

Allegories of Globalization: The United States in Recent Latin American Narrative

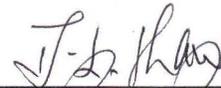
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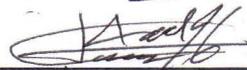
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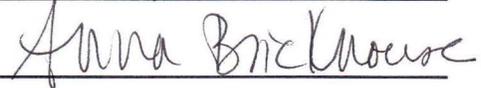
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ABSTRACT

This study examines the interplay of Latin American and North American culture in four novels by established Spanish American authors. Luisa Valenzuela's Novela negra con argentinos (1990), El plan infinito by Isabel Allende (1991), Linda 67: Historia de un crimen (1995) by Fernando del Paso and José Donoso's Donde van a morir los elefantes (1995) are each set in the United States of the late 1980s and 1990s. Though all of these novels are purportedly focused on individual relationships, pedaling around the theories of Fredric Jameson and Dorris Sommer I argue that these private romances are also figures for public, trans-national allegories. The love triangles always involve the choice, on the part of the Latin American protagonist, between a fellow Latin American and a North American partner who embodies the highlighted aspects of the surrounding culture. Given the timing of the production of these novels, with the centered promoters of globalization pushing the formation of a new world order in which the nation-state would play a significantly reduced role, these novels provide a counterpoint from the peripheral perspective and reveal the tensions and anxieties involved in integrating the global and the local without the mediation of the national level. Thus, these novels can be seen as literary contributions to the so-called postmodernism debate that heated up in Latin American scholarship in the 1990s. In their sub-texts they deny the desirability of (post)modern North American material culture as worthy of importation to their southern climes and at the same time question the validity of postmodernism as a regionally appropriate theoretical paradigm. The writing back to the center from the periphery, the concern for national and regional identity, and the rejection of absolute relativism all position these works as Latin American postcolonial novels.

Americanista Novels: Discourse, Tradition, Globalization

—Es así como la visión de una América *deslatinizada* por propia voluntad, sin la extorsión de la conquista, y regenerada luego a imagen y semejanza del arquetipo del Norte, flota ya sobre los sueños de muchos sinceros interesados por nuestro porvenir [...]. Ariel, José Enrique Rodó

The 1990s saw the emergence of several novels by established Latin American authors set in the United States. Falling within the purview of this study are Luisa Valenzuela's Novela negra con argentinos (1990), El plan infinito by Isabel Allende (1991), Linda 67: Historia de un crimen (1995) by Fernando del Paso and José Donoso's Donde van a morir los elefantes (1995). Though none of these, save Novela negra, has received much critical attention, I argue that the publication of these novels in such a cluster is significant for the field of modern Latin American letters, especially for those interested in Hemispheric Studies. It provides the exciting opportunity to take a look into the place of the United States in the contemporary Latin American literary imagination.

Throughout this study I will refer to this group of texts as the *Americanista* novels. This is more a label of convenience than it is an effort in rigorous classification, but it does carry with it some degree of analytical signification as well. The novels are set in the United States, the part of the world most often referred to as America; and they are written by Latin Americans in Spanish, hence the ending *-ista*. But this handle also reveals some of the goals of this study: first, to show that even though none of these works is focused on life in the United States *per se*, there is a unified vision of North America contained within them—something like, converting Edward Said's Orientalism to our purposes, a North Americanism; and second, to argue that this figuration has just as much to do with Latin America and its relationship with the United States as it does the empirical reality of the latter.

For the United States based Latin-Americanist any novel by a Latin American author set in the North America would probably prove intriguing. What would their vision be? How would they present North American life? How would it match up to our experiences, our views? But the publication of four such novels by prominent Latin American literary figures in the space of a few years provided something far more alluring. It provided fertile ground for comparative analysis, to trace the continuities and divergences that would emerge from the four distinct Latin American voices. This group of an Argentine, two Chileans and one Mexican, draws together authors from the most far-flung regions of Latin America and cuts across gender and generation boundaries. While Borges may have quipped that there was no need to visit a place to write a novel about it, this is not the case with these four novelists. Each of them had spent considerable time living and working in the United States. This is an important fact, because this would allow them the personal experience to help circumvent or negotiate the already existent body of Latin American writing on the United States, most notably by the late 19th and early 20th century production of José Martí, Rubén Darío, José Enrique Rodó and José Vasconcelos.

Though the alleged object of these earlier writers was to foment a spirit of Pan-Latin American fraternity among the various nations of the American continent, their work also focuses a great deal on the United States. Their constant allusions to an essential North American character build what must be considered an incipient discursive formation. Discourse here is employed along the lines of Michel Foucault and Edward Said. Foucault elaborated his idea of discourse and discursive formations across his theoretical production, most notably in the Archaeology of Knowledge, The Order of

Things and Discipline and Punish. To offer a brief summation we might suggest that discourses are statements aimed at a specific object of study which is always simultaneously constituted and described by those statements. This discourse creates a specific subject position with regard to the object and carries an implied relation of power. Discursive formations are the collections of such discourse over time that reveal systemic patterns contained within such statements. Of course it is Said's Orientalism that offers the most direct support for the present study as he concentrates on the discourses found in literature and applies discourse theory to geographic entities. Where I examine the United States in the literary imagination of Latin America, Said analyzes the entrance of the Orient into the Western imagination as a discursive formation.

Said's concept of Orientalism has paved the way for other scholars to investigate the way power, scientific (or realistic) knowledge and imaginative writing become unexpected bedfellows in the production of broad cultural viewpoints. Clearly, my study is deeply concerned with the intersection of power and knowledge in the construction of geographic difference: a Latin American North America. It would be careless to say, however, that I am looking at the *Orientalization* of the United States by Latin American authors. This is tempting, and at some level it holds a certain amount of truth, but there are several important differences between the relationship of Latin America and the United States that prevent the facile application of Orientalism to the present study. While many of the analytical tools such as the concept of othering, discursive formations, the archive, and the problem of political versus "pure" knowledge are shared, the historical differences between the case for Orientalism and the Latin American

production of an Other America require significant changes in scope, methodology and focus.

Edward Said took Foucault's method of discourse analysis and applied it to relations between the West and the Orient. The most obvious difference between Orientalism and the phenomenon that I am studying is that, in focusing on Latin America, I am focusing on the opposite side of the discursive field in relation to geopolitical power. Where Said traced the discourse of the Orient as it was produced by those Western nations that held in conjunction with the control of their own cultural production, actual physical territory in some cases and at the very least hegemonic power over the Orient, this study traces discursive formations produced by those in the zone against which hegemonic and direct military control was deployed. Thus while Orientalism is attached to a tradition of the geopolitical dominators, the discourse from Latin America emerges from a tradition of the geopolitically dominated.

Nevertheless, there are several concepts that do hold my study and Orientalism in a certain field of resemblance. The most fundamental may be the idea of the Other and of othering. These ideas can be traced back to the writings of Hegel. Hegel theorized that the self-awareness of an individual is always dependent on the encounter of that individual subject with another human being. This is the Other: the human object that functions as the limit of selfhood and sameness. When we conceive of and define what the Other is, we are also always defining our selves. The Other, therefore is a necessary and constitutive element in subject identity formation, but it also applies to the social. The unity of the subject or of the society is held together by the process of outgrouping: excluding, opposing and the creation of an overt or implied hierarchy. The Other will

always be represented as different in a way that “naturally” puts the subject group in a hierarchically privileged position due to the different and inferior traits of the Other. The work of Said relies on both the individual and larger group levels; he shows how this was done by individuals within the workings of the tradition of othering that obtains at the cultural level.

Although Said does not directly allude to Hegel we can clearly see the German philosopher filtering through Said’s thinking as he talks about the Other on a cultural level:

[T]he development and maintenance of every culture require the existence of another, different and competing *alter ego*. The construction of identity—for identity, whether of Orient or Occident, France or Britain, while obviously a repository of distinct collective experiences, is finally a construction in my opinion—involves the construction of opposites and “others” whose actuality is always subject to the continuous interpretation and re-interpretation of their differences from “us.” Each age and society re-creates its “Others.” Far from a static thing then, identity of self or of “other” is a much worked-over historical, social, intellectual, and political process that takes place as a contest involving individuals and institutions in all societies. (332)

All of the elements of Hegel’s concept of the Other are in-place in Said. We see the division of two groups or identities, the difference that is established between the two, the dependency of one upon the other for identity and the implied hierarchy that ensues. Said’s point is to show that this process is always present, always at work and therefore

no knowledge about the Other culture can enter the system of the Self without being subjected to filtering by the previous rounds of othering. It is unlikely that any concept of the Oriental can enter into European minds without first passing through and being shaped by the current archive. I argue that this same process is at work as Latin American writers approach the United States. Valenzuela, Allende, Del Paso and Donoso come up against an America that had existed for nearly a century in the Latin American cultural mind before they would disembark on United States soil and begin to take it in for themselves.

Discourse on America

Before looking at the Americanista novels it would be helpful to sketch out the patterns of statements and images that already existed in the Latin American canon before their novelistic projects were initiated, to outline the discursive formations that they would be forced to negotiate. As mentioned above, the key figures in this discourse are Martí, Darío, Rodó and Vasconcelos. However, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, does participate in a sort of minority report. The following brief survey of these figures is intended only as a summary of key points which may be found in the already existing scholarship. Miguel Correa Mujica, for example has written a relatively recent article comparing the views of Sarmiento and Martí on the United States. He categorizes the Argentine's pertinent writings as "una apología prácticamente incondicional y sin reservas de la nación norteamericana" (1). Writing at mid century in letters and his Viajes en Europa, Africa, i América, 1845-1847, Sarmiento cannot praise the North American scene enough. In a letter to Valentín Alsina Sarmiento reports that "este disparate inconcebible es grande i noble, sublime a veces, regular siempre" (334). While he

judiciously censures the likely annexation of Canada and Mexico, his general timbre is that of the panegyric:

No tienen reyes, ni nobles, ni clases privilegiadas, ni hombres nacidos para mandar, ni máquinas humanas nacidas para obedecer. ¿No es este resultado conforme a las ideas de justicia i de igualdad que la cristiandad acepta en teoría? El bienestar está distribuido con mas jeneralidad que en pueblo alguno [...]. (362)

Noble, sublime and just are three adjectives that will not be found together in a description of the United States from our other reporters. Though of course by the time Martí makes his contributions Texas and California had already been ceded to the United States in the wake of the Mexican-American War and Cuba seemed a probable candidate for further annexation. It would have been interesting to see how a few more years would have colored Sarmiento's prose, but perhaps nothing would have significantly swayed his already invested opinion. The fact is that he seems so heavily invested in the idea of the United States alignment with Providence and a real world utopia that, as Beatriz Urraca has pointed out, he is led to "gloss over any flaws he might have observed in the North American moral character" (6). In fact, he overlooks all of the African-American slaves when he speaks of the justice and equality of North American society.

José Martí on the other hand is intensely focused on the need of the incorporation of all sectors and all peoples of the Americas, clearly inclusive of African and Amerindian populations. And along these lines he might have found another opposite value set in the United States example. Martí's "Nuestra America" (1892) betrays even from its title, the importance of the Other in the construction of his projected Hispanic

American identity. Lying silently behind the “our” America, is Anglo-America to the north. In a recent article Oscar Montero has shown how Martí’s experience of post-Civil War racism in the United States helped to color his view of the northern neighbor’s society. Martí takes a consciously measured approach to the theme of the character of the United States. For his project it is seen as crucial to understand correctly. In “La verdad sobre los Estados Unidos” (1894), the first lines reveal the vital role a true understanding of North American life as well as the recognition of an already existent and polarized tradition in dealing with the subject: “Es preciso que se sepa en nuestra América la verdad de los Estados Unidos. Ni se debe exagerar sus faltas de propósito, por el prurito de negarles toda virtud, ni se ha de esconder sus faltas, o pregonarlas como virtudes.”

It is interesting to note that Martí is fully conscious that he is not only dealing with the concrete reality of the United States, but that he is also dealing with a discursive formation already in place. In fact this discourse is precisely his target. And the discourse that he is facing is that of the United States as a perfect model for the Spanish American republics. The following clearly demonstrates his position:

Pero es aspiración irracional y nula, cobarde aspiración de gente segundona e ineficaz, la de llegar a la firmeza de un pueblo extraño por vías distintas de las que llevaron a la seguridad y al orden al pueblo envidiado; por el esfuerzo propio y por la adaptación de la libertad humana a las formas requeridas por la constitución peculiar del país. En unos es el excesivo amor al Norte la expresión, explicable e imprudente, de un deseo de progreso tan vivaz y fogoso, que no ve que las ideas, como los árboles, han de venir de larga raíz, y de ser de suelo afín, para que

prendan y prosperen, y que al recién nacido no se le da la sazón de la madurez porque se le cuelguen al rostro blando los bigotes y patillas de la edad mayor. Monstruos se crean así, y no pueblos (“La verdad”)

As he enumerates the distinct motivations for Yankimania, the desire for those in the South to mimic the North, it is as if he were answering Sarmiento across half a century. Progress and Democracy developed in the historical circumstances of the United States cannot be imported wholesale to Latin America without disastrous consequences. Doubling the meaning of Said’s political knowledge, Martí aims a discourse which is inherently political in its formation, as knowledge must be, at a discourse on politics.

Turning to economics, Martí also contests Sarmiento’s claim of the uniform well-being found in the North American nation. Where Sarmiento turned a blind eye to all that outside of the circle of prosperity, Martí sets off a series of juxtaposition in order to include it:

En otros la yanquimanía es inocente fruto de uno u otro saltito de placer, como quien juzga de las entrañas de una casa, y de las almas que en ella ruegan o fallecen, por la sonrisa y lujo del salón de recibir, o por la champaña y el clavel de la mesa del convite; padézcase; carézcase; trabájese; ámese, y en vano; estúdiense, con el valor y libertad de sí; vélese, con los pobres; llórese, con los miserables; ódiense, la brutalidad de la riqueza; vívase, en el palacio y en la ciudadela, en el salón de la escuela y en sus zaguanes, en el palco del teatro, de jaspes y oro, y en los bastidores, fríos y desnudos; y así se podrá opinar, con asomos de razón, sobre la

república autoritaria y codiciosa, y la sensualidad creciente, de los Estados Unidos. (“La verdad”)

With the well-being, the riches that may attract Latin Americans to the North American model, Martí insists that one not forget the darker side, “la brutalidad de la riqueza”. The United States cannot serve as a model for Spanish American republics because it has lead the Northerners themselves to abandon their most worthy values:

Pero no augura, sino certifica, el que observa cómo en los Estados Unidos, en vez de apretarse las causas de unión, se aflojan; en vez de resolverse los problemas de la humanidad, se reproducen; en vez de amalgamarse en la política nacional las localidades, la dividen y la enconan; en vez de robustecerse la democracia y salvarse del odio y miseria de las monarquías, se corrompe y aminora la democracia, y renacen, amenazantes, el odio y la miseria. (“La verdad”)

And in his parting shot, Martí reveals his dialogue with a discursive formation, this time not on the United States, but that directed toward Latin America itself, further proof that the one cannot be imagined without the other:

Patria inaugura, en el número de hoy, una sección permanente de Apuntes sobre los Estados Unidos, donde, estrictamente traducidos de los primeros diarios del país, y sin comentario ni mudanza de la redacción, se publiquen aquellos sucesos por donde se revelen, no el crimen o la falta accidental-y en todos los pueblos posibles-en que sólo el espíritu mezquino halla cebo y contento, sino aquellas calidades de constitución que, por su constancia y autoridad, demuestren las dos verdades útiles a nuestra América: el

carácter crudo, desigual y decadente de los Estados Unidos, y la existencia en ellos continua, de todas las violencias, discordias, inmoralidades y desórdenes de que se culpa a los pueblos hispanoamericanos.

Though Martí brings the political and economic system of his northern neighbor in for serious criticism, his primary target is not the United States as much as it is the discourse on the United States. This discursive formation was built upon the totality of statements directed toward the North, always contrasting it with the South. This discourse, which can be personified through the figure of Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, is based on the desire for a segment of nation-builders in Spanish America to adopt whole-cloth United States style Liberalism as a model for their own republics. The gulf between Sarmiento and Martí runs deep. In fact, Correa Mujica considers Martí, “casi al detalle, la antítesis de Sarmiento” (3). Between the pair we can see the beginnings of the revolt of the lettered class, which Ángel Rama discusses in La ciudad letrada, playing out in real time. There is a shift away from the man of letters as spokesperson for the narrow interests of the privileged class. It is interesting to note that in this triangulation, at least between Sarmiento and Martí the United States plays such a pivotal role. Moreover, and most relevant to the present study, it is crucial to note that between Sarmiento and Martí and the question of the validity of the North as model, we already see the problem of the great American seduction, the prelude to the 1990s Americanista dilemma.

Often Rubén Darío is credited with the great culmination of Latin American poetic movement of *modernismo*, a movement which José Martí is often credited with initiating. And there is a parallel movement as far as the discourse on the United States is concerned. If Martí’s commentary seems biting writing in the early 1890s, Darío’s

vituperative tone magnifies this after the 1898 Spanish-American War. As the United States gains Spain's last great overseas possessions, Darío concentrates and culminates Martí's venom.

Darío, unlike Martí, seems unconcerned with any discursive formation. Perhaps the more pressing geopolitical concerns caused him to abandon the kind of balance that Martí claimed to seek. Alberto Acereda has discussed the importance of 1898 in polarizing Darío against the United States. But though he is facing gross materiality, Darío remains (and perhaps this is a direct reaction as well) literary. In "El triunfo del Calibán" (1898) the *preciocista* images that characterized his earlier poetry are inverted and replaced by a prose replete with monstrous characterizations of the United States. The opening lines establish the main discursive topoi:

Y los he visto a esos yanquis, en sus abrumadoras ciudades de hierro y
 piedra y las horas que entre ellos he vivido las he pasado con una vaga
 angustia. Parecíame sentir la opresión de una montaña, sentía respirar en
 un país de cíclopes, comedores de carne cruda, herreros bestiales,
 habitantes de casas de mastodontes. Colorados, pesados, groseros, van
 por sus calles empujándose y rozándose animalmente, a la caza del dollar.
 El ideal de esos calibanes está circunscrito a la bolsa y a la fábrica.
 Comen, comen, calculan, beben whisky y hacen millones.

This description, supposedly based on Darío's own experience living in the United States and not at all on Martí's "Verdad", betrays an all too perfect parallel between North American culture at large and its expansionist politics. Its as if no other way of life existed outside of that which directs official state policy. In each of these lines the same

trio of condemnations is echoed: against largeness, against materiality, and against coarseness. Taking a different tack, we also detect two distinct currents; Darío attacks business practices on the one hand and governmental policy on the other. And both of these connect neatly with unqualified essentialization of the character of the United States population at large.

It cannot be overlooked that Darío is applying the very same discourse of savagery that expanding powers have applied to their contemporary others for centuries. America, of course, is no stranger to this act. Indeed, it was Columbus himself, in his first reports from the New World which brought us the very name “Canibal” upon which Shakespeare’s Caliban was based. These monsters and other demi-humans, like Mermaids, Amazons and giants seem to pop up wherever Columbus, or other Europeans pushed the frontier. In his adventures in East Asia, Marco Polo found races of man-eaters and warrior-women as well. And of course Herodotus supplies us with an entire bestiary of sub-human races, far beyond the borders of the Greek world. But perhaps more present in Darío’s mind was the ubiquitous modern savages that populated the discursive Hispanic America as a necessary component of the United States doctrine of Manifest Destiny. The inversion of the typical discourse of savagery is that here the material culture under question is viewed as inherently savage, due to the void of spiritual concerns and authentic refinement, and so the more “developed” that this civilization might be, the greater the degree of barbarity.

The monsters appear early in “Triunfo” and reappear throughout. The Cyclops combines great size, avarice and a man-eating quality which helps bring the etymological associations of Caliban to the fore, and in general Caliban stands for brute materialism.

With “el Goliat dinamitero y mecánico, hombre que devora vivas las gentes” glossing the French novelist Paul Groussac, his “la gran Bestia” and “Behemot es gigantesco” he has three references to biblical monsters. Their monstrous size may have once referred to ominous size of the pagan world, of sheer materiality, chaos or of tyranny, but Darío revives the tradition to deploy against the United States. And when the monster imagery grows weary, other animal imagery gives relief. The United States is variously a Gorilla, a Boa Constrictor, “hombres de rapiña”, and some unnamed beast with “tentáculos de ferrocarriles, brazos de hierro” and “bocas absorbentes”.

Another important contribution is the allegorization of the struggle over Latin American identity. Martí introduced the trope of the seduction of Latin America by the United States; though Rodó is usually credited with its translation to Hispanic American letters, as Rodríguez Monegal recognizes in his edition on Rodó and Carlos Jáuregui has recently shown it was Darío who first dressed it, ironically with figures from English literature, and cast it with moral overtones: “¡Miranda preferirá siempre a Ariel; Miranda es la gracia del espíritu; y todas las montañas de piedras, de hierros, de oros y de tocinos, no bastarán para que mi alma Latina se prostituya a Calibán!” (“Triunfo”). This allegorization of a love triangle representing different nations/regions/cultures prefigures the same allegorical structure found in the Americanista novels of the 1990s.

Though to some degree we can see Darío as merely reproducing and intensifying many of the elements found in Martí, there are several variations or shifts of emphasis. Martí’s discourse contains elements of aesthetic and ethical concern, but the emphasis is on the political and economic. Darío picks up these threads, and magnifies all of them, however, there is a definite shift to moral and aesthetic concerns: “Tienen templos para

todos los dioses y no creen en ninguno”. His biblical and literary references, including the title character Caliban, highlight this turn. And this more pronounced, religious, moral focus fits hand in glove with a stronger drive toward essentialism: North Americans are the way they are due to inherent cultural factors, not historical causes.

From culture to race is only one small step, especially when dealing with an established geographic difference. In a sense, Darío re-racializes the issue. Where Martí had denied the kind of racial determinism that Sarmiento seemed to suggest, arguing instead for specific historical factors, Darío brings race back into the equation. This allows Darío to connect the conflicts beyond national traditions and beyond the American continent. Against the apparent British-United States alliance Darío calls for a pan-Latinism that positions all of Latin America, Spain, France and Italy as culturally superior. With Darío the issue becomes one of the Latin race versus the Anglo-Saxon race.

What literally goes unsaid with Darío is that Latin America, Spain, France and Italy are Catholic nations and Britain and the United States are Protestant. It is this divide that unites the divergent nations; it is their Catholicism, the keystone of the Latin tradition which provides a “natural” alliance for them. It is this element which Enrique Rodó will develop further in “Ariel”. The Uruguayan will most closely follow Darío in his calibanization of the United States. Rodó seems to find more of a balance than does Darío (though less than Martí according to Rodríguez Monegal), speaking a great deal more about the commonalities of Latin culture than the decadence of that of the United States. Rodó expands Darío’s thesis of the Latin essence and sharpens his moral and

aesthetic focus. In the process he goes a long way toward reifying the idea of a divide between the material Anglo-Protestants and the spiritual Latins.

Though largely an elaboration of the discursive formation already constructed by Martí and Darío against the American seduction embodied by writers and leaders like Sarmiento, as José Mas has outlined, José Enrique Rodó does offer some new developments. An important difference in focus is that the analysis in “Ariel” is much more clearly pointed at the structural historical causes of the crudeness of North American culture. Contrary to Darío, whose rancor seems to reveal the sting of an open wound, Rodó’s Próspero seems almost completely unaware of the recent military actions of the United States. In fact the chief concern is that of a moral and cultural conversion without “la extorsión de la conquista” (232). He diverges from Martí in his reliance on European high culture, where Martí insists on *lo autóctono americano*, as the source of an alternative model with which to form a truly superior Latin American culture. However, in that he sees North American culture as the result of specific historical developments he is more like the Cuban man of letters than the Nicaraguan.

Utilitarianism in America is inherited from the British and is carried through the key institutions of democracy and Puritanism. While following the same general pattern as Darío, as we have mentioned, Rodó’s analysis reveals greater historical sensitivity to the subject of culturo-racial determinism. For Rodó the mediocrity and cultural void are the results of specific historical trajectories. This is made clear by his differentiation of the British and North Americans: “—Si ha podido decirse del utilitarismo que es el verbo del espíritu inglés, los Estados Unidos pueden ser considerados la encarnación del verbo utilitario” (232). The body/spirit divide is present, providing the English with the spirit

and the United States with the corporeal materiality. And this incarnation of the British verb strengthens as one moves physically away from its ancestral home. While the American east is inferior, it at least preserves some of the British tradition, travelling west however, the cultural decadence is complete, no trace of spiritual life is to be found: *welcome to the desert of the utilitarian.*

Though we may still see the image of masses of reddish, fat, crude Americans pushing through the streets like animals, driven on only by the dollar that Darío painted, with Rodó it is a question of circumstances rather than of essence. And the circumstances are not completely unrelated to Darío's British-American connection. However, Rodó's analysis is based on the transmission of a certain sector of the English spirit to North America via the Puritan branches of Protestantism. Puritanism is the cause of their stripped down spiritual life and the lack of cheer (*alegría*). Though Rodó sees the United States' inferiority based in certain English characteristics, such as their austere Puritanism, their "crude" Positivism, and their utilitarianism, the two are not identical. He holds the Englishman in a higher spiritual regard than the Anglo-American. For the English spirit, "bajo la áspera corteza de utilitarianismo, bajo la indiferencia mercantil, bajo la severidad puritana, esconde, a no dudarlo, una virtualidad poética escogida, y un profundo venero de sensibilidad" (237). But the American spirit did not receive the poetic instinct of its British ancestor. The lavishness of its riches has led the North American only to appreciate the satisfaction the sumptuous, it has led to nothing of good taste, "el buen gusto". In art it has led him to the brutality of pretense, to ignorance of any subtle tone, to sensationalism and to the cult of false greatness.

And this lack of appreciation of beauty is equaled by the lack of concern for authenticity. Again this is tied to the split within Christianity: “La idealidad de lo hermoso no apasiona al descendiente de los austeros puritanos. Tampoco lo verdadero” (238). Utilitarianism also leads to a diminished educational system of mediocrity whose end result is a “semi-cultura universal y una profunda languidez de la alta cultura”. This in turn explains the rarity of superior knowledge or genius. Setting up a downward trajectory that is required to recognize the quality of the founding fathers, Rodó, like Martí highlights decay: “la historia de su actividad pensadora es una progresión decreciente de brillo y de originalidad” (238).

While Rodó listed the preservation of a religious spirit among the many admirable qualities of the United States, seemingly in direct contradiction with Darió, his analysis of that spirit reveals its weakness. Religiosity in the United States is little more than an ancillary support for punitive legislation and almost completely devoid of spiritual morality. Like other aspects of the culture, its morals are circumscribed by utilitarianism. He uses Benjamin Franklin as an example of American morals but critiques him for his limitations to “lo mediocre de la honestidad”, “la utilidad de la prudencia” and for the complete lack of sanctity and heroism (239). And Franklin is the highest of the moral. In the main, in the United States the pursuit of material well-being is converted into the “fin y objeto supremo de la vida” (236). This is the reality of the majority of Americans, quoting the best selling self-help book Pushing to the Front as proof, “El éxito [debe] ser considerado la finalidad suprema de la vida” (239). In this schema, the end (success) justifies any means, allowing for any code of ethics to be swept aside along the way.

Political life in the United States is highly criticized as well. Its democracy has been denigrated: “El valor cívico, la virtud vieja de los Hamilton, es una hoja de acero que se oxida”(239). American democracy, without the benefit of a cultured notion of the true “superioridades humanas” is subject to the brutality of the masses and a nullification of respect for “la dignidad ajena”. And if the lack of the idealist spirit and a dumbed-down educational system are to blame for the state of the democracy, then so too is the economic system to blame, itself a result of these same qualities:

La influencia política de una plutocracia representada por los todopoderosos aliados de los trusts, monopolizadores de la producción y dueños de la vida económica, es, sin duda uno de los rasgos más merecedores de interés en la actual fisonomía del gran pueblo. (239-40)

We can deduce that the Uruguayan considers this as one of the aspects most deserving of study because of the similarity to the archetypical Latin American political economy: the oligarchy. The question that Rodó is seeking to answer, should not be left too far afield, becomes: is the United States a worthy model for the Latin American republics? And clearly, from the above observations, the answer is a resounding *no*.

Another addition to the discourse are his frequent analogies equating the United States to Rome, both as a failed republic and as an empire. Finally, it should not be overlooked that, as el Inca Garcilaso had claimed that the Inca empire had prepared the way for the Spanish to spread Christianity, and as Marx had argued that Capitalism was a necessary step in the progression toward Communism, Rodó's Próspero sees the utilitarian culture of the United States as a step that will lead to greater good in the end:

La obra del positivismo norteamericano servirá a la causa de Ariel, en último término. Lo que aquel pueblo de cíclopes ha conquistado directamente para el bienestar material, con su sentido de lo útil y su admirable aptitud de la invención mecánica, lo convertirán otros pueblos, o él mismo en el futuro, en eficaces elementos de selección. (242)

The most important contribution from Rodó is the development of the argument for the pervasive influence of Puritanism across various sectors of United States culture. For Rodó, the Puritan mindset conditions the way that capitalism, the educational system, “high” culture and democracy develop in North America. Significantly, his argument in “Ariel” for the importance of Puritanism on the development of capitalism predates Max Weber’s famous treatise, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, by five years. Moreover, there is the tacit argument for *over-determination*: culture, politics and economy constitute and are constituted by one another in a continuous circuit. In his effort to arrive at the truth about the United States, Rodó hits onto a model of social reality more than a half-century before Louis Althusser would use the concept to revise Marxism and provide a new model of social constructivism.

By this point we can see how Edward Said’s notion of the creation of geographical difference based in discourse is at play in the Latin American image of the United States. While this summary of this particular discursive formation was intended as a baseline against which we could gauge the continuities and divergences of the discourse contained within the Americanista novels of the 1990s, one may already detect the way that “new” knowledge of the cultural Other comes into the discourse. It always must be filtered through the previous stages of formation. Though Rodó’s Próspero gives no

credit to his Latin American forerunners and true to his Euro-centrism only cites his European peers, almost all of his textual topoi are really revisitations. There is a shift in focus and in ideology, but aside from his systematic incorporation of Puritanism, Rodó's vision of the United States is largely a reinterpretation of that already established by Darío and Martí. It faces the same overarching problematic: the United States as a political and economic model to be imitated in Latin America, United States culture as a threat to Latin American identity.

The threat of North American predominance over Latin America is continued by José Vasconcelos, but in his La raza cósmica, he extends the possibility of a United States empire to the entire planet. Just as Martí proposes a cultural alliance of the disparate peoples within the republics of Latin America and a cultural alliance of those Latin American republics in order to stave off United States dominance in the region, Vasconcelos proposes a racial mixing within each nation of the world in order to oppose the unfettered propagation of white, especially white Anglo-American culture. What Vasconcelos is describing is nothing less than a true, thorough and evenly developed globalization. This is the goal of the fifth race, the cosmic race—a total blend of the world's cultures. The alternative, according to the Mexican essayist, is the spectre of a United States and British lead asymmetrical globalization, one that he already sees taking shape in the first quarter of the 20th century.

Throughout La raza the influence of the discursive formation is evident. We can trace several of the topoi back to Rodó, Darío and Martí. The racialization of the United States, the process of which, though implicit in Martí, was concretized by Darío and reinforced in Rodó, is carried to its zenith in Vasconcelos, becoming the center of his

ideological platform. We can trace the topoi of rampant North American social injustice and violence to Martí and that of cultural crudity to Darío. The idea of the United States as a new empire, the translation of the British Empire, and the comparisons with Rome, are also already fully developed in the discourse. The main variation to these topoi in Vasconcelos is that he seems to assume that the validity of these characterizations; he makes no attempt to explain or offer supporting evidence. And this, of course, is a result of the discursive formation itself, obviating the need for proofs, making things seem part of an eternal natural order.

The most important influence can be traced to Rodó. Vasconcelos revives and elaborates the discourse on science and technology found in “Ariel”, making it his own, employing it as a central part of his thesis. While Rodó praises the American application of science toward practical inventions, the blade is double-edged; he also uses the same characteristic to underscore their relegation to the inferior realm of the material.

Vasconcelos redoubles the sentiment. English culture is based in brute survival and due to geographical determinism they were forced to invent the stove and from the stove the motor. Here he replicates the discourse of Rodó, the English, and the North Americans after them, are unoriginal and intellectually inferior. The eventual defeat of this culture by the “quinta raza” sets up a hierarchy of ages. The rise of the cosmic race will usher in an aesthetic and spiritual stage or “estado” following from the political and intellectual state. Both of these states evolved from a more primitive warrior/material state. This hierarchy closely parallels Rodó’s concept of a material stage giving way to an era in which the “verdaderas superioridades” of aesthetics, spirituality and love would reign. More telling however, is the way that this final state will be achieved. Despite this

inferiority the Anglo-American culture will serve the greater cause through the mechanization of the planet, preparing the way for an era ruled by higher forms of the human species. This concept is taken almost directly from Rodó, who in “Ariel” states:

La obra del positivismo norteamericano servirá a la causa de Ariel, en último término. Lo que aquel pueblo de cíclopes ha conquistado directamente para el bienestar material, con su sentido de lo útil y su admirable aptitud de la invención mecánica, lo convertirán otros pueblos, o él mismo en el futuro, en eficaces elementos de selección. (242)

In “La raza” this same thought is expressed as follows:

Los días de los blancos puros, los vencedores de hoy, están tan contados como lo estuvieron los de sus antecesores. Al cumplir su destino de mecanizar el mundo, ellos mismos han puesto, sin saberlo, las bases de un período nuevo, el período de la fusión y la mezcla de todos los pueblos. (25)

In addition to the reinterpretation of topoi already present in the earlier essayists, Vasconcelos does offer some more original contributions to the discursive formation. The idea of racial exclusivity is one of Vasconcelos’ prime contributions to the discourse on the United States. Contrary to the Mexcian statesman’s vision of a new world culture created from the amalgamation of the best of each of the present civilizations, of complete integration from the ideal heights of aesthetics down to the most basic biological levels, the United States seeks to maintain the pureness of the White race: “Los norteamericanos se sostienen muy firmes en su resolución de mantener pura su estirpe” (37). A concerted effort is made to keep it apart from the other cultural-racial groups

within its territories. African Americans, American Indians, Japanese-Americans and Chinese Americans are all referenced by Vasconcelos. At one point it seems that the most brutal measures are reserved for the American Indians in the quest for a purely Anglo-American nation: “Hacer un mundo inglés; exterminar a los rojos, para que en toda la América se renueve el norte de Europa, hecho de blancos puros” (27). But this same technique, this extermination, seems to be implied in another line that includes Asian and African descendants as well: “el propósito confesado o tácito de limpiar la tierra de indios, mongoles y negros, para mayor gloria y ventura del blanco” (28).

Perhaps as interesting as Vasconcelos’ topos of Anglo-White exclusivity are the mechanisms through which this exclusivity is achieved and maintained. Physical extermination is only the most violent means, not the only means. Vasconcelos argues that Anglo-White civilization is held separate (and unequal) by deeply entrenched social systems: “En realidad, desde aquella época quedaron *bien definidos los sistemas que, perdurando hasta la fecha, colocan en campos sociológicos opuestos a las dos civilizaciones*: la que quiere el predominio exclusivo del blanco, y la que está formando una raza nueva” (28 [Emphasis added]). Here we can see the self against whom the North American Other is being constructed. Hispanic America is represented as a model of mestizaje, the Mestizo race which is leading the way to the Fifth and final Cosmic Race. But it is the well-defined systems which we would like to emphasize as Vasconcelos contribution to the discursive formation. He takes the economic and social inequality that was highlighted in Martí and argues that these are part of a systematic effort to guard and benefit an Anglo-White culture. For Vasconcelos, the economics are even more effective than the armed battles against the American Indians:

El inglés siguió cruzándose sólo con el blanco, y exterminó al indígena; lo *sigue exterminando en la sorda lucha económica*, más eficaz que la conquista armada. Esto prueba su limitación y es el indicio de su decadencia. Equivale, en grande, a los matrimonios incestuosos de los Faraones, que minaron la virtud de aquella raza (27 [Emphasis Added])

Trade and commerce are integrated as systems within and overall strategy of cultural extirpation. In addition to warfare and economics, there are other systems at work. We can see a glimpse of this in the quote above. The social practice of endogamous marriage works in conjunction with the other tactics to keep the Anglo-Whites apart from the others. Like so much else, and in harmony with Darío and Rodó, this effort is part of the British heritage carried on by the United States: “la práctica inglesa de celebrar matrimonios sólo dentro de la propia estirpe se verá como un ideal de refinamiento y de pureza. Los arios primitivos del Indostán ensayaron precisamente este sistema inglés” (36). Dovetailing with the economic and social systems which effectively isolated an Anglo-White civilization in the United States is the juridical system, which worked on a more explicit level to proscribe the ascendancy of other cultural groups. We see this in “La raza” when Vasconcelos speaks of “la línea inflexible que separa al negro del blanco en los Estados Unidos, y las leyes, cada vez más rigurosas, para la exclusión de los japoneses y chinos de California” (28). Here the rule of law is employed to keep African, Japanese and Chinese descendents from intermingling with those of Europe.

Though in his discourse on racism or racial exclusivity Vasconcelos is contrasting Anglo-White civilization with Hispanic-White cum Mestizo civilization in the Americas,

any serious look at the history of Latin America would also turn up any and all of these techniques that set apart an elite political and economic class which identified itself as White. Nevertheless, what is most relevant for the present study is to note the images which Vasconcelos contributes to the discursive formation on the United States. It is clear that the importance of violence, economic pressure, juridical-legal codification and social convention working together in a systematic fashion to ensure a dominant White culture is an important contribution to this discourse.

In addition to the reification of racial difference Vasoconcelos offers yet another contribution to the discursive formation by associating the scientific ideology that supports racism with the United States. This is yet another aspect of the British inheritance: “Los británicos predicán la selección natural, con la consecuencia tácita de que el reino del mundo corresponde por derecho natural y divino al dolicocéfalo de las islas y sus descendientes. Pero esta ciencia que llegó a invadirnos junto con los artefactos del comercio conquistador, se combate como se combate todo imperialismo” (45). With this passage Vasconcelos links a number of the topoi of the discursive formation, the Anglo-American alliance, the predominance of British influence, White exclusivity, the unequal distribution of power (and by extrapolation of wealth) and commerce as a tool of cultural dominance. Moreover, his association of these features with imperialism draws attention to the relationship between the mechanisms of hegemony deployed within the sovereign territories of the United States upon the excluded cultural-racial groups and the mechanisms of hegemony deployed upon the excluded foreign territories.

Where Rodó critiqued North American application of science as unoriginal and practical to a fault, Vasconcelos seizes upon the application of science for the theoretical

support of power: “el orgullo de los actuales amos del mundo afirma por la boca de sus hombres de ciencia la superioridad étnica y mental del blanco del Norte” (43). And later he gives this science a name and a pedigree: “De la observación de cruzamientos y variedades hereditarias de dichos animales fue saliendo el darwinismo, primero como una modesta teoría zoológica, después como biología social que otorga la preponderancia definitiva al inglés sobre todas las demás razas” (44-5). Finally, he hammers home the point that we are not merely discussing White-Anglo exclusivity but the idea of White-Anglo supremacy:

La teoría inglesa supone, implícita o francamente, que el negro es una especie de eslabón que está más cerca del mono que del hombre rubio. No queda, por lo mismo, otro recurso que hacerlo desaparecer. En cambio, el blanco, particularmente el blanco de habla inglesa, es presentado como el término sublime de la evolución humana; cruzarlo con otra raza equivaldría a ensuciar su estirpe. (44)

In “La raza cósmica” Vasconcelos provides yet another interpretation of the discourse on the United States. In addition to further concretizing the main topoi established by Sarmiento, Martí, Darío and Rodó, he offers some important contributions. He sees the United States as dominated by White-Anglo culture which uses political, juridical and economic means to maintain purity and exclusivity. This is all buttressed by the deployment of a philosophy of White supremacy based on the Spencerian application of Darwin’s theory of evolution to human society: social Darwinism. Furthermore, Vasconcelos associates these mechanisms used within the United States with those used by the North Americans to build a world empire, connecting the national to a

transnational viewpoint. There is an important over-determining combination of asymmetrical power, knowledge and commerce which characterize the North American essence. Moreover, as with the other spokesmen for Pan-Latin American unity and identity, Vasconcelos reinforces the pivotal role that the United States plays, that of the all important Other, in the construction of that identity.

Latin America, the United States and Globalization

The relative flurry of literary activity that the poetic, essayistic and narrative production that the late 19th century and early 20th century writers represent shares more than the references to the United States in common, they share (especially if we hold Vasconcelos to one side for the moment) that quality of temporal concentration. If we think of Martí, Darío and Rodó and their main contributions to pan-Latin Americanism “Nuestra América” (1892), “El triunfo de Calibán” (1898) and “Ariel” (1900) this temporal concentration becomes evident. After making this observation it becomes equally as obvious that this is no accident but that all of these come around the final blow to the Spanish Empire in 1898 known in Anglo-America as the Spanish-American War. Studies such as Leopoldo Zea’s El 98 y su impacto en Latinoamérica highlight the importance of this event to 19th century thought. Martí’s piece, which predates that conflict, had already foreseen the presence of the United States as a grave threat to true Cuban, and by extension, Latin American liberty and cultural survival. And if we recognize Martí’s prescience then how must we describe Simón Bolívar for whom the United States was the biggest potential threat to independent republics of South America and helped to justify the creation of his Gran Colombia? This brief survey leads us to the conclusion that whenever supra-national thinking has found form in Spanish American

letters, claiming an essential brotherhood based in common Latin roots, the United States has been the elephant in the corner. Whether it be continental independence with Bolívar, Cuban independence with Martí, the Spanish-American War with Darío and Rodó or World War I with Vasconcelos, there always seems to be some monumental geo-political shift which accompanies the effluence of the Pan-Hispanic spirit. It is almost as if, like with Hegel's Other, "nuestra" America depends upon its northern other for its own existence.

Accepting the premise that historical shifts lead to the concentration of Latin American literary production related to the United States raises the question of the present study. What geo-political occurrence has caused the proliferation of these Americanista novels? What is the Other that this generation seeks to recreate? The answer to this is not as clear-cut as with the earlier texts; there are a number of smaller moves which perhaps add up to one great shift. Several important events converge on the opening of the 1990s (including the centennial anniversary of the Spanish-American War) but two stand out: the end of the Cold War and the approach of Quincentennial anniversary of Columbus' first voyage. The first brought about what many called "a new world order". It ushered in or confirmed the era of Globalization, which more than political denoted a different way of imagining economic and cultural affiliations. Of course Columbus' first voyage may be seen as the real beginnings of global interconnection and may share more in common with the others than the combination of "new" and "world" which is associated, albeit spuriously, with both of them. But, the anniversary also, much more directly, probably served as a milestone inspiring introspection into what it means to be an American, specifically from Spanish America,

500 hundred years later. Taken together these events might have given many thinkers of Latin America reason to question its place, once again vis-à-vis the United States, in the context of Globalization.

One of the things that our survey of the Pan-Latin American essayists demonstrates is that globalization, the practices of international commerce, migration and cultural exchange across national borders is not a phenomenon of the 1990s, it was something that had been written about extensively at least since the 19th century. The much earlier move to a globalized world is a fact underscored by scholars of coloniality such as Ánibal Quijano, Enrique Dussel and Walter D. Mignolo among others, who place the most significant shift in the 16th century. However, it is also clear that by the late 1980s a clear shift in the structure of global interaction, the move away from a planet divided into binary oppositions by the Cold War, as well as the fall of the main force opposing the expansion of Capitalism, effected a sea change in the way that the international affairs were imagined and practiced. This was the newly imagined world of Globalization, where walls were torn down not built up, where people were free to move about the globe searching out the best opportunity for them, something strangely close to Vasconcelos' view of the world under the Fifth Race. If globalization was not merely a phenomenon of the 1990s, Globalization, capitalized, was. Globalization was the new model of organization being marketed to the world and it is within and, I argue, against Globalization that the Americanistas write their novels. The new Sarmientos, or the descendents of those whom Sarmiento represented, may have welcomed such a model with open arms, but Valenzuela, Allende, Del Paso and Donoso, following in the tradition of Martí, Darío, Rodó and Vasconcelos, raise some serious doubts. I argue that

their critique of United States culture is merely the latest wave of denying the viability of the North American model as appropriate for Latin America. Of course what is also implied, if we accept that this newer flurry of literary activity is indeed a response to Globalization, is that Globalization is little more than a new way to imagine the expansion of North American culture. This is the ideological base that makes possible the simultaneous critique of Globalization and the culture of the United States. What remains to be demonstrated is a convincing link between the Americanista novels and the practices of Globalization.

Allegory

This study argues that allegory plays a central role to allow a fuller understanding of the place of the United States in the literary imagination of these four Latin American writers. While the images of US culture are very often directly apparent in the novels, there is certainly a degree of ambivalence in them as well. Signs of vibrant cultural development, political freedoms and beautiful landscapes intermingle with those of domination, ignorance and excess. For the reader in search of a pattern or definitive positioning at the level of narration, this referential potpourri can lead to real frustration. However, this ambiguity is resolved by reading at the allegorical level. Allegory avails itself as an indispensable tool in the reading of these novels. It is the allegorical readings that allow the reader to make sense of the tangle, to decide precisely where, in fact, the oft times pointed criticism, is pointed.

This confluence of criticism and literature recalls Roberto González Echevarría's strident claims in The Voice of the Masters: "Literature is the equivalent of critical thought in Latin America, and critical thought most certainly includes politics" (3) and

again “[l]iterature is the criticism and the philosophy of Latin America and, I suspect, of much of the postcolonial world” (125). The Americanista novels are certainly critical, even political novels; or, at least they contain political elements at the level of narrative discourse. But as we have noted above we are not dealing with the political in the strict isolated sense. These are not Latin American dictator novels like Miguel Ángel Asturias’ El señor presidente. The Americanistas strength is their examination of the relationships of power that germinate through the cultural: intellectual, linguistic, economic, social and only indirectly, political. We are not dealing with charismatic tyrants of high office or tyrannical corporations safe through their distance, anonymity and virtual unaccountability, we are dealing with culture, we are dealing with the North American public at large.

González Echevarría’s claim that literature is the criticism and philosophy of Latin America shares a clear affinity with Frederic Jameson’s (in)famous dictamen published the following year: “All third-world texts are necessarily, I want to argue, allegorical” (319 Jameson Reader). In “Third-world Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism” he argues not that the private, psychological level of the story is merely a prop, but that it should be understood as only one part of the third-world text:

Third-world texts, even those which are seemingly private and invested with a properly libidinal dynamic—necessarily project a political dimension in the form of national allegory: *the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society.* (320)

It is from this perspective that the following study unfolds. We find that not only do these novels contain “proper” literary treatment and novelistic development along with Echevarría’s critical, philosophical and political ingredients, but that they also include something like national allegories which add depth and help put the broad range of criticisms of US culture into a meaningful context. They help locate the place of the United States in the modern Latin American literary imagination. Moreover, it is this foregrounding of hemispheric relations and the context of Globalization that had become so apparent by the final decade of the 20th century that compels us to reformulate Jameson’s *national* allegories as *international* allegories. These are stories whose allegorical substrate is that of the conundrum of Latin American identity in relation to the overwhelming force of the culture of Globalization, hence the accent on *inter*. A sidebar of this conclusion is that these Latin American authors are simultaneously revealing Globalization to be little more than the expansion of US culture, including dress, economics, language and food.

When I mentioned above that Jameson’s pronouncement might be considered infamous, I was referring to the response that Aijaz Ahmad offered. Absolutes like “all” and “necessarily” in Jameson’s essay led Ahmad to feel that, as a third world writer, he was being othered by yet another discourse of difference. From our point of view, though perhaps not quite neutral, but at least a more dispassionate one, it seems that Jameson offers enough caveats to preclude such an interpretation. In fact, one way to read his article is to see Jameson as characterizing third-world literature and not necessarily all literature from the third world. In other words, from this perspective Jameson does not speak of the third world as a monolithic geographic bloque, but as a political position. He

does not speak of third-world literature as all literary production written within a set of territorial coordinates, but of a literature that speaks from a certain position within a circuit of power relations. Whether that is what Jameson intended I am uncertain, but it does seem to resolve the issue that is really is far from the center of his point on the use of allegory. In fact, that is precisely the solution that Stephen Slemon puts forward in “Monuments of Empire: Allegory/Counter-Discourse/Post-Colonial Writing”. For Slemon the key is *positionality* rather than geographic location. His proposed method is “one which would require a realignment of the modality of critical access away from the determining structure of the first-world/third-world binary into the problematics of what might more accurately be called *the conditions* of post-coloniality” (9-10 Stress mine) He elaborates:

For the fact is that post-colonial cultures—including not only third-world post-colonial cultures such as those in East and West Africa, South-east Asia, or the Caribbean, but also those colonising/settler societies such as anglophone Canada or white Australia and New Zealand—have been and still are producing an enormous number of highly visible allegorical texts and many of these allegories are *themselves* productive of an interventionary, anti-colonialist critique. (10)

Slemon clearly offers a way around the controversy of the perhaps paradoxically too sweeping and too exclusive claims made by Jameson with regard to the recent literary uses of allegory. Most importantly this sort of reconstitution allows us to focus on what was always central to Jameson’s argument, that at the end of the 20th century, in the face of cultural pressure emanating from the power centers of the West for all to

internationalize and globalize, many writers seem to have become obsessed with the national situation and that allegories related to this preoccupation have proliferated in their literary production. This is certainly the part of Jameson's argument that supports our thesis here: that Latin American novelists, the very same authors who at other times had been heralded by the North American criticism for their universality, can be seen to employ allegory in a clearly historical fashion with concern for the national situation.

The United States as setting is neither accidental nor trivial in this scenario. González Echevarría has claimed that “[l]iterature as a concept and Latin America as an entity are both creations of modernity” (Masters 4). As far as Latin America is concerned, the current sense of Latin America as an imagined community of nations, I would go further and argue that in a very real way Latin America is also a creation of the United States (though the converse is also true). For Latin America (or rather, its constituent nations), there is no other center of power that threatens its cultural integrity, its identities, even its political autonomy, like that of its northern neighbor. The presence of the United States has always been pivotal in the theorization of Latin American Pan-hispanism. Can we imagine the great foundational texts of Bolívar, Darío, Martí, Rodó or Vasconcelos without the ominous presence of the colossus of the north? The United States has consistently been involved, both directly and indirectly in Latin American politics since the 19th century independence movements. And in the last decade of the 20th century there was no greater threat to Latin American cultural singularities than that of the United States via the economic and political mores of Globalization.

As a preface to his discussion of allegory, Jameson characterized the intellectual climate for third-world writers as such:

[T]here is now an obsessive return of the national situation itself, the name of the country that returns again and again like a gong, the collective attention to “us” and what we have to do and how we do it, to what we can’t do and what we do better than this or that nationality, our unique characteristics, in short, to the level of the “people.” (Jameson Reader 315)

This is certainly the case for the Americanista novelists. But in their case it is done through comparison to United States culture. There is the “us” and it is mediated through the North American “them”. As the record shows dating back at least to Herodotus, comparisons to external cultures, the Other, the projections of inverse values, out-grouping are as vital as any intrinsic affirmation or in-grouping are in cultural discourse. In fact, one might come to the conclusion that no “us” is possible without its corresponding “them”.

Though Jameson is worthy of lengthy discussion, Stephen Slemon goes even further in postulating the value of allegory from the perspective of criticism. As we have already discussed, his removal of geographic terminology from Jameson’s thesis frees it from a great deal of unnecessary controversy. Furthermore, in “Monuments of Empire”, Slemon. makes the interesting point that allegory depends on some already recognizable, mutually intelligible code within which to weave the disparate textual levels together; some form of attachment is required. Slemon explains:

In over-simplified form, allegory can be understood as a mode of representation that proceeds by forging an identity between things, and it reads present events, whatever the signifying system in which they are found as terms within some already given system of textualised

identification or codified knowledge. As Paul de Man points out, allegory consists of semantic *repetition* in a rhetoric of temporality, and within this rhetoric the sign is always grounded to a *another* sign which is by definition anterior to it. In allegory, that is, signifiers from the world “out there” are semantically fixed to a culturally positioned and historically grounded “master code” or “pretext” that is inherent in the tradition and is capable of acting as a matrix for a shared typology between the sign and its interpreters. In allegory, signs are interpreted as modalities of preceding signs which are already deeply embedded in a specific cultural thematics, and they work to transform free-floating objects into positively identified and “known” units of knowledge. (7)

At first glance this description of the mechanics of allegory might seem to be describing the inner-workings of any linguistic act. Does not any act of simple reading require signs, signifiers and interpretation all based within some anterior shared understanding? The real difference is that allegory doubles this movement into a bifurcational interpretation whereby signifiers stand for multiple signifieds. Allegory, then, is akin to a hyper-language, it forms a hyper-text, a palimpsest made up of meaningfully superimposed textual layers.

Slemon also elucidates several strategies by which allegory is employed by writers in a postcolonial condition. What all of these strategies have in common is that they are what Richard Terdiman has called counter-discourse, they contest the dominant. As Terdiman points out in Discourse/Counter Discourse, “the distribution of counter-

discourses is not random” (77). At the same time the counter discursive practices cannot be neatly fitted into a precise mode:

They are more than simple antinomic formations dependent upon their antagonist in the manner of some perverse mirror image. We cannot deduce their tactics or their contents by mechanically negating elements of the dominant discourse. (77)

This statement is confirmed by a reading of the Americanista novels, where noir novels come along with fictionalized biography and memoirs, and where thematic focus floats from racism, to consumerism, to obesity, and economics. Yet all of these texts are united by a preoccupation with the crisis of identity, national and regional, in the face of United States led Globalization and act to undermine its supporting discourse.

Slemon finds that one of the loose categories of allegorical practice concerns the interrogation of “those notions of history which colonialism leaves in its wake by reiterating those notions on an allegorical level of signification” (11). Though each novel may be quite different Slemon explains that this unity holds them into a kind of category:

In these texts, allegory functions as a *structurally* counter-discursive principle, for here received notions of history are bracketed off by a literal level of fictional activity and displaced into a secondary level of the text accessible only through the mediation of the primary fictional level.

Allegory here foregrounds the fact that history, like fiction, requires an act of reading before it can have meaning. (12)

Of the Americanista texts, Allende’s El plan infinito is most closely associated with this group. As a fictionalized biography Allende employs the life history of the central figure,

Gregory Reeves, as a springboard to examine and continuously interrogate episodes of US history from the Great Depression and World War II through the Vietnam War and the “me” generation of the 1980s up to the narrative present of the early 1990s. Linda 67 by Fernando del Paso does the same within a more limited time period but also shares some of the characteristics of Slemon’s second category.

This second pattern of allegorical use is found in novels that foreground the utility of allegory in colonizing discourse itself and therefore reveal allegory to be the enemy of emancipatory expression. The characters of these novels often find themselves trapped within already established allegorical roles. These novels figure “the inescapability of colonial discourse’s cultural prefiguration by narrating the entrapment of realistic characters within the allegorical roles” of a “paradigmatic colonialist text”. An allegory of entrapment really lies at the heart of all of the Americanista texts. David Sorensen of Linda 67 certainly falls into this category, and the paradigmatic colonialist text is that of the “American Dream” or the “American Way of Life”. Though the very living definition of a cosmopolitan, as a Mexican he cannot overcome his seemingly eternal second-class status relative to those surrounding him in affluent San Francisco and is eventually driven down the road to ethical ruin. This same phenomenon of entrapment befalls Agustin Palant of Luisa Valenzuela’s Novela negra con argentinos where the city itself in combination with his Argentine masculinity seem to generate the noir genre and where Roberta Aguilar becomes ensnared in a liberational discourse of otherness.

But Novela negra probably fits best with Slemon’s third category in which the texts “employ the inherently *excessive* duality of allegorical figuration in order to replace monolithic traditions with the plural typologies which inevitably inhere in cross-cultural

situations” (12). Slemon elaborates that “[t]his excessiveness can surface as an allegorical carnivalisation of received notions of history” or “engage with, and finally overcome, the kinds of allegorical reading which a universalizing European tradition would want to impose.” Still others “attempt to reappropriate allegory from its colonialist archive and deploy it towards specifically differential and heteroglossic structures” (12). José Donoso’s Donde van a morir los elefantes also should be mentioned with association to this group, for just as Valenzuela foregrounds allegory, Donoso overtly deals with his novel’s counter-discursive qualities at the narrative level. And where Valenzuela’s characters are not able to break out of their prefigured roles, the protagonist of Donde van is.

One thing should be made clear. None of the novels fits neatly into any one of these categories, all of them bridge two or more, but in general we can conclude in a sweeping way that all of the novels attempt to reappropriate allegory as a counter-discursive strategy in a specifically differential way against the universalizing tendencies of a US model of international capitalism which lurks behind, or rather within, the apparent heteroglossy of Globalization.

In Foundational Fictions, Dorris Sommer has contributed significant insights into both the inner workings of allegory as well as a particular form of the national allegory, the national romance, which shares a great deal in common with the allegorical structures found in the Americanista novels. Though Jameson does assert that national allegories need not be of a strict one to one correlation between perfectly discrete textual levels, Sommer amplifies this line of thought. And the key to her theory, and what forces her conception of allegory to be loosened up from the strict parallels associated with

medieval allegory, is her questioning of Paul de Man's idea of anteriority that we mentioned above. Since the allegorical elements that Sommer is working with— Liberalism, Nationalism, the bourgeois family, romanticism and the Latin American nation-state--are contemporaries, none of them neatly qualifies as the anterior cultural matrix from which to derive de Man's repetition. What Sommer describes is the generation of that matrix through mutually supportive texts where each serves as the other's tenor and vehicle, to use I. A. Richard's terminology. She describes her notion of allegorical structure as follows:

The difficulty with the term *allegory* here is that the shuttling is not a simple matter of round-trips to the same two points or lines but is more loomlike in that the thread of the story doubles back and builds on a previous loop. Love plots and political plotting keep overlapping with each other. Instead of the metaphoric parallelism, say between passion and patriotism, that readers may expect from allegory, we will see here a metonymic association between romantic love that needs that state's blessing and political legitimacy that needs to be founded on love. (41)

Following from Walter Benjamin, she sees allegory with a dialectical structure: "I take allegory to mean a narrative structure in which one line is a trace of the other, in which each helps to write the other [...] I describe the allegory in Latin America's national novels as an interlocking, not parallel, relationship between erotics and politics" (42-3).

There are an additional pair of lines from Sommer's introduction that stand out as relevant to the present study. The first is with regard to her discussion of the Puerto Rican Eugenio María de Hostos's The Peregrinations of Bayoán. This allegorical text never

made its way onto the canonical list of national romances, because asserting Pan-Caribbeanism, it eschewed the nation-state for the international utopia: “Which country would it celebrate or project? Which existing government could it have supported, when Bayoán’s dream was precisely international, beyond the future institutions that might have required it?” (50). Boyoán is interesting for two reasons. First because it is a very early example of the goal of international identity, some sort of pan-ism and it seems less than casual that this should come from Puerto Rico. And it also begs us to ask why. Why pan-Caribbeanism? The French invaded Mexico the same year Boyoán was published, but of course there is also its precarious proximity to the United States. The recent US acquisitions at the expense of Mexico could not have been too far out of mind. At a time when it was still part of the Spanish Empire, did Boyoán foresee that national independence would inevitably be followed by absorption by one of the other great powers of the day without a larger system of support? Its internationalism is the point of comparison that it shares with the Americanista novels of the 1990s, but the Americanista perspective is inverted with regard to it. The Americanista allegories plumb the limits of international identity, with an aversion to Globalization buffeted by Pan-hispanism. Boyoán’s failed attempt to project international support parallels the Americanista efforts to allegorize failed international relationships of Globalization.

The other important line is from Sommer is the following:

The historical romances became national novels in their respective countries, a term that refers not so much to their market popularity, although to be sure many of these novels were immediately popular, but to the fact that they became required reading by the first decades of the

twentieth century. *Perhaps the promise of a nationalizing embrace was particularly appealing after massive immigration in some countries seemed to threaten a cultural core [...]* (51 Emphasis Added).

My point is that the same international threat to an imagined cultural homogeneity at the opening of the century was renewed at the end of the century, albeit from a different source.

But the most important contribution that Sommer makes to the theoretical framework of the present study is her insight into how the allegory of romance and marriage can be read to stand for the reconciliation between and consolidation of different national sectors:

Perhaps as much in Spanish America as in the Spain that Larra spoke for, the function of costumbrismo was ‘to make the different strata of society comprehensible to one another,’ that is to promote communal imaginings primarily through the middle stratum of writers and readers who constituted the most authentic expression of national feeling. Identifying with the heroes and heroines, readers could be moved to imagine a dialogue among national sectors, to make convenient marriages, or at least moved by that phantasmagorical ideal. [...] Erotic passion was less the socially corrosive excess that was subject to discipline in some model novels from Europe, and more the opportunity (rhetorical and otherwise) to bind together heterodox constituencies: competing regions, economic interests, races, religions. (14)

Sommer goes much further than elucidating this mode of reading, and attaches her theory to a mode of writing as well. She argues that these novels were not only historically accurate, but that they were history making. They were part of intentional nationalizing projects on the part of the writers that were eventually canonized by the states that they supported. The novels reflected national realities and projected a history and a state that might help to guarantee their future. Hence the insistence on highlighting the metonymic presence as opposed to the metaphoric; metonymy supports the texts connections with historical reality and the contiguous and coterminous nature of the national romances and the nation-state:

The marriage metaphor slips into, or out of, a metonymy of national consolidation if we stop to consider how marriages bridged regional, economic, and party differences during the years of national consolidation. [...] If the love matches in Amalia (1851), binging the agricultural interior to the commercial port city, and in Martín Rivas (1862), where Chilean mining interests marry commerce in the capital, or in Mexico's El Zarco (1888) about a mestiza's unconditional love for the Indian hero, are indications of historical accuracy because they coincide with data on regional allowances, economic diversification, and racial coalitions, other novels may also reveal something about the project—and also the process—of bourgeois consolidation through literal and figurative marriage. (18-19)

Sommer takes Benedict Anderson's thesis from Imagined Communities one step further. Where Anderson sees periodical print culture as pivotal in helping create

imagined national communities—people living in Santiago or Valparaíso to think of themselves as Chileans, people living in Bogotá or Barranquilla to think of themselves as Colombians, or people living in Buenos Aires or San Juan de la Frontera as Argentines—Sommer sees the allegorical national romances as conscious projects intended to provide more or less specific ideal solutions to obstacles of national unity.

In the Americanista novels the allegories are precisely international. The love relationships between the main characters cross national frontiers and national identities. And this is the crux of the difference in the allegorical structure. Where the national romances of the 19th century projected an ideal national identity through the reconciliation and consolidation of disparate sectors, the allegories of the Americanista novels figure forth the speculative consolidation of disparate national identities terminating in cultural disintegration. The erotic pairings of Sommer's national romances helped in the formation of a national identity and identification with the state that would maintain that imagined community. On the contrary, the love matches between the Spanish Americans and their North American pairs of each of these Americanista novels thrusts the protagonist into a crisis of identity: instead of identity formation there is dissolution. Instead of mutual benefit there is often entrapment; none of the pairings results in a happy union. In these allegories, Globalization is the equivalent of identificational chaos.

With the Americanista novels we take advantage of the confluence of Sommer's allegorical readings of romantic pairings and the counter-discursive allegorical readings of Terdiman and Slemon. In this way we return to González Echevarría to see the productive admixture of philosophy, criticism and Latin American literature. One of the

literary figures that embodies this critical-literary position and had profound and widespread influence upon the writers of subsequent generations is Alejo Carpentier. And he is of double importance for the present study because of the points of contact between Los pasos perdidos and the Americanista novels. Carpentier's novel features allegorical pairings and story arcs as well as significant passages set in the United States. Like with the Americanista novels, discursive and allegorical readings are mutually enlightening and supportive.

In Los pasos perdidos, the opportunity to return to Latin America from residence in a thinly veiled New York City that is provided by the search for a primitive musical instrument serves as the vehicle for and is coterminous with a voyage of personal rediscovery. The trek from the metropolitan city, to the Latin American capital, to the provinces, to the newly founded frontier village and finally to the encounter with the elusive tribe of the jungle is also very much a voyage from metropolitan modernity to the most remote primitivism. And with that voyage, modern man, the man of modernity, traces his steps back to his innermost human, and very much American, essence. As can easily be gleaned from this brief sketch, the implications of this story line place humanity and modernity, the modern city and human community, existential crisis and meaningful fulfillment, the United States and another, hidden America, at opposite ends of a continuum of historical and geographical significance. But whereas often, such as in 19th and early 20th century novels, civilization is opposed to barbarity, in Pasos the opposite of civilization is not barbarity. Moreover civilization is a degraded version of the primitive, if anything modernity is barbaric. Far from the Positivistic Progress of the 19th century, civilization in Carpentier's novel dissolves all significant community and culture and

replaces it with chaotic fragmentation and alienation. Thus, the journey from the city to the jungle in Pasos is at once a search for a legendary primitive musical instrument as well as a journey from the modern existential crisis back to the source of humanity to an authentic, culturally rich and therapeutic primitivism.

At the discursive level, the United States, or at the very least, cultural life in the United States, of Pasos is one of complete dissatisfaction for the narrator. It is the lack of everything that the narrator eventually finds in the Latin American hinterland of Santa Monica de los Venados. In contrast to the pure authenticity of the ancient musical instruments which originated music, in the United States the cultural forms singled out, theatre and advertizing, are portrayed as devoid of any real substance, mere shells of something that once might have contained a kernel of substance but no longer do. They are almost entirely relegated to their use value in the economic field. The civil war drama that is depicted emphasizes the mechanical nature of the performance, rather than any intrinsic aesthetic concerns. The image of the actors growing old within their costumes drives home the endlessly repetitive nature of the enterprise, with the humans reduced to soulless automatons.

This portrayal of the New York cultural scene as dominated by economic concerns is seconded by the reception of the narrator's latest musical score. His North American colleagues lavish him with praise for his work, but this only divides him even further from them. Where they see a wonderfully scored film, the narrator sees only an unoriginal, banal and artless commercial jingle. In turn, he sees himself as a mercenary, a turncoat, and a sellout. The parallel of Marx's concept of alienation is clear in these

passages: man becomes alienated from the product of his labor. And echoes of Benjamin are detected as well. He is a man who feels that he has taken a wrong turn.

As Donald L. Shaw points out in Alejo Carpentier, his biographical information locates the narrator at the intersection of the two great cultures within the Western tradition:

The son of a Swiss-German Protestant father and a Cuban Catholic mother, he represents the two major Western religious and racial groups. Born in Latin America, an emigrant to the United States with two long stays in Europe, he is doubly the product of both Latin American and Anglo-Saxon cultures. (46)

And standing at the intersection of the two main branches of Western culture, the Germanic/Protestant and the Latin/Catholic (very reminiscent of the division highlighted by Darío and Rodó) the narrator can be seen as embodying an allegorical role. And while his genealogy ties him to old Europe, his own biography places him squarely in the Americas. His dilemma is the dilemma of Latin America, his path is the trajectory of Latin America; he has clear access to the North American model and roads into Europe as well, but the only fulfillment will come when he searches out authentic and uniquely American roots echoing the call of Carpentier's compatriot José Martí's call for *lo autóctono*. The musical instruments that he searches out stand for the key to an authentic Latin American culture, just as the cultural scene of New York stands through synecdoche for all Anglo-Saxon culture in what may equally reflect readings of Darío, Rodó and Max Weber. The allusion to the narrator's Swiss-German father seems to point directly to the German economist who's The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism

uses Swiss Calvinism to build his argument for the Reformation as instrumental in the development of Capitalism. He argues that religious doctrinal reforms emphasized zealously pursuing a secular “vocation”, frugality, accumulation of wealth and investment. These activities were not only ends in themselves, but tied to a sense of moral fortitude in a spiritual context. To accumulate wealth was to glorify God. But Weber also notes the eventual loss of this religious context and the rise of capitalism as an end in itself. Most germane to the present study is Weber’s examples of the loss of the spiritual component: the writings of North American founding father Benjamin Franklin, where frugality and investment had become part of a purely secular morality. And Weber’s conclusion is worth quoting because it bears such close resemblance to Carpentier’s description of New York:

For when asceticism was carried out of monastic cells into everyday life, and began to dominate worldly morality, it did its part in building the tremendous cosmos of the modern economic order. This order is now bound to the technical and economic conditions of machine production which today determine the lives of all the individuals who are born into this mechanism, not only those directly concerned with economic acquisition, with irresistible force. Perhaps it will so determine them until the last ton of fossilized coal is burnt. In Baxter's view the care for external goods should only lie on the shoulders of the "saint like a light cloak, which can be thrown aside at any moment." But fate decreed that the cloak should become an iron cage. (181)

For Weber, the United States offers the highest development of this iron cage and the mechanization of life and the loss of a vital spirit is precisely that which the narrator of Los pasos perdidos laments while reflecting on his life in North America. Later Weber speculates on the future:

No one knows who will live in this cage in the future, or whether at the end of this tremendous development entirely new prophets will arise, or there will be a great rebirth of old ideas and ideals, or, if neither, mechanized petrification, embellished with a sort of convulsive self-importance. For of the last stage of this cultural development, it might well be truly said: "Specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart; this nullity imagines that it has attained a level of civilization never before achieved."

Carpentier's answer, it would seem, is that Latin America must seek to escape from this "iron cage" and seek out old ideas and ideals. The Germanic/Latin, Protestant/Catholic, North/South split of Europe is remapped upon the Americas, but the narrator is not in search of the old ideas and ideals of Europe. Again borrowing from his forerunner Martí, Carpentier has his narrator on a quest for different, uniquely American ideas and ideals.

If the journey from the city to the jungle can be read allegorically, that is certainly also true of his romantic relationships. It is here where Sommer's analysis of national romances offers a heuristic model. But, as with the Americanista novels that follow in this study, Carpentier offers specifically international allegorical pairings. These international affairs clearly raise the fiction from the level of the individual to Jameson's level of the social. Shaw is correct in detecting the less than convincing nature of the love

interests. Rather than round individuals they are functions of the narrator's interaction with his environment. Though not necessarily a requirement of an allegorical reading, it certainly makes it easier to detect. We notice that the narrator's first two love interests have explicit geographic and aesthetic associations. Ruth, his American wife, is a Broadway actress and Mouche, his French mistress, has ties to the Parisian surrealist movement. This links any discursive or allegorical readings of the development of an authentic aesthetic philosophy to the development of an authentic culture.

Ruth represents everything on a romantic level that New York represents on a cultural level. The narrator's marriage is just as empty and lifeless as is his artistic production. Ruth's inability to live in any way other than through the playing of roles and her feigning a pregnancy are emblematic of the non-productive nature of their relationship. The small detail that he has put her career ahead of his is one that should not be overlooked. Read allegorically, with Ruth standing for the United States and the narrator for Latin America we see a clear reference to the alliances between the various Latin American countries and the United States which always have benefitted the latter more than the former and in which the former is held in a position of economic, political and cultural dependency. The price of modernity for Latin America has most often meant that its own long-term interests take the back seat.

With unsatisfactory relationships with these two women also represent the undesirability of an aesthetic model borrowed from either Europe or North America and by metonymic extension, a call for the development of truly autochthonous culture. This of course, is linked closely to Carpentier's theory of *lo real maravilloso americano*, the implicit aesthetic that is developed within as well as exercised on Los pasos perdidos.

This chains logically through to the romantic level. And on the romantic level, the hybridity of Rosario brings Vasconcelos' "cosmic race" to the party to join Darío, Martí, Rodó and Weber. We see that across various fields the solution has one common denominator: *lo autóctono americano*. As the topos of utilitarianism, instrumental reason and artificiality, the United States provides one clear antithesis to this solution and the allegorical story arc suggests a divorce from North American dependency just as the narrator desires a divorce from his North American wife.

The European option proves just as unsuitable; the French mistress disintegrates on the South American continent just as Surrealism does for Carpentier in the prologue to *El reino de este mundo*. Mouche's cohort, though involved in "high art" and thus potentially representative of real culture are saturated with decadence, far from the regenerative source sought after by the narrator. Nothing speaks to this as loudly as does her friend the forger and her lesbianism. Forgery expresses Carpentier's feelings about the stilted, affected and thoroughly inauthentic modern artists. Mouche's lesbianism is the counterpart of Ruth's feigned pregnancy, both are emblematic of the ultimate unfruitfulness of the relationships: they will bear no independent life. Most relevant to the thesis of the allegorical reading of international affairs following from Sommer's national romances is Mouches position as the French mistress. This is a rather appropriate considering France's relationship with Latin America since colonial times. She has been the perennial other woman with regards to an alternative cultural model for a region that has passed from Spanish to English to North American economic influence. In fact, this relationship with French culture against North American culture is the cornerstone of Rodó's *arielismo*.

This explains the love quadrangle that pivots around the narrator between Ruth and Mouche on the one hand representing the United States and Europe and Rosario on the other, representing *lo autóctono americano*. The narrator is faced with mutually exclusive choices: should he continue to put the career of his North American wife before his, should he be seduced by the coquetry of his French mistress or should he seek out his own American authenticity through a third option? In Pasos, true personal and romantic fulfillment is only found by a return to the heart of America. In a quest for the authentic American essence, the narrator must find a way to disentangle himself from his illusionary wife and mistress to achieve this.

Following from Jameson, Slemon, Terdiman and especially Sommer a particular form of the national allegory, the national romance as national consolidation, gives us an incalculably more profound understanding of the Americanista novels. But where the 19th century national romances imagined the marriage as the conjoiner of the nation, the Americanista novels flirt with international affairs which threaten to dissolve national and/or regional identity altogether, absorbed by North American culture, and posit divorce as the ideal solution. This allegorical structure is clearly present in Pasos and this work will prove an important precedent to the 1990s novels of Valenzuela, Allende, Del Paso and Donoso. The Americanista novels imagine further international consolidation as tantamount to cultural disintegration through absolute ninguneismo.

Place and Displacement in Valenzuela's Novela negra con argentinos

Novela negra con argentinos, published in 1990, tells of two Argentine writers exiled in New York City. Though it begins, as its title implies, in the mode of noir fiction, the story and its telling, the content and the form, begin to unravel soon thereafter. Agustín Palant, one of the title characters, apparently murders a potential American lover just before the consummation of their affair. It quickly becomes apparent that this supposed detective story concerns itself more with a search for identificational meaning, probing the limits of stable categories, and connections between New York and Buenos Aires than with whether or not Agustín will get caught or even if he really killed anyone. It is his compatriot, fellow writer and sometimes lover Roberta Aguilar, who leads him (and herself) on this search, retracing his steps and taking new ones. In fact, it is Roberta who encourages the very exploration of the city that led to his crime and like Agustín, providing symmetry, she too takes an American lover. Their search takes them through the mean streets of the Lower East Side with key passages taking place in Tompkins Square, a guerilla style Off-Broadway theatre, a dominatrix's dungeon, a thrift store and a homeless shelter. What becomes clear through repeated references is that for both Roberta and Agustín, each of these places resonates with Argentina, especially the period of harassment, arbitrary arrest, torture and disappearance under La Dictadura. With these continual references to their home country their search can be seen as part of an post-national identificational crisis with the novel functioning as an allegory of Globalization.

Novela negra is the only novel in the group that we are calling the Americanista novels that has accrued a substantial body of criticism. Several of the articles and book chapters deserve mention because of overlapping concerns with the present study. María

Inés Lagos compares Novela negra and Realidad nacional desde la cama in “Displaced Subjects: Valenzuela and the Metropolis”. This cogent article focuses on how the physical displacement of exile problematizes the concept of a stable identity across several dynamics including sexuality. There is special emphasis on nationality with reference to the repressive period of the dictatorship in Argentina. Her approach falls within the domain of cultural studies. Lagos cites postcolonial theorists and the interaction between the margin/center to examine the decentering effect that New York City has upon the title characters, but also portrays that contact with the metropolis and its emblematic postmodernity as having a liberating effect on them. She discusses subject formation further in “Sujeto, sexualidad y literatura en ‘Cambio de armas’ y Novela negra con argentinos de Luisa Valenzuela”, where she illuminates Valenzuela’s deconstruction of the notion of the fixed subject through the problematization of the binary division of gender roles. In an article which might serve as a model for reading literature against theory, she shows the ways in which Novela negra fictionally concretizes many of the same topics taken up by postmodern feminist theory.

In a brief note, “Los múltiples rostros del exilio: La experiencia del des-arraigo en dos novelas de Luisa Valenzuela”, María Teresa Medeiros-Lichem compares the two different cases of exile found in the same two works as Lagos in “Displaced Subjects”, Novela negra and Realidad nacional desde la cama, and in fact focuses on the same phenomenon of territorial displacement. Though she discusses Valenzuela’s attempts to unveil the workings of the patriarchal order and often tags-on correlations to the specific case of political repression of La Dictadura, her focus is on the psychological. What is central is the anguish that surfaces in Agustín as the repressed horrors of the Dirty War

are constantly bubbling to the surface during his exile, specifically because of his displacement to New York. In an earlier article Ksenija Bilbija had taken a very similar approach. “The Rhetoric of the Repressed in Black Novel (with Argentines) by Luisa Valenzuela” also looks at the phenomenon of repression, and like Medeiros-Lichem she finds that the crisis of identity that Agustín suffers in New York is due to the stifled memories of the terror of La Dictadura. Bilbija also examines Roberta’s role in the novel and incorporates one of the prevalent issues that many of the critics point up: writing with the body. The influence of psychoanalysis continues in “Novela negra con argentinos, imagos de la guerra sucia”. As in the studies of Medeiros-Lichem and Bilbija, Cordones-Cook is focused in elucidating how recurring memories of the Dirty War affect Agustín on the psychological level, incorporating psychoanalytic vocabulary of Lacan into the events of Novela negra con argentinos.

Sharon Magnarelli elucidates many of the possible interpretations of Roberta’s mantra of writing with the body. In “Luisa Valenzuela: Cuerpos que escriben (metonímicamente hablando) y la metáfora peligrosa” she draws together several ideas from Valenzuela’s literary corpus which help to illuminate many of the important linkages between Roberta’s philosophy and other aspects of Novela negra. Like Lagos she identifies the body as a site of linkage between the various overlapping identities, and though she focuses on sexuality from a largely feminist perspective she also acknowledges those of ethnicity, class and nationality. As does Magnarelli, Phillip Swanson takes up the issue of Roberta’s writing with the body in “Theory and the Body: Luisa Valenzuela’s Novela negra con argentinos as Test Case”. Though he acknowledges the association of writing with the body and a “political agenda of sorts”, nodding to the

social construction of identity and the avenue for resistance and change that this implies and which many of the above critics highlighted, but in the end he merely dismisses it as diffuse and impotent. Swanson's emphasis is on the problems and evolutions within theory itself that the novel seems to address and concretize. The intersections of the individual psyche, nationality and especially class are discussed by Jorgelina Corbatta in "Metáforas del exilio e intertextualidad en La nave de los locos de Cristina Peri Rossi y Novela negra con argentinos de Luisa Valenzuela". By pointing out Agustín's upper middle-class origin, Corbatta goes the furthest in linking the psychological scars (individual and group) of the political repression to a social phenomenon: class interest. In this light, Corbatta should be seen as applying a cultural studies approach.

From this brief survey we can see that most of the criticism at present can be classified as psychoanalytic, feminist, postmodernist or specifically theoretical. In addition there are a few examples of hybrid cultural studies. Perhaps a case could be made for hybridity in the majority of the cases (possibly a reflection of the character of the novel itself), but in the end most of the digressions into the social are, to use Fredrick Jameson's terminology, re-psychologized. In other cases, the other aspects of the social are subsumed to feminist concerns or are associated with a postmodernist liberation. This is certainly the case with Roberta's philosophy of writing with the body which will be shown to have other important interpretations. Noteworthy exceptions to this re-psychologizing pattern can be found in Lagos and Corbatta and though each of these critics makes valuable contributions to a socio-political reading, none of the above critics takes a systematic postcolonial approach to the analysis of Novela negra. The present chapter hopes to break new ground in this regard by analyzing the intersection of

national, class and individual identity with place while maintaining a focus on the social and political. It analyzes the portrayal of New York and how this portrayal relates to Buenos Aires and Argentine identity.

Place and Displacement

In Novela negra borders are established only to be crossed. Displacement is a consistent theme that runs throughout the novel across several fields. Roberta and Agustín, themselves displaced in exile, displace themselves across the landscape of a New York constituted by divided spaces. The most prominent of these spaces is the area of the Lower East Side, with Tompkins Square serving as its emotional center. This chapter will explore the role of place and displacement in the novel. The places in the novel are not mere backdrops to the action that come along as a matter of coincidence, rather, NYC is an integral part of the construction of the novel, more a character itself than a passive setting against which the action transpires. The places of the novel themselves motivate the actions of the characters and are developed just as they are. This elevation from setting to protagonist is supported by Valenzuela's own characterization of NYC as a living organism, an "hormiguera" and the primary importance of place by her classification of Negra novela as part of her trilogy of "bajofondos." It is not an exaggeration to claim that NYC (and the Buenos Aires to which it consistently points like an inverted sign in a semiotic system) plays one of the most important roles of the novel, on the same level as the female and male leads Roberta and Agustín. Moreover, taken together with the philosophy touted by Roberta within Novela negra and by Valenzuela without it, "Escribir con el cuerpo", use of place and displacement make possible a postcolonial reading of the text.

Borders hold a vital position within the logic of Novela negra. Borders between neighborhoods, bodies—personal identity, art forms, reality and fiction, hemispheres (of the brain and of the globe), presence and absence, here and there, now and then dominate the literary landscape. But in Novela negra the borders are there to be crossed, or rather, they are there because they are crossed, are always in the process of being crossed--of being broken down, made visible by their deconstruction.

Roberta Aguilar and Agustín Palant, the two Argentines in this so-called noir novel, are introduced as opposite doubles. In fact, Roberta is introduced to the reader through the extended metaphor of a boxer facing off against her opponent: “En su rincón del Village como quien está preparándose en el otro rincón del ring, de pie sobre la lona, Roberta baila sus pensamientos con una copa de slivowitz en la mano” (8). The interesting phrase “baila sus pensamientos” refers to one of Roberta’s refrains of the novel, the other being “puro teatro.” “Puro teatro” is her less than flattering evaluation of life in NYC but here, dancing her thoughts is a creative reference to her personal literary theory: writing with the body. This is put into contrast with Agustín’s style, as we are informed as the two characters, the two Argentine writers, introduce themselves to one another and to the reader. According to Roberta, Agustín has a somewhat sinister devotion to detail and comes across “bien racional cuando empuña la puña. Cuando empuña la pluma.” While “penning the fist” may be another allusion to her view of Agustín’s heavy handed rationality or attention to detail, her seeming slip of the tongue here is at the same time another sidelong reference to her slogan of writing with the body, blurring the boundaries between the metonymic grasping of the pen and the penning of the grasp. Agustín’s appraisal of Roberta’s stories reveals the strangely symmetrical,

complementary relationship between their two styles: “En lo poco que leí tuyo creí detectar un extraño razonamiento que sostiene el impulso. Por mi parte, ando buscando la ilógica en la lógica” (10-11). Completing the circle, Agustín also crosses the lines, reconciles the irreconcilable, posits the bridge between reason and impulse, logic and chaos, left-brain and right-brain, male and female as if they were the complementary versions of one another: mirror images or two fragments of the same image.

It is in fact the alchemy between these two complementary elements that undergirds the novel at an allegorical level, an allegory of writing that is only one of the tenors in a rich textural palimpsest. Returning to the focus on place, we can take the trope of opposition back to the line that first presented Roberta as a combatant, a (perhaps literary) pugilist preparing herself in her corner, in the opposite corner of the ring, in her apartment in the Village. It is the spatial sense of oppositeness that lends weight to the figure, which makes it possible. It is the corner that is opposite first, the place, the Village, which paves the way for the presentation of Roberta and Agustín as opposite doubles. But the Village is opposite what? The Village, Greenwich Village, does physically lie opposite many of the other neighborhoods prominently featured in Novela negra. In fact, with the East Village, the Lower East Side and Tribeca, it does form a sort of square in Lower Manhattan of which the Village would be the northwest corner. But at the point in which it is introduced as the opposite corner Agustín is in the Upper West Side and while on opposite ends of the island, it is not really an opposite corner, at least not physically. Of course there is more than just physical space to consider and when we consider the Village as historical-cultural place, then it is easy to see the oppositional, contestatory qualities that would lend it to the opposite corner in the boxing trope.

Though the reader need not have an intimate knowledge of the history of the various New York City neighborhoods in order to come away with a productive reading of Novela negra, the distinct, singular sense of place that each of these possesses does add another layer of meaning to the novel. The Village, The Upper West Side, The East Village, The Lower East Side, Tribeca, Tompkins Square and Alphabet City work as signifiers in a semiotic system. In a novel revolving around two exiled Argentines, two characters so conspicuously out-of-place, the sense of place becomes heightened. Places (as particularly distinct places) themselves function as texts as the two title characters continually move across a textured landscape, itself encoded with meaning. Place and displacement work together in harmony to score an intertextual counterpoint with the action and dialogue.

The Village

Greenwich Village, also known simply as the Village, possesses a cultural tradition that links intimately at many levels with Novela negra. Roberta's corner, her opposite corner has a history as a haven for contestatory cultural expression. According to the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation, this tradition runs to the early part of the 20th century:

By the start of World War I it was widely known as a bohemian enclave with secluded side streets, low rents, and a tolerance for radicalism and nonconformity. Attention increasingly focused on artists and writers noted for their boldly innovative work: books and irreverent "little magazines" were published by small presses, art galleries exhibited the work of the

avant-garde, and experimental theater companies blatantly ignored the financial considerations of Broadway.

It is this site of otherness, of outsiders within, of oppositional artistry that is so fitting for our tale of two displaced Argentine writers in a story that is often conspicuously referred to as a play, a theatrical production, their actions as part of a script. There is flow across genres, plays on words and plays of meanings, slipping, sliding across boundaries physical, psychic, of geography and of identity. The Village's history of counterculture makes it an important landmark in a novel that is itself, like one of the recurring images in its pages, a soup stirred by themes literary, theatrical and political. Greenwich Village is associated with the Beat Generation, Marcel Duchamp, Bob Dylan and the Weather Underground, but at least on an overt level the most important cultural intertext of Novela negra is that of the off-Broadway and off-off Broadway movements and the experimental theater associated with the neighborhood.

The main action of the novel is motivated by a visit to an underground, off-Broadway or off-off-Broadway, theater production. It is there that Agustín meets the American actress Edwina Irving, who he will eventually (he believes) kill. It is this act, and the double entendre is fully emphasized in the novel, that sets in motion his flight back to the Argentine writer Roberta and their dual exploration of themselves and their surroundings. There are two principal clues that allow us to speculate on the particular place referenced in the novel: the use of the word galpón and later references to the Theater of Cruelty. The Cherry Lane Theatre is the oldest off-Broadway theater company in New York and is associated with various experimental theater movements. Cherry Lane claims to have been the birthplace of the Living Theatre and Theatre of the Absurd

movements. This is important, because the work at the opening of Novela negra would clearly be considered experimental. Another lateral coincidence is that the most prominent founding member of the company was named Edna, remarkably close to Agustín's Edwina. But it is the original site of the theater and the curiously ambivalent word galpón, which point most convincingly to Cherry Lane as the place referenced by Valenzuela.

According to the RAE, galpón refers to either a large one-story house; slave quarters; or a large, lightly built structure, with or without walls. For Argentines, galpón most commonly refers to what in English we would consider a barn or a large shed. Like the word itself, these buildings have multiple uses including shelter for animals, agricultural products and tools. This rustic image, like our lead characters, seems a little out-of-place in the context of the urban landscape that the novel continuously describes, and it is this apparent linguistic displacement which brings it to our attention. But, according to the case we have been building, it is the one element which is clearly rooted in place. It is the rest of the city which has changed around it. Though a galpón may be out of place, may be difficult to translate, the structure to which the word refers or tries to attach itself to, is only out-of-time in present day New York City. But once too, the Village had been just that, a rural village, two miles from the city. Cherry Lane Theatre, it turns out, was built on the site of a farm silo and converted from a building that had served as a tobacco warehouse. So Cherry Lane was established on the site of two buildings for which the word galpón might be well suited, and suited perfectly well, had they been in Argentina.

But this association with the Cherry Lane Theatre is more than simple geographic curiosity, more than just an opportunity to explore linguistic, temporal and spatial displacement, it also provides a key intertext with Roberta's persistent slogan of "writing with the body" as well as with the implied ideology at the level of the novel itself. It is Cherry Lane's association with the Living Theatre movement that bonds its even more intimately with Novela negra. The Living Theatre movement is an experimental theatre company led by Julian Beck that was famous for its use of the body, particularly the naked body in its performances, with the body signifying a place of concrete truth as well as the site of repression. They were particularly focused on progressive social activism, acting-out and acting out, as it were, against what they saw as repressive laws and social norms. Thus theirs was a dual radicalism attempting to expand the horizons of theater and society. Like Roberta in Valezuela's novel (and like the novel itself), the Living Theatre blurred the lines between thought and action, the social and the aesthetic by bringing the problems of everyday modern life into the theatre and taking their problematic theatrical performances into everyday modern life. Performing in off-Broadway venues like Cherry Lane—Agustín describes the theater that he visits as, "tan alejado de la realidad y alejado de Broadway" (18)—as well as nowhere-near-Broadway venues like prisons, schools and city streets the company dissolved the barriers between art and reality, theatre and life. Their provocative performances often resulted in venue closures, to which the inability of Roberta and Agustín to find the theater/galpón may have been a nod. Of course the other, concomitant reading of that fact is, as Roberta begins to suspect, that maybe the theater never existed. But that does not wholly take us away from the Living Theatre, for as the name implies, theater is life and life, theater. Their theater of operations, to draw on

another, yet clearly not irrelevant use of the word, seemed not to be limited to any one building or even any building, but the city, their stage the streets. So it is with the characters of Novela negra. So it is the very artistic philosophy of Roberta, the physicality, dance, writing with the body, as if the linguistic wor(l)d upset by post-structuralism, the endless slippage of the sign on one hand and the heavy handed law of the Lacanian patriarchic father on the other, could only be remedied by the concrete cartography of the human body and by analogy, spatial and social bodies. Some center or centers must hold, for Roberta it is the body:

Bueno. Yo tampoco sé pero lo siento, escribí con el cuerpo, te digo. El secreto es res, non verba. Es decir restaurar, restablecer, revolcarse. Ya ves, las palabritas la llevan a una de la nariz. Te arrastran, casi. Arrastrada, me diría algún bienpensante de esos que sobran en nuestra patria. Y sí. Somos todos putas del lenguaje: trabajamos para él, le damos de comer, nos humillamos por su culpa y nos vanagloriamos de él y después de todo ¿qué?. Nos pide más. Siempre nos va a pedir más, y más hondo. Como en nuestros memorables transportes urbanos, “un pasito más atrás”, lo que quiere decir un pasito más adentro, más adentro en esa profundidad insondable desde donde cada vez nos cuesta más salir a flote y volver a sumergirnos. Ca-ra-jo. Por eso te digo con el cuerpo, porque ese meterse hasta el fondo sin fondo no lo puede hacer la cabecita sola. Con perdón de toda analogía , metáfora o asociación o alegoría que tu mente calenturienta esté pergeniando en este instante. O sin perdón alguno, que de eso se trata, al fin y al cabo. (11-12)

This passage is worth citing at length, because there is so much embedded here, so many references that we can almost say that the entire novel is contained in it or at least springs from it. The major themes are all here: the displacement of centers—of language, of authorial authority, of cities, of countries; the suggestion of a power hierarchy with which the Lacanian sense of language as rule is both the vehicle and the tenor in a multi-faceted allegorical relationship; the erotic references which might be taken as *the* analogy, *the* tenor when it is really only an intermediary vehicle, one sign in the novelistic semiosis; the social, which the body also signifies and that along with the individual body must be restored and reestablished. It is the body and its multiple signifieds that is of crucial importance to the philosophy of Roberta and that of Novela negra, because if we should not completely confuse the one for the other, we must recognize the genetic role that the idea of “writing with the body” plays in the rhizomatic structure of Valenzuela’s work. It is the way to provide some sense of center, some sense of strategic foothold in a world in which the centers have fallen away, been dis-placed, locking the hierarchies in-place and rendering them invisible and seemingly inevitable.

“Res, non verba” is particularly illustrative of this point, of the malleability of language. As a prefix, and Roberta is keen to point out that is also a prefix, it can mean two different things, and it cannot be fixed. In fact, it can mean exactly opposite things, it can alternatively attenuate or intensify. On the other hand, as a word in itself (a body), as a part of a phrase (the social body), in touch with its Latin roots (memory), it has clear meaning. It is a thing, a fact, a deed or punning on its Spanish meaning it is beef, meat, substance, a body, calling for action. “Res, non verba” calls for bodies in place of writing, action in place of words to restore some tentative places from which to overturn the

existing order. “Writing with the body” calls for both sides of the coin: writing through actions and actions through writing. It is this political call to literary arms to re-place the endlessly flexible (like meaning in post-structural language) status quo that brings us back to the concrete space of the city, yet another body in the palimpsest of signification.

As we have argued, New York City, or the various neighborhoods of NYC are like so many more characters, not just a backdrop. Perhaps we should say actors, because as we return to that theater of operations we must return to the operations of theater, the Living Theatre and its roots in Theatre of Cruelty. The second reference that pinpoints the theater as Cherry Lane is a direct allusion to Theatre of Cruelty and Antonin Artaud: “Ropa de teatro, of course. Estoy con un amigo que está escribiendo una obra. Puro teatro de la crueldad, sabés. Es un digno émulo de Artaud” (57). Julian Beck, the founder of the Living Theatre, drew heavily on the writings of Antonin Artaud, especially his ideas of cruelty in Le Théâtre et son Double. In fact, he took Artaud’s ideas on cruelty even further than Artaud. Cruelty for Artaud was a specialized term for the breaking down of the barriers between the theatrical performance and the audience, to shake them of their complacency. Ultimate cruelty would be to break the fourth wall to such a degree that the audience would be thrust into the midst of the action. Cruelty seen in this light was exemplified by Living Theatre performances, like Paradise Now alluded to above, in which the actors would cross the proscenium arch, begin to rant against society’s oppressive laws and norms, encouraging the audience to do the same as they disrobed and led a column of naked protesters/audience members into the streets. Outdoing Artaud (and adding a Brechtian sense of social activism) by breaking down all of the barriers between theater and life, Beck pushed the actors into the sphere of the public and

transformed the audience into actors. Valenzuela follows in the same vein, having Roberta push Agustín through the very same streets, pushing him to find himself, to reveal himself by rebelling against his socially constrained self-identity. Like Artaud, like Beck, and alluding to the same theatrical concept of the “fourth wall”, Roberta wants to “sacudirlo a Agustín, romper la pared, forzarlo a revelarse—¿rebelarse?” (55).

So far we have argued that the particular identity of Greenwich Village is itself a sort of character within Novela negra. A concrete space filled with historical memory and encoded with meaning, it plays an active role in the story line. Its association with counterculture movements places it in line with Roberta and figuratively supports her placement, as a contestatory figure, within it. The experimental theatre movements, which have roots in the Village, tie it to Roberta on an even more important level, her aesthetic philosophy. In turn, Roberta’s philosophy can be seen to manifest itself at the ideological and structural level of the novel. Experimental theater (and its components: performance, theory, activism) is an important hypotext of Novela negra, and one that not only links it to Greenwich Village, but to other nearby neighborhoods.

If we do consider the places explored in Valenzuela’s novel are akin to additional characters, then it is fair to say that the Village is up-staged by the Lower East Side. The Lower East Side, the many inner-divisions that this neighborhood contains or overlaps, and many of its landmarks figure prominently in Novela negra. This is the area that draws Agustín in, that provides the motivation for the central complication of the novel. It is the foreboding no-man’s land that dares him to enter. While we have argued that the real world theater that served as the model was most likely the Cherry Lane Theatre in Greenwich Village, for understandable poetic effect, in Novela negra, Agustín wanders

into his underground production somewhere adjacent to Tompkins Square, the dark heart of the Lower East Side.

Greenwich Village's history of counterculture and activism, including experimental theatre is matched by that of the Lower East Side. In fact, after Cherry Lane was shut down by one of the Living Theatres performances, Julian Beck and his clan moved their base to the Lower East Side, which they still consider to be home.

The Lower East Side seconds the contestory spirit of the Village and adds the element of danger to the mix. This is the aspect that sets up clear lines of demarcation between this neighborhood and the others surrounding it. And it is the desire to cross the threshold, to map the unknown, to test their limits, which draws the characters of Novela negra into its streets. We are first introduced to the Lower East Side through the eyes of Agustín. His impressions of New York in general are not flattering, but are instrumental in establishing the texture of the city from his viewpoint. Our first glimpses of NYC are during Agustín's flight from the scene of the crime. As he leaves the building he runs into a wandering drunk, who asks him if he ran into him just because he is black. Then while waiting for the subway, he surveys his environs: "Había sólo tres personas en el andén, cada cual concentrado en lo suyo. Un borracho semidormido sobre su propio meo y una pareja besándose. Dos tipos de idéntico bigotazo besándose como si fuera lo último que les quedaba por hacer en este mundo" (13). There is a striking parallel between this scene and the one in which Dave Sorensen of Del Paso's Linda 67 wanders about San Francisco in a stupor after having murdered his wife. Their attention seems drawn to the same topoi: filth and gender issues. Significantly, Agustín's immediate surroundings are generalized to the city as a whole, the subway platform becomes a microcosm of the

archetypal urban space. The action brings a trashcan into the foreground. Agustín fixes on the, “enorme contenedor de basura” and contemplates the “latas abolladas y papeles engrasados y diarios roídos y vasos de cartón y vómitos y demás ascos del desperdicio humano en la ciudad absolutamente visceral, capital de la inmundicia” (14). But this microcosm of filth and treachery is doubly applied to the Lower East Side. As Agustín continues his train of thought the danger element comes to the fore as well:

Recordó haber pensado eso: la basura y la ciudad y el vómito, precisamente eso al enfilar hacia la zona, cuando decidió invadir territorios incursionado en lo desconocido. Por allí no te metas ni muerto, le habían prevenido a los pocos días de llegar a New York. El Lower East Side es tan peligroso como Harlem en la otra punta, es barrio de drogas, de traficantes de la pesada. Más vale mantenerse a distancia, nunca cruzar hacia el este la Primera Avenida que es la frontera. (14)

Again the topos of the border appears and it is interesting that the trope of the imperial voyage of exploration, the voyage into the unknown that results in such strikingly similar findings: barbarity, just as expected. Of course the great difference is that the imperial agent finds barbarity in the lack of modernity, while here as with all the Americanista protagonists, barbarity is found in the excesses of modernity. The idea of the border is established and the geographic spaces written over by the names and their adjectives, are put into place, put onto stage with more stable identities than many (or all) of the human characters in the novel. And here the Lower East Side is adorned with its characteristic trappings of fear, darkness, drugs and the threat of violence. We are given its opposite as well, to further define it. If Greenwich Village is used as the opposite ring to the Upper

West Side, then the Lower East Side is contrasted with Park Avenue. Thinking again of the Lower East Side he likens it to the “regiones del detritus donde la ciudad se volvía letal” but considers it to be closer to the real New York than other zones: “mucho más fiel a sí misma que en la pulcra geometría de Park Avenue, por decir algo” (17). And this indeed is closer to the essence of the New York that is revealed to us in Novela negra and continues a series of contrasts which also includes the following: “Y fue reconociendo y reconciliándose en parte con la otra cara o mejor dicho el culo—el oscuro y delicuescente agujero—de esa ciudad que se le escapaba entre los dedos, que a cada instante se transformaba en otra” (16-17).

From these last two examples we make two additional observations. First, Agustín recognizes that the Lower East Side represents a particular zone of New York and not the entire city (a cognitive division which seems to come and go) by referring to it as the “otra cara” of the other parts of New York such as the upper east and west sides. Also, and this is supported by the first point, that the city’s character seems to constantly change, transformarse. This idea of a dynamic cityscape, a living organism transforming itself can be taken (and is) in two directions. One is the dimension of space and it is the same that we have gone about establishing thus far, that the city is made up of distinct zones encoded with singular cultural signification that Valenzuela incorporates in meaningful ways into the story and structure of the novel. One of the topoi of the novel is that of transformation. As Agustín moves through the city, through different neighborhoods, across various borders, it seems to transform itself. Its identity, like that of Agustín and Roberta, of signifiers, of the subject/object relation, seems subject to change. The other dimension is the temporal. Diachronic transformation is also taken up

by the novel, the city seems to transform itself, like perception of reality, like representation of language, it seems to slip away through the fingers, ungraspable, *inasible, in-puñable*, over time. We will take up this thread later, that dealing with historical transformation. Now we will return to the Lower East Side and its function within the novel.

“Inmundicia” as filth, impurity, is one of the key words of repetition that are used to describe New York. Agustín’s trek through the Lower East Side reveals some of the reasons for which this is an appropriate descriptor. Again, like the imperial observer, Agustín’s displacement puts him in the midst of savagery; the ills of modern society and their agents are the inverse counterparts of the otherwise-than-modern “savages”. As he strikes out through the dark streets, he registers some of the symptoms of the modern savage—drug abuse, violence, sexual exploitation and perversion:

Agustín se fue internando por las zonas opacas del desastre. De este lado o del otro, pensó, la inmundicia es la misma, siempre las mismas grandes bolsas de plástico negro, apiladas, llenas de desperdicios y en mi país en tiempos militares las bolsas tendrían más bien restos de, mejor pensar en otra cosa, armar la sonrisa de seguridad e indiferencia, mostrarse bien alerta sin mostrarse alarmado, caminar decidido entre esas voces que le ofrecen drogas aspirables, absorbibles, inyectables, que le ofrecen mujeres, hombres, adolescentes, niños y le dicen aceptamos tarjeta de crédito, cualquier cosa, y él avanza por la miseria humana haciéndose el que no oye, porque ésa es la forma de comunicación en esos estratos, unos hablan al aire o gritan al aire con desaforados gritos de loco, detallando las

tentaciones y los nombres poéticos de la heroína que suenan a paraísos tropicales en los oídos de los desesperados que se arrastran desde lejos respondiendo al llamado de quienes gritan pero nunca jamás miran a los ojos, nunca son ellos quienes venden ni son quienes compran los que compran, y así Agustín se desliza—deslizó—por esa región del desquicio sintiéndose intocado. (16)

Along with the litany of potential vices that are referenced here we find several references, digressions that demand the reader's attention precisely because they deviate from the main theme, because here they are slightly out of place. The reference to the credit card reminds us that these are not merely social ills but that they are a business. The reference to buying and selling supports this as well. But the credit card adds the additional element of establishment. It shocks us by taking something that seems by nature illegitimate and transitory, drug dealers and pimps as guerrilla businessmen always on the run, and converting it into something with a degree of stability and legitimacy. It transmits the idea that these social or moral ills are not fugitive externalities, but integral parts of the system. Of course the idea of credit, of living on borrowed money (or time), and to the chronic indebtedness to which it may very well lead, as a vice in itself is another possible connotation. In fact, given the creditor/debtor relationship of the US (or the IMF and World Bank to be precise) and Latin America and the credit crises of recent history we must be alert to this possibility.

There is much that lends weight to the validity of this interpretation, to the direct connections between the views of New York City and Buenos Aires, between the United States and Argentina. In fact, in this very passage, the visual image of the plastic garbage

bags and the idea of “remains” of the various uses of the plastic bags and the various meanings of “desperdicios” or “restos” all work to tie New York to Buenos Aires. Here we can see another example of displacement, whereby the language and images do not quite fit into the current situation, or rather that they do, but that they also bring other significations that allude to the absent city, to the absent country and perhaps specifically as the absent other side of the coin. Another feature of language and of communication is referred to in the above passage. Rather it is incommunication that is pointed out. This is another central theme of the novel: the somewhat false interpersonal relationships that replace genuine human interaction. Human bonds are missing. This is Roberta’s puro teatro—her analysis of life in New York City—the idea that people are never really themselves, that they are constantly putting on a show and playing out roles that always come pre-scripted. We will pick up this thread again below, here we merely wished to illustrate the way that these other themes, these seeming “digressions” are woven around the main narrative thread.

Aside from that as a location of violence, drugs and prostitution, the Lower East Side also functions as the site of yet another symptom of decadent modern society: homelessness. By the mid-1980s, homelessness in the major cities of the United States had become an issue that garnered considerable media attention. New York stole the show and it was the “temible” Tompkins Square that served as center stage. On a poetic level the idea of homelessness shares much with the condition of the principal figures of Novela negra. As self-imposed exiles, Roberta and Agustín are without their home. As Agustín states quite clearly, he has no place: “¿Qué lugar tengo?” (24). The idea of place is also explored in literary terms, the search or the work that the author must undergo to

find or make her own voice, to find or create her own space from which to write. But we should not become too preoccupied with trying to separate out these disparate levels of signification, because it is clear from the continuous juxtaposition that Valenzuela does not fear that the reader might take the various possible meanings in support of one another and stir them together. Whether the place is the country, city or domicile or if it is authorial or linguistic, the crisis of homelessness is never more than a few pages away in Novela negra. The following exchange illustrates the way that the various levels of displacement are woven together:

No somos de acá, le dijo Roberta, ¿qué querés que tengamos? Uno de los dramas del exilio, o al menos de la vida errante, es que te impide la acumulación. Hay tantas cosas que me gustaría tener y después me pregunto qué hacer con ellas en el próximo traslado. Una nunca sabe dónde va a ir a parar. Por eso sólo puedo permitirme un tapiz, esa obra de arte que enrollás y te metés bajo el brazo. El resto tiene que ser descartable. Una vida descartable, no es gracioso. (156)

We see the way that exile and art are joined together seamlessly, the one always the figure of the other and as Roberta later adds, there are also personal psychological affects of exile: “Hay además un exilio de sí, más inevitable de lo que parece a simple vista” (156). In the homeless shelter the same threads are taken up, the parallels with the above passage are apparent:

No quiere estar abierta a preguntas, Roberta. Ya no quiere o quizá nunca lo quiso, en el fondo. Sólo *permanecer* allí envuelta en sí misma como envuelta estuvo en toda la ropa de su armario o mejor envuelta como los

otros, cargando encima la montonera de trapos encontrados en tachos de basura, suéter sobre suéters sobre camisas inmundas sobre sacos y harapos, una capa protectora de ropa como en la tienda de Bill revolcándose con Bill pero eso fue en otra vida, otros tiempos y otros climas, otras latitudes del alma donde puede ser que nunca se retorne, nunca se vuelve, nunca, ni a las latitudes del alma ni a las otras, apenas un estarse aquí como quien ha llegado, ella que siempre se sintió como una dama de las bolsas de papel pero era papel de escribir, qué chiste, una mera grafía, una fantasía o sueño o pesadilla de ser en el fondo fondo una bag-lady cargando todas sus mundanas pertenencias en bolsas de papel, sentada en un banco de plaza a la espera de cualquier cosa menos de una pregunta. (123)

Again, the transience of personal identity, authorial identity and national identity are united by the figure of homelessness. Like Roberta and Agustín, like their work, like their language, New York's homeless have been displaced. Homelessness is a figure which ties together several of the crises of modernity, material and intellectual. Homelessness provides another image of the failings of modernity, that "contracara" as Roberta or Agustín might have it. For the nation, the US, that touted free market capitalism as the solution for struggling nations, for all nations, to have endemic drug abuse and violent crime is serious enough, but the spectacle of homelessness of the 1980s is a far more severe incongruity. For the system that is based on the fundamental concept of private property to provide such a conspicuous lack of even a small place to call one's own is a glaring contradiction. It is a contrast that is echoed in the geography of

the New York of Novela negra. The scene of the homeless around Tompkins Square stands in stark contrast to that of the immaculate symmetry of Park Avenue. From Agustín's point of view we witness the symmetry of the binary terms: pulcritud/inmundicia. On the one hand we have the flawless symmetry of the divided roadway, well-ordered, well-manicured space, one of the most expensive stretches of real estate in the United States, reserved for the elite of the beneficiaries of the system. On the other hand we have the run down, scary Tompkins Square, site of disorder, littered with makeshift shelters, and the homeless hanging out. A key passage gives us some insight into the respective points of view of Agustín and Roberta: "A Agustín le encantaba pasearse por Park sin Roberta, porque Roberta sentía allí un encogimiento del corazón que no le podía describir a Agustín pero que estaba relacionado con lo físicamente inalcanzable. Lo desmesurado, lo frío, lo bello, lo ausente" (17). While Agustín prefers the "pulcra geometría" (17), the immaculate symmetry of Park Avenue, Roberta finds some sort of refuge among the homeless in what might be the "inmunda geometría" of Tompkins Square. And here we might take from "inmunda" the meaning of impurity in addition to its sense of filth. For Agustín the two meanings are inseparable, but Roberta finds space for herself between these usages, at the homeless shelter, a personal refuge ("refugio") from the rigid walls of her apartment, from the excessive symmetry from which she desires to escape. Tompkins Square is a refuge, not only for transients, but also for transitivity. For Agustín, filth and disorder are equivalent, the meaning may not open up new doors. For Agustín the homeless must remain at a distance another "externality" of the system:

Mirá no más dónde se te ocurre meterte. Este es un lugar para salir corriendo, no para entrar como entramos nosotros. Uno no se puede quedar acá. Uno ni siquiera puede pasar caminando tranquilo frente a la puerta de calle, hay que cruzar a la otra vereda cuando se pasa por acá, para evitar a todos estos perdidos, a todos los delincuentes y vagos y drogados. [...] Lugar de miseria, de mierda. (122)

For Agustín the homeless bear particular descriptors which deserve attention. Perdidos, delincuentes and vagos all denote a specific relation to the system, they are outside of it either accidentally, “perdidos”, or due to their own choices “delincuentes” and “vagos”. Clearly, for Agustín the refugio is a space external to the system, not an integral part of it and it is a place that can and should be avoided.

For Roberta, the refugio is a space, a base from which to open up new avenues away from the excess of Park. She refuses, as Agustín wishes, to return home. As is often the case for the exiles, home carries the additional meaning of Argentina: “No se puede volver, sólo se puede tomar sopa. Nadie nos va a delatar ni nada. Este es el Ejército de Salvación y el ejército de salvación salva, no condena. Lo necesitamos” (122). There is no simple return to the better days before, to her apartment, to Argentina, to the stable geometries of totalizing signification, but there are places of provisional stability like the body, like the shelter where the body and perhaps the spirit can be nourished. “Lo necesitamos”, this space of possibility is necessary. Possibility is the open horizon, upon which Roberta’s own search for some solution, some end of a story, must be carried out. This is the positive side of New York, “eso es lo que siempre amó de la ciudad, la posibilidad de dar vuelta a la esquina y encontrar otro mundo imposible de prever, de

imaginar siquiera” (130). And this other world is connected once again to theater, where those outside the system, the city, the world, act-out within it: “Es el teatro, de nuevo o quizá por primera vez el teatro levantando un telón inexistente” (130).

It is interesting to note that the same signifiers that generate such repulsion in Agustín draw Roberta further in:

Había asistido por *casualidad* a una representación teatral en el *callejón* más lúgubre de la ciudad, se había manchado los zapatos con caca de perro o quizá de persona para verlos actuar en sus trajes de arpillera entre los tules de la noche desflecada. Eso había ocurrido a fines del verano, como quien dice en otro siglo. Roberta se había sentado entonces en los bancos *improvisados* con tablas apoyadas sobre cajones, al lado de las borrachas y drogados asiduos del pasaje, y había visto la obra de ratas y de cloacas y de cloacas y de muertos que hablaba del terror y de los cocodrilos ciegos. (129)

The alley is not a dead end. Far from it, the chance, the improvisation, the theater all provide Roberta with a sense of the possible, the alley is a passageway to other worlds, it is a station between them. The “inmundicia” of the city does not merely imply the filth external to the system, but is part and parcel of humanity: “en el ombligo del mundo, maravilla, puede acumularse toda la pelusa” (130). Purity in a system closes off all such spaces, all such possibilities of improvisation, of chance, of the inspiration that Roberta is searching for.

The History of Tompkins Square shows that it has long been a refuge for those that sought a base outside of the system. Like the counterculture art scene of Greenwich

Village or the off-off Broadway theater of the Lower East Side, Tompkins Square has often been the stage, a real living theater for social activists. Just before the publication of Novela negra, Tompkins Square became ground zero for a conflict between the municipal authorities and real estate developers on one hand and the homeless, punk rockers, and an alliance of other Lower East Side residents opposed to the trend of gentrification. Determined to rid the area of drug dealers and squatters as part of an urban renewal project, police were ordered to enforce a curfew. A rally by the residents against this action resulted in what became known as the Tompkins Square Police Riot of 1988. This was not the first incident between the municipal authorities and the working class residents of the Lower East Side. By the mid-19th century the Park had been baptized as a site of contestation. In 1857 immigrants gathered there to protest rampant unemployment and food shortages only to be beaten by police. The Draft riots of 1863 radiated out of the park, engulfing much of Manhattan. 1874 saw the largest demonstration to date in New York, it too took place in Tompkins Square with more than 7,000 laborers, again largely immigrant, being violently driven out of the park by mounted police. The 1936 redesign of the park by Robert Moses was intended to divide it up to help control large assemblies seemed to put a damper on these mass demonstrations but did not extirpate the sense of subversion that seems to inhabit the plaza. During the Vietnam era, it seemed only natural for major protests to be held at the site.

All of these events had made Tompkins Square synonymous with subversion and protest. While no references to the Police Riot are found in the novel, all of the major players are alluded to at one point or another. And while Valenzuela does not include the small-scale skirmish directly, Novela negra does dramatically document the gentrification

of the area around the park which was the underlying impetus of the conflict. One aspect of the novel that has been well treated in the criticism is the transformations that the main characters undergo through the course of the work. Lagos is especially insightful in this respect. Going far beyond more conventional character development, both members of the pair undergo radical physical changes that border on gender bending. This is made more noticeable by repeated references to clothing. What have not been commented on in the criticism are the transformations that the city itself undergoes. One of the aims of the present study is to redress this.

A recurrent image that emerges from Agustín's point of view is that of the endless change that New York seems to demonstrate. For him this is an unsettling quality and has been closely associated with the darker side of modernity. The line that we have cited above bears repeating: "Y fue reconociendo y reconciliándose en parte con la otra cara o mejor dicho el culo [...] de esa ciudad que se le escapaba entre los dedos, que a cada instante se transformaba en otra" (16-17). Agustín craves symmetry and order, but the city, like an animate being seems to evade him. He is not able to take it all in, he is unable to put a finger on it, to grasp its essence. Clearly, on one allegorical level (there are others) Agustín's personal crisis alludes to the cultural crisis of postmodernity. His inability to grasp the essence of the city, to achieve a suitable degree of fixity, relates to the speed with which changes take place in late modernity, to the fall of the totalizing master narratives, the endless deferral of linguistic meaning. The city, the world, the word are all inasible.

Up to this point we have been chiefly concerned with the way that the city transforms itself on the spatial plane, that is, how it changes aspects as one moves from

neighborhood to neighborhood and street to street. We have examined the way in which Valenzuela uses the cultural history of Greenwich Village and the Lower East Side to serve as a counterpoint to more mainstream landmarks such as the Upper West Side and Park Avenue. We will continue our analysis of the Lower East Side, but we will turn to the complementary dimension of space, that of time.

Part III of Novela negra offers a glimpse into a particular historical period of New York. After their period of “arresto domiciliario”, Roberta and Agustín venture out of the Roberta’s apartment above the Greenwich Village streets and head once again toward the Lower East Side in a second attempt to retrace Agustín’s path on the night of his fateful (and questionable) crime. They hope that by following his steps they can somehow come to terms with the impulse that drove him to the murderous act. He ultimately wants to understand, and this is not without allegorical implications, how an ordinary rational being can be transformed into a monster. She wants an end to the story, for the story to find a solution—or at least, she wants to search for that end, to search for that solution and to search together with Agustín. Perhaps what is most important for Roberta is the communion and the search. After undergoing a radical physical makeover, shaving his beard, taking to wearing glasses and a wardrobe change the pair had previously made an unfruitful attempt at picking up his trail. This led to Roberta’s encounter with Bill, whom she took as a replacement lover for the emotionally absent Agustín, and also lead to her subsequent physical transformation. By the time of the period of house arrest, both Roberta and Agustín had participated in a transvestistic ritual in which a member of the opposite sex dressed them in cross-gendered clothing. In part III as they find their way to Tompkins Square they find that area to have been re-dressed as well.

The first change is the perfect symbol of postmodernity, modern urban transport, a symbol of movement, movement through space is combined with movement through time. Roberta, leading Agustín with his eyes shut, describes the scene to him:

Ahí está la horrible, amenazadora boca del subte, boca de bruja desdentada, lengua verde pero no, nos la cambiaron. Si abrieras los ojos—no los abras—verías qué distinta está. Ahora tiene como un kiosko de techo abovedado, parece un gran invernadero como aquél del jardín botánico de Baires ¿te acordás? [...] ¿Cuántas veces nos habremos cruzado por esos caminitos o nos habremos sentado en el mismo banco sin reconocernos? Y ahora acá tan juntos y tan lejos, ahora acá pasando frente y dejando atrás la nueva estructura sobre la boca del subte que lo devuelve a su forma original de los años 20, según dice el cartel pero no te des vuelta ni abras los ojos, lo devuelve a su origen y nosotros como en la máquina del tiempo, y del espacio y del lenguaje, de la memoria, de esas cosas que nunca nos van a devolver a (116-17)

The train station has been renovated to replicate itself in an older state. That is, moving into the future, the past returns, moving out into New York they are transported through memory, “la máquina del tiempo, y del espacio y del lenguaje, de la memoria” to Buenos Aires. Whether this is the end of history or not we are clearly in the presence of postmodern simulation, time and space are collapsed, the metanarrative of progress has fallen or at least fragmented. The aesthetics of the endless forward march of technology, the automobile, the spaceship give way to the train—a brand new train station simulating its older self. Valenzuela points out the irony by having Roberta prohibit Agustín from

looking back as she describes the station as being returned to its origins. He can't look back, think back, reflect or remember. Roberta and Agustín, as exiles are cut off from their origins, Argentina is in the throws of another phase of "inevitable" but forced march of progress, while in the United States things move forward toward their origins.

The second image of change helps bring the concept into sharper focus: "Esto tampoco estaba antes. Es asombroso. Creo que vas a tener que abrir los ojos, no más, nos lo cambiaron todo. Este barrio es otro, ya no puede meterte miedo. Ya no. ¿Qué había antes, acá donde ahora está este bar postmodernista?" (117). This example helps us put the word on it: postmodernity. This confirms the postmodernist suggestions that were made with the train station re(tro)novation and it combines it with another facet, that of business. It is the business of channeling whatever can be channeled into the pattern of consumption. Alcohol can be consumed as can a cultural pattern like postmodernism. Swallowing its tail consumption is consumed. This theme is continued with the next example, the ubiquitous presence of art galleries. Roberta does not hide her astonishment: "¿Estuvimos encerrados tanto tiempo? Ahora hay una galería de arte acá, fijate vos, en este barrio nada menos. Y otra galería y otra. Es como estar metidos en un sueño" (117). For Roberta art galleries in the Lower East Side seems an irreconcilable contradiction. For even if she was one to brave the streets and find refuge in its provisional spaces of possibility as we have seen was the case with the street theater and the homeless shelter, an art gallery is something else entirely. It is the gallery, more than the art, which is surprising. It is the fixed location of the gallery and the idea that someone who could afford to purchase artwork would set foot near the Lower East Side that puzzle her.

Studying the history of the New York neighborhoods, we must conclude that art is an integral part of the process of gentrification. The neighborhoods go through phases of disinvestment followed by an influx of artists drawn by affordable rents. If these artists manage to achieve any success, investment returns, promoting the art scene and/or capitalizing on the success of that scene by reinvestment in real estate. Names like Jack Kerouac, Abbie Hoffman, Allen Ginsberg in literature; Lou Reed, Talking Heads, Patty Smyth and Blondie in music; and Andy Warhol in the visual arts all helped establish the Lower East Side as an art scene. During the period leading up to the publication of Novela negra “postmodern” artists such as Keith Haring and Jean-Michel Basquiat had made the grade; and this success helped pave the way for the following wave of gentrification and urban renewal, the very same phase as we witness in part III of Valenzuela’s novel.

Basquiat and Haring are perfect examples of Roberta’s comment on the street moving into the gallery: “Mirá a tu alrededor. Lo que andaba aterrando por la calle ahora está metido dentro de las galerías de arte, mirá, todo es material de exposición, ahora. Es fantástico ¿qué habrá pasado? ¿Y cuánto tiempo habrá pasado?” (119). The artist colony colonized by the gallery. Both Basquiat and Haring got their start in the same street graffiti that adorns so many of Valenzuela’s descriptions of New York before moving into the galleries and more traditional media. In fact, only a few lines later Agustín alludes to how the scene used to appear. Roberta begins to feel nostalgic for the old Lower East Side, even for her, the change has been too much. Now it is Agustín who welcomes the change. Preferring the newer, more orderly environment he classifies the rebellious street art as trash: “Como si frente de nosotros estuviera todavía esa especie de

escenario todo cubierto de graffiti, hecho un basural” (119). Agustín prefers the mean streets of the Lower East Side neatly contained in the galleries. And here we encounter yet another facet of postmodernity, the conflict of high elite culture/low popular culture or rather, the dissolution of the border between the two.

Roberta’s continual reference to Postmodernism as commodity links the renovation through these figures to the political and economic conditions of late-modernity. She derides postmodernism not as a provider of space from which to strike out against oppression, but Postmodernism as style, as product, as commercialization, as business. She prods Agustín while highlighting the transformation of the neighborhood: “¿Para andar por acá necesitabas la reafirmación de un revólver? Come on! Cuanto posmo anda suelto pasea sus spiky crestas por esta zona, como en su casa” (118). With references to the postmodern bar and the “posmo” of style here, Roberta directly links postmodernism to the changes that have taken place in the Lower East Side.

If the Lower East Side of Novela negra had once stood as the opposite corner against the immaculate geometry of Park Avenue, countering the pulciritud of the that most affluent zone with inmundicia, it no longer does so by part III. Roberta and Agustín’s flight from their self-imposed house arrest finds the area around Tompkins Square in the midst of gentrification and urban renewal. Strangely, Roberta seems troubled by the transformation. One can almost hear her disorientation as she suggests heading to the park to get their bearings: “Vos apoyate en mi hombro nomás, ya vamos a llegar a Tompkins Square. Al parque no lo pueden haber cambiado tanto. Los árboles de siempre, los robles, las ardillas, los terrores agazapados en las sombras. En el parque vamos a encontrar un punto de referencia” (117). Here allusions to the natural elements

of the park, the trees and squirrels alongside the terror huddled in the shadows underscores the “natural” state of the park—alive, dynamic, a real world with real possible threats. And the old oaks are themselves symbols of solidity and strength, of consistency. They are a fitting image for the use that Roberta now has, as a link to some degree of fixity in her world now pushed a little to far. And here we see the danger of the postmodern condition even for those who might gain from the newly found marginal spaces that emerge with it: that of complete slippage. Now Roberta seems a little disconcerted, just as Agustín had earlier in the very same areas. And Roberta searches for the center, the kind of center that she prefers, the provisional center, in the blur of, as Jameson has described the same scene, late-capitalism.

And capitalism is at the heart of the matter. As soon as they start toward Tompkins Square, Roberta notices the differences: “Esta calle parece mucho más transitada que antes. Ya no hay miradas aviesas, casi no hay sombras ni bultos que se menean. Es como si le hubieran abierto paso a la luz, qué sé yo, y no es culpa del frío, es otro imponderable” (117). The cold is not to *blame* for the lack of the rocking bundles, a metonymy for heroine addicts or homeless, says Roberta. Clearly these changes are not entirely welcome, she prefers the shadows that conceal spaces for new different worlds. What is to “blame” for the change: campaign of urban renewal and investment, the very same kind that occurred in the late-1980s under mayor Ed Koch as Valenzuela was writing her novel. Roberta continues: “Hay más negocios y son más claros, parece que barrieron a todos los traficantes de drogas, hay un clima de sonrisas por la calle, ¿te das cuenta? Esto es el Lower East Side, Loísa, el Bowery, el peor de los sitios, ¿quién hubiera pensado aquí en sonrisas?” (117). Again, like the art galleries, the other businesses are

decidedly out-of-place now performing a double displacement on Roberta, exiled within exile.

There is a clear problematization of postmodernism in Novela negra.

Postmodernism in the eyes of some theorists and critics opens up spaces of resistance for those groups marginalized by the totalizing schemes of modernity. Linda Hutcheon, as demonstrated in The Politics of Postmodernism, is one of the most visible figures in this camp. But this is not the role of postmodernism in part III of the novel. It more closely follows the view of the opposite camp: that the endless slippage of meaning and the radical disintegration of centers makes it impossible for new bases to be established against the totalizing structures already put into place by modernity. This is the position on postmodernism of theorists like Frederic Jameson, who clearly take a more skeptical view of the phenomenon. What is more, as Baudrillard claims, the postmodernist aesthetic of difference allows for the marginal spaces to be absorbed into a system of difference, a totalizing system where the appearance of difference in the margins does not keep it from being integrally connected to the now invisible center. Real difference, or singularity, is dissolved and those singular, previously marginalized groups, which may have found natural allies in one another around and against the totalizing center, are now cut off from each other through the apparent absence of that center. Singularity gives way to individuality. Previously marginalized groups are now stuck in their cells where the totalizing structures have been internalized, hierarchy frozen with no outside space from which to circumvent it. The path to liberation fades away. The narrative of their struggle no longer can reach its end.

The cleaning and commodification of the marginal spaces represented by the Lower East Side in Novela negra is one of the less favorable aspects of the change for Roberta. At first she tries to make the best of the change. Even in the midst of her own disorientation Roberta tries to find a saving grace in the transformative aspect of the city and postmodernism:

Alegrate. Lo que te cambiaron es la escenografía. El lugar del encuentro aquél está ya tan distinto, tanto lo han lavado y regenerado y, que es como si el encuentro no hubiese tenido lugar. Porque el lugar ya no está, es otro, y como sabemos muy bien espacio y tiempo son la misma cosa y entonces el tiempo del encuentro, etc. (118)

But Agustín resists her postmodern discourse, he still feels the guilt: “Nada se borra” (118). Eventually, Roberta realizes the futility of their situation. Once again it is connected to the postmodern washed condition of the new Lower East Side. Agustín suggests seeking shelter in Bill’s thrift store and Roberta retorts:

¿De qué tienda me estás hablando? Ya no debe existir más, este barrio es otro, nos metimos en el parque y ni siquiera nos ofrecieron fumo acá donde hasta hace poco reinaban los traficantes de la pesada. ¿De qué me estás hablando? Todo está como recién lavado acá, y la tienda de Bill estaba hecha para la otra cara. Ahora vamos allá y seguro nos encontramos con un límpido restaurante japonés, o una mini discothèque de moda. Cambiemos de barrio, de estrategia. Total, si tu teatro no lo encontramos antes, menos lo vamos a encontrar ahora.

As the traces of the past have been washed away, erased, the work that they were writing together, mind and body, must be foresaken. The trail has gone cold. Their narrative, of liberation (from not knowing) will not have a happy ending, or any ending. Like the “interminantes pesadillas” of Roberta’s childhood, like the willed forgetting of the heinous crimes of the dictatorship, their search for a motive, for basic meaning must be abandoned. Upon arriving at the center of the Lower East Side, Tompkins Square, and finding even it completely transformed, washed clean, a blank slate, Roberta is defeated.

She realizes that their quest, the search for meaning that had unified them, is over. And this is what Roberta has been trying to achieve since she met Agustín. She tries to go back. First she tries to go back in time: “Si sólo se pudiera recuperar un poquitito no más de la alegría. Si pudiéramos volver al antes. Vamos a sentarnos de Nuevo en el banco del parque” (119). Then she tries to go back through space:

Como si ahora, pintado y remozado, no se hubiese convertido en eso que en nuestro paisito del sur llamaríamos una concha acústica. ¿Te das cuenta? Concha acústica. Vamos a casa, Agustín, a nuestra casa casa, a la patria que le dicen, a nuestro país, a la concha acústica. (119)

But Agustín refuses to collaborate: “No harías mal en callarte la boca” (119).

It is precisely at this point in the novel that the pair of Argentines, Roberta and Agustín begin their redivision. It is here, the exact center of the novel, in the indeterminate ex-center of the Lower East Side that the dissolution begins. Here Roberta flees the walls of her apartment and seeks refuge with the homeless, seeks human warmth and finds it in an elderly homeless woman. Here Agustín returns to the apartment, begins to grow his beard, begins the return to his old self: “Yo argentino. No revolver más, no acordarse ni

indagar... Quiero retomar la pluma” (142). He will again take up the phallic revolver and discard it in favor of the phallic pen. He will continue his writing of the word within the law, from the position of the Law of the Father, he wants his old clothes, he will continue to write the manuscript which has already been started, which has been handed down to him intact, unchanged from its imprisonment in the inverted power structure world of Ava Taurel’s torture chamber. It is here that the threads in the allegory of solidarity between the sexes, between two ways of writing, between left brain and right brain, between the head and the body, between the state and the people begin to unravel.

Argentina

In this final section we will discuss perhaps the most important place that Roberta and Agustín visit in New York: Buenos Aires. Novel negra offers many turns on the meaning of the word displacement. Ambulatory, linguistic and psychological displacement are all integrally woven into the storyline, but the physical absence of Buenos Aires gives it an unusual presence. The “máquina del tiempo y del espacio, del lenguaje, de la memoria” (116-117) that is the novel brings Roberta and Agustín, as well as New York, in continuous contact with the capital of their “paisito del sur” (119).

Both of the main characters have memories of Argentina, but it is Agustín for whom New York is a continual connection to Buenos Aires. This is one of the elements of the story that is established in the very first pages. The second page of text divulges that Agustín is not a native of New York City, however it is this city which directs us back to his origins: “Ya en el ascensor puede alisarse la tupida barba, recomponer su aspecto. Puede ajustarse la corbata, esa defensa del porteño contra el desajuste de una ciudad demasiado desconcertante” (4). Here not only does New York refer us directly to

Buenos Aires but it also links it through a specific attribute: “desconcertante”. Just before this we have the first of many direct references to the atrocities of La Guerra Sucia. Here Buenos Aires is also linked to New York through the image of dead bodies: “Los dedos. Aquellos que cierto vez aparecieron en el basural a la vuelta del cuartel. En otro país, otro tiempo, otra vida, otra historia; no permitirle el paso a esos recuerdos” (4). So Edwina’s body in New York (Edwina, who stirred the soup in the play and stirred up something else in Agustín) links to an anonymous victim of the repressive military junta, one of the thousands of desaparecidos of the regime. This is made more explicit later where the same chain of linkages is employed: United States > New York > Edwina >> Agustín << desaparecidos < Buenos Aires < Argentina. Again the fight against the memories resurfaces:

¿Dónde termina la destrucción y empieza la apropiación? ¿Dónde reside la secreta memoria del olvido? Edwina—esa imagen, lo único que le quedaba de ella y ya no hay nada—removiendo ahora los insoportables recuerdos, los otros insoportables recuerdos, aquellos de los que Roberta nada sabe ni aún transmogrificados, de los que él casi no sabe, todo un país dejado atrás, un tiempo y un horror que no llevaba ese nombre (con gritos en la casa de al lado y desaparecidos). No. Recuerdos intolerables de otras víctimas que, como Edwina, no serán mencionadas de nuevo. (77)

It is not impossible to view Edwina as a metaphor for the desaparecidos and New York as a metaphor for Buenos Aires, but it is important to not view them as only metaphors, the metonymic ligaments are too important to be hidden away, to do so is to repeat the same violence done to both of these figures—to make them disappear. New

York is not merely superimposed over Buenos Aires, there is a contiguous relationship as well. New York does not “really” refer to Buenos Aires, but what happens in New York does really, on the same plane, the historical plane, relate to Buenos Aires.

The recurring black garbage bags of New York City are not merely metaphors for the body bags of Argentina. The metaphor takes one object and superimposes over another, it stands for the other, and the referred is what is really signified, it is what is really meant. Metonymy works in a qualitatively different manner. Metonymy connects two references upon the hinge of an association as does metaphor, but the former does not cover over one of the references as does the latter. Metonymy does not engage in the same hierarchy of meaning as does metaphor. When we use “Washington” to refer to the policies of the government of the United States of America, we do not “really” mean the United States of America to the exclusion of Washington; the decisions happen to really be made in, or at least voiced from Washington, DC. On the other hand, when we use metaphor we do mean something different from what we say, even though we would like for some trace of that which is cited to be imparted to that which is referred. When we say “es un sol”, we want to impart the warmth, light, any of the positive aspects that the sun possesses to that person, but that is all. We are really only referring to those attributes and not others. The distinction between the vehicle and the tenor is much more clear-cut in metaphor than it is in metonymy. There is a clear boundary between the two. There is Mary and there is the sun. It is not so easy to separate out Washington from the government of the United States. The upshot of this is that metonymy is more of a horizontal linking process which allows us to talk more evenly about two things at once (or slip back-and-forth between them), while metaphor entails more of a vertical

superimposition where the tenor is taken as embodying the ultimate meaning. This is important to take on board because we argue that Novela negra employs metonymic allegory where the vehicle is not “really” referring to a tenor but rather, it is referring to a vehicle and a tenor and both have significant meaning.

Saying that the revolver is a metaphor for writing, makes the story “really” about writing and the condition of the woman writer today in Argentina, with relation to the canon, writing styles, etc. The story is about these things, but it is also about so much more. Claiming that the revolver is a metaphor and denying the metonymy, reduces its importance, removes it from the “real” meaning, hides it away, “disappears” it. This action de-links the gun and the violence that it does in the story from the chain of signification, which has important connections back to Argentina.

There are other triggers, like that of the revolver, that send Agustín back to Buenos Aires via New York. There are black plastic garbage bags that remind him of body bags; there is the soup, whose floating ingredients remind him of floating bodies; stories of bodies found in the Hudson recall bodies floating in the Rio de la Plata. There are too many examples of this metonymic linkage between New York and Buenos Aires to do it justice. There is one more example, however, that cannot go without discussion: the “torture chamber” of Ava Taurel.

We are introduced to Ava Taurel through Roberta, and even Roberta, for whom New York is not haunted with the ghosts of Buenos Aires like it is for Agustín, cannot help but to make the comparison between the two cities through the metonymy of torture. “Los domingos trabajo en una cámara de torturas ¿no sabías?” (27). She did not know, but as Ava describes her work, Roberta’s mind is drawn to other latitudes (other

symmetries) with the suggestion: “y la oreja pasa a ser esa luz en su cerebro que se le enciende para señalar la otra recóndita escena de tortura en la que estuvieron atrapados sus amigos, hermanos, compatriotas, sin haberla buscado, sin posibilidad alguna de gozo, tan sólo de dolor” (27). While Ava speaks of the fantasy and her role as a dominatrix, Roberta thinks of those in other positions: “están los torturadores y están los torturados, pensó la oreja, están los que no quieren en absoluto serlo y son sometidos, dominados” (27-28). From these lines it is plain to see that Roberta is not oblivious to the terrors of the military regime. Moreover, it is clear that for Roberta the dominator/dominated relationship is not merely a feminist issue; it is not only a metaphor for a radical turn against machismo. This is not the same as saying that machismo is irrelevant in the text. Although it would have been easy for her to view the dominatrix as only an inversion of gender-power relations in a patriarchal society, this is avoided. The gender of her nouns in the Spanish make this obvious, the “torturados”, “sometidos”, “dominados”, her “hermanos”, “amigos” and “compatriotas” are all plural groups that most likely include both male and female members, but most definitely include males. Roberta’s parallel thoughts reduplicate Ava’s description on another plane. She removes the torture scene from the confines of the private sphere and relates it to the public sphere; she avoids reducing the scene to a strictly gender-politics context and moves it to a wider, more inclusive, political arena.

We must be very clear here that we are not claiming that Ava Taurel’s torture chamber has nothing to do with gender politics; clearly it does. It is, after all, where Roberta chooses to hide Agustín’s manuscript, the manuscript of his novel which is itself a symbol of a “masculine” writing style, the example por excelencia, following Lacan, of

language as the Law of the Father. We have been arguing for a reading of Novela negra that is open to multiple allegories, which overlap and intertwine with one another like a palimpsestic moebius strip. Clearly one of these levels figures an allegory of writing with Agustín's logical, rational, detail oriented style, that which Valenzuela has often referred to as that of the sun, dueling with Roberta's lunar style, writing with the body, dancing, feeling, under the sign of Eros. At other times the manuscript is called a "guión" fitting it into the allegory of writing through acting out, through action, but also with the implication of the script which delivers previously written (with the head), guiding, roles which must be carried out in strict accord with the totalizing rationality of the text. This aspect is further hinted at by the adoption of the appellation "papeles" at numerous points in the novel. Papeles is nicely ambiguous since it can seem to simply refer to the collection of papers that make up the manuscript, but is perhaps more commonly used to refer to the roles that actors play in theater or the prescribed norms that individuals are taught to follow in society. Agustín's manuscript then, can also be seen to stand for strictly defined social roles. We see an accumulation of associations with Agustín's writing: symmetry, geometry, perfection, rationality, structure, novel.

Leaving aside the play on words that link the pair throughout the story (the difference between "revolver"—the infinitive of the verb "to stir", to stir up, as in to stir up trouble, to stir up memories of the past, etc. and "revólver"—the gun which also stirs up trouble, is merely a question of accent), we can find other important connections between writing and the gun. If it is clear that the gun is a phallic symbol, as is the pen that writes within the Law of the Father, then so too is the manuscript. There is a certain

symmetry between the revolver and the manuscript taking their respective hiding places as the centerline between them.

There is also the possibility of violence lurking behind all of this, which, connecting it back to the *torturados* and *desaparecidos* of Argentina, clearly disqualifies it as a viable avenue. The gender-power positions at Donde Ya Sabés, is an example of monstrous inversion of the power relations between men and women (or between the state and the citizenry) that can only lead to new dead ends. By building a path whole cloth from the existing power structure, one is doomed to dependence on the maintenance of that structure. Contrarily, Roberta's salvaging of the intact phallic manuscript is symbolic of the return to *status quo ante bellum*. The near unification that Roberta and Agustín had achieved through writing with the body is undone. This underscored by our parting shot of the sadomasochist dungeon where for the first time we witness a male dominator punishing his female slave. This is surprising, because up to this point we had been lead to believe that all of the slaves were men and all of the dominatrices were women. Suddenly Roberta witnesses a new scenario in this heretofore-inverted microcosm. A woman is strapped to a large wheel with her arms and legs spread apart as in Leonardo Da Vinci's famous drawing:

La mujer no representa la armonía sino la espera de algo aterrador y supuestamente delicioso. Un hombre está oficiando. Lleva el torso al aire, pantalones de cuero negro y muñequeras con pinchos. Un atuendo clásico. Con clásica mirada observa a la mujer que espera atada a la rueda. De golpe, la hace girar, a la rueda con la mujer atada, y la mujer pega un grito, cabeza abajo. El hombre la reintegra a la posición anterior [...] (208)

Once again the man is in control, wearing the classic suit and in possession of the classic gaze. The manuscript or its role as Symbolic Father, its position, is brought back into the world with Roberta as a version of Prometheus, an inverted heroine. She, of course, will not be immune to the heat of her own flame. Soon, like the woman strapped to the wheel reminiscent of Leonardo's drawing, Roberta will disappear into Bill's drawing, striking the positions that he commands.

Gender politics is clearly at issue, but it is just as clearly not the only issue. The larger issue of general power relations including governmental and economic relations must also be considered. We have already pointed out the emphasis that Valenzuela places on commerce in the postmodernization (including the commercialization of postmodernism itself) of the Lower East Side. Donde Ya Sabés gives us another revealing glimpse into the counter-discourse of Novela negra. We know only three pieces of information about the clientele of Ava Taurel, they are usually men, they are businessmen and they are powerful. This is gleaned from a brief passage in which Ava sums up her work:

Y no es prostitución, no creas, nada de eso, somos dominadoras, somos profesionales conscientes, brindamos un servicio social muy positivo, imagínate a todos esos sueltos por el mundo sin alguien que les ponga en acto sus fantasías. Altos ejecutivos requieren de nuestro servicio, es un trabajo delicado, hombres cansados de ser siempre los patrones quieren que alguien los domine y los mande. (27)

Ava reveals how easily any task can be rationalized, much like her dictatorial counterparts might have rationalized and justified their acts of torture. And it comes

through a kind of twisted civilizing-mission framework: they need us (“requieren de nuestro servicio”) to help them on their way. But two words are especially key here. Both altos ejecutivos and patrones signal the clients’ economic role, their position of power and their gender, automatically, in a seemingly natural, almost inevitable way. Moreover, these two words position economics as inseparable from politics and gender. And it is the careful repetition of the concept behind ejecutivo and patrón with no variation that emphasizes the economic side. How easily could Valenzuela have included powerful politicians or even a lowly husband in this description? But the economy of her references is the significance. Economics is the absent link between the torture of Ava Taurel and the business of La Dictadura, other high executives (and executioners), but similar patterns of thought and action. This is yet another link between New York and Buenos Aires but not the kind so clearly attached to La Guerra Sucia. Not the kind that makes Agustín shudder thinking of dead bodies, yet the one is related to the other.

To read much of the criticism on literature that deals with La Guerra Sucia in one way or another, the integral way that economics relates to political and gender issues seems to go unnoticed. In the criticism La Dictadura seems to be a period of time in which people were tortured and disappeared just because, as if the dictatorship would have been acceptable without its atrocities. It seems as if the destructive acts of violence and the use of state sponsored terror were committed by corrupt politicians and military officials simply because they were corrupt and almost as if it were natural for military officers to act in that way, think that way. But this is tautological thinking par excellence. Was the Dictadura not something more than a collection of its most despicable symptoms? Though there are certainly ahistorical patterns of thought and action and

ahistorical positions from which to think and act, did the Dictadura not arise from historical circumstances in the real world? Did the Dictadura not come to power because of a desire to pull Argentina out of the perceived chaos in which it had been subjected? Did the Dictadura not seek to restore order?

Clearly the answer to these questions is yes. But it is important to consider the ways in which it restored order, that is what kind of order did they “restore”. Which order did they “restore” or, like Ava Taurel, was theirs a creative act (in their destruction)? Did they not attempt, as Roberta says to “reestablecer” the order? Again, what was the order that they created? It was one that favored business through deregulated foreign investment, it was one that reversed public safeguards, one that in large, reversed the social and industrial reforms that had been put in place during the period known as Import Substitution.

Donde Ya Sabés, Ava Taurel’s dungeon, connects New York to Buenos Aires on a political and economic level which helps to elucidate yet another allegorical feature in the palimpsest of Novela negra. The fact that it is called a torture chamber not only links it to La Dictadura in Argentina and its Guerra Sucia (head/body), but the economic-power relations between the clients and the dominatrices takes us further into the palimpsest (empire/colony/world system/imf) to the forces behind La Dictadura. This also repositions the allegory of postmodernism that we discussed in relation to the “clean-up” of the Lower East Side in the first chapter of Part III.

Roberta’s philosophy of “writing with the body” holds a central place in Novela negra. For Roberta this was not merely a cornerstone of her thought, it is her very essence, her *raison de être*. Similarly, it is the crux of the novel. “Escribir con el cuerpo”

holds together the various intertexts that we have commented on throughout. Sharon Magnarelli makes a quite thorough examination of the philosophy as it appears in many of Valenzuela's works in "Luisa Valenzuela: Cuerpos que escriben (metonímicamente hablando) y la metáfora peligrosa". However, Valenzuela's own précis of the philosophy will serve well for our purposes here. Valenzuela acknowledges the points of comparison between her philosophy and that of the French feminists' écriture féminine (Cixous, Irigaray and Kristeva) but insists that hers is not a gendered specific philosophy. For her it is an approach to writing that is based on the balance between the freedom to wander, to experiment, to experience and incorporate all that life has to offer, to follow impulses and to relinquish one's self to the act, to the "energía" involved in writing, to Eros. On the other hand there is writing from the center, well planned, guided writing, whose essence is control, that of Logos. She speaks about this in Gwendolyn Díaz' "Entrevista con Luisa Valenzuela":

Es más bien un trabajo conjunto de la cabeza y lo otro, aquello que nos impulsa a movernos, a bailar y respirar y exhalar, es decir por lo tanto acarrea a la cabeza y con ella al raciocinio a explorar caminos impensados que suelen asustarnos. Escribir con el cuerpo quiere decir—en parte, porque estas cosas nunca son tan específicas—no salir huyendo de aquellos impulsos que minan al raciocinio puro y lo tuercen y lo contaminan. (29)

In this passage we can see that she is using the body in contraposition to the head, which here stands for pure rationality. It is worth taking a further look at Valenzuela's words on

the subject because they clearly reveal that this philosophy of extends beyond the act of writing:

Creo que me refiero a la integración de todo, no a una escisión. Tiene que ver con la unificación o la unidad; es decir, siempre fue privilegiada la mente sobre el cuerpo, y no se escribe con la mente solamente, todo reacciona, todo escribe, todo hace, todo actúa. Por otra parte cuando uno actúa ciegamente actúa también con la mente. En el acto de escribir no hay separación sino unicidad. (40-41)

As we saw in the discussion of the tradition of experimental theater above, writing with the body extends itself to other acts, other action, “todo escribe, todo hace, todo actúa”. Then, when asked if there is a process or method that can be used to achieve this, she responds:

La liberación del discurso. Mientras se escribe con la cabeza domina el logos sobre el eros. Cuando se hace el amor domina el eros sobre el logos. Entonces cuando se está escribiendo con el cuerpo está todo integrado, eros y logos actúan ambos en equilibrio. En lugar de haber un proceso, uno tiene que sentirse muy libre y muy no dueño de la situación, porque en el momento en que uno se quiere apropiarse de la situación se pierde el equilibrio y se apropia o el cuerpo o la mente. Ese instante de perfecto balance está en el dejarse ir. (41)

When Valenzuela speaks of the liberation of the discourse, we sense that she is also speaking of a discourse of liberation. Again we see the repetition of the theme, the integration of the head (now Logos—rational discourse) and the body (now Eros—erotic

love/creative flow) and the balance between the two. What we also observe is Valenzuela's propensity to alternate terms opening up avenues to wider signification. Also, and this is significant for our present argument, is that she flows smoothly from one level of meaning to the next. And her pairing of "Mientras se escribe con la cabeza domina el logos sobre el eros. Cuando se hace el amor domina el eros sobre el logos" (41) is emblematic of the way that *Novel negra* moves from one suggested allegorical reading to the next by the subtle alteration of terms.

If we return now to Ava Taurel's dungeon, we can see why Roberta found it simultaneously boring and horrific. Boring because it had nothing of the balance required to provide for fruitful creative exploration and horrific for its metonymic links to La Dictadura. One could say with conviction then, that for Valenzuela, like for Roberta, the scene at *Donde Ya Sabés* is far from balanced. Similarly, the Argentina to which it refers both Roberta and Agustín is similarly imbalanced. Both stand in opposition to writing with the body; both write from the head alone *on* the body. As Magnarelli might put it, both entail perverted interpretations of writing with the body. One word that stands out in Valenzuela's comments above is "proceso" (others might be contamination, purity, rationality). Although we do not mean to imply that she intentionally chose these terms, "En lugar de haber un proceso, uno tiene que sentirse muy libre y muy no dueño de la situación [...]" resonates all too strongly with the both *Donde Ya Sabés* and the atrocities that occurred as part of the *Proceso de Reorganización Nacional*. There is almost intrinsic mutual exclusion between process and freedom. Valenzuela probably did not consciously key in on the word "proceso" and link it to the Junta. But it is precisely

this unconscious quality that illustrates how the ahistorical concepts with which she is dealing impose themselves on concrete reality.

Here we would like to position this malleable philosophy of writing with the body in a political reading, illustrating how the presentation of the United States in Novela negra might relate to the Argentine or general Latin American reader on a different level. In the political allegory, writing with the body will obviously take on a different meaning. We still see the contraposition of the head and the body, but now the body is the body politic, the land and the citizenry. This phrasing “body politic” was used as early as Thomas Hobbes in Leviathan (1651) and a quick examination of its frontispiece clearly reveals the allegory. A giant torso emerges from the land and emerges in a way that it appears to be part of the land. In turn, the giant’s body is made up of hundreds of miniature individual bodies. The head of the giant is that of the royal figure, and his are the only facial features that can be made out. He has the eyes, the ears, the mouth; he has sense. Upon his head sits the crown, the symbol of his authority. Here we see the body politic and the head of state, one of the more common political allegorical schemata. The head is the state, the governmental organization that possesses authority, and the body is the “civil society” which must submit to authority.

If we now change “writing” (and from Valenzuela’s comments above it is easy to see that “writing” has a range of meanings) to “governing” then we can see how the philosophy fits into the political realm. Writing with the body is also a political philosophy that suggests that civil society must have a truly integrated role in the governance of the state.

Writing with the body deals with questions of power, truth, authenticity, sustainability and balance. We can see this in Roberta's first mention of her writing style: "No te preocupés por la novela directamente, escribí con el cuerpo. Es lo único que puede tener cierto viso de verdad" (11). Truth in the postmodern condition, what meaning can it have without a body to which to fix it? And what else does Roberta mean by his "novel"? As Agustín realizes, Roberta often speaks figuratively: "cuando se habla de novelas se habla de otra cosa" (32). On the other hand the narrator knows that Agustín does so as well: "Agustín no estuvo aquí. Pero por supuesto Agustín está donde dice no estar, ¿qué pasa?" (24). But as we have been arguing, through allegory, the entire story (also) takes place where it is not; it too is displaced.

Let us take another look at an extended citation where Roberta introduces writing with the body:

Bueno. Yo tampoco sé pero lo siento, escribí con el cuerpo, te digo. El secreto es res, non verba. Es decir restaurar, restablecer, revolcarse. Ya ves, las palabritas la llevan a una de la nariz. Te arrastran, casi. Arrastrada, me diría algún bienpensante de esos que sobran en nuestra patria. Y sí. Somos todos putas del lenguaje: trabajamos para él, le damos de comer, nos humillamos por su culpa y nos vanagloriamos de él y después de todo ¿qué?. Nos pide más. Siempre nos va a pedir más, y más hondo. Como en nuestros memorables transportes urbanos, "un pasito más atrás", lo que quiere decir un pasito más adentro, más adentro en esa profundidad insondable desde donde cada vez nos cuesta más salir a flote y volver a sumergirnos. Ca-ra-jo. Por eso te digo con el cuerpo, porque ese meterse

hasta el fondo sin fondo no lo puede hacer la cabecita sola. Con perdón de toda analogía , metáfora o asociación o alegoría que tu mente calenturienta esté pergeniando en este instante. O sin perdón alguno, que de eso se trata, al fin y al cabo. (11-12)

We notice immediately that the text again thrusts us back to Argentina. And what kind of analogy, metaphor or allegory might Agustín be sketching out? With the talk of words and language there is the phallic content in the Lacanian sense. In turn, several of the words “cabeza” and “cuerpo” could be taken as references to the phallus or the penis itself. “Putá” lends extra charge to sexual association. This is clearly one allegorical level of Roberta’s philosophy. Here we see a cognate of what Jameson considers Deleuze and Guattari’s “conception of desire that is at once social and individual” (Jameson Reader 329). There is a close, perhaps over-determining, relationship between language, eroticism and the social. This would explain why must we be taken back to Argentina to discuss language or to understand the erotic overtones? The violence and power structure conveyed in the imagery of this passage relate to language itself, but we are dragged back to Argentina to establish the historical/political/social context. What if we substitute a few analogous terms for “words” and “language” in this passage to read it through a social lens?

The regime takes you by the nose. They almost drag you [...] And yes. We are all whores of the State: we work for it, we feed it, we humiliate ourselves on its behalf and we brag about it and after all that, what? It wants more. It will always ask more of us, and will always dig deeper.

Making these substitutions we have a situation very similar to the Argentina to which we are constantly referred as Roberta and Agustín move about the darker side of New York. But we have not spilt so much ink to suggest that Valenzuela had spilt so much ink merely to suggest, allegorically, that brutal dictatorship is undesirable. The deeper meaning seems to suggest that even formal democracy, which Argentina had obtained by Novela negra, can easily serve the same ends as dictatorship, can rule with the head alone. Though consent might be given freely in a democracy, the dominant and submissive extremes that we see in Donde Ya Sabés, might still, like the memories of desaparecidos and torturados are for Roberta and Agustín, have resonance with the present day concrete realities. That is institutions and institutional culture still carry the inertia of the recent past. The Argentines, notice Valenzuela's anonymous plurality, point this out to Bill when he asks about exile:

--Pero ustedes pueden volver a su país. Ya no hay más problemas, que yo sepa. Están en democracia, ahora.

--Poder podemos, ahora, claro, pero no sé si hay retorno posible. Las cosas cambian. No todos los caminos pueden ser desandados.

--Hay además un exilio de sí, más inevitable de lo que parece a simple vista. (156)

Never mind Bill's ignorance of the problems in Argentina, amnesty, debt crisis or hyperinflation for instance, (though it is not completely unrelated), what is important to notice here is the idea of the State seriously disfigured by the individual, social and economic violence wrought by the military regime. And if we think of the identificational trajectory of Roberta and Agustín, body and head respectively, over the course of the novel we find

a story of dashed hopes and tantalizingly near misses, followed by a return to status quo and renewed separation. That is, the unification, that Roberta hoped to bring about through writing with the body (in parallel with the love that she is constantly looking for) seems to have occurred only to fail in the end. She made a somewhat desperate choice, “[c]reo que estoy muy desesperada” (156-7), to take Bill as a lover, and though Agustín may have forced her hand, even she sees it as a betrayal. Consequently the unity dissolves; Agustín confesses his sins and Roberta is subjected to Bill’s drawing of her body, another corrupted version of Roberta’s philosophy.

If we take this back to the allegorical level we see that in the political allegory Roberta is Argentina, or one aspect of it, but so is Agustín. Like Roberta and Agustín, Argentina seemed to have a chance for unity after the fall of the military regime. With the new government there was new hope. Argentina looked to have the chance to move forward together, the State with the civil society under Raúl Alfonsín, this unity symbolized by his famous two hands clasp salute. Yet as Roberta/Agustín have indicated above: “No todos los caminos pueden ser desandados” (156). Previous flirtations of the junta with the IMF and neoliberalism put Argentina’s coffers in a too deeply negative position for Alfonsín to place enough emphasis on domestic rebuilding. Disillusionment set in and Alfonsín was defeated by Menem in 1989. Menem would subsequently set the country on a course of neoliberalism that would drive Argentines further and further apart from one another as well as from long-term prosperity on the national level. In her article on the relation between the Noir novel in general and the social ramifications of neoliberalism in Argentina, “La ciudad neoliberal en la novela negra argentina: Puerto Apache, de Juan Martini”, Natalia Jacovkis paints a similar picture: “durante los ochenta

hubo un esfuerzo consciente por parte del gobierno de Raúl Alfonsín por restaurar las instituciones del estado, y la confianza de la ciudadanía en éstas, luego de la brutal dictadura que gobernó al país entre 1976 y 1983” (2). Jacovkis points out that there was an initial honeymoon period with Menem as well, where it seemed as if unbridled neoliberalism, in a new democratic form, was indeed the magic bullet, but that that too was a false solution:

La amplia afluencia de capitales extranjeros en la primera mitad de la década del noventa permitió disimular los graves efectos que estas políticas causaban, y dio lugar a una aparente situación de estabilidad y crecimiento del país. A su vez, la lógica del consumo, el individualismo y el mercado se extendieron a otros ámbitos que sobrepasaban el económico, transformándose así en el discurso rector de la vida cotidiana.

(2)

And she emphasizes the connection to the military regime through the link of neoliberalism: “Sin embargo, este fenómeno no apareció de la nada en la Argentina. Por el contrario, había comenzado, en el plano económico, por el plan de liberalización de los mercados financieros y destrucción de la industria nacional puesto en marcha por la dictadura” (2). As Roberta’s relationship with Bill drives a wedge between her and Agustín and leads them down separate paths, to the failure of writing with the body, Argentina’s flirtation and deepening engagement with asymmetrical globalization, leads to crises at the national level.

And this brings us to the international or post-national allegory. If Roberta is the heart and Agustín is the mind (on the individual psychological level that has internalized

the drive for order and symmetry [and violence] of his society), Roberta the body and Agustín the head, Roberta the social and Agustín the state, then at the international level does this make Agustín the center and Roberta the periphery? Is Agustín the United States and Roberta Argentina? As Jameson has pointed out in his analysis of “Diary of a Madman” all allegory is not necessarily to be read as a rigid set of one to one correspondences (“Third World Literature”). On the other hand, it is clear that Agustín exhibits a very much Western, intensely rational, and in his delight in order, even *imperial* mindset. We might add that the loosening of allegorical equivalencies is the not too surprising situation in a post-structural cultural atmosphere. And where Jameson argued for a flexible “twin-valenced element” we have been taking that one step further, claiming that Roberta’s philosophy of writing with the body acts as a poly-valenced element, and instrument of abrogation (though not necessarily carnivalesque) within the allegorical matrix itself. This is allegory following a Derridaian grammar, which leads to a slippage of signifieds and richer and more varied possibilities. Through this model we can see that the Lower East Side and the Village are also Argentina, Latin America and the periphery in general. Novelistic writing is the private and the center while theater and dance are public and the periphery.

Along with all of the other possibilities, the allegorical reading of neoliberal globalization is indeed applicable. As we have suggested above, Buenos Aires and New York are consistently linked through metonymic bifurcations. We have also hinted that the referents of the metonymy not necessarily *only* contiguous and accidental, but they themselves interconnected. Through the lens of an allegory of asymmetrical political and economic influence of the centers (for at this stage of transnational capital we cannot

correctly speak of *the* center) on the periphery, and especially given the history of relations between the United States and Argentina (the tacit support of the military regimes, for example) the ubiquitous black garbage bags of New York and the body bags in Argentina are not unrelated. There is more than a poetic link; there is also an historical one. The garbage, the waste, the excess, the wealth of the metropolis is related to the efficiency of which it can extract wealth from the periphery. This extraction in the form of investment and exports from the centers in and to the periphery is exactly what the economic policy of the military regime facilitated. And their program of clearing a path for these policies, of curing Argentina of its sickness (from their point of view), of putting it on a new path of Order and Progress, infamously entailed the torture and disappearance of thousands of Argentines who would have complicated the issue, who were the cancer which the operation was to remove. So the excess of the center, perhaps including political rights, is inverted in the periphery. The garbage bags which remind Agustín of body bags may do so for various reasons.

And we will take pains to recognize that in the age of the fall of the State as the supreme structure of power, in the age of transnational capital, in the postmodern condition, there is no precise center and no precise periphery. Even so, we must also recognize that decentered “Globalization” is still considered by many to be an expansion of “Americanization”. Even if the UN, IMF and World Bank were not located firmly in the United States, and these institutions themselves widely considered to be instruments of US foreign policy, there would still be little separating “Globalization” and “Americanization”, for it is much less controversial to say that the centers of “Globalization” go about their business in the American mold and that it is American or

Americanized culture (it too affected by the periphery; it too a fluid construct), be it retail chains, fast food, modes of dress, technological consumption, communication techniques, etc., that is being spread throughout the world. Agustín makes clear his position on the issue:

New York era la ciudad más maravillosa del mundo en los primeros tiempos de su llegada. Alguien le había hecho la pregunta: ¿Dónde hubieras elegido vivir durante el Imperio Romano aún en plena decadencia y sobre todo en plena decadencia? En Roma, naturalmente, había contestado él, como quien dice New York a fines del siglo veinte desmoronándose y festejando a pleno. Un tiempo de estar vivo, un ir reconstruyendo el mundo a cada paso. (163)

And this while he stands in a bank reminiscing about a birthday party thrown in an ATM vestibule. So the association with empire, an American empire with New York as its capital is stamped in the most overt way on the text.

And of course with de-centering of the subject, with the blurring of the lines between the center and the periphery, the frontier becomes displaced as well. Postmodern time-space collapses the periphery on the center; the border between the two becomes ubiquitous. This postmodern space is prominently featured in the novel. As we have shown above, New York was itself the scene of urban renewal projects and gentrification that amount to a kind of internal colonization. In Novela negra, these changes are represented by what we have called Valenzuela's postmodernization of the Lower East Side, a complete change that happens, in true postmodern style, virtually overnight. And here we find yet another conduit between the United States and Argentina, displacement

in New York being displaced by displacement in Buenos Aires. The “clean-up” and “renewal” of the Lower East Side, involves many of the same structures as the “operation” and “reorganization” in Argentina. Both cases, as Agustín might suggest, are examples of intensive reconstruction: “un ir reconstruyendo el mundo a cada paso” (163). The positions of the real estate developers, the city and the police, displaced residents, homeless and squatters of New York bear topological congruence with the neoliberal policies, the state sponsored repression, the squatters, the villas de miseria, the tortured and the disappeared in Buenos Aires. Both involve the dismantling of public works, a radical shift to privatization, social resistance and the use of state violence to restore order.

Within a few lines we have the spectacle of a birthday party in an ATM vestibule—the celebration of one’s coming into the world in a bank, references to the United States as the late-20th century imperial power and the suggestion of moving through the world reconstructing it at each step. All of this following the postmodernization of the Lower East Side in tandem with the disintegration of the love relationship with Roberta as the erasure of any hope Agustín harbored of finding the solution to his identity crisis. Taken together with the consistent linkages between New York and Buenos Aires, these episodes points strongly to an allegory of globalization, of an Argentina in crisis (cultural as well as political and economic) struggling to find its own identity, the proper balance, healthful alliances, its true potential. There is a battle against the domestic foes, ghosts of the past, the policies of the military regime that have lead to the crises of the present, but at the international level the crisis involves the process of Argentina’s reorganization through the United States led IMF.

Love, Postcolonial Style

In the first part of this chapter we saw how the tradition of experimental theater related to Roberta's philosophy of writing with the body and the ubiquitous references to their writing "una obra de teatro". There is a clear contrast between writing in a structured (too structured) novelistic mode and writing in a more flexible theatrical mode. The modus operandi of the Living Theater of Greenwich Village and the Lower East Side shares much in common with Roberta's vision of good writing. Where the novel can be more individual, private and isolated, theater, even in its most minimalistic forms, depends upon plurality. There must be, at the very least, one actor and one spectator. Therefore a theatrical play is intrinsically a public act; it depends upon a public, an audience. Roberta's insistence to cross borders and to push the limits in writing with the body finds its analog in experimental theater's efforts to break the plane of the fourth wall, that is, to blur the lines between acting and living, to engage the audience. Moreover, if we consider the high political charge that much experimental theater possesses (and here the Living Theater company is the perfect example), then it would seem that on the literary level, Valenzuela is arguing for the legitimacy of a literature of engagement. And, in life on the other side of the work of art, if we extrapolate further, we find an insistence on real action at the social-political level as opposed to endless reflection or parlance: "El secreto es res, non verba. Es decir restaurar, restablecer, revolcarse" (11).

In the second part, much like the other Americanista novelists' ambivalent treatment of United States culture, we saw Valenzuela's ambiguous use of the Lower East Side. On the one hand it is a place where all the ills of modern society come to call

home: violence, prostitution, heavy drug use and homelessness feature. This is the fearful, dark side of New York, which is a figure for the darker side of modernity. At the same time, this “contracara” of the city is a place of possibility, the other side with which writing with the body requires interaction, the place where one can “explorar caminos impensados que suelen asustarnos” (Díaz 29). Tompkins Square Park, itself synonymous with social activism, connects back to the Living Theater and the theater of life. From this point of view, we can understand why Roberta begins to fade when they discover that the Lower East Side had undergone a radical change, virtually erasing the difference (or perhaps singularity) that it had previously harbored. We have called this erasure of difference the “postmodernization” of the Lower East Side because Roberta links the changes with postmodernism. And here we see one of the dangers of the postmodern: without that difference, without the singular Other, writing with the body is impossible, new ideas become unthinkable, creativity is stifled.

The presentation of New York and by extension, the United States closely relates Novela negra to the other Americanista novels that we will analyze in this study. The Latin American characters of Allende, Del Paso and Donoso will echo the tension between temptation and repulsion that both Roberta and Agustín feel toward their new environment. Though this tension is reminiscent of that which was already well established in Latin American letters by early 20th century, all of these novels display a focus on the crisis of identity which, supported by their publication in the decade of so-called Globalization, has historically specific associations with that post-national imagining of a new world order. So while these Americanista novelists are engaged with an already existing discourse on the culture of the United States as a reaction to overt

militaristic conflict of the late 19th century, they are also clearly responding to current problems associated with a renewed threat to the cultural autonomy of Latin American nations. Reflections on the United State postmodern culture are not disinterested observations but current contributions to the dialogue on the validity of the northern republic as a model for its southern neighbors. Novela negra not only raises questions to the desirability of such a model but also carries within it some suggestion that structural conditions in the relationship between North and South may make it impossible.

Finally, in the last part of the chapter, we examined the ways that New York serves as a conduit to Argentina. Though the Lower East Side can be seen as a metaphor of Argentina under La Dictadura, we have emphasized the way that metonymic linkages allow us to see the relationships of contiguity as causal rather than casual. This reading makes clear Argentina's place as peripheral in a world system dominated by other centers. The signifiers that refer Roberta and Agustín back to Buenos Aires do not just poetically stand for the Argentine signifieds, they are intimately linked to one another through a world system under the sign of modernity/coloniality. By way of a conclusion, we would like to offer a few remarks on the role of love in Novela negra. We have reached the point in this argument where it is clear that the national/international allegory (for really one implies the other) can be seen as a postcolonial allegory. It is a postcolonial writing without a strict national project but one that finds the asymmetry of neoliberal globalization unacceptable for the national situation. Novela negra is a postcolonial text devoid of any fixed utopian project, but one that diagnoses specific causes to present ills and suggests a broad framework within which viable solutions can be produced. This solution is that which Roberta is constantly seeking, love. Love is what

she wants from Agustín, and forced her to turn to Bill in desperation. Love, the reciprocal exchange between equals, the potential for fruitful creation, its solidarity is what she seeks. Love for Roberta has the same sort of function that family has for the other Americanista authors under study here, it is the key alliance that can safeguard them from the worst affects of the (post)modernity of Globalization.

As opposed to the role of marriage in the national allegories of Foundational Fictions, Valenzuela's love avoids the anti-democratic implications of patriarchy. This flexibility does have its pitfalls however. With a stronger social contract, perhaps Roberta and Agustín's relationship might have survived the unproductive affair with Bill. And this is the same slippery slope that postmodernism as a philosophy of liberation entails. How much creative space can it open up before all meaning is obliterated? And the danger is always present that if one fails to define one's center, one's project, that, as Bill eventually does for Roberta, someone else may define it for them. And for Roberta, Bill is much like postmodern globalization, the same imperial power structure wrapped in a multi-cultural package. But the other extreme, too much fixity, is clearly not an option, Novela negra repeatedly pairs order, symmetry and rationality, the cornerstones of imperial discourse, with the horrors of dictatorial Argentina. Some middle ground must be struck, and the freedom to explore unthinkable (head) avenues must be maintained, even at the risk of failure.

With Valenzuela's emphasis on the body and movement, the social and action we find an implicit call to arms embedded in the Novela negra. It is in this light that it can be considered a postcolonial text, writing back against the empire of Globalization. Though not a nationalistic project, the nation-state may be the best ally against the overwhelming

flow of transnational capital and the logic of a market controlled by other centers of power. As with the other Americanista novels, the central characters Certainly, Argentina is a central preoccupation in the text. New solutions must be sought, but they must do so within the framework reciprocal relations and authentic democracy, more akin to Valenzuela's love than to 19th century marriage, and avoid the traps of patriarchy, tyranny and neoliberal globalization. But an additional problem from the Latin American viewpoint is that since no one entity is formally holding physical territory, it is more difficult to unite against a common foe. Informal imperialism, Globalization tends to enter the scene in a way that naturally divides, making it more difficult to form meaningful alliances. Moreover, informal empire depends upon a schism a tear in the social fabric; it is the breakdown of "natural" alliances that allows its entrance at the inception. We can see here how Valenzuela's discourse of unity implied in writing with the body has both diagnosed this situation and proposed its solution. It is love or a set of reciprocal alliances between head and body that must be sought at the individual, state and international levels. Applied to the political sphere, it is a philosophy of an active, communicative, transparent democracy.

We are familiar with some of the objections to the application of postcolonial theory to the Latin American case. However, in this case, theory was not applied. Our readings of the text arrived at postcolonial terminology and categorization organically, only after our own theorizing had taken place. Moreover, postcolonial is more of a convenient way to orient (the word is not occidental) these texts and recognize similar analytical projects, rather than an attempt at strict or exclusive categorization. In fact, in our view, "allegories of coloniality" is a much more accurate description, and it avoids

many of the traps of “postcolonial”. For even if, as Bill Ashcroft has pleaded with us to remember, that postcolonial does not mean “after colonialism”, it still implies a starting point (of colonialism) which does not apply to the contemporary Latin American case. Moreover, as the case of Novela negra demonstrates with the Lower East Side, there are situations in which, colonality, as the other face of modernity, is less controversially applied. Roberta attached the descriptor of the postmodern to the changes that occurred there, and there is a strong case for this, but they are also evidence of colonality. In fact, as we have indicated, Valenzuela presents the commodification, in other words, the colonization of postmodernism itself. While it might be difficult to call the writings of an Argentine against the changes taking place in a neighborhood of New York postcolonial, saying that it speaks against colonality is far less problematic. And yet, for general communicative convenience we insist on calling it postcolonial, and we insist that it really is. It is postcolonial in that it is postmodern-postcolonial, in true postmodern space, from the periphery in the center against the center over the periphery of the center. This sounds rather baroque, but as Quijano and Wallerstein have argued, America is a system and the organs of the system are intimately connected. And America as a system is doubly represented by Valenzuela. The specifics of post-dictatorial Argentina are brought to the surface in Valenzuela’s other novel of 1990, Realidad nacional desde la cama. In Realidad nacional, the United States is always just beyond the present reality: in the country club, in the military instruction manual. In the United States of Novel negra, it is Argentina that is always just behind the surface. The observation that Roberta makes of Ava Taurel’s apartment fits this dueling diptych quite well: “La parafernalia del rito no está a la vista pero está presente en cada objeto” (28). Finally, Novela negra is also

postcolonial (in the standard sense) in that, like Agustín might do, Valenzuela is writing about where she is not; it is postcolonial in that, like Roberta, when she speaks about the novel she is talking about something else; it is postcolonial in that New York is also Buenos Aires.

Isabel Allende's El plan infinito: Race Matters**Under color of authority**

Whether or not the events of March, 3 1991, the beating of Rodney King, a black man, by several white officers of the LAPD, inspired the aptly described “resonant” name of King Benedict, one of the first characters that we are introduced to in the 1991 El plan infinito it certainly added yet another level of signification to it. Perhaps the name King was only intended to resonate with Martin Luther King, Jr., the iconic figure of race relations in the United States. Even if it were sheer serendipitous chance that put one more textural layer onto a palimpsest of social meaning that would invariably be inferred from that name, it would be read nonetheless as such. By the time the book would go to press the world, thanks to the endless replays of the home video that captured the beating of the African American motorist, the name King could not help but to evoke not only Dr. Martin Luther, but now Rodney as well. The court case that followed, including the controversial change of venue order that moved the trial site from Los Angeles proper to a new courtroom facility in the overwhelmingly white Simi Valley, sparked even more violence. Four LAPD officers were charged with “assault under color of authority”. Though “color of authority” in this context was intended to signify that the alleged assailant were in positions of authority derived from their status as police officers, the double meaning of the phrase could hardly be lost on the viewing public. The image of a black man lying on the ground as four white men stood over him dealing blows with police batons, kicking and pinning him down, provided a living symbol that the *color* of authority had nothing to do with the status of official duty, but the whiteness of the skin.

“[N]unca se puede estar seguro con los blancos” (18), thinks King Benedict at the very opening of El plan infinito, and surely much of the population of Los Angeles must have been thinking the same thing as the Rodney King saga played out. The irony of the phrase “under color of authority” was only intensified as the venue was moved to Simi Valley and the officers sat trial in a predominantly white area, under a white judge and with a jury made up of all white members, one was Hispanic. The fictional, World War II era, King Benedict is very aware that he is under the color of authority even as he rides in the back of a pick-up truck with a seemingly friendly family. Perhaps innocently surveying his surroundings he suddenly realizes the problematic arising from the mere hint of the transgression of racial and gender boundaries. “Llevaba abiertos los primeros botones de la blusa, gotas de sudor mojaban su escote y descendían como un lento hilo por la hendidura entre los senos. [...] Desvió los ojos, temeroso de ser sorprendido y que ella interpretara mal su curiosidad, hasta entonces esas personas habían sido amables, demasiado amables, pensó, pero nunca se puede estar seguro con los blancos” (18). King’s doubt is not unfounded, a history of race relations in the United States shows that the mistake of a black man looking at a white woman the wrong way often brought deadly consequences.

When the charges of “assault under the color of authority” were dropped on three of the four defendants of the Rodney King case in 1991 it was met with a violent outburst that highlighted racial tensions in one of the United States most progressive states. How much these events colored Allende’s presentation of El plan infinito would only be speculation without delving deeply into the mind of the author. However, reading the book in the early 1990’s one would be hard pressed not to have the violent events

associated with the Rodney King case as well as the violent acts perpetrated in the riots and at the same time the association of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. being channeled through the figure of an African-American named King appearing in the first pages of El plan infinito.

Though the dramatic events of 1991 may have colored the writing and definitely the reading of El plan infinito they certainly cannot be given credit for its inspiration. It is based on the life of her second husband William C. Gordon. With the rapid approach of the Columbus quincentennial, and the growing sense of conflict that this brought, Allende must have felt that this was the perfect time to tell the story. El plan infinito traces the life of Gregory Reeves from the open and anonymous desert southwest of the United States of his earliest memories, to his childhood in an all-Hispanic neighborhood of Los Angeles and finally to his adult years in Berkeley and San Francisco. Following this path, the reader is confronted with Greg's perennial alienation as he moves from one locale to the next without ever achieving a real sense of community. It is one of the purposeful refrains of the novel that Greg would "feel alone in the world" or "not feel right in his own skin". However, "skin" here should be extended to a more literal sense in addition to the figurative use. It is precisely his skin, its pigment, which is the cause of so much of his alienation. Though he is obviously not of mestizo Hispanic descent like the Mexican Americans of the barrio in which he spends his formative years, neither does he ever feel at one with white America that predominates outside of this enclosure. As he moves from one center of narration to the next, race and culture are issues that rise to the fore and de-naturalize his position. This section maps out the racial-cultural boundaries that Greg confronts as he moves through life.

In El plan infinito, race is highlighted in its function as a border that divides the upper classes from the lower classes and divides the lower class on itself. Following from Frederick Jameson's argument in The Political Unconscious, we find that the individual/psychological level of the text extends itself to an allegorical reading at the social/political level, so that the story of Gregory Reeves is a socially symbolic narrative: the story of Reeves is at the same time the story of the United States. I argue that Allende performs a series of "mediations" whereby the racial divides and the pursuant hierarchical relationships that surround the figure of Gregory Reeves are a metonymic figuration of the relation of a White mainstream America to the marginalized racially ethnic minorities. Her scheme highlights the fallacy of the melting pot theory and calls into question one of the universal tenets of the American Dream—that if you work hard, no matter whom you are, you will be rewarded equitably. Olga reiterates this when she tells Greg that "vivía en la tierra de las oportunidades y si no las aprovechaba era un imbécil sin remedio" (90). Allende's discourse normalizes whiteness and corrals all whites into the mainstream normative culture and into the ruling class. In this way Allende brings forward her own version of a melting pot and the American Dream, a white melting pot, a dream where race determines inclusion and exclusion. The second order mediation extends beyond national borders and symbolically relates the hierarchical relationship of the center to periphery within the United States to the relationship of the United States to the Third World: the color of authority on the world stage. This is where Allende breaks ranks with the tradition in Spanish American literature. Instead of merely creating an American other against which previous Latin American writers had

developed a common identity, an attempt to stave off the absorption of the disparate political entities of post-Independence Spanish America, Allende looks beyond “Latin” America and beyond the Americas. Her marginalized figures conspicuously represent a range of otherwise-than-modern representatives with El plan infinito bringing together a cast literally amassed from every inhabited continent. But precisely because of this global perspective, the defense of the otherwise-than-modern, her critiques would more accurately be aimed at modernity or non-Western-ness itself as a historical development rather than the United States as a geo-political or cultural entity. What is clear though, is that if the battle is to be carried out against a decadent modernity, America, it would seem, is still the site of unfettered modernity par excellence.

Allende employs her own form of a melting pot in her portrayal of white Americans. In El plan infinito uniformity of mainstream culture is perceived across a spectrum of analytical domains. We see whiteness constituted in the ways that whites love, in both familial and romantic relationships; we detect whiteness in the goals that whites set for themselves and the methods they employ to achieve them; finally, we sense whiteness in overt cultural expression—what may be understood to be various emanations of a culture of modernity. Each of these domains is highlighted by Greg’s feelings of discomfort on the one hand and contrasting, mostly positive, examples of Black, and more often, Hispanic cultural non-whiteness on the other. This is quite the opposite phenomenon from the one that one frequently encounters in postcolonial criticism of 19th century literature where normative whiteness and modernity are silent partners in a bourgeois imperialist ideology that is teased out by the critic through the ways in which the colonized subjects are presented in the texts. In El plan infinito,

Allende uses non-white culture as the standard against which white America is constituted. The task of the critic is to bring these hidden structures to the fore. It is my conclusion that the hidden structures in Allende are already postcolonial and counter-hegemonic—structures quite different from those of 19th century bourgeois novelists.

Love American Style: Race, Modernity, Maternity

The overall representation of white America in El plan infinito is strongly affected by the kinds of relationships that the characters maintain or seek out. These include familial as well as romantic associations. The most central of these are Greg's relationship to his mother Nora, his first wife Samantha and his second wife Shanon. It is around these relationships and the presentation of each of these white women that the mostly negative view of love American-style is based. Other figures, such as Imaculada Morales, Carmen Morales/Tamar and Bel Benedict serve as examples of clear alternatives to the former examples. This second group of women is united by the fact that they are racially distinct from the first group. Imaculada is Hispanic American, Bel Benedict is African American and Carmen/Tamar is of Hispanic American origin but undergoes an important personal transformation with regard to her identity.

Perhaps the most important difference between these two groups of women is in the role of mother. In fact, one would have a good case for asserting that El plan infinito is about the ways that different women have of motherhood and the results that this has on both the individual/psychological level as well as the social level. Allende was not alone in pointing up the racial and class divide regarding mother work in the early 1990s. According to American sociologist Patricia Hill Collins, feminist theorizing about motherhood was split into two camps. One group studied motherhood from a universalist

decontextualized perspective and the other argued that historically specific categories such as race and class made significant differences in the experiences of mothers. In “Shifting the Center: Race, Class and Feminist Theorizing about Motherhood”, Collins makes the case for the recognition of important differences that racially ethnic mothers encounter as compared to their white middle-class counterparts. Collins argues that:

[m]otherhood occurs in specific historical contexts framed by interlocking structures of race, class, and gender, contexts where the sons of white mothers have “every opportunity and protection,” and the “colored” daughters and sons of racial ethnic mothers “know not their fate.” Racial domination and economic exploitation profoundly shape the mothering context not only for racial ethnic women in the United States but for all women. (56)

It does not take much more than a cursory look at Allende’s narrative to conclude that she would strongly agree with this statement from Collins. In El plan infinito, the division that separates those mothers who take an active role in the nurturing of children and those that do not is a division of race and class. Though intuition might tell us that those in the privileged position would be afforded more time to nurture their offspring, Allende paints a completely different picture: it is the racial ethnic women who are the nurturers not the white women. Perhaps due to the lack of basic survival stressors, the assurance that their offspring will survive, the struggles of women of the dominant cultural group are played out in other arenas. Collins’ critique is aimed at feminist analysis of motherhood and the tendency within the field to ignore differences of race and class. Many of her questions and suggestions provide an interesting point of comparison

to the fictional text, written by a feminist, that is greatly involved with its own comparisons and contrasts between mothers of the privileged group and racially ethnic mothers.

Collins finds that “much feminist theorizing about motherhood assumes that male domination in the political economy and the household is the driving force in family life and that understanding the struggle for individual autonomy in the face of such domination is central to understanding motherhood” (57). She goes on to elucidate this point further:

The struggle for individual autonomy in the face of a controlling, oppressive “public” society or the father as patriarch constitutes the main human enterprise. Successful adult males achieve this autonomy. Women, children, and less successful males—namely, those who are working class or from racial ethnic groups—are seen as dependent persons, as less autonomous, and therefore as fitting objects for elite male domination. Within the nuclear family, this struggle for autonomy takes the form of increasing opposition to the mother, the individual responsible for socializing children by these guiding principles. (58)

This is the mainstream feminist view that Collins is critiquing. While the inclusion of historical and social context, namely race and class, may change the thrust of investigation of motherhood, this mainstream analysis does strike a chord with the presentation of the white mothers in El plan infinito. The struggles of each of these mothers, Nora, Samantha and Shanon, radiate around the struggle for individual

autonomy against one sort of social oppression or another. Through these white mothers we see the clash between modernity and maternity.

Nora Reeves is the most interesting and most sympathetic of the first group of women. We are introduced to her in the first pages as the family is traveling by pickup truck throughout the Southwest United States in support of Charles Reeves, family patriarch and Master Functionary of the Infinite Plan. The Infinite Plan is a corpus of spiritual thought based loosely on the Christian Bible, Nora's understanding of the Bahai faith and as we are told, issues of Reader's Digest. We learn that she is a Russian immigrant of Jewish decent, well educated, a teacher, a lover of opera and a convert to the Bahai faith. While Gregory's father Charles represents the practical, action and body, Nora is all morals, art, thought and spirit. There are two features of Nora's character which play a significant role in the life of Gregory: her Bahai faith, which held firm in the necessity for tolerance of all races and all religions, the unity of humankind and an eternal search for the Truth; and her complete submission to Charles Reeves, her introversion and gradual withdrawal. This last word, withdrawal, not only sums up her personal mental state, but, and very applicable to the current topic, also a key facet of her relationship with her son Gregory.

The link to feminist theory on motherhood is apparent. Nora's struggle for individual autonomy is the key feature of her personality, and its failure leads to direct detrimental effects for herself and her son. The hopes she harbors of human harmony are dashed by the horrors of World War II and her egalitarian beliefs are co-opted and reinterpreted by her husband. Losing faith, she fails to maintain a struggle for autonomy in the public or private family spheres. The only remaining struggle for individuality goes

on in an interior world of withdrawal. Nora withholds her affection from Gregory, a fact that surely contributes to his insecurities. One passage is especially illustrative of this. After being arrested as a boy for stealing from an army surplus store, an indignant Nora, feeling that she cannot raise her son correctly, is compelled to have a farming family adopt Gregory. The young man escapes the very same night.

Caminó toda la noche y temprano en la mañana se presentó ante la puerta de su casa extenuado. Oliver [the family dog] lo recibió con ruidosa alegría y Nora Reeves apareció en el umbral, tomó el atado de ropa de su hijo y estiró la otra mano para hacerle una caricia, pero el gesto se detuvo en el aire.

--Trata de crecer pronto—fue todo lo que dijo.

Esa tarde a Gregory se le ocurrió torear al tren. (79)

The final line of this passage indicates the degree to which this reception upsets Gregory. Allende places this not necessarily related fact at the climactic position of the sequence to suggest, quite elegantly, that Gregory was so distraught by his mother's cool "welcome" that was willing to die if that was his fate. In this passage we also see a case of juxtaposition that brings Nora Reeves' position into sharper relief. The "noisy happiness" with which the family pet receives Gregory stands in stark contrast to the silent resignation with which his mother greets him after something of a romantic/heroic endeavor. Nora Reeves importance to the story of El plan infinito lies in what she does not do. Here this is emphasized, ironically, by her actions. She "reached out with her hand to caress him, but the gesture was stopped in mid air". It is as if her natural reaction as a mother, like the natural reaction of the family dog: to bark and pant, was overcome at

the last moment by some sort of superimposed, analytical belief structure that pulled back the hand. The grammatical structure further reinforces this idea. The passive voice in “el gesto se detuvo” makes it seem as if Nora, the mother, is not directly in control of this action. This conflict, between the natural and the consciously imposed, is part of a larger pattern that spans many of the themes of this novel. Here it is the mother’s affection for her son, but there are many other instances of the same phenomenon. For the present topic the importance of this episode cannot be overestimated: Nora Reeves literally and figuratively, physically and emotionally, withdraws her affection from her son.

What we find in the figure of Nora Reeves is all the potential to be a great mother; a complementary force against the figure of the father, she possesses intelligence, spirituality, a love of the arts and a strong egalitarian belief system. In her we also find the symbolic representation of culture and essential components of the American foundational myths: equality, inclusivity and morality. But, for Allende, Nora is only a figure of what America could have been and not what it had become. There are only two choices for the woman in this scheme: relegate oneself to a secondary, servile position to the male, husband, father, representing here the dominant mainstream culture (practicality, competition, violence) or internalize the “non-feminine” values of modern culture in an attempt to remain vital to this culture. It is the role of the mother to pass on culture, starting with the “mother tongue”. But Nora’s descendants (in maternity), represented here by Samantha and Shanon have received the tradition of her withdrawal and left the culture tipped to the side of the father, hierarchy, competition and practicality. The repression of the “feminine” essence, by the end of the novel, has led to

the creation of monstrous children, themselves figures for the malformed and deficient American culture.

The withdrawal of affection for her son by Nora is not an isolated incident; in fact, it is the predominant pattern of their relationship. Nora is deeply traumatized by the horrors of World War II—the mechanized slaughter of Jewish Europeans by Nazi Germany as well as the cool, rational, premeditated nuclear destruction, by the United States, of two Japanese cities and their inhabitants. Thereafter, Nora turns inward taking a completely passive role. Gregory reinforces the essentiality of this withdrawal as he sums up the character of his mother. The narrator explains that despite his best efforts he could not get through to her. “[I]ntentó mil veces derribar los muros que aislaban a su madre y tocar sus sentimientos, pero como nunca lo consiguió decidió que en su interior no había nada, estaba vacía y era incapaz de amar a nadie con certeza, a lo más manifestaba una imprecisa simpatía por la humanidad en general” (29). But at the same time that we entertain Gregory’s claims of intent to normalize mother-son relations, we also know that he harbored anger for his mother and that he did not relinquish it until after her death. Gregory was caught stealing a pencil from a store by his mother. The punishment, burning his palm with a match, was carried out by his father as she looked on with her “mirada impasible” (30). Although it was his father that burned his hand, his hate was projected only onto his mother.

Perhaps no other episode underscores the withdrawal of motherly affection by Nora as that which presents Gregory’s return home from the war in Vietnam. When he appears on his mother’s doorstep:

Nora Reeves lo recibió con naturalidad, como si lo hubiera visto el día anterior, le ofreció una taza de té y le contó las noticias del barrio y de su padre, que seguía comunicándose con ella todas las semanas para mantenerla informada sobre la marcha del *Plan Infinito*. No se refirió a la Guerra y por primera vez Gregory comparó las semejanzas entre Samantha y su madre, la misma frialdad, indolencia y cortesía, idéntica determinación para ignorar la realidad, aunque para su madre esto último había sido más difícil porque le había tocado una existencia mucho más dura. En el caso de Nora Reeves no bastaba la indiferencia, se requería una voluntad muy firme para que los problemas no la rozaran. (209)

We would presently like to draw attention to the placement and subsequent qualification of “naturally”, and the other descriptors used to describe his mother. This passage is sandwiched between the visit to his now ex-wife Samantha and his daughter Margaret, who had given him a lukewarm welcome, and a passage detailing his visit to the Morales house. As the above quotation demonstrates, Allende does not allow the reader to independently make comparisons between Gregory Reeves’ mother and wife, which are readily obvious given the proximity of the two episodes within the text; rather she makes the comparison directly. She really wants to make the point clear: there is a direct connection between these two women. Like his mother, Samantha is very capable of a cold courtesy and able to maintain a shield that protects her fantasy world from any ugly realities. “Fiel a sí misma, pretendía ignorar la Guerra, el divorcio, el rompimiento de su familia y todo aquello que pudiera alterar su horario de tenis. Gregory pensó con cierto alivio que su mujer era una página en blanco y no tendría remordimientos en empezar

otra vida sin ella,” reports the narrator. “Blank page” or “white page”, both would be permissible translations from the Spanish. Although the literal context leaves no doubt that the common understanding would be “blank page” we should not ignore the fact that in Spanish there is a concrete linguistic link between the concepts of whiteness and blankness. Neither can we help but detect a pattern, this time one that is not commented on directly by the narrator, that the characteristics of the two white women establish a pattern of being simultaneously white and blank—empty, artificial and cold while the women of color are consistently portrayed as creative, natural, emotional and affectionate. Interestingly, the referents of these adjectives do not diverge much from those of the stream of descriptors that found its bed surrounding the subjects of colonization in the 19th century and earlier.

The colonial order is here turned on its head with the women of color, here Hispano- and African-Americans occupying the superior position in the binary hierarchy and with the Euro-American women being relegated to the inferior negative position. The colonial civility, white man’s burden and the apparently superior modern technologies are redressed here as mere empty, sterile forms: “páginas en blanco”. Thought regarding humankind’s position in relation to nature that followed directly from the Enlightenment and predominated in the 19th century is clearly linked to the hierarchical system and so to the classification of the colonized subjects. Man stood outside of and above nature, man acted on nature; he conquered and controlled nature. It was in the colonizer’s interest then to believe that the colonized were somehow less than human, that they stood, like animals, inside of the domain of nature, and then should naturally be acted upon via a vertical hierarchy and not through a horizontal system of interaction. The constitution of

whiteness in El plan infinito repositions these cold empty forms at the bottom of the hierarchy and elevates the comportment of the Hispanic and African Americans to that of the normative. But the really interesting part of this is that Allende accepts the categories and the associations themselves just as they are received from colonial discourse. What might prove more innovative would be an investigation of the categories themselves.

Gregory Reeves' return home is presented in a tripartite form that juxtaposes the treatment of his wife and his mother towards him on his return from war in Vietnam against the treatment that he receives from Imaculada Morales and her husband Pedro. The natural effect of the three episodes in quick succession is reinforced by the opening line of the third segment. Allende hammers home, "[l]os Morales le dieron el recibimiento que nadie le había dado hasta ese momento, lo abrazaron por varios minutos, llorando" (209). The Moraleses are everything that Nora Reeves and Samantha are not. Where the white women are emotionless and formal the Hispanics are full of emotion, warm and inviting. They touch and cry while the others are distant and cool. "Retiraron la funda de plástico de uno de los sillones y allí lo instalaron para interrogarlo en detalle sobre la guerra." (210). The plastic covering engages the tactile sense and the feeling of human connection is reinforced as they peel off the literal and figurative protective covers and open themselves up to the horrors of the war, including the death of their own son. In contrast to this intimacy, Samantha and Nora hide behind masks of courtesy and indifference. True to the archetypal Good Mother that Mrs. Morales surely represents, reinforced by the direct connection to the Virgin Mary by her name, Imaculada brings a moment of catharsis to Gregory with a simple phrase: "Al menos tú estás de vuelta" (210 emphasis mine). The narrator relates that "Gregory se sintió

perdonado de toda culpa, redimido de la angustia, a salvo de sus peores recuerdos y una oleada de agradecimiento lo sacudió entero” (210).

To complete the reception and to further distinguish them from Samantha, who had taken the initiative to reserve a hotel room for Gregory so as to facilitate the brevity of interaction, the Moraleses lodge him in their son’s room. Gregory discovers writings in the night stand, rounding out the character of Juan José. Inside the barrio, inside the home, inside the room, inside the drawer, inside the notebook, this warrior was also the poet. At the center of this house there was love, there was a musical heart.

All of these contrasts serve to draw a gap between the moral quality of the various Americas divided by race and class. The Morales, true to their name, have no problem with the ugly details of the war in Vietnam, victims of their own colonization and ghettoization, numbed to the violence, they neither feel responsibility nor guilt, for they receive no benefits of United States foreign policy cum imperialism and are cut off from real political influence to guide it. Issues of class are teased out further in the contrast between Nora and Samantha. Nora must employ all of her will to maintain tranquility. She must ignore the war out of guilt for her acquiescence to a patriarchal order destined to violence and to avoid further anguish of the type suffered after World War II--which lead directly to her initial withdrawal. Samantha, unlike Nora is “naturally” disinterested, which of course is an inversion of her actual social position. Of these figures, she is the only one in a social position that would benefit from United States policy, and therefore must remain ignorant of it. To aid in this she has her distractions, tennis and her cats.

Bel Benedict provides another example of maternal dedication that pushes the maternity of white America further down the scale: “No soy persona quisquillosa, tengo

mis prioridades muy claras, lo primero siempre fue dar de comer a mi hijo ¿qué me importaba acostarme con un hombre? Diez o veinte minutos y ya está” (313). Bel Benedict is a prime example of the racial ethnic mother as described by Patricia Hill Collins. Hers is not a quest for personal autonomy and development of her individual self. She is involved in a much more basic struggle. Collins explains one of the fundamental differences between the mother work for women of color and mainstream white mothers:

Physical survival is assumed for children who are white and middle class. Thus, examining their psychic and emotional well-being and that of their mothers appears rational. The children of women of color, many of whom are “physically starving,” have no such assurances. Racial ethnic children’s lives have long been held in low regard. [...] Approximately one-third of Hispanic children and one-half of African-American children who survive infancy live in poverty. (61)

This scheme laid out by Collins does find interesting parallels in Allende’s narrative. For Bel is fully concentrated on basic survival. As can be seen in the above excerpt of dialogue, the inner workings of Bel’s mind, her emotional wellbeing, are essentially negated. It is simply a question of quickly forgetting. In line with Collins research, much narrative space is given to the state of mind of Nora Reeves, Samantha and Shanon and their varying detachment from reality. For the African-American woman, the effort is focused on putting food on the table.

Bel was an African American granddaughter of a slave making a living anyway she could. Bel worked her way out west in search of her American Dream, finally

achieving maximum success as the servant of millionaires. Her beauty is a feature repeatedly alluded to and used to demonstrate the oppressive racial environment that exists in the United States. Timothy Duane tells her that she should be a movie star not his mother's maid. Gregory Reeves thinks to himself that "en su juventud debió ser una beldad y si le hubiera tocado nacer en otra época o en otra circunstancia tal vez se habría casado con un magnate poderoso que llevaría del brazo a esa pantera oscura sin que nadie se atreviera a objetar su raza" (312). A key flashback takes place on a Texas cotton plantation where Bel is happy to find work picking cotton along with an army of Latino braceros, the historical inheritors of the labor of the former slaves. Though seemingly the ideal boss that paid well and went to church every Sunday, he was a racist and sexual deviant only aroused when performing violent acts on his partners. Bel relates to Gregory Reeves how her son King, hearing her yelps, rushed to her defense only to be knocked unconscious by the rancher. "Vi a mi muchacho aturdido en el suelo y no tuve que pensarlo, cogí el bate de béisbol y le di al tipo en la cabeza. Fue un solo golpe con toda el alma, y lo maté" (313).

For mainstream American women, there is no perceived relation between the health of their offspring and the endurance of American culture. Collins suggests that this is precisely the case for racial ethnic women. She claims that, "[s]truggles to foster the survival of Native American, Latino, Asian-American, and African-American families and communities by ensuring the survival of children are a fundamental dimension of racial ethnic women's motherwork" (61). There is a perceived direct link between the survival of the children and the survival of the group and hence the culture, a culture that is consistently under attack from the outside. Collins finds that the mother fighting for the

physical survival of her children is a predominant pattern in African-American women's fiction. As the above discussion shows Allende taps into this narrative tradition in El plan infinito with the story of Bel Benedict. She implies that beyond the veneer of democracy, respectable authority and a religiosity in America, there is a darker side of abusive, unseemly practices that are frozen in a race based master-slave relationship. The case is not so straight forward with the other racial ethnic figures in the novel. Where Collins relies on testimonials of migrant agricultural workers to support her theses, in dealing with Latinos, Allende focuses on the Morales family, a Mexican-American family living with some security in a Los Angeles barrio. For Greg Reeves, the principal protagonist of the novel, the Morales represent the ideal family. They were the family that supported him in ways his own parents did not. It was more than just basic survival; it was the warm embrace of familial affection and cultural richness, with the music and food being of particular importance. With the Mexican-Americans in the novel it is not so much a question of physical survival of the children, but the emphasis on the maintenance of their culture remains. Crises of identity do assault both Juan José and his sister Carmen—even Pedro Morales takes the time to explore alternate religion. In Juan José and Carmen the crisis is between maintaining their cultural heritage and exploring their intelligence and ambition. While the barrio, the racial division, does help maintain the culture, it also limits the degree to which intelligence and talent can be exploited. Ambition in this context translates to frustration. The question is whether or not this is a quality that is universally human or whether it has been transmitted by the mainstream American culture. According to Carmen/Tamar the concept of success itself is an American invention. While figures like Bel Benedict illustrate that the threat of starvation tends to

focus one on the bare necessities, the Morales family shows how quickly a certain degree of security opens up more room to explore “psychic and emotional well-being”.

Though the Morales family may be the site of an identity conflict in the person of Carmen, we are shown that she is not so far removed from basic realities to neglect the future generation. Carmen provides yet another illustration of the Protective Mother with her adopted son Dai. Very closely resembling the violent episode of Bel Benedict and the rancher, a shopkeeper grabs the young boy by the neck and begins to strike him. Before he could land the second blow, “una fiera brava le cayó encima, toda zarpas, gruñendo y lanzando mordiscos de perra rabiosa [...] y antes que nadie pudiera preverlo empuñaba uno de los cuchillos curvos desenvainado” (275). The rabid beast is of course Carmen, following the metaphoric imagery, doing what any mother in the animal kingdom would naturally do in the same position: protecting her young. In both cases there is not time for contemplation, the mothers do not wait to see what might happen, they react immediately. This is a knee-jerk, instinctive, emotional reaction.

However, as has been pointed out above, this natural instinct does not extend to all of the mothers in *El plan infinito*. We have already noted the episode where Nora Reeves stares blankly as her son Gregory’s hand is burned by his father. Her behavior is in total contrast. Samantha, the first wife of Gregory Reeves offers another divergent view of maternity. From the very beginning she is a reluctant mother to say the least. The narrator tells much more: “Cuando Samantha descubrió que estaba embarazada se desmoralizó por completo. Sintió que su cuerpo bronceado y sin un gramo de grasa, se había convertido en un asqueroso recipiente donde crecía un ávido guarisapo imposible de reconocer como algo suyo” (144). She clearly is not the model of protective mother.

She takes to working out using the most violent movements that she can think of with the “inconsciente esperanza de librarse de aquella perniciosa servidumbre” (144). Feeling her personal autonomy threatened by the role that she will be forced to play she launches a tirade against Gregory: “Es culpa tuya, solo culpa tuya, [...] yo no quiero hijos, [...] eres tú quien habla todo el tiempo de formar una familia, mira qué ideas se te ocurren” (144). The situation does not improve at all after the birth of their daughter. The narrator’s tropes concerning “nature” continue but this time the woman is not transformed into a protective animal, but an impersonal and destructive cyclone. And from the point of view of the mother, for the second time the baby is presented as a less than cuddly lower animal form.

Para Margaret Ernst el viento del desastre comenzó a soplar el mismo día de su nacimiento, cuando su aristocrática madre la puso en manos de una enfermera y se desentendió de ella para siempre, y se convirtió en un huracán que la lanzó fuera de la realidad al momento de dar a luz a su hija. Mucho más tarde confesaría a su analista con la mayor sinceridad que esa criatura diminuta respirando con dificultad dentro de una caja de vidrio, solo le inspiraba rechazo. Secretamente agradeció no tener leche para amamantarla y tal vez en lo más profundo de su corazón deseó que desapareciera para no verse obligada a cargarla en brazos. [...] Tampoco se resignó a la idea de que estaba unida a ese gusano por ineludibles responsabilidades. (146)

The overwhelmingly destructive forces of nature have often been evoked in prose and poetry. Here the North American woman, the bad mother and by extension American

culture, takes the place of sublime nature and strikes a fitting metaphor as the hurricane itself. It is essentially non-substantive, it is air and vapor in motion, detached from any concrete terrestrial fixity, its formation is mysterious, its trajectory cruelly whimsical, and like Samantha, it quickly dissipates into oblivion. While these attributes may well fit with the character of Samantha and her relationship to reality, her role as a mother is symbolized by the emptiness of the hurricane. It is the hole at the center, the eye of the storm that represents the condition of Samantha. It is the relationship with her body and her pregnancy that the reader's view of Samantha is definitively shaped. She lacks what any natural mother possesses automatically, nourishment. She has no heart, no mother's milk, she, like Carpentier's modern women in Los pasos perdidos, is an empty form.

As this passage points up, there is a strong connection in the universe of the implied author with giving birth and reality. The fact that Samantha spins "out of the real world" at precisely this moment reinforces the link with the life-giving function of the mother and the life-giving function of the Earth. In this light we must view Allende's privileging the importance of Motherhood as a challenge to a Patriarchal social system that reaches back toward the ancient goddess cults.

The animal motif is continued with reference to nurturing.

Los padres tomaron un curso de estimulación precoz donde aprendieron a acariciar a su hija, hablarle en gorgojeos, señalarle poco a poco el mundo circundante y otras elementales destrezas que cualquier miserable orangután nace sabiendo y que ellos tuvieron que aprender con un manual de instrucciones. (151)

Shanon, Gregory Reeves' second wife, also demonstrates characteristics of the Bad Mother, for example, she smokes and drinks after realizing that she is pregnant, but she is mainly an example of the heartless lover and the extreme individualist. She uses Greg as a source of money, she cannot bring herself to work, she cannot bear the monogamy of marriage, her natural state is that of the flirt. We notice the contrast between sensuality and flirtatiousness: one has substance while the other is ephemeral and fleeting.

All of these examples draw a clear pattern: the white American women lack the nurturing instincts that are essential to raising children. They are "páginas en blanco," at the same time white and blank or empty. They are reluctant, cold and detached parents who are only marginally involved in their children's lives. Nora, Samantha and Shannon are all consistently described as being outside of reality. The result is sons and daughters that are insecure and prone to dangerous tendencies. Margaret, Samantha's daughter with Gregory Reeves, is the emblematic figure of this problem. Samantha's laissez-faire approach to childrearing, combined with Gregory's workaholicism, sets Margaret on an early path to life as a drug addicted, disease ridden prostitute. Gregory Reeves is ever in search of love that he cannot find. Due to his mother's indifference, and the solace that he found by escaping into Hollywood features as a child, his thirst for love could not be quenched by the women that he chooses, the same fair-skinned blonde types that the heroes always chose in the movies. Each of these mothers has her own distinct back story that might help explain their behavior. At this psychological level we can infer that, her father's infidelity, the mother's solitary existence and subsequent suicide determined Samantha's beliefs about youth, her body and bringing life into the world. In Nora's case

we are told explicitly that her fading into unreality was a direct and prolonged effect of her loss of faith in humanity due to the atrocities of World War II. Shanon's character (again one would be forced into inference) was probably shaped by her father's alcoholism, his physical abuse of her mother and her mother's fixation on the possibility of Shanon marrying a rich man.

Following from feminist theory about motherhood as described by Patricia Hill Collins, we can see that these white women "enjoy the racial privilege that allows them to see themselves primarily as individuals in search of personal autonomy instead of members of racial ethnic groups struggling for power" (60). While racially ethnic women may, as the case of Bel Benedict exemplifies, be engaged in basic survival, the women of the dominant racial group, especially Samantha and Shanon, take the physical survival of their children for granted and the focus on their individual issues becomes sharpened to the extent that their role as mother is drastically diminished. In fact, the individualism of these women is so exaggerated that it comes to the point of rejection of motherhood altogether and expectations of sexual gratification that put the stability of the family itself at risk. Their transgression of the patriarchal system with its bourgeois values of early modernity is extreme to the point that it endangers the survival of the children and by extension that of the cultural group as a whole. For Allende, this figures forth an American hypermodernity/hypomaternity caught in a vicious cycle of self-destruction. Ironically, it is the members of the racially ethnic groups, those that survive on the margins of the dominant group, those that are denigrated by the dominant group, which come to their rescue and help insure the survival of those that oppress them.

Glossing Hybrid Solutions

The racial divide indicated by the study of maternity signals a divide between human life based on survival through a system of protection and mutual nurturing by way of love and familial support, exemplified by the Benedicts and the Morales, and on the other hand, as exemplified by Samantha, Shanon and Timothy Duane, a life removed not only from this intimate emotional support network, but also removed from the daily struggle to survive itself. The imagery employed by Allende suggests that this first group lives a real life while the latter group lives in an artificial/unreal world. The second group, which represents mainstream America, possess sufficient wealth to keep the basic necessities of life at a distance, there is no threat that food will not be available to eat or that the rent payment will not be met. Without the external threats, it follows, the family bonds become less important and eventually atrophy. The one connection that remains is the need of money, itself only a symbol of wealth, in turn only the representation of stored labor. Everywhere in El plan infinito the choice is made for the guarantee of money over the choice for love. If the familial bonds have withered and the instinct to nurture has been lost, these have been replaced by an instinct to strategize for the maintenance of wealth. This has disastrous consequences for the family and extreme removal from the real, as in the case of Margaret's—she substitutes drugs for food and love and prostitution for love and marriage—is the end of the line. She is completely removed from the circle of life; infection and abuse have left her barren, unable to reproduce the next generation.

On a broader allegorical reading we must see this as indicative that mainstream America, suffering from excesses of particular facets of modernity—while repressing

others, is on a collision course with extinction, a catastrophic crash of the status quo brought on by a lack of real-world values, a solidly rooted culture incestuously reproducing its worst qualities.

The solution to the defects of incest of course is exogamy, ending the practice of cultural exclusion. It can hardly be missed that all of the solutions in the book are provided by immigrants, ethnic minorities like the Morales and exemplars of hybridity like Mike Tong, Tina Feinbech and Ming O'Brien. Daisy, the nanny who will reform the monster that has become David, Gregory's son by Shanon, is an important allegorical figure as well. An immigrant from the Dominican Republic and a black Hispanic, she links the two ethnicities that have been contrasted with mainstream America throughout the novel. Her simple views on discipline and nurturing in combination with modern assistance like consultation with child behavior specialists have success in reforming the monster in the making. There is Carmen, or Tamara as she is self styled, whose success is dependent upon a transformation. She takes a protracted path outside of the country, slowly learning secrets from authentic indigenous figures, borrowing something from this culture, something else from another, eventually changing her name and perhaps more relevantly, her ethnicity before she is accepted. As a Mexican girl in America, she probably would not be successful, but as a gypsy she has a chance. Carmen is the most important symbol of real fulfilling authentic success. Hers is a story of the American Dream come true, only, because of cultural realities, she had to first escape from America to make it come true.

Though the development of Gregory Reeves is the primary focus of the novel, El plan infinito possesses another major focus in the character arc of Carmen Morales. Her

story provides a parallel and a point of comparison with that of Gregory Reeves. Her journey from the self-ashamed daughter of a working class barrio family to a world renowned jewelry and fashion designer contrasts with Gregory Reeves' career path as a Bay Area lawyer. Of course, in the universe of the novel, the successes and failures of both of these figures are wrapped up in issues of gender, race and culture. Life's vicissitudes are not so many individual episodes of chance, and though individual human agency is certainly involved, the choices that each of the pair make are heavily conditioned, if not determined, by their respective cultural positions.

From their first meeting as children, the racial complements or difference of Gregory and Carmen, are indicated: "Gregory era alto, delgado, muy rubio, y ella pequeña, rechoncha, color azúcar dorada" (50). But the two would become quick friends, and as the narrator is wont to do, gives the reader the inside scoop on what the future will bring for them: "[u]na mirada les bastó para establecer la complicidad que habría de durarles toda la vida" (50). Though these racial others would become lifelong friends and confidants, with his entrance into a Mexican barrio of Los Angeles, Gregory was quickly made aware, not only of the "tremendas barreras raciales" (50), but also of the violence which often accompanied it. It is Carmen's role to show him how to recognize those barriers and to survive in the barrio. Outside of the barrio it is Gregory who helps Carmen. Faced with the significance of difference, inside and outside of the barrio, both Gregory and Carmen undergo crises of racial identity. The greater part of El plan infinito is centered on the ways that the crisis develops in each of the characters as they move across invisible borders.

Because of his fair skin, blue eyes and blond hair, Gregory Reeves grows up subjected to regular bullying from the other kids in the barrio. He quickly comes to see his physical features as a liability and becomes envious of the darker features that the others possess. He lives the majority of his childhood with that racial envy. His highschool years are a time of change. It is only after he challenges Martínez, a local tough, to a mortal duel with the train that Greg wins, that he begins to gain confidence: “por primera vez en años se sintió bien en su piel, ya no deseaba ser moreno como los demás del barrio, empezaba a evaluar las ventajas de no serlo” (101). Still, Gregory remains a man in crisis. His struggles with identity are highlighted by way of his relationship with his friend Cyrus. The older elevator operator and closet communist is bent on providing Gregory with the political education to complement the spiritual teachings of his mother’s universalistic Bahai faith and his experience growing up in the oppressed barrio. It is when Cyrus spurs him to take a leadership role in highschool politics as preparation for a life as a legal reformer, that Gregory’s culturally fuzzy position is spotlighted. Gregory snaps back at his mentor: “Estas loco, Cyrus, soy el más pobre de la clase y hablo inglés como un chicano. ¿Quién votará por mí? No soy gringo ni latino, no represento a nadie” (103). But Cyrus sees the advantages of this in-betweenness and convinces him of it. In fact, it is Gregory’s status of not being “white” and not being “Latin” that allows him to bridge the two cultures. It is at this point in the text that we have the foreshadowing of the solution and problem that are implied in the second half of the novel. The problem is social injustice predicated upon and fossilized in racial and cultural difference along with the glaring decay of American society. The solution is cultural and racial hybridization and a new commitment to nurturing human relationships.

The microcosm is highschool politics, the macrocosm is America. Greg, being neither “gringo” nor “latino” is able to represent “a todos” (103). Greg is elected president of the student body and during his term meets with great success: “Ése fue el primer año sin problemas raciales en la escuela, porque alumnos y profesores trabajaron al unísono, convencidos por Reeves de que navegaban en el mismo bote y a nadie le convenía remar en direcciones contrarias” (103).

At the same time Carmen Morales undergoes an identity crisis of her own. Exposed to the ostentatious wealth outside of the barrio and the class divisions in highschool, both of which illustrate the sharp divide between whites and Mexican Americans, Carmen grows ashamed of her skin as well: “se lamentó de sus pómulos indígenas y su color canela” (117). The real problem is that Carmen is smart, talented, a creative thinker and ambitious. She is caught in a double bind. The barrio, dominated by machismo, offers no place for her character set and America at large offers no avenue for success for someone of her race or culture. The obvious explanation of this is to be found in the ghettoization, the mistreatment in industry and the lack of access to a college education. All of this is backed up by messages being transmitted through cultural institutions like Hollywood. It is suggested that she is not the only Mexican-American who envies those outside the barrio and would trade her features for the lighter ones of her counterparts across the invisible border: “Carmen tampoco se parecía a las protagonistas de las películas para adolescentes, rubia, virtuosa y algo tonta, por quien suspiraban los muchachos y a quien intentaban inútilmente imitar las morenas y rechonchas niñas mexicanas que se decoloraban el pelo con agua oxigenada” (86).

Both Carmen and Gregory would find success, but the paths that they take to reach that success are divergent and represent the different opportunities available to each of the pair. This forced divide challenges the notion of the American Dream and the Melting Pot, that everyone will be rewarded justly for their work as well as Martin Luther King's dream that all should be judged by the merit of their character and not the color of their skin. Gregory's skin offers him advantages that Carmen has no claim to, advantages that had gone unnoticed for the majority of his childhood despite the constant indications. Gregory's fair skin, blond hair and blue eyes, while provoking the ire of his gradeschool peers, had at the same time opened many doors for him that he was seemingly unaware of. His closeness with Father Larraguibel and several business owners closely parallels the traditional association of the Church, the moneyed classes and European descent. His success as high school president was merely the first concretely recognizable advantage that his lighter skin held for him. Though bullied by most within the barrio, his physical features functioned as an all access pass in the wider world.

The advantages of white skin become very evident when he leaves Los Angeles to attend college in Berkeley. There are no Hispanic and no black students at university so this is an option that Carmen surely could not take. Though both friends possess above average intelligence and ambition, it is Gregory who is afforded a series of shortcuts through mainstream American society. He graduates from college and is accepted to law school. By virtue of this, he manages to catch the attention of an attractive young woman, just like those from the movies, tall, blonde and slender. She is the daughter of very wealthy parents, a Hollywood movie producer father and a Virginian aristocratic mother. He marries her, quickly starts a family (perhaps his personal definition of success) with

the birth of his daughter Margaret and he is hired into a prestigious law firm. Gregory is afforded the American Dream--the same one he would later lose faith in. From the poverty of his youth and armed with only his own intelligence and industry he manages to move up the rungs of society, enter into an exclusive and lucrative profession and marry into an established family. In one quick move he manages to climb from the bottom of the societal spectrum to embody the very definition of American success.

Carmen's path is a bit more tortuous. As noted above the fast-track to success taken by Gregory is denied by her darker skin. Discouraged by the lack of opportunity via the educational route, like most of the girls of the barrio, Carmen sees no point in finishing high school. Colliding with that invisible border that maintains her side, inside, in poverty and the other side, outside, in affluence she feels a prisoner of her skin. While race is the barrier to her success in white America, gender is the snag in her own culture. The heavily machista culture of the barrio requires the female to take a back seat to her male counterparts. Her primary duty is to marry, bear children and serve them and her husband. Occupations are limited by the rigid social mores based upon perceived femininity. In the barrio, the seamstress is one of the few acceptable positions for the young women, but it is not acceptable for the young Morales girl. Carmen, being creative, talented and ambitious, is caught in a two-way bind: by race outside and by gender inside.

Without a future in mainstream America and suffocated by the norms of the barrio, not sufficiently American and not sufficiently Mexican American, Carmen starts on her path to success by leaving the country. Like Campbells' archetypal hero in The Hero With a Thousand Faces, she must take a journey out of the world before she can

return transformed and empowered as a savior. Not only is Carmen's path tortuous, as mentioned above, but tortured as well. Her first move is to the outskirts of Mexico City, a sort of descent into hell, where again we find class based dividing lines:

Vivía en la tacita frontera donde termina la ciudad oficial y empieza el mundo inadmisibile de los marginales. El edificio era un pasillo angosto con dos hileras de cuartos a los lados, un par de grifos, un lavadero al centro y baños comunes al fondo, siempre tan sucios que procuraba evitarlos. Ese lugar era más violento que el ghetto donde se había criado, la gente debía por su pequeño espacio, abundaban rencores y escaseaban esperanzas, estaba en un país de pesadilla ignorado por los turistas, un laberinto terrible en torno a la hermosa ciudad fundada por los aztecas, un enorme conglomerado de viviendas míseras y calles sin pavimento y sin luz, inundadas de basura, que se extendía hacia una periferia sin término. Deambulaba entre indios humillados y mestizos indigentes, niños desnudos y perros hambrientos, mujeres dobladas por el peso de los hijos y el trabajo, hombres ociosos y resignados a la mala suerte, con las manos en las cachas de los puñales listos para defender la dignidad y la hombría eternamente amenazadas. Ya no contaba con la protección de su familia y muy pronto comprendió que allí una mujer joven y sola era como un conejo rodeado de perros perdigueros. (150)

Her neighbors are prostitutes and thugs and where violence and death are only just kept at arms length. "El machismo de su padre y sus hermanos era suave comparado con el que ahora soportaba" (150).

We must agree with Daniel P. Hunt that El plan infinito “appropriates and parodies the conventional masculine discourse of the Bildungsroman”, although we should qualify his conclusions to what that means. Hunt holds that in the Bildungsroman, “men individualize themselves by rejecting their upbringing in order to embrace a ‘higher’ culture [...], but that Allende turns this scheme so that Gregory Reeves discovers that he “must reject the cosmopolitan in favor of the communal”(Hunt 16). This last phrase is more than a little troubling because, although in the grand scheme of things, Reeves must recognize the error of his ways, it is rather exaggerated to claim that he ever rejects his modern Western education and profession. Allende is playing with the modernist aesthetic of the Bildungsroman but it is not the simple inversion that Hunt posits. More to the point, Hunt’s thesis glosses over the critical rôle that Carmen plays not only in the rehabilitation of Reeves, and thus America, but the shape of her personal narrative that offers the counterpoint to Gregory’s. If Allende employs a sort of appropriated Bildungsroman for the story of Gregory she places alongside for contrast, a romantic quest, lives-of-saints or even an alternative Bildungsroman to structure Carmen’s story.

While Carmen’s path leads out of the world to the margins within the margins of the West, Gregory takes the short-cut, in a short circuit, into the heart of the West. As Baudrillard reminds us in America, the United States was born of modernity and as Rodó points out, as the country moves westward it loses any link it had with its English heritage, with grounded tradition. The United States is pure occidentality and Allende energetically assembles signs of its excesses. Gregory Reeves’ United States is a Eurocentric world, a masculine world ruled by the sign of the pragmatic. If we cast a

glance at the masculine figures we will find a constellation of violence, economic interest and patriotism. This is evident from the very beginning of the novel, where the very different responses to the end of World War II, through the figures of Charles Reeves on the one hand and Nora Reeves on the other, are brought to the foreground. The dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki coincides with the end of Gregory Reeves happy early childhood which saw the Reeves family wandering around the American Southwest within an idyllic sort of communitarian existence. It also makes evident a split between the masculine and feminine elements. Each of Reeves' parents undergoes an extreme transformation in the wake of the news of the nuclear attacks. As has already been alluded to, Nora Reeves, is horrified by the news of the coolly planned destruction of human life that Hiroshima represents, loses faith in humanity and withdraws into an interior world, detaching herself from her family and resigning herself to perfect passivity. On the other hand, Charles Reeves jumps onto the bandwagon of blind patriotic celebration with the masses. Two forces allow him to avoid the interpretation of the same events that lead Nora to debilitation: a successful propaganda campaign to racialize the war on the Pacific front and the prospects of a more comfortable existence. These two forces are alluded to in an exchange between Nora, Charles and Olga.

By racializing the conflict with the Japanese government, the conversion was made from fighting specific military forces to fighting an entire people, a race. The extent of the effectiveness of the racialization of the war can be witnessed by the Japanese internment camps which forced American citizens of Japanese descent into wartime prisons. The enemy was not the Emperor or even the Imperial forces, and it was not to be

waged only against the avowed followers of a leader like the “Nazis” were on the European front. Only with the successful transformation of political conflict into race war could the instant destruction of civilian populations have been condoned. This circuit of masculinity, violence, economic interest, nationalism and racism was perceivable at the highest levels of society. In the public speeches of the father-figure of the nation, Harry Truman, the enemy was consistently referred to as the collective “Japs” and Truman did his part to massage the rival nation-state into a subhuman enemy that could be decimated with the consent of the public. In referring to the use of nuclear weapons against the Japanese he explained that “[w]hen you have to deal with a beast, you have to treat him as a beast. It is most regrettable but nevertheless true.” But the selling of the attack did not stop there, to the prongs of nationalism, racism and security, the lure of technological achievement was thrown into the mix as well.

Sixteen hours after the bombing of Hiroshima, President Truman, addressed the public with the news. He explained that the United States had “dropped one bomb on Hiroshima and destroyed its usefulness to the enemy.” That one bomb had destroyed “the usefulness” of a large city was not even the thing most worthy of celebration. Truman explains the true significance of the event.

But the greatest marvel is not the size of the enterprise, its secrecy, nor its cost, but the achievement of scientific brains in putting together infinitely complex pieces of knowledge held by many men in different fields of science into a workable plan. And hardly less marvelous has been the capacity of industry to design and of labor to operate, the machines and methods to do things never done before so that the brainchild of many

minds came forth in physical shape and performed as is was supposed to do. Both science and industry worked under the direction of the United States Army, which achieved a unique success in managing so diverse a problem in the advancement of knowledge in an amazingly short time. It is doubtful if such another combination could be got together in the world. What has been done is the greatest achievement of organized science in history. It was done under pressure and without failure. (2)

Science, success, exceptionality, knowledge, specialization, organization, management, industry—these ideas structure the understanding “the greatest marvel”. This fetishization of technology (of technologies: physical and social) and knowledge fits into a larger pattern of thought running through Western civilization since the 19th century. It is one of the main currents running through modernity. It is not the democratic impulse except in the ways in which it celebrates the disparate contributions made by each of the specialists, it is not *liberté, égalité* or *fraternité* which is celebrated here by Truman, it is the final product, the result: the progress; it is the harnessing of the productive capabilities of individuals, the aptitude for managing this heterogeneous mob, it is the organizational skill of the leaders: the order. These are the indicators, not of a program of Liberalism which celebrates the dissolution of the old restraints of mankind, these are the watchwords of Positivism which swallow the former by matter of course, seemingly naturally. It is the nature of power to extend itself, to multiply its organs, to spread its network, to achieve measurable results, to justify itself. We must see these two arms of modernity, Positivism and Liberalism in a constant struggle with one another, this is the history of the modern age. And it is this positivistic tendency which is used to cover over

the treason to the founding ideals of the nation in Truman's discourse on Japan. Order brings progress, the ends to the means, in this case the end of the war. Quickly, conveniently, like a fast food dinner, like a disposable lighter, life is made more comfortable with the flip of a switch.

Words like equality and liberty sound great in speeches and in parades, but order and progress bring measurable results, marketable goods. The connection between war and the economy is made in two different directions by Allende in El plan infinito. The first is in the scene alluded to above. Not only does Charles Reeves echo the example of Truman, falling into the imperialist discourse of civilization against barbarity, excusing the destruction of so many lives because "[e]sos no cuentan, eran todos japoneses" (36). But it is worth quoting the exchange at greater length:

Cuando Charles Reeves llegó eufórico con la noticia de la bomba, ella consideró obsceno alegrarse por semejante masacre, también su marido parecía haber perdido el juicio, como los demás.

—Nada volverá a ser como antes, Charles. La humanidad ha cometido algo más grave que el pecado original. Esto es el fin del mundo —comentó descompuesta, pero sin alterar su largo hábito de buenas maneras.

—No digas tonterías. Debemos aplaudir los progresos de la ciencia. Menos mal que las bombas no están en manos enemigas, sino en las nuestras. Ahora nadie se atreverá a hacernos frente.

--¡Volverán a usarlas y acabarán con la vida en la tierra!

--Terminó la guerra y se evitaron males peores. Muchos más hubieran sido los muertos si no lanzamos las bombas.

--Pero murieron cientos de miles, Charles.

--Ésos no cuentan, eran todos japoneses --se rió su marido.

Por primera vez Nora dudó de la calidad de su alma y se preguntó si era realmente un Maestro, como decía. Muy tarde en la noche regresó su familia. Gregory venía dormido en brazos de su padre y Judy traía un globo pintado con estrellas y rayas.

--Por fin se terminó la guerra. Ahora tendremos mantequilla, carne y gasolina --anunció Olga radiante agitando los restos de una bandera de papel. (36)

The discourse becomes clear, the themes are evident, the masculine material viewpoint contrasts with the female spiritual, humanitarian viewpoint. The former emphasizes the results, the practical benefits while the latter emphasizes values based on *a priori* judgment. They both point to possible utopias, one of pragmatic security the other of idealistic coexistence. The symbolism is rather evident, the balloon covered with stars and stripes, like a globe reorganized and redecorated to suit U.S. tastes, points to global domination, new imperialism, new security. The tattered flag both draws us back to the national anthem, the flag contained within--alluding to the origins of the country as a people fighting against imperialism and represents the threadbare state of the republican ideals. Allende provides two points of view of the same phenomena through the dialogue, but the focalization through Nora Reeves lends considerably more weight to her point of view. Access to her thoughts brings the reader to sympathize with her and question the

others. Thus Allende's view of America is one where the properly "feminine" view is suppressed and withdrawn leaving the culture debilitatingly out of balance. Charles parrots Truman's talking points to the tee, the rival nation-state is personalized but dehumanized through racialization, the great progress of Science is lauded and these are further supported by the specter of security. But it is Olga's comment while she waves the flag that connects the atomic to the economic. It is the economic benefit hiding behind a parade of patriotism that allows the ordinarily compassionate figure to rationalize the otherwise unthinkable. On this occasion the economic benefit is merely the conveniences of everyday life, a return to normalcy, but another example alludes to a far more sinister connection between the economy and war.

Mr. Duane, the father of Gregory's best friend, Tim, provides another nexus of American patriotism, war, economics and power. This time relating to the war in Vietnam, Allende lets slip, "decidió evadir el servicio militar sólo porque su padre apoyaba la Guerra, no tanto por patriotismo como porque tenía intereses económicos en las fabricas de armamentos [...]" (250). This alludes to both C. Wright Mills and Dwight D. Eisenhower. C. Wright Mills was named the authentic voice of America by Carlos Fuentes for his study of the close ties between the highest leaders of government, corporations and the military: The Power Elite. Dwight D. Eisenhower, in his famous farewell address, warned the American public against the rising dangers of the so called military-industrial complex, the alignment of certain interests in the business world and within congress with those in the defense department that inevitably search out for military solutions (and even problems) in order to bring personal economic and political gain at the expense of both the American people and those abroad. Hence Allende paints

an America which is essentially violent and centrally driven by the lure of economic gains.

I have claimed that this quote by Mr. Duane alludes to these two American figures, but that should be qualified. It is an important qualification because though while it may allude indirectly to these figures, this indirectness also permits a certain monolithic representation of U.S. culture when obviously, if we do take these allusions to their roots, there is a great deal of variation within. It is not my task here to defend the United States or to provide an alternate version of what the United States really is. I am discussing Allende's view on American culture as it surfaces through El plan infinito. That being the case, I believe that a discussion of certain techniques which build up that view or representation is within the purview of the study. The technique touched on here we have called allusion, though it might be only a partial allusion. Perhaps the word "gloss" would be more appropriate precisely because of the ambiguity that the word possesses. It is one of those peculiar words that have the flexibility to hold two meanings that are quite contrary. On the one hand "to gloss" can be to point out and to elaborate on a specific point or to refer, while on the other "to gloss" can be to cover over something as if it did not exist, as if there were no problem whatever. And this is why it is more correct to say that Allende glosses Mills and Eisenhower: she refers to the ideas that they have generated and are in circulation at some level in U.S. culture, while at the same time, in the same move she covers over the fact that these are already established ideas within the culture. This idea of the ambiguous technique of the gloss is vitally important because, it allows for the whitened, masculine American culture to be presented as one homogenous block. We can conclude without claiming direct knowledge of the "real" America, that

Allende's vision at times is likely to be influenced by already established patterns and the literary function to provide a strong allegorical relation.

Apparently in Allende's estimation, for the allegorical level to be effective, it must come through in stark contrasts, therefore in El plan infinito, problems do tend to be black and white (or Hispanic and White literally), cowboys and Indians. But in fairness, this is a charge that could be turned back to the American culture again. It was not, after all, Allende who invented such categories. In line with Anibal Quijano's notion of the coloniality of power, it was usually the dominant European colonizer that defined the racial categories that Allende is now playing with. It should, however, be pointed out that she is not questioning this categorization itself. What is really interesting is that she seems to accept the categories and even some generalized associations; her contribution is to simply invert the hierarchy. As we have seen, she even takes the stereotypical image of the sexually aggressive Black woman, the Jezebel, and nuances it by attaching it to a sense of intense love to celebrate the superiority over the mechanical, interest-motivated, loveless activity of the Anglo females in the novel. In this way Allende seems to have missed the point of her fellow Latin American theorist Quijano. The coloniality of power implies that it is coloniality that engenders modernity and not the other way around. Thus, not only the hierarchy, but the categories themselves, of race, gender, development are fully integrated into modernity ("Coloniality"). To undo coloniality is to undo modernity as we know it. Allende is much more in line with a classical Marxist approach, where a simple inversion finds the proletariat in control of the state and means of production upon which a new utopia can be based.

We looked a moment ago at Allende's technique of glossing in relation to the power elite and the military-industrial (-congressional) complex during the time of the war in Vietnam. I would like to look at another example that reaches back to the more distant past of the United States. In the opening of the novel, Allende highlights the close relationship between commercial and spiritual interests in the Reeves ministry of the Infinite Plan. Alongside his role a traveling preacher and seller of hope, Charles Reeves earns money for his family and to keep his ministry afloat by painting. It is not the connection between financial gain and spiritual message that is as remarkable as the specific mode of such gain and the ways in which they are carried out. The content and the spirit of the paintings is not only emblematic of a certain ideology of how America was born, but the description also betrays the fissures that can be used to interpret the imagery against itself, against the official history, against Cowboys and Indians, against the melting pot, against positivistic progress and against Manifest Destiny. The reader witnesses two things immediately about the artwork of Charles Reeves. First, he has a passion for certain subject matter: the surrounding landscape and second, he chooses to betray that passion for the practical advantage of selling more paintings. It is a clear choice between an authentic expression of art and a mechanical act using the same tools to produce an object for exchange. It is the choice of the practical over the aesthetic and of merely surviving over fulfillment.

The automatic, mechanical aspect of the operation is emphasized by Allende's prose: "Olga no demoraba mucho en copiar el paisaje de la revista, Reeves hacía la figura humana de memoria en pocos minutos y los clientes pagaban al contado y partían con el óleo aún fresco" (24). In a text that heretofore has dripped with religious content, the

images of the Sistine Chapel and the Creation of Adam might spring forward as a dramatic contrast. Reeves, taking Michelangelo's place and then God's "makes the human figure" from memory rather than from his own image and in place of the sacred we witness the offering of cash. The grammatical series which the form of this sentence takes pushes it forward in a one, two, three rhythm that has the reader pushing through in a double-time march. The time reference contained within each spur of the series redoubles the effect and with the final "with the paint still wet" imparts the line with the feel of vaudeville irreverence which could not be further from the sentiment of authenticity; the sacred is right out. Surely this assembly line procedure done with no thought, copied, this mechanical production, channels Benjamin and the idea of the loss of "aura". It is Fordism, Taylorism, specialization, rationalization applied to the field of art.

In "Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" Benjamin analyzed the changes that art would undergo in the modern era, with special consideration given to the rise of the mass media. In one of his more clearly Marxian writings, Walter Benjamin details the process through which the loss of the aura of a work of art, its originality, actually is a liberating for the audience of such a work. Benjamin historicizes the concept of art, tracing its beginnings in ritual magic, its passage into the service of religion and then its bourgeois secularization in the modern age. But it is with the mass production that develops under capitalism that we perceive a more complete epistemological break: the reverence felt, the value placed on an original piece of art is displaced. Art itself is changed as it begins to be created for the purpose of mass production and in turn the resulting media change our perception of art and what it is. The image on the celluloid is

not the work of art, the work of art is the print or projected film that is developed from the negative. The negative is specifically designed to be reproduced; in this context “originality” loses its meaning. While this loss of the value in the original, or aura, seems to run parallel to Marx’s notion of alienation, Benjamin does not bemoan the loss of aura, but instead sees it as a positive step in the service of a revolution of the conscience. The mechanical art “extends our comprehension of the necessities which rule our lives” (243). In its mass forms, which may on the one hand lead to the aestheticization of politics and the masking of ideology—the form which Benjamin decried, the new art politicizes art in a direct and open way. It purposefully emphasizes political action in the work and pushes the audience to consider the problems at hand.

This is precisely what Allende is doing by having Reeves “mass producing” art. It problematizes the buyer’s demands and the content of the art. It raises questions about the political nature of the figure of the Cowboy and the Indian and the ways in which those aestheticized figures have been brought into the service of ideology. There is a desire in both the painter and the consumer to think (or not think) in terms of a Manichean binary opposition, what is more, the painter is doubly reinforced by the monetary compensation. It was Benjamin’s primary focus in his essay to explore the possibilities which film held for political purposes. In the United States it was the genre of the Western, first through literature and then through film and television, which effected the aestheticization of the Cowboy and Indian for the American public like nothing else. By using the emblematic figures of the Cowboy and the Indian to reanimate the saga of the American West and the way in which it was won, the motion picture became a vehicle for the retrospective re-dressing of Manifest Destiny and an aid in its new role as a prominent world power.

The popularity of the Western genre in post-World War II film and television came at a time when the United States found itself alone in the world championing Western values. As citizens of the self-proclaimed Leader of the Free World, the public was assuaged by familiar comforting images of other wars and conflicts, of other Americans fighting for honor or law and order against an unambiguous foe who represented barbarity and a challenge to the order. While the United States sought to protect its citizenry from the Red Scare, Westerns offered images of free-spirited, rugged individualist Cowboys battling hordes of savage red-skins.

It is interesting to trace the development of the treatment of the American Indian in Western films in a sketch running along side major U.S. conflicts after World War II. In the films of the 1950s, when the Red Scare was perhaps at its height and the Cold War was in full swing, the Korean War was apparently so black-and-white that it was quickly forgotten and American Indians were almost exclusively portrayed as villainous heathens. During the late 1960s a turn was made that expanded into the 1970s as American Indians were given more even treatment. This period corresponds, of course to the war in Vietnam and the cultural revolution that took place not only in the United States, but in much of the world. In something like Angel Rama's revolt of the urban lettered class in Latin America at a much earlier stage, many Hollywood movers and shakers began to track a course independent of the government program. They correctly recognized a shift in the political conscious and conscience of a large segment of the U.S. public that was catalyzed by Vietnam and the Civil Rights Movement. After this period the stereotypical Indian (and Cowboy for that matter) all but disappears from the genre.

Allende resurrects the binary pair of the Cowboy and Indian in its original caricatured context of post-war America, but from a post-revisionist perspective that can only serve to recall and further problematize the underlying issues of Manifest Destiny and American Exceptionality as central planks to an American belief system and at the more abstract level the notion of the binary analysis itself. By emphasizing the territorial displacement of both of these figures from their “natural” location in the American West and presenting the “feathered redskins on frozen Tibetan peaks” or “a pair of cowboys dueling it out in wide-brimmed hats and high boots in the creamy white sands of a Polynesian beach” the reader is invited to not only to chuckle, but to ask questions. In hammering home the *unheimlich*-ness of each of these sketches, in exposing the fantastic and ahistorical nature of each of the paintings, Allende signals the fantasy or wish fulfillment aspect embedded in each of the figures themselves.

As mentioned above the success of the traditional Hollywood Western climaxed after the end of World War II, incidentally the setting for the opening of El plan Infinito, and is related in a Utopian project to both a nostalgia for the United States past, as well as anxiety to its new role as a world power. Through the traditional uses of the Cowboy and the Indian, film studios sought to legitimize the westward expansion of the United States by focusing attention on one part of a much larger constellation of conflicts. Allegorically the Cowboy represented the United States and the modern: the idea of honor, the egalitarian spirit, strident individualism and of course an essential martial aptitude to back up these righteous qualities. Embodied by the Cowboy, the United States battled for Westward expansion against the Other’s savagery, tyranny and backwardness represented by the Indian. The combination of a belief of the self as a just, righteous being with the

desire for additional resources and territory constrain the foregoing emplotment of character traits.

Should see the Manichean figures of the Cowboy and Indian in this context, in the context of El plan Infinito, in a parodic light? The ahistorical settings of the Himalayan peak and the Polynesian beach, as well as the tone of the passage and the overall context of their rendering all lend support to this reading. Allende's well known opinions on the treatment of the marginalized make it difficult to read the dualistic pair in any mode but the ironic. Moreover, the appearance of a frame within a frame or the work of art within the work of art, and its position in the exposition of the story, signal this passage as one of key importance. It is, we argue, one of the keys by which to read this novel and one of the symbolic figures that links the specific story-line "facts" to a more generalized worldview. The figures of the American Indians on the Asian peaks and the Cowboys on the Polynesian beach demystifies this dualism that is in a large part fundamental to the sustenance of core American beliefs. This point is almost impossible to overstate and is a large part of Allende's narrative. Furthermore this deconstruction is carried out in two different directions at the same time. On the one hand the Manichean good versus evil dualism is brought into view for inspection. On the other hand a far more sinister undertone begins to make itself felt in the radical (yet comical) displacement of the figures. This spread of the "western frontier" to distant shores is humorous, but the darker side of that humor is intimation of imperialist expansion that indeed began once the westward expansion was complete.

Race is a fundamental issue in the Cowboy and Indian dualism and it is an issue in ways less obvious than the racial difference between the white, Anglo-American

Cowboy and the Asiatic American Indian. To those involved in the period, there was such a racial discrepancy that the idea of Manifest Destiny itself was seldom thought to apply to the lands of American Indians. Manifest Destiny was most often used describe United States aspirations vis-à-vis territories controlled or claimed by other national powers—most importantly Mexico. Manifest Destiny was an openly racist doctrine; it was, as Rudyard Kipling would have it in his eponymous poem, the white man's burden.

Race is central in El plan Infinito. Allende unravels American myths such as the melting pot and exceptionalism. Her modus operandi seems to simply be to hold up the founding ideals, stated aims and national mythology of the United States to the historical facts. The result is a picture of decay and poverty—spiritual poverty, cultural poverty, national poverty because of a betrayal and corruption of the principles upon which the nation was founded. Tied up in this is the fact that these same apparently ideals were used to justify imperialism and tyranny abroad in addition to its own territory. This is not simple Anti-americanism. Allende's critiques are pointed, but we detect a note of hope sounding from behind the critique. In the final analysis we must see Allende as positing the United States as the ultimate site of hope for change. Her solution is simply to call for the daily practice in the United States to live up to those guiding principles upon which the country was founded.

Throughout the novel Allende will bring elements of American legend or fantasy in for deconstruction simply by contextualizing them in ways that do not allow for their textual or historical seams to remain hidden from view. In many ways, Allende's technique is simply one of historicization. She brings commonly held fantasies about the way we wish things might be and shows the inconsistency of thought contained in many

American myths, the ideologies that support them and the utopian schemes that such ideologies imply. Ironically, at the same time, the allegorical message that wishes to transmit depends on caricatured representations of life in the United States. On different levels and in different directions, El plan infinito is Cowboys and Indians all over again.

We have seen some examples of the way that life for Gregory Reeves and Carmen Morales/Tamar and by extension that of the United States as a whole, is racialized and gendered. The white, masculine world of the mainstream American culture allowed Reeves a quick track to “success”. He worked hard, he got ahead, and he married into a wealthy family—a perfect example of the American Dream. But, as implied by the Allende’s narrative, his success is built on systematic race based exclusion. He attains success precisely because others, Hispanics and Blacks most notably, are denied it. Expanded to the social/political reading of the text, American culture is seen to be a racist one, primarily concerned with material comforts for some of its citizens and the denial of these for others. Taken still further to an international level, and surely this is supported by the references to World War II and Vietnam in the novel, we detect this same racially exclusive economic program with the United States as an imperial or hegemonic power taking advantage of its superior political and economic strength relative to developing countries to further its position at their expense. This explains the economic success of the United States in terms of violence, blatant pragmatism and a lack of moral substance, that allows the less powerful segments of the world to view their inferior economic positions as a result not only of interference by a hegemonic power but also due to a superior sense of culture and of moral imperative. Reeves, because of his exposure to Hispanic culture, finally sees his successes as illusory and undergoes a personal crisis that

for Allende represents the hypocrisy and decadence of the homogenous American culture as a whole. The irony is that this Manichean view of race so tightly linked to socio-economic status is much closer to the social reality of Latin America than it is to the modern day United States. And, of course, all of this fits into an already existent pattern that was established by Alejo Carpentier in Los pasos perdidos the rejection of modern life using the United States as the topos of modernity.

In El plan infinito both of the central figures makes a journey out of the United States and bring them into contact with a sense of authenticity that had been theretofore missing from their lives. Reeves finds this in the Vietnamese village, a sense of community that he had always longed for. This seems to have some affect on him as he begins to change his priorities from the previous fascination with money and power, seen as the natural outcome of life in the United States, to one base with a higher moral purpose. However, he is soon set back yet again by the infidelity of his second (Anglo-American) wife Shanon. As mentioned above, it is Carmen Morales or her transformed iteration Tamar, that brings the lasting solutions. Tamar is the new Prometheus, bringing instead of fire, the technologies of profound sustainable inclusive success to counter the exclusion-based successes which have brought Reeves, and by extension America, such turmoil. As such her journey is an inversion of the typical colonial topoi of the expedition into the wild. Instead of spreading civilization into the savage world, it is the savages who will help civilize those of the center. Like the narrator of Los pasos perdidos, Carmen/Tamar sets off on a journey out of the metropole and finds authenticity and love in the margins, outside of modernity. The sites of these encounters, pre-Columbian Mexico, Vietnam, Morocco, in addition to being outside of the United States are

specifically non-Western, non-modern. It is there in the “margins” that Carmen absorbs a variety of local “authentic” ideas, patterns, fabrics and lines to form a hybrid style that she parlays into a successful “ethnic” fashion design business and redefines her own identity complete with her new name, Tamar. Though Allende, like Carpentier before her, uses the American culture as the epitome of decadent modernity there are two clear differences in their approach. First, while Carpentier follows a line close to the “*novelas de la tierra*” which show the contrast between a clash of modernity and tradition in the Latin American hinterlands, Allende internationalizes the problem. Her authenticity is not only found in Latin America, but from disparate points of the otherwise-than-modern world. In The Location of Culture, Homi Bhabha claims that: “This side of the psychosis of patriotic fervour, I like to think, there is overwhelming evidence of a more transnational and translational sense of the hybridity of imagined communities” (7). Allende’s work does provide evidence of this, but it should be pointed out that in Latin America, this transnationality was present at the same time of nationalistic fervor of which Bhabha speaks. Since the days following on the heels of independence Latin American thinkers have been thinking beyond the national: Gran Colombia and Nuestra América are two obvious examples. This is a tradition carried into the present, but the distinction with Allende is that she moves beyond the region, beyond Latin America to all of the otherwise-than-modern world, much in line with Ánibal Quijano and other theorists of the coloniality of power such as Enrique Dussell. The second difference, an important one, is that there seems to be something like a solution in the works, something not found (or at least lost again) in Los pasos perdidos. Carmen/Tamar is not attempting to retrace the lost steps to authenticity, but to bring a new paradigm to move forward with

modernity. Her solution, more than just pluralism, is hybridity. “What is theoretically innovative, and politically crucial,” states Bhabha in his introduction:

is the need to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences. These “in-between” spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood—singular or communal—that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself. (2)

These “in-between” spaces abound in El plan infinito and allow us to read across the title itself in a new light. It makes a joke of the kind of Infinite Plan that Charles Reeves first preached in the opening of the novel, where people belonged to discrete, pure categories and through those categories can learn to live in harmony with one another. Instead of this fixed projection, the plan is infinite in the endless ways that it opens up with the introduction of interstitials, in-between characters as solutions.

The problem with Allende’s approach is that it replicates the imperialistic techniques of the past by appropriating caricatures and extending them to create convenient homogenous groups. Her hybrid solutions depend upon a strictly delimited homogenous culture, but it is a strictly delimited homogenous culture that is the extrapolation of stereotypes. On the one hand this might not be fair to many (who don’t fit into Allende’s view of Americanness) who feel themselves to be fully American, and on the other hand this may lead to serious theoretical problems which would seem to be counterproductive to her own implied plan. By not dealing with the possible splits between race and identity, especially race and class, the threat seems all too real that

hybridity or the inclusion of racial ethnic minorities itself could become diluted and appropriated by hegemonic power. For example, does the fact that an African-American woman is appointed Secretary of State or that a Hispanic-American man is appointed Attorney General signify that Black and Hispanic Americans in general are offered the same opportunities and same rewards as those in mainstream America? Is this simply a case of cynical hegemonic instrumentality and cooptation?

But Allende's vision of America is exclusively exclusive. We have seen, in the first part of this chapter, how she uses the motif of maternity to divide America into two groups: mainstream White culture deficient in love and nurturing qualities and therefore not properly feminine; and the racially ethnic, the exemplar of the feminine--protective mother and faithful loving partner. In the second part of this chapter we examined how this divide is reinforced by the twin trajectories of the two central figures. Reeves quickly rises, but then tragically falls in a white, masculine America, while Carmen/Tamar journeys through the feminine margins, gaining the knowledge that will save her friend. We therefore detect both the establishment of an ailment and a cure that is emplotted on the individual/psychological level but is clearly intended to project a social/political reality. There is a white mainstream America that is patriarchal, powerful and wealthy, but is spiritually and morally decadent, and there is a racially ethnic minority, feminine, nurturing, artful and spiritual, but which is marginalized economically and politically. Allende's solution is hybridity: to bring the margin, racialized and gendered, to join with the center and in so doing create a sustainable balance. What is of great interest in this patently postcolonial work in which hybridity, with its complex crossings of identity, is the solution, is that Allende uses so many of the typical colonial tropes—the

classification of racial types, the voyage into the unknown—as they were used in colonial discourse and simply inverts the hierarchy around them.

It is clear that her view of American culture need not be nearly as chiaroscuro as it is. We have examined her tendency to gloss, the ambivalent reference which paradoxically is alluded to, but at the same time papered over. And there are several instances, such as the turn in the American film hero or the student protests of the 1960s, where white American agents of difference and of resistance--in the very text itself--are undermined, their presence diluted and swept aside. The reason for this appears to be the desire for a solution to come from outside of the United States. It is a variation on a theme within the Latin American literary tradition that began in the 19th century and its most direct fictional antecedent in Carpentier's Los pasos perdidos. Allende posits a solution to a cultural problem that elevates the esteem of the marginalized, the Third World or the otherwise-than-modern, but at the same time risks the alienation of her greatest potential allies.

Technologies, Simulations and Deterritorialization in Fernando del Paso's

Linda 67. Historia de un crimen

Like the protagonist of Linda 67, Fernando del Paso spent about twenty years apart from his native Mexico living and working in the United States, England and France. He spent three years in Iowa City in the late 1960s and early 1970s as part of the International Writing Program hosted by the University of Iowa. This was the beginning of a sort of self-imposed exile from Mexico that would last until 1992 when he returned to head the Biblioteca Iberoamericana at the University of Guadalajara. From Iowa City he moved to London, and then to Paris; along side of his work toward his novel Noticias del imperio during this time abroad he worked for the BBC and Radio France Internationale as a writer and producer as well as serving as a diplomat in Paris. He is also a visual artist, focusing on drawing and painting. When he finally returned to Mexico in 1992 he began work on a novel set in the United States.

Linda 67. Historia de un crimen, published in 1995, incorporates much of the autobiographical material from the life of Fernando del Paso in an apparent hard-boiled crime novel in which the central figure is a identity challenged Mexican who kills his cheating American wife in an attempt to start his life anew with his Mexican lover. David Sorensen's plan to extort 15 million dollars from his wife's millionaire father is foiled by a series of unlikely events and in the end he finds himself alone in a jail cell contemplating his downfall. Strikingly similar to the fall from grace of Gregory Reeves from Isabel Allende's El plan infinito, David Sorensen succumbs to the ambition, greed and the lure of material wealth that surround him in the United States culture. Unfortunately for David, or Dave, as he is often referred to in the novel—an abbreviation

that symbolizes his Americanization, he does not recognize the golden thread that Olivia has handed him to guide him back out of the labyrinth as Carmen/Tamar had done for Reeves. Once he realizes that he has become the minotaur, it is too late. In Linda 67 we continue the study of the discourse on America by centering ourselves on three main topoi: the role of the mass media, the corruption of the art form through mass production and the (a)morality of instrumentality. Each of these dovetails with the next and together they obtain an aggregate and overdetermining effect.

In its various forms, the mass media is a conspicuous presence throughout Fernando del Paso's Linda 67. Historia de un crimen. Advertising, with all of its attendant concerns like statistical studies and psychological models, the news information services (television, radio and print), photography, popular music and technology as mundane as the telephone and answering machine are integrated, rather noticeably, into the novel. Rather than part of the setting to provide a sense of realism, the incessant and obtrusive references bring mass communications into center stage. They are alluded to and employed with great frequency by characters in the text and in several instances are used as structuring devices in the presentation—they are used in both the plot and the emplotment, the story and discourse, the content and the form. They are brought into Dave's plot to kill his wife and to extort money from her father, they are brought into Inspector Gálvez's efforts to solve the crime, into the Vietnam veteran's plan to extort money from Dave, etc. Almost without exception, they saturate the story-line at every turn, making a powerful contribution to the overall representation of American life.

It is hardly surprising to find violence in the crime novel. Of course, it is usually at the very center of it, or it is at least the stimulus of the action. While, as Raymond

Chandler reminds us in his seminal essay “The Simple Art of Murder”, it need not be what the story is about, it is one of the defining characteristics. This is certainly the case of Linda 67. While Dave Sorensen’s murder of his wife is the act around which gets the novel going, it is certainly not what the novel is about. In El género negro, Mempo Giardinelli argues that noir fiction can provide what he terms an x-ray (“radiografía”) of society. This point is alluded to in Chandler, where the world of the noir hero reveals the hypocrisy of the world we live in; Giardinelli develops this point using the medical metaphor which carries the implicit notion of pathology with it. As the protagonist moves from daily life, into the world of crime which connects all strata of society, we are taken behind the façades, behind the walls, behind the skin and surface tissues of the body public; hence the parallel with the x-ray. This holds true for Del Paso’s foray into the crime novel. Through Dave (and the Inspector Gálvez) we explore U.S. culture from captains of industry, the world of advertising, the millionaire heiress, to the hippie turned extortionist Vietnam veteran. But in addition to this probe-like function that is so readily employed by noir fiction, Del Paso uses the news media as a tool within his novel to further amplify this x-ray vision.

Linda 67 makes a point to demonstrate how very pervasive that the news media is in American life. References to print, radio and televised news media abound. Essential to the plot of the novel is the way that the various media, function to create a sort of echo chamber, where news stories are recycled and repeated to the degree that it becomes the very substance of the conversations. In a pivotal episode, Sorensen and Sheila Norman, engaging in a conversation that covers the greater part of a chapter, discuss the O.J. Simpson murder trial. The ever presence of the news media and its echo effect are finally

directly commented on by Dave, who is frustrated by the monopolization of his thought as well as the degradation of privacy that the system necessarily carries with it.

Not only is the media ever-present, amplifying the x-ray effect in intensity with a relation to time, the spatial dimension is filled with the media as well, amplifying the extension. It is at once immediate and distant. The constant intervention of information allows the exploration of culture and society beyond the temporal and spatial immediacy of the protagonists. The media move the novel, and the consciousness of the actors beyond their physical milieu and into an imagined community at the national level. In The Novels of Fernando del Paso, Robin W. Fiddian, claims that “the novel uncovers deep-seated flaws in the moral and psychological constitution of the nation” by recalling “a number of horrible *causes célèbres* that have etched themselves into the consciousness of the American people” (148). We would like to qualify this statement, drawing attention, as Del Paso does, to the way that these stories came to be internalized by the public. Specifically, we would argue that these stories did not etch themselves, in a neutral, innocent way into the public consciousness, rather they were etched by the endless repetition in the media. In fact, following from Anderson’s thesis in Imagined Communities, it is this “consciousness” created by the media, that gives some degree of cohesion to the otherwise impossibly disparate masses within large societal groups like nation-states. We will discuss this point later, but at present, we would like to underscore the role of the media in collapsing time and space and bringing events from across the country, other cities in California as well as stories from Oklahoma and South Carolina to be the stock of mundane conversations in San Francisco.

Fiddian is correct, as Chandler and Giardinelli would surely agree, in pointing up the use of the sensational violence of the “*causes célèbres*” to provide a sort of x-ray highlighting the shortcomings of American culture. But even if we see these cases, which are surely remarkable (and marketable) precisely for being far beyond the pale of the ordinary, as the symptoms of a society in decadence, under stress and divided against itself, we must also see these cases or rather the endless circulation, the constant etching by the popular media of these cases as generative of the symptoms themselves. It may be merely reflective such as when Dave, confused by the shifting images of Linda and Olivia and finally a transvestite, is finally driven to raise his fist to strike him/her, but certainly more important is its role as a producer of violence. But where does one draw the line? Where does reflexivity meet stimulus? These lines are blurry, like the identity of the transvestite, the very symbol of liminality. There is little room for doubt though, that Linda 67 presents a strong case for the generation of violence by constant reference to violence. It is, in fact, through the conversation over the O.J. Simpson murder trial that Linda’s murder is suggested to Dave. It is that conversation in which the last vestiges of Dave’s conscience are eradicated. This is where the echo chamber echoes out of the world of words and back into the world of actions. Dave does kill Linda and as he pushes her car over the cliff, the white noise of news radio covers over Linda’s unconscious gurgling. He prepares his simulated ransom note with the cut and paste technique, so common in movies, from the headlines of those other violent crimes alluded to in the novel. His crime is almost literally made up of pieces of those other crimes.

Dave’s job at the Morris publicity firm allows the reader a behind the scenes view into the world of advertising. It is this incursion, part of the x-ray perspective of the noir

genre, that allows Del Paso to explore some of the ideas and opinions of the staff at the advertising firm, including Dave, that surely reveal more about themselves than about their subject matter. Advertising, its techniques and aims tie together numerous thematic threads that run throughout the novel and show up in some technical features as well.

Linda 67 presents the world of David Sorensen in crisis. His particular crisis, fitting for the aesthetic of the novel is a crisis of identity. Specifically, his identity crisis is one of nationality, in which race and class play key roles. Like Gregory Reeves from Isabel Allende's El plan infinito, Sorensen is caught in an in-between space, in a sort of personal diaspora or exile. But the comparisons do not stop there. In the Spanish American literary canon Alejo Carpentier's Los pasos perdidos offers many as well. Fiddian has called attention to the parallel:

Los pasos perdidos lies barely concealed beneath the surface of Linda 67, like one of the constituent layers of a palimpsest. The narrative of Linda 67 effectively refashions Carpentier's exploration of authentic American identity and the disorientation of twentieth-century western man, through the vehicle of a male protagonist who lacks a specific national identity and is burdened by the trappings of "civilized" life. (150)

Fiddian goes on to develop the oppositional nature of Linda and Olivia and relate the pairing to that of Rosario and Mouche of Los pasos perdidos. This is well pointed out and argued by Fiddian. As we have seen in an earlier chapter, Allende used the same technique in El plan infinito to differentiate the white mainstream America from the racially ethnic other by contrasting the female figures that orbited around Reeves. It seems a well marked path on the exploration of national identity and authenticity, the

woman as the metaphor of the nation (or region in the case of Carpentier) and versions of her at odds in the struggle for legitimacy. This is clearly the case in *Del Paso* as well. Evidence of this can be found in an early episode where Linda disrobes to sunbathe nude (in full semi-public view) on top of a towel styled as the American flag. The dialogue underscores the symbolism in an exchange between Dave and his best friend Chuck:

Apenas habían dejado el muelle, rumbo a Alcatraz, Linda se quitó el bikini y se tendió bocarriba en la cubierta, sobre una de las toallas que Chuck tenía en su yate, y que reproducía la bandera de Estados Unidos, con todas sus barras y todas sus estrellas.

“Esto es lo que le faltó a Marilyn”, dijo Dave: “Retratarse desnuda acostada en la bandera americana.”

“Es cierto”, contestó Chuck. “De lo mejor que produce este país son esta clase de gringas. Los japoneses nunca les ganarán este mercado...” (42)

This citation demonstrates the allegorical function that Linda plays in the novel’s symbolic system, but it also points out the outsiders inside, the in-between-ness of both David and Chuck, and hence questions of identity, two topics touched on by Fiddian, and, more importantly, it returns us to our focus on advertising and consumerism. Not only does the instantly recognizable reference to the pop icon Marilyn Monroe point up her status as a branded commodity, reproduced and projected into of the American and international consciousness, always for sale, always consumable (and in the present case recyclable) always present, and always present in only the most Marilyn of moments; but it also betrays the model of the market and consumption as a psychic structure in the

culture. Let us glance again quickly at Chuck's response "De lo mejor que produce este país son esta clase de gringas. Los japoneses nunca les ganarán este mercado..." Its a easily understandable metaphor, perhaps a seemingly natural one (and that is precisely the point), but it is certainly not an inevitable response. We are not condemning any sort of objectification of the female form here; Del Paso's Linda does enough of that on her own. What we would like to point out is the seemingly natural quality of the model of production and market competition in everyday speech. This one image and the accompanying dialogue tie together many of the motifs and structural devices of the novel: identity, consumerism and marketing. The advertising model is a tool that allows the exploration of questions of national identity, of American identity, Mexican identity and the question of identity itself including the imitative qualities of 'markets' that import American cultural products.

Despite some of Fiddian's quite appropriate comparisons, it is quite wrong to liken Sorensen to someone "burdened by the trappings of 'civilized' life" (150). In our view these "trappings" are the very essence of Dave's identity and it is his ambition to acquire more and the threat of losing those that he has which help to drive him to murder. Dave is the son of a Mexican diplomat who was born in London, grew up there, in San Francisco and Paris and so speaks English, French and Spanish equally well. Lacking strong geographic or linguistic roots, his problem is akin to an embarrassment of riches, for him the crisis stems from too many choices. Having many identities he lacks the certain ontological security of an earlier era, for example, that of his father. His is the crisis of humankind in late or post modernity, beyond the projection of the nation-state. He lives in a time in which the Self is made or constructed, and not born fully grown in

battle dress. His world is a world in which the traditional or even modern signs of identity have broken free from one another and wherein identity comes to be based on the construction of a lifestyle; an assemblage of digitalized codes. The vehicle for such lifestyle construction as presented in Linda 67 is consumption. It is the consumption of consumer goods, of time through recreation or work, of works of art, of music, of news stories, of space through the location of one's house or the mobile space of an automobile that one drives. In the United States, for Dave, these are the limits, these are the absolutes.

Advertising fits neatly into this universe, because it is a profession dedicated to the creation of identity. Advertisers not only create brand identity, of the products they wish to sell, they also endeavor to create customer identity, consumer identity, consumers. Advertising does work on the rational part of the brain, but much of the creative thought goes into reaching the non-rational part. Dave and his colleagues spend the vast majority of their energy discussing symbolism, aspects of association and of suggestion. Of course, they go about all of this with a great deal of rationalized knowledge. Market studies abound. Again, the question of identity is drawn to the fore as the potential market is divided and cross-divided from every angle, leaving the public digitalized and reassembled. Rather than organic wholes, they are beings, consuming beings, in turn constructed and consumed, constructed from the sole perspective of one of their parts. Thus, the market, or its constituent members are essentialized and reessentialized as part of the daily routine. In effect the ad men are engaged in the colonization of the human mind.

This work of the ad men aligns them closely with hegemonic systems theorized by Antonio Gramsci and Luis Althusser. Gramsci's work was aimed at understanding why people would support a social system that worked to their own disadvantage. Why did the industrialized European working classes not rise in revolution in opposition to Capitalism and set up a more equitable socialist system? He theorized that though the overt threat of state monopolized violence (the army and police) was always potentially available for deployment, they were rarely needed. Gramsci's contribution was to distinguish between state and civil society, and to elucidate the importance of non-violent controls exercised in the civilian sector: the exercise of cultural hegemony. Hegemony is the capacity to manufacture consent, a social technology whereby the elite class manipulates culture and forms inter-class alliances in order to reproduce the status quo.

Althusser further developed the basic Gramscian schema. Like Gramsci, he was interested in the ways in which the working class was controlled without the use of overt physical force. In Althusser's view Ideological State Apparatuses, such as the family, the Church, school and most importantly to our current discussion, the media, simultaneously construct the notion of individual subjectivity as well as the resultant individual subjects through "ideological practices". In Linda 67, Dave and his colleagues at the Morrison advertising agency are feverishly dedicated to the digitalization and construction of individuals who will then be subject to their psychological ploys. Their goal, like the elite class in Althusser's theory, is to sway the thinking of a target group. Instead of reproducing the status quo to insure the smooth operation of a Capitalist system (but of course it does this as well) the ad men are creating problems, needs and desires that will be satisfied by specific goods and services. Instead of creating easily controlled citizens,

they are creating docile consumers. These lines do tend to blur together and to be mutually supportive, which is precisely why Althusser is appropriate for the analysis. Docile consumers are tantamount to docile citizens and thus are linked the private and public, the individual to the political, the psychological to the allegorical levels of the text. The role of the mass media and advertising techniques in Linda 67 cannot be overstated. American culture as represented in Linda 67 is dominated by mass media and consumption. It is a culture with little, if any attachment to tradition or historical reality. It is immediate, it is everywhere, it is nowhere. Advertising, as in Althusser, is one of the tools of hegemony, an ideological apparatus, that not only shapes the wants and needs of its audience but shapes the very mechanics of the thought process.

The reflexive knowledge used in advertising, the creation of impressions for future use, transitions smoothly from Dave's work at the marketing firm to his plan to kill his wife. We have examples of this early on in the novel and they continue throughout suggesting that this model, or rather modeling itself (consumers, products, behavior) as an important key to deciphering the text. The morning following the murder Dave takes a morning walk through the neighborhood when he encounters the police. Though he has just killed his wife, he is not disturbed:

Caminó rumbo a Yatch Harbor. Por El Embarcadero venía una patrulla, muy despacio, quizás a cinco, diez millas por hora. David Sorensen no se inmutó. La patrulla era bienvenida. Si su encuentro con ella no le daría una coartada, al menos quizás contribuirá a que la gente pensara en su inocencia. Cuando se detuviera junto a él y el policía le preguntara si necesitaba ayuda, él le respondería que no, que estaba preocupado porque

su esposa no había llegado en toda la noche, pero que seguramente a su regreso la encontraría en casa. (17)

Like advertisers, he is selling a product. In this case the product is one of the distraught husband. Like any company developing its brand Dave attempts to create an impression among his audience that will later be called upon to serve some purpose. This type of calculation and proactive planning is again underscored in Dave's initial conversation with Inspector Gálvez. His contempt, surprise, irritation are all carefully modeled on the behavior that he imagines someone in his position should have. The most dramatic evidence of this in this episode is when the mailman delivers his ransom note—the fake ransom note that he sent himself. The premeditation is commented upon directly by the narrator:

“Quería entregarle este sobre personalmente, señor Sorensen. Parece uno de esos anónimos que envían los delincuentes. Espero que no sea nada serio...”

“Gracias”, dijo Dave, y tuvo el cuidado de que su mano temblara al recibir el sobre. “Gracias”, repitió. (215) [emphasis mine]

The improbability of this action and this line by the postman as well as the grammatical mode of the previous excerpt is part of a related artificiality in the form of the text that will be discussed later. Here we simply wish to establish the pattern of modeling and simulation that characterizes much of the content of the text. Another notable example is Dave's knowledge of how to best end a phone call:

Sabía que la mayor forma de cortar la conversación telefónica, era interrumpirse a uno mismo.

Y así lo hizo:

“¿Jimmy? Escucha: te repito que no tengo la menor idea de lo que estás...”, dijo, y colgó el teléfono. (234)

But Dave is not the only one who employs this tactic. And here there is a twist, the expected behavior—to console Dave for his wife’s disappearance—is proscribed, though a general mood of affection is conveyed: “En pocos minutos, todos estaban allí. Y todos saludaron con afecto—los más con fingido afecto—a Dave, sin mencionar la desaparición de Linda” (241). The emotional distance reminds one of Mrs. Reeves and Samantha of Allende’s El plan infinito and proves to be a sub-theme that runs throughout these texts, but here is added the additional artifice of the official prohibition of consolation, and the resultant subtle affection which may or may not be simulated. And still later the whole modeling/simulation complex will be turned on its head against Dave as the father Lagrange orchestrates an elaborate ruse of the sort found in Borges’ “Tema del traidor y del heroe”, a mini-*festspiel* designed to frame Dave, with simulated evidence, for the murder that he, ironically, truly committed.

Linda 67 presents American culture as saturated with self-reflexive and pre-meditated identity construction. This impulse is pervasive in both behavior and material consumption as discussed above, but it also extends to the physical body. Extremely white teeth and bronzed skin are two references that turn into refrains in the novel which obviously also relate to a certain shallowness and superficiality of the elite white Americans that are given so much space. These touchstones of physical beauty are contrasted by the attributes of the mainstream: “Chuck comprobó una vez más que Estados Unidos se estaba volviendo un país de monstruos. De todas las razas y edades:

anglos, mulatos, chicanos, hombres y mujeres, adolescentes, que pesaban ciento veinte, ciento cincuenta, doscientos kilos. Junto a ellos él, el gordo Chuck, se sentía esbelto” (42).

The pervasiveness of media technology in the representation of American life within the storyline flows over into the structure of Linda 67. As if by contagion, the thematic matter lends itself to the presentation. This is evidenced most dramatically by the use of the telephone as well as photographs to organize dialog and introspection respectively.

The extreme intrusiveness of the telephone in the plot is underscored by Linda’s habit of even answering the phone during sex. If this is intended to demonize Linda, it also serves to make the reader reflect upon the role of the telephone in society at large. The place of telephonic communication and its ubiquity are incorporated into the competing plans of David, Inspector Gálvez and the Vietnam veteran. In turn it is incorporated into the plan of the author to structure certain parts of the novel. An extraordinary amount of the action of the novel takes place over the phone. Chapter 17, “Llamadas Cruzadas” is one of the most obvious examples of this, the greater part of the chapter being made up of dialog transmitted across phone lines. The effect is exaggerated by the use of answering machines and multi-line systems allowing for several people to communicate at once, and even (through recordings) allow one person to communicate different messages at the same time. The end result borders on the absurd with the dizzying criss-crossing of phone calls one after the other. Having already left a message for Inspector Gálvez, Dave calls his father-in-law:

Dave escuchó una voz grabada que le decía:

“Grabe usted el nombre de la persona a la que busca, su propio nombre, su teléfono, la fecha y la hora y su mensaje después de la nota aguda. Tiene usted un minuto.”

Dave escuchó la nota aguda y dijo a continuación:

“Señor Lagrange. Habla David Sorensen. Me temo que tengo malas noticias. Linda ha sido secuestrada.”

Colgó.

La radio de la patrulla siguió llamando:

“Inspector Gálvez...inspector Gálvez...”

De regreso a la patrulla, el inspector contestó:

“Aquí el inspector Gálvez.”

“Tenemos un mensaje para usted, inspector, de un tal señor Sorensen...”

“Póngalo”, dijo el inspector.

.....

La patrulla arrancó. El inspector se comunicó con la Comisaría para solicitar la intervención urgente del teléfono de Dave. Luego, marcó su número.

En esos momentos, Chuck O'Brien hablaba con Dave:

“¿Cómo que secuestrada?, ¿Linda secuestrada? ¿Pero qué estás diciendo?, ¿estás loco?”

“Espérate, espérate, Chuck, está entrando otra llamada, un momento”, dijo Dave, y cambió de línea.

Pero no había nadie. Volvió a Chuck y le dijo:

“Se cortó la otra llamada. Te decía Chuck...”

Mientras subían por Grant Avenue, el inspector Gálvez le dijo al sargento Kirby:

“Se cortó... Voy a probar el hotel Faimont para hablar con Lagrange... ¿tiene usted el número a la mano?”

Lagrange contestó de inmediato: (222-23)

The fragmentation of the dialog parallels the fragmentation of time and space. Everyone is everywhere at once, can be everywhere at once, is responsible for being everywhere at once. And the fragmentation extends to identity, communicating multiple messages at once, multiple selves. The dialog splits off on two parallel phone conversations (subjected to interruptions) between Lagrange and Gálvez on the one hand and Dave and Chuck on the other. The similarity of structure within each of the conversations is emphasized by the short bursting cross-cuts as well as by the content:

Lagrange casi le gritó al inspector Gálvez:

“Secuestradores, inspector? ¿Está usted seguro? ¿Y qué es lo que quiere esa gente?, ¿dinero?”

Dave volvió con Chuck:

“¿Me decías Chuck...?”

“Te preguntaba que qué es lo que quieren los secuestradores, ¿dinero?”

El inspector le contestó a Lagrange:

“Sí, señor Lagrange, lo que quiere esa gente, según los mensajes, es dinero..”

“Dinero, sí”, le dijo Dave a Chuck.

“¿Cuánto?”, le preguntó Lagrange al inspector.

“¿Cuánto?”, le preguntó Chuck a Dave.

“Quice millones de dólares”, le contestó el inspector a Lagrange.

“Quice millones de dólares”, le contestó Dave a Chuck. (224-25)

The ridiculous nature of the question(s) will be discussed later, but this provides a good example of the fragmentation and parallelism that also raises questions about identity, questions that will be taken further as the novel continues. The word for word matching blurs the lines between the discrete identities of the characters. But what we want to establish here with this example and the fact that chapter 19 is nothing but a violent tirade across telephone lines, is that Del Paso’s use of media and technology extends to the structure to show an America, that like the organization of the text, is profoundly effected by the content and forms of the media and technology that are employed within it. Like the novel, American culture is ordered by these technologies and practices.

This argument also lends itself to the use of photographs in Linda 67. While the telephone is used to organize dialogue, photographs are used to structure other, more introspective personal episodes. Dave’s memories of Olivia pedal around a series of photographs that they had taken when she visited San Francisco. As with the telephone, these photographs place another level of filtration between an event and the re-presentation, a memory for example, of that event.

Del Paso uses the hyphenated compound “click-flash” as a refrain that reminds the reader time and again that Sorensen is viewing photographs. While reflecting on this, with the media foregrounded in this manner, one becomes more aware that Dave’s memories, which are always already re-presentations entail an additional translation—they are memories of copies. We approach something of an infinite regress, reminding us of one of Borges’ pet motifs, the copy of a copy, the version of an edition, etc., etc....Readers of “Tlon, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius” will be especially attuned to this effect. One reader of Borges, the French sociologist Jean Baudrillard, has brought into currency the concepts of simulation and of the simulacra. But if to remember is always a sort of simulation and photos are always a sort of simulacra, it is what is in these particular photographs that really make these simulacra remarkable. The simulation effect is reinforced by the locales of the photographs—museums, wax figures an aquarium—and all of these are also examples of another Baudrillardian concept: hyperreality. What we have then are memories stimulated by simulacra located in the midst of hyperreal simulations.

Mass media and communication networks create and sustain the new imagined community. In Linda 67 that community is one based on consumption and violence: violent consumption and consumption of violence. Unlike the communities described by Anderson, the new community is one consciously being constructed, modeled with a view to manipulation. The techniques of modern marketing are brought to bear upon it in efforts to create brands: brands of consumer items and brands of consumers. It is a basic fact, that between the communication networks and the marketing firms, that the public is

not only the market, it is the product as well. Leaving aside all notions of public good, the public becomes the good; it is the community that is bought and sold.

While the brand names of luxury items from Italy, England, Germany, etc. scattered through the text imply an international if Eurocentric community of consumption of goods, the violence of the news stories is the exclusive product of the United States, limited to its national borders. Of course one of the implications of this violence, within the text, is that violence breeds more violence and therefore it follows that violence within its borders reflects violence (both physical and intellectual) carried out beyond its borders. Violence and images of violence create feelings of insecurity, they create a need for more security and the attendant erosions of freedoms that are at odds with any kind of humanistic emancipatory project. At the same time insecurity produces at the same time the rational choices of living for the moment, because tomorrow may never come or saving for the rainy day. But both of these are united in the consumption. The ingrained human response to stress is to consume more. This makes sense from an evolutionary standpoint as well as a psychological one. Organisms who consume more (food or water for example) are more likely to survive crises (like famines and droughts for example). On the other hand, consumption helps stave off the fear of external threats, it allows a diversionary activity, it is the tonic that is returned to; and like a repeated prayer to ward off demons it becomes a ritual activity that opens up a safe space, it provides insulation within which to operate.

Simulation of Form

In the study of Del Paso's novels Robin Fiddian argues that, "[n]otwithstanding the existence of a vibrant tradition of noir fiction in Mexico and other parts of Spanish

America, Linda 67 turns to North American examples such as Dashiell Hammett and Patricia Highsmith, to elaborate a dystopian vision of the darker sides of life in the United States” (152). Fiddian quite convincingly demonstrates the parallels between the plot lines of Linda 67 and Patricia Highsmith’s Those Who Walk Away. Fiddian claims that Del Paso is playing with the idea of the author as parasite by employing “a strategy of mimicry and pastiche in which the figure of the author is consigned to the rank of a technician of textual rearrangement and a (mere) agent of intertextuality” (154). But Fiddian also uses Frederic Jameson to position Linda 67 “quite clearly with the aesthetic of postmodernism” but then claims that “postmodern pastiche has the potential for conveying criticism of the social and political status quo” (151). This is problematic because the aesthetic of postmodernism is hardly clear in and of itself. Moreover, Jameson himself claims that the postmodern aesthetic is not suitable for providing criticism. The following passage from Postmodernism or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism expresses this idea:

In this situation parody finds itself without a vocation; it has lived, and that strange new thing pastiche slowly comes to take its place. Pastiche is, like parody, the imitation of a peculiar or unique, idiosyncratic style, the wearing of a linguistic mask, speech in a dead language. But it is a neutral practice of such mimicry, without any of parody’s ulterior motives, amputated of the satiric impulse, devoid of laughter and of any conviction that alongside the abnormal tongue you have momentarily borrowed, some healthy linguistic normality still exists. Pastiche is thus blank parody, a statue with blind eyeballs: it is to parody what that other interesting and

historically original modern thing, the practice of a kind of blank irony, is to what Wayne Booth calls the “stable ironies” of the eighteenth century.

(17)

But I would disagree with both Fiddian and Jameson, the former for not going far enough and the latter for going too far. I, like Fiddian, do believe that Linda 67 brings American culture in for criticism, that is, it does have a calling, a vocation, while at the same time employing something like pastiche in something like a postmodern way. It is perhaps post-postmodern. It is self-reflexive and ironic in relation to the genre but perhaps also to postmodern theorizing. Is it possible that Del Paso is parodying pastiche itself? While in purely formal respects, the novel might be seen to be a blank parody: it is no spoof, the genre is not treated satirically with any overt irreverence; but the thematic features point more to parody. What I want to argue is that the thematics and the formal elements contain certain parallels that when taken together, preclude the option of a blank parody in Jameson’s definition. But cannot one be postmodern, that is have the same self-reflexive, ironic position, resulting from the culture of late capitalism, while still maintaining some form of vocation? It need not be a grand totalizing utopian scheme to have some of the bite or humor of Jameson’s parody of the modernist aesthetic. On the other hand, some of this bite does not relegate it to historically outmoded forms of the type practiced by the national elite (bourgeoisie) of the nineteenth century; it certainly does not originate from that same sector. Interestingly, it is the “national” elite of Mexico which now operates in the post-national world of NAFTA and multinational corporations, while, after the fall of the lettered class, writers like Fernando del Paso can produce something like a national allegory that does not reference the same “nation” of the

national elite. But then again, it is not really a national allegory, it is more of an anti-postnational allegory; it is an allegory that bemoans the loss of a national spirit, a loss that has come as a result of the cosmopolitanism of globalization. Linda 67 stands at a crossroads in this respect, it occupies a third space and surely Bhabha's notion of otherwise-than-modern, his idea of the mimic man or Marie Louise Pratt's concept of parody as an art of selective appropriation in the "contact zone" are more fitting than either of Jameson's options. Of course Walter Mignolo's concept of locus of enunciation would place the text within the field of the postcolonial: a critique of modernity from the periphery.

What *is* clear is that the form of Linda 67, the degenerate simulation of a crime novel, works in concert with the thematic elements and that like Sorensen, the implied author of this crime novel has been corrupted by American culture. The idea of the novel itself (or the implied author) in identity crisis, lacking authenticity, lacking self-ownership, lacking a (moral/ethical) compass and full of mistakes provides an interestingly close parallel with the crises of the central character, David Sorensen. Baudrillard's concept of simulacra is a useful hinge upon which to hang these crises in Linda 67.

Despite all of the criticism of his difficulties in his work in general Baudrillard is very clear in laying out his notions of simulation, simulacra and hyperreality. In "The Precession of Simulacra" Baudrillard uses a misreading (or is it only the simulation of a misreading) of "Del rigor en la ciencia" by Borges as a jumping off point. But if Baudrillard misreads Borges it is only in that Baudrillard's notion of simulacrum and hyperreality (as a defining characteristic of the postmodern) is already fully present in

Borges. Though this only obliquely hinted at in “Del rigor en la ciencia”, a sort of poetic micro-short-story or poem in prose, it is more fully elaborated in the quite famous “Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius” where the (nightmarish?) idea of the map generating the territory is quite clearly presented, but where it is an encyclopedia that generates an entire world.

This is a topic that deserves separate treatment on its own so we will leave it for the time being; and because it was Baudrillard that brought these concepts into current theoretical discourse, we will continue to call it Baudrillard’s simulacra, simulation and hyperreal. In the essay “The Precession of the Simulacra” he explains:

Today the abstraction is no longer that of the map, the double, the mirror, or the concept. Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being, or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal. The territory no longer precedes the map, nor does it survive it. It is nevertheless the map that precedes the territory—*precession of simulacra*—that engenders the territory, and if one must return to the fable [of the map in “Del rigor en la ciencia”], today it is the territory whose shreds slowly rot across the extent of the map. It is the real, and not the map, whose vestiges persist here and there in the deserts that are no longer those of the Empire, but ours. *The desert of the real itself.* (1)

For Baudrillard, this loss of the real is the essence of the postmodern condition and for us it is the essence of Linda 67. This is the crisis of David Sorensen. Without solid origin, without a real territory to call home, his identity is a simulation, he is a simulacrum, generated by models of behavior and thought, even his crime is generated by models of

other crimes. And so too does this apply to the form of the novel. Is it a parody or is it a pastiche? As we argued above, it seems to occupy, like Sorensen himself, some in-between space. Leaving these two categories aside, it is clearly a simulation in the sense provided by Baudrillard above, it is generated by models, it is a novel generated by the map of a genre, and we argue here that this problem itself, in turn, is a simulation. We will discuss this last point more fully below, but before we continue let us clarify that Baudrillard is not claiming that in the world ruled by the precession of the simulacra that these simulacra and simulations are hiding reality. They are the new real (the hyperreal). If the generation of this real from models is the cause or mechanism that produces the postmodern then the essence of this condition is the loss of the division between reality and unreality. Baudrillard clarifies this in his piece:

In fact, even inverted, Borges's fable is unusable. Only the allegory of the Empire, perhaps, remains. Because it is with this same imperialism that present-day simulators attempt to make the real, all of the real, coincide with their models of simulation. But it is no longer a question of either maps or territories. Something has disappeared: the sovereign difference, between one and the other, that constituted the charm of abstraction. Because it is difference that constitutes the poetry of the map and the charm of the territory, the magic of the concept and the charm of the real. This imaginary of representation, which simultaneously culminates in and is engulfed by the cartographer's mad project of the ideal coextensivity of a map and territory, disappears in the simulation whose operation is nuclear and genetic, no longer at all specular or discursive. It is all of

metaphysics that is lost. No more mirror of being and appearances, of the real and its concept. No more imaginary coextensivity: it is genetic miniaturization that is the dimension of simulation. The real is produced from miniaturized cells, matrices, and memory banks, models of control—and it can be reproduced an indefinite number of times from these. It no longer needs to be rational, because it no longer measures itself against either an ideal or negative instance. It is no longer anything but operational [Emphasis mine]. (2)

How perfectly do these lines describe David Sorensen? He overtly employs rationalization but does so without being rational. But Sorensen is really embroiled in two crises, one which he is conscious of throughout the novel and the other that he only realizes at the very end. The first is his crisis of nationality, of non-territoriality, while the second is precarious position that this first places him in. Without the first, without psychological territorialization and self-sovereignty he succumbs to colonization by the models, of thought and behavior. Sorensen (as is the implied author) is colonized. He is colonized by Linda, by Chuck, by Bob Morrison, by Sheila Norman and though it is hinted at in the opening lines only in the final instance does he realize that he had become merely operational and realize the full consequences of that status.

How well do Baudrillard's lines describe formulaic fiction, pulp fiction, noir fiction—any form colonized by the empire of the market, the work of advertisers, the building of brand—and how well do they describe (even if by design) Linda 67? Is the novel not produced by miniaturized cells (stock characters), matrices (formal problems), memory banks (intertexts) and modes of control (a certain kind of narrator)?

And if Dave is subject to the empire of models, if he is susceptible to the same sort of power of suggestion which he thinks he only wields, so too is the narrator/implicit author of Linda 67. This becomes evident as the novel develops and is one of the indications of the self-conscious artifice that characterize its pages. It's not just that Del Paso is borrowing plot lines from other novels as Fiddian argues, but something far more unsettling is afoot: the narrator/implicit author seems to be stealing ideas from characters within the novel itself. An example of this is Dave inventing the idea that there were kidnappers, then that the kidnappers had knocked Linda out to subdue her and Gálvez's interesting question of how they are managing to feed her. Soon, the Vietnam Veteran appears claiming to have kidnapped Linda, knocked her out and to be sustaining her with a feeding tube (262). It is as though the implicit author is eavesdropping on the dialogue and then creating problems or answering questions at a later stage. The Vietnam Veteran, in a poetic mood, confirms this suspicion: "el caso es, el caso fue, que yo estaba allí para verte y te vi, que yo estaba allí para oírte, y te oí" (262). His function literally (and literarily) was to witness the event, that is the reason for his existence. The following line adds the ethical judgment and upholds the moral economy of the novel: "me mandó la casualidad, me mandó la Providencia, me mandaron las dos para descubrirte y que tu crimen no quedara sin castigo, para que no nada más así sin más ni más huyeras de la justicia humana y te largaras con los bolsillos reventando de dólares" (262) For the allegory to work, David cannot get away with his crime.

The technique of creating characters and letting them "write" the novel is not a new or radical idea, far from it. Neither could some sort of radical self-reflexive metafictional technique found in Unamuno's Niebla (where a character within the novel

rebels against the narrator/IMPLIED author) be considered ground breaking at this stage.

What makes Del Paso's inversion of this technique uncannily effective, like Sheila Norman's effort to have Dave kill Linda, is that it is merely suggested. It also makes it more intriguing. The only "proof" that it is indeed there is the existence of so many other subtle clues planted throughout the text.

Linda 67 is a novel that exists in the blurry line between chaos and order. Random chance, blunders and slips play an important role in the storyline. Despite Dave's meticulous planning, his plan to murder his wife, fake a kidnapping and collect ransom is foiled by chance occurrences and mistakes. He tells a reporter that his wife has been kidnapped and divulged the amount of the ransom, allowing the Vietnam veteran to extort the sum from him. Then, despite the methodical detective work of Inspector Gálvez, the case is inconclusive. It is only after he is mistakenly arrested for having the exact amount of the ransom in his bank account that evidence is found that truly incriminates him. He had forgotten to put the key back in the car before he pushed it over the cliff, and by putting it in his pocket, personally delivered it to the police, sealing his fate. These are merely the major functional errors within the storyline, those that give rise to the twists of the narrative; there are many other less significant ones here and there. But to match these slips, there are aberrations in content, typography and linguistics found throughout Linda 67 in significant enough numbers to erase any doubt to their intentional inclusion. The story is like a machine running on autopilot, a record or compact disc skipping, digital video pixelating as the image stalls; these "mistakes" foreground the textuality without the usual meta-fictional techniques and results in an uncanny sense of artificiality.

Errors are always a part of the genre; mistakes must be made, clues must be left. Returning to Chandler's "The Simple Art of Murder", we find allusions to a different category of error, errors in execution of the writing of the novel that leave the reader with something short of verisimilitude. In Linda 67 these errors abound as well, but interestingly they are not authentic slips, they are planted. We have already hinted at a couple of these instances above. Asking what Linda's kidnappers want for example: what else would the kidnappers want? It goes without saying, but not in this novel, that kidnappers want money (224). The fact that Dave does not speak French with the imposters in Bern, or find it odd that they don't speak French among themselves is another example of this type of shortcoming. They are just unrealistic enough to put the reader off, to break the spell of the narrative, to interrupt the flow.

Another class of errors continues this theme on the side of linguistics. But it is difficult to call them errors, for they range from non-standard forms to slight alterations. Examples of this category include the use of "gasolinería" in place of "gasolinera" (210, 335, etc.) and "everybody who is somebody" instead of "everyone who is anyone" or "anyone who is anyone" (92) and "Vick-Vaporub" for "Vicks Vaporub" (107). One could make the argument that these slight variations give an added sense of verisimilitude to the dialogue, although "gasolinería" is not accepted by RAE and the standard form "gasolinera" is much more common in Mexico, the former is used. Though the case for verisimilitude could be made, given the context it would be a stretch and in any case it could still be a criticism of the role of the media (in this case pulp fiction) in perpetuating denigration. These examples clearly fit into the pattern of imperfect duplication and culture in decay that we find running throughout the novel. And Del Paso is far from

unconcerned with such issues. In a April 6, 1997 article in Proceso, he complained that “no hay nada cómo la televisión, especialmente en México, para empobrecer el idioma.”

Then there are the irregularities in orthography. Again, the technique is as unsettling as it is subtle. It may take some time for the pattern to take hold, for the reader to realize that there are just a few too many slips to be unintentional. (And if it were unintentional then the all too real errors by the publisher would just be reinforcing the point made in throughout by Del Paso.) Art, imagination, creativity and the language itself will be denigrated in the face of the market model of efficiency and mass production that characterizes life in the United States. Unless we are speaking Slovak “¿Haló?” (228 and throughout) should be “¿aló?”, “pidó” (314 et al.) should be “pidió” and “le habló Olivia” (Dave’s dialogue 321) should clearly be “le habló a Olivia”. But these mistakes creep up on the reader, even someone who teaches Spanish language might skip over “¿Haló?” or missing personal “a” while reading a novel. It is intriguing because these are the same kinds of mistakes that students of the Spanish language make (or perhaps any language), they proceed forward and produce language based on limited patterns and incomplete models trying to get across the point, the product.

Other errors of omission and transposition are strewn throughout the text. “Nuca” (278) should be “nunca”, “BWM” (338) should obviously be “BMW”, “MCA” which stands for Make-up Art Cosmetics (246) should be “MAC” and as early as page seventeen the Yacht Harbor of San Francisco is misspelled “Yatch Harbor” (17 etc.), like MCA a spelling that is consistent throughout the novel. These typographical transpositions simulate simple mix-ups and find their parallel in the storyline when Dave confuses Olivia and Linda on a pair of occasions (108-9 and 198) and the impossibly

ridiculous mistakes of Inspector Gálvez calling Lagrange “Señor Sorensen” and Lagrange calling Gálvez “inspector Lagrange” within a few lines (275). Once again showing the strange relationship that the narrator/IMPLIED author have with the text, the narrator makes the same kind of mistake, calling Dave’s wife “Olivia” instead of “Linda”, and for the only time in the novel, draws attention to one of the mistakes: “Pero Dave no era una celebridad, y sabía que el solo hecho de haber asesinado a Olivia...¿a Olivia? Qué digo, a Linda, que el solo hecho de haber asesinado a Linda no le aseguraba que hicieran de su cuerpo y su cara una imagen de cera” (187). We see in this double parallel something like a series of Chinese boxes with the error of transposition at the heart of the story, opening up to the narrative frame with the narrator making the same kind of mistake and continuing the pattern as that level opens out onto the level of IMPLIED author and/or the publisher. These mistakes function to simultaneously draw attention to the various frames while paradoxically establishing identity between them. And of course, the momentum of the pattern opens out onto the frame of the reader and implies that at every one of these levels, the reader could very well be making his or her own mistakes.

To sum up what we have been arguing here: Fiddian claims that Linda 67 is an example of postmodern pastiche and uses Jameson to back up this claim. However, Jameson calls pastiche the postmodern form of parody, but a blank parody, a parody without the bite of a moral economy. We agree that there is something very much like parody or pastiche, but that at the same time there is a clear message in the novel, ergo it is no blank parody in Jameson’s postmodern sense. The novel is much closer to Mignolo’s definition of postcolonial.

The mistakes in the storyline, beginning with Dave's decision in his demoralized state to kill his wife and the mistakes in the form of the novel by the narrator/IMPLIED author point to degeneration of moral character on Sorenson's part and degeneration of literary form on the narrator/IMPLIED author's part. We have used Baudrillard's notion of simulation to join these two levels: both are merely operational simulations. Baudrillard is useful here because he allows us to momentarily escape the parody/pastiche binary set up by Jameson and because he allows for much more fluid interconnections between the orders of simulacra. The novel is not a pastiche, merely the simulation and pursuant parody of pastiche. The narrator/IMPLIED author has produced a pastiche, Fernando del Paso has produced a parody of that pastiche. This is relevant to the present study for it paints the *mise-en-scène* of the United States as a corrupting influence, both in terms of what David Sorensen has become as he loses touch with his Mexican identity, succumbing to a sort of neo-colonial tutelage; and in terms of what the form of the novel has become subject to "low-brow" tastes and market forces (ie. follow proven models to mass produce literature).

Tutelage and Elite Morality

Dave's relationship with his wife is strained and poisoned by his lack of control. Linda controls everything and in turn, everything they possess, the house, cars, art, furnishings and literally the shirt on Dave's back is the property of the senior Lagrange. This fact is brought forward as David visits his father in Cuernavaca and learns that he will inherit nothing, the remnants of the property had been sold to cover medical bills. His father is unaware of the distress this causes Dave:

Porque según Papá Sorensen, su hijo vivía en una maravillosa casa en San Francisco, era dueño de un BMW 850 que debía costar más de cien mil dólares, era el vicepresidente de una gran agencia de publicidad y estaba casado con una millonaria que, a su vez, era dueña de un Daimler Majestic de colección. Lo que no sabía Papá Sorensen es que ya no aguantaba a la agencia y que Linda ya no sabía, ella misma, si era o no millonaria, si lo había sido o si dejaría de serlo algún día: su padre la había amenazado con desheredarla por haberse casado con Dave y, para colmo, la casa y los dos coches estaban a nombre de él, de Lagrange. (28-29)

Even though he possessed all of the signs of extreme wealth, in actual fact, David owned nothing. This fact is reiterated several times in various ways throughout the novel setting up class distinction as an important motif. As Gálvez remarks to Dave: “Tener o no dinero establece diferencias en todos los ámbitos, ¿no es verdad?” (204).

Dave had first become accustomed to luxury in his youth. As the narrator informs us: “En pocas palabras, Dave tuvo una infancia y una adolescencia que transcurrieron en el lujo y en la abundancia, y que le hicieron creer que era rico y que siempre lo sería” (57). His father’s salary, and his parents penchant for holding nothing back in the attempt to best represent Mexico had provided him with a false sense of wealth which quickly vanished after his father’s early retirement from the foreign service. His marriage to Linda and her considerable allowance brings a return to the good life, but the relationship sours partly because, “era Linda la que controlaba hasta el último centavo de esa pensión. Ella decidía cuándo y dónde Dave se compraba su ropa, y de cuánto dinero podía disponer [...]” (29). It is not that Dave is “burdened by the trappings of civilized life” as

Fiddian has suggested, it is that he is demoralized by the lack of ownership that leaves him feeling counterfeit. “Había sido siempre engañado por todos. Había vivido, desde niño, en un mundo falso, lleno de mentiras” (23).

If Lagrange holds his daughter in a guardianship that keeps her in an extended child-like position, the same can be said for her relationship with David. This unidirectional circuit of power results in the decay of the marriage. Dave begins to hate his wife and suspects her of adultery. He reflects on the parallels with a childhood girlfriend: “A la novia del liceo la quería. A Linda ya no. Y en aquel entonces su novia, el compañero que la conquistó y él mismo, todos eran niños. Ahora él era un adulto y lo mismo Linda, a pesar de lo que ella había dicho: no quiero andar con un niño. Pero ella tuvo la culpa. Siempre lo trató como un niño, como un bebé” (102). According to Dave, it is the treatment devised from a pre-established judgment that molds the behavior not that he acted as a child and therefore Linda decided to treat him like one, if he became something like a child it is only because Linda consistently treated him as such: a self-fulfilling prophecy.

This child/adult comparison is important because it dovetails with the notion of tutelage. Tutelage is a part of the program of colonialism, a component of the civilizing mission which is the ideological justification for the unequal power relations that obtain in colonialism. It simply holds that, like a child who will one day develop into an adult, the colonized is not completely civilized, but can one day aspire to be so, with the guidance and assistance of the colonizer. It is a form of growing up, of maturation, of civilization under the careful guardianship of a superior being. In the Americas this has been played out in the name of Christianity in the colonial era, order and progress after

the wars of independence and the more recent variation of this latter slogan: development, democracy and free trade.

It is through the tutelary relationship that hate is bred, hate for the colonizer who degrades the native, hate for the colonized who lets himself be humiliated and which helps prop up the power structure, and self loathing for permitting the daily injustice to continue. The narrator underscores this by having Linda offer Dave money so that he might afford some champagne for a hypothetical girlfriend: “Dave titubeó dos segundos y aceptó el dinero. Nunca había odiado tanto a Linda. Pero nunca, tampoco, se había odiado tanto a sí mismo, por dejarse humillar así” (29). There is blowback however; it is the violence of the asymmetrical relationship in Dave’s marriage (that might represent any relationship of hegemony, the United States relationship with Mexico for example) within the context of familial violence rampant in media images that leads to Linda’s murder. As Edward Said has remarked “domination breeds resistance [...] the violence inherent in the imperial contest—for all its occasional profit or pleasure—is an impoverishment for both sides” (Culture 288).

In addition to the animosity that had built up, there had also been profit and pleasure for Dave in the relationship. The opening sections of Linda 67 are a litany of luxury goods and high dollar name brands. Luxury and excess is the theme and the tone is set from the first page. Dave scans his closet:

Había allí una impresionante colección de trajes y combinaciones de los casimires y materiales más finos, la mayor parte hechos a la medida por los mejores sastres de Milán y de Saville Row. Más de una vez, cuando los contemplaba, David pensaba: pobre Papá Sorensen, lo feliz que hubiera

sido con todos los trajes y camisas que tengo. Y con las corbatas: más de ciento cuarenta. Corbatas de seda acanalada de colores lisos compradas en Jermyn Street. Corbatas de brocado de la Place Vendôme, corbatas regimiento de Harrods y Pierre Cardin. Corbatas Bernini y Van Laak que Linda le había traído de Los Ángeles. En cuanto a las camisas, estaban hechas a su medida por el camisero de The Custom Shop, de Grant Avenue, y eran del mejor algodón egipcio.

So before the humiliation and hate set in Dave had a fair share of pleasure. The empire of the dollar is implied in this excerpt as well, as the finest luxury goods of Europe are funneled through the California shops. As we have mentioned before, in the absence of a rooted identity—of class, language or nationality—name brands and consumerism provide one way of constructing identity in a postnational modernity. But the name brands are flashed across the pages of Linda 67 far too often to document adequately here. In fact, few goods are ever referred to without reference to their brands. Linda's car is emblematic of this mania for identification (in fact it is the license plate of her car, another type of brand or identifying mark, that gives the novel its title). It is never "Linda's car" but always "Linda's celestial blue Daimler", even the color has its brand, its identity. It is always Dave's BMW, the house at Jones and Sacramento, the Klee, everything has its brand and everything has its place. All of these names and the implied concern with purity are markers of class, separating their owners from the middle class, making them conspicuously elite. Of course, class and coloniality buttress one another with a seeming naturalness. It is the imperial activity of collection--collection of territories, of subjects and of tribute that is echoed in the collection of brands and the

discourse that surrounds them. It is the proof of good taste, as Bourdieu has argued, that justifies the position of power.

Along with the branding of all that exists there is pure excess. Linda's fanatical attention to hygiene, the placement of every article in her house and the appropriate aroma for each room, the appropriate car for her husband all find a golden thread in excessive purity. It is a drawing of lines around dirt, the wrong mood, odors, territory and the banishment of that which does not meet standards of purity, which does not fit perfectly. This drive for perfect control is reflected upon: "Pero a veces todo parecía demasiado perfecto en esa casa. En la casa de Linda, no en la casa de Dave: él se había dado cuenta, quizás un poco tarde, que en esa casa nada le pertenecía, y que Linda no dejaba que nadie moviera un milímetro uno solo de los objetos" (52). There is excess purity and there is pure excess. The drive for perfection and the desire for collection lead to surplus. As Dave explains to Gálvez, "Lo que usted ve colgado, inspector, no es todo lo que tenemos. En la bodega hay otros cuadros que alternamos con éstos...no nos alcanzan las paredes" (203). The theme of excess is set out early on with a humorous passage that illustrates the rotation of the paintings:

Insegura de sus gustos y de su criterio, Linda prefería navegar con las corrientes de moda y, así, el Tamayo que estaba colgado encima de la chimenea fue a dar a la bodega por un tiempo indefinido cuando Linda colocó en su lugar un *early* Botero que nadie reconoció nunca porque el personaje allí pintado no era uno de esos gordos que a Dave le parecían inmundos, sino un muchacho moreno, delgado y semidesnudo, que tenía una camisa azul y un gallo en las manos. Todo parecía esa tela, menos un

Botero. Por lo mismo, en cuanto el padre de Linda accedió a sus deseos y le compró un Keith Haring, el Botero también fue a dar a la bodega. Pronto el Keith Haring fue sustituido por un cuadro de uno de los mejores exponentes del fotorrealismo: una pintura de Richard Estes que ilustraba el Museo Guggenheim de Nueva York, como si estuviera visto desde la ventana de un edificio cercano. La fidelidad era tan asombrosa que daba la sensación perturbadora de tener una casa en San Francisco, con una ventana que daba a Nueva York. (53)

This excerpt contains so much: problems of identity and of simulation, the conflict between individual tastes and social pressures, but here we would like to emphasize, like the typical Boteros themselves, the idea of surplus. In her quest to perfect the image of her self as reflected in her décor, expensive original paintings are rotated like so many trading cards, and are collected in such numbers that a storage room is required for the overflow. The crucial problem for Linda is relating the correct message about herself, not having the financial means to acquire the art. The ironic tones radiating from the narrator in the above passage are consistent with Dave's soured perspective on Linda. It is yet another harsh reminder of the financial gulf that separates Linda and himself, reminds him of his subordinated position in their relationship. The difference of class is further accentuated by the rejoinder from Gálvez: "Los envidio. Yo sólo tengo *posters* y tarjetas postales [...]" responding to Dave's attempt to pass off the Lagrange household as his own (203).

If excess wealth is one of the new sins, it is only one of the many to which the well-to-do Americans in Linda 67 do not give any thought. As Sheila Norman remarks,

with what might be the slogan of so many characters in the novel, “A mí me tienen sin cuidado los problemas de conciencia” (95). She was referring to O.J. Simpson’s alleged murder of his wife. What is essential to note is that she condemned the murder, not for the inhumanity of the act itself, but for the stupidity implied by the sloppiness of the killer. Indeed, and in keeping with the x-ray function of the genre, the novel is in large part an indictment of the alternate morality exhibited by the elites of Linda 67. A minor thread that questions the moral fiber of the American culture is the rather open use of illicit drugs. Early in the novel, as adolescents, Chuck and Dave are offered Marijuana, Cocaine and Angel Dust on the streets of San Francisco. They, of course, refuse to partake. The narrator’s line “Nunca probaron nada” contains within its terseness and double negative absolutes an implied judgment: they were on a moral level above those that would try the drugs (61). Later, at a party Dave leaves to avoid the awkwardness of declining the offer of cocaine:

Salieron a la una de la mañana de la fiesta, poco antes de que los Harris hicieran el acostumbrado y generoso reparto de pequeñas dosis de cocaína a sus amigos adictos. Linda había dejado la coca y la mariguana cuando nació su obsesión por la salud, y Dave, por su parte, no compartía ni las virtudes ni los vicios de una clase social alta a la que parecía pertenecer, pero a la que nunca había pertenecido. (100)

Here the condemnation is overt and extended not only to the “amigos adictos”, or those friends that also use cocaine, but rather to the “adictos amigos” implying that all of his friends and all those in the upper class shared the vice. But that really is what the

discourse on morality points to: a condemnation of the moral character of the American elite.

So much of the figure of Linda parallels that of the white American female characters of Isabel Allende's El plan infinito. Samantha, Gregory Reeve's blonde, aristocratic first wife, also noted for her bronzed, tanline-less skin was certainly cut from the same mold as Linda. And like Samantha before her, Linda's sexuality comes in for criticism as a key feature in her development. Much ink is spilt describing Linda's sexual etiquette and prolific promiscuity. All of this serves to vilify her and build the case for Dave's anger. The motif of her promiscuity is introduced with her character as she and Dave move quickly from meeting for the first time in a fender-bender, to lunch, to a hotel for sex. As noted above, she showed no hesitancy in sunbathing nude in front of all onlookers on Chuck's yacht and had unusual sexual practices such as keeping the wireless phone with her so she could carry on conversations with other men while having sex with Dave. The dirty pillow talk and her desire to have sex in unusual times and places and finally her affair with Jimmy Harris help the reader understand the more intimate details behind Dave's growing discontent with his relationship and to legitimate his taking of a lover.

To clarify that this is an American phenomenon, the behavior of Linda is directly contrasted, point for point (just as Samantha's foil is Carmen in El plan infinito), by Olivia, the Mexican flight attendant who Dave met while flying back to the United States from Mexico. Robin Fiddian has detailed this comparison well and has argued that in doing so Fernando del Paso is recycling structural devices from Carpentier's Los pasos perdidos in a sort of postmodern pastiche. We feel the comparison is correct. In fact, one

of the initial theses of this project was that all of the authors examined in this study are following closely in Carpentier's path, but in many more respects than the good girl/bad girl dichotomy. As discussed above, we believe it is incorrect to locate Linda 67 within the field of the postmodern pastiche as it clearly contains a critical program. And rather than seeing Linda/Olivia pairing as a pastiche of the Mouche/Rosario binary on the individual character level our reading envisions these figures as part of an allegorical system of decolonization, whereby the individual characters also serve as figures for nations, regions or cultures. These binary pairs are part of a long running tradition within Spanish American literature and has surfaced in works as remote as Sab and Cecilia Valdez where the *morena* possessed all of the positive aspects and the *rubia* was somewhat lacking. Through this symbolism these works sought to celebrate "lo autóctono" as Martí has phrased it. Alternatively, works which sought to praise the order and progress that outside influence (English or American) could bring, like Amalia, inverted this racial symbolism attaching all the positive attributes to the lighter, whiter *rubia*. The significant difference between these earlier novels and the later ones is that they come out of the period of nation building, whereas Los pasos perdidos comes at a time of transition into, and the Americanist authors are writing from the florescence of, a post-national period of late-modernity, postmodernity, radical modernity or whatever name one feels comfortable assigning it, but of which a key feature is the decentralization of the nation-state in the face of the power of multinational capital. As we have discussed, in Linda 67, David Sorensen is a figure of this phenomenon, but he is caught in a double-bind. He lacks the ontological security of a well defined nationality and he lacks the financial means to override this shortcoming; he is multinational without the

capital. But it is Linda and her elite, white American cohort, contrasted with the family oriented, ethically concerned Mexican Olivia, which figure forth United States culture as morally decadent; or following from Sheila Norman, outside of moral standards; or following from the narrator's comments, with their own particular moral code.

Seen from this perspective, it is clear that the contrast between Linda and Olivia is much more than a postmodern pastiching of Carpentier's Mouche/Rosario dyad. Like the narrator of Los pasos perdidos, David Sorensen is caught between two worlds. There is no denying that in this regard and in using the two women to represent different cultures, consciously or not, Fernando del Paso is following closely in a pattern developed by Carpentier, but he applies it in a different context to a different historical situation. Though it takes place in the United States, Linda 67 is clearly concerned with Mexico. Where Carpentier used a thinly veiled unanimous New York City to contrast with his generalized Latin American setting, Del Paso is much more forthcoming. The vagueness worked in Carpentier's case because he sought approach more universal human themes. On the political side, he is questing after that elusive true identity of lo americano, but it meshes seamlessly with the quest for true human identity. David Sorensen's crisis is much more specific: that of nationality. Is he French, is he English, is he American or is he indeed Mexican? Another considerable difference is that Dave finds his Rosario—Olivia—in the heart of urban Mexico, rather than in some remote primordial location. Where Carpentier suggests the problem lies in the long count of the years, implying that it was the European colonization of the Third World that is what must be considered, Linda 67 presents the current project of globalization as the primary threat. Fernando del Paso is working very much in the present, within the very specific problem of Mexican

identity in the face of enormous financial and cultural influence emanating from the United States. Undoubtedly the ratification of NAFTA as Del Paso was writing the novel would have brought that problem sharply into focus. Though Mexico can stand in metonymy for Spanish America just as the United States can stand in metonymy for the former colonial powers that make up the cocktail of David's identity, Linda 67 is directly concerned with the relationship, specifically the hegemonic relationship of the United States with Mexico. To a large degree it is a morality tale of Mexicans getting sucked into the culture of international capital, specifically the cultural deracination that can occur with American influence. Following the logic of the novel, this influence threatens to strip them of their cultural (and financial) ownership, language, food, etc.. Of course, this is what makes California such an interesting setting. It is a place where all of this has already occurred, though in a different era and by different means and where the cultural battle between Mexican-Americans and mainstream Americans is constantly being reenacted. This is hinted at early in the novel. Speaking of the neighborhood where David and Linda lived: "De hecho, Nob Hill fue uno de los resultados de la profunda transformación que sufrió el pueblo mexicano de Hierbabuena, a causa de los miles de aventureros que llegaron entre los años de 1849 y 1850, atacados por la fiebre del oro [...]" (48). Gold fever and building luxurious palaces over the ruins of the Mexican town not only takes us back to the nineteenth century but to the fall of Tenochtitlan as well, it is the conquest all over again. But the new conquest is not the conquest of territory, the effort is directed at the colonization of minds and practices. The extent of the effectiveness of this new conquest is illustrated by a passage that illustrates the financial depths that the Sorensen family had sunk to, spending the last dime contradicting José

Martí's vision for a new continental pride in "Nuestra América": "Le alcanzó, todavía, para pagar la educación de su único hijo varón en el Colegio Alemán [...] y después en Yale. Cuando nació David Sorensen Armendáriz, el abuelo David Isaías estaba arruinado. Pudo, sí, morir en el Hospital Inglés y ser enterrado en el Panteón Francés" (28).

The America of Linda 67 is a place of violence with a culture ruled by mass communications, excess consumption, a sharply racially based class system and an uncompromising drive for riches. Dave's activity as ad man stands at the crossroads of the commodification of entertainment, the development of brand names and the commodification of the public. We have argued that the model of mass communications and its attendant technologies are shown to breach the limits of their intended channels. The violence of sensationalist news generates its own violence, it becomes a model for future violence. Video and telecommunication contracts the world, breaking up the traditional relations of time and space. Moreover, the logic of these systems becomes so naturalized, that their patterns substitute those of the supposed masters. They are internalized so that there is a loss of the difference between, say, Dave's creative work as an advertising executive and his creative work as a murderer/extortionist. A new imagined community of greed and violence replaces the old.

We have also argued that the logic of these systems take the next step away from invading the mental matrices of the characters of the novel and in fact, penetrate the structure of the novel as well. At one level the use of telephone calls and photographs as structuring devices for dialogue or narration merely lends thematic support, but at another level there is a more radical effect. Entering into a tradition of popular fiction, the crime

novel, the novel as form suffers a fall from high culture to low culture. The non-standard language that is so characteristic of the genre, that gives it its gritty realism; the antihero that guides us, stumbling through the pages; all have the same effect on the novel that mass communications has on Dave the character: degradation. The non-standard language of the characters gives way to non-standard spelling and a host of mistakes in form that simulate automated system failures. The production of art from set formulae results not in mechanistic perfection, but mechanistic awkwardness.

We have further shown that this loss of artistic integrity is echoed by the loss of moral integrity in the storyline. Despite San Francisco being famous for its cosmopolitanism, there are effectively only two social groups represented in Linda 67, the elite white Americans and the voiceless poor Mexican-Americans, “chicanas” in the novel, who are only represented indirectly. Dave, Chuck, Gálvez and Olivia are liminal figures who demonstrate different positions within or responses to this binary division. Linda and the other white Americans are painted as wealthy, vice-ridden and perverse. It is their alternative moral code which colonizes Dave’s mind, much as do the techniques of advertising and the violent images of the headlines, leading to a violent example of blowback in the murder/kidnapping of his wife.

But another major part of the problem is Dave’s personal crisis of identity—unrooted cosmopolitanism. He is one step too far removed from any solid basis of race, class or nationality. It is this crisis that puts him in the precarious position from which he falls, helped over the brink, by Linda, by Sheila Norman, by Jimmy Harris and by Bob Morrison. This is the factor that betrays Linda 67 of being just as much about Mexico as it is about the United States. As an allegory of some of the perils of globalization, Dave

represents a Mexico dispossessed of its language, culture and territory by way of the cultural hegemony of the United States. Just as Dave was put into a position of colonial tutelage under Linda in the psychological level, the political level posits that Mexico could be put in a similar relationship with the United States.

But dealing with the problem in this way, with these terms (cultural imperialism waged by one nation over another), could obscure some basic truths. Perhaps Carpentier got it right when he left New York City anonymous and his Eden a generic Spanish American backwater. As we can see from the study of Linda 67, like Novela negra con argentinos and El plan infinito before it, most of the criticism aimed at American culture is better aimed at the larger cultural framework of modernity. Suggestive selling and brand development are not techniques that developed organically from the American masses. There is nothing inherent in baseball or apple pie that permits them to be marketed and mass produced. The problem is not that the American people are bent on controlling the world, it is that its institutions, developed in, with, and in turn developing modernity, look to reproduce themselves and to expand. The problem is not a racial problem as is often suggested by the consistent references to light colored eyes and blond hair, but a historical problem. The problem is not that the United States attempts to dominate Spanish America because it is morally deficient, the problem is that more or less born of modernity, the United States was better suited to thrive in it than Spanish American states, which had their roots in a quasi feudalistic fiefdoms and went through more than three hundred years of colonial rule before shrugging off the Spanish imperial yoke. The problem is how the Spanish American states engage with modernity. The instrumentality (or utilitarianism) that Rodó so famously criticized American culture for

is not really all that American—it is a facet of modernity. Dave’s identity crisis, as are the different nations which provide him with the problem of choice, is a problem of modernity. His calculated thought and reliance on expert knowledge (in his case gleaned from the advertising world) are also symptomatic of modern behavior. In Modernity and Self Identity Anthony Giddens has this to offer:

In the post-traditional order of modernity, and against the backdrop of new forms of mediated experience, self-identity becomes a reflexively organised endeavour. The reflexive project of the self, which consists in the sustaining of coherent, yet continuously revise, biographical narratives, takes place in the context of multiple choice as filtered through abstract systems. The more tradition loses its hold, and the more daily life is reconstituted in terms of the dialectical interplay of the local and the global, the more individuals are forced to negotiate lifestyle choices among a diversity of options. Of course, there are standardizing influences too—most notably, in the form of commodification, since capitalistic production and distribution form core components of modernity’s institutions. Yet because of the “openness” of social life today, the pluralisation of contexts of action and the diversity of “authorities”, lifestyle choice is increasingly important in the constitution of self identity and daily activity. Reflexively organized life-planning, which normally presumes consideration of risks as filtered through contact with expert knowledge, becomes a central feature of the structuring of self-identity.

(5)

This quote from Giddens supports the claim that rather than being endemic to United States culture, the constellation of motifs that are played with in the pages of Linda 67 (the organization of thought, the commodification, the break down of traditional social mores, even the existence of the nation-states themselves), are components of life under modernity. Rather than being a recent development it is an intensification of the project that was undertaken with the Enlightenment, the breaking up of the traditional orders: of the organization of knowledge, commerce and government. The real culprit of Dave's fall is not United States culture; it is the condition of modernity which cuts him off from tradition.

Excess, Consumption and Identity in the Symbolic System of
Donde van a morir los elefantes by José Donoso

Donde van a morir los elefantes was published in 1995, the year before José Donoso himself passed away. It tells of a Chilean professor of literature, Gustavo Zuleta, who relocates to the fictional Mid-Western college town of Saint Jo where he takes up a position on the faculty of the local university. Through his interactions with fellow faculty members, a pair of Chinese graduate students, the general undergraduate student body and Ruby, with whom he embarks on an extra-marital romantic adventure, the reader is provided with an exploration of United States cultural life. Caught between two cultures, with half a mind on his newborn son in Chile and the other half gradually being seduced by the American Way of Life, the coincidence of his wife's arrival, her disgust with the scene and a multiple-homicide campus shooting finally breaks the spell and sends Gustavo running for home where he begins working on a novel based on his experiences which we are apparently reading.

Chronologically, Donde van comes on the heels of the other novels in this study and in some ways it engages in dialogue with them. Many of the images of United States culture that we find in Luisa Valenzuela's Novela negra con argentinos, Isabel Allende's El plan infinito and Fernando del Paso's Linda 67: historia de un crimen, surface again in Donde van. As is clear by this point, these recurring images or thematic units make up a sort of vocabulary. Not counting the first line cum paragraph that inhabits an extradiegetic meta-narrativistic frame, the references to of excess, consumption, low culture, ignorance, coloniality and violence, are found in the opening line of the story, prefiguring the centrality of these motifs to the novel:

Los cuatro disparos que Gustavo Zuleta no oyó—si su atención no hubiera estado subyugado por la bulimia de la Ruby, que devoraba un rascacielos de helados multicolores, los habría oído pese al estrépito de la cocina y los decibeles del rock ambiental—fueron los del triple asesinato, seguidos del balazo con que se suicidó el culpable: resultó ser un estudiante chino de altas matemáticas que Gustavo había conocido en esa pequeña universidad norteamericana, perdida en las praderas del Medioeste. (15)

The four shots serve as a metonymic figure of the violence as pervasive in American society and linked, therefore as a natural extension, to its foreign policy. In “Academic Relations and Latin American Fictions,” Lucille Kerr rightly points out that The Chinese graduate students, are a metaphor for the tension between identity and difference and with what seems a nod to Said’s Orientalism, that they are the ideal Oriental, the ideal Other. Given this it is surprising that she does not connect this more directly to Said and Foucault and examine the relationships of images of otherness with power. Taking on board the totality of recurring images and themes in the novel, the Chinese mathematicians should also be viewed as a figure of coloniality, of bringing the margins to the center, America bringing “possessions” under control. At the same time they signal the shortage of American intellectual power, especially in their field, that of prime numbers, which seems to defy a rigid Western rationality. This also ties them to the theme of ignorance or anti-intellectualism that has its roots in the pan-Americanists of the late 19th and early 20th century. Gustavo’s ignorance of the violent act in his immediate vicinity, like the rest of the student body at the university, stands in for a generalized lack of what is construed to be real, serious knowledge. Like Gustavo, who is

distracted by the spectacle that is Ruby, America is distracted by its own spectacles and obsessed with its own idiosyncrasies and so remains oblivious to the surrounding world.

Looking back to the above quotation, Ruby does not merely eat the ice cream or enjoy the ice cream, she devours it. This unbridled alimentation does not only carry with it the idea of lack of control, lack of will power or virtue that it has at least since the time of Homer, but this act, Ruby's consumption stands for the consumption of the society, of an American culture and economy built, not on production, but almost entirely on consumption. Bulimia, the skyscraper of ice cream (the skyscraper adding an extra element of American-ness) and Ruby herself are all figures for overabundance. Ice cream, already a luxury, is present in luxurious quantity; bulimia, one of those especially American diseases, first requires a certain level of disposable income, then over-consumption and finally complete waste as the food is expelled before it can be digested; Ruby, her obesity, her body, is throughout the novel linked so closely to America itself in all of its wealth and expanse, is a new Columbia that allegorical figure of the spread of civilization across North America, the personification of the land, the nation, its potential and its problems.

As we have seen in previous chapters, the American romantic interest of the Latin American (or in the case of Allende's Gregory Reeves: Latin Americanized) male protagonist has been used as a more or less obvious allegorical figure for the United States as a whole. Features of Samantha, Shanon from El plan infinito and Linda from Linda 67, are readily extended to American culture and society. Or, to restate from a different perspective, Samantha, Shanon and Linda are all treated as if they somehow were representative figures of the American populace and are contrasted with equally

representative figures of Latin American populace. This is certainly the case with Ruby in Donde van. In fact, while in Allende's version, the allegory must be dug out of the text, and it is only slightly more overt in Fernando del Paso's Linda 67, Ruby is so often juxtaposed with the landscape, compared to America itself, and contrasted with Gustavo's Chilean wife Nina in Donoso, that it could be difficult to see this as anything but an openly displayed, direct allegory. Like the others before her, Ruby is represented as the extreme racial other of the "typical" Latin American: like Samantha, Shanon and Linda she is fair skinned with the requisite blonde hair and blue or green eyes (Ruby interestingly oscillates between blue and green). Her racialization, her blondeness, is somewhat accentuated by the word play contained in her name. Ruby is remarkably close to rubia, the Spanish word for blonde which also carries with it the implication of very light skin pigmentation. Her name also fits into a loose system of The Wizard of Oz references—tornados, Ruby and ruby slippers, Maud and the witch, Jeremy and the wizard, etc.--but little can be made of these aside from perhaps the similar ending in which Gustavo, like Dorothy, realizes that "there's no place like home" and quickly returns there. But more than any of this, "la Ruby" as it is always found in the text is clearly "la rubia", she is white, blonde, she is America.

Excess, also attached closely with Ruby and her obesity, is one of the more salient recurring motifs in Donde van. If the comparison, juxtaposition and recurrent scenes of overabundance had not been assimilated by the reader into a pattern of thought by the first quarter of the novel, a monologue by Marcelo Chiriboga, fictional Latin American novelist, certainly does so:

Y sin embargo, una chiquilla como ésta, tan inmensa, tan conmovedora, de dimensiones norteamericanamente superlativas, bueno, a pesar de que uno la ame con locura no puede dejar de darse cuenta: ella encarna el exceso, la avidez, el surplus yanqui del que nosotros, hambrientos, nos apoderamos mediante el robo, los negocios turbios, la venta de los bienes nacionales. (91)

In another passage, Gustavo compares his to Marcelo's view of Ruby, again calling attention to the allegorical function of Ruby and elucidating some of the dangers associated with a limited appreciation:

como lo que siente un latinoamericano frente a Estados Unidos, por ejemplo, tan enorme, rico y envidiado. Pero ese sentimiento era tan endeble que podía transformarse, a la vuelta de una esquina, en desvalorización por tanto surplus consumible y adquirible... y también descartable y reciclable, para que personas menos pudientes tuvieran acceso a él. (154)

In addition to further developing one of the main patterns running through the novel these two fragments do more pointedly than any of the other passages, is to concretize the allegory, to articulate overtly the underlying imagery, to help link, directly, the obesity of Ruby with the large geographical size of the continental United States and its relative wealth and abundance of natural resources. The text, very much in line with the spirit of superabundance, is itself teeming with examples of excess from beginning to end. The excessive corporal mass of Ruby is also closely linked to the masses in general. This loop completes the allegorical circle, equating Ruby with the United States with the American

public. The student body, the youth, represents the new American culture at large, a low culture typified by excess consumption, broken free from any ties to tradition and links to a productive past. Surveying the scene of the hotel lobby, on his first day in his new American college town Gustavo Zuleta is confronted with excess:

Divisó a algunas enormes muchachas, infladas como personajes-globo de Disneylandia: groseras y delicadas a la vez, limpias, frescas, blancas. Un espectáculo típicamente norteamericano, supuso: todo el volumen de esa carne risueña de hoyuelos rebasando los shorts mínimos, toda la opulencia de aquellas ancas cimbreándose, la piel inflada susurrando en la intimidad caliente, seguramente húmeda, de sus muslos al caminar. Estas muchachas, albas como pan a punto de dorarse, cubrirían con amplias camisetas sus pechos libertinos, agitados por el apetito de la mirada de sus interlocutores. Evocó la virtuosa menudez de Nina, su esqueleto de jilguero. (39)

The contrast is taken to classificatory extremes. In what will become an established pattern with an almost countless number of similar comparisons, Gustavo's Chilean wife and thereby Chile is compared to American women and thereby the United States. Extending the comparison Zuleta recalls that his wife: "Pesaba apenas cuando la levantaba en sus brazos para llevarla, a veces riendo, hasta su estrecha cama de El Quisco: Nina pertenecía a otra estirpe animal, una especie desprovista de olores, y su pecho no acezaba como una máquina con la presencia de otros" (39).

Excess is in itself a relative term, therefore the examples of American excess, though illustrative enough, ultimately are dependent upon these external Latin American

comparisons to achieve and highlight the intended level of the grotesque. But the Chilean examples which serve as the point of comparison serve as symmetrical counterpoints, themselves marked versions, marked for their lack, for the estrechez, for their meagerness, rather than as a baseline of normalcy. This positioning leads to the conclusion that like the examples themselves the excess wealth on the one hand is more or less directly proportional and more or less directly related to the scarcity on the other. As we saw with Valenzuela's Novela negra con argentinos, the concept of Americanness and world-system theory posited by Ánibal Quijano and Immanuel Wallerstein is an intertext (29-31).

As indicated by the opening lines featuring Ruby devouring a tower of multicolored ice cream, many of the images of American excess are related to the kinds and quantities of foods that are readily available and voraciously consumed by both Ruby and the student body at Saint Jo. Looking at the adjectives that color Gustavo's first impressions of the student body this becomes apparent, first they are "gordos y gordas", they eat popcorn out of bags that are "gigantescas", the ice cream servings are "descomunales" and the pizzas are "colosales" (38-39). His impressions are verified for him by Marcelo Chiriboga who warns him: "Vuélvete, antes de que sea demasiado tarde y ya no sepas prescindir de esta dieta de placebos engordadores y te conviertas tú también en cadáver de elefante" (100). But it is his wife Nina, unknowingly the frequent mental counterpoint to Ruby's excess and therefore a fitting symbolic spokeswoman to bring the discourse on excess to an emphatic climax. The trio visits a local "MacDonald's" where Nina shares Gustavo's initial perception, but cannot hide her repulsion:

se horrorizó ante la dimensión de los platos, el espesor de la masa, el cerro de papas fritas. ¡No aguantaba más tanta gorda, tantos hombres-montaña, tanto pernil húmedo enfundado en shorts diminutos, tantos castillos de helado púrpura chorreando salsa de plástico color de chocolate! (312)

She continues, tapping into the darker side, or one of the dark sides, of such disproportionate portions, the attendant waste: “Todo es tan grande. Hay tanto de más. Mira cómo pasan los platos de vuelta, a medio comer. ¿Qué hacen con tanto de sobra? ¿Lo botan? ¿Basura? ¿Lo queman todo, lo venden, lo reciclan? Seguro que aquí no hay monjitas adonde mandarlo...¿Que hacen con todo lo que sobra?” (313).

The portrayal of the superabundance of food is one of most consistent images contrasting the relative wealth of the United States to Chile, Latin America or a generic Third World. Another important figure of excess, and perhaps more seriously, a symbol of Gustavo’s growing comfort with excess, is the conspicuously opulent house that he decides to rent. The house also fits into the Wizard of Oz scheme, taking the place of the quested-after emerald city, while its color suggests the yellow brick road. Ruby (slippers) accompanies him on the protracted search, which takes up the greater part of the novel as he makes friends and overcomes obstacles, for a suitable house. By the end of the journey, Gustavo has accustomed himself to little luxuries and feels that he deserves the house. His only worry is that his colleagues might judge him as pretentious. Enter Nina. His Chilean better half, as prefigured by her reaction to the extra large portions served in the “MacDonald’s” episode, finds the ostentation of the yellow house repulsive. Fittingly, it is here Nina, so often a figure for Chile itself, who evokes the comparison with their home country:

En Chile tenía su propio espacio, sus alumnos, sus colegas, sus publicaciones, sus primas, su mamá, sus hermanas y cuñadas, y su propiedad sin pretensiones en El Quisco. Y ahora Gustavo le venía con esta absurda mansión en un país descomunal, donde todo el mundo era rico a una escala que ignoraba al ser humano y constituía una antesala para transformarlo todo en desperdicio.

--¿Qué quieres hacer?

--No sé. No sé. Todavía no sé. No me apures. El apuro también es parte de la deshumanización. Déjame tranquilizarme. Quiero ver a mi hijo, primero que nada. (316)

McMurray has argued that the houses in Donoso's literary imagination function as symbols of the "false family" or the loss of the family as a fundamental human institution (35). Though he had not had the opportunity to read Donde van when he wrote his study on Donoso, it seems to hold true here as well. The image of the enormous, and empty, house consistently causes Nina to think of her family. Everytime she is confronted with the yellow house, she is reminded of her son, and of her family members that would not be able to help her care for him. It is as if in this case the physical size of the house stands in a direct relation to the physical space that separates her, in the United States, and her family at home. Her goodbye letter to Gustavo, announcing her return to Chile, once again enumerates the complaints found in the excerpt above. Size, isolation, solitude all figure prominently in her view of America, but it is the "obesidad generalizada" that refers us back to the food and to Ruby and the college students. Obesity is the nexus that connects the motif of American excess with that of voracious empty consumption.

As we have demonstrated the discourse on American excess in Donde van is expressed through frequent references to the amount of food in abundant supply and the quantities consumed by the American youth, and the amount of pure waste that results. This is just as frequently contrasted with the relative scarcity of the Third World, Latin America and specifically, Gustavo Zuleta's home country of Chile. Nina and Ruby are the figures that personify each of these discourses: Nina and her thinness standing metaphorically for Chile; and Ruby with her obesity for the United States. It is this obesity that directly connects the theme of excess with the closely related theme of consumption. They are closely related but not intellectually indivisible. Excess has to do with the ability to achieve and maintain such an abundance while consumption deals with the willingness or the appetite to utilize (or waste) that superabundance. There is no doubt that the two concepts fit hand in glove and it is hardly surprising that they function so in the text. The superabundance of food and its subsequent over-consumption is a figure employed frequently by Donoso in Donde van, which reinforces and weaves together other less developed strands of discourse that nonetheless share a certain family resemblance.

From the first lines, Ruby, her obesity, what she eats and how she eats it signal the discourse on American consumption. "Los cuatro disparos que Gustavo Zuleta no oyó—si su atención no hubiera estado subyugado por la bulimia de la Ruby, que devoraba un rascacielos de helados multicolores [...]" (15). The bulimia, the ice cream, that the ice cream would be multicolored and that Ruby devours it: all of these items are symbolically if not concretely related to issues of consumption and consumerism. Ice cream is a luxury, which provides very little necessary alimentation, with or without

irony it can be said to be full of empty calories. It is consumed for pleasure, as part of a social (or personal) rite, it is a distraction, it is entertainment. And all of this can be said of many of the kinds of foods that are conspicuously consumed by the Americans throughout Donde van.

Ice cream is only one of the foods that figure forth American consumption and consumerism. If we recall the first scene of American life that Gustavo witnesses, we will recall that his attention so often focused on the food:

devorando palomitas de maíz que sacaban de gigantescas bolsas de papel [...] lengüeteando las descomunales boñigas de helados de frambuesa que las máquinas evacuaban en cucuruchos de galleta, o devorando cuñas de pizza colosales, enajenados todos en su burbujeante parloteo o coqueteo [enajenados from the impending danger of the announcement on the loudspeaker], [...] los jeans tironeados no a causa de escenas como las que iba a desencadenar el huracán, sino porque así lo dictaba la moda. (38)

This fragment is drawn, and significantly so, from his very first impressions of the student body at Saint Jo, his new American university. What is presently most important is to notice the kinds of food which draw Gustavo's attention. Again we find the ice cream that featured in the opening lines of the novel, but here it is accompanied by other foods which taken together as a group make a stronger impact, and a clearer function if it were missed at first glance. Again the size, the excess, is important, but it works in concert with other descriptors to achieve the scene of gluttonous consumption and immediate gratification. The giant bags of popcorn, enormous swirls of ice cream, and huge slices of pizza are only one half of the equation. How they are consumed is equally

as important. The fact that they are not merely eaten but devoured sets a completely different tone, emphasizing the consumption as well as the product consumed. This will to devour, as well as the word devour, is portrayed consistently throughout the novel.

There is plenty of evidence in the pages of Donde van to support a multi-tiered reading of the significance of the recurring scenes of gluttonous consumption. On the individual/psychological level, as witnessed by the story of Ruby's adolescence, the consumption of food functions as a defense mechanism to shut out the harsh realities of a difficult personal environment. Ruby, we learn is subjected to a forced abortion, after which she begins to eat to comfort herself.

O robaba comida de la pulpería, o sobras de otras casuchas como la nuestra, o le arrebatava a mi hermana menor su bolsa de palomitas de maíz, o en la penumbra del alba interceptaba a un compañero más pequeño que marchaba a la escuela, para robarle su merienda sin fijarme si era buena o mala, si la comida estaba fría o caliente, o ya semipodrida. Engullía, engullía, engullía, para consolarme, para acariciarme, para hartarme. Porque estar harta era mi única fuente de placer y seguridad, y el placer sólo podía procurármelo, yo a mí misma, con la comida. Engordaba casi voluntariamente. Era la perfecta venganza contra mis padres. (270)

Ruby's difficult surroundings, trauma filled familial relationship and the ensuing over consumption of food closely parallel the story of Judy Reeves in Isabel Allende's El plan infinito. Judy, sexually abused by her father and bullied by the neighborhood kids, begins to eat voraciously as well. Her consumption and ensuing obesity seems to be derived from a desire on the one hand to gain physical size to physically protect herself and on

the other hand a source of psychological comfort. Another interesting nexus can be found between these two women. Both have relationships with Hispanic men. In Ruby's case she is forbidden to see her boyfriend and is forced to have an abortion, which in turn leads to her gorging and obesity. Judy's obesity on the other hand is a protection against a traumatic wound which is only truly healed when she finally marries a Hispanic man. Her habit and her pounds then give way to reveal the beauty of her youth.

Ruby offers a dramatic example of consumption as self-defense when she is spurned by Gustavo at a dinner party. She responds by gorging herself while the others, the Latin Americans, look on:

Desde afuera, al otro lado de la vitrina que cerraba el restaurante y excluía al puñado de comensales de la terraza, Gustavo observó a la repugnante pareja de obesos engullendo. La Ruby, su atención fija en el veloz exterminio de la redondela amarilla y de su montaña de oro sangriento, creía que iba a encontrar bajo toda esa comida, y después de toda su avidez, la plenitud que hasta ese momento le había sido esquiva; esa quimera la condenaba a comer más y más, sola y cabizbaja y llena de ira. (175)

Gustavo, reflecting on the scene, realizes its function as a defensive reflex, but still can not avoid the social and symbolic resonance:

Era un nuevo panorama de la injusticia, un pabellón izado en honor de sus soberbias ancas de potranca. Qué difícil encontrar una muchacha de semejante circunferencia en Chile, país signado por su historial de generaciones desnutridas. Aquí en cambio, él había presenciado todo el

esplendor del exceso. El superávit que florecía en estos ejemplares le causaba estremecimientos de repugnancia y envidia. (175)

Again the direct comparison to Chile emerges from the scenes of superabundance and consumption. This in conjunction with the physical divide of inside/outside, with Ruby and Félix engaged in the ritual act of overeating inside the restaurant and the group of Latin Americans looking on from a distance outside the restaurant, suggest a shift to an allegorical reading of the imperial centers (the U.S. and Europe/Spain) feasting—enjoying the fruits of hegemony, while the margins are relegated to the role of spectators. Again there is an indication that the obesity on the one hand is directly connected to the malnutrition on the other. We can see this in this scene and in the citation above where Ruby is able to consume more and more food only by physically stealing it from her little sister or other unwary schoolchildren, or by raiding the cupboards at home. All of this leads to a vague allegory of imperialism and filibustering which would find ready cognates in the relations of the United States government, corporations and even individuals with Latin America. Some of the imagery in the above fragments lends support to such a reading of coloniality. When the pizza and French fries are referred to metonymically as a shield and a mountain of gold respectively, there is resonance with the writings of some of the Spanish Chroniclers of the Indies and some of the myths, like that of El Dorado, surrounding the exploration, conquest and colonization of the Americas in the 16th century.

This ritual of consumption of food as self-defense is clearly only one part of the significance held by the frequent allusions to food. The consumption of food also plays a supporting role in the discourse on consumerism as a cornerstone in the cultural edifice of

the United States. In most of the scenes featuring food, not only are the quantities emphasized and the manner of consumption highlighted, but as we have already touched on, the kinds of foods consumed also play an important role in the symbolic system of Donde van. When we glance at the passages that refer to the consumption of food, we find the same foods featured time and again. The principal scenes including the ice cream of the first lines, the lobby episode of Gustavo's first day, the restaurant scene cited above and the "MacDonald's" visit at Nina's arrival offer a surprisingly homogenous menu. The foods are, to modify Baudrillard's notion of the hyperreal, hyper-American: pizza, ice cream, French fries, hamburgers, hotdogs and popcorn. Surprisingly, Coca-cola only makes limited appearances. The foods found in highest frequency are pizza, ice cream and popcorn. One of the things that these foods have in common is that they are extremely unhealthful. Nor do they have much positive nutritional value. Except for the beef contained in the hamburgers and whatever scrap meat that hotdogs contain, these foods are simple carbohydrates which are quickly converted into sugars by the digestive system. The health factor is alluded to in the text as Ruby is told by doctors that she must change her diet or she will meet certain demise. But in addition to being comfort foods, and fun foods, they are also connected to commercial and corporate interest, foods that can be easily mass produced, distributed around the country or around the world. In this way this imagery connects to a discourse of commercial and cultural imperialism. It might seem a stretch to make this jump in logic, but in the company of so many more direct references, the property of association lends its support. They are foods that one consumes not for the nutritional value, but for entertainment value. They are foods that

are associated with the cultural dimension of globalization, the spread of consumer capitalism, or at least the products of consumer capitalism, to the developing world.

The association between the conspicuous presence of food and consumerism in general is hinted at early in Donde van. Revisiting the lobby episode of Gustavo's first day in the United States, we find a direct link as Gustavo's focus travels from the foods that the students are enjoying to the clothing they are (or are not) wearing. As we can see in the above-cited passage, a series is set up which moves seamlessly from the consumption of food, the usual pizza, popcorn and ice cream to the clothing of the Americans creating a unity of identity between the two quite different classes of objects. The two classes are stitched together by pleasure, by lifestyle, by fashion. While the jeans themselves fit into the above mentioned scheme of cultural globalization, and again of a specific American variety, the references to bare feet and the torn jeans carry with them a not-so-indirect allusion to other people, somewhere else, that truly have bare feet, they have bare feet by necessity, their clothing is tattered not by choice, not purchased that way, but it is really tattered, from overuse, from being overworked, because of poverty. Because of techniques like this more subtle series or more obvious juxtaposition, in Donde van, much like New York served as a conduit to Buenos Aires in Novela negra, images of consumerism always carry with them the implicit (when not explicit) comparison to some other place, some other people, some other way of life. Part of the effect of this kind of comparison is a charge of inauthenticity, of falsity, of Baudrillardesque simulation.

Since Martí a sense of "lo autóctono" has been a feature of Latin American, or specific national, identity. His call to authenticity was not ignored by the writers of early

20th century Latin America. Donoso himself, in his Historia personal del “boom”, speaks of how the criollistas spilt so much ink creating paper borders between the different nations of Latin America. By attempting to underscore their authenticity, these writers focused on the specific features which made their countries or regions unique; in demonstrating local color they lost sight of the big picture. According to Donoso, the reaction away from this localism was one of the most important driving forces of the so-called Latin American literary boom. In reaction to the criollista tendency, the writers of the 1960s began to tap into a growing sense of Latin American internationalism. Actually much closer to Martí than were the criollistas, this new generation of Latin American writers were feeling out the contours of a Latin American unity and a sense of Latin American authenticity (17-18). For this reason the word “boom” solicits irony in some and something more like repugnance in others. That an English word should be applied to a movement of writers awakening to a sense of Latin Americanism, instead of a Spanish one, is certainly a curious phenomenon. Given the history of Latin American—United States relations, it is a situation that maps out the flows of power in a way that resonates strongly with coloniality. Julio Cortazar, one of the “chaired” members of the movement, has alluded to the use of the word “boom” and its parallels with imperialism.

One of the recurring planks in the discourse on America is that of inauthenticity, of artificiality, of falsity and of simulation. This is a product of othering that is negatively projected from the internalized sense of “lo autóctono” that Martí wrote about at the end of the 19th century. If the boom saw an international coming of age from Latin American identity, later periods, such as that from which emerged the novels under study here, seem to be questioning the way by and the degree to which internationalization has

played out and continues to play out for Latin America and its constituent nations and nationals. If the escape from the localism of the criollistas was celebrated for those that participated in the literary boom, then this later moment seems to be one reassessing the ramifications of that will to cosmopolitanism. It is not as if Latin American nations, since their colonial pre-history had not been hooked into the global system. As Latin American scholars of coloniality are quick to point out, as colonies of Spain they certainly had a direct and formative link with it. But since independence, and with the entrance of France, England and then the United States into the picture, how the different nations were connected to the world economic system varied greatly from place to place. Bolívar foresaw that it would be the United States that would take dominant position with relation to Latin America, and by the time of Martí and Rodó his vision had been confirmed as reality. Not coincidentally, these writers were concerned with fomenting a sense of Latin American identity so as to resist a piece-by-piece absorption into a new imperial system. But though ultimately their programs of Latin American identity, were very much concerned with protecting the national integrity that is in line with an emerging modernity, it is important to note that their cultural projects were aimed at the supranational level. If Benedict Anderson's Imagined Communities posits that real modern nationalism begins in the colonies of the Americas, then perhaps we find a correlation in regional organization as well. By how many decades does Gran Colombia precede the European Union? How interesting is it to consider that both of these supranational organizations implied efforts to compete with the United States? In any case, the postmodernity dream of Gran Colombia would not come off within a framework of barely or partially emerging modernity, whereas the late-modern phenomenon of the

European Union seems to be well situated. It is in late-modernity that borders have much less import, once globalization and multinationality have overshadowed national concerns. At this point globalization has reached a point of inertia that it is almost a product in itself as opposed to a process. Along the same lines Frederick Jameson has argued that globalization (in its current phase) is the spatialization of the culture of consumer capitalism. Accordingly, we can see the current concerns being a dominant mixture of economic and cultural factors rather than a mixture of political and economic factors that were predominant in an earlier era. This certainly seems to be the case with the novels under study here and Donde van is no exception. The constant references to wealth, superabundance and consumerist consumption in the United States contrasted by allusions to the poverty, scarcity and traditional values of Latin America readily demonstrate this. Even the references to power relations is couched in cultural terms. Gone are Darío's raiding armies of blue-eyed devils that we find in his short story "DQ". The blue eyes remain, but instead of soldiers we find blue jeans. Gone are the exploitative corporations and massacred workers that we find in Pablo Neruda's "United Fruit Co." and García Márquez' Cien años de soledad, now we see only see the fruits of those conquests, through the consumption of products and perhaps the brand names.

But this discourse of artificiality, gleaned from the constant references to insubstantial foods and the rule of fashion in Donde van, has hints in Martí and Rodó, and is concretized and developed in fictional form by Carpentier with Los pasos perdidos. Not insignificantly, Donoso, as do many critics, holds this novel as key to the emergence of a common sense of continental Latin American identity among writers of the 1960s and an important precursor to the Boom (Historia personal 17-32). In a very pared-down

way then, we can say that a view of the United States as a false, empty cultural landscape has, since the 19th century, played a considerable role in the formation and maintenance of Latin American identity.

Surface Illusion

There are several sub-discourses that combine in an overarching discourse of artificiality and superficiality. Most of these have to do with a sort of intellectual culture of the United States. As Donde van takes place in a North American university town there is ample opportunity to explore the intellect of various social groups. Among the professional academics the issue of prestige and the shameless quest for more of it is probed. The sub-discourse on American ignorance is developed quite fully and few are safe from its pall. A few references are also made to the blind faith in rationality and a tendency to utilitarianism. The most sustained discourse found in Donde van, however, is that dealing with identity itself and the dexterity involved in its transformation. It is clear to see that this theme is also closely related to ignorance, the ability to ignore the past or employ a selective memory, to move forward as if things had always been thus. In this section we will examine this constellation of discourses that combine to portray America as the land of the artificial and superficial: the surface illusion.

Maud's speech on Mexico in the first part of the novel anchors the theme of American ignorance which had previously surfaced though hints and oblique references. When we speak of ignorance here, we are putting "ignore" back in "ignorance", for when we speak of American ignorance as it is developed in Donde van, we are not speaking of merely a neutral lack of knowledge, (nor of sheer stupidity which the more vulgar usage might have it,) but also of ignorance as an active role of ignoring. This activity ranges

from being led astray by a host of distractions to outright refusal to process new information that is being directly related. Maud's speech on Mexico as she chats with Gustavo is an example of this latter, more extreme example of ignorance. She strikes up a conversation by recounting a trip she had taken to the archaeological site of Chichén Itzá:

...tan agradables esas dos semanas que pasamos en México con mi difunto marido... en tiempos de don Lázaro Cárdenas fue. ¿Se acuerda de que era amigo del presidente Roosevelt? ¿Cómo se llamaba el professor de Yale que llevaba a cabo las excavaciones [...] en Chichén-Itzá? [...] Sí. Mr (sic) Roosevelt. Tan fino dicen que era. ¡Hizo tanto por las antigüedades mexicanas! ¿No encuentra usted? (50)

She has mistaken the Chilean for a Mexican and when Gustavo realizes this he explains that he does not know much about Chichén Itzá and that he is from Chile not Mexico. Her response is as humorous as it is troubling: “¿Chileno? Yo creí que era mexicano, igual que Josefina. En fin, como su aspecto es de mexicano y habla inglés tan bien como un mexicano, no tiene ninguna importancia” (50). Josefina is, of course, also from Chile and so the reader may chuckle, and even if that laugh is tinged with irony, it is nothing like Maud's puzzling qualification for being Mexican. Looking Mexican and speaking English as well as a Mexican are good enough. The attitude is one of “you all look alike to me” and as long as one speaks English, one can be of service. These comments carry the implication that all of Latin America can be lumped together as one homogenous and vague region, where an exotic indigenous past (read inferior and in need of guidance) defines the present. If we take a close look at her opening remarks this view is certainly supported. Not only does she mistake Gustavo for a Mexican, but she has confused the

archaeological sites as well. Chichén Itzá was excavated in a string of independent efforts, some bordering on theft. The most extensive and systematic dig carried out by a professional American archaeologist was through the Carnegie foundation and headed by Sylvanus Morley. The most famous discovery and excavation by a Yale professor, which Maud referred to, was that of Hiram Bingham at Macchu Picchu in Peru. So, Maud has compressed the greater part of Hispanic America, as well as their American agents, into one territory of sameness. The differences between Chile, Peru and Mexico would seem to have “ninguna importancia” and they are all seen through the lens of an exotic indigenous past.

This telescopic vision that Maud has of Latin America is confirmed directly when Gustavo insists that he is Chilean. Her response is unequivocal in its rampant essentialism: “Chileno, colombiano, mexicano: da lo mismo. Todos los latinoamericanos son iguales. Josefina es mi mejor amiga. Le cuento todo. No sé qué haríamos sin nuestra querida Josefina. Y ella sí que es mexicana” (51). Aside from summing up the foregoing, that all Latin Americans are the same, and if they had differences they would be of no importance, we notice the other comments that are woven into this discourse. It is that of friendship, that of aiding, Cárdenas was a friend of Roosevelt, Josefina is Maud’s best friend (even though she does not know that she is Chilean), Roosevelt did so much for Mexico, Josefina does so much for Maud. This leads us to issues of relationships, personal relationships, national relationships and personal relationships which stand for national or regional relationships. These are issues which are laced into the storyline throughout Donde van and therefore deserve attention, but we will leave these aside for the moment so as to continue the analysis of the discourse on American ignorance.

Maud's insistence on the sameness of all Latin Americans helps demonstrate the phenomenon of active ignorance. Within the text there is a backlash by the Latin American characters, who often call into question the intellectual capacity of the American characters. This ranges from the ignorance of the students to that of the professors. When Josefina and Rolando, the other two Chileans in Saint Jo learn of the arrival to Chicago of the novelist Marcelo Chiriboga, they begin making plans for luring him to Saint Jo to give a talk. Josefina suggests speaking with Gorsk, the department chair. Rolando responds vehemently: "¡Gorsk es un ignorante! No debe tener idea de quién es Marcelo Chiriboga. La cultura de ese pobre individuo no llega más que hasta Fray Luis: eso a mí me consta" (58).

Gustavo is convinced that he must dumb down his classes to compensate for the less knowledgeable American students:

Había pensado dar un curso más novedoso, más adelantado: algo sobre los latinoamericanos y el estructuralismo, por ejemplo. Pero Rolando le aconsejó un curso básico para comenzar, y él exhumó entonces sus manoseadas lecciones sobre el boom, fenómeno del cual por esos andurriales no estarían suficientemente informados. (76)

This pattern continues in one of the most dramatic episodes of cultural clash and xenophobia. An American college student insults Gustavo, but it is his Venezuelan girlfriend who reprimands him in front of the group largely made up of Latin Americans. In her rebuke, the Latin American discourse on American ignorance resonates clearly:

You wouldn't have, he's not light. You only read chewing-gum fiction, when you get around to reading at all—dijo Mimí, dirigiéndose a los

demás comensales y al público agolpado alrededor de la mesa--. Mark es uno de esos yanquis bestias que se creen con derecho a todo; un bruto ignorante que sólo tolera las novelas chicle: esos libros en rústica que se compran en el aeropuerto junto con el periódico del día, y se tiran a la basura a la llegada, junto al envoltorio del chicle. (219)

When asked to explain further what she means by chewing-gum fiction she cites the following examples:

--Bueno, novelas como las de Danielle Steele...no recuerdo el nombre de ninguna...O como El Informe Pelicano, no recuerdo el nombre del autor... creo que es Grisham. Son novelas que no nutren: tienen escaso contenido proteico; no se integran. El sabor dura quince minutos en la boca y el organismo queda incólume. Entonces, el trozo de goma inerte se bota a la basura y, ¡adios! Como Grisham. (220)

So here we see the motif of American ignorance linked directly to the various components of its culture: art, learning and food. The themes of waste and disposable culture are reintegrated here closely tied to the discourse on food, especially junk food, that we have established above. These various discourses are all linked together at different junctures. Artificiality, mass-production, waste, superficiality: these all combine in this image of “novelas chicle”. Chewing gum is an incredibly plastic food and the plasticity not only refers to its transformational characteristics but also suggests artificiality and superficiality as is supported at other places in the novel. Mimí emphasizes the ephemeral nature that characterizes this fiction, but the key word “nutren” recalls the pizza, ice cream and popcorn that is highlighted at various points throughout

Donde van. Like these other “foods” the purpose of chewing gum is that of entertainment. It is the perfect example here because it is not even ingested as are the other foods, but is literally consumed at the surface of the digestive system and then extracted and thrown away. The insertion of the “periódico” in this passage not only adds weight to the brevity and cheapness of the American literary experience, but it also ties an important component of any democratic system, Journalism, to this image of the chewing-gum. The news becomes entertainment as well: superficial, disposable and forgotten. We see here an image that seeks to link together the fundamental components of culture, art, food and the transmission of knowledge, and show them as corrupted by mass-production, driving and driven by mass-consumption, resulting in superficiality, artificiality, waste and oblivion.

The ideas of ignoring and forgetting are closely related, and in Donde van they converge in the figure of Ruby—a figure who simbolizes the United States. Toward the end of the novel, or the end of the epilogue, Gustavo and Josefina meet for lunch and discuss their old friend Ruby. We see how closely the discourses of culture, ignorance, memory and identity are linked in the following lines from Josefina:

Te advierto que Félix no ha oído jamás el nombre de Edgar Allan Poe, y si la Ruby lo supo alguna vez, ya lo ha olvidado, porque posee no sé qué don para olvidar lo que quiere olvidar, y transformarse en otra. ¿Es la encarnación número qué sé yo cuanto de la que la Ruby está viviendo ahora? ¿Las cosas siempre estuvieron destinadas a ser como ahora? A veces me cansa pensar en la Ruby: eso de comenzar de nuevo cada vez debe ser agotador. (370)

Though Josefina had been painted as a conniving snake earlier in the novel, it is made clear that here, with this visit, Gustavo had noticed a change. He had found a more relaxed, contented Josefina. When we read these lines then we see them devoid of any of the venom that we might have expected earlier in the novel. In fact, her assessment of Ruby is very close to that of Gustavo which we find a few pages later:

Y la Ruby que yo amé era aquella Ruby exuberante en sus convicciones, la de Gordura es Hermosura, la de los versátiles espejos deformantes y los disfraces insólitos, todo eso posible sólo a través de su obesidad y sus teorías. Era verdad que, durante cinco minutos, pude admirar su belleza transubstanciada en la delicadeza de Louise: la acepté como otra posibilidad de su inmenso poder [...]. (374)

So we can glean that in the final analysis, that the defining characteristic of Ruby, if she can be said to be definable, is her ability to transform herself. There is a slight divergence in the views of Gustavo and Josefina, however. While the latter sees her transformational qualities as dependent upon memory, or selective memory, Gustavo points to her obesity, her power and her theories as the necessary factors. While a selective memory is clearly a prerequisite for making a new start, it is Gustavo's notion of theorization that is more clearly developed in Donde van. In fact, even in Josefina's narrative on the current life of Ruby we find an indication of explaining away, rather than forgetting: "O bien ella habla con Louise del remoto y primitivo mundo de su niñez, pintándoles a las mellizas retratos amablemente censurados de Snake River y de sus padres" (371). On the allegorical level this image of Ruby softening up the truth of her own childhood, of her own beginnings, reads as the hygienic censoring of history, creating a celebratory past, which can serve as

the basis for national pride where perhaps humility would be the more fitting response. Clearly, this tendency of Ruby to create herself anew, to start over, can be related to the idea of the United States to be a place for immigrants to make a new (and the always hoped for better) life for themselves. On the other hand, it could allude to the foreign policy of the United States and especially its relationship with Latin America: a shining example of democracy, then the Monroe Doctrine, then Roosevelt Corollary, then a revision of this, a rereading of the Monroe Doctrine and the Good Neighbor, then the Pinochetazo, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, Panama: so many changes, so much ideology, so many theories explaining away apparent contradictions.

Perhaps in answer to the view of Latin America as a geography of magical realism, the United States is portrayed as a land of virtual realism. When Gustavo is first introduced to Ruby, she is introduced as a fanatic of virtual reality, claiming that it would be virtual space that would solve all problems of identity based conflict. From this moment on, in addition to being an allegorical vehicle of America, Ruby is firmly established as a figure of identity transformation. In the first part of the novel Ruby takes Gustavo to visit a kind of virtual reality salon. Here we see those “versátiles espejos deformantes” alluded to in the citation above, an integral part of the Ruby that he had come to love. But his first reaction to the mirrors is one of fear, a fear that prefigures the transformation that he himself will undergo during his stay in the United States and to which he nearly loses himself completely:

Iba a avanzar, pero se recogió ante un monstruo que se abalanzaba sobre él desde la profundidad de un espejo. Quiso retroceder: el monstruo tenía las fauces abiertas para gritar y los ojos desorbitados, fijos, como si quisiera

hipnotizarlo. Pero ni el monstruo ni él gritaron. Suspendidos en ese vértigo, oscilaban en el fondo de cada uno de los espejos, que eran como simulacros del abismo. ¡Claro que el monstruo no iba a gritarle! Ésta no era más que una de esas cámaras de espejos deformantes que suele haber en la entrada de los circos y las ferias más modestas. (71)

Of course, he is the monster, or rather, in keeping with the symbolic system of the novel, the monster is one of the possible versions of himself if he were to lose himself to the shifting identities. But the house of mirrors and its transformational capabilities are clearly not limited to the psychological level. It is not merely Gustavo's nor Ruby's identity that is subject to radical and sweeping changes. Donoso once again juxtaposes the individual with the masses. While the narrative could have maintained its focus on Gustavo and Ruby it does not do so; the subject shifts from the singular to the plural and from adults to children: "Espejos a cuyas profundidades los niños se asoman, hacen una pirueta y una morisqueta, no se asustan, no se ríen, o creen lo que ven, y parten sin interesarse más: están habituados a cambios de identidad más complejos" (71-72). By shifting from the singular to the plural, Donoso has lifted the narrative from the psychological to the social, from the prosaic to the poetic, from the world of the text to the text of the world. This passage takes on greater meaning as the phenomena of changing identity is extended to an anonymous mass: the general public. The use of children shows how deeply integrated (or disintegrated) the issues of identity transformation, or as Gustavo puts it "transubstantiation", are in society. It is just one of the many links that allow us to read Ruby as a figure for the United States. What Ruby does, so do the masses.

Departing from an allusion to children's games and the power of the imagination, Gustavo's thoughts lead to more serious insights about the real world ramifications of all of this shape shifting. Gustavo reflects on how changes in appearance deeply affect not only the way that the shifting subject is perceived, but also how these changes in identity transform the subjects way of perceiving: "Cambia no sólo la apariencia del niño, sino también su percepción de las cosas, según los trapos con que se envuelve, la bandolera que se terciaba, las plumas con que se enjaeza o se corona" (72). Again, we detect the shift to the social/political level in these last images. *Trapos* can be cloths or secrets, a *bandolera*, a cartridge belt can be "terciada"—slung over the shoulder or can be used to "terciarse"—intervene. And the ambiguity is brought out into the open in the final image with "plumas"—pens or feathers—which can be used to harness or to crown. All of this is avoided in Kerr's analysis where she stays within the limits of the relations of the academic and where authority is only a crisis for authors. Reading through a postcolonial framework and paired with the history of United States involvement in Latin America, these images possess a darker side wrapped up in intervention, hegemony and coloniality. The implication is that the United States has radical policy shifts and more importantly is able to rapidly change its image and therefore change peoples' perceptions of reality. This includes people within and people without.

The narrative switches back to the individual/psychological level, but after doing so, leads the reader once again to make the allegorical jump:

Gustavo percibió que, en ese país, cualquier imagen suya en otra persona — en Rolando, en la Ruby, en Gorsk, en el doctor Butler— era una burbuja que podía estallar dando lugar a otra burbuja, que también sería él... y en

esta habitación hechicera parecía más fácil existir como otro, o por lo menos como un reflejo modificable, suplantable, supletorio. Todo era disfraz, todo trapo, todo efímero. (72)

Here Gustavo, the early Gustavo, the Gustavo that is still recently arrived in the United States, keenly aware of the stark differences between this culture and his own, is ready to extend his experience in the house of mirrors to his experience in America at large. The juxtaposition between “ese país” and “esta habitación hechicera” functions to unify them so that we can list yet another figure for the United States: the house of mirrors. Ruby, the house of mirrors, the United States these are unified by the ability to transform identities, by their delicate superficiality and ephemeral nature.

Reminiscent of the borgesian image of America in “Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius”, where Americans wouldn’t be satisfied inventing a country, but would undertake the creation or re-creation of an entire planet, Donoso has Ruby introduced to us not only as the typical racially defined American woman, “rubia y muy linda, y de piel muy lisa y blanca” and as America itself “todo en ella hacía juego con una minúscula banderita norteamericana” but also as a fanatic of virtual reality. Aside from what any one idea of what virtual reality might entail, what is important is the definition given by Ruby and reiterated by Gustavo the narrator. Very much like what happens in “Tlön”, Ruby suggests, “con el tiempo, la realidad virtual va a reemplazar a la realidad tal como la conocemos” (41). Gustavo had previously read about virtual reality and not had given it any credence, but in America, talking to Ruby in person, Gustavo is more susceptible: “Aquí, en cambio, esta rubia portentosa lo iba a convencer muy fácilmente de que era viable reemplazar la existencia natural por otra” (42). And if it were not clear that virtual

reality, in this case, is a figure for modernity or the latest phase of modernity, then Ruby's "es casi como una nueva religión" hammers home the connection. Virtual reality, like a new modernity, "señala el futuro, el comienzo de la verdadera ciencia y el punto de partida del arte. Es el principio del progreso auténtico de la humanidad" (41-42).

"Natural", "science", "new religion", and especially "progress": all of these are key words of the Enlightenment and of modernity. Two things are signified simultaneously, at once we have the image of one reality, a "natural" one in danger of being overlaid by a new un-natural and un-real reality: virtual reality. This is mixed with lexical references to the Enlightenment and modernity which reminds us that, contrary to Gustavo's estimation that he is living in a "natural" existence, this process of overlaying reality has already occurred and is perhaps always occurring.

Gustavo's position as a new professor in an American university, provides an opportunity for the examination of American intellectual life. Lucile Kerr has dealt with the presentation of university life in "Academic Relations and Latin American Fictions," but limits her analysis to the relationships between the professional academics and Latin American writers, especially the effort of the latter to carve out an authentic narrative space from which to speak. Though there is tacit acknowledgement of the power relations between the United States and Latin America as it relates to cultural production, it is not fully developed. Part of my aim is to incorporate the presentation of intellectual life with other analogous topoi within the novel as well as to show how these chain together to relate to larger cultural and political concerns. In the following citation with Gustavo reflecting on his colleagues, we find the recurring motifs of superficiality and simulacra:

Existían dos cosas que a él...le parecían intolerables: en primer lugar, detestaba a las morenas teñidas de rubio, especialmente a las latinoamericanas como Josefina...porque eso daba una tonalidad sucia y un poquito repulsiva a su tez aceitunada, rebelde al disimulo de la cosmética, que se despinta en seguida con la abundancia de lubricantes de todo cutis oscuro. (43)

We have seen this discourse on cosmetics and Latin Americans in the above chapter on Del Paso. Here again it is read as a sidelong metaphor for racial-cultural hegemony and the power of coloniality, but in this specific episode it also functions as one more example of superficiality and a prelude to the discourse on an American academic life that is equally false and seemingly only skin deep. Again the technique is juxtaposition. There are apparently only two things that Gustavo finds intolerable, the first is bleached blonde Hispanics and the second is the excessive formality of the American academics.

En segundo lugar...le parecía chocante la exagerada formalidad de los norteamericanos cuando intentan ser elegantes.... [O]pinó que el acto había tenido un airecillo inciertamente falso.... Iba explicándole a Josefina cuáles cosas estimaba él, no les resultaban bien a los norteamericanos -- ¿demasiado empaquetados en sus trajes oscuros y sus corbatas de seda para la función?, ¿o sólo un poco pomposos al saludarse a la salida del anfiteatro con sus títulos de doctor o professor en lugar del Tom, Dick o Harry habituales?, ¿era a causa de estos detalles que todo adquiría un toque caricaturesco?—y no parecían sino afectaciones instituidas con el propósito de convencer al público de que la Universidad de San José era

muy tradicional, borrando toda traza de fórmula no nacida en el tiempo e incorporada desde siempre a la esencia del ritual. (43-44)

One equals two. The American academics are just as false and just as entrenched in simulacra as the Latin American woman with her fake blonde hair and her olive-hued skin covered with make-up. Both are carrying out exercises in simulation. The one betraying her racial heredity while the other betraying their “natural” cultural standing. The key descriptors express their meaning both temporally and spatially; both as linear phrases and as a constellation. “[E]xagerada”, “inciertamente falso”, “títulos”, “caricaturesco”, “afectaciones”, “el propósito de convencer” and “fórmula”: all of these words help develop the discourse on simulation and simulacra as an essential component of American life.

Gustavo is made especially uncomfortable by the exaggerated biography that is delivered by his department chair as he is introduced to the new faculty:

se dio cuenta con irritación de que los datos suministrados por Rolando Viveros--¿quién si no él?—sobre su persona eran hiperbólicos, hinchados, ablandados como esas legumbres que flotan en la superficie del agua cuando la cocinera las deja remojándose. Esto no hubiera sido posible en Chile: allá eran más serias las cosas, sin tanta faramalla pretenciosa. Gustavo sabía muy bien que, al contrario de lo que Gorsk afirmaba, su incipiente carrera universitaria todavía no era más que del montón, pues sus estudios acerca del boom de la novela latinoamericana contemporánea apenas arañaban la superficie de tan complejo tema. (45)

Using the same descriptors as he often had to describe the student body at Saint Jo, Gustavo categorizes the words of Gorsk as hyperbolic, inflated and softened and again refers us to superficiality with the image of the vegetables floating on the water's surface and with his research which has barely scratched the surface. In the context of so much discussion of virtual reality, Donoso's point is not lost on the reader. The idea of the CV making the man, or in this case the department and the university itself, instead of the man making the CV is brought to the forefront. Prestige is not awarded as a casual byproduct of work well done, the prestige is the primary objective, and the academic must find legitimate channels (those authorized by his or her discipline) through which to attain it. The research is of secondary importance; of primary importance is the line on the CV which refers to that research. It is clearly a question of the unlinking of the signifier from the signified in a sort of postmodern professionalism. It is a question of appearances, of what can be plausibly extracted from any given concrete event. It is a play of shadows taken for total reality.

Members at all levels have something at stake in this shadow play and so it turns into something of a retablo de maravillas. Gustavo perceives with disdain that everything said by Gorsk was a pack of "patrañas sostenidas por la falta de información y por esa ambición de aparentar que el departamento y la Universidad de San José misma eran más de lo que realmente eran" (46). The prestige of the departments are built on the prestige of its faculty. In turn the prestige of the institution is built on the prestige of the departments and so all have an interest in seeing the retablo. Gustavo considers how easily one could be absorbed by the simulation: "Resultaba muy tentador tomar en serio lo que el profesor Gorsk estaba diciendo sobre él: bastaba acatar ese ligero cambio de

perspectiva para aceptar la mentira. Pero era preferible, estimó, colocarse fuera de ese juego por medio de la ironía [...]” (46).

In addition to the virtual nature of the system of prestige which Donoso takes a less than hospitable view, intellectual currents within academia are examined with equal skepticism. We have already discussed the way that overspecialization is shown to contribute to American ignorance, the Latin Americans full of disdain for the rather obscure research topics that the Americans have chose to investigate. The other prong of this attack on the academy is a critique of the theoretical trends. Of these, postmodernism and the related general ideology of political correctness come in for the most criticism. The reader will recall that an article on virtual reality was what lured Ruby away from her university studies.

Un artículo, leído en una revista femenina mientras esperaba ser atendida por el pedicuro, le abrió literalmente el apetito sobre las realidades virtuales: de ahí le bastó un paso para aceptar la validez de la cena de bario, el café sin cafeína, el dulce sin azúcar, la grasa sin gordura. La Ruby fracasó en sus exámenes, no por insuficiencia de sus legajos universitarios, sino por el abuso de una dieta tan posmoderna que la había llevado casi a doblar su peso. (63)

Here postmodernism is figuratively tagged as a mere trend, by its association with a fashion magazine, and is linked to artificiality: “café sin cafeína, dulce sin azúcar”. In these examples the items, coffee and sweetness are robbed of the very thing that gives them their essence yet are somehow expected to still be considered “virtually” the same. Again, as is so often done in Donde van, food is used to link together important themes.

Here it is a postmodern diet which on the psychological level consists of virtual foods and on the metaphorical level consists of an intellectual diet of postmodernism or theoretical trends as distraction from “authentic” scholarly activity.

The American vogue of Postmodernism is again satirized when Ruby, much like Maud had done by confusing a Chilean for a Mexican, confuses two of the Postmodern canonical figures and two of its theoretical bases. Referring to Gustavo’s wife she makes the first error: “Pero ya estás casado, ¿no? ¿Con una semióloga, me parece que oí decir?” (124). Gustavo corrects her and Ruby, by collapsing two intellectual currents, shows how piling so much under the heading of Postmodernism can often lead to confusion:

--Lacanian.

La Ruby se rió.

--¿De que te ríes?

--“Charlacanas”, les dicen aquí. Una vez alguien tuvo la desfachatez de decirme “tú no eres una gorda”. O le contesté con bastante flair, me parece: “Ce n’est pas une pipe”. El tipo no entendió nada, y cada vez que se encuentra conmigo, se pone rojo y mira para otro lado...

--No es Lacan; es Foucault.

--Bueno, el que sea. En todo caso, no me tiente disfrazarme de gorda asumida. (124)

It is the superficial knowledge of the theorists that is here under inspection, but the example itself is also illustrative of the division between the surface and the essence. “Ce n’est pas une pipe” is not, after all, really Foucault, at least not originally. Or is it? Foucault took the inscription from the René Magritte painting La trahison des images in

which below the image of a pipe read the words “Ce n’est pas une pipe” and applied them to his book of the same title. Of course, it is not a pipe; it is merely the image of a pipe. So the question of who this really refers to is another analog to the seeming paradox which the painting originally presented. That is, the painting points up questions of the relationship between words and their referents and/or images and their referent objects. It is this split between signifier and signified on the level of discourse, of image, of personality, that is so often explored by Donoso. Semiology is the link at the theoretical, literary level to all of the allusions to fashions, trends, exaggerated CVs, changing personalities, physical transformations, fast-food and virtual reality that populate the pages of Donde van.

Ruby’s exaggerated pseudo-semiological discourse develops the point contained in the reference to Lacan/Foucault/Margitte and makes the connection directly: “Lo que sí entiendo es que el lenguaje es una convención: las palabras son sólo el uso que yo les asigno, instrumentos que empleo según me acomoden. El lenguaje, las palabras, a fin de cuentas, son un disfraz. Y todo lo que uno dice o viste es, finalmente, literatura” (122). Words are like disguises, like so many costumes that can be changed for others. The signifier and signified are independent. At the end of the ball the mask can be removed, but, the suit makes the man. The personality is independent of the person and in this case, Ruby has many—America has many, and can change them to suit her purposes. In Gustavo’s rejoinder, we find at the same time, the ridicule of Ruby’s statement but a reinforcement of the imagery of words as clothing: “Estas ideas—si así pueden llamarse las palabras de la Ruby—se revolvían como fragmentos ya demasiado usados, y buscaban un lenguaje inédito en aquellos atuendos inservibles. Ni el tiempo ni la garúa

explicarían qué partes formaron ese todo, ahora desmembrado, que alguna vez fue alguien” (122). Gustavo puts the emphasis on the power that the costumes have on the wearers rather than the other way around:

¿Cómo llegar al fondo de Josefina Viveros sin explicar, por ejemplo, que su viejísima clámide púrpura constituía su fondo mismo, y que, vistiendo ese harapo, se generaba a sí misma como se genera una fantasía? ¿Quién captaría la esencia de Mi Hermana Maud en una de las blusitas lavables, floreadas, juveniles, ahora descontextualizadas, típicas de su guardarropa? (122)

So this discussion on the portrayal of the American academic world has brought us back to one of the main themes running through Donde van: authenticity and the lack thereof within the Postmodern. And it has done so in a way that links back to some images and referents which by this time have developed into clear symbols. Like food, the references to fashions and clothing perform beyond their immediate syntactical environment. In addition to its direct link to consumerism, clothing becomes a symbol for identity and is used in ways that are essential to take account of. These are especially important because the references to clothing help us understand the relationship of the criticisms of United States culture and Latin America. It was clothing that helped link the scene in Saint Jo, a seemingly hermetic, artificial space, to an outside world with a harsher (non-virtual) reality. It was the tattered jeans, ripped for fashion’s sake, and the feet bared for pleasure, which contrasted with a generic third world whose bare feet and tattered clothing were due to disastrous poverty. Later on in the text, the connection to the third world is made again. Again, it is clothing that serves as the bridge.

As it turns out, one of Ruby's many friends is Helena, who runs a clothing boutique. This store is, of course, yet another symbol of American overabundance, excess and waste, but it is its connection to the third world which fills out the symbolic system of Donde van. After being given an overview of Helena's storefront, we find out that the sale of exotic, elegant pieces is not her only source of income:

Éste, sin embargo, no era el único ni el más rentable comercio de Helena. Gran parte de su peculio —que los exagerados o los ignorantes calculaban en millones—provenía de la reventa mayorista de ropa usada. Terminados la desinfección y los remiendos caseros, era enfardada mecánicamente, a alta presión, y luego exportada a países miserables donde otras mujeres, en general de pigmentación más oscura, la arrebatarían de los mostradores. “¡Ropa norteamericana, importada!”, corría la noticia, y las nativas desintegraban estos bultos, fruto del grosero hartazgo de los países poderosos, con voracidad de aves de rapiña. Rasgaban y rasguñaban, acaparando piezas multicolores a cambio de la harina, los pollos, las hortalizas que hubieran debido nutrir a sus hijos raquíticos; pero ellas les daban a sus productos este otro valor de cambio —suntuario, obsesivo, misterioso—, infinitamente más atractivo. (120)

Discourse on Discourse

Of the three novels discussed here, the discourse on America expressed in Donde van a morir los elefantes is at the same time the easiest and the most complicated to analyze. It is the easiest because in neither of the other novels is the discourse foregrounded so heavily, so consistently developed nor so fully integrated into the action.

It would not be too much of an exaggeration to say that the novel is essentially an elaboration of the discourse on America. The themes that have been discussed above in no way exhaust all possibilities and the examples given for those themes that are discussed merely scratch the surface. Much more could be written on the discourse on America in Donde van. So why do we consider it the most complicated of the novels under study if it presents such a caricatured view of the United States? If not for the myriad themes or the dozens of supporting examples (because these make the analysis easier), then what is it? What complicates Donde van is that on one level the novel deconstructs its own discourse at every step of the way.

We can begin with the epigraph. In a novel which ridicules American culture to the degree that Donde van does, why does its epigraph quote an American author? It is clearly not an extension of the ridicule, there is no sense of irony. The respect for and influence of Faulkner, in Latin American letters in general and for Donoso specifically, is well established. In fact, in retrospect one may say that this fact and the quote itself hold the key to understanding the novel's seeming contradictions. The dilemma could be attempted by recalling that Faulkner himself had much to say about American society and culture, but this would not be supported by the text of the novel, in which the dominant Anglo-American culture is treated as one undifferentiated whole. We believe that the real clue is to be found in the text of the epigraph: "A novel is a writer's secret life, the dark twin of a man." If on one level Donde van is the dark twin of Gustavo, or of Donoso, ridiculing American culture, at another level Donde van, the novel itself, has its own secret life, its own dark twin. It is this "dark twin" which complicates the discourse on America. This dark twin is a counter-discourse. Alongside the caricaturizing discourse on

America there is a well developed discourse on stereotypes and on discourse formation itself; there is a discourse on discourse.

Just before entering the hotel lobby on his first day, the scene which has been proven so fruitful as a point of departure for the discourse on America, Gustavo (the narrator) relates that he “tuvo visiones de viejas novelas de Joseph Conrad y Somerset Maugham, y de noticieros de Bangladesh y la India, con pueblos inundados y vacas y niños flotando, y gente pidiendo auxilio desde los tejados de granjas miserables” (37). This is a direct allusion to the power of narratives, discourse and narrativized memory has over our everyday perception of reality. The placement just before he enters to describe the caricaturized student body of Saint Jo can be no accident; neither can be the inclusion of Conrad and Maugham, who are stock material for postcolonialist theorists from all quarters precisely because of their tendency to caricature non-Western culture. The point is that Gustavo’s imagination has already been colonized by a set of images which guides his perception as he surveys the lobby. And this Orientalism, as Lucille Kerr has indicated, is not pointed more sharply at anyone more than the two Chinese math students at the university. In a seeming play on words, for in America to be Oriental is to be East Asian, these two students are Orientalized to the extreme. No one in the town can tell them apart and everywhere their defining characteristic is their indefinability, their interchangeability, their symmetry, their sameness. If the Americans in the novel are shown to be ignorant and discriminatory against Hispanics as part of the discourse on American ignorance, the Hispanics in the novel display the same propensity for othering. Nowhere is this clearer than with the Chinese students. On the way to the very reception where Maud would confuse, with no remorse or embarrassment, Chileans for Mexicans

and lump all Latin Americans into one inferior group, Gustavo collapses all Asians into another:

--¿Con quién se quedó Rolando?

Josefina también miró hacia atrás:

--Con un chino.

--Eso se ve.

--No sé. Podría ser japonés o vietnamita o coreano...

--Da lo mismo. (47)

This is an exact parallel to Maud's line of thinking: "Chileno, colombiano, mexicano: da lo mismo" (51). Gustavo: "Yo encuentro que todos los chinos son iguales" (47). While Maud claims: "[t]odos los latinoamericanos son iguales" (51). The juxtaposition and phrasing not only serve to let Gustavo have the shoe on the other foot, but they and other similar episodes serve to deconstruct the caricatures of United States culture that are found so frequently throughout the novel.

This kind of undermining juxtaposition is ubiquitous in Donde Van and becomes puzzling. Why, in a novel by one of the major figures of the Boom, by a writer who has spilt a great deal of ink portraying the ephemeral nature of identity, by an author who so often toys with ambiguity, are the characters so extremely drawn? Then, why does the caricaturizing itself seem to be caricatured? The key to this self-deconstruction is found in the epilogue. Reference is made to Gaston Bachelard's La poétique de l'espace and to Jonathan Culler's ideas on convention and discourse, but of greatest importance to us is the allusion to Edward Said. Referring to the American novel All the Pretty Horses he reveals a key to understanding Donde van:

Esta novela me parece especialmente interesante desde un punto de vista que Donohue no toca: esencialmente, se trata de una novela de t cito imperialismo norteamericano –acabo de leer el libro de Edward Said, que toca puntos paralelos, aplicables a Estados Unidos, pero eso funciona incluso a nivel de idioma: el texto de MacCarthy, salpicado de hispanismos, refiere la historia de una invasi n, en este caso la invasi n efectuada por un ni o norteamericano que se aventura en terreno mexicano; pero en esta parte del libro, que no es la mejor, los personajes mexicanos valen s lo como clich s, y son reflejos de la necesidad que los yanquis tienen de que los latinoamericanos correspondamos a un molde fijo para ellos, a un estereotipo inamovible de sexo, violencia, prejuicios ancestrales, naturaleza salvaje, apetitos de dinero y de otros cuerpos, primitivismo, caricatura en todo sentido, de lo que ellos querr an que fu ramos. (359)

And what has Donde van been up to this point if not the very same treatment of Americans and American culture: an Orientalism of the United States. The obesity, the excess, the overly comfortable, insulated existence, the wealth, the junk food, the ignorance, the violence: all of this is presented as if it were directed at the United States to let them know, like Maud let Gustavo know, how it feels to have the shoe on the other foot. And if the above passage were not enough to suggest this it is explicitly laid out in the following passage. All that we must infer is that this hypothetical novel is indeed the novel that we have been reading:

¿Por qué no escribir, entonces, la novela de una invasión nuestra del territorio de ellos, salpicando nuestro texto de anglicismos, caricaturizando tan cruelmente el mundo norteamericano, que los personajes se transformen también en clichés, ejerciendo así nuestro derecho de invadirlos y colonizarlos... y desconocerlos --¿y por qué no, vengarnos?--, como ellos nos invaden, se apropian de nosotros y nos colonizan? (359)

This answers many of our doubts then, as we can now see that the American clichés are consciously manifested exaggerations with a view to a kind of literary vengeance and part of a program of decolonization.

But, does this deconstruction apply to some of the allegorical features? Are they dissolved as well by the open admission of vengeance based stereotyping? Especially, does it apply to the relationship of the US to LA or the third world? We tend to think that it does not. For if the stereotypes are exaggerated and made obvious through repetition and focus, the overall allegory, while well supported, is not on the same level as the other stereotypical references. At every turn the Latin American characters show themselves to be just as guilty of sweeping generalizations and essentialist views as any North American and the juxtaposition of their stereotyping undoubtedly serves as indirect commentary on and a way of deconstructing the act of discourse formation itself. Discourses on the other are shown to be a universal way of constructing or maintaining identity, but at the same time, the patent absurdity of them is also highlighted. It is a kind of will to identity that requires a selective ignorance as its accomplice. It is clear from the epilogue, that not even Gustavo, who is confirmed as the author, much less Donoso, feels

that the action in Donde van is an accurate portrayal of the United States or of American culture. It is a conscious caricaturization that ironically deconstructs itself.

This is not the case with the allegorical features of the novel, which would be maintained if all the hyperbolic stereotypes were peeled away. As we have seen with Valenzuela, Allende and Del Paso, Ruby need not be physically enormous to represent the large physical territory of the United States. We need not have the hyperreal fast-food nightmares to figure forth consumer capitalism. The deeper structures of the novel are not treated with the same sense of irony as are the surface features. There are no similar auto-deconstructive elements referring to allegory, and with all of the references to literary theory that pepper the prose it would have been rather easy to weave them in. This is an important distinction to make, for the open caricaturization allows both North American and Latin American readers to laugh at themselves. And it is this humor which opens the door for the more serious, perhaps more important, allegorical features of the text to be taken on board. It is clearly not just a story about an individual who is almost seduced by an attractive American woman. Nor is it merely about a man who almost loses his cultural identity through this seduction. It is also about the danger of an entire country, region, culture or various cultures being colonized by another. This is the political/social seduction, America is the femme fatal in an allegory of globalization. It may be that Modernity itself is an age (or culture) of identity crisis and the discourse on America found in Donde van is another example of the ongoing struggle of identity formation that may have begun as much as five hundred years ago. The novel is not written primarily to show Americans how it feels to be stereotyped and ridiculed. Written in Spanish and with such a negative portrayal of United States culture from the outset, few American readers

would be likely to have much patience with it. But what does it offer the Latin American reader? What use is this imaginary invasion and colonization that Gustavo speaks of in the Epilogue? Is it a warning? While Kerr's interpretation that Donde van deals with the reclaiming of narrative authority in the face of the overwhelming might of the United States Academy is correct, a postcolonial framework employing an allegorical reading also considers the larger cultural and political realities. It is a glimpse into one possible future that globalization holds for Latin America with an eye to avoiding it. It is clear that the relationship between the United States and Latin America survives the destruction of the auto-deconstruction, so the key must lay there. Perhaps we can take some cues from the end of the story. Gustavo returns home to write his story, to be with his wife who also represents his homeland and his child who represents the future. In turn Chile, and by extension, Latin America must write its own story/history, it must engage with the world on its own terms and keep in view its particular realities.

Conclusion

Despite the many differences that separate the novels studied here, as we have shown, there are clearly many unities which hold them in a field of resemblance. The temporal concentration of their publication and thus the historical context from which they emerge, the Spanish American provenance of their authors and their North American setting are all important commonalities. Any one of these taken separately would not necessarily arouse much interest, but the fact that within a five year period, four established Latin American novelists would choose to publish novels set in the United States is certainly grounds for attention. The conditions of their authorship and publication, then, alone are reason enough to be taken seriously as a unified group and as an object of inquiry. The academic field of Latin American literary studies, which is largely dominated by North American universities, might well take notice of a phenomenon so clearly intrinsically relevant as the representation of United States culture by Latin American authors, especially since the authors in question received their impressions of the United States, undoubtedly some of the source material for the novels, via academic appointments in those very same North American universities. These conditions of the production of these novels lends support to my choice to refer to these works and authors with the label *Americanista*: by default they link Latin America and North America in a system of relations.

Preliminary readings of these novels suggested that beyond the first level story line, the portrayal of the United States amounts to works of cultural studies (via imaginative rather than theoretical writing) aimed at North American life. In this light, the first part of *Americanista* reflects the United States of America as an object and

location of study, while the *-ista* suffix indicates the position of the subject-observer as Latin American. I am quite aware of the usual controversy surrounding the use of America or American to refer exclusively to the United States and admittedly, this could have been easily avoided by simply employing the prefix Norte or even North. However, this move also would have removed the ambivalence that leads to yet another layer of signification of the term *Americanista*.

One of the fundamental questions that prompted this study was the question of *how* the United States would be presented in these four novels. To answer this question of representation we employed discursive analysis following from the work of Michel Foucault and Edward Said. Our initial goal was to examine the texts, individually and as a group, for regular patterns of thoughts and actions emitted by the characters and narrators that functioned to reveal the “essence” of North American life. The predominant pattern in the first two works under study, Novela negra con argentinos and El plan infinito, was an emphasis on hierarchical divisions. Geographic ghettoization and the concomitant economic status represented by the Lower East Side and East L.A. were only the most concrete examples of this phenomenon. Divisions of race and gender continued the theme. In Novela negra Roberta and Agustín, the title Argentines, find a New York that at first sight represents total freedom of thought and movement along with prosperity. On the other hand New York is intellectually sterile. In search of inspiration they explore the Lower East Side, where most of the novel is concentrated. Unfortunately this is also the darker side of New York. The homeless, drug dealers, junkies, prostitutes and trash populate the landscape. The United States of Novela negra is one of stark inequalities and of the social problems that accompany them. Significant passages take

place in the margins within the center: a homeless shelter, a sadomasochistic torture chamber and Tompkins Square Park. These passages are replete with images of inequality and mistreatment of the poor, the perversion of intimate relationships and by extension love, and the rapid expansion of capital and commercialized consumerism at the expense of authenticity.

Though very far apart in terms of aesthetics, narrative technique and genre, Isabel Allende's El plan infinito shares this pattern of imagery. In El plan, the protagonists escape from the ghetto, a Mexican-American barrio in Los Angeles, in which the first part of the novel is set. The scenes of violence, sexism, racial prejudice and stifling traditionalism which dominate the narrative of Gregory Reeves' and Carmen Morales' childhood and adolescence inside the barrio give way to a host of other negative images outside of it. The hierarchical division of the barrio from mainstream America is reiterated through a number of variations throughout the novel. Allende shows the barrio as an inverted microcosm of mainstream America. The violence and inequality of the barrio is not an aberration in the fabric of North American society, it is an intrinsic part of it. The racist and patriarchal inequalities found in the barrio are inescapable outside of it. But it is the lack of tradition and sincere love in a conspicuously modern America which leads Greg down a grievous path. All of this was most clearly demonstrated through a comparison of the women of El plan, especially along the lines of motherhood. The white women, those that *belonged* in modern North American culture, are incapable of genuine love, while the racially ethnic women, those marginalized in modernity, epitomize deep authentic love.

This is very similar to the romantic pairing in Fernando del Paso's Linda 67: Historia de un crimen. In fact, the title character, Linda Lagrange, is fundamentally an amalgamation of Gregory Reeve's two wives from El plan. Linda, a blonde millionaire heiress, possesses all of their essential characteristics: wealthy, blonde, fair-skinned, emotionally detached, whimsical, elitist and unfaithful. David Sorensen, the Latin American protagonist, shares some qualities with Gregory Reeves as well. Like Reeves he is caught in an identificational whirlwind. Where Reeves was Latinized through his upbringing in the Mexican American barrio, Sorensen is born Mexican, though of clear Danish ancestry given away by his blond hair, light skin and surname. Because of his northern European traits, he is able to navigate mainstream American society just as Reeves was. And as was the case with Reeves, this path leads Sorensen to anguish. Though visually, ethnically and culturally indistinguishable from the elites of the San Francisco society that surrounds him, his Mexican status results in his alienation from it. Apart from issues of race, images of extreme economic inequalities provide continuity with both El plan and Novel negra. Aesthetic beauty is trivialized and objects of fine art are functionalized as they become social markers, status symbols. Paintings in particular, or their proliferation and storage, are used to show the extremes of whim, wealth and of throw-away consumer culture. Art itself is reduced to instrumentality through the most American of arts and sciences: advertising and market research. Technology, though conspicuously anachronistic, is fore-grounded in passages to heighten a sense of detachment, dehumanization and fragmentation. The culture at large is consistently represented as vulgar, and attendant with rampant consumerism, obese.

Donde van a morir los elefantes by José Donoso gathers together many of the same topoi. Though in this work a small Midwest college town is the microcosm, the novel brings together violence, consumerism, infidelity, intellectual limitation, technology and racism that are found in the big cities of the other Americanista novels. We showed how an examination of the presentation of food and clothing in Donde van tie together themes of consumption, consumerism and obesity; abundance, wealth and capital; and branding, franchising and globalization. The voracious eating of junk food/fast food as is iterated in various passages is the modern equivalent of the 16th and 17th century cannibalistic feast—it is the proof of North American savagery. And the equally voracious consumption of second-hand North American clothing in Latin America relates the center to the periphery. The North American characters, save the bilingual and culturally competent Ruby, are intellectually inferior, self-centered, culturally ignorant and insensitive when not outright racist. They are fixated on social status and keeping up appearances with little concern for sincerity. Perhaps the most dangerous aspect of North American life is its power of seduction. As is the case with protagonists from all of the Americanista novels, Gustavo Zuleta becomes ensnared by its mysterious charms and nearly loses himself irredeemably as his older Chilean colleague had. This dual nature of United States culture is personified by Ruby, who while grossly obese maintains an unidentifiable power of attraction over men, including the protagonist.

This third level corresponds to a portion of this study which, as it developed over time, revealed itself as increasingly central. My label for the texts also reflects the ambivalent relationship of Latin American intellectuals with the United States. It reflects

the way in which the meditations on North American culture have just as much to do with the idea of Latin America, its individual republics, and how they do not want to see themselves become, as it does with any desire to represent the “real” reality of life in the North. As we have demonstrated throughout, the trajectory of each of the Americanista protagonists can be seen not only as the story of an individual and his or her relationships, but also as representative of the relationship of Latin American nations with the United States, taking the American seduction to the social-political level. I argue that not only do the Americanista novels contain “proper” literary treatment and novelistic development (Jameson Reader 320), but that it also includes something like a national allegory which adds depth, and following from Sommer in Foundational Fictions, that its romantic pairings help put the broad range of images of US culture into a meaningful context. They help locate the place of the United States in the modern Latin American literary imagination. Moreover, it is this foregrounding of hemispheric relations and the context of Globalization that had become so apparent by the final decade of the 20th century that compels us to reformulate the theoretical work of Jameson and Sommer. These novels are texts whose allegorical substrate, or hypotext, is that of the conundrum of Latin American identity in relation to the overwhelming force of the culture of Globalization.

Linda 67 offers the clearest example of this. David Sorensen, Mexican, is drawn into the world of American millionaire heiress Linda Lagrange. But as he accepts the accoutrements of her world, he is forced to relinquish his own. Partway through this process he is offered a way out, through the person of Olivia, an attractive Mexican flight attendant. In the introduction we demonstrated how an allegory of international romance

operates in Carpentier's Los pasos perdidos. Del Paso's Olivia has the same function here as did Rosario in Carpentier. Olivia is less complicated, less demanding, truer and offers Dave a link back to his Mexican roots. The choice is a clear one between the blonde, fair-skinned, ultra-modern, promiscuous, millionaire North American which brings with her entrapment in an inferior position and the dark haired, olive-skinned, faithful Olivia with promise of true romantic fulfillment. Olivia offers Dave a return to authenticity, and he decides to take that return, but cannot resist the temptation for vengeance against Linda, who has entered into an adulterous relationship, and a chance to regain some of the luxuries to which he had grown accustomed. It is this attempt for revenge which prevents Sorensen from achieving fulfillment and authenticity. His murder and simulated kidnapping of Linda, ironically revealed through simulated evidence fabricated by Linda's father, leads to his complete entrapment in the United States, life in prison.

As opposed to Dorris Sommer's national romances which posited marriage between characters as the allegorical consolidation of national sectors, Linda 67 clearly projects an allegory of international or transnational romance gone wrong. Here the marriage of the Latin American to the North American threatens to dissolve national/regional identity altogether, absorbed by a debased and superficial North American culture. The solution is simply annulment and a return to cultural authenticity. The Mexican/US marriage in Linda 67, especially given the publication date, bring to mind the NAFTA accords which brought the two nations into more intimate relations. Taken together with the glimpse into the marketing plans of David's company to expand into Latin America as a whole, and references to the debt crisis, it is not difficult to read the allegory of Globalization.

Sorensen figures allegorically as the sector of Latin America that undergoes its own de-latinization as it accepts the benefits accrued with the partnership with global transnational capital by separating itself from and providing access to the resources of other racialized ethnic groups. In this light Dave stands in for the kind of Latin American nordomania, a wholesale adoption of North American political and economic culture (which in its present state might be deemed transnational) that late-19th and early 20th century Latin American essayists like Martí, Darío, Rodó and Vasconcelos warned against in their manifestos for Latin American unity.

Allende's Gregory Reeves, the Latinized American in El plan infinito, follows a similar path to Sorensen's: his marriages to two different North American women leave him in spiritual and financial ruin. Instead of an allegory of the ideal nation-state, there is an allegory of Globalization which terminates in disaster. Reeves turns on himself for revenge, but El plan infinito does not end in an existential abyss as does Linda 67. It is the other version of North America and the other version of Globalization which comes to the rescue of Gregory Reeves. An ensemble of racially-other Americans, Asian-Americans, African-Americans and Hispanic-Americans joins up to set Reeves on the path to redemption, and importantly, help save his son as well. The message is clear, only as a genuine melting-pot or better yet---salad bowl (where diverging singularities peacefully and equitably coexist)--will the future of the United States be guaranteed. The figure of Carmen/Tamar concretizes this philosophy. Carmen, Greg's best friend from the Los Angeles barrio, finds enormous success, but as a mestiza she only finds success after leaving the United States. She returns to her roots in Mexico, travels through Africa, then to Asia to adopt her late-brother's half-Vietnamese son, and finally finds a successful

romantic partner in an Italian man. The pair settles in Rome where she establishes herself as the transformed Tamar with a lucrative career as a fashion designer, drawing upon conspicuously international ethnic cultural inspiration. It is this profitable enterprise which provides the financial resources to salvage Greg's career in law as the two are reunited in a significantly non-romantic, non-binding relationship. Tamar is the personification of equitable and voluntary global integration. She is the allegorical figure for Allende's positive version of Globalization.

Gustavo Zuleta, in Donoso's Donde van a morir los elefantes, follows the trajectory of Sorensen and Reeves and like Reeves, he too is able to make the return to his Latin Roots and to fulfillment. His unexplainable attraction to the morbidly obese Ruby, a metonymic allegorical figure of a North America which is repeatedly represented as overly luxurious and given to cannibalistic junk food feasts, and the United States itself, is finally broken by the vicarious shock of his wife upon witnessing the American Way of Life first-hand and the spectacle of a multiple homicide campus shooting. As with the other examples, the seduction of the Latin American man by a North American woman is concomitant with his adoption of the new North American lifestyle. Gustavo finally makes the choice to return to Chile with his wife and young son, where they lead a more humble, but very happy life.

It is Valenzuela's Novela negra con argentinos that most complicates the allegorical pattern, but components of it are obvious. Agustín Palant looks to fall into his allegorical role first as he moves outside of his relationship with his fellow Argentine Roberta Aguilar. He goes home with an attractive American actress, but before their relationship can even properly begin he inexplicably, as if he were playing a role over

which he had no control, apparently shoots her, cutting short his allegory of Americanization. Roberta is not as fortunate. She is seduced by an American male, Bill. He is African-American, manages a thrift shop, and seems to have revolutionary tendencies—far from the sterility of mainstream America. However, as part of the transformation that New York undergoes during the novel, Bill morphs into just another patriarchal male who eventually draws Roberta completely into his world and shapes her as he sees fit. It is crucial to recognize Bill's change as well, for as in Allende's El plan infinito, the larger structures clearly bear upon the individual destinies. The barrio, and the behavior of its inhabitants are overdetermined by and a clear reflection of the relationship of the larger society to the barrio. The same phenomenon is at work here. Bill is transformed as his neighborhood, once the vital source of inspiration (and also danger) for Roberta and Agustín, is taken over by external financial interests. The postmodern colonization of the Lower East Side has important ramifications for Bill, and in turn, for Roberta. As in the other Americanista novels the betrayal of the homeland, here represented by Agustín, for North America, leads to a personal crisis for the Latin American. And here, as in El Plan, Globalization is tied to internal colonization.

This panoramic survey reaffirms the specific shape of the re-formulation of allegory as a reading strategy. In the Americanista novels, the allegories are precisely transnational. The love relationships between the main characters cross national frontiers and national identities. And this is the crux of the difference in the allegorical structure. Where the national romances of the 19th century projected an ideal national identity through the reconciliation and consolidation of disparate sectors, the allegories of the Americanista novels figure forth the speculative consolidation of disparate national

identities terminating in cultural disintegration. The erotic pairings of Sommer's national romances helped in the formation of a national identity and identification with the state that would maintain that imagined community. On the contrary, the love matches between the Spanish Americans and their North American pairs of each of these Americanista novels thrusts the protagonist into a crisis of identity: instead of identity formation there is dissolution. Instead of mutual benefit there is entrapment; none of the pairings results in a happy union. In these allegories, Globalization is the equivalent of identificational chaos and moral decay. Some of the characters manage to escape from the maelstrom, others do not.

The discursive analysis leads us to the conclusion that the fundamental concerns of Martí, Darío, Rodó and Vasconcelos over Latin America's precarious position with regard to the United States were still very central in the minds of these four Latin American novelists in the 1990s. The topoi and the images presented by the Americanistas are strikingly similar to those figured by the earlier generation. There are two very different possible sources of these similarities. First, similar real-world conditions: Globalization is seen as just as great a threat to Latin American autonomy as was the 19th century territorial expansion of the United States and the coterminous nordomania. Alternatively, the similarities could be based in a tradition of discourse itself, the power of a counter-hegemonic Orientalist-type narrative which constrains not only which topics or which observations should be made, but also provides a stock of facile images to be readily applied to North American life within those categories.

In Orientalism, Said argues that surprisingly little change is found between the discourse of one generation and the observations of the next, save that the latter would be

more sophisticatedly elaborated. This is true for the portrayal of the United States by the Americanista novelists and it is hard to consider that such a limited vocabulary of topoi and images was not conditioned by the prior reading of Martí and the other pan-Hispanoamericanists with Carpentier as an important novelistic influence. However, allegorical analysis and numerous references to Globalization within the texts themselves as well as the timing of their publications, suggest that the Americanista novels are not purely discursive products. Moreover, the contemporary formation of Mercosur and other regional accords which aimed to shield the region from abuse as well as a contemporary theoretical backlash from Latin American humanists and social scientists attest to real-world, extra-textual circumstances as major players as well.

In this light, the singularity of Globalization must be called into question insofar as it relates to Latin America. The similarity of the Americanista response to Globalization to the earlier generation's response to naked US imperialism leads us to the conclusion that rather than a new era of global interconnection, we can view Globalization as an extension of, rather than a break from the regular pattern of United States/Latin American relations. And if Globalization is an extension of United States/Latin American relations we may conclude that it is a particularly modern, peculiarly North American turned post-national form of hegemony: Globalization as the Americanization of imperialism.

An article by Ánibal Quijano and Emmanuel Wallerstein highlight the connections between modernity, colonialism and the Americas. This idea of America as a system is treated at length by the two sociologists in their 1992 article "Americanness as a Concept, or the Americas in the Modern World-System". Though the apparent thesis of

the article is the centrality of the Americas to the formation of the modern world economy, they also engage in a lengthy comparison of the US and Latin America and detail the ways in which they mutually depend on one another as a sort of subsystem within the larger world-system. The opening lines of the essay are a series of terse declarations at the ultra-macro-economic level which though do not directly address the idea of America as a system in and of itself, do establish certain ground rules upon which much of the foregoing has been based:

The modern world-system was born in the long sixteenth century. The Americas as a geosocial construct were born in the long sixteenth century. The creation of this geosocial entity, The Americas, was the constitutive act of the modern world-system. The Americas were not incorporated into an already existing capitalist world-economy. There could not have been a capitalist world-economy without the Americas. (549)

Contained here are some revolutionary statements that place the Americas, not just at the spatial center but at the historical, or causal, center of the modern world-system. This is of vital importance to us as another of our conclusions is that the discourse on the US found in the Americanista novels does not necessarily relate specifically to US culture, if culture could be somehow separated out, but to the modern world-system of which modernity is the cultural manifestation. If it is impossible to completely extricate modernity from US culture, then we can at least acknowledge that US culture is not monolithic; it has its own variations and gradations. One of these components is of course culture from above, which is most directly connected to modernity and expansive capital. And it is clear that with the rise of more powerful mass media and communication

techniques and technologies, that this cultural modernity is always consolidating and expanding its influence. Local and regional singularities are constantly conceding terrain to national (and increasingly international) differential homogeneity. Even the most fundamental cultural manifestations like language and food are under assault. However, as we have pointed out through the course of this study, some of these variations stand in direct opposition to modernity from above and many commentators from within US culture have made the some of the same critiques of US modernity found in the pages of the Americanista novels. One of the limitations of these novels is that they do present US culture as monolithic.

Perhaps through Quijano and Wallerstein we can glimpse just why this is. We can understand just why it is that modernity and American culture are so inextricably linked as well as why both North and South are so dependent on the other for their own sense of identity. Modernity is born out of the incorporation of the Americas into the known world of the 16th century that placed Western Europe at its center. This is vitally important to take on board, because if modernity is often considered a cultural phenomenon that begins in Europe and is translated to the Americas, Quijano and Wallerstein argue that, on the contrary, the Americas are at the heart of the matter from its very inception: “Americanity has always been, and remains to this day, an essential element in what we mean by ‘modernity’. The Americas were the ‘New World’, a badge and a burden assumed from the outset. But as the centuries went by, the New World became the pattern, the model of the entire world-system” (550). In a very real way the path to the modern world is through Americanization, albeit in a different sense than the term usually connotes, but one that is nonetheless not completely removed from the common

understanding. Americanization is commonly used to describe the encroachment into other cultural spheres of United States customs and practices. Most often these are associated with United States corporations and their retail stores, fast food, fashion, language on the one hand and the entertainment, communications and technology industries on the other. But again, there is no real division between these two branches; they mutually support one another. But when we speak of Americanization in the sense of the New World as “the model of the entire world-system”, we are speaking about the exportation and super-imposition of the matrix of the Americas on the rest of the world. Rather than the material cultural products, we are speaking about a whole new way of doing things, a different system of organization. Of course, this Americanization (and the assistance of two world wars which devastated the competitors) laid the foundations for the Americanization in the second sense. That is why when the Americanista novelists focus the spotlight on particular products of United States culture, there is an entire coterie of associated systemic cultural-political-economic phenomena in tow.

America was the “New World” that provided the space and resources necessary for the rise of the world-system. Eventually America would find itself at the very center of modernity, but not before it would be split into *the Americas*: North and South. It was the creation of two distinct geographical areas that would allow one to gain in stature at the expense of the other. In this move from periphery to center we see the Americas as the scene of a double inversion of the hierarchies of coloniality. And this path was made from more than sheer territorial accumulation. From before the time of Manifest Destiny, the discourse of modernity went hand in hand with geographical expansion. Modernity then, has always been at the core of the divide between North and South. This is as

evident in pre-Mexican War rhetoric from United States high officials as it is in the novels of the Americanistas. It continues to be so as the struggles move away from territorial expansion and the expansion of markets to the creation or re-creation of territories and the creation of markets.

It is the rise of the United States from colony, to republic, to imperial power, to hegemonic power and its changing relationship with its fellow American states to the South that is at the heart of the Americanista novels. This entails a change in the relationship with coloniality and the world system. Thus it is coloniality which serves as the crux between Americanness, modernity and the critique of United States culture found in our study. As Wallerstein and Quijano state, all of the state entities formed in the Americas were formed as formal colonies in part of an “interstate system”. As such they stood in a clearly inferior hierarchical position to the modern European nations, again, that they helped create. It is this hierarchization which is the root of coloniality. Coloniality becomes a worldview based on the hierarchization of states, people and labor forms. Paradoxically, it is the revolutions of independence which entrench the colonial hierarchies in politically decolonized territories. Not only do the institutions and culture of coloniality outlive the formal colony, they transform the fundamental basis of divisions. This happens qualitatively and directionally. According to Quijano and Wallerstein the vertical hierarchies grow in importance and become much more rigidly established after independence: “The administrative boundaries established by the colonial authorities had had a certain fluidity in that, from the perspective of the metropole, the essential boundary-line was that of the empire *vis-à-vis* other metropolitan empires” (551). This fluidity found in the formal colony evaporates after independence.

This was a shift from organization from the perspective of imperial difference, Spain versus its competitors in the newly forming Europe of nations; to one of colonial difference, Mexican, Chilean or Argentine Creole elites versus the other strata of society. There was a move from “classical” colonization to internal colonization. No longer formally part of the interstate system which saw the colonies at the bottom rung of the hierarchy, this system of hierarchization was internalized and bolstered as part of the formation of the new republics resulting in an ossification of ethnic categories. The essential boundary lines were moved inward. Coloniality, as the cultural manifestation of the geopolitical practice of imperial expansion, is internalized and strengthened (and sometimes officially codified) at the death of formal colonialism.

This is why we can speak of coloniality at present, in the 1990s and in the Americanista novels. Coloniality is essentially a cultural entity and as such transcends the irruptions in geopolitical organization. Though formal colonization of the Americas ended at the turn of the 20th century, coloniality is still very much a part of the cultural landscape in the current phase of globalization. In fact, with globalization and a concomitant reduction in the importance of national borders and nationality, ethnicity—one of the key features of coloniality--has gained importance. This focus on ethnicity and its relationship to social status is apparent in all of the Americanista novels. Novela negra con argentinos, El plan infinito, Linda 67 and Donde van a morir los elefantes each present the main protagonist in a crisis of identity as a result of his or her immersion in United States culture, many of these figures are in an inferior position due to their Latin American ethnicity. They also draw attention to other groups or individuals who are ethnicized and thereby marginalized from the mainstream culture. Often these are other

Latin Americans or Hispanic-Americans but there are frequent references to East Asians, Asian-Americans, African-Americans and American Indians as well. Making visible this hierarchy of ethnicities these novels uncover the coloniality present in United States culture even when they are referring directly to the past, as Allende does so often.

This coloniality is not limited to the internal colonization of the United States or the presence of the third world within. These structures of coloniality are mirrors that reflect back to Latin America, to coloniality within Latin America and between Latin America and the United States. North and South came to be divided politically, geographically and ethnically. This entrenchment of a Southern and Northern ethnicity developed as the United States made the move from a colonial peer to a competing imperial power. The Monroe Doctrine marks the point where the United States revealed its desire to maintain open markets in the Americas and facilitate the transition to a new world order which would be more beneficial to itself. The Roosevelt Corollary marks that which it had gained the power to do so, effectively replacing the European powers in the interstate hierarchy in their aspirations over the Americas. This is crucial: from the very moment of Latin American independence, the United States had taken up the imperial reins, though it would be a new kind of empire, one whose stated aims were to maintain freedom and openness conducive for free-market capitalism against the threats of “backsliding” into the restrictions and limitations of mercantilist imperial organization. The fact that it was the British Royal Navy that effectively enforced the Monroe Doctrine reveals the real stakes involved. It was a consolidation of the changes toward the British system of which the North Americans were to take up the reins. The division between North and South in the Americas mirrored the same division that had been carried out in

Europe in previous centuries as England emerged as the preeminent power in the Atlantic circuit.

Different locations within the power structures carry with them ethnic divides. It was clear from the early 19th century that the Americas were dividing into two halves. In his “Carta de Jamaica,” Simón Bolívar, already perceived that the United States would more likely be a foe than a friend. The relationship between the United States and Latin America would now cross the colonial difference and with the asymmetries of power would come the differences of ethnicity. From the North, the discourse of Manifest Destiny at mid-century made it clear that ethnic differences were being developed, utilized, fossilized. By the end of the century, ethnic difference was utilized in the South. Though Martí would claim that “no hay odio de razas, porque no hay razas”, Darío had an established vocabulary of essential physiological and cultural differences that characterized the northerners and by the turn of the century Rodó had an elaborated philosophy of the North American otherness. Both North and South employed ethnicity, against one another, against the other within and for themselves.

Ethnicity and coloniality, largely inseparable, have roots in the discovery of the Americas and gain renewed strength in the period of independence—formal decolonization. The new global order that began to emerge with the incorporation of Americas and developed as the Americas themselves evolved, emerged from a matrix of coloniality, ethnicity and racism and as such the evolution of that order carries with it in its genetic makeup those building blocks. The institutions and individuals that would thrive in that environment would be those which first, could take advantage of the environment and second, reproduce themselves in the most propitious manner. When

Allende, Donoso, Del Paso and Valenzuela write about the United States they are writing at the height of openly declared Globalization—the Americanization of the world. Though the Globalization was touted as a new world order, as we have seen, it was more a return to the intensification of modernity with a post-national twist. These Latin American novelists' explorations of culture reveal Globalization as just that. At every step the traces of coloniality, ethnicity, racism and “newness” are shown to be lurking behind the fashion, fast food, entertainment and the dollar. They are showing how products and practices of United States culture are imbued with coloniality, how they are empty of real (authentic) content and in the background there seems to be the warning that their adoption will lead to even greater dependency rather than liberation. In the root they are revealing the liberational promises of neoliberalism as false. An understanding of the place of the Americas in the World-System elucidates the inextricable ties between North and South, modernity and coloniality. What is more, Quijano and Wallerstein's concept of Americanity is the social science analog of the anti-romantic allegories that we have discussed above. We can view the tormented love affairs or failed and strained marriages in these novels as the allegorization, or following from Jameson the re-psychologization, of the socio-political relationship of the Americas as a system with all of its attendant difference, inequality and violence.

All of this finally brings us to a point of the classification of these works: that the Americanista novels are postcolonial novels. The discursive and allegorical analysis reveal strong attempts to “write back” against Globalization. When I speak of postcolonial literature I am using the term in the way that was laid out by Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin in their seminal work on the subject *The Empire Writes Back: Theory*

and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures (1989). They use the term “to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day. This is because there is a continuity of preoccupations throughout the historical process initiated by European imperial aggression” (2). Thus, they use “post-colonial” in an inclusive way which gives it purchase across national traditions and historical periods, including, as they note as well, the lands colonized by Spain. Rightly then, we can apply the term to the literature and criticism of Latin America. The early generation of Hispano-Americanists, especially in the figure of José Martí, made a smooth transition from speaking about Europe to speaking about the United States as the other, external threat to their autonomy and autochthony. And as we have argued throughout this study, there is definitely a continuity of preoccupations on the part of Latin American writers from one historical period to the next when it comes to the relationship of the United States with the various republics of the region. We have shown that not only has there been continuous preoccupation, but that the particular points of concern under the umbrella of cultural imperialism show continuity as well. While Dependency theorists like Cardoso and Prebisch worked to show how economic imperium functioned to maintain “developing” countries in a constant state of dependency. Latin American literary writers have been equally concerned with the tenuous position of Hispanic culture in the face of such asymmetrical economic forces; their theme of seduction and entrapment, like those allegorized in the Americanista novels amount to a warning against dependency on the cultural side.

On the other hand, when Ashcroft et. al. provide a list of countries which would fall under the rubric of postcolonial, the great majority of Hispanic America is passed

over. They conclude, “the literatures of African countries, Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Caribbean countries, India, Malaysia, Malta, New Zealand, Pakistan, Singapore, South Pacific Island countries, and Sri Lanka are all post-colonial literatures” (2).

Unfortunately, even though they append the United States to that list, none of the countries of the authors of the present study is included. We may deduce that none of the literature of continental Latin America would be included in the formation of what would become known as “post-colonial”. Therefore, while their original definition is clearly inclusive, the exclusion of most of Hispanic America on their roll call raises some concern and cause for additional caution. But again Ashcroft et al. diminish our anxiety when they explain further:

What each of these literatures has in common beyond their special and distinctive regional characteristics is that they emerged in their present form out of the experience of colonization and asserted themselves by foregrounding the tension with the imperial power, and by emphasizing their differences from the assumptions of the imperial centre. It is this which makes them distinctively post-colonial. (2)

Thus, even if their particular litany seems to be concerned with literature in English, the spirit of their definition clearly includes Latin America.

For many theorists, however, there is too much confusion surrounding the term. As The Empire Writes Back itself points out, the prefix “post” is often used to refer to a specific period after the independence movements: postcolonialism as *after* the colonial period. This, combined with the strong English accent on the field of postcolonial studies in general, has lead many Latin American critics to mark out a theoretical territory of

their own and apply different terminology. They rightly argue that a theoretical corpus which is based in the study of traditions from former English colonies may not be best suited for a region which was colonized by a country with different aims, methods and organization, with its own particular historical trajectory and which became active in colonization in a different historical period. The fact that the English Empire began to take shape about a century after that of Spain only adds tension to this polemic. To retrofit the colonization of the Americas with the blind application of an Anglo-centric theoretical corpus would not only be culturally insensitive but would be to engage in anachronisms and ironically repeat the very act of colonization that postcolonial theory attempts to redress.

In the introduction to the recent contribution to the field Coloniality at Large: Latin America and the Postcolonial Debate (2008), Mabel Moraña, Enrique Dussel and Carlos A. Jáuregui promote the term “coloniality”, originally coined by Anibal Quijano, as a replacement for “postcolonialism”. They prefer “coloniality” because it “encompasses the transhistoric expansion of colonial domination and the perpetuation of its effects in contemporary times” (2). With coloniality there is no implication that the study begins after the imperial power has left, is limited to the immediate aftermath of independence, or that the effects of colonization have terminated. More germane to the present study are their observations on Globalization and its ties to (post)coloniality. They claim, “it is obvious that for Latin America both globalization and neoliberalism stand as new incarnations of neocolonialism, and capitalism continues to be the structuring principle which, by ruling all aspects of national and international relations,

not only allows for but requires the perpetuation of coloniality” (12). Moraña et al. also emphasize the centrality of the United States in the affairs of the region:

In addition to internal problems derived from the continuation of colonial structures Latin America also endured, since the beginning of its independent life, the effects of both economic interventions and political aggressions. With the Spanish-American War of 1898 and more clearly after World War I, the international hegemony of the United States reformulated Latin America’s neocolonial condition, thus providing new evidence of the multiple faces adopted by colonial expansion, its always renewed dominating strategies, and its devastating repercussions. (9)

While by 2008, Moraña et al. may see it as obvious that Globalization is a new incarnation of colonialism, George Yúdice, Jean Franco and Juan Flores were making the same claim as early as 1992. In On Edge: The Crisis of Contemporary Latin American Culture, Yúdice et al. open their edition with the following vignette:

“A new dawn in the New World” is the tune that several Latin American presidents have been singing as backup to George Bush’s lead on his December 1990 promotional tour for the Enterprise for the Americas Initiative. “To fulfill the New World’s destiny,” Mr. Bush crooned, “all of the Americas and the Caribbean must embark on a venture for the coming century: to create the first fully democratic hemisphere in the history of mankind.” On the flip side of the democracy label is the Brady plan, “an Administration proposal that developing debtor countries sell state-owned industries and cut spending while commercial banks forgive some debts

and lower interest payments on others.” The aim is to create “a free trade zone from the North Pole to Tierra del Fuego.” (vii)

Two points are of interest here: first, this is one of the opening moves of Globalization and second, the date of publication is coterminous with the first Americanista novels. This suggests that the Americanista novelists are the literary wing of a generalized Latin American intellectual backlash against Globalization. Yúdice continues:

These lyrics, with all their promise of novelty, are of course just a jazzed-up remake of an old standard that has variously been billed over the past two centuries as the Monroe Doctrine, Pan-Americanism, the Big Stick, the Good Neighbor Policy, Alliance for Progress, the Caribbean Basin Initiative, and so on. The lyrics’ double entendre was already understood by José Martí as early as 1889. (vii)

The litany of social ills that Yúdice and Moraña associate with Globalization, modernity, coloniality are dominant themes throughout the Americanista novels. Privatization, hyperinflation, urbanization, class divisions, crime, mass unemployment, homelessness, starvation, the pervasive reach of media and technology, and informal economies all lead to the breakdown of traditional social structures and stable subject-identity formation. The Americanista novels not only reveal the existence of these problems at the very heart of the new global order, the United States (internal colonization), but they show that the structuring principles and institutions are directly related to Latin America. Valenzuela makes ubiquitous references through the imagery of the Lower East Side and its “postmodern” transformation to the Buenos Aires of the dictatorship. Postmodernity here clearly symbolizes Globalization and *is part of it*. As

Jameson has argued Globalization is essentially the spatialization of postmodern culture. The bags overflowing with trash are consistently linked to the “chusma”, the victims of the so-called Guerra Sucia. Thus, as Walter Mignolo has argued, the modernity of the center has a darker, colonial side where bags of excess waste on the inside are transformed to bags of human remains on the outside.

Allende draws the link between technology, industry, violence, race and power. She aligns external events such as War World II and Vietnam to the annihilation of American Indians or the ghettoization of African- or Mexican-Americans. Del Paso juxtaposes the hyperinflation of riches, images and simulation in San Francisco with the monetary hyperinflation of the debt crisis in Mexico and like the other Americanistas, implies that the two are metonymically rather than merely metaphorically connected. Donoso likewise compares wealth, consumerism, industry and obesity in the United States to the poverty and informal economies in Latin America making the direct connection between the two via a sketch of trade in second-hand North American name-brand clothing. Furthermore, all of the Americanistas either imply or directly comment on the imperial relationship of the United States to Latin America, most often—again following in the tradition of Martí, Darío and Rodó—including a reference to the United States as a new Rome. But perhaps more importantly, they are showing the reality of the Americas as a system.

All of this, of course, reaffirms our observations on the continuity of the critique of North American culture by Latin American writers separated in time and space. It helps us understand why the Americanista novelists have revisited many of the same discursive topoi at the end of the 20th century that the Pan-Hispano-American essayists

had begun to map out at the end of the 19th century. They are still confronting the kinds of “neocolonial pacts” between national elites and international powers, representing the choice of Sarmiento over Martí that led to the revolt of the lettered class as outlined by Angel Rama in La ciudad letrada. The Americanistas represent an extension of that revolt, a lettered city in exile, “replicants”, to use Coloniality’s terminology, writing in the belly of the beast.

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