Ámbitos Feministas

Revista crítica multidisciplinaria anual
de la coalición Feministas Unidas Inc.
ISSN 2164-0998

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***Feministas Unidas Inc.*, Membership fees (**membership.feministas-unidas.org):
Institutions $25, Professors/Associate Prof. $20, Assistant Prof. $15 Students $10 per year.

Revista: *Feministas Unidas Inc.,* publishes a biannual Revista *(Fall and Spring).*
ISSN 1933-1479 (print) ISSN 1933-1487 (on-line) newsletter.feministas-unidas.org

The *Revista*'s editors welcome books for review. Send books and other materials to:
Carmen de Urioste, Book Review Editor
SILC-Spanish Program Box 870202
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Tempe, AZ 85287-0202

Ámbitos Feministas is the official critical journal of the coalition. Printed. ISSN 2164-0998 (print)
Blind Peer reviewed and indexed by the MLA and EBSCO.

Published annually in the fall, with a monographic Issue every 5 years.

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Fall 2017, Volume 7

Ámbitos Feministas

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While we accept submissions at any time, in order to be considered for the **Fall 2017 Issue**, originals should arrive to our editorial office by **June 30th, 2017.**

Submit original and cover letter as Word attachments to:
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A current membership to the coalition Feministas Unidas Inc. (http://feministas-unidas.org) is required of all authors at the time of submission and must be kept until the end of the process. Membership information

Manuscripts should be double-spaced and between 17-25 double-spaced pages in length, including all notes, as well as the Works Cited. They should be formatted using Times New Roman Size 12 and 1" margins.

For review purposes, originals should contain no reference to the author. Include a one page cover letter with author's information: name, rank, academic affiliation, email, postal address, essay's little, and a brief bio (8-10 lines) with latest publications.

Essays in Spanish, Portuguese or English, need to conform to the most recent versions of the MLA Style Manual and the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers.

The end notes will be at the end of the essay, and they should not be inserted automatically. Please manually use numbers in superscript in the text and then refer to them in the end notes section.

The editors of *Ámbitos Feministas* have the right to reject manuscripts for the Fall volume that do not address the criteria of the journal and of the coalition *Feministas Unidas* Inc. <feministas-unidas.org>

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Otoño 2016

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La ventana y la representación del género femenino en *El espíritu de la colmena* de Víctor Erice

Sharon Keefe Ugalde
Texas State University

El rol esencial del espacio en la construcción del género ha engendrado en las letras y las artes una imagen—la mujer en la ventana. Desde el siglo XVII pintores, como Jan Vermeer (1632-75), Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840), Edward Hopper (1882-1967) y Salvador Dalí (1904-89), han contribuido a fijar la imagen en la memoria colectiva. Retrocediendo a los siglos XVI y XVII existen tratados morales que recalcan el peligro que representa para la mujer sentarse ociosamente junto a la ventana. En *Epístolas familiares* (1539-41), Antonio de Guevara advierte: "Guardaos de ser vana, liviana, ventanera, habladora y chocarrea" (cit. en Martín 34). El mandato prescribe el comportamiento femenino normativo: ser abnegada y evitar apariencias de disponibilidad sexual. Leída bajo el prisma feminista, la imagen histórica de la mujer en la ventana expone las consecuencias negativas de un sistema patriarcal binario (Cixous). La ventana marca divisiones que separan a los hombres y las mujeres en dos categorías y establece una jerarquía: exterior/interior, público/privado. Por su calidad limítrofe la ventana señala un sistema social asentado en la formulación excluyente de "o" / "o": dominador o subyugado; fascista o Republicano; yo o el otro.

Sharon Keefe Ugalde received her Ph.D. in Spanish from Stanford University and is University Distinguished Professor at Texas State University. Her primary research field is 20th and 21st century poetry of Spain, with an emphasis on poetry written by women. Books published include *En voz alta. Las poetas de las generaciones de los 50 y los 70* (Hiperión, 2007), *Conversaciones y poemas. La nueva poesía femenina española en castellano* (Siglo XXI, 1991), *Gabriel Celaya* (Twayne, 1978). She has edited collections of critical essays on the poetry of Juana Castro, María Victoria Atencia, and Ángel González and published more than eighty articles in scholarly journals. Her current project is A New Look for Ophelia in the Cultural Production of Spain. From 2010-2013 she served on the MLA Executive Committee of the Division of Twentieth-Century Spanish Literature and is on the editorial boards of *Letras Hispanas, Cuadernos de ALDEEU, Aula Lírica*, and *Cincinnati Romance Review.*

La ventana abierta facilita la comunicación y el intercambio de perspectivas, pero cerrada es una barrera. Al terminar la Guerra Civil española en 1939, la ventana se cerró de golpe en la cara de las mujeres españolas con el establecimiento de nuevos límites represivos de exclusión. Terminado el conflicto bélico, el general Franco recordó a la Sección Femenina de Falange que quedaba una conquista más: "Os queda—como dijo vuestra delegada—la reconquista del Hogar" (cit. en Zecchi, 200). El destino de las mujeres consistía en la abnegación, obediencia y servicio—volver a ser un ángel del hogar decimonónico. Como norma, el espacio público—la fuerza laboral, la política y la producción cultural—se consideraban zonas cerradas a las mujeres. Dos artículos del código civil, *permiso marital* y la *patria potestad*, legalizaron varias restricciones. Los artículos exigían que la mujer consiguiera el permiso del marido o del padre antes de emprender cualquier actividad fuera del hogar—trabajo, negocios, una cuenta bancaria, iniciar procedimientos legales, viajar, o disponer de sus bienes gananciales o propios. Se estableció una jerarquía rígida con los adultos por encima de los niños y los hombres por encima de las mujeres, un microcosmos del esquema nacional del poder vertical.

Refiriéndose específicamente a las escritoras de posguerra, Carmen Martín Gaite asevera que la condición de mujer ventanera estaba vigente. Alude a la ventana cerrada, signo del ambiente asfixiante del franquismo y del encierro doméstico, pero también a la escritura como ventana abierta hacia la liberación imaginaria y real (102). Para muchas escritoras la ventana "cerrada, abierta, tapiada, con rejas, será el muro que se ha de romper para liberar la imaginación centrífuga" (Balló 22). La obra de Martín Gaite es el ejemplo cumbre de la utilización de la ventana para representar las circunstancias de las mujeres de la posguerra. Variaciones de la palabra—ventanas, ventanales, ventanucos, mirillas, claraboyas, balcones y barandillas—abundan en sus novelas (Martinell 11-12). Las poetas de la Generación de los 50 igualmente encuentran en la imagen de la ventana una forma de expresar sus vivencias de posguerra. María Teresa Cervantes (Cartagena, 1931), por ejemplo, pone de manifiesto la naturalización de las prácticas cotidianas que excluían a las mujeres del espacio público. En *Ventana de amanecer* (1954) la poeta indaga el impacto emocional de vivir dentro del cerco impuesto por el régimen. Las dimensiones del pequeño libro, 8.5 cm.

por 12 cm. y la ilustración en la portada, una ventana abierta con una mirada desde adentro hacia afuera, reiteran los límites espaciales femeninos. La obra poética de Cristina Lacasa (Terassa, 1929) es similarmente ilustrativa. La protagonista del poema "Estas cuatro paredes" (*Voz*, 1953) se siente inmovilizada, sin poder ni siquiera asumir debidamente la posición de sujeto verbal: "Yo aprisionada en el alto balcón, / creciendo en melancolía y en impaciencia" (16). El poema "La calle" (*Brazos*, 1958) es otro testimonio revelador de cómo las restricciones sofocaban el pleno desarrollo anímico, sexual y profesional de las mujeres. En la primera posguerra el concepto de la ventana no solo fue utilizado por escritoras para lamentar su encierro o anhelar la libertad, sino también por la Sección Femenina de Falange en forma de una publicación titulada *Ventanal* (1946-47). En su estudio de *Ventanal,* Barbara Zecchi (212) afirma que, a pesar de algunas ideas no conformistas durante la primera época de la publicación, predominó un contenido oficialista que elevaba como modelo ideal a la mujer abnegada en el espacio interior.

Víctor Erice elabora con esmero y originalidad el motivo de la ventana en *El espíritu de la colmena* (1973). Es un recurso poético que le permite dar substancia visual a las vivencias íntimas de las mujeres españolas de los años 1940, años que son a la vez los de su propia niñez. Existen en la historia del cine ejemplos clásicos del motivo visual de la ventana, señaladamente en *Rear Window* (1954) de Alfred Hitchcock. Laura Mulvey utiliza el film del director inglés para apoyar su tesis que en el cine narrativo clásico domina el punto de vista del hombre; él posee la mirada activa y controladora que determina el valor del objeto femenino pasivo. *El espíritu de la colmena* comparte con *Rear Window* el papel central de la ventana en la narrativa, en el discurso, y en repetidos encuadres y también la presencia de una mirada masculina controladora. Sin embargo, la preponderancia de la historia política de España, los intertextos de la tradición pictórica y las posibles lecturas feministas alejan el film de Erice del cine hitchcockiano con respecto al motivo visual de la ventana. Para el director español el motivo tiene dos funciones esenciales. Por una parte, hace palpable y sentida la cotidianidad íntima de mujeres abnegadas, silenciosas y obedientes de la posguerra, y por otra, prefigura una futura construcción del género femenino en que la mirada controladora masculina cede frente a una mirada femenina capaz de imaginar comportamientos alternativos.

El cine poético y los motivos visuales

La historia crítica de *El espíritu de la colmena*, un film clasificado por Santos Zunzunegui como "the Zenith of the trajectory of Spanish film since its beginnings," traza dos caminos paralelos: el realismo y la abstracción (128). La especificidad de un tiempo y un espacio históricos—"Algún lugar en la meseta castellana hacia 1943"—incita a una descodificación realista (*El espíritu*). Chris Perriam alega que: "the plot can be decoded as largely having reference to the social, political and psychological effects of the early years of the Francoist regime" (63). Pero aún así, es innegable que múltiples lecturas abstractas giran alrededor del eje realista. Paul Julian Smith sostiene, de forma convincente, que el film es una síntesis de lo histórico y lo poético; Jo Labanyi descubre un énfasis en el estatus "*hauntological*" de los acontecimientos narrados; Josep Carles Laínez considera la posible construcción de un mundo alternativo basada en la afirmación final de Ana de su "verdad interior" (56); Jorge Latorre enfatiza una búsqueda, en la figura de Ana, de soluciones a las grandes cuestiones de la existencia; en lecturas enfocadas en el género (Susan Martin-Marquez, Celestino Deleyto), Ana es la prefiguración de la liberación. Alberto Elena afirma que la obra de Erice es sobre todo una historia de iniciación, pero añade que también resalta "the need to transcend the weight of tradition and a paralyzing social inertia" (102).

La proliferación de descodificaciones de *El espíritu de la colmena* se relaciona directamente con su lirismo, cuya materia prima son los motivos visuales. Jaime Pena nos recuerda que "el propio Erice ya aludía a la estructura lírica que estaba en la base de la definición de los personajes de los padres a partir de una serie de *figuras* primordiales: un hombre en el balcón, una mujer escribiendo una carta" (51). Para Zunzunegui la desreferencialización, el despojamiento de referencias reales—por ejemplo, la ausencia en *El espíritu de la colmena* de imágenes de las ruinas de la guerra—intensifica "the strong iconic density" del lirismo (134). Otro factor que contribuye al carácter poético del film es una preferencia por la toma frontal y detenida que fomenta en el espectador una contemplación intensa, pero tal vez el más esencial es la reincidencia de determinadas imágenes.

La cuidadosa e insistente presencia de la imagen de la mujer en la ventana—incluyendo las variaciones del padre en la ventana y la niña en la ventana—involucra al espectador en el proceso de descifrar su significación polisémica. Los análisis de *El espíritu de la colmena* resaltan el motivo visual de la ventana en distintos contextos—por ejemplo, en relación a la iluminación (Rubio Munt), la puesta en escena y

la significación de los espacios (Gorostiza López, Català Domènech), las estrategias para contar historias de iniciación en tiempos de dictadura (Elena), los intertextos pictóricos (Pena), la organización social del patriarcado (Parrondo Copel) —pero no existe ningún estudio que se enfoque específicamente en la ventana en relación a la representación del género femenino. Para recalcar la potencia expresiva que Erice da al motivo visual en relación a la construcción de feminidad, consideramos tres de sus posibles significaciones: el enclaustramiento de la mujer, la ley patriarcal, y el nomadismo como alternativa al pensamiento dualista.

El enclaustramiento y la ventana-colmena patriarcal

Bajo el subtítulo "El hogar como cárcel," Jordi Balló explica que "En el cerco doméstico de la ventana existe también un anuncio de una prisión femenina, que puede llegar a alcanzar aliento trágico" (29). Tres de las múltiples secuencias de *El espíritu de la colmena* que encuadran las ventanas de la casa familiar muestran que el espacio de Teresa (Teresa Gimpara), esposa de Fernando (Fernando Fernán Gómez) y madre de Isabel (Isabel Tellería) de nueve años y Ana (Ana Torrent) de seis, es esencialmente interior, doméstico y privado. En la primera, Teresa aparece sentada delante de una ventana escribiendo una carta; en la segunda secuencia ventanera ella está de pie y de espaldas, tocando el piano con la misma ventana a su izquierda, y en la tercera, la vemos delante de la ventana conversando con el médico que atiende a Ana. La imagen reiterada de Teresa en la ventana subraya, por una parte, el enclaustramiento femenino histórico, y por otra, intensifica el aliento trágico que caracteriza a Teresa como mujer española de posguerra. El encierro no es sólo físico sino también psíquico y sexual.

La carta que escribe Teresa va dirigida a un antiguo amante—o tal vez a algún familiar—y su contenido, que se escucha en *off*, confirma un estado de desolación. Hay indicios de que el vacío anímico es una secuela de la guerra civil porque la dirección de la carta es la Cruz Roja de Nice, Francia. Cuando Teresa lleva la carta al pueblo la secuencia incluye encuadres de las miradas de unos soldados sentados en el tren. Las caras vistas a través de las ventanillas del tren revelan los estragos del conflicto. Los edificios abandonados y ventanas tapiadas en los alrededores de la estación igualmente conectan la desolación de Teresa con la posguerra, como también su intento fracasado de cantar y teclear en el piano "*Zorongo gitano*" de García Lorca, una canción popular durante la República. Otra referencia a la posguerra es el refugiado, posiblemente un maquis, que muere fusilado.

No obstante las referencias a la posguerra como explicación del desaliento vital de Teresa, el estilo lírico del film permite otras descodificaciones. La incorporación de la histórica iconografía de la mujer en la ventana, por medio de alusiones a la pintura de Vermeer, plantea la construcción del género como explicación de su estado psíquico. Pena enfatiza la fusión de Teresa con las mujeres retratadas por el pintor holandés: "sus cuadros parecen haber servido de clara referencia iconográfica para componer estos 'retratos de Teresa'" (69). Obras de Vermeer, como "Mujer de amarillo escribiendo una carta," "Mujer tocando el laúd junto a una ventana," "Muchacha que lee una carta junto a la ventana," y "Dama escribiendo una carta," son palimpsestos de Teresa en la ventana. La ventana cerrada en las escenas vermeerinas se erige como límite de la demarcación del espacio femenino interior. La reproducción de la composición y la luz de los cuadros del siglo XVII incrementan el valor estético de *El espíritu de la colmena* y también

su complejidad conceptual e ideológica. Por un lado, los intertextos pictóricos introducen un cuestionamiento de la relación entre la pintura y el cine, y, por otro, enfatizan el impacto del sistema binario patriarcal en la existencia de las mujeres.

El reiterado motivo visual se transforma en una "metáfora espacial de una prisión (psicológica y emocional) en la cual está recluida" Teresa (Wilcox 235). En la secuencia del dormitorio matrimonial Erice manipula el motivo visual para resaltar uno de sus matices significativos. En lugar de la cabecera de la cama de Teresa se ve en la pared la sombra de unos hierros que recuerdan los de una ventana. ¿O son barrotes de una prisión? Los hierros de la cama se enlazan con el silbido del tren, reiterado a lo largo del film, para expresar la represión sexual. Como medio de transporte, el tren

sirve para alejarse del ámbito desolado, pero también para que retorne el amante ausente, y en este caso el silbido es un eco del deseo frustrado. Robert J. Miles (104) propone que el refugiado no es solo una referencia a la posguerra sino un personaje de una trama secundaria que narra la relación amorosa entre él y Teresa. La imagen de los hierros, el hecho de que Teresa finge dormir cuando Fernando entra en el dormitorio, y el silbido del tren se conjugan para expresar poéticamente la frustración sexual.

Al inicio de la secuencia de la primera escapada de Ana de casa, se repite el motivo de los barrotes. Al salir del jardín de la casa se proyecta en la pared detrás de la niña una sombra similar a la del dormitorio matrimonial. En esta toma la presencia de los barrotes connota el motivo de la huida de Ana: el agobio de la casa-colmena, o tal vez, la prefiguración de la frustración sexual futura que padece en el presente su madre. El encuadre de Teresa en la terraza durante la segunda y prolongada desaparición de Ana replantea la temática de la subyugación femenina en términos arquitectónicos. Erice modifica la imagen de los hierros ventanales al situar a Teresa en la azotea rodeada de almenas, como si fuera una mujer medieval encerrada en una torre.

Mientras la reincidencia de la mujer (Teresa) en la ventana recalca la histórica reclusión femenina, las modificaciones originales de la imagen elaboradas por Erice cuestionan más ampliamente el funcionamiento de una estructura social cerrada y rígida. Las innovaciones consisten en colocar al padre delante de la ventana y unir esa imagen con la metáfora de la colmena. Al escuchar en *off* selecciones del ensayo "La vida de las abejas" de Maurice Maeterlinck mientras Fernando escribe en su cuaderno, los espectadores empiezan a dilucidar el porqué del título de la película. Las líneas citadas hablan de la sociedad casi perfecta pero despiadada y del mejoramiento de la especie, que no se puede obtener "sino a costa de la libertad de los derechos y del bienestar propios del individuo" (cit. en Pena 43). La colmena metafórica expresa la contención y el orden obligatorio: "The house they occupy is styled like a hive and the ambiguous patriarchal figure of Fernando keeps bees and studies apiculture" (Miles 99). Peter Ashworth ofrece una lectura similar afirmando que la colmena es una imagen poderosa no sólo de la casa familiar sino de "all closed societies and particularly, of course, of Franco's Spain" (67).

Inicialmente, los primeros planos de Fernando vestido de apicultor y de las de colmenas que cuida tienen una función referencial: establecer su oficio. Aun así, se transparenta el lenguaje poético característico

de *El espíritu de la colmena.* Se trata de la yuxtaposición, sin transición ninguna, de un encuadre de Fernando enmascarado de apicultor y uno del monstruo de Frankenstein que las niñas ven en la pantalla del pueblo. Lo que Fernando tiene de monstruo—el poder en un sistema binario—se irá representando precisamente con la imagen de las ventanas de la casa, transformadas en colmenas. Las vidrieras amarillentas con sus formas hexagonales simulan panales. La asociación de la colmena-ventana-casa con una sociedad controlada se estrecha al unir en un mismo encuadre la ventana-colmena con la colmena real que Fernando tiene en observación en su estudio. La meticulosa composición de la secuencia constituye un crescendo que culmina en una fusión total de la colmena-ventana-Fernando: un primer plano de la ventana del hogar a través de la cual es visible el túnel de entrada y salida de las abejas de la caja en observación; luego el cuerpo de Fernando en el balcón, visto a través de la vidriera-colmena, una de "las imágenes primordiales" que el director identifica como un punto de partida del film (Pena 51). El clímax de la fusión metafórica es un primer plano extremo de la cara de Fernando, algo desenfocada con aire de monstruo, que parece mirar desde dentro de la colmena hacia afuera. Otros encuadres de la misma secuencia enfatizan la autoridad de Fernando sobre la colmena/familia. Vigila con mirada penetrante la actividad de las abejas/mujer e hijas, y su silla delante de la ventana-colmena recuerda un trono.

La autoridad patriarcal de Fernando, cuya representación primordial es la ventana-colmena, se acentúa en otras secuencias. En un plano general largo aparece Fernando abriendo el portalón de la reja que rodea la casa, dando a entender que es él quien controla la entrada y la salida de la casa-colmena. Su poder también se manifiesta cuando, después de haber instruido a sus hijas en el bien y el mal, aplasta la seta venenosa diciéndoles con voz sentenciosa: "No lo olvidéis, hijas. Es la más venenosa, la peor de todas. El que la prueba se muere sin remisión" (*Espíritu*). Celestino Deleyto propone como posible interpretación metafórica del dramático destrozo de la seta "the early crushing of female sexuality in the two girls, who are being prepared for their entry in the

symbolic order of patriarchal Law" (48-49). Cuando se ausenta de la casa las niñas disfrutan de una libertad que su presencia inhibe, como confirma la exclamación de la criada Milagros: "ya está armada la República". Otra secuencia que reitera el control del padre es de especial interés para el análisis del motivo visual de la ventana. Se trata del desayuno familiar la mañana después de que Fernando había ido a identificar el cadáver del refugiado. La toma frontal de Fernando sentado y centrado delante de una ventana amarillenta con formas hexagonales reafirma que ocupa el rango más alto de la jerarquía de la casa-colmena. Durante el desayuno ejerce su autoridad condenando a Ana por haber transgredido el orden establecido. Su crimen es haber entregado una chaqueta al refugiado en cuyo bolsillo estaba el reloj de Fernando. El plano-contra plano padre-hija no deja ninguna duda sobre quién gobierna la casa ni sobre la rigidez de sus reglas.

Ana, abriendo ventanas hacia una subjetividad nómada

En su análisis de *El espíritu de la colmena,* Ashworth describe los dos campos de visión que abarca la mirada de Ana: "Ana's eyes… see the spirit of the hive from within: the loss of individualism, the subjection and silence that traumatize the human spirit and that are the products of dictatorial regimes within a nation or a home. But those same eyes also perceive the spirit of the hive from without, and that is the spirit of rebellion and integrity" (68). Como motivo visual en el cine, la poesía y la pintura, la ventana no es sólo un cerco: "Mirar a través de una ventana, desde un espacio doméstico, contiene una poderosa evocación fuera de campo… El hombre [/la mujer] se apropia de la ventana porque al mirar desde el vidrio hacia fuera fabrica su voluntad de superación, como un símbolo del descentramiento, de la ruptura del orden establecido" (Freire). En la última, espectacular, escena culminante de *El espíritu de la colmena*, Ana mira por la ventana abierta y descubre una visión—la subjetividad nómada—que descentraliza el orden establecido.

Para precisar en qué consiste el nomadismo como postura intelectual es conveniente insistir en la palabra *fluidez:* la movilidad, el movimiento a la deriva, el cruzar fronteras, no llegar nunca y menos a un punto predeterminado. El estado nómada deconstruye el pensamiento dualista y jerárquico y, por lo tanto, tiene repercusiones subversivas. Ser nómada es asumir una posición antiesencialista, es desentenderse del centro y abandonar el deseo unidireccional del dominio (Deleuze, 21). El sistema nómada, como el rizomático, es "an acentered, nonhierarchical, nonsignifying system without a General" (Deleuze 21). Rosi Braidotti

subraya el lazo entre el sujeto nómada y el feminismo, señalando el rechazo compartido del poder céntrico y la estructura vertical a favor de lo múltiple e inestable. Lo extraño se interioriza y se hace cotidiano: "there is no home per se that is a safe place from strangeness" (Peters 31). Ser nómada es librarse del estancamiento de significaciones. El habitar lo extraño permite al nómada poner en juego diferentes sistemas de signos que confluyen en una multiplicidad metamórfica (Deleuze 21).

Al final de *El espíritu de la colmena* el director, a través de la mirada de Ana desde la ventana hacia fuera, deja con el público una visión alternativa a la patriarcal. Ana no sólo tolera lo extraño sino que abre las ventanas de par en par para llamar con su conjuro al espíritu del monstruo. Reconoce intuitivamente, desde su perspectiva de una niña, que el abrirse a lo misterioso y a lo extraño es una senda que le transporta más allá de la casa-colmena. Para el sujeto nómada el hogar es móvil; no existe tierra fija, sino un constante reposicionarse en espacios inestables. Linda Ehrlich reconoce la prefiguración de una subjetividad nómada en Ana al comentar el final de la película: "As Ana faces outward, we cannot help but ask ourselves: Who is this figure, this splinter of the night, standing and gazing out the open window? Perhaps the only answers are those moments when the monsters that rise up before us becomes part of our own name" (14).

La revelación final es convincente porque es la culminación del proceso de aprendizaje de Ana. La trayectoria se puntualiza con el motivo visual de la ventana, que históricamente connota la naturalización del enclaustramiento femenino. Curiosa, observadora, con fuerza de voluntad, y algo rebelde, Ana es una niña ansiosa de comprender la vida y la muerte. En una secuencia temprana observa la colmena en el estudio de su padre. Los encuadres reiteran los anteriores de Fernando haciendo lo mismo. Esta duplicación establece un contraste entre Fernando, quien desde su posición de autoridad respalda la uniformidad de la sociedad cerrada, y Ana, quien empieza a cuestionarla. Metafóricamente el escrudiño intenso del panal le permite a la niña intuir, desde su perspectiva inocente, ciertos fallos en la organización de la colmena, los

cuales si fuera un adulto podría nombrar con mayor precisión: ausencia de agencia y subyugación.

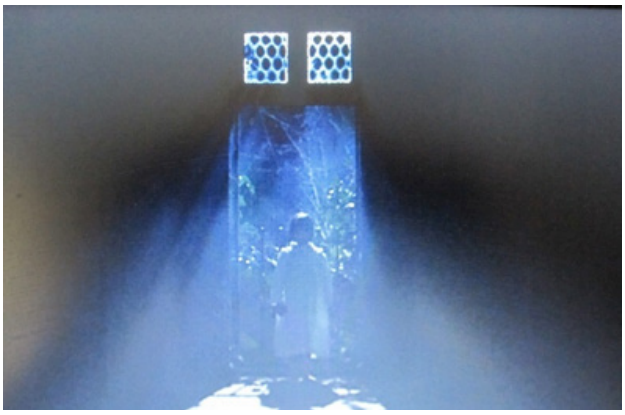
Su reacción frente a la muerte simulada de su hermana Isabel es una indicación de que Ana intenta descifrar su existencia. Su incertidumbre al dar con el misterioso estado de Isabel es visible cuando se dirige a la ventana entreabierta delante de la cual está estirada Isabel en el suelo. Después de una larga toma mientras examina el cuerpo de su hermana, Ana, confundida frente al misterio peligroso, va a la ventana atraída por el ladrido de un perro. ¿Viene el peligro desde adentro, la ley patriarcal encarnada en el padre Fernando? o ¿desde afuera, la otredad del refugiado, una reencarnación del monstruo de Frankenstein? Peter Evans (15) hace esta distinción entre los dos tipos de monstruos. En realidad, en el film el concepto de "monstruo" es polivalente. Además de la doble lectura de Evans—monstruo patriarcal y monstruo Otro que amenaza al orden establecido—existen otras, incluyendo, el monstruo de *El doctor Frankenstein* de James Whale y la categorización binaria de la mujer: ángel-monstruo. Antes de cerrar la ventana Ana pausa brevemente indecisa sobre cómo proceder, ¿cerrarla o dejarla entreabierta? Todavía no discierna caminos hacia una subjetividad propia.

En contraste con Ana, Isabel no cuestiona la ley patriarcal. Después de su simulada muerte—¿una premonición de su destino anímico en el patriarcado? —y disfrazada en el atuendo de apicultor de su padre, espanta a Ana. No es fortuito que aterrorice a su hermana delante de una ventana-colmena; el posicionamiento apunta a que Isabel ya está socializada en los valores de la sociedad controlada. Se conforma con la opción binaria femenina predeterminada—ángel o monstruo—hundiéndose en el segundo: seductora y bruja. La aceptación de su papel se manifiesta en el trato sádico del gato; el reflejo pérfido cuando se pinta los labios con su propia sangre; y en la imagen negra congelada de su salto por las llamas. Susan Martin-Marquez enfatiza el hecho de que Isabel sucumbe frente al papel predeterminado de *femme fatale*: "Isabel is therefore inscribed into traditional cinematic feminine roles in an over-determined way, symbolizing that her real-life socialization is horrifyingly complete: she is destined to play both victim and monster" (228). Ana, en cambio, quien desde el inicio muestra una actitud inquisidora y desconfiada frente al orden establecido, busca alternativas. En la primera secuencia en el dormitorio de las niñas se insinúa el deseo de Ana de comprender el porqué de la categorización dualística y restrictiva de las mujeres. Enciende una vela—un acto representativo de la búsqueda del conocimiento—colocada entre dos objetos simbólicos de la dicotomía

ángel / monstruo, una imagen de la virgen María y un peluche en forma de mono.

Algo en Ana rechaza una socialización que le niega agencia y le impone un orden rígido. Al respecto, es revelador un intertexto, un poema de Rosalía de Castro incluido en un libro escolar, cuyo título, *El libro de las niñas*, es discernible en la pantalla. Se escuchan los versos leídos en voz alta en el aula donde están Isabel y Ana, la maestra y otras alumnas. El intertexto es una representación realista de la socialización femenina de los años de posguerra: enseñar a las niñas a ser pasivas y resignadas frente a las circunstancias de la vida. Pero el énfasis en el poema—un primer plano de la alumna que lo lee delante de la clase—hace sospechar que es más que una referencia a la educación en la época franquista. En efecto, la sutileza de las palabras de Rosalía y la perspicacia de Erice se enlazan para expresar un mensaje velado. Los primeros cuatro versos del poema, "Ya ni rencor ni desprecio / ya ni temor de mudanza / tan sólo sed..., una sed / de no sé qué, que me mata," realzan la necesidad de Ana de comprender por qué la ley patriarcal le sofoca el ser (Castro 39).

El aprendizaje de Ana culmina, como señalamos arriba, en la última secuencia de *El espíritu de la colmena*. La niña ha adquirido un conocimiento que le salvará de la muerte en vida, como el médico le dice a Teresa cuando Ana vuelve de su escapada nocturna: "Lo importante es que tu hija viva" (*Espíritu*). Recobrada del trauma de una noche sola perdida en el campo, Ana bebe agua—símbolo de la vida—se levanta de la cama y se dirige a la ventana cerrada, y esta vez sin vacilación, la abre. La apariencia de esta ventana es distinta de las demás de la casa, "los cristales llegan hasta el suelo y además tiene un montante separado en los paños acristalados" (Gorostiza 190). Esta diferencia, pero sobre todo el cambio dramático de luz, son esenciales para representar una visión de la apertura de los muros de la colmena-casa y la percepción de un orden más allá de la ley patriarcal. Con la luz de la luna, la ventana pierde su calidad de colmena; el tono amarillento de los hexágonos se torna banco-azulado. Zunzunegui enfatiza la importancia de la iluminación en la secuencia final:



> [W]e meet the illuminated circle of the lens that projects light through the film projector, that will be cast, in the last image of the film, as the light of the moon. Streaming into Ana's room . . . it will change color—formerly a golden hue—of the hexagonal, beehive-like window panes. The transformative quality of the film is seen rising to the foreground, most of all in this shot that ends the film. It marks Ana's definite elevation within the profoundly inner dimension of her adventure. (138-39)

La ventana ya no es signo de límites; la permeabilidad reemplaza la barrera de los hierros. Abierta de par en par invita a abandonar el modelo de una sociedad cerrada—colmena-casa-nación—e imaginar una forma distinta de ser. Es cuestión de descartar categorías jerarquizadas y ser "ambos" / "y": niña pura y monstruo, yo y el Otro. Como afirma Paul Julian Smith, el final de *El espíritu de la colmena* "reveals the role of the Other in the constitution of a sense of self; it is by giving herself to the monster… that Ana finds her own… identity" (112). Y no sólo se trata de una identidad individual sino de un modelo cultural alternativo. Con esta escena, el director anticipa la postura intelectual nómada y para su joven protagonista prefigura la transformación del papel de la mujer en la sociedad post-franquista. La admirable calidad del cine poético de Erice reluce en la escena luminosa. Con una iluminación mágica, misteriosa y atrayente se transforma la imagen histórica de la mujer en la ventana, personificada en la Teresa vermeeriana del inicio del film. La luz blanca de la luna que inunda el cuarto ilumina el camisón blanco de Ana, dejando a los espectadores con la tentadora recolección de los alumbrados místicos, quienes rechazaban la autoridad de la Iglesia, su jerarquía y sus dogmas. Ana en el umbral del balcón y a espaldas de la cámara, recuerda el conjuro para llamar al monstruo, el cual se oye en *off* con la repetición al final de la autoafirmación: "Soy Ana; soy Ana". Iluminada por un nuevo conocimiento, "[Ana] emerges amalgamated with alterity and intuited rootlessness" (Riley 117). En el último instante se da la vuelta y la vemos frontalmente con la ventana abierta detrás. Sentimos con ella que existe una nueva luz en la casa, que se han roto los límites para "librar la imaginación centrífuga" (Balló 22).

Conclusiones

El cine poético de Víctor Erice incita a distintas lecturas—históricas, políticas, morales, existenciales. Entre ellas, cabe una lectura feminista que desvela la representación perspicaz del director de la ideología patriarcal y las prácticas cotidianas que determinaron la vida

de las mujeres españolas de los años 1940. Para expresar esta realidad histórica, Erice engarza en su discurso cinematográfico imágenes de la historia del arte de la mujer en la ventana, que llevan implícitas el comportamiento femenino normativo. Otro acierto es la elaboración original del motivo visual para expresar contundentemente el poder jerárquico patriarcal. Se trata del acoplamiento de la ventana, signo del espacio limitado femenino, con la colmena, signo de una organización social cerrada. La ingeniosa fusión conceptual y sensual se intensifica con una iluminación amarillenta que entremezcla el colorido de los cuadros de Vermeer, el del interior de la colmena y de la casa. Otro logro singular es insertar una narrativa feminista que no se limita a exponer la realidad histórica de mujeres abnegadas. La culminación del aprendizaje de Ana, una secuencia espectacular de luminosidad y misterio, prefigura una estructura del género post-patriarcal, anti-esencialista sin dualismos ni jerarquías, abierta a los espíritus de los monstruos.

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La que espera, desespera: Mexican Migration to the United States and Representations of the Women who Stayed

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In contrast with the vast attention that the mass media of both Mexico and the United States have granted to the phenomenon of immigration *al Norte*, there does not seem to be a comparable interest in the effects experienced by the Mexican communities that the migrants have left behind. When the media attention does manifest itself, it almost invariably adopts a melodramatic format that reinforces stereotypes of victimization and abandonment of Mexican women, ubiquitous in the imaginaries of both nations. It falls then to other types of cultural products to allow for more empowered portrayals. This essay will discuss two texts from different sides of *la frontera*: the documentary *Letters from the Other Side* (2006) and the theatrical monologue *Mujer on the Border* (2005), construct representations where the iconical Mexican mother is subverted at the same time as she is consolidated by the unstable nature of the border. In the crossroads between tradition and reformulation of gender roles and their corresponding cultural expectations, the portrayal of the Mexican women "who stayed" becomes a crucial point of contention in the debates over identity, nation, culture and globalization.

In the documentary *Letters from the Other Side*, director Heather Courtney presents the stories of three different groups of rural Mexican

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women whose lives have been forever altered by the migration of their male relatives to the United States. The significance of Courtney's film is that it goes beyond painting commonplace pictures of "forsaken" Mexican women either as helpless, victimized ingénues or as melodramatically selfless, dependent mothers. In fact, *Letters* attempts to present, from a feminist perspective, what I will call a "realistic agency". I am using this term to emphasize that the representation of the women in this film, while sympathetic, does not hide or disguise the limitations to their empowerment in favor of presenting them as heroic but unreal "agents." The featured women are shown to attain progressively this agency when they are left as heads of household and must face the specific difficulties that international migration has brought to their communities. Thus, the transformation of these women, as displayed in the documentary, transcends the thematic and can also be detected in the composition of the film because of the order of the sequences chosen by the filmmaker. That is to say, the documentary purposefully follows a dramatic structure to emphasize the women's agency: from an introduction to the characters to a moment of disappointment to the strategies they employ—with varying degrees of effectiveness—to achieve economic self-sufficiency. Thus, the three sets of women go from a patriarchal motherly/spousal stereotype to a relative empowerment on the economic front that mostly releases them from their portrayal as subordinate "women-awaiting" or Mexican Penelopes. Nevertheless, the conclusion of Courtney's documentary does not offer clear resolutions: while some of the female protagonists' aspirations come to fruition and others do not, this open ending clearly contributes to the audience's perception of realism in the film as it mirrors the actual experience of those who stay. Yet, *Letters* patently shows its ideological commitment and partiality to its subjects' troubles, and can thus be easily classified as a rhetorical film, which, according to David Bordwell, must have as its goal to convince the audience of its particular position.[1]

With a contrasting fictional structure, the theatrical monologue *Mujer on the Border* (2005), adapted by María Muro and Marta Aura from the original screenplay *El llanto del verdugo* by Antonio and Javier Malpica, also strives to tackle the larger issues that may result from the increasing numbers of *mujeres solas* in Mexico's rural areas due to international migration.[2] Thus, this play explores how the exodus of Mexican rural migrants can affect the composition of national, cultural and gendered identities by focusing on the intimate misfortunes of the sole character of this dramatic piece, Aurora Hernández. That is to say,

the figure of Aurora in Muro and Aura's text, by virtue of having been "left behind" in a small Zacatecan town by both her husband and her son, ends up embodying both the defiances *and* the compliances to traditional gendered roles and qualities expected of Mexican women under these circumstances of male migration. Indeed, from a feminist perspective, Aurora can be seen as epitomizing the gendered *ambivalence* present in numerous representations of Mexican women. This character's portrayal hence becomes conflictive as she simultaneously personifies a conservatively long-suffering and devoted mother pining for her migrant son as well as a woman who displays sufficient agency to defy the system that oppresses her loved one and to exact her own revenge on the *gringo* El Rojo, a "representative" of this hegemonic system. Moreover, the sociodemographic transformations illustrated in the play go beyond questions of gender to expose several of the less-than-rosy outcomes that such economic processes of globalization as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) have brought on the Mexican countryside (González Montes and Salles 19). In fact, NAFTA's various negative consequences for Mexico's rural areas are addressed in *Mujer on the Border* from a multitude of viewpoints, such as those of national and cultural identities, international politics and gender analysis.

At this point, a brief outline of both works will clarify how they advance their positions and agendas. *Letters from the Other Side* acknowledges its partial stance by highlighting the extreme adversity of its protagonists' present situation vis-à-vis the hardships caused by the migration of their loved ones. The first woman we see on screen, Eugenia, comments on the sorrow she feels for the absence of her sons, while the second one, the subsistence farmer Maria, talks about the destitution prevalent in her land, which triggers the migration to the United States. Carmela, the third woman on screen, talks about the day she saw her husband for the last time as he said good bye to her and their children to go work in the United States for one year. Instead, he—along with seventeen others—died asphyxiated in a trailer that was smuggling undocumented immigrants across the border. The documentary uses a specific technique to present these accounts visually: the action shots of the women either talking to the camera or doing their daily chores are alternated with shots of them on a TV screen addressing a specific viewer. This combination of "live" and recorded sequences constitutes the narrative method employed throughout the documentary, even though only in one of the three stories (Eugenia's) do we actually observe an authentic reciprocity in the communication via video letters. Therefore, the main focus of

the film ultimately does lie on Eugenia. Her case, then, is unique in that she knows the recipients of her video letter well, as she sends her video correspondence to her son and in turn receives a recorded message from him and her estranged husband. In this exchange, the viewer learns that since her husband and her two older sons left to *el Norte*, Eugenia has basically had to fend for her family alone, as she must support her two daughters and the son who remain in Mexico. She has tried to make a living with the small scale cultivation of *nopal* and the manufacturing and selling of its derived products such as shampoo, soap, creams, etc. For their part, Eugenia's son Enrique and her absent husband Héctor try to explain themselves to the camera—and therefore, to Eugenia—as to why they have not sent remittances home by adducing that life in the United States is much harder than they thought.

The other two narratives pertain to two distinct groups of women to which Maria and Carmela belong: Maria is part of a cooperative that sells textile handcrafts in San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato, and Carmela is a member of a microenterprise that intends to open a bakery, initially with government aid. Both Maria and Carmen, in contrast to Eugenia, do not know the people they are sending their video messages to before they send them, and this makes for a more disjointed filmic narrative, in the sense that the viewer does not see a delayed conversation as much as interconnected monologues. In the case of Maria, the video message of her fellow artisans and herself is delivered to a U.S.-American woman who purchased their hand-embroidered cushions and who praises their work in her response. As for Carmela, she shares the screen in her video letter with Laura, whose husband also died asphyxiated in the trailer and who works together with Carmen and other women to start up the bakery. The director of the documentary delivers their video letter to Russell Knocke, a Homeland Security spokesperson, who listens to their grievances with regards to the deaths of undocumented migrants in the border. His video reply, in a most official tone, intends to offer them justice by stating that the *coyote* who smuggled their husbands is in prison but the women quickly see past his well-wishing. Precisely because the recipients of Maria's, Carmen's and Laura's communications are unfamiliar to them, the delayed interaction witnessed in Eugenia's example is nonexistent. Therefore, the narrative naturally concentrates more on the women themselves and in the development of their respective situations in Mexico.

As for *Mujer on the Border*, the theatrical format of the monologue assumes an interaction with the audience as a silent interlocutor. The

play begins with Aurora's return home after attending El Rojo's funeral prayers (which tellingly she organized herself). By alternatively noting Aurora's reminiscences and her commentary on her present situation, the audience becomes aware of the background and the details of the tragedy that culminated with *two* deaths by execution, one public and the other one private. Thus, Aurora's monologue very soon turns to the description of her son's shattered dreams of becoming a professional *fútbol* player, crediting his ensuing heartbreak as the reason for his migration north. For the mother left behind, her son's migration is clearly perceived as the ultimate cause for his incarceration in Los Angeles for the murder of a white teenager, a crime that Aurora is positive Rodrigo did not commit. Aurora then recounts her personal calvary as she tries to earn extra money by making *piñatas* by hand in the hope of being able to pay for a defense lawyer that may help free her son. In the end, even as Aurora learns English and desperately studies U.S.-American laws on her own, all her efforts are in vain and Rodrigo receives the lethal injection in San Quentin. Obsessed and enraged with the injustice of a world that has consistently denied her son a fair trial, the grief-stricken Aurora delivers a Pentothal injection to her boss, a U.S.-American man she calls El Rojo, thereby completing what she believes to be a cycle of vengeance.

The unfairness of the transnational circumstances of her son's migration, imprisonment and capital punishment, serve within the structure of the play, to highlight several of the aforementioned ambivalent aspects of Aurora's character as a Mexican woman. To begin with, the protagonist's characterization as a *mother* above all—even a Mater Dolorosa of sorts—could be seemingly interpreted as manifestly *passive* due to the centrality of sorrow to her portrayal. But while the exploration of Aurora's maternal grief is essential to the dramatic development of *Mujer on the Border*, her *actions* throughout the play belie any assumption of meekness. In the particular case of Aurora, it is apparent that there is no quiet acceptance of the adversity in her life, as she wishes she could have done more: "A lo mejor no hice todo lo que pude…" (Muro and Aura 14). Moreover, one may argue, it is precisely Aurora's condition of motherhood that acts as the motor for her actions and, is ultimately, the driving force of the play.

Nevertheless, one would be hard-pressed to state that Aurora's battles accomplish any tangibly *effective* results in the end. For, despite traditional representations of the Mexican countryside that advance the notion that motherhood per se gives women social value, self-esteem, emotional fulfillment, economic security and relative empowerment,

the dramatic outlook depicted in *Mujer on the Border* shows Aurora with none of those sociocultural advantages (González Montes and Salles 39). It would seem then that one of the unexplored effects of international migration would be the additional marginalization of mothers who are left behind, a dire condition that leaves them with barely any alternatives when faced with injustice, except for acts of reactive retribution such as the very extreme vengeance that Aurora undertakes on El Rojo. And yet, despite this murderous act, Aurora's motherhood as examined within Muro and Aura's play could still be associated with the best-known exemplar of tender and devoted Mexican maternity, embodied by "the Virgin of Guadalupe [in which] we have the model of mother as love-giving and forever nurturing" (Berg 58). Indeed, the constant in Aurora's characterization lies in her unswerving dedication to her son Rodrigo in mind, body and spirit, as exemplified by the tribulations in her futile attempts to free him, as well as her relentless endeavors to preserve his memory as "un joven lleno de ilusiones" (Muro and Aura 16). Additionally, there are enough references within *Mujer on the Border* to construe a characterization of Aurora's son as particularly youthful and dependent on her, therefore underscoring the portrayal of Aurora as a caring and protecting mother. For instance, when Aurora has to spend her own money to help Rodrigo get enough cash for his *coyote* and later, to pay for his trial, the audience is likely to notice how Aurora's unconditional motherly love makes up for all of Rodrigo's shortcomings.[3] Nevertheless, within the marginalized context of Muro and Aura's play, one never senses a stereotyped "hipervaloración de la maternidad" of Aurora, mostly since her condition as a mother is neither redeeming nor honored (Melgar 15). This lack of moral or societal recognition can be explained by recalling that the dramatic emphasis of this theatrical production is placed on the protagonist's final, complete solitude, in which there is no one left to value her emulation of *the* "prototypical" (Guadalupana) Mexican mother.

In the case of the women in *Letters*, the main emphasis placed by the film is not exactly on their roles as mothers but as heads of household. Thus it could be argued that while the most urgent hardship the documentary deals with is the women's economic situation, the most significant one actually relates to the cultural shift that these rural women must take on as their gender roles are transformed by the absence of the expected male providers. This cultural conversion is represented most notably in the cases of Eugenia and Carmela, since neither of them was initially comfortable or in any way prepared to unexpectedly become the

main wage earner.[4] Eugenia poignantly remembers, "se me había cerrado el mundo; yo era muy, muy tímida" (*Letters* 00:17:45), thus revealing the despair she felt when she realized that she could not count on the remittances from her estranged husband anymore. This early reaction of vulnerability is immediately contrasted in the documentary with her present, more empowered situation where she is able to support her family with her small *nopal* business, mirroring Carmela's modest success as a baker. The shot of Eugenia in the cover page of a government brochure—el "Manual del Nopal"—is therefore quite symbolic of her newfound pride in her self-sufficiency, particularly since she asserts that she did it with no help from her husband Héctor. At this point, the camera switches to show his reaction, and his face clearly displays a great deal of shame. He can clearly see that he has failed in his "manly" obligations as a breadwinner, while his wife seems to have succeeded at providing for their family in his absence.

Despite their appropriation of this traditionally masculine role in Mexican society, the women of *Letters* still adhere to other patriarchal values, namely, those that defend a conventional *image* of family unity. Eugenia's situation, for example, is fraught with irony, for she pines for her lost family unit even when she does not expect or yearn for her husband's return. Hence, her assertion that "cuando una familia está bien integrada, creo que se vive mejor" (*Letters* 00:06:50) opens the door for an interpretation that, while following a conventional cultural tenet regarding the revered bonds of family, redefines it with a woman as its *economic* and emotional anchor. And yet, Eugenia is quite different from the other women in *Letters* in that she is the only one that has a critical stance against the most salient aspect of patriarchy, that is to say, the expectation that a man has the "right" to rule the house. Thus, when she and her daughter Maricruz watch the video where Héctor embarrassedly admits that he has been unsuccessful in making the money expected of a migrant and plans to return, it is understandable that they appear anything but pleased. At the same time, they are also quite sceptical about his promise to return. For Eugenia, the thought that the husband that virtually abandoned her, and according to one of their sons, was living with another woman, could come back is perceived as a threat. She believes that Héctor "va a sentirse con como [sic] los mismos pantalones" (*Letters* 00:21:56) and she is quite clear that she has no intention of allowing him power over her.

Eugenia's feminist ideas seem to derive solely from her life experiences and her reflections on the path she has taken since her

husband left. These ideas extend to include her hopes for her daughters, particularly 14-year old Maricruz. Eugenia, reflecting a possible (and momentous) change of attitudes in rural Mexico, wants her daughters to have jobs that will guarantee them some independence. Therefore, even if they marry, Eugenia wishes "que ellas sepan valerse por sí solas" (*Letters* 00:33:05), a clear indicator of a practical feminist stance. Regrettably, towards the end of the film we learn of Eugenia's grave disappointment when Maricruz decides to elope with her boyfriend Víctor, an 18-year old who is set on migrating to the United States very shortly. Here, the viewer senses that Maricruz's desertion goes decidedly against her mother's feminist beliefs and expectations for her, particularly as Maricruz's prospects of studying high school now seem quite dim. Eugenia sadly feels that "todos mis esfuerzos, todos mis sacrificios se fueron a la basura" (*Letters* 01:00:09). Nevertheless, one could think that there is still hope for a feminist consciousness of sorts to arise in Eugenia's youngest daughter Jessica, who accompanies her mother everywhere she goes.

For its part, while not explicitly advocating a feminist stand in the manner of *Letters*, *Mujer on the Border* does address a series of sociopolitical issues, from the discrimination Mexican migrants face within the U.S.-American legal system to the socioeconomic conditions that bring about this migration in the first place. In doing so, *Mujer on the Border* conforms to the idea of theater as a form of social protest, a tradition that has been part of Spanish-speaking literature since Lope de Vega.[5] More specifically, Muro and Aura's adaptation attempts to give a voice to those whose lives have been disregarded as others have left them behind, for "quedarse no es noticia. Sufrir la ausencia no es noticia" (Mayer and Reyes 22). This endeavor of giving a voice to the forgotten becomes even more urgent when the point of view to be highlighted in this particular theatrical arrangement is that of a woman—historically ignored as a valid perspective. This goal of underscoring the feminine angle is probably what inclined Aura and Muro to intentionally choose the format of a monologue for the adaptation of this play when in the original script by the Malpica brothers there were two characters.

Continuing with the idea of how *Mujer on the Border* functions as dramatic denunciation, it must be noticed that the main indictment made in the play is against migration itself. More specifically, this theatrical production directs its accusation towards those in the "sending" country who have ultimately failed to provide suitable socioeconomic circumstances that could prevent the migration of young men such as Rodrigo. This "abandonment" of the Mexican government towards

its people is obviously perceived as having taken place much before Rodrigo's execution, a tragedy that the Mexican authorities who too late pay attention to Aurora are unable to stop. In fact, Aurora's insight on the underlying causes of her personal tragedy is considerably more far-reaching than the lumbering excuses coming from the Mexican government. Therefore, the solution proposed by the protagonist to avert the further loss of Mexican lives could easily have appeared in the editorial page of any conscientious newspaper: "Que [los políticos] se preocupen por nuestros paisanos … antes de que se echen al río … antes de que se les antoje el '*American Dream*'" (Muro and Aura 15, italics in original). Regrettably, Aurora's reasoning is of the type that the Mexican establishment seems bound and determined to ignore, as it could be construed as hindering to the nation's favored self-representation as a country fully prepared for globalization. Moreover, Aurora's marginalized position as a speaker, because she is a woman and because of her impoverished, rural background, makes it significantly more difficult for her voice to be heard and for her criticism against Mexico's imagined prosperity to be taken seriously.

Considering the binational approach of Muro and Aura's work, it follows that Mexico is not the only country that is criticized by *Mujer on the Border*. The major charge that the play brings against the United States intersects with the political question of human rights with respect to the death penalty that so affects Aurora's family. For the protagonist, the lack of justice in Rodrigo's case can be solely blamed on her lack of funds, which in her mind hamper her ability to get a good lawyer who may have obtained a lesser sentence for her son (Muro and Aura 14). Aurora proves this point as she insists on Rodrigo's innocence, all the time providing details of the faulty judicial proceedings he was subjected to. Amongst the most blatant blunders of the court with respect to Rodrigo's situation, Aurora recounts the false accusation that Rodrigo's cellmate makes (in order to have his own sentence reduced) and the last-minute rejection of a witness that may have exculpated Rodrigo, as this witness was present in the street fight where Aurora's son supposedly murdered the white teenager. Adding to the climate of injustice and to the pathos surrounding the outcome of this case, it is significant that Aurora takes on the "language of the enemy," thus learning "el inglés leído" in an attempt to assist in Rodrigo's defense (Muro and Aura 8). It is of further note that Aurora's English lessons come from El Rojo himself, in exchange for the insulin injections he needed and that she would apply. In the end, even though Aurora tries to learn the logic of the State to save

her son, ultimately her subaltern position, which stems from nationality, gender and socioeconomic status, does not grant her any access to a proper defense for Rodrigo.

In *Letters*, the impact of several external and institutional factors on the well-being of the featured families is examined throughout the film, both through the commentary of the women and by means of the different statistics displayed on the screen. In all three stories, the role that the Mexican government has played in all matters related to migration appears as an important feature that has negatively affected these women's lives.[6] The most salient example is Laura and Carmela's dealings with the representatives of the Mexican government, as they border on the tragicomic: the aid they provide to the cooperative of bakers comes in the form of an unwieldy oven that is so large that a wall must be torn down for it to fit inside Laura's house. One month after the delivery of the equipment, the women had yet to open the bakery because they had no money (and no government support) to set up the necessary gas installation for the oven. Four months after the equipment was delivered, Carmela was finally baking cakes from her own oven. All the equipment for the collective bakery had been abandoned and the government officials had not returned. The previous example illustrates how the women in this film are perfectly capable of noting that their best option for growth is mutual association—quite independently from the government who *should* be supporting them.

As for Mexico's counterpart in the migration issue, the United States, it is portrayed in *Letters* in at least three distinct facets: through its government and its laws concerning undocumented migrants, as the source of NAFTA and its detrimental consequences for Mexican agriculture and as an idealized space that exerts an inordinate pull over the Mexican poor and unemployed. The first aspect, the government itself, is treated more directly by the sections devoted to Carmela and Laura, since they are the only ones who receive an opportunity to communicate with U.S.-American government officials through their video letter. In this exchange, the two women hold the government of the United States directly responsible for the numerous deaths that have occurred while Mexicans cross the border without documents. The response from the Homeland Security spokesman in Houston, while intending to be sympathetic, clearly states that the Department's duty is to enforce immigration laws. The following shots of the border wall and of a big city in the United States are complemented by screen titles that show the statistics on the increase in Border Patrol agents, in smuggler's fees

and in deaths while crossing. By means of presenting both the women's words and these transitional shots, *Letters* attempts an emotional as well as a more "fact-based" criticism of the government of the United States vis-à-vis its treatment of migrants.

The second part of the position of Courtney's film with regards to the United States is related to NAFTA and it is best discussed through the example of Maria. She states to the camera that she and her husband can only be subsistence farmers, since the prices for corn are very low and they cannot afford to irrigate their crops. Another transition shot of the fields then serves as the background for more on-screen statistics that claim that, after the 1994 implementation of NAFTA, "by 2002, the number of farming jobs in Mexico had fallen by 1.3 million" (*Letters* 00:15:41). Clearly, Mexican farmers such as Maria cannot compete with the heavily subsidized agribusinesses of the United States, which have flooded the Mexican market with cheap corn. The position that *Letters* evidently supports is that NAFTA is a primary cause for the massive migration from Mexico's rural communities to the U.S.

The final aspect of the depiction of the United States in Courtney's documentary is related to the seemingly excessive appeal of this country in the imaginary of would-be Mexican migrants, as seen from the perspective of those affected by the migration. Eugenia probably expresses this sentiment more poignantly than the other women of *Letters* when she exclaims "¿qué tiene Estados Unidos que se olvidan de acá de México?" (*Letters* 00:10:40). The answer to this question is quite complicated, as it involves both push and pull factors. The latter aspects go from simple curiosity about life in the mythic *Norte* to the prospect of available low skilled employment to possibly an easier path to infidelity, as was the case with Eugenia's husband.[7] In contrast, the push factors, as showcased in *Letters*, can mostly be attributed to the dire economic situation in the Mexican countryside.[8]

From a fictional perspective, similar sentiments about the drive to leave the Mexican motherland are echoed through symbolism. Poignantly, Aurora's gendered characterization is shown to have an added layer of representational depth as her condition as a mother becomes associated with *telluric* symbolism prevalent in the play. This earthy imagery within *Mujer on the Border* relies heavily on the continuous references made in the monologue to the fields and to its related catastrophes, such as droughts and torrential rains, like the one significantly positioned at the very beginning of the play. The precise connection of Aurora's character with the land she inhabits may be appreciated most clearly in her

impassionate defense of her native soil despite its floods or its droughts: "y su tierra, ¿qué? Donde nacieron, ¿qué? Aunque esté seca, ¿qué?" (Muro and Aura 9). For Aurora, like the migrants' hometowns, is clearly deficient in the resources that might have convinced her son (and others like him) to stay. Thus, the correlation of Aurora as a woman and a mother with this abandoned Mexican homeland is consistent with archetypical *earthly* representations of motherhood, even if in this case, the representation is one of scarcity and not of abundance. In addition, in *Mujer on the Border*, this feminine gendered imagery has a counterpart of sorts in the seemingly inescapable association of men with migration and therefore, with the desertion of their home: "todos los hombres de esta tierra desean: 'Irse al Norte'" (Muro and Aura 9). Hence, the play reinforces the prevalent cultural conception that Mexican women are supposed to be static, significantly *rooted*, while Mexican men have the questionable "freedom" to be migratory.

It is arguably telling that from the point of view of the documentary film, the pre-eminence of the *domestic* sphere is so central in the imagery and the stories portrayed in *Letters*, echoing to some extent, the locus of Aurora's tragedy. It is in this private space that Eugenia, Carmela and Maria define themselves in stark contrast to patriarchal expectations of Mexican women, particularly women who are believed to conform to a model where, in absence of the main male provider, they are supposedly marked by their waiting and by their inaction. Barbara Clayton suspects that this traditional feminine depiction may have its roots in an ancient Homeric portrayal of a woman-in-waiting: "As a mythic archetype, the figure of Penelope … is the idealized faithful wife" (83). And yet, even the myth of Penelope has been recently reinterpreted not as a symbol of marital virtue but as "a weaver of narrative," a coder of messages through her weaving and unweaving of Laertes's shroud, a woman, much like the women of *Letters*, best characterized by her *actions* (Clayton 123).[9] One way that the film metaphorically parallels Penelope's "weaving of narrative" is by constructing Carmela's, Eugenia's and Maria's stories as part letter, which normally assumes an exchange of communication between two known interlocutors, and part *testimonio,* which presumes an unknown audience as the recipient of a vital social message. It is important to note that by following this format, the women featured in the documentary are perceived as making their own individual contributions to the fabric of *Letters'* message of denunciation of a social crisis.

It could be argued that one of the reasons why the film's general condemnation of migration is so effective from a narrative perspective

is because it bases the strength of its argument in the inseparability of the public and private realms. In Courtney's documentary, one of the strategies used to underscore this melding of the public and the private spaces is through the emphasis placed in the aforementioned centrality of the *family* in this particular Mexican rural scenario. A key element in this "family-centered" representation that has not been discussed in-depth with respect to *Letters* is the figure of the mother. It is quite intriguing to observe that while all of the women highlighted here are mothers, their motherly roles are not underscored in a particularly dramatic way, especially in comparison with the *pathos* displayed in Aurora's portrayal. This filmic choice follows classic format guidelines, as *Letters*, a documentary, after all, will routinely strive to present a supposedly neutral perspective on the problem even while showcasing an emotional narrative throughout. And yet, the stories of Eugenia, Carmela and Maria would not be as convincing within the Mexican cultural context if they were not somehow related to their portrayals as *mothers*. Nor would they work as effectively for the ulterior message of censure of migration that the film wishes to deliver. Moreover, Eugenia and Carmela are additionally idealized because they are not only mothers but also unwilling heads of household, who look after the emotional as well as the economic well-being of their children in the absence of their husbands. Nevertheless, while their children are an evident motivator for these women's actions and these stories of anguished mothers are heartrending per se, motherhood is by no means the main focus of the portrayals of the women in *Letters*. Courtney's film centers instead in their personal transformation into *subjects* with a circumscribed agency within a very *traditional* cultural context that sustains significant change due to the overarching effects of migration.

A similar contention between a specific subject position and her cultural mores is presented in Muro and Aura's play where aspects of the national character intersect with specific gendered markers. Thus, an important part of Mexican identity is symbolized in the play by the activities that characterize both mother and son: he is linked to *fútbol*—in Mexico, a mostly masculine endeavor and pipe dream—while she is repeatedly associated with her handcraft of piñata-making. This antique demonstration of artisanship also functions as a distinctive element of traditional cultural identity. Moreover, in the case of *Mujer on the Border*, the manufacture of piñatas is denoted as a feminine pursuit, one that has been honored by women in Aurora's family since her great-grandmother, but that her son refused to learn. An additional noteworthy aspect

of both of these symbolic activities is that they move the play's plot forward; as it is Rodrigo's injury while playing *fútbol* that dashes his hopes of playing professionally and provides the "motivation" to try his luck *del otro lado* (combined with his rejection of the family trade). As for Aurora, her return to the piñatas is forced by her son's imprisonment as an improbable—and therefore additionally symbolic—means to secure the extra money she needs in order to visit him and pay for his defense. In the end Aurora's revisiting of the tradition of handcrafts is shown to be a futile effort to save Rodrigo. This outcome parallels what appears to be the fate of the Mexican countryside if they continue reverting to "conventional" solutions, such as agricultural subsidizing, in an attempt to face up to the dramatic changes brought forth by migration. And yet, the theatrical use of the piñata leitmotif is quite complex and cannot be readily pegged as negative, as this occupation indeed brings some solace and comfort to the grieving mother.

Moreover, the piñata appears to have its own philosophy and symbology: for Aurora, it represents the *blind*(folded) struggle of mankind against fate, expecting a prize to fall out from the sky, but in all its futility because in the end "una vez que [la piñata] está rota y vacía... entonces ya no hay nada que hacer" (Muro and Aura 15). The evident parallel with Rodrigo and Aurora's lives replicates their subaltern condition and the lack of agency and control over their own existence. Furthermore, the piñata is strongly associated with Aurora's notions of honor and cultural identity, as it represents the last resort of the poor to have a "properly" Mexican celebration: "podía no haber regalos o pastel, pero *una piñata colorida, siempre*" (Muro and Aura 7, emphasis in original). Linking "appropriate" *mexicanidad* with a specific socioeconomic level may be, to some extent, a double-edged sword, for even as it provides a cultural sense of self-respect to the marginalized; it may also strangely compensate for their inferior position and hence justify, or at least excuse, the status quo.

Undoubtedly, piñatas are charged with meaning in *Mujer on the Border*. Thus, it is no accident that Aurora's favorites are those made of *barro*, with their immediate earthy smell, as they connect more closely with the images of the feminine and of motherhood represented in the play (Muro and Aura 7). Within the play's structural composition, it must be noted that Aurora returns to her retelling of the history of piñatas whenever she despairs over her son's execution. This dramatic connection further advances the piñata symbology and provides some consolation for the bereaved mother because, amidst her mourning, she may at least turn to her one source of pride: the connection of her craft

with a traditional conception of a humble, but dignified *mexicanidad*. The protagonist's particular brand of Mexicanness extends quite naturally to a cultural conception of death which becomes interconnected to her piñata-making as Aurora appears to be gluing newspaper cut-outs that contain the last words of death row inmates onto her piñatas. This is one of the illustrations of the diametrically different approaches to death from the Mexican and the U.S.-American perspectives that are showcased in *Mujer on the Border*. In fact, death acts a signifier and a means of distinguishing between cultural identities: "**Estos gringos no saben de ceremonias ni de lutos**" (Muro and Aura 11, bold in original). This differentiation continues to be contrasted throughout the play through examples such as Aurora's hopes to be able to honor her son with a great funeral, like the one she threw for El Rojo, in comparison with the formulaic and aseptic execution procedures that Rodrigo had to face. Furthermore, the antagonism between these two identities is demonstrated with the town's rejection of El Rojo even in death, in particular when most people leave the funeral prayers that Aurora organized for him "que porque era gringo" (Muro and Aura 5). With instances such as these, the two national identities are construed in opposition: The Mexican one as intrinsically ritualistic while the U.S.-American one is perceived as overtly legalistic. And yet, this inordinate adherence to the letter of law is proven to be fallible, insincere and heartless by Aurora as she insists on her son's innocence until the end, while noticing the contradictions in a judicial process that should have guaranteed a fair treatment to Rodrigo but instead "sin misericordia te condenaron a la pena capital ... te encerraron en una celda oscura, inhóspita" (Muro and Aura 11). By highlighting the cruelty of her son's plight, Aurora is ultimately addressing the larger injustices surrounding undocumented Mexican migration to the United States, including the references to a vastly unequal balance of power between nations and individuals.

It is precisely these larger issues of inequality that the women depicted in Courtney's documentary take on as part of their performance of a "realistic agency." Thus, Eugenia, Maria and Carmela are shown to achieve relative empowerment through their efforts to attain socioeconomic independence, despite the fact that none of them had the intention of being self-sufficient before they had to deal with the actual consequences of the migration of their loved ones. At the same time, the documentary emphasizes the importance these women place on the preservation of family ties, clearly considering the family, in whichever modified state it might be, as an essential value to be protected for their

long-term well-being. Finally, the film makes a point of showcasing how all the women of *Letters* are aware of the larger socio-political processes at play in their personal misfortunes derived from migration: from NAFTA to the U.S. immigration laws to the Mexican government's indifference or ineptitude to ensure adequate employment in rural areas. In the end, though, while striving to individualize the stories of Eugenia, Carmela and Maria in order to present a more diverse narrative, the message of *Letters* stays the same: that as modern Mexican Penelopes of sorts, they have forsaken their expected waiting for their men to return from their journeys. One could imagine that even if their loved ones *could* return, the women would not be "recognizable" to them, perhaps signalling the birth of a new kind of rural woman.

As for Muro and Aura's play, the impossibility of the loved one's return implies, rather than a birth/rebirth, a metaphorical death. The final scene of *Mujer on the Border*, even while hinting at Aurora's contemplation of suicide, can only imagine her future waiting for her son's body (Muro and Aura 18). And yet, in creating a character that is able to symbolize as many ambivalent positions as Aurora, this text is able to stress the various ambiguities inherent to this aspect of Mexican migration. Thus, even if Aurora is primarily portrayed as a mother, a role that in rural communities supposedly "comprende la reproducción social y cultural de los individuos", the outcome of this dramatic piece would apparently leave her motherhood barren and deserted (Fagetti 304). Nonetheless, considering solely the ending of this play would fail to notice that the richness of Aurora's portrayal can be found in her many contradictions: as an abnegated, traditional, telluric mother as well as a woman who has claimed her own voice and her own revenge, therefore daring to subvert established assumptions and positions of power.

Mexican migration to the United States is a social phenomenon that simultaneously exists in a series of indeterminate physical locations that in turn originate a multitude of cultural settings where individuals and communities are reimagined as a response to their contact with *el otro lado*. Women who are attached to this experience by virtue of their migratory loved ones make a conscious choice, despite their apparent lack of options, not to leave their families or towns behind. In doing so, they take it upon themselves—consciously or unconsciously—to perpetuate *family* as "a collective principle of construction of collective reality" that they hold on to notwithstanding the thousands of miles, or even the occurrence of death, that may separate the members of the household (Bourdieu 66). Given this deep connection to family that Mexican women

traditionally espouse, it is not surprising that the representations of these women are at first glance among the most conservative ones associated in some way with the U.S.-Mexico border. Furthermore, since the rural areas where the majority of these portrayals are situated are also the least receptive to sociocultural change, one could easily have anticipated quite conventional depictions of the women who did not depart.

And yet, *la frontera*, with all of its revolutionary energy, manages to seep into the constructions of the women who stayed, therefore attesting to the presence of an unlikely cultural battleground in the Mexican heartland. In this scenario, women like Aurora, Carmela, Eugenia and Maria offer contestation as well as compliance to traditional feminine roles such as that of the abnegated mother and the dutiful wife. Moreover, texts such as *Mujer on the Border* and *Letters from the Other Side* comment forcefully on the larger issues that touch upon Mexican migration to the United States without overlooking the private sphere where this globalized phenomenon comes from or in which it has such a devastating impact. The remarks made by both texts on all the problems related to this migratory flow—the incompetence or the unwillingness of both governments to address successfully this situation, the socioeconomic forces that ultimately encourage it or the negotiations that cultural identities undergo as a consequence of it—have a further relevance because these statements are made by women.

Nevertheless, to signal the arrival of a new, empowered representation of Mexican rural women affected by migration would be quite premature, as these portrayals are still heavily influenced by stereotypes that prescribe that women should be controlled by the collectivity "en ausencia de los guardianes masculinos de su moralidad" (Marroni 35). Therefore, and particularly in small towns, female sexuality is closely watched and any real or imagined indiscretion is strictly chastised, which leads to some women left behind isolating themselves from their community as a form of self-protection. Cultural texts that depict these women are remarkably scarce in explicit mentions of female sexuality. It would appear then that women's empowerment in these cases can only be accepted if it is kept asexual, as female sexuality proves to be too much of a destabilizing factor for a society already strained by the effects of globalization through migration. And still, these few depictions persist in their gendered dialectics of subversion *and* submission to established sociocultural mores that would try to have the women quietly waiting for an improbable return. Instead, these women—and, figuratively, their portrayals—speak with their actions while they stand their ground and

reinvent themselves, refusing to play solely the part of demure feminine bulwarks of the homeland.

Notes

[1] "The goal in such a [rhetorical] film is to make the audience believe or feel something about the subject matter, and perhaps to act upon that belief or feeling" (Bordwell 55). While the expected action may not be completely evident in Courtney's film, one could argue that mere awareness of the women's situation is the anticipated outcome that the film intends to achieve.

[2] *Mujer on the Border* was first performed in the Museo del Chopo and in the Foro Shakespeare in Mexico City in 2005. It was later staged in Zacatecas, Chicago and Dallas (Olivares). While I believe this play was last presented in 2009 (a testament to its success), I was unable to get more information about its box office achievements.

[3] Furthermore, this example also reflects on the actual unpredictability of remittances as a stable source of income for the families in Mexico. In fact, social scientists like Marina Ariza have concluded that remittances must be demystified as an option for feminine empowerment or for local development. In other words, factors such as the added work and responsibility that an absent relative means for many Mexican women or the prevalent conditions of destitution which barely allow subsistence, even with the money sent from the United States, have to be considered as important disadvantages that the women who stay must face (Ariza 474).

[4] Maria does not express these concerns in the film as her primary source of income has always come from working in the fields with her husband. Yet, the effect of migration looms heavily on her, as their only son who has not left to *el Norte* does not appear to want to work the land when his parents will no longer be able to do so.

[5] More recently, the *teatro de los oprimidos* of Brazilian Augusto Boal, the works of Víctor Hugo Rascón Banda in Mexico and the plays of Argentinian Griselda Gambaro are examples of socially motivated theatre originated in Latin America.

[6] The only case that could be seen as presenting a positive influence is Eugenia's, as it was government officials who introduced her to the *nopal* business. And yet, after the initial donation of *nopal* plants, she receives no more government help to sustain her small enterprise.

[7] As the economic crisis has deepened in the United States, the inflow of migrants from Mexico has indeed decreased (from 770 thousand in 2000 to 140 thousand in 2010), as those imagined possibilities of employment have undoubtedly and substantially been reduced. However, the number of Mexican migrants returning to their home country has barely changed in the same time period, as those who are already there prefer to take their chances in *el Norte* rather than in their places of origin (Passel, D'Vera, and González-Barrera).

[8] It unfortunately remains to be seen if the incredible increase in violence all over Mexico (an estimated 70,000 murders connected with organized crime during the presidential rule of Felipe Calderón, 2006-12) will overtake the lack of economic opportunities in the countryside as the main push factor for migration to the United States (Martínez).

[9] Barbara Clayton's main point in her book *A Penelopean Poetics* (2003) is that Odysseus's wife can be clearly interpreted as a *maker* of stories, because through her delaying tactics of weaving and unweaving she plainly shows her cunning and her impetus as one of the main driving forces behind the *Odyssey*'s narrative.

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María Luisa Elío Bernal: en busca de la identidad perdida

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La victoria del bando sublevado el 1 de abril de 1939 supuso una oleada masiva de civiles que tuvieron que abandonar su patria debido a las diferencias con el régimen político establecido. Entre estos se encontraba la gran mayoría del núcleo intelectual del momento: Antonio Machado, León Felipe, Victoria Kent, Max Aúb, Dolores Ibárruri, y un largo sinfín de nombres. La obra de estos quedó relegada a un absoluto silencio durante casi cuarenta años, sálvense escasas excepciones, dentro de las fronteras españolas. Ya en la última parte de la dictadura franquista, una dictadura que iba relajándose poco a poco, surge la obra de José Ramón Marra-López *Narrativa española fuera de España* (1963). No obstante, no es hasta la muerte de Franco en 1975 y la apertura mental que sufre España en los años posteriores cuando se produce un acercamiento a estos autores en profundidad. Aun así, estos estudios se centran, en su mayoría, en figuras que ya estaban publicando antes de marchar al exilio y que contaban con cierto renombre. Algunos de ellos son Francisco de Ayala, Max Aub o Rafael Alberti, todos ellos pertenecientes a lo que se ha denominado la

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"primera generación del exilio" pues marcharon ya siendo adultos y con plena consciencia de lo que estaba sucediendo. Junto a estos autores, salió también una generación de escritores aún por nacer.

Éstos se dirigieron al exilio siendo apenas niños o adolescentes sin una clara conciencia, en su mayoría, de la verdadera situación de su país y sin la libertad de elegir por ellos mismos. Esto marcó profundamente a una generación de escritores que vio sus inicios ya en los países de acogida y que se le ha conocido como "segunda generación". Este "grupo" ha sido mucho menos estudiado y por ello que sea difícil encontrar trabajos que se aproximen a figuras como la de Fernando Aínsa, Francisca Perujo, Arturo Souto o María Luisa Elío Bernal, siendo esta última el objeto de estudio de este trabajo. La obra de María Luisa Elío Bernal no ve la luz en España hasta 2002 publicada bajo el título *Tiempo de llorar y otros relatos*. Esta obra recogía lo que había aparecido en México como dos volúmenes independientes —*Tiempo de llorar* (1985) y *Cuaderno de apuntes* (1992)—. María Luisa Elío es, además, escritora y codirectora de la única película del exilio español hecha por exiliados, *En el balcón vacío* (1962), la cual sí ha llamado más la atención de la crítica. A pesar de que tanto su obra escrita como su obra fílmica giran en torno a sus recuerdos durante su primer viaje de regreso a Pamplona, existe una diferencia importante entre ambas. El regreso a Pamplona real no se produce hasta 1970, por lo que todo lo narrado en la película es fruto de su imaginación, de una construcción de cómo podrían ser los hechos. De hecho, la escritura de las primeras notas sobre el film surge durante su estancia en Cuba mientras su marido Jomí García Ascot colabora con el ICAIC en 1959. Por otra parte, su obra literaria sí se escribe una vez producido el esperado retorno, por lo que las diferencias serán significativas y a ellas se aludirán en alguna ocasión, aunque no es éste el objetivo del trabajo.

Aunque son algunos más los estudios que se han acercado a la poesía de la segunda generación de escritores exiliados españoles, son escasos los que existen en torno a la narrativa. Por su parte, Fernando Larranz, en un trabajo centrado ya en la narrativa de dicho grupo, señala el hecho de que es la experiencia de un exilio común tan particular un factor determinante en la existencia de unas formas discursivas semejantes (584). A pesar de que, como bien ha señalado ya Aznar Soler, no se trata de una generación que escribe en rebeldía contra los mayores—de hecho, pueden rastrearse las influencias de estos y de los clásicos en sus obras—, Eduardo Mateo Gambarte, uno de los estudiosos más importantes de dicha generación, ha señalado la nostalgia heredada, la esperanza de la emigración, la falta de rebeldía, la melancolía, las dificultades de

publicación, la desilusión, las introspecciones y las carencias de ambición y agresividad como rasgos que los separan de la primera generación (69). Una de las problemáticas que plantean estos estudios es ¿a dónde pertenecen estos autores?, ¿a la literatura española o a la mexicana? Esto se traduce en un plano individual en un problema aún mayor: la formación de la identidad. En el caso de María Luisa Elío Bernal, dicha identidad se ve quebrantada por la lucha entre su yo-infantil, anclado en España, y su yo-adulto, un yo atrapado en el pasado que no consigue nacer hasta la realización del primer viaje de regreso a Pamplona, su tierra natal, en 1970. Por lo tanto, este trabajo tiene como objetivo cubrir uno de los vacíos que los estudios en torno a los exiliados han dejado: estudiar la configuración de la identidad en su obra escrita—aunque será necesario hacer alusiones al film debido a su estrecha relación—, considerada autobiográfica, así como destapar los traumas surgidos durante su recorrido en el exilio hasta que llegó a México. De este modo, cabe preguntarse quién es María Luisa Elío Bernal, cómo afectó a su vida el abandono de su patria cuando apenas era una niña, hasta qué nivel consiguió integrarse en la vida de su país de acogida y cómo se ha visto afectada su identidad, tanto cultural como personalmente, por todos estos elementos. También, desde un punto de vista literario, será necesario abordar por qué recurre al uso de la autobiografía para realizar la búsqueda de esa identidad pérdida que ya se mencionaba en el título.

María Luisa Elío nació en 1926 en una de las familias más acomodadas de la sociedad pamplonesa. Toda su infancia se desarrolló en un ambiente favorable hasta que su padre, cuya experiencia relataría él mismo en su libro *Soledad de Ausencia. Entre las dos sombras de la muerte (España, 1936)*, fue detenido el 18 de julio de 1936 por el bando sublevado. Esta detención conllevó, por un lado, la desaparición de la figura paterna durante más tres años y, por otro lado, unos días más tarde, el inicio del exilio por parte de María Luisa Elío, su madre y sus dos hermanas puesto que su padre había conseguido escapar de la cárcel y temían que las arrestaran para que éste se entregara. De hecho, María Luisa recoge este momento en su obra con las siguientes palabras:

> Aquel día en que mamá nos despertó muy temprano, hizo que nos vistiésemos diciendo que nos íbamos, pero sin decir a dónde. Mamá parecía otra. Me dieron la ropa que debía ponerme y me vestí. Me advirtieron de que no podía llevarme nada, ningún muñeco ni el abrigo siquiera, debía parecer que íbamos de día de campo. (62)

De esta forma, comienzan un peregrinaje que les llevaría por distintas localidades de la geografía española en sus varios intentos por salir del país: Elizondo, Dancharrinea—donde su madre estuvo presa durante tres meses—, San Sebastián, Valencia, Barcelona, hasta que escaparon por el puerto de Le Perthus en un coche con Indalecio Prieto, ministro de defensa, a mediados de 1938. Una vez establecidas en París, María Luisa Elío fue internada en un orfanato para que su madre pudiera trabajar. Es en este orfanato donde se produjo uno de los primeros choques culturales de María Luisa Elío con el país de acogida. Un año después aproximadamente y tras pasar numerosas estrecheces económicas, se produciría el reencuentro familiar tan deseado: María Luisa Elío, su madre y sus hermanas volverían a ver cara a cara a su padre, aunque éste nunca fuera el mismo: "Pasaron veinte o treinta años antes de que muriera, no sé cuántos exactamente, pero el anterior papá ya había muerto" (91). Su padre había conseguido llegar a París después de estar más de tres años encerrado en una alcoba y de pasar unos meses en uno de los campos de concentración franceses tras pasar la frontera. En marzo de 1940 llegaría toda la familia unida a México, donde pasarían el resto de su vida, aunque ésta se disolvería con el divorcio de sus padres.

Estas simples notas autobiográficas bastan para situar a la autora en su época. Sin embargo, será necesario aclarar ciertos episodios de su vida a la vez que se vaya analizando la configuración de su identidad.

Desde el punto de vista psicológico, el profesor Eugenio González ha hablado de la adolescencia como ese momento en el que el individuo aborda los problemas y la realidad de una forma distinta, así también como ese momento en el que busca su lugar propio en la sociedad (311). Cabe preguntarse entonces en qué sociedad debería haber buscado o en qué sociedad buscó su lugar María Luisa Elío Bernal, ¿en la sociedad española, en la francesa o en la mexicana? La respuesta a esta pregunta se complica si se tiene en cuenta que la escritora pamplonesa pertenecía a la segunda generación de exiliados como ya se mencionó en la introducción. Es decir, frente a esa primera generación adulta, en muchos casos con una importante conciencia política y feminista en el caso de las mujeres y con una imagen configurada de lo que era España como patria, María Luisa, que apenas tenía sólo doce años, carecía de dicha claridad. Aún estaba desarrollando su propio concepto de ello cuando éste se fragmentó repentinamente.

Hasta el momento del regreso a España en 1970, más de treinta años después de su salida, María Luisa había sentido que su patria era España, que la sociedad a la que pertenecía era la española y que su

vínculo con esta tierra aún seguía latente. Sin embargo, esta unión, hasta ahora inquebrantable, parece romperse con el retorno y así lo dice el inicio de la obra: "Y AHORA ME DOY CUENTA QUE REGRESAR ES IRSE. Es decir, que volver a Pamplona es irse de Pamplona. Al fin voy a volver donde las cosas no están ya. He vivido en el mundo de mi propia cabeza" (*Tiempo* 19). Hasta este momento la escritora había creado una imagen idealizada de lo que era España para ella, había cosificado su recuerdo según su propia visión de la realidad. Esta imagen se borra a medida que va avanzando durante su estancia en Pamplona:

> Lo que me asombra es cómo ha cambiado. Aquí está la ciudad universitaria y una que otra fábrica, pero al parecer el campo ha desaparecido. [...] Le pregunto al chófer si ya no queda nada del pueblo. [...] En unos minutos estábamos ya en lo que yo llamaba 'el pueblo'. Parecía que lo hubiesen barrido. Sólo quedaban en pie dos casas, un granero y la iglesia, que difícilmente se reconocía. (33)

De este modo, la España existente en la mente de María Luisa Elío Bernal va desapareciendo poco a poco. Como ya apunta Mónica Jato, volver conlleva la producción de unos nuevos recuerdos de España que acaben con los existentes y, por lo tanto, con parte de la propia escritora (149). Cabe, por lo tanto, destacar el papel decisivo que ocupa la memoria, pues ésta aparece cuando transcurre el tiempo. De esta forma, es inevitable analizar, en la medida de lo posible, cómo funciona la memoria en la obra de María Luisa Elío Bernal para entender la configuración de su identidad. Además, como también apuntaba ya Giuliana de Febo, la memoria tiene una función de recomposición identitaria "como código ordenador de la experiencia que distribuye prioridades y relevancias, que silencia y recrea precisamente en la medida en que se traduce en autoimagen" ("Memoria" 308). A pesar del uso generalizado del término "memoria", es más preciso hablar de recuerdos, como bien explica Paul Ricouer. Mientras que la memoria es única, es decir, está en singular, los recuerdos están en plural, se caracterizan por la multiplicidad y la variación según el transcurso del tiempo (41). En el caso de María Luisa Elío, si se compara con otros testimonios que acrediten los mismos hechos, puede verse como esta memoria única aparece representada de forma distinta por los recuerdos de los diferentes miembros de la familia que fueron testigos de dicha experiencia. Si se presta atención, por ejemplo, a esa escena-relato (episodio contado tanto en la obra escrita como en la fílmica) en la que la propia María Luisa describe su soledad ante la mirada atónita de la

persecución por los tejados de un republicano desde el balcón de su casa, puede verse que ella se representa a sí sola en la escena. Sin embargo, no fue así. Su propia hermana Cecilia, en una entrevista concedida personalmente a mí, confesaba que en esas escenas las tres hermanas se encontraban en el balcón. De esta forma, el recuerdo, múltiple en sus formas, corresponde únicamente a la verdad de María Luisa Elío, pero no a la memoria única de la que hablaba Ricoeur. Este recuerdo evidencia, en cierta medida, en qué medida funciona la memoria o el recuerdo de una niña que vive una experiencia traumática en un momento determinado, aislándose del resto que la rodea. Además, en el caso de María Luisa Elío, se puede seguir ahogando en las teorías del crítico francés pues éste diferencia entre el simple recuerdo y la rememoración (36). En el segundo de estos términos se trata de una búsqueda activa. Parece obvio que el regreso a España en 1970 parece tratarse de una búsqueda consciente, de una búsqueda de sus raíces, de sus recuerdos, de su identidad. Ya en su película grabada en 1962 se evidenciaba la falta de una identidad. Francie Cate-Arries analiza de forma magistral dos símbolos que aparecen en esta como metáfora de la ausencia de dicha identidad: por un lado, el juego del hide-and-seek, que refleja la búsqueda de una realidad, de una identidad fragmentada entre en dos polos, ausencia y presencia. Por otro lado, el tapón que recoge entre los escombros durante su peregrinaje por las tierras de España es analizado por esta investigadora como el talismán perdido que constituye un pequeño fragmento perdido de una pieza completa hecha añicos. Así, María Luisa pasa a ser ese pequeño fragmento de esa pieza que no es otra que España.

De este modo, a través del viaje de retorno a España, ese vínculo que unía a la escritora con su tierra va perdiendo fuerza, lo que provoca una situación de vacío, de no permanencia a ningún sitio. De hecho, así se refleja también en la obra: "Creo que podría volver en este instante a México, y creo saber por qué. Me estoy quitando a mí misma mi motivo de ser; mi excusa, y el miedo vuelve a aparecer cando pienso en quedarme vacía" (27). Tras darse cuenta de que su España ya no es lo que era, vuelve la mirada a México, lugar en el que continuar la búsqueda de su identidad y donde, al mismo tiempo, refugiarse, una vez más, de su vacío. Podría decirse que, hasta ese momento, la escritora pamplonesa se había mantenido en lo que Bergson, también citado por Ricouer, había denominado memoria-hábito (44). Es decir, el tiempo del pasado estaba incorporado a la vivencia del presente, incorporación que se fragmenta con dicho viaje. De este modo, México se dibuja como la salida de ese hábito. Además, en la obra queda reflejado como la prueba última de su

desgracia familiar, como el testigo de la caída de su familia y la posterior muerte de sus padres. Al mismo tiempo, existe un profundo cariño por este país que le ha permitido desarrollar su vida y tener a su hijo Diego. De hecho, una vez que María Luisa pone fin a su viaje de regreso y, tras permanecer unos meses en el centro de salud mental ya mencionado, parece encontrar sus raíces mexicanas. Frente al rechazo que sufrió al principio, pues usando términos propias de la escritora en una entrevista concedida a Paloma Ulacia y James Valender, se encontró con un país bastante fascista, donde era frecuente ver camiones que portaban una esvástica, consiguió insertarse de forma satisfactoria en su país de acogida. Confiesa que su adhesión a México va surgiendo poco a poco, pero no es hasta su vejez y tras su regreso de España cuando se resuelven todos sus problemas de identidad. Ya en dicha entrevista, concedida unos pocos años antes de fallecer, declara sentirse mexicana antes que española, aunque no rechace sus raíces (358). No obstante, admite que se trata de una resolución a la que ha llegado con el tiempo, en la que la realización del viaje ha sido clave. Véase la respuesta de la escritora cando los entrevistadores le preguntan sobre la función de *Tiempo de llorar* como sistema para borrar el pasado: "Sí. Lo que digo allí es lo siguiente: 'Voy, todo lo que pasó lo voy a ir yo deshaciendo, borrándolo, para que no haya pasado'. Como verás, he estado bastante trastornada siempre. Yo soy un drama viviente. Estoy muy cuerda ahora, por eso puedo confesar que he estado trastornada toda mi vida" (359). Este trastorno se debe, en gran medida, a la ausencia de una identidad configurada, de una sociedad de la que sentirse miembro, de la incapacidad de reencontrarse con su propio yo.

En esta lucha de identidad territorial, Francia queda relegada a un segundo plano, puesto que apenas fueron dieciocho meses los que pasó en este país. Sin embargo, ya en tierras napoleónicas fue testigo de algunos momentos que marcarían ese paso de la niñez a la madurez. La transición de un país a otro supuso la ruptura con el lugar de origen y la apertura hacia lo desconocido, a pesar de que aún existiera en la cabeza de los exiliados la idea del pronto regreso.[1] De hecho, Giuliana di Febo lo compara con el dolor del parto, pues supone una ruptura umbilical con todo un entramado de relaciones familiares. El paso de la frontera de España a Francia queda marcado como el elemento que activa el binario memoria-identidad, tal y como expone dicha crítica ("Espacio" 468). En el caso de María Luisa Elío este binario entra en funcionamiento en ese momento en el que, en un internado francés, una de las chicas de la escuela le apela lo siguiente: "«Et toi, la nouvelle, passe moi la balle».

Nunca olvidaría el nombre de pelota en francés" (23). De esta forma, es a través del lenguaje como se produce la concienciación en la mente de la escritora de su llegada a una nueva realidad. El choque con la sociedad francesa llega a través de la incapacidad de comunicación. La necesidad de aprender un nuevo idioma se opone al interés de preservar su idioma materno, rasgo identificativo de su identidad como miembro perteneciente a un grupo social. Es decir, ya en Francia se produce un fuerte impacto en la propia identidad de la autora fruto del enfrentamiento de dos culturas. Por otra parte, es curioso que este enfrentamiento con el idioma supondrá un hecho positivo durante su estancia en México, pues será el conocimiento del francés lo que le permita trabajar en la oficina de turismo de Francia, donde, además, conocerá al que será su marido, Jomí García Ascot, y padre de su único hijo.

Al mismo tiempo, Francia, descrita por muchos escritores exiliados como la gran enemiga que los encerró en los campos de concentración y que colaboró en su repatriación,[2] aparece descrita favorablemente en la obra de María Luisa Elío. Allí fueron capaces de encontrar una segunda oportunidad, de volver a reunir el núcleo familiar para salir hacia su último destino, México. Tal fue así que, durante su estancia en México, conservó algunas de las amistades forjadas durante su estancia en el país galo.

Siguiendo con el análisis desde el punto de vista psicológico, "construir una identidad implica definir quién eres, qué valoras y las direcciones que deseas seguir en la vida. El adolescente debe sentir una continuidad progresiva entre aquello que ha llegado a ser durante los largos años de la infancia y lo que promete ser en el futuro; entre lo que él piensa que es y lo que percibe que los demás ven en él y esperan de él" ("Desarrollo" 326). Es aquí donde reside la mayor problemática en la configuración de la identidad de aquellos que dejaron España siendo adolescentes y, especialmente, en María Luisa Elío Bernal. Tal continuidad no es posible. Aquello que había sido durante su infancia, una niña perteneciente a una de las familias más acomodadas de la sociedad pamplonesa, que tenía profesoras privadas, cuidadoras y pasaba sus veranos en su casa de San Juan de Luz, tuvo que dejar paso a una situación de precariedad, en la que pasaron importantes apuros económicos, fruto de la expropiación de todos sus bienes por parte del gobierno franquista, de la incapacidad de trabajar por parte del padre tras pasar más de tres años encerrado en una alcoba y por la poca experiencia laboral de su madre, que hasta el momento en el que estalla la guerra había relegado su papel al de ama de casa. Por lo tanto, pasado y futuro parecen irreconciliables. Se le hace difícil configurar un presente en el que

el pasado no tiene cabida en su vida futura. Ya Juan Carlos Pérez Guerrero habla de la reorganización del discurso identitario como una consecuencia directa de la relación entre pasado-presente y futuro (663). Y es de dicha relación de lo que habla la propia María Luisa Elío Bernal en su obra:

> Hasta creo que sabía de mí, María Luisa, muerta también. Estaba muerta, porque yo era un yo sin nada. Me habían quitado el pasado. Ahora me quitaban el recuerdo del pasado, del que yo hacía el presente, y sin tener ninguno de los me era imposible pensar en el futuro. ¿Cómo puede haber un futuro sin pasado ni presente? (21-22)

El momento del viaje supone la ruptura total con ella misma, se produce una fragmentación entre lo que ella había sido y lo que debe ser a partir de entonces. Tal es así que esta situación la llevará a pasar unos meses internada en un centro de salud mental, del que ella misma hablará también en su obra. María Luisa Elío había pasado toda su vida arraigada en la figura de aquella niña que dejó España, atormentada por la pérdida de su yo-infantil, tanto es así que había creado dos yoes que se ven perfectamente definidos en la obra. De esta forma, el yo-infantil se contrapone con el yo-adulto, es decir, presente versus pasado, dando luz a una técnica narrativa basada en el desdoblamiento. Durante la obra, las voces de estos dos yoes se van alternando, aunque no de forma simultánea ni equilibrada, para reflejar la dualidad traumática surgida en su propia personalidad. Véase el siguiente ejemplo: "«Os escondéis las tres y yo os busco.» Corremos cada una para un lado, chocando con todo. A mí debía serle muy fácil encontrarme ya que siempre me escondía en los mismos lugares" (30). La voz infantil habla en presente de lo que pasó hace más de treinta años. En oposición, la voz adulta reflexiona sobe el juego con la familia. Es tan fuerte esta incapacidad de reconocimiento entre el yo-infantil y el yo-adulto que va más allá, alcanzando su momento culmen en su film *En el balcón vacío,* en el que, en la escena final, se produce el encuentro de ambos yoes en las escaleras que conducían hasta su apartamento en Pamplona pero no se produce la anagnórisis, es decir, Gabriela-adulta, pues así se llama María Luisa en la película, no reconoce a Gabriela-niña, tal y como explica José Naharro-Calderón (157). Esta dualidad se enfatiza a lo largo de la obra hasta tal punto que llega a multiplicarse de nuevo para dar cabida a una tercera voz narrativa, perteneciente también a la madurez, pero a su madurez tras el viaje de regreso: "La subieron después no sabía a dónde, la pusieron en una cama que no era hecha para nadie y, al fin, la llevaron a aquel cuarto. Se negó a obedecer, y la dejaron tras días sin comer, tres días sin beber agua. Así

fue." (106). En este caso la escritora no se reconoce a sí misma durante su estancia en el centro psiquiátrico. Todo esto resulta especialmente curioso si se tiene en cuenta las palabras de Alicia Alted Vigil, según la cual "el lugar de origen y el tiempo 'detenido' en el momento de la partida" sólo afecta a aquellos que han vivido el exilio siendo adultos (247-48). Sin embargo, este no es el caso de María Luisa Elío Bernal. Como ya he quedado demostrado más arriba, existe una total paralización de la vida de una niña de sólo doce años en el momento de exilio.

De este modo, su identidad construida en la recuperación del pasado se ve aniquilada una vez que ha comprobado, a través del viaje, que dicha recuperación, es decir, que eso con lo que ella se identificaba, ya no existe, que de la España que ella dejó ya no queda apenas nada y, por lo tanto, debe construirse una nueva identidad buscando sus raíces en su país de acogida. Es, por lo tanto, en la personalidad tras la realización del viaje a Pamplona donde debe entenderse la configuración de la nueva identidad. Dicha identidad pasa por la cura de los recuerdos reprimidos que, según Tzvetan Todorov, deben ser recuperados para ser capaz de producir una sanación completa. Es decir, la neurosis es fruto de una represión, de atribuirle a los recuerdos del pasado un lugar dominante, lo que provoca que dichos recuerdos se conviertan en ofensivos e incontrolables (26). El viaje a su ciudad natal supone la liberación de dichos recuerdos; éstos pasan a una posición periférica, dejando que el nuevo yo, que la nueva María Luisa surja. Siguiendo las teorías de este mismo crítico, María Luisa Elío Bernal no había utilizado lo que él denomina "la memoria ejemplar" para aprender de las situaciones del pasado y afrentar los nuevos problemas que se le presentaban, sino que se había reducido a una "memoria literal", basada en la sucesión de recuerdos intransitivos, que impiden el progreso (34).

De esta forma, puede entenderse que la escritura funciona como proceso curativo, es decir, relatar sus vivencias le ha permitido enfrentarse a la realidad de su pasado y de su presente para poder configurar una nueva identidad. Como ya apunta Ángel Loureiro, "the reparation continues in the act of telling itself" (181). Narrar el trauma sufrido por el exilio y el fin de éste tras la realización del viaje de retorno conlleva la renuncia de su patria, de su familia–ella misma menciona en la obra a una tía suya de Madrid a la que nunca volvería a ver- y de su comunidad. Aun así, cabe preguntarse en qué medida funciona la autobiografía para llevar a cabo esa curación, es decir, para realizar la búsqueda de esa identidad perdida. Abogando por uno de las acepciones definidas por Anna Caballé, debe entenderse el término "autobiografía" como sinónimo de "literatura del

yo", dejándose así de lado las numerosas distinciones que algunos críticos como Mercedes Arriaga han hecho sobre los distintos géneros dentro de dicha literatura (*Amor* 2). Esta definición parece más adecuada porque abarca una escritura cuyo referente inmediato es el propio escritor, otorgando más importancia así al sujeto-narrador que al tipo de texto en sí. Teniendo en cuenta que la escritora pamplonesa lleva a cabo una búsqueda de sí mismo, parece incuestionable que recurriese a la literatura del yo para naufragarse en su proyecto. Además, Aleksandra Hadzelek destaca que lo autobiográfico explota "la necesidad de autodefinirse frente a la imposibilidad de definir la realidad" (309). Esto, asociado a exilio, alcanza un segundo nivel teórico al vincular ambos términos con otros dos conceptos: el nacimiento y la muerte, según la misma escritora. No obstante, la problemática en el caso de María Luisa Elío Bernal surge al preguntarse si ambos conceptos tienen cabidas, en qué momento y qué yo los desarrolla. Lo que debería haber sido la muerte del yo-infantil para dar paso al nacimiento del yo-adulto en el momento del exilio no se produce. La escritora navarra va avanzando en edad, pero el yo-infantil, aunque muerto ya en la realidad, que no así en la mente de la autora, impide el nacimiento del yo-adulto. De esta forma, podría decirse que, desde el momento en el que la autora deja Pamplona hasta el momento en el que se produce el viaje de regreso, no existe María Luisa Elío Bernal, que su yo no existe. La sombra del yo-infantil muerto sigue proyectándose durante toda su vida hasta el momento del regreso, momento en el que desaparece definitivamente y se produce el auténtico nacimiento del yo-adulto, un yo tardío sin duda, como se verá más adelante. Aunque Hadzelez afirma que el resultado de la autobiografía es permitir al yo presente ver y recrear el yo anterior para hacerlo nacer de nuevo, sucede todo lo contrario en este caso (310). Recrear el yo anterior permite ver a la autora que no queda nada de él en la actualidad y que es el momento de dejar al yo-adulto nacer, es decir, que es el momento de configurar una nueva identidad basada en su yo-mexicano.

Además, el uso de la autobiografía permite ver al lector que, en el caso de los exiliados, pueden identificarse dos etapas: por un lado, la identificación con el mundo del pasado; y por otro lado, la incorporación en el mundo actual (310). En el caso de María Luisa Elío Bernal, queda muy claro cuando, al final de la obra, ella confiesa que debe dejar de lado definitivamente España para sumergirse por completo en el panorama mexicano: "Y ahora estoy aquí, con mi hijo apoyado en mis piernas, esperando que pasen unos minutos para estar de regreso en lo que, quizá por primera vez, llamo casa. «Diego, hijo, ya estamos llegando.»

«¿A dónde?» «A México.»" (96). De esta forma, la autobiografía se dibuja como el instrumento utilizado para dar espacio a una voz que hasta ahora, como ya se mencionó en la introducción, no había tenido espacio. Nuevos acercamientos críticos y teóricos explican la utilización de dicho género para dar salida a una serie de escritores pertenecientes a una clase subalterna, es decir, a una clase sin poder, que había estado silenciada por un sector dominante. Este último estaba conformado por miembros blancos, hombres, de occidente y de clase social alta, mientras que los mencionados en primer lugar eran las mujeres, los homosexuales, los negros y los pertenecientes a una clase social baja. A esta última categoría, yo añado a los exiliados pues, durante los años de dictadura, su voz también estuvo silenciada por estar enfrentados a la posición dominante, al poder. De hecho, Mercedes Arriaga, refiriéndose a esta cuestión, explicaba que el carácter cognoscitivo está filtrado por la cultura dominante

> que controla los medios de difusión y, lo más importante, autoriza y garantiza a determinados emisores (hombres-blancos—nobles o burgueses—europeos-heterosexuales) y desautoriza y silencia a otros (mujeres, extracomunitarios, homosexuales). Por lo tanto, hay que ir más lejos del significado del texto, como señala Iris Zavala, e "interrogarse sobre las formas de vida que proyecta, sobre los saberes que construye y sobre quién, cómo y cuándo los construye y reproduce". (31)

Por lo tanto, María Luisa Elío se basa en la autobiografía para garantizarse un espacio en la búsqueda de su identidad . Además, como ya ha estudiado el gran teórico de la autobiografía, Philippe Lejeune, no se puede olvidar que este género tiene como facultad final la de transmitir un nombre propio (41). Se trata de un nombre que, en el caso de María Luisa Elío Bernal, se había visto silenciado no sólo por su condición de exiliada, sino también por moverse en un círculo intelectual en el que otras grandes figuras como su propio marido Jomí García Ascot, u otras de primer nivel, como Gabriel García Márquez o Alejo Carpentier, habían dejado poco espacio para lo que algunos críticos considerarían unas simples memorias femeninas.

De esta forma, María Luisa Elío Bernal participa de una corriente literaria argumentada por el crítico ya mencionado Ángel Loureiro según el cual predomina en los escritores exiliados una autobiografía en la que se produce una reconstrucción o reparación de la propia identidad a partir de un contencioso diálogo con la nación y la historia. María Luisa

Elío Bernal entabla un profundo diálogo con la que ella había considerado su nación a través del viaje de retorno, imagen que va perdiendo fuerza a medida que avanza la conversación interna. Es la asunción de la derrota de su historia la que le va a permitir abrirse paso a su final identidad mexicana, a la que ya se ha hecho mención anteriormente. Por lo tanto, parece ser inevitable examinar la autobiografía de escritores como María Luisa Elío Bernal y otros exiliados sin abordar previamente la historia que ha producido dichos sujetos (184-85).

En definitiva, la autobiografía surge como un espacio en el que María Luisa Elío Bernal deja como testigos de un momento histórico las vivencias de un niña de 12 años que debe enfrentarse al exilio debido a una guerra civil sin entender el por qué. Este fenómeno supuso una ruptura en la configuración de una adolescente, tanto personal como culturalmente, que va a arrastrar durante gran parte de su vida. De esta forma, la autora rememora su infancia en España a través de un viaje más de treinta años después de su marcha para esclarecer qué queda de lo que ella fue un día. El anhelo y la nostalgia de su patria que le habían impedido desarrollarse de forma completa antes de dicho regreso dejan lugar a un sentimiento de vacío, de pérdida, en el que México se configura como la nueva realidad que asumir. Así, la ausencia de una identidad configurada por esa falta de permanencia a una sociedad pasa a un segundo plano para dejar espacio hacia una nueva identidad en la que los recuerdos del pasado se han curado, dejando atrás a ese yo-infantil, y permitiendo que el yo-adulto se desarrolle en todo su esplendor. Por lo tanto, debe entenderse la plasmación de su viaje como la cura que permite a la escritora la configuración de una entidad en la que reafirme su ser mexicano, pues es ahí donde ha desarrollado la gran parte de su vida, y que, al mismo tiempo, le permita dejar su pasado en el pasado, es decir, le permita deslindar esos dos tiempos históricos que, hasta ahora, habían impedido el desarrollo del momento actual.

Notas

[1] Véase para ello el estudio de Vicente Llorens. "El retorno del desterrado". *Estudios y ensayos sobre el exilio republicano de 1939*. Sevilla: Renacimiento (2006): 105-54.

[2] Ejemplo de ello es la obra de Silvia Mistral titulada *Éxodo. Diario de una refugiada española*. Barcelona: Icaria (2001).

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The Latina *Bildungsroman* and the Paradigms of Space: The Search for Identity in Julia Alvarez's *Before We Were Free*

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One of the central themes of contemporary Latina fiction is the search for self-identity. This process of becoming, or this quest, whether it is from child to adolescent or the exploration of womanhood or maturation, seems to be a recurrent topic in Latina literature. Therefore, many Latina narratives that explore this path of self-definition pertain to the *Bildungsroman*[1] genre. Traditionally, though, this genre has focused primarily on the male protagonist and his search for identity as well as his denouement—a harmonious relationship with the established social order. However, the Latina *Bildungsroman* breaks from the traditional mold of the male *Bildungsroman,* hence transforming the concept of *Bildung*[2] and thus subverting the conventional characteristics of the genre and recreating a new form.

While Julia Alvarez's novel *Before We Were Free* exemplifies some of the primary characteristics of the *Bildungsroman*—the inner development of the protagonist, her journey/her struggles, and the culmination of this trajectory—most significantly it departs from the conventional male-focused model. For instance, the traditional male *Bildungsheld* emerges with a sense of clarity and completeness, but

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Anita, the 12-year-old protagonist of *Before We Were Free*, arises in a state of bewilderment of her understanding of the world and her place in it. Furthermore, in the novel, the concept of discovery of self is closely tied to the creation process; the act of writing is the creative outlet for our protagonist. Anita's diary, as well as the narration itself, therefore, allows her to transcend her social reality and break from the socio-cultural confines as she subverts the traditional notion of *Bildung*[3] and creates her own story.

Although there has been a surge of scholarly articles and dissertations on the *Bildungsroman* in Latina/o literature in recent decades, the works of Julia Alvarez, particularly her young-adult literature, is bereft of such research. *Before We Were Free* is no exception. For example, the bulk of investigative research on *Bildungsroman* fiction and Julia Alvarez focuses mostly on her novel *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*, which, incidentally, is not considered part of young-adult literary fiction. However, Kelli Lyon Johnson's *Julia Alvarez: Writing a New Place on the Map* does briefly examine Alvarez's young-adult works. In a few pages, for example, the reader will find a concise analysis of both *A Cafecito Story* and *Before We Were Free:*

> …aside from the obvious fact that thousands of children suffered under the trujillato and after the ajusticiamiento, the apparent simplicity of the genre of children's literature allows Alvarez to extend the purpose and force of the testimonio of that history and to celebrate the power of the voice—even for children. (118)

Anita's voice, which at times is silenced, throughout the novel serves not only as a *testimonio*[4] or collective memory of the children under the *trujillato* but also of the Dominican people as a whole. The interplay between Anita's diary and her first-person narration shapes her story, thereby subverting the traditional *Bildungsroman* and breaking from its socio-cultural confines to create an authentic Latina *Bildung*. In *Before We Were Free,* there are two key elements that create this break from the traditional *Bildungsroman*. First, the social contexts and intimate spaces that form Anita's identities (gender, nation, family, self) distinguish her from the genre's archetypes. Second, where the archetypical *Bildungsroman* protagonist is regenerated from a prolonged state of confusion and doubt to one of psychological and moral clarity[5,] Anita emerges with a perplexed understanding of human suffering and justice: Her father is killed, her people tortured, and she is severed, exiled, from family and country when she flees to New York. Although she does reach

a new level of consciousness and a brief moment of clarity at narrative's closing, the transition from childhood to adolescence, from innocence to knowledge, and from the Dominican Republic to New York, leaves her mostly in a bewildered state as she negotiates the various spaces in which she is forced to reside as well as the parental and societal expectations of her.

While this genre has traditionally focused on the male protagonist, particularly in the early critical studies of *Bildungsroman* fiction of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it is no longer typified by the male, Anglo, hero. In her 1983 article, "*Bildung* in Ethnic Women Writers," Bonnie Hooever Braendlin asserts:

> …the Bildungsroman is being resuscitated, revived not by males of the dominant culture but by societal outsiders, men and women of marginality groups. The Bildungsroman of these disenfranchised Americans—women, Blacks, Mexican-Americans, Native Americans, homosexuals—portrays the particular identity and adjustment problems of people whose sex or color renders them unacceptable to the dominant society… This new Bildungsroman asserts an identity defined by the outsiders themselves or by their own cultures, not by the patriarchal Anglo-American power structure. (75)

Perhaps most telling of this transformation is the surge of the non-traditional *Bildungsroman* in the latter half of the twentieth century, such as narratives with a female, Latina, African-American, or gay protagonist. This clearly supports Karafilis's assertion that "discussion of this particular genre continues because what we really mean, as critics, when we refuse to abandon the *Bildungsroman*, is that we are interested in how texts negotiate the development/education of their protagonists and how these protagonists negotiate themselves in a larger social context" (63).

The dilemma, however, of the female *Bildungsroman* arises when this non-traditional, non-male *Bildungsheld* attempts to integrate herself within, and is defined by, a dominant patriarchal value system. As Fernández Olmos indicates, "Although male-centered texts value initiative, industry and individuation achieved through conflict and struggle with society, passivity and compliance are the values ascribed to females in traditional novels, leaving them little room for exploration or change," (58), which, inherently, is contrary to the primary purpose of the novel of development. While the female protagonist, in the traditional *Bildungsroman*, is entrapped within these patriarchal norms, it is not until her "awakening" that she is able "to seek authenticity

and selfhood beyond the social confines of patriarchal structures" (Eysturoy 31) and therefore sever from the social and cultural norms by which she is defined. It is both in the "awakening" or "break" from the traditional male *Bildungsroman* that the female *Bildungsroman*[6] and the Latina *Bildungsroman* converge. However, the Latina *Bildungsroman* distinguishes itself from its Anglo counterpart primarily by incorporating race, culture and class as crucial components of the Latina experience.

In *Daughters of Self Creation: The Contemporary Chicana Novel*, Annie O. Eysturoy astutely indicates two important points concerning critical studies of the *Bildungsroman.* First, "Since *Bildung* is a historical concept subject to historical shifts in sensitivity and values, the general thrust of the *Bildung*, as it is portrayed in the *Bildungsroman*, undergoes a perpetual process of transformation" (9). Second, Eysturoy asserts, " The protagonist's experience of the social and cultural environment depends on several interrelated factors such as gender, race, ethnicity and class, because these determine the individuals' position vis-à-vis the social context" (7). Moreover, a unifying concept of this genre is that it is a narrative form, "characterized and defined by its subject matter. It is the particular perspective of the protagonist, his or her inner development, and not an identifiable structure, that defines a *Bildungsroman*" (Eysturoy 5). The Latina protagonist's inner development, therefore, is part of the search for truth and regeneration within the context of race, ethnic group, dominant Anglo-American culture, nation, social class, family, gender and/or barrio. While the female *Bildungsroman* and the Latina *Bildungsroman* explore issues of gender, class and/or sexuality, the Latina protagonist, however, must reinvent herself, usually resisting the cultural norms of the dominant Anglo group (which may include her female Anglo counterpart). Needless to say, Latina literature departs significantly from the traditional, or classic, structures of US and European canonical *Bildungsromane*[7], primarily by breaking from the predominantly white, heterosexual-male protagonist emblematic of the genre. Importantly, though, the search for personal identity typical of the coming-of-age novel remains prominent to the framework of the contemporary fragmented society.

As such, *Before We Were Free* unequivocally distinguishes itself from the male-centered *Bildungsroman*, most notably by embracing the themes of gender, class and sexuality. Mostly significantly, however, is that Anita, the Latina/Dominican protagonist, reinvents herself and ultimately rejects a dominant Anglo culture that has repeatedly dismissed her and her family.

Another distinguishing component of this Latina *Bildungsroman* is its depiction of both Anita's exile and her life prior in the Dominican Republic. That is, while most Latina *Bildungsroman* focus on the coming-of-age of the Latina heroine in the United States, *Before We Were Free* delves into the protagonist's experiences in the Dominican Republic; i.e. her journey of formation is her life pre- and post-exile. Nonetheless, even while in the Dominican Republic, Anita's cultural surroundings are defined through an American backdrop (her American school and friends) –Alvarez thus deviates from the traditional *Bildungsroman* and adheres more closely to the Latina *Bildungsroman*. Still, the protagonist's societal limitations are clearly present both in the Anglo and the Latino spheres.

Further, in *Before We Were Free*, there is another significant movement from the Latina *Bildungsroman* when Anita struggles with the challenges of her exile. As Emma Staniland states:

> Structurally, stories of geographical exile mirror the outward movement of the journey into the social arena that is one of the most significant aspects of the novel of development. In the classical Bildungsroman, it would be this venture away from home and what are, at that moment of departure, seen as its constrictions, that initiates the formative adventure of the Bildungsheld. (98)

In her analysis of Peri Rossi's novel, *La nave de los locos*, Staniland highlights yet another key separation:

> Whereas the young protagonist of the novel of formation embodies a process of development recognizable only in hindsight, the exiled individual is fully cognizant of his or her enforced expulsion. In terms of identity, therefore, we encounter a contrast between the Bildungsheld's identity in the process of becoming, and the exile's identity as one in the process of being undone. (98)

In the case of *Before We Were Free*, Anita's exile further emphasizes a pronounced break from the normative *Bildungsroman*. Essentially, Anita is excluded not simply from both Dominican and American society; at times, she is exiled from her own family as well. The "process of being undone" is quite poignant in this novel and one, which we will further explore.

In *Before We Were Free*, 12-year-old protagonist Anita de la Torre lives through the final, horrendous days of the Trujillo dictatorship. On the surface, her rite of passage is typical of the coming-of-age text, as she

must adjust to the emotional, physical and psychological changes from childhood to adolescence. Atypically, though, she must also adjust to the clandestine gatherings of her father and uncle, the sudden departure of her cousins in the middle of the school day, and the disappearance of her extended family via exile or imprisonment by *El Jefe*. Anita's home—the compound comprised by her huge extended family—is suddenly an isolated piece of land with empty houses. All that remains is her nuclear family: mother, father, sister, brother. Anita slowly unravels the secrets of the adult world, knowing that she is under the watchful eyes of the SIM, Trujillo's secret police. Moreover, during the final days of the Trujillo regime, Anita is not permitted to leave the compound and no longer attends school. After *El Jefe's ajusticiamiento*[8], and before fleeing the country, Anita is forced to live in the walk-in closet of family friends. Throughout the ordeal, Anita expresses her struggles in a secret diary—in order to comprehend what led to her imprisonment and isolation; to understand the changes in her body and her feelings for boys; to reconcile her relationship with her mother; and to come to terms with the dramatic undoing of nation, family and self. Anita's rites of passage include struggles with societal values and mores, the fragmentation of space and memory, and her detached and intimate space of both writing and creating.

In addition, space and memory play particularly important roles in Anita's life and her recreation and interpretation of self, family and society. She shapes her particular story within these spaces through her diary and first-person narration and consequently becomes the narrative authority and voice of her story. Essentially, Anita is the creator and teller of her own personal *Bildungs*. This process of narration is the necessary "break" for the Latina protagonist from the socio-cultural confines of patriarchal structures. As Eysturoy indicates in her study of the Chicana *Bildungsheld*,

> …subversion of the traditional female *Bildungs* story is made possible when the protagonist becomes the narrator of her own text. When the female "I" is the central consciousness of a Bildungsroman, the rendering of the female *Bildungs* process is based on a female experiential perspective: the oppositional nature of the interaction between the female self and soci-cultural values and gender role expectations is not presented by an external and distanced omniscient narrator, but based on and interpreted by the complex subjectivity of the female *Bildungsheld*. (86)

While Anita's writing is a subversive creation, it also departs from the socio-cultural status quo of Dominican society, American life, and even within her own family unit. It is not surprising, then, that an entire chapter is dedicated to "Anita's Diary." Here, Anita's intimate spaces and the fissures between the outside world and her intrinsic life are documented to construct a memory and a voice for her and others:

> We're in the crawl space—and I'm scribbling down this note by flashlight just in case anyone finds this diary—There was a huge roar in the back-yard like a plane landing—now a crashing sound at the downstairs door—Oh my god—they're coming through the house!!!! My hand is shaking so hard—but I want to leave this record just so the world knows. (137)

The fragmentation of space and memory in Alvarez's novel contributes to the development of the protagonist's identity and her private and public personae in these various places: school, home, walk-in closet, New York City. Each a representation of her life in exile. The eraser in the shape of the Dominican Republic, introduced in the first chapter, becomes an important motif. For example, in chapter one "The Eraser in the Shape of the Dominican Republic," there is a sense of urgency as Anita's cousins prepare to relocate to the United States. Anita's Papi, who is usually playful, replies to her inquiries with, "Children should be seen, not heard," (2). At the outset of *Before We Were Free*, Anita is known by her family as a little parrot, "'Cotorrita' Papi warns playfully. That's my nickname in the family because sometimes I talk too much" (4). She is lovingly ridiculed for her curiosity, constant chatter and questions. Her greatest frustration, however, is that she is beginning to realize that everything is changing (although no one in her family wants to inform her of the imminent danger). Her mother and nanny remind her of the adage *en boca cerrada no entran moscas:* "No flies into a closed mouth.' The less said, the better" (26). At school the Secret Santa activities are suddenly canceled since "some parents feel that there's enough tension in the air. Kids sneaking around and leaving secret message might be taken the wrong way" (32). Anita's silence steadily grows throughout the narrative and reflects the loss of freedom and voice of the Dominican people under the *trujillato*. Memory and testimony of the accounts, become a vital place for survival and belonging. Likewise, in Tiffany Ana López's study on Alvarez's children's book, *The Secret Footprints*, she notes:

> Alvarez's children's book stand in dialogue with her other engagements with the history, culture, and people of the Dominican Republic, most especially its history of political violence and how it impacts the definition of self and community… *The Secret Footprints* is about making secrets visible, a continuance of Alvarez's ongoing portraits of survivors' shared struggle to unburden themselves of secrets of what trauma theorists term *the unspeakable.* (222-23)

While Anita's feelings of social alienation, a frequent characteristic in the *Bildungsroman*, seem to frame the entire work, it is ultimately when she reclaims her voice, both literally and figuratively, that her identity emerges. In the intimate space of memory, she is also transformed, not necessarily regenerated—from a prolonged state of confusion to one of psychological and moral clarity—as is usually the case in the classic *Bildungsroman*, but rather she emerges in the mire of her grief, confused and isolated from the world.[9]

Nevertheless, *Before We Were Free* does, at various points fall within the Western narrative tradition of the coming-of-age novel. As Klein states, "The protagonist comes of age by going through painful rites of passage, by performing heroic feats or passing tests with the help of mentors, by surviving symbolic descents into hell, and finally by reaching a new level of consciousness" (22). Although characteristics of the traditional *Bildungsroman* do emerge, with Anita's journeying and growing from childhood to adolescence, the story also breaks from this classic trope. For example, the Latina, Dominican, narrator, here searches for truth within various contexts as well as within physical and intimate spaces not generally associated with archetypical *Bildungsroman* male protagonists: a chaotic Caribbean nation; the dominant Anglo-culture of the American school which she attends; among her American peers; within her fractured family unit and community; in her hide out at the Mancini's walk-in closet; and as an immigrant and exile to the United States. Lyon Johnson, for instance, in her chapter "The Paradox of Remembered Space," draws attention to the confining spaces in which Anita is forced to reside, particularly the walk-in closet at the Mancini house: "This compression of space represents the shrinking freedoms allowed to Dominicans during Trujillo's reign and in the upheaval that followed. They suffer limited access to spaces, even in what might be called 'private' spaces, because all space has become public space, subject to the ruler in such a political climate" (20).

Toward the end of *Before We Were Free*, before Anita and her mom escape to New York, they take refuge in the Mancini's walk-in

closet. Here, Anita has limited access to the outside from a bathroom window: "I have a bird's-eye view of the grounds of the embassy. But unlike a bird, I can't fly free… except in my imagination" (109). Indeed, through her imagination, Anita takes refuge and also breaks the confines of her waning spaces, and it is in her written word where she finally reclaims a voice: "The plot did not work. Pupo, the head of the army, just wasn't there to announce the liberation over the radio, and instead, Trujillo Junior has taken over, and it's a bloodbath out there… I wanted to block my ears and not listen to this stuff! Whenever I feel this way, I start writing so there's another voice that I can listen to" (111). This third voice, "A third radio, tuned to my own heart," as Anita describes, is the intimate space where her memory and voice are recovered.

Thus, memory is also part of that intimate space and takes on a significant role in Anita's life, as she moves both between the public and private spheres and the written/spoken word and silence (at times both imposed by her parents as well as self-imposed). The values that Anita places on each of her spaces, and often times her detachment from them, form the foundations of her identities and, subsequently, guide her journey. Her diary, therefore, is the detached space of authenticity and of self-definition. Anita becomes a detached space from others through her artistic creation, in this case through her writing: "The path toward self-development or self-definition is in some cases portrayed as intimately connected to the process of creation; thus the act of writing or creating becomes essential to discovery of self" (Eysturoy 4). For example, various excerpts from Anita's diary make specific reference to her act of writing: " When I write in it, I feel as if I've got a set of wings, and I'm flying over my life and looking down and thinking, Anita, it's not as bad as you think" (124), or, "Before I wrote all this out, I really didn't know I felt this way" (42), and "Only writing in my diary helps me feel a little less crazy" (46). Essentially, the particular perspective of the Latina protagonist frames this novel, and Anita becomes the narrative voice of her story.

Significantly, *Before We Were Free* begins in the classroom, a safe and quotidian space for our protagonist. Anita attends an American school in the Dominican Republic, and her social as well as economic status is indicated both by her education, the family compound and family connections. In the first chapter, "The Eraser in the Shape of the Dominican Republic," Mrs. Brown, Anita's teacher, is planning a Thanksgiving skit. Anita is disappointed because the Dominican children always have the "not-so-good" parts; Anita and her cousin Carla play the Indians who welcome the pilgrims: "'Anita' –she points at me– 'I want you

to say, Welcome to the United States.'" Oscar Mancini, a classmate who is part Dominican and part Italian, intelligently protests, "Why the Indians call it the United Estates when there was no United Estates back then, Mrs. Brown?" The American children ridicule Oscar's accent and begin to snicker. Anita declares, "I hate it when the American kids make fun of the way we speak English." Clearly, as an outsider in her American school, Anita de la Torre demonstrates a stronger solidarity with her Dominican peers and with the history of her nation. Furthermore, although she is enamored of Sam, son of the American consulate and a new neighbor at the family compound, Anita, still, secretly declares her allegiance: "'We're staying!'; Sam announces proudly. 'We've got amnesia.' 'Amnesty,' Oscar corrects. I bite my lip so as not to smile. Even though I'm almost in love with Sam Washburn, I can't resist feeling proud when a Dominican corrects an American's English" (47).

Importantly, Anita's relationship with Americans and America is already established in the Dominican Republic through her school, her studies of American history and through family friends. Her allegiance remains steady with her Dominican peers and community, despite the encroaching loss of freedom in her country. In spite of Anita's feelings as an outsider in her school, this space, which in the past was part of quotidian life, slowly becomes a place of refuge and the last bastion of normality. Once the school closes, and Lucinda, Anita's older sister, is forced to leave the Dominican Republic, Anita loses her final secure space and begins her journey and her longing for a safe place of her own.

The home space, which also provides a sense of normality for Anita, begins to disintegrate just as the nation starts to unravel. Thus, this marks the beginning of Anita's exile. The sudden departure of Anita's cousins to New York is the first indication of change in the family compound and the first marker of Anita's isolation. Initially, when the American consul and his family move in, there is a sense of relief for Anita: "I'll be glad for anyone living in the compound with us. It's creepy being in a place with so many empty houses. Besides, I'm so lonely and bored without Carla or any of my other cousins around" (21). This American connection maintains some stability in the compound; however, this peaceful existence is momentary, and Anita's foundation is, repeatedly, agitated as she is eventually displaced from her home and her country. The denouement for Anita—her permanent displacement from home—differs greatly from the prototypical male *Bildungsroman* and the culmination of his journey: a harmonious relationship with the established social order.

The second indication of abrupt change in the family compound is when Lucinda is forced to leave to the United States after *El Jefe* starts to court her. Her parents fear for her life as the object of Trujillo's lascivious desires. Lucinda's departure coincides with the closing of the American school: "'I have some sad news to report,' Mrs. Brown says first thing in class. I am so numb already, I don't think I can feel any more sadness. But when she says that the American school is going to close its doors temporarily, it's like the last straw Chucha says broke the Donkey's back. Even though I complain about school, I really don't want the last normal thing in my life to stop" (78). Once the school shuts down, Anita is confined to the family compound with occasional visits to the Mancini's house for homeschooling. Her place is in the home and any movement outside of this space poses an imminent threat. Lyon Johnson indicates the significant role of confined spaces in Alvarez's novels and compares *Before We Were Free* with *¡Yo!:* "Alvarez's insistence on the association between access to physical space and the freedom of intellect—in Anita's free imagination and in Carlos's study—emerges in her depictions of women's creativity and improvisation in the face of displacement and dissonance" (21). Here, Anita's silent companion, her diary, is the only expression of liberation, which she secures for herself. In the path of artistic creation, particularly the art of writing, both the female and Latina *Bildungsromane* intersect by subverting the traditional socio-cultural norms and recreating their own *Bildung*. Anita's permanent displacement is the impetus of her artistic creation[10] and her break with the conventional patterns of the male *Bildungsroman*.

Finally, the death of *El Jefe* marks Anita's isolation and traumatic journey: the end of her home life and the final separation from all family members except her mother; the clandestine hideout in the Mancini's walk-in closet; the uncertainty of her family's future; the danger which her father and uncle face; and her final displacement as an exile in the United States. During this time, she wrestles with the uncertainty of their situation and the knowledge that her father and uncle were the orchestrators of an assassination plot against the country's leader, whom she thought everyone revered:

> 'You mean.… I don't even have to say our leader's name.' Lucinda nods solemnly and puts a finger to her lips. Now I'm really confused. I thought we liked El Jefe. His picture hangs in our front entryway with the saying below it: IN THIS HOUSE, TRUJILLO RULES. 'But if he's so bad, why does Mrs. Brown hang his picture in our classroom next to George Washington?' (19-20)

While the ideals which lead to the assassination of *El Jefe* seem to appeal to Anita, she struggles with the idea of killing another human being. It does, however, become clear to Anita that nothing is what it seems, including Trujillo. The final space, at least the final one in which she still feels a sense of belonging, is the Dominican Republic—the imprint of her country and each place that has formed her foundation and identity. As she is airlifted from the grounds of the Italian embassy to the airplane which will take her to New York City, Anita holds onto one last intimate space, memory: "So many people and places I might not ever get to see again! Looking down, I saw a quilt of faces and memories spreading out over the sea—Monsito carrying our sack of plátanos in his wheelbarrow, Tío Pepe with his white socks, Porfirio watering the ginger plants while singing his sad songs—and the purple thread stitching piece to piece was Chucha" (142).

A moment of clarity arrives briefly at the very end of the novel when she experiences snow and snow angels for the first time: "What I see as I look down aren't angles but butterflies, the arm swings connecting to the leg swings like a pair of wings, our heads poking out in between! I'm sure if Chucha were here, she would say they are a sign. Four butterflies from Papi, reminding me to fly" (163). The brevity of this moment highlights yet another recurring motif in Alvarez's work, freedom. Perhaps for Anita, the Latina *Bildungsheld*, there is no true freedom. Her moment of clarity at the very end and her new level of consciousness are directly intersected by her final displacement and the recognition of herself in this space. Here, in this place of isolation she creates a space of her own, her written word. As readers, though, we are left with this last pondering thought: Is Anita finally free?

As Ismael Muñiz highlights in his article[11], "All *Bildungsroman* delineate the transition from innocence to enlightenment, trying to close the breach between an uninitiated protagonist and an experienced narrator" (92). However, as Anita reconciles this breach, she is also thrust into her new life as an exile and as a bereaved child. These two dimensions inevitably impact her journey, and it is here where she rises with a new level of consciousness as she recreates herself and consequently her identity Anita's intimate space also impacts her rites of passage. Anita relocates from Dominican home to clandestine closet to hotel apartment in New York, and each one forms part of her intimate spaces that form her identity. As Hurtado Benavides astutely indicates, these spaces are not limited to the physical realm.[12] Rather, they extend to the intimate

spaces, for example, of community, family, Latina ethnicity and, in Anita's case, memory.

On the one hand, *Before We Were Free* fits into the tradition of US Latina literature; however, it is distinctly different in regard to Anita's quest for personal identity within a Dominican context, which begins and develops in the Dominican Republic and ends with her immigration and exile to New York City. While *Before We Were Free* is related to many of the characteristics of the Latino *Bildungsroman*, such as *House on Mango Street*, *Nilda*, *Down These Mean Streets*, *When I Was Puerto Rican*, it also falls outside the parameters of the first-, second- or third-generation immigrant Latina child/adolescent growing up in the United States. Similar to Alvarez's other coming-of-age novel, *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*, *Before We Were Free* demonstrates, as Hurtado Benavides declares in the former novel, a departure from the popular preconceptions of a Dominican female immigrant[13] (22). While the classical European and/or American *Bildungsromane* focuses on the individual and the individual's becoming and subsequent accommodating himself to the existing society's values and mores,[14] *Before We Were Free* clearly defies this traditional trope. Here, the nontraditional goals of *Bildung* seem to flourish: a young Dominican female growing up under turbulent political times who immigrates to the United States as an exile.

In the final chapter of *Before We Were Free*, Anita begins the process of reconciliation with the ideals of her family and the consequences of her parents' actions and her role as other within the dominant Anglo culture. This realization, herself as other, is ever-present in the school which she attends in the Dominican Republic and more so in the school in New York. In American society, she encounters the typical barriers of a Latina immigrant, which profoundly mark her and which exemplify her final displacement. For instance, the incident when she is thrown out of the grocery store for not fully understanding what the storeowner says:

> 'Don't you understand English?' he says, taking hold of my arm. I'm about to tell him that I do, but already he is yanking me to the front of the store and out the opening door to the sidewalk… He is patting me all up and down checking to see if I've stolen something. At first, I just stand there, ashamed, submitting to his search as if I've done something wrong. But when he slaps his big hand on my chest, I cry out, 'I wasn't doing anything! This is a free country.' Actually, I'm not really sure this is true. Maybe this is a free country only for Americans. (149)

Finally, though, she emerges with her own ideals and breaks from societal expectations. Each space, which claims its own marker in her journey, ultimately forms her foundation and identity. Although the physical spaces leave a profound impact on her, it is not the physical places but rather the concept of origin, community and family which leave an indelible mark: "How could I live in this world full of strangers and gray light instead of a country of cousins and family and family friends and year-round sunshine?" (143). Perhaps Anita is nostalgic for her home and her place of origin and how she will reconcile her relationship with this new space while on a quest to create an authentic self.

Ultimately, the personal and collective memories are both present in *Before We Were Free*. As the title indicates, it is the account of a family's journey, the process of this quest and the collective identity of this community reflected in Anita's story.[15] Similarly, Anita's voice, both in the form of the narration itself as well as the diary, is the recreation of her self and of her identity through the female "I." Through her written words, Anita creates the necessary "break" from the socio-cultural confines of patriarchal structures, the status quo of Dominican society, American life and the family unit. She subverts the traditional *Bildungsroman* and shapes her story within the various paradigms of space and memory, therefore creating her own narration, voice, and identity. In the end, Anita reclaims her voice, in multiple ways, and while she emerges engulfed in her grief and detached from the world, she has also created a new space of her own. Needless to say, *Before We Were Free* is hardly a standard *Bildungsroman*. Echoing Staniland's observation of *La nave de los locos*, *Before We Were Free* can also be described as an "Anti-*Bildungsroman*." As such, most Latina *Bildungsromane* could readily fit into the "Anti-*Bildungsroman*" classification, or those works that veer from the normative male-centered *Bildungrsroman*.

Notes

[1] "The German term *Bildungsroman* has been used to designate a genre of novel (*Roman*) which demonstrates the formation (*Bildung*) of a character; indeed, the possibilities for such a novel proliferate. Ideas of literary characters' self-development have been variously categorized as novels of growth, education (*Erziehungsroman*), development (*Entwicklungsroman*), socialization, formation, culture, or as novels of coming-of-age of the artist (*Künstlerroman*). The dominant

paradigm of the genre was first identified and coined as *Bildungsroman* by Karl Morgenstern in his history lectures of 1819/1820, but was not fully described until Wilhelm Dilthey's *Das Leben Schleiermachers* (1870)" (Maier 317-18).

[2] "Chicana *Bildungsromane* partake in a general trend in contemporary women's literature: during the last three decades women writers have often adapted the basic patterns of the traditionally male-defined *Bildungsroman*, but given the particular nature of female development, women's *Bildungsromane* have transformed the concept of *Bildung* and thereby also the traditional definitions of the genre" (Eysturoy 5).

[3] If we examine *Bildungsroman* of different periods and social circumstances—for instance, *The Awakening* (1899) by Kate Chopin, *Look Homeward, Angel* (1929) by Thomas Wolfe, *Daughter of the Earth* (1929) by Agnes Smedley, *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951) by J.D. Salinger, *Brown Girl, Brownstone* (1959) by Paule Marshall, *Pocho* (1959) by José Antonio Villarreal, and *Delia's Song* (1988) by Lucha Corpi—we find not only distinct *Bildung* experiences in respect to era and social context but also the crucial determinant of gender in the protagonist's *Bildungs* process. The interplay of tensions between the individual protagonist and his or her social and cultural environments shifts with history: in looking at the development of the Bildungsroman, we thus encounter, for instance, changes that have taken place in self-development reflected in this literary form, changes extending from a male-defined, eighteenth-century concept of *Bildung* to contemporary female perspective on identity and self-definition" (Eysturoy 7).

[4] In the Author's Note at the end of *Before We Were Free*, Alvarez states, "There is a tradition in Latin American countries known as *testimonio*. It is the responsibility of those who survive the struggle for freedom to give testimony. To tell the story in order to keep alive the memory of those who died" (166).

[5] "In the prototypical Goethean model of *Bildung,* whatever the male protagonist's occasional obstacles to self-fulfillment, the underlying assumption is his capacity for individual realization and integration into the social status quo" (McIlvanney 60).

[6] From this point forward, the term female *Bildungsroman* will be used to express the non-traditional genre, which breaks from the historically patriarchal structures of this form.

[7] The *Bildungsromane* has been at the core of American literature since Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.* Minority writers like Frederick Douglas and Malcolm X have exploited the subgenre's flexibility, open-ended structure, and personal quality to portray their protagonists' unique rite of passage. In first-person narratives like memoirs, autobiographical vignettes, and the *Bildungsbiographie*—an autobiographical *Bildungsroman*, these authors have explored their protagonists' initiation into higher states of ontological awareness and society. By doing so, they have criticized the Anglo-American or their home culture's perception of, for example, African American culture. Julia

Alvarez, Sandra Cisneros, Junot Díaz, Nicholas Mohr, Richard Rodriguez, and Piri Thomas write versions of the *Bildungsroman* to expose Latino and societal limitations on their protagonists' personal development. In the public domain of commercial books, these authors experiment with language and genre in order to incorporate the previously silenced perspectives of women, gays, upper-class Latinos, or Dominican-Americans into Latino and American literature. Although they honor the organizational theme of personal development, each work has a unique relation to this subgenre (Hurtado Benavides 11-13).

[8] "It's very interesting that in the Dominican Republic, we don't use the word assassination in referring to Trujillo's death. We use a word you don't have in English: *ajusticiamiento*, which means 'bringing to justice.' Dominicans feel that Trujillo's death was not murder; murder suggests that he was the victim of a crime. Dominicans believe that Trujillo was the criminal and the act of his removal was a just act" (*Before We Were Free*, "A Conversation with Julia Alvarez," 176).

[9] At the end of *Before We Were Free*, there is an excerpt of an interview with Julia Alvarez. Here is a question and response which is of particular interest to this study: "**Q.** As the situation in the story becomes increasingly grave, Anita becomes almost silent. As you wrote this, did you view Anita's reaction as typical, as well as symbolic? **A.** You do things sometimes as you write out of a writerly instinct—something will feel right or seem in character, but you don't think about it analytically. I remember reading memoirs by survivors and reports of children who have suffered trauma —I remember being struck by how some of these victims responded with silence. I have a sister who works in Boston with Latin American refugees, many of whom have survived the burning of their villages, the torture and death of family members. My sister tells me that she knows that her patients are going to get better when they can tell the story of what happened to them. So the silencing of those who have lived in terror is not just an external thing: it's also a way in which the whole self shuts down. Anita's silence is symbolic of what is happening to her country" (176).

[10] In "Multi-Ethnic Female Identity and Denise Chávez's *The Last of the Menu Girls*," Karen Weekes posits, "Hispanic authors must invent the *Bildungsroman* anew to reflect experiences specific to their culture, and their protagonists must invent themselves as well, exploring uncharted and frightening territory. These protagonists generally resist the Anglo cultural impulse toward valorization of autonomy at the expense of connection, instead configuring themselves within the traditions of family and community. Oftentimes the process of creating a self is intimately united with other types of creativity, so that the *Bildungsroman* becomes inseparable from the genre of the *Künstlerroman*, or narrative of artistic development" (382).

[11] "*Bildungsromane* written by Puerto Rican Women in the United States: Nicholasa Mohr's *Nilda*: *A Novel* and Esmeralda Santiago's *When I Was Puerto Rican*."

[12] Hurtado Benavides in her study on Julia Alvarez's novel, *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents* and Piri Thomas's novel, *Down These Mean Streets,*

makes the following observation: "although the author and narrators come from diametrically opposed realities, both *Bildungsromanen* disprove popular preconceptions of a Dominican female immigrant or a man from the streets of Spanish Harlem. Alvarez and Thomas accomplish this by emphasizing the impact of the intimate space on the narrators' rite of passage. I use this term because the authors do not limit their definition of home to a physical space like a residence. Rather, their emphasis on emotional connotations includes the concepts of origins, community and Latino ethnicity. This is due to the fact that, beginning with their exile or migration from the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, they constantly relocate" (22).

[13] As I indicated earlier, Anita is from a well-to-do and socially well-connected family, who attends a private American school in the Dominican Republic, and lives on the family compound.

[14] As Margarite Fernandez Olmos's states in regard to her study on two Latino *Bildungsromanen*, *Nilda* and *Felices días, Tío Sergio*, "Far from accommodation to the existing society, as is usually the case in the traditional *Bildungsroman*, the female protagonists in these works must distinguish between those elements of the social order that they should accept or reject in their quest for meaningful existence, 'Growing up *puertorriqueña*,' therefore, on the Island or on the mainland, denotes a life that is molded by an intense cultural consciousness and an arduous quest in the pursuit of integrity and the creation of an authentic self" (72).

[15] As Eysturoy emphasizes in her study on the Chicana *Bildungsroman*, "While the Chicana has remained 'silenced' and 'unseen,' the collective knowledge of her history has been doomed to a quiescent existence in the depths of her consciousness. This is the consciousness of the Chicana 'Everywoman,' and it becomes the task of the female hero, and a part of her *Bildung*, to retrieve and give voice to that knowledge" (39).

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The Detective Turned Victim: The Victimization and the Visibility of the Female Body in Maria-Antònia Oliver's Lònia Guiu Series

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In 1970s Barcelona, a group of writers who collectively called themselves Ofèlia Dracs came together in an effort to experiment with different genres so as to attract a new generation of readers in Catalan.[1] This group of Catalan writers expressed similar concerns about the social and cultural status of the Catalan language and its literature, but also held a new vision for Catalan popular literature that would prompt its revival (Hart 302). As a result, each collection that was published by the group took on a different genre such as erotica, horror, detective tales, science fiction, and even a cookbook (Cortés and Escandell 26).[2] As a member of Ofèlia Dracs, Maria-Antònia Oliver experimented for the first time with the crime fiction genre in the 1983 collection titled *Negra i consentida* with her short story, "On ets Mònica?".[3]

Oliver's "On ets Mònica?" features Lònia Guiu, the female sleuth protagonist that reappears in Oliver's detective novel trilogy and that has garnered both domestic and international acclaim. Even though Lourdes Ortiz introduced the first female detective protagonist in Spain with Bárbara Arenas in *Picadura mortal* (1979), Oliver is the first author in Spain

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to create a crime fiction series whose main character, the private eye, is female.[4] With this series, Oliver defies the notion of the male-dominated crime fiction genre at various levels: by replacing the male detective hero with a female detective whose sidekick, Quim, is male (as well as gay) and by shifting the focus of the main crime to gender violence, making all other crimes secondary to this one. Using "On ets Mònica?" as an introduction to her female hard-boiled detective, Oliver turned her attention to the detective novel genre and tackled a legal system that despite its democratization was still considered hostile to female victims of sexual violence. Hence, Lònia's clients and/or the victims she encounters are always female, often Majorcan women like herself, and children who have been exploited, and the crimes that Lònia investigates are always of a sexual nature, though these will often be intertwined with ecological crimes as well.

The focus of most of the scholarship on Oliver's crime fiction has been on Lònia's self-transformations and how these have been intimately tied to her feminist convictions and the evolution of these beliefs. Scholars such as Shelley Godsland and Nancy Vosburg have done extensive work on the connection between Lònia's self-transformations and her feminist awakenings, which lead her to identify with the victims of her cases, women that have been subjected to gender violence. For his part, José Colmeiro emphasizes how Lònia's identification with the victims of her cases leads to identity crises in each of the novels, which then result in feminist realizations that promote solidarity and strengthened female networks. In my study of the Lònia Guiu series, however, I want to draw attention to another crucial aspect of the trilogy—the link between narrative hybridization and the representation and spectatorship of the female body. By writing a hybrid narrative that is both a detective story and an examination of the self, Oliver has led the reader into an examination of crime fiction's treatment of gender violence and of the female body. The disconcerting effect is that Oliver brings both the detective protagonist and the reader into the very sphere of violence, and it is here that the female body becomes visible. Unlike the representations of women's bodies in traditional male crime fiction that are displayed to be attractive and pleasurable to the reader, in Oliver's trilogy, the female body gains visibility when it is mistreated and viciously abused. Lònia's body is only made visible when she is assaulted, when she doubles as a victim; otherwise, her body remains unavailable to the reader.

Despite all that we know about Lònia as a character, from her professional insecurities to her lipstick fetish, we never get a physical

depiction of the private eye as the character herself admits in the final novel of the trilogy, *El sol que fa l'ànec*. Though Lònia claims that she has not read Oliver's novels (which angers her author-friend), Lònia confirms the lack of her physical description in Oliver's works when the receptionist at the German consulate, who has read both *Estudi en lila* and *Antípodes*, the first and second novel of the series, complements her by saying that she is pretty, "[é]s molt mes guapa que així com la descriu ella" (66).[5] Lònia responds to her complement by pointing out that "l'Oliver no m'ha descrita mai! Només en una ocasió va posar que tenia els cabells foscos i que era bastant alta..." (66).[6] This lack of a physical description provides a stark contrast with the detailed descriptions of the female characters in male detective fiction, in particular when we encounter the *femme fatale* or the male detective's sexy sidekick, whose physical attributes are indeed highlighted.[7] Kathleen Thompson Casado has previously drawn attention to the fact that in female crime fiction the woman detective is not described, avoiding her objectification and thus giving her professional skills greater distinction by contrast (140). In both the short detective story and in the trilogy, the lack of Lònia's physical description serves to highlight Oliver's rewriting of how the female body is now staged in crime fiction.

We do, however, witness how Lònia's body is victimized throughout the series, since the first-person narration details the extreme violence and pain endured. Oliver utilizes these episodes not only to criticize how violence is employed in male crime fiction, as has already been suggested by Shelley Godsland and Anne White, but also to make the victimized female body available by creating a doubling where the protagonist is both a detective and a victim of sexual assault. In male-centered crime fiction, the detective will be subjected to the occasional beating, but will not be sexually assaulted like Lònia is in the trilogy. Thus, Oliver takes these episodes of violent confrontations between the detective and their criminal counterparts to further shift the generic form.

While we accompany Lònia as she works her cases, we are also privy to her flashbacks and her internal world. We observe how she must rediscover and redefine herself as a *detectiva*, as she refers to herself, in a post-dictatorship society, for her function and identity as a detective have also changed in accordance with this political and societal transformation.[8] Lònia's redefinition as both a sleuth and as a woman is clearly linked to the new types of cases that she is asked to solve that involve the more widespread social problem of sexual violence against women.[9] Oliver's

Lònia, however, seems to be unaware of her own potential role as a victim, and initially underestimates her own vulnerability in a social system that as her cases prove is dangerous to women, a system that mistreats and abuses the female body. She becomes a victim of the same crime that she investigates, and finds there is no solution, no guarantee that a stop can be put to this cycle of sexual violence. As a result of her victimization, the female detective's body becomes the site for a discussion of gender violence and for redefining victimhood in the genre.

This recasting of the detective as a victim of sexual assault poses a problem for the genre because, as Kathleen Klein explains, "Rape transforms the detective into a victim, moves him from the dominant position to the subordinate one in the power struggle and the linguistic configuration (criminal/victim)" (180). This is true for Lònia who narrowly escapes being raped in all three texts and in *Antípodes* is forced to prostitute herself to the extent of feeling that she has been raped. The sexual nature of the assaults that she endures transforms her into a victim of gender violence. According to Klein, the victim "is, despite biology, always female. … the Woman is the body in the library on whom the criminal writes his narrative of murder. On top of that narrative, the detective inscribes his narrative of investigation" (173). What changes, then, when the detective is also a sexual assault victim?

By having her female detective experience sexual victimization firsthand and by having her assaulted body put on display, Oliver creates the new binary of detective/victim and deconstructs the sexualization of the female body in traditional crime fiction. In *Estudi en lila*, for example, Lònia first doubles as a victim when she goes to investigate the criminal, Ernest Gómara, and is greeted by his henchman. She describes how she fights off Gòmara's men, who are not only physically assaulting her, but are also attempting to rape her:

> Jo vaig aguantar mentre em tocaven com si fos un home. Però quan les mans del grassonet s'entretengueren més del compte per segons quines parts del meu cos li vaig envergar una galtada que el va deixar perplex. ...—Agafa-li els braços! Agafa-li els braços—cridava enfollit al filipí, mentre jo li feia caure una pluja de cops de puny a la cara–. Ja veuràs aquesta melindrosa com espernegarà de gust d'aquí a una estona.
> Quan em va esqueixar la brusa i els sostenidors vaig seguir el consell del Quim. ... Tenia les mans del català damunt cada mamella. I els seus baixos se m'oferien indefensos. Repenjant-me a l'esquena del filipí, li vaig encastar els dos genolls a les parts sense os i immediatament els meus pits foren lliures. L'home es cargolava a dues passes, grunyint com un porcellí. (81)[10]

Unlike the attacks the male detectives face, in the case of the female private eye she is at risk of also being sexually assaulted. This transforms the episodes of violence that we are used to finding in traditional crime fiction into terrifying assaults that replicate the violence against women, which Lònia combats in this novel. In this instance, the female body appears only to be undressed and assaulted, and her vulnerability is emphasized, for the detective has lost control, albeit for a moment, over her body. Lònia, however, is able to regain power over her body, taking advantage of the fact that they are fondling her to disable her attackers. As we will see, these instances of victimization also serve to empower Lònia, to embolden her to fight.

Moreover, violence in the Lònia Guiu trilogy is linked to rememorations and flashbacks, for a causal relationship exists between these violent episodes and the remembrances that are triggered by these assaults. Following the aforementioned attack, she is able to get away, but later wakes up after being knocked unconscious and locked up in a room at Gómara's house. Wondering if they have sexually assaulted her, she describes looking down at her clothes, but quickly realizes that she has not been raped. It is then that she feels the lump on her head, which triggers the following childhood memory:

> I els ulls em començaren a plorar de dolor mentre amb la mà em palpava un bony descomunal, com el que m'havia fet quan tenia set anys, un dia abans de la primera comunió, quan em vaig barallar a pedrades amb na Joana perquè deia que mumare havia pagat a les monges perquè jo anàs la primera de la fila a combregar... Em vaig veure reflectida al mirall del tocador amb cara de bleda assolellada pel record melangiós. Però ja no era una nina de primera comunió. (85-86)[11]

As we will see throughout the trilogy, the violence inflicted upon the female body conjures up these childhood memories for Lònia, reinforcing the vulnerability that this doubling of the detective as victim entails as demonstrated in both *Estudi en lila* and *Antípodes*. Though her appearance is not described, Oliver makes her available for the reader during this scene, but instead of obtaining a picture of Lònia as we would expect when she stands before the mirror, what comes into focus is a childlike vulnerability.[12] Facing her vulnerability, however, empowers her to fight back, and so she is able to disarm the criminals by rendering them unconscious in order to make her escape.

While the beating she receives in *Estudi en lila* leaves Lònia with some temporary bruises, others, especially those inflicted in the Majorcan

brothel in *Antípodes* are permanent—for example, the blow to her right ear, which leaves her practically deaf, and the knife scar on one of her cheeks. This particular assault in *Antípodes* occurs immediately after spending an afternoon with one of her ecologist friends, Queta, at the beach Cala Mura in Na Morgana, which she learns is in danger of being overdeveloped. In some of Oliver's detective and non-detective fiction, the brutality of female victimization goes hand in hand with the desire to construct indiscriminately on beautiful land, a phenomenon known as balearization.[13] According to Biel Horrach Estarellas explains, balearization refers to an uncontrollable urbanization, which has its origins in Majorca in the late 1960s and early 1970s due to the overwhelming amount of construction that took place on the seashore to boost the tourism industry without taking into account the destruction of the beaches and ecosystem.[14] As we will see, the land and the female body mirror one another in this novel—for balearization, this form of savage capitalism, is the equivalent of being prostituted and raped, and in Lònia's case, the assailants that intend to violate Na Morgana's Cala Mura are the same men who try to beat her into submission.

This episode, which begins with Lònia's astonishment at the beauty of Cala Mura ends with her musings that "[e]nlloc ja no hi era possible la puresa total" because while swimming a plastic bag covers her breasts like a jellyfish and when she gets out of the water one of her feet is covered with tar (*Antípodes* 166).[15] Cala Mura has already been touched, prostituted, and as these reflections end, an episode of horrifying violence during which the detective protagonist is savagely assaulted is intertwined with memories of childhood abuse and memories of the beating done to her friend Joana, one of her roommates when she was a university student in Barcelona, for political reasons (170-71). By linking these three beatings together, an association between child abuse, rape, and political violence is established.

Lònia, who has discovered how the sex trafficking ring in Majorca works under the guise of a marriage and a tourist agency, has been able to infiltrate the brothel by playing the role of a prostitute, and in trying to gather evidence, she is caught in the act. As one of the men at the brothel beats and slaps her, the face she sees is that of her childhood teacher, Sister Magdalena: "i després una altra galtada, i una altra, i una altra, prou!, basta!, no me pegui més!, no me pegui més, sor Magdalena! … Em sortia sang pel nas, moc pel nas, llàgrimes pels ulls i baves per la boca … La suor freda em feia enganxar la pols de guix que saltava de la pissarra, tot mesclat, baves, suor, mosques..." (168).[16] Like in *Estudi en lila*, the

violence inflicted upon Lònia conjures up the body's memory of physical suffering, but this time in the form of a vivid flashback that intertwines the current beating with one from her childhood past, where Sister Magdalena beat her for not knowing how to solve the problems on the board. The past and present converge in the pain that her body is being made to experience. Moreover, it is significant that once again Lònia's childhood body, the body in its most vulnerable state, is reimagined in this scene.

From the description of the state of her body—blood and snot trickling down her nose, tears coming out of her eyes, and bruises on her chest and thighs—another picture of the female detective/victim, though vague, emerges. As she doubles as a female victim, the scene continues in crescendo until they have left her completely naked and are about to rape her: "M'havia obert les cames. I jo em sentia lassa, com una pepa de pedaç sense mobilitat pròpia, vexada però incapaç de fer cap esforç per tornar a ajuntar les cames; però l'altre home va dir: –I ara boixaries amb aquest pelleringo? Encara li donaries gust, betzol. I em varen tirar la roba damunt" (*Antípodes* 172).[17] Once again, a description of Lònia, even in this rudimentary form, becomes available because she is assaulted and threatened with rape. The assaulted body attains visibility in this scene because her transformation into a victim has taken place.

As one of the men grabs and pulls her by the hair, she has yet another flashback of her childhood self when a neighbor pulled her hair so that she would not leave:

> Però aquell home m'havia agafat pels cabells i me'ls volia arrabassar. Quins cabells tan fins que tens, guapa... I quan ho vaig contar a mumare, ella es va posar a cridar, porc, me sentirà aquest porc, gorà, poca-vergonya! I va armar una escandalera a tot el carrer, i la veïnada plorava i plorava, i s'enrabiava amb mi, ets una mentidera, Polita, es meu homo no t'ha estirat els cabells. Sí, que els m'ha estirats, primer no, però quan jo me'n volia anar perquè no volia que els m'embrutàs, perquè sempre duu ses mans molt brutes, llavors sí que els m'ha estirat. (172)[18]

This second flashback of her childhood body, this time a body threatened by a pedophilic neighbor, serves to continue emphasizing the loss of control over her body, her mounting vulnerability and a return to a childhood state of feeling unprotected, exposed, and threatened. In fact, she has previously described the same glee experienced by both the nun and this man upon savagely beating her when she says, "però mai no havia notat el rabejament que notava en la monja. Fins ara, que l'havia tornat

a notar en aquell home que coneixia però no recordava" (171).[19] Unlike in *Estudi en lila* where the criticisms against the Catholic Church remain somewhat veiled, here the critique is quite explicit, and a link between the institution of the Catholic Church and the present victimization of the female body is clearly established.

Furthermore, Lònia's present and past beatings also converge with a memory of the political torture suffered by her friend Joana, who was beaten for seventy-two hours by the police to make her talk: "Era com un record llunyà que no em pertanyia, com si algú m'ho hagués contat. Dos homes que apallissaven una dona perquè la volien fer parlar i ella tenia la memòria emblanquinada pel pànic" (170).[20] As we are told in *Estudi en lila*, Lònia's roommates are politically active, especially at the University of Barcelona during the Transition period in Spain, and she describes the bruise another one of her roommates, Margalida, has suffered after the police storm the University during a student gathering at which she is present. Remembering how Joana has suffered, Lònia views her actions as heroic regardless of whether her memory went blank from panic or not. Joana, therefore, represents the brutality carried out against those who oppose the political establishment during the end of the Franco regime and during the beginning of the Transition. Apart from the potential political implications, the fact that at that moment of victimization she associates in her memory the beatings she received from Sister Magdalena and the beatings her friend Joana received (from the police) may point to how the female body still suffers from similar forms of mental and physical torture.

By having the hard-boiled detective turn into the sexually assaulted victim, Oliver uses Lònia to exemplify the condition of the female victim of gender violence, and experience the powerlessness of victimization. Moreover, as we will see in her scene with Inspector Vargas (which takes place in the brothel), the author also has her female detective experience what it feels like to be forced to prostitute herself to maintain her cover as a sex worker. Though she admits that Inspector Vargas did not force her and that she did not resist, she still feels it was an assault on her body. She explains that:

> Només una cosa bona hi va haver: vaig menysprear aquell home com supòs que menyspreen els clients totes les putes del món, fins i tot les que no en són conscients. Fins i tot les que no fan l'ofici obligades com les del xalet del Terreno. I aquell sentiment de superioritat enfront del mascle que tenia damunt em va fer sentir solidària amb totes les dones que no tenien l'oportunitat d'experimentar-lo. (*Antípodes* 194)[21]

Though her friend Lida has previously emphasized that no prostitute has sex for pleasure, Lònia comes to truly grasp this during this narrative sequence. The feeling of solidarity towards other prostitutes that she describes during this episode results in her later realization that all women prostitute themselves in one way or another, regardless of whether it is the prostitution of the body or of the mind. The feelings of scorn drive Lònia to feel superior to the man that lays on top of her, taking advantage of her, and once again, though vulnerable in this scene, this vulnerability emboldens Lònia to free all the women at the brothel that have been forced into prostitution and that she now feels connected to because she has prostituted herself. This vulnerability, as we saw before, is another source of empowerment. What is more, the fact that the victimization of the female body is narrated by a female voice adds an emotional and subjective component, which distinguishes it from the more rational and objective traditional male description of victimhood. This is particularly true in Oliver's crime fiction where the victim recounts her own sexual assaults, and thus the reader experiences these assaults as they happen.

Though in *Estudi en lila* and in *Antípodes* Lònia does not blame herself for her attacks, in *El sol que fa l'ànec* she does feel responsible because she allowed herself to be followed and finds herself at the mercy of two men who beat and undress her:

> El que tenia darrere em va estirar els braços cap amunt i em va fer veure la padrina, el malparit. I el que tenia davant va estrènyer les cames i em va ficar mà a l'entrecuix, tot alhora, que els genolls em varen fer cre-crec i la cotorra em va cantar de dolor... I a l'entretant m'havia obert el zig-zag dels pantalons i me'ls baixava. Però només podia fer-ho fins a mitja cuixa. Llavors em va esqueixar les bragues. I se'm va quedar mirant el parrús, sense saber què fer. (142)[22]

Similar to the other scenes where she is attacked, the female sleuth is threatened with the act of rape, but her assailants are unable to follow through because while they try to capitalize on her momentary state of vulnerability, Lònia is able to use their perception of her vulnerability against them, taking advantage of any opportunity to fight back and prevail over her attackers.

Sally Munt has previously characterized the female detective as "a moral watchdog from the Other who paces the streets in order to expose sex/gender oppression" (197). This is the case in each of Oliver's novels that form part of the trilogy. Oliver's female detective protagonist, Lònia Guiu, is this watchdog, this advocate for female and child victims

of sexual assault and exploitation. In women's crime fiction, "Woman-as-victim are being dissected and investigated by Woman-as-hero" (202-03), for only the female detective can uncover "the artifice of gender via an investigation into patriarchal effects" (207). In Oliver's crime fiction, however, women-as-victims are investigated by the detective-as-victim. As readers of Oliver's trilogy, therefore, we are always threatened with the possibility of witnessing the rape of the detective, something unheard of in male crime fiction. Oliver forces her readers to remain alert, on edge as these violent episodes unfold because the consequences for the character, being raped, are far more sinister than what we traditionally expect from the detective genre. We can rejoice, however, because Lònia is always able to defeat her attackers. In fact, vulnerability becomes yet another weapon in her arsenal, which she utilizes to outsmart her criminal counterparts.

According to Klein, in the pairing detective/criminal "it is apparent that the detective is always male, always in the dominant position in the pairing. Consequently, we see the dilemma writers have faced in using a biological female in a definitionally male space" (173-74). As Klein sees it, the problem consists of the male space that defines the crime fiction genre, and "[t]he result has been to call into question at least one side of the phrase 'woman detective,' rendering it an oxymoron. If female, then not detective; if detective, then not really female" (174). In order to resolve the woman then not detective dilemma, in female crime fiction "women detectives emphasize their deviancy, their distance from the proper role of Woman" (177). We see this distancing and deviancy effect in Oliver's trilogy: Lònia can move through the world, role-playing, chameleon-like, switching between social and linguistic registers because she rejects the traditional roles afforded to women and intentionally positions herself as an outsider. Lònia, along with her sidekick Quim, is always on the margins, but moving back and forth between the margins and the center. For this reason, she has the capacity to infiltrate both the underbelly of the urban areas, but also the upper echelons of society.

More significantly, the character of Lònia is deviant, in terms of the tradition of the genre, because she doubles as a victim, because she experiences gender violence firsthand. Oliver confronts the traditionally masculine space of crime fiction by using the scenes where the female private eye is assaulted to guide her reader's gaze to the new representation of the female body in the genre—the victimized body. There is no pleasure in the viewing of the female body, for when Lònia's body finally becomes available, it is always in danger of being raped. As

both the detective and the reader find themselves encircled by gender violence, we realize that the female detective turned victim poses a problem for the genre because the narrative of investigation now goes hand-in-hand with a narrative of sexual victimization. Lònia, however, does not remain a victim. She fights back and is able to reestablish the power and hierarchy configuration of the detective/criminal. Though she temporarily doubles as a victim, in the end she ends up having the upper hand in these power struggles.

As Priscilla Walton and Manina Jones have previously suggested, the female detective occupies an "outsider" position, making her status that of an "outsider" (173-74). She is always on the border between spaces, legality, and social and institutional norms (191). In Oliver's crime fiction, the female detective is also always on the border between detective and victim. According to Walton and Jones, writers of female crime fiction have opened "up a site of discursive power", and as Oliver's series demonstrates, a space for self-exploration and for the reformulation of how the female body is represented and how victimhood is understood in crime fiction has been opened as well (194). I agree with Walton and Jones that through the genre's gendering a new code for crime fiction has been written, making the female writer—and I would add the female detective as well—what they term "generic outlaws" (195). In Oliver's crime fiction, empowerment springs forth from vulnerability and victimization. Employing a female detective that can take on a sexual assault victim's perspective is an empowering move on Oliver's part, a deviant move that rewrites traditional representations of victimization in crime fiction by forcing the detective to examine and recognize herself as a victim.

NOTES

[1] For more on Ofèlia Dracs' use of popular literature to attract new readers in Catalan, see Patricia Hart's "Catalan Culture and Identity". According to Isidor Cònsul, "es pot afirmar que el llançament operatiu de la literatura de gènere es produí el 1980, quan el col·lectiu Ofèlia Dracs hi apostà amb sengles reculls de narracions que eren repertoris del gèneres més populars" (31-32).

[2] The group Ofèlia Dracs published: *Deu pometes té el pomer* (1979), *Lovecraft, Lovecraft* (1981), *Negra i consentida* (1983), *Essa Efa* (1985), *Boccato di cardinali* (1985), and *Misteri de reina* (1994).

[3] Oliver arrived in Barcelona from her native Majorca in 1969, and formed part of Ofèlia Dracs, alongside her husband Jaume Fuster, also a Catalan author and

writer of detective novels. Like others of the literary generation of the 1970s in Barcelona, Oliver's avantguard and experimental phase came about when she published a series of short stories in the 1980s in conjunction with the other Ofèlia Dracs authors (see Hart and Cortés and Escandell's *Maria-Antònia Oliver: Retrats*).

[4] While she is perhaps best known for her Lònia Guiu trilogy, during her forty years as a writer and translator Oliver has published everything from television scripts to children's literature. A recurring theme in her creative endeavors has been women's issues and the socio-ecological upheavals experienced in Majorca during and after the dictatorship, both of which have acquired a special protagonism since she began her literary career in 1968 with the publication of two short stories, "El meló" and "La drecera", and in her first novel, *Cròniques d'un mig estiu*, which was published 2 years later in Barcelona by Club Editor. For more on Oliver's biography, see Cortés and Escandell's *Maria-Antònia Oliver: Retrats*.

[5] "You're a lot prettier than she describes you" (*Blue Roses for a Dead… Lady?* 33). All translations in English of Oliver's novels are taken from Kathleen McNerney's translation of the trilogy.

[6] "Oliver has never described me. Just one time she said I had dark hair and I was pretty tall" (*Blue Roses for a Dead… Lady?* 33). By knowing how she has been described in Oliver's novels, this would suggest she has either read them or has attained this knowledge in some other fashion.

[7] In male crime fiction, while we do not usually obtain a detailed physical description of the male sleuth, female characters' physical attributes do tend to be highlighted. Thompson Casado makes note of this characteristic of female crime fiction, specifically in Oliver's trilogy and in Alicia Giménez Bartlett's Petra Delicado series, where the sleuth's physical depiction is lacking (140). Thompson Casado also draws attention to the fact that we know very little about their personal lives in order to underscore their professional abilities (140).

[8] Similar to what occurs with Lònia's male detective counterparts, I would suggest that the redefinition of her function as a detective is also intimately linked with the *desencanto* phenomenon in Spanish crime fiction (see Joan Ramon Resina's "Desencanto y fórmula literaria").

[9] The response to how society has ignored victims of sexual assault is that in Oliver's crime fiction gender violence is the focus of her investigations (see Vosburg's "Genre Bending" and Godsland's *Killing Carmens*). Lònia realizes that all women, regardless of status and social class, continue to be the victims of men, especially of those in power who because of their social status and a complicit and at times corrupt police force get away with their crimes. As Nina Molinaro explains, "rape happens because the societies reflected in the novels are organized to facilitate it happening" (110).

[10] "I put up with it with it while they searched me as if I were a man. But when the fat guy's hands started playing freely with certain parts of my body, I let loose with a slap that caught him off guard ... 'Grab her arms! Grab her arms!' he screamed at the Filipino, enraged, while I kept showering his face with punches. 'We'll see how this prude's going to squirm with pleasure in a little while.' When he ripped my blouse and bra off, I took Quim's advice. ... The guy had a hand on each tit, and that left him defenseless below. Leaning against the Filipino, I penetrated his boneless parts with both knees, and my boobs were set free immediately. He curled up a couple of paces away, groaning like a stuck pig" (*Study in Lilac* 66).

[11] "My eyes started watering with pain as my hand palpated an enormous lump, like the one I'd gotten when I was seven, the day before first communion. I'd had a rock fight with Joana because she said that my mother had bribed the nuns so I could be in the first row for communion ... I saw myself in the mirror, like a dummy struck by the nostalgic memory. But it wasn't a first communion any more" (*Study in Lilac* 69).

[12] The connection between violence and memory also emphasizes violence of other types, including political, even though this political violence has been experienced by some of Lònia's friends.

[13] For more on the phenomenon of *balearización* in Majorca see Biel Horrach Estarellas' article, "La balearización: Mallorca, el laboratorio de experimentación del turismo y su manifestación en el litoral."

[14] Put differently, it is a form of savage capitalism that Oliver condemns in the series by linking balearization to crimes committed against women. Vosburg also mentions this link between male aggression against women and against nature in relation to Cristina's rape in *Antípodes* and in the short story, "On ets, Mònica?" (see pages 66-67).

[15] "Total purity wasn't possible anywhere" (*Antipodes* 144).

[16] "then another slap, and another, enough! stop! don't beat me any more, stop beating me Sister Magdalena! … Blood and snot were coming out of my nose, tears out of my eyes and spit out of my mouth … The cold sweat made the chalk that fell from the blackboard stick to me, mixed with spit, sweat, flies …" (*Antipodes* 146).

[17] "He had spread my legs. I felt helplessly exhausted, like a rag doll without its own mobility, furious but unable to make any effort to bring my legs back together; but the other man said, 'And now you want to fuck this trash? You'd still give her pleasure, you ass!' And they threw my clothes on top of me" (*Antipodes* 149-50).

[18] "But the man had grabbed my hair and was trying to pull it all out. What nice hair you have, cutie-pie… When I told Mom about the man, she started yelling, pig, animal, that pig'll hear from me, he has no shame! She raised a stink in the whole neighborhood, the neighbor was crying, she was furious at me, you're a liar Polita, my husband didn't pull your hair. Yes, he did, not at first, but when I

wanted to leave so he wouldn't get it dirty, because his hands were always dirty, he pulled it, all right" (*Antipodes* 150).

[19] "but I'd never noticed such glee as the nun had when she did it. Until now, when I saw it again in that man I knew but didn't remember" (*Antipodes* 149).

[20] "It was like a faraway memory that wasn't really mine, as if someone had told me about it. … Two men had beaten up a woman because they wanted to make her talk and her memory was blanked out by panic" (*Antipodes* 148). The 72 hours is a reference to the maximum time (3 days) that the police could keep a person in custody in Spain before being required to present him/her before a judge.

[21] "There was only one good thing: I felt such scorn for that man, just like all the whores in the world must feel about their customers, I guess, even the ones who aren't conscious of it. Even the ones who aren't forced to work like the girls in the chalet at Terreno. That feeling of superiority over the male who was on top of me made me feel solidarity with all the women who hadn't had a chance to experience it themselves" (*Antipodes* 171).

[22] "The one behind me pulled upwards on my arms and it wracked me with pain, the sonofabitch. The one in front of me tightened up on my legs and stuck his hand in my crotch at the same time. My knees went creak-creak and I was singing the blues… Meantime he'd undone my zipper and was pulling down my pants. But he could only get them down to mid-thigh. Then he ripped off my undies. And there he was staring at it, without knowing what to do" (*Blue Roses for a Dead…Lady?* 74-75).

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Creación

Ellen Mayock

Amor al subjuntivo

English—todo
impuestos,
leyes,
derechos,
instrucciones—
indicative,
declarative,
objective,
con un sabor de mandato.

El español—todo oraciones largas, párrafos sin terminar,
conversaciones sabrosas con un café o tres.
Quiero que hagamos el amor tú y yo, subjuntivo, un amor que sea lingüístico, lánguido y lenguado,
un amor que revele urgencia a la vez que tome su tiempo,
un amor que busque sonrisas en las profundidades de la pasión,
un amor subjuntivo que sepa reír y reírse de sí mismo
un amor que declare el deseo sin ruborizar
un amor verde que te quiero verde (si solo siguiera vivo el Maestro granadino)
un amor total que sepa hacerse parcial, que haga huequitos para los dos, que nos permita dudar, querer, pedir, opinar, recomendar, alegrar,

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Ellen Mayock, Ernest Williams II Professor of Spanish at Washington and Lee University, has published a book-length study on Spanish women writers, a translation of a one-act play (by Professor Chris Gavaler), titled "Man Woman Hombre Mujer," several co-edited collections, and over 35 articles and book chapters on Spanish, Latin American, and U.S.-Latin@ literature. Mayock's poems have appeared in *Letras Femeninas*, *Fronteras de lo imposible* (Casa de los Poetas), and Lost Horse Press. Her new book, *Gender Shrapnel in the Academic Workplace*, came out in 2016 with Palgrave Macmillan.

negar—todo lo que se supone
un amor subjuntivo de sujetos subjetivos.

Tormenta 'derecho'

Por estas partes la llaman una tormenta derecho
porque el viento llega derecho, en una línea directa,
derribando árboles, cables y vidas
cubriendo las calles y aceras con los escombros
naturales de los arces e innaturales de los alambres
silbando su peligro por segundos, minutos quizás,
y dejando en su estela un estancamiento temporal.

El pueblo se desespera, se ensucia, se queja ante
el poder de este derecho.
Pero también se ayuda, se da las gracias a la vida,
se empieza a reconstruir tanto los alambres
como las semillas de los arces, reconociendo
que una tormenta derecho revela rápida pero sigilosamente
los derechos que tenemos y los que nos tienen.

Flavia Company

El último cumpleaños de mamá

Suena el celular. Te despertás sobresaltado. Vas a atender, pero recordás que es la alarma. Son las siete de la mañana. Volás a Montevideo. Tu madre cumple años. Otra vez. Los cumpleaños de tu madre te parecen muy seguidos. Puteás. "No voy y listo", pensás y, entretanto, te levantás, vas al baño, prendés un pucho, el humo se te mete en el ojo, llorás. Tardás en afeitarte, te cuesta pero te gusta. Hasta ahora jamás te hiciste un corte.

Antes de salir del departamento te mirás al espejo sin intención de verte. Sólo lo justo, lo propio de un hombre. Comprobás el orden de la ropa, no de las cosas. Todavía no estás acostumbrado.

Salís a la calle. Desde hace algunas semanas el pavimento te parece una alfombra de arañas y de hormigas y de cangrejos y de bolillas. Cuando la gente te mira, pensás: "Caminen por donde yo camino y van a ver, carajo".

No llevás equipaje. Vas y volvés. "Una noche, mamá, el tiempo no me da para más". Y ella: "Ay, hija, siempre lo mismo, pero claro, yo soy lo último" –suspiro, carraspeo– "si viviera tu hermana…" –quiebre de la voz, silencio, suspiro– "pero bueno, mejor me callo, una madre tiene tantas cosas que callar, claro que vos, cómo vas a saberlo, si nunca quisiste hijos, pero tenés razón, ¿sabés?, total para qué…".

Esta vez no le compraste nada, porque esta vez es distinta y además porque nunca le gustaron tus regalos. "Para qué quiero yo otro saco, ese libro me dijeron que no es muy bueno, tengo guantes de sobra,

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qué chinelas delicadas, se van a estropear en una semana, ¿cuánto te costaron?"

"Siempre la obsesión de los precios", pensás mientras pedís al taxista que te lleve al aeropuerto y el taxista te pide que repitas el destino, sobre todo porque quiere escuchar de nuevo tu voz, no está seguro de haber oído bien. Volvés a decirle lo que ya escuchó, esta vez con hostilidad, y el hombre, que observa tus manos con perplejidad, da vuelta la cabeza para adelante y arranca. Suena de nuevo el celular. Otra alarma. Hora de tomar una pastilla. No te cuesta tragarlas sin agua. Fueron ya tantas. Perdiste la cuenta.

El tumulto del aeropuerto te relaja. Te acercás al mostrador de Aerolíneas con cautela, con una ligera taquicardia. No va a ser fácil. Así las cosas, es la primera vez que volás. Respirás hondo. Vas a intentar hacerlo todo sin hablar con nadie, o al menos eso es lo que planeaste en la primera parte de la noche de ayer, durante un largo insomnio. Te dirigís a un mostrador en el que hay una mujer. Algo más joven que vos, quizás treinta y cinco. Sacás el documento. La chica te mira, disimula darse cuenta de lo que ve y pregunta: "¿Va a despachar equipaje?". Negás con la cabeza. Te devuelve el documento junto a la tarjeta de embarque mientras te sonríe.

Una vez en el avión, llamás a tu madre. "Vamos a estar solas", te dice. "Con tu tía me enojé hace media hora y por mí que la maten, no te lo vas a creer, lo que me dijo…" La interrumpís. Ya te lo va a contar cuando llegues. Sí, sobre las once vas a estar en su casa.

Durante el vuelo intentás imaginar qué cara va a poner cuando te tenga adelante. Hace un año que no se ven. Valoraste la posibilidad de decírselo por teléfono, por carta, de mandarle un pasaje de avión para que te visitara, incluso para que te acompañara los días de hospital. Recordás muy bien la primera y única conversación sobre el tema: "Ni se te ocurra. O sos mi hija o no sos nadie".

En el aeropuerto te espera una amiga de toda la vida que sí estuvo junto a vos los días de hospitalización. Te abraza. Te dice "qué lindo estás". Fuman un cigarrillo en el auto. No se te mete el humo en el ojo, pero llorás.

Antes de tocar el timbre te acomodás la camisa adentro del pantalón, guardás los anteojos de sol, te frotás la cara con las manos. Llamás. Oís el taconeo rápido que llega desde el interior. Se abre la puerta. Tu madre te mira de arriba abajo y cierra. Oís el taconeo lento que llega desde el interior. Esperás quieto unos minutos, hasta que ya no se oye nada más. Salís de nuevo a la calle. Ahí está tu amiga, que se quedó por si acaso. Subís al auto. "Vamos", decís. "Se acabaron los cumpleaños de mamá".

Susana Martín Gijón

Por una vez

Nunca debí haberme entretenido en rematar aquella camisa. Nunca debí quedarme hablando con Jennifer. Nunca debí haber perdido la línea 38 del último turno que salía de la maquila. Al subir al autobús, más de una hora después, la noche era ya de una oscuridad densa. Como la de los ojos de aquel conductor que repararon en mí más tiempo del necesario, de una forma que me hizo estremecer.

Pero no supe verlo, como sí lo sospechó una afable señora, la última en descender, quien titubeó para pedirme que la acompañara hasta su domicilio pues no llegaría con la artrosis. Me disculpé con ella, no podía retrasar más el regreso a casa. Mi hermano me esperaba para que le preparara el tupper que tenía que llevarse a la obra. Con una extraña mirada, entre la lástima y la incomprensión, descendió los escalones del autobús para desvanecerse en la inmensa penumbra que parecía haber clausurado el mundo.

Susana Martín Gijón es autora de la serie policiaca *Más que cuerpos* compuesta hasta la fecha por las novelas *Más que cuerpos* (2013), *Desde la eternidad* (2014), *Vino y pólvora*(2016) y la novela corta *Pensión Salamanca* (2016), protagonizadas por la oficial de policía Annika Kaunda. En 2015 publicó *Náufragos*, novela corta finalista en prestigiosos certámenes como el Premio Literario Felipe Trigo o La Trama de Ediciones B. Combina su afición al *noir* con el relato, género en el que ha cosechado galardones como el del Círculo de Bellas Artes de Tenerife o del concurso de relatos para la igualdad del Ayuntamiento de Burgos. Ha participado como jurado en numerosos certámenes, entre ellos los concursos de microrrelatos "Alza tu voz contra la trata de mujeres y niñas" y "Tú también tienes algo que decir contra la violencia de género", el certamen literario para personas mayores "Experiencia y vida" o el certamen "Mujer y libros". Licenciada en Derecho con posgrados en Derecho Internacional Público y Cooperación para el Desarrollo, ejerció la labor de Directora General del Instituto de la Juventud de Extremadura y ha sido Presidenta del Comité contra el Racismo, la Xenofobia y la Intolerancia. Actualmente colabora en plataformas nacionales e internacionales como la Asociación por la Igualdad de Género en la Cultura Clásicas y Modernas y la Red de Mujeres Jóvenes Africanas y Españolas, y forma parte de la directiva de la Asociación de Escritores Extremeños.

Cuando los baches del camino me hicieron botar, comencé a imaginarlo. Cuando el vehículo se paró inesperadamente, lo presentí. Cuando se levantó del asiento, lo supe con certeza. Vino hasta mí con una sonrisa aviesa y una expresión que me inundó de desprecio. Dicen que la policía de Ciudad Juárez nunca llega a tiempo. Por una vez lo hizo. Aquella señora les había proporcionado los datos del autobús e insistido para que lo siguieran. No me dio tiempo a escapar. Encontraron entre mis ropas la afilada tijera, aún cubierta de sangre, que le había clavado en el cuello con todas mis fuerzas. No estaba dispuesta a desaparecer como mi madre.

Carlota Caulfield

Moradas

Celui qui n'accepte pas ce monde n'y bâtit pas de maison.
Henri Michaux

1.
Aquel que no acepta este mundo no construye aquí casa alguna. Eco del mundo. Las casas están ocupadas por familiares y extraños. De la primera fui expulsada por mí misma. Ventana abierta. La historia de una vida. Ir de casa en casa.

2.
Mis casas de la infancia fueron hoteles, una casa alta de pasillos vacíos, una casa estrecha de ventanas altas, un chalet modernista de varias habitaciones. Después, la casa de las casas. Primera impresión: un jardín cubierto de enredaderas y estatuas. Segunda impresión: --Hemos entrado en nuestra casa. Tercera impresión: una luz contagiosa. La tinta invisible fue aquella voz adolescente atrapada entre las varias capas de pintura.

3.
Si fuera a escribir un manual sobre cómo construir una casa ideal, escribiría primero la palabra casa y después la tacharía con trazos rápidos. A lápiz. O mejor sería desaparecerla poco a poco con la ayuda de una pluma fuente: tinta azul. Así el azul podría volverse no sólo nostalgia en otra lengua, sino las tantas ventanas de aquella casa de mi adolescencia y juventud. O quizás mejor sería tachar la palabra casa mientras pienso en mi última casa, bella y decrépita.

Entre los libros más recientes de Carlota Caulfield se encuentran *JJ/CC* (2014) y *ABCD ario* (2015). Sus poemas han sido publicados en *Haight Ashbury Literary Journal, Michigan Quarterly Review, Poetry San Francisco, Visions, Beacons, The Texas Review, Barcarola, Nómada, Cuadernos del Matemático, Textos, Aleph, Baquiana, Tsé-Tsé, Revista Litoral y Canibaal, entre otras.* Es editora de la antología *No soy tu musa. Poetas irlandesas contemporáneas* y co-editora de *Barcelona: Visual Culture, Space and Power*. Caulfield es directora del Latin American Studies Program y co-directora del MFA Low Residency in Translation del Mills College, California.

4.
Desnudo la casa. Me lleva siete meses despojarla de sus tantos disfraces. Mi casa, aquella morada de ventanales, terrazas y jardines de yerbas secas, era una casa rara. Hermosa, sin lugar a dudas. Llena de recuerdos, nadie lo niega. Fría e inhóspita en su reflejo. Los que llegaban no creían en su ser despótico. Era generosa con todos. Hasta con aquellos extraños vueltos invitados por azar. Fronteras desplazadas. Traspasar su enorme puerta de roble era perderse en un universo sin orden.

5.
Mis manos temerosas en su espacio. Multiplico por aposentos, cuartos, estancias, salas, habitaciones. Y ahí estaban los ojos bien abiertos --cámaras fotográficas, más veloces que nunca. Y siempre frío. Un frío insoportable, vientecillo mortal de día tras día tras día. Casa inhóspita.

6.
Siete meses para despojarla de libros, pinturas, instrumentos musicales, muebles, objetos sin nombre, y lo más difícil, las raíces. Calentarlas en la boca. Traer a cuento cuentos, rumores y mentiras. Dirigirlas en palabras cortadas. No ordenarles sensatez, pedirles tacto. Todo lo necesario para la idónea medida del callar-se. Así es. ¿A quién darle la palabra?

7.
Con agudeza destrabo la lengua. Enhebro casa con vivienda con domicilio con residencia con mansión y con morada. Moradas. El verbo morar gusta de su complementario avecindarse, y lo ignoro porque acaricia la lengua. Es mordiente. ¿No es acaso permanecer la peor mordedura del ser que no habita en ninguna parte?

8.
Y así la casa. Vacía. Picada de huecos. Roída de ratas. Carcomida de vieja. Triturada por el abandono. Puro ripio. Dejé los techos con humedades. Las paredes, llenas de emplastos. Las maderas, quejándose de las ausencias, del destierro de una biblioteca en cajas. Acorralada –-Toda la fragancia del papel. Disonancia.