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George Thaniel

Dwellers in the Greek Eye (George Seferis and Lawrence Durrell)

"All my favourite characters have been / Out of all pattern and proportion," Lawrence Durrell announces at the start of his poem "Mythology" (*Collected Poems*: 251)[1] which he once sent to Seferis, primarily to amuse him. Seferis became sufficiently interested in the poem to translate it into idiomatic Greek appropriate to the style of the original (*Andigrafes*: 133). Durrell's claim to have a predilection for extraordinary characters is certainly true about his fictional characters, especially those of the *Alexandria Quartet*, the work which made him famous. It was also true about some real characters whom he had known, either personally, like George Katsimbalis, Miller's *Colossus of Maroussi*, who figures in "Mythology," or Cavafy, the Alexandrian poet whom he knew through his work. To some degree, Durrell's assertion may also be taken to include himself as well as Seferis.

The two men, the extroverted Durrell and the introverted Seferis (senior to Durrell by twelve years) were close friends through most of Seferis' life and sources of inspiration for each other, particularly during the early part of their acquaintance. The Cyprus conflict eventually found them in different camps and may have soured their friendship (judging from Seferis' diaries and correspondence), but the break seems to have been temporary. Through the 60's they kept in touch and exchanged letters, though less frequently than in the early years. They also wrote brief memoirs about each other. Durrell's on Seferis postdates the latter's death in 1971.

In his memoir on Durrell (originally published in French),[2] Seferis turned to the war period when he, Durrell and several other writers, English and Greek, were self-exiles in Egypt, and to Durrell's poems on Greek themes. Seferis had received about twenty letters from Durrell during the wartime period. Some of these were written, in the words of Seferis, "on anything that came to hand," some "decorated

in the margins with multicolored drawings," some with "the sender's profile quickly sketched in place of the signature, like an ideogram." Seferis used two of these letters in his memoir. The first letter dated from around the end of April or beginning of May 1941, and the second from around October 1943.[3] The letter from 1941 is short, almost telegraphic in its urgency. Durrell and his family (first wife Nancy and baby daughter Penelope, or "Pinkie") had to be evacuated to Egypt from Crete, and Seferis—also in Crete but destined himself to leave the island very soon, although he did not know this at the time—was asked to take care of Durrell's luggage when it arrived by ship from Kalamata, Greece. Seferis was never able to do that, and the luggage was lost or captured by the Germans. One result was the loss of several letters from Henry Miller to Durrell—the very opposite happened when Miller lost several of Durrell's letters to him from the period 1941–1943 while travelling around America, studying the habits and mores of what he called *Homo Americanus*. In a letter of Seferis to Miller, dated 25 December 1941, we read about Seferis's and Durrell's time on Crete.

> I love Larry, he's got wonderful moments. I remember him in Crete. He came from Kalamata, on a sort of boat like the one you used to go to Spetses—with Nancy and Bouboulina.[4] We were starving when we met that night. Nancy waiting with her child for some food in a very sad hotel. Everything was full up in the town. The taverna stuffed with a queer crowd of soldiers and homeless civilians, sweeping the dishes like grasshoppers on a vineyard. After a tremendous struggle we succeeded in getting some cold rice, and left without paying, because the waiters were drowned in the compactness of this mad crowd. We parted in the blacked-out narrow street, under the extraordinary clusters of the sky. After one or two days he was gone to Egypt.[5]

The 1943 letter of Durrell to Seferis, printed in Seferis' memoir on Durrell, discusses the poem "Mythology" mentioned earlier, and gives us hints that Durrell had already started what much later became *Justine*, the first part of his *Alexandria Quartet*. The commentary on "Mythology" reflects material which we also find in Seferis' *Meres D*: 283–285.

The three letters of Durrell to Seferis, now first published below,[6] come from the periods 1940–1941 and 1944 and thus bracket, chronologically, the two letters published by Seferis in his memoir and a third, intermediate letter from Seferis to Durrell which has been

printed in *Meres D*: 159–160 and which will be mentioned later. But before we discuss these letters and other material from the war and later years as illustrations of the Seferis-Durrell relationship we should describe its background.

II

In 1935 all the Durrells, that is the widowed mother and four children aged 10 to 23 (Lawrence was the oldest and Gerald the youngest) moved to Corfu, Greece, from England in search of an agreeable climate and inexpensive life. The background of this eccentric move and many picturesque details of the Durrell sojourn in Corfu are given in two books by Gerald Durrell, *My Family and Other Animals* (first published in 1957) and *Birds, Beasts and Relatives* (1969), and in Lawrence Durrell's more poetic but equally personal *Prospero's Cell* (1945). Lawrence had written and published poetry but his main ambition was to be a best-selling novelist. His first two books in prose, *Pied Piper of Lovers* and *Panic Spring*, were neither commercially nor critically successful. He wrote his third book, *The Black Book*, under the liberating influence of Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer*. Durrell had written a fan letter to Miller and this started a long and rich correspondence between the two. In *Blue Thirst*: 17, Durrell says that he was virtually bombarded by Miller (who was then living in Paris) with "a great deal of encouragement and documentation and masses of ideas." In *Prospero's Cell*: 22 we hear of Miller's "rambling exuberant letters from Paris" being received in Corfu and read to the delight of Durrell's friends who included the Armenian writer Zarian, the Anglo-Greek physician and encyclopedic "monster" Theodore Stephanides, and others. Durrell finally met Miller in Paris, in September of 1937, and decided to have *The Black Book* brought out by the Obelisk Press, which had also published Miller's book. Durrell's publishers, Faber and Faber (where Eliot had been very helpful), were prepared to publish the book themselves but with cuts which Durrell did not want to make.

In 1939 Miller visited Greece, as a first step in a long itinerary he was planning, with Tibet as the ultimate destination! Up to that point, he was not especially interested in the Mediterranean world, but he gradually became interested in Greece through Betty Ryan, a young lady who was living in the same building with him in Paris,

and the "poetic" letters he received from Durrell. Once in Greece, he was captivated by it. The outcome of his affair with that country and people was, of course, *The Colossus of Maroussi*, which he always considered to be his happiest book and which Durrell considers one of the two best books about Greece, the other being his own brother Gerald's *My Family and Other Animals*. Durrell appears several times in *The Colossus*. When war was breaking out in Europe, Durrell—Miller wrote—sought to enlist in the Greek Navy for service on the Albanian frontier, "because he thought more of the Greeks than he did of his own countrymen." We are also given a portrait of a different Durrell in Miller's description of a trip to Mycenae and Sparta, where Durrell's fussiness over an order of boiled eggs at some humble restaurant revealed to Miller "the Englishman in Durrell" and to himself his own "American" identity.

In Edmund Keeley's "Postscript: A Conversation with Seferis" (*Modern Greek Poetry: Voice and Myth*: 198–199) we learn that Durrell was with Miller when they first met Seferis (via Katsimbalis who knew Theodore Stephanides) and that Seferis appreciated the fact that those two non-Greek writers seemed to understand his poetry much better than some of his Greek friends. The encounter is described more fully in *Meres C*: 131–132.

> At Katsimbalis', in Maroussi, Henry Miller and Lawrence Durrell. I found them all in the dining room finishing their tea. George [Katsimbalis] had read them translations of my poems. So when I arrived I found an air of interest in me. I think that they [that is, Miller and Durrell] are the first English writers whom I have met. Durrell is a short and sturdy young man with the intelligent head of a satirist (. . .). [He] told me that he was struck by the absence of sentimentalism in my poems (they are unsentimental in a good sense). This he found surprising in a Greek writer. He asked me whether I was brought up with English literature. He thought it odd that before the summer of 1931, as I pointed out, I had barely any contact with the English writers (. . .). At the end of the evening, Miller said to me: "What is peculiar about you is that you turn things inside out."

We recall that Seferis had first come upon the poetry of Eliot in 1931 and that up to that time his education had been overwhelmingly French. Durrell may have eventually understood that Seferis' unsentimentalism was, partly at least, due to Seferis' exposure to modern French writers like Valéry, Apollinaire, Laforgue and Corbière.

In *Meres C* Seferis appears struck primarily by Miller while he

seems to take Durrell for granted. This is understandable. A forty-eight year old American like Miller, penniless but full of Dionysiac spirit, was more impressive than the much younger British expatriate Durrell, who had fallen out with his own people and was then searching for his identity in Greece, under what he called in *Prospero's Cell* the Greek "eye." Miller had to sail to America at the end of 1939. "For a long time," Durrell writes in *The Greek Islands*: 232, in reference to that period, "we had lived in the penumbra of a war declared on all sides but not implemented" in Greece, which technically was still a neutral country. "It was in the twilight of European history that I said goodbye to Henry Miller, who was ordered back to the States by his Consul."

The Durrells had already returned to Britain, except for Lawrence and his wife, who stayed on in Greece and moved to Athens from Corfu. There, Lawrence worked first for the British Embassy as a press officer and then for the British Council. He continued associating with men like George Katsimbalis, Seferis, Elytis, the painter Ghika and others who were linked with the literary magazine *Nea Grammata* (New Letters), which was then ceasing its publication. He contributed to plans for a new magazine this group hoped to use as a showcase for their work. Durrell wanted something really daring, something "in a smooth Dada way," which might secure for them a larger public. "What is important," he remarked, "is that poetry circulate, never mind the means." Seferis was sceptical. He thought that the lack of *kefi* (humour) in the Greek literary life of the time did not allow for such ventures (*Meres C*: 168).

On 1 August 1940, shortly before the Durrells were to move South to Kalamata, Seferis visited them at their home in Athens:

Last night at Larry's in Psihiko. Their house is high on the hill, below the quarries. As soon as I entered, I felt that I had left Greece behind; I was at some suburb of London (. . .) the entrance hall with the exotic knives, the books on shelves, the drapes, the cheese after the fruit, and something beyond all these, an indefinable mood emanating from every piece of furniture, every fabric (. . .). After dinner, Larry read us the first act from a drama on which he was working: the foreman, his wife, the convict, the prompter—he is planning a chorus of murderers. A terribly gloomy story, in the line of 16th century English drama.[7] Nancy (who I think can judge) finds it too *grand guignol*. I observed that the characters seemed to lack verisimilitude: their truth was not their own but the poet's. I also

thought (but said nothing about this) that the English sometimes harbor inside them such a wild world—the civilized English as they usually call them. Consider only *Wuthering Heights*. Where else could a thirty year old girl have written such a thing? (*Meres C*: 218.)

As for Durrell's mood while in Athens, we have a poem which is quite explicit (*Collected Poems*: 112):

Exile in Athens
(1940)

To be a king of islands,
Share a boundary with eagles,
Be a subject of Sails.

Here, on these white rocks,
In cold palaces all winter,
Under the salt blanket,

Forget not yet the tried intent,
Pale hands before the face: face
Before the sea's blue negative,

Washing against the night,
Pushing against the doors,
Earth's dark metaphors.

Here alone in a stone city
I sing the rock, the sea-squill,
Over Greece the one punctual star.

To be king of the clock—
I know, I know—to share
Boundaries with the bird,

With the ant her lodge:
But they betray, betray.
To be the owner of stones,

To be a king of islands,
Share a bed with a star,
Be a subject of sails.

In an earlier poem, "Finis" (*Collected Poems*: 25), by Durrell, the sea is cast as a mirror of the poet's pale thoughts: "There is a great heart-break in an evening sea; / Remoteness in the sudden naked shafts / Of light that die, tremulous, quivering / Into cool ripples of blue and silver . . . / So it is with these songs." Later, the sea off the coast of Corfu made Durrell ecstatic rather than sadly contemplative.

"Blue" became an obsessive word with him. It is used as a kind of magic stone in many of his poems and often surfaces in his letters ("We are dwellers in the Eye [of Greece], dedicated to the service of this blue," Durrell wrote to Seferis in 1941 from Cairo).[8] But as "Exile in Athens" suggests, the blue could darken and become alien. Durrell idealized the country from the confines, the claustrophobia of the big city, the "stone city" (which reminds us of Seferis' remark about Durrell's house being near quarries).

III

The second half of 1940 found the Durrells at Kalamata, where Larry taught English. It is from there and in the excited atmosphere of war—Greece had just been invaded by Mussolini's forces which were driven back deep into Albania–that Durrell wrote to Seferis on November 9:

Institute of English Studies

Kalamata 9 November 1940

Dear George:

Just a line to thank you for your note; at last we begin to see the star of Greece rise in all its splendour. I'd love to see Katsimbalis on his horse riding over the Albanian hills, and Tonio scouring the sea for the Italian Fleet. Great moments. By contrast we are in a tomb. These people are all paralyzed with terror at losing their money and their lives and cringe about in shelters all day long. No parades, no celebrations—only an occasional air-raid alarm.

When I heard the news I telephoned Burn, asking [him] to close down the school but he thinks not; I have already applied for a liaison job with the British in Greece, but was informed that they are not doing anything worth mentioning! Still I'm waiting to hear. Perhaps naval intelligence could use me. I've just been reading *News of the Week* which we wanted to print ourselves last year! There is a wonderful letter in number II which begins "Englishmen! You are the ancient Greeks of modern times!" Send it to Henry [Miller]: he will like that. As for the Greeks—the spirit is wonderful! They deserve to enjoy their shattering victories in Albania. It seems as simple as eating cheese to them.

Here we have had many visitors but as yet no bombs, which is curious because Kalamata is quite important. The people are very wild and savage—the country people, I mean the Maniotes. They talk now of fighting Germany by themselves without help. We are living on the sea-coast in an awful house, and the bad weather is beginning. I have no *kephi* [that is, I am not in the mood] to write these days, unless it be a saga for

Katsimbalis riding to battle or an ode to Churchill. The last speeches of Churchill, by the way, have been *great prose* as well as popular oratory. T. E. Lawrence once said: "When a man does a job that is bigger than he is, he grows to the size of it." That's rather what Churchill has done. As for Metaxas—salut! O president of the Anglo-Hellenic league. He has become Barba-jani [that is, Uncle John] to the troops—with him and Tonio and you and Katsimbalis and Karageozi we do not need to worry. Between us we will make a new myth of Greece, and a new style of heart for Europe: and a souvlaki [that is, skewered meat] of the Eyetalians [*sic*].

Love from us all,
Larry

Tonio is the poet Antoniou, whom Durrell had met through Seferis, and Burn is A. R. Burn, the classicist and philhellene (and translator of Greek folk poetry into Scottish and vice versa), who was then in charge of the British Council's activities in Greece. Metaxas was the Greek dictator Ioannis Metaxas, who, in the eyes of many Greeks, was redeemed from the abuses of his regime by not surrendering Greece to Mussolini in 1940. Durrell also uses "Karaghiozis" (in allusion to the popular shadow theatre hero) to represent the anonymous Greeks, mostly peasants, who, as soldiers, were victorious in opposing the Italian invasion. Both here and in Seferis' translation of Durrell's "Mythology" (where, prompted by Durrell, Seferis rendered the poem's last line "O men of the Marmion class, sons of the free" by "O fitra tou megalou Karaghiozi, yi ton eleftheron,")[9] Karaghiozis seems to be an equivalent of the "innocently crazy" and "spontaneously free" individual, who might be either a Greek soldier defending his country against overwhelmingly superior forces or an avant garde writer, like Ramón Gómez de la Serna, who had founded an association for the protection of inanimate objects—Seferis had remembered Ramón in his delirious talk after an antityphus injection and Durrell had been intrigued.

The letter also foreshadows a poem which Durrell must have written about this time—despite his disclaimer of being in the mood for writing serious verse. It is cast as a letter to Seferis and shares in the euphoria that pervaded Greece in the period between the two invasions, the Italian and the German.

Letter to Seferis the Greek
'Ego dormio sed cor meum vigilat'
(1941)

No milestones marked the invaders,
But ragged harps like mountains here:
A text for Proserpine in tears: worlds
With no doors for heroes and no walls with ears:
Yet snow, the anniversary of death.

How did they get here? How enact
This clear severe repentance on a rock,
Where only death converts and the hills
Into a pastoral silence by a lake,
By the blue Fact of the sky forever?

'Enter the dark crystal if you dare
And gaze on Greece.' They came
Smiling, like long reflections of themselves
Upon a sky of fancy. The red shoes
Waited among the thickets and the springs,
In fields of unexploded asphodels,
Neither patient nor impatient, merely
Waited, the born hunter on his ground,
The magnificent and funny Greek.

We will never record it: the black
Choirs of water flowing on moss,
The black sun's kisses opening,
Upon their blindness, like two eyes
Enormous, open in bed against one's own.

Something sang in the firmament.
The past, my friend compelled you,
The charge of habit and love.
The olive in the blood awoke,
The stones of Athens in their pride
Will remember, regret and often bless.

Kisses in letters from home:
Crosses in the snow: now surely
Lover and loved exist again
By a strange communion of darkness.
Those who went in all innocence,
Whom the wheel disfigured: whom
Charity will not revisit or repair,
The innocent who fell like apples.

Consider how love betrays us:

In the conversation of the prophets
Who daily repaired the world
By profit and loss, with no text
On the unknown quantity
By whose possession all problems
Are only ink and air made words:
I mean friends everywhere who smile
And reach out their hands.

Anger inherits where love
Betrays: iron only can clean:
And praises only crucify the loved
In their matchless errand, death.
Remember the earth will roll
Down her old grooves and spring
Utter swallows again, utter swallows.

Others will inherit the sea-shell,
Murmuring to the foolish its omens,
Uncurving on the drum of the ear,
The vowels of an ocean beyond us,
The history, the inventions of the sea:
Upon all parallels of the salt wave,
To lovers lying like sculptures
In islands of smoke and marble,
Will enter the reflections of poets
By the green wave, the chemical water.

I have no fear of the land
Of the dark heads with aimed noses,
The hair of night and the voices
Which mimic a traditional laughter:
Nor for a new language where
A mole upon a dark throat
Of a girl is called 'an olive':
All these things are simply Greece.

Her blue boundaries are
Upon a curving sky of time,
In a dark menstruum of water;
The names of islands like doors
Open upon it: the rotting walls
Of the European myth are here
For us, the industrious singers,
In the service of this blue, this enormous blue.

Soon it will be spring. Out of
This huge magazine of flowers, the earth,

We will enchant the house with roses,
The girls with flowers in their teeth,
The olives full of charm: and all of it
Given: can one say that
Any response is enough for those
Who have a woman, an island and a tree?

I only know that this time
More than ever, we must bless
And pity the darling dead: the women
Winding up their hair into sea-shells,
The faces of meek men like dials,
The great overture of the dead playing,
Calling all lovers everywhere in all stations
Who lie on the circumference of ungiven kisses.

Exhausted rivers ending in the sand;
Windmills of the old world winding
And unwinding in musical valleys your arms.
The contemptible vessel of the body lies
Lightly in its muscles like a vine;
Covered the nerves: and like an oil expressed
From the black olive between rocks,
Memory lulls and bathes in its dear reflections.

Now the blue lantern of the night
Moves on the dark in its context of stars.
O my friend, history with all her compromises
Cannot disturb the circuit made by this,
Alone in the house, a single candle burning
Upon a table in the whole of Greece.

Your letter of the 4th was no surprise.
So Tonio had gone? He will have need of us.
The sails are going out over the old world.
Our happiness, here on a promontory,
Marked by a star, is small but perfect.
The calculations of the astronomers, the legends
The past believed in could not happen here.
Nothing remains but Joy, the infant Joy
(So quiet the mountain in its shield of snow,
So unconcerned the faces of the birds),
With the unsuspected world somewhere awake,
Born of this darkness, our imperfect sight,
The stirring seed of Nostradamus' rose.

(*Collected Poems*: 99–102)

Here we have a paean or a hymn to victory which is also an elegy to the dead. The language is highly metaphoric, some of the imagery has to be pondered, but the tone holds to a strong key and the reader is swept along from stanza to stanza. "Letter to Seferis the Greek" is moulded by the archetypal concepts of love betrayed, hubris and nemesis, sin and remission of sin. Bankrupt Greece, which, just as in the Persian invasions of the fifth century B. C., had acted against the gloomy predictions of the wise, "the calculations of the astronomers, the legends / The past believed in could not happen . . ." We will not find a Greek equivalent of this poem in Seferis, where "ecstatic" moments are rare, but rather in Odysseus Elytis' *Heroic and Elegiac Song for the Lost Second Lieutenant of the Albanian Campaign* (1945).

The other Durrell letter to Seferis from this period, published below, shows Durrell making efforts to improve his Greek:

Institute of English Studies

Kalamata 20 February 1941

Dear George:

It was good to hear from you and to know that I am here because I speak Greek: life is disposed to be ironic. But now the good weather has begun things are not too bad here: plenty to eat at any rate; only lack of good company is boring—and nothing to read. I suppose you couldn't gather up Henry's Greek book and post it to me: I would love to read it and would gladly pay postage whatever it may be: or better still, our Kalamata consul is now in Athens: his name is Kostopoulos and he would bring me the MSS when he comes. You will see from the enclosed how famous I am getting as a modern Greek translator! If there's anything new you want 'translated' according to my bastard method send Greek with *full English text*. Otherwise I can't do it! How about us doing *The Woman of Xante* [sic] together: you would do all the work and I would get the fame! I am sure Eliot would print it by Faber. Does the idea amuse you? I will try and find a Greek text here and we could do it by post. It's a good moment now! What do you say?

Love from us all.
Larry

[P. S.] Seriously let us collaborate on Solomos: you could write a critical introduction and appendix and I could help with the Englishing of the poem.

Henry's "Greek book" is of course *The Colossus of Maroussi*, as yet

unpublished but in the hands of Seferis in manuscript form—long chunks of it, if not the entire work. It is not clear what Greek text Durrell had translated, taking the opportunity to deprecate himself as a translator. The work which he proposes to Seferis for translation, *The Woman of Zaky[n]thos* by Dionysios Solomos, an incomplete narrative which the great poet left behind when he died, together with a number of unfinished poems, was, for Seferis, like the *Memoirs* of General Makriyanis, a model of the simple and honest style of writing. But it presents many problems of interpretation and leaves questions unanswered. For these reasons it is doubtful whether Faber and Faber would have ventured publishing it.[10]

IV

In Chapter VIII ("Epilogue in Alexandria") of *Prospero's Cell*, Durrell mentions several of his fellow exiles in Egypt during the war, giving brief but expressive citations of Seferis and his wife: "Maro, the human and beautiful, in her struggle against apathy (. . .) . the solemn face of Seferiades with its candour and purity." Early in this period, Seferis had to serve several months in Pretoria, South Africa, before returning to Egypt in the Spring of 1942 to serve at the Greek Embassy in Cairo. While still in Pretoria, Seferis wrote to Durrell (in Cairo), enclosing in his letter the translation of a limerick he had written ("I think that limerick writing is a good exercise for lonely men, and suppose that the genre has been created in England because all of you are lonely like islands"), asking about Miller, whose *Colossus* he would have liked to translate into Greek. "I have all the feelings of a marooned man," Seferis added. "It is much better than not having feelings at all, as one of your distinguished essayists would have observed, I mean Thomas Stearn [Eliot]."[11]

While in Egypt, Durrell first supported himself and his family as a journalist, then served in Cairo as a Press officer for the British Embassy, which subsequently posted him to Alexandria as an information officer. His wife took their daughter and moved to Palestine when there was fear of a German invasion in Egypt. The separation proved permanent. Durrell met another woman, a Greek-Jewish girl, Eve, whom he was to marry later. In 1943 Durrell was quite active as a man of letters, editing, together with the writers Robin Fadden and Bernard Spencer, the magazine *Personal Landscape*, finishing

his *Prospero's Cell*, publishing his first real collection of poems, *A Private Country*. During this time, Seferis was pouring out his frustrations through poems, like "Days of April '43" and "Actors, M. E. [Middle East]" (*Collected Poems*: 305, 511, 513) whose biting and darkly humorous style set them apart from his other, more introspective and solemn poetry.

Apart from his other activities, Durrell had been translating, with Bernard Spencer, poems of Seferis into English, intending to bring out a book as soon as it was completed. Durrell had been in fact drafted by Katsimbalis to do this job even from before the outbreak of the war. Both of the following letters of Durrell to Seferis concern this project.

29 March 1944

Dear George,

Thank you for the corrections—we are having trouble in translating you so that you don't sound like Eliot—the technical similarities are quite astonishing as the temperamental similarities.

1. You are both 'tentative' poets—not positive and dominated by an idea, but searching and feeling, a little faded and ridiculous: Prufrock and Pascalis.
2. You both are after a statement of the unnameable thing and find it in a landscape. The rose-garden in Burnt Norton—Asini Acropolis.
3. You both quote like hell.
4. You are both elliptical.
5. You both write bits of jazz and invent mythological characters.

Eh bien quoi?

[Lawrence Durrell]

The second letter is undated but seems to come from the same period and is illustrated in a similar fashion with the other, with Durrell's "profile quickly sketched in place of the signature," as Seferis observed in discussing his correspondence with Durrell (p. 2 above).

Dearest George,

Your little piece of autobiography is charming. I am glad to have teased you into doing it—of course I knew the facts: Have you forgotten that evening at Maroussi when Theodore, George and I were battling with Pascalis—and the question of your common origin from the French symbolists together with Eliot was discussed by G[eorge Katsimbalis] with so

much erudition? Perhaps you don't remember—at any rate we are forging ahead and will send you scripts a day or two hence. I want to hurry the book off so it doesn't conflict with the poems of all of us due to appear—the King of Asyny (*sic*) is a very great work, my dear—and it is lovely in English.

[Lawrence Durrell]

Durrell's comparative sketch on Seferis and Eliot is quite perceptive but may have revived a ghost in the mind of Seferis. As early as 1933, Seferis had predicted that Greek critics would overplay his dependence on Eliot (*Meres C*: 118). In time, he grew touchy over the subject, especially after critics like Timos Malanos divided, rather too neatly, Seferis' development as poet between his early Valeryan period and his later Eliotic one. We do not know exactly how Seferis took Durrell's remarks which were obviously made in good faith—"Seferis is the Eliot of Greece," Durrell had also written in 1941 to Eliot's secretary Anne Ridler (*Spirit of Place*: 67)—but he may have tried to enlighten Durrell on Mathios Pascalis, one of several personas which Seferis had adopted in the writing of certain poems with the purpose of representing different sides of his personality. Durrell also wrote poems under the name Conon (*Collected Poems*: 127, 130).

The "evening at Maroussi" may be the same occasion at which Seferis met Durrell and Miller in 1939, although we would expect a reference to Miller as well. The remark on the poem "The King of Asine," last in Seferis' *Logbook I* poems (1940), foreshadows the title of Durrell's and Spencer's book of translations, *The King of Asine and Other Poems*, which was eventually completed with the collaboration of the Greek poet Nanos Valaoritis and published, with a preface by Rex Warner, in 1948 (by John Lehmann),[12] after various delays which had to do with the instability in the lives of those involved with the project as much as with the shortage of paper in Britain right after the war. In the papers of Seferis there is a brief letter to Seferis by Bernard Spencer in which we read: "If you like the translations, please give your consent *as soon as possible*, because Lehmann has got some paper—a rare thing in England (commoner in lavatories than in publisher's officers)."

In his memoir on Durrell, Seferis remembered Spencer, the prematurely deceased poet, whom he called "a beautiful soul / like none

that are made today" (quoting Laforgue). Spencer had joined the British Council in 1940 and was posted to Thessaloniki when Durrell was teaching at Kalamata. During the war he too was in Egypt and edited, as noted earlier, *Personal Landscape* with Durrell and Fadden. The magazine was published from 1942 to the end of the war, drawing on the work of several writers stranded in or posted to the Middle East. Spencer's first book of verse, *Aegean Islands* (1946), was highly thought of by Seferis (according to the recollection of Mrs. Maro Seferis). On the other hand, Kenneth Young (1950:61) found Spencer's "more pictorial, less metaphysical" poetry lacking in comparison to the work of Durrell and Seferis, who may have influenced Spencer.

V

Durrell did not return to Greece, as Seferis did with the other members of his government, towards the end of 1944. He remained in Egypt until June 1945, at which time he was appointed Press and Public Relations Officer for the Allied Government in the Dodecanese until March 1947. *Reflections on a Marine Venus* (1953) recounts his experiences in Rhodes, and more broadly the Dodecanese, an area of the Greek archipelago which went through a stage transitional between its Italian occupation and its union with Greece in 1947. In the meantime, civil war had erupted in Greece, and Durrell remembers, in his memoir on Seferis, in the Tunisian magazine *Alif*, Seferis' bitter comment on these developments: "En 1918, après la Grande-Guerre, Dada s'est installé dans la littérature. Après cette guerre-ci, voilà Dada entré dans la vie politique!" The comment harbors tragic overtones which are very different from the playful connotations and Dadaist echoes of Durrell's "Mythology." As a diplomat and, particularly, as director for a time of the Regent's (Archbishop Damaskinos') political office, Seferis registered and felt to the marrow of his bones the Greek political troubles of the period. The poem he wrote in 1947, *Thrush*, is a mirror of his war experiences as much as a reflection of his current anxieties and an overwhelming desire for at least a spiritual transcendence.

Before returning to England, in 1947, Durrell called on Seferis, who invited Katsimbalis, the painter Ghika and Rex Warner to gather around a phonograph record of Henry Miller's voice reading from

his works. Miller had sent the record to Durrell and he left it with Seferis. The publication of *The King of Asine and Other Poems* in 1948 and the good reviews it had in Britain must have pleased both Seferis and Durrell. The latter was now in . . . Argentina to work for the British Council, teaching English in the university town of Córdoba. But he did not stay there more than a year. He did not like South America much, although he found it somewhat better than North America which he had not visited yet! He longed for a post in Greece, but a suitable one could not be found; so he accepted the position of Press Attaché in the British Embassy at Belgrade and stayed there until 1952.

Durrell liked the landscape of Yugoslavia but was unable to meet and get to know the people on a human level, as he had done in Greece. In Communist Yugoslavia everyone was suspicious of each other, and the break between Stalin and Tito made the problem even worse. "The people are like moles," Durrell wrote to Henry Miller in the Spring of 1950, "frightened to death, shifty, uneasy." (Durrell-Miller: 281). A writer associated with Durrell was thrown into jail for falling under the influence of a Western imperialist! But Durrell continued writing and his Yugoslavian experience resulted in the novel *White Eagles over Serbia* (1957)—an adventure for young people—and *Esprit de Corps* (1957), a series of farcical short stories about Embassy life in the Balkans.

In his memoir on Seferis, in *Alif*, Durrell says that Seferis "was never overwhelmed by diplomatic life and took a wry and ironical view of it." The same holds true about Durrell, who dramatized the funny side of diplomacy not only in *Esprit de Corps*, but also in two other books, *Stiff Upper Lip: Life among the Diplomats* (1958) and *Sauve Qui Peut* (1966). The lecture "Propaganda and Impropaganda" (in *Blue Thirst*) is, similarly, a candid exposé of his repeated attempts at diplomacy during periods of crisis. The ephemeral and precarious world of politics, which Seferis had to endure for most of his adult years, and Durrell for different periods of his life, is contrasted in the following poem which Durrell wrote probably before or shortly after leaving Greece in 1947 and which he dedicated to Seferis, with the internal and undefinable, yet very real world of the poet, the domain of the existential why.

Politics

To George Seferis

Chemists might compare their properties:
The Englishman with his Apologising Bag,
The Ainu with interesting stone-age cuffs,
Or whoever invented stars as a witness:
Nations which through excess of sensibility
Repose in opium under a great leaf:
The French with their elastic manual code:
And so comparing, find the three common desires,
Of hunger, smiling, and of being loved.

Outside, I mean, the penumbra of the real
Mystery, the whole world as a Why.
Living purely in the naked How, so join
As the writer unites dissimilars
Or the Doctor with his womb-bag joins
The cumbersome ends of broken bones in
A simple perishable function,
To exhale like a smoke ring the O: Joy.

(*Collected Poems*: 191)

When Durrell wrote this poem, he could not of course foresee that a few years later he would be playing "The Englishman with his Apologising Bag" himself, I mean with his book on Cyprus *Bitter Lemons*. It all started "poetically." In the fall of 1952, Durrell was still in Belgrade but ready for a move. "I'm quitting the service in December and we are setting off to Cyprus, I think," he wrote to Miller. "No money. No prospects. A tent. A small car. I feel twenty years younger. Heaven knows how we'll keep alive, but I'm so excited, I can hardly wait to begin starving" (Durrell-Miller: 291).

VI

To earn money Durrell got a teaching job at the Greek Gymnasium in Nicosia and settled in the Kyrenia district of the island after buying a Turkish house. One 20 November 1953 he wrote to Miller: "Night before last there was a bang on the front door and a shout and Seferiades walked in. You can imagine how warmly we embraced each other. He had not altered by a day, still the graceful and lovely humour—man and poet. He had never been to Cyprus before and is ravished by it." And in another letter, of 5 January 1954: "It was so lovely too to see Seferis again after so many years, as gentle and

humorous as ever. I teach, you know, at the Greek Gymnasium and he was brought down as a distinguished poet and given an oration, so I was able to be present as a master. He made a touching address to the boys full of thoughtful things very gently said." (Durrell-Miller: 298, 300). Seferis was Greek Ambassador at Beirut at the time, and though he had stopped over for two hours at the port of Limassol in December 1952, on his way to Lebanon, he considered his 1953 visit to Cyprus to be truly his first one. During this visit he met several times with Durrell, Maurice Cardiff, director of the British Council in Cyprus, and several Greek Cypriot educators, writers and artists.

The conflict between Greece and Britain over Cyprus was growing at the time, but Durrell was still in the "neutral zone." Seferis was apprehensive that his private visit might become the object of political abuse. He had an opportunity to discuss developments with the Greek and British authorities, but on the whole the functions which various Cypriot cities organized in his honour had a broad cultural character. His diary notes from the period (*Meres F*: 1986) suggest the starting points of several of his *Logbook III* poems.

Several months later, Durrell accepted the position of Press and Information Director. According to the Cypriot painter Diamantis, in a letter he wrote to Seferis in August 1954 (just before Seferis' second visit to the island) (Diamantis-Seferis: 1985: 50), when Durrell asked Maurice Cardiff whether he should accept this position, he received the answer: "Do what you like but you will lose all your Greek friends." Cardiff thought, however, that something good might come out of Durrell's appointment to that sensitive post, since Durrell knew the Greeks so well. During his second visit to Cyprus, Seferis, who was again there for essentially private reasons, met Cardiff and learned that Durrell had become a nationalist after his service in Yugoslavia. He now trusted the official policy of the British Government. If Cyprus was thought to be indispensable to the Empire, so be it. "I remember," Seferis noted in his diary *Meres F* (1986: 147), "when he [Durrell] thumbed his nose against the English generals—and before that when he spoke ill of England, the time he was a pacifist." And in a letter to George Theotokas, dated 28 December 1954, Seferis made the comment, particularly sarcastic for an old friend, that he was afraid that Durrell was heading towards becoming a subvice-Kipling! What annoyed Seferis above all

was the attempt of British propaganda, which inevitably issued from Durrell's office, to present Greek Cypriots as being not of Greek origin but of Phoenician origin!

The political situation worsened in 1955, with the start of the guerilla war after the failure of the tripartite (England, Grecce and Turkey) conference of London and the Turkish atrocities against the Greek community of Constantinople, and in 1956, when Archbishop Makarios was arrested and sent to exile. Durrell resigned his post and went to England where he wrote to Miller in October 1956: "Cyprus is so tragic it doesn't bear talking about." (*Ibid.*: 306). He wrote *Bitter Lemons*, his "apologia pro vita sua" in Cyprus, in a few weeks, and announced its publication to Miller in a letter from France, dated from February-March 1957: "My book on Cyprus comes in September and will rustle a few dovecots, I hope." (*Ibid.*: 311). The book was very successful, both for literary and political reasons, and was awarded the Duff Cooper Memorial Prize. 1957 was in general a turning point in Durrell's career, for soon he was famous on both sides of the Atlantic after the publication of several of his books including *Justine*, first part of his *Alexandria Quartet*. He settled in Southern France meaning to stay put, but still regretting the loss of his house on Cyprus. In January 1958 he wrote to Miller, "I sympathise with you not wishing to voyage around. One's own house is such a step. Alas, I shall never get back to mine [in Cyprus] thanks to our fatuity and Turkish imbecility and Greek pottiness" (*Ibid*: 328).

Whatever its biases, Durrell's *Bitter Lemons* is an open and honest account of its writer's Cypriot experience with its dilemmas and conflicting loyalties. Seferis distilled his own experiences in Cyprus in the poems of *Logbook III* (1955), dedicated "To The People of Cyprus, in Memory and Love." The collection has many facets and displays a variety of moods, from elation to a sense of doom and tragedy, from sorrow to affirmation; but it can also be seen as a resistance to the British attitude towards Cyprus, a resistance couched in figurative terms. The poem "Helen" (*Collected Poems*: 355–361) is certainly a parable questioning the value of sacrifices which *bona fide* people, Greek and non-Greek, made in the Second World War in view of Britain's persisting post-war imperialism; and those who are spoken to in "Salamis in Cyprus" (*Ibid.*: 383–389) as

"Friends from the other war" are those honest fighters, some of them now dead, with whom the poet once felt united in a common cause:

> Friends from the other war,
> on this deserted and cloudy beach
> I think of you as the day turns—
> those who fell fighting and those who fell
> years after the battle,
> those who saw dawn through the mist of death
> or, in wild solitude under the stars,
> felt upon them the huge dark eyes
> of total disaster;
> and those again who prayed
> when flaming steel sawed the ships:
> "Lord, help us to keep in mind
> the cases of this slaughter:
> greed, dishonesty, selfishness,
> the desiccation of love;
> Lord, help us to root these out . . ."

The quoted prayer echoes, as the poet has informed us in a note, the wartime prayer of a British Commander, Lord Hugh Beresford, R. N., who fell in the battle of Crete. The poem ends in a dialogue, where the one speaker is the poet and the other may be an English friend like Durrell or Maurice Cardiff, or even another, resigned part of the poet himself:

> —Now, on this pebbled beach, it's better to forget;
> talking doesn't do any good;
>
> who can change the attitude of those with power?
> Who can make himself heard?
> Each dreams separately without hearing anyone
> else's nightmare.
>
> —True. But the messenger moves swiftly,
> and however long his journey, he'll bring
> to those who tried to shackle the Hellespont
> the terrible news from Salamis.
>
> Voice of the Lord upon the waters.
> There is an island.
>
> Salamis, Cyprus, November '53

A forewarning that hubris leads inevitably to tragedy and that the island of Cyprus will make its stand.

The inability of the British to assimilate the island into their own

world or fuse themselves with it is sketched in light satirical terms in the rhyming poem "In the Kyrenia District," where the "cynic and philehellene" poet mentioned may be Durrell. One of the two ladies chatting in the poem confesses not to feel entirely at home in Cyprus:

> —Ah, this view
> that questions and questions. Have you ever
> noticed how the mirror sometimes
> makes our faces death-like. Or how that
> thief the sun
> takes our make-up off each morning? I'd prefer
> the sun's warmth without the sun; I'd look for
> a sea that doesn't strip one bare: a voiceless
> blue
> without that ill-bred daily interrogation.
>
> The silent caress of the mist in the tassels of
> dream would refresh me:
> this world isn't ours, it's Homer's—
> that's the best description I've heard of this
> place.

It is significant that the poem ends with a reference to some Englishman called Bill (probably to be identified with the fallen Commander of "Salamis in Cyprus") who died in Crete. The casual reference to this man in the middle of an idle chat (that weaves together details pertaining to Britain as well as to Cyprus and is interrupted, at some point, by a dog called "Rex") is bitterly ironic of course: the supreme sacrifice which an English soldier made in a cause that united Greece and Britain during the Second World War has now lost its meaning and value in the new, cynical, and at best touristic view of Cyprus by its British masters.

Durrell's synopsis of his Cypriot experiences was, by analogy, given in a poem which one could see as a prologue or an epilogue to his book *Bitter Lemons*:

Bitter Lemons

> In an island of bitter lemons
> Where the moon's cool fevers burn
> From the dark globes of the fruit,
>
> And the dry grass underfoot
> Tortures memory and revises

Habits half a lifetime dead
Better leave the rest unsaid,
Beauty, darkness, vehemence
Let the old sea-nurses keep
Their memorials of sleep
And the Greek sea's curly head
Keep its calms like tears unshed
Keep its calms like tears unshed.
(*Collected Poems*: 238)

VII

In 1960, by the time the Cyprus issue was resolved with the signing of a treaty between Britain, Greece and Turkey, Durrell had settled permanently in the Midi of France with his third wife Claude, whom he had originally met in Cyprus. In 1962 he travelled to Israel and Greece on a journalistic assignment. On 24 September 1962 he wrote to Diana Menuhim (formerly Diana Gould) (*Spirit of Place*: 153–154):

As you can imagine the Greek visit was most exciting though Israel was interesting and rather moving and I hope to write something about it. But Athens gave me back at a blow all my old friends whose touching warmth was really like a home-coming; made it like one I mean. We did a swift autumn tour of the Peloponnesus—deserted, bare and blue! Dug out old taverns, discovered new. Above all had Katsimbalis and Seferis to ourselves for *days* on end. Such shouts, such gales of laughter, such memories exchanged! It was like a gasp of rare air and I felt twenty years younger.

In 1964 and 1967 there were reunions at Corfu where much had changed from the pre-war days. Durrell wrote an essay, "Oil for the Saint; Return to Corfu"—the Saint being the patron saint of the island, St. Spyridon—to commemorate his comeback.

In 1966, when Alan G. Thomas was planning *Spirit of Place*, he wrote to Seferis with the request that Seferis lend him, for use in the book, some of Durrell's letters to him. Thomas' letter lies among the papers of Seferis with a handwritten comment by Seferis that he had written to Durrell on the matter. "There are no Durrell-to-Seferis letters in *Spirit of Place*, which probably means that Seferis' response to that request was negative—not surprising, since Seferis hardly let any of his private letters to others or such letters to him be

published while he was alive. He only made moderate use of such letters in his own writing, as we have seen in discussing his memoir about Durrell.

In 1972, a few months after the death of Seferis, Durrell wrote an obituary poem:

Seferis

Time quietly compiling us like sheaves
Turns round one day, beckons the special few,
With one bird singing somewhere in the leaves,
Someone like K. or somebody like you,
Free-falling target for the envious thrust,
So tilting into darkness go we must.

Thus the fading writer signing off
Sees in the vast perspectives of dispersal
His words float off like tine seeds,
Wind-borne or bird-distributed notes,
To the very end of loves without rehearsal,
The stinging image riper than his deeds.

Yours must have set out like ancient
Colonists, from Delos or from Rhodes,
To dare the sun-gods, found great entrepôts,
Naples or Rio, far from man's known abodes,
To confer the quaint Grecian script on other men;
A new Greek fire ignited by your pen.

How marvellous to have done it and then left
It in the lost property office of the loving mind,
The secret whisper those who listen find.
You show us all the way the great ones went,
In silences becalmed, so well they knew
That even to die is somehow to invent

(*Collected Poems*: 321)

The poem is rhyming and thus approximates better a traditional funerary encomium or elegy. Seferis is portrayed as a sower of words which will invigorate those who will listen to them. He is also a worthy promoter of Greek traditions and a man whose silences are as pregnant with meaning as his words. Seferis' supreme silence, that is his death, is as eloquent as his life and work. This reminds us not only of Durrell's own "tears unshed" of the poem "Bitter Lemons" but also, and above all, of Seferis' work; the poem "Last Stop," for

ament of Durrell must have initially attracted the reserved Seferis. He saw in the first of the two letters from Durrell which he discusses in his memoir on Durrell a "faith in happiness, a mystique of happiness" which also Miller seemed to embody—the latter was to advise Seferis, in 1942, to keep his wits and go to explore Timbuctoo! Seferis, who, as his fellow Greek Nikos Gabriel Pentzikis has written (*Ya ton Seferi*: 152–54), found it difficult to get up and dance off his worries, so to speak, seemed to be both fascinated by, but also mistrustful of his opposites, that is men who overreacted to things. Above all he appreciated genuineness. He recognized, for example, the poet Sikelianos as a giant of sorts but also felt that Sikelianos could be carried away. He disliked the rhetoricism of Kazantzakis and wondered whether his *Odyssey* is real poetry—by the way, Durrell thought that, in Greece, Kazantzakis was someone whose work could be compared with his own. To an interviewer's question on what modern writers he found himself most naturally in sympathy he replied: "In France, with Montherlant and Proust; in America with Henry Miller; in Greece with Kazantzakis; in Argentina with Borges; in Italy with Svevo" *Labrys*: 42).

Miller and Durrell exchanged many accolades through the years. Miller was very old and half-blind in the late 70s when they asked him to contribute a statement about Durrell for the special issue of *Labrys* referred to earlier, but he did not mince his words. He wrote that he considered Durrell to be "the finest writer in the English language today (a writer *par excellence*, as they say)." Seferis liked the poetry of Durrell but confessed not to be very fond of his fiction. He wrote in his memoir on Durrell: "Novels do not mean a lot to me, and I never gave much importance to the civil servant whose diplomatic buffoonery has made numerous people laugh in the chancelleries." He does not say why he did not like Durrell's novels, but we may suppose that he agreed with several English critics who found them overwritten, too rich and gaudy. Again, it should be pointed out that both Kazantzakis and Durrell were better accepted in America (which is still going through its epic period) than in England where nuance and understatement are valued more than vigour and directness of expression.

The meeting ground of Seferis and Durrell (whatever their affinities or differences of character) was of course Greece, in a real and

also imaginative sense. In his memoir on Durrell, Seferis starts with Durrell's calling Greece (at the end of *Prospero's Cell* "not a country but a living eye," an eye that records and measures the traveller, and recalls the riddle of the Theban Sphinx to which there was only one answer: Man. Seferis quoted the story with the Sphinx also in his Nobel acceptance speech in 1963 and described, in his diaries and essays, the Greek landscape as a landscape made in the measure of man. And it is Durrell's Greek poems which he discusses in his memoir.

Durrell was inspired in several poems, as we have seen, by the work of Seferis, but Seferis never dedicated a poem of his to Durrell—the only two non-Greeks who were "given" poems by Seferis were Henry Miller and Rex Warner; nor is there a Seferis poem which relates directly to a work of Durrell. But this does not mean that Seferis did not respond consciously or subconsciously to things which the poet or travel-writer Durrell produced. If we try, we can find echoes or similarities of tone and imagery between the two poets. For instance, when we read "And those who abandoned the stadium to take up arms / struck the obstinate marathon runner / and he saw the track sail in blood, / the world empty like the moon / the gardens of victory wither: you seem them in the sun, behind the sun" (Seferis' *Thrush*, III) we may recall "Those who went in all innocence, / Whom the wheel disfigured: whom / Charity will not revisit or repair, / The innocent who fell like apples" (Durrell's "Letter to Seferis the Greek"). The angle of vision is different in the two passages but there is a likeness of tone and a similar succession of images which lead to some still point, like a punctuation mark, which both finishes and recapitulates dramatically what has been said. But a search of such parallels could lead us astray. The field of influences is at best vague and uncertain.

In conclusion, we may add that, with the Greek landscape and culture as mediators, Seferis and Durrell often shared thoughts and feelings which transcended their personal and national boundaries. The ways in which they described the light of Greece, for example, are idiosyncratic but reflect a similar sensibility. It would be appropriate to finish this essay with the words of Durrell and Seferis on what particularly united them: the landscape of Greece.

From a letter by Durrell to Diana Gould (*Spirit of Place*: 82):

Ah but Diana you should see the landscape of Greece—it would break your heart. It has such pure nude chastity; it doesn't ask for applause; the light seems to come off the heart of some Buddhistic blue stone or flower, always changing, but serene and pure and lotion-soft on the iris (. . .) . Lots of love and a bit of blue broken from the sky.

From Seferis' *Meres E*: 20:

I sometimes think that the only thing that makes a difference between us and them [the English] (in thought, expression, architecture, language) is the light.

Ibid: 25:

[In Greece] a ruined lintel with two or three leaves is really *something*. It is the light. The most insignificant objects toy and dance in the light and you observe their transubstantiation by it.

NOTES

1 Durrell had initially titled his poem "Mythology II" to distinguish it from "Mythology I," which he later changed to "Coptic Poem."

2 An English translation of the memoir was printed in the special issue on Durrell of *Labrys* 5 (1979). I am quoting from, or referring to this English translation in the present article.

3 Durrell half-dated or did not date at all most of his letters. The problem was noted also by A. G. Thomas, in his preface to *Spirit of Place* (1969).

4 "Bouboulina," another name for Durrell's daughter "Pinkie." The name (of a well-known heroine of the Greek revolution of 1821) was also applied by Nikos Kazantzakis to Lady Ortense of his *Zorba the Greek*.

5 I am quoting from the letter as it was printed in *Labrys* (n. 2 above). Another, slightly doctored version of this letter was published in Seferis' *Meres D*: 169–171.

6 With the permission of Mrs. Maro Seferis, to whom I am grateful.

7 In Durrell's *Collected Poems*: 80–81, we find "The Sermon, from a verse play," which most probably comes from the play mentioned by Seferis.

8 Quoted in a letter to Miller by Seferis (included in the *Labrys* issue, n. 2 above).

9 Seferis explains his translation in *Meres D*: 284; in *Andigrafes*: 160; and in his memoir on Durrell (n. 2 above).

10 *The Woman of Zaky[n]thos* can now be read in two different English translations: by Marianthe Colakis, in *The Charioteer* 24–25 (1982/83): 118–136; and by Peter Colaclides and Michael Green, in *Modern Greek Studies Yearbook* 1 (1985): 153–171. The first translation is accompanied by the Greek original; both carry introductions and notes.

11 The letter, dated from the beginning of November 1941, is printed in the Appendix for 1941 in Seferis' *Meres D*: 159–160.

12 The book was preceded by Robert Levesque's *Séféris, Choix de Poèmes*, which was published in Athens in 1945. Levesque was another draftee of Katsimbalis and worked on his translations during the war with the assistance of Seferis' brother Angelos.

13 See also Peter Levi's "Lawrence Durrell's Greek Poems," in *Labrys* (n. 2 above), 101–103.

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Manuela Scarci

Bembo's and Firenzuola's Contribution to the Renaissance Idea of Literature

Agnolo Firenzuola (1493–1543) wrote *I Ragionamenti*, one of his earlier works, during the latter part of his stay (December 1524–May 1525) at the Roman Curia which he had joined in 1518 as a legal representative of his monastic order, the Vallombrosans. The work is incomplete. Firenzuola abandoned it upon completion of the first day, and—judging by other extant fragments—soon after sketching a plan for the second day.

The one unit which he did complete, however, allows us to reconstruct his initial work programme. It follows the structure of the *Decameron* in that it depicts a group of young men and women who leave the city for a pastoral retreat where they engage in story-telling, but it also modifies the quintessential model of the novella collection for it includes a dialogue on Neoplatonic love followed by lyric poems, a blending of genres which is the basic structure of the love treatise as exemplified by Bembo's *Asolani*. As a result, *I Ragionamenti* has always been considered by critics either as a work belonging to one genre or to the other; in both cases it has always seemed incomplete, contradictory, a strange hybrid somehow lacking the essentials of either genre.[1]

It is my contention that *I Ragionamenti* is neither a love treatise nor a mere collection of short stories. It is, rather, the artistic realization of Firenzuola's thoughts and theoretical considerations on literary language and, hence, on literature. In the sixteenth century, any attempt at new elaborations of literary language required coming to terms with Pietro Bembo and his codification of the same. In *I Ragionamenti* Firenzuola does exactly that: he squarely confronts the cardinal, a true "dictator" of cultural tastes, to oppose his concepts which inspired most of the high literary production of his times.

Throughout the centuries, what has always struck the readers of *I Ragionamenti* is the apparently casual mixture of various literary

genres, especially the combination of the love dialogue with the licentious short stories written in the style of Boccaccio. Both ancient and modern critics, faced with the contradictions inherent in the medley, rather than trying to find an explanation for them within the text, have found it easier to split up the text.

Some have considered the novellas as a separate body, an appendix to the dialogue which, at best, has no bearing on the discussions on love itself.[2] Alternatively, they have seen them as an appendix which proves either the hypocrisy of the social class which the author represents or his artistic shortcomings for they fail to illustrate the principles of Neoplatonic love.[3] Other critics have taken the work as a mere collection of short stories modelled on Boccaccio's masterpiece and have seen the dialogue on love as a mere component of the frame.[4] They have also pointed out that Firenzuola, intellectually incapable of understanding the deeper structures and meanings of his model, lacking any truly original inspiration, was doomed to failure from the start.

In either of these cases, the work is dismembered into several elements. These interpretations, in other words, tend to break up what the author saw fit to unite.

And unite them he did, taking great pains to make his work a cohesive, organic, seamless whole. Its outer structure appears perfect and perfectly symmetrical, in perfect conformity with the numerical scheme which the author had chosen for himself. There are six characters (three men and three women), and the sojourn in the country lasts six days. Each day consists of six separate activities, which include, we are told, the reciting by the interlocutors of six lyric poems, and the telling of six novellas and six *facetiae*. The dialogue on love is developed around six questions posed by the participants and it is intimately connected with the lyrical and narrative components which follow it for these, it is announced, shall further illustrate the philosophy of Neoplatonic love.

As it turns out, the schematic order of this composition, its structural symmetry, is merely external for it does not reflect a deeper internal order of the narrated matter. Indeed, every element which points to structural rigidity can be overturned and is, in fact, overturned in the text to demonstrate the exact opposite of the principle on which it originally was based.

For instance, one finds that, despite the ostentatious repetition of and the ostensible compliance with the numerical scheme, the grouping in sixes is not really adhered to and the figure is thus nonsensical. There are not six but actually seven poems. Furthermore, they contradict, some structurally and some thematically, the principles of Neoplatonic love which they are supposed to reflect. None of the short stories can be taken as the consequentially logical continuation of the philosophical discussions as the reader might expect, except for one which tells a truly exemplary story, but which is narrated, ironically, by Folchetto, the one character who is openly sensual, displaying throughout the text an irreverent cynicism towards that particular doctrine of love. Perhaps more significantly, one realizes that Costanza and Celso, the Neoplatonic lovers proposed as models to be emulated, are the ones who tell the most obscene stories, those least likely to submit to a moralistic interpretation.[5]

In other words, a close reading of *I Ragionamenti* reveals that the contradictions noted by readers in the past are far more numerous and, more importantly, far more systematic than at first suspected. They cannot, therefore, be attributed to the artistic deficiencies of the author, to his presumed lack of organizational skills, to his supposedly limited intellectual abilities. To a reader who is able to shed the biases which generations of often inattentive critics have fostered, it is evident that the eclecticism of *I Ragionamenti*, its deep-seated contradictions, the fundamental restlessness of its poetic material, the dialectic interaction of opposites, the ironic inversions both structural and thematic, are all factors with more far reaching implications than at first recognized and than previously acknowledged.

In another formulation, one may say that what is striking about this work is that Firenzuola is able to reiterate the cultural, artistic, social, and moral principles which inspire high literature and to repeat themes and motifs common to high genres while, at the same time, by means of ironic inversions, he systematically rejects them, seemingly for the purpose of freeing the writer from normative constraints. In order to highlight all this, which in my opinion constitutes the essence of *I Ragionamenti*, I have analyzed the work from a parodic perspective. A parodic reading of the text is a powerful tool to interpret it in its necessary wholeness. A parodic reading also represents a natural heuristic model of interpretation for the modern

reader, as it might not have been for readers of past epochs, for today we are more sensitive to the parodic construction of texts and better equipped to recognize it. It is only recently, after all, that the West has discovered the Russian formalists, Mikhail Bakhtin and their theories on parody, and it is only very recently that literary theoreticians, like Linda Hutcheon, have fully demonstrated the extent to which parody is used in every field of artistic expression in our century.[6]

Firenzuola's polemical idol is Pietro Bembo. The parodied text circumscribed in *I Ragionamenti* consists of the language, the style, the motifs, the aesthetic forms, and the literary conventions which Bembo had already displayed in the *Asolani* and which he had reduced to rigid norms in *Prose della volgar lingua*. Firenzuola's intention to parody Bembo's literary language manifests itself through the polemical pages of *I Ragionamenti* dedicated to language and to the poetics of imitation.[7] While Bembo recommended Petrarch and Boccaccio as the models for literary language, Firenzuola, through his characters, demands a more modern form of the vernacular as his model; he wants a language developed in contact with the real. He also casts doubts on the validity of imitation as a precept, and lashes out at "modern censors" and "tyrants."[8] In the text the polemic occupies a central position, both structurally and ideologically. The heated discussion, in fact, is not an end in itself. As one proceeds in the reading, it becomes increasingly evident that, for Firenzuola, to challenge Bembo's view on literary language is equivalent to challenging his concept of literature which, exactly like his concept of language, was static, motionless, detached from the present and from reality.

Moving from what Bakhtin calls the verbal-ideological centre of the text[9] to its outer structure, the frame, one notices that it is entirely modelled on the *Decameron*, but not because Firenzuola was incapable of original thought. Bembo, who had proposed Boccaccio's style as the prose model to be imitated, had a preference for the most noble language displayed in all its formal excellence precisely in the frame of the *Decameron*.[10] Firenzuola's repeated, and open, references to Boccaccio (who is also cited by name), while at first denoting a passive acceptance of Bembo's model, also function as a foreshadowing of an adherence to the book "cognominato Prencipe

Galeotto" which is more compromising and more outrageous, one certainly not sanctioned by Bembo.[11]

As for the number six, Firenzuola charges it with symbolical significance. The figure, according to Biblical exegesis, should represent the perfection of the hexameron. It should also stand for man's redemption and rebirth. Later, however, Firenzuola ironically empties the number of all meaning by plainly stating that it is devoid of any mysticism. He also denies its significance by deliberately sabotaging the textual organization which he had chosen for himself. By doing so, he is actually rejecting the technique of numerical composition, for a numerical scheme is nothing but order and stillness, the denial of dynamism. Within it, all is predicted and predictable right from the start. Such, of course, is not the nature of the real world. It is, therefore, unacceptable to Firenzuola.

That *I Ragionamenti* is constructed on a double plane of textual organization becomes even more evident in the dialogue on Neoplatonic love.[12] Firenzuola distorts the characteristic features of the love treatise, of which Bembo's *Asolani* was the quintessential model (since it was the first text of its kind written in the vernacular, and one which would indeed prove exemplary and influential throughout the sixteenth century) through structural, rhetorical, and thematic manipulations.

As far as the structure is concerned, the reader readily notices how atypical it is when compared to Bembo's dialogue. Little space is given to the expounding of the love doctrine itself while the ensuing discussion is prolonged to its limits. The issues raised by the other participants are of a practical nature and thus give Costanza, who is elected "queen" by the others, no opportunity to elaborate further on the strictly philosophical aspect of love. In the *Asolani* the monologues are longer, the interruptions far fewer; at times they are made up of specific questions, but more often they are simple invitations to proceed, very seldom are they real objections to what the speaker is explaining.

Furthermore, motifs which are specifically Neoplatonic in nature (such as the definition of beauty and the question of beauty as a necessary prerequisite for love)[13] are closely interwoven with the practical everyday considerations that the other interlocutors keep making. The two modes of thought are further distinguished on the stylistic

level. In fact, while the passages that deal with the more concrete manifestations of love are written in a style notable for its clarity and incisiveness, those that betray beliefs more in keeping with traditional Neoplatonism are burdened with rhetorical figures and artifices (which represent nothing else than parodic textual strategies). Most notable are the metaphors, especially the ones also found in Bembo's *Asolani*,[14] and the ones which establish analogies between the highest philosophical concepts and "things" (such as vases, candles, lanterns, lutes, etc.),[15] and which, therefore, tend to lower the tone of discourse.[16]

As for the contents, Firenzuola's version of the Neoplatonic doctrine of love represents an oversimplification of the problems inherent in this philosophy which he reduces to its lowest terms. There are two types of Love, explains Costanza: one is born of that Venus who is daughter of the Heavens, the other of that Venus who is daughter of some mortal woman. This latter kind can be further subdivided into two: 1. honest love, which is ruled by human laws and social conventions; 2. lustful love, which is not ruled by reason, renders us akin to beasts, and leads us to "mille vizi brutti" (a thousand ugly vices).[17]

In this brief and schematic representation of the Neoplatonic doctrine of love one can easily recognize the three stages of love expounded by Bembo in the *Asolani*. Firenzuola, however, chooses not to dwell on unrequited love (the only time he touches upon it, he dismisses it swiftly by citing Dante's famous verse: Amor . . . a nullo amato amar perdona[18]), nor to fathom Bembo's mystical rapture upon speculation of the celestial nature of love. In fact, love is virtually denied its traditional circular motion whereby it originates from God, descends upon man to return finally to Him. In Firenzuola's version, at the end there is no ecstatic contemplation of the presence of God. He chooses to dwell, instead, on Bembo's second stage of love, the one embodied by Gismondo who states that "giovevolissimo è Amore sopra tutte le giovevolissime cose."[19]

Firenzuola's interests lie not in the philosophical aspects of love as much as in its sociological aspects, as Costanza's final hymn to love clearly indicates.[20] For instance, he violently condemns sensual, homosexual, and adulterous love not for any moral reasons, but because they constitute elements of transgression of the estab-

lished social order. Furthermore, he sees love as the only generative principle of civilization for it brings peace, which produces the necessary conditions for men to found cities and to prosper; as the only force capable of refining man's soul and customs; as the basis of any religion.

Firenzuola, then, revises the Neoplatonic philosophy of love and changes its general structure by emphasizing some elements of its supporting framework while he purposely conceals some others. The distortions he carries out are always determined by his underlying interest in reality. However, if his version lacks any ascendental movement and any spiritualizing element, it does not lack other ideals. These never involve the trascendent, as any other more genuine form of Neoplatonism does, but they do keep their own ideal dignity, for love's ultimate goal is knowledge. In the author's view, in fact, it is love which induces man to pursue knowledge in general and to develop a passion for literature in particular. Costanza, after all, successfully asserts her authority over everybody else precisely because she is a "woman of letters"; she is portrayed as the living example of the ennobling abilities of love.

To conclude, then, we can say that these techniques of parodic construction all tend to one end: to remove Love from the idleness of the Neoplatonic celestial sphere and to bring it back to earth where it might be less perfect, but certainly more active and productive. Firenzuola, in fact, keeps love firmly within the realm of human activities. In its most noble of forms, then, love becomes not a mystical experience but rather a cultural one, for its force induces the lovers to pursue knowledge. Firenzuola, in other words, ironically inverts the supporting structures of Neoplatonic love: rather than spiritualizing the woman, beauty, the lover, he secularizes love and all that is connected to it; in Bakhtin's words, he *contemporizes* it, brings it in touch with reality and its constant becoming.[21] By doing so, he liberalizes it and its literary manifestations.

If not all, certainly some of the author's observations on the Neoplatonic concept of love could be considered as mannerist variations of other preceding and contemporary texts. This possible interpretation seems particularly obvious when one is interested only in some elements of *I Ragionamenti* and not in the text as a whole (Firenzuola's contribution to the evolution of the love treatise in the *Cin-*

quecento, for instance). Such a critical interpretation, however, no matter how useful and practical, would always amount to an unwarranted extrapolation (abstraction) of one element from its own literary system which constitutes a necessary whole. To treat *I Ragionamenti* only as a love treatise and to ignore the elaborate framework which surrounds the dialogue is equivalent to dismembering the text; more specifically, it is equivalent to removing from the work the ideology which produced it, for Firenzuola's manipulations on the philosophy of love dominant in his times are nothing else than the continuation of the controversy concerning literary language which he had engaged in with Bembo.[22]

In other words, one may say that Firenzuola challenges Bembo's *Asolani* both for its linguistic codification and for its philosophical contents because as its language strove to attain the status of dogmatic teaching, so its philosophy wanted to codify in normative terms the manner in which love was to be perceived, interpreted, and lived. This, of course, prevents the personal understanding of love; it denies individual experiences, new insights and new interpretations. More significantly, it also prevents new literary expressions of the phenomenon of love. Firenzuola rejects the idea of a literature which is static in nature because it is the mirror-image of a predetermined reality and which, as such, appears already codified in all its artistic forms thus placing itself beyond any new elaboration deemed desirable or even just possible by the very writers who were supposed to produce it.

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NOTES

1 That is, ultimately, the stand taken also by Danilo Romei, author of one of the latest and more comprehensive study on Firenzuola: *La "maniera" romana di Agnolo Firenzuola (dicembre 1524–maggio 1525)* (Firenze: Edizioni Centro 2P, 1983).

2 See, for instance, Adriano Seroni, "Firenzuola novelliere e favolista," in *Apologia di Laura e altri saggi* (Milano: Bompiani, 1948), pp. 25–45.

3 Among others, Luigi Tonelli, *L'amore nell'arte e nel pensiero del Rinascimento* (Firenze: Sansoni, 1933), pp. 191–193, 296–297.

4 See Marziano Guglielminetti, *La cornice e il furto. Studi sulla novella del '500* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1984), pp. 7–15; Eugenio Ragni, "Introduzione,"

Le novelle di Agnolo Firenzuola (Milano: Salerno, 1971), pp. 7–31.

5 These, of course, are not mere internal structural inversions. They establish ironic parallels, at the level of language, structure, and character, with the linguistic and philosophical models promoted by Bembo.

6 These are the specific texts to which I am referring: Vladimir Propp, "La parodia," in *Comicità e riso. Letteratura e vita quotidiana*, a cura di Giampaolo Gandolfo (Torino: Einaudi, 1988); Jurij Tynjanov, "Dostoevskij e Gogol (Per una teoria della parodia)," in *Avanguardia e tradizione* (Bari: Dedalo, 1968); Mikahil Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. by Helene Iswolsky (Cambridge, Mass.-London, England: The M.I.T. Press, 1968); *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, ed. by Michael Holoquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981); Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody: The Teaching of Twentieth-century Art Forms* (New York-London: Mathuen, 1984).

7 The intent to parody another work is absolutely crucial to any parodic text. It appears as an indispensable element in virtually all definitions of parody. Bakhtin, for instance, speaks of parody as an "intentional dialogized hybrid," "From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse," in *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 76. See also Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody*, pp. 22–23, and Tynjanov, "Dostoevskij e Gogol," pp. 152, 171.

Also necessary to the textual organization of any parodic form is the presence of irony. According to Hutcheon, irony is "the main rhetorical mechanism for activating the reader's awareness." It is the only element which distinguishes parody from other literary forms which are similar to it, such as Renaissancce imitation. See *A Theory of Parody*, pp. 10, 25, 31–32, 34, 40. For Mikahil Bakhtin irony is the means through which an author can fearlessly and freely investigate the world; it is, therefore, the means which allows him to demolish old aesthetic norms established by usage and create new ones. For him, then, as for the Russian formalists, irony is one of the major elements which give parody its central role in the evolution of literary forms.

8 See Agnolo Firenzuola, *I Ragionamenti* in *Opere*, a cura di Delmo Maestri (Torino: UTET, 1977), pp. 110–126.

9 It is only here, says Bakhtin, in this "center of language," in this "center of organization" that we can find the author as the "creator of the novelistic whole." "From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse," pp. 48–49.

10 Bembo rejected any form of *sermo popularis* and cautioned writers against writing in the manner in which the people spoke. Indeed, he even accused Boccaccio of being unwise for having at times used in his masterpiece a popular form of discourse. The examples from Boccaccio's prose which Bembo offered in *Prose della volgar lingua* are, in fact, all taken either from the frame or from the introductions and the conclusions to the tales, not from the tales themselves, with one exception: he quotes from *Decameron* IV, 1, from the speech recited by Gismonda on her lover's heart. This, however, is

not a notable exception, for the modes of this speech are not at all unlike the ones found in the generally more noble language of the frame. In *Prose* see, in particular, I, xvii; II, ii, xv, xix.

11 I am referring here, of course, to the six novellas which follow the dialogue and the six poems. Firenzuola was the first short story writer, in the XVI century, to re-adopt the *Decameron*'s general design. His, therefore, was the first attempt to restore the novella to its former state, for the genre had been confined to the periphery of high official culture by Quattrocento humanism.

12 The double plane of textual organization is a distinguishing feature of any parodic form. In *A Theory of Parody* Hutcheon often speaks of the parodic text as a double-voiced, doubly coded, and doubly decodable text.

13 Firenzuola, *I Ragionamenti*, pp. 97–98.

14 The case of the metaphor of the sea, for instance, with which Bembo opened his text and which Firenzuola abuses by repeating it over and over again. See Bembo, *Gli Asolani* in *Opere in volgare*, a cura di Mario Marti (Firenze: Sansoni, 1961), I, i, pp. 11, and Firenzuola, *I Ragionamenti*, pp. 96–97, 99–102.

15 Firenzuola, *I Ragionamenti*, pp. 97–98.

16 These are the metaphors defined by Tynjanov as "metafore cosali" which are particularly effective in the construction of any parodic form. "Dostoevskij e Gogol," pp. 140–142.

17 Firenzuola, *I Ragionamenti*, p. 95.

18 Firenzuola, *I Ragionamenti*, p. 94.

19 Bembo, *Gli Asolani*, II, xx, p. 97.

20 Firenzuola, *I Ragionamenti*, p. 106.

21 Bakhtin, "Epic and Novel: Toward a Methodology for the Study of the Novel," in *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 21.

22 The two processes are, after all, inseparable from one another, since every linguistic code implies a specific perspective on the world in which we live. As Bakhtin states, every parody shows "two languages . . . crossed with each other, . . . two styles, two linguistic points of view, and in the final analysis two speaking subjects," but every parody further indicates "to what extent forms of language, and forms of world view, [are] inseparable from each other." "From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse," pp. 77, 82.

Emilio Hidalgo-Serna

The Rhetorical Function of Poetry: *Segismundo*'s Ingenious Thought and Philosophical Metaphor

The foundation for the following text is our interpretation of the *ingenious method* in Baltasar Gracían, published several years ago in the U.S.A.[1] Gracían's *Agudeza y arte de ingenio* of 1642/1648 had always been reduced by critics to its purely formal and its aesthetic aspects. For Menéndez y Pelayo, Gracían's work was the "codex of poetical intellectualism."[2] Benedetto Croce judges Gracían to be the theorist of literary *conceptismo*, which consists of "the literary form considered as an ingenious and pleasant ornament, added to the naked expression of thought."[3] We showed, in our above mentioned interpretation, that *ingenium* and its concepts cannot be relegated to the status of mere formal and decorative additions to rational expression. We now intend to explain the rhetorical function of Gracían's ingenious method using, as an example, the philosophical comedy *Life is a Dream*.

The assertion that the 17th century was the "Golden Age" of Spanish literature has meanwhile become the standard view of literature. However, to be more precise, one would have to appreciate that the gold of this epoch was nothing more than the gold of its imagery. Concepts such as baroque, *conceptismo* or *culteranismo* have long lost their strength and colour and require restauration. How is it possible to forget that, like the exponents of Spanish paintings who were contemporaries, our classical authors—Cervantes, Góngora, Quevedo, Lope de Vega, Gracían or Calderón—speak, think, argue, invent and write primarily in images?

Within this epoch, word and image embody one and the same reality. Hence, *The Surrender of Breda* (1625), for instance, is depicted simultaneously by Calderón (1625) and Velázquez (1634/35). In his little known treatises on painting (1677),[4] Calderón examines the relationships which interpose between painting and the seven free arts. They all contribute in some manner to painting; however,

those whose special medium is the word do so more directly than others: "Therefore grammar contributes its concordances to painting; dialectics its consequences; rhetoric its powers of persuasion; poetry its art of inventiveness; (. . .) therefore, who can doubt that the painting is, as the collective entirety of all the arts, the prime art, which includes everything?"[5] He pays special note to the art of persuasion, the object and the aim of rhetoric, in which poetry and painting indeed also have a share. "For it (painting) is silent rhetoric; its painted words persuade, its articulated lines no less so; what greater means of eloquence can, then, therefore exist, other than that which it represents?"[6]

In the case of the theatre, the effect of the word is intensified by the visual image. In Calderón's works, as in Gracían's, the search for rhetorical elements and the transfer of knowledge is realized through the keenness (*agudeza*) of the *ingenium*, whose special inventive means and tools of communication are the *conceptuosas imágenes.*[7] These images belong to the fundamental structure of keenness and all ingenious *conceptos*, which Gracían examines in his rhetoric or rather his *Agudeza y arte de ingenio* (keenness and the *ingenium*'s art). In this respect the following *conceptos*, among many others, deserve special note: the *conceptos por correspondencia y proporción* (cf. O. C. 247), *agudeza por semejanza* (O. C. 277), *ingeniosas transposiciones* (O. C. 313), *agudeza crítica* (O. C. 335), *conceptos por ficción* (O. C. 406), *argumentos conceptuosos* (O. C. 412), and the *conceptos compuestos por metáforas* (O. C. 467).

In a letter to Schiller, Goethe imparts the impression that the imagery in *The Steadfast Prince* made on him: "If poetry should be totally lost to the world, then one could restore it from this play."[8] However, if, according to Goethe, Calderón embraces in this work the total constellation and all the possibilities of poetry, then one would have to ask where the special features of his dramatic method and language lie. Schelling had already seen, before Goethe, the key to Calderón's creativeness in the "inexplicable reasoning in the construction" and in the "genius of creative inventiveness."[9] Schelling's phrase "Genie in der Erfindung" is not in the least a contradiction, nor does it mean that there can be no unity among philosophy, rhetoric and poetry. Since in Calderón's works this inventiveness is the result of a method which bears the same mark and function as *arte de*

ingenio of Gracían, it would be perfectly legitimate, even necessary, to reflect upon the work of our dramatist.

One can probably regard Calderón's theatre as the realization of the logic and the rhetoric of the *ingenium*, as developed by Gracían. The *conceptismo* is evident in Calderón's work. His method and language integrate into a system, whose expressive structure is well accessible to the audience. According to Gracían, there is no *art* without *ingenium*, without *matter* and without *example*.[10] An examination of the inherent structure of this inventive rhetoric requires subject *matter* in our case also. The theme of man and the originality of his dramatic art, or his method, seem, from a philosophical perspective, to form the two main points in Calderón's works.

In reference to subject, and therefore to man, the world in *The Great Theatre of the World* becomes, in theatrical terms, the object of representation, only because man dwells in it. This also occurs in the philosophical comedy *Life is a Dream*, which deals with the problem of existence and freedom. The answer to the question of human freedom precedes the argument. In addition, the question of God, which in Calderón appears as the horizon of human strife for eternity, presupposes previous knowledge of the ego and its earthly stage, its circumstance (*circum-stantia*).

Without using deduction, without paying notes to dogmatic principles, Calderón opts for quick means—using examples, symbols, allegory and metaphors. He thus portrays in a vivid manner to his audience, conveying in a richly inventive language, his philosophical message of the limitations of man. This transference of his thoughts occurs in *conceptos*, which are clearer, more familiar and more effective and, therefore, correspond to the keenness, taste and logical structure of the *ingenium* of the audience. Considering the large number of his plays (almost 200), and his continual use of the method of the *ingenium*, it would be completely beyond the scope of this essay to specify all Calderón's *conceptos* and inventive expressions of *correspondencias* with respect to man.

Let us turn our attention to the comedy *Life is a Dream*. The reason for our choice is not only the metaphor in the title, which at the same time forms the theme and the main argument, nor is it only the fact that it constitutes the transfer of one of the fundamental aims in Gracían's ingenious logic. The principal reason for this choice is

that this work is above all the best known of all Calderón's poetry and will therefore facilitate our understanding of the analysis.

Segismundo represents Man wrestling for his freedom. The problem arises as to the possibility or impossibility of changing his fate. Once again Calderón seizes upon the theological discussion of *free will* which at his time was an object of rational and metaphysical controversy between the Thomists (e.g. Báñez) and the Jesuits (e.g. Molina). Our author arrives at a mid-way solution, in that he defends man's relative freedom. He repeats precisely this view again in his *auto The Great Theatre of the World.* By contrasting the image of the dream with reality, Calderón accentuates Segismundo's existential dualism, he being the Prince of Poland who is ruled by the stars and, at the same time, by the irrevocable authority of the King, his father Basilio.

Dramatic impression, effective harmony between argumentation and the logical and rhetorical structure of *Life is a Dream* depend primarily on the degree of unison between all the different dramatical means, in particular with regard to the *ingenium* and its language. If one qualifies Calderón's poetry as "syllogistic precision" and "rhymed logic,"[11] then one faces the danger of misunderstanding the manifold wealth of his work. Calderón undoubtedly employs the structure of syllogism, but it is just as true to say that this is not an inventive means for him; neither is it a true communication of his *conceptos.* It is exclusively a simple device for a pseudo-rational arrangement of arguments. Since syllogism, in the hands of neoscholasticism, enjoys philosophical prestige, it is used by Calderón to render a certain authority to the inventiveness of the *ingenium.* In contrast to general opinion in this field of research, Calderón's syllogism appears to be a purely formal cosmetic aid for his philosophical thinking and this, as in Gracían, is ingenious.

In Calderón's theatre, image, metaphor, analogy and symbol obviously have an indispensable function as tools of *agudeza* and *argumentos.* These inventive means are a basic element of his ingenious logic and together form the fundamental structure of his philosophy. In *Life is a Dream*, that which composes the truth of the discourse and its effect lies in the *acumen* of the *ingenium*, or rather in the results of his *inventio.* The invented elements emerge therefore within the compact scheme of rational categorical syllogism, which in its

uncreative stream could not produce anything at all new in its *conclusio* without these elements. If "life is a dream," then the tautology of the minor premise and the *conclusio* precede this major premise in general validity, which through subtle keenness of the *ingenium* has already been surpassed. "Segismundo and his father are people," so "their life is a dream" (*conclusio*). The poetical correlation and the ingenious images in Calderón override, however, the boundaries of literature, in order to partake in the essential aspect of the method of cognition and the line of argument. The object depicted, its forms and colours, are not, however, expressions of *ratio*, but of *correspondencias* and *conceptos imaginativos* of the *ingenium*.

How can one then explain inventive creativity? At what point in the dramatic plot does it emerge? In Calderón the premise indeed works under the condition that it is the result of an inventive process, in which one discovers the real relationship between more familiar things and the object (*materia*) from which one will form a *concepto* in a concrete situation and by inductive means. In his knowledge, Segismundo never abandons either his ego or his circumstances. He perceives life the way it is,—in movement—and denies every intention, in an *adaequatio*, to recognize and return to an existence the *res*, since this can never be a constant unity either within himself or in the subject of knowledge. Calderón's philosophy of life on the temporal and historical impression made by human life is different from rational egalitarianism.

The Spanish dramatist is conscious of the fact that the origin of invention lies in the ingenious method of seeing the connections between objects and their circumstances. The responsibility falls to the *ars inveniendi* to seek the necessary elements for the syllogistic statement. By allowing the metaphor *life-dream* universal validity, we can neither forget the free movement and its semantic, nor the relative value of an incomplete number of individual relationships unfolded in the metaphor. Individual events, in their meanings, relationships, existence, etc., are immeasurable quantitatively and qualitatively. This scale of relativity corresponds to real situations both of the human intellect as well as of rhetorical language, and it belongs to one of Gracían's clearest convictions of *arte de ingenio* as well as to Calderón's dramatic art.

It is precisely in the metaphor that *inventio* finds its own linguistic

representation. The fact that man is engineer of his own world is a special privilege of human creativity. Man, master of his *ingenium*, possesses the capacity, in the main stream of the river of imaginative words, to allow the stream of meanings, which spring from things only apparently separate or dissimilar, to converge. In reality, and in the eyes of the imagination, the objects are united in their source, their direction of flow and their orifice by a number of relationships, which, as in a spider's web, form this *correspondencia* and their distinctive quality. *Semejanza* and *proporción* are normally the most frequent to occur among the manifold *relaciones*. These find their parallel correspondence in the type and form of *agudeza* or, rather, ingenious process. Gracían assures that "simile or metaphor, be it because of the taste of their artistic skill, be it due to the simplicity of adaptation through terms often sublime in which one transfers the subject or the one it resembles, would appear to be the usual workshop of *discursos*, and although so mundane, one comes across *conceptos* in it, which is made extraordinary by the wonder of unity and contrast."[12] Analogous relationships converge under the roof of the metaphor. *Ingenium* and taste succeed in crystallizing these relationships in the keen *conceptos* of the argument. Metaphors were not originally products of the aesthetic artistic skill of the *ingenium*, but were formed in reply to the necessity to procure new *conceptos*, when there was a lack of a word to describe something.[13] Such ingenious artistic skill forms an essential part of the human task, whose primary aim is language, with all its possibilities of rhetorical and philosophical creation. Since the metaphor serves as an indispensable instrument of discovering, of naming the "unknown" thing by transferring meanings already known, its function exceeds aestheticism and overlaps into the sphere of philosophy. With its aid we are able to achieve cognitive *apprehendere* of the *res*, to grasp that which exists outside the special cases of *ratio* and which escape our logical rational principles.

The philosophical statement and transferred meaning of the dream-life metaphor proves to be an expression of the fantasy. Segismundo's subtle and keen penetration, a prerequisite of transfer in *Life is a Dream*, precedes every premise of rational streams of thought. If it is, therefore, imagination and its images which agitate on Calderón's stage as the protagonists, then they always present their roles in or-

derly and unified partnership with reason and its concepts.

Life is a Dream deals with a concrete situation in life. It is about loneliness in the figure of the mythical Segismundo, who incorporates the original sense of abandonment. He is surrounded by partly similar beings who, however, since they are not the same as he, make dialogue impossible. The dramatic action of our figure does not arise from the ideas of loneliness, or rational proceedings which could ease the abstract nature of the circumstances, but from lively reality and experience. From his forced loneliness, Segismundo experiences the absence of freedom. Yet he cannot achieve a realization of his needs and his legal claim to freedom by deduction because he lacks "equals"—people whom he indeed does not know. And it is just this impossibility of relating language and thought in which the roots for the absolute necessity for the monologue lie. Confused, powerless against his own living conditions, Segismundo, with a disillusioned cry throwing open the gates of his monologue, turns questioningly to his unknown fate:

> Ay mísero de mí, y ay infeliz!
> Apurar, Cielos, pretendo,
> ya que me tratáis así,
> qué delito cometí
> contra vosotros naciendo;
> aunque si nací, ya entiendo
> qué delito he cometido;
> bastante causa ha tenido
> vuestra justicia y rigor,
> pues el delito mayor
> del hombre es haber nacido
>
> Oh, wretched me! Alas, unhappy man!
> I strive, oh Heav'n, since I am treated so,
> To find out what my crime against thee was
> In being born; although in being born
> I understand just what my crime has been.
> Thy judgment harsh has had just origin:
> To have been born is mankind's greatest sin.[14]

Conscious of the absence of a partner, Segismundo traverses the new paths alone, which satisfy his thirst for knowledge. His method is similar to that which Andrenio[15] also employed as he tried to form a *concepto* of his own hell of nothingness. This initial look introduces us to the world of the image and the possibilities for interpreting

reality to which rational thinking has no access. With the first steps of ingenious knowledge, Segismundo achieves a precise perception of each individual aspect of the objects which surround him in the tower. While he ascertains similarities and differences between them, he discovers that some have the exact attributes he does not possess and that he, without understanding their nature, laments:

> Sólo quisiera saber,
> para apurar mis desvelos
> —dejando a una parte, cielos,
> el delito del nacer—,
> ¿qué más os pude ofender,
> para castigarme más?
> ¿No nacieron los demás?,
> pues si los demás nacieron,
> ¿qué privilegios tuvieron
> que yo no gocé jamás?

> I only seek to know, to ease my grief,
> (Now setting to one side the crime of birth)
> In what way greater, Heav'n, could I offend,
> To merit from thee greater punishment?
> Were not all others born? If so, in fine,
> What dispensation theirs that was not mine?[16]

Here ends his lament, his questioning, a sentimental conclusion for his painful ignorance, whose only partner is the silence of this place shrouded in mystery. It is within this framework surrounding Segismundo that Calderón finds a possibility for cognitive dialectics (of the ingenious dialogue), which permits Segismundo to understand his own world. His sense, his power of imagination and the courage to understand free him from the chains of ignorance. Since his reason is excluded, due to a lack of general concepts, rational argumentation proves to be an inappropriate method. In respect to the missing object (freedom) and other people, only one possible answer remains: the unveiling of existing harmonies between himself and his environment. In his penetration, the *acumen* hits upon the heart of the similarities with which the *ingenium* paves the way for the inventiveness of its arguments. The actual function of the metaphor is none other than to make it possible to recognize a less well-known object through another better-known thing.[17] And so Segismundo sees the similarities and differences between things.

This factor separates the rational from the ingenious knowledge. The arguments of the hero, who demands freedom, begin out of necessity directly afterwards. Beautifully, and at the same time full of rich truth, Segismundo continues:

Nace el ave, y con las galas
que le dan belleza suma,
apenas es flor de pluma,
o ramillete con alas,
cuando las etéras salas
corta con velocidad,
negándose a la piedad
del nido que deja en calma;
¿y teniendo yo más alma,
tengo menos libertad?
Nace el bruto, y con la piel
que dibujan manchas bellas,
apenas signo es de estrellas
—gracias al docto pincel—
cuando, atrevido y cruel,
la humana necesidad
le enseña a tener crueldad,
monstruo de su laberinto;
¿y yo con mejor instinto
tengo menos libertad?
nace el pez, que no respira,
aborto de ovas y lamas,
y apenas bajel de escamas
sobre las ondas se mira,
cuando a todas partes gira,
midiendo la inmensidad
de tanta capacidad
como le da el centro frío;
¿y yo, con más albedrío,
tengo menos libertad?
Nace el arroyo, culebra
que entre flores se desata,
y apenas sierpe de plata,
entre las flores se quiebra,
cuando músico celebra
de las flores la piedad
que la dan la majestad
del campo abierto a su huida;
¿y teniendo yo más vida,

tengo menos libertad?
En llegando a esta pasión,
un volcán, un Etna hecho,
quisiera sacar del pecho
pedazos del corazón:
¿qué ley, justicia o razón
negar a los hombres sabe
privilegio tan süave,
excepción tan principal,
que Dios le ha dado a un cristal,
a un pez, a un bruto y a un ave?

Birds are born, rich garbed in hues that give
Them brilliant beauty; then, when scarcely more
Than feathered flow'rs or plumèd garlands, breast
The vault of air with speedy wing, and leave
The shelt'ring nest forlorn. And what of me?
Should I, with soul much greater, be less free?
Beasts are born, their skin all mottled o'er
With lovely colors; then, when scarcely more
Than starry patches, limned with learnèd brush,
The needs of man instruct them to be bold,
Cruel monsters in their lair. And what of me?
Should I, with higher instincts, be less free?
Fish are born, unbreathing spawn of ooze
And slimy seaweed; then, when scarcely more
Than tiny boats with scales upon the waves,
They swim away to measure all the vast
Cold limits of the deep. And what of me?
Should I, with greater free will, be less free?
Streams are born, and serpent-like uncoil
Among the flow'rs; then, when scarcely more
Than silv'ry snakes, they wind away and sing
In tuneful praise the rustic majesty
Stretched open to their flight. And what of me?
Should I, with life much longer, be less free?
And as I reach this angry pitch I burn
With Etna's fierce volcanic fires, and want
To tear my heart in pieces from my breast.
What law, what reason can deny to man
That gift so sweet, so natural, that God
Has giv'n a stream, a fish, a beast, a bird?[18]

The acumen in *conceptos* achieved here by the author clearly surpasses the boundaries of a premise and any general declaration of

reason. In each one of the 50 octosyllables, we perceive the line of the argument. Gracían shows in his *Agudeza y arte de ingenio* that "every kind of acumen which participates in an argument or a discourse is more ingenious because this *agudeza* is here the object of the principal act of the mind."[19] The selection which Segismundo makes among those four ingredients of the argument reflects good taste. Those visible symbols selected serve as a mirror in which he, seeing himself from his own perspective of life, recognizes himself as dissimilar. The *ingenium* forms a *concepto* out of this dissimilarity, "showing the difference which exists between the unlike subject and the term to which it is dissimilar."[20]

The bird, wild animal, fish and stream symbolize the subject matter and simultaneously the origin of the argument. The author presents many *conceptos*, from small to large, in order to express the opposite situation to the sought after object: Segismundo's denial of freedom. However, since symbols exist in function with man, the captured prince discovers them and transfers them, compares the image with the one represented and gathers in symbols their correspondences. These correspondences then permit him to experience a cognitive revelation and show him the ability to express what he has understood. If, in the general feeling of the audience, the bird graphically symbolizes spatial freedom and independence of movement, then the choice of such an image and the transference of its meaning corresponds to the need to express this contrast ingeniously, for the benefit of cognition. This contrast, because it is not rational, cannot be understood by a logical ordering of reason.

The symbols and metaphors in the monologue serve the illustration, the expressive tension and the speed of transference, which by bringing to mind the subject and object, corresponds to the structure demanded. The similar and dissimilar relationships are found here to be creatures of different types in other words, beyond any possibility of definition. The choice of images, their comparison and the transferred meaning through metaphor are not arbitrary, for they correspond without exception to the common denominator of the argument—freedom.

After Segismundo has compiled (*symbállein*) the symbols and images which manifest the perception of the differences in his last lines, he finishes with a cry to the incomprehensible law, to justice and to

the mystery of reason, which have denied him the privileges, "that God has giv'n a stream, a fish, a beast, a bird." Each and every metaphor of the passage expresses a coming closer to the objects in a moment of comparison. In contrast to the concepts of traditional logic, the metaphors are not demonstrative judgements. Through *metaphérein* we present that which is most obvious or best known (fish, bird, etc.), in order to bring the hidden object into light and discover the object of cognition. In Calderón's rhetoric, without exception, philosophical argumentation follows the image. The ingenious language obtains once more its own original keenness and lucidity, when it illustrates the existential connections between objects.

Transferences, as bridges of meaning, rescue us from the indefinable. They are not the perception and expression of that which definition cannot explain (the individual object) and which one cannot deduce from another object. The diverse functions of the metaphor and its actual character do not only depend on a search for the meaning of unknown objects, but also on the spectrum of possibilities which circumstances can offer in order to reinstate cognitive and linguistic communication with the ciphered object. Metaphorical craftsmanship always begins with perception and a choice of similar relationships, in other words, with the activity of the *ingenium* and good taste. In his method of forming *concepto*, Segismundo uses that truth, which Ortega in his philosophical equations of life concluded as being "*I am myself and my circumstance*, and if I do not save it, then I can not save myself either."[21] Seen from this angle, the possibilities of the metaphor could be just as numerous as the correspondences, which the *res* carries in itself. Grassi illustrates the experience of the metaphor and its disparity with rational thinking in two forms of human behaviour: in dance and in game. The transference of the meaning "through the human body, its movements and through rhythm" is not the same as that of the game: "through devising rules, which include space, time and objects, a new order is achieved, which lifts the player out of daily reality."[22]

In the monologue, the object of cognition (Segismundo's freedom) is hidden or, rather, not present. His yearning for freedom forces him to look for the light of truth in the most immediate circumstances outside himself. In the cognitive fulfillment of this destitution, he is only

equipped with his feelings, but lacking the general concepts of his impotent reason. This search does not, in our case, approximate any tradition for which the essentials of truth are based in rational *adaequatio*. Concordance, as in the Spanish *estar de acuerdo* (from *cor*), or also in the other romance languages, cannot only be expressed by reason or understanding. It originally meant the correspondence of the heart and senses, images, or, as in music, voices and sounds. Due to the impossibility of defining something in such a concrete situation, or of using a logical line of reasoning, Calderón strives to grasp in *conceptos* that which is self-revealing of "the unhidden" *aletheia* in birds or in a stream, etc. In actual fact, Segismundo cannot know the reason for the deprivation of his freedom. Yet he fully understands how the present objects of his attention move in freedom.

Modern rational man refuses to admit that thought very often needs to be conveyed metaphorically. The effect of the metaphor does not end in verbal transference; it is, beyond this, an inventive act, whose essential function is cognitive. It is a perception of the relativity in reality, exactly of that which goes beyond the scope of reason, but is within that sphere which can be penetrated by the *ingenium* and imagination. Yet it is not enough to trace relationships. In order for them to serve our argument, they must be objects of cognition of the *acumen* of the *ingenium*. By perceiving links which keep him in harmony with his circumstances, Segismundo forms a *concepto* of his dissimilarity. An example for this logical *artificio ingenioso* is his lively and effective identification and description of similar relationships.

When he calls the bird a flower with plumage, we ascertain the creation of a new object of the imagination; out of the three real images "bird," "flower" and "plumage" arises a new one: "bird—flower with plumage." None of these three words has its own meaning here. They only exist in order to serve reality and the new meaning conveyed through the image. This meaning (Segismundo's *concepto*) does not correspond to anything other than the actual similarity between bird and flower. It was chosen in order to illustrate his own dissimilarity (that is, not being free, although he does believe himself to possess more soul and being than the bird). Bird and flower represent freedom in their delicate bodies. Their blossom, their plumage,

their leaves and wings symbolize their freedom. Yet the concept of freedom is extended through the image of a bouquet of flowers with wings (bird), which moves through ethereal space in the firmament with ease and without limitation through windows and doors.

Segismundo continues his inductive argumentation in a similar way. He gathers and transforms in his monologue as many similarities as he perceives around him. Gracían confirms, "when all circumstances (. . .) of the subject freely approximate to the transferred image and with such unison that each part of the metaphor is a relevant *concepto*, then the compilation of *conceptos* has reached its utmost perfection."[23] Throughout the entire monologue, necessarily rich in metaphors, the choice of brook in its dissimilarity to the three animals does not at first appear to offer any relation to freedom at all.

Calderón embraces the form and flow of the brook with the help of the image of the snake. It "frees itself," fleeing in zig-zag form, and then becomes a "silv'ry snake." The brook gives its thanks among the procession of flowers and plants on its banks which also experience its unconstrained movements. It "sings" uninterruptedly during the prince's lament:

> And what of me?
> Should I, with life much longer, be less free?

NOTES

1 Cf. E. Hidalgo-Serna, "The Philosophy of 'Ingenium': Concept and Ingenious Method in Balthasar Gracían," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 13.4 (1980) 245–63.
2 M. Menéndez y Pelayo, "Poética conceptista: Baltasar Gracían." *Obras Completas, Historia de las ideas estéticas en España*, vol. 2 (Madrid, 1950) 355.
3 B. Croce, "I trattatisti italiani del Concettismo e Baltasar Gracían," *Problemi di estetica e contributi alla storia dell'estetica italiana* (Bari, 1940) 313.
4 P. Calderón de la Barca, "Tratado defendiendo la nobleza de la pintura," *Cajón de Sastre literario*, vol. 4, ed. F. M. Nipho (Madrid, 1781).
5 Calderón, "Tratado" 33.
6 Calderón, "Tratado" 30.
7 B. Gracían, "El Criticón," *Obras Completas*, ed. Arturo del Hoyo (Madrid: Aguilar, 1967), 524. In the following, Gracían is cited only from this edition.
8 *Goethes Briefe*, vol. 2 (Hamburg, 1964) 464.
9 *Aus Schellings Leben, in Briefen*, vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1869) 423.
10 Gracían, "Agudeza y arte de ingenio" 514–16.

11 A. Machado, "El 'Arte Poética' de Juan de Mairena," *Obras Completas*, (Madrid, 1952) 957.
12 Gracían, "Agudeza y arte de ingenio" 467.
13 "Necessitas est, quum deest verbum quo res significetur." J. L. Vives, *De ratione dicendi, Opera omnia*, vol. 2 (Valencia: G. Maynas, 1782–1790) 99–100.
14 P. Calderón de la Barca, "La vida es sueño," *Obras Completas*, ed. A. Valbuena Prat, vol. 1 (Madrid, 1952) 366–67. Translation by William E. Colford, *Life is a Dream. La vida es sueño* (Woodbury, 1958) 4.
15 Gracían, "El Criticón" 525–26.
16 Calderón, "La vida es sueño" 367; *Life is a Dream* 4.
17 "Similitudo ad explicationem inventa est rei minus notae per magis notam." Vives 99. "Transferuntur ea (metaphor) quae similia esse judicantur." Vives 99.
18 Calderón, "La vida es sueño" 367; *Life is a Dream* 4–5.
19 Gracían, "Agudeza y arte de ingenio" 351.
20 Gracían, "Agudeza y arte de ignenio" 294.
21 J. Ortega y Gasset, *Meditaciones del Quijotc*, (Madrid, 1963) 18.
22 E. Grassi, *Die Macht der Phantasıe*, (Königstein/Ts., 1979) 54
23 Gracían, "Agudeza y arte de ingenio" 468.

Krisztina Weller

The Mysterious Lady: An Enigmatic Figure in the Fantastic Short Story of Nineteenth-Century Spain

In the early part of the nineteenth century, Spain, in the heyday of Romanticism, was producing many poems and short stories, some of which deal with the elusive figure of a witch, beautiful enchantress or mysterious lady.[1] This figure is portrayed in the fantastic short story as a supernatural being among men who causes "confusión de lo onírico con lo real, de los sueños con la vigilia"[2] (confusion between that which is dreamt and that which is real, between oneirons and watchfulness).[3] Bécquer's "Los ojos verdes" ("Green Eyes") and Galdós's "Theros" are both examples of this type of fantastic short story found in Spain but also in other cultures almost as a universal phenomenon, which conjures up the figure of a mysterious lady or pagan goddess who seduces a young male protagonist as an act of mischief or evil, only to lead him to his ultimate doom. A better understanding of this dangerous female entity can perhaps be achieved by studying the fantastic short story itself as the genre which breathes life into her haunting and unearthly form.

The fantastic short story, also known as a tale of horror, has its origins in Romanticism, a literary movement characterized by aesthetic rebellion or a strong reaction against the French Revolution, whose excesses had been tolerated in the new Age of Reason guided by the spirit of rationalism.[4] According to Hegel, rationalism left man as content as a worm with but water and soil, after his having experienced the privilege of living beneath a brilliant constellation of gods and miracles.[5] The romantic preferred the shadows of doubt cast by that which was irrational, or a dead but nevertheless idealized past, to living in a much abhorred present.[6] In the nineteenth century, that which was romantic came to mean something imaginative, evoking the supernatural or fantastic. The Spanish horror story first appeared

as an excerpt within more lengthy romantic novels, but it was soon to emerge as a new genre significant enough to exist on its own considerable merits.

Spain, very much inspired by the spread of the increasingly popular form of German Romanticism, started by such authors as Hoffmann and Tieck, disciples of Schelling whose works had been translated into Spanish so as to become familiar to a contemporary Spanish readership,[7] created its particular version of the romantic-fantastic short story, by means of the Becquerian legends. Rafael Llopis traces this type of short story back to two sources; a black stream and a white stream, the black being of English origin and containing morbid and macabre elements, the white being mainly of German extraction composed of bits of poetic fancy and fairy-tale wonders; the stuff of legends, with the addition of some degree of melancholic humour.[8] The fusion of these two sources produced the fantastic short story, an admittedly grey area which takes us into the realm of the supernatural, that which escapes from or is on the verge of a "scientific" or realistic explanation, or beyond the surrounding world of concrete, knowable facts.[9] Although Bécquer and Galdós had viewpoints that were diametrically opposed, the one being romantic, the other a hard-core realist, their respective works, "Los ojos verdes" and "Theros" can both be categorized as fantastic short stories, made complete by adding a vital supernatural element, in this case that of the mysterious lady, she who disturbs the very soul of man rendered vulnerable and helpless due to the intensity of his own desires.

"Los ojos verdes" and "Theros" conform to Todorov's generally accepted definition of the fantastic, as a vacillation between the superstitious and the natural explanation of events. The Latin *superstitio* means to be left paralyzed with fear before an object or person, hence to hesitate.[10] Here the object or person causing this fear or anxiety is a mysterious lady. The individual fears this supernatural being and is also afraid of himself, of his being unable to resist the passion aroused by the lady in question. In short, he is fearful of being possessed by a supernatural force beyond his control. The words "El joven vaciló un instante; un sudor frío corrió por sus miembros"[11] (The youth hesitated for a moment; he broke out in a cold sweat) describe Fernando's doubt, the fact that this protagonist is no longer so sure as to whether or not he wishes to remain with the lady of

the fountain. "Theros" presents us with a narrator who also admits that the mere sight of this woman's eyes with their livid flashes "le puso algo intranquilo"[12] (made him feel somewhat uncomfortable). Fernando finds himself "atraído como por una fuerza desconocida . . . más y más al borde de la roca"[13] (drawn as if by some unknown force . . . ever closer to the edge of the precipice) that is to say death itself. The gentleman in "Theros" has his judgment clouded as well, in that he says "apenas pude formular este pensamiento angustioso: 'Estoy en las calderas infernales' "[14] (I could but barely formulate this one agonizing thought: 'I'm in the depths of Hell').

In both instances, there is a clash between that which is imagined and that which is real, a shock which causes some hesitation in the protagonist and in the reader as well.[15] There are elements which are modelled on reality, but arranged in a manner to which one is not accustomed and this feels strange and disconcerting, negating that very same reality but presenting it in such a way as to seem real or at the very least possible.[16] The protagonists represent reality; they are portrayed doing ordinary things which are interrupted by the apparition of supernatural beings: Fernando is in the midst of hunting in pursuit of an injured stag in the woods (probably in a mythical medieval period),[17] while the narrator in "Theros" is travelling by train to Madrid. That which is unreal suddenly comes upon them, erupting into their daily lives. Fernando confirms that he thought he had "visto . . . una cosa extraña . . . los ojos de una mujer"[18] (seen . . . a very curious thing . . . a woman's eyes). In "Theros" the narrator is traveling alone, when all of a sudden he is surprised by a woman, ". . . sentía que me tocaban en el hombro. Sorprendiéndome esto, porque me creía solo en el coche"[19] (I felt that I was being tapped on the shoulder. This came as some surprise, because I believed myself to be quite alone in my compartment.)

The ambiguity which arises out of this shocking real-unreal encounter makes us wonder what the real nature is, although we know their origin must surely be supernatural, of the women who appear in the stories.[20] Doubtless attempts are made to explain away these phenomena using clever rationalizations. After all, Fernando remembers, "yo me creí juguete de un sueño"[21] (I believed myself to be dreaming) and the narrator in "Theros" declares "yo fuí de los seducidos"[22] (I was one of those seduced), in other words, that he

had indulged himself in a tavern with more than his fair share of alcohol before his sighting of the lady in the train. Furthermore, several references are made to paintings, again suggesting that these ladies do not exist, at least not within our notion of reality. "Yo recordaba vagamente haberla visto en pintura, no sé donde . . . en alguna región, no sé cuál, poblada por la imaginación creadora de los dioses del arte"[23] (I vaguely remembered having seen her in a painting, I'm not sure where . . . in some place or other, I don't know where, in a place over which presides the fertile imagination of artistic muses) says the narrator in "Theros." "Yo creo que he visto unos ojos como los que he pintado en esta leyenda . . . cuento con la imaginación de mis lectores para hacerme comprender en este que pudiéramos llamar boceto de un cuadro que pintaré algún día"[24] (I believe I saw eyes such as those that I have described in this legend . . . I'm counting on my readers' imagination in this to make me understand that which we may call a little sketch of a canvas which I hope to paint some day) states the narrator of "Los ojos verdes." Nevertheless, the protagonist destroys our presumption in having discovered a mundane explanation for that which has occurred. In the very same sentence in which Fernando suggests the possibility that he is in fact dreaming, he still insists: "pero no, es verdad; la he hablado muchas veces, como te hablo a ti ahora"[25] (but no, it's true; I spoke to her many times, just as I am now speaking to you).

As we can see, the focus of the protagonists' problems seems to center around the supernatural element which alters their lives, namely the mysterious lady herself. This lady possesses powerful weapons in her eyes, capable of blinding the would-be suitor in "Theros," "no era fácil contemplarla, porque sus ojos eran como pedazos del mismo sol . . . quemando la vista"[26] (it was not easy to contemplate her, because her eyes were like pieces of the very sun itself . . . burning one's sense of sight). Green eyes lead Fernando to damnation, as he is prepared to lose everything "por una sola mirada de esos ojos"[27] (for but a single gaze into those eyes). The mysterious lady's dress is also of note, as an addition to her supernatural aura. The lady with the green eyes is a water nymph "vestida con unas ropas que llegaban hasta las aguas y flotaban sobre su haz"[28] (clothed in garments which reached down to the waters and floated just on their surface). We are told in "Theros" that "no era fácil imaginar

atavíos más originales . . . no tenía alguno"[29] (it wasn't easy to imagine more original attire . . . she wasn't wearing any). Not even the voice or words uttered by these ladies is normal; they seem instead to emanate from another world: ". . . sus labios se removieron como para pronunciar algunas palabras; pero sólo exhalaron un suspiro . . . débil . . . como el de la ligera onda que empuja una brisa al morir entre los juncos"[30] (her lips moved as if to utter a few words; but they only exhaled a sigh . . . tenuous . . . like the light flutter emitted by a delicate breeze as it fades among the rushes). The narrator in "Theros" further confirms this fact: "A esta palabra siguieron otras que no pude entender bien"[31] (Along with this word of hers there followed others which I was not able to comprehend very well).

The lady described in "Theros" and "Los ojos verdes" seems not only to be strange and ambiguous due to her outward physical appearance, but also as we soon learn, as a result of her angelic-diabolical countenance as well. On the one hand, the lady with the green eyes is "hermosa sobre toda ponderación"[32] (beautiful beyond compare), but there is also mention made of "la fuente de los álamos en cuyas aguas habita un espíritu del mal"[33] (the fountain of the poplar trees within whose waters resides an evil sprite). "Theros' " "hermosa imagen" (beautiful picture) is at the same time an "endemoniada ninfa" (wicked wood nymph). This mixed message from a female entity most probably stems from the Christian idea of man's fall from grace, which traditionally holds Eve responsible for Adam's weakness and subsequent condemnation to live forever barred from Eden.[34] The notion springs from the idea that women are "el instrumento más eficaz que el demonio ha tenido, y tiene para engañar a los hombres"[35] (the most perfect instrument the devil ever designed, and has for the purposes of deceiving men). In "Los ojos verdes" the woman kills the youth Fernando, while in "Theros" she abandons her lover, but in both cases she is an agent who harms the hapless protagonists, the one by causing the loss of his life, the other by making him lose his peace of mind. Thus, these ladies pertain to that "auténtico arsenal de variedades de los arquetipos femeninos, de estas mujeres cuyo principal don es el de encantar, el de hechizar, el de seducir, el de reducir"[36] (veritable army of feminine archetypes, of these women whose chief talent is to charm, enchant, seduce and reduce) their partners. As for these beings themselves, they admit

that they are not mortals: "Soy la sazón univeral"[37] (I am the vernal equinox) reveals the lady in "Theros," and as she disappears on September 22nd, the last day of summer, one knows that she represents this season, as an ancient pagan goddess of the sun. In the same way, the lady of the green eyes is not an ordinary woman, but rather "espíritu puro"[38] (pure spirit). It is of interest to note that the ladies' lovers are men who distinguish themselves as being superior to the rest of the mortal masses. The water nymph confides in Fernando "soy una mujer digna para ti, que eres superior a los demás hombres"[39] (I'm a woman who is worthy of you, as you are far above other men). The ladies can perhaps be explained away as a form of madness or an hallucination, because no one sees them except for the protagonists. The "Theros" narrator describes his lady as "conservando siempre aquel natural fantástico que la hacía invisible para todos excepto para mí"[40] (always maintaining that fantastic nature which made her invisible to all but me). Fernando adds "que al parecer sólo para mí existe, pues nadie la conoce, ni la ha visto, ni puede darme razón de ella"[41] (that apparently she only exists for my benefit since no one knows her, nor have they seen her, nor can they tell me anything about her).

At this point, it should be mentioned that one of the major differences between "Los ojos verdes" and "Theros" is the moral-didactic tone of the former Becquerian work. "Theros," rather than dealing with any overtly moral teaching, seems more intent upon playing with the fantastic, hence with its humour making the reader laugh. "Los ojos verdes," on the other hand, instead of provoking laughter, contains mystical elements. Fernando's love of a spirit is taboo according to local superstition, and any transgression of this law will mean the destruction of the individual offender.[42] Fernando's servant Íñigo warns his master that "el que osa enturbiar su corriente (de la fuente del espíritu), paga caro su atrevimiento"[43] (he who dares disturb its current (that of the spirit's fountain) will pay dearly for his insolence). But typically the youth pays him no heed and dies for his sin. On the other hand, the hero in "Theros" does not seek forbidden love with the goddess, but rather wishes to flee her presence and even goes so far as to advise her on how she should behave. "Señora, tenga la bondad de vestirse . . . Ese traje, mejor dicho esa desnudez no es lo más a propósito para viajar dentro de un coche

de ferrocarril"[44] (Madame, please have the decency to clothe yourself . . . that suit, rather your nudity is not the most suitable attire for travel inside a train compartment) he admonishes her and later, "Señora . . . Es muy doloroso para un caballero huir . . . pero . . ." (Madame . . . It is very embarrassing for a gentleman to flee . . . but . . .) he confesses his discomfort to the rather forward young lady. Fernando dies for having believed himself to be above superstition and is thus punished for his impatient pride. But the "Theros" narrator suffers nothing but the sad loss of his beloved. "Theros" is humorous in its style with passages such as "mi compañera . . . profundamente aficionada a mi persona, no quiso dejarme, y me siguió . . . y se aposentó en mi mismo cuarto"[45] (my companion . . . deeply attached to my person, refused to leave me, and followed me . . . and installed herself in my personal quarters). "Los ojos verdes" is more mystical, communicating with Nature: "En las plateadas hojas de los álamos . . . en las ondas del agua, parece que nos hablan los invisibles espíritus de la Naturaleza, que reconocen un hermano en el inmortal espíritu del hombre"[46] (In the silvery leaves of the poplars . . . in the watery waves, it seems as though Nature's invisible spirits are speaking to us, that they recognize a brother in the immortal spirit of man).

The "Theros" lady is a rogue, wreaking havoc on Madrid's weather, causing storms, etc.; "No he visto pánico tan horrible . . . (dice el narrador) y cómo reía la pícara al ver tales estragos!"[47] (I never saw such terrible panic . . . (says the narrator) and how the little devil was laughing at seeing the results of her mischief-making!) Nevertheless, in "Los ojos verdes," apart from that which we suspect happens to Fernando, there is nothing which tells us what the lady of the green eyes is really like. We only know of her through the mouths of other characters in the story who speak of traditional legend and superstition. Fernando, in his frustrated attempts to procure more information demands of the nymph "¿querrá que dé crédito a lo que de ti me han dicho?"[48] (do you wish me to believe that which they've told me about you?) In "Theros" the story seems more realistic, since the narrator is the protagonist himself, a live firsthand witness of the account to follow: "Vi a una mujer, . . . ¿por dónde había entrado. . . ? He aquí un punto difícil de aclarar"[49] (I saw a woman, . . . how did she get in. . . ? That's a difficult question

to answer) muses "Theros' " narrator in the first person, talking to his listening readers. "Los ojos verdes" vacillates in its narration between that of playing a game and adopting the more serious tone of the romantic. At first we are told "Hoy, que me ha presentado ocasión . . . he dejado a capricho volar la pluma"[50] (Today, since the occasion has so presented itself to me . . . I have allowed my pen to fly to wherever it so wishes to go) only to be transported via a third person to the past, "En aquel momento se reunía a la comitiva el héroe de la fiesta, Fernando de Argensola . . ."[51] (At that moment long ago the retinue was joined by the hero of the festivities, Fernando of Argensola). As opposed to Bécquer's romantic style which attempts to convert a fountain in the woods into a precious universe where every plant and drop of water suddenly breathes with a spiritual life of its own, Galdós in his realism speaks to us as if to say in a more down-to-earth fashion, "well you're not going to believe this, I myself have doubts about the matter, but anyway . . ." before steeping us into the story at hand.

Nevertheless, even if by somewhat different routes, both Bécquer and Galdós present us with this mysterious lady, a popular element in the fantastic short story. This lady is ideal, an ideal woman because she is unattainable, an impossible dream. She functions as a sort of pole of attraction or lightning rod for the protagonist's feelings, his anxieties, his aspirations. The pagan world invades the real one, in that mythological but not necessarily Christian entities reveal themselves suggesting a parallel but contiguous existence to our world, made known by the apparition of ambiguous or inexplicable beings.

The spatial plane of the fantastic short story is relatively unimportant as compared to the human feelings which are involved with one's encounter with the fantastic element, in this case a mysterious lady. The reader is forced out of routine life and experiences the aesthetic pleasure of fear in confronting the unknown. For this reason there is continued popularity in fantastic works of a more all-encompassing nature as seen in Hitchcock and in Spielberg for example, or in programs such as *Night Gallery, The Twilight Zone* or *The Next Step Beyond*, whose plots often resemble works like the stories dealt with in this essay. But according to Borges, the source of the fantastic's appeal is to be found within us. Stories such as "Los ojos verdes" and "Theros" are a symbol of us, our lives, the universe, the insta-

bility and the mystery of our existence. The mysterious lady belongs to a type of literature which leads us to the philosophy that life is a dream and that only appearances really exist. It forces us to ask not only purely literary questions but rather things that we have all at some time felt or will perhaps feel in the future. Is the universe, our life, part of that which is real or is everything the product of a huge imagination or the fantastic? Perhaps there is some kind of fusion of life and death where real and irreal planes disappear, where there arises the occurrence of premonitions in dreams and inexplicable coincidences which throw us into constant doubt. Would this not perhaps be the key to the fascination which the fantastic holds throughout the centuries? It leads to doubts and as Descartes pointed out, doubt is the basis of our existence; dare we say that whosoever thinks of the fantastic or doubts it is himself really existing, for there is some merit in the words *Dubito, cogito, ergo sum*!

NOTES

1 Peter Penzoldt, *The Supernatural in Fiction* (New York: Humanities, 1963) 43.
2 Jorge Luis Borges, *La literatura fantástica* (Buenos Aires: Olivetti, 1967) 9.
3 Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.
4 Rafael Llopis, *Esbozo de una historia natural de los cuentos de miedo* (Madrid: Júcar, 1974) 33.
5 Tobin Siebers, *The Romantic Fantastic* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1984) 26.
6 Llopis 33.
7 Henry Charles Turk, *German Romanticism in Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer's Short Stories* (Lawrence: Allen, 1959) 21.
8 Llopis 45.
9 Emilio Carilla, *El cuento fantástico* (Buenos Aires: Nuevo, 1969) 20.
10 Siebers 32–34.
11 Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer, "Los ojos verdes," *Obras completas*, ed. J. García Pérez (Barcelona: Ferma, 1967) 44.
12 Benito Pérez Galdós, "Theros," *Obras completas*, vol. 6, ed. Federico Sainz de Robles (Madrid: Aguilar, 1942) 436.
13 Bécquer 45.
14 Galdós 434.
15 Antonio Risco, *Literatura y fantasía* (Madrid: Taurus, 1982) 65.
16 Risco 14.
17 Risco 132.
18 Bécquer 42.
19 Galdós 431.

20 Risco 67.
21 Bécquer 42.
22 Galdós 431.
23 Galdós 432.
24 Bécquer 38.
25 Bécquer 42.
26 Galdós 432.
27 Bécquer 43.
28 Bécquer 42.
29 Galdós 432.
30 Bécquer 44.
31 Galdós 432.
32 Bécquer 42.
33 Bécquer 39.
34 Francisco J. Flores Arroyuelo, *El diablo en España* (Madrid: Alianza, 1985) 118.
35 Arroyuelo 118.
36 Arroyuelo 136.
37 Galdós 434.
38 Bécquer 41.
39 Bécquer 45.
40 Galdós 435.
41 Bécquer 41.
42 Joan Estruch, *Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer, relatos de terror y de misterio* (Barcelona: Fontamara, 1982) 16.
43 Bécquer 39.
44 Galdós 432.
45 Galdós 435.
46 Bécquer 42.
47 Galdós 435.
48 Bécquer 44.
49 Galdós 432.
50 Bécquer 38.
51 Bécquer 39.

Dale V. Kirk

Autobiographical Content and Ideological Commitment in Sender's *Contraataque*: A Work of Propaganda from the Spanish Civil War

Among the many books inspired by the Spanish Civil War, *Contraataque*, by Ramón J. Sender, allows us the opportunity of sharing the experiences of a young participant in this tremendous conflict. Together with his countrymen, Sender suddenly finds himself immersed in a cataclysmic event whose repercussions will tear apart his homeland and shatter millions of lives.

Contraataque attempts to convince the world[1] of the great danger posed by the Fascist threat while offering the contrasting model of the Communists who, for the author, embody the hope for a more just society. According to Sender, his own life-long concern for the problem of social injustice begins at the tender age of seven; as a child he witnesses the final agony of an expiring labourer who, after a life of arduous toil, dies in the most abject misery.[2] Greatly affected by the cruelty of such an injustice, the young Sender is thus set upon the path which will bring him to denounce injustice both in his books and throughout a journalistic career devoted to serving the people.

Contraataque exhibits a number of contradictions which are worthy of examination. Although the author's intention is to present a realistic portrayal of events, there are passages which are undeniably the product of pure invention. As he enumerates the forces comprising the ranks of the enemy, Sender includes the Church while at the same time manifesting an ambiguity of attitude towards this Institution, doubtless the result of his inability to shake off the lasting effects of his upbringing.

This work supposedly documents several crucial months in Sender's life, but to what extent is *Contraataque* truly autobiographical

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and to what degree are the facts distorted in order to enhance the performance of the author/protagonist? Indeed, it is virtually impossible to overlook the arrogance of a man who makes no mention of his own fears yet dwells on the fear shown by others.

Given that *Contraataque* offers many points of interest, it is rather disconcerting that so many critics have neglected the task of doing an in-depth study of this book. It generally receives no more than a brief mention, a few paltry lines dismissing it as mere propaganda. No doubt it came as a disappointment to those who had found themselves in awe of the potential displayed by the young author of *Imán* (1930), *Siete domingos rojos* (1932) and *Viaje a la aldea del crimen* (1934). In any case, there is a persistent tendency to not recognize the significance of this work's ideological and biographical content; perhaps this is an unconscious reproach aimed at an author who might have given the world "*the* great book of the Spanish Civil War."[3]

Contraataque is actually a curious hybrid of several genres, and perhaps for this reason it has been hung with a variety of labels: "report," "chronicle," "testimonial," "historical document," etc. Most critics, with little or no explanation, tend to classify it as a "testimonial" and, above all, as "propaganda." King, in his study of Sender, includes *Contraataque* among the author's journalistic works, claiming that it is "a personal narrative of the author's experiences and observations as an active combatant with the Loyalist forces."[4] Carrasquer describes it as "destined to serve as propaganda abroad,"[5] although Rodríguez Monegal assures us that it has been written "for the very explicit purpose of boosting the morale of the Republicans."[6] For Ponce de León it is "simply a work of propaganda destined for the foreign market,"[7] an opinion shared by Nonoyama, who adds that "there are short, personal narrations, episodes of the war lived by Sender himself, with reflections generally of a moral nature."[8] Only Max Aub believes that *Contraataque* is a "novel," though "with neither soul nor spirit."[9] In his brief Introduction to the English version, *The War in Spain* (July, 1937), P. Chalmers Mitchell, a translator and friend of Sender's, displays his own propensity to create propaganda when he summarizes the book in the following manner:

His is a personal narrative of what he saw with his own eyes. It is the work of a great writer, a poet and psychologist who is a man of extreme

personal bravery and a passionate admirer of a people fighting for bread and freedom and in defence of the liberties they thought they had won by peaceful and democratic means.[10]

Finally, Rafael Bosch, evidently impervious to the book's emotional outbursts, demonstrates that it is really a question of one's point of view when he informs us that "During the war, Sender publishes his thoughtful and moderate *Contraataque*."[11]

Indeed, *Contraataque* is difficult to classify. Sender, novelist and journalist, allows these two occupations, related yet distinct, to merge, situating him in a literary limbo "between aesthetics and History."[12] On one hand he tries to create an atmosphere of reality by adopting the tone of a "report" but, at the same time, he does not renounce the use of novelistic techniques such as the introduction of letters about whose existence the reader really must entertain serious doubts.[13] Given this ambiguity, Ressot is quite correct in asserting that *Contraataque* is "novelistic material in the rough...direct testimony, in which the story's protagonist is identified with the author himself."[14]

Contraataque is undoubtedly a work of propaganda, but it must be pointed out that the terms "propaganda" and "truth" are not mutually exclusive. Here, the term "propaganda" is not used with the pejorative connotation which it has been unable to shake off since its extensive use during the World Wars.[15] The Royal Academy of Spanish Language offers the following definition: "action or effect of making something known with the objective of attracting followers or buyers."[16]

The general consensus with regard to the appropriateness of the qualifying term "propagandistic" suggests an implicit recognition of the notion that the narrator and Sender share a single point of view and that they are, in effect, one and the same person. Given the intention of the author, there is no room for divergent opinions in *Contraataque*; consequently, using an autobiographical base as a starting point, it is Sender himself, as he relates his experiences, who becomes the advocate of the message he wishes to propagate. One can better appreciate the extent of the autobiographical content of *Contraataque* if one considers the author's clarification with regard to the book's title: *"Contraataque"* (or *Counter-attack*), "referred not so much to a military operation as to a personal reaction to

attacks which had also been of a personal nature."[17]

For some critics, *Contraataque* fails to satisfy the prerequisites (which are highly debatable) necessary to be admitted to the genre of the autobiography; nevertheless, due to its obvious autobiographical content, neither may it be entirely excluded.

In 1968, Stephen Shapiro felt that the autobiography still deserved the designation of "dark continent of literature,"[18] but during the last two decades it seems to have emerged from this obscurity. At this point there is still much to be debated and, needless to say, it is not the purpose of this study to examine the numerous arguments presented in the ongoing quest for a definitive definition of this genre. In the past, critics generally agreed that an autobiographical work "had to offer an at least ostensibly factual account of the writer's own life—that it had to be, in short, a self-written biography."[19] Nowadays, however, the autobiography, "the most elusive of literary documents,"[20] embraces, according to many experts, anything ranging from the prefaces of Henry James' books to poetry. James Olney tells us that Paul Valéry "claimed that *La Jeune Parque*, the longest of his poems and one of the most obscure, was his true autobiography and I, for one, believe him."[21] Poetry and prefaces would seem to be rather remote from the simple definition which is popularly accepted: "The life story of a person written by himself,"[22] but because they reveal something of the author's inner life, of his thoughts and personal philosophy and feelings, they *are* indisputably autobiographical in nature. In this sense *Contraataque*, to a certain degree, is also autobiographical.

This book, so difficult to define, is a product of the terrible crisis brought on by the war and reflects the personal sociopolitical views of the author, who consistently claims to act independently of any political entity. When Sender writes *Contraataque*, he expresses what for him, at that moment, constitutes the absolute truth. At times, the dogged adherence to this personal truth detracts from the book's powers of persuasion, causing it to provoke mixed reactions. Nevertheless, in spite of its defects, *Contraataque* deserves our attention for so clearly manifesting one of our author's most significant facets—his sincere and irrevocable commitment to "the people," to the proletariat, whose welfare is his greatest concern.

A survey of Sender's early years reveals the making of "a man

of action," always prepared to run risks for his ideals. He never fails to throw himself into the thick of events while simultaneously remaining on the periphery of all that is strictly political, and he never ceases to reiterate his independence: "I do not belong, nor have I ever belonged, to any political organization."[23] Víctor Fuentes takes note of this attitude, so typical of our author:

> The novels of Sender, who, between 1929 and 1933, militates in the cause of anarchosyndicalism, identify with this group's ideological creed while adopting a critical attitude of pessimistic reserve with regard to anarchistic strategy and tactics.[24]

The same scholar points out that in Sender's novel *O. P.* (*Orden Público*), a jailed anarchist leader, known as "el Cojo," mutters to himself: "my companions will take me for a Communist. . . . But I think one must rationalize anarquism, free it from dogma and give it a flexibility which will augment its effectiveness."[25] This character is undoubtedly spokesman for Sender's own position since the author's true commitment lies in the ideal and ultimate goal of social justice, always portrayed as a far worthier objective than committing oneself body and soul to any political organization.

In *Contraataque* too, one can see how the narrator insists upon his non-affiliation and, with this in mind, at a moment when the various components of the patrol come together, he observes that "we were a living proof of the effectiveness of the Popular Front. A young Galician represented the Left republicans, four were communists, two were anarcho-syndicalists, and I and the driver . . . belonged to none of the parties."[26]

Perhaps, when considering his options, Sender had drawn the same conclusion as Raymond Williams:

> what is the point, at any time, of a demand for commitment? Is not this always a demand to write from one point of view rather than from others, and in this sense a demand for affiliation, conversion, or even obedience? . . . Commitment, if it means anything, is surely conscious, active, and open: a *choice* of position.[27]

Sender abstains from carrying the card of any party, hoping thus to avoid the danger of having his autonomy annulled by a clear alignment.

Despite his reticence with regard to the question of political af-

filiation, Sender, from his days as a young collaborator on leftist newspapers, manifests a keen interest in the cause of social justice and tirelessly pursues this ideal. As King writes: "Sender's quixotic opposition to oppression, wherever he finds it, is a constant in all of his life and work."[28] Sender himself admits that "a writer cannot ignore social reality. To remain insensitive to social problems in our times one must be either a rogue or an imbecile."[29]

Sender's attitude, far from being unusual, is typical of a time (the thirties) when many writers, in search of a more just society, find themselves drawn to an ideology which appears to provide solutions. Glicksberg explains that "many intellectuals were attracted to Marxism because of its humanistic content, its moral appeal, its vision of a just society in which men were no longer objects to be exploited."[30]

When Sender's novel *Imán* is translated and published in Russia in 1932, he is apparently pleased that in Moscow he is considered a "proletarian writer." Notwithstanding the compliment, however, our author wishes to stress the difference between proletarian literature within the Soviet Union and beyond its borders. He distinguishes between what it ought to be and what it necessarily *is* in Spain:

> The basis of a dawning, blossoming proletarian art must be the song in praise of work which, once the bourgeoisie has been defeated, will redeem us all. . . . In countries like ours, proletarian art can only allow itself to describe the struggle against capitalism and—this it can do—contribute to the fusion of the new revolutionary tendencies, of the . . . groups, . . . let us unite in the realm of emotion and sensitivity. Outside of Russia this is all that we can do.[31]

In this way Sender establishes his independence with regard to his Russian colleagues and explains what he sees as his possible contribution to the fight for the just cause. But despite this declaration of independence, Sender, like other intellectuals of his day, puts his faith in the Soviet Union, experiencing a sense of solidarity with its people. As Collard notes, "when Ramón Sender, in the thirties, speaks of literature, or of culture in general, the terms 'revolution,' 'reaction,' 'proletariat,' or 'bourgeoisie' are never far off."[32] It is in May of 1936, scant months before the outbreak of war, that Sender, in his article "El novelista y las masas," celebrates the fact that the bourgeoisie chooses to identify the so-called "social" literature with revolution, a circumstance which leads him to counter that a liter-

ature produced by a bourgeois society (read "sick" society) can be nothing other than "*anti*-social."[33]

Sender's obsessive attachment to all that is Soviet is evident long before the appearance of *Contraataque*. This enthusiasm is already at a high pitch in *Madrid-Moscú: Notas de Viaje* (1934) in which the author also exhibits an unfortunate tendency to assume the air of "a humble man," as if he wished to experience the novelty of playing at being just another proletarian. In spite of the fact that the Soviet Union has a system which recognizes (and assuredly recognized at that time) that a writer, like a farmer or a soldier, has his own way of serving the state, Sender finds it necessary to beg pardon for his profession, probably because subconsciously he is incapable of suppressing an innate sense of superiority. In the most absurd manner he explains that

> I can assure you that I am no man of letters, that I write books and articles because I do not know how to mix lime and sand, or cure leather, or drive a street-car, or even how to efficiently do sums in an office. Because it's all I know how to do to make a living.[34]

In spite of these words, we do not see our proud Aragonese abandoning his writing to sign up for training in some humble occupation and it is quite possible that this obvious desire to "belong" does nothing more than sharpen the skepticism felt by front line Communists who already have ample reason to suspect the fervour (too often ephemeral) of the intellectuals. The fact is, Communist leaders did entertain serious reservations regarding their intellectual "comrades" because they well knew, from experience, that their individualism was wont to be incorrigible.[35] According to Glicksberg:

> They were held up to ridicule and derision as flighty, unstable, irresolute . . . Lenin was cognizant of the negative traits of the intellectuals: their anarchistic leanings, their unwillingness to follow directives. When Stalin gained control of the Communist movement, the campaign against the feckless intellectual was intensified.[36]

Even if one takes into account the historical moment and the targeted reading public of *Madrid-Moscú*, it becomes evident that any reader of even average intelligence must have suppressed a smile as he read the passage in which Sender laments being nothing more than a writer. But it is above all the non-Soviets, the non-partisans, those

who open the book expecting that a serious attempt will be made to sway them—in short, it is all of these who cannot have helped but perceive the condescension implicit in this apparent affectation on Sender's part. And we say "apparent" because it is likely that Sender does neither more nor less than express the truth as he sees it at that stage of his ideological evolution. In reality, Sender never does betray his commitment to "the people" because he never turns against the proletariat; on the contrary, years later he can only pity them.[37] What he does vehemently reject is the *modus operandi* of the Soviet leadership.

Madrid-Moscú does no more than pave the way for *Contraataque*, a work in which we observe the same unbridled admiration for everything Soviet. A typical example from the chapter "Aeroplanes over Madrid" follows:

> but there is one country in the world, a great country, whose engineers think about more than simply earning a living; whose proletariat, when they work, know that they are helping to liberate the world, not with dreams, but through the tenacity of their efforts and through their intelligence.[38]

In the first place, for the contemporary reader, emotionally remote from the historical context of *Contraataque*, it is difficult that such passages be seen as anything but utterly naïve, particularly if one recalls that Sender, at this time, was no inexperienced, impressionable youngster but, on the contrary, a mature man of thirty-six. If one accepts that the book's principal objective is to attract sympathizers from abroad and boost the morale of his comrades-in-arms, then Sender fails on both counts. It is more probable that these goals are actually jeopardized by his constant praise of the Soviets and their State, a less than propitious tactic for cultivating support in the West and lifting the spirits of the diverse anarchist factions. It may be taken for granted that readers outside of Spain were more than willing to hear any vituperation of the Fascists, but the exaggerated praise lavished on the Communists constitutes an intrusive element. Worse yet, and just as the author had foreseen, the book provokes "a furious reaction among the anarchists due to the strong sympathy shown . . . towards the Communists."[39]

Why, then, does Sender persist in expressing himself with a frankness which is frequently counterproductive? His stubborn individ-

ualism no doubt impels him to speak out. Sender cares little if he angers his anarchist companions, for his commitment is to the people, to the urgent necessity of seeing them saved from the Fascist threat and able to start along the road to a more just society. For this reason he does not hesitate to criticise the deficiencies of his own forces, particularly the frustrating lack of coherent command which contrasts so unfavourably with the admirable orderliness displayed by the Soviets, representatives of that "great country" which will help to liberate the world, including Spain.

Faced with this dilemma of the troops' lack of direction, Sender allows his frustration to overwhelm any pretext of diplomacy when dealing with the commanding officers. He shares the anguish of those who "tear their hair"[40] in exasperation, a circumstance which leads him to proclaim the truth of the situation at the front:

> And the command? Where was the command? Why were we there without leaders? . . . the accomplished fact could only be the victory of Franco. In the enemy camp not a soldier moved except under the direct orders of his officers. All that we had to oppose to that discipline were the enthusiasm and free initiative of the working mason, the business clerk, the labourer and the out-of-work journeyman, . . . 'What are we doing now? Are we advancing? Are we to stay here . . . ? Who can tell us if this line is the best?'[41]

An examination of the strategies followed during the Civil War confirms the gravity of this problem: "For the Left, with no political, economic, diplomatic, tactical or strategic plan, the Civil War was practically lost from the outset. The inactivity of the Left gave the generals in revolt . . . the time needed to pull together their fronts."[42]

This chaotic and indeed dangerous situation partially explains why Sender consistently stresses the efficiency of the Communist forces—an example deserving of emulation if the war is to be won. Set upon following the dictates of his own conscience, Sender disregards a fundamental precept of propaganda theory—*suppressio veri*[43]—by revealing what must have been demoralizing for his camp and heartening for the enemy. With regard to his efforts to garner support from abroad, it is quite possible that such candid admissions inspired serious doubts as to the wisdom of subscribing to what already appeared to be a lost cause. Despite the risk of adverse repercussions, Sender firmly believes that his first duty is to point out what is hindering

his side's capacity to resist the enemy.

But the Fascists and a deficient command are not the only obstacles in the path to victory. In *Contraataque*, Sender does not overlook any component of the enemy forces; we read that "We had not been considering the Church as a serious enemy. That was one of our mistakes."[44] Sender, who as a youngster had attended a school run by friars, is convinced that a religious education, from the first moment, has a pernicious influence on the bourgeoisie, instilling a "cynical class prejudice which is the chief support of fascism."[45] To bolster this assertion and stimulate anticlerical sentiment, the author reproduces a supposed dialogue between a priest and a seven-year-old boy, overheard "by chance":

> 'Are the brains of sparrows eaten?'
> The Priest answered without thinking:
> 'Yes.'
> 'And ducks' brains?'
> 'Of course.'
> 'And those of lambs?'
> 'Certainly.'
> The little boy stopped for a moment and then asked more anxiously:
> 'And human brains?'
> The priest started.
> 'What nonsense!'
> But the boy hurried to explain—
> 'I don't mean the brains of people like you or papa,' and added with contempt, pointing his slim finger to a poorly dressed workman on a bench in the sun: 'I meant the brains of that sort.'
> The priest began to laugh and patted the boy's cheek without answering.[46]

By offering this verbal vignette, Sender hopes to illustrate how the clergy carries out a systematic brainwashing of the new generation. This will not be the only occasion on which we encounter a conversation repeated *verbatim*; throughout *Contraataque* Sender makes use of his talents as a novelist to recreate the past, or a hypothetical past, in order to further his arguments. Although this practice would appear to be a sacrifice of the desired verisimilitude, Sender does not stray far from the essence of reality when he utilizes truly autobiographical material, his first-hand memories. As Gusdorf notes: "Experience is the prime matter of all creation, which is an elaboration of elements borrowed from lived reality. One can only exercise

imagination by starting from what one is."[47]

When a militiaman is stabbed to death for the folly of having trusted a priest, Sender uses this death to return to the same anticlerical theme, although in this case his attack acquires a jocular tone. A rather eccentric bumpkin remarks that "Priests . . . are inhuman by nature. They begin by not marrying, which is not decent . . . The priest is the only animal who sings when one of his kind dies."[48]

On another occasion we are entertained by the classic stereotype of the lascivious man of the cloth: "The priest was almost a monster of commonness, and as I watched the 'niece' [lover] I was moved once more by the capacity of women for love and pity. For she was rather nice. He was scarcely human."[49] Although the lovelorn priest is suspected of having taken a shot at Sender and his men, the quite viable option of executing him is not even mentioned. Far from being portrayed as a menace to be eradicated, the priest is depicted as an absurd figure, rendered pathetic by his terror.

The author is well aware that it is difficult for the people to turn against the clergy because the Church has always played such a major role in their lives. By Sender's own treatment of this segment of society we are led to suspect that even he, having been brought up in a typical bourgeois family, experiences difficulty in overcoming his own social conditioning. Projecting his own view of the situation, Sender assures us that "there was no risk involved in the mere fact of being a priest,"[50] but the truth is that the Church, a very visible and defenseless institution, was an easy target for rampant hostility.[51] There is also extensive documentation of the atrocities committed against men and women in the service of the Church, including the torture and execution of priests and the rape and murder of nuns.[52]

On the other hand, although the clergy rarely pull the trigger personally, it cannot be denied that their reputation as traitors and informers has a certain basis in truth.[53] Nevertheless, Sender will reserve the most acid of his venom for Fascist military figures. Unlike certain extremist elements of his band, Sender wishes not to exterminate but to discredit the Church and to ridicule its representatives. The nature of his attacks, however, would indicate a moderate attitude.

In his continued efforts (of varying success) to sustain a realistic atmosphere, Sender endeavours to limit himself to the description of

plausible events and characters and, consequently, throughout *Contraataque* we encounter "types" which, if they never lived as individuals (something only the author knows), at least must have existed in the generic sense. Sender, in his role as "witness," does not attempt to delve into their psychology, letting each individual's behaviour and comments speak for themselves. There is, for example, Turkovich, who "had rather a mystic belief in man,"[54] and Vicente, "a comrade who never hid his fears, but all the same went everywhere and did his duty like anyone else."[55] The narrator also strikes up a friendship with Lieutenant P. of Artillery, a realistic young man: " 'That battalion of steel,' he said, but without any venom, 'would be better called a battalion of straw.' "[56] But, in fact, our acquaintance with these individuals remains superficial, for they are akin to what E. M. Forster denominates "flat" characters[57] ; it is up to the reader to "round them out" according to his familiarity with similar types. This is truly a disadvantage from the propagandistic point of view because the absence of a sense of affinity with these characters leaves us frankly indifferent to their fate.

In contrast, when it comes to impressing the reader with an image of what the enemy represents, Sender gives free rein to his imagination. There is an original use of dialogue between the city of Madrid, victim of an air raid, and "talking" aircraft, war machines that act as mouthpieces for Fascist savagery. We read that

> The Heinckel and Junker and the Capronni aeroplanes spoke to sharply listening ears from the blue skies of Madrid . . . 'Kill children? Yes . . . It amuses us to see the dead children and their fathers putting down their rifles to weep over them . . . we amuse ourselves over the sorrow of others . . . The few who survive shall obey us . . . Ha! Ha! Ha![58]

But Madrid offers a different kind of message:

> We lack that will to power but have the will to live together in love and peace and liberty . . . We ourselves believe in the creative activity of the sentiment of liberty . . . and we also believe in the grandeur of human dignity.[59]

This strong image of the opponents' respective attitudes is very effective, for it touches the reader on an emotional level, inspiring indignation and compassion. This technique is in keeping with Ellul's claim that propaganda "cannot operate with simple arguments

pro and con. It must . . . create an image to act as a motive force. This image must have an emotional character."[60]

Obviously Sender did not elaborate such a polished dialogue as he witnessed the attack on Madrid; long after the fact, he reflects, creates and presents these hypothetical speeches, reproducing not the reality of the bombing but rather his own interpretation of two ideologies which are head to head in a struggle for victory.

The entire narration is strewn with judgments of situations and people in such a way as to keep the reader under a continual barrage. The author launches a series of blistering attacks on major figures of the opposing camp, such as: "Thinking about Mola, I said to myself: 'He may have a great military reputation, and yet be a fool' "[61] or "there is something not only vile but also grotesque; the figure of Franco, a soldier of moderate ability, ambitious and fantastic, as stupid as his brother Ramón."[62]

It is interesting to note the marked contrast between the dispassionate presentation of the facts and the explicitly propagandistic moments which irrupt into the narrative stream. These brief halts are used to bombard the reader with strong messages alternating between diatribes against the enemy and praise for his own band. Let us see an example which contrasts the two sides: "our republican good faith, our clean morality and our respect for the law would have to face the lawlessness, insolence, cynicism and gangsterism of our enemies."[63]

In spite of its obvious subjectivity, *Contraataque* is of considerable importance as an historical document since it offers the researcher a well-defined point of view, representative of a certain component of the anti-national forces. With regard to the author, the subjectivity patent in this work has its own value in that it provides us with autobiographical information. Rockwell points out that "the bias is part of the information. If we know what the writer's bias is, we can place him in relation to the theme he has chosen, whatever he himself claims."[64] Consequently, this lack of objectivity or exactitude does not jeopardize our objective of gaining greater insight into the Sender of 1937; on the contrary, it permits us to glimpse, indirectly, a particular facet of his inner life. In the case of *Contraataque*, the Sender in the throes of a full-blown propagandistic frenzy, although unpleasant, is quite fascinating, affording us a rare

look into his psyche which, to use the curious analogy of Stephen Spender, is rather like seeing "the inside . . . of a sofa,"[65] i.e., what we would never ordinarily see.

When it comes to telling us something of his personal life, Sender appears to feel inhibited, perhaps because, as he confesses to the reader, "We Spaniards have an exaggerated sentimental modesty."[66] He allows us to share his thoughts on death or fear, but these constitute just one aspect of his inner life. Only in the last few pages of *Contraataque* will he cease trying to avoid what touches him most closely. Although Sender may consciously attempt to exclude the personal, he does recognize that it is virtually impossible to prevent certain elements of his existence from manifesting themselves in his work:

> Always in my writing I have avoided autobiography. We put too much of ourselves in our books to give the readers anecdotes as well. But perhaps this is not right in my case . . . In defending popular liberties, I have given so much that I have no right to withhold the truth however cruel it is.[67]

In *Contraataque*, this attitude determines the manner in which the author communicates his most painful experiences. Due to his reticence, Sender relegates his propaganda mission to the background by choosing not to exploit the emotional potential of his own personal suffering. It is a decision which must have been particularly disappointing to the foreign reading public, hungry for sensationalist details and always eager to pry into an open wound. This omission, however, is in keeping with the spirit of a book which seeks to portray the heroism and sacrifice of a people (not of an individual) in their struggle against "the Beast."[68] Given the enormous loss of life occasioned by the war—"A million dead."[69]—Sender no doubt considered it incongruous to dwell on his personal anguish. In reference to the deaths of his wife, Amparo, and brother, Manuel (mayor of Huesca), Sender declares: "I have not the right to be silent about anything,"[70] but he prefers to relate these tragedies in "the fewest possible words; I shall give only the bare facts."[71] With regard to these anecdotes—"only two like thousands of others"[72]—P. Chalmers Mitchell, who prepared the Introduction to the English version of *Contraataque*, explains that the author

> has begged me not to add a word of comment . . . He was very unwilling even to mention his personal tragedy, but he came to think of it as his

duty, in a few reticent lines to open the sorrow of his own heart as an instance of the sadistic cruelties brought on Spain by the rebels.[73]

Sender, in accordance with his temperament, limits himself to a show of solidarity with those who have suffered as he has, offering his case as just one more, representative of the many which will remain anonymous. After giving a brief sketch of the circumstances surrounding his wife's arrest, he says simply: "A month after her arrest, they brought a priest who confessed her, and then took her to the cemetery, where they shot her . . . "[74] For the sensitive reader, this sentence, for its very brevity, holds a more profound significance than would have been possible in a more extensive explanation. Nevertheless, from the pragmatic point of view (that which scrutinizes the nature of the reading public), the reserve shown by the author detracts from *Contraataque*'s impact as a work of propaganda. By giving priority to his need to silence what is most intimate, Sender loses his last opportunity to win public sympathy and make gains on the propagandistic front. Due to the impersonal tone which prevails throughout the book, the news of Amparo's death provokes little reaction in the reader; "it is nothing more than an additional piece of information."[75] And this is perhaps the book's greatest weakness, for, as Ressot observes, "Sender's narrative does not move us. Although the reader may theoretically be in direct contact with reality, he experiences no feeling of solidarity; on the contrary, he remains on the sidelines of the story."[76]

In spite of this reticence, there are moments in which the narrator shares intimate details as to how the war is affecting him. On one occasion we are told: "Between our position and the first houses I saw more than fifteen abandoned human bodies. . . . I saw all that with an indifference so great that it surprised even me, and I kept on my way down."[77] Although he finds it odd that such a macabre scene should make so little impression on him, he is not yet so saturated with horror that he fails to notice how his sensitivity is becoming numbed. This brief observation suffices to illustrate a singular consequence of the war: the fact that daily exposure to death eventually brings about a psychological change. This phenomenon also takes place in our author; he feels himself slipping towards the emotional abyss of those who wear" 'the front line look.' "[78]

Among the author's introspective digressions there is one which

reveals an internal struggle to resist the pull of his intellectual formation. Evidently Sender wishes to cleanse himself of his spiritual contamination and start anew:

> Although I am nothing if not an intellectual, I have tried to forget my reading and the effects of culture, and sometimes have managed to reach a point of perfection which in my view is that in which my thought is influenced by nothing but instinctive, natural and simple facts; but intellectual theories often pursue me, and when they take me by surprise, try to impose themselves on material reality and undo it.[79]

In spite of this clear desire to act only in accordance with his "unadulterated" impulses, Sender obviously has his own doubts with respect to the probability of being able to shed his sociocultural baggage.

When Sender sets out to write *Contraataque* he has no interest in documenting his participation in the war for the purpose of preparing an autobiography. The autobiographical content is merely a byproduct of his true intent—the creation of a work of propaganda which, on a personal level, also permits the author to unburden himself of his experiences by sharing them. Ernst Fischer writes of this impulse which compels an individual to find his place in the world, to attain a sense of fulfillment, "to unite his limited 'I' in art with a communal existence; to make his individuality *social*."[80]

Although *Contraataque* does not pretend to be even a partial autobiography, Sender, as he recounts his experiences, inevitably partakes of certain characteristics which are typical of the autobiographer, such as that of distorting reality in order to present a more flattering image of oneself. This phenomenon need not be premeditated; as Maurois explains:

> L'autobiographie ne déforme pas seulement par oubli. Elle déforme aussi par l'effet de cette naturelle censure qu'exerce l'esprit sur ce qui est désagréable. . . . Nous nous souvenons des faits quand nous désirons nous en souvenir."[81]

It cannot be denied that there are autobiographers who, for whatever the reason, endeavour to mislead the public, though we reject the position of extremists like Bernard Shaw who insists that "All autobiographies are lies . . . I mean deliberate lies."[82] It is more a question of certain mental processes which become operative as the autobiographer attempts to recreate the past.

In Sender's case, the desire to "come out looking good" leads him

to exhibit one of the autobiographer's more forgivable weaknesses—"[l']impossibilité de ne pas déformer volontairement."[83] According to Líster, a general with the Fifth Regiment, Sender (with the rank of Chief of Staff), "showed . . . a lack of warmth, of humanity, of camaraderie with the men around him."[84] Even more interesting, Líster makes a serious charge which might very well explain the mystery of how Sender lost his command, a circumstance which his biographers have never succeeded in explaining satisfactorily.[85] There is no reason to doubt the general as a credible source of information; his *Nuestra Guerra* (*Our War*), from 1966, is a book whose tone denotes the crusty old military man but, when writing of Sender, he expresses indignation rather than any malicious intent. It is also worth noting that in *Contraataque* Sender himself includes Líster among the "notable leaders"[86] and considers him "a heroic communist leader."[87] Although our author does not normally hesitate to refute any criticism which he deems unacceptable, this case is markedly different, for Sender never denies the general's charge. What he does do is create a parody of Líster (the character of Verin in *Los cinco libros de Ariadna*[88]), an act which might be attributed to one of human nature's little perversions—the fact that one tends to harbour an irrational resentment of those who have caught us *in flagrante delicto*.

It is interesting that *Contraataque* displays certain attributes characteristic of those autobiographies whose authors are relatively young. These precocious autobiographers are in a position to describe only their limited progress in life, providing an incomplete picture and, given that everything changes with time, a perspective which lacks stability. But one of the great advantages of *Contraataque* is precisely the fact that it was written within close temporal proximity of the events it relates, when the author was still reeling from the emotional impact of his experience. The book's vitality emanates from a profound horror of the enemy juxtaposed with the heroism of those who defend the just cause, all of this projected onto a backdrop of urgency. Thus, by avoiding "the distorting prism of hindsight,"[89] the intensity remains fixed in the text, safe from the erosive effects of time. Roy Pascal suggests that "life is a sort of graph linking the experiences. But the movement oscillates."[90] If we imagine Sender's life in graphic form then the time period spanned by *Contraataque*

must be visualized as a brief but violent oscillation in the thread of his existence. The book encapsulates a compact but crucial episode in our author's life and so reflects the psychological moment of the Sender of that time.

Needless to say, years later Sender would have been quite incapable of producing the same kind of book. It is obvious that the author of *Los cinco libros de Ariadna* (1957), which also deals with the theme of war, is no longer the same man as twenty years earlier. As Olney points out:

> When 'is' has been transformed into 'was,' when the unique moment of the present slips into the huge abyss of the past, if it remains in any sense real at all, then it must be within a new and entirely different order of reality from that informing the present.[91]

In *Ariadna*, the dramatic change in Sender's perception of the Communists has its roots in the time period corresponding to *Contraataque*. Many writers discover that their ideals clash violently with the pragmatic reality of naked politics and that they are unable to reconcile their artistic integrity with party dogma. This crisis was only to be expected if one takes into account that "imbued with the intellectual's respect for independence of thought and speech, they resented the scarcely hidden forces which tried to keep them to the 'party lines.' "[92] The fact is, many intellectuals do not manage or do not want to stifle the spontaneity of their creative impulses and consequently proceed with their accustomed task of analyzing, asking, doubting, and finally, criticising.

Naturally, Sender is among those who have no intention of conforming. With reference to his break with the Communists, he explains that

> the basis of our discrepancies were not political, the difference was in our manner of understanding what is human. I understood it in my way and they didn't understand it at all.[93]

As usual, Sender's most outstanding trait, his individualism, comes to the forefront as he makes the following observation: "I believe that I am unable to see or feel politically. I am incapable of joining the line of circus dogs who bark on cue and carry the master's stick in their mouths."[94]

Sender is very indignant when he discovers, through a Russian

translator, that the Soviets have altered the text of his books "when they have not met the needs of their propaganda."[95] As for *Contraataque* (which was not published in Russia[96]), Sender accuses the publishing house of Nuestro Pueblo of having changed a few significant lines; the result is that the narrator seems to affirm that he is a Communist.[97]

Always jealous of his independence, Sender is anxious to make it clear that only the most pressing circumstances could have obliged him to remain silent. He meticulously enumerates what would have been the disastrous consequences of a complaint:

> a) I wouldn't have gotten out of the country and would have been denied a passport; b) my children would have been left helpless; c) if I were far away I could do nothing for them since I was on Stalin's *black list* along with others who disappeared a short time later. In short, I had to tolerate that change in those two lines of my book so that my children wouldn't starve to death.[98]

Contraataque corresponds to a period in Sender's life when he sees Communism as a solution to the world's social ills, but his personal ethics will not allow even his fondest dream to justify brutality as a means to that end. Although he is soon free from any illusions he might have entertained with respect to the Soviets, his personal commitment remains constant throughout his life.

At the time of his greatest personal crisis, Sender seems unable to give his best as a writer. *Contraataque* displays a series of weaknesses which contribute to its failure on all fronts. On an emotional level the book is ineffectual because although a number of easily recognizable stereotypes are introduced, they are so superficially sketched that the reader is not inclined to identify with them. As a piece of propaganda, *Contraataque* falls short of the desired objective due to its tendency to project an image of divided and disoriented forces.

Notwithstanding Sender's undeniable perspicacity, he elects to ignore the potentially prejudicial effects which certain of his observations could precipitate, especially those in reference to the superiority of the Soviets; it is almost as if he scorns all those who lack the discipline and efficiency which he so much admires. Neither does Sender make any attempt to suppress the dictates of his individualism and, consequently, his ego (consciously or not) drives him to give priority

to the expression of his own particular ideas. Indeed, it is ironic that Sender should have ever adhered to a political ideology (the Marxist) which by its very precepts necessarily implies the sacrifice of that same independence of thought which is so dear to his heart.

For such a proud man it must have been a terrible blow to be obliged to flee and begin a life of exile far from his beloved "little homeland" of Aragon. But in spite of this deeply painful experience, Sender never renounces his ideal of a better world, which is why, in 1978, forty years after the war, he is able to say:

I am still a man of the people. . . . I am the same as I was then. The same as always, a little more shaped by experience. . . . I am not a politician, but I will always stand by those who love freedom and are honest in what they do, whether they are monarchists, republicans, socialists or even communists, if they truly are.[99]

NOTES

1 The translations of *Contraataque*, all published in 1937, are as follows: *The War in Spain* (London); *Counter-attack in Spain* (Boston); *Contre-attaque en Espagne* (Paris).
2 Marcelino C. Peñuelas, *Conversaciones con Ramón J. Sender* (Madrid: Editoral Magisterio Español, 1970) 199–200.
3 Emir Rodríguez Monegal, *Tres testigos españoles de la guerra civil* (Caracas: Monte Avila Editores, 1971) 40.
4 Charles L. King, *Ramón J. Sender* (New York: Twayne, 1974) 163.
5 Francisco Carrasquer, *"Iman" y la novela histórica de Sender* (London: Tamesis Books, 1970) 6.
6 Rodríguez Monegal 32.
7 José Luis S. Ponce de León, *La novela española de la guerra civil (1936–1939)* (Madrid: Insula, 1971) 63.
8 Michiko Nonoyama, *El anarquismo en las obras de Ramón J. Sender* (Madrid: Editorial Playor, 1979) 34.
9 Max Aub, "Discurso de la novela española," 104, cited in Ponce de León, 62–63.
10 P. Chalmers Mitchell, trans., introduction, *The War in Spain*, by Ramón J. Sender (London: Faber & Faber, 1937) vii.
11 Rafael Bosch, *La novela española del siglo XX* (New York: las Américas Publishing Co., 1970) I:41.
12 Jean Pierre Ressot, "De Sender a Malraux" in *In Memoriam*, ed. José Carlos Mainer (Zaragoza: Diputación General de Zaragoza, Ayuntamiento de Zaragoza et al., 1983) 338.
13 Ramón J. Sender, *The War in Spain*. Sender includes a letter supposedly

written by a duchess, in which the woman reveals her susceptibility to what Sender calls "the fascist calumnies" (6). The letter concludes in the following manner: "I forgot to tell you that your little nephew Miguel, who is still in his ninth year, said yesterday to the porter's son, who had greeted him with the fist held up, that if he saw him making the socialist salute again, he would kill him. When Irene told me about it, I nearly wept with emotion. See what a religious education does for one!" (7).

14 Ressot 337.

15 Leonard W. Doob, *Public Opinion and Propaganda* (New York: Henry Holt, 1948) 231–232.

16 *Diccionario de la lengua española*, 19th ed. (Madrid: Real Academia Española, 1970) 1072.

17 Sender, introduction to *Contraataque* (Salamanca: Almar, 1978) 18.

18 Janet Varner Gunn, *Autobiography: Toward a Poetics of Experience* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982) 4. Gunn makes reference to Shapiro's article, "The Dark Continent of Literature."

19 William C. Spengemann, *The Forms of Autobiography* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980) xi.

20 James Olney, "Autobiography and the Cultural Moment: A Thematic, Historical, and Bibliographical Introduction" in *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, ed. James Olney (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1980) 3.

21 Olney 5.

22 *Diccionario* 144.

23 Ramón J. Sender, *Madrid-Moscú: Notas de Viaje (1933–1934)* (Madrid: Pueyo, 1934) 88.

24 Víctor Fuentes, "La novela social española (1931–36): Temas y significación ideológica," *Insula* 288 (Nov. 1970) 4.

25 Fuentes 4.

26 Sender, *The War in Spain* 128.

27 Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (New York: Oxford UP, 1977) 199–200.

28 King 21.

29 Ramón J. Sender, prologue, *Los cinco libros de Ariadna*, by Ramón J. Sender (New York: Ibérica Publishing Co., 1957) viii.

30 Charles Irving Glicksberg, *The Literature of Commitment* (Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 1976) 29.

31 Ramón J. Sender, "Literatura proletaria" (*Orto* 3, May 1932) in *Los novelistas sociales españoles (1928–1936)*, eds. José Esteban and Gonzalo Santonja (Madrid: Ayuso, 1977) 113.

32 Patrick Collard, *Ramón J. Sender en los años 1930–1936* (Ghent: n.p., 1980) 14.

33 Ramón J. Sender, "El novelista y las masas" (*Leviatán*, May 1936) in Esteban and Santonja 162.

34 Sender, *Madrid-Moscú* 89.

35 In the Introduction to *Ariadna* (xi), Sender declares that "the anarchists are those who, individually, seem closest to what I am."
36 Glicksberg 14.
37 Sender, prologue to *Ariadna* viii.
38 Sender, *Contraataque* 292.
39 Nonoyama 34.
40 Sender, *Contraataque* 175.
41 Sender, *The War in Spain* 56–67.
42 Abraham Guillén, *El error militar de las "Izquierdas"* (Barcelona: Ricou, 1980) 15–16.
43 A. P. Foulkes, *Literature and Propaganda* (New York: Methuen, 1983) 9.
44 Sender, *The War in Spain* 8.
45 Sender, *The War in Spain* 10.
46 Sender, *The War in Spain* 9.
47 Georges Gusdorf, "Conditions and Limits of Autobiography," Olney 45.
48 Sender, *The War in Spain* 109.
49 Sender, *The War in Spain* 47.
50 Sender, *Contraataque* 380.
51 Hugh Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1971), see 227–228.
52 Thomas 228–232 passim.
53 Gabriel Jackson, *Aproximación a la España contemporánea: 1898–1975* (Barcelona: Grijalbo, 1980) 105.
54 Sender, *The War in Spain* 130.
55 Sender, *The War in Spain* 121.
56 Sender, *The War in Spain* 119.
57 E. M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (New York: Penguin, 1978) 73–77.
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60 Jacques Ellul, *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971) 243.
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65 Stephen Spender, "Confessions and Autobiography," Olney 119.
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70 Sender, *The War in Spain* 302.
71 Sender, *The War in Spain* 302–303.
72 Sender, *The War in Spain* 303.

73 Mitchell vi.
74 Sender, *The War in Spain* 305.
75 Ressot 338.
76 Ressot 337–338.
77 Sender, *The War in Spain* 63.
78 Sender, *The War in Spain* 63.
79 Sender, *The War in Spain* 132.
80 Ernst Fischer, *The Necessity of Art: A Marxist Approach* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1964) 8.
81 André Maurois, *Aspects de la biographie* (Paris: Au Sans Pareil, 1928) 138–139.
82 Bernard Shaw, cited in Arthur Melville Clark, *Autobiography: Its Genesis and Phases* (London: Oliver & Boyd, 1935) 14.
83 Maurois 145.
84 Enrique Líster, *Nuestra Guerra* (Paris: Colección Ebro, 1966) 82.
85 Líster 82–83. Líster describes Sender's behaviour in the following way: "Sender, thinking that I'd never survive the enemy's attempt to surround us at the time when he 'fell back' to Madrid, went off . . . and after a night's rest, showed up the next day at the 5th Regiment's Headquarters wearing a commander's insignia which, so he said, I had given him before my death. He was stripped of his rank on the spot, which was the least he deserved, and so his military career was abruptly terminated. . . . he 'withstood' the rest of the war there [in Paris], where he wrote his book, *Contraataque*, in which he describes events and his personal performance . . . portraying himself in the most advantageous light."
86 Sender, *The War in Spain* 163.
87 Sender, *The War in Spain* 287.
88 Peter Turton, "Los cinco libros de Ariadna: La puntilla al minotauro comunista," Mainer 463.
89 Francis West, *Biography as History* (Sydney: Sydney UP, 1973) 14.
90 Roy Pascal, *Design and Truth in Autobiography* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960) 17.
91 James Olney, "Some Versions of Memory/Some Versions of Bias: The Ontology of Autobiography," Olney 237.
92 George Woodcock, *The Writer and Politics* (London: The Porcupine Press, 1948) 12.
93 Sender, prologue to *Ariadna* vii.
94 Sender, prologue to *Ariadna* viii.
95 Sender, introduction to *Contraataque* 11–12.
96 Sender, introduction to *Contraataque* 14.
97 Sender, introduction to *Contraataque* 12. Sender is no doubt referring to the following lines in *The War in Spain* (19), in which the narrator, during a conversation with General Queipo de Llano, comments: "Thinking that I was a communist, and I have very often been taken for one, and there would be

nothing much in that, as I am one. . . ."

98 Sender, introduction to *Contraataque* 14.

99 Sender, introduction to *Contraataque* 16–17.

Anthony Percival

"A New Experience": The Art and Power of *La familia de Pascual Duarte*

Most novels, with the passage of time, lose their potency and cease to touch the reader's sensibility. At best, they find their way into the histories of literature and are read and studied by scholars and their students. Another—much rarer—kind of novel creates a resounding initial impression and continues to speak to successive generations of readers. Into this category can be fitted *La familia de Pascual Duarte* (*The Family of Pascual Duarte*). It occupies a central and indisputable place in the history of the post-Civil War novel. But, above all, it has "stayed news." And, more than forty years after its first appearance, it continues to find readers—in the Hispanic world, in the far-flung academic community and, by way of translation, among a variety of foreign readers. How this diverse public responds to the text is of course impossible to determine. However, judging by one's own experience of hearing the book praised and acclaimed, attacked and even dismissed, *La familia de Pascual Duarte* is a powerful, perplexing and, for some, a subversive novel.[1]

Among other things I want to touch on some of the aspects and effects of the work that contribute to its quality as a disturbing experience. Let me start by quoting an adverse judgement of the novel. In *La familia de Pascual Duarte*—writes Enrique Anderson Imbert—"Cela contaba por el puro gusto de contar; y contaba violencias por el puro gusto de la violencia. Es decir que no había allí ninguna intención moral. . . . Cela choca, asusta, disgusta con escenas crudas y cruentas. Esas escenas denuncian una malhumorada actitud ante la vida, pero es un humor frío, sin compassión."[2] (Cela was recounting a story for the sheer pleasure of it; and he was recounting violence for the sheer pleasure of indulging in violence. In other words there is no moral intention in the storytelling. . . . Cela shocks, frightens, upsets with his crude and gory scenes. These scenes reveal an ill-humoured attitude to life, but the humour is cold, lacking in

compassion.) The general tenor of this passage does not accord with my reading of the text, but it neatly encapsulates some of the points that concern me here: the violent and sordid aspects and their effects on the reader, the question of moral engagement and compassion as realised in the work and the matter of the presentation, tone and telling of the story.

Perhaps we should first remind ourselves of the extent of the violence and sordidness in the book. The protagonist shoots his dog, knifes a drinking companion in a quarrel, stabs his horse to death, murders his wife's lover and, in a savage encounter, kills his mother. His upbringing and home life are disablingly grim: his parents show themselves to be brutal, selfish, mean-minded and given to heavy drinking and vicious squabbling, his sister becomes a prostitute in early adolescence and his brother is a mental defective whose short life is filled with unrelieved suffering. In all, some ten deaths are mentioned. Given that the novel is rather short (some 150 pages), this list of human misery might suggest that the author were pathologically obsessed with the seamy underside of life, intent on recounting violence for the sake of it, as Anderson Imbert claims. Without wishing to underestimate the shock effect of certain scenes, I would argue to the contrary that the author, through the workings of insight, moral awareness and verbal creativity, fashions the material of violence into a kind of aesthetic counter-order, which in stressing the absence of human values in the degraded world of the novel points to their importance in the real world.

At the beginning of the work, in the transcriber's note, in Duarte's letter to a person in Mérida that accompanies his memoirs, in the clause of this person's will relating to these writings and in Duarte's dedication of his text to a man he has murdered, questions are already being raised about the protagonist, his situation and his attitudes. The tongue-in-cheek tone implicit in the manner and ordering of these documents, the playful approach to literary tradition, writerly artifice and scholarly procedures serve to cast out a net of irony. The attentive reader is intrigued by these initial suggestions, alerted to possible complexities of presentment, structure and character study and disposed to adopt a quizzical standpoint in relation to the protagonist.

The central drama, seldom directly mentioned but always present,

is set in a prison cell in Extremadura, where a condemned murderer, Pascual Duarte, is reviewing his life and writing down his version of it in the form of a confession. The point of view is exclusively his, apart from the details supplied by the editor-transcriber. Pascual's first words take us directly into the realm of conscience and self-justification: "Yo señor, no soy malo, aunque no me faltarían motivos para serlo."[3] (I, sir, am not evil, though I'd certainly have plenty of reasons for being so.) The voice of revelation soon begins to impose its authority on the reader. As we listen to a person confiding to us aspects of his life and find ourselves being won over by the earnestness of the tone so that we accept the version as true (though, on reflection, we would have to suppose that it were partial), so—as we read—we accept Pascual's words as convincing and succumb to the spell woven by the story-teller. When he talks of his village in a detailed concrete and evocative way, we momentarily forget that Pascual is a murderer. Suddenly, the recollection of the church bell is so vivid that it makes him imagine he is hearing it in his prison cell. Pascual, we see, is engrossed in the task of telling and reliving his tale. He goes on to speak of his home, supplying graphic details, evaluating and making social distinctions. He next turns to his favourite pastime, hunting, and starts to talk affectionately of his dog, "la Chispa," reminiscing of the times they had together. Then, still in the same paragraph, the tense switches from the imperfect to the preterite and the focus is placed on the final moments the dog and his master spend together, the final moments in which master kills dog. Because this act comes so unexpectedly and because its motivation is only vaguely presented (the dog has "la mirada de los confesores, escrutadora y fría" / the look of the confessor, scrutinising and cold),[4] the reader is left stunned. Moreover, the description of the act is neutral, connoting no emotion on the part of the killer: "Cogí la escopeta y disparé; volví a disparar. La perra tenía una sangre oscura y pegajosa que se extendía poco a poco por la tierra."[5] (I took up the shot-gun and fired; and then fired again. The dog was covered in dark and sticky blood that spread little by little over the earth.) This whole scene is one of the most disturbing in the book, suggesting all sorts of deep frustrations in Pascual. Other scenes are more violent, more rivetting,—for example, when Pascual and Lola brutally make love in the cemetery after Mario's burial or, at the end,

when Pascual murders his mother. These events have a Goyesque intensity and leave a deep impression on the reader, but because they are—looking in particular now at the act of matricide—culminations of a demonstrated process of feeling, a process that is motivated and even—for the protagonist—justified, they do not have the same lingering power to disquiet the reader. In this way, Pascual's violence against people comes to be more readily accepted, the reader being shown how a multiple murderer, who might be branded a "hyena" according to conventional standards of judgement, can still have redeeming qualities.

The subject matter of the confessions is violence, corruption, the disintegration of the natural order, in which man vents his anger on animals, husband brutalises wife, mother persecutes witless son, and son murders mother. And the recreator of this disordered world presents himself as a victim as well as a perpetrator of violence. He wishes to show that he is not intrinsically evil but that he has been led into committing socially repugnant acts. Writing of his parents and family background, he feels that heredity and his upbringing in a climate of incessant domestic strife have played a part in disposing him to evil-doing. He also, at various points, sees himself as the victim of destiny, fate and the devil's doings. Thus, nagging questions about shaping influences, personal responsibility, determinism and free will are posed for the reader.

Pascual declares his main concern to be the setting down of essential facts about his life as faithfully as his memory will allow in order to get closer to the lived reality than the recipient of the confessions would, through merely imagining what happened. In other words, Pascual wants to prevent his name from remaining a prejudice, to paraphrase Nietzsche. Before long he shows himself to be self-conscious about the lack of order in his memoirs, but explains that the only way he can relate his story is by letting it emerge "como me sale y a las mientes me viene, sin pararme a construirlo como una novela."[6] He defends his spontaneous approach to literary creation and proceeds to write with sensitivity and compassion of his brother, maltreated by his mother and putative father. By chapter 6, Pascual is again commenting on authorial problems:

Ahora, después de releer este fajo, todavía no muy grande, de cuartillas, se mezclan en mi cabeza las ideas más diferentes con tal precipitación y tal

mareo que, por más que pienso, no consigo acertar a qué carta quedarme. Mucha desgracia, como usted habrá podido ver, es la que llevo contada, y pienso que las fuerzas han de decaerme cuando me enfrente con lo que aún me queda, que más desgraciado es todavía; me espanta pensar con qué puntualidad me es fiel la memoria, en estos momentos en que todos los hechos de mi vida—sobre los que no hay maldita la forma de volverme atrás—van quedando escritos en estos papeles con la misma claridad que en un encerado . . .[7]

Now after re-reading this still not very bulky sheaf of notes, the most disparate of ideas get all mixed up in my head so precipately and dizzily that, however much I think, I can't manage to decide what to make of it. As you must have seen, I have already recounted much misfortune, and I think that my strength will surely fail me when I confront what still remains, which is even more of a misfortune; it horrifies me to think of how faithful and precise my memory is, at those moments, in which all the facts of my life—over which there is no damned way of turning back—are being written on these sheets as clearly as if on a blackboard.

Here the reader shares in Pascual's growing awareness of life-writing as an existential act, a form of moral probing and self-query, in which he is conscious—acutely conscious—of time, the horror of his misspent life and the loss of personal freedom. His sense of self is expanding, his moral sense is sharpened and his sensitivity heightened. In chapter 7 he brings out the candour and ingenuousness he showed in the episode with Lola, revealing that her pregnancy took him completely by surprise. Whilst in the act of composing and writing he manifests a gain in awareness, he ironically discloses his earlier lack of awareness: his lack of self-control when he gets caught up in a knife-fight and his lack of prudence when he allows his wife to go unescorted on a horse that has, not many days before, been involved in an accident.

Pascual places much emphasis on the accident, particularly its adverse effects on his frame of mind and on his relations with his womenfolk. After describing the death of his infant son, he is led to wonder if he has been predetermined to a life of misfortune. That is to say, his past experiences strongly colour his attitudes as he writes; his past is catching up with him and influencing his consciousness. His narrative becomes more direct, as he reproduces the recriminations his hysterically antagonistic wife hurls at him. This is a crucial period when murderous thoughts obsess him. He explains

how one comes to kill: "Se mata sin pensar, bien probado lo tengo; a veces sin querer. Se odia, se odia intensamente, ferozmente, y se abre la navaja, y con ella bien abierta se llega, descalzo, hasta la cama donde duerme el enemigo."[8] (You kill without thinking. I'm the living proof of it; sometimes without wanting to. You feel hate, intense, ferocious hate, and you open the knife, and with the blade fully exposed, you come barefoot to the bed in which your enemy is sleeping.)

After these gloomy comments, Pascual dwells on his present condition. He reveals that he has spent a whole month without writing; and, by giving rein to his imagination, he has been able to enjoy himself. He has achieved peace of mind after going through various states of emotion. However, on the day previously he had taken confession with the prison chaplain and this had unnerved him, causing him to harbour "pensamientos siniestros"[9] (sinister thoughts). The experience of institutionalised confession has driven him back to the urgent business of getting his confessions down on paper. But writing has now become a more problematical enterprise. It has become a physical and aesthetic necessity for Pascual to write slowly, deliberately and with all his senses alert, for, as he says, "Estas cosas en las que tanta parte tiene la memoria hay que cuidarlas con el mayor cariño porque de trastrocar los acontecimientos no otro arreglo tendría el asunto sino romper los papeles para reanudar la escritura."[10] (These things in which memory plays such a big part have to be looked after with the utmost care because if the events are switched around, the matter could only be put right by ripping up the papers and starting to re-write.) Furthermore, he has discovered that things are never quite what they seem; on examination, they disclose unexpected aspects. In trying to set the record straight about himself, Pascual has become intellectually attuned to the complexity of life. But not only intellectually, also morally: he wonders, for example, about the possible ill effects of recounting "barbaridades"[11] (awful things). Writing is an activity that brings him sadness, moments of joy and moments of regret at what has happened and cannot be undone. It is an activity which agitates him, yet makes him feel more alive.

He proceeds to tell of his flight and two-year absence from home, his return to find his wife pregnant by the hated ex-lover of his sister,

his killing of this man, his term in prison, his release, his second wife and finally his murder of his mother. At decisive moments he interjects explanations for his misfortunes. For instance, regarding his early release from prison, he reflects: "Da pena pensar que las pocas veces que en esta vida se me ocurrió no portarme demasiado mal, esa fatalidad, esa mala estrella que, como ya más atrás dije, parece como complacerse en acompañarme, torció y dispuso las cosas de forma tal que la bondad no acabó para servir a mi alma para maldita cosa."[12] (It pains me to think that the few times in my life I took it into my head to behave not too badly, fate, ill-starred as it is, which, as I said earlier, seems to take pleasure in dogging my steps, left me in the lurch and arranged things in such a way that being good in the end did damn all for my soul.) This kind of comment is recurrent in the final chapter, where Pascual records how he killed his mother. In taut graphic prose he describes the physical build-up of his matricidal impulses: "Los pensamientos que nos enloquecen con la peor de las locuras, la de la tristeza, siempre llegan poco a poco y como sin sentir, como incansable, pero lenta, despaciosa, regular como el pulso."[13] (The thoughts that drive us to the worst form of madness, that is sadness, always come gradually and unawares, just as fog invades the fields and tuberculosis the chest. It advances fatally, untiringly, but slowly, deliberately, as regular as a pulse beat.) Immediately before recounting the murder episode, he refers to the matter of his conscience, using the conditional tense: "La conciencia no me mordería; no habría motivo. La conciencia sólo remuerde de las injusticias cometidas. . . . Pero de aquellos actos a los que nos conduce el odio . . . no tenemos que arrepentirnos jamás, jamás nos muerde la conciencia."[14] (My conscience would not gnaw me; there would be no reason for it to do so. Conscience only gnaws you for injustices you have committed. . . . But for those acts motivated by hatred . . . we never have to repent, our conscience never gnaws us.) The obsessive act described, Pascual can bring his confessions to a close with words that describe how this event affected him physically: "Podía respirar . . ."[15] (I could breathe). A fine irony, since, as the transcriber speculates, Pascual may have been garrotted not long after writing these words.

Pascual could feel the weight of hatred lifted from his shoulders on the 10th of February 1922, but fifteen years later, as a condemned

murderer, he feels the weight of guilt and the need to unburden his conscience and to present his life story as a deterrent to others. In writing down his confession, in grappling with his bloody past, he can find himself, can articulate and enlarge his humanness, so that he is no longer merely that hyena, that madman, that multiple murderer bearing the name Pascual Duarte. As he writes about the past, he becomes engaged in a process of self-enquiry, a literary as well as moral process, that is sometimes painful, sometimes joyous. In confinement he has the time and comes to feel the compulsion to examine, relive and recreate the chaos of his earlier life. Huge gaps of silence—the last fifteen years of his experience, especially—remain and many ends are left untied. Yet Pascual's scribbled pages affirm and justify his "triste vivir"[16] and reveal a kind of rough-hewn wisdom.

The life and situation of Pascual Duarte throws out a challenge to the reader to define his own sense of what is criminality and what is normality and to reflect on such questions as: In what ways are all human beings involved in evildoing? To what extent does society itself help to shape the capacity for evil shown by its members? Is it possible for violence to be an authentic form of action? More impressively than the case histories produced by many a criminologist, the novel offers a moving, concrete and complex instance of the human side of a man who has taken human life. Cela himself has alluded to Pascual in terms of his "recóndita honradez" (recondite honesty) and talked of the book as being about the relations of normality and abnormality.[17] There is no doubt that the moral power of the work resides at this level. But not solely, for *La familia de Pascual Duarte* poses all sorts of questions about the process of memory and imagination, about truth-telling and self-delusion and about the art of narrative. The complex narrative presentation, involving framing devices, editorial concerns and the deployment of the autobiographical mode, works to multiply the ironies and the questions concerning the text and its protagonist. The novel leaves gaps, fissures and loose ends at the level of content and structure; it is porous and open-ended, but in a more tacit way than the Cortazarian novel. It is a work that embodies some of the contingency, contradictions and incongruousness of human life. Out of these elements Cela has made a verbal structure that produces "a new experience,"

one not easily pigeonholed, as D. H. Lawrence put it,[18] an experience that over the years seems to lose none of its newness and none of its power to move, suggest and disturb.

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NOTES

1 All quotations are taken from Camilo José Cela, *La familia de Pascual Duarte*, 13a. edición, *Obra completa de C. J. C. Tomo 1. Las tres primeras novelas (1942–43–44)* (Barcelona: Destino, 1962).
2 Enrique Anderson Imbert, *El cuento español*, 3a. ed. (Buenos Aires: Columba, 1974, 41–42.
3 Cela 57.
4 Cela 64.
5 Cela 65.
6 Cela 82.
7 Cela 96.
8 Cela 140.
9 Cela 144.
10 Cela 145.
11 Cela 146.
12 Cela 169.
13 Cela 187–88.
14 Cela 190.
15 Cela 194.
16 Cela 146.
17 See Camilo José Cela, "Palabras ocasionales," *La familia de Pascual Duarte*, ed. Harold L. Boudreau and John W. Kronik (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1961), ix.
18 "The world doesn't fear a new idea. It can pigeonhole any idea. But it can't pigeonhole a new experience." Quoted by Lionel Trilling, *Beyond Culture: Essays on Literature and Learning* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1967) 15.

Review

The Jews of Islam. Bernard Lewis. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1984. pp. xii + 245. Cloth $42.50, Paper $8.95.

In the later 1940's, the arrival in Israel of many "Sephardim"—Jews from Muslim countries—provided the impetus for an investigation into their history and culture which was long overdue. The history of these people, who had attained the highest intellectual pinnacles during the medieval period, had previously been neglected by modern historiography, as a result of the prolonged period of decadence and obscurity which had kept them on the margins of mainstream Jewish history during the premodern and modern period. However, as a result of growing interest, a substantial body of research and publication has emerged during the last quarter of a century, which enables us to speak with greater confidence and authority, not only about the major cultural phenomena of these people, but also about their everyday life. In this book, Professor Lewis has attempted, by drawing on the current proliferation of literature and on his vast knowledge and understanding of Islamic history, to provide an overview of this chapter of Jewish history, a period which lasted for about 1400 years. He has also attempted an analysis of those factors which shaped its evolution, and, even more, of those which caused its decline.

The book is divided into four chapters, arranged chronologically, and varied in length. The first chapter, "Islam and other religions," is in itself a well-rounded discussion of the major themes which are developed in more detail in the remaining chapters. The author describes numerous related problems concerning the attitude of Islam towards its non-Muslim citizens, in an attempt to define its particular relationship with Judaism and the Jews. While Islam's basic attitudes were determined by principles derived from the 7th and 8th centuries' Qor'an and Sunna which ordained tolerance, yet second-class status, for Jews and Christians, the "People of the Book," historical conditions in their turn actually shaped everyday life. The author surveys Jewish limitations and prerogatives, occupations, and legal, fiscal, and social qualifications, periods of prosperity and security, and the periods of threat and persecution which came mostly from the Messianic and Millenarian Muslim movements. The long period of decline which would follow the medieval period is also referred to in this chapter. Its causes are linked to the Crusades and to the disappearance of the Middle Eastern bourgeoisie, of which Jews were respectable members.

The second chapter, "The Judeo-Islamic Tradition," deals with the profound influence of Islam, and the adoption, by the Jews living under its aegis, of Islamic modes of thought and culture, as well as patterns of behaviour. Given the highly intellectual and sophisticated nature of the Islamic culture during the medieval period, Lewis' discussion of the surprisingly few cases of Jewish converts to Islam is extremely relevant.

The third chapter, "Late Medieval and Early Modern Period," is devoted to the general decline in the status and conditions of the Jews, and the general decadence in the Muslim countries. This period coincided with the growth of a new political unit: the Ottoman Empire. The author describes here the reasons why Jewish life in the early days of the Ottoman Empire was happier than it was later on, or than it was in Iran and Morocco. The expulsion from Spain and Portugal first of the Jews and later of the Marranos, provided the expanding Ottoman Empire with highly desirable immigrants, who were skilled in finances, languages and technology, and who often owned considerable amounts of money, which greatly helped the economy of the new empire. Jewish physicians, merchants and translators were welcomed and encouraged to settle, and were sometimes even moved forcibly into newly-conquered areas.

At this point, Lewis devotes some valuable space to discussing the possibilities for research which the Ottoman archives offer. These archives are outstanding both for their organization and for the wealth of information which they contain about this period.

The Jews living in Muslim lands were not entirely responsible for the decline of their fortunes, although Lewis does mention the loss of their skills through withdrawal from Europe, and the cessation of Jewish immigration from Europe as contributory causes. However, the growing material and cultural impoverishment and the general weakening of the Ottoman Empire led to increasing segregation of the Jews, while reduced tolerance for them led to their diminished participation in the social and economic life of the empire. In contrast to the decline of the Jews, the rise of other minorities, particularly the Greeks and the Armenians, was even more dramatic. They came to occupy positions previously held by Jews, and achieved status through having European education. The protection which was offered to the Christians by the Great Powers provided these new minorities with a power base which was unavailable to the Jews.

In the fourth and last chapter, "The End of Tradition," the author describes what he correctly perceives to be the final stage of the Jewish existence under Islam: the end of an era. Based on reports written by teachers from the Alliance Israélite, as well as by European travellers, the chapter provides a pretty accurate picture of the constant humiliation and threat, financial burden and material degradation which hundreds of Jews faced daily. The Muslims' intolerance of the Jews was reinforced at this stage, through an injection of elements of Christian antisemitism,

notably the blood libel, which were imported from Europe by diplomats and clergymen serving in the Middle East. The political circumstances created at the beginning of the twentieth century gradually brought the relationship of Jews and Moslems into a new phase, that of confrontation. The subsequent physical removal of the Jewish communities became inevitable.

The book, based on a series of lectures delivered in 1981, has retained the vivid style and flow of a live presentation. Although meant to be a general synthesis, the book never loses sight of historical details, in spite of its many dimensions and the length of time which it covers. It provides these details within the text, and in the voluminous annotations and references. In this book, as in his previous works, Professor Lewis unfailingly displays his unique talent for combining the description of a long period of evolution with the detailed use of primary sources. With a light, yet authoritative hand, he guides us through a long, rich and troubled history, in a book which is a major contribution to an important historical debate, relevant to both Jewish and Islamic history.

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