SCRIPTA MEDITERRANEA

VOLUMES XIV-XV 1993-94

Bulletin of the Society for Mediterranean Studies
Toronto, Canada
Bulletin de la Société d'Études Méditerranéennes
Toronto, Canada

Scripta Mediterranea

VOLUMES XIV-XV 1993-4

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From Mariotto and Ganozza to Romeo and Giulietta: Metamorphoses of a Renaissance Tale

The practice of re-elaborating stories already written by others, of recasting extant narrative material was a rather common one among short-story writers in Italy, particularly in the period between the appearance of the *Decameron* and the end of the sixteenth century. This phenomenon, of course, is common to the entire literary production of that time, since imitation, not originality, was the ruling criterion for all writers. Writers of short stories were original only in their interpretation of the poetics of imitation, pushing it to the limit, till it came to mean that one could borrow freely from everyone else. With the possible exception of the theatre, in fact, in no other field is this phenomenon more noticeable than in that of the novella. Here it is so pronounced that Letterio Di Francia, writing earlier in our century a comprehensive tome on the novella for a history of literary genres in Italian literature, goes beyond the customary condemnation by historicist literary criticism of this practice, and labels it "thievery".[1] Recently this *modus operandi* by Renaissance short-story writers has been re-examined by literary critics who, obviously enough, have purposes in mind other than such pronouncements.[2] The new critical approaches are bent upon underlining among texts not the similarities, but the dissimilarities, the variations, the deviations conferred to the typical narrative structures and the traditional themes by individual authors, for the differences are never casual, never accidental, but always subjected to and revealing of the authors' ideology.

These theoretical justifications are almost unnecessary when it comes to the story of Romeo and Giulietta, so natural it is to

compare its various literary refashionings, both on a horizontal and on a vertical axis. Such a comparison has most often taken the shape of a search for the sources of Shakespeare's tragedy. As a critical approach, then, it has always underscored the correspondences among texts, not the divergences.[3] This approach has been taken more rarely and only recently.[4]

The purpose of this article is to look again at the first three narrative adaptations in the Italian vernacular of the story of the two lovers from Verona—that is, the short-stories by Masuccio Salernitano (1410-1475), Luigi Da Porto (1485-1529), and Matteo Bandello (1485-1561)—and, by focusing on the historical and cultural circumstances surrounding their recastings, to offer possible interpretations for the reasons which motivate them and for the ideological messages which they incorporate.

The individual narrative segments which make up the story are probably as ancient as the art of narration itself. However, they were first grouped together in the form familiar to us all by Masuccio Salernitano who worked on his *Novellino* from 1458 to 1475, the year of his death. His novella number 33, in fact, is already composed of the following microstructures: the clandestine marriage of the two lovers, the exile imposed on the young man for having been found guilty of murder, the arranged marriage for the young girl, her apparent death, the fatal mistiming of the message that finally brings about the death of the lovers (in this first formulation, he by beheading, she by starving herself to death).

In his dedication of his short story to a duke of his day, Masuccio writes that he submits for the duke's consideration "the most pitiful, unfortunate case of two wretched lovers" in order that he may judge "which of the two...loved more fervently" (427).[5] In keeping with his political stance, which is not only defensive but actively supportive of the Aragonese dynasty and rule in particular as well as of nobility in general, and in accordance with his ideological position on women—Masuccio is unrelentingly misogynist and his stories often fuel the fiercely anti-woman side of the debate on the respective worth of the two sexes—the author himself, in lieu of his ideal reader, concludes that the most passionate love is the man's, whose name in this version of the story is Mariotto (not yet Romeo), and, predictably enough for us, not the woman's, who here is called

Ganozza.[6] Thus his narrative structure is subservient to the task of confirming and reinforcing the value system of his day. For instance, the author often depicts the honour of the families involved as placed in jeopardy by the actions undertaken by Ganozza. Such considerations cause him to linger essentially over two issues: firstly, the unavoidable logic of the class structure, and secondly, the unreliability and irresponsibility displayed by the woman. Furthermore, Ganozza, whose standing in his eyes is partly redeemed by the fact that she does, after all, belong to the Sienese (not yet Veronese) nobility, is yet denied the dignity of a heroic death over her lover's corpse, as Masuccio announced in the summary paragraph preceding the story. He has her committed to a convent where she dies later for having deprived herself of food and sleep.

If Masuccio was the first to gather together the basic elements of the plot, Luigi Da Porto was the first to define forever the motifs, setting and principal characters for a story destined to become one of the most famous love stories of all time, even if we took Shakespeare's version as the paragon against which every other version is to be judged.[7] In Da Porto's novella, in fact, which is believed to have been written by June 1524, we find these additional elements: the feud and, therefore, the opposition by both families to a possible marriage between two of their members; the circumstances surrounding the lovers' falling in love; the love scenes, including the balcony scene; the scenes of despair; the murder of one of Giulietta's relatives (and not that of an ordinary citizen, as in Masuccio); the introduction of a faithful servant and that of Giulietta's nurse; the suicides of both lovers; the families' reconciliation.

His narration proceeds quickly towards its inescapable ending. The swift unfolding of the events seems to echo the intensity of the passion felt by the two lovers and the merciless advance of an evil and tragic fate. This version of the story is not burdened with ideological assumptions which the author seeks to promote or confirm. In the dedicatory epistle preceding the story—and it is no coincidence that it is addressed to a woman—Da Porto states that the reason for writing it is to "show clearly which risks, which tricky pitfalls, which cruel deaths Love at times brings upon wretched and unfortunate lovers" (95). The statement of the moral and didactic usefulness

of the story for its readers is not to be taken at face value. It is more a pretext than a true intent; it is made merely in deference to tradition rather than as a heartfelt resolve to censure certain patterns of behaviour deemed reproachable by the moral standards of the times.

The narration, it seems to me, is due more to the pleasure of narrating than anything else. Elements external to the text seem to confirm my contention. Da Porto was foremost an historian, not a writer of literary texts; this, in fact, is his only literary effort. Most importantly, the novella is a self-contained text, not a tale in a series, not a story imbedded in a collection whose general architecture always dictates certain interpretations and whose general design always implies an ideological point of view.

Matteo Bandello, writing only a few years later—it is believed between 1531 and 1545—avails himself of this storyline, and, although he seemingly does not alter the kernel elements which comprise the fabula, acts subtly upon them, finally succeeding in bringing the content of the story in line with the ideological objectives of his novella collection.

From a structural point of view, Bandello lengthens, amplifies, expands and weighs down the plot. As evidence of that, let us consider the two following microstructures, placed one at the very beginning of the story, one at the very end, thus becoming emblematic of the author's mode of composition. In order to define the setting, Da Porto's Veronese narrator finds it sufficient to say "in my beautiful home town" (97); Bandello's, however, feels compelled to give us an entire turgidly descriptive paragraph on Verona. If Da Porto confines himself to saying that the epitaph on the lovers' communal tomb explains the reason of their deaths, Bandello retells their deaths, almost entirely, in the sonnet which constitutes his epitaph.

I will provide two additional telling episodes. In the moments immediately preceding Romeo's death, Da Porto is not satisfied with recounting Romeo's enormous sense of loss. For dramatic expediency, he has him interjecting with brief but poignant first-person accounts of his despair. Bandello, on the other hand, cannot feel content with something similar. Therefore, first he narrates Romeo's state of mind and then he allots him not one but three very long and very eloquent

speeches, which Romeo pronounces after having ingested the poison he had taken with him to Giulietta's tomb.

In Da Porto's version, the balcony scene is occasioned by the fact that Romeo, hopelessly in love, had taken to frequenting Giulietta's neighbourhood at night. The young man, Da Porto tells us, at times paces the street on which Giulietta's house stands, at times climbs a wall of the house in order to hear the girl speak through her open window. One such night, made especially bright by the moonlight, Giulietta sees him and they thus engage in a dialogue during the course of which they declare eternal love to each other. This segment flows very naturally, and is free of cumbersome details and improbable motivations.

Conversely, Bandello burdens the scene with a seemingly useless wealth of details and with excessively long, detailed descriptions, unlikely motivations and convoluted logic. Here is Bandello's transmogrification: he introduces the nurse to whom Giulietta entrusts a letter addressed to Romeo and containing instructions for him—he is to come to her at five the next morning and bring a rope ladder with him. In order to carry out her instructions, Romeo has to introduce an additional character, Pietro, his faithful servant, who is ordered to find such a ladder. Together they come to the place agreed upon, just below Giulietta's window; together they hoist the ladder up, with the aid of a string which Giulietta, helped in the task by the nurse, has lowered from the window to which the two women secure the ladder. At this point the two servants disappear to afford the lovers some privacy. Giulietta now tells Romeo how and when they can join in holy matrimony. The exchange having come to an end, the foursome remove the ladder.

The clandestine marriage is, of course, essential to the storyline and if the structural unit under examination served the purpose of leading up to it, then we would have enough justification for it, no matter how severely we would judge it on aesthetic grounds. Except that Bandello had already made mention of it: Romeo and Giulietta had already agreed to marry in a previous encounter. Clearly this episode, in its redundancy to the plot, must find its reason for being on some other plane of meaning.

The rhetorical figure of *amplificatio* does not represent, in the

works by short-story writers of this and earlier times, simplistic, mannerist variations on pre-existing texts; it is, instead, the formal device which allows them to intervene in narrative situations they inherit from their predecessors and make them new, make them current. Such interventions are to be read as the most telltale signs of the writers' aspirations to represent reality as mimetically as possible. The artistic representation of reality, however, is never devoid of ideological significance. Here it serves two purposes: the first, and most obvious one, is that the verbosity constitutes the formal device which allows Bandello to incorporate Da Porto's version (Da Porto's text is often found verbatim in Bandello's rifacimento); the second is that it is in the prolixity of his discourse that Bandello hides his modifications, his subtle, but significant manipulations, of the story on an ideological level.

Barry Jones in two of his articles on this very topic, mostly without the support of this contrastive approach, reaches the conclusion that Bandello's version of the tale of Romeo and Giulietta is misogynist and patricentric in so far as it gives edifying characterization of every male protagonist, including Romeo, and depicts all women as weak and given to emotional excesses to the detriment of reason.[8] According to Jones, Bandello makes Giulietta the scapegoat of the situation: it is, after all, her excessive melancholy and her depression following Romeo's exile which cause the tragedy. At the same time, Jones has us note, Bandello exonerates Romeo. In order to prove his point, he calls attention to two events. The first revolves around Romeo's first love. Da Porto barely mentions it, informing the reader that Romeo attends the house party organized by the head of the Cappelletti family because he follows "some cruel woman" there. Bandello, on the other hand, dwells on Romeo's first love, has it last two years and describes it as "constant and ardent" (441). He thus effectively eliminates any possible implication of fickleness on Romeo's part in matters of love. The second event mentioned by Jones, revolves around Tebaldo's murder. In Da Porto's version, Romeo, who is a participant in the street fight between the two factions, has some initial consideration for Giulietta's relatives, but finally strikes Tebaldo mortally because he was "overwhelmed by rage" (103). In Bandello's, Romeo kills Tebaldo in self-defense, and if this were not

enough, completely by accident, and only after he had attempted, alas in vain, to reconcile the warring parties. Romeo, then, is the only reasonable voice amidst chaos, a pacifist, a mediator, an ambassador of good will, and an innocent victim of circumstances.

My own analysis in part corroborates Jones's findings and conclusions, in part aims to go even further. For now, however, relying on his very sound arguments, I could point to other examples which make them even more cogent.

Firstly, in Da Porto's rendition, the two young people fall in love while being well aware of each other's identity; in Bandello, they ignore who the other is, for otherwise Romeo would have to be depicted to act thoughtlessly, to be unmindful of the consequences of his actions. Bandello cannot admit that: when his Romeo learns the girl's identity, it is already too late, for "the wound had already been opened and the amorous poison had already penetrated deeply" (446).

Secondly, Giulietta's inconsolable despair over Romeo's departure from the city has perhaps a reason for being in Da Porto, where the exile is for life, but it is utterly unjustifiable in Bandello, where we are first told that the banishment is a temporary measure to be revoked momentarily and then given the term of one year. Bandello's option of providing a precise figure, and a small one at that, is functional to his Giulietta's purported lack of self-control.

Thirdly, in the matter of the arranged marriage, in both versions Giulietta, in refusing to consent to it, defies her father's fury; however, while Da Porto restricts himself to referring her answer to her father's proposal—"That will never be!" (107)—Bandello cannot refrain from editorializing, and adds that Giulietta answers "with more defiance than is appropriate to a young girl" (459).

Fourthly, in keeping with his presentation of impeccable male characters, Bandello's Frate Lorenzo is an incredibly outstanding man: he is a theologian, a great philosopher, a superior herbalist, knowledgeable in magic, an all-around very learned man. Da Porto's friar, on the other hand, who initially does not even have a name, has a more human dimension. He is described simply as a "great philosopher and scientist" (102). Furthermore, he is a friend of Romeo's not altogether because

he is taken by the latter's faultless nature—although he does find him "feared, courageous and cautious" (102)—, but because Romeo's friendship also serves his own self-interests. There is more. In both versions, when Giulietta, in the family tomb, is about to awake from her sleeping potion, she realizes she is being kissed by someone. In both cases she suspects Frate Lorenzo. In Da Porto, however, the suspicion is inconsequential and it rather conforms to the traditional slurs and attacks on the clergy, especially on monastic orders, typical of novellas ever since Boccaccio and earlier. In Bandello it is another matter, and not only because his version of this story, indeed his entire collection of tales, is devoid of any criticism of individual clergymen and of the Church as an institution.[9] From our observations so far it should be clear that Bandello's further characterization of Frate Lorenzo is not an end on itself. This, too, is an element functional to displaying yet another of Giulietta's unappealing qualities: she has less than a pure mind. Also, her being suspicious of such a "very saintly" (450) man speaks more of her character than of Frate Lorenzo's.

Finally, the two examples cited above, in the initial stages of this contrastive analysis, —that is, Romeo's demeanour and actions shortly before his death and the detailed circumstances leading up to the balcony scene—can also be interpreted in this light: the elaborate speeches Romeo is given to recite illustrate another of his talents—his eloquence—, while Giulietta's suggestion to bring a rope ladder proves her recklessness, her lack of consideration for Romeo's well-being, her carelessness of risks and consequences.

We could go on at length citing instances capable of supporting this line of inquiry, looking at every character and noting Bandello's modifications, which, at first glance and taken individually, seem too slight and, therefore, too irrelevant to make a difference but which finally amount to a radical transformation of the story. Let us take Giulietta's mother as a final example. In both versions, the idea of marrying the girl off is attributed to the mother. This, as Jones has pointed out, is, after Giulietta's own fit of despair, the most immediate cause for the tragedy which is destined to ensue. The error in judgement made by the mother in Bandello, in misinterpreting Giulietta's despair, further suggests women's generally imperfect, deficient nature. It

is not so in Da Porto where I daresay the occurrence is of no appreciable consequence given that it is counterbalanced by the mother's intuition that Giulietta's refusal to consent to the arranged marriage may be due to her loving another man. Bandello's mother figure has no such insight into her daughter's heart. It is her father who suspects her love for another man other than the one chosen for her by the family; it is he who instructs his wife to find out whether that may indeed be the case.

The process of comparing and contrasting is a necessary, albeit a tedious, one for it is the totality of such apparently insignificant changes which reveals the scope of Bandello's cumulative deviation on the poetic material he had inherited and which allows us to start drawing some conclusions. The point is this: it is behind the verbosity of his discourse, the repetitions, detailed descriptions, long-windedness of the direct speeches, the reiteration of schemes and structural units that Bandello conceals his manipulations, which ultimately reveal his political agenda in defense and support of the status quo.

It should also be pointed out that the rhetorical figure of *amplificatio* is active in this novella not only on the formal plane of organization. It is extended to the content itself, in that every emotion—love, rage, grief, despair—is exaggerated, intensified, heightened, exacerbated. Let one example suffice for all: the hostility between the two families is much more pronounced here than in Da Porto's version.

And yet it is excesses that Bandello warns about in the dedicatory letter preceding the tale; it is lack of temperance that he wants to chastise and excess of passion that he wants to curb. That, according to the author's own stated intent, is the moral of the story. "I wrote it," he says, "to warn the young that they should learn to be ruled by moderation and not to rush into things" (439). The reader, however, is left with a totally different impression. Since the story line does not change from previous versions, the more excessive are the emotions felt by the protagonists, the more reasonable seem the characters presumably in their power.[10]

As proof of that, let us consider the following instances: (1) no matter how much out of control Romeo's first love was, he succeeds in subduing it and the relationship has virtually ended

by the time he meets and falls in love with Giulietta; (2) whatever purpose Bandello had in mind when he wrote it, the scene of the street fight between the two factions displays a Romeo admirably capable of self-control; (3) despite the unrestrained despair in which Giulietta often indulges and which causes her repeatedly to come up with wild talk and crazy schemes, each time she does in the end give in to reason and gladly takes the practical advice given to her by the friar and by Romeo; (4) however intense is the terror she feels in imagining herself buried next to Tebaldo's fetid, rotting corpse, Giulietta does finally rein in her fears and drink the potion.

There are enough reasons to ask whether the author is not being inconsistent. Is his stated purpose in telling the story not incongruent with the facts as he expounds them? By what devious reasoning do these protagonists, the embodiment of reasonableness and rationality, become the epitome of blinding passion itself? The problem here is that, no matter how judiciously they behave later on, Romeo and Giulietta are guilty of that initial transgression against paternal authority that is here symbolic of Authority itself, which, at this point in time, is the most essential manifestation of the Catholic Reformation. From this perspective, Bandello's exacerbation of the hostility between the families can only be interpreted as a device used by the author to increase the scope of the violation enacted by the two lovers. The author's intolerance for the initiative displayed by the two, an action unfortunately not sanctioned by any authority, is responsible for the single most outrageous variation brought about by Bandello on Da Porto's outline (it is, in fact, the one constitutive element of the fabula which changes): the reconciliation of the families is only temporary in Bandello. It must necessarily be so, for in this new hierarchy of values, Giulietta's public or civic purpose for agreeing to marrying Romeo—which is to become a means to everlasting peace—has to be hampered and ultimately nullified. The ostentatious rationality enveloping the story as well as the verbosity of Bandello's discourse need to find a different justification: they are elements which intensify the didactic value of the tale.

Furthermore, it is important to note that although fate features prominently in the story, Bandello never mentions it,

never brings it to the foreground, neither to invoke it nor to curse it, as Da Porto at times does at the turning points of the plot, that is, precisely the ones decided by fate. In Bandello's rendition, the ideological economy of the story would make any observation on fate superfluous because it is deemed obvious. However, it is precisely in this postulation of the obvious that we find the tacit approval by Bandello in censuring, not as he ostensibly declares, unbridled, compelling passion—or at least not only that—, but more poignantly Romeo's and Giulietta's original transgression, one which Bandello cannot let go unpunished if the authoritarianism of the institutions of his day is to be upheld.

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NOTES

1 I am referring to *La novellistica*, volume I of *Storia dei generi letterari* (Milano: Vallardi, 1924).

2 See, for example, Marziano Guglielminetti, *La cornice e il furto. Studi sulla novella del '500* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1984).

3 For a good bibliographical review on this issue, see J.L. Levenson, "Romeo and Juliet before Shakespeare," *Studies in Philology* 81 (1984), pp. 325-347.

4 Other than the ones to which I will be referring later on, the studies I found most interesting are: L. Capecchi, "Romeo and Juliet: due versioni: Bandello e Shakespeare," *English Miscellany* 28-29 (1979-80), pp. 61-90; M. Cavalchini, "Bandello, Shakespeare, and the Tale of Two Lovers from Verona," *Italian Quarterly* 70 (1974), pp. 37-48; A.H. Diverres, "The Pyramus and Thisbe Story and its Contribution to the Romeo and Juliet Legend," in H.T. Barnwell et al., eds. *The Classical Tradition in French Literature: Essays Presented to R.C. Knight* (Edinburgh, 1977), pp. 9-22.

5 The novellas cited in my text are found in: for Masuccio Salernitano, *Novelle italiane. Il Quattrocento*, ed. Gioachino Chiarini (Milano: Garzanti, 1982); for Luigi Da Porto, *Novelle italiane. Il Cinquecento*, ed. Marcello Ciccuto (Milano: Garzanti, 1982); for Matteo Bandello, *Novelle*, ed. Giuseppe Guido Ferrero (Torino: UTET, 1974). The translations are mine.

6 On Masuccio and his time see: E. Grano, *Un Boccaccio alla corte aragonese: Masuccio Salernitano* (Salerno: Boccia, 1972); *Masuccio: novelliere salernitano dell'età aragonese*, eds. P. Borraro and F. D'Episcopo (Galatina: Congedo, 1978); L. Mulas, *Lettura del Novellino* (Roma: Bulzoni, 1984); L. Reina, *Masuccio Salernitano: un narratore alla corte dei Sanseverino* (Salerno: Edisu, 1979); E. Spinelli, *Masuccio Salernitano: struttura delle crisi e poetica del diverso* (Salerno: R. Reggiani, 1980); *Strutture narrative e conflitti sociali nel "Novellino" di Masuccio Salernitano*, ed. M. Cautadella (Salerno: Palladio, 1978).

7 On Da Porto see: G.H. Bumgardner, Jr., "An Antecedent of Romeo and Juliet," *YULG*, 59 (1975), pp. 268-76; H. Hauvette, *La "Morte Vivante,"* Bibliothèque de la Revue des cours et Conférences (Paris, 1933); A. Torri, *Bibliografia della Novella "Giulietta e Romeo" di Luigi Da Porto*, Biblioteca degli eruditi e dei bibliofili, LXVII (Firenze: Sansoni, 1961).

8 "Romeo and Juliet: Boccaccio and the Novella Tradition," *Stanford Italian Revue* 1 (1979), pp. 75-99; "*Romeo and Juliet*: The Genesis of a Classic" in *Italian Storytellers* (Dublin: Irish Academic P, 1989).

9 On Bandello and his time see: G. Getto, "Il significato del Bandello," *Lettere italiane* 7(1955), pp. 314-329; G. Herczeg, "Matteo Bandello: scrittore di una società che cambia," *Critica letteraria*, 7 (1979), pp. 353-364; G. Petrocchi, *Matteo Bandello, l'artista e il novelliere* (Firenze: Le Monnier, 1949); L. Russo, "Matteo Bandello novellatore 'cortegiano'," *Belfagor* 16 (1961), pp. 949-76; *Matteo Bandello novelliere europeo*, ed. U. Rozzo (Tortona: Litocoop, 1982); *Gli uomini, le città e i tempi di Matteo Bandello*, ed. U. Rozzo (Tortona: Centro studi Matteo Bandello e la cultura rinascimentale, 1985).

10 This point has been made before by J. Levenson who notes that in the story there is a conflict between "compelling emotion and reasonableness" (p. 333), that this "extraordinary tale of passion is confined within bounds of logic" (p. 337), and that "passion generally defers to reason" (p.339).

F. Gerson

Voltaire et le sentiment de l'amitié à travers sa correspondance, son théâtre et ses contes

Tout au long du dix-huitième siècle les Philosophes essayèrent d'expliquer ce qu'ils entendaient par amitié et s'appuyèrent sur ce que les Anciens avaient déjà approfondi. Pour certains l'amitié est une vertu dont l'origine remonte aux Stoïciens, pour d'autres l'amitié devient un sentiment loué par les Epicuriens. Voltaire semble rebelle à tout classement. Il évite l'ornière de la tradition pessimiste qui loue l'amitié-vertu tout en n'y croyant guère, et celle des philosophes optimistes qui devisent sur l'amitié-sentiment et, oubliant sa réalité en acte, l'étouffent sans le vouloir.

Nous nous proposons d'examiner quelques lettres tirées de sa *Correspondance*, une définition ou deux de son *Dictionnaire philosophique* et son conte "Jeannot et Colin" afin de dégager le paradoxe suivant: idéalisant et cultivant l'amitié au point d'en faire une véritable mystique, Voltaire en limite en même temps les implications et met l'accent sur la dimension vertueuse. Il est à espérer que nous parviendrons à détruire l'image d'un Voltaire rationnel et calculateur.

Voltaire considère l'amitié comme une vertu; en cela il ne diffère pas des prélats et des moralistes qui définissaient la conception ancienne de l'amitié. Toutefois il nomme vertu une amitié qui tire aussi son origine d'un enthousiasme sincère et en 1764 il rappelle que son époque ne possède pas l'enthousiasme des Grecs et que l'amitié ne brillait guère réellement au dix-septième siècle (*Dictionnaire philosophique* 15-16). Le mouvement libertin mis à part, il avait sans doute raison quant au dix-septième siècle, mais il reste moins convaincant quand il déclare que nul grand traité d'amitié n'existait dans les romans et le théâtre de son époque. Par contre, il semble que Voltaire synthé-

tise les attitudes stoïciennes et épicuriennes en glorifiant l'amitié au nom de la vertu et de la passion dans les vers suivants:

> Mais qui célébrera l'Amitié courageuse,
> Première des vertus, passions des grands coeurs,
> Feu sacré dont brûla ton âme généreuse,
> Qui s'épurait encore au creuset des malheurs?
> (*Ode sur la mort de la princesse de Barith* dans les *Oeuvres complètes* 8: 465)

Influencé par les écrits de Plutarque, Voltaire ne se refuse pas l'occasion de dénoncer les faux amis et les flatteurs; nous décelons une animosité mal dissimulée envers les princes même avant son expérience à la cour de Prusse (*La Henriade* dans les *Oeuvres complètes* 8: 43-258). Trop de penseurs se défiaient de l'amitié parce qu'ils étaient témoins de l'hypocrisie de la société mondaine. Bien qu'il en soit aussi conscient, Voltaire demeure néanmoins fidèle à sa foi en l'amitié:

> Du ciel alors daignant descendre
> L'Amitié vint à mon secours;
> Elle était peut-être aussi tendre
> Mais moins vive que les Amours.
> (*Stances VIII: A madame du Châtelet (1741)* dans les *Oeuvres complètes* 8: 513)

Parfois, un épicurisme désabusé s'empare de lui, et il nous encourage alors à réfléchir afin d'échapper à l'automatisme du quotidien et à aimer pour éviter le désespoir; il nous exhorte à trouver un ami pour nous rendre les maux moins vifs et les plaisirs plus grands (*Stances XV: Impromptu (1750)* dans les *Oeuvres complètes* 8: 521). L'amitié demeure sacrée même si les véritables amis sont rares:

> Souvent l'Amitié chancelante
> Resserre sa pitié prudente;
> Son coeur glacé n'ose s'ouvrir;
> Son zèle est réduit à tout craindre:
> Il est cent amis pour nous plaindre,
> Et pas un pour nous secourir.
> (*Ode XVI: A la vérité (1766)* dans les *Oeuvres complètes* 8: 484)

Sa correspondance avec la marquise du Deffand révèle qu'il n'est pas le seul à ressentir cette lucidité désabusée; son amie l'éprouvera aussi quelques années plus tard:

Je ne sait pas mon cher Voltaire, de quel oeil vous envisagez ma mort; je m'en détourne la vue autant qu'il m'est possible; j'en feroit de même pour la vie si cela se pouvoit; je ne sait en vérité pas laquelle des deux mérite la préférence; je crains l'une, je hais l'autre. Ah! si on avoit un véritable ami, on ne serait pas dans cette recherche; au lieu de remèdes universels, on ne trouve que des poisons. (Besterman 83: 67-68)

Comment ne pas voir, cependant qu'en se confiant à Voltaire de sa solitude la marquise contribue néanmoins par le geste de l'écriture à la réalisation de l'amitié. Sans la sincérité de cet échange l'amitié ne pourrait en effet que dépérir. La lettre de la marquise du Deffand rappelle quelque peu la citation attribuée à Socrate: "Mes amis, il n'y a pas d'amis." D'ailleurs, commencés dès 1720, les liens d'amitié de Voltaire pour la marquise sont allés en se renforçant, ce qui lui permet de dire en 1754:

Votre lettre, Madame, m'a attendri plus que vous ne pensez; et je vous assure que mes yeux ont été un peu humides en lisant ce qui est arrivé aux vôtres. J'avais jugé par la lettre de Mr. de Formont, que vous étiez entre chien et loup, et non pas tout à fait dans la nuit...Je ne regrettais donc, Madame, dans vos yeux que la perte de leur beauté, et je vous savais même assez philosophe pour vous en consoler. Mais si vous avez perdu la vue, je vous plains infiniment. Je ne vous proposerai pas l'exemple de Mr. de Senneterre aveugle à vingt ans, toujours gai et même trop gai. Je conviens avec vous que la vie n'est pas bonne à grand'-chose; nous ne la supportons que par la force d'un instinct presque invincible que la nature nous a donné: elle a ajouté à cet instinct le fonds de la boite de Pandore, l'espérance...(Besterman 24: 116)

Lorsque Madame du Deffand devint aveugle en 1754, Voltaire pour la consoler, feignit de l'être devenu aussi. Le 19 août 1763, il adressa la lettre suivante à son amie: *L'Aveugle Voltaire à l'aveugle Madame la marquise Du Déffant* (Besterman 52: 244-245). Celle-ci loin d'être dupe lui répondit le 30 septembre de la même année: *L'Aveugle Dudeffand au soi disant aveugle, mais très clair voyant Voltaire* (Besterman 53: 50-51). Madame du Deffand lui écrit le 7 mars 1764:

Votre lettre est charmante, tout le monde m'en demande des copies; vous me consolez presque d'être aveugle; mais monsieur, vous n'êtes point de notre confrairie. J'ai beaucoup interrogé m. le duc de Villars. Vous jouissez de tous vos cinq sens comme à 30 ans, et surtout de ce dixième dont vous me parlez, qui fait votre bonheur, mais qui fait le malheur de bien d'autres. (Besterman 54: 166)

Enfin Voltaire concède avec tact que Madame du Deffand ne s'était point trompée:

Voici le temps, Madame, où vous devez avoir pour moi plus de bontés que jamais. Vous savez que je suis aveugle comme vous dès qu'il y a de la neige sur la terre; et j'ai par dessus vous les souffrances. (Besterman 71: 76)

Si je suis en vie au printems, Madame, je compte venir passer dix ou douze jours auprès de vous avec Madame Denis. J'aurai besoin d'une opération aux yeux, que je n'ose hazarder au commencement de l'hiver. Vous me direz que je suis bien insolent de vouloir encor avoir des yeux à mon âge quand vous n'en avez plus depuis si longtems. (Besterman 73: 155)

Libre à nous de trouver la délicatesse de Voltaire quelque peu agaçante car elle ne trompe personne. Il a cependant reconnu l'aspect essentiel, aspect sans lequel aucune amitié ne peut subsister: le sentiment.

Nous nous proposons d'examiner les liens entre Voltaire et Thiriot qui ont duré une cinquantaine d'années. Ces liens illustrent notre point de vue qui soutient que Voltaire respectait l'idéal de l'amitié sans se faire d'illusions quant aux hommes. Devenu un homme célèbre, Voltaire rendit de nombreux services au paresseux Thiriot qui, mécréant conséquent, préférait jouer le rôle de parasite. Voltaire n'eut pas à se louer des services qu'il lui rendit. Thiriot se lia avec l'ennemi de son ami, Desfontaines, et eut une conduite équivoque. Il fit une centaine de souscriptions, en garda les fonds, et Voltaire remboursa la somme sans indignation, puis déclara:

Comme on a son bon ange, on a aussi son mauvais ange, et malheureusement c'est Thiriot qui fait cette fonction. Je sais qu'il m'a rendu de fort mauvais offices, mais je les veux ignorer. Il faut se respecter assez soi-même pour ne jamais se brouiller ouvertement avec

ses anciens amis et il faut être assez sage, pour ne point mettre ceux à qui on a rendu service à portée de nous nuire. (Besterman 7: 181)

En 1767, encore une fois compromis par Thiriot, Voltaire écrit:

...je n'ai à lui reprocher que de s'être conduit avec un peut trop de mollesse; et quoy qu'il arrive, je ne trahirai point une amitié de soixante années, et j'aime mieux tout souffrir que de le compromettre à mon tour. Je vous déffie de deviner le mot de l'enigme, et vous sentés bien que ne puis l'écrire, mais vous devinés aisément la personne. (Besterman 64: 81)

Leurs rapports indiquent cette fois que le sentiment de l'amitié peut être éprouvée en dépit d'un manque de réciprocité, et que le vertueux professe une foi d'autant plus sereine qu'elle mesure à l'indignité de l'autre.

C'est dans le conte "Jeannot et Colin" (1764) que Voltaire présente le plus directement le thème de l'amitié. Celui-ci avait quelque actualité depuis la publication du *Diable boiteux* (1707) de Le Sage, de *Manon Lescaut* (1731) de Prévost, de *La Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761) de Rousseau, et de *L'Amitié à l'épreuve* (1761) de Marmontel. Pourtant les oeuvres antérieures à "Jeannot et Colin" traitaient avant tout des passions en amour, l'amitié y tenait un rôle de second plan. Voltaire ainsi devance de dix ans Saint-Lambert et Diderot: *Les Deux Amis, conte iroquois* paraîtra en 1770, et *Les Deux Amis de Bourbonne* suivra en 1773.

Jeannot et Colin sont de familles modestes: l'un était fils d'un marchand de mulet, l'autre d'un laboureur. Les deux enfants s'aimaient et se fréquentaient assidûment. Leur amitié subit de sérieux revers à partir du moment où Jeannot apprend que sa fortune est faite. Colin, bon enfant, participe à la joie de son ami, qui quant à lui commence à l'éviter. Jeannot quitte la province pour Paris et rompt tout rapport avec Colin. Mais la fortune capricieuse déserte le nouveau riche qui fait l'expérience de la fragilité d'amitiés fondées sur le seul intérêt: une jeune veuve, sa maîtresse, l'humilie en offrant un poste de femme de chambre à sa mère lui fait don de quelques maximes insipides en guise de consolations. Jeannot désabusé n'apprécie guère l'ironie de la situation; mais l'action du récit revire une fois de plus quand il rencontre Colin, qui sans rancune s'exclame:

"Eh! mon Dieu! s'écria-t-il, je crois que c'est là Jeannot." A ce nom, le marquis lève les yeux, la voiture s'arrête: "C'est Jeannot lui-même, c'est Jeannot". Le petit homme rebondi ne fait qu'un saut et court embrasser son ancien camarade. Jeannot reconnut Colin; la honte et les pleurs couvrirent son visage. "Tu m'as abandonné, dit Colin; mais tu as beau être grand seigneur, je t'aimerai toujours". Jeannot, confus et attendri, lui conta en sanglotant, une partie de son histoire. "Viens dans l'hôtellerie où je loge me conter le reste", lui dit Colin; embrasse ma petite femme, et allons dîner ensemble." (Voltaire, *Romans et contes* 136)

Colin vient de faire fortune dans le commerce. Sans ressentiment, il prend Jeannot sous sa protection et promet de lui apprendre un métier. Saisi de remords, celui-ci se rend compte que les gens qu'il avait estimés l'ont oublié dans l'indigence et que celui qu'il avait autrefois méprisé est le seul à lui venir en aide. On pourrait reprocher au jeune écervelé de ne pas savoir respecter les règles de la loi mondaine ni de les acepter avec grâce.

Voltaire pose ainsi un problème fondamental à toute relation amicale: une amitié peut-elle réellement subsister entre individus appartenant à différents niveaux sociaux? Certains demeurent mais elles sont extraordinaires. Diderot, une dizaine d'années plus tard, reprendra le même sujet; dans les *Deux amis de Bourbonne*, les liens d'amitié existaient parce que Félix et Olivier ne possédaient aucun bien matériel. Dans *Jacques le Fataliste*, l'un des amis était riche et l'autre pauvre; ce qui devait éventuellement créer une grande amitié ou une forte haine se résoud finalement en une fusion de haine et d'amitié. Voltaire n'envisage pas seulement sous un angle social les rapports de Jeannot et de Colin, mais il soulève aussi un problème moral et psychologique. Prenons sa citation sur l'amitié tirée du *Dictionnaire philosophique*:

C'est un contrat tacite entre deux personnes sensibles et vertueuses. Je dis *sensibles*, car un moine, un solitaire peut n'être point méchant et vivre sans connaître l'amitié. Je dis *vertueuses* car les méchants n'ont que des complices, les voluptueux ont des compagnons de débauche, les intéressés ont des associés, les politiques assemblent des factieux, le commun des hommes a des liaisons, les princes ont des courtisans; des hommes vertueux ont seuls des amis. (*Dictionnaire philosophique* 15-16)

Si nous nous donnons la peine d'examiner "Jeannot et Colin" à la lumière de cette citation, le récit n'illustre pas exactement le point de vue énoncé. On reconnaîtra que Colin fait preuve de vertu et de sensibilité, mais que Jeannot nous frappe par la rapidité avec laquelle il rompt avec son ami une fois que la fortune lui sourit, par la candeur avec laquelle il réussit à démasquer l'hypocrisie sociale une fois placé devant le fait accompli, par la souplesse avec laquelle il se dispose à bénéficier de la générosité de son ami, c'est-à-dire à cultiver le jardin de Colin. Jeannot est foncièrement bon enfant soit, vertueux non.

Quand Voltaire définit l'amitié comme étant un mariage de l'âme,[1] il saisit une notion de l'amitié qui mérite d'être approfondie. Pourrait-on comparer l'amitié au mariage? Quelques années plus tard, Dupont de Nemours montrera dans sa *Philosophie de l'univers* (1792) que l'amitié ne diffère en fin de compte de l'amour que par quelques nuances du plaisir physique; l'amitié comme l'amour a ses joies et ses inquiétudes. Il est inutile, pourrait-on rétorquer, de disséquer les mobiles explicites ou cachés qui poussent deux êtres à s'aimer et il est utile de savoir que l'un est un peu plus ou moins esclave et l'autre maître. On ne niera pas que cette division demeure quelque peu simpliste et qu'elle gagnerait à être nuancée, cependant il n'en reste pas moins qu'entre deux êtres l'équilibre des sentiments respectifs peut être mis en doute et que celui qui est plus attaché est aussi le plus dépendant.

En amitié, comme en amour, l'équilibre est tout aussi précaire. Ce mariage d'âme ainsi interprété conduirait à nier la définition de l'amitié basée sur le concept de la réciprocité: ainsi serait-il possible de justifier à la fois Rousseau qui toujours prêt à recevoir mais à ne rien donner, et Diogène pour lequel il fallait être prompt à se présenter la main ouverte aux amis.

Mais il se peut aussi que Voltaire suive la pensée de Le Maître de Claville qui dès 1737 disait que l'hymen et l'amitié ont leurs douceurs et leurs peines. L'amitié, comme l'amour, a ses moments de sérénité et d'angoisse. Avec "Jeannot et Colin", Voltaire traite de l'amitié et se refuse à la définir ou à l'intellectualiser: méfions-nous du monde mais reconnaissons que le sentiment de l'amitié existe et fions-nous aux amis. D'ailleurs il

ne s'agit pas chez Jeannot et Colin d'un rapport authentique de maître-esclave, mais plutôt d'un ami qui est ami et d'un autre qui ne l'est pas. Ce conte finit sur un ton aimable et dépourvu d'amertume.

Afin de mieux saisir le paradoxe d'un Voltaire enthousiaste et désabusé, reprenons ses réflexions sur l'amitié lorsque le philosophe avait alors soixante-dix ans:

> Que porte ce contraste entre deux âmes tendres et honnêtes? Les obligations en sont plus fortes et plus faibles, selon leur degré de sensibilité et le nombre des services rendus, etc. L'enthousiasme de l'amitié a été plus fort chez les Grecs et chez les Arabes que chez nous. Les contes que ces peuples ont imaginé sur l'amitié sont admirables; nous n'en avons point de pareils, nous sommes un peu sec en tout. L'amitié était un point de religion et de législation chez les Grecs. Les Thébains avaient le régiment des amants: beau régiment! quelques-uns l'ont pris pour un régiment de sodomites; ils se trompent; c'est prendre l'accessoire pour le principal. L'amitié chez les Grecs était prescrite par la loi et la religion. La pédérastie était malheureusement tolérée par les moeurs; il ne faut pas imputer à la loi des abus honteux...(*Dictionnaire philosophique* 15-16)

Voltaire se rapproche ainsi de la thèse d'Empédocle selon lequel "le geai connaît le geai,—le voleur connaît le voleur,—et le loup connaît le loup": le bon serait l'ami du bon en tant qu'il lui ressemble. Il reste également influencé par Platon qui estime que l'ami c'est celui qui aime, sans être aimé lui-même, celui qui est aimé et n'aime point, celui qui aime et est aimé en retour. Voltaire subit l'emprise des Stoïciens qui pensaient que le sage tient l'amitié pour une vertu. Ceci dit, il ne se contente pas d'exiger de l'amitié pour une vertu, mais aussi une sensibilité qui existe à différents degrés chez différentes personnes.

Imbu des écrits de l'Antiquité, Voltaire fait preuve toutefois d'une lucidité évidente. Dans son *Catéchisme chinois*, il propose ce qu'il entend par amitié:

> Kou... L'amitié est le baume de la vie, il vaut mieux que celui du chimiste Erueil, et même que les sachets du grand Ranoud. Je suis étonné qu'on n'ai pas fait de l'amitié un précepte de religion; j'ai envie de l'insérer dans notre rituel.

> Cu-Su... Gardez-vous en bien; l'amitié est assez sacrée d'elle même, ne la commandez jamais; il faut que le coeur soit libre; et puis, si vous faisiez de l'amitié un précepte, un mystère, un rite, une cérémonie, il y autre mille bonzes qui, en prêchant et en écrivant leurs rêveries, rendraient l'amitié ridicule; il ne faut pas l'exposer à cette profanation. ("Cinquième entretien" du *Catéchisme chinois* dans le *Dictionnaire philosophique* 81)

Dans la citation traitée auparavant, Voltaire précise que l'amitié était un point de législation et de religion chez les Grecs; il semble approuver le fait que les Grecs vouaient un culte à l'amitié. Pourquoi semble-t-il en douter dorénavant?[2] Il se peut qu'il ait senti le danger de ce culte, car les penseurs qui se firent une idée trop absolue de l'amitié la transformèrent en idole et furent finalement poussés à la désacraliser. Il se peut que Voltaire se soit rendu compte des embûches qui guettaient une amitié idéalisée: de même que les Pères de l'Eglise adaptèrent le Stoïcisme à des fins théologiques et reléguèrent l'amitié à la devise "Dieu, roi, famille", les matérialistes durent exploiter l'Epicurisme à des fins gouvernementales, et vouèrent l'amitié à l'intérêt général et à la législation. Sachons gré à Voltaire d'avoir su éviter de tomber dans la systématisation et d'avoir cru en une amitié provenant d'un élan du coeur réglé par la raison.

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NOTES

1 Voltaire, *Dictionnaire philosophique* Notes: *Var.*: "C'est le mariage de l'âme, c'est un contrat..." (éd. 1769), 437.

2 Voltaire, "Cinquième entretien" du *Catéchisme chinois* dans le *Dictionnaire philosophique* 437:

> En vieux langage on voit sur la façade
> Les noms sacrés d'Oreste et de Pylade,
> Les médaillons du bon Piritoüs,
> Du sage Achate et du tendre Nisus,
> Tous grands héros, tous amis véritables:
> Ces noms sont beaux, mais ils sont dans les fables.

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José N. Martínez

Yerma vis-à-vis Aristotle's *Poetics*

I'm now going to finish *Yerma*, my second tragedy. The first was *Blood Wedding*. *Yerma* will be the tragedy of the barren woman. The theme, as you know, is classical. But I want it to have a new development and intention. A tragedy with four main characters and a chorus, the way tragedies should be. We have to go back to the genre of the tragedy. The tradition of our dramatic theatre compels us to go back. There will be ample time to write comedies and farses. In the meantime, I want to give the theatre tragedies. *Yerma*, which I'm finishing now, will be the second tragedy. (García Lorca, *Obras completas* 1709 my own translation)

These were the words expressed by the Spanish poet and playwright Federico García Lorca (1898-1936) with respect to *Yerma*, the second play of his rural trilogy, which premiered on 29 December 1934 in Madrid. Lorca envisioned his play as being a return to the theatrical womb of the Western world, that is, the classical Greek tragedy. However, certain critics have questioned Lorca's assertion. For example, Jacqueline Minett is of the opinion that "Notwithstanding Lorca's claim to have kept to the canons of the Classical tragedy, *Yerma* is much less closely linked in spirit and form to the Greek model than the author suggests" (36).

What is the truth? Who is right? In order to answer these questions I believe it apropos to go back to one of the first critics of the tragedy, namely, Aristotle (384-322 B.C.). This article will thus look at the points of contact between *Yerma* and the *Poetics*. Did Lorca adhere to the principles of tragedy delineated by Aristotle in his notebook over 2,000 years ago? This is the question that I will attempt to answer. Naturally, due to limits in space, I will not be able to discuss all the elements that Aristotle noted, but I will endeavour to emphasize the most salient aspects of the classical Greek tragedy.

One of the first principles described in the *Poetics* was that of the length of a tragedy. According to Aristotle "tragedy

attempts as far as possible to keep within one revolution of the sun or [only] to exceed this a little, but epic is unbounded in time; it does differ in this respect, even though [the poets] at first composed in the same way in tragedies as in epics" (7). Thus Aristotle believed that a tragedy should last no longer than twenty-four hours.

Obviously Lorca did not respect this Aristotelian principle in *Yerma* since Yerma and Juan have already been married for two years at the beginning of the play and it ends three years later. Yet even though *Yerma* does not adhere to this precept, we will see that in other more important aspects Lorca was loyal to the classical tragedy as it was practised in ancient Greece.

In the *Poetics*, Aristotle offered his students a definition of the tragedy:

> Tragedy is a representation of a serious, complete action which has magnitude, in embellished speech, with each of its elements [used] separately in the [various] parts [of the play]; [represented] by people acting and not by narration; accomplishing by means of pity and terror the catharsis of such emotions. By "embellished speech", I mean that which has rhythm and melody, i.e. song; by "with its elements separately", I mean that some [parts of it] are accomplished only by means of spoken verses, and others again by means of song. (7-8)

In my estimation there are three key elements in this definition: 1. "a representation of a serious, complete action", 2. the fact that the catharsis is effected "by means of pity and terror", and 3. "rhythm and melody, i.e. song".

The first element is self-explanatory; the second and third require a further explanation. Valentín García Yebra, who has translated the *Poetics* into Spanish, clarified the third aspect by explaining that Aristotle was not solely referring to musical instruments, but rather to a feeling of sweetness or softness of sound. Thus "melody can occur not only with instrumental music, but also in song and even in free verse" (García Yebra 265 my own translation). Even though, as Ildefonso Manuel-Gil has noted "Only one-sixth of *Yerma* is written in verse" (23 my own translation), any spectator or reader can appreciate the poetic character of this drama, and of all of Lorca's works in general. In fact, *Yerma* commences with a song:

A la nana, nana, nana,
a la nanita le haremos
una chocita en el campo
y en ella nos meteremos. (1.1.41)

(For the nursey, nursey, nursey,/For the little nurse we'll make/A tiny hut out in the fields/And there we'll shelter take.)

The second act as well begins with a song by the laundresses:

En el arroyo frío
lavo tu cinta,
como un jazmín caliente
tienes la risa. (2.1.66)

(Here in this icy current/let me wash your lace,/just like a glowing jasmine/ is your laughing face.)

And also the last scene of the play begins with an erotic song:

No te pude ver
cuando eras soltera,
mas de casada
te encontraré.
Te desnudaré
casada y romera,
cuando en lo oscuro
las doces den. (3.1.99)

(You I never could see/when you were fancy free,/but now that you're a wife/I'll find you, yes,/and take off your dress,/you, pilgrim and a wife/when night is dark all' round,/when midnight starts to sound.)

It is true that the Greek tragedy was never written in prose (García Yebra 265), yet Lorca was able to create, through verse and song, a poetic milieu full of rhythm, harmony and melody in the style of the classical tragedy.

The second aspect that I underlined was the phenomenon of catharsis or purgation, which is definitely a vital point of the tragedy. In fact for Richard H. Palmer, "The crux of the definition [of tragedy] lies in the concept of *katharsis*" (24). In the *Poetics* Aristotle indicated the conditions needed to effect pity and terror. As he taught his students, the protagonist's character was fundamental in order to produce those emotions:

first, clearly, it should not show (i) decent men undergoing a change from good fortune to misfortune; for this is neither terrifying nor pitiable, but shocking. Nor [should it show] (ii) wicked men [passing] from misfortune to good fortune. This is most untragic of all, as it has nothing satisfying nor pitiable nor terrifying. Nor, again, [should it show] (iii) a thoroughly villainous person falling from good fortune into misfortune: such a structure can contain moral satisfaction, but not pity or terror, for the former is [felt] for a person undeserving of his misfortune, and the latter for a person like [ourselves]. Consequently the outcome will be neither pitiable nor terrifying.

There remains, then, the person intermediate between these. Such a person is one who neither is superior [to us] in virtue and justice, nor undergoes a change to misfortune because of vice and wickedness, but because of some error, and who is one of those people with a great reputation and good fortune, e.g. Oedipus, Thyestes and distinguished men from similar families. (16)

This long quotation shows that Aristotle believed that the tragic protagonist should be someone who is in between wickedness and virtue. García Yebra reaffirmed this point by stating:

The most suitable person for being the protagonist of a tragedy is one who is in between the two extremes of virtue and wickedness. This type of person has the two conditions needed in order to excite our pity and our fear: our pity, since he is not so bad that he deserves misfortune; our fear, because he is similar to us. (283-284 my own translation)

By following these precepts, Lorca was able to provoke the pity and fear required to effect the catharsis.

It seems obvious that the catharsis takes place at both the level of the protagonist and the audience, yet this is a disputable matter; for example, Palmer believes that the Aristotelian tendency was to consider art from the audience's perspective. Thus the catharsis represents the audience's response to the action taking place on stage (Palmer 22).

There is no doubt that the audience feels relieved emotionally when Yerma kills her husband. Aristotle, in fact, believed that the poet should put himself in the spectator's place:

In constructing his plots and using diction to bring them to completion, [the poet] should put [the events] before his eyes as much as he

can. In this way, seeing them very vividly as if he were actually present at the actions [he represents], he can discover what is suitable, and is least likely to miss contradictions. (22)

Indeed, Aristotle had already expressed this belief when he underlined the importance of the plot vis-à-vis the audience: "For the plot should be constructed in such a way that, even without seeing it, someone who hears about the incidents will shudder and feel pity at the outcome" (17). And we definitely fear and pity Yerma.

Nevertheless, I believe that the catharsis also occurs at the protagonist's level. I base my argument on the word "emotions", which García Yebra has cited as a synonym of "illness" (386). I've italicized this word because, in my opinion, Yerma suffers an illness, which is not only her infertility. Basically her illness consists of her obstinacy in not recognizing her fate. Thus her illness is a psychological one. We shall now see how the text points toward this fact.

Her illness is established within the text from the beginning of the play. The first thing that the audience observes is the external manifestation of what Yerma is dreaming:

Al levantarse el telón está Yerma dormida con un tabanque de costura a los pies. La escena tiene una extraña luz de sueño. Un pastor sale de puntillas mirando fijamente a Yerma. Lleva de la mano a un niño vestido de blanco. Suena el reloj. Cuando sale el pastor la luz se cambia por una alegre luz de mañana de primavera. Yerma se despierta. (1.1.41)
(When the curtain rises Yerma is asleep with an embroidery frame at her feet. The stage is in the strange light of a dream. A Shepherd enters on tiptoe looking fixedly at Yerma. He leads by the hand a Child dressed in white. The clock sounds. When the Shepherd leaves, the light changes into the happy brightness of a spring morning. Yerma awakes.)

Lorca insistently emphasizes Yerma's maternal desires through the asides and verses. This desire gradually turns into desperation:

(El marido sale y Yerma se dirige a la costura, se pasa la mano por el vientre, alza los brazos en un hermoso bostezo y sienta a coser.
¿De dónde vienes, amor, mi niño?

«De la cresta del duro frío.»
¿Qué necesitas, amor, mi niño?
«La tibia tela de tu vestido.»
...
¿Cuándo, mi niño, vas a venir?) (1.1.45)

(The husband leaves. Yerma walks toward her sewing. She passes her hand over her belly, lifts her arms in a beautiful sigh, and sits down to sew.

From where do you come, my love, my baby?/"From the mountains of icy cold."/What do you lack, sweet love, my baby?/

"The woven warmth in your dress."/.../When boy, when will you come to me?)

Given this desperate situation, I believe that the play consists of a process toward self-discovery. Yerma passes through various stages in order to find out the truth about herself. Lorca's protagonist wishes to find out the reason why the son she so desires cannot become a reality.

At the beginning of the play, it seems that Yerma is quite confident that she will have a son; it is only a question of patience. Yet in her first conversation with María, one immediately becomes aware of her preoccupation with time; Yerma anguishes over the fact that she's been married for exactly "two years and twenty days" and she still has no son.

Yerma tries to rationalize the reason for her sense of emptiness. And right from the start, Yerma seems to blame her husband when she tells him in a desperate tone: "A mí me gustaría que fueras al río y nadaras y que te subieras al tejado cuando la lluvia cala nuestra vivienda. Veinticuatro meses llevamos casados, y tú cada vez más triste, más enjuto, como si crecieras al revés" (1.1.42) ("I'd like to see you go to the river and swim or climb up on the roof when the rain beats down on our house. Twenty-four months we've been married and you only get sadder, thinner, as if you were growing backwards"). I find this to be ironic because, as we will discover, she is also ill, even though she does not realize it until the end of the play.

Yerma's suspicion about Juan is confirmed by the Old Woman, who refers to Juan as a "rotted seed": "Aunque debía haber Dios, aunque fuera pequeñito, para que mandara rayos

contra los hombres de simiente podrida que encharcan la alegría de los campos" (1.2.57) ("Though there should be a God, even a tiny one, to send his lightning against those men of rotted seed who make puddles out of the happiness of the fields"). Yerma accepts this accusation, and reaffirms it when she speaks with Dolores:

¡Es bueno! ¡Es bueno! ¿Y qué? Ojalá fuera malo. Pero no. El va con sus ovejas por sus caminos y cuenta el dinero por las noches. Cuando me cubre cumple con su deber, pero yo le noto la cintura fría como si tuviera el cuerpo muerto y yo, que siempre he tenido asco de las mujeres calientes, quisiera ser en aquel instante como una montaña de fuego. (3.1.92-93)
(He's good! He's good! But what of it? I wish he were bad. But, no. He goes out with his sleep over his trails, and counts his money at night. When he covers me, he's doing his duty, but I feel a waist cold as a corpse's, and I, who've always hated passionate women, would like to be at that instant a mountain of fire.)

In the last scene of the play, which takes place in a hermitage high in the mountains, the Old Woman leaves no doubt as to who is at fault for Yerma's infertility:

Lo que ya no se puede callar. Lo que está puesto encima del tejado. La culpa es de tu marido. ¿Lo oyes? Me dejaría cortar las manos. Ni su padre, ni su abuelo, ni su bisabuelo se portaron como hombres de casta. Para tener un hijo ha sido necesario que se junte el cielo con la tierra. Están hechos con saliva. En cambio, tu gente no. Tienes hermanos y primos a cien leguas a la redonda. Mira qué maldición ha venido a caer sobre tu hermosura. (3.2.106-107)
(What can no longer be hushed up. What shouts from all the rooftops. The fault is your husband's. Do you hear? He can cut off my hands if it isn't. Neither his father, nor his grandfather, nor his great-grandfather behaved like men of good blood. For them to have a son heaven and earth had to meet—because they're nothing but spit. But not your people. You have brothers and cousins for a hundred miles around. Just see what a curse has fallen on your loveliness.)

However, one must question the veracity of such a statement. I am not questioning the fact that Juan may be impotent; what I would like to question is whether Yerma is free of all fault, since

even the Old Woman states that Yerma's father was austere and stoic, that is, two traits which are contrary to the notion of sexual enjoyment:

¡Ah! Enrique el pastor. Lo conocí. Buena gente. Levantarse. Sudar, comer unos panes y morirse. Ni más juego, ni más nada. Las ferias para otros. Criaturas de silencio. Pude haberme casado con un tío tuyo. Pero ¡ca! Yo he sido una mujer de faldas en el aire, he ido flechada a la tajada de melón, a la fiesta, a la torta de azúcar. (1.2.54)
(Ah! Enrique the shepherd. I knew him. Good people. Get up, sweat, eat some bread and die. No playing, no nothing. The fairs for somebody else. Silent creatures. I could have married an uncle of yours, but then...! I've been a woman with her skirts to the wind. I've run like an arrow to melon cuttings, to parties, to sugar cakes.)

Yerma herself admits implicitly to having inherited the puritanism of her father when she states that, "Yo me entregué a mi marido por él, y me sigo entregando para ver si llega, pero nunca por divertirme" (1.2.56) ("I gave myself over to my husband for his sake, and I go on giving to see if he'll be born—but never just for pleasure"). This repulsion towards sexual enjoyment had already manifested itself during a chat she had with the Old Woman:

Vieja: ¿No tiemblas cuando se acerca a ti? ¿No te da así como un sueño cuando acerca sus labios? Dime.
Yerma: No. No lo he sentido nunca. (1.2.55)
(First Old Woman: Don't you tremble when he comes near you? Don't you feel something like a dream when he brings his lips close to yours? Tell me.
Yerma: No. I've never noticed it. 1.2.186)

Therefore, all these allusions in the text make one suspect that, perhaps Juan is not the sole one at fault.

Linked to what has been called puritanism, there is the fact that Yerma exploits the concept of honour in order not to recognize the reality of her situation. In his book, *La tragedia en el teatro de Unamuno, Valle-Inclán y García Lorca*, Luis González del Valle has stated that, "Honour is an excuse which Yerma uses in order not to recognize her own personal shortcomings" (142 my own translation). I am in complete agreement with this state-

ment for I believe that her major problem is not that she is infertile, but rather that she cannot admit it to herself. Honour is not an obstacle to sexual enjoyment. The reproval of sex forms part of her character, which, as I have alluded to, was a paternal inheritance.

Even though she questions herself, she is unable to accept the fact that she cannot have a baby. In the second scene of act two, one can appreciate the main difference between Juan and Yerma. He is tired of hearing her speak about the baby, and he scolds Yerma for this reason: "Siempre lo mismo. Hace ya más de cinco años. Yo casi lo estoy olvidando" (2.2.77) ("Always the same thing. It's more than five years. I've almost forgotten it"). These words show how in fact Juan has resigned himself to not becoming a parent. But Yerma cannot resign herself to such a reality because it would be like commiting suicide, as she explains to Juan:

Juan: Estando a tu lado no se siente más que inquietud, desasosiego. En último caso, debes resignarte.

Yerma: Yo he venido a estas cuatro paredes para no resignarme. Cuando tenga la culpa atada con un pañuelo para que no se abra la boca, y las manos bien amarradas dentro del ataúd, en esa hora me habré resignado. (2.2.78)

(Juan: At your side one feels nothing but uneasiness, dissatisfaction. As a last resort, you should resign yourself.

Yerma: I didn't come to these four walls to resign myself. When a cloth binds my head so my mouth won't drop open, and my hands are tied tight in my coffin—then, then I'll resign myself!)

Throughout the play Yerma holds on desperately to the idea of having a son; her desperation becomes so acute that she considers herself to be the only person that is tormented by nature:

Porque estoy harta. Porque estoy harta de tenerlas y no poderlas usar en cosa propia. Que estoy ofendida, ofendida y rebajada hasta lo último, viendo que los trigos apuntan, que las fuentes no cesan de dar agua y que paren las ovejas cientos de corderos, y las perras, y que parece que todo el campo puesto de pie me enseña sus crías tiernas, adormiladas, mientras yo siento los golpes de martillo aquí, en lugar de la boca de mi niño. (2.2.81)

(Because I'm tired. Because I'm tired of having them, and not being able to use them on something of my own. For I'm hurt, hurt and humiliated beyond endurance, seeing the wheat ripening, the fountains never ceasing to give water, the sheep bearing hundreds of lambs, the she-dogs; until it seems that the whole countryside rises to show me its tender sleeping young, while I feel two hammer-blows here, instead of the mouth of my child.)

Later on she reaffirms her hope by assuring herself that, "Lo tendré porque lo tengo que tener. O no entiendo el mundo" (3.1.91-92) ("I'll have one because I must. Or I don't understand the world"). Almost as a last resort, she pleads for divine intervention: "Señor, abre tu rosal/ sobre mi carne marchita" (3.2.101-102) ("Lord, make your rose tree bloom/ upon my barren flesh). The last line is very important because it signals the fact that Yerma has begun to realize that she is sterile.

At this point I would like to introduce another element that Aristotle considered necessary, namely "recognition" or "anagnorisis", which he defined in the following manner: "A recognition, as the word itself indicates, is a change from ignorance to knowledge, and so to either friendship or enmity, among people defined in relation to good fortune or misfortune" (14). Thus the play consists of a process toward recognition. At the same time that Yerma was holding on to her desire, there is also in play the phenomenon of the recognition that she is barren. One of the key moments leading to that recognition occurs in the second scene of act two when Yerma screams out that she is a barren field:

> ¡Ay, qué prado de pena!
> ¡Ay, qué puerta cerrada a la hermosura!
> que pido un hijo que sufrir, y el aire
> me ofrece dalias de dormida luna.
> ...
> ¡Ay, pechos ciegos bajo mi vestido!
> ¡Ay, palomas sin ojos ni blancura!
> ¡Ay, qué dolor de sangre prisionera
> me está clavando avispas en la nuca!
> Pero tú has de venir, amor, mi niño,
> porque el agua da sal, la tierra fruta,

y nuestro vientre guarda tiernos hijos,
como la nube lleva dulce lluvia. (2.2.80)

(Oh, what a field of sorrow!/Oh, this is a door to beauty closed:/to beg a son to suffer, and for the wind/ to offer dahlias of a sleeping moon!/.../Oh, breasts, blind beneath my clothes!/Oh, doves with neither eyes nor whiteness!/Oh, what a pain of imprisoned blood/is nailing wasps at my brain's base!/But you must come, sweet love, my baby,/because water gives salt, the earth fruit,/and our wombs guard tender infants,/ just as a cloud is sweet with rain.)

As these last lines indicate, Yerma still clinged to her hope of becoming a mother.

In the last scene of the play, Yerma recognizes on various occasions her personal deficiencies. She tells the Old Woman that she is infertile: "Yo soy como un campo seco donde caben arando mil pares de bueyes y lo que tú me das es un pequeño vaso de agua de pozo. Lo mío es dolor que ya no está en las camas" (3.2.107-108) ("I'm like a dry field where a thousand pairs of oxen plow, and you offer me a little glass of well water. Mine is a sorrow already beyond the flesh").

The Aristotelian concept of recognition becomes a reality in the last encounter between Yerma and the Old Woman, when the latter accuses her of being infertile:

Vieja: Pues sigue así. Por tu gusto es. Como los cardos del secano, pinchosa, marchita.

Yerma: ¡Marchita, sí, ya lo sé! ¡Marchita! No es preciso que me lo refriegues por la boca. No vengas a solazarte como los niños pequeños en la agonía de un animalito. Desde que me casé estoy dándole vueltas a esta palabra, pero es la primera vez que la oigo, la primera vez que me la dicen en la cara. La primera vez que veo que es verdad. (3.2.108)

(Old Woman (strongly): Then stay that way—if you want to! Like the thistles in a dry field, pinched, barren!

Yerma (strongly): Barren, yes, I know it! Barren! You don't have to throw it in my face. Nor come to amuse yourself, as youngsters do, in the suffering of a tiny animal. Ever since I married, I've been avoiding that word, and this is the first time I've heard it, the first time it's been said to my face. The first time I see it's the truth.)

And if perchance there was still some hope, Juan puts a definitive end to all possibility or hope:

Yerma: ¿Y nunca has pensado en él cuando me has visto desearlo?
Juan: Nunca. (Están los dos en el suelo.)
Yerma: ¿Y no podré esperarlo?
Juan: No.
Yerma: ¿Ni tú?
Juan: Ni yo tampoco. ¡Resígnate!
Yerma: ¡Marchita! (3.2.110-111)
(Yerma: And you never thought about it, even when you saw I wanted one?
Juan: Never. (Both are on the ground.)
Yerma: And I'm not to hope for one?
Juan: No.
Yerma: Nor you?
Juan: Nor I. Resign yourself!
Yerma: Barren!)

Thus in my opinion, the process of recognition is completed; Yerma has gone from a state of ignorance to a state of knowledge.

In the last confrontation between Yerma and Juan, Lorca fulfilled another requisite of the tragedy according to Aristotle, that is, "suffering", which was defined as "a destructive or painful action, e.g. deaths in full view, agonies, woundings etc." (15). In effect, Yerma kills Juan, which thus affirms her infertility since she kills all hope of having a son and finally resigns herself to accepting her fate (illness):

Marchita. Marchita, pero segura. Ahora sí que lo sé de cierto. Y sola. (Se levanta. Empieza a llegar gente.) Voy a descansar sin despertarme sobresaltada, para ver si la sangre me anuncia otra sangre nueva. Con el cuerpo seco para siempre. ¿Qué queréis saber? No os acerquéis, porque he matado a mi hijo, ¡yo misma he matado a mi hijo! (3.2.111)
(Barren; barren, but sure. Now I really know it for sure. And alone. (She rises. People begin to gather.) Now I'll sleep without startling myself awake, anxious to see if I feel in my blood another new blood. My body dry forever! What do you want? Don't come near me, because I've killed my son. I myself have killed my son!)

We do not know how well Lorca knew the classical Greek tragedy, but the principle of suffering in *Yerma* seems to follow faithfully the precepts delineated by Aristotle:

> when sufferings happen within friendly relationships, e.g. brother against brother, son against father, mother against son or son against mother, when someone kills someone else, is about to, or does something else of the same sort—these are what must be sought after. (18)

These are the situations which must be sought because, as García Yebra has noted, these are the ones that produce pity and fear to the highest degree (289).

"Hamartia", which is also known as "error" is another Aristotelian principle of the tragedy. It acts as a complement to the element of suffering. In chapter thirteen, Aristotle stated:

> a plot that is fine is single rather than (as some say) double, and involves a change not from misfortune to good fortune, but conversely, from good fortune to misfortune, not because of wickedness but because of a great error by a person like the one mentioned, or by a better person rather than a worse one. (16)

García Yebra has added that hamartia did not imply wickedness, but rather "a detrimental ignorance for the person who suffers from it" (284 my own translation). Without a doubt, hamartia is present in *Yerma*. The protagonist commits the error of discovering the truth about herself. A truth which she did not expect and which leads to the deaths of her husband, her future son and of herself in a spiritual sense.

There is an inevitable fatalism implicit in Yerma's name which was a neologism created by Lorca. In his study on this play, Miguel García-Posada underlined that there exists:

> a type of imminent fatalism in the character, expressed in her name, which is the author's neologism; the name and the symbolic web which is woven by Lorca throughout the tragedy identifies Yerma with sterility, drought, darkness and destruction. In this sense, Yerma is linked to the typology of the classical tragic hero. Just as Oedipus is the son of fortune, Yerma is "like a dry field where a thousand pair of oxen plow." Her name refers to the classical names (Phaedra, Medea, Electra). She is the only protagonist in Lorca's theatre who is so profoundly marked by her name. (20 my own translation)

This keen observation proves that there is a close link with the classical Greek tragedy. By baptizing the protagonist with a name that is so specific, Lorca emphasized the fact that Yema was born with a *fatum* that would dictate the development of her life.

Another aspect that Aristotle underlined was that of the simple and complex plots. Plot meant action (García Yebra 278); for Aristotle a simple plot was "continuous in its course and single, where the transformation comes about without reversal or recognition" (14); while a complex plot was "an action as a result of which the transformation is accompanied by a recognition, a reversal or both" (14). Furthermore, "the construction of the finest tragedy should be not simple but complex, and moreover it should represent terrifying and pitiable events" (16). Without a doubt, Yerma consists of a complex plot since as we have already shown, there is "suffering" and also "peripetia" or "reversal" which is "a change of the actions to their opposite" (14). This comes into play at the end when Yerma suddenly kills Juan.

Moving on to a different matter, Aristotle believed that tragedy consisted of six elements: plot, characters, diction, reasoning, spectacle and song (Aristotle 8). Of these six, plot was the most important:

> So plot is the origin and as it were the soul of tragedy, and the characters are secondary....Tragedy is a representation of an action, and for the sake of the action above all [a representation] of the people who are acting. (9)

However, Lorca seemed to disagree in this aspect, when in an interview given in Catalan to Juan Tomás, he affirmed that, "*Yerma* does not have a plot. *Yerma* is a character who develops in the course of the six scenes...I repeat *Yerma* has no plot" (*Obras completas* 1671 my own translation).

Thus there seems to be a discrepancy. However, Richard H. Palmer has argued successfully that there is a close link between Aristotle's concepts of character and plot:

> For Aristotle character involved more than dramatis personae articulating attitudes and values. Character revealed moral purpose, "showing what kinds of things a man chooses or avoids." Speeches that entail no action or choice express no character but only a potential for character.

The moral dimension that defines a person's essential nature develops exclusively from actions revealing that moral makeup. Character, therefore, intrinsically relates to action and plot. (23)

Thus I propose that in reality Lorca was not opposing himself to any Aristotelian principle. The dividing line between action and character is practically inexistent, for they are intimately related. Plot plays a large role in *Yerma* but it is not subordinated to the character of Yerma. In fact, her character enhances the plot. The plot and the development of Yerma's character reach their climax with the murder of Juan.

Throughout this article, I have showed how *Yerma* is definitely a play written according to the precepts of the classical Greek tragedy as Aristotle taught them to his students. As a finishing touch, I would like to focus in on one last element of the tragedy, that is, the chorus which certainly makes its presence felt in *Yerma*. As to the chorus, Aristotle believed that "[The poet] should regard the chorus as one of the actors. It should be a part of the whole, and contribute to the performance" (25). And in effect, Lorca could not conceive of a tragedy without a chorus (*Obras completas* 1709). In this play in particular, we have a chorus of laundresses who begin the second act with some lines that I quoted at the beginning of the article. However, it must be said that this is not a traditional chorus, since there is no unanimity of opinion amongst the laundresses (Minett 35).

The laundresses act as the chorus by commenting and disputing who is at fault for not having any children. Some defend Yerma, while others take Juan's side:

Lavandera 5ª: Estas machorras son así: cuando podían estar haciendo encajes o confituras de manzanas, les gusta subirse al tejado y andar descalzas por esos ríos.

Lavandera 1ª: ¿Quién eres tú para decir estas cosas? Ella no tiene hijos, pero no es por culpa suya.

Lavandera 4ª: Tiene hijos la que quiere tenerlos. Es que las regalonas, las flojas, las endulzadas, no son a propósito para llevar el vientre arrugado. (2.1.68)

(Fifth Laundress: That's the way those mannerish creatures are. When they could be making lace, or apple cakes, they like to climb up on the roof, or go barefoot in the river.

First Laundress: Who are you to be talking like that? She hasn't any children but that's not her fault.

Fourth Laundress: The one who wants children, has them. These spoiled, lazy and soft girls aren't up to having a wrinkled belly.)

The appearance of the chorus of laundresses proves once again Lorca's desire to go back to the classical Greek tragedy.

I thus believe that when Lorca made the statement with which this article began that he was not simply making a superficial, thoughtless statement; as we have seen by examining *Yerma* in the light of Aristotle's *Poetics*, Lorca was truly faithful to the principles of the tragedy that had been taught by the Greek philosopher over two thousand years ago. I therefore conclude that Lorca's *Yerma* is a tragedy in the classical sense of the word.

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Angeles Encinar

Technical and Thematic Aspects of Juan Marsé's *Un día volveré*

The past few years have witnessed many diverse trends in Spanish fiction.[1] This fact has not hindered the emergence of a common factor in many Spanish novels, which could be summed up as a desire for narrativity, and the search for a tale to tell, a feature which Forster considered to be the most fundamental aspect of the novel (Forster 42). This characteristic has been a constant element in all of Juan Marsé's works. As early as 1970, in an interview with Federico Campbell, Marsé asserted that having an "interesting, cataclysmic story, fun to tell" and doing it properly made up the essential fabric for weaving a good novel (220-225). *Un día volveré*, published in 1982, partakes fully in these propositions. Besides the narrative component, there are elements of the detective novel, a genre that a number of Spanish authors have cultivated in the past few years. To this we must add a narrative world that delves into a deeper and more ambitious panorama: a social and existential subject that takes on relative importance in the discourse. The goal of the reflections presented in this article will be to comment on all of these characteristics.

The plot of *Un día volveré* could be summarized as follows: Jan Julivert Mon, a one-time anarchist gunman, after having spent a number of years in prison, returns to what had been his mother's house in the Guinardó quarter, where his sister-in-law Balbina and her son Néstor now live. Everyone in the neighborhood awaits Jan's return with great anticipation, especially his nephew and the latter's friends, who dream of the possible events this ex-political activist and boxer might set in motion. Yet the passing of time shows just the opposite, and Jan Julivert seems to have repudiated his past and now leads a quiet life. Things are kept on a more or less even keel until Jan decides to work as a guard in the home of Luis Klein, who had been a

judge during the infamous years of repression and had been in contact with the ex-prisoner. This occurrence will lead to a number of suspicions on the part of Jan's old friends and fighting companions, who had preconceived plans with respect to the distinguished judge. Nevertheless, Jan's behavior will once again disappoint his onlookers, who at the last moment misinterpret his conduct to the point of provoking his death.

A feature that is present in all detective novels is an abundance of facts and dates that are supposedly significant to the protagonist. This type of detail appears right from the beginning of Marsé's work, thereby allowing us to have a glimpse of the events taking place in Jan Julivert's world. Thus, for example, we are inundated with the following data: "9 de junio"; "hacia las 3 de la tarde"; "en 1930, a los 20 años pesaba"; "una mañana de abril de 1936"; "no volverían a verse hasta 1947"; "quince años después en 1975" ("June 9"; "at around 3 in the afternoon"; "in 1930, at the age of 20, he weighed"; "one April morning in 1936"; "they would not meet again until 1947"; "fifteen years later in 1975").

Besides this data there is an air of mystery which permeates the entire structure of the novel. A conventional division of the book into four parts, divided in turn into four or five chapters with subsequent sections, allows us, for the purposes of this article, to track the waves of suspense that the writer injects gradually into his story. The plot that drives the action and keeps the reader in suspense is provided by the expectations—which on occasion coincide with those of the reader—of the various characters as regarding the activities the protagonist carries out in this new stage of his life of freedom. The climactic points of this tension are found strategically distributed at the beginning or end of each section. In the fifth chapter of the first part, Julivert finally accompanies Néstor to inspect the home of Judge Klein. Similarly, the last chapters of the second and third parts, as well as the first chapter of the fourth part, represent possible decisive moments: Jan, in his role of night watchman, (re-encountering) Luis Klein; the decision to admit the latter to a psychiatric clinic; and, finally, the plans to kill him.

The characters who seem in some ways to be rudimentary, upon critical examination turn out to be artistically interwoven

through the use of perspective. The reader, actively involved in this type of novel, must put together the trail supplied to him by the three narrative focuses in order to get a total view of the protagonist. There exists an adolescent world, and through its eyes we see the transformation of the mythical figure in the imagination of the boys who knew this man only through references. The imagined impression of boxer-bandit-political revolutionary clashes constantly with the actual passivity of the supposed hero. The dreams and frustrations of this juvenile myth are narrated with a succesful and often lyrical nostalgia and its distorsion is highlighted by the violence of the vulgar street jargon used by the group of youths and the people of the neighborhood. A second perspective is presented through dialogue and the evocative reminiscence between the "viejo Sau" and Polo. Their situation, as opposed to that of the protagonist, will allow the antagonistic views they have of Jan to be judged. The old painter of cinema posters reconstructs the humanistic and committed image of the man who marched in the Durruti column. Counterbalancing this positive memory, Inspector Polo emphasizes the life he led as a gunman and thief. Clearly the final option is the one the reader himself is able to deduce, thanks to the periods of omniscient narration and to the reader's position as an observer in the development of the action, that is to say, using Booth's terminology,[2] through the narrative alternation between "scenes" and "summaries" used by this more reliable narrator.

The role of active reader must be constantly performed in order to assimilate and fully understand Marsé's novel. It seems appropriate to define it as an enigmatic book that stirs up many unanswered questions (Thompson 81). It is quite evident that the text is plagued with question marks. Is Néstor the son or the nephew of Jan Julivert? Is the death of the policeman Polo a suicide or a murder? What happened to the money stolen by the protagonist? What kind of relationship existed between Jan, Luis Klein and his wife, Virginia Fisas? What was the meaning of the hair clip or tie pin belonging to the Kleins? The answers to some of these questions is only found at the end of the novel, when the reader has access to more detailed knowledge of different events that occurred in the lives of the main characters.

Somehow this proliferation of questionings allows us to reach the conclusion that we are dealing with a work based on "eternal textual return" (Thompson 94).

As in earlier novels, *Un día volveré* emphasizes the social problems of the post-war world and the stifling Franco dictatorship. The intertextuality present in the work of this Catalan writer is an element that has been underlined many times, and has even been termed "intratextuality", when all the novels are considered as a continuous work (Sherzer 57-67). The repetition of scenes (urinating on Fascist political symbols), anecdotes (burying a pistol underneath a tree), characters (Balbina, Palau, Sendra), and the subjects themselves are manifest proof of the presence of this element in the world of Marsé's novels.

The subject of the Franco period is dealt with imaginatively and lyrically (Villanueva 53). The political struggle, the repression, the various factions and other matters are wisely diluted in a narrative in which action and subjective value are underlined. The range of impoverished characters that move about before our eyes illustrates the available options for living during those years. An existence which, in the majority of cases, was fatally determined by poverty or the repressive situation (e.g. Balbina's case). There is also a focus from another perspective, the opportunistic choices of people such as the doctor, Mr. Folch or "Mandalay", who knew how to take advantage of adverse situations. The world of poverty is juxtaposed by the victorious wealty class, the Kleins, who, settled in their villa-paradise, form part of the group of people who could ignore this unpleasant and bothersome aspect of reality were it not for its potential attribute of danger.

Social criticism is polarized in the protagonist, Jan Julivert. This man, whose image questions the need for a myth in old age and childhood as a survival weapon, at a deeper level raises the possibility of an empty existence, alien to any current development since the truth is that one does not live but only survives in a world where change is not possible, in which everything stays the same. The existentialist subjects of alienation and failure are expressed accurately through the living prism of Julivert. The confrontation between the ex-revolutionary individual and party aims, and the social circumstances that pre-

vent their being attained, does not refer exclusively to the social condition of Spaniards, but also seems to go beyond these limits, expanding into the state of modern man's alienation and disenchantment. Existential nausea and vomit, products of a conscience threatened by the oppresion of facts, are shown with tremendous dramatic intensity in the following excerpt:

Y aun así, aun aferrándose de forma implacable a esta atrafagada cadena de cometidos triviales pero llenos por lo menos de sentido práctico, inmediato, aun así volvió a experimentar súbitamente en su ánimo el tirón hacia abajo, el mismo vértigo que sintiera el primer día de cautiverio en una fría celda del penal de Burgos,años atrás, cuando algo le hizo comprender de pronto que su vida se descolgaba de la vida, que perdía pie, que ya nada volvería jamás a tener sentido, ni siquiera los recuerdos.

Se levantó, abrió la puerta corredora de cristal y vomitó en la terraza, bajo la lluvia. (196)

(And even then, even clinging relentlessly to this engrossing chain of tasks, trivial but at least full of practical, immediate sense, even then in his spirit he suddenly felt that downward pull once again, the same vertigo he had felt his first day in captivity in a cold cell at the Burgos penitentiary, years before, when something made him suddenly understand that his life was slipping away from life, that he was losing his footing, that now nothing would ever make sense again, not even his memories.

He got up, opened the glass sliding door and vomited onto the balcony, in the rain.)

This viscous and obstructive atmosphere, typical of an existential picture, is also perceptible in the other social sphere, the world of the Kleins. It is the judge himself who speaks to the protagonist of his intuitions regarding the unpleasant odor of the past: "Igual que una charca pestilente" (228) ("Just like a fetid pond").

The determining past that dragged Jan Julivert to the situation of the present narrative is parallel, although antagonistic, to the past of another important character, Luis Klein. The comparison between the two figures, of opposite signs, could be taken as a constant in the reading of the work, since the circumstances of their lives led them to come into contact on decisive

occasions. The actual moment of forgetting, willful in one case and accidental, but accepted, in the other, is a new point of contact. This parallelism in their lives seems to serve as well as a means of revealing their personalities. The definition of Jan provided by the judge is the sharpest and most realistic definition in the realm of the the novel: "Una mezcla de pensador y de hombre de acción. Pero tenga mucho cuidado: el hombre que actúa siempre se ve mal interpretado por el que piensa" (230) ("A mixture of a thinker and man of action. But be very careful: the man who acts always finds himself misunderstood by the man who thinks"). This advice prophesies the end of the novel. Jan's reflex action was negatively interpreted by the real instigators of the attack.

The theme of guilt is another constant in Marsé's writings that emphasizes their intertextual nature. Feelings of guilt are, in the majority of cases, closely tied to the problem of alienation (Sherzer 189-195). In this novel Balbina's character clearly projects the link between the two elements. To the external alienation provoked by the difficult situation she faces in the world that surrounds her, which never hesitates to take advantage of her unfortunate circumstances, we must add her own weakness, which makes her more inclined towards less demanding positions. Her resignation towards being a waitress and a prostitute is a cause for the feelings of guilt she has on judging her life and it's possible influence on her son, as she herself expresses: "Soy una fulana, cuñado. Podría haber sido otra cosa, pero no pude o no supe" (52) ("I'm a hooker, brother-in-law. I could have been something else, but I wasn't able or didn't know how").

In *Un día volveré* Balbina also higlights another primordial element in all the novels by this author: sexuality. Although it is not as clear as in earlier works, it is easy to discern the presence of a significant erotic component. As Marsé himself confirmed, he likes to "show, demonstrate the characters to the reader, to physically profile them" (Freixas 55). Thus the narrator of *Un día volveré* on various occasions dwells on physical descriptions of Balbina that highlight her sensuality, especially in situations in which the possibility of a rekindling of affections between Jan and herself is revealed.

From a structural point of view, the linear mode of the narrative and its simple language permit this book to be studied on a less demanding level. The systematic abandonment of complicated metaphors and frequent comparisons however, does not exclude the presentation of certain decidedly lyrical passages. In contrast to these fragments, one must underline the predominance of language that reveals the social condition of the different characters. The use of street jargon, rich in sexual and aggresive expressions is notable: "minga", "pajillera", "birló", "guantazos", "me cago en su padre", "vete a tomar por el saco", etc. Moreover, the narrator tends to adapt to the reality of the scene, and on occasion takes on the discourse of other characters or groups.[3]

Un día volveré should be included within a current trend in which history, as a basis for the story, becomes a fundamental element of attraction that satisfies the expectations of all good reading material. With this novel Juan Marsé brings us a well-structured creation with a fluid narrative, imbued with a more profound, transcendent subject matter.

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NOTES

1 For a specific study of the different trends see the the special issue of *Insula* 464-465 (July-August 1985).
2 The difference between telling and showing may be studied in chapter 1 of Booth's book.
3 This fact could be analyzed in detail from the point of view of heteroglossia, see Bakhtin 310-325.

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Connie Tchir

Lourdes Ortiz and the Re-appropriation of the Genesis Myth

Myth will here be taken to mean what the history of religions now finds in it:...traditional narration which relates to events that happened at the beginning of time and which has the purpose of providing grounds for the ritual actions of men of today and, in a general manner, establishing all the forms of action and thought by which man understands himself in his world. (Ricoeur, 5)

The two basic functions of "myth" defined in Paul Ricoeur's *The Symbolism of Evil* establish its use within the confines of religion; firstly, as the basis for socio-religious rites and practices, and secondly, as a philosophical means by which man can attempt to come to terms with his existence on earth. Although Ricoeur's definition does not directly allude to the processes involved behind mythogenesis, what is none the less taken for granted is the implication of moral judgement suggesting to the reader/listener the most propitious conduct for the general good of society. The continued propagation of a particular myth would then presuppose some level of general consensus with regards to this judgement. Any myth that has not achieved this general consensus would simply not become established in the mythology of a people, but would find itself condemned to fictional death through silence. Once accepted into a popular mythology, the precepts of a myth can be effectively used as a strong psychological force capable of unifying society through a form of moral contract whose objective would be the maintenance of order within said society. This moral contract can further be utilized as an effective method of foreseeing and preventing changes to the subsequent established order. Given this extension of the implications of a popular mythology, the analysis of which particular myths are preserved and spread throughout a given culture can be directed towards the study of

the prejudices, at times carefully inculcated by the controlling sector, and the fears of that people. In a patriarchal set-up, for example, myths that exalt the supremacy of the feminine will be repressed in favor of those that will not subvert the established masculine "order."

The preservation of the most advantageous mythological base can become a matter of great importance to those in power and any deviation from the norm can provoke censure under the implied threat of dire consequences. The discourse of the North American mythologist Joseph Campbell reflects precisely this type of apocalyptic censure:

> Moyers: What happens when a society no longer embraces a powerful mythology?
>
> Campbell: What we've got on our hands. If you want to find out what it means to have a society without any rituals, read the New York *Times*.
>
> Moyers: And you'd find?
>
> Campbell: The news of the day, including destructive and violent acts by young people who don't know how to behave in a civilized society. (Campbell, 8)

According to Campbell, maturity would seem to imply a tacit acceptance of well established myths and rites on the part of the young people, who then become members of society only through their conformity. Without this implicit approbation, civilization runs the risk of wallowing in destructive anarchy.

The most persuasive myths, those of the Bible that govern the genesis of the Judeo-Christian-Muslim triad, have come under scrutiny as strong examples of prejudicial maintenance of societal order because of the privileged status afforded to the masculine in their structure. The patriarchal hegemony within the synagogue/church/mosque organization has lead to biased biblical exegesis in which the role of the female personage is suppressed. This suppression is then reflected in the position of women within the communities that have accepted this biblical base. Female authors have rebelled against this mythological/religious manipulation that has left them without a "voice," without power. Their purpose is to achieve a subversive demystification "through which the now relativized patri-

archal or paternal source of myth and archetype is shifted, displaced, and replaced with a gender specific alternative" (Ordóñez, 103). An analysis of the short story "Eve" by Lourdes Ortiz serves as an example of this "shift" in that she provides a possible alternative reading of biblical myths; in this particular case, of the Genesis myth.

The patriarchal interpretation of the myth of the Fall, of man's expulsion from Eden, establishes a religious base for the long accepted alliance between woman and evil. The feminine is to be forever stigmatized through the culpability of Eve as reflected in the words of the Christian patriarch Tertullian:

> Do you not know that each of you is Eve? The sentence of God on this sex of yours lives in this age: the guilt must of necessity live too. *You* are the Devil's gateway. *You* are the unsealer of that forbidden tree. *You* are the first deserter of the divine Law. *You* are she who persuaded him whom the Devil was not valiant enough to attack. *You* destroyed so easily God's image man. On account of your desert, that is death, even the Son of God had to die. (Noddings, 52)

This concept of woman's inherent vile nature which has facilitated many years of her religious oppression is subverted in "Eve." According to Ortiz, the original sin that assured the fall from Paradise was not the feminine act of submission to temptation, but rather the masculine act of "differentiation" in Adam's discourse: "Hasta entonces él...jugaba con las palabras y nombraba las cosas. No había valoración, ni adjetivo para comparar, ni matiz, ni grado que marcara jerarquías y diferencias" (Ortiz, 11)[1] (Until then he...played with words and named objects. There had been no value judgement, nor adjective with which to compare, nor nuance, nor level that would denote hierarchies and differences). Adam, gifted with the power to name and thus appropriate, begins to "distinguish" and "classify." Ideally, when an object is named, it is simply and precisely that object, without appraisal. But when the "gaze" awakens, what is also aroused is "algo de la serpiente en los ojos de Adán" (Ortiz, 11) (something of the serpent in Adam's eyes). God's firstborn is given the power to name with the purpose of facilitating distinction between objects, but he is incapable of preventing his "gaze" from capturing the features of each entity

that afford them advantages over himself. Envy becomes the predominant aspect of Adam's character.

The Fall begins with the naming of the birds as Adam differentiates between their appearance and abilities. When he realizes that he is incapable of the gift of flight, in mid-sentence, a cardinal sin is realized: "pero tiene alas, unas alas dúctiles y firmes con unos remos poderosos que de pronto, aquel día, el mismo día de la mirada y del deseo y de la piel, él comenzó a envidiar" (Ortiz, 12)[2] (but it has wings, firm, ductile wings with powerful oars that suddenly, that day, the same day of the gaze and of the desire and of the flesh, he began to envy). Adam has already tasted of the forbidden fruit, as evidenced by sexual desire, but the feminist focus shifts in order to concentrate on his "envy." The importance of the apple, Eve's submission to evil within the myth, is diminished. Through his jealousy, Adam distinguishes himself from the birds: "un anhelo apenas formulado, un 'sí yo también...' que implicaba pasiones, desvelos, expectativas" (Ortiz, 12) (a scarcely formulated desire, a 'yes, I too...' that implied passions, preoccupations, expectations). This distinction indicates the psychological scission similar to the Lacanian "mirror stage" with the first realization of the separate existence of "you" and "I." Before the comparison Adam was "todavía sin nombre" (still without name) and "parte indiscernible" (an indiscernible part) of Eve. Now through his envy of the "other," Adam has stopped accepting the primordial union and a simultaneous frenzy of differentiation occurs; of the "I," of value judgement, of adverb and adjective. All of these imply classification and inevitably denote certain limits between the differences. The true Fall becomes the realization of these limits and the otherness that they engender. If there exists a "más allá" (a further beyond) and an "arriba" (above), then there exists "un camino que recorrer, una aventura, preguntas nunca antes formuladas" (Ortiz, 13) (a road to travel, an adventure, questions never before formulated); in other words, an antipode to whatever is situated "here."

An inadvertent discovery precipitated by Adam's extension of his gaze outward, is the realization of his opposing inward gaze. Like inter-stacking Chinese boxes, each differentiation opens up to reveal another inner contraposition. The ability to

judge the advantages of the "other" inevitably affords the realization of "lack" within oneself. Adam, not content to merely envy exterior assets, now begins to compare with the intent of "attainment." The masculine tendency towards appropriation takes on major importance in Ortiz' version and is used to further underscore the basic differences between Adam and Eve's natures. Although both have tasted of the forbidden fruit, and therefore should be logically experiencing the same effects, the power to name that marks Adam's superior position also nuances the character of the Fall. Although the narrator comments to Eve: "tú también ambicionaste, comenzaste a desear aquella piel" (Ortiz, 14) (you also strove, you began to desire that pelt)[3], it is Adam who takes measures and fabricates the first weapon—"la quijada" (the jawbone). With supreme irony Ortiz points out the ultimate object of destruction—a jawbone. Not only is this the instrument that is used to kill the first leopard and, in Cain's hands, his brother Abel, but also it symbolizes the part of Adam's body from which rises the voice leading to expulsion; that is to say, his power to name and thus differentiate. It can also be seen as ironically representing the weapon of the feminine voice that tries within this story to subvert masculine mythology through re-appropriation of her-story. In "Eve," the jawbone transforms Adam into a vicious beast of prey: "con las manos, que se asemejaban ahora en su destreza a las propias garras del leopardo, comenzó a desgarrar la piel, a separarla de la carne sanguinolenta" (Ortiz, 15) (with his hands, which now matched the skill of the leopard's own claws, he began to rip away the pelt, to separate it from the bloody meat). Instead of civilizing him, the power of the word has lead him to a more primitive, regressed animal state. No longer is there a peaceful co-existence between man and beast; this relationship has been poisoned by the covetous desires of Adam.

Within this particular Chinese box are other relationships effected by appropriation. The leopard's skin, once offered to Eve, sets up a hierarchy between herself and Adam:

> ...al brindártela, algo se había transformado: Tú diminuta de pronto, sumisa y agradecida...tú ya no igual a él, sino regalada y protegida por él que además te contemplaba de manera diferente—¿cómo llamar a esa distancia repentina entre los dos, a esa manera de situarse frente a

ti y ante sí mismo...no ya parte de tu cuerpo, no piel de tu piel... (Ortiz, 16)
...in his offering it to you, something had changed: You, tiny all of a sudden, submissive and thankful...you, no longer equal to him, but rather looked after and protected by he who also regarded you in a different manner—how to define this sudden distance between the two, this way of placing himself in front of you and before himself...no longer part of your body, not flesh of your flesh...

The separation between man and woman is complete; Adam is no longer of the same flesh. Eve occupies the lower rung of the scale and it would appear that she has to "pagar aquella piel dorada" (Ortiz, 17) (pay for that golden pelt). After making love, an act described in violently animal terms, Eve is converted into an object of prey equal to the leopard. The omniscient narrator comments: "él reposaba a tu lado satisfecho, cubierto con la piel parda, tiznada con tu sangre y la sangre ya seca del animal" (Ortiz, 17) (he laid by your side satisfied, covered by the dark pelt, soiled with your blood and the already dried blood of the animal).

The earth itself becomes an object of appropriation when Adam puts into action "proyectos, avenidas por construir, murallas, caminos que trazar, fronteras" (Ortiz, 18) (projects, avenues to be opened[4], walls, roads to design, borders). Man has not only established psychological limits between himself and woman, but also physical limits between lands and peoples. Every patch of earth will now be separated, differentiated from one another. In this way, man has perpetuated not only the sin, but its own punishment; there will no longer be harmony and union. An ominous re-reading of the words of St. Augustine becomes possible: "humanity produced what humanity became, not what it was when created, but when, having sinned, it was punished" (Pagels, 109). Differentiating has opened the proverbial Pandora's box, unleashing a chain of cause and effect that represent their own retribution. The gift of naming and appropriating has cyclicly appropriated man's destiny, leaving him in a hell of his own making.

The separation of the primordial union of Adam and Eve comes full circle in Ortiz' version with the birth of Cain and

Abel. The former, "queriendo ser Adán, obsesionado por ocupar su puesto" (Ortiz, 19) (wishing to be Adam, obsessed with occupying his place), renews the cycle of envy and possession. Cain assumes his father's work and even feels an illicit passion towards his mother: "dispuesto a combatir por ti y avergonzado de ese deseo" (Ortiz, 19) (ready to fight for you and ashamed of that desire). Eve is forced to cover herself in front of Cain from the moment that she becomes aware of this immoral desire, warned by "el calor húmedo de su aliento" (Ortiz, 19) (the humid warmth of his breath). God gives life with His sacred breath, but here man profanizes the symbol into one of possessive sexual desire. The imitation of the father reaches a climax when Cain, consumed by envy, kills his brother with the jawbone and proffers the same "grito de orgullo desmedido" (shout of unbound pride) that Adam celebrated upon killing the first leopard.

In opposition to Cain, Abel emphasizes separation from the father through his return to the paradisal union. This son is still joined to Eve "en una especie de indisoluble unidad que volvía a borrar la diferencia" (Ortiz, 18) (in a sort of indissoluble unity that once again erased the difference), though he remains complete within himself: "macho-hembra que asumía la síntesis de aquella primitiva unión, antes de nuevo de la manzana" (Ortiz, 18-19) (male-female that took on the synthesis of that primitive union, once again before the apple). His gaze is the innocent one of before and his act of naming is the former pure act, without adverbs and adjectives. While Adam suffers from "un trabajarás y ganarás el pan que le excitaba y le impedía ver los árboles, el río, el pequeño lago junto al valle" (Ortiz, 18) (a "you will work and you will earn your bread" that excited him and prevented him from seeing the trees, the river, the small lake next to the valley), Abel (notably at the side of his mother) "los nombraba como si pudiera ver de nuevo el árbol, el río, el valle" (Ortiz, 19) (named them as if he could see once more the tree, the river, the valley). When Cain contemplates the earth, he is only capable of "mumbling" about projects for the future; in other words, his discourse is not clear or pure.

In further opposition to Cain, Abel's sex is the one that completes Eve's, not an illicit desire. This "male-female" represents

a possible return for mankind to the paradisal state: "como si el Jardín volviera a estar allí" (Ortiz, 19) (as if the Garden were once again there). The narrator, speaking for Eve, clearly recognizes Abel's ability to bridge the difference between man and woman: "como si a través suyo, a través de aquel hijo-hija dual...pudiera volver a reconstruirse la unidad primigenia..." (Ortiz, 20-21) (as if through him, through that dual son-daughter...the firstborn unity could be reconstructed). For Eve, Abel represents this salvation, but for Adam and Cain, he represents an inversion of all the established values. From the male perspective, he is "Abel infame...despreciado e ignorado...Abel-mujercita" (Ortiz, 21) (vile Abel...despised and ignored...Abel the Effeminate)[5]. It is strikingly evident that Adam and Cain portray traditional male prejudice whereby the worst insult one can hurl at a man is the one that accuses him of being woman-like.

In spite of the apparent disdain, Cain is not above feeling consuming jealousy with regards to Abel. In one savage act, a faithful reflection of the killing of the first leopard, Cain destroys his brother and the possibility of Edenic return. In her attempt to invert the patriarchal focus of the traditional biblical reading, Ortiz puts the weight of the Fall totally on the shoulders of Cain and the father whom he imitates. After the assassination, "cayó el rayo vengador de los sucesivos dioses-machos e iracundos e imperó definitivamente la desdicha y la muerte...abrió el triángulo del miedo...de la vergüenza y de la culpa" (Ortiz, 22) (the vengeful bolt of the successive irate male gods fell and death and misfortune definitively reigned...the triangle of fear, shame and culpability opened up). Now Eve "sees" paradise only upon "closing" her eyes, upon canceling out "el reino de la mirada" (the realm of the gaze), all the while imagining the sound of Abel's flute. In her imagination, Eve once again lives in a world of pure words without differentiation, without value judgements. She is once more "Ave" (Bird)[6] as Abel has named her, and she freely "vuela...simplemente vuela" (flies...simply flies) without limits through the skies. The cycle closes and her mind inverts time in the same way that Abel had inverted her name; she returns to innocence and the primordial union, confusing Abel with the Adam of before.

Physical time, however, is not so easy to escape as part of man's "differential" punishment: "El tiempo era ahora una línea incierta tendida hacia adelante, como un diseño de terrores por venir" (Ortiz, 22) (Time was now an uncertain line stretching forward, like an outline of horrors to come). The Fall is not restricted to the simple removal of Paradise; it has damned Adam's progeny to continual appropriation of the future. For having dared to distinguish, to assess limits, man is condemned to the terror of "*tiempo*...denso y pesado, como una sucesión...algo que se podía medir, casi cortar..." (Ortiz, 15) (time...dense and heavy, like a succession...something that could be measured, almost cut). This linear succession pushes man who plans against the present for the future and limits woman who is reduced to a state of constant measured "waiting." Adam has deprived them of paradisal time, forcing them to travel the road towards death. It is not the woman Eve, but the man Adam who is the supreme transgressor for having appropriated and limited, to his own detriment, the concept of time.

Ortiz attempts to re-appropriate Edenic time for her Eve through Abel, portraying it as mythic time:

> Abel contaba una a una las estrellas y creaba leones, toros, carros, hermosas mujeres que vertían agua fresca de un cántaro inagotable, convirtiendo el firmamento en un libro ilustrado, en un inmenso marco de premoniciones, de promesas, de símbolos que tú aprendías a leer a su lado...(Ortiz, 21)
> Abel would count the stars one by one and would create lions, chariots, beautiful women pouring fresh water from a bottomless pitcher, converting the firmament into an illustrated book, into an immense framework of premonitions, promises, symbols that you were learning to read at his side...

Abel turns the Heavens into an entire Greek mythology for Eve, bringing reflections of this illusory past in contact with the future. In this way, time becomes a cyclical union, not a solitary linear progression. According to the definition of Mircea Eliade, all myths propose some form of return to a sacred Great Time:

> ...the myth takes man out of his own time—and projects him, symbolically at least, into the Great Time, into a paradoxical instant which cannot be measured because it does not consist of duration...

Merely by listening to a myth, man forgets his profane condition, his "historical situation..." (Eliade, 58)

Man effects a return to the sacred, which permits him to forget the profane. In the same way, Eve attempts a return to Edenic time in order to escape from the horror of a world "profanized" by Adam. When she turns her gaze to the past, Eve sees "una línea de tiempo congelado" (Ortiz, 19) (a line of frozen time), instead of destructive rapid changes. Her mind still functions in terms of Edenic time, confusing all her memories: "¡Fueron tantas cosas las que sucedieron casi al mismo tiempo!" (Ortiz, 16) (There were so many things that happened almost at the same time!). When Eve starts to narrate the story of paradise to her son Abel, she insists on its anti-chronological nature: "Cuando no existía el tiempo" (Ortiz, 20) (When time did not exist), and all that happened before the fall has no other delineation than "before the apple." With these references, Ortiz establishes the sacred character of Eden and of Eve, both innocent victims of Adam's temporal infiltration.

This insistence on the profanization of the sacred through masculine attempts at appropriation and differentiation subverts the traditional patriarchal reading of the Genesis myth. Ortiz has managed a re-reading which incorporates the basic elements of the biblical myth without prejudice against the feminine. On the contrary, Eve becomes a heroine, Adam's "object" turned into "subject" of the story. Through her personage, the oppressed feminine sector of society can re-appropriate herstory in a way that dignifies memory. Eve is not the transgressor, but rather the last vestige of Edenic life; that which Adam has destroyed still lives on in the memories of Eve. She is incapable of imposing limits, neither in time, nor between the sexes, and still longs for the sacred primordial union. If Eve suffers, it is for the sins of Adam who has assured their Fall within the masculine world of appropriation. Despite the implied painful destiny, the feminist reader can still discern some positive results: "the elixir of androgyny is glimpsed and the potential for revisionary female mythopoesis emerges, even if the individual quester is forcibly reintegrated into the patriarchy" (Ordóñez, 103). Eve empowers a feminine biblical voice and

allows the reader a glimpse of moral values that surpass the need to possess—one of the inescapable side-effects of masculine differentiation.

None the less, the very structure of the story threatens to annul this positive message. At the end of it all, the curious reader may find herself overwhelmed by a series of "whys." Why is it necessary to re-write a patriarchal myth at all? Why re-appropriate if appropriation is to be despised? Why create an Eve who is still victim and object of man? And finally the ominous structural "why"—why does Eve not have her own voice? This omniscient narrator who continually speaks for the feminine character, is s/he God, Ortiz, Eve referring to herself in the form of "you," or is it a simple reflection of the ambivalence and open structure of the feminine text? Although the structure's lack of easily imposed conclusions figuratively complies with Eve's desire to surpass the masculine need for limits within the text, the "voice" that Ortiz intends to return to the feminine personage disappears into this abyss. There is always an omniscient presence that directs Eve's discourse; the subject of the story is incapable of speaking for herself. Is this a faithful reflection in a mythological world of woman's position within the patriarchal scheme? It would seem that Ortiz is warning the reader not to attempt to formulate decisive conclusions that limit all possibilities; not to expect masculine logic, but rather a feminine structure that subverts any attempts at classification. The positive values depicted in the short story are to be accepted as expressed, along with their embodiment in the feminine character. Eve has been retrieved from the old alliance with evil without the wholesale destruction of the original myth. Ortiz has removed the masculine perspective in order to replace it with the feminine, and if the de-mythification has not managed to create a heroine without faults, at least it has given rise to a feminine "voice" in biblical writing and analysis—without general consensus, without destructive anarchy. Through "Eve," Ortiz has denuded the masculine "myth" at the point of Genesis.

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NOTES

1 All translations taken from the text of "Eva" are my own and tend towards the literal with stylistic changes being made only for purposes of clearer comprehension, as in cases of idiomatic equivalency. In such cases, literal translations will be provided in further footnotes.
2 In this context Ortiz plays with the double connotation of the word "remo" in its pluralized form. While the wings of the bird are given the image of oars, the bird is "sailing through the air" with the implied figurative associations, it is also a direct replacement for the word "limb" or "wing" as part of its dictionary definition. In this way she calls attention to the original association of an accepted cliché, which effects a return to the original "naming."
3 In this particular passage, the narrator is reminding Eve of her desire to acquire the leopard's skin to protect herself from the cold, presented as a more practical decision in opposition to Adam's "codicia" (covetousness).
4 Literally, "avenues to be constructed."
5 Literally, this last expression would be "Abel—the little woman."
6 "Ave" is a simple inverted play on the Spanish name for Eve, "Eva." It fulfills the double purpose of being a reference to the inversion of Eve to her former state through Abel, who has named her Ave, and also as a reference to the "bird" with its ability to soar freely beyond man's constructed limits.

John Gilbert

Franco-American Relations through the Cinema: Some Thoughts on the "Cultural Exception"

This is the story of an invasion without chariots, without firepower but equally relentless and with equally ominous predictions of cultural enslavement. The words of President François Mitterand at the time of the last round of GATT negotiations in 1994, in reference to "l'exception française"—the cultural exclusion clause so bitterly negotiated—summarise the intent of this paper: he said "A society which gives up the means of depicting itself is a society that will soon be enslaved"[1]. I shall examine this statement in the specific area of film production where the skirmishes are threatening to become all-out war. In the year of the celebration of the hundred years of cinema, we might almost call it a hundred years war because the confrontation between France and the USA over film production has been there, however spasmodically, from the beginning.

The most recent figures issued by the Paris-based National Cinema Centre reveal that French movies performed worse last year with the home audience than ever: of the 126 million seats sold in French cinemas, less than 28% of them were in theatres showing French films.[2] From a purely economic viewpoint the figures are alarming for the future of the French film industry. They are perhaps more alarming from a cultural perspective. The loss there is less tangible but possibly more serious for the French identity. I should like to examine this loss in a very narrow and specific area, that of national self-representation in film especially as it is revealed in what I shall call filmic "rewrites" of French films by the Hollywood industry. This is one area of inquiry which reveals what might be lost if the French film industry went the way of the British and Italian industries.

As this paper represents the beginning of my work in this area, I shall use only one film to illustrate my point—Jean-Luc Godard's *A bout de souffle* remade as *Breathless* by director Jim McBride—but before looking at the films themselves some preliminary historical overview is useful to contextualize the debate. As early as 1926 we read the following from an American analyst who was fully aware of the impact of movies in changing cultural profiles and creating images of desire: "The peoples of many countries now consider America as the arbiter of manners, fashions, sports, customs and standards of living. If it were not for the barrier we have established, there is no doubt that the American movies would be bringing us a flood of the immigrants. As it is, in a vast number of instances, the desire to come to this country is thwarted, and the longing to emigrate is changed into a desire to imitate."[3] This, accompanied by a statement by Marcel Braunschveig in 1931, tells us how early the battle for culture had begun in the area of cinema: "film is in the process of Americanizing the world".[4] As we look cursorily at the history of French cinema we can detect a pattern of intrusion by the American film industry into France. The greatest inroads are usually made at moments of greatest weakness, coinciding with the great wars and with moments of disorientation and indecision, as at present. What is sobering too, is to see how the French response to the perceived danger has been predictably the same over the years.

The current crisis seems to be cyclical. Up until the first World War one could say that film was a French industry. After the early artisan period of production represented by the Lumière brothers and Georges Meliès, film corporations, spearheaded by Pathé frères, were set up which were as powerful as their American counterparts. Foreign exchanges were established for distribution in Germany and Russia and later in the USA. Pathé had studios in Jersey City. Gaumont followed and boasted the world's largest studio at Buttes Chaumont, the largest cinema, the Gaumont Palace, and agencies around the world. It is estimated, perhaps unreliably, that before the war 90% of films distributed were French but by 1919 only 10% to 15% projected in Paris alone were French. Most American films seen in France were initially distributed by French distributors

like Pathé and Aubert but even before 1914 their position had been eroded and both Vitagraph and Biograph had offices in Paris. French production dropped to 30% of world production and it is thought that the effect of the war was to encourage the taste for the escapist entertainment provided by the American industry. There is a curious echo at the present time. A Parisian filmgoer quoted in the recent press claimed: "French films are not showbusiness. And at 45ff a seat you don't want to be bored".[5] The current big seller in Paris is *The Lion King*. France then, as now, was in danger of becoming a cinematic colony. Its solutions then, as now, took two forms: to imitate and associate. Attempts were made to associate, as exemplified by the short-lived arrangement between Diamant-Berger and Adolph Zukor. Or to imitate: independent producers went the route of block-buster super-production in competition with the Americans but only one notable success emerged, *L'Atlantide* by Jacques Feyder. By 1922 super-productions were in doubt and the most successful attempts at regenerating the French film industry came through small independent companies working on low budgets assigned to a particular director such as Louis Delluc the director of the landmark film, *Fièvre*.

After the second World War, a similar crisis arose. Films were among the export commodities which figured in the general agreement of conditions surrounding the granting of Marshall Aid for post-war reconstruction, foreshadowing the desire on the part of the Americans to include cultural products in the GATT negotiations that are still being debated today. A share of box-office receipts seems to be the current target for American negotiators, receipts which provide in the form of taxes some of the revenue devoted to subsidising the French industry, subsidies being the most recent advantage the French industry clings to in its hopes to ward off American encroachment.

Several subsidy arrangement have been tried since the second World War with mixed results. The First Plan (1947-50) resulted in the creation of the Centre national de cinématographie which provided an 'aide automatique' derived from a proportion of production and exhibition profits to be ploughed back to ensure the next production provided it was French. Volume of production increased but not quality and audiences

for French film declined. In 1953 a "Fonds de développement" was created providing selective aid for projects that were French and of a kind to serve the cause of cinema and to open new perspectives in the art of cinematography. The educational value of film was affirmed. Finally, in 1959, a new system based on a "Fonds de soutiens" emerged consisting of an advance on receipts, interest free loans on the basis of an outline, which were repayable if a film made a profit. This system started the careers of some of France's most distinguished film-makers such as Alain Resnais, Agnès Varda and Chris Marker. The so-called 'art film' somewhat counterbalanced the invasion of American spectators. Unfortunately, nowadays, the whole notion of 'art film' is being used by people like Jack Valenti, the head of the American academy, to cordon off a certain kind of independent vision by suggesting that it is a cinema for a small, élite, well-heeled audience. At all events, by the seventies the industry was again in recession. Consolidation of distribution led to less and less variety and television began to benefit from subsidy for film production. This chronic complaint suffered by the French industry and sketched out in the foregoing survey suggests that a new plan is necessary and some form of protectionism will be envisaged as part of the GATT resolutions in spite of the fierce opposition of American negotiators. Among French film people it has become a burning issue and with the rise of new nationalisms, politicians are taking heed. It is no surprise then to hear Prime Minister Balladur stating that "we cannot accept that the fundamental values of our traditions of our culture and our civilisation should be treated like ordinary commercial goods".[6]

What effect has all this had on the product itself? and what are the dangers posed from a political and artistic standpoint? These quotations are more difficult to answer. Some preliminary and superficial observations can be made. In the average small French town the exhibition of French films constitutes a small percentage of the whole. One sees appearing a number of super-productions to compete, with the Americans (an echo from the past) which have varied success and deplete the limited resources available. Films like costume dramas *Germinal*, *La Reine Margot*, and *Le Colonel Chabert* (bringing back memories of

'le film d'art' of the twenties), or historical reconstructions like *Indochine*, *Pétain*, etc. *Germinal*, based on Zola's great novel, cost as much as an American blockbuster but was the object of some derision when it was called variously by the newspaper *Libération*, 'un film ethno-musée des arts et traditions populaires', or less respectfully, 'dézolant', 'détournement de mineurs' etc.[7] These films while dealing with French history, or based on French classics do not necessarily reflect French consciousness as they are aimed at a wider and more profitable international market with the predictable result that they end up speaking blandly to no particular audience. And here we come to the crux of the matter. As the philosopher Régis Debray is quoted as saying in response to the American assertion that the French are good at food, wine and clothes: "one does not grow to resemble what one eats but one always ends up looking like what one reads and sees",[8] which returns us to the central question of how we depict ourselves, represent ourselves and how we tell our own cultural stories.

The Merchant-Ivory films, coincidentally directed by an American director, are viewed by many as presenting a false and often glamourized view of England, an antidote to which would be the films of Mike Leigh and Ken Loach. Similarly, in France, the antidotes are needed, provided by an independent film industry. When imitating or giving the customer what he or she wants, that is, a certain view of France, a culture becomes enslaved by myths created about it by outsiders and the myths become dominant, and no longer active in describing the destiny and story of the French people. It is the danger of having one's own story rewritten for economic purposes. In order to examine this cultural phenomenon through the cinema I have chosen to focus on a film which in its own limited way seems to disrupt the 'American' narrative in France and once rewritten by an American re-make loses its original thrust. Speculatively, I suggest that this may be one way of gauging the loss of cultural identity that might be incurred should the French film industry be lost in the struggle for the film market to the American monopoly.

The film I have chosen to focus on is Jean-Luc Godard's *A Bout de souffle*, his first feature, therefore carrying none of the

overt political agendas of some of his later films. The French New Wave while rediscovering the American cinema did its own refurbishing of American genres. But I suggest that Godard's film carries even at this early stage in his career the contradictions which are abundant in the culture itself and which are erased in the 1983 American re-make by Jim McBride. In an often quoted quip, Godard when asked whether he believed in a beginning, middle and end in his films, replied 'yes, but not necessarily in that order'. One of the points of this, of course, is that narrative structure, or the ordering of a film's reality does not necessarily have to follow the usual causal and sequential movement to its denouemnet. Even in this early Godard loosely based on classic American film noir, the classic narrative is disrupted and a sub-text emerges which is full of contradiction, and in which a number of Godard's later political concerns can be seen in germ.

In superimposing the two films we can discover what has been suppressed in the original film. In other words, it affords the opportunity to gauge what a monopolistic film culture might accomplish in colonising the national consciousness of a people. Of course, I am not suggesting a dark and sinister plot but simply that the loss for the French (or for any culture) of a voice to tell its own story, and images to represent itself has excited such passion within the French industry because more than economics is at stake. In this comparison I shall not attempt full readings of the films but merely suggest a number of areas where the films differ in revealing ways. Godard's film while telling the story of a small-time crook on the run as does McBride's also deals with issues which are neglected in the American film. Godard's central character, Michel Poiccard, models himself on an American movie hero Humphrey Bogart, imitates his gestures, gazes at his image in mirror-like fascination and to some degree loses himself in this obsession. In perhaps obvious symbolism the imitation illustrates Debray's point about how we come to resemble what we see. Michel's struggle for self-definition in his confrontations with his American mistress informs the film throughout resulting in curious riffs, as for example in the extensive scene in Patricia's hotel room which suspends for some time the advance of the narrative

movement as we lose sight of Michel's attempt to elude the police pursuit while matters of national and gender difference are discussed. McBride's film fails to foreground these matters. Instead, the room becomes an arena for sexual encounter and male dominance. The clash of cultures evident in the French film does not appear in McBride's where the whole preoccupation with language and incommunication across cultural lines is also suppressed. For a film which ostensibly is no more than a love story in the 'film noir' tradition complete with gangster hero and femme fatale, *A bout de souffle* allots an unusual amount of time to discussions of language and the final shot of the film in particular is very informative in this respect. Godard's film ends with Poiccard, weary and existentially despairing, allowing himself to be ignominiously shot in the back by the police. Having collapsed in the street, Patricia stands over him and he says "tu es vraiment dégueulasse!"—"you are really disgusting"—she asks the unanswered question what 'déguelasse' means and the camera stays framed in medium close-up on her face and cuts to black. Michel has dropped out of the frame and out of her like and the final problem of language remains unresolved, alluding to a problematic contained in the sub-text of the film. The final shot in McBride's film is quite different.

Godard's film ends on the following dynamic: Poiccard stumbles along the street in a pastiche-like melodramatic death, accompanied by the jazz motif that has punctuated the film throughout. He collapses and dies at Patricia's feet out of frame; she gazes blank-faced and seemingly indifferent into the camera. It is the death of an outsider and anti-hero. McBride's *Breathless* has a very different 'take' on the ending. Even though the American film is very faithful to the plot of its French predecessor it reads oppositely. The protagonist is viewed in his last moments by his female companion but in this case she disappears first into the background and then out of the frame leaving the hero to fully assume his heroic not to say triumphant end as he turns with his gun to confront the police. The final freeze-frame captures him in a defiant macho stance like the gun-fighters of old, leaving behind the trace of an icon of courage and stern resistance. The message, needless to say, tells

a different story. The French one, is consonant with its time, in the disaffection and failed dreams of the post-war period, the other reprises the myth that even in death there is triumph over adversity. There are no value judgments intended here; I merely note the difference as, too, with the representation of the two women in the two films. In the French version Patricia is a complex character and her decision to betray her lover to the police is not, to my mind, fully explained. She says she does so because she does not want to love him, but the full implication is that she wishes to take control of her own story and escape from his at whatever cost. This would certainly be coincident with the view of women in Godard's other films even one so early as *Vivre sa vie* where the prostitute assumes fully the choices she has made. In the American *Breathless* the young woman remains written into the male story, an accessory to it.

I realise that what I have given is a very selective view of the two films. However, the more one looks at American re-makes of French prototypes, and there are a number such as Renoir's *Boudu sauvé des eaux*, 'americanized' as *Down and out in Beverly Hills*, the more one detects in the changes a suppression of part of the French 'story'. Clearly, although the French thrust towards protectionism is not solely motivated by artistic and cultural concerns, the film industry remains one of the areas where cultural erosion can be stemmed. With the promise of the proliferation of satellite television channels, television will become flooded by the American product unless the European industries can maintain production, and television is much harder to monitor. Already American film has provided a convenient store-window for the selling of American culture—one has only to witness the homogenization of youth styles throughout Europe. The French public is partly to blame in all of this, of course, especially in their appetite for escapist entertainment—the success of *Jurassic Park* and *The Lion King* attest to that. This is acknowledged by the secretary of the Federation of European Film Directors (FERA): "We have allowed the Americans to take over because we have been too splintered, too diverse and governments never really saw the film industry as a job sector, which is how the Americans have always seen it".[9] With some 2.6 million people employed directly or indi-

rectly in the audiovisual sector across Europe and the share of film distribution going more and more to the Americans (85% in Germany, 90% in Britain, etc.), one understands why the French are determined to cling to their 30% share of the market. Beyond all these figures, however, the impact in terms of loss of self-representation, the erosion of cultural myths is harder to quantify. Here, perhaps a Canadian parenthesis is permissible. There is talk in film circles and in film publications of a Canadian New Wave, with directors like Atom Egoyan, Bruce McDonald, Patricia Roszema, Jeremy Podeswa leading the way. Their voice is distinctive and is refreshing to hear in a country flooded by American images and threatened more directly in the trade agreements by American invasion. In the present shifting world, cultural continuity is often assured by the way we see ourselves and, as Godard and his companions of the French New Wave found, film, especially in its independence of voice and vision contributed massively to the freedom which President Mitterand so rightly puts at the centre of the French fight for "l'exception culturelle".

* This paper is based on a talk given to the Society of Mediterranean Studies at the University of Toronto in March 1994 and still carries some of the marks of its original oral presentation.

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NOTES

1 *The London Observer* 24 October 1993: 14.
2 *The London Observer* 12 March 1995: 19.
3 Quoted in Richard Abel *Frech Cinema: the First Wave, 1915-29*, (Princeton University Press, 1984): 38. Much of my historical background material is derived from this essential work.
4 Abel 38.
5 *The London Observer* 12 March 1995: 19.
6 *The London Observer* 24 October 1993: 14.
7 *Libération* 29 September 1993: 33.
8 Quoted by Michel Ciment, "Wide Angle on Europe's cinema crisis", in the *London Observer* 12 December 1993: 5.
9 *The Guardian* 19 February 1994: 27.

ISSN 0226 8418