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Introduction

Throughout an extensive writing career, Mario Vargas Llosa has been openly concerned with the creative process. In interviews, lectures, essays, drama, and fiction, he has returned—almost obsessively—to his concept of the author as the protestor of adverse socio-political realities. The novelist describes the reading and writing of literature as inherently rebellious, an objection to the existing world. In his book-length investigation of the literature of Gabriel García Márquez, Vargas Llosa explains:

Escribir novelas es un acto de rebelión contra la realidad, contra Dios, contra la creación de Dios que es la realidad. Es una tentativa de corrección, cambio o abolición de la realidad real, de su sustitución por la realidad ficticia que el novelista crea. [..] La raíz de [la] vocación [del autor] es un sentimiento de insatisfacción contra la vida; cada novela es un deicidio secreto, un asesinato simbólico de la realidad. (Deicidio 85)

Dissatisfied with the conditions that surround him, Vargas Llosa sets himself at variance with the realities he modifies in fiction. The author attributes the themes of his literature to personal demons which he defines as "obsesiones negativas—de carácter individual, social y cultural—que enemistan a un hombre con la realidad que vive, de tal manera y a tal extremo que hacen brotar en él la ambición de contradecir dicha realidad re haciéndola verbalmente" ("Regreso" 179). Vargas Llosa believes that the writer's vocation is one of constant opposition to societal failures; the result of these fictional protests is the modification of a national conscientiousness that is intended to produce a critical attitude in its constituents.

In his earlier years as a novelist, Vargas Llosa limited his fictions to contemporary Peruvian contexts and concerns. In 1981, the writer left the Peruvian scene for the first time in the publication of La guerra del fin del mundo—a fictional re-writing of Euclides da Cunha's Os sertões (1902) that re-tells the Brazilian backlands rebellion in Canudos.1 Vargas Llosa comments on the creative demons that forced his literature out of the contemporary Peruvian locale, as he explains:

[... At] the time I read Os sertões some specific problems pertaining to Latin America were bothering me very much. One was: How is it possible for the intellectual in Latin America—

1 Following the publication of La guerra del fin del mundo, Vargas Llosa confessed: "If you asked me fifteen years ago whether I would ever write a book with these characteristics—not situated in Peru and not contemporary—my answer would probably have been 'No, never.' I always write books about Peru and all of them have been contemporary" (Writer's Reality 123).
people of ideas, cultured people, people who are closely informed about what is going on in our counties, people who generally have traveled a great deal and for that reason can compare what happened in one country with what happened in another and can have a general outlook or perspective on Latin American problems—to have been responsible so many times for the conflicts and troubles Latin America has faced in its history? (Writer's Reality 124-25)

Following the publication of La guerra del fin del mundo, Vargas Llosa returned to Peruvian issues throughout nearly two decades of prolific writing. In La fiesta del Chivo (2000), the novelist produced a second non-Peruvian historical novel that addresses the Trujillo Era (1930-61) in the Dominican Republic. Both of these locational misfits within Vargas Llosa’s traditional Peruvian canon evidence his continuing preoccupation with the Latin American intellectual and recapitulate his concept of the power of the Word in restoring cultural memory and protesting socio-political abuses.

Throughout La fiesta del Chivo, Vargas Llosa produces echoes of a colonial past that extend the Trujillo Era to a general discussion on authoritarian misuses of power that have existed in multiple forms and faces in Latin America since 1492. The writer claims that the creation of his fictions is a subconscious process; however, Vargas Llosa is likewise meticulous in the incorporation of historical “fact” into his fictional representation of the Dominican Republic. Furthermore, it seems that Vargas Llosa characterizes his central protagonist—Urania Cabral—according to the post-colonial theories of the French psychiatrist turned Algerian revolutionary Frantz Fanon. The theorist’s most celebrated work, The Wretched of the Earth, is seminal in post-colonial thought, and the fact that Jean-Paul Sartre—a principle influence for Vargas Llosa—wrote its controversial preface makes it probable that the Peruvian read the work with some interest. Indeed, the colonial overtones of the novel and the close relationship between Fanon’s theories and Vargas Llosa’s protagonist cannot be ignored. Throughout the narrative, Vargas Llosa creates in Urania a protagonist-Storyteller that experiences Fanon’s three phases of the production of national culture. In order to extend his concern with the role of the intellectual to a Latin American—and perhaps an Inter-American—audience, Vargas Llosa seems to incorporate the theories of the post-colonial theorist Fanon into the characterization of his principle protagonist Urania Cabral.

2 The work was originally published in French under the title Les damnés de la terre (1961). Throughout this investigation, both citations and references to the title of the book will be provided from the English translation The Wretched of the Earth (1964).

3 The publication of The Wretched of the Earth corresponds chronologically to Vargas Llosa’s denunciation of Jean-Paul Sartre—his former literary master—for his preference of violent revolution over the power of literature as protest. Vargas Llosa recalls an interview in the mid.1960s in which Sartre declares his new stance on literature. “Esta entrevista tuvo para mí un efecto mortal en mi relación con él. No recuerdo exactamente las palabras que empleó, pero decía ‘comprendo que los escritores africanos renuncien a su vocación literaria para hacer la revolución’ (‘El intelectual’ 520). The Peruvian continues: “Entonces yo, escritor de un país sub desarrollado donde todo estaba por hacerse, ¿debía renunciar a la literatura o debía renunciar a Sartre? […] Renuncié a Jean Paul Sartre casi inmediatamente. Fue para mí una gran decepción” (627). Vargas Llosa’s separation from Sartre forced the novelist to vindicate his own position on literature, resulting in the furthering of his concept of writing as protest, or, as defined in his 1967 acceptance speech of the Rómulo Gallegos Prize, a literature of tire.
Assimilation Phase

Urania Cabral is a purely fictional character who returns to the Dominican Republic after living in the United States for thirty-five years. As she recounts the details of her past, the protagonist discloses her rape at the hands of the dictator Rafael Trujillo. Although her oral account is personal in nature, it also exposes the brutalities of the Trujillo Era in a more generalized context. Vargas Llosa develops the historical events of the novel with relative accuracy; however, his purpose is not the exact mimesis of the past. The author comments on the Trujillo Era—through his protagonist—in order to protest in fiction the past and present socio-political realities of Latin America. Through the recasting of her personal experiences, Urania modifies the existing perceptions of her father, her relatives, the Dominican Republic, and, of course, Vargas Llosa’s readership. She does not change the historical realities that she describes, and, certainly, her audiences are for the most part aware of the horrors of the regime. Urania’s intention, then, which also seems to be that of her author for his readers, is to awaken the critical attitude that once existed on the island. She is concerned that the Republic has forgotten the brutalities of its past, as she most certainly has not. Therefore, as she speaks, Urania assumes the role of the Vargasllosan Storyteller, that of an authoritative first-person narrator that arouses the collective, cultural memory of her listeners. Vargas Llosa extends the oral account of his protagonist beyond one Caribbean nation as he creates echoes of a broader account of colonization on the island that becomes emblematic of socio-political abuses from a myriad of Latin American strongmen. Through Urania’s Word, Vargas Llosa comments on the potential of literature to recover, restructure, and remonstrate the past from a personal and contemporary perspective.

In The Wretched of the Earth, Frantz Fanon is also concerned with the role of the intellectual—referred to as the “native intellectual” throughout the work—in the formation of national cultures and identities. Fanon states that the function of the native intellectual in the struggle for liberation is secondary to violence. Nonetheless, the theorist recognizes the need for a national culture, as he maintains that it places the responsibility of the nation-building project into the hands of the once-colonized masses. In The Wretched of the Earth, Fanon discusses three phases that recently-liberated nations experience as these attempt to create an autonomous national culture. In La fiesta del Chivo, Urania experiences these phases in her search for a voice that is independent of her rape and the dictator Trujillo. The first is the assimilation phase in which Fanon states that “[…] the native intellectual gives proof

4 The use of the word “rape” in the context of this novel is problematic, since the dictator, because of his deteriorating health, cannot complete the sexual act. Unable to maintain sexual arousal, he robs Urania’s virginity with his hand. Although Vargas Llosa emphasizes Trujillo’s sexual impotence he never denies the impact of this abuse on his female protagonist who sees herself as a target of rape without making such a distinction. As such, I also use the term “rape” throughout this investigation to refer to Urania’s sexual assault by the dictator Rafael Trujillo.
that he has assimilated the culture of the occupying power. [...] This is the period of unqualified assimilation" (222). Fanon explains that this period corresponds to the desire of the native intellectual to become human as s/he copies the cultural patterns of his/her former master. In the case of Urania, she does not initially intend to become a representative voice for the national culture of the Dominican Republic. However, as the protagonist conforms to her status as a victim of rape, she eventually moves from this phase of assimilation to an independent expression that reshapes the perspectives of her listeners. In the verbalization of her most pained memories, Urania also reveals an attempted assimilation to the culture of the United States that seems to indicate an Inter-American critique of semi-colonial powers in the present.

Although Vargas Llosa addresses the political abuses of the Trujillo regime, the novelist seems concerned with United States capitalism as a neo-colonial power in Latin America. In The Wretched of the Earth, Fanon also expresses his preoccupations with the economic and militaristic power of the United States in the world scene. The theorist summarizes: "Two centuries ago, a former European colony decided to catch up with Europe. It succeed so well that the United States of America became a monster, in which the taints, the sickness, and the inhumanity of Europe have grown to appalling dimensions" (313). Vargas Llosa’s concern with the United States in the novel is not as explicit; nonetheless, Urania’s assimilation to the culture of the northern neighbor implies its colonial status.

From the perspective of her relatives in the Dominican Republic, Urania has obtained the “American dream.” She receives a law degree from Harvard and maintains a successful legal practice in New York. However, these successes are mere indications of the victim’s most personal failures. Despite the outward achievements of the protagonist, Urania cannot escape her past and therefore remains the colonized victim of 1961. The victim finds herself in a double-bind: she is trapped between the superficial life that she leads in the United States and the rape that defines her past and present realities. Urania thus consumes the culture that surrounds her in an attempt to “become human” once more. In other words, the protagonist-victim assimilates to the culture of the United States and even to the image of the dictator in search of an identity that controls rather than conforms to the demands of colonial—and in her case patriarchal—powers.  

5 Throughout The Wretched of the Earth, Fanon emphasizes the capitalist colonization of Latin America. In one instance, the theorist notes, “The banking magnates, the technocrats, and the big businessmen of the United States have only to step onto a plane and they are wafted into subtropical climes, there for a space of a week or ten days to luxuriate in the delicious depravities which their ‘reserves’ hold for them” (154). Fanon’s comments mirror the juxtaposition of Urania’s recurring statement: “Mej cuatro cosas en la maleta y tome el avión” (211) and the narrator’s flippant conclusion regarding her return to the Republic: “Te arrepentirás, Urania. Desperdiciar una semana de vacaciones” (12), as if her search for identity were nothing more than a joyride to the Caribbean islands.

6 Vargas Llosa emphasizes the relationship between Senator Cabral and Rafael Trujillo (Padre de la Nueva Patria) as the dual patriarchs to Urania’s violated personas. She returns to the Dominican Republic to confront both her father and her fatherland. Furthermore, the last name “Cabra”-based in the Spanish cabra—indicates that Urania is both the daughter of the Senator and of the “Chivo” that raped her.
Urania first assimilates to her new culture in the United States through excessive studies. The narrator clarifies: "No era el deseo de aprender, de triunfar, lo que te confinaba en la biblioteca, sino de marearte, intoxicarte, perderte en esas materias—ciencias o letras, daba igual—para no pensar, para ahuyentar los recuerdos dominicanos" (215). Urania finds herself in a situation that differs from the colonial predicament of the Algerian nations that Fanon describes. The initial stages of Urania's assimilation demonstrate less assimilation and more conformation to the powers that confuse her character. At this point in the narrative, Urania has not become the autonomous Storyteller that she is at the end of the novel. Therefore, the protagonist responds in a manner that is similar to Fanon's notion of the native intellectual that still desires liberation. Fanon explains: "The native is an oppressed person whose permanent dream is to become the persecutor" (53; emphasis mine). Urania returns to condemn her father and therefore assumes the role of the "persecutor" in order to take the place of those authoritative figures that continue to torment her memories.

Throughout Urania's confrontation with Senator Cabral, Vargas Llosa indicates an inversion of roles between father and daughter. Before Urania arrives at her former home, she anticipates and even rehearses the imminent dialogue. "Hola, papá. Cómo estás papá," the protagonist practices. "¿No me reconoces? Soy Urania. Claro, que me vas a reconocer. La última vez yo tenia catorce y ahora cuarenta y nueve. [. . .] ¿No era esa la edad que tú tenías, el día que me fui a Adrian? Sí, cuarenta y ocho o cuarenta y nueve" (18). Apart from the fact that Urania is the same age as her father at the time of her departure from the Dominican Republic, she also assumes the right to his authoritative voice, as the once-influential politician is now mute. Vargas Llosa continues to develop an inversion between the father and his daughter in the scene where Urania feeds the former Senator. "Muy bien, muy bien," the attendant nurse notes, "se comió su fruta como niño bueno" (139). Throughout the attempted conversation, Urania acts in a position of dominance and the Senator becomes the submissive child. Vargas Llosa establishes this inversion in order that his protagonist can express her thoughts outside of the father's control.

As Urania presents the callous histories—both national and personal—in which the former Senator's role is central, her father's eyes petition: "[. . .] cállate, deja de escarbar esas llagas, de resucitar esos recuerdos" (149). Throughout the narrative, various and varied authoritative voices will demand the same. However, as the narrator notes: "No tiene la menor intención de hacerlo. ¿No has venido para eso a este país al que habías jurado no volver?" Urania continues: "Sí, papá, a eso debo haber venido [. . .]. A hacerte pasar un mal rato." Throughout this stage of
assimilation, Urania assumes the role of her violators. The inversion that Vargas Llosa develops provides the protagonist the confidence that she needs in order to shape her future oral narrative. As Urania progresses through the subsequent phases that Fanon outlines, the victim moves toward the personal expression—ultimately turned national—that she has desired for more than three-and-a-half decades.

**Pre-Combat Phase**

Fanon identifies the second phase—that of pre-combat—as a precursor to an autonomous national culture and voice. “In the second phase,” the theorist explains, “we find that the native is disturbed; he decides to remember what he is” (222). For years, Urania attempts to repress her past through her assimilation to the culture of the United States. However, the memories of her rape require the protagonist-victim to confront the past that she suppresses. From the opening word of the novel—"Urania"—the protagonist expresses an ontological preoccupation that she attempts to assuage in her historical investigations. In accordance with the philosophies of Fanon, Urania does not search out her personal past. Rather, the disturbed victim embarks on an incessant investigation for the national character of the Dominican Republic. Throughout her readings—and even in her return to the island that hosted her rape—Urania feels detached from the people that were once her own. As Fanon states: "But since the native is not a part of his people, since he only has exterior relations with his people, he is content to recall their life only" (emphasis mine). Urania is not prepared to confront her own past directly—as evidenced by her refusal to reply to the numerous letters received from her relatives—and thus she searches for answers in traditional histories of the Republic. Moreover, as Fanon indicates: “This period of creative work approximately corresponds to that immersion which we have just described.” Although Urania is unwilling to return to the true source of her frustration—the rape that she suffered years before—her internal demons are the impetus to her future discourse. Her readings prepare the developing Storyteller for the oral testimony that she eventually offers. In the pre-combat phase, the protagonist discovers the preoccupations that likewise torment Vargas Llosa. These same concerns comprise a significant portion of Fanon’s theories on revolution. As Urania becomes an expert in the Dominican past, she cannot resolve her concern that the intellectuals of the Republic support the cause of the dictator and the abuses of his regime.

Once Urania arrives at her home in the Dominican Republic, she realizes that her memories do not resemble the realities before her. "¿Eran los mismos muebles?" the narrator questions. "No reconocia nada" (69). She remains downstairs for some
time before she ascends to the bedroom of her father. As Urania enters the room she realizes her father’s deteriorated health and once more questions the purpose of her return. “Soy Urania,” the protagonist declares. “¿Te acuerdas de que tienes una hija? […] Yo tampoco te reconozco. […] No sé por qué he venido, qué hago aquí” (71). As Urania surveys the room, she notices that the bookshelves are empty and comments: “La casa estaba llena de libros. ¿Qué fue de ellos? Ya no puedes leer, claro.” The victim reveals her obsession with historical accounts of the Trujillo Era in her commentary on her own reading habits. Urania contrasts the absence of texts in the house with her apartment in New York: “Mi departamento de Manhattan está lleno de libros […]. Testimonios, ensayos, memorias, muchos libros de historia. ¿Adivinas de qué época? La Era de Trujillo, cuál iba a ser. Lo más importante que nos pasó en quinientos años. […] En esos treinta y un años cristalizó todo lo malo que arrastrábamos, desde la conquista” (72; emphasis mine). Urania indicates in her declaration that the Dominican past that she describes has colonial implications. The protagonist likewise contrasts her book-learned knowledge with previous demands for the maintenance of her silence as a sacrificial victim of the Republic. Urania declares to her father: “Me he convertido en una experta en Trujillo.” Sabine Köllmann notes that Urania’s “[…] obsessive search for the truth reflects Vargas Llosa’s recent statement that his ‘invincible repugnance’ for totalitarian regimes has turned him against his will into a specialist in dictatorships” (298). Although reading does not provide answers to the protagonist’s personal dilemmas, these studies are indicative of the pre-combat phase that prepares her to recast the past from her own perspective. Urania is no longer the innocent victim of 1961, but rather an educated woman with an extensive understanding of the regime that left her violated.

Urania returns to her father in an attempt to confront him with the information that she has consumed in her obsessive studies. Her words initiate the transition from historical account to personal narrative. Urania’s subconscious preoccupations surface in her personal pre-combat phase and these become the motivation for the future themes of her oral discourse. Fanon confirms: “Past happenings of the byegone days of his childhood (sic) will be brought up out of the depths of his memory; old legends will be reinterpreted in the light of a borrowed estheticism and of a conception of the world which was discovered under other skies” (222). Through the words of Urania, Vargas Llosa reveals the internal concerns, or subconscious demons, that drive him to write the narrative. Both the protagonist and the author are troubled with the role of the intellectual in the reparation of socio-political failures. More particularly, Urania comments on the “intellectual laziness” that Fanon describes in his discussion of comparable circumstances. Urania—in accordance with the theories of Fanon—returns to certain incidents of her childhood that serve as
representative examples of her concern with the (in)ability of the intellectual to counteract the abuses of the dictator through written and spoken discourse.

Urania articulates her preoccupation with the Latin American intellectual as she recalls an occurrence at the home of her neighbor Don Froilán Arala. Froilán is a former political advisor to Trujillo and his wife is one of the few female figures in Urania’s life. As the innocent protagonist visits the wife of Froilán—whose first name she fails to recall—the dictator arrives at the door. Urania is promptly dismissed and she returns home to recount the scene to her father. The encounter alarms the Senator and he attempts to conceal the true significance of the dictator’s visit to the neighbor’s home. The narrator later reveals that Trujillo repeatedly sends Froilán on distant political assignments in order to extend sexual adventures with the advisor’s exceptionally beautiful wife. “Hijita, hay cosas que no puedes saber,” Urania’s father insists, “que todavía no comprendes. Yo estoy para saberlas por ti, para protegerte. Eres lo que más quiero en el mundo. No me preguntes por qué, pero tienes que olvidarlo” (77). The young Urania promises to conform to her father’s mandates. More than thirty-five years later, however, she cannot maintain her silence. “Así era de inocente,” the protagonist recalls, as later in her life, “[. . .] descubrí por qué visitaba el Generalísimo a sus señoras.” While Urania has learned much about the Dominican Republic in her studies, the protagonist—similar to Vargas Llosa and Fanon in their own socio-political circumstances—remains perplexed by the compliance of the intellectuals in the Trujillo regime to the continuous abuses of the dictator.

Urania indicates her contempt for Trujillo’s extreme sexual addiction as she describes her terse encounter with the dictator in the home of Don Froilán. Furthermore, she cites this incident as a representative example of her concern with the unresponsiveness of some Dominican intellectuals to political misuses of power. Urania describes a feast conducted in honor of Trujillo, as heard from the mouth of her father’s political nemesis, the former Senator Henry Chirinos. During the dinner conversation, the dictator attributes his political successes to his sexual conquests. “Yo he sido un hombre muy amado,” the tyrant boasts. “Un hombre que ha estrechado en sus brazos a las mujeres más bellas de este país. Ellas me han dado la energía para enderezarlo.” Trujillo concludes: “¿Saben ustedes cuál ha sido la mejor, de todas las hembras que me tiré? [. . .] ¡La mujer de Froilán!” (81). While Urania expresses her displeasure at the dictator’s declaration, the protagonist is more disturbed by the reaction of Don Froilán to the comment. Using the words of Chirinos, Urania states: “Froilán había heroicamente sonreído, reído, festejado con los otros, la humorada del Jefe.” Apart from the obvious distaste of the exchange,
Urania cites the incident as an individual example of more personal concerns: (1) her frustration with the conformity of Dominican thinkers to the extraordinary demands of Trujillo and (2) her own father’s involvement in her rape. Urania’s expression echoes Vargas Llosa’s continuing obsession with role of the Latin American intellectual before the excesses of authoritarian regimes. Furthermore, this scene indicates one of the reasons that Vargas Llosa might have been attracted to Fanon’s text, as the Frenchman dedicates a large portion of The Wretched of the Earth to questions analogous to those that Urania poses in the novel.

Throughout Urania’s conversation with her father, she is frustrated that the former Senator is unable to converse with her. She repeatedly poses rhetorical questions that reveal her inner preoccupations; these subconscious expressions indicate her desire for concrete answers that neither her mute father nor indiscriminate historical readings can provide. “¿Cómo era posible, papá?” the protagonist questions. “Que un hombre como Froilán Arala, culto, preparado, inteligente, llegara a aceptar eso. ¿Qué les hacía? ¿Qué les daba, para convertir a don Froilán, a Chirino, a Manuel Alfonso, a ti, a todos sus brazos derechos e izquierdos, en trapos sucios?” (82). The narrator expounds upon this recurrent concern of Vargas Llosa through this description of the protagonist:

Lo que nunca has llegado a entender es que los dominicanos más preparados, las cabezas del país, abogados, médicos, ingenieros, salidos a veces de muy buenas universidades de Estados Unidos o de Europa, sensibles, cultos, con experiencia, lecturas, ideas, presumiblemente un desarrollo sentido del ridículo, sentimientos, pruritos, aceptaran ser vejados de manera tan salvaje (lo fueron todos alguna vez) como esa noche, en Barahona, don Froilán Arala.

Vargas Llosa reiterates his obsession with the Latin American intellectual through Urania’s account of Don Froilán. The narrator indicates that Urania has learned much through her studies. She has even come to terms with the fact that the uneducated were manipulated into their blind devotion to the dictator. However, she cannot accept the commitment of the more prepared, educated members of the Republic to the regime that unabashedly abused them time and again. Both the protagonist and her author are avid readers of historical texts; however, these are not sufficient to satisfy their preoccupations. Urania therefore transitions once more—after a brief relapse to be discussed in the next section of this investigation—to the final phase of Fanon’s theories on national culture: the creation of a literature of protest.
Fighting Phase

As Urania concludes her monologue with her voiceless father, the protagonist's cousin Lucinda arrives at the home to care for her uncle. With reason, Lucinda is outwardly surprised to see her cousin in the Dominican Republic after a thirty-five-year absence. Urania accepts a dinner invitation at the home of her aunt Adelina; however, she also expresses doubts as to the prospect of a positive encounter. "¿Qué haces aquí?" the narrator continues to question. "¿Qué has venido a buscar en Santo Domingo, en esta casa? ¿Irás a cenar con Lucinda, Manolita y la tía Adelina? La pobre será un fósil, igual que tu padre" (227). Urania assumes that her visit to the home of her relatives will resemble the failed conversation that she concludes with her father moments before. Following Urania's disappointment with the Senator, she reverts to the internal suppression of her past experiences that has been characteristic of her life since leaving the Dominican Republic as an adolescent. As Fanon indicates: "Thus, if a local defeat is inflicted, he may well be drawn back into doubt, and from thence to despair" (50). Urania repeatedly returns to the "doubt" and "despair" of her earlier years. Similar to the emerging nations that Fanon describes, psychological trauma remains as her companion. Urania's new listeners, however, initiate a subtle transformation in the protagonist from her former status as the chronic slave of her past to an empowered role as Storyteller, or one that dictates her own future. Urania's personal narrative begins as the verbal indictment of the living symbol of her rape—Senator Cabral. In the home of her aunt Adelina, however, her words focus on a new audience—comprised entirely of women—that is symbolic of a return to her own people. Fanon comments: "While at the beginning the native intellectual used to produce his work to be read exclusively by the oppressor, whether with the intention of charming him or of denouncing him through ethnic or subjectivist means, now the native writer progressively takes on the habit of addressing his own people" (240; emphasis mine). During Urania's conversation with her father, she intends to confront him in historical terms. Despite the disappointment that she experiences at the conclusion of her monologue, Urania makes the crucial conversion from historical fact to personal and somewhat fictive narrative. In the presence of her female relatives, Urania protests the male-dominated Dominican past through her personal perspective that is to represent in the broader scope of the novel the collective memories of the Republic.

Both Fanon and Vargas Llosa are concerned with the position and importance of the woman in authoritarian regimes. Nigel C. Gibson indicates that in Fanon's writings about women "[...] we get the clearest idea of a subaltern speaking and acting without precedent, through no institution and with no help from outside" (138). Vargas Llosa is also interested in the empowerment of the woman as he states: "Urania para mí es un personaje muy conmovedor. [...] La dictadura fue particularmente cruel con la mujer. Como todas las dictaduras latinoamericanas fue un contenedor machista; el machismo es un fenómeno latinoamericano" (qtd in Luna Escudero Alie). Urania serves as a representative character that both demonstrates the woman as an individual "objeto vulnerable a los peores atropellos," and demonstrates a feminized Latin American image of abuse.
Only in the fighting stage does Urania recognize—at least in part—the greater purpose of her storytelling. She condemns the complacent intellectuals that, according to the protagonist, support the dictator in their impassiveness. Fanon comments:

Instead of according the people’s lethargy an honored place in his esteem, he turns himself into an awakener of the people; hence comes a fighting literature, a revolutionary literature, and a national literature. During this phase a great many men and women who up till then would never have thought of producing a literary work, now that they find themselves in exceptional circumstances—in prison, with the Maquis, or on the eve of their execution—feel the need to speak to their nation, to compose the sentence which expresses the heart of the people, and to become the mouthpiece of a new reality in action. (223)

In the presence of her relatives, Urania does not face the same intense circumstances that Fanon mentions in the previous citation. Nonetheless, she cannot remain silent in the face of these women that misrepresent her most pained realities. She becomes another in an extensive line of Vargasllosan Storytellers that guard the collective memory of the people through oral protests.

At the home of her aunt Adelina, Urania senses that her relatives desire an explanation for her prolonged absence. After the expected pleasantries, the discussion moves toward Urania’s guarded secret. She is notably uncomfortable and even questions to herself: “¿Ha pasado ya el tiempo prudente de sobremesa para despedirse?” The narrator continues: “Urania no se ha sentido cómoda en toda la noche. Más bien tensa, esperando una agresión” (296; emphasis mine). Fanon describes the colonized native in a similar manner: “The native’s muscles are always tensed. You can’t say that he is terrorized, or even apprehensive. He is in fact ready at a moment’s notice to exchange the role of the quarry for that of the hunter” (53; emphasis mine). Urania does not intend to reveal her past to her relatives. However, when Lucinda comments, “Algun bien resultó para ti, Uranita. No estarías donde estás, si no. En cambio, para nosotros, fue el desastre” (286), Urania responds in a manner that is characteristic of Fanon’s descriptions. Given the fact that Urania has endured the memories of her past alone, the cousin’s misrepresentation of that history produces the forceful reaction that the narrator and Fanon propose. As aunt Adelina questions, “Ahora, que ha pasado tanto tiempo, ¿se puede saber por qué, muchacha?” the protagonist’s answer is pointed and confident: “Porque no era tan buen padre como crees, tía Adelina” (299). In her response, Urania gains the strength and determination that have long escaped her. Her subsequent explanation becomes an oral testimony that challenges the authoritative powers that once demanded her silence.
As Urania recounts the abuses that she has endured, both she and her relatives are outwardly bothered. At one point in the dialogue, Manola invites: “Si hablar de esa historia te ofusca, no lo hagas, prima” (372). Urania replies: “Me molesta, me da vómitos [. . .]. Me llena de odio y de asco. Nunca hablé de esto con nadie. Quizás me haga bien sacármelo de encima, de una vez. Y con quién mejor que con la familia.” Urania’s need to share the past with her relatives once again associates her actions with the post-colonial theories of Fanon. He explains:

Because he feels he is becoming estranged, that is to say because he feels that he is the living haunt of contradictions which run the risk of becoming insurmountable, the native tears himself away from the swamp that may suck him down and accepts everything, decides to take all for granted and confirms everything even though he may lose body and soul. The native finds that he is expected to answer for everything, and to all comers. (218)

Certainly, Urania’s thirty-five-year estrangement in the United States is replete with the haunting contradictions that Fanon describes. As Urania’s personal understanding of her past contrasts with the incomplete version of her relatives, she recognizes the need to provide answers for herself and her audience.

In a previous conversation, Urania attempts to conceal her true situation as she informs her cousin Lucinda that her life in the United States has been ideal. She even invents the story of a secret lover to satisfy Lucinda’s demand for details with regard to her love life, which, in reality, is non-existent. Urania reveals in the conclusion of the novel that her successes are in fact the evidence of her most personal failures. One might read Urania’s achievements in her studies and legal practice as a triumph over the abuses of her past. However, the narrative reveals the aloneness that Urania feels in these accomplishments. Urania admits to Lucinda:

Te mentí, no tengo ningún amante, prima [. . .]. No lo he tenido nunca, ni lo tendré. [. . .] Mi único hombre fue Trujillo. [. . .] He estudiado, trabajo, me gano bien la vida, verdad. Pero, estoy vacía y llena de miedo, todavía. [. . .] Yo las envidio a ustedes, más bien. Sí, sí, ya sé, tienen problemas, apuros, decepciones. Pero, también, una familia, una pareja, hijos, parientes, un país. Esas cosas llenan la vida. A mí, papá y Su Excelencia me volvieron un desierto. (564)

Urania returns to the Dominican Republic in order to recover and overcome her personal demons. However, she also returns unknowingly to re-establish an important relationship with the family that she has lived without throughout her life. As Urania converses with her relatives, she confronts her imminent departure to the United States, which, at this point in the narrative, still signifies a return to her previous condition of solitude. Similar to the theories of Fanon, Urania recognizes the insurmountable contradictions of her past and present realities, and decides to risk all in revealing her most personal secrets.
As a characterization of Vargas Llosa's own creative practices, Urania's testimony is an expression of dissent that does more than reveal her own experiences; it challenges the previous perspectives of her relatives. Urania's oral protest is most troublesome to her aunt Adelina—as she refuses to believe that her brother Agustín Cabral could offer his daughter's innocence to Trujillo's sexual appetites. As Urania reveals the grotesque details of her rape, the aunt exclaims: "¡Basta, basta! Para qué más, hija. Ven acá, persignémonos, recemos. [. . .] ¿Crees en Dios? ¿En Nuestra Señora de la Altagracia, patrona de los dominicanos? Tu madre era tan devota de ella, Uranita" (559). As aunt Adelina recalls the most sacred likenesses available—deity and Urania's deceased mother—she pleads for Urania to abandon her storytelling. However, the victim demonstrates no intention to take back her words. "Son palabras horribles, ya lo sé, cosas que no debería decir, tía Adelina," the protagonist comments. "No lo hago nunca, te lo juro. ¿No querías saber por qué dije esas cosas sobre papá? ¿Por qué, cuando me fui a Adrian, no quise saber más de la familia? Ya sabes por qué" (560). Urania understands that her alternative depiction of the past contradicts her relatives' opinion of that same historical era. Urania's actions correspond with Fanon's concept of the purposes of the fighting phase, which the protagonist seems to initiate at this moment. “Finally in the third phase,” the theorist indicates, "which is called the fighting stage, the native, after having tried to lose himself in the people and with people, will on the contrary shake the people" (223; emphasis mine). Vargas Llosa expresses similar notions as he declares that the central role of literature "[. . .] es agitar, inquietar, alarmar, mantener a los hombres en una constante insatisfacción de sí mismos: su función es estimular sin tregua la voluntad de cambio y de mejora" (“La literatura” 135). Urania does not desire pain for her aunt. Rather, the protagonist recognizes that conflict is productive, and even necessary, to the critical attitude that she hopes to inspire for the future.

As aunt Adelina represents the perception of the Trujillo Era that Urania denies, the Storyteller's young niece Marianita embodies the victim's desire for a better tomorrow. Throughout her recounting of the past, Urania expresses concerns that the rising generation of the Republic has forgotten—or worse, is unaware of—the atrocities of its own history. In the home of her father, the protagonist converses with the nurse that cares for the former Senator. Urania inquires whether she remembers the dictator, and the young nurse replies: "Qué me voy a acordar, yo tenia cuatro o cinco añitos cuando lo mataron. No me acuerdo de nada, sólo lo que oí en mi casa. [. . .] Seria un dictador y lo que digan, pero parece que entonces se vivia mejor. Todos tenian trabajo y no se cometian tantos crímenes. ¿No es cierto, señorita?" (139-40). As she leaves the room, Urania immediately counters: "Se cometían, papá. [. . .] No entrarían tantos ladrones a las casas [. . .]. Pero, se mataba, se golpeaba, se torturaba
y se desaparecía” (140). Urania attempts to inspire in Marianita a new critical perspective through the horrific experiences that she reveals. In many respects, Urania’s intention mirrors the notion of Fanon that the native intellectual in the fighting phase will approach “the people” with the desire to pass wisdom on to them, or to place the responsibility of the future into their hands. He states that the native Storyteller will attempt “[. . .] relentlessly and passionately, to teach the masses that everything depends on them [. . .]” (197). Urania finds in the fixed stare of Marianita the future of her own narrative, and the possibility for a better future in the Republic. For the first time, Urania sheds her previous character as victim to promote a new “national consciousness” that she hopes will insure that the same atrocities do not reoccur.

As Urania prepares to leave for her hotel, her cousin Manolita questions: “Ahora, ya no será como antes ¿verdad, Uranita? [. . .] Nos vamos a escribir, y contestarás las cartas” (566). Although Urania responds, “De todas maneras,” the narrator expresses her continued reservations: “Pero, no está segura. Tal vez, saliendo de esta casa, de este país, prefiera olvidar de nuevo esta familia, esta gente, su pasado, se arrepienta de haber venido y hablado como lo ha hecho esta noche. ¿O, tal vez, no? ¿Tal vez querrá reconstruir de algún modo el vínculo con estos residuos de familia que le quedan?” Earlier in the conversation, the narrator’s description of Urania’s perception of her family is opposite to her reactions at the end of the novel. “[. . . Se] siente más distante de [su familia] que de las estrellas,” the narrator observes. “Y comienzan a irritarla los grandes ojos de Marianita clavados en ella” (296). Urania retains her silence with regard to the secret of her rape for over thirty-five years; however, at the novel’s conclusion she reveals her desire for the companionship of a family that her past has forbidden. Contrasting this earlier statement on Marianita’s attention to the narrative, Urania comes to recognize in her niece the future of the Republic.

Although one representative member of the nation cannot be considered the whole, through Marianita, Urania is certain that her experiences will survive as an open correspondence with her relatives. As creative Storytellers, Vargas Llosa and Urania share a similar purpose, and their common intent in revisiting the Dominican past is clarified in the commentary of Fanon:

There is a tendency to bring conflicts up to date and to modernize the kinds of struggle which the stories evoke, together with the names of heroes and the types of weapons. The method of allusion is more and more widely used. The formula ‘This all happened long ago’ is substituted with that of ‘What we are going to speak of happened somewhere else, but it might well have happened here today, and it might happen tomorrow.’ (240)
Through Urania, Vargas Llosa is able to evaluate one moment in the Dominican Republic as a vivid recognition that colonialism is a monster of multitude faces that still continues in the present. As Urania attempts to inform her people of the realities of her past, Vargas Llosa provides a powerful statement on the ability of the Word to combat socio-political failures. Similar to Vargas Llosa’s insistence that the writer’s commitment is to create alternate realities to those existing in the real world, Fanon recognizes the same need to reject the negative circumstances of colonialism through the establishment of new cultural consciousness in recently-liberated nations. Through the incorporation of Fanon’s post-colonial theories into the characterization of Urania, Vargas Llosa creates a protagonist that confronts the past—including the colonial echoes of Latin American identity—in a manner that is both universal and powerfully specific.

Conclusion

In La fiesta del Chivo, Vargas Llosa evaluates one moment in the historical past of the Dominican Republic through the contemporary perspective of his protagonist-Storyteller. It appears from the actions of Urania—in response to her rape—that Vargas Llosa expresses his own creative philosophies through the post-colonial models of Frantz Fanon. Similar to the author’s insistence that his internal obsessions inspire the themes of his literature, the creative demons of Urania’s past and present motivate her oral discourse. Prior to the protest of their negative realities, both the author and the protagonist consume historical accounts of the Trujillo Era. The protagonist also embodies her author’s suspect of historical “truth” as she realizes that the meaning of her storytelling resides in the fictional modification of the past and not in its exact representation. Urania resembles the philosophies of Fanon in her desire to inspire a new critical attitude—or a national consciousness to use Fanon’s words—in her listeners. Similar to Fanon’s assimilation phase, Urania returns to the Dominican Republic in the image of her father and the culture of the United States that has become a part of her estranged character. She also experiences a variation of Fanon’s pre-combat phrase in her obsessive search for the historical past of the Dominican Republic. As Urania recognizes that she cannot create an autonomous identity through foreign frameworks, she transitions—in what Fanon would describes as the fighting phase—to an open and personal testimonial that protests the father, the dictator, and the regime that violated her years before.

La fiesta del Chivo is a powerful re-vindication of the Vargasllosan Storyteller that extends to a post-colonial Latin American audience. “Una de mis preocupaciones cuando escribí la novela,” the novelist affirms, “era mostrar como lo que ocurre en la
Republika Dominicana de ninguna manera es privativo ni de ese país ni, en consecuencia de ese personaje [Trujillo]” (qtd. in Köllmann 245). Urania’s story is an extended metaphor for a larger context of abuses in the Latin American past and present. Vargas Llosa references the island’s colonial past in order to indicate that the Trujillo regime is one of numerous examples of abuse that have existed in Latin America since its inception. Urania’s rape is a powerful representation of the symbolic and in many cases literal rape of America by colonial powers and the dictator Trujillo is an emblematic figure that denotes the numerous Latin American strongmen that have abused their respective nations.

More than a political statement, La fiesta del Chivo is the story of the Storyteller. Through the fictionalization of the past in the voice of his protagonist, Vargas Llosa reaffirms his insistence that the committed writer becomes an instrument of protest against oppressive realities. “Nuestra vocación,” the novelist declares, “ha hecho de nosotros, los escritores, los profesionales del descontento, los perturbadores conscientes o inconscientes de la sociedad, los rebeldes con causa, los insurrectos irredentes del mundo, los insoportables abogados del diablo. [. . .] Ésta es la condición del escritor y debemos reivindicarla tal como es” (“La literatura” 136). Through the characterization of Urania Cabral in the voice of one of post-colonialism’s most eminent theorists, Vargas Llosa extends his narrative past the specific history of the Trujillo Era to a five-hundred-year ontological preoccupation in Latin America. Through the Trujillo Era in the Dominican Republic, Vargas Llosa creates a specific context for the general discussion of the socio-political abuses in the novel. Through Urania’s powerful testimony—seemingly based in the creative philosophies of both Fanon and her author Vargas Llosa—the Peruvian declares once more his unwavering concept of the writer as the guardian of a collective memory that must be constantly revised and never forgotten.

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The "Gateway" to the Antilles: Some Historical Considerations of Puerto Rican Place and Space

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Puerto Rico's strategic location overshadowed its economic significance... Puerto Rico was to become a Caribbean "Christian Rhodes", a bulwark ready to repel intruders and infidels into the new Spanish Mare Nostrum; and, as the crown officials stated, "the strongest foothold of Spain in America." (Morales Carrión, Puerto Rico 8)

Geography - note: important location along the Mona Passage - a key shipping lane to the Panama Canal; San Juan is one of the biggest and best natural harbors in the Caribbean... ("Puerto Rico," World Factbook)

The island once known as San Juan Bautista was never a Mexico, Peru or Cuba in the Spanish Empire. As cited above, Puerto Rico's existence within the Spanish vision of empire was that of an armored "gateway," a visual metaphor that throughout the island's dual colonial histories has been adapted to circumstance, subsequently influencing the development of the island's national self-image. While the "gateway" been interpretive of Puerto Rico's global place, the physical parameters of the island itself, or its space, have ceased to be simple territorial interpretations, instead functioning more like territorial mediations of Puerto Rican national identity. In this article I trace some of the historical foundations of the "gateway" metaphor through Puerto Rico's early social, cultural and economic development. I then discuss the re theorization of the metaphor and its rearticulation within the nineteenth-century City/Country or civilización/barbarie dichotomy by one of the Caribbean's most famous fin-de-siècle writers, Eugenio María de Hostos. And finally, I briefly touch upon the refashioning of Hostos' "gateway" model in the twentieth century.

Columbus arrived in Borinquen on November 19, 1493 but it would be "[s]everal years...before colonization was attempted. A permanent foothold was finally established in 1508, when Juan Ponce de León led a group of settlers from Hispaniola." (Morales Carrión, Puerto Rico and the Non Hispanic Caribbean 6). In 1521, Ponce de León decided to seek his fortune in Florida but his decision to leave was not entirely motivated by the tales of fabulous riches and a Fountain of Youth that so excited the European imagination. Puerto Rico's insignificance in the project of conquest, its lack of immediate economic possibilities, and especially Spanish politics had much to do with Ponce de León's abandonment of his governorship. Isabel I had guaranteed a substantial portion of the Conquest's spoils to the descendants of Christopher Columbus who challenged his and other conquistador's right to rule in the New World.

As Peggy K. Liss explains in Mexico Under Spain: 1521-1556, almost from the first moment of legislation between mater patria and colony there was tension between monarchical and colonist control of economic markets and social practices.
The Crown legislated accordingly in order to better centralize its power and fill its treasury, while conquistadors like Ponce de León promised loyalty to the Crown yet more often than not disregarded royal legislation when it suited them.

The basic assumptions of the exclusivist doctrine were thus challenged by the pressure of overwhelming historical and geographical factors. There soon developed a struggle between a theory conceived in Europe... and the emerging social reality with its indigenous interests and needs. (Morales Carrión, Non Hispanic Caribbean xi-xii)

The Crown also organized its imperial venture according to

Exclusivism had to be adapted to the challenges of the geography and colonial administrative policies ended up being more like experiments based on hypothesis. These policies, however, when coupled with administrative squabbling within colonial government itself, had a negative effect in the long term on the Puerto Rican economy. It seems, then, that Ponce de León's abandonment of Puerto Rico set a sinister precedent. Firstly, the conquistador archetype brought a type of settler who

Secondly, those who followed him were government appointees, minor clergy, military personnel, slaves and escaped slaves, criminals and pirates. The administrative chaos, a weak economy, and the prospects of fabulous riches offered by the recent conquest of the Incan Empire made those few Spanish colonists left in Puerto Rico even more anxious to leave and try their luck elsewhere (7).

Almost from the beginning the French challenged the Pope's and Spain's authority in the Americas and Puerto Rico was one of their targets. In 1528 the island was in crisis as officials communicated to the Crown that Puerto Rico was being deserted due to both Carib and French corsair threats (13). Morales Carrión writes that the foreign incursions in the island's first century of colonization

had been essentially negative, with little profit to the attacker, and if Cumberland's raid is excepted, as feats of arms. If there is anything remarkable in this cycle of foreign aggression, it is undoubtedly found in the tenacity with which the early settlers of Puerto
Rico, dispersed, neglected and abused, clung to the land, trying desperately to eke out an existence. (33)

The sense of fluidity, impermanence and chaos in the social and economic structure of early Puerto Rico may be best evinced by the peculiar, somewhat ironic, state of affairs in San Germán, the second most important port in Puerto Rico. San Germán, had "a nomadic existence up to 1569" (33), meaning that this port city could actually change locale according to the type and severity of external threat. Morales Carrión concludes that one cannot expect any "normal" or "peaceful" development "in a land where the foreigner had come at frequent intervals in a crescendo of destruction and violence" (33). Of course, many would argue that the lack of economic stability in present-day Puerto Rico might be attributed to more complex factors than simply a history full of conquistadors and pirates. One thing, however, is clear: despite a notable lack of interest in anything other than building military fortifications, Puerto Rico's place in the Spanish Empire, the island citadel impeding passage to the Caribbean, gave way to the geographic and economic realities of colonial life in that Puerto Rico usually allowed the entry of varied peoples and cultures rather than prohibited it.

Time and again these constant migrations hindered population growth on the island, which in turn upset sustainable economic development. By 1767 there were only 44,883 people in Puerto Rico (González Vales 51). Colonists tried their hand at various agricultural pursuits but none of the gross product yielded sufficient revenues. The government of Puerto Rico was constantly asking for funds from Spain via Mexico, and it was often the case that neither government officials nor soldiers could be paid without these funds. European conflicts also played out in the theater of the Caribbean, negotiating and influencing trade relations and movement of goods, products, services and even peoples between the competing empires and their colonies. For example, after the French corsair crisis of the early sixteenth century, the English engaged in royally-sanctioned forays into Spanish territories which continued on and off throughout the century. The Dutch then evolved into a major European economic power in the seventeenth century, their privateers establishing an even worse reputation among the Spanish colonists than their English and French counterparts (Morales Carrión, Non Hispanic Caribbean 31). The English and the Dutch were especially interested in Puerto Rico, also viewing it as a "gateway" to the all-important Caribbean shipping lanes which would afford them better control over trade in the Latin America. These ideas held about Puerto Rico lead to various attempts throughout the next three centuries to subdue the capital of San Juan.
The economics of scarcity dictated that the colonists disregard peninsular exclusivist policies and engage in a black market economy. Morales Carrión states that the Portuguese were one of the first to break Spain's hold over the slaving trade, undercutting prices and illegally selling Africans in San Juan as early as 1541 (11). Puerto Rican officials complained constantly about the inefficiency and irregularity of the Spanish fleet's shipping schedule. In The Repeating Island Antonio Benítez-Rojo theorizes that the Armada's movements evolved into a quite complex system—a machine-within-a-machine-within-a-machine he calls it—the ultimate function of which was to protect the Crown's bullion and take it back to Spain (5-9). Yet despite the Armada's complex routes and powerful presence in the Caribbean basin, from 1652 to 1662 not a single Spanish ship from the fleet put to harbor in Puerto Rico (Caro Costas 37). If all goods first had to enter through an authorized, Spanish-controlled port, and if according to Caro Costas nothing came into Puerto Rico for ten years, it is with little wonder that the population turned to illegal trade. The black market economy also gave way to some interesting ironies: It often happened that once a foreign attack was repelled in San Juan Harbor in the north, the defeated ships would simply sail to southern Puerto Rico and trade with the populace in order to re-supply their ships.

The eighteenth century also witnessed the growing presence of North Americans in the Caribbean and Puerto Rico began to develop a special relationship with New England traders. Especially after independence from Britain, the North Americans were considered neutral and when Spain went to war with one of her European neighbors and trade with that nation was suspended, the North Americans tended to step in and buy up much of the Puerto Rico's produce in exchange for much-needed goods, such as slaves. Black market trade was de facto business. It was so commonplace that most governors, priests, and military personnel engaged in the practice (37). Although the comparison is modern in tone and evocative of a U.S. understanding of history, Spanish colonial Puerto Rico was the equivalent of a "wild west" outpost.

Other historical factors further demonstrate the movement and fluidity of the populations that came to Puerto Rico, one of which was the fact that the island was known as a safe haven for the African race. Once escaped slaves arrived to Puerto Rico they were as good as lost to their owners. The mountains were famous for their impenetrability, as shown by the Taino flight in the 1500s. Spanish authorities also displayed little interest in pursuing slaves not belonging to them and official policy was that escaped foreign slaves were free on Spanish soil. Such a policy irritated neighboring non-Spanish colonists because they felt that it encouraged their slaves
to flee. Interestingly enough, at a time when slavery in the Caribbean was at its height, a mulatto or African not born a slave or purchased as a slave in Puerto Rico was simply considered a freeman whose background required no further investigation. Spanish officials even gave a number of these freemen lands for cultivation in order to stabilize the population.

Spain's various half-hearted attempts at reform in the nineteenth century resulted in growing unrest among the island's Creole population. Yet while other Latin American colonies were taking advantage of the political upheaval in order to declare independence or to decidedly move towards independence, Puerto Rico did not. One explanation for this relative lack of independence fervor may have been the sudden increase of royalists from neighboring nations, particularly Venezuela. While sympathetic to the other Latin American nations, and especially Venezuela, the majority of Puerto Ricans did not seriously consider independence. They did not do so even with the appearance in the nineteenth century of one of the greatest and most respected Latin American intellectuals and abolitionists, Eugenio María de Hostos.

Puerto Rican Creoles had identified a uniquely Puerto Rican culture but did not necessarily believe it separate from or in opposition to that of Spain. The island's precious little literary output at this time followed European Romantic, costumbrista, and Naturalist trends, overall treating local differences in the insular culture as exotic curiosities. In a collection of essays titled El qibaro (1849), Manuel Alonso tried "not only to draw the broad outlines of a Puerto Rican cultural identity, but also to chastise the social and cultural backwardness of his countrymen" (A. González 491). As was typical of Latin American colonial society and its experience, the major writers of the era were either of "old Creole stock or of mixed Creole and Peninsular lineage" (491). Hostos, in consonance with most of the Creoles of his time, first sought a political and economic compromise with Spain. Later he would become an independentista. His subsequent literary and rhetorical efforts promoting independence would make him into one of the first Puerto Rican Creoles to identify, develop and solidify not necessarily a uniquely Puerto Rican culture (institutionalization would come later with the Generation of 1930), but a uniquely Antillean—and by extension, Puerto Rican—political consciousness.

Hostos' first literary effort was a mediocre novel, La peregrinación de Bayoán (A. Rivera 158). In this novel Hostos appropriates the Taino as a figure for the nation and metaphor for the Creole's position within the Empire. Bayoán was published in Madrid in 1863 but had a very poor readership indeed. Not only did the Spaniards ignore it, they were simply uninterested in Puerto Rico's problems. They were facing rebellions in Cuba and the Philippines, the Carlist Wars, a Republican movement
growing in power and numbers at home, and in five years’ time their unpopular queen would abdicate the throne. To add insult to injury, the novel was banned in Puerto Rico. Bayoán’s failure prompted Hostos to give up his illusions of becoming a novelist, but it did catch the attention of famed independista and revolutionary, Ramón Betances. When Hostos asked Betances for an opinion of his novel, the latter supposedly uttered this famous phrase: “Cuando se quiere una tortilla, hay que romper los huevos: tortillas sin huevos rotos o revolución sin revolucita no se ven” (Maldonado Denis 36-7). Hostos claimed that Betances’ words decided him. He would commit himself utterly to the independence of the Latin American colonies, but especially that of Cuba and Puerto Rico.

The anecdote is clever, but there may be another reason why Hostos gave up his youthful illusions of compromise with Spain. When Isabel II exiled herself in 1868, the newly established Republic was believed to be the cure for what ailed Cuba and Puerto Rico. Surely a democratic state would treat the colonies as equals. In 1868 Hostos went to Madrid to lobby for his cause but was met with this succinct answer from Spanish official Emilio Castelar: “Soy español primero que republicano” (36). The Republic, too, was blinded by an antiquated imperial mentality. That mentality led Hostos to believe that further negotiation was useless. He went on to denounce Spain as a degenerate, decadent, and despotic society that did not even recognize its own mixed ancestry and various struggles for independence (“Retrato de Francisco V. Aguilera” 74).

Through letters, journal entries, and essays, Hostos espoused a pan-American ideology, ideas that were not particularly unique for Bolívar himself had envisioned a united Latin America. Hostos’ own vision for a united Caribbean also overlapped considerably with that of contemporary José Martí. Nevertheless, Hostos armed Caribbean, and especially Puerto Rican, intellectuals and artists with certain important ideas, the echoes of which still reverberate today. One of those ideas, a bit shocking for the era, envisioned the mixture of races as a positive force. Hostos argued that miscegenation was actually an expression of the developing Antillean character as evidenced by its own geography. Miscegenation, therefore, is part of the natural progression in the development of a cohesive and uniquely Caribbean identity in the ever-fluid, constantly moving Antilles:

En las Antillas, es natural y necesa¬ria y conveniente y civilizadora esa fusion y confusión de razas, porque de ella ha de salir la sociedad su género que en condiciones fisiológicas y morales corresponda al medio geográfico. Los españoles, que afectan un desden español por esas mezclas sirven también a la fusion y ha servido, no sólo por la debilidad de la naturaleza humana, sino hasta por especulación. Una esclava, como una gallina o una yegua, vale más cuando más procrea, pues cada fruto de su procreación es un valor aparte” (“Plácido” 272).
The call for racial equality, however, had more pragmatic roots. Martí and Hostos understood that a successful revolution in either Cuba or Puerto Rico could not be accomplished without contributions from all sectors of society. Consequently, the Afro-Antillean had to be invited to participate more fully in the family model that Creoles promoted and used as symbol for the nation.

As important as the pro-miscegenation declaration is, Hostos also developed and promoted two other ideas that laid the groundwork for the later generations' understanding and subsequent theorization of Puerto Rico's place and spatial self-image. Firstly he repositioned Puerto Rican culture and civility not in the city like Manuel Alonso and other Creoles, but in the countryside; and secondly he reworked the "gateway" metaphor. In the context of mid to late nineteenth-century Puerto Rican political thought, there certainly was a fundamental difference between Hostos' and his compatriots' conceptualization of Puerto Rico. The Creole elite conceived of the island within its strict geographical limits, believing Puerto Rico was too small to be on its own. Hostos, however, saw Puerto Rico and the Antilles as a whole and as a connection between the continents. He did not, however, articulate that connection strictly in economic terms. Hostos' "gateway" model emphasized an exchange of culture and ideas, grounded in the plurality of races. As Maldonado Denis writes: "Para Hostos, las Antillas constituyen una entidad cultural con personalidad propia, o para ser más preciso, una nacionalidad. Su ubicación geográfica, su composición étnica, sus comunes experiencias históricas, así lo han determinado" ("Introducción," 38). This mixture of bloodlines and characteristics are ultimately beneficial, then, unifying the Caribbean and even Latin America. If we all carry the same blood, African, European and indigenous, the rationale would seem to follow that we are all of the same race and cannot discriminate. Of course, in keeping with the times one might conjecture that Hostos was thinking more as a man of science. One might venture a guess that Hostos knew inbreeding would eventually cause genetic weaknesses in a population whereas "outbreeding" did not—or at least not always.

By contrast, Hostos' contemporaries often believed that racial homogeneity was a source of social stability in the nation. It is well-known that the learned men of colonies often attempted to emulate what they saw as European values and racial paradigms, creating a complex and on occasion contradictory allegory out of the The Tempest: Ariel symbolized spirit and intellect, or all that is European, while Calibán symbolized the body and instinct, or the non-European. More specifically, Calibán was a savage African man with a witch for a mother. The allegory fit nicely with the nineteenth-century City/Country model that also functioned as a social and national metaphor. The city was Arielian, the site of civility, culture, education; the
countryside was the territory of Caliban. The model, however, had never been perfect or absolute. For example, Romanticism generally glorified certain elements of the natural world, while Realism and especially Naturalism tended to represent urban spaces negatively. Intellectuals vacillated between positive and negative interpretations of the countryside, as Skurski and Coronil show in their article on Venezuelan nationalism and the appropriation of the llanos, or plains, as national symbol. Hostos, however, clearly allied himself with the countryside, arguing that cultural authenticity and the maturing sense of national cohesion in Caribbean identity could be found there. In “Retrato de Francisco V. Aguilera,” he points out that in Cuba “[la revolución] empezó en el campo, y con los elementos rurales de la sociedad; continuó por una ciudad rural, se extendió por los distritos rurales, y su nervio y su vida y su alma ha sido, desde el principio hasta hoy, la población rural” (76). Almost one hundred years later, Puerto Rican writer Luis Rafael Sánchez would say something very similar about a supposed “authentic” Puerto Rican culture situated in the countryside (Americas Series: Builders of Images).

Hostos’ was decidedly in the minority of Puerto Rican political opinion and his steady procession of newspaper articles and essays went unheeded in San Juan. The island’s resistance to his liberalism left him deeply disappointed: “La patria se me escapa de las manos. Siendo vanos mis esfuerzos... el modo de seguir amándola y sirviéndola es seguir trabajando por el ideal” (“Retrato de Francisco V. Aguilera” 210). He was also in a complicated position, since Puerto Rican Creoles lauded his intellect but considered independence inconceivable because Puerto Rico was too small geographically and too poor in resources. Moreover, Hostos had already spent most of his adult life outside of Puerto Rico, setting up residence in the Dominican Republic and even requesting that upon his death his remains stay there until Puerto Rico was set free. Hostos’ exile, then, has not only been a matter of geographic distance but a cultural one as well. His impact during the time in which he lived was felt more in the rest of the Caribbean and even Latin America, but not in Puerto Rico. Nevertheless, with the later historical revisions and resuscitations in the search for what defines Puerto Rico, Hostos would time and again resurface as a significant figure for subsequent Puerto Rican generations. Even a community college in present-day New York City bears his name.

Interpretations of Puerto Rico’s place and space become even more important when they are co-opted by another rising power, one whose traditional imperial tendencies would fade for a while once truly engaged in the complicated and sometimes deadly task of far-away colonial administration. The Spanish-American War of 1898 revealed the United States’ fledgling aspirations of empire, its desire to
compete with nineteenth-century European powers (Crucible of Empire). Arguably, the Spanish-American War was an extension of Manifest Destiny thanks to the closed western frontier; but it was also a new addendum to the tenets of an almost century-old Monroe Doctrine. There was a strategic rationale too: the United States was concerned about key geographical locations in the Caribbean and the Pacific.

In general, Spain was considered friendly and the U.S. government felt that the islands should remain in Spain’s possession for as long as possible. By the late nineteenth century, however, the U.S. questioned Spain’s ability to hold Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines, and doubted the ability of these islands to maintain their sovereignty should they become independent. The United States would prefer outright control of these islands rather than allow other European powers to control them. A good example of the European mentality of the era is this incident which occurred soon after the conquest of the Philippines. Unlike Cuba, where it was clear that the island would be given political independence, the U.S. government did not know quite what to do with a volatile Filipino population that had already developed its own nationalism yet still wanted to establish naval bases there. The general American populace also felt uncomfortable in the new role of conqueror. Americans had been able to rationalize the war by conceiving of themselves as the liberators and protectors of Cuba but actual colonial administration seemed anathema to them. It was this indecision that prompted the Germans to aggressively sail into Manila Harbor just after the war and the German threat put an end to the Filipino question: The U.S. troops and officials stayed.

Unlike its Pacific counterpart, Puerto Rico gave practically no resistance to the U.S. invasion. The “conquest of Puerto Rico was ... a peculiar offshoot of the Spanish-American War, a sideshow of the international crisis over Cuba which had been brewing for years” (González Vales 133). Edward Berbusse writes that the mayor of Yauco, Francisco Mejía, “came out to meet the American forces and gave the following welcome: ‘Fellow citizens, long life to the United States of America! Hurrah for its valiant troops! Viva Puerto Rico Americano!’” (65). Alex Maldonado makes a similar reference to “the acting mayor” of “one small town” who “greeted the Americans by making a speech in the village plaza” (47). This man “asserted that the U.S. occupation ... was an ‘act of God’ designed to bring Puerto Ricans back to the ‘bosom of America’” (47). Maybe Maldonado and Berbusse speak of the same man. We cannot be sure. What is of interest, though, is the political discussion of Puerto Rico’s status at the turn of the century present in the above statements. The first has already been mentioned: Creoles wanted continued affiliation with a major power because they considered their island too small and too poor, but self-government and total control of local economic activity. By 1897, they had already
achieved such an agreement with Spain through *The Autonomous Charter* but with the war, they lost that arrangement. Another faction of Creoles arose during and after the war that favored annexation by the U.S. Like their Latin American counterparts, Puerto Ricans also admired the United States’ democratic system and as most of the population suffered from crushing poverty, the rationale also went that if Puerto Rico became a state, then they too would share in American affluence thus enabling the island to become a modern, industrial, and democratic society. It is no surprise that Hostos wrote against annexation.

If before he had complimented the United States by calling it the most “positivistic” of nations, that opinion disintegrates entirely:

Los norteamericanos... no parecen ya los salvadores de la dignidad humana... .

¿Son ellos esos que hoy, en vez de atender en Puerto Rico a salvar la dignidad y a establecer la libertad, atienden con fría premeditación a cómo se mueren y se matan los puertorriqueños?...

[Es] una convicción inconfesa de los bárbaros que intentan desde el Ejecutivo de la Federación popularizar la conquista y el imperialismo, que para absober a Puerto Rico es necesario exterminarlo... (“Carta al Director de 'La Correspondencia de Puerto Rico'” 212)

The extermination to which Hostos refers is meant to dramatize a cultural annihilation that he believed would occur should Puerto Rico remain under U.S. rule and become a state. But such a strong use of terminology would have far-reaching consequences for this powerful word, “extermination,” would be used by many Puerto Ricans throughout the twentieth century. For example, Luis Rafael Sánchez uses similar terminology to describe Puerto Rican culture in the documentary segment titled *Builders of Images*. A musician living in New York repeats Sánchez’ words almost verbatim, stating that Puerto Rican national identity “is under constant attack.” (Americas Series: The Latin American and Caribbean Presence in the United States). Cultural extermination, genocide even, have become indicative of the way some sectors of the Puerto Rican population have come to view their relationship to the United States. Independence, then, becomes not a question of national pride or economics, but a question of cultural survival within a perceived colonial regime. Where is Puerto Rico’s place, if it has one, in the United States?

Both Hostos and Martí interpreted U.S. designs on Caribbean in a somewhat prophetic manner, anticipating Cuba’s and Puerto Rico’s new militaristic roles in the new political and imperial contexts. Puerto Rico in particular would function much in the same fashion as it had before. It would again be the “gateway” but more a bottleneck or stopgap affording the United States control of military, economic and
even demographic movements in the region. Puerto Rico would also become home to one of the few live-ammunition, training bases for the U.S. Navy (the controversial and now-defunct base on Vieques). The island “citadel” would be the first line of defense—or intimidation—for the United States, a role that would become even more important with the post-World War II communist threat.

In all fairness, *fin-de-siècle* United States held a view of Puerto Rico that was not completely discordant with the view the Puerto Ricans held of themselves. A. Maldonado writes that “[u]nlike Cuba, Puerto Rico was thought to be too small and too poor to be granted independence: its culture was considered by most Americans to be so foreign as to make it ineligible for statehood. . . (47) Also consider this proclamation made just after the invasion on July 28, 1898 by General Nelson A. Miles:

> We have not come to make war upon the people of a country that for centuries has been oppressed, but, on the contrary, to bring you protection, not only to yourselves but to your property, to promote your prosperity, and to bestow upon you the immunities and blessings of the liberal institutions of our government. It is not our purpose to interfere with any existing laws and customs that are wholesome and beneficial to your people as long as they conform to the rules of military administration, of order and justice. This is not a war of devastation, but one to give all within the control of its military and naval forces the advantages and blessings of enlightened civilization. (González Vales 133; Annual Reports of the War Department, 13-5)

The language of Miles’ speech reveals some of the patronizing attitude the United States maintained towards Puerto Rico. He frames the United States the “Great Liberator” who has come to bestow prosperity and peace on Puerto Rico. Although this excerpt does not specifically state it, in other readings and materials discussing the Spanish-American War the size of the island is a huge factor influencing the United States’ attitude. Even now, the “too-small-too-poor” argument is still in play, an argument that had dual functions. The geographic size of Puerto Rico obviously makes it small and weak by comparison, but it influences the perception of Puerto Rican culture in that the people themselves are then seen as small and weak. And finally, the island and its people, being small and weak, quickly become equated with women or children as evidenced by editorial cartoons in American newspapers of the day (Crucible of Empire). Because Puerto Ricans are children and/or feminine, they are ultimately dependents who require paternal care. Following the logic of the era, Puerto Rico must then be ruled and protected by a much larger (in terms of territory), more powerful and therefore more “masculine” (paternal) nation, who would be more “enlightened.” The “too-small-too-poor” argument was clearly an imperial apology for the United States meant to justify its new role, but it is important to remember that the U.S. did not impose the original
territorial image of Puerto Rico onto the Puerto Ricans. The U.S. and pro-American Creoles did, however, appropriate and reinterpret the "too-small-too-poor" argument in accordance with the new situation.

Oddly enough, the image of Puerto Rico as a dependant produced an unexpected, ambivalent reaction in Americans for on the one hand they felt responsible for Puerto Rico in their role as protector, but on the other hand they believed themselves to be a democracy of anti-imperialists, a "Good Neighbor." According to Alex Maldonado there was a sense of altruism mixed into the American public's attitude towards Puerto Rico, imbued with a high dose of superiority. Just as under Spain, the Puerto Rican reality was much different from the rhetoric espoused inside the new mater patria proper: "Whatever illusions Puerto Rican liberals may have cherished about American rule were soon to vanish. The Puerto Rican parliament was dissolved, native officials were replaced by Americans, and military rule was instituted" (A. Maldonado 47). Despite the evidence, Americans continued to believe that they were not imperialists. They believed they were serving a higher purpose that would surely bring about peace, prosperity, and democracy in Puerto Rico, an attitude which resulted in their inability to comprehend their failure at colonial government. Americans simply could not believe that their policies were actually making Puerto Rico poorer and more dependent instead of the reverse.

Laura Briggs' Reproducing Empire (2003) analyzes some of the United States' complex historical responses to its new role as imperial power, as well as its continued negation of Puerto Rico's true political status, even its very existence, within the Union. Briggs argues that because Puerto Rico did not improve under its period of U.S. "tutelage" there arose a strong need to "rationalize," "study," and "analyze" Puerto Rico's poverty. Numerous reports made by government institutions and private organizations alike co-opted the scientific method and the language of science in the twentieth century in order to explain the social and cultural roots of Puerto Rican poverty. Puerto Rico's poverty then became the Puerto Ricans' fault primarily because they had inadequate family structures (a lack of fathers), and there were too many Puerto Ricans. In sum, poor and working-class women were simply having too many children, often without having the proper paternal supervision. These factors, then, hindered the island's modernization. Thanks to Briggs' work on the supposedly "deviant" Puerto Rican sexuality as the root of all evil in Puerto Rican society, it came to my attention that this "deviance" was coupled with a fear of overpopulation. Briggs does not quite come this far, does not fully discuss the fact that overpopulation as a cause of the island's poverty also stemmed from the long-held perception of very limited space on the part of both Puerto Ricans and Americans. Puerto Rico's 100 miles of length and 35 miles of width (160 km by 56
km) are a fatalistic condition, something that can never be overcome, and the inherent danger of such small space is uncontrolled population growth. As a consequence, Puerto Rican families are ever monitored by “authorities,” their sexuality and supposed fecundity always threatening to tip a fragile balance towards economic catastrophe.

Puerto Rico began its existence in Western history as a “bulwark,” an “outpost of empire,” an insignificant outcropping of land that happens to be next to the very important Mona Passage. Nineteenth-century intellectual and educator Eugenio María de Hostos tried to liberate Puerto Ricans from their “small” mentality by reinterpreting the visual metaphor of the “gateway” and defining the island in terms of its relations to the Antilles. Puerto Rico would be another link in the geographic chain that would act as a cultural conduit between the continents as well as a racial paradigm to be emulated. Hostos also resituated Puerto Rican culture in the countryside and away from the too-Europeanized cultural elite of the city. These ideas have since been resuscitated in more contemporary authors’ work. In El país de cuatro pisos y otros ensayos (1980) José Luis González argues that not only does Puerto Rico have much in common with its Antillean neighbors, but that the first true Puerto Ricans were African Creoles and that the foundations of Puerto Rican culture can be found in Africa. A second interpretation of the “gateway” model arrived with the United States and was adapted to its emerging role as world superpower. First Puerto Rico was to help further U.S. influence in the Caribbean and Latin America. Then, with the onset of the Cold War, a new image was added that almost replaced the old one (at least for a while). Puerto Rico as the “gateway” was now to be heralded as the vitrina or “showcase” of the Caribbean. Puerto Rico had become another experiment in colonial administration, this time an exercise in capitalism and industrialization, and its purpose was to demonstrate the supremacy of the U.S. economic model to the world.

And finally, in 1998, leading literary lady Rosario Ferré refashioned the “gateway” model into more globalized context in an article titled “Writing in Between.” Puerto Rico not only becomes a cultural and linguistic mediator, but a technological mediator:

As a bilingual, technologically advanced community, we can set the pace for our neighboring Latin American countries, help them enter the modern world, and at the same time help the United States become more cosmopolitan. We can help Anglo-Americans deal with the Latino “problem,” for example, by setting their minds at ease when, like peoples of every age before them, they hear in the unfamiliar languages spoken around them the sounds of the barbarians at the gates.
Puerto Ricans are heroes of modernity; in spite of our poverty of resources and limited land, our "passivity," "indecision," and "plasticity"—our bending over to please the powerful as those envious of us say—we have achieved what some of our richer and more powerful neighbors have not. (53)

Ferre lauds the adaptability of the Puerto Ricans which has resulted in more comfortable economic conditions and an advanced technological society that is the envy of the Caribbean. She also touches upon the "too-small-too-poor" argument when she refers to "our poverty of resources and limited land" and in the same sentence makes reference to Puerto Rico's political status, the Free Associated State. I conclude that the attitude Puerto Ricans have long held about their own territory has influenced their choices in self-governance, creating a national perception of a limited territorial space so strong as to influence policy in favor of a "special relationship" with the United States. It is a relationship, thanks to the continued and gross misperception worldwide, that is referred to as a Commonwealth status when it is most decidedly not. Ultimately Ferre resorts to the favored territorial metaphor that continues to mediate Puerto Rican identity and culture, which in turn becomes the basis of her argument in favor the island's continued status as a U.S. territory. It was probably no accident that Ferre published her article exactly 100 years after the Spanish-American War. For Puerto Rico, the constant recycling of the "gateway" metaphor and the "too-small-too-poor" argument seem to have become cultural and historical legacies nearly impossible to leave behind.

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Colonizadores y colonizados: las relaciones de poder respecto a la raza, el género y la clase social en Maldito amor de Rosario Ferré y su efecto en la construcción de la identidad nacional

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El trabajo literario de Rosario Ferré suele exponer la amalgama de elementos que distinguen la sociedad puertorriqueña. Su novela Maldito amor no es la excepción. En Maldito amor, Ferré utiliza la situación política colonial que caracteriza la realidad puertorriqueña y la problemática de la identidad nacional para construir un texto donde todas las relaciones exhiben los vínculos de poder que distinguen la estructura socio-política que prevalece entre colonizadores y colonizados. La tensión entre estos grupos, sin embargo, no sólo se limita a las diferencias raciales y sociales apadrinadas por la élite como consecuencia del sistema colonial, sino que se extiende a otros elementos como el género. Como comenta Oyéronké Oyütùmímí, “it is clear that any discussion of hierarchy in the colonial situation, in addition to employing race as the basis of distinctions, should take account its strong gender component” (340).

En el caso de Puerto Rico la situación colonial provocó, en primer lugar, un sistema clasificatorio donde la pigmentación de la piel jugaba un papel fundamental. Esta diferenciación produjo un sistema jerarquizado donde el hombre-blanco-propietario se ubicaba en la cúspide. No obstante, el desarrollo de una sociedad jerarquizada fomentó la creación de otras relaciones de poder que propiciaron, a su vez, la subordinación de la mujer. Con ello, se da un proceso donde cada colonizado (oprimido) se convierte a su vez en colonizador (opresor) de los miembros del grupo que se encuentran en un nivel inferior según las pautas socio-políticas establecidas. Este proceso confirma lo que Albert Memi ha llamado “the history of the pyramid of petty tyrants: each one, being socially oppressed by one more powerful than he, always finds a less powerful one on whom to lean, and becomes a tyrant in his turn” (17).

Con la invasión norteamericana en 1898, el juego de poderes existente se vio complicado por un elemento adicional: civilización vs. barbarie. Este componente igualmente presente en Maldito amor “traza una oposición jerárquica y desigual típicamente imperialista” (Urrea 281), que tiene como consecuencia el trastocamiento de las estructuras preexistentes y añade un requisito adicional para alcanzar la cúspide de las relaciones de poder: ser estadounidense. Como resultado de ello, las relaciones que emulan la dicotomía colonizador / colonizado presentan
una pluralidad de elementos que derivan de los estados coloniales consecutivos que ha sufrido Puerto Rico.

La nueva situación colonial que enfrentó la elite puertorriqueña luego de la invasión estadounidense engendró un sentimiento de nostalgia que facilitó el desarrollo de una literatura mítica que evocaba el retorno a la tierra; “a un tiempo legendario en que el puertorriqueño era un ser autosuficiente y puro, no sometido” (Urrea 283). Como respuesta al sistema capitalista y la inevitable industrialización de Puerto Rico, esta literatura buscaba volver al pasado como una forma de “definir la identidad nacional frente a la metrópolis” (Urrea 284). Esta reacción se originó precisamente como una forma de enfrentar y resistir los cambios en las relaciones de poder que afectaban a la clase acomodada. Propongo entonces que en Maldito amor, Rosario Ferré utiliza la metáfora colonizador / colonizado para desvelar el complicado juego de relaciones de poder en cuanto a raza, clase social y género en la sociedad puertorriqueña; así como para exponer el papel de la literatura “nacionalista” en el proyecto elitista de identidad nacional que intentaba evitar la destrucción de las relaciones de poder existentes bajo el dominio español.

Con este propósito, intentaré esbozar por separado los elementos que componen los diferentes juegos de poder. Sin embargo, la convergencia de algunos de estos componentes es tal que será necesario tomarlos en conjunto.

A fin de comprender la multiplicidad de niveles que abarcan las relaciones de poder y la complejidad que exhiben los personajes que las representan, es necesario hacer referencia al momento histórico en que toma lugar la narración. Puerto Rico perteneció a la corona Española desde su descubrimiento en 1493. No obstante, la carencia de abundante riqueza mineral hacía a la isla poco atractiva para los colonizadores. Ello provocó la enajenación de la escasa población isleña y una dependencia económica de las colonias más ricas en lo que se denominó el situado mexicano. Durante este periodo, Puerto Rico fue utilizado principalmente como bastión militar. Sin embargo, a finales del siglo XVIII la corona española comenzó a realizar esfuerzos dirigidos a revitalizar y hacer autosuficiente una economía que hasta el momento había sido una de consumo y subsistencia. Así lo establece Ángel Quintero al indicar que en ese periodo “practically all the peasants (except the slaves) were independent producers” (“Background” 103).

Como parte de los intentos revitalizadores el gobierno español redistribuyó las tierras cultivables, poniéndolas en manos de españoles o descendientes de españoles. A raíz de esta redistribución los campesinos quedaron desposeídos de la tierra que cultivaban para consumo propio y se vieron obligados a trabajar para el
nuevo dueño a cambio de un pequeño predio de terreno que pudiesen habitar y labrar. A este régimen es el que denominamos hacienda.

Sin embargo, el sistema de hacienda sufrió varios cambios en las últimas décadas del siglo XIX. Según Ángel Quintero, entre los cambios experimentados se encuentra la sustitución del predio de terreno otorgado al campesino por un sistema de crédito o vales donde el trabajador obtenía las provisiones necesarias en una tienda de suministros propiedad de la hacienda (“Background” 109). A pesar de los cambios, a nivel económico el sistema de hacienda era el que dominaba en Puerto Rico al momento de la invasión estadounidense.

En cuanto al ámbito político, para fines del siglo XIX las elites criollas lideradas por el Partido Liberal Reformista habían logrado la concesión de poderes autónomos. Después de la abolición de la esclavitud en 1873 y tras años de lucha por lograr un gobierno autosuficiente, la corona española concedió a Puerto Rico un gobierno autónomo en 1897. Sin embargo este gobierno, que entró en vigor en marzo de 1898, se vio frustrado por la intervención de los Estados Unidos en la llamada Guerra Hispanoamericana y la eventual cesión de la Isla a los Estados Unidos como parte del Tratado de París de 1898 que puso fin al conflicto bélico. La invasión estadounidense el 25 de julio de ese año significó entonces la pérdida del gobierno autónomo, el trastorno de las relaciones sociales, políticas y económicas existentes y la reinstauración del sistema colonialista.

Un gobierno militar fue impuesto en la Isla desde el momento de la invasión hasta el año 1900. Posteriormente, el Acta Foraker de 1900 concedió un gobierno civil bajo el mandato de un gobernador nombrado por el presidente de los Estados Unidos. No fue hasta la promulgación del Acta Jones en 1917 que se concedió la ciudadanía estadounidense a los puertorriqueños y que se otorgó el derecho a elegir un Senado compuesto por puertorriqueños. En términos económicos la política impuesta después de la invasión norteamericana facilitó el crecimiento y desarrollo de grandes corporaciones azucareras y tabacaleras controladas por empresarios estadounidenses. La economía se desplazó de una variada (café, tabaco y azúcar) a una mayormente de monocultivo (azúcar). Las centrales azucareras se convirtieron así en la semilla del sistema capitalista que suplantaría luego la vida de la hacienda. Ello provocó un cambio en la economía que afectó a los miembros de la elite que habían logrado consolidar su poder económico y político bajo el dominio español. Como comenta Ángel Quintero:

1 Cabe señalar que aunque la hacienda era el sistema de producción dominante, no ejercía el control de la economía puertorriqueña. La existencia de pequeños y medianos propietarios provocaba un constante antagonismo entre los hacendados y los pequeños o medianos productores. Para más detalles sobre este particular vease Ángel Quintero, “Background to the Emergence of Imperialist Capitalism in Puerto Rico,” The Puerto Rican: their History, Culture, and Society, ed. Adalberto López (Cambridge: Schenkman, 1980) 107.
The emergence of capitalist agriculture in the island also had a tremendous impact on the Puerto Rican hacendados and subsistence [sic] farmers. Some of these subsistence farmers became workers in the sugar plantations. Other began to plant sugar cane to be processed in the North American sugar mills [...]. These formerly independent farmers became then dependent on the North American companies and on the commercial system. ("Development" 217)

Estos cambios políticos y económicos son los que sirven de trasfondo para el desarrollo de la narración en Maldito amor, donde se nos transporta desde el periodo colonial español hasta poco más de dos décadas después de la invasión.

Tanto los cambios experimentados durante el siglo XIX, como los que sufrió el sistema de hacienda durante el periodo inmediatamente posterior a la invasión estadounidense, encuentran eco en la narración, ya que éstos no sólo alteran la estructura económica preexistente sino que tienen un impacto directo en las relaciones de clase.

Dentro de la perspectiva Marxista tradicional, las divisiones de clase son definidas principalmente en términos de la relación entre propiedad y explotación (Wright 141). Aquel que posee tierras o propiedades ocupa una posición superior al que trabaja la tierra y/o produce el fruto pero que no tiene derecho alguno sobre el producto de su trabajo porque no le pertenece. En el caso del sistema de hacienda, la jerarquía que produce la relación entre propiedad y explotación se percibe en la costumbre de otorgar un predio de terreno para el cultivo individual. Dicha costumbre es expuesta por el narrador básico de la novela que el personaje de Hermenegildo Martinez escribe sobre los De la Valle y el pueblo donde ubica la central azucarera que la familia posee: "Había sido costumbre de los antiguos dueños de la Justicia permitirle a los jornaleros el uso de las fincas más alejadas y salitrosas del feudo, en las cuales estos últimos engordaban y pastaban sus bestias, sembrando sus cosechas y sus viandas" (Ferre 23). Dos cosas resaltan de esta afirmación. En primer lugar, se expone la diferencia de clase con respecto a la tierra. Los jornaleros constituyen el grupo de desposeídos; el grupo de colonizados que perdió su tierra como parte de la incursión del colonizador blanco español o de descendencia española. En segundo lugar, revela la desigualdad social existente y la explotación sufrida por el peón. El otorgamiento de un predio de terreno se perfiló como una forma de mantener el control sobre los miembros de la clase inferior. Debido a la "oportunidad" de mantener un predio de tierra para si, que además era de mala calidad (salitroso), los jornaleros se veían obligados a trabajar para el hacendado. Lo contrario conllevaba la pérdida del terreno y la consiguiente desaparición de su medio de subsistencia. De esta forma, se estableció un sistema de
explotación casi-esclavista parecido al que se desarrolla en la relación entre colonizadores y colonizados.

Sin embargo, ésta no era la única forma de asegurar la permanencia de las clases sociales. Según Ángel Quintero, “The laborers [. . .] were tied to the hacienda work by factors other than purely economic rewards: by mutual services and ritual ceremonies” (“Backgroud” 108). Estas prácticas también son expuestas en Maldito amor. El padrínazgo constituía la forma más común de crear una situación de subordinación que aseguraba la hegemonía de la clase hacendada. La moralidad del jornalero no le permitiría revelarse contra la explotación del hacendado, con quien entiende que tiene, por razones de padrínazgo, lazos más fuertes que la relación de servidumbre: “Los De la Valle [. . .] se las habian arreglado para retener, [. . .] la devoción absoluta de su servidumbre [. . .]. Asistían [. . .] infaliblemente a todos los entierros, bodas y bautizos de la peonada” (23).

La división de clase se volvió más marcada una vez que se comenzó a implantar el “razonamiento capitalista que promueve la máxima explotación de los medios de producción” (Quintero, “Background” 109): “Un día don Julio decidió que era necesario incrementar la producción de azúcar de la Central y ordenó que, en cada solar baldío, en cada huerto o conuco en los que antes los peones cultivaban su propio sustento, se sembrara más caña” (Ferre 23). Ello derivó en una diferencia de clases aún más marcada. Este contraste se refleja en el modo de vida de los De la Valle y el de Titina, la criada negra de los De la Valle. “Los De la Valle habian vivido siempre como condes” (Ferre 23), mientras que Titina trataba de asegurar recibir en legado “la casita de tablones y techo de zinc en que [ha] vivido siempre” (26) y que, aunque no le pertenecía, entendía que merecía por los años de servicio a los De la Valle.

Esta estructura clasista que aseguraba la hegemonía de la clase hacendada se vio alterada después de 1898. El pretexto de que el gobierno y la economía debían ser tutelados hasta que los puertorriqueños fuesen capaces de gobernarse a sí mismos facilitó la colonización y eventual pérdida de poder de la clase hacendada. Una de las medidas que garantizó la primacía estadounidense sobre la clase hacendada fue la congelación del crédito: “La nueva Banca Norteamericana [. . .] financiaba sin dificultad a las corporaciones de los centralistas norteamERICANOS, pero desconfiaba de la iniciativa isleña” (Ferre 37). Ángel Quintero explica que: “The restrain on credit decreed in 1899 represented for the hacendados the elimination of the basis of their commercial production. In order to obtain necessary capital to continue production, they found themselves forced to sell some of their lands” (“Backgroud” 118).
Después de la congelación del crédito, los hacendados se dieron cuenta de que para no sucumbir ante el nuevo colonizador era necesario crear algún tipo de alianza que les garantizara al menos una posición intermedia. Por ello Don Julio Font, patriarca de los De la Valle, ofrece vender parte de sus tierras a los nuevos colonizadores con tal de recibir a cambio un préstamo que le permita seguir operando su central azucarera: "Y le expliqué entonces a Mr. Dirham que estaba dispuesto a venderle parte de sus tierras, si él convencía a Mr. Irving de que su Banco le prestara el dinero necesario para la modernización de la Justicia" (Ferre 43). Sin embargo, sus descendientes no lograron sobrevivir a la incursión del nuevo colonizador y a pesar de lograr mecanizar la Justicia y doblar la producción terminan por vender la central a los estadounidenses dueños de la Central Ejemplo.

No obstante, esta decisión no se debe sólo a los conflictos de clase existentes, sino también a la problemática racial que impregna la sociedad puertorriqueña y que es expuesta con detalle en la narración.

Las estructuras sociales comprendidas en Maldito amor no sólo están cimentadas en la posesión de tierra, sino que se encuentran íntimamente ligadas al concepto de la raza\(^2\). Ser negro o mulato implica ocupar el papel de colonizado y, por lo tanto, poseer las características que se han adjudicado como inherentes a su condición de subordinado: salvajismo, vagancia e ineducación. Esta ideología se ve reflejada en la narración a través de la figura de Aristides, quien argumenta que Nicolás: "decidió ganarse la idolatría de esos salvajes recién descolgados de los árboles, que cultivan a regañadientes nuestras tierras [...]" (Ferre 52). El pensamiento de Aristides no sólo tiene el propósito de justificar la situación de sumisión de los trabajadores sino que valida su posición como colonizador. Según Albert Memmi, "Nothing could better justify the colonizer’s privileged position than his industry, and nothing could better justify the colonized’s destitution than his indolence" (79).

De igual forma, ser negro o mulato involucra una asociación directa con el sistema esclavista. Titina es víctima de esta asociación. En su narración, Hermenegildo se refiere a ella como “Titina, la última esclava del pueblo, la criada sempiterna de los De la Valle” (Ferre 37). De esta afirmación se desprende, en primer lugar, el reconocimiento de que la negritud de Titina la ubica en una posición de inferioridad similar a la del esclavo, aun cuando formalmente no existe esclavitud. En segundo lugar, el carácter eterno e inmóvil de tal condición; Titina nunca dejará de ser la criada de los De la Valle. Más aun, nunca dejará de ser negra.

\(^2\) Aquí hemos adoptado la definición que propone Barriteau para el concepto raza “a social construct, a created set of social relations that recreate groups of people as physiologically distinct and, as a result, perceived as superior or inferior to others” (10). Vease Eudine Barriteau, The Political Economy of Gender in the Twentieth-Century Caribbean (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2001) 10.
El distanciamiento social que provoca la diferencia racial es expuesto por la propia Titina al indicar que “los blancos, por más simpáticos que sean, siempre son blancos, y entre ellos se entienden” (Ferre 26-27). Igualmente, Titina advierte que su condición de liberta no cambia su sujeción económica y social sino que perpetúa su carácter de colonizada. Al carecer de bienes propios, Titina se ve obligada a seguir trabajando a cambio de “un sueldo de miseria” (Ferre 29).

Ahora bien, la diferencia étnica no se circunscribe a la figura del negro, ya que también abarca la del mulato. El mulato es el resultado de la mezcla racial producto de la colonización de la población indígena y la posterior importación de esclavos africanos.

En Puerto Rico la mezcla racial fue evidente desde los primeros momentos de la conquista española. Sin embargo, se fomentó la creación de sistemas de categorización que certificaran la pureza racial de la clase dominante. Entre los sistemas conocidos se destaca la realización de árboles genealógicos y los archivos bautismales de la Iglesia Católica, que poseía registros exclusivos para negros y mestizos. Estos sistemas tenían el propósito de permitir a la clase dominante asegurar su posición como colonizador bajo el argumento de superioridad racial.

En Maldito amor, dichas prácticas quedan expuestas en la asociación que se hace entre los De la Valle y sus antepasados españoles: “La única pasión de las tías, que Ubaldino también compartía, consistía en investigar, […] las intrincadas ramas del árbol genealógico de los De la Valle. Que si la abuela mengana era hija de la condesa zutana, […] y por lo tanto, ellas eran tataranietas de las hijas del Cid” (Ferre 71). No obstante, en el texto se inscribe una crítica a esta afición y la obsesión del puertorriqueño con la raza a través del personaje de Laura. Doña Laura, esposa de Ubaldino De la Valle, rechaza el afán de su marido por aparentar “una pureza de sangre que no tenía que buscar” (Ferre 77). Del mismo modo, Laura expone la relación entre étnica y aceptación social al aludir al trato que recibieron sus hijas quienes eran consideradas mulatas por los miembros de la elite: “a pesar de que nuestras hijas llevaban un nombre ilustre y eran herederas ricas y bien parecidas, jamás eran invitadas a las fiestas que se celebraban en las casas de buena familia de Guamán” (Ferre 73).

Sin embargo, la relación colonizador / colonizado no se limita al plano racional sino que se extiende a los vínculos entre los géneros. En Maldito amor se plantea una correspondencia entre la sumisión que sufre la mujer y la dicotomía colonizador / colonizado, donde la mujer ocupa el papel de colonizado y el hombre el de

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colonizador. Esta forma de poder, según Foucault, se basa en la subjetividad y sumisión del individuo por medio de la clasificación en categorías y la imposición de verdades absolutas que deben reconocer y que los otros deben reconocer en ellos (7). En nuestra sociedad patriarcal, estas tipificaciones responden a las características asignadas a los sexos según la cual la mujer es un ser pasivo, puro, frágil y obediente mientras que el hombre es un ser activo, fuerte y montaraz.

La relación entre Doña Elvira De la Valle y Don Julio Font es un ejemplo del papel subordinado de la mujer. Don Julio domina la relación y posee la última palabra: “[Elvira] acató sin chislar la voluntad de su marido, dedicándose en cuerpo y alma a las labores de la Central” (Ferre 21). Pese a ello, se revela una tensión en la relación de poder entre ambos y un intento por parte de Elvira de “transgredir las regulaciones represivas del sistema” (Guerra-Cunningham 16), mediante los constantes pedidos de consideraciones para ella y los trabajadores. Pero estos esfuerzos, lejos de menguar la situación de subordinación, repercuten negativamente en su persona. Como consecuencia de ello, Don Julio utiliza la violencia y el dominio como formas de sujeción: “En casa las mujeres hablan cuando las gallinas mean, y te prohíbo que en adelante vuelvas a meter las narices en lo que no te importa. — Y mientras seguía golpeándola a diestra y siniestra […]” (Ferre 25). La violencia de Don Julio objetiviza a Elvira y la reduce a una mera de posesión, de la misma forma en que las manifestaciones de poder y tiranía que ejercen los hacendados contra sus esclavos deshumanizan y objetivizan a éstos últimos.

Sin embargo, no debemos perder de vista que existe una bifurcación entre los elementos de raza y género que plantea una doble problemática para la mujer. La posición de la mujer como colonizada no sólo tiene su génesis en el género sino también en la inferioridad racial (Oyúwúmi 342). La inferioridad racial tiene como consecuencia la creación de una esclavitud tanto física como sexual que se deriva de la tendencia a asociar el deseo con la raza. Dentro de esta asociación, la mujer mulata adquiere un cariz sensual y erótico que “invita” a la posesión, leáse colonización, de su cuerpo. Aristides revela esta correlación al referirse a Gloria como “una mulata hermosa, de éses que detienen el tráfico” (Ferre 50). Y al describir su relación como una de autoridad donde Gloria pasó de ser una “mujer de vida alegre” a una “muchacha morigerada y decente, atenta a mi menor capricho y sumisa a mi voluntad” (Ferre 50).

La identificación de Gloria como una “mujer de vida alegre” y posteriormente como “la puta del pueblo” (Ferre 58), resalta también el prejuicio sufrido por la mujer mulata con respecto a su honor o castidad. Según Suárez: “Women of African descent […] were believed to be inherently disreputable” (25). La supuesta falta de
decoro de la mujer negra o mulata contribuía al mantenimiento de su inferioridad. Así, cualquier intento por ganar un espacio social respetable es visto como una afrenta por los mismos hombres que se adjudican el derecho a poseer con ellas una relación amorosa. Por ello, Aristides se refiere a la posibilidad de que Gloria herede la Central Justicia como la “ambición de una sirvienta glorificada” (Ferre 45).

Ahora bien, la subordinación de la mujer negra o mulata no se basa sólo en la posesión de su cuerpo sino también en su marginalización. Como colonizada, la mulata queda limitada a ocupar el papel de concubina puesto que, como afirma Urrea, “su procedencia popular, escrita en el color de la piel, no le permite introducirse en el círculo aristocrático” (297). Sin embargo, según Suárez, los hombres, como colonizadores, “asserted the right to rape, seduce, and establish long-term informal relationships with plebeian women, while marrying women of their own class” (30). La facultad de poseer relaciones extra-maritales que los hombres entienden inherente a su posición de colonizador queda evidenciada tanto en la relación entre Aristides y Gloria como en la afirmación de que algunos de los peones de la Central Justicia eran hijos ilegítimos de Ubaldino De la Valle (Ferre 52).

Todas estas relaciones de poder develan las luchas internas que la elite criolla intentaba aplacar por medio de la creación de una retórica que apelara al sentimiento nacionalista de los grupos en pugna. En Puerto Rico, al igual que en el resto de Latinoamérica, el proyecto de identidad nacional fue trabajado e implementado a través de la literatura. No obstante, dicho proyecto tuvo dos fases. La primera, anterior a 1898, donde se pretendía consolidar el proyecto nacional de la elite liberal y la segunda, posterior a 1898, donde se promovía una vuelta a la majestuosidad de un tiempo pasado en que dicha elite aún conservaba el poder económico y político.

La nostalgia por un pasado no recuperable, pero que se perfila como preferible al que pretende imponer el nuevo estado imperialista, se manifiesta en las alabanzas contenidas en la novela de Hermenegildo Martínez al estilo de vida que existía en Guamani y a los elementos naturales que dominaban la región. Guerra-Cunningham indica que:

La oposición entre los elementos típicos de la flora y la fauna de Puerto Rico y el poder foráneo se relaciona con la homología histórica establecida entre el poder imperialista y el país sub-desarrollado [. .]. La aniquilación de lo primitivo y natural en un intento por subyugar económica y culturalmente en nombre de la civilización, se presenta . . . desde la perspectiva del dominado quien concibe el consumismo, [. .] y la tecnología como manifestaciones de una estructura de poder que aniquila el verdadero ser. (18)
Cabe recordar que la conexión con la naturaleza era esencial para la elite dominante pues representaba su modo de subsistencia y la estabilidad de su hegemonía política y económica.

No obstante, la pérdida del control sobre la tierra no es único elemento que pone en jaque la posición de la clase hacendada. La implantación de instituciones y leyes extranjeras que benefician al nuevo colonizador son combatidas desde el punto de vista del colonizado mediante la exaltación de las antiguas e ilustres instituciones hispánicas. En el ámbito del derecho, el Código Civil se convirtió en el máximo ejemplo del carácter justo y civilizado del puertorriqueño; lo que contrastaba con la visión que poseía el colonizador de nuestro carácter bárbaro e incivilizado. En la novela de Hermenegildo Martínez, el Código Civil y su Derecho de Retro representan las bondades de la herencia hispánica: “El derecho al que se refería se llamaba el Derecho de Retro, y era un derecho muy antiguo del Código Español, que Mr. Arthur y Mr. Durham desconocían” (Ferre 67). Además, constituyen el arma que le permite a Ubaldo De la Valle recuperar la Central Justicia, icono alrededor del cual Hermenegildo Martínez conceibe su proyecto nacional.

Sin embargo, a este pasado mitico se opone la figura de Aristides como representante de la decadencia de la clase hacendada y su inevitable condición de colonizado. Para lograr la supervivencia económica de su familia Aristides se ve en la necesidad de aliarse con el nuevo colonizador: “he sido siempre amigo de mis poderosos vecinos, los dueños de la Central Ejemplo, y ha sido dándoles de comer del ala, cediéndoles algunos terrenos baldíos [. . .] que nuestra familia ha logrado seguir comiendo del muslo durante estos últimos años” (Ferre 49). Más aun, Aristides adopta a regañadientes la lengua del colonizador, vulnerando con ello la postura de su clase con respecto a la grandeza de la lengua y la herencia hispánica: “me aprendía de memoria todas las nuevas técnicas en esa lengua grosera y bárbara; y no cejé mis esfuerzos hasta que llegué por fin a soñar en ella” (Ferre 50).

El afán por evitar la colonización total y la consecuente pérdida de poder de su clase lleva a Hermenegildo Martínez a crear un texto literario donde la figura del hacendado-patriota se presenta como el defensor incansable de la identidad puertorriqueña. La literatura se presenta entonces como medio para “re-escribir” la historia desde la perspectiva de la clase dominante y orientarla hacia su proyecto político nacional. Empero, el proceso historicista depende de la creación de figuras míticas y heroicas que infundan un sentimiento de orgullo nacional y creen un sentido de pertenencia. Hermenegildo Martínez, consciente de ello, reconoce que:

4 El artículo 1412 del Código Civil de Puerto Rico lee como sigue. “El copropietario de una cosa común podrá usar del retracto en el caso de enajenarse a un extranjero la parte de todos los demás conduciendo o alguno de ellos”. Véase: Código Civil de Puerto Rico, 31 L.P.R.A. § 3922.
“Toda nación que quiera llegar a serlo necesita sus líderes, sus caudillos preclaros, y, de no tenerlos, le será necesario inventarlos” (Ferre 36).

Ahora bien, como indica Chanady “[the nation-building process] is also based on forgetting [...] particularly unpleasant incidents in the past [...]” (183). Por ello Hermenegildo Martínez recurre al “olvido” de todo aquello que desestabilizaría el predominio de la clase social que representa y nos presenta una visión transfigurada del prócer Ubaldino De la Valle: “Pero estos desgraciados sucesos es mejor perdonarlos, eclipsarlos con las relaciones edificantes de aquellos gestos de los que nuestros próceres también han sido capaces” (Ferre 36).

No obstante, la novela de Hermenegildo no puede evitar caer en las contradicciones que encierra la apropiación sin integración de la figura del “otro”. Tanto su discurso hegemónico como su contenido machista y clasista son cuestionados durante la narración. Pues como bien señala Sommer, “Hegemony, after all, is not an egalitarian project, but one that legitimates the leadership of one social sector [...]” (82).

El concepto paternalista de la elite liberal puertorriqueña donde el hacendado cuida por el bienestar de los trabajadores como un padre de familia pierde efectividad dentro de la misma novela al enfrentar los puntos de vista de doña Elvira y don Julio. Según doña Elvira: “Los De la Valle hemos sido siempre estanciers pero nunca negreros [...]” (Ferre 23). Sin embargo, Julio Font argumenta que: “tan negreros habían sido los De la Valle como el resto de los hacendados de la comarca [...]” (Ferre 25). Lo anterior implica que las bases de la economía que permiten el predominio de la clase hacendada, lejos de estar fundadas en el bienestar del “otro” (negro / mulato / pobre) están cimentadas en su constante explotación. Sin importar la raza del que se posicione en la escala superior (blancos o mulatos), el mantenimiento de los privilegios que derivan del sistema de hacienda depende de la sumisión y esclavización del trabajador.

Igual sucede con la posición de la mujer. La narración revela un choque entre la posición conservadora de la elite con respecto a la mujer y los cambios que se estaban experimentando en la sociedad puertorriqueña. Según el proyecto nacional de la elite los roles patriarcales debían ser conservados para asegurar el dominio del hombre. Por ello, el lugar preferible para la mujer era la casa: “nuestros hijos estudiaban en Europa y nuestras hijas aprendían las virtudes excelsas de la maternidad” (Ferre 18). Con todo, esto no implicaba necesariamente que la mujer no podía recibir educación, sino que su educación debía tener como fin hacerla más efectiva en los roles que históricamente se le han asignado. La inclusión de la mujer en el ámbito reservado a los hombres seguía vedada. Por ello, Elvira De la Valle
nunca logra equiparar su situación a la de su marido, a pesar de los innumerables intentos por hacerlo.

Sin embargo, es la falsedad, la contradicción y la intransigencia del proyecto nacional lo que provoca su fracaso. Fracaso que es confirmado por el matrimonio de las hijas de Ubaldino De la Valle con los hijos de los estadounidenses dueños de la Central Ejemplo y la eventual venta de la Central Justicia a éstos.

El fiasco del proyecto de identidad nacional es denunciado por los personajes femeninos puesto que, como acertadamente señala Urrea, Ferré utiliza el cuerpo femenino como “metáfora múltiple desde donde se revela el complejo funcionamiento de las relaciones de poder en cuanto a sexo, clase y raza” (280). Titina, por ejemplo, denuncia la perenne inferioridad que sufre la mujer negra y que está ligada tanto a su género como a su etnicidad. La abolición de la esclavitud lejos de terminar su subordinación le otorgó un nuevo cariz. La clase liberal entendía que: “only men were producers while women’s primary obligation was to the patriarchal family. Nevertheless, freedwomen on the island, unlike their upper-class counterparts, were expected to labor, preferably in occupations considered appropriate to their sex (such as domestic-related work) [. . .]” (Rodriguez-Silva 200). Esto no sólo implicaba la inculcación de las ideas patriarcales respecto a las labores que corresponden a los sexos, sino también la perpetuación de la posición servil de estas mujeres. Así, la narración de Titina deja claro las contradicciones entre la visión de la clase hacendada: “Usted sabe lo generosiño que era el Niño Ubaldino [. . .]” (Ferre 27), y la explotación racial subsumida en el proyecto nacional mediante la intercalación de comentarios que destacan su posición servil: “como me decía riendo mientras yo le servía el café [. . .]” (Ferre 34).

De igual forma, Laura y Gloria exponen posturas que contravienen el proyecto de identidad nacional. Tanto Laura como Gloria cuestionan la posición de sumisión que les adjudica la elite patriarcal al presentarse como mujeres fuertes y trabajadoras. Laura se agencia una posición igualitaria al reclamar que se hizo cargo de gran parte de la administración de la Central y que gracias a los esfuerzos aunados de ella y Ubaldino lograron hacer de la Central Ejemplo una de las más productivas del valle (Ferre 73). Mientras que Gloria expone su fuerza de carácter mediante la destrucción de todo lo que representa el dominio burgués y que causa la sumisión de su persona: la casa de los De la Valle.

Finalmente, la falsedad sobre la supuesta incorporación del “otro” es revelada por Laura al descubrirnos la verdad sobre el linaje de los De la Valle: “Don Julio Font, era negro” (Ferre 75). Tanto esta aseveración como el hallazgo de la mentira de Hermenegildo Martínez sobre el origen de los De la Valle, ponen en duda la
La imagen de la “gran familia” compuesta por todos los elementos raciales que integran la sociedad puertorriqueña. La “gran familia” no pretende incluir el elemento africano que contiene sino el blanco-europeo que necesita para asegurar su dominio sobre los demás. Así, los defensores de la patria se convierten en simples políticos que por un lado defienden la independencia e identidad del pueblo puertorriqueño y por otro se oponen a perder sus beneficios como clase privilegiada.

Una vez integramos esta problemática de la identidad nacional a la de las relaciones de poder observamos que las mismas se caracterizan por su interrelación y complejidad. Éstas se ven afectadas tanto por la situación política del momento como por las creencias y prejuicios de los miembros de cada clase. Por ello, ante la llegada de un nuevo colonizador se construye un mundo mítico que garantiza la hegemonía de la clase hacendada; ante el reclamo de hegemonía se alzan las voces de marginadas que cuestionan el proyecto nacional; ante la imposición de los valores patriarcales se impone el deseo de independencia e igualdad de las mujeres; ante el reclamo de pureza racial se presenta la realidad del mestizaje.

La multiplicidad de visiones lleva a cuestionar las intenciones de la clase que se confiere la potestad de definir la identidad nacional, el papel asignado a la literatura por dicho grupo y los que componen la cúspide de la estructura jerárquica son expresadas de forma oral por quienes se encuentran en la base. Como corolario, se destaca la inadecuacidad de un proyecto nacional que falla en integrar todos los componentes de la sociedad puertorriqueña.

Obras Citadas


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Allpamama: El regreso de los otavaleños a sus tierras

By Adam W. Coon, University of Utah

"El indígena otavaleño está obligado a regresar porque es su terruño, porque su familia está allá, porque ama tanto a su tierra, porque le dio un espacio de renacimiento y muchos otros aspectos."

Luz María de la Torre, Entrevista, 10 noviembre 2005

"La tierra ha sido siempre toda la alegría del indio," escribe José Carlos Mariátegui; él explica que, "El indio ha desposado la tierra. Siente que 'la vida viene de la tierra' y vuelve a la tierra. Por ende, el indio puede ser indiferente a todo, menos a la posesión de la tierra en sus manos y su aliento labran y fecundan religiosamente" (4). El pueblo otavaleño en el Ecuador es un ejemplo de este sentimiento fuerte por su tierra. Luz María de la Torre, una lider del movimiento otavaleño para las mujeres, proclama que "es el fuerte sentimiento de pertenencia que existe con su sitio que le dio seguridad, le vio nacer, se alimentó en ese sitio, y todas sus relaciones sociales, ahora políticas y económicas, son las que han hecho casi una obligación para que el otavaleño regrese a su terruño" ("Re: Estudios Otavaleños").

El caso del pueblo otavaleño es un ejemplo sumamente interesante porque muchos salen no sólo del pueblo sino del país para vender sus artesanías. En contraste con otros grupos, estos artesanos sólo viajan y no emigran. De la Torre explica que "al otavaleño [este viaje] le sirve solamente para intercambiar sus saberes y [los] productos de sus saberes, que es la mercaderia artesanal" ("Re: Estudios Otavaleños", inserción mía). Después de "probar una diferente realidad .. . va a alimentar a su propio pueblo" ("Re: Estudios Otavaleños"). Varios estudios sobre el pueblo otavaleño hacen mención de este sentimiento fuerte por sus tierras; sin embargo, estas investigaciones no analizan específicamente de dónde proviene esta conexión. Este estudio expone que las raíces de este sentimiento se ven en la literatura otavaleña y su enumeración de la cosmovisión, las tradiciones, los movimientos sociales y el idioma de este pueblo.

Luz María de la Torre aporta un gran conocimiento sobre el pueblo de Otavalo. En Historia del movimiento de mujeres, ella expone el movimiento otavaleño para la reivindicación de la mujer en todo el mundo. Esta historia se relaciona con este estudio en su explicación de la cosmovisión de su gente. En La reciprocidad en el mundo andino: El caso del pueblo de Otavalo, De la Torre y Carlos Sandoval explican la tradición de la minga y otras tradiciones de reciprocidad entre el pueblo.
indigena. El diccionario español-quichua que ella escribió sirve para recalcar la importancia de la tierra desde una perspectiva lingüística.

Germán Patricio Lema es un otavaleño que ha ayudado a su pueblo a progresar y valorar su cultura. Él escribe las historias y literatura de su pueblo en Los Otavalos: Cultura y tradición milenarias. En Andean Entrepreneurs, Lynn A. Meisch entrevista a varios otavaleños, quienes se convierten en fuentes primarias. Otras fuentes servirán para mostrar la historia más antigua de la región ecuatoriana. El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega explica en Comentarios reales las creencias indígenas antes de la Conquista y expone su cosmovisión.

Entre estas fuentes el fuerte sentimiento por la tierra del pueblo Otavalo se destaca. Su cosmovisión valora la tierra no sólo como el lugar que los vio nacer, sino como un miembro o ayllu (pariente) de su familia. Las tradiciones como la minga también unen al pueblo y aumentan el aprecio por la tierra puesto que estas tradiciones se centran en ella. Hay movimientos como el de las mujeres que sirven para mejorar los problemas pertinentes al pueblo. Al mejorar las condiciones en el pueblo, estos movimientos hacen que sea más placentero quedarse en su tierra. En un análisis lingüístico, el kichwa contiene elementos que señalan este aprecio a la tierra. A la vez, este idioma ha sido reivindicado por medio de un programa bilingüe; esto ha rescatado elementos culturales que forman parte del idioma y creado un sentimiento comunal más fuerte entre los otavaleños. El conjunto de estos elementos crea un lugar donde los indígenas "se sienten como en el aire" y "tienen necesidad de volver a ver a su ayllu, a su familia, a su allpamama" (De la Torre, Presentación, 7 noviembre 2005).¹

Los runas y su allpamama: La cosmovisión otavaleña

Un elemento fundamental de la cultura otavaleña es su "cosmovisión integral y armónica del mundo" (De la Torre, Reciprocidad 16). Con el progreso del pueblo de Otavalo en la década de los ochenta, los indígenas empezaron a valorar esta "filosofía propia: cuáles son las aspiraciones, cuáles son los pensamientos, cuál es la cosmovisión de los indígenas" (De la Torre, Entrevista, 9 noviembre 2005). Comenzaron a apreciar "todo este tema filosófico, todo el tema de sabiduría" (9 noviembre 2005). Estudiaron su propia cosmovisión y los principios que contiene.

En vez de aceptar filosofías extranjeras, el pueblo de Otavalo llegó a crear sus propias soluciones desde su propio pueblo. Los otavaleños dejaron "esa visión paternalista o maternalista en donde al indígena […] le veían como un niño, como un

¹ El autor tiene permiso de usar las entrevistas y presentaciones de Luz María de la Torre
invalido, como un sin alma” y empezaron a ver “nuestras necesidades, viendo nuestros ideales, viendo cuáles eran nuestros sueños, cuáles podían ser nuestros proyectos al futuro” (9 noviembre 2005). De la Torre pone énfasis en que “nadie nos viera elaborando porque hasta aquí todos eran elaborados por alguien [fuera del pueblo de Otavalo)” (9 noviembre 2005, inserción mía). Ella sostiene que las soluciones residen en su propia idiosincrasia tradicional.

Una de esas filosofías es el valor de su allpamama. La cosmovisión otavaleña describe la tierra como un elemento sagrado de la vida humana. La tierra es la madre que les vio nacer: “De ahí que se atribúa de que el feto habría sido concebido de los montes, lagos, arco iris, cerros, y de que su vida prenatal la habría desarrollado en grutas, pozos, grietas” (De la Torre, Movimiento 29). Existe la misma referencia a la madre en otros idiomas como la frase “madre tierra” del español y “mother earth” del inglés. Para los indígenas la allpamama significa mucho más que en los otros idiomas, puesto que no existe para ellos el concepto de un “padre” que domina y subyuga la naturaleza a su voluntad como en el español y el inglés. Los términos “madre tierra” y “mother earth”, tiene la connotación del “sexo débil” o un elemento que controlar. La literatura española e inglesa representan a la tierra como una mujer “fértil” y lista para la dominación del hombre. De la Torre muestra la diferencia de la cosmovisión indígena con la vista occidental cuando explica que la “ausencia del padre [...] nos hace ver [...] la estima que los andinos sentían hacia la maternidad” (29).

La reivindicación de esta cosmovisión reta las discriminaciones sufridas por los indígenas. Por ejemplo, la palabra runa ha llegado a significar algo de poca calidad o ilegítimo en el Ecuador, pero antes significaba completamente lo opuesto en la cultura indígena. El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega explica que los incas, “para diferenciarle de los brutos le llaman runa, que es hombre de entendimiento y razón” (De la Vega 60). Los otavaleños interiorizaron el significado negativo de esta palabra por un tiempo. Ni siquiera querían admitir que eran indígenas. Ahora ellos han revalorado su cosmovisión y salvado el significado verdadero de runa. Actualmente los otavaleños usan este término con orgullo para referirse a sí mismos. Como runas, ellos forman una parte integral de esa importante cosmovisión. Este aprecio hacia su propia cultura y gente los atrae a quedarse en su tierra natal y hacerla crecer.

En estas creencias resurgidas, no sólo tienen vida los seres humanos:

También la comparten los animales, las plantas, los minerales, los suelos, los ríos, los cerros, las piedras, las aguas, los vientos, las nubes, las neblinas, las lluvias, los wayku (quebradas), los pukyu (manantiales). (De la Torre, Reciprocidad 19)
Estos elementos no sólo tienen vida, sino forman parte de su familia. En el Ayllu (la familia grande) de la cosmovisión otavaleña, no solamente "son parientes los runas (los seres humanos), sino todo lo que en la naturaleza coexiste con ellos: los ríos, los cerros, las piedras, las estrellas, las plantas, los animales, etc." (22). Así, la tierra es un elemento vivo al cual respetar. Los otavaleños declaran, "No somos de otro lugar/somos gente de Peguche" (Lema 16). Sobresale "el respeto" y la veneración para la Pachamama, "la madre naturaleza" porque "nos da los alimentos y nos protege" (24, inserción mía).

Describiendo esta tierra como un ser vivo, Germán Patricio Lema describe un pueblo "[a] los pies del taita Imbabura, rodeado de colinas [donde] se asienta el hermoso valle de Otavalo" (13, inserción mía). Lema también habla de este pueblo como un lugar sagrado "pintado de lagunas, caminos y maizales; donde el sol, cada mañana se levanta a saludar a la gente y regir el día como astro mayor del universo" (13). Los alrededores tienen vida en "este valle señorreado por montículos, [donde] se hondonean las tranquilas aguas de la laguna de San Pablo, y una multitud de garzas que alzan su vuelo al limpio cielo" (13, inserción mía). En este entorno, los otavaleños viven en "el eterno encanto de su tierra" (13).

Se nota la diferencia entre la visión occidental y la de los otavaleños con la llegada del movimiento marxista al pueblo. De la Torre explica que hubo un choque de términos. Los marxistas se basaban en el "materialismo dialéctico e histórico", el cual para los indígenas era "una confusión terrible" (Entrevista, 9 noviembre 2005). Los indígenas hablaban de la allpamama y la pachamama, elementos de los cuales nunca podía hablar un marxista (9 noviembre 2005). Para el otavaleño, la tierra no era una base material, sino el elemento más significativo de la vida. Nina Pacari Vega explica que, a diferencia de las sociedades occidentales, "Los pueblos indígenas no han sido concebidos como sujetos económicos" (ctd. en De la Torre, Reciprocidad 12). La tierra no es vista como una comodidad económica, sino un sitio sagrado para su ayllu y comunidad. De la Torre y Sandoval enseñan la diferencia con la vista occidental hacia sus entornos y allpamama al declarar que "[...] la causa del problema es la concepción egocéntrica del hombre frente a la naturaleza" (58). En contraste con esta concepción egocéntrica, el otavaleño venera la tierra en su cosmovisión.

**Tradiciones Milenarias**

Junto con su cosmovisión, los otavaleños preservaron sus tradiciones a pesar de siglos de discriminación. En respuesta a la Conquista, el pueblo otavaleño ha tenido que "reconquistar ese mundo que ha estado claudicado [...] que es el mundo
indígena" (De la Torre, Entrevista, 10 noviembre 2005). Santiestevan escribió en 1808 que los indígenas estaban "inclined to laziness and drunkenness" (ctd. en Meisch 27). Al principio de Cumandá, José León Mera comenta sobre los indígenas que "[p]ocas veces volveremos la vista a la sociedad civilizada" (León Mera 95). José María Cotacachi explica que los "indígenas had to get off the sidewalks for the people with neckties" (ctd. en Meisch 37). En Huasipungo, los mestizos tratan a los indígenas como animales de carga para construir una carretera que cruza por sus propias tierras--"centenares de runas que bien pueden servirte para abrir el carretero" (Icaza 82). Los otavaleños fueron discriminados y desplazados de sus tierras. El desplazamiento llegó a ser tan serio que en el censo de 1960, la población de Otavalo era solamente 8% indígena (Meisch 37).

Ante este pasado de discriminación, el pueblo otavaleño ve la responsabilidad de hacer progresar a su pueblo. De la Torre explica que "nos pesa una gran historia que hemos heredado de nuestros ancestros" (Entrevista, 10 noviembre 2005). Sus antepasados tuvieron que pasar por una marginación y discriminación fuerte en la época colonial y poscolonial. Ella también habla del efecto que esa historia tiene para su pueblo:

Esa marginación, esa exclusión, ese estigma que han colocado sobre nuestra población, sobre nuestro pueblo, ha sido uno de los motivantes para que podamos seguir heredando la fuerza, la lucha, de nuestros antepasados, de nuestros ancestros, de nuestros familiares, de nuestros abuelos, abuelas." (10 noviembre 2005)

Esta lucha ha ayudado al pueblo de Otavalo a sobresalir y crecer en porcentaje de población indígena. En el censo de 1995, se registró que la población de Otavalo era 70% indígena (Meisch 66). Se declaraba ahora que "the Otavaleños are the owners of Otavalo" (66). A pesar de la integración en el mercado de hoy día, los otavaleños han preservado su cultura. Hablando de esta preservación, Frank Salomon explica que "Otavalo contradicts the steamroller image of modernization" (Salomon 421). Existe la idea de que las sociedades tradicionales "are critically vulnerable to the slightest touch of outside influence and wholly passive under its impact" (421). Los Otavaleños han mostrado que eso no es cierto porque participan en el mercado y a la vez preservan los elementos de su cultura.

Germán Patricio Lema pone énfasis en la importancia de las tradiciones de esa cultura y declara que "los otavalos formamos, quizás los únicos pueblos que hemos logrado sobresalir conservando nuestras tradiciones, a pesar de los años de colonización y conquista" (Lema 6). Estas raíces tradicionales son tan importantes que se comparan con las raíces de un árbol. El grupo otavaleño Peguche canta que
"[t]hose who do not recognize their historical origin and culture are like trees without roots" (ctd. en Meisch 135).

A fin de que las raíces de ese árbol cultural crezcan, tiene que tener tierra firme. Lema explica que la tierra de Otavalo es la madre de su “cultura milenaria”, es una “tierra viril” donde el otavaleño “exhíbe con sus trajes el placer que siente por [ella]” (13, inserción mía). Es el lugar donde puede estar con “su género, vestido de blanco, de sombrero, poncho y alpargates” (13). Las tradiciones sirven para aumentar el amor del indígena hacia su terruño. Este pueblo está envuelto en la “hechura de las montañas andinas [y] apegado a las costumbres de la tierra” (13, inserción mía).

Por estas tradiciones y su conexión con la tierra, los otavaleños han creado una “transmigración” en vez de una migración. Ellos mantienen los lazos con sus familiares en Otavalo y forman “multiple relationships—familial, economic, social, organizational, religious, and political—that span borders” (Basch 7). La familia es sumamente importante en su cultura. Los Ayllus (familias) forman un Ayllu más grande, llamado “la gran familia” o “Pacha local” (De la Torre, Reciprocidad 22). Al crecer, el pueblo sigue unificándose. La gran familia “se sigue agregando a otros Ayllus y Pachas” (22).

Entre estos familiares, los otavaleños preservan tradiciones que promueven la importancia de la tierra y su pueblo. La minga es una de estas prácticas solidarias y comunitarias donde “realiza[n] cualquier trabajo en donde no intermedia el dinero, sino más que las voluntades, más que las solidaridades, y más que estas complementariedades” (De la Torre, Entrevista, 10 noviembre 2005, inserción mía). Este esfuerzo es un “trabajo mancomunado y solidario” en el cual participan todo un grupo social para “ejecutar una obra de interés común” (De la Torre, Reciprocidad 29). Pueden realizar cualquier trabajo en beneficio de toda la comunidad, como “una siembra, abrir un camino, componer una acequia” (De la Torre, Entrevista, 10 noviembre 2005). No intermedia el dinero, solamente “la contribución de la fuerza de trabajo.” Mostrando esta actitud de reciprocidad, los otavaleños declaran, “Yo presto mis manos a mi vecino, por ejemplo para desyerbar su cultivo, porque él me presta las suyas cuando yo las necesito” (De la Torre, Reciprocidad 23). Aun los gobiernos locales usan esta tradición de “reciprocidad y mancomunidad de trabajo” y realizan trabajos de alta importancia, y así muestran “la eficacia del sistema que todavía está vigente en las comunidades” (De la Torre, Entrevista, 10 noviembre 2006).

Ellos logran llevar a cabo estos proyectos “sin haber malgastado y despilfarrado el dinero”, el cual es un problema contundente en el Ecuador (10 noviembre 2005).
El pueblo ha podido realizar “miles de obras a costos realmente ínfimos” (10 noviembre 2005). Esta tradición sirve para unir al pueblo y crea un sentimiento más fuerte por su tierra puesto que todos han participado en su desarrollo. Para ellos este trabajo comunal “no es solamente una actividad” sino “una institución social que aglutina lo organizativo, lo cultural, lo religioso y lo político de un pueblo” (De la Torre, Reciprocidad 31).

Hay celebraciones que se basan en este trabajo mancomunado. Por ejemplo, la minga se representa en la celebración Inti Raimi, donde la gente de la comunidad se divide en “dos ‘grupos de trabajo’.” (31). Esta celebración sirve para unir al pueblo en “varios de los principios [de la] economía comunitaria así como la ritualidad y lo sagrado” (Nina Pacari Vega, ctd. en Reciprocidad 14). En una invitación a esta festividad, los otavaleños escriben que Inti Raimi es “una fiesta milenaria que . . . nos ha permitido dar continuidad en nuestras vidas de generación en generación” (ctd. en Wibbelsman 165-6). Esta fiesta les ha servido para encontrar una identidad en los “espacios pluriculturales” (166). La creación de esa identidad les ayuda a unificarse como pueblo y así fortalecer el uno al otro en sus tierras. Estos festivos no sólo son días en que se reúne el pueblo para reconocer algún acontecimiento, sino una expresión de sus principios y aprecio a su tierra.

En estas celebraciones, la música juega un papel de suma importancia. Lema explica la importancia de la tradición musical y su letra para los indígenas como un “sentimiento vivo del pueblo, que se canta en honor a las cosechas, a la tierra, a los dioses, al hombre, a la vida y a la muerte” (Lema 109). En esta música sobran referencias a la tierra. En 1977, el grupo musical Peguche dijo que la música era una oferta para su allpamama, “symbolized by waterfalls, rivers, and springs, who transmits her vigor to our people, attenuat[ing] her song” (ctd. en Meisch 249). Ahora ese canto es un llamado a los otavaleños a regresar a sus tierras, “a profound echo to encourage a people who were silenced, humiliated, dispossessed” (249).

El uniforme o traje tradicional también sirve para unir al pueblo en esa tierra sagrada. En cuanto a la vestimenta, la otavaleña Breenan Conterón de Ilumán explica que se viste tradicionalmente porque es “la manera en que yo valoro y respeto a mis ancestros” (241). Los hombres llevan sombrero de fieltro, camisas blancas, ponchos azules y sandalias (Englebert 1). Tienen una única trenza larga detrás. Las mujeres llevan blusas con cuello y mangas plegadas, una falda azul o negra sobre otra falda blanca con un cinturón colorido, pulseras y un collar de varios cuentas (1). De la Torre recalca que esta vestimenta es “muy importante para nosotros, realmente, es más que una constitución de nuestro mismo espíritu” (Entrevista, 10 noviembre 2005). Es una forma de identificarse como otavaleño—“el
elemento de lucha, el elemento de presencia, el elemento de siempre estar abanderados en esta identidad” (10 noviembre 2005). Antes era visto como un elemento de desprecio, pero ahora se ha vuelto un “estandarte” para declarar, “Aquí estamos presentes, así somos, somos diferentes, y como diferentes queremos convivir en esta gran unidad que es planetaria” (10 noviembre 2005).

De la Torre y Sandoval recalan que la visión otavaleña contrasta con “la concepción mestiza de un mundo individual y egoísta” (Reciprocidad 26). En contraste con la cultura occidental de consolidar sus riquezas, en el pueblo otavaleño es “más importante tener ahora y compartirlo” (26). El conjunto de esta tradición crea una identidad otavaleña. Esta identidad crea un aprecio por esa tierra donde pueden estar identificados. Luz María de la Torre declara, “Yo si me siento mucho más específica y cuando dije soy del pueblo kichwa, soy de la nacionalidad kichwa del pueblo de los otavalos, entonces eso me da esa característica muy local, muy particular” (Entrevista, 10 noviembre 2005). Esta identidad está conectada con las tierras de Otavalo, puesto que es la cuna de tal identidad y allí se puede expresarse libremente con ella.

### Sobre el cimiento de sus dificultades: Movimientos sociales

El movimiento para las mujeres también une al pueblo, creando un sentimiento comunal y junto con eso creando el deseo de quedarse con su comunidad. Las mujeres que participan en este empeño buscan “reconstruir la palabra de las mujeres que fueron censuradas de modo casi imperceptible” (De la Torre, Historia 27). No aceptan la frase “Los trapos sucios se lavan en casa” (De la Torre, Entrevista, 9 noviembre 2005). Al luchar en contra de las percepciones que “detrás de un hombre hay una gran mujer” y “de que aunque pese, aunque mate marido es” (De la Torre, Historia 17), se reivindica una mitad del pueblo y las une en un esfuerzo mutuo. En vez de hablar de su pueblo como una utopía, los otavaleños crean soluciones para las dificultades entre su pueblo. Lynn Meisch entrevistó a una otavaleña que expresó que “A community develops from the foundation of its problems” (ctd. en Meisch 208). La mejora de estas condiciones atrae a los otavaleños también a regresar a sus tierras.

En esta reivindicación de la mujer, reconocen la importancia de la mujer entre su gente. Este movimiento ha expresado la importancia de la mujer en la enseñanza de sus hijos (o los hijos de otros) y toda la sociedad. Ellas les transmiten su cultura y tradiciones indígenas a ellos. De la Torre explica que “[c]uando una es madre, cuando una es mujer, no se forma solamente la mujer—cuando se forma una madre, se forma al esposo, se forman los hijos, se forma una sociedad” (Entrevista, 9
noviembre 2005). Ella explica que las mujeres asumen esta responsabilidad de formar una sociedad que preserva las tradiciones. El movimiento ha hecho que las mujeres sean “muy conscientes de eso” (9 noviembre 2005). Ella concluye que con “Madres” solamente podíamos resumir esta expresión con sólo una expresión, ‘mujer’” (9 noviembre 2005). Así, las mujeres promueven esa cosmovisión y tradiciones ya mencionadas que veneran la tierra.

En el movimiento para las mujeres, también han rescatado la importancia de la mujer en la cosmovisión indígena. De la Torre también habla de la importancia de lo femenino en las creencias indígenas. Existe una veneración por lo femenino en la cosmovisión. Hay tres diosas que se destacan: Pachamama (Madre de todos los espacios y Tiempos, el Universo), Paxi Mama (La Luna Sagrada) y Mamacocha (la madre de todas las aguas, el mar). Ella explica que estas diosas “inclusive tuvieron un predominio sobre los elementos masculinos” (Historia 28) Esto recalca la importancia del concepto de la allpamama (“madre tierra”). La tierra es la madre que les dio vida y por eso es “una obligación” regresar a su tierra natal. El regreso a su tierra es como el regreso a su madre. Esta idea de la madre en la naturaleza se ve en el nombre de los elementos de la geografía, como “Mama Cotacachi” [La madre montaña] (Meisch 11).

Las otavaleñas, junto con el resto del pueblo, han trabajado por hacer progresar a su pueblo en el ámbito político ecuatoriano. Desde la década de los ochenta, los indígenas del Ecuador poco a poco comenzaron a surgir con voz propia en la política. En 1997, crean un movimiento político llamado Pachakutik donde el pueblo indígena “se lanza con sus propios candidatos” (De la Torre, Entrevista, 9 noviembre 2005). Estos candidatos “arrasan con un voto nunca antes pensado” (9 noviembre 2005). Esta presencia en la política ha permitido al indígena a dar su voz en el Ecuador, y a la vez ha hecho que Otavalo sea una tierra mejor para su gente.

Otro movimiento en el pueblo de Otavalo es el regreso a sus tierras. Existe un concepto de “diáspora”. Hasta 1950, los mestizos y gente criolla estaban apoderados de las tierras de Otavalo y no permitían que los otavaleños intercambiaran en la Plaza de los Ponchos. Como los judíos desplazados, los otavaleños tuvieron que refugiarse en otros lugares antes de poder regresar a sus tierras (Meisch 156). Como los judíos, sienten morro por su tierra y vuelven a tierra sagrada.

El Pueblo de Otavalo declara, “Estas tierras son nuestras” (208, traducción mía). En luz de la situación, Washo Maldonado explicó que “necessity forces us to leave in order to live by those activities at which we are most able, artesanias and business.
And music” (ctd. en Meisch 156). Los otavaleños empezaron a salir adelante e ir de país en país para vender sus artesanías. Hay un sin número de ciudades donde se han visto otavaleños—Salta, Córdoba, Mar de Plata, Rio de Janeiro, Brusela, Hamburgo, Berna, Chicago, Honolulu, Salt Lake City, Montevideo, Venezuela y la lista continúa (165). Hasta hablan de “OVNIs” (Otavalos Voladores No Identificados) (165). Es común conocer a un otavaleño como a Luis Enrique Cabascango que menciona, “He viajado a veinticinco países” (ctd. en Meisch 165). Ellos regresan a sus tierras—a esa madre que los vio nacer.

En los años ochenta, este grupo de comerciantes internacionales comenzó a ahorrar dinero y con él ellos recompraron las tierras que habían perdido a los colonizadores. La gente mestiza vendió los terrenos a precios tan altos que “resultaba más barato una o dos casas con ese precio que vendían en Otavalo, podían comprar en la capital en Quito” (De la Torre, Presentación, 10 noviembre 2005). Compraron las tierras a pesar de eso y “comenzaron a edificar sus grandes edificios, sus grandes centros comerciales, administrados por ellos mismos” (10 noviembre 2005). En contraste con la época colonial y poscolonial, “ya no trabajaban para las haciendas, sino era un trabajo para su familia en donde daban trabajo a toda su comunidad” (10 noviembre 2005). De la Torre explica que la diferencia entre los otavaleños y emigrantes es que el otavaleño no se queda en el otro país. Ese otavaleño “está obligado a regresar porque es su terruño” (10 noviembre 2005). Tiene que regresar “porque su familia está allá, porque ama tanto a su tierra, porque le dio un espacio de renacimiento, y muchos otros aspectos” (10 noviembre 2005). Los otavaleños no valoran sus tierras por el valor económico, sino por el valor comunal, familiar y espiritual de estos espacios.

Runa shimi: Evidencia en la lingüística y la educación bilingüe

Luz María de la Torre cuenta que “mucha gente ha intervenido en los esfuerzos de poder pensar cómo educar al indígena, cómo alfabetizar al indígena” (Entrevista, 10 noviembre 2005). A pesar de esos intentos, ella comenta que “ninguno de ellos había contado sobre esa gran necesidad que los indígenas teníamos” (10 noviembre 2005). Esos programas buscaban alfabetizar, enseñar a leer y escribir y computar (10 noviembre 2005). El programa usaba el kichwa con el propósito de eventualmente eliminarlo. Como Fray Bernardino de Sahagún en sus estudios del idioma y cultura indígenas poco después de la Conquista, los primeros programas bilingües buscaban apoderarse del idioma indígena para luego poder persuadir al indígena a dejar sus costumbres. En la época colonial y poscolonial se veía el kichwa con desprecio, hasta lo nombraron yanga shimi (lengua humilde o sin valor) (Meisch
El propósito de estos programas era más bien europeizar al indígena en vez de respetar sus tradiciones. Tenían una actitud paternalista de ayudar a los "pobres indios." Buscaban solamente "enseñar [a los otavaleños] a leer y escribir y hacer un paso para llegar a la castellanización e integrarse en los estados nacionales" (De la Torre, Entrevista, 10 noviembre 2005, inserción mía).

El Estado veía a los indígenas más como un estorbo para el progreso que una rica parte de la cultura ecuatoriana. De la Torre menciona que eso era uno de los grandes errores de las primeras iniciativas para la educación bilingüe—no tenían "una visión completa" de que el indígena también contribuía a la sociedad con "sus propios principios" y que tenían "sus propias necesidades" (10 noviembre 2005). No buscaban propagar los idiomas indígenas, sino hacer una transición a la castellanización y al final la pérdida de las lenguas indígenas.

En la década de los ochenta, surge un programa bilingüe de los indígenas mismos. Un grupo de jóvenes "comienza a [dar] educación bilingüe [a] su propia gente, un proceso de alfabetización usando su propia lengua" (De la Torre, Presentación, 10 noviembre 2005). Ellos comienzan a usar su propia lengua como "recurso lingüístico, recursos culturales, recursos humanos, recursos del pensamiento propio" a fin de satisfacer las "múltiples necesidades para los indígenas" (10 noviembre 2005). Los maestros se preocupaban por esas necesidades especiales de los indígenas y el aprecio hacia la tierra se ve en esa educación misma. Uno de los líderes de esa educación explicó que "We are educated in the field, ... be it in agriculture or be it in music and arts" (citado en Korovkin 134). La preservación de su idioma ha servido para unir y atraer al pueblo a sus tierras. De la Torre comenta que "más que nada yo pienso que ayudó en una construcción psicológica de autoestima del pueblo" (Entrevista, 10 noviembre 2005).

De la Torre recalca que esta educación bilingüe "fue llevada por los propios maestros indígenas, por la propia población indígena, y hablada, e informada, y enseñada desde la misma población" (10 noviembre 2005). En vez de un programa paternalista, este programa tuvo una base más fuerte por venir de los mismos indígenas. Por eso, tuvo más efecto y muchos continúan en él y lo consideran "tan beneficioso para toda nuestra población" (10 noviembre 2005). Esta educación ha podido traer un "reconocimiento de estas diferencias lingüísticas, culturales" (10 noviembre 2005). Ahora hablan el kichwa con orgullo. Viendo este aprecio a su idioma, Lynn A. Meisch observaba en sus entrevistas que las otavaleñas decían a sus niños que el kichwa es "la lengua preferida de su gente" (Meisch 236). En torno, este aprecio por el kichwa creaba un sentimiento más fuerte por la tierra donde podían expresarse libremente en su idioma natal.
María Luz de la Torre publicó su libro *La reciprocidad en el mundo andino* en español y kichwa en el mismo volumen. Un idioma no domina al otro en estas traducciones ni está uno detrás del otro. Uno tiene que dar la vuelta al libro y se ve la misma portada pero en el otro idioma. El kichwa ya no es considerado como un idioma inferior al español, sino tan importante y rico como el castellano. Esto se ve en las clases de educación bilingüe que ahora no sólo son para alfabetizar al indígena, sino ayudarlo a sobresalir con su propia cultura. También, es una manera de compartirlo. Las clases no sólo son para los otavaleños, sino para cualquier ecuatoriano o extranjero que quiera aprender. El kichwa o *runa shimi* ("el idioma de la gente") ha surgido con fuerza y creado un sentimiento más fuerte entre los indígenas (232). Este surgimiento del idioma ha tenido el efecto de crear un sentimiento fuerte a su tierra, puesto que allí pueden expresarse en kichwa.

Este reconocimiento del kichwa ha traído a luz palabras que habían perdido su significado verdadero durante la época colonial y poscolonial. En kichwa *runa* significa "hombre" o simplemente "humano" (De la Torre, Diccionario 33). Esta palabra llegó a significar "el opuesto a lo fino" (De la Torre, Entrevista, 9 noviembre 2005). Llamar una cosa o a una persona *runa* era un insulto. En cuanto a los términos que antes se consideraban despectivos, los otavaleños declaran que "Estamos retomando esta[s] palabra[s]" (Meisch 204, inserción mía). Con orgullo se llaman **indígenas** y **runas**, lo cual antes era algo que escondían (204). Mario Conejo Maldonado, quien llegó a ser alcalde de Otavalo, explica que "acquiring confidence has been a long process" (ctd. en Meisch 203). Declara que "today we are proud to be Otavalo Indians" (203). Con el "renacimiento de la cultura indígena" y los "procesos de valoración identidadaria", María Luz de la Torre declara que "con este término que realmente nos han dominado, este término que nos han malinterpretado, la consigna ha sido si con runa nos pusieran en los sitios más inválidos, con el término runa nos vamos a levantar" (Entrevista, 9 noviembre 2005). El pueblo se levanta con su propio idioma y se siente orgulloso de él.

Más y más se ve la valoración del kichwa en público. Por ejemplo, esta revaloración del kichwa se ve en los nombres de los otavaleños. María Estela Vega cambió su nombre a *Nina Pacari* ("El fuego que despierta") (Meisch 234). Ella explica que estos intentos han tenido el efecto de poder "salvar el kichwa" (234). Luz María de la Torre también tiene otro nombre: *Achiq Pacha Saqil*. Además, el kichwa en la política se valora ahora. Mario Conejo Maldonado dio su discurso de inauguración como alcalde de Otavalo en español y en kichwa (240). Ya no es un idioma subyugado, sino el idioma de los otavaleños para expresar su cultura.
Esta revaloración ha hecho que sobresalgan los términos que se expresan mejor en kichwa que en español. Cuando De la Torre describe la tierra, ella usa muchas veces la palabra en kichwa *allpamama*. Se usa la palabra indígena *minga* en vez de usar una palabra que provenga del español (233). Eso da a entender que es un concepto tan importante que no se expresa lo suficientemente bien en otros idiomas.

La palabra *Allpamama* consiste de dos palabras: *allpa* y *mama*. *Allpa* significa “tierra” y *mama* significa “mamá” (De la Torre, Diccionario 39, 53). Parece que la etimología es igual a “madre tierra”, pero *allpamama* significa más para el indígena. Los otavaleños cantan: “allpa mamapash chapaqunchil/runacunata chapaqunchi” [“madre tierra” nos espera, a todos los hombres nos espera] (Lema 111). Para los indígenas la *allpamama* es un elemento vivo en su vida que les “espera”, que les da vida y los protege. El otavaleño Luis Enrique Cachiguango explica que hay que proteger a esa madre y, refiriéndose al abuso de la tierra en la economía global, dice que “no hay que hacer que esté pariendo y pariendo la *allpamama*” (ctd. en Wibbelsman 173). Hay que respetar esa tierra como uno respetaría a su madre.

Además, se usa la palabra *pachamama* para referirse al universo y la “madre naturaleza”. *Pachamama* está compuesta de dos palabras: *pacha* y *mama*. *Pacha* puede significar “gran familia” (De la Torre, Reciprocidad 22). *Mama* significa “mamá” (De la Torre, Diccionario 39). El conjunto de estas dos palabras para identificar la naturaleza es una muestra del aprecio del otavaleño por sus entornos. Hablan de ellos como miembro muy íntimo de su familia—como la mamá de su gran familia. *Pacha* también significa “sábana” y el uso de esta palabra para referirse a la naturaleza y la familia pueden ser un símbolo de la protección que esos elementos dan en la vida (50). Como una sábana protege del frío, la *pachamama* y gran familia son sitios de refugio y aceptación. Así, estos términos revalorados llevan en sí un significado que les lleva al aprecio hacia la tierra.

**Conclusión: La tierra de conocimiento alternativo**

En resumen, existe un fuerte sentimiento entre el pueblo otavaleño y su tierra por su cosmovisión de la *allpamama*, sus tradiciones basadas en el aprecio a la tierra, los movimientos indígenas para mejorar al pueblo y la revaloración del kichwa. La tierra no es vista como una comodidad, sino un lugar sagrado del cual nace su pueblo. Por eso, el otavaleño tiene “la obligación” de regresar a sus orígenes y no se queda interminablemente en otros países.

Sin embargo, no es un simple regreso a sus tierras. Los otavaleños no buscan regresar al pasado, sino usar sus tradiciones para proyectarse al futuro; no sólo para
su propio pueblo, sino para toda la humanidad. Esta proyección hacia toda la raza humana está comenzando a llamar la atención del mundo. Algunos estudios hablan de los “productores de conocimiento alternativo” al crear sus propios “native theoretical frameworks” (Rappaport 12). En este esfuerzo se destaca la importancia que es la tierra de su pueblo. Isabel Dulfano recalca en “Pluriculturalism in Latin America” que los “indigenous intellectuals are actively promulgating and articulating alternative models of knowledge” (16). Para los otavaleños, la tierra sirve como base para hacer esta proyección hacia no sólo los indígenas ni los americanos, sino todos los runas y ayllus (en todo su sentido) de la pachamama. También forma parte de esa proyección misma: una visión alternativa al occidente y su “concepción egocéntrica del hombre frente a la naturaleza” (De la Torre, Reciprocidad 58). De esta manera, se destaca por qué los otavaleños no pueden tener esa indiferencia hacia la tierra de la cual habla Mariátegui.

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The Role of Memory in the Aftermath of Massive Human Rights Violations

By Justin B. Atkinson, University of Utah

In this project I will analyze the role that memory plays in situations where a whole portion of society has been harmed, and then compare those concepts with the theories of memory presented in Funes, the Memorious, by Jorge Luis Borges, I Hope I Shall Arrive Soon, by Phillip K. Dick, and Death and the Maiden, by Ariel Dorfman.

The Spheres

Julia Kristeva writes and speaks extensively on the concept of forgiveness. When discussing the function of forgiveness, she refers to a necessary separation of the social and private spheres (Kristeva 278). I will attempt to adapt her theories of separation of spheres to the concept of forgetting, which will be shown along with memory, as necessary tools in the progression of a society.

How, then, can the apparently opposite functions of remembering and forgetting both be necessary? The answer is that the two functions are accomplished by different "actors" in society: first, private individuals, or groups of individuals who have experienced similar events; and second, the public as a collective actor. These different actors are referred to, respectively, as the private sphere and the public sphere. The private sphere is personal. Its activities are intimate, and an outside actor cannot force it to perform its functions. Choosing to forgive someone, or to forget some sort of injustice committed against someone, must be a choice taken voluntarily by that person or people, and therefore falls within the private sphere. To clarify, when I talk of forgetting, I am referring to the act of remembering something differently, in order to put something in the past. This is not in reference to the religious meaning of "forgiving and forgetting."

The private sphere, however, depends greatly on the social sphere's duty to "pave the way" in order to make private forgetting possible. The social sphere is the collective, encompassing a society as a whole, and each of its actions are taken on behalf of that society. As far as possible, this sphere should be used to create an exact record of historical events (Brooks 296), and at this public level, society must strive to portray justice. Although exacting justice is in no way black and white, and therefore should not employ a "one size fits all" approach, the social sphere must at least function to show that it actively pursues justice. Kristeva writes that "if there is judgment, the criminal must be punished. There is a public discourse, and it must be
continued as a discourse of condemnation, of settling accounts (Kristeva 283)."

When the two spheres work in tandem, fulfilling their duties, a society functions and progresses: the social sphere seeks out, and makes a record of crimes and abuses, rectifying the offenses with necessary punishments. Those that were harmed, after seeing justice, or an active pursuit of justice, will be allowed to believe and trust that the social sphere will create a permanent memory at the collective level. With that trust, stemming from justice, the duty then falls on those in the private sphere to forget those trespasses for the good of society. However, the social sphere is not perfect, and does not always fulfill its duty. Therefore, what happens to a society in which the social sphere malfunctions, and neglects a whole portion of its society that has been harmed? In many cases, and in the name of convenience, the public sphere will oblige the private sphere to forget not only the crimes that were committed against it, but society’s failure to seek justice as well. This failure, in effect, marginalizes portions of society, and works to condemn them as second-class citizens, effectively telling them that they are not good enough for justice. Also, the episode could be portrayed as nothing but an invention, rendering the victims untrustworthy in the eyes of their peers.

**Establishing a Public Memory**

Recently, Saddam Hussein was put on trial for planning and ordering massive human-rights violations in his own country. Holding those responsible for violations committed while they are in control of the public sphere seems like the logical and proper course of action. The obvious plan of the American invaders is to make sure that Hussein be tried in Iraq. Unlike many human-rights violators of international treaties prohibiting crimes against humanity, Hussein was not tried in The Hague, or in some other “outside” tribunal. On the contrary, he was tried in the very place where he committed the violations. Although many argue that Hussein’s trial was staged and directed by the Americans, it is significant that he was sentenced by an Iraqi judge; a sentence that was carried out by fellow Iraqis. The Iraqi society as a whole is in effect saying that Saddam and his cohorts committed these violations in Iraq, and were tried and sentenced, by Iraqis, for their actions. According to the design the Iraqi society, through a trial, is establishing a public record or memory. In this public and open manifestation, they are also demonstrating an action of justice, thus fulfilling the social sphere’s function. If the Iraqis view this as a resolution, and as actual justice, they can allow themselves to forget at a private level

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for the benefit of society. However, brutal dictators, who violate human rights, are not always obliged to appear in court, impeding the establishment of a public record, thus halting the progression of a society that is not allowed to move on.

The quest to bring about a public memory of justice in transitioning countries, going from a dictatorship to a democracy, or some other type of government, is especially tricky. All too often, the out-going government wields so much power that they are able to grant themselves a blanket amnesty for anything that they did, before permitting the country to have elections. Furthermore, even after the elections, the former military government continues to maintain effective control of important parts of government.

In the context of law, amnesty is an interesting word. The actual root of the word comes from the Greek “amnestia,” meaning “without memory.” Jurisprudence in the United States is familiar with this concept:

[a] pardon extended by the government to a group or class of persons, usually for a political offense; the act of a sovereign power officially forgiving certain classes of persons who are subject to trial but have not yet been convicted. Unlike an ordinary pardon, amnesty is usually addressed to crimes against state sovereignty - that is, to political offenses with respect to which forgiveness is deemed more expedient for the public welfare than prosecution and punishment. (Black’s Law Dictionary)

In the United States, it is the President or congress who wields the power to grant amnesty to a person or to a group of people. United States jurisprudence contains many examples of the courts recognizing and interpreting presidential and congressional grants of amnesty to groups such as southerners “warring against the United States (Knote v. United States),” and illegal “undocumented” immigrants (McNary v. Hatian Refugee Center, Inc). In fact, in an early amnesty case, the Supreme Court discussed a possible distinction between amnesty and pardon. The court stated that “[s]ome distinction has been made, or attempted to be made, between pardon and amnesty. It is sometimes said that the latter operates as an extinction of the offence of which it is the object, causing it to be forgotten, so far as the public interests are concerned, whilst the former only operates to remove the penalties of the offence. This distinction is not, however, recognized in our law (152). Interestingly enough, the court recognizes the function of amnesty as “causing [the offense] to be forgotten (Knote v. United States).”

In sum, amnesty, at least in the United States, acts to pardon the offenses in situations where forgiveness is deemed more expedient for the public welfare than prosecution and punishment. Imagine, however, if the President declared a military state, and used the army to torture thousands of people who disagreed with him. Further imagine that the President, in order to reestablish democracy, allows a free election provided that he be allowed to grant
amnesty to himself, and other interested parties. In such cases, it seems unfair that an interested President, in the name of public welfare, can give himself amnesty. Such is the case in many transitioning governments.

Some illustrative examples of transitioning governments in the aftermath of bloody dictatorships can be found in Latin-America. Historically, military coups are the chosen path for a dictator to take control, and these coups have been a very frequent occurrence in Latin-America.² In these military coups, or “golpes,” the military takes power via armed force, sets up a dictatorship, and oppression and serious human-rights violations almost certainly follow. After a certain amount of years, the dictatorship will “restore democracy,” or be forced out by non-militarized means.

A solid example of this process is the military coup that took place in Chile. In 1970, Chile democratically elected Salvador Allende from the socialist “Popular Union” party (Unión Popular). He was a life-time politician who worked in many different and important parts of the Chilean government. Although socialist, he also believed in free elections. In fact, Allende was the first socialist President ever to be elected (Foran). Although there are many different arguments regarding reasons for Chile’s declining economy (including recent declassified archives detailing heavy U.S. involvement (George Washington University Website)), General Augusto Pinochet used the economy as one of many justifications for his planning and implementing a military coup against Allende. On September 11ᵗʰ, 1973, Pinochet took control, and ruled for the next 17 years. From 1973 – 1978 (Vidal 240), there were massive human-rights violations. Pinochet’s plan incorporated public torture camps, including the national soccer stadium in the capital city (Cozzi), and secret torture camps in various parts of the country (Vidal). It is relevant to point out that there was no declared civil war, nor any declared subversive groups. This was state-sponsored terrorism and people were afraid to be seen with anyone with any type of connections with leftist groups, including student organizations and labor unions (Vidal 260).

In 1978, while Pinochet was still in power, he obliged the government to issue Decree 2191, a general amnesty to immunize Pinochet and other government and military officials from prosecution for crimes between 1973 and 1978 (263). In 1990, and in return for permitting a democratically elected government, Pinochet insisted on the adoption of a new constitution, which made him a member for life of the Chilean senate, rendering him immune from legal process in Chile (264).

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The same was the case in Argentina, when the outgoing “junta” (military government) declared a blanket amnesty when they “restored” democracy in Argentina. During their time, they carried out a systematic campaign of repression through kidnapping, disappearances, torture, and murder, as well as the illegal adoption of children, taken from those that were killed or tortured. It is estimated that 10 - 30 thousand people disappeared solely in Argentina (CNN Online). In effect, this self-proclaimed amnesty blocked the people who were harmed from making a public record—the exact objective of the court trying Saddam Hussein.

After the free election in Chile, the newly elected President, President Aylwin, set up a truth commission. (Stanley 590) This was an attempt to deal with the claims of the injured, as well as appease the prior regime who still maintained some control. The commission’s mission was to identify, and tell the stories of the tortured and disappeared. The commission, however, stopped short of prosecuting the perpetrators. In fact, the truth commission was not allowed to state the perpetrators’ identities. Aylwin, and the designers of the plan, understood the need to establish a public record, but were not able to complete a major function of the public sphere and manifest justice. Their hands were tied by the amnesty decree. (Van Dykel)

The amnesty decree, self-granted by Pinochet, was almost universally criticized by the rest of the world (curiously, it was not questioned by the United States or the United Kingdom). The Inter-American Commission, from the OAS (Organization of American States), is a panel of experts empowered to investigate and appraise human rights abuses. They reviewed a series of complaints filed by relatives of victims who had been arrested, and then disappeared under General Pinochet (Inter-American Commission on Human Rights). Under various theories, the aggrieved alleged that Amnesty Law 2191 was invalid. The council agreed, and found that the decree emanated from authorities who lacked the credentials and right, as they were not elected or appointed in any way, but usurped power after deposing the legitimate Government, in violation of the Constitution. Furthermore “[a] de facto Government lacks the legal authority, for if a State has adopted a Constitution, anything which runs counter to it also runs counter to the Law (Inter-American Commission on Human Rights).” The commission also agreed that those that benefited from the amnesty were not disinterested parties, but “the very accomplices of the acts perpetrated in keeping with the plans of the former military regime (Inter-American Commission on Human Rights).” In other words, they found that Pinochet’s decree of amnesty should not be legal.

The Chilean Supreme court, a few years later, recognized the same principles, and stripped Pinochet of immunity. However, they chose not to continue the
prosecution. Currently, because of the passage of time, Pinochet’s grip of the country has loosened, and there is no real threat of another coup. The country has the power to act, and must decide how to proceed as a country. The two most discussed courses of action are, first, to make a cut-off point for people to file complaints, and second, to continue the prosecutions as long as necessary. Each of these proposed courses of actions has its benefits and disadvantages. The first could be considered as another type of forced forgetting, while the second could be considered a continuous drudging up of the past. Both, however, deal with memory.

Memory, and the ability to forget is the topic of Jorge Luis Borges’ short story *Funes, The Memorious*. Funes is a young man who falls off of a horse and becomes unconscious. He awakens and finds himself with a perfect memory. In the story, Funes describes his situation to the narrator:

Previous to the rainy afternoon when the blue-tinted horse threw him, he had been—like any other Christian—blind, deaf mute, somnambulistic, memoryless. For nineteen years, he said, he had lived like a person in a dream: he looked without seeing, heard without hearing, forgot everything—almost everything. On falling from the horse, he lost consciousness; when he regained it, the present was almost intolerable it was so rich and bright; the same was true of the most ancient and most trivial memories. A little later he realized that he was crippled. This fact scarcely interested him. He reasoned (or felt) that immobility was a minimum price to pay. And now, his perception and his memory were infallible. (Borges 108)

Much like Funes, a whole portion of Chilean society (the same in Borges’ own Argentine society) had fallen, or been forcibly knocked down, and had become unconscious. In the name of progression, and from a real feeling of fear, they were forced to accept the amnesty, and forced to accept the unconsciousness. However, the lack of justice and desire for recognition made it impossible for them to stay unconscious. The public outcry was a societal awakening, making the present “intolerable, it was so rich and bright (108).” Upon awakening, the pain and resentment was as alive as ever, and like Funes, the victims remember every detail of the past abuses.

Memory, however, can be a double-edged sword. After Funes received his perfect memory, he hardly noticed that he had become crippled, and “reasoned or (felt) that immobility was a minimum price to pay (109).” Therefore, Funes, in his perfect memory was immobile. The question presents itself, then, that if groups of people remember all injustices, and are unable to forget, will they be immobile as well? In Funes’ case, because his memory was so perfect, he was unable to abstract, and thus could not put seemingly contradictory memories together (the memory of the dog from one angle versus the same dog, from another angle) in order to create something new (the same dog, just at different angles). Incapable of completing
regular, though abstracted thoughts, he continued to remember each of his memories in its separate form. This can also be related to the injured people of Chile. If they cannot forget, or think abstractly, in order to change how they react and view those past memories, they too will become immobile. Forgetting, then, can be seen as necessary for progression.

Following the Funes theory of memory, it would seem that the society must forget as a whole in order to move on, and escape Funes’ destiny. Augusto Pinochet himself reasoned the same when speaking at a business conference on the 20th anniversary of the coup. He stated that “[w]e have to be silent and forget. The only thing left, my friends, is to forget. And you do not forget by reopening a court case, by throwing someone in jail. F O R G E T [he spelled the word]. That is the word, and to achieve that, both sides have to forget (Amnesty International)” Although there may be a kernel of truth in what Pinochet says, does forgetting mean an illegal and forced amnesia of past abuses? How does that line of reasoning square with Sol Sierra’s (President of the Association of the Families of the Disappeared) comment about forgetting? She said that “[m]emory helps people so that the same crimes are not repeated; calling things by their real name, saying a criminal is a criminal... The worst that could occur in Chile is to think that by forgetting we will do away with the problem (Sierra).” These two opposite statements fit directly into Kristeva’s sphere theory. The public sphere is to remember (Sierra), and the private sphere is to forget (Pinochet). There is a problem, however, when the public sphere, before fulfilling its job, tries to force the private sphere to forget. Unless the private sphere is allowed to voluntarily resolve its memories, there is a great danger that those unresolved private memories will resurface “publicly” in the future.

The issue of unresolved memories is one of the topics discussed in I Hope I Shall Arrive Soon (Dick). A man, in the future, is trapped on a space ship embarked on a ten-year journey. He finds himself awake—when he should be in a cryonic state. This was the result of a malfunctioning ship; thawing him just enough to allow brain activity. “Everyone else aboard the ship lay in an unknowing state—he was the exception, as if bad karma had attacked him for obscure reasons. Worst of all, he had to depend totally on the goodwill of the ship.... He was, in effect, totally in the ship’s power (70).” The ship, in this case, can be related to Chile. The ship has malfunctioned, and continues to malfunction by not fulfilling its duty. As a result, a big part of the society is being harmed. Part of the malfunction is due to the state’s failure to seek the perpetrators and to recognize the crimes, permitting many people, not harmed, to believe that nothing ever happened and discredit those who say it did.
When commenting on the Chilean government’s contemplation of putting an end to any investigations, Alejandro Gonzalez, President of the Association for Reparation and Reconciliation, stated:

"It is unacceptable to try to put an end to the investigations and the state's duty to re-establish the truth. This would mean recognizing that more than a thousand perfect crimes were committed, without authors, in Chile, a country with a tradition and capacity to investigate. In our history there have been few crimes without author, except during the dictatorship. It will be very serious if the state gives up. There was no war here; there was a policy of state terrorism. Therefore, to me, it is essential to continue demonstrating the will to investigate. Impunity is a very bad signal from an educative point of view, it is not healthy. It is a very dangerous lesson for future generations to remember that nothing happened in relation to the crimes committed. (Amnesty International)

The people harmed, with no way to obtain justice on their own, have to depend completely on the goodwill of the "ship." Furthermore, if the ship does not act, they will become marginalized, disenfranchised and prone to fall through the cracks.

The Chilean military, like Pinochet, believes that people should simply forget the past. In an official statement, the army proclaimed that "[w]e must concentrate on the good points of our history, looking forward to the future, while forgetting the past (Vidal 264)." In I Hope I Shall Arrive Soon, the ship also comes up with a similar idea to remedy the problem. In order to keep the protagonist alive, the ship has to find a way to keep the protagonist's mind working for ten years. The ship decides to feed him his own memories over and over again: "I will feed you your own buried memories, emphasizing the pleasant ones (Dick 74)." Amazingly, the ship's plan of concentrating on the good points of history is almost exactly the same as the proposed plan of the Chilean military. However, although the fictitious ship thought the plan was solid, it quickly realizes that the protagonist's unresolved problems from the past start infiltrating and infecting all of his past memories, including the pleasant ones. In order to escape the problem, the ship decides to feed him projected "future" memories, which, too, become infected with his past. What happens is that past, unresolved memories, come back to haunt and influence other past memories and present thoughts. Furthermore, and as seen in the story, the underlying problem eventually affects future thought, and future actions. The ship asks, "[w]here does the flaw lie? . . . [w]orry dormant in the man; underlying anxieties. What has happened is that massive subliminal insecurities have taken possession of him; the fault is not mine, but lies, instead, in his psychological makeup (75)." The ship continues, stating that "[t]here is too much fear in him and too much guilt. He has buried it all, and yet it is still there, worrying him like a dog worrying a rag (75)." Hence, even if the new government or "space ship" has the best intentions, unless it
takes it upon itself to correct those past wrongs, and allow the private sphere to work, they will resurface.

When the Group of Families of the Detained and Disappeared was asked about what the objective of the new government should be, they stated that “[n]o healthy, solid, stable democracy can build itself upon a foundation of forgetting the most serious crimes against the right to life, integrity and freedom committed in Chilean history and within a policy of state terrorism that unleashed maximum political violence against society (Group of Families of the Detained and Disappeared).” Returning to an example from *I Hope I Shall Arrive Soon*, the protagonist makes a comment that resembles the statement of the Group of Families of the Detained and Disappeared. In one of his memories, while in the basement of his house, he realizes that his house is collapsing and says: “I know I’ve got to get a concrete slab poured.... The whole house is collapsing (Dick 76).” Here, the protagonist gives a clue at where the problem lies. There must be a solid, social foundation that will create a public memory.

According to Sol Sierra’s comment above, there is a danger in forgetting, because the same violations could happen again. Furthermore, it is the duty of the social sphere to make a permanent memory of historical events. Consequently, there is a danger that if the social sphere continues to fail to establish a permanent record, it will be hard for people to recognize when a functioning social sphere exists, and distrust will continue. For example, because the protagonist in *I Hope I Shall Arrive Soon*, had become accustomed to a pattern of landing on the new planet (a future memory that the ship prepared for him), and then realizing each time that the new planet was false. Because it became such a custom, he did not recognize when he actually did land, believing that he was still trapped in the ship.

Likewise, in many transitioning countries, the society has a history of corrupt government, and state sponsored violence. Violations and injustices happen, and they are forgotten by the social sphere. In the end, there is no justice. While trapped in this sort of cycle, it would be difficult to know if the social sphere’s actions are real, or just an act, lacking any machinery behind them. For example, in *I Hope I Shall Arrive Soon*, the protagonist would check to see if the new planet was an illusion by unscrewing the back of the television projector. He knew that if the television was still working, but lacked innards, then everything was an illusion. Additionally, he knew that if he could put his hand through the wall, the world was an illusion. His tests fail him in the end, however, when he fails to put his hand through the wall, but still believes that everything is an illusion (76).
As discussed in detail, the public sphere sometimes obliges the private sphere to forget. Without a state-sponsored public memory, it is much easier for people, unaffected by the violations, to believe that nothing happened. However, when the public sphere does not fulfill its duty, the private sphere will sometimes try and compensate, through means such as vigilante justice. Such is the case in the play *Death and the Maiden* (Dorfman). In that play, Pinochet has just given up power, and the new President has started the Truth Commission.

The play opens with Paulina, a woman that had been tortured, waiting for the arrival of her husband Gerardo. Gerardo had just been given a job in the Truth Commission, and was excited about the progression of the country. Paulina, however, feels angry because the country cannot do anything more than just tell the stories of those that were killed or “disappeared.” When Gerardo arrives, he mentions that he had a flat tire, and that a doctor had picked him up, and brought him home. Just then, someone comes and knocks on the door. It is Roberto, the doctor who had taken Gerardo home; Gerardo had left his spare tire in Roberto’s trunk. Immediately, Paulina recognizes the doctor’s voice as the person who had tortured her years before. Paulina decides that, since the country will not give her justice, she must do it herself. She grabs a gun, and ties Roberto to a chair. While he is tied up, he talks about how he too has a family, and that they do not deserve that he die. He also talks about the cycle of violence and revenge in which the country could find itself. Eventually, Paulina lets Roberto go—without even a sincere apology. Paulina is left without justice, and without an apology. Her plan failed. The answer to Roberto’s inquiry about when the cycle of violence and revenge stops is rather simple: society as a whole must exact justice. That way, people like Paulina will not feel so obliged to take matters in their own hands.

The next scene takes place in a theatre. Paulina looks behind her and spots Roberto, staring at her. When *Death and the Maiden* was first shown in Chile, at the end of the play a giant mirror would drop in front of the audience, forcing them to stare at themselves. The play was a failure in Chile right after the military dictatorship. Those watching the play were the middle and upper class; virtually unaffected by the violations of the dictatorship. It is unbelievable to think that in a country as small as Chile, and with human-rights violations happening all over the country, that a whole portion can fail to realize, or believe that it was happening. For me, this self-imposed doubt highlights the need for a state-sponsored record, and the establishment of a “true” public memory.

Although the situation in *Death and the Maiden* may seem a little farfetched, the current President of Chile, Michelle Bachelet, who belongs to the same political
party to which Salvador Allende belonged, had a similar experience. In the NY Times, she tells the story of what happened when she was made Minister of Defense. She had moved to Santiago, the capital city, and stepped into the elevator of her new apartment. There, in the elevator, she came face to face with a Mr. Moren Brito. They had met nearly three decades before in Villa Grimaldi, a torture and concentration camp set up by Pinochet. Michelle Bachelet and her mother had been prisoners, Mr. Moren Brito, a secret-police Colonel, who ran the camp, was their torturer. It was Mr. Brito, however that rushed out of the elevator. Their roles had changed. In the interview, Bachelet proclaims that “[t]here was a group of Pinochet supporters who thought when the wives of the disappeared died off, the problem will die with it, but their children and grandchildren have taken up the flag (New York Times Online).”

Unresolved Memories in the United States

Has the public sphere failed in the United States? One explanation for the continuing discrimination, and immense disparities in educational and job opportunities among races, is the failure of the public sphere to rectify past societal discrimination. In Grutter v Bollinger, Justices Ginsburg and Breyer, in a concurring opinion stated:

[i]t is well documented that conscious and unconscious race bias, even rank discrimination based on race, remain alive in our land, impeding realization of our highest values and ideals. As to public education, data for the years 2000-2001 show that 71.6% of African-American children and 76.3% of Hispanic children attended a school in which minorities made up a majority of the student body. (310)

Very much like the reappearing past memories of I Hope That I Shall Arrive Soon, unresolved racial discrimination is still showing its ugly head in many parts of today’s American society. This type of state-sponsored discrimination should be considered human-rights violations, just as the torture in Chile is now considered a human-rights violation. Much like the injured people in Chile, the U.S. citizens who were targets of racial prejudices, were marginalized, and denied basic rights. Because discrimination was legal, there was no punishment of those who were practicing racial discrimination. When formal policies of racial discrimination were struck down, those practicing those discriminatory policies were simply forced to stop overtly discriminating. Similarly, the actions of the military dictatorship in Chile were legal according to the governmental system at that time. However, the fact that the actions were legal under the then current regime does not excuse the social sphere’s duty to seek justice. As described above, Chile still has the power to correct the wrongs by directly going after the perpetrators. Conversely, in the United States,
how should the public sphere react to this continuing discrimination, in order to achieve our "highest values and ideals," when the people who set this discrimination cycle in motion are long gone? Who should now be held accountable?

By allowing discrimination and economic disparities among races directly resulting from past injustices, the unaffected portions of society are implicitly benefiting, and should somehow be responsible for remedying the problems. Public participation in oppressive governmental regimes can range dramatically. For instance, white slave owners benefited directly from free slave labor, while white Californians had a more attenuated benefit, buying land at cheap prices, as their neighbors of Japanese dissent were forced to evacuate (Daly). I think the same holds true today. Those lucky enough not to be affected by biases and discrimination are in many ways benefited by the same. Better jobs, access to better schools, and a pool of cheap labor should all be considered as benefiting the majority. Therefore, by being complicit in the benefits, the majority should be considered an accomplice in the crime. Only, because the majority has the power, and ultimate control of leadership, it can immunize itself by not recognizing past harms, and thus effectively grant itself amnesty.

One of the ways that the unaffected can help the affected is through the system mentioned in Grutter v Bollinger. Although far from perfect, I like the idea of Affirmative Action. It is a viable way that the public sphere can work to show justice for past wrongs, and establish equality. One of arguments against affirmative action, championed by Justices Scalia and Thomas, is formal equality. They convey the idea that if government does not favor any group, nor disfavors any group, then there is equality. Furthermore, and along those same lines, many believe that equality is an illusion, and that the country should simply allow free competition. However, how can competition be free when whole portions of our society start with a disadvantage? These arguments fail to take into account past societal injustices which have resulted in more societal injustices, and will continue to result in injustices. The cycle continues, and must somehow be broken. Unless there is justice in the social sphere and an established public memory, the private sphere will continue to suffer and impede progress for society as a whole.

Works Cited

Improvement through Movement: A Thematic Analysis of German Minority Writing through the Works of Anant Kumar

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Political campaigns like "Kinder statt Inder" as formulated in 2001 by Nordrhein-Westphalia's Christian Democrat Ministerpräsident, Jürgen Rüttger, created heated discussions amongst German politicians and citizens. Rüttger's and others' strong opposition to the supply of "Green Cards" to thousands of Indians for computer and multimedia assistance in Germany reaffirmed once more many citizens' fear of additional immigration. Similar questions of inclusion or exclusion are being raised also in areas outside of the sciences. The field of German literature likewise, often faces the charge of non-acceptance. A country, impacted by increased multiculturalism, finds itself questioning a literary tradition fashioned primarily by its own writers and philosophers. The East-West interrelation of the past, as manifested in German Romanticism in which Western authors frequently looked eastward, is undergoing directional change as writers from the East are drawn to the West where their mere presence and certainly their literary works force questions regarding national literature and national identity.

Despite the growing interest in minority and migrant literature which has resulted in important publications, generally, research on German minority literature has mostly been restricted to Turkish authors who, living in Germany, have described the situation of the foreigner and whose feelings and intercultural chiasms contribute to their sense of a diverse identity and individuality, while at the same time prodding them on the road to integration. It seems as if Turkish literature has paved the way for distinguishing a new set of writers on the literary front. As borders become less defined and German citizenship is better understood in terms of European membership, it is quite understandable that Germany has struggled with questions concerning the role of native versus visitor (and would-be resident), and in terms of recognized literature, which authors are to be accepted into the corpus of writing that continues to emerge in, and thereby reflect, contemporary Germany. Non-native authors blur the lines of such distinctions. One now wonders in what direction

2 Romantic authors such as Johann Gottfried Herder and Friedrich Schlegel were intrigued by the East and incorporated some of its themes in their work. However, they were attracted primarily to themes of the exotic and saw the East as a place for escaping the unsettling trends of the Western world.
3 For strong points of view on the contributions of minority literature, see Chelino; Ackermann et. al.; Amirsadighi et. al.
4 Popular authors reflecting a Turkish-German voice, some of whose recent works have appeared on German best-seller lists See Cirak's Leibesunqen, Sevgi's Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei hat zwei Türen aus einer kam ich rein aus der anderen ging ich raus and Shami's young adult contribution, Eine Hand voller Sterne.
German literature is actually moving. Are most authors, and perhaps more importantly, are most critics, moving the discipline toward a policy of open doors or are there still literary folk wanting to derail all movement toward literary inclusiveness? Simply put, are there still influential individuals and groups who resist having German literature reflect the social reality of Germany’s present situation?

Nevertheless, rather than addressing Turkish authors about whom much scholarly work has already been done,\(^5\) this article will focus on a new group of writers, a group which is of high importance and should be an obligatory group to study: immigrant authors from India. This article discusses select works of Anant Kumar, a native of India who presently resides in Germany and who, like his fellow expatriate, Rajvinder Singh, has chosen German as his language of literary articulation.\(^6\)

As this article points out, it is encouraging that today’s literary scene allows one to study authors of Indian descent who have chosen to employ German rather than English as a means of writing. The mere fact that they have freely chosen this language to convey their thoughts contrasts markedly with authors who have decided to write in their colonial language.\(^7\) Authors such as Kumar, demonstrate that literary expression is a language of choice rather than an imposition by a ruling government. His writings require a new interpretive lens for he has picked the less travelled path by writing in German. In doing so has become a constant and crucial contributor to the field of German literature. His shift from India to Germany has resulted in a rippling effect of changes, ones, which surface in many of his literary pieces.

Kumar, born in 1969 and raised in the North Eastern Indian state of Bihar, India, gained interest in German while still quite young. At eighteen Kumar began his formal studies of German at the Goethe-Institut in New Delhi. In 1991 he moved to Germany where he studied Germanistik at the University of Kassel. Upon completing his thesis on Alfred Döblin’s, Manas, he has remained in Germany and works as an author writing strictly in the German language. Kumar is the author of ten books. His incessant output definitely categorizes him as a prolific writer. He writes mostly prose and poetry but also adds an additional flavour to the literary scene through his children and youth publications. His various writings include poems, satires, essays, anecdotes, fables, short stories and lastly his unpublished, one-act play, Ghana. His works can be described as cautious where attention to interaction between people of

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5 A more in depth study on such Turkish authors and their struggle with identity is offered in the following: see, Hall. Leslie Adelson examines current Turkish trends in contemporary German literature, see Adelson. Also see Seyhan.

6 See Singh.

7 Despite the strong influence of the colonial powers, many Indian writers have gained international fame by choosing English. Some of these widely read authors include Arundhati Roy, Anita Desai, Vikram Chandra and of special prominence, Salman Rushdie. See Rushdie.
the same nationality or different nationalities calls for discreet contemplation and thorough examination.

In analyzing select works of Kumar, I will limit myself to one specific thematic approach. I am particularly interested in the sense of movement with reference to progress. Many of Kumar’s works focus on the idea of cultural progression and acceptance or lack thereof in an ever-changing Germany. Simultaneously, such advancement forces Kumar to question his own sense of “hybrid” identity and how he and others like him fit into the new cultural mosaic of Germany. Is it possible for a person like Kumar to be a member of multiple communities? Such questions, both from the individual and group perspective, are developed through his images of transportation or general movement. Kumar’s pieces, such as “Eine Schwarze kommt ins Krankenhaus,” “GLEIS EINS,” “Die Zeit ist stehengeblieben,” “Weiterkommen,” “Ausweg,” “Ein Stück für Dich!” and “The German Post,” exemplify the idea of motion. Not only do the texts vividly describe being on the move, but on a deeper level Kumar’s writings also mirror the current state of Germany as it adjusts and adapts to its shifting international surroundings and inhabitants. Kumar believes that every step, as graceless as it may be, offers room for interpretation and indicates forwardness. Even if borders and personal space no longer have distinct definitions, some level of advancement is inevitable.

My aim, although introductory, will pay particular attention to the way in which Kumar addresses cultural progression. Kumar pushes one to analyze critically what it means to be foreign. As borders become less defined and German citizenship is better understood in terms of European membership, it is quite understandable that Germany has struggled with questions concerning the role of native versus visitor (and would-be resident), and in terms of recognized literature, which authors are to be accepted into the corpus of writing that continues to emerge in, and thereby reflect, contemporary Germany. Non-native authors blur the lines of such distinctions. This article will shed light on Kumar’s writings, which offer many reasons for his recognition as a constant and crucial contributor to the field of German literature. On a deeper level his literary contributions mirror the current state of Germany as it adjusts and adapts to its shifting international surroundings and inhabitants. His shift from India to Germany has resulted in a rippling effect of changes, ones which surface in many of his pieces.

Anant Kumar offers a discourse on the idea of cultural improvement through literary movement by creating situations centred on transportation and on a deeper level what Germany’s destination is; is Germany accepting and moving forward in its understanding of immigrant inhabitants and of immigrant writers? Anant Kumar,
although aware that this road may be bumpy, finds reasons to respect paths, which are not always easy. Although Kumar has travelled and read from his works transnationally, his pieces are rarely translated. His dedication to the German language has resulted in a difficult path because by choosing German, he restricts his texts from moving toward wider spheres. In this sense, Kumar, a non-native, is fighting for German, a field, which is constantly shrinking.

The topic of migrant literature has been problematic since its inception. It has become increasingly difficult to find appropriate labels for writers who are writing in a part of the world different from their own and more significantly in a language other than their mother tongue. Writing outside of one’s homeland, and in some cases in another language, presents a number of different categorical factors worth highlighting. These authors’ viewpoints can be simultaneously considered foreign and native. Considering when, if ever, others regard the works of non-Germans as representing the opinions and sentiments of a writer with a German background become points of contention. As the contemporary research interests of German Studies scholars attest, the significance of writers from the outside, their place in the German canon and the validity of their contributions has deepened the well of German literature. This is also one of the goals, which Kumar aims to achieve in his literary pieces. Kumar has allowed readers to witness firsthand an ever-changing global situation: the state of non-natives living and learning in a country other than their own. His works address questions of inclusion or exclusion in the field of German literature, a discipline, which often faces the accusations of non-acceptance.

There are many ways to see and understand the works of Kumar. One of these ways is through the philosophical approach of Friedrich Schlegel. Schlegel developed a fervent interest in India and particularly in the contributions Indian language and literature could generate on German culture. However, it remains his approach and his form that is most strikingly identifiable in Kumar’s style. Schlegel’s “fragmentation” and compartmentalization methods are mirrored in Kumar’s thematic decisions. Kumar addresses larger, cross-cultural topics by means of small, isolated “fragments” of life, situations, so trivial as reading a newspaper or partaking in a conversation at a local bar. The more basic and minor the experience, the more real and alive it becomes to Kumar and thereby has the ability to become relevant to a broader audience, in this case, natives and foreigners. (“Friederich Schlegel”)

Most notably, Schlegel, much like my understanding of Kumar, demonstrates a clear progression in his writings and thought. In Schlegel’s works, Rothermund
recognizes a sense of "evolution not revolution [...]" Similarly Kumar frequently portrays this realistic progression in his writings. Marilya Veteto-Conrad highlights the comparison between Schlegel ("German Minority" 80). In grouping Kumar with Canetti she writes, "[b]oth Kumar and Canetti possess an eye for the minutiae of human existence; paradoxically, this is one way each chooses to point to the globalities they emphasize." (80) Her point is demonstrated very clearly in Kumar’s poem, “Ein Sonntagsmorgen” in which Kumar shadows the everyday experience of reading a newspaper (Kumar, Fremde Frau, 29). Anna Narojek’s also demonstrates that Kumar thrives on including the minute details in life, ones, which often are considered rather trivial. Najorak "praises Kumar for making routine events lyrical, saying that they illustrate the poetry of daily life that otherwise remain concealed to us." (qtd. in Veteto-Conrad, "German Minority," 80). Her point sums up well my belief: Kumar, like Schlegel, concentrates on change as it occurs.

Accordingly, Anant Kumar’s works and philosophies are parallel to Rothermund’s descriptions of Schlegel. The idea of "chaotic unity," (Rothermund 34) as Rothermund detects in Schlegel, also is evident in Kumar. Schlegel realized that unity arises from chaotic elements; for him form only is possible when disorder and irrational events precede it. In this respect, he was "systematically unsystematic, and he tried to transcend the limitations of philosophy by associating this discipline with poetry, mythology and psychology in terms of a universal analysis of language and thought." (Rothermund 34-5) Kumar similarly notices how the subtleties of life, the more chaotic moments, allow for a unified experience. Little did Friedrich Schlegel know that his ability to "combine diverse trends of thought in a masterly synthesis" (Rothermund 34-5) would reoccur almost two hundred years later through an Indian author residing in Germany.

In his selections, Anant Kumar depicts movement and mirrors Schlegel’s initial stages of chaos; likewise his aim is to present progressive movement while underscoring unity” (Veteto-Conrad, "German Minority" 80). In [Kumar’s] Fremde Frau, fremder Mann [he] states that poetry knows no borders.” (Veteto-Conrad, "German Minority" 80). Traversing space both in the sense of crossing from country to country or merely by crossing a street results in change and new spaces are discovered.

In light of the recent subway bombings in London and Madrid, obviously attempts to disturb the ritual of movement, and of the change in demographics in an
increasingly radically shifting Europe, space and movement need to be analyzed anew. Anant Kumar presents numerous forms of transportation, which include moments of turbulence and commotion. He realizes that he too participates in the act of disruption; many of his selections highlight cultural forces in opposition. Just like a subway jolts the passenger and creates radical reactions in those witnessing the acute situation, Kumar too shakes up his readers. Only through such literary chaos can Kumar draw attention to the reality of a diversified Germany. Appropriately he believes like Roland Barthes that writing means “den Sinn der Welt erschüttern, eine indirekte Frage stellen” (qtd. in Kumar, Kasseler, 65).

Regardless of one’s opinions concerning the nature of foreigners in one’s country, Anant Kumar pushes one to analyze critically what it means to be foreign. According to Kumar, Germans are experiencing a sense of otherness in Germany. He delves into the inner being of all people and provokes them; the familiar no longer is familiar and everything must be questioned even for the German. The Verderner Aller Zeitung adds further insight describing the reader’s path of self-discovery:

Darin werden deutsche Empfindungen und Empfindsamkeiten mit spitzer Feder pointiert und ebenso präzise wie poetisch zu Papier gebracht. Der erlauchte Leser wird zum „Blick an sich herab“ angeregt und wird – falls er dieser Weisung folgt – viel Urdeutsches an sich entdecken (“Ein Hesse”)

Along this note, his poem “Identität” (Kumar, Fremde Frau, 65) quite comparable to one of Ernst Jandl’s traditional “Wortspiele,” reveals variations of the same line with different word order and consequently a change of meaning underscores the thought processes involved in any individual who feels out of place:

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12 Here I mean Ernst Jandl’s unique quality to write abstract poetry. His poetry includes "abstrakt[e] sprachintern[e] Gesetzmäßigkeiten" focusing on "sogenannter Normalsprache als auch Gedichte wie die in 'heruntergekommener Sprache'." See, Schmidty. "Ernst Jandl. Eine Untersuchung zur späten Lyrik. Partie als 'erhabende und niederschmetternde Sprachkunde.'"
The inversion of lines in many ways not only responds to the stages through which authors like Kumar may find themselves as they struggle to write in a country and language which is not their own but achieves a similar level of confusion when applied to the native. Upon closer analysis, one recognizes that the poem also depicts a lower case "I" with the title, "Identität" as its 'dot.' Kumar draws attention to the fact that a firm, secure sense of the self does not yet exist. The structure and content of this poem suggest that identity continues to be questioned. Furthermore, the fact that Kumar includes the verb, "finden" emphasizes influence of others on the self.

Reading Kumar's pieces does not leave one smiling nonchalantly or uttering a word of indifference. Instead, one is sensitized to one's surroundings, to the people in one's neighborhood, to others in a grocery store, at a bus stop, or in a school cafeteria. Kumar highlights what is real and presents his readers with the motivation and yearning to change, to question, to feel irritated and finally to move. It is not surprising that Kumar focuses on forces, which result in different types of reactions it emits. After all, movement has impacted Kumar himself from the beginning. Leaving his homeland in 1991 to study German as a foreign language at the University of Kassel, Kumar has undergone his own personal transformation. The following literary analyses draw attention to Kumar's recognition of advancement in the minds of Germans, in the minds of others living in Germany, and also in himself.

The first selection "Eine Schwarze kommt ins Krankenhaus" (Kumar, Fremde Frau, 27-8) exposes a rushing world, where individuals often intersect negatively. Not only do the vehicle and its passengers have trouble arriving at a desired location, but pedestrians, with whom cars share the road, make traveling a dangerous event. The question of who has the right of way becomes a point of contention. As Kumar points out, responsibility is the key to 'defensive driving.'

**EINE SCHWARZE KOMMT INS KRANKENHAUS**

Zum Glück geschah es
Nahe dem Krankenhaus.
Sie wollte die Straße überqueren,
und dabei wurde sie von einem Auto angefahren.

War es noch rot oder grün geworden?
Darüber wird noch weiter gestritten.
Der Auto- und sein Beifahrer meinen,
für die Schwarze war es rot und für sie grün.

13 Interestingly, Kumar also worked as a trainee in the Volkswagen factory in Kassel during 1993. Factory work may have influenced his idea of movement both in the sense of the car as well as the individual parts moving forward on the conveyor belt. His notion of uniformity, the production of a car, in relation to chaos, the assembly of an uncountable number of parts, may have been fundamental as he dealt with these concepts in his writing.
Sie begründen ihre Aussage noch weiter,
man macht das in diesen Ländern sowieso öfter.

Aber ein alter Penner ist der Ansicht,
er habe das Kreischen des Autos gehört.
Und als er aufsah,
war die Ampel grün für sie.

Bewusstlos mit hohem Blutverlust
wird sie ins Krankenhaus eingeliefert.
Nach den notwendigsten Behandlungen bringt man sie
von Schlächten umgeben in ein 6-Bett-Zimmer.

Frau Tischbein mit unbeherrschbarer Neugier sagt:
„Sie hat aber ein sehr hübsches Gesicht!“
Frau Klugkopf ergänzt sie schnell:
„Aber für eine Inderin ist sie zu dunkel!“

Irgendwann öffnen sich langsam ihre Augen.
Es wird geklingelt.
Ein Pfleger kommt gerannt.
Dann die nervöse Stationsärztin außer Atem.

„Können Sie Deutsch?“
„Verstehen Sie Deutsch?“ fragt sie
mit ihrer schrillen Stimme.

Der Körper der Schwarzen zittert heftig,
und sie wird wieder bewusstlos.
„Sie ist noch sehr schwach!, aber wir müssen diese Aufnahmebescheinigung ausfüllen.“

Der Pfleger wählt vorsichtig herum,
und findet endlich den Personalausweis.
Er liest die Daten vor,
und Frau Doktor trägt Name, Vorname, Geburtsort:
München-Pasing ein.

Upon reading the title of this poem, one recognizes the severity of the situation.
The mere fact that a woman has been hit by a moving vehicle, while crossing the
street, confirms that there are contradictions in direction. The woman is crossing the
street and perpendicular to her action, a car hits her, consequently preventing either
from reaching their destinations. Both parties’ goals are quite different from each
other, and this fact results in an accident, one with acute outcomes. Not only does
the mishap create a tragic situation, but as Kumar describes, bystanders perceive the
action in various ways. No one can come to a definite conclusion in determining the guilty party.

This poem supports my opinion that Kumar artistically includes the concept of motion in his writings. On the surface, the reader is concerned with the woman's well-being, which he/she very well should be. On a deeper level, however, the problem is much more complex. Other elements of movement suggest that although the accident seems to have caused a sudden halt, the situation is perpetuated through the speed of the ambulance which does reach its destination, hence the title, "Eine Schwarze 'kommt' ins Krankenhaus"; the woman is delivered to the hospital successfully (Kumar, Fremde Frau, 27). The hospital imitates the rapidity of the ambulance in the hasty movements of the nurse and the attendant interrogating the woman about her origin and ability to communicate in German.

In this sense, it seems as if Kumar presents the often-impetuous reactions of outsiders unaware of reality. The hospital scene revealed here could very likely represent anyone's surroundings in a time of uncertainty where cooperation is lacking and irrelevant questions are asked. The scene presents an ironic incident: Although in the end the woman speedily arrives at a destination, it most certainly does not correspond to the one she had been anticipating. On the other hand, those working in the hospital receive information of her origin, which also does not match their expectations. From her skin color, the staff had concluded that the woman was not 'German' and consequently would not know German, while on the contrary she was born in Germany and quite possibly could have been a German citizen and at any rate have grown up speaking German.

Another poem, which clearly exhibits movement on another level, is Kumar's "GLEIS EINS" (Kumar, Kasseler, 14-16). The German train system is known for its punctuality and dependability. A nation, which prides itself on its superb system of railways, connects citizens all over the country. Kumar, who takes pleasure in observing the networking of people, makes some interesting observation in the following poem, where he describes travelers stopping at a pub near the train station to read a newspaper, drink a beer and finally dance; the "R A U S C H" from the passing coaches creates a realistic setting for the reader. In offering a bar in close proximity to the railway tracks, Kumar has created a literary foil in which the ideas of rest, motion and chaos are highlighted.

Within the bar, one witnesses the entrance and exit of people throughout the evening and into the early morning. At "20 Uhr", the place is barely populated, yet when the narrator discusses the bar a few hours later, he/she is not even able to distinguish visually the relationship between people and tables. Each person at the
scene is pushing and shoving his/her way to the dance floor where the most complex form of movement occurs. It is here where Anant Kumar displays Schlegel’s sense of “chaotic unity.” Much like Schlegel pushes his readers to search for the unity in a seemingly confusing message, Kumar also presents a scene where clear vision at first glance is not possible amidst disarray and smoke. But as Kumar shows on the dance floor, a unified action is doable even if different dance moves contribute. Although each person is tapping to his/her own beat, the dance floor embraces them all and only together do they emit “dum dum thak dum dum thak.” (Kumar, Kasseler, 14-16)

In addition to dancing and feeling the power of the loud music, Kumar depicts other forces present in the bar. The dance floor vibrates and people push each other; however through the act of pushing, they are forced to make conversation and encounter the other. Kumar’s array of individuals (“unsere Germanistikdozentin,” “farbige Asylanten,” “der indische Yogalehrer,” etc.) projects an image which inhabitants in a multi-cultural Germany probably experience as well. (Kumar, Kasseler, 14-16) The rhythm and movement experienced in this poem deliver a world of disorder and yet all are unified on the dance floor.

Expanded in length, Kumar’s prose piece “Die Zeit ist stehengeblieben” exemplifies a playful use of language (Kumar, Die galoppierende, 77-8). The text accomplishes this through the artistic employment of exaggerations, puns and contradictions. This poem, as its title suggests, pays particular attention to the idea of time. Undoubtedly, the laws of science prohibit one from believing that time can stand still, but in this instance, one is forced to reanalyze the ways in which time is construed. From a mythological standpoint, one recalls the Greek sun god and his chariot, making his trip across the heavens beginning in the morning and ending at night. The Amphitryon legend describes that the sun god has the possibility to pull in the reigns on his horses causing the sun chariot to stop, thus stopping time. The sun god’s power to halt the passing of time is brought by Kumar down to earth when those who resist movement toward an intercultural world likewise pull hard to stop the moving hands of their clock.

The narrator, after listening to his acquaintance’s reaction to travels in India and stating that, “DIE ZEIT WAR IM MITTELALTER STEHEN GEBLIEBEN”, (Kumar, Die galoppierende, 77) is persuaded to think of time in the German realm and comes to the conclusion that the German winter distorts his sense of time as well. Much like the Greek chariot traveling through the heavens, the Indian narrator and the acquaintance arrive at a moment where the observed and experienced do not meet

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14 More specifically, I am comparing Schlegel’s approach to hermeneutics in which Schelgel asks readers, in the words of Nicoletu’ to be, “...ebenso klug wie der Autor zu sein, also wozu die Konfusione im Text gelten zu lassen, und schließlich ebenso dumm zu sein und die Prinzipien der Konfusione selbst zu lesen, [zu] charakterisieren und [zu] konstruieren.” (Übersetzung 82)
their expectations of how time should pass; surroundings which do not fulfill their
desires cause a feeling of standstill:

Vor meinem Fenster sehe ich eine Schneedecke. In einem einheitlichen grauen Licht fallen
ununterbrochen die Schneeflocken. DIE UHR IST STEHENGEBLIEBEN. Für mich könnte es
zehn Uhr am Vormittag so gut wie drei Uhr am Nachmittag sein. (Kumar, Die Galoppierende
78)

In this passage the lack of movement indicates that when worlds are completely
misunderstood, progress is not possible. Although time, no matter what the situation,
continues to move forward, humans only recognize a shift in time when there is
advancement of another sort. The two go hand in hand. Without the accomplishment
of something, it is hard to understand the passing of time. Motionlessness results in
frustration much like the narrator’s sentiments in the last sentence of the
aforementioned passage.

To contradict this sense of stagnancy, Anant Kumar introduces “Weiterkommen”
(Kumar, Kasseler, 30-1). The word itself means, “going further,” i.e. continuing to
move because a destination has not yet been reached. In its context, the word often
is associated with a sense of tiredness in which the motivating words would be,
“weiterkommen; wir müssen weiterkommen.” Most significantly, “weiterkommen”
suggests that one is not at the beginning of the journey but that a part of the path
towards the goal has been covered. Within the first few lines, the reader experiences
moving from point A to point B as Kumar describes the conversation between two
young people sitting in a train. Although moving on the tracks, the train has not yet
arrived at its final station. “Zum Beispiel laschte ich heute morgen in der Bahn ein
paar Sätzen zweier junger Leute: ,Na! Wie geht’s?’ -‘Ach es geht!! Ich komme nicht
weiter!’” (Kasseler 30) Consequently, I question Kumar’s set of contradictions. In one
sense, the two young individuals are moving forward at an increasingly high velocity
and yet their words relate not to their movement, thus the pun. This inconsistency
makes clear why things are not always what they appear to be. It is as if Kumar
stresses the need to examine events more closely before jumping to conclusions. By
mentioning De Saussure, and the psychological proof of the relationship between
language and image, Kumar underscores the uncertainty many feel in constructing
their own relationship between the observed and the understood. “Aber dieses
entwickelte Bild in der Psyche kann meines Erachtens in einzelnen Fällen sehr
unterschiedlich sein” (Kasseler 30). Although one word supposedly should produce
a certain image in one’s brain, the narrator begs to differ. It is astonishing how
Kumar can trigger a reaction in his readers to think about the condition of
themselves, their neighbors and the world by including these scenes of motion.
A poem, which truly captures the sense of chaos and which further supports my belief that Kumar shares something with his romantic counterpart, Friedrich Schlegel, is the piece, “Ausweg” (Kumar, Kasseler 33).

Ausweg

Eine Maus
Verirrt sich
im ausweglosen
Labyrinth.

Wie viele Menschen
sucht sie
vergeblich
den Weg.

Vielleicht
bleibt ihr
doch nichts
übrig.
Wenn,
dann die Hoffnung.

Labyrinths such as the one described above are stressful and are associated with moments of trepidation. The idea of moving without the ability to escape causes restlessness. Most recently, Kumar’s “Ausweg” achieves new meaning in events such as Hurricane Katrina, where thousands were trapped in New Orleans, moving aimlessly without finding a way out. The inability to reach a destination resulted in heinous acts. Much like the poem’s end, the victims of this natural disaster relied on their hopes.

In this short poem, Kumar is very critical about society’s inability to move. Although initially the desire to change, to move on and to impact conditions which are not acceptable may be present in Germany’s, in Europe’s or in other countries’ people, the means to attaining these goals are not always possible. Restrictions set by governments, religious institutions or by people’s principles have resulted in a powerlessness to create a change. It is as if the “unsystematic” quality of the labyrinth causes individuals to give up and “systematically” accept the situation without tearing down a wall and pushing to move forward. Much like the mythological tale of Theseus and the Minotaur in which the Greek hero, Theseus, only finds his way out of the labyrinth by way of the ball of string given to him by the Cretan princess, Ariadne, stressing the need for cultures and genders to interact and assist one another to overcome problems, Kumar likewise points out the necessity for such mutual collaboration between distinct cultures.
Kumar’s ability to captivate the reader into discovering harsh realities concerning progress and lack of progress explains why he is so fascinating to read and why his works should continue to stimulate the minds of his audience. Veteto-Conrad testifies:

The reader cannot escape the sensation of participating in his life while reading the two volumes; at times this window on the soul is almost oppressive, but primarily it is addictive. The element of fascination, and the undeniable quality of many of the poems, will ensure Kumar a future readership. (“World” 614)

It is not surprising how Kumar causes any reader to reevaluate his/her situation on a variety of levels. The controversy behind his themes initiates discussion, and it is not shocking why the reader is ‘moved’ on more than one level.

Kumar’s literary works do not only cause adults to reflect on the reality of Germany, its people and its current state of cultural inclusion and progression. This article has already pointed out that a shift in demographics leads to a new understanding of the ‘other’ where lines are being erased in terms of different races, religions, language, upbringings and experiences. Many who have moved to Germany from different countries are facing a new challenge right in their own home; second and third generations are examining what it means to be German when one’s ancestry or one’s passport proclaims differently. A brief analysis of Kumar’s ...und ein Stück für Dich! confirms that Kumar is very aware of feelings and questions which arise in a much younger audience. What qualifies this piece as one of Kumar’s most unique works in regard to the theme of movement is that it primarily takes place in a streetcar. The story centers on two adolescent boys, “die ihre Pubertät noch nicht überschritten hatten,” (Stück 8) and their mother, “eine Muttergestalt mit einer Tiüte, die große fladenbrotartige nicht typisch deutsche Brote enthielt” (10), who, together, enter the streetcar number three. The number three, an odd number, is of special import. Also the mere fact that the boys are still so young forces the reader to recognize their naivety and innocence. They do not yet hold preconceived notions about the world and its inhabitants.

The entire situation is told by a narrator, who is of a different background than the mother with her children. “Vom Aussehen und Verhalten her ordnete ich sie dem östlichen Teil Europas zu.” (Kumar, Stück 12). His assumptions are confirmed later, when he hears her speak a Slavic language. Throughout the story, the narrator unavoidably comes in contact with the boys and the mother. There is not enough room on the train, so one of the sons must sit directly next to the narrator. Although no word has been exchanged between the narrator and the other three passengers,
Kumar's inclusion of action and observance provide a very thought provoking scene, one in which words are not necessary.

The main action of the story occurs in the breaking and distributing of bread by the mother. She hands both of her sons fairly large pieces of the "Fladenbrot" (Kumar, Stück 30) and for herself breaks a much smaller one. The narrator watches as the events unfold and notes the differences in the bread size. "Nach ein paar Sekunden brach die Mutter ein viel kleineres Stück Brot ab und knabberte selbst daran." (Kumar, Stück 30) Although situated on the train and moving forward with the mother and her two children, the narrator exits the scene and gets off the train without having ever been offered a piece of the bread. One wonders if offered, the narrator would have been receptive. Kumar seems to be commenting on the lack of overture on the part of the mother. The narrator's response to the differences in culture is evident in his abrupt exit. Kumar argument is twofold: he detects the fusing of cultures, as evident in the crammed train seats, which offer hope for a Germany in which all members must make room for their neighbor. However, by leaving the streetcar, Kumar also puts forward the idea of individuals not being able to accept fully the reality of Germany's changing situation.

For the purpose of better understanding this short story, the words of the Roman emperor and stoic philosopher Marcus Aurelius seem applicable. In the sixth book, line seventeen of his Meditations, he states, "Above, below, all around are the movements of the elements. But the motion of virtue is in none of these: it is something more divine, and advancing by a way hardly observed it goes happily on its road." (Long) For many moving forward to solve a certain problem or to overcome disappointment, sorrow or pain, seems like an answer to all questions. But in reality movement, in this sense, means movement away from something that feels uncomfortable. Kumar, like Aurelius, believes that virtuous movement, although often unnoticed, does take place. When discovering the deeper meaning to Kumar's works, his idea of "weiterkommen" conjures the appropriate philosophy needed on this road to improvement.

In closing, I would like to offer a brief analysis of Kumar's, "The German Post" (Kumar, Kasseler 34). People living in opposite countries of the world rely on the postal service to remain in touch with family and friends. Kumar, separated by thousands of miles from his town of Bihar and a passionate writer, undoubtedly takes pen to hand to stay in touch with his kin. This text suggests the mobility specifically between the countries of Germany and India. In this instance, Kumar grapples with the question of punctuality for the purpose of understanding. The narrator is aware of

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15 The etymological meaning of 'companion' is one who shares bread.
the German postal system’s delivery rate and the amount of time needed to carry out its tasks. “Und wie ist die deutsche Post? Wir kennen alle die normale Laufzeit in Deutschland: Einen Tag.” (Kumar, Kasseler, 34) But as is evident in many other situations both temporally and spatially, rules often are broken and even the assumingly speedy delivery of the post office does not meet one’s wishes. “Es kann aber auch etwas anders aussehen, zum Beispiel in meinem Fall.” (34) It is in these conditions when one is ‘moved’ to believe simply and hope that one’s action will be fulfilled as desired. Sometimes, although all the signs tell one otherwise, one remains steadfast in one’s convictions and ‘pushes the envelope.’

Aber so ein Pech! Es war 19.00 Uhr und die letzte Leerung war gegen 18.30 Uhr. Die schnellste nächste Lieferung in der Gegend war am folgenden Tag um 14.00 Uhr. Na ja! Kalkulierend und wünschend, daß vielleicht auch der Empfänger die Post nicht nachmittags bekommt, habe ich den Brief eingeworfen und warte auf eine baldige Antwort. (Kumar, Kasseler 34)

In contrast to the quest of German Romanticism where Germans merely sought to escape and gain insight into a foreign culture, today’s literary pieces dealing with the Orient are radically changing. No longer are quests for mysticism and foreign lifestyles desired as the means to break away from traditional themes as was popular during this time; but instead the focus is shifting from a West-looking-East perspective to one in which the Orient is now finding its place in the West. Kumar calls attention to these bridges between East and West.16 In many ways, the movement from both sides is evident, yet certain restrictions such as the postal timetable prevent cultures from reaching ultimate inclusion.

Even though Kumar presents both cultures in a predicament, he does not let one win and the other lose. Instead he puts forward the obstacle enabling the reader to battle and determine what fits best. “Kumar, whose ‘texts move between the Indian and the German world without playing one against the other,’ also dismisses questions about his allegiance as irrelevant.” (Veteo-Conrad, “German Minority” 80) The polarity between India and Germany and between the outsider and the person of the system, as Kumar reveals, does not result in an easy solution. Again, Kumar distinguishes himself as a writer who does not rest easily and who succeeds in challenging his readers through contradictions; the rules do not always comply with the demands of the system.

Kumar’s images of transportation or general movement as displayed in the selections above often signify making headway in terms of cultural understanding and acknowledgement, but he also presents other notions; Germany continues to

16 For example, recent interest in Indian movies in the West underscores this change in focus. (Flynn)
undergo change, and natives and foreigners alike continue to adjust to their modified surroundings. Movement forward is not the only reaction and as Kumar recognizes and causes others to identify, there is reversal, vacillation or in some instances complete standstill. In its simplest definition, people tend to associate movement with going forward and consequently misunderstand the reality of questions regarding cultural integration, acceptance or merely respect. Anant Kumar does not allow for such false interpretations and forces his audience to wrestle with these definitions and their subsequent ramifications.

Perhaps for this reason, Kumar's own personal movement is of particular interest. Not only do Kumar's selections deal with the issue of movement and examine the degree of progress, but the writer, Kumar, also moves himself. His commitment to public readings and lectures strengthens his voice and demonstrates exactly what he implies in his literary pieces. By reading to his audience, Kumar proves that he, like the characters in his writings, is linked to humanity. "Kumar möchte durch die Literatur verbinden, und zwar zwischen allen Generationen." Numerous German newspapers report Kumar's direct involvement with children, youth and adults as he shares the gift of his literature in towns such as Hamburg, Cologne, Chemnitz, Mainz, Münster and others.


Kumar exhibits his determination to reach all people no matter their age, race or gender. He feels that to 'move' requires someone to start the action. He excites his listeners and by personally reading and offering additional comments on his ideas and questions, he sparks the interests of a growing audience. Ongoing poetry readings and lectures by Anant Kumar are being organized in various cities in the European Union, in North America (Department of Germanic Studies) and in India. In the public scene, Kumar electrifies and moves his readers; he is prepared for any type of listener.

Today Germans witness a growing taste for minority literature. Within the last decade, Europe has experienced a demographic shift. Particularly, the founding of

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19 For more information concerning these types of public presentations see, Anant Kumar's "Dancing Words."
the European Union has altered populations within each European country. Germany has undergone a tremendous change. A country impacted by increased multiculturalism finds itself turning away from traditional approaches as instilled by key Western writers and philosophers. Although scholars such as Johann Gottfried Herder, Immanuel Kant, Ludwig Tieck, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Friedrich Schlegel dealt with themes of the Orient in many of their works, today's global situation entices artists from the East to welcome Western themes, in this case German ones. Two centuries ago German Romanticists created a cross-cultural dialogue by introducing Germans to the exotic world of India. Anant Kumar continues this dialogue by expressing what it means to be an Indian and a German living and working in Germany. The message extracted from many of Kumar's literary works shows how wrong Rüttger was. "Kinder und Inder" are both needed in today's Germany.

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The Crossroads of Gender and Race in Shaping Masculinity in Colonial French Cinema

By Sharon Meilahn-Swett, University of Iowa

A popular genre of French cinema developed after World War I: colonial or Empire films. This analysis of a classic colonial film, La Bandera (Duvivier 1935), establishes a framework that fosters an understanding of the film Pépé le Moko (Duvivier 1936), which addresses the instability of France’s image of a colonial power through its subversions of gender, especially the performance of masculinity as it is shaped by race and space. These portrayals of masculinity contest the hegemony of the colonizer/colonized binary and weaken the perceived superiority of colonial power. In my analysis of these films I consider how gender performance can both represent the conventional colonial subjectivity one would expect from a colonial or empire film, yet, it can also disrupt that conventionality by contesting the permanency and stability of the gender of those who, theoretically, hold the colonial power.

In La Bandera the protagonist, Gilieth, is accused of murder and flees to Spain where his wallet is stolen by fellow Frenchmen. Starving and penniless, he is taken in briefly by a woman at the market who brings him to a bistro where she gives him soup. Other men approach him and while his bent head over his bowl they push his face into it. A fight ensues and left with no other choice, Gilieth decides to joins the Spanish Legion. The advertisement calling men to join offers glory and profit for doing so. He is deployed to Morocco and his pursued by Lucas, a man convinced he is guilty of the murder and who wants the reward money for turning him in. In Spain and Morocco the landscapes are open, bright, and arid. The only suggestion of urbanity is the brothel where Gilieth meets and later marries a beautiful Bedouin courtesan, Aicha, played by the French actress Annabella, who he uses to extract information from Lucas. By the end, Gilieth is fighting alongside Lucas and dies in battle.

The following year Duvivier made Pépé le Moko, about a jewel thief, Pépé, who is trapped in the Casbah of Algiers. He is wanted by the French authorities who employ an Arab go-between, Slimane, to pursue him in the space of the Casbah, where they themselves are ineffective. Pépé lives with an Arab woman, Inès, and yet when he meets Gaby, a beautiful Parisian, he is instantly beguiled. Slimane uses Gaby first to bait Pépé, then to force him out of the Casbah and into his trap at the port where Pépé is supposed to take a ship with her back to France. Anxious to leave the Casbah, Pépé risks everything and when he realizes he is trapped, he kills himself as the ship sails away.
The French public's interest in colonialism and the subsequent creation of colonial films can trace their origins back to the Franco-Prussian war. Susan Hayward writes that France's defeat in this war led to the colonial expansion that was supposed to replenish the country's image as a major power and to galvanize national unity based on this colonial might (149). During the same period as the end of the Franco-Prussian war, in 1871, the French formulated a "continuous, firmly applied policy that gave the colonial period of French Algeria its definitive shape. Algeria had to become a mere continuation of France on the other side of the Mediterranean (Stora 6). This new policy in Algeria foreshadowed France's decision to articulate for the first time in its colonial history, in 1878 at the Congress of Berlin, a formal French colonial policy called the "civilizing mission" which was supported by a politic of assimilation. By the 1930s, while officially this policy was supported by the French government and by political parties such as the Socialists, it was also contested by the French Communist Party (Stora 15). Popular colonial and anti-colonial expositions in the same time frame, together with film, reflect the confusion of the French public vis-à-vis colonialism.1

Within France in the early 1930s, Hayward notes that escapist colonial films enabled the French to ignore the conflicted mentalities of a nation affected by economic depression, declining wages, and rising unemployment (113). Dudley Andrew observes an evolution in colonial cinema from the escapism of exciting adventures in its early forms, such as we see in films like La Bandera, made in 1935, to more psychological topics in later, more desperate films such as Pépé le Moko, made in 1936 (242). Both films suggest that Africa had "become a necessary construction in France's self-conception," as indicators like the International Colonial Expansion of 1931 would suggest (Andrew 242). Indeed, in La Bandera we see the common myth of spiritual regeneration in Africa yet, Pépé le Moko, made only a year later, "signals the defeat of the lure of Africa by the greater lure of Paris" (Andrew 254-5, 258). Far from consistent, the use of colonial imagery and themes reflects the ambivalence of the French public towards its colonial endeavors.

While much has been written about these films, particularly Pépé le Moko, it is difficult to classify them. Hayward calls La Bandera a legionnaire film, part of a subgenre of colonial films (151), Abdelkader Benali analyzes both as colonial films in his book, Le cinema colonial au maghreb, and Andrews describes Pépé le Moko's poetic realism (255). Andrews recognizes some elements of poetic realism in La Bandera, especially the opening sequence that seems like a "prologue" to it because

it shows a dark, glistening street and figures in silhouette (252). The actor who plays the alienated protagonist fleeing the urban underworld of France in both films, Jean Gabin, condenses poetic realism into a single figure that moves on screen and becomes the iconic antisocial urban type of the period (Andrew 226, 251). In this anti-social cinema we see similar codes of lighting, camera movement, and editing as in poetic realism (Andrew 226). Gabin, through his iconic performances that combine the rough gestures of working class heroes with the elegance of an entrepreneur, and the cunning of a criminal, "moves from margin to center in the course of these films, replicating in the process the social aspirations of the Popular Front that would bring the neglected and alienated lower-class individual into the center of culture" (227).

Janice Morgan seems to advance this interpretation and asks if setting the story of a working class hero-in-revolt in North Africa isn't an effort to displace and quell French workers' anxieties on the home-front (646). However, it is important to remember that the working class hero in these films, while representing the economically marginalized French worker of the 1930s, also represents a criminal who must flee to the colonies because he feels he has no other choice. Under such circumstances life in the colony becomes a sort of punishment. This image hardly evokes the capitalistic thrill of economic exploitation or the pursuit of self-betterment often associated with colonialism. It seems to prove Gwendolyn Wright's observation that the alleged economic benefits of colonialism are negligible at best for the average person since these benefits applied to a few French banks and a couple of industrial enterprises (305). In these films we do not see a colonial figure qualified to advance the civilizing mission or one who will proudly enforce French rule. This colonial figure, embodied by Pierre Gilieth in La Bandera and the eponymous Pépé le Moko, is the problematic representative of colonial rule who helps illustrate France's problematic, ambivalent, colonial history.

Wright, in calling colonialism an "artificial construction" (305), evokes the post-colonial and gender theories that analyze the construction of race and gender. These constructions serve to establish and maintain patriarchal, hegemonic, Western ideologies. In these films we see the roles of gender, race, and space in defining masculinity as it is normalized in colonial discourse. It is particularly important to consider how these same elements, especially race, all participate in the construction of the "Other" in the films. In both films, French actors Annabella and Lucas Gridoux (Slimane) portray Arabs but their portrayals are greatly magnified by heavy makeup, an abundance of jewelry, and clothing stereotypical of Arabs as orientalized by Western cinema at the time. This need to exaggerate the other in the
films implies discomfort at the proximity of colonizer/colonized subjectivity. Further, the use of French actors suggests an unwillingness to engage real Algerians or Moroccans for the films. How to explain this, given the centerpiece of French colonial policy which held that the colonies were an extension of France? Clearly, the films present an unstated distinction between the French and North African actors while also betraying a weakness in the formal, promoted, colonial policies.

The construction of gender in the films is crucial in variably transmitting and contesting French colonial ideals. Gender theorist Judith Butler writes in Gender Trouble that gender is performative in the sense that what is taken to be an internal essence of gender is actually manufactured through a sustained set of acts which are repeated as one would a ritual, thereby achieving an illusionary effect of naturalization in the context of the body (xv-xvi). She adds that there are temporal and collective dimensions to the repetitious performances because their meanings are socially established and also legitimized (191).

Butler also believes that “the inner truth of gender is a fabrication,” “a fantasy,” and that “genders can neither be true nor false, but are only produced as the truth effects of a discourse of primary and stable identity” (186). This discourse of primary and stable identity is at first established and largely accepted by the more conventional of the two colonial films, La Bandera, but is subsequently undermined in Pépé le Moko as masculinity is developed by the male protagonist’s relationship to women, to the colonized Other, and to space. The ambivalence of the representation of masculinity, which depends on the discourse used (gendered, racial, or spatial), serves two purposes. First, it reflects the conflicted goals and ideals of colonial policy at the time. Second, by revealing the colonizer’s ambivalent relationship to the colony, masculinity contests colonial authority and returns the colonizer’s gaze back to France. Pépé le Moko, through its engagement with and subversion of many stereotypes, problematizes the colonialism that Susan Hayward considers fundamental to the recovery of France’s image as a major European power after the Franco-Prussian war, an image used to bolster national unity (149).

In order to understand colonial ideology it is important to consider the components that contribute to and sustain it. In patriarchal hierarchies masculinity is propagated and perpetuated via what Kaja Silverman calls “the dominant fiction.” She believes this fiction is composed of the ideological and social beliefs that establish what “real” and “normal” behavior is for a certain subject (Male Subjectivities 15). It defines the system by which the subject assumes a sexual identity and then adopts the desires of that identity as well as forms the idea of a stable national or historical reality (41).
Silverman believes that the terms “male” and “female” demarcate the dominant fiction’s most fundamental binary oppositions (*Male Subjectivities* 35). Because male and female gender performance vary according to social context, to ethnicity, and to economic power, it can be shown that the performances of male and female gender are not mutually exclusive since it is possible to perform both types of gender, at times simultaneously.

Despite the potential fluidity in gender performance, the fiction seeks consistency from and depends on the power of male subjectivity which is guaranteed by the possession of the phallus (43). Silverman further explains in *The Subject of Semiotics* that the notion of the “phallus” is not an anatomical term but rather a discursive one that signifies cultural privilege and is associated with all the positive value which defines male subjectivity in patriarchal societies (183-4). The dominant fiction requires both the male subject to see himself and the female subject to see him, through the mediation of an “unimpaired masculinity” (*Male Subjectivities* 42). The belief in an unimpaired, infallible masculinity could be termed “phallic sufficiency” (*Male Subjectivities* 8).

The manifestation of masculine behavior is motivated by power and privilege which is in turn threatened from many directions because the foundation of that motivation, the dominant fiction, is derived from “the ideologies of class, race, ethnicity, gender, and nation” (*Silverman, Male Subjectivities* 47). These ideologies are constructions that, despite constituting and sustaining a society’s ‘reality’ (*Male Subjectivities* 15), are not permanent or stable. The power and privilege accorded in a given society is subject to change if the formulation of class, race, or gender, which help define ideology, also changes. In this way, any one of these elements that contributes to an individual’s identity can in turn undermine his identification.

Silverman continues in *Male Subjectivities at the Margins*, “traditional masculinity emerges there as a fetish for covering over the castration upon which male subjectivity is grounded” (47). Performing masculinity therefore plays two crucial roles in enforcing the dominant fiction of patriarchy. The performance first signifies power and authority and then is used to make up for a lack in any of the ideological areas that contribute to the fiction. If we consider Gilieth, a starving fugitive without any type of phallic sufficiency, aggression becomes his substitute for other lacks. He fights with the Frenchmen who take his wallet, with the men who cover his face with soup, with a fellow legionnaire, and with Lucas.

On the other hand, Pépé always appears impeccably dressed in crisp suits and shirts. The elegance of this clothing is perhaps a fetish which covers his class related
lack. He comes from a working class background, he makes a living as a thief, and presumably he wants to exploit the riches of the colony he lives in. His clothing suggests power and influence which compensate for his origins and restore his place in the dominant fiction. Despite his attempts to avert crises in his domain he is ineffective; he is trapped within the Casbah, he loses his close friend and surrogate son, Pierrot, and he can not reverse the damage of Régis' betrayal.

It is interesting to note that when Pépé's masculinity seems the most sufficient and unimpaired, his outfit is complemented by a tie of a contrasting color which draws the eye. The tie, suggestive of the shape of a phallus, further asserts his masculinity. For example, when the police first try to capture Pépé after seeing Gaby the first time, he reaches for a gun. The lighting of the scene perfectly captures the stunning contrast between his white tie and black shirt. However, when Inès points out for the first time that he is trapped within the Casbah, he leaves their home wearing a suit but no tie. The lack of phallic symbol alludes to his degrading dominance and counteracts his masculinity. The tie returns when he discusses bank robbing and when he converses about Paris' “Place Blanche” in his famous tête-à-tête with Gaby, but it disappears shortly after when things really start to unravel for him.

At the end, when he tries to flee the Casbah to join Gaby and return to France, he wears not a tie but a scarf, strikingly similar to the one Gaby is wearing. He of course is apprehended and later commits suicide. All his efforts to dominate and control have failed. He is emasculated and the choice of a scarf over a tie emphasizes this. One possible interpretation is that the tie serves as a fetish to conceal a lack. I would nuance this by suggesting that the tie is deployed to bolster the fragile condition of his masculinity, not necessarily to hide an outright lack of it. If the tie was meant to substitute or replace a lack why not feature it more prominently in the middle and later scenes rather than the early ones of the film? In the earlier scenes, especially with the gun, the tie seems to reinforce rather than substitute; the masculinity signaled by the gun, his stern tone of voice and the defiant looks are fortified by the addition of the tie. Later in the film as he is increasingly threatened by Slimane and the French authorities, the forceful props such as the gun and his authoritative features begin to fail him. When the tie disappears it affirms his eroding but still present masculinity. By the end, when the tie is exchanged for the scarf, his masculine subjectivity and all the associated privileges have been stripped away. What remains is a panicked and fragile figure who now evokes femininity and all the correlating weaknesses such as precarity, fear, and betrayal.

The notion of fetishism, the use of an object to compensate for a weakness by either replacing or covering over that weakness, is expounded on by film theorist 95
Laura Mulvey. She notes that the subject chooses a certain object as a fetish and uses it above any other object because it can be controlled (35). The first time Pépé meets Gaby he appears stunned by her image. His gaze fragments her body, as shown by the close shots of her hands and neck. This is an example of what Silverman, by evoking Mulvey, would call “salvaging the phallus” with the female body (Semiotics 224). This is possible in one of two ways: either by implying the woman deserves punishment for a wrong-doing or by fetishizing her body through erotic overinvestment or narrative interruption (Semiotics 224). This fetishization of Gaby’s body helps Pépé’s character compensate for his own lack of masculinity. Her body represents first, sexuality through her beauty as enhanced by the lighting and costumes, second, economics because of her expensive jewelry, and finally territory. Later, when they discuss Paris and their favorite places, her intimate familiarity with his home transforms her figuratively into “home” for him, a home he can attain whereas his real home is a legal impossibility. In fetishizing her he covers over his frustration with his entrapment in the Casbah. As a fetish she does not replace the Casbah but her presence lets him cover over this area of weakness in his life by fostering opportunities for him to flaunt his masculine prowess in charming, impressing, and seducing her. Although he can no longer control the situation in the Casbah, he can ostensibly control this beautiful woman whose subjectivity must inherently be weaker than his own because it is feminine. In these ways the female body is conflated with sexuality, economics, and territory in a tri-part fetish that enables the male subject to reclaim his phallic sufficiency in these three areas.

It should be stressed that the fetish is one attempt to reclaim sufficiency in an area of lack. It is by no means a guarantee of restored sufficiency. As the character of Pépé aptly demonstrates, when the colonial male figure does not adequately perform masculinity it is possible to code him with feminine characteristics that undermine his subjectivity. Vincendeau asserts that the lighting and its softness “signal him (Pépé) as vulnerable and ‘other’” (20). There are numerous examples within the text. The scarf he wears at the end resembles Gaby’s and aligns him with her femininity. In the pivotal scene where he meets Gaby for the first time his face is fully lit, he takes her in for a moment, and then lowers his eyes with a delicacy that is almost demure.

In many scenes the arrangement of the characters is staged so that Pépé is positioned spatially lower than his conversation partner. For example, in the scene where he accuses Inès of betraying him and she defends herself, her point of view is privileged by placing her on a higher plane than him. While his words state that she is a child, he must look up at her to deliver the line, depicting him as a child defying a parent. This empties his words of any value and grants her superiority over him.
Later he complains in all seriousness that he is sick of her and the Casbah while she merely smiles and playfully banters with him as if she is indulging a moody adolescent.

Sometimes Pépé’s masculine inferiority is signaled in comparison with other European men. Carlos, for example, is referred to as a guy who doesn’t speak but rather acts and beats his significant other, therefore qualifying as a “vrai homme.” This contrasts significantly with Pépé who orders Inès to go home after his temper explodes but then discovers that instead of going home, she’s waited for him outside. Gaby displays a similar refusal in the scene just after her “Place Blanche” conversation with Pépé. He asks her to step out onto the terrace. After she refuses he stares intently at her and then she looks away. She is standing on a staircase towering over him while his gaze up at her is that of a subordinate towards a superior.

Janice Morgan finds that Duvivier’s camera-conscious use of light, shadow, rapid editing, and close-ups all rivet the spectator’s gaze on these key features of the mise-en-scene, “which invests them with greater-than-usual iconic value and psychological interest” (638). She cites Vincendeau’s observation that the same techniques used to eroticize female stars are used to display Gabin as Pépé (639). For Morgan, “it is clear that Pépé/Gabin is aware of himself as spectacle, an awareness that fully participates in his charm” (639). How to interpret then the spatial configurations that place him in prone positions compared to women, that women assert themselves so easily to contradict him, that his “spectacle” effeminizes him and undermines his masculinity? Andrew offers one interpretation when he writes that the ‘woman’ in poetic realist texts is a reversible sign that serves a textual function (240). Like Africa, she functions as a figure that inflects the plots and visual designs of the film (240). According to this thinking, we could say that Pépé’s “feminine characteristics” do not endow him with specifically feminine qualities but rather effeminize his social position as a white colonizing male in a French colony. In this way gender questions the stability of the role of the colonizer in the film.

There is yet another dimension to the problematic of gender roles. In the scenes such as the ones mentioned above between Pépé and Inès and Pépé and Gaby, Inès and Gaby have more autonomy than Pépé and exert more influence over him that he can over them. Since the women’s behavior is more masculine than the man’s, these scenes confirm Silverman’s belief that the “phallus” is not a biological term but a discursive one (Subject 183-4). She asserts that phallic qualities can be transferred to women (Subject 26) since these qualities are not associated with a particular body.
but rather with the subject who possesses all the positive, stereotypical, masculine characteristics such as assertiveness, agency, and economic stability. This is aptly demonstrated by Gaby’s and Inès’ characters.

The power to destabilize masculinity is also found in the film’s formal composition which is revealed primarily through the use of the gaze in key scenes. Mulvey’s theories of the gaze in which the gazer is typically male and that which is gazed at is typically female (23), insinuate that characters such as Gaby, who openly gaze, can attain phallic sufficiency. In the scene where Gaby and Pépé meet for the first time after he’s been lightly wounded in a shootout with police, he approaches the group she is sitting with, asks for assistance bandaging his wrist, and then turns his gaze to her with a steady intensity. She returns his look with an equal, unwavering intensity. He drops his eyes before a cut to a shot of her wrists. The manner in which he averts his gaze implies modesty for a brief moment before we see that he is assessing the jewels on her wrists. This type of alternation continues between his eyes and her neck which is also bejeweled. When he does return his gaze to her face we see that she has the same expression as when she first laid eyes on him, as if her eyes have never wavered and she hasn’t concluded her evaluation of him.

When Pépé and Gaby complete their intimate assessment of each other, the camera tracks back slightly in order to show Slimane and an Algerian woman in the group who are both staring at Pépé as well. When Slimane looks he is completely identifiable but Pépé’s back is to the camera and he is almost unrecognizable. The shot reminds the viewer that Slimane is an authority figure with power over the person he is watching. When the Algerian woman looks, her face takes up the majority of the space and Pépé’s only distinguishing feature is the white scarf around his wrist and forearm, which was noticeable in the beginning of the scene. As she reaches to bandage his wound she looks at him as a mother would her child which undermines his plenitude as an adult.

Through their gazes, Slimane apprehends Pépé, the Algerian fragments him, and Gaby sexually objectifies him. By placing the viewer in an ambivalent position which allows three separate points of view, the sequence emphasizes the power of the gaze and also questions the stability of Pépé’s subjectivity which is triply assualted. The ability of Slimane and the Algerian women to gaze at Pépé advances another possibility, that of the Other to potentially influence the colonizer.

Female independence in Pépé le Moko contests the supremacy of the male colonial subject in this genre of film. The refusals by Inès and Gaby to succumb to Pépé’s desires are relatively minor transgressions against his authority. A more significant transgression occurs after Pépé tells Gaby that being with her is like
being in Paris. When she breaks their kiss and stands up to go she is already asserting her dominance in their relationship. He tries to insinuate that if she doesn’t come something will happen but the sentence is interrupted because she cuts him off and challenges his threat by asking what he could possibly do. As if the words are not brutal enough, her body placement further emphasizes her power: she is standing and he is lying down in a somewhat vulnerable position. She casually shrugs her shoulders and states that he really can’t get rid of the Casbah. The careless way she delivers the line shows to what extent she is ambivalent about his potential escape from the Casbah. Not only does the scene emasculate him, but through her words and actions she refuses to participate in a charade about his phallic sufficiency.

The female gaze in film usually implies a lack of modesty and an uncontrollable sexuality that defies the social norms of behavior for women. A woman who actively gazes in a film is typically in turn reigned in by male characters who restore order through their patriarchal authority. Although their relationships with Pépé and other men are implied to be sexual, Gaby and Inès’ ability to gaze is not attributable simply to promiscuity. It must be remembered that they are able to behave “badly” by openly gazing at men or refusing to submit to their control because they operate outside of legal male authority such as “husband;” no man in the film succeeds in correcting their behavior. Since they are also operating outside the boundaries of social norm and marital status established for women, their ability to gaze aligns them with those with power, autonomy, and the ability to commodify and exploit: men. Their subversion of gender roles illustrates how Gaby and Inès’ characters transgress social norms and consequently, undermine patriarchal hegemony. In many ways the women in the margins of colonial, social, or marital authority in Pépé le Moko are closer to attaining phallic sufficiency than their male counterparts.

Although she may refuse traditional stereotypes of femininity and call into question the stability of colonial rule, in the film the female characters are also exploited in order to mediate between the protagonist and his enemy. For example, Gilieth asks Aïcha to take advantage of Lucas’ attraction to her to get information about his pursuit of Pépé. Slimane manipulates and uses Gaby by painting a dangerously glamorous image of Pépé which entices her into the Casbah to meet him, just as he later preys on Inès’ jealousy to push Pépé away from her and out of the Casbah. While the portrayal of women in these films is hardly progressive or feminist, we must remember first, that this portrayal is nevertheless in keeping with the historical context, and second, that the female characters succeed in demonstrating phallic qualities that underscore both male and colonial inadequacies.

The attribution of phallic qualities to women is one type of subversion of
traditional binaries between male and female gender stereotypes. Vincendeau alludes to a second subversion of those binaries when she notes that in Pépé le Moko, the woman is not merely classic cinema's object of male desire but she is also "[...] coded, quite explicitly, as his double rather than his opposite" (51). For example, Gaby's scarves and Pépé's ties are very similar throughout the film. In the final scenes they are both wearing tilted fedoras. Also, when they first meet the camera fixates on their eyes as if to suggest equality in their mutual assessments. Finally, they are from similar backgrounds and neighborhoods in Paris. Through her clothing, the positioning of her body, and her background, her similarities present her not just as a double, but by extension, as Pépé's equal. According to Silverman's conceptualization of the dominant fiction, the female subject strengthens male subjectivity through her lack of phallic sufficiency. If she appears to be lacking, by comparison he appears complete. However, if this female is equal to the male her position no longer strengthens his subjectivity. The equalized structure undoes the binary system and the hierarchy of power that relies on comparison in order to confer superiority.

In the same way that gender is traditionally configured through binary oppositions, so is the figure of the Other who emerges because his/her language, religion, or culture is perceived as the counterpoint to the Western definition of those same institutions. Many post-colonial theorists have noted the tendency of colonialism to conflate race and gender when constituting the Other and to position him/her as the opposite of the colonizing figure. My analysis considers not merely this conflation, but also the disquieting implications for the colonizer who prefers to be seen as unaffected by the Other in the colonies.

Homi Bhabha's theory of hybridity illuminates the problematic colonizer/colonial Other relationship, which is often disavowed by the former. Pépé le Moko reveals what Bhabha refers to as the ambivalence of hybridity, which is not a "third term that resolves the tension between two cultures" as the use of the term 'hybridity' in recent literary scholarship would imply (113), rather, it is the sign of shifting colonial power and the name for the process that reverses domination (112). To put it differently, the Other abides by the rules of the colonial power and dutifully mimics its behavior but that mimicry results in a deformation and displacement of the colonial power. Bhabha develops this and says "it unsettles the mimetic or narcissistic demands of colonial power but re-implicates its identifications in strategies of subversion that turn the gaze of the discriminated back upon the eye of

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power" (112). Through the deforming mimicry of the Other it is possible to return the
gaze back to the colonizer and the potential for complete colonization is shown to be questionable.

Significantly, the French actor who played Slimane, Lucas Gridoux, was deemed
too handsome and sympathetic to play Pépé’s nemesis which resulted in a
rearrangement of the lights and cameras to film him from the side and portray him
less flatteringly (Vincendeau 61). The deliberately amplified differentiation between
the European and Algerian characters is necessary to establish a comfortable
distance between colonizer and colonized.

Presumably the demarcation of racial difference alone was not powerful enough,
which required the addition of a homophobic discourse that questions Slimane’s
sexuality and further distinguishes him from Pépé. At one point, while they are
walking through the Casbah Pépé mocks Slimane’s beautiful curly hair and accuses
him of wearing mascara. Despite these seemingly disparaging remarks, Slimane is
the only character that seems to enact his own performance. He is rarely fragmented
by a shot, never portrayed as disheveled and sweaty, never flustered in a
conversation, never hesitates before acting or moving. In the opening sequence at
the police station, he leans forward and downward slightly into the camera as if he is
speaking from an advantaged position. Every gesture and move seems calculated
and confident.

While the mise-en-scène amplifies his visual representation as a stereotypical
Arab, Slimane also appropriates sexual and racial stereotypes in order to accomplish
his job. He is able to penetrate any context and interact with any character precisely
because he can manipulate the boundaries of sexual and racial difference. For
instance, when he is in the Casbah talking with Pépé and his gang, he can rely on
an apparently feminine deference to seem unthreatening. When he joins Mr. Kleep,
Gaby, and their friends at a seaside restaurant outside the Casbah, he negotiates the
space of the colonizer with ease and, with the exception of his hat, his appearance
does not signify “Arab.” In doing so, Slimane not only tolerates but exploits his
otherized status. At times he performs feminine gender and is ultimately seen as one
of the only unequivocally masculine males in the film.

While Slimane is coded as the Other by the mise-en-scène and he is emasculated
in conversations such as the one I allude to above, he nevertheless has a sizeable
advantage over Pépé: the authority and power to arrest him. Slimane is the colonized
Other who should be inferior to Pépé’s white colonizer. Yet Slimane’s authority over
Pépé contests the occupier/occupied hierarchy. Pépé is after all, a criminal and
Slimane upholds the law. Both the doubling of the French characters and the subversion of the colonial power structures by the Arabic ones collapses the colonizer/colonized distinction. Ultimately, a character like Slimane who bears traces of both French and Other subjectivities symbolizes France's inability to totally assimilate the colonized Other or to articulate a cohesive colonial strategy in North Africa.

Bhabha writes that space is crucial in situating a subject in "a proper frame or condition for some action or result" (109). Wright comments that the space of a city is "at once something shared and particular: it draws together diverse groups, creating common ground. At the same time, every space or building is inevitably seen and experienced in distinctive ways by different people [...]" (312). I would argue that the intended effect of the depiction of space in *La Bandera* is to invite exploitation and conquest because the country appears so open and untainted by development. The Casbah in *Pépé le Moko* reflects a long-standing colonization and evokes a presence of urbanism and capitalist development that would foster colonization. When Gaby's French male companion compares Algiers to Marseille he further proves Bhabha's belief that mimicry can turn colonialism back on the colonized. This reference draws an uncomfortable parallel with France's premier port city and foretells the city's turbulent post-colonial immigration issues. Wright echoes this, "the colonial cities of the early twentieth century are not settings that can be isolated from other Western metropolises. They shared many of the same problems [...]. One can still find the imprint of these earlier experiments in both Western cities and postcolonial cities of our own day" (312-13).

At once dark, impenetrable, and imprisoning, the Casbah restricts movement. Vincendeau, in contending that these qualities give the Casbah a feminine identity and in turn feminize Pépé (63), seems to imply that his imprisonment in this space has transformed him into the brooding and impenetrable character that he is. Further, she suggests that his inability to negotiate space freely is a weakness the Western viewer would expect to see in a female character. Yet in this film women have spatial autonomy and the principal male figure is captive. Benali asserts that Pépé's imprisonment in the Casbah saddles him with characteristics of an "indigène" (317) but this is not entirely accurate, given that Slimane and Inès, both Algerian, are able to move freely between spaces without any restrictions. The lack of spatial autonomy reinforces Pépé's weak subjectivity, not simply because his spatial limitations prevent him from performing masculinity or because he is compared to the Algerians themselves, but in fact because he actually has less autonomy than the Algerians in the film.
Hierarchically he would be positioned below the colonized Other in a nameless category completely void of binary oppositions against which to define himself. Only in such a murky position can a character like Pépé be placed because his numerous characteristics that encompass both masculine and feminine, colonizer and colonized, defy any other type of categorization. Not only does the film again subvert conventional distinctions, it also pushes these distinctions into a little explored third space seemingly outside of the dominant fiction. In this space female identity is not constructed through the assimilation of inferiority and powerlessness, as Silverman writes in The Subject of Semiotics (145), but male identity, as represented by Pépé, is. Additionally, we see women with phallic sufficiency and the colonized people with more freedom than the colonizer. Although the French authorities do ultimately capture Pépé, and in doing so they re-establish social order in keeping with the patriarchal values of the dominant fiction, it is only by endowing the colonized Other with police authority, by encouraging sexually liberated women to inadvertently bait and trap Pépe, by limiting the male colonial figure’s autonomy, in short, by subverting the founding values of that fiction, that a return to order is possible.

Space determines not just the autonomy of the characters, but also influences their performances of gender. Masculinity in particular is evoked differently in different spaces. I would agree with Vincendeau’s opinion that the Casbah is feminine and would add that in comparison to its stereotypically feminine obscurity and the structural complexities of the buildings, the police station is signified as a masculine space because it is luminous, open, with crisp architectural lines and high ceilings that offer total visibility. Since this space seems ordered and is associated with authority, it seems also to emanate order, reason, and logic, all of which Westerners like to associate with their “enlightened” values. It is further linked to masculinity because it is a space of power and domination, a space from which women are traditionally marginalized.

Masculinity is performed differently according to space, as Slimane perfectly illustrates. He tolerates emasculation in the Casbah and his placement within the shots positions him on a lower plane than that of the people he converses with. He is talked down to, literally, as if he was inferior like a woman would be. In contrast, in the police station he manifests a confident masculinity, holds his head up, and at one point looks down into the camera from an implied position of superiority. When he is criticized for not simply taking out Pépé in the Casbah, he confidently explains to the colonial authorities that he must wait to apprehend Pépé until the trap he has carefully orchestrated is set. These examples illustrate the variability of masculine gender performance according to context, whether racial, social, or spatial.
Juxtaposed with Slimane’s spatial mastery is Pépé inability to accept his spatial ineptitude. Scenes such as the one on the rooftop of his apartment with Inès in the Casbah where the French part of the city and the port are featured behind them, recall the openness of La Bandera. Although Gilieth’s character does have access to this openness, albeit under military authorization, this openness is nothing but an illusion for Pépé who cannot enter it without castigation. Nevertheless he stubbornly insists that he can leave the Casbah at any time and tells everyone furiously “Foutez-moi le camp.” By his placement in front of this landscape and by his insistence on his autonomy, the tension is heightened for the spectator who sees this impossibility in very visual terms. Pépé’s failure to acknowledge this impossibility implies a lack of self-awareness that extends to his gender performances. While his character seems obsessed with his public image, as is evident in his impeccable clothes and normally suave demeanor, his configuration in many scenes nevertheless makes him appear inferior to Arab or female characters. We see this both on a formal level as the staging and lighting attest, but also thematically as his female counterparts reveal. Whereas Slimane manages to revert back to masculine gender via feminine performances, Pépé’s character remains largely effeminized throughout.

Benali describes the demise of the typical colonial male in films of this genre by writing, “La destinée le plus souvent tragique que connaît le héros métropolitain, étouffé dans son espace d’origine, se renouvelle au-delà des frontières françaises sous la forme d’un dépaysement excessif qui appelle le déracinement, la déchirure et la mort du héros colonial” (325). True to the genre, Pépé kills himself at the end. But why is death the colonial hero’s only hope? Why is it impossible to return to France? Perhaps because the ambivalence of colonialism and the traces he bears of that ambivalence are too onerous to conceive of back on French soil. Pépé is so intimately linked to the Casbah and to the Arab culture of Algiers, that if he were to return he would figuratively bring the colonies and potentially the perspective of the colonized with him. Rather than address that ambivalence or face the threat of some mediated form of the colonizer in France, it is easier to kill the figure off so that the problems may hopefully be buried there with him.

The film Pépé le Moko, as compared to the more traditional example of colonial cinema, La Bandera, contests many conventions of that cinema and in doing so seems to question colonialism itself. In my readings of these films I have sought ways to highlight anti-colonial or feminist elements, not to claim that the films themselves could be labeled “anti-colonial” or “feminist.” Rather, I believe that the films cannot be so neatly categorized because of the ways they subvert gender and racial stereotypes. Each film expresses gender and colonial identity in a unique way; La
Bandera employs more traditional methods while Pépé le Moko dismantles binary oppositions such as colonizer/colonized, male/female, France/Algeria. Pépé's character is the central site that epitomizes the destabilization of those binaries because he is at once colonizer and colonized, masculine and feminine, of the Casbah and from France. His background and behavior show it is possible to be both complicit with and resistant to colonialism. This vacillation, in conjunction with the depiction of colonized characters with more spatial autonomy and phallic sufficiency than the colonizer, indicate that the colonial figure and the power he represents are unable to truly master the colonies. By destabilizing these binaries the film destabilizes the possibility of an infallible colonial power.

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The Hidden Kabbalah in an Argentinean Novel

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In the novel No tan distinto, Argentinean author Marcelo Birmajer presents an omniscient narrator who introduces the reader to the main character and guides us through his journey. Don Saúl Bluman is forty-three years old and is described as "un judío laico que nunca había sentido mayor interés en preguntarse por el sentido de la vida" (11). Saúl has a happy life, a beautiful wife, and a successful business in the Once. He enjoys weekends at the country club until the tragic death of his wife in a car accident: "Al morir su esposa, Berta, en un accidente automovilístico, cuando ambos contaban con cuarenta años, su mundo interno se desmoronó" (11). The death of his beloved wife brings Saúl to an unfamiliar state of mind. Death, the most definite separation, changes Saúl’s life. The loss of Berta is for Saúl the cause of so much sadness that he cannot recover for several years. There is not one moment in the narrative where the reader can find Saúl trying to understand and accept this tragic event under a spiritual light. Saúl suffers because he focuses on the present life; he is unaware of the mysteries of the afterlife, the continuation of the spirit after death, and for him maybe death is the end of everything.

The use of Kabbalah to study No tan distinto is a tentative effort to relate some of the events narrated in the novel with some concepts existent in the realm of this hidden wisdom. The conflicting questions of identity lived by this Argentine-Jewish character will be explored, as well as how they are connected to the topics of death, marriage, sex and numerology, all of which are examined under the spectrum of the Kabbalah. But first it is important to have a brief introduction to what the Kabbalah and the Zohar are. As Rabbi David ha-Cohen once said: "People can open these books, and they’ll still find them closed" (Weiner 15). The study of the Kabbalah is more profound than most people may suppose. But what is the Kabbalah really? It is a complex question to answer. Kabbalah can be briefly explained as being the ancient Hebrew esoteric philosophy based on a mystical interpretation of the Bible. As Herbert Weiner clarifies, "Indeed, the Kabbalah, being an inner teaching, can never be fully communicated by words which belong, after all, to the revealed world" (12).

The Kabbalah was studied and defined by Solomon Maimon, one of the greatest Jewish thinkers of the eighteenth century, as follows:

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1 One of the Jewish neighborhoods of Buenos Aires. The Once is famous for its picturesque and lively businesses and commerce.
2 Some authors write Kabbala with h and others without it. I have preferred to spell it Kabbalah and whenever quoting from different sources I use the spelling chosen by each author. Kabbala written with a c, Cabbala, was also found.
Cabbalah, [...] means, in the wider sense of the term, tradition; and it comprehends, not only the occult sciences which may not be publicly taught, but also the method of deducing new laws from the laws that are given in the Holy Scriptures, as also some fundamental laws which are said to have been delivered orally to Moses on Mount Sinai. In the narrower sense of the term, however, Cabbalah means only the tradition of occult sciences. (94)

Gershom Scholem, the scholar who dedicated his life to the study of Kabbalah defines it simply: “The Kabbalah, literally ‘tradition,’ that is, the tradition of things divine, is the sum of Jewish mysticism” (1). The Zohar—or Book of Splendor—is the main literary work of the Kabbalah. The author of the main part of the Zohar was Moses de León, who lived in Spain in the 12th century, but it is pseudepigraphically ascribed to the Palestinian Simeon bar Yohai, who lived in the 2nd century C.E. It is one of the basic texts of the oral Torah and Kabbalah.

Some individuals have a need or a “thirst for an inner substance and vision which transcends the obvious surface of existence,” but there are those “who thirst more than others, who search with greater effort, and some who claim to have found ‘the waters of joy which can quicken the dry outer skeleton of existence’ ” (Weiner 4). These special beings are called mystics. The mystics found throughout history come from a number of varied religions and from different parts of the world. Kabbalah constitutes the mystical tradition of Judaism. Weiner explains: “the mystics are masters of hidden wisdom. Their ‘speciality’ is the effort to understand and personally link themselves with truths, insights, and experiences which are below the surface” (6). Mystical readings are not for everyone, for they are written in a language full of symbolism, metaphors, images and codes. The stories narrated by the Hasidic rabbis remind us very often of the tales we find in the literature of Zen Buddhism: simple stories revealing profound lessons that are not always easily understood. It is believed that there might be a deeper meaning for everything and “God’s will must be something other than what can be plainly observed” (Weiner 7).

Hasidim was a mystical movement of orthodox Jews born in the Ukraine in the eighteenth century that is rich in popular folktales composed of abstract teachings of the Kabbalah (Weiner 11). As an example consider the following Hasidic tale: in a small town in Poland, on the eve of a wedding, people heard horrible screams coming from the backyard of the bride’s house. Everybody felt scared. According to the Judaic tradition, the bride may become very nervous before her wedding, and it is a custom for family and friends to spend the night in vigil to avoid the bad spirits who could take advantage of the vulnerability of the girl. The local rabbi was called to elucidate the mystery. He heard the horrible screams and became very

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3 For details on the origin of the Zohar, see Hanson pages 122-125. Pseudepigrapha means “false writing” like the ancient books of Enoch and Jubilees (Hanson 124)
concerned. He too was scared to go outside and check the cause of those frightening screams. There was a man in town who was a lunatic, a fool, and he was called to come to the house and check the origins of the screams. The rabbi was certain that that was a very complex and dangerous situation. The fool was sent to the dark backyard and soon returned seeming very relaxed. He explained that there was no reason to fear, since the cause of the scary noises was that an old tree had fallen on the ground, and the wind going through its old dry trunk produced the noises that sounded like human screams. It was just the sound of the wind passing through a decayed tree trunk. Everybody was relieved with the news, except the rabbi. That same night he gathered the whole community and recommended that they pack and leave the city immediately. Nobody understood the rabbi, but for him it was an obvious sign. They all obeyed the rabbi’s orders and left. The entire rabbi’s community was indeed saved from the Nazi invasion that happened some time later. What the rabbi heard were real screams that came from the future, announcing the massive killings that would take place with the Nazi intention to exterminate the Jews of the area. 

Across the centuries, some distinguished Jewish leaders became known and respected for their revolutionary mystical teachings and messages, including Isaac Luria (1534-1569), Rabbi Loew of Prague in 1580, Shabbetai Zvi in 1648 (who was believed to be the Messiah), the Baal Shem Tov in 1700, Rabbi Nachman of Bratzlav in 1772, to name just a few. Isaac Luria, the renowned sixteenth century Kabbalist, spoke of three major symbols that remain in Jewish mysticism today: the tsimtsum, the shevirah or breaking of the vessels, and the tikkun olam or mending of the vessels. These major concepts cannot be fully expressed in words; they can only be understood as symbols:

Isaak Luria [...] used the phrase “tikkun olam,” usually translated as repairing the world, to encapsulate the true role of humanity in the ongoing evolution of the cosmos. In his view, God created the world by forming vessels of light to hold the Divine Light. But as God poured the Light into the vessels, they catastrophically shattered, tumbling down toward the realm of matter. Thus, our world consists of countless shards of the original vessels entrapping sparks of the Divine Light. Humanity’s great task involves helping God by freeing and reuniting the scattered Light, raising the sparks back to Divinity and restoring the broken world.

It is thus one of the major beliefs of Jews in general that every human being has a major role in the world. Everybody contributes somehow to the healing of the world’s imperfections. That gives us an understanding of a meaningful aspect of Saul

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4 This and other Hassidic tales can be found in the book written by Brazilian rabbi Nilton Bonder. The book is on the ancient Jewish tradition of resolution of problems. See details in the bibliography. This particular tale translated by me is on pages 134-135.
Bluman's identity quest: his concern with his role as a good Jew. The author himself, in one of our interviews, mentioned his own concerns about being a good person.⁶

The main goal of Jewish mysticism is the effort combined with practice to come close to all things, small and large, and identify with the innermost aspect of everything, that is, the divine in everything. "Mysticism," Rabbi Steinsaltz explained, "is the desire to remove the outer coverings of things which hide their inner quality. Only through finding innerness in our life, as well as the innerness of all things, will this desire for full identification enjoy any kind of gratification" (Weiner 108).⁷ Rabbi Steinsaltz in one of his classes emphasizes that for the Jewish mystic there was no empty space: "His heaven was thoroughly crowded with hierarchies of angels, levels of worlds, chambers, palaces, thrones, and chariots. He did not suffer from a sense of interior emptiness" (107).

In Jewish mysticism, death appears as one of the most mysterious subjects. In order to explore the topic of death, one must review one of the most famous passages in the Bible, the moment Eve ate the fruit in the Garden of Eden. This episode is surprisingly full of symbolism and it is worth paying close attention to it. When Adam eats from the tree of knowledge and is expelled from heaven with Eve, death takes on a different meaning. And that is how the idea of a severe and punishing God is born. However, Weinreb reflects: "El individuo deberia acostumbrarse a no ver mas en Dios al juez y castigador severo. ¿Acaso no ama Dios a los hombres?" (182) If God gave man death, He had a purpose which should be beneficial to man. Since Adam —the man— ate from the tree of knowledge he is now capable of reasoning, measuring, calculating, and realizing the world around him; he cannot have a different type of behavior (182). Adam gained a certain consciousness that he did not possess before. When God looks for Adam in the Garden of Eden, Adam hides and explains: "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid." God replies: "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree from which I commanded you not to eat?" Adam and Eve are banished from the Garden of Eden and have now to survive on their own. They must reorient their faith and their trust in God. Death gives Adam and Eve the possibility of living a conscious life even though they ate from the tree which they were asked not to. Their disobedience gave them consciousness and reason.

Weinreb goes on to say that death is the frontier beyond which all the knowledge of the world is insufficient to let us see. Death is the unknown, that very thing that

⁶ In May and August of 2004 I interviewed Marcelo Birmajer in Buenos Aires.
⁷ Rabbi Steinsaltz was one of the rabbis that Herbert Weiner met in a study circle in Jerusalem. Weiner describes the teachings of the Adin (as the Rabbi was called) in chapter 4 of his book. The chapter provides a very complete explanation of the selfref. See bibliography for Weiner's book that I quote very often in my study.
cannot be calculated, predicted or defined. However, it is in death that we find faith and trust that we will have the opportunity to be reunited with those we love and with God (182). The ultimate destination of all humankind is necessary for the transformation of the soul, for its approximation to the Divinity. A human being suffers when contemplating death because he or she is unaware of what awaits. Though refinement is the final goal of God for His creation, suffering is a natural feeling, for we live in the world of matter. It is puzzling to think that “something” inhabits our body, what we call most commonly “soul.” We are, then, a physical body, a material body, animated by an invisible, unexplainable “soul.” That worldview is something that even the most secular individual can perceive as acceptable. We suffer as well, not only at the contemplation of our own death, but at the death of those around us. The disappearance of our loved ones is an inevitable cause of pain. People seek in religion the relief, the consolation, and the explanation, if possible, for the unknown separation caused by death.

Death is accepted by each individual in a different way. Jewish tradition – explains Weiner– “encourages little speculation regarding life after death; even the mystics did not let their minds dwell on it” (47) and that is based on the knowledge that there are mysteries that mysticism cannot penetrate. In Birmajer’s novel we find an episode that illustrates this truth: when Saúl and rabbi Lipzki talk about the resurrection of the dead with the arrival of the Messiah, Saúl has lots of questions regarding this mysterious subject. He wants to know how things are really going to happen, and before Saúl asks the rabbi one more puzzling question, the rabbi adds: “- Aún no sabemos mucho de eso. No se sabe” (76).

Rabbi Setzer (one of Weiner's teachers) remembered the words of Rabbi Nachman.8 “It is forbidden to be old”, that is, people, no matter what age they are, should always make big plans and engage in exciting projects to have something to look forward in the future (Weiner 48). The secret is that we should be busy with life so as not to really worry about death. Death is after all a mystery, and no matter how many religions try to approach and explain it, nobody is really sure what it is. When Saúl decides to continue living instead of putting an end to his life, he goes on despite the suffering. And he recovers slowly to find happiness again.

At the beginning of the novel, the reader learns that Saúl lives in a world of memory and that every step he takes brings him cherished moments of the past. He is still recovering emotionally from the death of his beloved wife. He is extremely emotional and sensitive. In just a few pages into the story, we see that Saúl cries several times: “En el avión, lloró por el recuerdo” (14); “[...] a Saúl se le llenaron los

8 Famous leader of the Hasidim.
ojos de lágrimas” (18); “Saúl aguardó conmovido” (23); “Descubrió que estaba llorando cuando una lágrima le rozó la comisura de la boca” (27). The novel goes on to reveal a mature porteño who does not exactly represent the image of the macho latino that we are used to seeing in the movies; he does not correspond to the stereotype of the Latin macho who does not cry. Saúl’s character is somebody living in his own world, looking for his own answers and does not seem worried about acting according to certain conventionalities: “Había sido feliz y no debía nada a nadie. No tenía cuentas pendientes con el Más Allá ni consigo mismo. ¿Me mato o sigo viviendo?, se preguntó a los cuarenta años. Decidió seguir viviendo [...]” (12).

Interestingly, the name Saúl evokes the history of another Saúl in Jewish history. Around 1020 BC, the 12 tribes into which the Israelites were divided found a leader, Saúl, who became a king and won many important battles to protect his people. However, in a battle with the Philisthines, his three sons were killed and Saúl, who suffered deeply over this loss, committed suicide (Lewis 150). Our protagonist, Saúl Bluman, also thinks of killing himself, but this time, this Saúl chooses life.

In his vacation trip to Israel, while sitting at a café in Tel Aviv, Saúl recognizes in the newspaper, among the pictures of those killed in the terrorist attack, the picture of the girl who had come just days before to pick him up at the airport, the maid of his cousin Meir. He leaves his paper and his coffee half unfinished and forgets to pay the bill. Saúl is immersed in his thoughts; the owner of the coffee shop, who is also an Argentinean, understands his distraction and jokes with him about forgetting to pay. Saúl proceeds to the hotel: “Llegando al hotel, como si la tragedia lo siguiera como una nube, pasó por la vereda donde inequivocadamente había sucedido el atentado” (45). Saúl is on vacation in Israel, but the luggage he carries inside himself cannot be unloaded anywhere. There is no relief for the emotional Saúl. Alone in his room, he remembers his wife and falls asleep thinking of her. The terrorist attack affected him deeply, and the absence of his wife occupies his mind permanently. The most striking point is that Saúl never looks for consolation in religion; he acts more like a rebel, getting angry at injustice and loss. He cannot understand the many shades of pain that life brings upon people everyday. The author himself, in one of his short stories, talks about the human incapacity to bear the pain of desire: “Nuestros cuerpos y nuestras almas no están preparados para la vida. Los hombres no estamos hechos para vivir. A duras penas soportamos las descargas de dolor que nos produce el deseo de ver a una persona; se nos hace incomprensible que sea nuestro propio espíritu el que produce esas fuerzas que tanto nos dañan” (Nuevas historias 222).

Other important aspects that I wish to explore in the Jewish mystical tradition are the study of numbers and the meaning of marriage and sex. Numbers have profound
meanings in Jewish mysticism. Each letter of the Hebrew alphabet carries a numeric value. The Hasidim of Europe studied each letter of the sacred Torah, looking for hidden mathematical codes. This is what is called *gematria*, the study of the numerical value of letters which became one of the fundamental aspects of Kabbalah. As Kenneth Hanson explains: "The mystics knew, long before modern physicists, that everything in the created world is governed by precise mathematical laws" (98).

In the second book of Genesis the element of water is predominant in the narrative. In Hebrew the word water is MaIM, which in numbers would correspond to 40-10-40, and sea is IaM, which corresponds to 10-4. In both words we can find the structure 1-4. The symbol of water is also related to the female, the woman, and the left side. The Genesis story changes from light (number 2) with "And God said, 'Let there be light'" to water (number 4) with "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place." Weinreb calls our attention to the fact that light moves faster than water. Water is an element that moves much slower. Everything on earth that is governed by the natural movements of waters is much slower than the speed of light. The slowness of the structure 1-4 that relates to water is always presented in the Bible with a sense of duration of time. All the episodes narrated in the Bible that are related to the symbolic element of water always last a long time: the slavery of Jews in Egypt lasted 400 years, the wandering in the desert lasted 40 years, Moses remained in the Sinai Mount for 40 days, the kingdom of David lasted 40 years, the famous deluge lasted 40 days, and Elijah stayed in the desert for 40 days. The word water in Hebrew is related to the Hebrew letter MeM; this letter corresponds to the number 40. It is thus clear that the number 40 is symbolically related to specific and meaningful events that lasted a very long time (Weinreb 80).

Apart from the slow passing of time, the other aspect to observe about this mysterious number is its relation to the left side, to the female, and the woman: water is present in the body, in the womb where the fetus develops, the menstrual period, the water of tears (as the woman is seen as more emotional). French psychoanalyst and philosopher Luce Irigaray confirms that the properties of liquids are associated with female imagery: "continuous, compressible, dilatable, viscous, conductible, diffusible" (111). In the second book of Genesis we see a detailed explanation about the creation of the woman. Eve is created and takes her first action. The story that follows is about Eve and the serpent. The man - Adam - simply eats passively what the woman gives him. In many different passages of the Bible, we find the feminine

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9 Hanson 98, 99 and 110.

10 Friedrich Weinreb wrote a detailed book on the Kabbalah for beginners. See bibliography, p.79-80.

11 I use "woman" in very general terms, considering that most but not all women are by nature physically capable of conceiving and giving birth, have menstrual period, and are represented in myth and world literature as being more emotional than men.
protagonists next to water fountains where they do their household chores, get water for the house, and feed the animals. These meaningful elements are connected. What may go unnoticed for most readers is charged with symbolic meaning under the surface.12

Saul has lost his wife at the age of forty and cries frequently at his memories. The number forty in Saul's life has lost his feminine counterpart (Berta); all he is left with are his tears (water). The emptiness of her absence causes him great sadness, which seems to last an eternity. Anyone who has lost a loved one knows that the suffering of loss seems sometimes eternal and without end.

How much does Judaic culture impact Saul's life? What was the role of his late wife in his life? The Talmud clearly says: "Any man who does not have a wife is without joy, without blessing, without goodness" (Talmud, Sotah 17a).13 In the very first page of the novel, the reader finds out how distressed Saul felt with the death of his wife. Marriage is a fundamental aspect of Judaic culture. Westheimer and Mark explain: "In traditional Judaism, getting married is not simply a legal ceremony [...] but a public enactment of Judaism's most sacred communal and familial values" (113). It is believed that the union of two people by marriage is prepared far in advance: "Starting from birth, the angels must work overtime, if necessary, to bring the future spouses together from the opposite ends of the world, if need be, so that they might meet and fall in love" (113). Another sacred aspect of marriage is that "Traditional Jews are taught that while humans are created in the image of God, a man or a woman alone and separate is not the fullest realization of that image. Only together can they fulfill their destiny" (115-16). When Saul loses his wife, their sacred union arranged in heaven is broken and he is left alone in the physical plane. He is only half and alone cannot fulfill his destiny.

The presence of a strong woman in a man's life is seen throughout history in all times and places. Rabbi Akiva, born around 40 or 50 CE and well-known in the Jewish world, is described by Kenneth Hanson:

Like so many mystics, his origins were humble. He was but an uneducated shepherd until the age of forty, whereupon he began a life of study and contemplation. His saintly wife, Rachel, urged him on, though he had to sit in class with small children, learning the alphabet for the first time. After fifteen long years of study, he made an incredible ascent to the throne of authority, as adjudicator and leader of his people. (54)

Rabbi Akiva affirmed the importance of the woman in a man's life some two thousand years ago. He advised the three most important requirements for anyone
who wanted to study the secrets of the Torah and have wisdom: he should be forty years old (an age of maturity), be married to a good wife (stability, love and sex), and have a full stomach (full of the knowledge of Jewish Law, the Torah). The female figure is absent in Saul’s life. He has just lost his wife at the age of forty, and he has many questions as he starts his adventure in Israel three years later. This trip offers him a unique opportunity to finally be in contact with the religion and the beliefs of his ancestors, which help him eventually to clarify some of his identity issues.

The male and female union is largely studied and discussed in the Zohar. In Rabbi Weiner’s book, he comments on the teachings he received from several rabbis and scholars. One of these is Mr. Setzer, a kabbalist he meets in New York who gives him lessons on the Zohar for several months. It is Ms. Setzer who explains:

[...] in his creation a creator reveals something of his personality; touched by him, it must bear his stamp. [...] 

The thoughts and acts of man in our world are invested with implications stretching far beyond the immediately visible scene. All acts of unification, including sexual acts, become not just symbols but instruments which enable the upper worlds to function. [...] 

The use of erotic imagery for spiritual symbolism is not, of course, unique to the Zohar; it is found in the prophets, the Song of Songs, and indeed, throughout the Bible. In the Zohar, however, the eroticism is at times so daring and provocative as to make clearly understandable the law which requires a student of the Kabbala to be stabilized in his emotional and physical life by marriage and by a commitment to the revealed structure of the commandments. (30-31)

On the creation of the first man, Hanson explains:

Indeed, the Bible really does not say that God created man in His own image (Gen.1:26). That level of sexism would take centuries to develop. On the contrary, the account of Genesis declares that God created not a male, but “the Adam” in His image. Adam, translated “man” in English, is also used to designate the name of the first man. But Adam is simply a shortened form of the Hebrew Adamah, which means the “ground” or “earth”, from which the Adam was created. In truth, we would be better advised to translate the verse: “And God said, ‘Let us make a person – a human being, an “earth-creature” – in our image.’” This Adam, this “earth-creature”, was to be a reflection of everything that God is. And since God is both male and female, according to kabbalistic lore, with masculine as well as feminine traits, so is Adam, the “earth-creature”, both male and female.[...]

The lesson is that every male must find a balance with his feminine attributes, and every female must find a balance with her masculine attributes. Moreover, the purpose of sexual intimacy is not procreation, but rather the union of male and female traits in created things, as a reflection of the union of male and female traits of God. (135/136)
In Judaism, the woman does not compete with the man, she is not his inferior, nor is she seen as a sexual object. The woman completes the man and vice versa, for both were made by God with the higher purpose of union to reach the creator. The famous Jewish sex expert Dr. Ruth Westheimer emphasizes that "Judaism is intensely sexual (5)" and that "Celibacy is not a virtue – orgasms are" (4).

The relevance of sex is fundamental in Judaism and we see that it plays an important role in Saul's life. The Zohar speaks about the androgynous nature of beings. Daniel Chanan Matt, on his notes to the Zohar, comments that "Any man or woman who remains single is only 'half of the body'. [...] The inner purpose of human sexuality is to regain wholeness and manifest the oneness of God" (217). In the novel, we know that after the death of Berta, it took Saul six years to be with a woman again (12), a period in which he was grieving her loss. However, he is not completely shut off from the world of carnal pleasure. He says that he feels "indifferent" to sex, food and money (12). Saul continues being attracted to several female characters in the narrative but becomes very selective in his emotional involvement with other women. He is looking for a true connection, something that can take him to another level. It is indeed how Judaism regards the sexual union of a man and a woman: a unique union with God.

Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan both wrote long studies on sexuality and sexual behavior. In what concerns desire, Vincent Leitch explains that, according to Lacan, "[...] desire is what by definition remains unsatisfiable" (1282). What is it that Saul needs to satisfy in his life? As he struggles with questions about his own beliefs, we learn of his thoughts as his body, his eyes and attention are directed to the women that appear throughout the narrative. Could he be unconsciously looking for that union with the Divine? Is it simply a physical need? Doubts regarding his religious beliefs bother him, and he starts asking himself more questions. Could sex bring him the balance that can be reached with the harmonious union of the sexes? Could it bring him closer to God?

The second part of the book narrates a trip Saul takes to Cuba nine years later with his new girlfriend Bea. The author separates the narration of these two trips with a page where two short paragraphs explain that Saul lived a great revelation that originated in his trip to Cuba. The second paragraph justifies the interruption in the narrative. The trip to Cuba, he clarifies: "Es una trama larga y compleja, y justifica el haber narrado toda su anterior travesía por Jerusalem y Tel Aviv, que sin el fin de la historia podría acaso parecer un simple relato turístico" (81). Despite the time that has elapsed between the two trips, they are fundamentally connected. The first one helps the reader learn who Saul is and what his thoughts are. To fully understand the
second story, it is imperative that the reader knows Saul’s emotions, his feeling towards his dead wife, his character, his points of view about life, about death, about the orthodox Jews. The experience in Israel served to shape Saul’s impressions and reinforce the conviction of the person he is. The doubts he had about his Jewishness are resolved as he comes in contact with the Jews in the yeshiva of his nephew Elías. Whether he had any doubts about being a good Jew or not, the trip to Israel serves to give him peace of mind: he learns that he is fine where he is.

The most important mystical moment of the narrative comes at the very end of the book. The trip to Cuba wears Saul out, and he sees Bea less often. In the second weekend after their return from Cuba he goes to the country club to spend some time alone. He refuses invitations to play tennis and hardly speaks to friends. On Sunday, at eleven in the evening, somebody rings the bell. Saul opens the door and sees Berta, his dead wife. At first he forgets her death and his twelve years of pain, but then it dawns on him that it is really his dead wife standing before him. Saul cries, hugs and kisses her. She looks more beautiful than ever and he remembers the words of the rabbi in Jerusalem: “cuando llegue el Mesías, los cuerpos de los redivivos serán de mejor calidad” (113). He asks Berta if the Messiah has arrived and she says no: “Cuando llegue, todos regresaremos del paraíso. A mí me trajiste vos. ¿Cómo?” (113) He doesn’t know. And then he asks her how heaven is. Berta answers: “no es tan distinto” (113). She tells him that there are no buildings, no ground, no hunger, no thirst and that people have free will like they do on earth. He wants her to stay, but she is only visiting and must return to heaven. The comic touch the author gives is that since the two realms — heaven and earth — are so similar, Berta, like Saul, has somebody special in the afterlife.

Hanson explains: “Kabbalah teaches that everything below has a counterpart above. The earthly reality is really just a reflection of the heavenly reality. It is the Hebraic equivalent of the ancient Greek concept, expounded by Plato, called mimesis. Things on the earth are but a copy of things in the realm of the ideal” (40). The title of the book is revealed to the reader, teaching a profound mystical truth. Weiner explains the same concept: “Kabbala [...] teaches that everything in the world above has its analogue in the world below. That is why, say the kabbalists, the Bible begins with the second letter of the Hebrew alphabet, beth, which is the equivalent of the number two — to teach us that God created everything on two levels” (13).

The passionate topic of love after death, of grieving for the dead wife, appears in other works of Jewish literature and arts. Russian-Jewish painter Marc Chagall, after the loss of his first wife in 1945, “his beloved muse, his support and inspiration through thirty-five years,” deeply grieved her death for nine months during which he
did not work at all. After that period, he started painting again, creating “tributes to his departed wife” (Kagan 72). The painting entitled Around Her “depicts Bella weeping, leaning toward a scene of her native town presented to her by a floating acrobat. The artist appears at his easel at the lower left, his head inverted in a standard Chagall image of confusion, revery, or distress. At the upper right a bridal couple is embowered, as in so many of Chagall’s paintings. At the upper left a bird-angel carries a lighted candle, in memoriam” (Kagan 72).

A few decades earlier, Sholyme Ansky, the pseudonym of Russian-Yiddish author Shloyme-Zanvl ben Aaron Hacohen Rappoport, incorporated elements of regional Jewish folklore into the stories he wrote about the life of peasants and Hasidism in his homeland. One of his most famous plays, which was adapted into a film in 1938, is called Tsvishn Tsvey Veln, oder der Dibuk (1916), translated as The Dybbuk in 1926. The play’s main plot is the drama of a young yeshiva student named Khonon who suffers an injustice and cannot marry the daughter of a rich rabbi. In distress for seeing the impossibility of his love with Leah coming true, Khonon uses the mystical ways of the Kabbalah secrets to right the injustice suffered. Khonon dies. A dybbuk - a dead soul that takes possession of a living body - dominates Leah’s body on the day of her wedding with another man. The dybbuk is Khonon, who through this mystical method finds a way of being with his bride forever. After being exorcized out of her body, he appears to her at the very end of the play and they march together to the spiritual realm. The dybbuk is a recurrent theme in Yiddish folklore, and it became immortalized in this play, which has been translated into numerous languages and presented in several different countries throughout the world.

Saúl is consciously secular; he does not practice any religion and is not interested in changing. When he meets Ariel, the religious Jew who bothers him with questions about his own Jewishness and his religious beliefs, Saúl feels quite disturbed. Ariel’s questions make perfect sense for a religious Jew, but Saúl has his own view and gives convincing answers.

Ariel asks why Saúl doesn’t do tchuvá: “Tchuvá, arrepentimiento. [...] Volver al camino de la Torá”. Saúl feels intruded, violated by an individual who enquires about his personal life. Ariel doesn’t seem convinced and continues saying that the loss of a loved one is a good moment to look for emuna or truth. And he adds: “- ¿A

15 Ansky was born in 1863 in a city called Vitebsk in Russia, the same birth place of Marc Chagall. He began his career among radical Russian populists and Socialist-Revolutionaries. Later he returned to his roots, to Yiddish and the Jews, his fellowman. He created the Jewish Ethnographic Expedition in 1912 that had a good group of scholars and young field workers that went on expeditions to survey Jewish life. They collected several photographs, folktales, legends, folk songs, historical documents, manuscripts, sacred objects, etc. Ansky considered oral tradition as a real treasure. He died in 1920. (xxiii) For a detailed biography of his life and his work, see the introduction to The Dybbuk written by David G. Roskies.

16 An additional comment to further explain the concept of tshuvah. In Rabbi Herbert W. Wagner’s book we find: "Hence the importance of Judaism’s call to tshuvah, often mistakenly translated as repentance, but which really means return – the return of one’s essential self, that has been covered over by neglect, sin, or hatred. This is what Rabbi Nachman of Breslav meant when he said, "It is forbidden to be old." (266). See bibliography.
Ariel continues with all sorts of arguments: how can he be morally good if he doesn’t respect “Ashem”? Why doesn’t he follow the Torah? Why doesn’t he eat kosher? Why doesn’t he respect the Shabbat? Did he want Judaism to disappear from the face of the earth? One day he would realize that he had wasted his life (38). But Saúl has a firm belief: he doesn’t need to behave like them to be a good Jew; he doesn’t need to become an orthodox Jew to feel better in his life. Saúl is confident of his position and beliefs, and in turn, he feels comfortable and is tolerant enough not to insult them back. The reader can accept both sides, the orthodox and the secular, for both are correct under the light of their beliefs. There is no good Jew or bad Jew. There is no better Jew. They are all Jews with different beliefs and points of view.

Before Saúl leaves the yeshiva one last rabbi asks him the question that Saúl dreads the most. The dialogue goes like this: “- ¿Piensa convertirse en un judío? - preguntó Lipzki. / - Si me convirtiera - dijo Saúl - tendría que ser a otra fe; judío ya soy. / - Los judíos debemos cuidar nuestra alma - dijo Lipzki - Es un alma de gran calidad. Cumpliendo mitzvot, ganamos terreno en el Más Allá” (74-75). Saúl listens with a mixture of fear and irony as rabbi Lipzki explains that the souls of the dead will resurrect with the arrival of the Messiah. Saúl realizes that he had not escaped unharmed. Those questions had been bothering him ever since. Days before when Ariel had asked him if he didn’t feel like he was throwing his life in the garbage, he realized that something in that question had troubled him more than the mere interference in his personal life: “La pregunta por su vida, en última instancia, lo había inquietado. / ¿Y si había un sólo modo de ser bueno? ¿Y si estaba traicionando a su pueblo, viviendo sin quipá y sin kosher sólo porque los romanos habían vencido a los judíos siglos atrás?” (75) But the rabbi’s beliefs on how the bodies would be resurrected and his uncertainty about how these events will happen are enough to show him that he cannot share any thoughts with Lipzki. The absurdity of that belief is enough to keep Saúl away from orthodoxy.

The final episode in the novel is about the day after Berta’s visit. It is a Monday morning and Saúl has to travel back to Buenos Aires. He would normally take the van service provided by the country club to travel to the capital. It was in one of those vans that Berta had died in an accident. This morning he decides to call a cab that would leave sooner. The cab arrives, he jumps in and they depart. Immersed in his thoughts of Berta he doesn’t pay much attention to the driver or to the heavy traffic that delays them near a Jewish country club. Suddenly the driver makes an anti-Semitic comment referring to the people coming out of the Jewish country club and
causing the heavy traffic. Saúl’s country club wasn’t defined by its population—it had gentiles and Jews—but this one had a Hebrew name, and at that time a lot of cars were departing the country club at the end of the weekend. The taxi driver had no way of knowing whether Saúl was Jewish or not. Saúl is perplexed and angry as the driver continues with more insulting comments against the Jews. He makes a decision: “Tomaría por la nuca al remisero y le oprimiría violentamente el rostro contra el volante. Juntos se estrellarían contra un árbol, o contra un poste telefónico. Ambos perderían la vida. Saúl vería a Berta. O acaso dejaría de sufrir” (118/119).

They stop in a gas station, and in the brief moments that Saúl waits for the driver while he fills up the tank of the car and has a drink at the bar, Saúl is surprised to see the van from his country club parked in the same gas station. That would remain an enigma for the rest of his life: the van wasn’t supposed to leave until much later. How could it be there already? He tried to figure things out; maybe during the time his cab was stuck in traffic, the van took a different route and avoided the traffic in which they had been stopped and was able to catch up with them. At the same time Saúl knew that they had been stuck in traffic for maybe fifteen minutes. It didn’t make any sense. He looked at the van and recognized the passengers traveling in it. He reflects on that moment of his life. He decides to leave the cab and board the van. He greets the four passengers and sits at the back, next to a ten-year-old boy, the son of a family he knew. The boy brings him a memory of when he was a child himself. Sometime later he arrives at his destination and Bea, the girlfriend, waits more beautiful than ever.

Saúl makes a meaningful choice. He leaves behind the anti-Semitic taxi driver with his rude anti-Semitic comments, which infuriated and offended him deeply. He leaves behind his thoughts of killing the driver. He leaves behind death. Instead, he chooses life when, in a mysterious way, the van in which he normally travels parks at the same gas station. He chooses to live. He joins the other Jewish passengers in the van and sits next to a little boy. The freedom of choice gives Saúl new life. He feels like the air in the street is different: “le pareció que el aire de la calle era distinto” (121). Saúl is ready to start life again.

On the question of Jewish identity, different sources have offered one thought in common: the “Jew is always conscious of his/her relationship with God”. It seems that the question that bothers Saúl the most is: “¿Y si había un sólo modo de ser bueno? ¿Y si estaba traicionando a su pueblo, viviendo sin quipá y sin kosher [...]” (75). Saúl doesn’t practice Judaism but is concerned about his relationship with God, and that is a fundamental aspect of Jewish identity. He may not admit clearly of his worries, but the question remains in the back of his mind. The religious and
philosophical doubts are related to the identity quest. This theme is colored by the meaningful encounters that Saúl has with other Jews in his trips to Israel and Cuba. He tries to keep orthodoxy away from him since its precepts are too strict and distant from his own way of being. Despite his best efforts, the intrusion of orthodoxy is inevitable. In Cuba, the orthodox rabbis seem to be more influenced by the Caribbean atmosphere; they have a party with music and food, and are not interested in Saúl or Bea’s Judaism. But there too, Saúl cannot leave unharmed. He meets the kabbalist Almelio, who brings Berta from the spiritual world in an inexplicable way. The novel could fit into the category of the Latin American magic realism in that the dead communicate with the living in a normal and accepted fashion. Nevertheless, after we take a look at Judaic mysticism and Jewish literature, we know that the topic has been present from ancient times and we cannot look at it as magic realism.

Saúl tries to preserve what he is, but he is inevitably affected by the events of his life, including the death of his wife and everything that comes after. His traveling to Israel is an indication of his need to define who he is, to find answers, to understand the questions he hadn’t bothered to answer until then. His origins are reinforced. The constant presence of Judaism and its teachings along his path result in giving him a deep understanding and acceptance of his life, of his pain and of his raison d’être. The teachings of Judaism and the Kabbalah reveal the secrets that are hidden in the narrative. Besides Saúl’s quest for understanding himself, the novel depicts several different individuals that are Jews in their own way.

No matter how assimilated a Jewish individual may be, he will carry the memory of his ancestors in his soul, in his being, and he will believe and act, even unconsciously, relating to beliefs and behaviors that are transferred to him across generations. Just like the way we walk or the color of our hair, identity too is partly inherited. There is no discussion that Saúl is a Jew, a good one in his point of view. He has noble feelings for the country of his people: “[...] muchas veces creía en Dios, y aquella noche le pidió al Creador que defendiera por siempre aquel país hermoso que los judíos habían construido a despecho de la tragedia” (41). He is deeply moved by the terrorist attack that takes place while he is there. Nevertheless, Saúl is profoundly Argentinean. He loves his country, the life of Buenos Aires, the life in the Once, the neighborhood where he has his business, the country where he met the women he loved; he loves the city life with its noises and its lights; he loves the mundane in life, he loves women, he loves sex and he loves the freedom of being able to choose what he wants to be and to believe. Aren’t there so many Jews just like Saúl? Yes. Aren’t there so many who are so extremely different? Yes. What are the differences among them? The author succeeds in showing some of the extremes of
this rainbow and some of the shades along it. The different characters depicted in the novel reflect real individuals who exist everywhere in the Diaspora and in Israel. No one is better than the other. They all represent different truths that are valid according to the needs of each group. The author succeeds in creating a protagonist who is so plainly human that his truth, the pure truth of his identity, shines without conflict. Saúl has no problem being who he is or being from where he is from; his soul has room enough for his Jewishness and for his argentinidad. The author succeeds in presenting the contrasts among individuals of different environments where a number of different Jews are displayed with their beauty and their idiosyncrasies. The contrasts only prove that each and all of them are good examples of the diversity among Jews in Israel and abroad. The differences presented reflect not only how they are viewed by others, but also how they are interpreted and how they feel.

The presence of Kabbalist elements in the narrative that have been explored in this study reveal that, in spite of the character's identity crisis, pain and doubts, the mystical and spiritual events and coincidences continue existing in his life. It is not necessary for Saúl - or any of us - to believe in the mystical world and its powers. Kabbalah shows, however, that it does exist, hiding behind numbers, sacred texts, ancient parables, personal encounters, sexual unions, marriages, births and deaths that create the dynamics of our lives. These dynamics are hidden for most people and are only perceived when the eyes are ready to see.

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Tony Kushner’s Angels in America and “the Eternal Joy of Becoming”: A Case of “Gay Science”

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Numerous analytical approaches have been made toward Tony Kushner’s Angels in America. Most of them reveal the complexity and the ambivalent aspects of the play; hence, the directions that these interpretations take vary accordingly. However, in relation to the meaning of the ending, most of the critics agree that the play dissolves its ambivalence at this point and provides a unanimous outlook.

George Piggford in his article “In time of Plague: AIDS and its Signification in Herve Guibert, Tony Kushner, and Thom Gunn” researches AIDS as a cultural discourse in literature. He distinguishes two different types of discourse, one that he calls the “tropic discourse,” which is concerned with AIDS as a cultural metaphor and the “empirical discourse,” which includes medical explanations of AIDS and the latest status of scientific research on AIDS (178). Using a theory by Thomas Yingling which claims that as a result of the fact that AIDS is not fully understood scientifically there is a “gap between the apprehension and the comprehension of the disease,” Piggford argues that this gap is constantly being filled and replaced by allegories describing the disease (178-179). In his analysis of three different pieces of literature concerned with AIDS he focuses on this “asymptotic gap;” which kinds of allegories fill it and how the protagonists deal with it (179). In his view, the character Prior Walter in Angels in America refuses to be placed into the “category of life-in death,” the common association of death and AIDS, by rejecting the Angel’s demand (186). Instead Prior chooses to hope “for an utopian future, in which disease and prejudice will be unknown” (186). The utopian depiction of liberal pluralism at the end of the play, in Piggford’s eyes, belittles the problem of repetitive reconstruction of discourse regarding AIDS (187).

David Savran’s article “Ambivalence, Utopia, and a Queer Sort of Materialism: How ‘Angels in America’ Reconstructs the Nation” interprets the utopian vision of liberal pluralism more positively. His thorough analysis provides an elaboration of the ambivalence in the play and the resolutions of binarism. According to Savran the binary of “utopia/dystopia” serves as a leitmotif in Angels in America and leads to a “contradictory progress” (211). Even the Angel “[is linked] to the concept of utopia/dystopia” since she chooses “the vehicle of hope and redemption” among those who go through the greatest suffering (211). Prior, “the vehicle for hope,” strives for “more life” and liberal pluralism and in the end, transcending the rather marginalized role of theater, due in part to the play’s extraordinary success, “queers
the America of Joseph Smith - and Ronald Reagan" (225). The oppressed part of society leaves the marginalized role and stands at the center of attention (220-227).

The actual performance of the play **Angels in America** also plays an important role in David Ramon's book chapter "November 1, 1992: AIDS/Angels in America." Ramon approaches the play in a very personal way. His analysis is embedded in a frame narrative: the opening marathon performance of **Millennium Approaches** and **Perestroika** at Los Angeles' Mark Taper Forum on November 1, 1992. He and his four friends are gay and one of them has been suffering from AIDS for twelve years. The seven-hour long play becomes a journey of suffering for his friend parallel to Prior's journey of suffering. Drawing on Schechner's performance theory, Roman discusses theater as a place of transformation; a place in which the performance functions as "the agent for the invention of new realities and these realities are made available through transformation" with the chance to become materialized (202 - 218).

By watching the play Roman and his friends go through that transformation, which is mainly concerned with the notion of tolerance, delivered by the idea of liberal pluralism at the end of the play. After a journey of suffering under the Reagan and Bush-administration as gay men and PWA's (Patient with AIDS), Roman and his friends transform the notion of hope especially towards the prospect of the elections, which are going to take place three days after the performance. Hence, like Prior in **Angels in America**, the group of gay men watching the play transform a journey of suffering into a "journey of hope" through the performance (218-224).

Whereas all three critics agree on the idea of an utopian ending, Jonathan Freedman in his article "Angels, Monsters, and Jews: Intersection of Queer and Jewish Identity in Kushner's Angels in America," in which he focuses on the Jewish characters and their meaning in the play, develops in his analysis a problematic depiction of the Jewish part in the idea of liberal pluralism. Firstly, he points out that none of the Jewish aspects is depicted completely positively. He argues that even Louis remains a "querulous and ineffectual" character until the very end and therefore does not seem to be as integrated into the group as the other characters. Furthermore, Freedman claims that as Louis begins to tell the story of Bethesda, which Hannah and Belize finish, the play indicates that "Jews exist to accomplish: announcing the new Christian dispensation, then getting out of the way." Conversely, Prior, as the "arch-WASP [...] under the logic of typology" is able to give a Jewish blessing (Freedman 98-99). Hence "the subordination of the Jew to Christian emplotment" leaves the question of identities and integration unresolved and therefore a "more troubled vision of utopia" (100).
The four analytical approaches to the play deliver a range of interpretations of the ending, including utopia, a criticism of utopia, and a questioning of a utopian ending. To go beyond the text and its performance and to take into account the public reaction to the play (which meanwhile had been turned into film and achieved even further popularity), Savran’s analysis shows new levels of meaning for the play. However, it is not clear how much the popularity of the play actually contributes to the improvement of the lives of gay men and lesbians and especially the PWA’s among them. It is questionable whether the “central role” (Savran 227) he claims the gay population has gained through the play does not in fact merely apply to the play itself. By saying that the ending of the play “downplays crucial factors that produce the conflicted and contested discursive construct ‘AIDS’” (Piggford 187), Piggford shares my concerns about the role of the gay and lesbian community. Yet, I argue that Prior rejects and redefines more than just the AIDS-allegory “life-in death” and moreover that the utopian idea of liberal pluralism, which Piggford regards as problematic, is undermined with anti-utopian evidence, not just regarding the role of Louis as a Jew, but Prior as a homosexual as well. The ending is not just a “troubled vision of utopia,” it is not utopian after all.

Although for Roman the ending of the play delivers a positive outlook, he calls the new perspective, which Prior achieves and which Roman and his friends transform into something meaningful for their lives, a “journey of hope.” Also, Roman does not define the end of the journey. This expression contradicts the final state which is inherent to the term utopia: an ideal as an intellectual construct of a state of being, which is therefore static (von Wilpert 986). A journey, however, especially if its end is not utterly defined, is, both mentally and physically, a state of constant motion. This process of constant motion includes the transformation of “the journey of suffering” into the “journey of hope.” In my analysis I will shed more light on this type of journey including the transformation from “suffering” to “hope,” which is also expressed in Piggford’s idea of rejecting discursive constructs.

While transforming suffering into hope or rejecting oppressive discursive constructs of “AIDS,” Prior Walter in Tony Kushner’s Angels in America embodies a process which Nietzsche describes as “[realizing] in oneself the eternal joy of becoming that joy which also encompasses joy in destruction” (Lackey 743). Nietzsche refers to the “discreation” of moralities and values and the process of overcoming humans’ identification with current moralities. By representing this process, Prior Walter, a gay man suffering from AIDS, shows at the same time where this liberating idea has its limits and introduces a certain irony into the text.
Homosexuality and suffering from AIDS in Angels in America, depicted in the context of neo-conservative politics, reflects “the will” of intolerance, [...] of fear of political weakness” of the political and religious right. AIDS, similar to issues such as immigration, subversion and pollution, feeds their “consensus-building fear”, and hence serves the conservative means to power (Sontag 63-64). Therefore Prior is subject to other people’s wills to power. By being homosexual and avowing himself to that lifestyle and by suffering from AIDS, he is, as the character Roy characterizes the status of homosexuals, at the low end of the “food chain”: he is some one “who [has] zero clout” (Kushner 53). Prior is at the low end of a hierarchy which is dominated by the American religious conservatives and by neo-conservatives.

Prior’s play on words using the term “lesion” shows the nature of his verbally encoded identity. Having AIDS in the 1980s, he is standing opposite to everything that the religious conservatives stand for. Thus, through his “inadequacy” Prior reinforces their “righteousness” and therefore serves their power, just like the people who get thrown into the water by the crew of his grandfather’s ship in order to decrease the weight and increase the necessary power of the longboat so that it will reach the shore (Kushner 46). Prior connects the term “lesion,” the visible symptom of AIDS, his “label,” with the term legion/legionnaire: “I’m a lesionnaire. The Foreign Lesion. The American Lesion. Lesionnaire’s disease” (27). While comparing his condition as a PWA with a legionnaire he articulates the common concept, which is inherent to both: serving a superior person’s will to power. As opposed to Prior who hasn’t any choice, a legionnaire does his service (in most cases) voluntarily.

Moreover, in the same play on words, Prior exemplifies the military realm as a source of metaphoric expressions to describe the disease and the way to deal with it (Sontag 10-11). As a “lesionnaire,” Prior indicates the fact that he has to “fight” his disease. On the other hand this reflects how science describes the activity of the virus in military terms, turning the doctor into a “warrior,” the virus into an “enemy,” and the whole disease into an “invasion.” Consequently, the patient him/herself is turned involuntarily into a participant of the “battle” and into the enemy of the uninfected (Sontag 10-24).

The role of the PWA as an enemy is further emphasized in the “risk group” which Prior represents by being gay, which in the eyes of the conservatives pursue, as Joe calls it, a “wrong and ugly” lifestyle (Kushner 46). Moreover, the terms “Lesionnaire’s disease” and “Foreign Lesion” are imbued with the notion of foreignness, which has labeled almost any type of epidemic, indicating its invasive character; it does not belong to the “invaded” society and everything associated with it is seen as destructive towards the society’s values (Sontag 48). Hence, Prior is an enemy in the
eyes of the religious and conservative right, and he lives a “foreign,” delinquent, and deviant lifestyle whose result and punishment is his illness (25).

Joe’s mother, Hannah Pitt, further clarifies the conservative perspective on “the homosexual” in her confrontation with his homosexuality. During the telephone conversation in which Joe reveals to her his emerging understanding of his sexual identity, she calls him “ridiculous” and wants to “forget this phone call” (Kushner 82). Hannah is even scared to pronounce the word “homosexual” (this is more pronounced in the film), and she herself admits “I flew into a rage when he told me [about being homosexual], mad as hornets” (235-236). Hannah initially represents a large homophobic proportion of American society which treats homosexuals in most cases as a threat.

Nevertheless, it is not just the conservative right that stigmatizes AIDS. Prior’s boyfriend Louis, who appears to be a left wing liberal politically, shows a degree of intolerance. He leaves Prior due to his progressing disease and its visual symptoms that he associates with death. His “neo-Hegelian positivist sense of constant historical progress towards happiness” does not agree with illness and death (Kushner 31). More than just repressing the expected loss of a loved one, he rejects Prior and his disease as the “other,” the foreign enemy who does not fit into his concept in the same way Prior does not fit into the concept of the religious and conservative right.

Initially Prior gives in to this stigmatized role of the enemy, first seen in the fact that he labels himself and his illness with degrading metaphors such as “lesionnaire” and “[t]he wine dark kiss of the angel of death” (Kushner 27). In his feverish dream, while dressed as a drag queen, Prior resigns himself to the fact that his life is determined. The Angel of Death is hovering above him waiting to punish him. The metaphor of the disease as punishment destroys the joy of his lifestyle and under these circumstances “even drag is a drag” (37). Later, after his conversation with Harper, who insists on her ability to see that “deep inside [...] there is a part of [him] [...] entirely free of disease,” Prior feels instead that his blood is “polluted” and he feels “dirty” (37). What Prior senses here as pollution of his inner self is not just the virus, but also all the inscribed metaphors that assign him his place in society. His place in society in turn, as discussed earlier, reinforces those already in power.

The powerful part of society represented by Cohn and initially by Joe, in order to retain their power, fight against everything which in Joe’s eyes causes the world to be “in decline, horrible, hopeless, full of unsolvable problems and crime and confusion” (Kushner 32). Sontag describes the fight as against everything which originated in the 1960s including AIDS (Sontag 63), since it was “a sign of moral laxity” and
"political decline" (54). Joe points out that as a result of this fight, "America has discovered itself. Its sacred position among nations" (Kushner 32), Joe is referring to the neo-conservative establishment and the way it influences the country.

The Angel shares Joe's perspective to a certain degree. She is also concerned about "Crisis and Confusion" (Kushner 173). She represents Heaven's will for humans to stop thinking and imagining, to stop "progress[ing], travel[ing], [and] intermingle[ing]" which causes the confusion and drives God, who has adopted the human's behavior of progress and abandoned Heaven, further away (176-179). The Angel demands from Prior that humanity should stop the progress in order to avert a disaster, the apocalypse. She demands "Neither Mix, Nor Intermarry" and finally, "STASIS" (178-180). Hence we can assume that Heaven refuses under the broad term progress interracial marriage, homosexual commingling and promiscuity. The Angel reveals a high degree of intolerance and with "STASIS" a standpoint of ultra-conservatism. The latter is also to be seen in the obsolete appearance of Heaven (252). Additionally, the Angel's appearance introduces another metaphor for AIDS; its association with the apocalypse.

The Angel forces upon Prior, just like the neo-conservative and religious majority of the American society, Heaven's values expressed in the book of prophecy. The book is contained within Prior and is thus another metaphor of conservative values is inscribed into him. "The virus of prophecy" pollutes his blood like so many other metaphors for his disease (Kushner '82). Prior again is supposed to serve others' wills to power. Here it is the rehabilitation of the power of Heaven. Forcing upon Prior the same metaphors as the conservative and religious right, the Angel and Heaven can be seen as metaphors for religious right wing conservatism. Hence the Angel with her appearance at the dramatic climax of the play accompanies a high point of discursive oppression.¹

However, this climax means for Prior a turning point. Instead of "[SUBMITTING] TO THE WILL OF HEAVEN" (Kushner 171), he "[hates] heaven" and wants to run (182). After wrestling with the Angel, whom Prior defeats so that he can express freedom of choice (251), he chooses to return his book of prophecy and to ask for more life. As far as God is concerned, Prior is convinced that "[h]e isn't coming back," and that "the bastard" should "[be sued] for walking out" (264). This audacious comment in front of the Angels in Heaven is reminiscent of the same daring and provocative stance of the madman in aphorism 125 of The Gay Science: "God is dead. God remains dead" (Nietzsche 181). Interestingly, the Angel's

¹ Although religiousness is not necessarily a qualification to be neo-conservative, as Cohn says "I'm not religious but I like God and God likes me" (Kushner 21), Western religious moralities serve the neo-conservative means just well.
response to Prior is “Thus spake the Prophet,” reminding us of another work by Nietzsche: “Thus Spake Zarathustra.” With this Kushner draws a connection from Prior rejecting the conservative religious values to Nietzsche’s philosophy concerned with dismantling the construct of religious morals.

In his article “Killing God, Liberating the "Subject": Nietzsche and Post-God Freedom,” Michael Lackey provides a post-structuralist reading of Nietzsche which further helps to unravel the discursive issues in Angels in America and the references to Nietzsche. In his interpretation of Nietzsche, Lackey elaborates on “the abandonment of the correspondence ideal,” which proclaims that there is no real referent matching the word (740). Nietzsche therefore calls each word an “innocent lie” as opposed to a “willful lie,” which is the belief and the words of theologians, who by uttering their belief commit to a further lie (741-742).

In Lackey’s reading of Nietzsche, in order for everyone to facilitate becoming free, one needs to agree that any word is a lie, and as “long as individuals accept other people’s language games as final vocabularies, they are determined by others” (Lackey 744). Therefore beliefs as well as societal values and metaphoric descriptions of diseases are “game[s] of language” (744). When referring to himself as a “lesionnaire,” Prior still believes in “other people’s games of language” with which they define him. He still believes in language, “the principle of belief,” feeding “the lordly ruler’s will to linguistic power.” Lackey quotes Nietzsche, “[t]o be free, godless anti-metaphysicians must first abolish belief in the real/apparent world distinction and then expose the degree to which language is sheerly of the lordly rulers’ verbal will to power” (751). Consequently, Michael Lackey points out that by destroying the “sacred idol of God” the self frees itself of other humans’ wills to power, which are inscribed in us as “values, words, formulas, moralities of opposite descent.” Other people’s wills to power are “encoding us, so that we become the involuntary carriers of other people’s verbal projections [...] But for Nietzsche, in killing God, the death of metaphysics will logically follow, and this will free individuals to cast a deconstructive glance at their linguistically generated ‘selves,’ a glance which opens up the possibility for a potential reconstitution of ‘self’” (753).

Since the reconstruction of our self happens through language, the self becomes again subject to other wills to power. Therefore, symbolically speaking, we need to “destroy the sacred idol of God” more than once, maybe over and over again:

Yet for Nietzsche, this is no cause for despair, but rather, an occasion for unbridled joy, for in killing God and metaphysics, he has set into motion the creative self-overcoming of ‘self’ [...] Now we know why Nietzsche so passionately desired to kill God; it was the only way to free the “human” from the Human, a freedom which could empower individuals to achieve something much more noble, much healthier, much more alive (Lackey 754).
Prior's role as a victim of discourses about AIDS, his refusal of the prophecy and the references to Nietzsche in Heaven make more sense now, for we can see Prior's encounter with the Angel as a metaphor for the religious/neo-conservative values. The rejection of his prophecy, which is supposed to help the departed God to return to heaven, can be seen as a further destruction of "the sacred idol of God." Hence, Prior deconstructs his verbally created self within the context of the neo-/religious conservative side of America.

By bringing together the Foucauldian principle of subjection and psychoanalysis in her book The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection, Judith Butler reveals the notion of overcoming and repossession of self being disguised as resistance in the unconscious. According to Butler, there is only a paradoxical approach possible to explain the injunction of power on our inner self, but approaching it shows that there is a way to suspend the exclusiveness of Foucault's system of power. Foucault, on the other hand, claims in Discipline and Punish that the soul regulates our bodily production and thus is the prison of our body. Drawing on her interpretation of Foucault, Butler claims that the properly producing subject, "[t]he subject's ideal corresponds to the ego-ideal." Thus the subject-ideal is produced at a cost, "and whatever resists the normative demand by which subjects are instituted remains unconscious" (87). The metal around an inscribed name on a coin would be that which "resists the normative demand" (88). The subject, bringing together other discursive power regimes, can reactivate the unconscious resistance. Also, considering the Althusserian idea of interpellation, which is subjection by naming people, Butler exposes the possibility of "misrecognition" when being named (95). Hence there is a certain space, originated in the unconscious, which allows the intuition of a different identity. (This is a confusing paragraph. Can you tie examples from the film into it more directly, so that we follow the steps easier?)

Thus the encounter with the Angel, seen as a feverish dream, originates in Prior's unconscious. Consequently, Prior, during the second encounter with the Angel when he rejects his prophecy, reactivates his unconscious resistance. Hannah as a character at this point becomes part of his dream and thus his unconscious. Confronted with the Angel, Prior, as part of his unconscious, does not know how to reject the book and the Angel. Yet Hannah suggests, "[y]ou...you wrestle her," and her advice in this urgent situation seems to be an intuition. Prior follows her advice and as a result he defeats the Angel and is able to alter his identity. Hence Hannah represents the part of the intuitiveness of a different identity. Altering his identity takes place in Heaven, a place not known-just like resistance to the inscribed power that remains unconscious and therefore unknown.
As we have seen, Prior’s visit to Heaven and his rejection of the prophecy exemplify religious and neoconservative power inscription. At approximately the same time when Prior returns the book of prophecy and experiences his rebirth as a result of defeating the Angel, Roy Cohn, the exponent of neo-conservatism and its corruption dies wrestling with “his Angel” Ethel Rosenberg. With his death Cohn “provides” Prior with AZT, the rather materialized blessing of “more life” (Kushner 271).

Joe also wrestles with an Angel, and, as he states, “[t]he angel is not human, and it holds nothing back, so how could any human win” (Kushner 55-56). Joe does not share Prior’s success in wrestling with the Angel, meaning he is not able to prevent the neo-conservative and religious realm from forcing its subject-hood upon him, as he shows in his behavior throughout the play. He attempts to overcome the societal and political ideas that identify him, but he fails, as evidenced in the fact that he is not part of the group of tolerant and progressively thinking people at the end of the play.

Opposing her son, Hannah indeed goes through a more effective change. While she first refuses any interaction with her son Joe regarding his homosexuality and dismisses it as “ridiculous,” she later confesses, after she has learned to dare to pronounce the term, that it was not so much homosexuality but rather men themselves “in any configuration” that cause her discomfort (Kushner 236). After the encounter with the Angel, who provides her with a rather homosexual experience, as shown in the epilogue Bethesda, she is able to become close friends with people whom she once strongly depreciated. Louis also finds his way back to Prior and is able to accept him with his disease. Nonetheless, Prior and Louis make their peace as friends, not as lovers.

Contrasting the liberal pluralism of the group of friends at the end, the audience may see in Kushner’s optional final scene Roy Cohn one more time “in Heaven, or Hell or Purgatory” (Kushner 279). He seems to be asked to represent someone in a paternity suit of abandonment. Since Prior suggested to the Angels to “sue the bastard [God]” when he comes back, we can assume that God is the one who is being represented in this case. Suggesting a status of employment between Roy and God, besides a humorous effect, further underlines the connection between Heaven and neo-/religious conservatism.

With defeating the Angels and returning the book Prior destroys the “sacred Idol of God,” and he overcomes the discourse of those people such as Hannah and Cohn who “create” God as their means to power which in turn is used to (de-)form
and degrade Prior's identity. Prior has overcome his "self," and he does indeed seem to be "much healthier, much more alive." Prior's subject-hood has changed at least regarding the relationship with the LDS member Hannah, with his ex-boyfriend Louis, and maybe to a certain degree with the oppressive conservative discourse in general. The ending suggests, though, that the encounter with the angel and the rejection of Prior's prophecy was not the last deconstruction of his self since the reconstruction of the self, according to Lackey, evokes a new subject-hood. Prior will continue the process, which Lackey describes as the process of "creative self-overcoming" or, as Prior calls it, "[the world spinning forward]" (Kushner 280). As Lackey interprets Nietzsche, this process is healthy and promotes life and joy.

Yet it should be questioned whether the new reconstruction and its new overcoming of the self will actually be as joyful as Nietzsche proclaims. First of all, the audience witnesses a new alliance of Cohn and God. That means God is back and will reestablish Heaven with the help of Roy Cohn. Both, as we know, stand for conservatism and, as far as Cohn is concerned, for unethical standards. In the same manner, it needs to be noted that Joe is excluded from the group of friends, who, as opposed to Harper, used to be part of the group. His disappearance, his violence against Louis (239-244), and the fatherly blessings he receives from Cohn right before Cohn dies might imply that he will become Cohn's successor and will help to continue the powerful, corruptive, and oppressive neo-conservatives whom Cohn used to represent. As a result, people such as Prior, Louis, or Belize are left merely trying to overcome the same discourse.

The reconstruction on a global level, such as "Perestroika," which Louis discusses enthusiastically in the epilogue Bethesda, hoping for "the miraculous" to "occur," meets with criticism on the part of Hannah and Belize. They interrupt Louis' passionate speech about the political development in Russia and Gorbachev with comments such as "I wonder what'll happen now in places like Yugoslavia" and refer to political issues in the Middle East, foreshadowing the next global conflicts to come, and therefore are taking the new developments with a grain of salt (Kushner 277-280). The utopian ending is diminished. Roman in his article, which I discussed earlier, shares Louis's positive outlook on the future. His optimism, however, refers to the elections that were going to take place at the time as he watched this play. As we know, Bill Clinton displaced the conservative administration, allowing many, especially liberal gay men and lesbians, to breathe a sigh of relief. Yet, from the current perspective within the era of another neo-conservative administration provided with "fatherly blessings" from its neo-conservative predecessors, fueling several global conflicts and demanding a "SATSIS" for the development of equal
rights for gays and lesbians, Louis’ as well as Roman’s optimism adopt a strong notion of irony.

The utopian ending or, to put it in a Nietzschean way, “the eternal joy of becoming” through the “discreation” of, in this case, religious and neo-conservative values does not seem to make any remarkable steps forward. Hence, Prior’s claim that “[t]he world only spins forward” is firstly, as Freedman already pointed out, “a false claim, since the world, which spins on its axis, could be said in that sense to be moving nowhere” (Freedman 100). Secondly, the following sentence “[w]e will be citizens,” (Kushner 280) meaning as a result of the “world [spinning] forward,” the progress of society, gay men and lesbians will be fully integrated in the American society. Yet, since the world rather moves “nowhere” and just “spins on its axis,” Prior, as well as everybody else, will deal with more or less the same circumstances repeatedly, which is not utopian after all.

Additionally, the name “Prior” indicates the constant process of overcoming oneself since Prior is prior to himself, his new self. The new self is inherent to the name. However, “Prior” as a name and a label and therefore as a linguistically generated self can never be overcome since it stands for overcoming itself. The person Prior, therefore is somewhat doomed to overcome but not the overcoming. He will always have the need to overcome but cannot overcome at the same time. In a similar way being gay indicates being caught in the process of overcoming. Hence being gay is an ironic version of Nietzsche’s idea of the “eternal joy of becoming”. As the historical development of the integration of homosexuals into American society shows, only little progress has been made and many of the former issues of integration are still effective and need to be overcome. Being homosexual will therefore mean for a long time to be in the need of overcoming a subject-hood.

What Lackey, by interpreting Nietzsche’s idea of killing God, sees as a continuously liberating process, receives in Angels in America rather the notion of a constant struggle. “[T]he eternal joy of becoming” in this context it might not be so joyful after all but rather, could be seen as the eternal “gay science,” which is to “kill God” constantly. As it says in The Gay Science, “God is dead; but given the way of men, there may still be caves for thousands of years in which his shadow will be shown. - And we – we still have to vanquish his shadow too” (Nietzsche 167). Hence the play Angels in America transcends the utopian ending, the idea of liberal pluralism, and shows underneath a situation of being caught in the world “spinning nowhere.”