

condition of being enclosed within the limited territory of the aesthetic, but rather to an attempt to embrace the whole of reality, to refer to a tendency to see art or language or discourse or text as constituting the primary realm of human experience.¹³

One of the fundamental questions alluded to here has been about the consequences of giving a voice to the sources of aesthetic production. There is an effort at attaining totality to what seems an infinite non-coincidence and non-identity. If there exists a temporal dimension to writing that permits the exploration of finding a subjective posturing both within and outside of time as it is experienced in everyday life, this cannot be attained by attempting to escape one's cultural, linguistic, and historical context. Rather, the acts of creation and interpretation, always involve translations in a sense. Indeed, Yourcenar's writing of the portrait of the artist conforms to a historically specific landscape of other authors who in their turn describe their particular idea of what constitutes aesthetic production, hence the need to translate these singular experiences into a universal humanist language.

That the work of literature does not take place according to the time of the everyday, whose chief marker is the immediacy of the present, is what I hope to have shown in the preceding analyses of the tale. As with other writers living in exile, Yourcenar writes in a classical, refined style of one removed from the vernacular. In this light, her claim that any literary exertion involves "l'ecoute d'une voix" involves the position of the writer as temporally separate from her époque. Indeed, in her critical writing relating to history, Yourcenar makes a claim for a posthumous perspective on cultural forms from within the heart of the present itself—that is, she makes a claim for a dialectically critical history. Having already attained the status of the Grand Dame of French letters at the time she rewrote the *Nouvelles*, the first women ever elected to the Academie Française, Yourcenar writes from a critical distance between herself and the objects she treats, facilitating her effort to configure a constellation of classic texts, east and west, in a universal canon. This has particular significance in view of the fact that these tales emerge from the international crisis of the post-war II period, which marked her writings enormously. One way of thinking about the *Nouvelles Orientales* is as a communal configuration of tales which despite their various cultural and historical backdrops indicates a common idea that, as suggested by Benedict Anderson, all civilizations consist of values, truths, and myths—the latter are neither fables, nor fixed truths, but rather shared illusions lived as certitudes and images that comprise a shared reality.¹⁴

In conclusion, the translation that occurs in the story is from the empirical world to the aesthetic realm. Yourcenar chose this particular period, distant linguistically and in time, partly to remind us that there was a time when people died for language and translations since what was at stake with the question of language was truth itself. She succeeds in writing about aesthetic creation and the experience before beauty, discursively from within, outside, and beyond the prevailing humanist discourse; she appropriates and alters the figure of the classical artist and textually fashions artistic experience as something familiar yet beyond absolute comprehension, striving toward an aesthetic experience that would overcome distinctions of, mind body, rationality -irrationality, dream and reality. In doing so, she offers a promise of completion (or totality), as yet unfulfilled, the grounds for which is a historical subject situated into a community by means of a difficult translation of an *I* to a collective *we*.

NOTES

¹ For more on cultural influence of China in Heian period Japan, see David Pollack, *The Fracture of Meaning: Japan's Synthesis of China from the Eight through the Eighteenth Centuries*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1986. 35.

² Marguerite Yourcenar, *Ton et Langage Dans Le Roman Historique in Essais et mémoires*. Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1991.

³ Metaphor comes from the Greek *metaphoros* related to translation, or *translatio* (imitation with transformation). This also has to do with the transfer, *translatio studii*, involves transfer of learning.

⁴ Yourcenar, *Œuvres romanesques*. Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1982. 1141.

⁵ Yourcenar, *OR*, 1145-46.

⁷ Yourcenar, *OR*, 1145-46

⁸ Yourcenar, 5.

⁹ Yourcenar, *EM*, 290.

¹⁰ Yourcenar, 290.

¹¹ Yourcenar, *EM* 291.

¹² Yourcenar, 521

¹³ Megill, Allan, *Prophets of extremity: Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault, Derrida*. Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985. 42.

¹⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 1991. 83.

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LITERATURA ARGENTINA DE LOS SETENTA: BORGES REESCRITO POR MIGUEL BRIANTE⁽¹⁾

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Este trabajo está dedicado al análisis de ciertos aspectos de la narrativa de un escritor argentino “olvidado” cuya producción se inicia en los sesenta: Miguel Briante (General Belgrano, 1944-1995). Resulta llamativo observar que una escritura tan relevante y con tanta productividad crítica prácticamente no ha sido estudiada, si se tiene en cuenta su importancia dentro del sistema literario y su incidencia en las narrativas de los ochenta y los noventa.

Miguel Briante ha sido señalado como un “escritor olvidado”, “soslayado” por el gran público pero si tomamos como referentes a sus pares, los escritores contemporáneos, resulta totalmente erróneo hablar de olvidado. El conocimiento que de su obra tienen sus pares generacionales e incluso escritores más jóvenes quedó explicitado en el dossier especial que le dedicó el diario *Página/12* con motivo de su muerte en 1995. En este suplemento, aparecen artículos referidos a Briante firmados por Tomás Eloy Martínez, Fogwill, Di Benedetto, entre otros.

En otras palabras, la narrativa de Briante tuvo una circulación reducida en cuanto a lectores “comunes”, un desconocido para el gran público. Fue soslayado por la crítica pero, paradójicamente, fue leído por las formaciones de escritores posteriormente consagrados que consideraron que su narrativa se adelantaba al giro de las poéticas del momento respecto de las precedentes; en este sentido, constituiría una suerte de maestro denegado.¹

La producción narrativa de Briante es escasa: *Las hamacas voladoras*, libro de cuentos publicado en 1964, marca su ingreso oficial a la literatura. En 1968, se edita su segundo libro de relatos: *Hombre en la orilla*. En 1971, fue finalista del premio de la editorial venezolana Monte Ávila con su novela *Kincón*, publicada en Caracas en 1975 y, por primera vez, en Argentina en 1993. El silencio narrativo que media entre estas dos ediciones sólo se ve interrumpido por la aparición de una recopilación de cuentos escritos entre 1962 y 1982, titulada *Ley de juego*.

Luego de esta acotada pero necesaria contextualización, me adentraré en la lectura de su novela. La hipótesis interpretativa que pretendo desarrollar en las páginas siguientes es desafiante: considero

que la narrativa de Briante se genera a partir de la reescritura de textos ancestros, privilegiadamente borgianos. En este sentido, su novela *Kincón* permite observar un proceso de inscripción dentro de un linaje textual que reconoce en el *Martín Fierro* de José Hernández y “El fin” de Jorge Luis Borges a sus padres textuales o, en términos de Genette, a sus hipotextos.

La escritura de Briante se articula como “campo de tensiones”. ¿Cómo surge la “tensión”? Surge a partir de la inscripción en un linaje textual (la adhesión a una paternidad textual), pero al mismo tiempo surge la necesidad imperiosa de instaurar la ruptura, marcar la diferencia para evitar quedar alienado en el discurso del Otro.

En este sentido, al hablar de reescrituras borgianas emerge una problemática relevante para la crítica actual: la densidad y el peso de la escritura de Borges dentro del sistema literario argentino. En este sentido, Nicolás Rosa acuñó el concepto “objeto Borges” para designar el corpus borgiano, sus ancestros textuales y sus metatextos. Afirma que este “objeto” se ha convertido en un padre textual omnívoro y omnipresente para las escrituras contemporáneas:²

La herencia textual borgiana es una marca indeleble, como una marca de fábrica y todavía no nos ha permitido esa traslación, esa transferencia, en el sentido mercantil pero también psicoanalítico del término, propia de los linajes textual: asentarse sobre la marca para borrarla, convertir la propiedad textual privada, privadísima, en bienes mostrencos (Rosa 149).

El crítico afirma, con valoración negativa, que los escritores que oscilan entre los cuarenta y los cincuenta años, al no lograr la separación del padre textual producen “textos borgianos”, textos miméticos, es decir, copias de copias, imitaciones de la imitación, pastiches de los pastiches creados por Borges. Sin embargo, veremos que la lectura de los textos de Briante permite refutar esta hipótesis. Sus textos superan la mimesis, el reflejo especular, para apropiarse del sistema de símbolos y sentidos borgianos y, al resemantizarlos, logran de manera paradójica una escritura no borgiana.³

La constitución de la genealogía Hernández – Borges – Briante hace que la novela se convierta en un hipertexto con un estatuto complejo. Se inserta en una intrincada red de reescrituras porque toma “El fin”, el cual, a su vez, rescribe al *Martín Fierro*. Leemos, entonces, un texto que se presenta como transformación y derivación de escrituras precedentes. Por lo tanto, se vuelve dificultoso seguir el trayecto de la

escritura en su búsqueda de emancipación habida cuenta de la multiplicidad de desvíos como senderos a los que se ve conducida.

Asimismo, desde el punto de vista genético, la novela es el eslabón final de una larga cadena de pre-textos. En primer término, se publica el cuento “Kincón” en 1961; diez años más tarde se convertirá en la novela homónima; por último, aparece una versión distinta, en la edición corregida de 1993 que nos avala a considerarla, a su vez, reescritura de sí misma.

Planteadas estas cuestiones, trataré de responder a la siguiente pregunta: ¿cómo se genera en la escritura de Briante el juego de transformaciones y desplazamientos de este linaje?⁴

Desde el punto de vista estructural, el linaje que aquí construyo: *Kincón* – “El fin” – *Martín Fierro*, se presenta en tres textos heterónomos: una novela, un cuento y un poema, aunque en todos ellos predomine la trama narrativa, se inscriben en distintas matrices genéricas. Esta es la primera transformación que establecen las reescrituras: el abandono de la forma impuesta por el padre; Borges opta por el cuento y Briante por la novela.

Me gustaría señalar la pervivencia de ciertas huellas de la gauchesca y, en especial, una de sus dominantes productivas: la narración generada a partir del trazado de la biografía del protagonista.⁵ Este registro discursivo se anuncia, en los textos canónicos de la serie, desde el mismo título, transformado, por eso mismo, en connotador de una marca genérica: el nombre propio del protagonista señala que se tratará del relato de una vida. Los ejemplos son múltiples baste recordar el texto fundacional, *Historia del gaucho Martín Fierro*, hasta una de las irónicas reescrituras borgianas, “Biografía de Tadeo Isidoro Cruz”.

En la novela de Briante, en cambio, *el título es un índice de subversión genérica*: el nombre propio se transforma en un apodo peyorativo: Kincón. Así, Don Barrios, el personaje que actúa como uno de sus biógrafos, escribe: “quién sería capaz de elegir un nombre definitivo para nombrarlo, de qué modo secreto se lo traicionaría nombrándolo de un solo modo, yo fui el encargado de recordarle su historia.”⁶

La imposibilidad de establecer el nombre propio (supuestamente, Bentos Márquez Sesmeao) y la utilización de múltiples apodos: Carneiro, Cabo Negro, Negro, Lechuza, el Mono, deconstruye una de las convenciones del género e instala la biografía como paradoja de identidad, como símbolo de indeterminación: se narra la vida de alguien que desconoce su filiación y su origen.⁷ La escritura de *Kincón* trabaja el registro autobiográfico en cruce con un abanico de escrituras de supuestos biógrafos. Al eludir la persistencia de una sola voz, instala la

polifonía para denegar la posibilidad de construir un referente unívoco; elabora, así, un palimpsesto confuso en el que coexisten versiones e inversiones sobre la vida de Kincón. Los procedimientos discursivos que configuran este coro polifónico son la multiplicación de voces narrativas y el ingreso de géneros y registros heterogéneos. En este sentido, es importante observar que el despliegue de procedimientos y técnicas narrativas, la particular forma de organización y construcción del relato (a partir del fragmento y el montaje) deniegan el realismo e inscriben el texto dentro de una estética experimental propia del imaginario literario de los setenta. De esta manera, la escritura adquiere una complejidad inusitada que, en el plano de su recepción, se acerca a la teoría del lector de Julio Cortázar.

La historia responde a este sesgo experimental y se organiza bajo la lógica de la dispersión, rechazando cualquier ordenamiento cronológico-lineal, se construye a través del fragmento. Se narran simultáneamente distintas historias en forma entrecortada e incompleta: el viaje al Matto Grosso, las andanzas de Kincón como cabo de la policía, la historia de un viajero inglés durante el siglo XIX, el suicidio de Healy, la historia de una venganza, el enigma con respecto al origen de Kincón, entre otros.

¿Pero quiénes hablan en esta textualidad multiforme? En primer término, aparece la voz autodiegética, pero el discurso autobiográfico se revela impotente: Kincón es un brasileño, nacido en el Matto Grosso, que desde pequeño fue traído a la provincia de Buenos Aires por una razón que se desconoce. Como no tiene instrucción alguna, se expresa en una suerte de *lingua franca*, contaminada; don Barrios, uno de los personajes principales, la define como “la oscuridad de ese apareamiento de palabras que no son de la misma raza” (134). Al igual que en la gauchesca se le cede la voz a un iletrado, pero este procedimiento, lejos de aproximarse a un recurso de verosimilitud realista, según el cual aparecería como índice de personaje, es una alegoría de su condición de “desterritorial”, para utilizar una noción deleuziana. Otra operatoria aprendida de Borges se hace patente aquí: no hay intento reproductivo mimético de un léxico caricatural o extranjero, sólo ciertas anomalías sintácticas revelan un desplazamiento lingüístico que dobla la indeterminación lengua / identidad.

También, hay que considerar las coordenadas temporales desde las cuales mira su pasado: tiene aproximadamente setenta años, es un marginal que bordea la vejez y la locura; ha ocupado un terreno en el medio de un camino que alambró con palos, estacas y pedazos de botellas, — una nueva metáfora de una vida cuyo recorrido es un tránsito

permanente—. Alega que lo heredó de su patrón, don Tomás, pero no advierte que la antigua estancia “se había subdividido al infinito”.

En definitiva, Kincón no puede reconstruir autónomamente su propia vida que, paradójicamente, está escrita fuera de él mismo: se trata del diario escrito por el inglés Tomás Healy durante su viaje al Matto Grosso, de donde Kincón procede. Obsesivamente, Kincón lo lee de manera sistemática y repetitiva, pero no logra entenderlo. A la lectura en una lengua ajena, el español, se le superpone una nueva traducción: la prosa romántica de otro extranjero, que tampoco utiliza su lengua materna.⁸

La elección del registro biográfico revela una continuidad con la gauchesca, pero su uso diferencial es un signo de transformación y deslectura respecto de la serie. En la gauchesca, los relatos autobiográficos —como bien apunta Ludmer— transmiten una memoria, pero además se convierten en “el lugar donde se elabora y reproduce una forma de vida, una identidad colectiva” (Ludmer 1988: 212). *Kincón*, en cambio, anula cualquier posibilidad de “biografía colectiva”: el protagonista no representa ningún tipo genérico, es un Otro que se recorta a partir de la diferencia y la desterritorialización.

Quiero recalcar, una vez más, la principal operación de desplazamiento y transformación de la serie: la elección del protagonista: un extranjero que deniega el arquetipo gauchesco leído como epitome de lo nacional por los intelectuales del Centenario; arquetipo ya deconstruido por Borges, pero que aquí procede por extrema irrisión cuyo tono también se ha desviado de las reescrituras borgianas de la gauchesca. A su vez, subvierte dos de sus ideogramas fundantes: 1) la “natural” xenofobia hacia los inmigrantes que es constitutiva de la gauchesca; 2) el individuo debía ser un representante de la especie, según la noción de tipo característica del realismo decimonónico, pero Kincón es un personaje atípico para la demografía gauchesca.

La muerte de Kincón durante un duelo rescribe “El fin” pero Borges ya ha “corregido”, a su vez, la conclusión del texto hernandiano. Según la lectura de Borges que retoma la presentación de la primera parte del poema y niega la segunda, Fierro muere en un duelo, como corresponde a la vida de un marginal, fuera de la ley. De esta manera, Borges efectúa una operación de cierre de la serie gauchesca y marcaría un corte entre la literatura del siglo diecinueve y la del veinte.

En consecuencia, la continuación del texto borgiano es virtualmente imposible: el gauchito ha muerto. Briante asume la liquidación de la serie y decide resemantizarla. Se niega a duplicar el objeto precedente y lo reemplaza por otro bárbaro: Kincón. Al igual que

Fierro, se encuentra en conflicto con el medio social; situación que se encuentra agravada por su condición de extraterritorial.

El final de Kincón es rescrito recurrentemente a lo largo de la novela. Las distintas voces que pueblan el relato generan, a partir de la repetición, una trama de versiones y contra-versiones que coexisten y no se anulan, pues ninguna prevalece. El lector no puede, así, “elegir” un final.

El texto borgiano se inscribe desde el inicio de la novela: don Barrios relata un duelo entre Kincón y un tal Polilla Díaz. De manera paródica, se deconstruye el sistema de signos y valores asociados al duelo: “La provincia, la república debe estar llena de *historietas* como ésta: los hombres de *coraje ciego* que se confiaron en su habilidad para esquivar un cuchillo y pegar, dejar tendido al otro a chancletazos” (22).

La elección del término “historieta” diseña un campo semántico que opera por deformación paródica. Aparecen hombres que poseen un “coraje ciego” que reemplazan la utilización del cuchillo por “hachazos” y “chancletazos”; mientras que los oponentes, de acuerdo a las distintas versiones, se valen de cuchillos y también de revólveres.

La primera versión sobre la muerte de Kincón es referida por una voz heterodiegética que construye un alocutor específico: la persona que ha matado a Kincón. Al igual que en las siguientes versiones, se advierte que las posiciones de ambos oponentes no son simétricas: Kincón posee una historia singular y distintiva, mientras que el otro es un sujeto desconocido. Al respecto, leemos en este pasaje:

Su historia, mucho más larga y mucho menos solemne, quizá empiece a volver cuando usted le haya clavado la última puñalada. O tal vez después, cuando usted limpie su cuchillo en el pasto (no por indiferencia sino por miedo, por sacarse de encima las marcas del terror, la sangre que verá bailotear durante más de media hora enfrente suyo [...]) (42-43).

La cita precedente ofrece de nuevo la complejidad de los cruces y el desvío: se reconoce aquí la voz del Borges, crítico de la gauchesca, en el pasaje citado más arriba “limpiar el facón en el pasto”. También la voz del pseudo biógrafo de Tadeo Isidoro Cruz, cuya valerosa historia abunda en hiatos.

En las versiones siguientes, se despliegan una serie de informaciones que acentúan la asimetría entre los contendientes y diluyen el código, no escrito, del honor. En este sentido, el informe del comisario Clavijo, titulado “Último relato. Muerte del cabo Sesmeao”, con su “preciso” lenguaje referencial, parodia de los informes policiales,

nos señala que Kincón tenía aproximadamente setenta años cuando fue asesinado por un joven inexperto y con miedo, el hijo del dueño del campo. El duelo, lejos de originarse en el honor o el coraje, se anuda con la motivación material: la propiedad de la tierra. Mientras Kincón supone que ha heredado ese campo de Healy; Clavijo afirma que arrendaba diecisiete hectáreas y luego usurpó algunas más, demarcándolas con alambres viejos y pedazos de rama. La versión de Clavijo será, a su vez, “corregida” por don Barrios, permitiéndonos descubrir que Kincón defiende un campo imaginario, alambrado con botellas.

La reescritura final del episodio cierra el texto, pero no la historia porque, por una parte, constituye una inversión, relatada por el propio Kincón, donde él es el matador y no la víctima, por otra, porque con un procedimiento autorreferencial instaura la novela misma como fluir ininterrumpido de posibles relatos. Se supone que es la confesión de Kincón al comisario, donde se privilegia la ficción por encima de la realidad y se alude a una incompletud constitutiva de todo relato, que deviene un perpetuo diferimiento:

— Mire, Miranda, eso se acabó.

Y para intimidarlo y darle miedo como siempre fue mi costumbre cada vez que peleaba le dije:

Mire, Miranda, le voy a sacar las tripas y las voy a colgar en el alambrado.

Así le dije y lo vi que iba a defenderse y tiré el primer hachazo, así que fue defensa propia. Pero lo que falta, comisario, va a ser mejor que se lo cuente Don Barrios, que sabe contar mejor las cosas. Va a ser mejor (254).

De esta forma, la reescritura se funda en la diferencia, lo cual no implica la *deslectura* absoluta. Desde la noción de “bien mostrenco” con la que traté de entablar un diálogo, la polémica se instaura en función de su posible existencia. La pregunta era: ¿ha sido, hasta el momento, imposible desleer a Borges y “asentarse en su marca para borrarla”, tal como lo estima Rosa?

Cabe señalar que esa tensión consiste, fundamentalmente, en la potencia con que la escritura trabaja esta borradura, la posible desvinculación de su filiación, que le permita crecer. Como es obvio, no significaría el olvido total, pues entonces, el trabajo productivo de la intertextualidad no sería ni siquiera perceptible; se trata, más bien, de la potencia en derivar hacia la autonomía, así como no dejaremos de conservar algunos rasgos parentales, aunque seamos adultos independientes. En este sentido, *Kincón*, al establecer un diálogo

intertextual con los textos anudados en la genealogía, revela su potencia como bisagra que gira hacia la diferencia.

Estoy convencido que Briante, lector de Borges, halló los blancos desde donde desafiar al texto borgiano a fin de reescribirlo. Logró desplazar a Borges, distraerse de él, para poder inventar su deslectura.

NOTAS

(*) El presente artículo recorta ciertos aspectos abordados con anterioridad en mi tesis de licenciatura y desarrollados con profundidad en el libro *Miguel Briante. Genealogía de un olvido*, próximo a publicarse por la editorial Beatriz Viterbo.

¹ En la actualidad, se observa un renovado interés por su literatura. En primer lugar, su cuento "Inglés" (1981) fue incluido por Héctor Libertella en el reciente libro *25 Cuentos Argentinos del Siglo XX (Una antología definitiva)* por considerarlo ineludible dentro del corpus literario argentino. Este texto (Buenos Aires: Perfil, 1997) en una suerte de lista canónica, reúne cuentos de Arlt, Bianco, Bioy Casares, Borges, Castillo, Conti, Cortázar, Di Benedetto, Fogwill, Martini, Piglia, Saer y Walsh, entre otros.

Segundo, resulta llamativa la aparición de sus cuentos en textos de literatura para la enseñanza media. El relato "A la hora oficial" aparece en *Lengua. El texto, el contexto y los procedimientos*, de Fernando Avendaño y Gabriel Cetkovich. (Buenos Aires: Santillana, 1998. 14) Mientras que el cuento "Triángulo" forma parte del libro *El viejo oficio de contar historias. El discurso narrativo*, de Susana Montes de Faisal. (Buenos Aires: Kapelusz, 1999. 83-84).

² También Silvia Molloy se interroga sobre cómo evaluar el legado, la marca de Borges en la ficción de fines del siglo veinte. Observa que los propios textos borgianos se hallan saturados por lecturas repetitivas, una suerte de "museo textual" producto de lo que denomina el "efecto Borges" oclusivo, que obstaculiza lecturas activas. La crítica escribe: "Todo texto pasa por períodos de inercia, períodos en que es reemplazado por sus estereotipos: períodos, quiero pensar, en que ese texto solapadamente recoge nueva fuerza" (Molloy 8).

³ Si bien no recorreré la totalidad de su narrativa me gustaría mencionar que la lectura de sus textos revela un proceso gradual de separación y diferenciación respecto de su padre textual que puede trazarse al estudiar su narrativa en forma completa. En mi tesis de Licenciatura, titulada *Genealogías y reescrituras en la poética de Miguel Briante* (Universidad Nacional de Mar del Plata, 2000) y en el libro *Miguel Briante. Genealogía de un olvido* (Rosario: Beatriz Viterbo, 2001) me he ocupado de estas cuestiones con detenimiento.

⁴ Quiero advertir que la lectura intertextual aquí propuesta no se basa en un análisis comparativo o contrastivo. Éste sería el objetivo si me restringiera únicamente a la propuesta teórica de Genette. Por el contrario, no deseo agotar la significación de la novela en su propio reflejo especular de los textos ancestros. Me interesa guiar la mirada crítica hacia la lectura de la tradición que se inscribe en la propia novela y que se articula como transgresión de una serie textual asociada a “lo nacional” (la gauchesca) y que, en consecuencia, gira hacia la diferencia.

⁵ Al respecto, Josefina Ludmer ha señalado que “el enunciado más acorde con la situación de comunicación popular en la gauchesca es el relato autobiográfico” porque evita la inclusión de enunciados oficiales o políticos en forma directa, por cuanto el contenido autobiográfico condiciona la identificación del oyente y así vuelve a la serie eminentemente popular (Ludmer 1984: 51).

⁶ Todas las citas pertenecen a la última edición (revisada y corregida) del texto: Alfaguara, Buenos Aires, 1993. p. 29. En adelante, entre paréntesis, indico el número de página correspondiente a esta edición. En todos los casos el resaltado me pertenece.

⁷ Señalo, de paso, uno de los desvíos que cruzan la red de las reescrituras: en “Biografía de Tadeo Isidoro Cruz”, también se ignora el nombre del padre del protagonista, citado como “un innominado montonero”, pero tal origen bastardo, así como la certidumbre respecto de su madre, cuyo apellido lleva, es una marca fuerte de su inscripción en la serie gauchesca: como era frecuente, es producto de un episodio ocasional en medio de las vidas, nómades y violentas, de las montoneras.

⁸ En este sentido, la problemática de la lengua impuesta tiene un desarrollo explícito en el cuento de 1961, mientras que la novela evita la teorización sobre esta temática.

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ROME ET LA DISSOCIATION DU MOI POÉTIQUE DANS *SONGE* : PHÉNOMÈNES DE CONSTRUCTION ET DE DESTRUCTION

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Or, les traits de ma peinture ne fourvoient point,
quoiqu'ils se changent et diversifient.
Le monde n'est qu'une branloire pérenne.
- Montaigne, *Les Essais*, Livre III, 2.

Dès le titre, *Les Antiquitez de Rome contenant une generale description de sa grandeur, et comme une déploration de sa ruine : plus un songe ou une vision sur le mesme subject*,¹ du Bellay annonce une ambiguïté dans sa démarche poétique. Les quinze sonnets de *Songe* prolongent les *Antiquités de Rome* en offrant les mêmes oppositions de grandeur et de décadence, d'alternance de *laudatio* et de *deploratio*, de volonté de reconstruire et d'inévitable destruction. Mais, en choisissant de décliner sa vision de Rome sur un mode onirique, le poète fait appel à une autre tradition qui vient comme réfuter sa perception première des choses.² En se mettant en scène à la fois comme auteur et spectateur, le poète médite sur son « moi » poétique. En d'autres termes, sa quête de Rome dans Rome (*Antiquités*, Sonnet 3) le pousse à se poser des questions relatives à sa propre création, c'est à dire à l'imitation littéraire. La théorie du travail d'imitation pour les poètes de la Renaissance procède de ce principe qui vise à détruire pour construire ; à déterrer les anciens pour se bâtir soi-même. En ce sens, Du Bellay constitue un *exemplum*. Son discours est envahi par le deuil des ruines et leur ambivalence.³ « Because Du Bellay's situation became in so many ways exemplary » écrit Thomas Greene, « it is possible to speak of a larger crisis of the humanist movement precipitated in the life of one microcosmic individual ». ⁴ Le « je » microcosmique du poète humaniste marque son empreinte par rapport à une tradition rhétorique, une histoire dont Rome devient le symbole macrocosmique. Dans *Songe*, l'inconstance des éléments et la vanité humaine sont les sources de cette fracture interne et la cause de toute destruction. Le poète fait surgir de Rome, une nouvelle forme de matière, une poétique du chaos qui engage l'activité du spectateur-lecteur, et s'apparente à une esthétique baroque.⁵ Le terme « baroque », vient du portugais *Barocco*,

et était utilisé au XV^{ème} pour désigner une variété de perles imparfaites, irrégulières. La disparité des perles, et le constat de leur singularité implique nécessairement un écart par rapport à une norme implicite et signifie que, par référence, il existerait une perle parfaite, voire rare à chercher. Rapidement, le terme prit un sens métaphorique ; en poésie, cette notion rend compte des altérations du « je » par rapport à cette norme, de son expérience singulière et extraordinaire du monde en tant que territoire. L'espace romain imaginaire de *Songe* devient le *locus* de cette instabilité identitaire du sujet poétique. C'est là, nous semble-t-il, tout le canevas de *Songe*.

Reprenant la tradition antique de la poésie élégiaque appliquée aux ruines, Du Bellay fonde *Songe* sur un contraste générant un mouvement répétitif ondulatoire de construction et de destruction de la cité de Rome. Chacun des sonnets est bâti autour d'une dissimilitude flagrante entre les quatrains et les tercets et ces derniers se posent comme réfutation des précédents. L'antithèse est la figure de style ici exploitée pour mettre en parallèle les deux idées, images contrastées ou devrait-on dire visions qui se neutralisent : celle qui correspond à la nécessairement restrictive faculté physique et celle que l'on qualifiera de vision de l'esprit, fortement mise à l'épreuve. D'après les critiques, *Songe* trouve son modèle chez Pétrarque, dans la Canzone XXIV et *Rime Sparse* 323.⁶ Selon nous, c'est avec les *Ballades dans Rome*,⁷ de Pétrarque que la comparaison est éclairante. Pétrarque initie cette démarche humaniste, qui permet par le cheminement de la pensée, de reconstituer la gloire passée de la cité et de réaffirmer ainsi le lien d'héritage et de continuité nécessaire entre les auteurs classiques de l'antiquité et ceux de la Renaissance. Pour Pétrarque, ce parcours est initiatique. A la vue des ruines et à la mesure de son pas, sa pensée s'accélère et Rome s'anime. Les monuments resurgissent plus imposants encore ; les héros et personnages illustres apparaissent pour entrer en action ; les auteurs anciens déclament des mots qui recouvrent tout leur sens. C'est une vision de Rome triomphante lors des Guerres Puniques, un Empire uni et puissant que Pétrarque décrit au cours de ses ballades.

La notion de *Translatio Studii*, telle qu'elle fut définie au XII^{ème} siècle d'après les termes de *Translatio Empirii* de Daniel, est plus que jamais vivace chez les poètes de la Renaissance qui se posent en héritiers directs des auteurs de l'Antiquité. C'est au nom de cette notion que la rivalité entre la France et l'Italie persiste depuis le XIV^{ème} siècle. Et c'est encore en vertu de cette théorie que les humanistes ont foi en leur temps comme celui du progrès. Or, à la lueur de cela, le temps et l'histoire peuvent aussi être perçus comme les signes d'une dégradation

incessante puisque « les Empires se sont succédé et sont tombés, malgré toutes leurs prétentions à l'immortalité. »⁸ A la vue des ruines, dans *les Antiquités de Rome*, le poète de la Pléiade tente également de ressusciter Rome comme au temps de sa gloire passée. En vertu de son pouvoir nécromancien, tel Orphée, le poète humaniste descend aux Enfers pour ramener d'entre les morts, la cité antique.⁹ Or, tel Orphée encore, et contrairement à Pétrarque, le projet de du Bellay échoue. Lors de son voyage dans Rome, qu'il retrace tout au long des *Antiquités*, il se heurte à l'inévitable vision matérielle des champs de ruines. C'est alors qu'il se tourne vers *le rêve*, révélateur de vérités.

A la Renaissance, Le songe constitue une topique littéraire en tant qu'instrument de connaissance, et surtout d'interrogation.¹⁰ Il permet de recouvrir des vérités en particulier lorsqu'il se déroule à l'aube et qu'il est ordonné par Morphée. Dans les *Satires* d'Horace, le moment des songes vrais est toujours celui de la deuxième partie de la nuit. Et, dans les *Métamorphoses* d'Ovide, Morphée est celui qui grâce à son don d'imitation a pouvoir de rendre les choses plus humaines.¹¹ On lit dans *Songe* :

Finablement sur le point que Morphée
Plus véritable apparait à noz yeux (sonnet XV)

L'abondance de mots appartenant au registre sémantique de la vision montre que du Bellay inscrit son œuvre dans la tradition qui au XVIème siècle invite le poète à comparer son travail scriptural au travail visuel entrepris par le peintre. Cette attitude se place sous le signe de la célèbre expression d'Horace dans son *Art Poétique*, *Ut Pictura Poesis*. De plus, dans *Songe*, du Bellay ajoute à son entreprise des critères empruntés à la composition architecturale : « Je vis une Fabrique... et la façon de l'œuvre était à la dorique » (I, 1-4) ; « colonnes d'ivoire », « chapiteaux d'albâtre » (IV,1-3). D'ailleurs, dans la première partie des *Antiquités*, Orphée échange souvent son rôle avec Amphion, le rebâtitseur de Thèbes.¹² Comme torturé par ces deux visions qui se contestent, le peintre-poète-architecte ne peut reconstruire Rome ni physiquement ni par la pensée, offrant *de facto* au lecteur-spectateur, une succession d'images qui n'en sont pas. A lui, d'interpréter :

Voy comme tout n'est rien que vanité.
Lors cognoissant la mondaine inconstance,
Puis que Dieu seul au temps fait resistance,
N'espere rien qu'en la divinité. (Sonnet I, 12-15)

Les forces divines sont toujours présentes dans le chaos car les deux sont liés à la question de l'origine. Pour Du Bellay, seules l'inconstance et la vanité humaine sont les causes de la destruction de Rome. En témoignent les champs lexicaux autour des images de « poudre », « cendre », « vapeur », « sable ». La tension poétique que cela suscite dans le poème nous est confirmée par une tension onomastique. Privés de *decorum*, fragilisés, les noms seuls voient leur sens contesté. Il est précisément impossible pour le spectateur d'arrêter son regard, de visualiser ces symboles de Rome qui s'effondrent aussitôt qu'ils sont nommés. S'il incombe au poète de donner sens au monde de par son style, les mots, sans ornementation aucune, ni descriptions, témoignent de l'inconstance universelle de par leur arbitraire. La richesse sémantique ne suffit pas pour compenser l'économie phonique de la rime. « Rome » rime encore avec « nomme » (sonnet I) comme dans les *Antiquités*. « Cieux » rime avec « yeux », « Dieux » (sonnets I, IV, XI, XV); « Encore » et « or » (Sonnets II, III, XIII); « temple » et « contemple » (sonnets I, VII); « descendre » et « cendre » (sonnets III, VII); « butin » et « mutin » (sonnets X, XIII).¹³ Les répétitions constantes de même consonances, d'allitérations traduisent toute la vanité du monde et sa fatale circularité.¹⁴ Au sonnet IV, « Romain » rime avec « main » signifiant la construction de Rome, puis aussitôt avec « humain » signifiant sa destruction. Les rimes qui s'opposent ou se font écho confirment la fatalité qui préside à l'union répétée de certaines rimes. On ne cesse de s'entregloser, écrit plus tard Montaigne. On trouve, en effet, dans *Songe*, l'idée que l'on ne saurait écrire sans se répéter, comme si l'expression même tombait à son tour en ruine. Le sens, en tant que direction de l'histoire aboutit à une répétition du sens, en tant que signification.

De la sorte, chaque sonnet montre un aspect de la grandeur de Rome : ses monuments, l'arbre Dodonien de Jupiter, la louve, l'aigle, les sept collines et ceux-ci se trouvent systématiquement anéantis. Dans le sonnet II, la Fabrique est faite de belles matières, mais déjà dans le quatrain, elle est annoncée comme fragile:

La muraille n'estoit de marbre ny de brique,
 Mais d'un luisant crystal, qui du sommet au fond
 Elançoit mille rayz de son ventre profond (sonnet II)

Si ce ventre est profond, c'est aussi qu'il est creux et donc fragile. Tout s'effondre sous l'effet d'un tremblement depuis son fondement, c'est à dire depuis son origine qui était déjà elle-même fragile. De la même manière :

Puis m'apparut une Poincte aguisee
D'un diamant de dix piedz en carré
A sa hauteur justement mesuré
Tant qu'un archer pourroit prendre visée (sonnet III)

D'une seule flèche, un archer pourrait faire tomber le diamant prétendument imposant. L'agencement précaire de la construction montre que l'édifice ne pourra résister. La tempête qui suit l'emporte soudainement:

Je vis un fier Torrent, dont les flots escumeux
Rongeoient les fondemens d'une vieille ruine :
Je le vy tout couvert d'une obscure bruine,
Qui s'eslevoit par l'air en tourbillons fumeux :
(sonnet VIII)

Le torrent est voué à disparaître en fumée dès le début du sonnet. Enfin, le poète écrit au sonnet XIV :

Ayant tant de malheurs gemy profondement,
Je vis une Cité quasi semblable à celle
Que vit le messager de la bonne nouvelle,
Mais basty sur le sable estoit son fondement.
(sonnet XIV)

Mais un cruel orage intervient réduisant en « pouldreuse nüe », « les foibles fondemens de la grande Cité ». Or, comme le ventre de Rome, elle est creuse. Bien que destinée à être immortelle, elle ne le sera finalement pas. (sonnet XIV, 7-8) Sorte de vision apocalyptique, c'est la nouvelle Jérusalem sans la nouvelle Jérusalem.¹⁵

Ici, le poète défie toute intelligence au nom d'un rôle prépondérant joué par la nature. En effet, une part importante est accordée aux éléments naturels, à leurs cycles et à leurs effets. Dès le premier quatrain, il indique que le songe se déroule au seuil d'un jour laborieux, puis interviennent la tempête, la foudre (Sonnet III, IV), les rameaux, le tronc et la souche qui vont permettre la repousse de deux arbres verts (sonnet V) ; le feu qui enflamme pour devenir cendre (sonnet VII) ; le vent dissipant les nuages, le froid et les flots (sonnet VIII) qui sont ceux dans lesquels on se baigne (sonnet IX) ; la pluie qui devient fleuve (sonnet IX) ; le feu éteint à son tour par la pluie (sonnet XI). Les deux éléments prédominants, l'eau et le feu, sont à la fois cycles et sources de vie et de mort, signes de construction et de destruction.

D'ordre oxymorique, ils renvoient à la division fondamentale du sujet poétique, au « moi » dissocié, oscillant entre génération et tombeau. De la même manière, l'histoire voue toute chose à son effondrement mais aussi à sa perpétuelle renaissance. Pour le poète, Rome porte déjà en elle les germes constitutifs de sa ruine et de sa réviviscence. La fondation de Rome est née à partir d'une duplicité, avec deux frères jumeaux Remus et Romulus et le fratricide commis par ce dernier. Dans les *Antiquités*, le sous-texte est la *Pharsale* de Lucain qui retrace l'épisode de la guerre civile comme à l'origine de la chute de Rome. Michel Jeanneret écrit:

Si le destin de Rome était de sombrer finalement dans l'indifférenciation, il apparaît à la lecture des vestiges, que, d'un bout à l'autre de son histoire, elle a toujours frôlé le chaos, elle aussi juchée sur la ligne de crête qui sépare l'harmonie de l'anarchie.¹⁶

Entre harmonie et anarchie, et les deux à la fois, Rome ne meurt que pour renaître de ses cendres, tel le phénix qui la symbolise au sonnet VII :

Je vy son corps en poudre tout reduit,
Et vy l'oyseau, qui la lulière fuit,
Comme un vermet renaistre de sa cendre.(sonnet V)

De même le sonnet V annonce à la fin une reverdie qui ramène aussi à l'origine de Rome puisqu'elle naquit à partir d'une gémellité:

J'ouy le tronc gemir sous la congee,
Et vy depuis la souche desdaignee
Se reverdir en deux arbres jumeaux. (sonnet V)

L'image des arbres jumeaux constitue à la fois une référence à Remus et Romulus, mais aussi à l'Empire romain qui fut scindé en deux Empires : celui d'Orient et d'Occident. Cette division contribua à la fois à la chute de Rome dans sa dispersion, mais assura aussi à sa survivance. Dans *Songe* comme dans le reste des *Antiquités* – et comme dans la *Pharsale*-, les Barbares ne sont pas jugés responsables de la chute de l'Empire, mais Rome elle-même. Les forces destructives tout comme les forces constructives viennent de l'intérieur.

Nietzsche voit dans toute création artistique, grâce à la nécessaire expérience du rêve, une dualité entre la tendance apollinienne qui ordonne, harmonise les formes, clarifie et la tendance dionysiaque qui génère chaos, obscurité et difformité.¹⁷ Ces deux propensions

coexistent dans *Songe*. Il semble cependant qu'une part plus grande soit faite peu à peu à la deuxième démarche créatrice. Dans le sonnet XII, le poète écrit que :

Là sembloit que nature & l'art eussent pris peine
D'assembler en un lieu tous les plaisirs de l'œil :
(sonnet XII)

En apparence, l'accord semble possible entre l'art et la nature lorsque celle-ci est sereine. Or, le poète nous montre dans *Songe*, que précisément la nature est source de chaos et de destruction lorsque la main de l'homme par sa construction tente de rivaliser avec celle-ci. Aux « accords plus doux » des sirènes s'opposent « les effroyables cris » d'une suite de faunes qui à leur tour s'opposent aux cents nymphes. Leur « flanc à flanc » s'opposent aussi à leurs « vilains piedz ». Les nymphes sont en fuite et les faunes, êtres hybrides (mi-humains, mi-animaux) gagnent la partie. Ils participent à la formulation d'une nouvelle poétique dionysiaque, chaotique et double qui annonce l'esthétique caractéristique de la poésie baroque. De plus, l'apparence d'une verticalité dans la chute des symboles romains laisse entrevoir en fait une architecture qui privilégie les courbes, le mouvement, le mal défini : les chapiteaux, les arcs (sonnet IV) orné des feuillages (sonnet V), les tourbillons (sonnet VII, VIII), la fumée (sonnet XI) sont partout présents.

Si la nature est chaos, il faut la peindre telle quelle. Le refus du poète de reconstruire Rome, de la laisser à l'état de monstre difforme traduit une nouvelle mimésis. Rome devient immortelle, parce que le poète de la Renaissance la ressuscite. L'exhumation des anciens nécessite un pillage revendiqué par les hommes de la Renaissance. Pourtant, contrairement à Pétrarque, l'économie descriptive de Du Bellay fait résistance à la poétique traditionnelle des ruines qui habituellement renvoie à une intégrité perdue que seul le poète peut ranimer. La vision du poète est celle de la fracture interne qui en appelle une autre, la sienne. Sa méditation sur Rome le renvoie à une poétique du hors temps, celui du rêve.

A ce propos, les quinze sonnets de *Songe* expriment tous des visions au passé : « Je vis » alors que la dernière vision est au présent : « je voy »¹⁸ Mais, « je vis » renvoie également à un présent de vie dans l'écriture : puisque « je vis » est aussi le verbe vivre au présent. C'est dans ce « présent de l'écriture » qu'il sonde ses propres profondeurs créatrices, son propre mouvement et qu'il reconstruit l'unité de ce « moi » poétique après la nécessaire dissociation autorisée par le rêve.

La Rome de *Songe* se crée dans et par le poème qui s'écrit.¹⁹ Le « voy » de « je voy » est autant sa « voix » que sa « voie ». Le passé de la vision de Rome et le présent de la création poétique se superposent pour donner naissance au poème. Et comme nous l'avons vu, le songe de la Renaissance est prémonitoire, révélateur de vérités. En étant le personnage du rêveur, l'auteur assume une fonction plus large, qui est celle d'exprimer des émotions universelles ou des vérités humaines.²⁰ Le voyage à Rome de Du Bellay dans *Songe* est en quelque sorte épiphanique. Fidèle à la poétique de l'anonymat et de l'*exemplum*,²¹ l'hermétisme et l'obscurité de *Songe* n'ont pas pour but de cacher mais au contraire de révéler pour trouver l'unité fondamentale du sujet. Françoise Joukovsky écrit « Le cadre du songe est aussi le lieu d'une révélation, l'accès à un savoir plus qu'humain, et une méditation, parfois soutenue par des réminiscences bibliques ou mythologiques. Il constitue dans l'ordre profane l'équivalent de ce qu'est la prophétie dans les Ecritures. ».²² Nécessaire repli autobiographique, on lit en soi comme on lit dans les mythes. C'est, d'ailleurs, un démon prophétique qui apparaît dès le début de *Songe* lui commandant de regarder:

Quand un Demon apparut à mes yeux
Dessus le bord du grand fleuve de Rome,
Qui m'appelant du nom dont je me nomme,
Me commanda regarder vers les cieux (Sonnet I, 5-8)

Du Bellay, comme tous les poètes de la Pléiade, est un auteur inspiré, habité par la « fureur divine ». Tel un prophète de l'après Babel, de la Pentecôte, le poète à la Renaissance est chargé de réintégrer le sens et l'unité. Dans sa compétition avec la cité de Rome en tant qu'espace, le « moi » du poète circonscrit par le cadre du songe, montre que c'est l'acte d'imagination, qui permet de donner sens au monde et aux événements, comme si seule la subjectivité poétique gouvernait l'ordre des choses.

NOTES

¹ Joachim du Bellay, *Les Regrets et autres œuvres poétiques suivis des Antiquitez de Rome plus un songe ou vision sur le mesme subject*, ed. Jolliffe et Screech (Genève : Droz, 1966). Toutes nos références sont tirées de cette édition.

² François Rigolot, « Du Bellay et la poésie du refus, » *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 35 (1974) : 492. François Rigolot nous montre que le refus caractérise la démarche poétique de Du Bellay à la manière d'un langage, d'une expression personnelle.

³ Michel Jeanneret, *Perpetuum Mobile : Métamorphoses des corps et des œuvres de Vinci à Montaigne* (Paris : Macula, 1997) 105. Notre lecture du chaos dans *Songe* s'appuie sur l'argumentation proposée par Michel Jeanneret par rapport aux *Antiqués* de manière générale.

⁴ Thomas Greene, *Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982) 221

⁵ L'introduction de Timothy Hampton « Baroques : Introduction » to *Baroque Topographies in Yale French Studies* 80 (1991) 1-9 est très utile pour comprendre le Baroque en tant que: « séries of exchanges between various types of représentation – political, literary, historiographical, philosophical. » 9.

⁶ Selon Margaret Brady Wells dans son article « Du Bellay's sonnet sequence *Songe*, » *French Studies* 24 (1972), il s'agit du Canzone XXIV. Elle écrit: "he skilfully replaced the lament for Laura by eloquent evocations of Rome's rise and fall." 1. Pour Michael Riffaterre, dans « Le Tissu du Texte : Du Bellay, *Songe*, VII, » *Poétique* 34 (1978), il s'agit de la Rime Sparse 323 où Pétrarque « raconte six incidents mystérieux au cours desquels, chaque fois, est détruit un objet de beauté apparu au contemplateur. » 193.

⁷ Petrarch, "Walks in Rome." *Letters on Familiar Matters*, Book VI (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1966) 63-66.

⁸ Antoinette Roubichou-Stretz, *La Vision de l'histoire dans l'œuvre de la Pléiade* (Paris : Nizet, 1973) 201.

⁹ Greene 221-222.

¹⁰ Françoise Joukovsky, *Songes de la Renaissance* (Paris : Christian Bourgeois, Collection 10/18, 1991) 39.

¹¹ Ovid, *The Metamorphoses* (London, Penguin Books: 1985) 263.

¹² Greene, 229.

¹³ Ces rimes constituent aussi une répétition par rapport au reste des Antiquités.

¹⁴ Floyd Gray, *la Poétique de Du Bellay* (Paris : Nizet, 1978) 45.

¹⁵ Rome à la Renaissance était aussi un haut-lieu de pèlerinage pour les Chrétiens. Dans ce passage, on peut supposer que la quête de ce « nouveau venu de Rome dans Rome » serait tout autant celle d'un pèlerin chrétien que celle d'un voyageur humaniste. Mais, même cette vision de Rome est à son tour détruite.

¹⁶ Jeanneret, 105.

¹⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy and the case of Wagner* (New York: vintage book, 1967) 33-38.

¹⁸ Voir la note de l'éditeur dans Joachim du Bellay, *Les Regrets et autres œuvres poétiques suivis des Antiquitez de Rome plus un songe ou vision sur le mesme subject*, ed. Jolliffe et Screech (Genève : Droz, 1966) 321.

¹⁹ Rigolot 490

²⁰ Joukovsky 39.

²¹ Riffaterre 193.

²² Joukovsky 39.

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CLORINDA: IDENTITÀ E TEATRALITÀ

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Questo saggio si propone di individuare nella figura di Clorinda della *Gerusalemme Liberata* del Tasso la presenza di una teatralità che riflette la visione esistenziale teatrale-tragica dell'autore. Si vuole infatti mostrare come nel personaggio di Clorinda si condensino una "visione negativa della capacità umana di capire e interpretare e raccontare la realtà e i suoi segni, di comunicare" (Erspamer 122). In queste parole è ben definita la teatralità del Tasso: teatrale è la concezione di vita come apparenza, scena, inganno. È di conseguenza una visione tragica della vita perchè significa assenza di identità e verità. L'appropriazione dell'epico da parte del Tasso è essenzialmente tragico-teatrale. C'è nella *Gerusalemme Liberata* una forma di teatralità che va al di là delle espressioni deittiche e performative che rappresentano lo specifico del testo teatrale e lo differenziano da un testo poetico o narrativo. È quella teatralità che, come dice Roland Barthes, "è un fatto di creazione non di realizzazione" (Barthes 5): ad essa sono soggetti tutti i personaggi della *Gerusalemme Liberata* ad eccezione di Goffredo, perchè, mentre tutti i personaggi si confrontano con l'inganno, Goffredo è l'unico ad essere quello che pare. Clorinda è l'esempio più peculiare di questa teatralità: ella è un carattere teatrale nella misura in cui si costruisce come spettacolo davanti agli occhi dello spettatore Tancredi e la sua entrata in scena e la sua uscita di scena dipendono dal suo sguardo su di lei. Ma soprattutto l'intera vicenda di Clorinda nasce e si sviluppa sul rapporto tra verità e finzione ovvero identità e assenza di identità. Vogliamo quindi considerare Clorinda un carattere tragico-teatrale e un esempio della poetica del Tasso dove il teatro è simbolo della sua visione della vita e del mondo. Corrisponde a quanto esplicitamente il poeta afferma nel dialogo *Il Gianluca ovvero de le maschere* dove, riferendosi al suo primo incontro con la città di Ferrara, descrive la città come teatro e la vita come scena e lui stesso come spettatore aspirante a far parte della "comedia":

[...] mi parve che tutta la città fosse una meravigliosa e non più veduta scena dipinta, e luminosa e piena di mille forme e di mille apparenze, e l'azioni di quel tempo simili a quelle che son rappresentate ne' teatri con varie lingue e con vari interlocutori; e non

*bastandomi l'esser divenuto spettatore, velli
divenire un di quelli ch'eran parte della
comedia, e mescolarmi con gli altri (Tasso
1958, 675).*

Il Tasso attribuisce allo spazio esistenziale la forma di un palcoscenico: la città che è simbolo della vita gli si presenta come “scena” e in quanto tale “piena di mille forme e di mille apparenze,” ovvero una “comedia.” Tasso, con la figura di Clorinda, ha drammatizzato l'assenza di un criterio sicuro per distinguere la vita dalla scena-finzione, il vero dal falso.

Un aspetto della teatralità nella vicenda di Clorinda consiste nella falsità della sua apparenza che inganna sulla nascita, sulla stirpe, sulla religione e sul sesso. Tasso assegna al personaggio Clorinda una doppia identità di cui l'armatura da guerriera diventa simbolo e assomiglia alla maschera che racchiude la doppia identità dell'attore. Nell'armatura Clorinda gioca la sua doppia identità e in funzione di essa si determinano la sua esistenza e la sua morte. La storia di Clorinda intreccia di continuo finzione e realtà e si sviluppa sotto il segno dell'equivoco. Già la sua nascita miracolosa con pelle bianca da genitori etiopi sarebbe un equivoco in funzione della sua apparenza. La madre infatti per evitare l'equivoco l'affida all'eunuco Arsete e la sostituisce con una bambina di pelle nera. Questo pone le basi della finta identità di Clorinda che non si limita soltanto alle sue origini ma si estende fino alla negazione della sua identità femminile nella scelta di essere una guerriera. La maschera di Clorinda è la corazza di guerriera in cui ella attua un duplice atteggiamento di dissimulazione e spersonalizzazione della sua identità: è donna ma mostra la virilità di un guerriero; milita tra i pagani ma è cristiana di origine; muore per la causa pagana e nel contempo abbraccia la fede cristiana. Clorinda, come si racconta di lei nel II canto, ha rifiutato il suo destino di donna e ha scelto con ostinata consapevolezza un destino di guerriera:

*Costei gl'ingegni femminili e gli usi
tutti sprezzò sin da l'età più acerba :
a i lavori d'Aracne, a l'ago, a i fusi
inchinar non degnò la man superba.
Fuggì gli abiti molli e i lochi chiusi
chè ne' campi onestate anco si serba
armò d'orgoglio il volto, e si compiacque
rigido farlo, e pur rigido piacque.
Tenera ancor con pargoletta destra
strinse e lento d'un corridore il morso;*

*trattò l'asta e la spada, ed in palestra
indurò i membri ed allenogli al corso.
Poscia o per via montana o per silvestra
l'orme seguì di fer leone e d'orso;
seguì le guerre, e 'n esse e fra le selve
fèra a gli uomini parve, uomo alle belve. (II, 39-40)*

Clorinda ha annullato la sua identità femminile dissimulandola nell'armatura. Legata alla sua pura apparenza, alla "tigre, che su l'elmo ha per cimiero, / [...] famosa insegna," ella si è data un'identità che manca di identificazione in quanto spersonalizzata e fissata nella immutabilità della sua maschera-armatura. Diventa segno intercambiabile: ci sono nella *Gerusalemme Liberata* tre episodi che infatti mettono in scena la mancanza di corrispondenza tra Clorinda e la sua immagine. Il primo è quando Erminia per recarsi al campo cristiano si traveste con la sua armatura:

*finger mi vuo' Clorinda; e ricoperta
sotto l'imagin sua, d'uscir son certa. (VI, 87)*

Il secondo è quando Belzebù crea un fantasma con la immagine di lei per aiutare Argante:

*e la sembianza di Clorinda altera
gli finse, e l'arme ricche e luminose. (VII, 99)*

Il terzo è quando Tancredi nella foresta incantata crede di udire la voce di lei che esce da un cipresso:

*presente aver gli è avviso
l'offesa donna sua che plori e gema,
nè può soffrir di rimirar quel sangue,
nè quei gemiti udir d'egro che langue. (XIII, 45)*

La rottura con la falsa identità dell'apparenza si realizza come rottura con la vita: la vera identità di Clorinda viene fuori al momento della sua morte e coincide, in termini teatrali, con l'uscita di scena. Clorinda muore combattendo per la causa pagana ma nello stesso tempo con il battesimo muore da cristiana ed esce dalla identità di "famosa insegna" di guerriera pagana. Con la morte Clorinda fa emergere la "forma autentica" contro la "forma assunta" (Chiappelli 1981, 60).

Ci sono momenti in cui Clorinda esprime dubbi e s'interroga sulla sua identità di guerriera:

*Io (questo è il sommo pregio onde mi vante)
d'alto rinchiusa oprai l'arme lontane,
sagittaria, no 'l nego, assai felice.
Dunque sol tanto a donna e più non lice?*

*Quanto me' for a in monte od in foresta
a le fere avventar dardi e quadrella,
ch'ove il maschio valor si manifesta
mostrarmi qui tra cavalier donzella!
Chè non riprendo la feminea vesta,
s'io ne son degna, e non mi chiudo in cella?
Così parla fra sè; pensa e risolve
Al fin gran cose, ed al guerrier si volve (XII, 3-4).*

E infine depone l'usuale armatura luminosa e ne indossa una scura:

*Depon Clorinda le sue spoglie inteste
d'argento e l'elmo adorno e l'arme altere,
e senza piuma o fregio altre ne veste
(infausto annunzio!) ruginose e nere,
però che stima agevolmente in queste
occulta andar fra le nemiche schiere. (XII, 18)*

Alla base della ragione logica di non volere indossare fregi rilucenti per non essere riconosciuta nel campo nemico, potrebbe esserci una motivazione inconscia: la volontà di dividere e liberare la sua personalità dalla corazza-maschera. Si potrebbe quindi leggere nel gesto di Clorinda una doppia volontà: da un lato la volontà di portare fino in fondo la sua fedeltà all'etica guerriera:

*Nè per temenza lascerò, nè lice
a magnanimo cor, l'impresa e l'armi (XII, 41)*

e dall' altro la volontà di morire rafforzata dal chiaro presentimento di morte che confessa ad Argante:

*Ma s'egli averrà pur che mia ventura
nel mio ritorno mi rinchioda il passo,
d'uom che 'n amor m'è padre a te la cura
e de le care mie donzelle io lasso. (XII, 5-6)*

La doppia identità di Clorinda si rivela in rapporto a Tancredi in una modalità che imita il rapporto specificamente teatrale tra attore e spettatore. Questo rapporto si innesta sulla “dialettica del nascondimento e della scoperta, del nascondere e del celare” (Scianatico 107) che Clorinda mette in atto in rapporto allo “spettatore” Tancredi. Poichè le descrizioni di Clorinda passano attraverso gli occhi di Tancredi, essa si forma sulla scena come “spettacolo che si offre e si nega...filtrato dallo sguardo di chi osserva il teatro dell’azione” (Scianatico 55): gli occhi di Tancredi sono incapaci di discernere quello che il suo cuore riconosce. Gli occhi giocano un ruolo centrale nell’innamoramento di Tancredi e Clorinda, esso anzi si inizia e si conclude in un gioco di sguardi dove gli occhi come raggi lampeggiano, folgorano, si accendono:

*Lampeggiar gli occhi e folgorar gli sguardi,
dolci ne l’ira; or che sarian nel riso? [...] (III, 22)*

e

*Così dicendo fiammeggiò di zelo
per gli occhi, fuor del mortal uso accensi;
poi nel profondo de’ suoi rai si chiuse
e sparve, e in lui conforto infuse (XII, 93)*

L’episodio è un’applicazione poetica dell’importanza attribuita dal Tasso allo sguardo nelle *Conclusioni amorose XXIX* dove gli occhi sono definiti “principio e fine d’amore.” (Tasso 1959, 503). Allo stesso modo la continua visualizzazione di Clorinda tramite gli occhi di Tancredi è un’applicazione di quanto Tasso sostiene nei *Discorsi dell’arte poetica e del poema eroico* dove dice che il poeta pone le cose “davanti agli occhi” in due modi: “l’uno è la narrazione, l’altro è la rappresentazione.” (Tasso 1959, 504). Il poeta epico quindi narra mentre quello tragico rappresenta: la vicenda di Clorinda, essendo costruita su uno schema tragico, trasforma la narrazione in rappresentazione ovvero apparizione sulla scena del “teatro del mondo.”

La voce narrante si nasconde dietro lo sguardo di Tancredi e riesce attraverso avverbi e aggettivi a dare alla presentazione di Clorinda il tono di una apparizione teatrale. In questa prospettiva la presentazione di Clorinda ha un andamento dinamico e si configura sin dall’inizio come un gioco scenico di improvvisa e fugace apparizione-sparizione. Clorinda appare e scompare, la sua esistenza dura il tempo dell’apparizione:

*[...]d'improvviso una donzella
tutta, fuor che la fronte, armata apparse. (I, 47)*

È l'avverbio "d'improvviso" a caratterizzare la modalità teatrale della sua apparizione: Clorinda appare all'improvviso come una immagine di folgorante bellezza ovvero una "bella sembianza" ricoperta dall'armatura, ad eccezione della fronte che non indossa l'elmo. Con la stessa teatralità - indicata nel verso dall'avverbio "ecco" - Clorinda si presenta per la seconda volta nel II canto:

*Mentre sono in tal rischio, ecco un guerriero
(chè tal pareo) d'alta sembianza e degna
e mostra, d'arme e d'abito straniero,
che di lontan peregrinando vegna.
La tigre, che su l'elmo ha per cimiero,
tutti gli occhi a sè trae, famosa insegna,
insegna usata da Clorinda in guerra;
onde la credon lei, nè 'l creder erra. (II, 38)*

Essa si mostra all'improvviso nella sua bellezza lontana ("alta") e inafferrabile a distogliere lo sguardo di Tancredi che combatte contro Argante:

*[...] in leggiadro aspetto e pellegrino
s'offerse a gli occhi suoi l'alta guerriera.
Bianche via più che neve in giogo alpino
avea la sopraveste, e la visiera
alta tenea dal volto; e sovra un'erta,
tutta, quanto ella è grande, era scoperta, (VI, 26)*

ritorna come "indomita" guerriera che combatte eroicamente al fianco di Argante:

*mentre così l'indomita gnerriera
le squadre d'occidente apre e flagella, (IX, 71)*

e riappare con il superlativo "eccelsa" come una figura titanica e sicura di sè:

*e in su la torre altissima angolare
sovra tutti Clorinda eccelsa appare. (XI, 27)*

Il ritmo graduale con cui si danno i particolari esteriori di Clorinda segna un allontanamento dallo schema descrittivo della bellezza di

stampo ariosteo: attraverso un sottile gioco visivo di visto-non visto Tasso vuole indurre l'immaginazione del lettore a ricreare personalmente una figura dinamica, che non si presenta mai fissata in una posa statica nè nei tradizionali "termini di linearità geometrica e architettonica" (Chiappelli 1985, 57). La sua figura prende corpo attraverso accenni e approssimazioni graduali secondo quella tecnica descrittiva che Jonard chiama "denudamento" e che ha una natura scenica: "il corpo non è più la libertà della carne esposta che s'offre allo sguardo innocente senza lasciar indovinare altro. Il corpo ha i suoi misteri che chiedono di essere penetrati; non si espone mai in tutta la sua nudità." (Jonard, 46-7).

La teatrale modalità di apparizione si sviluppa ulteriormente nel tono delle espressioni verbali e nelle indicazioni delle espressioni gestuali di Clorinda che assomigliano a delle didascalie teatrali. La teatralità emerge nella ferma austerità delle parole che riflettono il suo "intrepido semblante" come sintesi perfetta di bellezza casta e animo forte che, come dice Sozzi, sembra modellata "sullo stampo della biblica *mulier fortis*" (Sozzi 7):

*Clorinda intanto incontra ai Franchi è gita;
molti van seco, ed ella è a tutti inante;
[...] la generosa i suoi seguaci incita
co' detti e con l'intrepido semblante:
ben con alto principio a noi conviene
dicea – fonder de l'Asia oggi la spene. (III, 13)*

Con tono tragico Clorinda parla ad Arsete che le ha appena confessato le sue origini cristiane:

*nè per temenza lascierò, nè lice
a magnanimo cor, l'impresa e l'armi,
non se la morte nel più fer semblante
che sgomenti i mortali avessi inante, (XII, 41)*

e successivamente a Tancredi prima di iniziare il duello:

*«Guerra e morte avrai;» disse, « io non rifiuto
darlati, se la cerchi,» e ferma attende, (XII, 53)*

e ancora, durante il duello, quando Tancredi le chiede di rivelargli la sua identità e il suo nome, Clorinda risponde orgogliosa e senza paura rivelando una volontà tragica:

*Risponde la feroce : «Indarno chiedi
quel c'ho per uso di non far palese.
Ma chiunque io mi sia, tu inanzi vedi
un di quei due che la gran torre accese». (XII, 61)*

Le espressioni gestuali si configurano in descrizioni di posture o gesti che possono funzionare come le didascalie nei testi teatrali, esse sono sintetizzate in aggettivi che qualificano Clorinda come “guerriero / d’alta sembianza e degna,” “leggiadro aspetto e pellegrino,” “alta,” “indomita,” “eccelsa,” “feroce,” “ferma.” Didascalie sono il riferimento al tono della sua voce “afflitta” quando è stata ferita a morte:

*Ella, mentre cadea, la voce afflitta
movendo, disse le parole estreme [...], (XII, 65)*

le descrizioni del colore della pelle e della direzione degli occhi:

*D’un bel pallore ha il bianco volto asperso,
come a’ gigli sarian miste le viole,
e gli occhi al cielo affisa [...], (XII, 69)*

il morbido gesto con cui prima di morire Clorinda risponde a Tancredi:

*e la man nuda e fredda alzando verso
il cavaliere in vece di parole
gli dà pegno di pace[...]. (XII, 69)*

Nel duello tra Clorinda e Tancredi la visione tragico-teatrale diventa scena dove le apparenze nascondono il vero. L’assenza d’identità viene materializzata nel buio della notte in cui si svolge il duello che impedisce di distinguere il vero dal falso. Che il duello abbia una forma teatrale lo riferisce la stessa voce narrante:

*Degne d’un chiaro sol, degne d’un pieno
teatro, opre sarian sì memoranda. (XII, 54)*

Esso si configura come comunicazione sul duplice livello visivo e sonoro: si materializza nelle sensazioni uditive del rumore delle spade:

odi le spade orribilmente urtarsi, (XII, 55)

nelle sensazioni tattili della fisicità dei “nodi tenaci”:

*Tre volte il cavalier la donna stringe
con le robuste braccia, ed altrettante
da que' nodi tenaci ella si scinge [...], (XII, 57)*

nelle sensazioni visive dello svolgimento lento ed esitante del duello:

*Tornano al ferro, e l'uno e l'altro il tinge
con molte piaghe; e stanco ed anelante
e questi e quegli al fin pur si ritira,
e dopo lungo faticar respira, (XII, 57)
[...]
Ma ecco omai l'ora fatale è giunta
che l' viver di Clorinda al suo fin deve.
Spinge egli il ferro nel bel sen di punta
che vi s'immerge e 'l sangue avido beve, (XII, 64)*

nell'effetto fisico della mano di Tancredi che trema nello scoprire di aver ferito a morte la donna amata “tremar senti la man, mentre la fronte / non conosciuta ancora sciolse e scoprio.” (XII, 67)

Gli occhi di Tancredi ovvero la sua capacità di vedere o non vedere determinano il destino di Clorinda. L'entrata in scena e l'uscita di scena di Clorinda sono filtrate entrambe dallo sguardo di Tancredi ed entrambe costruite sul rapporto maschera-identità. È infatti in rapporto a quella parte dell'armatura che più ci ricorda una maschera ovvero l'elmo che Clorinda esce di scena, come “fronte / non conosciuta ancor” (XII, 67), perchè coperta dall'elmo, nella modalità esattamente opposta a quella in cui, a fronte scoperta, “tutta, fuor che la fronte, armata apparse” (I, 47), era entrata in scena. Nel primo duello tra Clorinda e Tancredi, quello narrato nel III canto, la capacità di vedere di Tancredi è affidata alla casualità del colpo di lancia con cui egli facendo saltare l'elmo di Clorinda la riconosce :

*Clorinda intanto ad incontrar l'assalto
va di Tancredi, e pon la lancia in resta.
[...] chè rotti i lacci a l'elmo suo, d'un salto
(mirabil colpo!) ei le balzò di testa;
e le chiome dorate al vento sparse,
giovane donna in mezzo 'l campo apparse. (III, 21)*

Nel duello del XII canto la capacità di vedere di Tancredi è ancora una volta inibita dall'elmo-maschera ma questa volta Tancredi non riconosce Clorinda perchè l'ha identificata con l'elmo-maschera abituale ovvero la “famosa insegna” che Clorinda invece ha deposto per indossare

le armi “ruginose a nere.” Tancredi è caduto in un doppio errore ottico: ha identificato Clorinda con una maschera e ha scambiato la finzione per realtà. Tancredi combatte e uccide la donna amata perchè non l’ha riconosciuta ovvero l’ha identificata con la maschera. Nel duello Tasso ha drammatizzato l’inganno dell’apparenza ovvero il fallimento dello sguardo che si è fermato davanti all’apparenza e ha trasformato l’amata in nemica e l’abbraccio amoroso in abbraccio mortale:

*Tre volte il cavalier la donna stringe
con le robuste braccia, ed altrettante
da que' nodi tenaci ella si scinge,
nodi di fer nemico e non d'amante. (XII, 57)*

In questo senso nel canto XII, con il fallimento dello sguardo di Tancredi, riemerge la visione tassiana della vita come spettacolo pieno “di mille forme e di mille apparenze” e rivela tutta l’ironia contenuta nel verso-sentenza “onde la credon lei, nè il creder erra” del canto II che presentando Clorinda come immagine, “sembianza,” pone le premesse della sua fine tragica:

*[...] ecco un guerriero
(chè tal pare) d'alta sembianza e degna
e mostra, d'arme e d'abito straniero,
che di lontan peregrinando vegna.
La tigre, che su l'elmo ha per cimiero,
tutti gli occhi a sè trae, famosa insegna,
insegna usata da Clorinda in guerra;
onde la credon lei, nè il creder erra. (II, 38)*

Per concludere possiamo quindi assumere Clorinda come il simbolo della poetica tassiana secondo cui l’inganno degli occhi trasforma la vita in apparenza e rappresentazione, e la conoscenza è ciò che sopravvive all’autoinganno dei sensi. La sua identità, il suo carattere e la conoscenza di se stessa, l’epilogo della sua vicenda provano che Clorinda è un carattere tragico perchè la conoscenza della sua identità, arrivando con la morte, è conoscenza tragica, distruttiva. La teatralità si conferma allora come mancanza di corrispondenza tra apparenza e realtà.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*We would like to extend our gratitude for their support to the following individuals departments and organizations who facilitated the publication of this year's **Romance Review***

Professor John Neuhauser and the Office of the
Academic Vice-President

Dean Michael Smyer and the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences

Professor Laurie Shepard, *Department Chair*
Professor Dwayne Carpenter, *Director of Graduate Studies*
Ms. Joanna Doyle, *Administrative Secretary*
Mr. Esmail Khaksari, *Departmental Secretary*
And the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures
of Boston College

The Graduate Student Association of Boston College

