

DECOLONIZING MODERNISM: JAMES JOYCE AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF  
CONTEMPORARY SPANISH AMERICAN NARRATIVE

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## ABSTRACT

JOSÉ LUIS VENEGAS: Decolonizing Modernism: James Joyce and the Development of Contemporary Spanish American Narrative  
(Under the direction of Diane R. Leonard)

This dissertation provides a radical re-examination of literary scholarship that associates the experimental fiction written in Spanish America during the 1940s through the late 1970s with European (post-)modernism. This type of scholarship often finds support in Joyce's "influence" on the aesthetics of the so-called Spanish American "new narrative." I establish the necessary critical conditions to contest the assimilation of this narrative to Anglo-American modernism via Joyce by contextualizing the reception of the Irish writer's modernist aesthetics within the discursive framework of the cultural decolonization taking place in Spanish America and the Third World during the years of gestation and flourishing of the new narrative. This contextualization not only reveals the decolonizing potential of Joyce's prose when interpreted by Spanish American intellectuals writing in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s (a potential that has gained critical attention in the Anglo-American academy only over the last decade). It also takes decisive steps towards reconstructing a context for the literary production of "Joycean" authors such as Leopoldo Marechal, Jorge Luis Borges, Julio Cortázar, José Lezama Lima, Guillermo Cabrera Infante, and Fernando del Paso that does not necessarily link them to the development of European literature. From this perspective, I argue that the textual parallels between Joyce and these six authors configure a transatlantic aesthetic

nodal point that stands in polemic dialogue with modernity as a philosophical paradigm  
and with Eurocentric literary history as a globalizing discourse.

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## MODERNISM AND GEOPOLITICS IN SPANISH AMERICA

Europeans insist on measuring us with the same  
yardstick with which they measure themselves,  
without recalling that the ravages of life are not the  
same for all. . . . To interpret our reality through schemas  
which are alien to us only has the effect of making us even  
more unknown, even less free, even more solitary.  
Gabriel García Márquez, Nobel Prize Speech

In a letter to Sergio Sergi, Julio Cortázar explained that he spent the summer of 1947 drinking Coke and reading James Joyce's Ulysses.<sup>1</sup> Sixteen years later, Cortázar would publish Rayuela, acclaimed by many as the "Spanish American Ulysses," and celebrated as a literary watershed epitomizing the formal and linguistic experimentalism of the so-called "boom." The alleged "Joycism" of Cortázar's Rayuela appears to bear out Emir Rodríguez Monegal's unambiguous claim that this new narrative trend should be placed within the larger context of Euro-American modernism, as well as his contention that Joyce's Ulysses is the central model from which the experimental novels of the boom derived directly:

La hazaña de James Joyce habría de ser imitada en muchas lenguas. Con cierta lentitud, y a través de muchos ensayos felices (Borges, que realiza una reducción a escala del cuento [de Ulysses]) y de algunos simplemente monstruosos (el Adán Buenosayres de Marechal) el Ulysses se va constituyendo en el modelo central invisible de la nueva narrativa latinoamericana. Desde este punto de vista, tanto Rayuela, de Cortázar, como Paradiso, de Lezama Lima, Cambio de piel, de Fuentes, como Tres tristes tigres de Cabrera Infante, son libros joyceanos. . . . Es decir: todos ellos están de acuerdo

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<sup>1</sup>Cortázar writes that he spent "unas vacaciones bastante abúlicas, tomando sol y Coca-Cola (bebida infecta) y leyendo el Ulysses" (Cartas 1:224).

en concebir la novela, a la vez, como una parodia y un mito, una estructura que tanto en sus topoi como en sus signos privados revela la unidad de un sistema completo de significaciones. (El boom 89)

[James Joyce's achievement was to be imitated in many languages. Slowly, and through many successful attempts (Borges performs a scale reduction of Ulysses in his short stories) and through some that are simply monstrous (Marechal's Adán Buenosayres), Ulysses became the invisible central model of the new narrative in Latin America. From this point of view, Cortázar's Rayuela, Lezama Lima's Paradiso, Fuentes's Cambio de piel, and Cabrera Infante's Tres tristes tigres are all Joycean books. . . . That is: they all coincide in conceiving of the novel as both a parody and a myth, a structure which in its topoi, as well as in its private symbols, reveals the unity of a complete system of signification.]

Joyce's "achievement," as this quote suggests, is to have created an autonomous artwork whose significance does not depend on the mimetic representation of actual social or political conditions, but on its intricate linguistic and formal structures. However, the influence of Joyce's "achievement" is not restricted to linguistic matters. The purely formalistic value of this type of narrative discourse--which Rodríguez Monegal tellingly calls "la novela del lenguaje" [the novel of language]--also succeeds in finally propelling the Spanish American novel away from the parochial provincialism of the nineteenth-century naturalist and realist novel into the realm of universal culture, a universal culture which on closer scrutiny turns out to be synonymous with the Western canon.

This study is largely devoted to prove Emir Rodríguez Monegal's contention that Joyce's Ulysses is a central model for the development of the Spanish American "new narrative," concentrating on a body of texts typically associated with the "boom" and framed by the publication of Borges's Ficciones (1944) and that of Fernando del Paso's Palinuro de México in 1977. To support this claim, I will devote several pages to the discussion of myth, parody, narrative structure, and the use of allusion. But by focusing

on these formal aspects I do not want to propose “modernism” as the theoretical category against which to read and compare Joyce and Borges, Joyce and Cortázar, or Joyce and Cabrera Infante.<sup>2</sup> Nor do I seek to claim that the formal and linguistic virtuosity that characterizes the authors studied here lifts them away from specific locations to place them within the free-floating realm of universal literature. Rather, I propose to look at the aesthetic intersections between Joyce and the “new narrative” as a direct contestation of Eurocentric cultural universalism--i.e., as the configuration of a nodal point that resists and exceeds the unilinear historical narrative that can only lead from the local to the global, from the primitive to the modern, from the particular to the universal, or, to put in terms familiar to Latin American cultural discourse, from barbarism to civilization. This type of analysis brings into focus the relevance of the colonial difference--or the epistemological and ontological distinctions sustaining a colonial organization of the world--for aesthetic production, a relevance that a Euro-American transition from realism to modernism would leave largely unexplained. In the last analysis, what this study seeks is to open up alternative routes for literary historiography that do not replicate the masternarrative of modernity in its universal, progressive, developing, and modernizing garbs.

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<sup>2</sup>“Modernism” has remained largely unquestioned as a valid historico-literary category allowing a comparison between Joyce and the Spanish American new narrative. For instance, Morton Levitt’s Modernist Survivors includes a chapter on Joyce’s impact on the boom novelists (“‘The Fortunate Explosion’: Contemporary Fictions in Latin America”) supporting this author’s general thesis that the narrative fiction of these novelists is “an extension and elaboration of European Modernism that is in the spirit at once of Joyce and his fellows and of this new continent.” Levitt adds that Joyce and the Modernists have “enabled this new generation of writers to transform their separate, local literary inheritances into fictions which are truly universal” (182, 184). On Joyce’s influence on modern literature, see also Robert Martin Adams, After Joyce: Studies in Fiction after “Ulysses” and the essays in Transcultural Joyce, edited by Karen Lawrence. In her introduction, Lawrence alerts us to the nuanced nature of Joyce’s modernism and underscores the significance of his borderline position as both “canonical modernist and Irish writer of colonial postcolonial periods” (3) for transnational approaches to his work and influence, adding that the essays contained in her collection “suggest that as both canonical authority and disruptive iconoclast, Joyce possesses a particularly slippery valence for postcolonial writers” (4).



Consequently, the formal analogies between Joyce and Borges, Cortázar, and Lezama Lima, among others, will not be conjured up to endorse a putative linguistic universalism that triumphantly erases the scars of history, but to show how a discernible purpose of these formal innovations is to carve up a place of enunciation that registers the situatedness of the Irish and Spanish American writers with respect to hegemonic cultural patterns.<sup>3</sup> As Laura Doyle and Laura Winkiel have recently argued, the kind of spatial repositioning that I support here “estranges the category of modernism itself,” giving way to what they call “geomodernisms,” which signal “a locational approach to modernisms’ engagement with cultural and political discourses of global modernity” (3). In this sense, it is a shared critical stance regarding modernity (not admission to it) that materializes the transatlantic circuit uniting Joyce to contemporary Spanish American fiction.

To a large degree, I set out to offer a corrective reassessment of what Neil Larsen has felicitously called the “canonical decolonization” of modernism, proposing a geopolitical decolonization instead.<sup>4</sup> According to Larsen, during the mid-1960s through

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<sup>3</sup>Whether Spanish America and Ireland should be considered postcolonial sites has triggered heated theoretical debates in recent years. This controversy largely derives from the discontinuities and asymmetries between the historical situation of these two geopolitical areas, on the one hand, and those that became the object of analysis of postcolonial studies, on the other. It has become a virtually uncontested critical assumption that postcolonial studies originated in the late 1970s and early 1980s following the publication of Edward Said’s influential Orientalism. As it developed, this new field of critical enquiry focused on the Asian and African ex-colonies of the former British Empire. The socio-political structures of these ex-colonies differed greatly from Ireland and Spanish America. Whereas in countries such as India the language and culture of the colonizer remained within the province of bureaucratic administration, in Ireland and Latin America they permeated all layers of society. Other differences stem from the duration of colonial rule and the timing and means of decolonization. See Stephen Howe, Ireland and Empire; and Liam Kennedy, Colonialism, Religion and Nationalism in Ireland for “revisionist” arguments against a postcolonial conception of Ireland. Those who argue that the colonial model aptly captures the Irish-British relations over the centuries include Declan Kiberd, Luke Gibbons, David Lloyd, and Seamus Deane. Within Latin American studies, Jorge Klor de Alva, in his widely controversial article “Colonialism and Postcolonialism as Latin American Mirages,” regards the application of the term “post-colonial” to Spanish America as a serious case of academic imperialism. For a response to Klor de Alva’s arguments, see Walter Mignolo, “Occidentalización, imperialismo, globalización.”

<sup>4</sup>The term “geopolitics” was originally coined by Rudolf Kjellén to refer to the links between political power and geographic space. For my purposes, “geopolitics” relates to the global connections

the mid-1970s, metropolitan readers of Spanish American fiction who were ethically supportive of Third-World anti-imperialistic and decolonizing stirrings carried out an act of literary recognition by granting boom celebrities such as Fuentes or Cortázar the status of canonical modernists. The result of this act of inclusion is that a “parity of North and South is proposed, but this parity is strictly literary, defined against a universal aesthetic standard embodied in modernism” (Reading North by South 7). This literary parity begins to show its conservative side as soon as we realize that the geopolitical specificity of the new narrative is neutralized and co-opted by an ultimately imperialistic critical move that identifies the universal with the European. This co-option increases when the relevance of Joyce’s “Irishness” is ignored and his work presented as the model of the “universal aesthetic standard” of modernism, for as happens with the Spanish American “modernists,” canonicity is granted on grounds determined by the metropolitan intelligentsia.

By contrast, a geopolitical decolonization of modernism establishes that what should be altered are not the shifting boundaries of metropolitan standards, but the exclusivity of the hegemonic culture to administer cultural value and to arrange literary histories across the globe. In this light, the meeting among Joyce and Cortázar, Borges, Lezama Lima, and del Paso does not take place against the “universal” background of Euro-American modernism, but rather represents a point of contact among the peripheries. With this reevaluation of “Joycism” in Spanish America I am also trying to provide a transcontinental framework for the current geopolitical rethinking of contemporary Spanish American literature, thus elucidating a literary cosmopolitanism

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between knowledge and place, and more specifically to the ways in which those spatio-epistemological connections can contest universalizing paradigms and norms. On geopolitics and knowledge, see Walter Mignolo, “The Geopolitics of Knowledge and the Colonial Difference.”

that derives from the ties connecting firmly situated points of resistance to globalizing cultural and political paradigms, not from metropolitan global designs. As Fernando Rosenberg has brilliantly argued with regard to the Latin American avant-garde of the 1920s and 1930s, “if we are to aspire to dismantle all sorts of diffusionist accounts that leave Latin America in an epistemologically subrogate position, vanguardism must not be read as part of a single line of progress that only belatedly catches up with Latin America” (16).

The line of argumentation that Rosenberg’s The Avant-Garde and Geopolitics in Latin America has opened and that I intend to complement and expand here stands as an alternative to the dominant approaches to “modernist” Spanish American narrative in contemporary literary critical discourse, approaches which are largely in agreement with Rodríguez Monegal’s assimilation of Joyce and the “boom” to Euro-American modernism. Perhaps the most persuasive argument for a “Spanish American modernism” inspired by Joyce is found in Gerald Martin’s Journeys through the Labyrinth. Martin, like Rodríguez Monegal considers Joyce’s Ulysses the main catalyst for the development of the Spanish American new narrative.<sup>5</sup> The Irish novelist is presented as a “First World” writer (204) whose formal innovations reach the peripheral culture of Latin America at a moment when this culture appears to be ripe for the assimilation of the daring techniques of European modernism. It is at this point that “the final flowering of Latin American Modernism in the shape of the ‘boom’ novel” (130) takes place, the

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<sup>5</sup>Martin argues that Faulkner is to be taken as a mediator of Joycean innovation at a time (the 1930s, the 1940s, and the 1950s) when Joyce’s writings were not as readily available as Faulkner’s to a Latin American readership. James Irby’s “La influencia de William Faulkner en cuatro narradores hispanoamericanos” remains the canonical analysis of Faulkner’s impact of Spanish American fiction. Deborah Cohn has recently analyzed the connections between Faulkner’s regionalism and the new narrative in Spanish America in History and Memory in the Two Souths: Recent Southern and Spanish American Fiction.

publication of Cortázar's Rayuela marking "the precise moment at which 'Joycism' appeared to assume the main thrust of Spanish American fiction" (204). In Martin's view, the Joycean audacity of works such as Rayuela or Palinuro de México is the formal indication that Latin America has finally achieved modernity in aesthetic terms, that it "really is a part of Western civilization and that its cultural identity was of such a nature as to provide both a replication of the Joycean trajectory and optimum conditions for its assimilation" (141).

It should be noted, however, that Martin does not advocate a fully "diffusionist" pattern of literary evolution according to which the forms of Spanish American modernism are mere reflections of metropolitan aesthetic innovations. With the success of the boom, which, as is well known was aided by an intense process of commercial promotion in Europe and North America, literary influences began emanating from Latin America, transforming the contours of contemporary European narrative: "Indeed, whereas most Latin American fiction between the 1940s and the 1960s is recognizable 'Joycean' or 'Faulknerian', it is equally arguably that since the 1960s many of the most important writers--Italo Calvino, Milan Kundera, Salman Rushdie, Umberto Eco--have had to become 'Latin American' novelists" (Martin 7). Literary theorist Douwe Fokkema took a similar stance when he famously stated that Jorge Luis Borges was the originator of the postmodernism, "the first literary code that originated in America and influenced European literature" (38). This template of literary relations abandons the hierarchical organization that places European literature as the norm to be copied and assimilated in the peripheries and embraces instead what we could call, following Immanuel Wallerstein, a world-system model of analysis.

Foremost among contemporary proponents of this notion of world literature is Franco Moretti, who in his programmatic “Conjectures on World Literature” boldly argued for a global understanding of literature, without reference to national spaces. This global vision is, however, still determined by the hegemonic culture of Europe, for those writing from the periphery only access the world literary system through a process of “incorporation.” Speaking of the novel, he argues that “in cultures that belong to the periphery of the literary system (which means: almost all cultures, inside and outside Europe), the modern novel first arises not as an autonomous development but as a compromise between a Western formal influence (usually French or English) and local materials” (58).<sup>6</sup> It is as if the formal patterns manufactured in the Europe were universally valid as representational devices and as if historical specificities only had a bearing on the content, but not the form, of the literary artifact. From this perspective, one might wonder whether Borges was accepted into the mainstream because his “otherness” as a peripheral writer was acknowledged or simply because his fiction could be easily co-opted by or “incorporated” into a literary system governed by metropolitan norms and forms. The same applies to the “Latin Americanness” of Calvino or Eco: wouldn’t this reversal of the unidirectional nature of literary influences have more to do with the fact that Cortázar or García Márquez were perceived primarily as “Joycean” and “Faulknerian” (and so “cosmopolitan”), not as “Latin American” writers? Under close scrutiny, therefore, Moretti’s and Martin’s revisions of cultural hierarchies and old models of literary influence are still ruled by a deep Eurocentric logic.

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<sup>6</sup>Moretti has recently developed his views on literary history in a series of publications, including *Modern Epic*, *Atlas of the European Novel 1800-1900*, and *Graphs, Maps, Trees. Abstract Models for Literary History*. For a critique of his main arguments, see Efraín Kristal, “‘Considering Coldly. . .’: A Response to Franco Moretti,” and Fernando Cabo Aseguinolaza, “Dead, or a Picture of Good Health? Comparatism, Europe, and World Literature?,” 424-430.

It should be noted that the notion of cosmopolitanism behind these literary models is a mutation of the Hegelian view of history according to which Western consciousness is bound to install a principle of ontological and epistemological continuity across the globe. From this Hegelian point of view, cosmopolitanism means, to a large degree, the absence of radical, ungraspable differences. While postulating a local haven untouched by modernity would be epistemologically futile, I believe that a different sort of literary cosmopolitanism might offer an alternative map of literary relations that could explain the presence of Joycean formal features in contemporary Spanish American narrative without recourse to the metropolitan category of modernism. This map emerges from the local histories of what Moretti calls the “periphery” and is configured by localized points of resistance to the globalizing designs of the metropolitan centers. The circuits uniting these points of resistance have the potential to configure a web of literary relations that, far from perpetuating the cultural dominance of the Europe, contest it by proposing “other” literary histories that de-link themselves from a core literary system governed by metropolitan cultural values.

This would also be a map where narrative form does not arise univocally from European literature, but is rather used as an active means of geopolitical articulation. To demonstrate this point, I will also devote some attention to how the formal equivalence between Joyce and the “new narrative” might be interpreted as a radical contestation of “literature” as an imperialistic institution. In Against Literature, John Beverley has persuasively shown that the institutional value of literary discourse in Latin America derives from its colonial origins and its instrumentality for neocolonial projects of nation formation. Without contesting the truth of this claim, I should like to argue that Joycean

aesthetics in Spanish America open up a territory where the type of hegemonic representation associated with “literature” is restlessly undermined and negated through a radical questioning of the universal aesthetic underpinnings of literary representation. Rather than agreeing with Moretti that literature in the periphery arises from the encounter of Western form and a local reality, I contend that the local reality demands radical transformations of Western form, and that these aesthetic transformations trigger a geopolitical de-linking from a Eurocentric literary world system. In subsequent chapters I will focus on how Borges and Cortázar, for instance, do not turn to “Joycean” narrative forms such as parody and myth to represent their “local reality” in an unproblematic manner, or even to transcend the backwardness of that reality, as Rodríguez Monegal would have it. Their positionality with regard to the literary world system is not registered at the level of content, leaving the validity of metropolitan form unquestioned; instead such positionality is signified most forcefully and profoundly by showing how hegemonic forms are unable to fully represent a local place of enunciation. Thus, parody for Borges interrupts rather than perpetuates the aesthetic (literary) space that enables continuity between an authoritative model and its copy. And myth for Cortázar is not a mechanism of structural control ensuring representation, but a dislocation of the rationalistic assumptions that make representation possible. This subversive use of myth and parody doubles as a radical act of interpretation that throws into relief Joyce’s own marginality and questions his modernist canonicity. The effect of this radicalization of form in fact involves an almost perfect reversal of Larsen’s “canonical decolonization,” as it ruptures the universality of the very aesthetic grounds that enable the act of co-

option of Western readers observed above, a rupture that indeed amounts to a decolonization of the canonicity of modernism as a global literary category.

However, a brief perusal of recent critical production on contemporary Spanish American fiction would quickly reveal that Moretti's literary world system, as well as the underpinnings of "canonical decolonization" (Larsen), remains largely uncontested. Rodríguez Monegal's and Martin's assessments of the role played by Joyce in the development of Spanish American fiction are in deep theoretical agreement with the critical guidelines that have informed the ongoing debate on "Spanish American modernism."<sup>7</sup> Critics such as Raymond L. Williams and Donald L. Shaw agree that "Modernism" is a valid term to study the evolution of Spanish American fiction from the 1940s to the 1970s, since in their view the narrative techniques and philosophical attitudes that characterize this fiction largely coincide with those of Anglo-American modernism. In a number of recent publications,<sup>8</sup> Williams has argued that the "rise of the Modernist novel" brought with it a renovation of the regionalist realism and naturalism that had dominated the Spanish American narrative scene until the publication of Borges's *Ficciones* in 1944. It is his conviction that the "modernist" novels of Fuentes, Cortázar, García Márquez, Donoso, and Lezama Lima fulfilled in the 1960s a long-

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<sup>7</sup>Along with Martin, Shaw, and Williams, I make a distinction between "Modernismo" and "Modernism," the first term referring to the poetic movement represented by José Martí, Julián del Casal, Rubén Darío; the second referring to the "new novel" of "boom" authors and others such as Cortázar, García Márquez, Del Paso, and Fuentes. For a thorough discussion of the critical term "Modernismo" in Hispanic literature, see Ned Davison, *The Concept of Modernism in Hispanic Criticism* and Ivan A. Schulman, "Reflexiones en torno a la definición de modernismo." John Butt provides a useful contrastive analysis of the terms "modernism" and "modernismo" within the context of Peninsular literature in "Modernismo y modernism." The collection of essays *Modernism and Its Margins*, edited by Anthony Geist and José Monleón, offers a wide range of perspectives on the theoretical problems associated with the definition of aesthetic modernity in Spain and Latin America.

<sup>8</sup>See "Introduction to the Spanish American Modernist and Postmodernist Novel" in *The Postmodern Novel in Latin America* (1995) 1-20; *The Modern Latin-American Novel* (1998); "Modernist Continuities: The Desire To Be Modern in Twentieth-Century Spanish-American Fiction" (2002), and *The Twentieth-Century Spanish American Novel* (2003).



standing “desire to be modern” (a phrase he borrows from Octavio Paz) that had persisted among Spanish American intellectuals since political independence from Spain was achieved (see his “Modernist Continuities”). Within this context, adopting the stylistic sophistication of Anglo-American modernism seemed to afford the possibility of finally becoming “modern,” leaving behind the backwardness of regionalist literature and culminating a process of intellectual maturation that began with the achievement of political independence. “In their desire to be modern,” Williams argues, “the Latin-American novelists of the 1940s and 1950s were well aware of the basic tenets of Modernism, and their understanding of the aesthetics of Modernism dramatically transformed Spanish-American fiction” (“Modernist Continuities” 383).

Likewise, Donald Shaw also argues that to study “Spanish-American fiction in the context of Modernism/Postmodernism can be very beneficial” (“When Was Modernism in Spanish-American Fiction” 409).<sup>9</sup> According to Shaw, Spanish American fiction acquired modernist characteristics as early as the late 1920s, with the “dehumanized” and subjectivist narrative of Eduardo Mallea, Felisberto Hernández, and María Luisa Bombal, among others, which marked the abandonment of the mimetic realism of the regionalist novel and the “beginnings of Modernism in fiction, which plainly led via Borges directly to the Boom” (“When” 407-408). Like Rodríguez Monegal, Shaw consistently advocates a type of analysis which concentrates on the technical and linguistic continuity between Anglo-American modernism and the “boom,” arguing that this continuity satisfies the conditions for the inclusion of Ernesto Sábato, Julio Cortázar, or Carlos Fuentes within the canon of High Modernism. Shaw, like Williams and Martin, sees in this derivational

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<sup>9</sup>See also La nueva novela hispanoamericana: Boom, posboom, posmodernismo, especially 365-377 and “More about Modernism in Spanish America.”

sort of modernism the overcoming of “local reality” and the successful assimilation of “Western form”--to use Moretti’s terms--by a select group of Spanish American writers, an assimilation that authorizes the use of categories culled from Western literary history to analyze their work.

A latent theoretical presupposition behind the application of “modernism” to contemporary Spanish American narrative is that there is a temporal norm that should be met in order to reach aesthetic “modernity.” Pascale Casanova’s useful term “Greenwich Meridian of literature,” can help us refine our understanding of this aesthetic-temporal norm:

Just as the fictive line known as the prime meridian, arbitrarily chosen for the determination of longitude, contributes to the real organization of the world and makes possible the measure of distances and the location of positions on the surface of the earth, so what might be called the Greenwich meridian of literature makes it possible to estimate the relative aesthetic distance from the center of the world of letters of all those who belong to it. (88)

Studied in this light, literary history is thought to follow a teleological pattern that determines what is “backwards” and “local” or “modern” and “universal” in aesthetic terms. Casanova argues that “one may say that a work is contemporary; that it is more or less current (as opposed to being out of date--temporal metaphors abound in the language of criticism), depending on its proximity to the criteria of modernity” (88). As presented by Martin, Williams, and Shaw, modernism marks a long-sought-after intersection between the literary evolution of European and Spanish American literature, an intersection that also signals the successful achievement of a modernity in aesthetic terms that has failed to happen in the economic realm. To be modern is, to a great extent, to be European, which implies that producing modernist works in the periphery demands

overcoming a differential gap that is not only chronological, but also cultural and, as I shall argue, colonial. Spanish American “modernism” “catches up with” Western literature, and in doing so it confirms that the contemporaneity that it achieves depends on a self-transcending temporality which perpetually determines what kind of cultural phenomena qualify as “modern.” Hence, chronology is not the only measure of literary progress.

This conception of literary history is shaped by an understanding of “modernity” that derives from Kant and the Enlightenment. As is well known, Kantian modernity is a local, northern European philosophical formulation that was nonetheless presented as a universal project for historical progress dictated by an autonomous, “emancipated” reason. “Progress,” “universality,” “development,” and “rationality” were all concepts that became associated with European modern thought and constituted a global normative discourse.<sup>10</sup> The attendant historical template of this modernity is the familiar Hegelian pattern whereby the European “Spirit” or “Reason” dictates historical evolution as it progresses towards self-knowledge.<sup>11</sup> From a Spanish American perspective, the universality and rationality that come with modernity is not a given, but an end to struggle for. Mexican essayist and poet Octavio Paz acknowledged in a variety of his writings that the idea of “modernity” became an obsessive horizon for his poetic endeavors. In a passage that can be taken as paradigmatic of the Spanish American “desire to be modern,” Paz claims that the search for the present implies looking for the

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<sup>10</sup>This theoretical discourse about what constitutes the “present” historically and epistemologically is what Jürgen Habermas has called the “philosophical discourse of modernity.” This discourse derives from an economic, political, religious, and aesthetic matrix that assumes the role of universally valid norm. See Habermas, The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures and “Modernity--An Incomplete Project.”

<sup>11</sup>See Hegel, Lectures on the Philosophy of World History. On his views on the “New World,” which he considered “outside of History,” see 162-170.

“real reality” (“la realidad real”). This “real reality,” Paz goes on to argue, resides, for Spanish Americans, in “el tiempo que vivían los otros, los ingleses, los franceses, los alemanes. El tiempo de Nueva York, París, Londres. Había que salir en su busca y traerlo a nuestras tierras” [the time of the others, of the English, the French, the German. The time of New York, Paris, London. We had to go out looking for it to bring it to our countries] (“La búsqueda del presente” 11). Paz adds that shortly after he became aware of this temporal gap between Spanish America and the First World, he started writing poetry as a quest for modernity. For Paz, this quest for poetic modernity runs parallel to the repeated and continuous attempts of the Spanish American nations to modernize themselves: “De ahí que a veces se hablase de ‘europeizar’ a nuestros países: lo moderno estaba fuera y teníamos que importarlo” [Hence, sometimes we would speak about ‘Europeanizing’ our countries: the modern was outside and we had to import it] (“La búsqueda” 12).

While the economic dependence of Spanish America is still a palpable reality that perpetuates an asymmetrical relationship with the West, Paz argues that in the cultural terrain the gap with modernity has been narrowing incessantly ever since the legitimacy of enlightened reason was dramatically exposed by the horrors of two world wars. That exposure signaled the end of history as a narrative of progress and the advent of a temporal relativity that rejects the notions of center and norm: “No hay centro y el tiempo ha perdido su antigua coherencia: este y oeste, mañana y ayer se confunden en cada uno de nosotros” [There is no center and time has lost its old coherence: East and West, tomorrow and yesterday get confused in each of us] (Corriente alterna 23-24). This “postmodern” lack of central authorities fosters the illusion that the hierarchies of cultural

production have disappeared, and that we cannot really talk about “artistic underdevelopment” (452-453). Nevertheless, the process that Paz interprets as the end of the cultural unevenness between those creating from the hub of modernity (London, Paris, New York) and those outside of that circle leaves intact the underlying philosophical assumptions that generated that unevenness in the first place. In other words, for Paz, as for Martin, Shaw, and Williams, those assumptions become obsolete only when those outside of the circle enter it, which, of course, does nothing to call into question the legitimacy of the principles that make that circle a privileged site. Hierarchies of cultural production disappear at the precise moment when writers from Mexico, Argentina, or Chile reach the “Greenwich Meridian of literature,” a meridian whose central position remains fixed and unchallenged.

In this light, the reason why the evolution of contemporary Spanish American narrative should be placed within the wider framework of Western literature derives from the persistent conviction that the Europe still holds the key to determining what counts as legitimate cultural knowledge even after the loss of its universal validity. The deep inconsistencies of using this Eurocentric framework for the study of contemporary Spanish American fiction become more pronounced as we probe the epistemological function customarily assigned to modernist literary discourse with regard to the crisis of Western cultural values. As Astradur Eysteinsson has aptly indicated, one can identify a wide variety of modernist paradigms, ranging from T. S. Eliot’s classicist formalism (see “Ulysses, Order, and Myth”) to Georg Lukács Marxist critique of subjective alienation in modern narrative (see The Theory of the Novel). However, some degree of generalization can be allowed to argue that modernism emerged as “a kind of aesthetic heroism, which

in the face of the chaos of the modern world (very much a “fallen” world) sees art as the only dependable reality and as an ordering principle of a quasi-religious kind” (Eysteinnsson 9).<sup>12</sup> Modernism is, therefore, an aesthetic remedy for the dismal condition of Europe that intended to become not “a rescuing alternative to modernity, but rather a component of it, its informing structure” (8), as Art Berman has succinctly put it. Thus, to speak of a “Spanish American modernism” would amount to assessing the aesthetic value of fiction written in the periphery in light of a cultural crisis occurring in the metropolis, thus obliterating from that fiction the capacity to offer a situated, geopolitical critique of the Eurocentric project of modernity.

The lack of metacritical awareness derived from this approach to the new narrative in Spanish America might be related to a method of analysis that underplays the relevance of cultural specificity and location for intellectual and artistic production. In La nueva novela hispanoamericana (1969), Carlos Fuentes best illustrates this type of analysis--which we have already encountered in Rodríguez Monegal’s El boom--as he elaborates on Paz’s ideas on modernity and literary creation to claim that the loss of universality that European thought experienced after the horrors of the world wars opened the doors of modernity to those who until then had remained banished from it. Now universality is fully available to the Spanish American writer, who does not have to remain tied to the parochialisms of autochthonous creation any longer. Fuentes writes:

Los latinoamericanos--diría ampliando un acierto de Octavio

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<sup>12</sup>It is important to distinguish “modernism” from “avant-garde.” “Modernism”--often associated with names such as Eliot, Pound, Thomas Mann, and Virginia Woolf, among others--is, as discussed here, used to designate broadly an aesthetic reaction against the decay of Western cultural values. The “avant-garde,” usually related to artistic movements such as Futurism, Cubism, Surrealism or Dadaism, can be described as a radical aesthetics of incessant change and anarchic irreverence towards the very values modernists were struggling to preserve (for an elaborate discussion of these two terms see Matei Calinescu, Five Faces of Modernity 141-44).

Paz--son hoy contemporáneos de todos los hombres. Y pueden, contradictoria, justa y hasta trágicamente, ser universales escribiendo en el lenguaje de los hombres de Perú, Argentina o México. Porque, vencida la universalidad ficticia de ciertas razas, ciertas clases, ciertas banderas, ciertas naciones, el escritor y el hombre advierten su común generación de las estructuras universales del lenguaje. (32)

[Latin American people—I would say elaborating on one of Octavio Paz’s insights—are today contemporaneous with all men. And, contradictorily, justly, and even tragically, they can be universal writing in the language of the men of Peru, Argentina or Mexico, since once the fictitious universality of certain races, classes, flags, and nations has been superseded, writers and men become aware of their common generation of the universal structures of language.]

The disappearance of visible centers of authority places the Spanish American writer within the same temporality as his European and North American counterparts, as they now all share a new linguistic or textual universality that transcends the racial, cultural, and economic imbalances that structure the world otherwise. We are all contemporaneous or modern, Fuentes claims, because we are all philosophically ex-centric, our only common frame of reference being language. Even though Fuentes grounds his detailed discussion of the new novel on the peculiarities of the cultural and historical development of Spanish America since the arrival of Christopher Columbus, he places this development within a global picture that still keeps the idea of modernity at its center. The difference is that this center is now disenfranchised and can be claimed by everyone: hence the possibility of having both Anglo-American and Spanish American “modernisms.”

Spanish American “modernism” would then be one symptom of this universal ex-centricity that, as Fuentes claims, shapes and determines literary creation across the globe. From this point of view, the presence of Joycean techniques in the Spanish

American novel would be testimony to the erasure of boundaries between the center and the periphery in literary matters. In this regard, it is no coincidence that Fuentes's proposes a theory of "multi-vocal" reading and writing derived from Cervantes and Joyce that complements and supports his notion of contemporary literary history as a "multi-center" phenomenon. In Cervantes o la crítica de la lectura, Fuentes proposes a model of reading and writing that seems to be specifically tailored to the Spanish American new novel as he theorized it in La nueva novela. In his view, Cervantes' Quixote undermined unitary readings by presenting in Don Quixote an individual whose personality disintegrates once he becomes conscious of his dual and paradoxical role as both reader and fictional character. That is to say, the enigmatic figure of Don Quixote makes the boundaries between fiction and reality porous to such an extent that the illusion of realism is destroyed. Fuentes makes the poststructuralist claim that this porosity also has the effect of foiling monolithic interpretations, for the reader, like Don Quixote, is trapped in an inescapable textual web and lacks a fixed intellectual standpoint that endows him with ultimate mastery over the text. It should be obvious that this sort of reading practice is consistent with a reality where the bygone epistemological and ontological certainties of Western modernity have now given way to a linguistic universality where thinking, reading, and writing are virtually indistinguishable.

This kind of "multi-vocal" reading is connected with the sort of writing that characterizes Joyce's Ulysses and Finnegans Wake. It is Joyce, Fuentes claims, that opens up the universality or totality of language from which stems the new Spanish American narrative: "Joyce abre las puertas de la totalidad del lenguaje, de los lenguajes" [Joyce opens the doors of the totality of language, of languages] (103-104). The de-



centering festival of languages and styles of Joyce's works documents the wake of the modern world and rewrites the "true discourse of the West" ("el verdadero discurso de Occidente"), that is, a discourse that is conscious of its artificiality and thrives on its contradictions. With the collapse of cultural certainties registered by this writing practice, the knowing subject of the Enlightenment becomes fragmented. The literary corollary of this fragmentation is what Fuentes calls "desyoización" ("de-I-fication"), an obvious pun on "Joyce" and "Joyceización" ("Joycification"). According to the Mexican writer, "la crítica de la escritura en Joyce es una crítica de la escritura individual, de la escritura del yo. . . . la novedad de la Joyceización es que inscribe la desyoización" [Joyce's critique of writing is a critique of individual writing, of the writing of the I . . . the novelty of Joycification is that it inscribes the de-I-fication] (108). Clearly, Fuentes's assessment of Joyce's writing is heavily influenced by poststructuralist thought, as his references to Jacques Derrida and Hélène Cixous confirm (103, 107).<sup>13</sup>

Fuentes's reading of Joyce's writing parallels his characterization of the new Spanish American novel in La nueva novela. Indeed, "Joyce" emerges in Fuentes's discussion as a cipher of the stylistic innovations and the textual politics of Spanish American novelists such as Cortázar or Cabrera Infante. The linguistic playfulness and deconstructive relativism that Fuentes ascribes to Ulysses and Finnegans Wake cross national borders in an age of lost beliefs and are now coextensive to Cortázar's Rayuela or Cabrera Infante's Tres tristes tigres. This "linguistic universality" embodies a new kind of aesthetics directly tied to the changing epistemological conditions of the Western world. As Fuentes's arguments suggest, the "desyoización" of the new narrative is

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<sup>13</sup>A detailed explanation of the interconnections among Fuentes, Joyce, and poststructuralism is offered in Wendy Faris, "Desyoización: Joyce/Cixous/Fuentes and the Multi-Vocal Text."

coterminous with the familiar poststructuralist critique of Western metaphysics, as this critique opens up a two-way street whereby “el escritor occidental sólo puede ser central reconociendo que hoy es excéntrico, y el escritor latinoamericano reconociendo que su excentricidad es hoy central en un mundo sin ejes culturales” [the Western writer can only be central by realizing that today he is eccentric, and the Latin American writer, by realizing that his eccentricity is today central in a world without cultural axes] (La nueva novela 32). The re-evaluation of the margins that this statement involves stands as a powerful theoretical justification for abandoning structures of cultural domination and for advocating a literary history that erases the boundaries between Europe, North America, and Spanish America. As the Mexican novelist has reiterated in Geografía de la novela,

Al antiguo eurocentrismo se ha impuesto un policentrismo que, si seguimos en su lógica la crítica posmodernista de Lyotard, debe conducirnos a una “activación de las diferencias” como condición común de la humanidad sólo central porque es excéntrica, o sólo excéntrica porque tal es la situación real de lo universal concreto, sobre todo si se manifiesta mediante la aportación de lo diverso que es la imaginación literaria. La “literatura mundial” de Goethe cobra al fin su sentido recto: es la literatura de la diferencia, la narración de la diversidad, pero confluyendo, sólo así, en un mundo único, la superpotencia mundo, para decirlo con un concepto que conviene a la época después de la guerra fría. (167)

[The old Eurocentrism has been overcome by a polycentrism which, following in its logic Lyotard’s postmodern critique, should take us to an “activation of differences” as the common condition of humanity, central only because it is eccentric, or eccentric only because such is the real condition of the concrete universal, particularly if it manifests itself through the diversity of the literary imagination. Goethe’s “world literature” has finally found its correct meaning: it is the literature of difference, the narration of diversity, but converging in one world, the world superpower, to use a concept that befits a post-Cold War era.]

As suggested above, this view of literary history successfully undermines the imbalance between the center and the periphery that still shapes economic relations and,

at the same time, seems to justify the use of the term “modernism” to refer to both Euro-American and Spanish American literatures. It should be recalled at this point how Martin took the assimilation of Joycean aesthetics by Spanish American novelists as conclusive evidence that “Latin America really is a part of Western civilization” (141). However, the enthusiastic celebration of marginality that Fuentes promotes and that authorizes Martin’s, William’s, and Shaw’s transatlantic view of modernism, masks the underlying fact that it is still the center that manages the postmodern and poststructuralist cultural scene. As Robert Young clearly states, poststructuralism “does not offer a critique by positioning itself outside ‘the West’, but rather uses its own alterity and duplicity in order to effect its deconstruction” (20). Ernesto Laclau has made a similar point by arguing that “Postmodernity does not imply a change in the values of Enlightenment modernity but rather a weakening of their absolutist character” (“Politics and the Limits of Modernity” 67). In other words, the lack of cultural axes that Fuentes describes is the philosophical consequence of an internal critique of modernity, and so it is to be conceived of as a phase (perhaps a terminal one) of that modernity.

Given that this genealogy of thought connects contemporary Spanish American narrative with Joyce and Western modernity in its “postmodern” or “poststructuralist” phase, it should not be surprising that “Joycean” authors such as Cortázar and Cabrera Infante have been frequently censured for not being “Spanish American” enough. In the 1970s, Alejo Carpentier wrote in Ecue-yamba-ó that the dilemma that plagued the Spanish American intellectual at this historical time was how to be a “nationalist,” yet also “avant-garde,” given that embracing technical virtuosity and experimentation was perceived by many as being at odds with a sincere engagement with “local reality.”

Literary critic Manuel Pedro González's attacks on the new narrative are a case in point. He vehemently contended that the boom had ushered a narrative aesthetics that is largely inadequate to render the cultural specificity of the American continent, a task in which the regionalist novel remain unsurpassed. In a series of articles published during the 1960s, González identified the experimental techniques of Joyce's Ulysses as a damaging influence on the new novelists, who he perceived as neglecting the immediate reality of the American continent to favor the cultural designs of First-World capitalism.<sup>14</sup> To a large extent, this opposition between local concerns and modernist aesthetics has been fostered and sustained by some of the most prominent members of the boom themselves. For instance, in his Historia personal del Boom José Donoso spelled out the connections between Anglo-American modernism and the new novel in Spanish America when he argues that remaining within the old, autochthonous tradition of realist writing of his Spanish American literary forefathers amounted to being trapped in an inescapable position of cultural backwardness. Fuentes himself formulated in unambiguous terms this opposition between the regionalism and nationalism of the previous age and the universalism of the new aesthetic. In his view, the Spanish American writer was confronted with two options: on the one hand, he could aspire to be "universal" by imitating the styles and themes of the literary (European) vanguard; on the other hand, he could remain a national writer ("escritor nacional") who lagged behind the literary phases of European literature (La nueva novela 23). As indicated above, for Fuentes that dichotomy becomes obsolete once the idea of universality ceases to be geographically determined and becomes a global, linguistic phenomenon.

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<sup>14</sup>See "El Ulysses cuarenta años después," "La novela hispanoamericana en el contexto de la internacional" and "Consideraciones sobre la novela."

From this perspective, the linguistic euphoria that characterizes the new novel masks a pessimistic abandonment of the capacities of the intellectual to change social and historical reality. What Doris Sommer has called the “national romance” of the nineteenth century might have been derivative in an aesthetic sense, but it had enormous leverage when it came to shaping the politics of the emerging Spanish American Republics.<sup>15</sup> The illusion of a teleological race towards intellectual modernity and economic modernization that this type of fiction conjured up died out after World War II, when the mirage of financial well-being of the inter-war period gave way to chronic underdevelopment in South America. Sommer writes that at this point “patriotic storylines wilted into the vicious circles that Carlos Fuentes found typical for the new novelists” (*Foundational Fictions* 2). As Fuentes argues, “ni el anhelo ni la pluma del escritor producen por sí mismos la revolución y el intelectual queda situado entre una historia que rechaza y una historia que desea” [neither the hopes nor the pen of the writer produce by themselves the revolution and the intellectual remains between a rejected history and a desired history] (*La nueva novela* 29). Banished to a purely textual realm like Don Quixote, the new novelist has made the mark of the “Greenwich Meridian of literature,” but at a high cost, namely the sacrifice of the potential of cultural production to have an effect on social reality. It seems, then, that the renovation of literary forms threw out the baby of social criticism with the bathwater of the rudimentary realism of traditional narrative.

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<sup>15</sup>In Sommer’s view, novels such as Argentine José Mármol’s *Amalia*, Colombian Jorge Isaacs’ *María*, and Dominican Manuel de Jesús Galván’s *Enriquillo* and the new Spanish American states display “a Moebius-like continuity where public and private planes, apparent causes and putative effects, have a way of twisting into one another” (*Foundational Fictions* 7).

The sheer experimentalism of the “modernist” Spanish American novel, studied along the critical lines initiated by Fuentes, involves then the fulfillment of “universalism,” or, to put it differently, of what Paz and Williams identified as the persistent Spanish American “desire to be modern.” But this linguistic or textual universalism results in the severance of the ties between the text and the world, between literary production and cultural specificity. That is to say, achieving “aesthetic modernity” amounts to losing touch with the logic of historical development as shaped by local circumstances. In this light, the “Joycean” or “modernist” features of the new novel can only be explained as a centrifugal force that pulls the Spanish American text away from the particularities of its geopolitical place of origin and into the depoliticized aesthetic realm of transnational modernism. Peruvian novelist José María Arguedas offered a paradigmatic formulation of this rapport between the “Joycean,” linguistic pyrotechnics of the new novelists and a lack of engagement with the immediacy of social reality. “Modernist” or “Joycean” aesthetics, like capitalist modernity, represent, for Arguedas, an obstacle for a faithful representation of Spanish American culture. In the diary entries inserted in his last novel, El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo (1971), he repeatedly refers to Ulysses as a modernizing force that clashes with the traditionalist regionalism of the type of novel which he propounded. Joyce’s experimentalism, like the North American imperialism that uproots Arguedas’s indigenous characters from their original communities, drives a wedge between an autochthonous sort of literature and an internationalist trend that the Peruvian novelist identifies mainly with Cortázar. Arguedas writes:

Este Cortázar que aguijonea con su “genialidad,” con sus solemnes convicciones de que mejor se entiende la esencia de lo nacional

desde las altas esferas de lo supranacional. Como si yo, criado entre la gente de don Felipe Maywa, metido en el oqlllo mismo de los indios durante algunos años de infancia para luego volver a la esfera “superindia” de donde había “descendido” entre los quechuas, dijera que mejor, mucho más esencialmente interpreto el espíritu, el apetito de don Felipe, que el propio don Felipe. (13-14)

[This Cortázar goads us with his “geniality,” with his solemn convictions that the essence of the national is better understood from the high spheres of the supranational. This is as if I, raised among the people of don Felipe Maywa, immersed into the very oqlllo of the Indians for a few years during my infancy to then come back to the “superindian” sphere from which I had “descended” among the quechuas, were to claim that I can interpret the spirit of don Felipe better, more essentially, than don Felipe himself.]

With these words, the Peruvian novelist is actually responding to an open letter to Cuban critic Roberto Fernández Retamar that Cortázar had published in Casa de las Américas in 1967 (later reprinted as “Acerca de la situación del intelectual latinoamericano” in Último Round). This letter not only dismantles the Manichean dichotomy between regionalism and universalism that Arguedas forcefully endorses--it also offers the possibility of conceiving of the compromised regionalism of Arguedas and the “universalistic” aestheticism of the new novel as distinct, albeit complementary, responses to the same historical demands. Indeed, we can take Cortázar’s arguments in this text as a starting point for reassessing the problematic relationship between the new novel and the cultural specificity of Spanish America. Cortázar’s main point is that neither his situation as an exile nor the experimental aspects of his fiction signify an aloofness to what it means to be a Spanish American intellectual. Instead of arguing, like Paz or Fuentes, that “universalism” blurs the boundaries between cultures and nationalities, Cortázar argues that it was precisely from France that he had become keenly conscious of his Spanish American condition. He argues that, like Cuban novelist and

poet José Lezama Lima, he has articulated his “Argentinness” (“argentinidad”) by injecting into the foreign culture he has absorbed “los jugos y la voz de su tierra” [the juices and the voice of his land] (276). In this sense, the Argentine writer negotiates his intellectual position with regard to the seemingly opposing poles of “universalism” and “nationalism.” On the one hand, Cortázar seems to respond to Fuentes and Paz when he maintains that apolitical or ahistorical universalisms are comfortable ways to avoid “las responsabilidades inmediatas y concretas” [concrete and immediate responsibilities] (268). On the other hand, Cortázar is also careful to distance himself from what he calls “los nacionalistas de escarapela y banderita” [the flag-and-badge nationalists] (266), whom he connects to the regionalist tradition epitomized by Rómulo Gallegos’ Doña Bárbara. In his view, a nationalism that loses sight of a global perspective can result in a defense of ethnic exclusivities very much like Arguedas’ in El zorro. Therefore, Cortázar positions himself and his work between local and global realities, convincingly arguing for a theoretical and practical intellectual attitude with the potential to connect literary experimentalism and social compromise.

It was precisely Fernández Retamar who defended this critical appreciation of Cortázar’s work in a colloquium on Rayuela (1963) celebrated in Havana shortly after the publication of the novel (a colloquium in which, incidentally, Lezama Lima also participated). To begin with, Fernández Retamar underscores the geopolitical specificity of Rayuela by stating that (despite the fact that the book was completed in Paris) the novel is one of the most important books written in America (“uno de los libros más importantes escritos en América”) (Simo et al. 21). While he is careful not to interpret Rayuela as a statement concerning the condition of the Spanish American intellectual, he



discusses the novel insofar as it relates to the specificity of Spanish American culture and society, as he contends that Horacio Oliveira's (the protagonist) plight, far from being that of a disengaged émigré, embodies the condition of "un pensador de un país latinoamericano frente al problema de la cultura. Un intelectual que vive del lado de allá y del lado de acá. Es decir, que vive en París, y que vive después otra vez en el Río de la Plata" [a thinker from a Latin American country facing the problem of culture. An intellectual who lives over there and over here--that is, who lives in Paris, and who then lives in the River Plate again] (Simo et al. 31). Predictably, Fernández Retamar establishes a connection between Rayuela and Joyce's Ulysses. However, this connection is not sustained by reference to their shared verbal audacity or formal innovations, but is rather presented as the result of the parallels between the Irish and Spanish American cultural and historical realities and their presence in the novels. Oliveira's plight as a Spanish American intellectual is linked to Stephen Dedalus' troubled relationship to Irish society at the turn of the twentieth century, for, as Fernández Retamar writes: "En cierta forma ese ahogo, esa opacidad de la sociedad argentina actual, y de casi todas las sociedades de la América Latina, se expresan en Oliveira en forma similar a aquel ahogo de la sociedad irlandesa que se manifiesta en Esteban" [In a way, the stifling opacity of contemporary Argentine society (and of almost all societies in Latin America) is expressed in Oliveira in a way similar to that oppression of Irish society manifested by Stephen] (Simo et al. 33). In addition, Fernández Retamar argues against taking Ulysses as the "model" for Rayuela as much as he discourages a reading of Joyce's novel that interprets it as a modern reproduction of Homer's Odyssey. According to him, a work of art maintains specific relations with a concrete historical situation, and these ties disrupt a

transnational and transhistorical model of literary analysis based on “models” and “imitations” or “originals” and “replicas” (Simo et al. 64).

With these remarks, Fernández Retamar is proposing a reading of Cortázar’s Rayuela and of his relationship to Joyce’s Ulysses that radically departs from Fuentes’s linguistic ahistoricism, but also from Arguedas’ recalcitrant nativism. Whereas Fuentes saw in Joyce and the new novel facets of the same “linguistic universalism,” Fernández Retamar defends a more historicized interpretation of the Joycean features of Rayuela: instead of suggesting a transatlantic aesthetics that would disregard cultural specificity to favor a depoliticized convergence of literary histories, the Cuban thinker emphasizes that a comparison between Cortázar and Joyce should be allowed primarily by the similarities and correspondences between their respective socio-cultural contexts. This important qualification adds an historical dimension to the interpretation of the new novel that is absent from Fuentes’s discussion and denied by Arguedas’ ethnic exclusivism. In fact, Fernández Retamar’s perspective allows an alternative interpretation of a Cortázar that drinks Coke and reads Joyce’s Ulysses. While the modernity that Coke symbolizes has indeed configured the globalized communication network that allows an Argentine to read an Irish writer’s novel, the literary “contact” between them might be seen as resisting rather than favoring the erasure of cultural specificities that globalization tends to provoke. Put differently, there exists the possibility to see in the Joyce-Cortázar an intercultural node of resistance to the uprooting and globalizing effects of modernity.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, the critical implications of Fuentes’s claim that Rayuela is to Spanish prose what Ulysses is to English prose (“Hopscotch” 88) are quite different from those of

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<sup>16</sup>On the dialectics between modernity and local socio-cultural formations, see Anthony Giddens, Modernity and Self-Identity.

Fernández Retamar's almost identical contention that Rayuela "es para nosotros los latinoamericanos tan importante como el Ulysses para los escritores de lengua inglesa" [is for us Latin Americans as important as Ulysses for the English-speaking writers" (Simo et al. 25).

If we attend to the implications of Fernández Retamar's critical suggestions, then the fulfillment of "universality" through the attainment of "aesthetic modernity" becomes more problematic than it might seem to the defenders of a Spanish American "modernism." Contrary to what Martin suggests, the literary map that would derive from a development of Fernández Retamar's remarks would not consider Joyce as a "First World writer" whose innovations set the goal for "peripheral" writers to achieve.<sup>17</sup> While for some authors such as Fuentes and Paz the emergence of "modernist" aesthetics would be a clear symptom of artistic maturity or "modernity," as well as testimony to the final collapse of the cultural boundaries between the West and Spanish America, for others such as Fernández Retamar there is still the possibility of relating the daring formal and stylistic techniques of a Joycean or "modernist" novel like Rayuela to the complex cultural specificity of Spanish America without reference to the development of Euro-American literature. In other words, novels such as Rayuela or Ulysses might not need to be interpreted in terms of a unique "Greenwich Meridian of literature" (to use again Casanova's felicitous expression) that stands as the only source of aesthetic modernity. Their analogies can be taken as the starting point of a new configuration of literary relations that do not need the sanction of a center or "Greenwich Meridian" to exist. This

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<sup>17</sup>Jose David Saldívar has pointed out that Fernández Retamar is "known for his meticulous efforts to dismantle the impact of Eurocentrism (with its implied theory of world history) on pan-American societies . . . His writings are intimately engaged with the problematics of Latin American history—how it has had to serve the economic, political, and cultural 'barbarism' of the West" (12-13).

new configuration would afford an alternative to the use of “modernism” to refer to “Joycean” Spanish American fiction, for the connection between Cortázar as an Argentine and Joyce as Irish would actually represent a link between peripheral artists that escapes the scope of the epistemological frames of the West. Instead of situating itself within the West, as Fuentes’s and Rodríguez Monegal’s poststructuralist reading of Joyce and the new novelists suggests, this connection steps outside of Eurocentrism and the teleological development of its modernity.

It would be instructive to recall at this point Borges’s familiar arguments in “El escritor argentino y la tradición,” first presented as a lecture at the Colegio Libre de Estudios Superiores in Buenos Aires in 1951, and later published in Sur in 1955. Borges’s points in this text closely resemble those of Cortázar’s in “Acerca de la situación del intelectual latinoamericano,” as he also disrupts the persistent dichotomy between nationalism and universalism that shaped Spanish American and Argentine culture during this historical period.<sup>18</sup> Borges rejects the thematic limitations that the nationalists try to impose on Argentine writers and claims that they should be fully entitled to embrace the Western literary tradition as their own. However, this appeal to the West need not entail a docile emulation of its poetic models or a frantic race to meet its aesthetic standards (that is, an urge to fulfill a “desire to be modern”). Instead, the Argentines, Borges argues, might be in a position analogous to that of the Jews and the Irish in relation to Western culture. He maintained that the creative inventiveness of the

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<sup>18</sup>Social thinkers such as Ezequiel Martínez Estrada and Bernardo Canal Feijóo were engaged in the hotly contested debate on what Argentinness (“argentinidad”) might mean. Perhaps Martínez Estrada’s Radiografía de la pampa (1933) and its exalted defense of the Argentine countryside and its “gaucho” inhabitants represent the clearest exposition of the nativist or regionalist views to which Borges responds here. A more immediate referent for Borges’s critique is the tawdry nationalism on which the Perón regime thrived. On the debate over Argentine nationalism during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, see Nicolas Shumway, The Invention of Argentina and Martin Stabb, In Quest of Identity.

Irish is not due to racial determinism, since many prominent Irish writers (Shaw, Berkeley, Swift) were of English descent. Instead, they only had to consider themselves Irish in order to transform English culture in innovative ways. He writes that “los argentinos, los sudamericanos en general, estamos en una situación análoga; podemos manejar todos los temas europeos, manejarlos sin supersticiones, con una irreverencia que puede tener, y ya tiene, consecuencias afortunadas” [the Argentines, the South Americans in general, are in an analogous situation; we can handle all the European themes, handle them without superstitions, with an irreverence that could have (and already has had) fortunate consequences] (Obras completas [OC] 1: 288). Thus Borges, like Cortázar and Fernández Retamar, believes that the presence of Western themes and techniques in Argentine (or Spanish American) writing does not need to be at odds with an artistic activity that remains geopolitically conscious: to position oneself as a Spanish American or Irish writer does not necessarily involve writing about Spanish American or Irish themes exclusively. Recall here Borges’s famous words about his story “La muerte y la brújula”: “Pese a los nombres alemanes o escandinavos, ocurre en un Buenos Aires de sueños: la torcida Rue de Toulon es el Paseo de Julio; Triste-le-Roy, el hotel donde Herbert Ashe recibió, y tal vez no leyó, el tomo undécimo de una enciclopedia ilusoria” [Despite the German and Scandinavian names, everything happens in a dreamy Buenos Aires: the twisted Rue de Toulon is the Paseo de Julio; Triste-le-Roy, the hotel where Herbert Ashe received, and perhaps didn’t read the eleventh volume of an illusory encyclopedia] (OC 1: 517). This awareness of the relevance of location for literature presents the transnational links between peripheral authors not as a convergence at a

common center occupied by the “Greenwich Meridian of literature,” but as an encounter on its margins.

My contention here is that if we depart from this geopolitical awareness to interpret Joyce’s “influence” on contemporary Spanish American narrative, then we will be facing a substantially different literary map than that proposed by Martin, Shaw, and Williams. If, as noted above, the literary history postulating a transatlantic modernism--into which its belated Spanish American contributors were finally integrated in the 1960s--keeps the status of Western modernity as a privileged site of cultural legitimacy virtually unchallenged, the type of literary history suggested by Borges and Fernández Retamar would abandon the route proposed by that modernity and articulate an alternative model. This model would function as an antidote to what Fredric Jameson has identified as the temptation to make the term “modernism” mean “something ahistorical and relatively transcultural.” Interestingly, and in spite of his postulation of a singular world system and a “singular modernity,” Jameson is well aware that the vulgar Marxist view that would posit “modernity as the new historical situation, modernization as the process whereby we get there, and modernism as a reaction to that situation and that process alike” is foiled by the “various national traditions” (A Singular Modernity 99).

To the relevance of this national (not nationalist) or geopolitical consciousness for the configuration of alternative literary histories, I would add the legacy of colonialism. In Para una teoría de la literatura hispanoamericana, Fernández Retamar claims that imposing on Spanish American literature theoretical criteria formulated according to the particular features of other literatures, the metropolitan literatures (“las literaturas metropolitanas”), amounts to academic colonialism. This type of colonialism stems from

the belief that metropolitan ideas have universal validity, and is very much a “secuela del colonialismo político y económico” [sequel of political and economic colonialism] (82). Of course, this critique of cultural dependence does not involve an isolationist attitude, which would bring us close to the nativist stance of Arguedas or to the Argentine cultural nationalism to which Borges responded in “El escritor argentino y la tradición.” In terms that remind us of Borges’s opinions about the position of the Argentine writer within Western tradition, Fernández Retamar qualifies his own ideas about cultural colonialism by stating that he is not advocating “partir absolutamente de cero e ignorar los vínculos que conservamos con la llamada tradición occidental, que es también nuestra tradición, pero en relación con la cual debemos señalar nuestras diferencias específicas” [starting radically from scratch and ignoring the ties with the so-called Western tradition, which is also our tradition, but in relation to which we should point out our specific differences] (87).<sup>19</sup> It is this importance granted to “specific differences” that has the potential to disrupt the generalizations that allow Martin, Shaw, or Williams to talk about a “Spanish American Modernism.” Interestingly, in his well-known anti-colonial essay, “Calibán” Fernández Retamar identifies in Fuentes’s La nueva novela hispanoamericana the critical product of a typically colonial attitude (“una típica actitud colonial”) (Calibán 70), arguing that the Mexican author applies to the new narrative “esquemas derivados de otras literaturas (de países capitalistas), reducidas hoy a especulaciones lingüísticas”

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<sup>19</sup>In the prologue to the first complete edition of Para una teoría de la literatura hispanoamericana, published in 1995 by the Colombian “Instituto Caro y Cuervo,” the author actually cites Borges to characterize his anti-colonial and anti-isolationist position, thus distancing himself from both Europeanism and nativism. The fragment from Borges comes from the prologue to El tamaño de mi esperanza (1926) where he claims that his work is not addressed to those “que creen que el sol y la luna están en Europa” [who believe that the Sun and the Moon are in Europe] (qtd. in Para una teoría 15).

[schemes derived from other literatures (from capitalist countries), reduced nowadays to linguistic speculations] (69).

It is from the geopolitically-conscious and anti-colonial perspective advocated by Fernández Retamar that I want to reassess here Joyce's impact on the new Spanish American narrative. This does not mean that I will restrict my attention to the social, political, and historical factors conditioning literary production. In fact, my argument will draw its strength primarily from careful analyses of form and structure, thus showing how close attention to literary technique should not necessarily support a poststructuralist approach to the new narrative. This reassessment would not only endorse a Spanish American literary history that does not need to attain legitimacy by way of the "Greenwich Meridian of literature;" it would also add a transnational and transatlantic dimension to the ongoing "recolonization" of Joyce as an Irish writer. As Vincent Cheng has pointedly remarked, Joyce has been "canonized by an Academy that has chosen to construct a sanitized 'Joyce' whose contributions are now to be measured only by the standards of canonical High Modernism" (3).<sup>20</sup> Likewise, Emer Nolan raises an argument that recalls Fernández Retamar's critique of academic colonialism as she claims that "the major trends in Joyce criticism have occluded the particularity of Irish historical experience as it determines and is reflected in his fiction" (xii). It is my contention that if we consider Joyce's fiction as a reflection of "Irish historical experience" rather than as the epitome of the decentralized linguistic playfulness of modernism (as Fuentes would

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<sup>20</sup>This "High Modernist" Joyce has been recently contested in a number of relevant studies. See Seamus Deane, "James Joyce and Nationalism"; Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland*, 327-355 and *Irish Classics* 463-481; Emer Nolan, *James Joyce and Nationalism*; Duffy, *The Subaltern Ulysses*; Vincent Cheng, *Joyce, Race, and Empire*; M. Keith Booker, *Ulysses, Capitalism, and Colonialism* and the collection of essays edited by Derek Attridge and Marjorie Howes, *Semicolonial Joyce*. On the politics of "Postcolonial Joyce Studies," see Cheng, "Of Canons, Colonies, and Critics: The Ethics and Politics of Postcolonial Joyce Studies."



have it), then the formal links between his fiction and contemporary Spanish American narrative will not be an actualization of modernist aesthetics. The encounter between the aesthetics of Joyce and Cortázar or Del Paso, for instance, might be interpreted, therefore, as the result of circumnavigating the “Greenwich Meridian” of aesthetic modernity to engender an “other” literary history. To use Elleke Boehmer’s words about the interaction between anti-colonial nationalisms at the turn of the twentieth century, the “contact zone” of literary exchange between these authors, which had been “conventionally located between the European colonial centre and its periphery will instead be positioned between peripheries” (2).

As Robin Fiddian has suggested in an important and stimulating article that unfortunately has not inspired much scholarship, an “essential element in the collective Spanish-American response to Joyce and, by implication, a key factor in the process of Joyceización, has been recognition of Joyce’s status as a paradigm of cultural excentricity.” Fiddian adds that “excentricity” and “peripherality” are the consequences of colonialism, “and in this respect Spanish-American intellectuals have not failed to note the similarities between their experience and that of Joyce and his fellow countrymen” (23-24). However, as we have noted above, the particular perspective adopted for the study of literary history has a crucial bearing on the meaning of “excentricity” or “peripherality.” Clearly, “peripherality” has contrasting meanings for Fuentes or Paz, on the one hand, and for Cortázar or Fernández Retamar, on the other. While Fiddian does not elaborate on what he understands by “peripherality,” César A. Salgado, in his valuable comparative study of José Lezama Lima and James Joyce (From Modernism to Neobaroque), has been more specific. He correctly claims that Lezama’s indebtedness to

Joyce should not be seen as creative dependence, but as an act of recognition: “it is the margin seeing the margin, the colonized seeing the colonized, the islander the islander.” However, Salgado, following Paz, explains the crossing of the aesthetic paths of Joyce and Lezama as a result of the “crisis of European centralism after the First World War” and the dislocation of “the hierarchy of center and periphery, high and low, metropolis and margin.” Therefore, instead of interpreting the interrelations between these two writers as a potential point of resistance to the teleological and universalistic narrative of European literary history, Salgado stretches the boundaries of high modernism, as it were, to make it include Lezama via Joyce. In this light, “modernism,” he maintains, “becomes a global phenomenon, a poetic exercised in areas politically and geographically remote” (27).

By arguing that “the crisis of European centralism” unraveled the dissemination of modernism across the globe, Salgado, like Paz and Fuentes, is still enforcing the idea that it is that very centralism and its internal transformations that determine global transformation of culture. This model of analysis places the “critique of the Western mode of thought” inside rather than outside the “West,” whose internal development is, after all, the ultimate cause for the reconfiguration of the cultural relationship between the center and the periphery. From this standpoint, it is only when Kantian modernity becomes self-conscious and self-questioning about its epistemological foundations that the excluded “other,” who had been formerly denied access to it, is finally incorporated as a supplement. It is important to underscore that in this case the “other” gains a voice only as a result of the internal development of Western modernity. As Carlos J. Alonso has elegantly remarked, “If at the banquet of modernity [Spanish Americans] were

always a second-class invitee, history finally rewarded [them] when sveltness became the apparent universal fashion” (The Burden of Modernity 154). Although the illusion of the teleological progress of (Western) historical time might have waned after World War I to finally vanish after World War II, the quality of that time remained unchallenged. That the “Greenwich Meridian of literature” is no longer located in Paris, London, or New York does not mean that it has ceased to be defined by its relation to modernity. Therefore, expanding the limits of the label “modernism” to encompass Joyce, Cortázar, or Lezama Lima amounts to interpreting their work as a response (not a challenge) to modernity. One obvious consequence of this act of global inclusiveness is the impossibility of articulating geopolitical differences in relation to the Western tradition, given that the demarcations between periphery and center are now porous to the point of configuring a spineless modernity, but which is still modernity nonetheless.

Therefore, our proposal for a geopolitical approach to the links between Joyce and Spanish America demands a questioning of not only the foundations, but also the scope of modernity. If we are to envision the literary interaction between Joycean aesthetics and contemporary Spanish American narrative as truly occurring “in the peripheries” and beyond the “Greenwich Meridian of literature,” then we need to conceive of modernity as a local, not universal, epistemological frame. A global conceptualization of modernity where centers and peripheries are interchangeable would fail to explain Borges’s contention that “el mundo, para el europeo, es un cosmos, en el que cada cual íntimamente corresponde a la función que ejerce; para el argentino es un caos” [the world for the European is a cosmos where everybody is linked intimately to his own function; for the Argentine, it is a chaos] (OC 2:40) or Cortázar’s opinion that it is precisely his

Argentinean marginality with respect to Europe that provides the grounds for artistic freedom.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, such a global modernity would neutralize the innovative potential of the “irreverence” that Borges attributed to the Irish and the South Americans alike. This shared irreverence provides the historical justification to abandon modernity and modernism as a unique theoretical horizon for our analysis and to interpret, following Borges, formal innovation as directly connected to a particular author’s relative position with respect to modernity. A comparative exercise informed by this geopolitical awareness would invalidate the claim that the presence of Joycean aesthetics in Spanish America is proof that “Latin America really is a part of Western civilization and that its cultural identity was of such a nature as to provide both a replication of the Joycean trajectory and optimum conditions for its assimilation” (Martin 141). While there is undoubtedly some truth in this statement, to support its validity without any qualifications would obliterate the possibility of a contestation of modernity that does not fully coincide with its internal epistemological development. One can argue that for Borges and Cortázar the internal development of the Western tradition and its modernity does not constitute the intellectual territory where they place their literary production. In my view, Borges’s and Cortázar’s vindication of marginality or eccentricity as a productive artistic and intellectual space discloses the duality or two-facedness of modernity as a local discursive project that was nonetheless presented as universal.

Enrique Dussel’s concept of “global modernity” is highly instrumental to theorize this duplicity of modernity. Dussel argues that European modernity resulted from the

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<sup>21</sup>When Cortázar considers his disengagement from a stifling literary tradition, he feels lucky to be a South American, and especially an Argentine “que no se cree obligado a escribir en serio, a ser serio, a sentarse ante la máquina de escribir con los zapatos lustrados y una sepulcral noción de la gravedad-del-instante” [who does not feel forced to write in earnest, to be solemn, to sit in front of the typewriter wearing polished shoes and feeling a sepulchral notion of the gravity-of-the-moment] (*Vuelta al día* 14).

constitution of a periphery, not because of the rationalistic coming of age or “emancipation” of Man that Kant defended. As Dussel argues,

Modernity is for many (for Jürgen Habermas or Charles Taylor, for example), an essentially or exclusively European phenomenon, but one constituted in a dialectical relation with a non-European alterity that is its ultimate content. Modernity appears when Europe affirms itself as the “center” of a World history that it inaugurates; the periphery that surrounds this center is consequently part of its self-definition. The occlusion of this periphery . . . leads the major contemporary thinkers of the “center” into a Eurocentric fallacy in their understanding of modernity. If their understanding of the genealogy of modernity is thus partial and provincial, their attempts at a critique or defense of it are likewise unilateral and, in part, false. (“Eurocentrism and Modernity” 65)

I would argue that by reading Joyce’s interaction with Spanish American narrative as part of a critique of modernity from the long-silenced perspective offered by its silenced periphery, one could underscore the geopolitical dimension of modernity and, by extension, of modernism. If placing Joyce and the new novelists within the internal revision of modernity presents them as participating “in this revision regardless of national context” (Salgado, From Modernism 27), locating them outside of that modernity, in a space of radical alterity, would underscore the positionality of their critique as much as it would enable the articulation of their “irreverence” through the transformation of form.<sup>22</sup> From this perspective, the innovative literary techniques that associate the new narrative with Joyce would not be read as the materialization of a universal literary paradigm originating in Europe and then spreading outwardly to the peripheries, but as localized aesthetic responses to specific historical and cultural

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<sup>22</sup>Thus, the alternative literary history that this study proposes would position itself within a recent trend of cultural studies that sets out to vindicate the epistemological validity of the “darker side” of modernity as a discursive space. The recovery of the epistemological possibilities of this space has been relevant for Enrique Dussel, The Invention of the Americas and The Underside of Modernity; Mignolo, Local Histories/Global Designs and The Idea of Latin America; Sylvia Wynter, “Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation--An Argument”; Arturo Escobar, Encountering Development.

conjunctures. Developing Fernández Retamar's insight into the connections between Rayuela and Ulysses, as well as Borges's comment on the shared irreverence of the South Americans and the Irish, one could interpret the formal similarities between Joyce and the new narrative as an aesthetic point of resistance to the Western discourse of modernity. This act of interpretation would propose to think beyond modernity as the only legitimate cultural horizon, embracing instead, as Irish critic Joe Cleary has suggested as regards Irish cultural production, "a less linear and more global and conjunctural mode of analysis that starts from the assumptions that Irish modernity comprises a particular configuration of wider global processes, and that its modernity is therefore directly coeval with other modernities" (210-211).

One important way in which the first decades of the twentieth century in Ireland and the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s in Spanish America could be seen as "coeval" is by observing the radical changes that both historical moments inflicted upon the limits of modernity as a universally legitimate discourse. These changes may be seen as an attempt to unveil and undo the foundations of the modern world system ruled by the economic, political, and cultural designs of Europe that emerged in the sixteenth century and incorporated both Ireland and Spanish America (or what was then called the "Occidental Indies") as its periphery.<sup>23</sup> The years during which Joyce composed Ulysses, 1914-1922, witnessed a rapid succession of crucial political and cultural events unraveling the colonial sway of that system over Ireland. The formation of the paramilitary army of the

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<sup>23</sup>The imperial designs of England and Spain emerged almost simultaneously during the sixteenth century. In 1541, only fifty years after Columbus founded on Hispaniola the first Spanish colony in the New World, Henry VIII took the decisive step of crowning himself King of Ireland. In Language and Conquest in Early Modern Ireland, Patricia Palmer has studied the similarities between the English and Spanish imperialist expansions, arguing that Castilian colonialism provided to a large degree the ideological groundwork for the Tudor re-conquest of Ireland launched by Henry VIII and continued by Elizabeth I. In this sense, the English annexation of Ireland is "part of a much larger pattern of sixteenth-century colonial expansion" (Palmer 6).

Irish Volunteers and the turbulent Home Rule negotiations at Westminster added to strained tempers that eventually boiled over into the Easter Rising of 1916 against British rule in Dublin. The utopian longings unleashed by this momentous military uprising resulted in a War of Independence followed by a Civil War, to eventually culminate in the long-awaited Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1922, granting political autonomy to twenty six of the thirty two Irish counties. That Ulysses was published in Paris a month before the Treaty was signed in London might be ignored as irrelevant trivia or it might trigger a deep reflection on the possible connections between the revolutionary aesthetics of Joyce's novel and the contemporary events dismantling the colonial structures of Ireland, thus interpreting its daring techniques and linguistic contortions as a strategy to grapple with a rapidly changing cultural landscape where imperial models of subjectivity, representation, and language should be cast off in order to give rise to decolonized social, political, and cultural models. If this second reading of Ulysses is seriously considered, then the novel marks, as Edna Duffy has put it, "the moment at which the formal bravura of the Eurocentric high modernism is redeployed so that a postcolonial literary praxis can be ushered onto the stage of a new and varied geo-literature" (4).<sup>24</sup>

I would claim that, to a large extent, this is the Ulysses that was read and rewritten in Spanish America from the 1940s in Borges's epigrammatic short stories through the 1970s in Fernando del Paso's mammoth novels. As happened between 1914 and 1922 in Ireland, the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s in Spanish America witnessed radical cultural and political transformations calling into question the universal legitimacy of Western modernity. While the most visible of these transformations is no doubt the

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<sup>24</sup>On Ulysses as an anti-colonial text intended for an Irish audience, see C. L. Innes, "Modernism, Ireland, and Empire: Yeats, Joyce and their implied audiences," 148-154.

Cuban Revolution of 1953, there emerged around these years a whole constellation of philosophical proposals that challenged the position of cultural dependency of Spanish America with respect to Europe. “Dependency theory” and the “Philosophy of Liberation” were two such models that in the 1960s were intent on shifting the global geography of knowledge production, boldly claiming that philosophical thought can also stem from the experiences of those shackled to the occluded peripheries of the modern world system, and not exclusively from a disembodied and universal “mind” that ultimately represents the imperial designs of the Western subject. These philosophical interventions were in fact part of a larger framework of decolonization that swept across the Third World at the beginning of the Cold War and crystallized brilliantly in the writings of Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, and Leopold Sedar Senghor. It is within this context that the reception of Joyce’s writing peaked in cultural journal and magazines in Spanish America and his aesthetics began to make its presence felt on the pages of the “boom” novels.

In chapter 2, I analyze these decolonizing formations in Spanish American cultural discourse and the place of Joyce’s critical reception within them. I discuss how two recognizable trends of Joyce criticism can be identified in Spanish America during the years of gestation of the new narrative: one of them relies heavily on the canonical, Anglo-American high modernist Joyce whose virtuous stylistic and formal techniques elevate him above his Irish origins to position him within a universal aesthetic sphere; the other reads Joyce as a decolonizing author in polemic dialogue with the cultural and philosophical paradigms of the West whose revolutionary narrative contested the disembodied discourse of aesthetics that legitimates the universalism of the modern



subject. While I argue that the first trend of Joycean reception shares fundamental theoretical premises with the formalistic Spanish American literary criticism originated by Rodríguez Monegal and continued by Carlos Fuentes, Donald Shaw, and Raymond Williams, I discern in the second interpretation of Joyce's work a possible point of departure for a geopolitical reassessment of the new narrative and its connections to Joyce's fiction. In fact, this mode of Joycean criticism is situated at the intersection among aesthetics, colonialism, and modernity, underscoring how Joyce's narrative stands as a powerful assault on the Kantian "aesthetic disinterestedness" that strategically silenced and transcended both the desiring body and the colonial "other" to sustain the universality of artistic beauty in particular, and modernity, in general. In this regard, it is no coincidence that Joyce's Ulysses was seen by Arturo Uslar Pietri as a baroque work at a time when the kinetic aesthetics of the baroque were seized on by Spanish American intellectuals to take issue with philosophical modernity and find literary ways to articulate their cultural specificity.

Chapter 3 focuses on Jorge Luis Borges's selected short stories from Ficciones (1944) and El Aleph (1949), while chapter 4 explores Julio Cortázar's Rayuela (1963), given that these two authors have been consistently singled out as the main precursor and the epitome of the new narrative respectively. In both chapters my analysis gravitates around the ideological relevance of formal and structural transformations in narrative discourse. In chapter 3, I concentrate on how Borges's use of parody and his critical treatment of Joyce's Ulysses in his essays and short stories intersect to propose a conception of cosmopolitanism that engages critically with prevailing models of national and global culture and questions modernist aesthetics as a valid transnational literary

model. While Borges's impressive range of cultural and literary reference has been frequently summoned as proof that his work is better understood as forming part of a transnational canon of universal literature, when one contrasts his technical use of citation and parody with modernist writer T. S. Eliot's theoretical views on this matter and his own literary practice, Borges emerges as an author that, despite the allusive richness of his prose, consistently manages to inscribe his situatedness vis-à-vis the universal discourses of tradition and modernity. I interpret the discursive overlapping between Borges's subversive use of allusion and parody and his critical views on Joyce as a possible solution to the tension between the rootless cosmopolitan universalism of modernism and the tawdry nationalism that populist leader Juan Domingo Perón used as a political platform during the years that saw the publication of Borges's short stories in Ficciones and El Aleph.

In chapter 4 I read Julio Cortázar's Rayuela, the centerpiece of the "boom" and the culmination of "Joycism" in Spanish America (Martin), as a text that stages an anti-colonial critique of modernism through its nuanced treatment of myth. I begin by showing the central position that Cortázar accorded Joyce's narrative within his aesthetic project, and go on to suggest the possibility of abandoning modernism as a historico-literary category that could ground a comparison of their narrative fiction. This abandonment of modernism is predicated on Cortázar's radical subversion of modernist uses of myth. Whereas the use of myth as an ordering structure has been customarily taken as a basic feature of modernist discourse--following Eliot's theorization in his famous 1923 review of Ulysses, "Ulysses, Order and Myth"--, I contend that in Rayuela myth, particularly the Ulyssean myth of homecoming, is deployed not to give "a shape

and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history” (Eliot, “Ulysses, Order and Myth” 270), but to articulate what Enrique Dussel has called an “exteriority” from the dialectics between self and other, reason and myth, culture and nature that underpins the philosophical discourse of modernity. The interruption of this dialectics is achieved through the denial of otherness operated through the cognitive phenomenon which African American theorist W. E. B. Du Bois labeled “double consciousness.” As I read it, double consciousness configures a place of enunciation that replaces the structures of myth associated with modernist discourse to inscribe within the narrative of Rayuela a “counter-mythical” space capable of producing a narrative model and elicit a reading practice that decidedly dislocate and rupture the homogenous models of representation and subjectivity emerging from modernity. This “counter-mythical” territory throws into relief the decolonizing dimension of the novel and offers an alternative context to analyze the interrelations between Ulysses and Rayuela that underscores the positions of Joyce and Cortázar with respect to modernity.

In chapter 5, I return to the intersection among aesthetics, colonialism, and modernity to identify in Joycean fiction in Spanish America a geopolitical reconfiguration of modernist form. I concentrate on a group of novels that have been usually characterized as “Joycean”--including Leopoldo Marechal’s Adán Buenosayres, Guillermo Cabrera Infante’s Tres tristes tigres, José Lezama Lima’s Paradiso, and Fernando del Paso’s Palinuro de México--to trace the connections between their subversion of the Kantian doctrine of “aesthetic disinterestedness” and their inscription of particularized place within the globalizing narrative of modernity. I argue that this

inscription of place is consistently related to the presence of the body in narrative discourse, a presence that dislodges the disembodied universalism underpinning the Eurocentric discourse of modernity and carves up an “interested” site of contestation belying the global scope of such discourse. In the last analysis, my discussion of the “interested aesthetics” of Joycean fiction in Spanish America intends to propose a map of global literary relations that registers the historical relevance of the geopolitical positionality of those writing from the colonial difference.

As so often, the intelligence of Borges’s texts affords a lucid way to both summarize and further clarify our arguments. His famous short story “Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote” contains the important caveat that the historicity conditioning the act of creation is a crucial aspect to bear in mind in order to develop coherent criticism of a given text. As the Borgesian text conclusively demonstrates, the same fragment from Cervantes’s novel can generate two mutually exclusive interpretations depending on the historical context of its original production. The same argument applies to the reading of Joyce and the new novelists in Spanish America. If read from the side of modernity, as Fuentes instructs us to do, their narratives engage with the internal crisis of European centralism, that is, with the realization that the European culture no longer stands as the uncontested center of universal signification. If read from the underside of modernity, from its long-silenced periphery, these narratives document the conviction that the world of the colonized is (as Frantz Fanon put it) “fundamentally different” (Wretched 7) and demands alternative forms of expression.

DISSOCIATIONS OF SENSIBILITY: AESTHETICS, CULTURAL  
DECOLONIZATION, AND JOYCE'S RECEPTION IN SPANISH AMERICA

Leo The Waves, esa puntilla cineraria, fábula de  
espumas. A treinta centímetros por debajo de mis  
ojos una sopa se mueve lentamente en mi bolsa  
estomacal, un pelo crece en mi muslo, un quiste  
sebáceo surge imperceptible en mi espalda.  
Julio Cortázar, Rayuela

## 1

In Chapter 5 of Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, Stephen Dedalus explains his aesthetic theory to his fellow college student, Cranly. At a crucial point in his exposition, he makes a distinction between "static" and "kinetic" art: while the latter is "improper" and incites feelings of "desire or loathing," the former is the cause of the "esthetic emotion" which arrests the mind and raises it above the squalid materiality of the external world (205). After a complex elaboration of his formalistic, quasi-scholastic approach to the artistic object, Stephen culminates his argument with his often-quoted description of the artist as the "God of the creation, [who] remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails." However, his well-wrought disquisition is no sooner finished than it is gruffly deflated by another of his classmates, Lynch: "What do you mean," he asks, "by prating about beauty and the imagination in this miserable, Godforsaken island? No wonder the artist retired within or behind his handiwork after having perpetrated this country" (215). With these remarks, it seems that Joyce is playing the aesthetic formalism

of “static art” against the social conditions of Ireland at the turn of the twentieth century. Early reviewers of Joyce’s A Portrait and Ulysses were quick to turn this dichotomy into an article of faith, as they identified Stephen’s aesthetic views with Joyce’s and opposed the structural complexity of his works to the Irish background of their contents.<sup>1</sup> As Joseph Brooker has noted, while some of these critics celebrated his narrative by focusing on its “static” architectonics, others denigrated it on account of its “kinetic” aspects (21). The opinions of the first group, which included Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot, constituted the critical foundation of Joyce’s canonization as the epitome of “high modernism”; the often enraged reactions of the second group eventually resulted in the notorious censorship of Ulysses in the United States and Great Britain until the 1930s.

Joseph Kelly has claimed that Pound and Eliot “changed Joyce from an Irish writer into an avant-garde, cosmopolitan writer, shucking off his provincial husk” (9). But how can one ignore the “Irishness” of a writer whose entire oeuvre revolves around Dublin and the speech and customs of its people? For Pound and Eliot, the Irish content of Joyce’s narrative was little more than the dull subject matter to be transfigured into art by the formal virtuosity of A Portrait and, most notably, Ulysses. But this formal virtuosity was not appreciated in vacuo. The emphasis on the “static” elements of Joyce’s prose was a necessary critical step toward establishing his stylistic and technical innovations as the remedy for the rapid dissolution of European cultural values after World War I. Discussing the realism of Ulysses, Pound affirmed that it was the solution

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<sup>1</sup>On Joyce’s views on aesthetics, see William T. Noon, Joyce and Aquinas; Umberto Eco, The Aesthetics of Chaosmos: The Middle Ages of James Joyce; and Jacques Aubert, The Aesthetics of James Joyce. Noon’s classic study explores the influence of scholastic philosophy on Joyce. Eco also emphasizes the Irish writer’s indebtedness to Thomism and the persistence of scholasticism and allegorical structures in his fiction, especially Ulysses. Aubert’s well-documented book focuses on Joyce’s aesthetics as it developed in his critical writings. For an insightful and well-documented study on the conceptualization of Joyce’s “Irishness” in the early reception of his work, see Kevin Dettmar, “Joyce/‘Irishness’/Modernism.”

to the “hell of contemporary Europe. The sense of style that Joyce’s narrative represents would have saved America or Europe. The mot juste is of public utility” (Pound/Joyce 93). For the author of the Cantos, this stylistic precision was testimony to Joyce’s detachment from the “local stupidity” that his native Ireland represented and to his entrance “into the modern world”: “He writes as a European, not as a provincial,” Pound unambiguously stated in a piece tellingly titled “The Non-Existence of Ireland” (Pound/Joyce 32-33).

The “modern” and “European” characteristics of Joyce’s Ulysses were also the main concern of Eliot in his well-known 1923 review “Ulysses, Order and Myth.”<sup>2</sup> Eliot perceives in the mythical structure of Ulysses a paradigm of order that fulfils a function analogous to that which Pound assigned to Joyce’s narrative precision, namely that of “controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history” (270). Though fragmentary, the post-Great War world of Eliot and Joyce could gain stability by association with the order of myth. Thus, what he called the “mythical method”—the manipulation of “a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity”—afforded the possibility to concentrate on the “static” underpinnings of the construction of Ulysses, while ignoring its “kinetic” contents. In this respect, A. Walton Litz maintained that “Eliot was troubled from the start by the threat which Joyce’s diverse and rambunctious prose might pose to the ‘classicist’” (14), adding that, like “a devoted but somewhat timid child, Eliot was trying to process Joyce’s novel into a congenial world of ‘authority’ and ‘tradition’” (15).

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<sup>2</sup>Astradur Eysteinnsson has argued that the Eliot’s views on this text closely resemble Stephen’s aesthetic ideas in A Portrait, adding that their shared theory of art “is frequently taken to constitute the center of the revolutionary formal awareness and emphasis that most critics detect in modernist works” (10).

Therefore, one could argue that modernist aesthetics as theorized and practiced by Pound and Eliot found in Joyce's Ulysses a space for projection. Christopher Butler writes that Ulysses "may well have been the crucial impetus to the major work of Pound and Eliot in this period, and have provided some of the central aesthetic principles governing their work and their intersection at this time [the 1920s]" (74).

Indeed, Eliot the "classicist" perceived in the "static" order of Ulysses a cure for the cultural fragmentation of the West, which he surely perceived as an extreme case of "dissociation of sensibility." Eliot introduced this concept in his essay "The Metaphysical Poets" (1921), where he claimed that Donne, Chapman and other English poets of the early seventeenth century exemplified the perfect integration of lived experience and intellectual learning. As he writes, "their mode of feeling was directly and freshly altered by their reading and thought" (229). For these poets, feeling and thought were in perfect harmony, since their intellects were constantly pressing their experiences into systems or "wholes." Their minds were not assailed by the fragmentation that, according to Eliot, became increasingly frequent in English letters after the seventeenth century. Eliot must have noticed a strong parallel between this initial moment of "dissociation of sensibility" in the English poetic tradition and the consequences for artistic expression that he attributed to the "immense panorama of futility and anarchy" during the early decades of the twentieth century. As he argued in his review of Ulysses, the interpretations of primitive myth elaborated by the emerging sciences of anthropology, ethnology, and psychology could offer an intellectual model for the organization of this dismal historical and cultural panorama:

Psychology (such as it is, and whether our reaction to it be comic or serious), ethnology, and The Golden Bough have



concluded to make possible what was impossible only a few years ago. Instead of narrative method, we may now use the mythical method. It is, I seriously believe, a step toward making the modern world possible for art. (270)

What Eliot might have found appealing in these scientific discourses is their common goal to find in the “savage” cultures a mode of thought that still had not lost its undivided integrity. Marc Manganaro has actually identified in the French ethnologist Lucien Lévy-Bruhl<sup>3</sup> a source for Eliot’s views in “The Metaphysical Poets,” arguing that the unified sensibility that he ascribed to the English metaphysical poets closely resembles Lévy-Bruhl’s notion of the mentalité primitive, a mentality for which physical objects and their spiritual value are “un tout indécomposable” [a synthetic whole] (Lévy-Bruhl 39). By linking Ulysses to the recuperative potential of anthropological discourse, Eliot presents this novel as a reliable cornerstone to regain for art the “auratic” value of the mythical mentalité primitive.

Eliot’s modernist program to originate an integrated artistic space could be placed in the wider philosophical context provided by the development of the Western discourse of aesthetics. As originally formulated by Kant’s mentor, Alexander Baumgarten, in his Aesthetica (1750), aesthetics was intended to mediate between the universality of reason and the particularities of sense perception, or, to put it in Eliot’s terms, between “thought” and “feeling.” According to Terry Eagleton, aesthetics as a theoretical discourse is “a kind of prosthesis to reason, extending a reified Enlightenment rationality into vital regions which are otherwise beyond its reach” (The Ideology 10). In particular, the problem of “dissociation of sensibility” that Eliot tries to solve in artistic terms could

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<sup>3</sup>That Eliot knew the work of Lévy-Bruhl in substantial depth is an amply documented fact. On T. S. Eliot and Lévy-Bruhl, see David Spurr, “Myths of Anthropology: Eliot, Joyce, Lévy-Bruhl.”

be related quite accurately to Kant's aesthetic theory.<sup>4</sup> Kant had viewed knowledge as deriving from the organization of the intuitive play of sensations ("feeling") performed by the aprioristic concepts of understanding ("thought"). However, he was keenly aware of the reifying potential of understanding, of a rationality which, severed from the mutability of the material world that it tries to neatly conceptualize, would remain perpetually alienated from it. The German philosopher saw in the aesthetic judgment a "faculty" mediating between nature and the universality of reason (Vernunft) which ultimately intended to arrest and transcend the unruly, "kinetic" aspects of experience into universal principles. In the "Introduction" to The Critique of Judgment, Kant writes: "The reflective Judgment, which is obliged to ascend from the particular in nature to the universal, requires on that account a principle that it cannot borrow from experience, because its function is to establish the unity of all empirical principles under higher ones, and hence to establish the possibility of their systematic subordination" (17). Notice how Kant's principle of aesthetic judgment as a means of combining experience and thought into a synthetic whole is formulated in a way that recalls Eliot's recourse to the form of myth as an organizing principle. In the "Analytic of the Beautiful," Kant gave a concise articulation of this formalist approach in discussing how to correctly appreciate the work of art. His depuration of the artistic object to the contours of its aesthetically apprehensible form (or "delineation") is analogous to Eliot's emphasis on the capacity of the mythical template to organize and give a stable shape to the anarchy provoked by historical change:

In painting, sculpture, and in all the formative arts--in  
architecture, and horticulture, so far as they are beautiful

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<sup>4</sup>For a detailed analysis of Eliot's unpublished writings on Kant, see M. A. R. Habib, "The Prayers of Childhood: T. S. Eliot's Manuscripts on Kant."

arts--the delineation is the essential thing; and here it is not what gratifies in sensation but what pleases by means of its form that is fundamental for taste. (Critique of Judgment 75).

What aesthetic discourse and the structures of myth offered Kant and Eliot respectively was the possibility of a transcendental and transhistorical space of representation in which they could resolve the constant threat of dissolution that their universalistic formalism faced when confronted with the unruliness of the material changeability and historical transformations. We can now to appreciate the similarities among Kant's formalism, Stephen's defense of "static" art and Eliot's celebration of "mythical order." In all three cases, placing form over content (stasis over kinesis) becomes a strategy to find a way to systematize experience according to a stable and unchanging principle. Taking these similarities to their logical conclusion, it could be argued that emphasizing the "static" or formal aspects of Ulysses would amount to interpreting the novel as part of the aesthetic project to reconstitute the representational integrity of the "Western mind." Just as "static" form is the necessary object of aesthetic judgment and aesthetic judgment is instrumental for (and at the same time derives from) the integrity of Kantian reason--and, by extension, for the project of Enlightened modernity--so the formal consistency or "stasis" of the mythical structure of Joyce's book (as discussed by Eliot) emerges as a powerful and convincing illustration of how art can provide a redemptive space where the "dissociation of sensibility" of contemporary society could be remedied.

If this image of a "modern" Joyce goes hand in hand with a formalist and cosmopolitan (Europeanist) reading of his work, those who decried Ulysses as mere pornography emphasized, more often than not, its author's Irish "backwardness." As Kevin Dettmar has aptly noted, to label a writer as Irish during the first decades of the

twentieth century “was not simply to supply one’s readers with information about the author’s national origin; for whether consciously or unconsciously, the label “Irish” served to enmesh Joyce in a long history of British anti-Irish stereotypes” (105). A case in point is H. G. Wells’ 1917 review of A Portrait, where the English author examines Joyce’s novel from an imperialistic perspective and interprets the author’s “cloacal obsession” and anti-English feelings as results of his “limitations” as an Irishman. The “kinetic” nature of Joyce’s prose is perceived as a sign of underdevelopment with respect to England, whose modernity has successfully expunged the uncivilized features permeating A Portrait. Joyce, Wells argues, “would bring back into the general picture of life aspects which modern drainage and modern decorum have taken out of ordinary intercourse and conversation.” To these remarks, he adds the revealing comment that “We shall do Mr. Joyce an injustice if we attribute a normal sensory basis to him and then accuse him of deliberate offense” (86-87). It appears then that the cause of Joyce’s impaired “sensory basis” is, according to Wells, his Irishness. Thus, where Pound and Eliot had to denationalize and “modernize” Joyce to bring out the “static” side of his work, Wells immediately links up his nationality and the “kinetic” aspects of A Portrait in order to underscore the novel’s non-modernity or “backwardness.” Likewise, while Eliot saw in the “order” of Ulysses a possible solution to the “dissociation of sensibility” that plagued the modern world (and the project of modernity), Wells alerts us to the disrupting effects of the contents of A Portrait, only to relate them to Joyce’s deficient sensorial perception.

Wells’ notion of an Irish abnormal “sensory basis” can be usefully connected to Kant’s ideas on how aesthetic perception or “taste” varies depending on race and

nationality. For Kant, the right mode of sensory or aesthetic perception is that which perceives in the purposiveness of nature the cognitive structures of enlightened reason.<sup>5</sup> Ethnic or national identity is a factor that affects this rapport between perception and cognition. In section four of his Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime (1764), Kant argues that “finer feeling” or appropriate taste is to be associated mainly with Europeans, and specifically with the Germans: they have “a fortunate combination of feeling, both in that of the sublime and in that of the beautiful” (104). This “fortunate combination of feeling,” remindful of Wells’ “normal sensory basis,” is denied to other nations and races in direct proportion to their geopolitical distance from Germany. The lowest end of this aesthetic spectrum is occupied by the colonized “Negroes of Africa” who “have by nature no feeling that rises above the trifling” (110). The racial (and, I would add, colonial) difference between whites and blacks, the German philosopher believes, “appears to be as great in regard to mental capacities as in color” (111). It seems, then, that the racism that supported the colonialist enterprise did not only find support in a “denial of coevalness,” as has been convincingly argued,<sup>6</sup> but also in what we might call a “denial of finer feeling.” Therefore, Wells’ notion of what a “normal sensory basis” should be might have been also conditioned by his perception of the Irish not only as England’s colonized “other,” but also as racially inferior. As Vincent Cheng

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<sup>5</sup>Consider, by way of illustration, the following lines: “The regularity which leads to the concept of an object is indeed the indispensable condition (condition sine qua non) for grasping the object in a single representation and determining the manifold in its form. This determination is a purpose in respect of cognition, and in reference to this it is always bound up with satisfaction. . .” (Critique of Judgment 98).

<sup>6</sup>The phrase “denial of coevalness” is due to Johanness Fabian, who in his Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object argues that a foundational mechanism for the Eurocentric constructions of “otherness” consists of the articulation of the cultural hegemony of the metropolitan culture as temporal norm. Dominated cultures would then be “primitive deviations” which permanently lag “behind” that norm. Notice, in this regard, the irony involved in the modernist appropriation and transformation of the “primitive” as raw material for “new” artistic forms that could salvage the integrity of Western culture.

has conclusively shown, “the racial comparison most frequently and insistently made about the Irish during the latter half of the nineteenth century was with ‘negroes’” (27). Wells’ response to Joyce radically clashes with Eliot’s and Pound’s: far from being the champion of Western values, Wells sees in Joyce an intellectually deviant and anti-modern man, a man that, to borrow John Middleton Murry’s apposite remarks, “would blow what remains of Europe into the sky . . . [due to his] rebellion against the lucidity and comprehensibility of civilized art” (196).

This brief survey of Joyce’s early reception in Europe usefully illustrates the underlying connections between aesthetics as a philosophical discourse, modernity, and colonialism. These connections often determined and substantiated the almost antithetical critical perceptions of A Portrait, and, most notably, Ulysses. Depending on the reviewer, Joyce’s prose was either “static,” “cosmopolitan,” and “modern” or “kinetic,” “Irish,” and “backwards.” It was the first Joyce who, until recently, dominated the critical tradition, which almost unanimously considered his work as the model of modernist aesthetics.<sup>7</sup> Recently, literary critic Andrew Gibson has openly set out to recover the second Joyce, thus contributing to the ongoing “Irishization” of the author started in the mid-1990s by Seamus Deane, Emer Nolan and Declan Kiberd, among others.

Commenting on Wells’ review of A Portrait, Gibson claims that “Joyce had introduced the sordid and obscene elements in the novel with malign or seditious intent. They were part of his Irish assault on England and English culture” (2). Interestingly, eighty years after the publication of the novel Gibson’s re-evaluation of the effect of Joyce’s

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<sup>7</sup>On the continuities among Pound, Eliot, and the canonical image of a modernist Joyce supported by the New Criticism, see Jeffrey Segall, Joyce in America (Berkeley: U of California P, 1993) 115-136.

nationality on his work returns precisely to the relation between the kinetic, the Irish, and the anti-colonial.

My argument for this chapter departs from that relation: I believe that one effective way to place Joyce's work on the underside of modernity--above, below, or beyond the "Greenwich Meridian of literature"--is by stressing how the "kinetic" aspects of his narrative frustrate the rapport between reason and sensation. So, for instance, if a modernist exegesis of the scientific catechism of "Ithaca" (chapter 18) would emphasize the way in which the circumstantial material presented in this chapter is ultimately circumscribed within stable discursive models (science and religion, or even science as religion), a mode of interpretation alert to Joyce's calculated ironic handling of all kinds of authoritative paradigms would focus on the multiple ways in which the narrative actually exceeds and undermines the truth claims of science and religion. Leopold Bloom provides a provocative illustration of this frustration of universalistic systems when he gazes at the stars and muses about the mismatch between the immensity of the universe and the scientific laws of nature. This mismatch reminds Bloom of his futile efforts to calculate the quadrature of the circle, an exercise that actually involves reducing an infinite numeric series to a finite set of algebraic coefficients:

. . . some years previously in 1886 when occupied with the problem of the quadrature of the circle he learned of the existence of a number computed to a relative degree of accuracy to be of such magnitude and of so many places, e.g. the 9<sup>th</sup> power of the 9<sup>th</sup> power of 9, that, the result having been obtained, 33 closely printed volumes of 1000 pages each of innumerable quires and reams of India paper would have to be requisitioned in order to contain the complete tale of its printer integers. . . the nebula of every digit of every series containing succinctly the potentiality of being raised to the utmost kinetic elaboration of any power of any of its

powers. (U 15.1071-1082)<sup>8</sup>

What the sprawling dimensions of these calculations signify is the irreducibility of a kinetic reality to static laws, a point that informs “Ithaca” as much as it informs the whole novel. The effect of Joyce’s technique is, therefore, to expose (rather than remedy) the failure of formalist abstractions to represent the material world. The implications of this exposure in the particular case of “Ithaca” become politically charged when we realize that, as Nicholas Whyte has amply demonstrated, scientific discourse in Ireland before independence remained the almost exclusive province of the colonial establishment, namely British officials and the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy. Read in this way, Ulysses would incite rather than remedy the “dissociation of sensibility” that, much to Eliot’s chagrin, plagued Western culture after the Great War. Given the close links among aesthetics, modernity, and colonialism that we have discussed above, exposing critically this “dissociation of sensibility” would amount to a declaration of cultural independence, indeed to a decolonizing aesthetic move.

It is my contention that this way of reading Joyce, which has gained scholarly force in the Anglo-American academy in the last decade, was already in practice between the late 1940s and the 1970s among the Spanish American literati, including some of the authors frequently associated with the “boom.” By paying attention to this mode of interpretation, and to how it permeated the narrative fiction of the period, the equivalence between Anglo-American modernism and the new Spanish American narrative can be called into question. Put differently, an exploration of the relationship between this new narrative and Joyce that brings into play the elusive (albeit solid) links among aesthetics,

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<sup>8</sup>Parenthetical references to Joyce’s Ulysses will be to the Hans Gabler edition, indicating chapter number followed line numbers.



modernity, and colonialism can reconnect the experimental literary production of the period to the debate on decolonization that dominated Spanish American cultural politics at the time. I am interested, therefore, in the possibilities that an historical recontextualization of Joycean narrative in Spanish America might offer for an alternative literary history.

## 2

It is true that, as Donoso wrote in his Historia personal del “boom”, he and his contemporaries openly acknowledged the mastery of Kafka, Mann, Proust, or Joyce over that of their Spanish American forefathers: D’Halmar, Gallegos, Alegría. This declaration of literary preferences might be conveniently summoned to characterize the new Spanish American novel as an unambiguously internationalist literary object. But Donoso also argued that the “boom” writers willingly and ardently embraced the ideology of the Cuban Revolution. Until the notorious Padilla affair,<sup>9</sup> the Cuban cause (Donoso claimed) provided these writers with a coherent ideological structure of continental scope. In the words of the Chilean novelist: “Creo que si en algo tuvo unidad casi completa el boom. . . fue en la fe primera en la causa de la Revolución Cubana” [I believe that if the boom had complete unity in something. . . it was in their initial faith in the cause of the Cuban Revolution] (60-61). By quoting these remarks, I do not intend to imply that the new novelists were simply the literary wing of Fidel Castro’s political project. In fact, one of the authors that I discuss in detail in chapter 5, José Lezama Lima, was openly

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<sup>9</sup>Cuban poet Heriberto Padilla, initially a supporter of Castro’s revolution, was placed under house arrest after the publication of his collection of poems, Fuera de juego (1968), which were considered subversive of the regime. Many writers that had supported Castro until then, including Cortázar, Fuentes, and García Márquez, expressed great dissatisfaction with this act of repression.

condemned by Castro's government for his homosexuality and for his complicated, "uncompromised" poetry and prose. My intention is rather to underscore that the new novel in Spanish America is not, as it has been often portrayed, an apolitical phenomenon.<sup>10</sup> Donoso's words actually invite an exploration of the connections between the literary innovations of these new novelists and the cultural climate that brought about such a political watershed as the Cuban Revolution. In this regard, I will contrast the views of Joyce as cosmopolitan and "modernizing" aesthetic force with those views that see in him an author whose narrative could serve as a model to establish meaningful links between political and aesthetic decolonization.

Joyce has been a common literary reference for the new novel ever since its earliest stages. The inception of the narrative trend that would later crystallize in the "boom" began, Donoso argues, with the publication of Fuentes's La región más transparente, a novel which, for all its stylistic virtuosity, cannot be truly appreciated unless one is aware of its cultural specificity. For Donoso, La región más transparente belongs, by virtue of its search for a Mexican cultural identity, to a genealogy of profoundly Latin American books ["una estirpe de libros profundamente latinoamericana"] embodied by works so diverse as Ezequiel Martínez Estrada's Radiografía de la pampa, Mario Benedetti's Montevideanos, and Leopoldo Marechal's Adán Buenosayres. This local specificity did not pass unnoticed by Cortázar, who in a letter to Fuentes dated September 7, 1958, complained that the references to the Mexican social, cultural, and historical realities were so detailed that they often became obscure for the non-Mexican reader. However, that partial obscurity did not keep the author of Rayuela from perceiving in Fuentes's novel problems and issues that also affected him as

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<sup>10</sup>See, for instance, Juan Manuel Marcos, De García Márquez al Post-Boom.

an Argentine. He wrote: “leyendo su novela, he subrayado centenares de pasajes, y he escrito al lado: Argentina. Me imagino que usted ha podido hacer lo mismo con algunos libros nuestros” [reading your novel I have underlined hundreds of passages, writing Argentina on the margin. I imagine that you could have done the same thing with our books] (526). It is with regard to this cultural idiosyncrasy that Cortázar compares La región to Joyce’s Ulysses. While for Cortázar Joyce’s goals were more “literary” than those of Fuentes, his main concern in Ulysses being to supersede previous narrative molds, the Argentine novelist also uses the book as an example of the densely-packed local specificity that he attributes to La región.

With this brief comment on the similarities between Ulysses and Fuentes’s first novel, Cortázar is not only establishing Joyce’s novel as what became a persistent point of reference for the aesthetics of the “boom.” He is also crediting to Ulysses a local dimension that, as seen above, was conspicuously ignored by those that transformed Joyce into an iconic figure of international modernism. This “local” appreciation of Joyce was registered and developed by some Spanish American critics and reviewers publishing between the mid-1940s and the 1960s, the period of gestation and flourishing of the new novel. As César Salgado has noted, the “interest in Joycean themes and narrative techniques paralleled a brief ‘boom’ of critical studies and commentaries in Spanish on Joyce during the forties” (From Modernism 89). He goes on to supply ample documentation to indicate that this was a period of active Joycean criticism in Spanish America: journals such as Alfar, Contrapunto, or Lezama Lima’s Orígenes featured translations of articles on Joyce by Valéry Larbaud, Edmund Wilson, Jacques Mercaton, and Harry Levin; Herbert Gorman’s biography James Joyce was published in translation

in Buenos Aires; and Juan Jacobo Bajarlía's Literatura de vanguardia del Ulises de Joyce y de las escuelas plásticas was issued in 1946, a year after J. Salas Subirat's translation of Ulysses appeared. Salgado adds that, despite subsequent "disfigurements" of established critical perspectives, the contribution to the Joycean debate by Hispanic critics constituted a case of paradigmatic dependence: "All peninsular and Latin American approaches to Ulysses resort to 'canonical' criticism, whether or not this operation is made explicit in the text" (91). A substantial part of the Spanish American intelligentsia writing about Joyce during these years did echo received ideas from the Anglo-American academy. But this dependence is by no means typical of all the ideas about Joyce published in Spanish America at the time. Critics as relevant as Arturo Usler Pietri, publishing in Leopoldo Zea's Cuadernos Americanos in the 1950s, expressed views that differed substantially--and in some cases flatly contradicted--the critical orthodoxy of Joycean studies of the Anglo-American academy. I believe that this heretical line of criticism offers the possibility to create an alternative context for the analysis of Joycean narrative in Spanish American, a context that connects in meaningful ways the aesthetics of the new novel to the intense process of cultural decolonization of that period.

Before exploring these alternative contexts, we will discuss how the "mimetic" trend of Joyce criticism that Salgado identified developed into a more general constellation of critical ideas that can be held largely responsible for the recent characterization of the new novel as a "modernist" phenomenon. The articles on Joyce published during the period under consideration in the prominent Buenos Aires journal Sur provide a useful illustration of this critical constellation. Indeed, the characterization of Joyce's aesthetics found in the pages of Sur was consistent with the cultural mission of

the journal, namely to find a cultural expression for Argentina and South America by looking towards Europe.<sup>11</sup> Predictably, then, the Joyce of Sur is closer to the modernist icon of Eliot and Pound rather than the Irish author that Wells critiqued.

Founded in 1931 by Victoria Ocampo, Sur and its associated press (Editorial Sur) became a major venue for the introduction of modernist aesthetics and continental philosophy in Argentina and Spanish America. As John King has noted, the main representatives of the new novel (Cabrera Infante, Fuentes, Vargas Llosa, García Márquez) acknowledged that they first came in touch with the Anglo-American avant-garde through its pages. A perusal of Sur's contents over the years is enough to get a sense of the prominent position that the editors accorded this kind of literature. In 1947, a double issue on modern British literature was published, featuring translations of V. S. Pritchett, Stephen Spender, T. E. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, and T. S. Eliot, among many others. Four years later, on the occasion of the publication's twentieth anniversary, its secretary, Guillermo de Torre, celebrated the groundbreaking publishing efforts Sur, which boasted the first Spanish translations of authors such as Huxley, Lawrence, Joyce, Woolf, and philosophers such as Heidegger--whose "What is Metaphysics?," de Torre reminds us, appeared in translation almost simultaneously with the original. As this list of names indicates, one of the main goals of the editorial board of Sur was to "keep up" with the aesthetic and philosophical innovations from across the Atlantic.

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<sup>11</sup>For David Viñas this attitude of cultural dependence crystallized in what he called "the trip to Europe," a trip that symbolizes the abandonment of the materiality or the "body" of American reality in order to attain the "spirit" of Europe. According to Viñas, Sur embodied this trend by promoting the figure of the disengaged, individualistic, and bourgeois writer (*De Sarmiento a Cortázar* 83-89). On the notion of "the trip to Europe" see his *De Sarmiento a Cortázar*, 141-214; and *Literatura argentina y realidad política*, 3-80.

As part of her efforts to create cultural ties between Europe and South America, Victoria Ocampo established strong connections with several relevant European literary figures, notably Virginia Woolf and T. S. Eliot. According to Woolf's personal diary, she meet Ocampo (or "Okampo," as Woolf frequently spelled the name) in November 1934 at a photography exhibition in London. This initial encounter was the beginning of a literary friendship that greatly influenced Ocampo's creative and critical writings. Years later, in a paper delivered at a meeting of an association of Argentine anglophiles, she referred to her first encounter with Woolf in highly idealized terms, an idealism that extended to her description of the English novelist: "Todo lo que esta mujer ha comprendido, sentido, pensado, se agrega en este momento a su belleza y la subraya. Se pregunta uno cómo se las ha arreglado para no pensar en nada vulgar, para no sentir nada bajo, pues ninguna vulgaridad, ninguna fealdad ha dejado marca en su rostro"

[Everything that this woman has understood, felt, thought, adds to her beauty and underlines it. One wonders how she has managed not to think of anything vulgar, not to feel anything low, since no ugliness has left a mark on her face]. For Ocampo, Woolf's physical appearance seemed to be reflective of her writing style, which, despite its apparent disorder (the Argentine author contended) responds to inspired foresight, rigorous selection, art, and discipline (*Testimonios* 93, 97). Woolf held similar opinions about literary propriety, as becomes evident in her opinions about Joyce's *Ulysses*, which, despite the technical similarities between this novel and her own narrative, she dismissed on account of its "vulgar" features. As her diary documents on August 16, 1922, she had read the first few chapters of the book with interest, but as she reached "Aeolus," she quickly became "puzzled, bored, irritated, and disillusioned" with a farrago

of styles that seemed to be the work of “a queasy undergraduate scratching his pimples.” Her final assessment, strongly remindful of Wells’ critique: Ulysses is the “illiterate, underbred book. . . of a self taught working man,” whose “egotistic, insistent, raw, striking, and ultimately nauseating” class would predictably render literary products considerably at odds with the taste of Woolf’s elite companions.

That Victoria Ocampo counted herself as one of those companions, who included T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound, was obvious. In fact, in light of Ocampo’s laudatory comments on the order and discipline of Woolf’s prose, it should come as no surprise that she also openly supported the type of elitist literature that T. S. Eliot promoted and practiced. In a short editorial note in which Ocampo celebrates the Nobel Prize recently awarded to the British poet, we find an explicit comparison between the mission of Eliot’s journal The Criterion and that of Sur. That mission--to preserve the legacy of Western tradition and culture during times of social and political turmoil through a type of literature rarely popular (“pocas veces inmediatamente popular”)--was also embraced by Ocampo on behalf of her journal.<sup>12</sup> She stresses, however, that there exists an evident cultural imbalance between England, “un país de antiquísima tradición y cultura” [a country with a millenarian tradition and culture] and Argentina, “un país de nivel cultural deficiente, con posibilidades literarias muy inferiores (amén de la inferioridad patente de su directora)” [a country with a clearly deficient cultural level, with inferior literary possibilities (let alone the obvious inferiority of the journal’s director)] (“T. S. Eliot” 7-8). For Ocampo, it appears that the solution to this cultural lag is to build solid bridges between (to use her own words) “what Eliot stands for” and journals such as Sur, which,

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<sup>12</sup>Michael Levenson has argued that the founding of the Criterion is the “mark of modernism’s coming of age. . . because it exemplifies the institutionalization of the movement, the accession to cultural legitimacy” (213).

she confesses, “viven. . . y mueren” [live. . . and die] for the kind of literature that Eliot defended.

This brief discussion of Ocampo’s literary alliances and how they determined the editorial choices of Sur offers useful points of reference to contextualize the critical treatment of Joyce in this journal. Given Ocampo’s valorization of the rigor and order of Woolf’s prose, and her defense of Eliot’s Western elitism, it is understandable that the Joyce who found his way to the pages of Sur, far from being a dissonant, anti-European voice, was one that bore a strong resemblance to the “static,” “cosmopolitan,” and, we might add, “modernist” Joyce of Pound and Eliot. In fact, the journal frequently featured translations of articles on Joyce by renowned English and American scholars, such as Stuart Gilbert and Joseph Prescott, who took decisive steps to institutionalize a “modernist” interpretation of Joyce. In his popular James Joyce’s “Ulysses” (1930), Gilbert, an imperial British official who served as a judge in Burma for nineteen years, mainly focuses on the Homeric parallels that provide the novel with structural consistency, and so it might be regarded as a critical elaboration on Eliot’s “Ulysses, Order and Myth.” In terms that remind us of Ocampo’s description of Woolf’s writing, Gilbert claims that Joyce subjects his work “for all its wild vitality and seeming disorder, to a rule of discipline as severe as those of the Greek dramatists” (40). Since in this hyperclassical Ulysses “we find the ideal silent stasis of the artist nearly realized, his personality almost impersonalized,” one of the main achievements of the novel is “to ban kinetic feelings from his readers’ mind” (30-31).

Only two years after the publication of Gilbert’s guide to Ulysses, his main ideas were echoed by Charles Duff in “Ulises y otros trabajos de James Joyce” [Ulysses and



other works by James Joyce], a brief introduction to Joyce's life and work intended for the "common reader" and published in the fifth issue of Sur. Here Duff actually recognizes an Irish dimension to Joyce's writing, but only to dismiss it as an abnormality. Relying on the stereotypical views on the Celt popularized in the late nineteenth century by Ernest Renan and Matthew Arnold,<sup>13</sup> he claims that Joyce's typically Irish mind displays or suffers from ("padece") an effervescent imagination, a marked mysticism, and a comic quality, all features that deviate from what Wells would call a "normal sensory basis," but which inevitably permeate his fiction (90-91). However, these all too Irish excesses are curtailed by Joyce's rigorous "literary criterion," which as Duff tells us, is not Irish (nor English for that matter) but "pan-European": "Añádase al pan-europeísmo literario ese gigantismo de exuberancia irlandesa mencionado más arriba, y se tendrá noción aproximada de lo que podemos esperar de Joyce" [Add to this literary pan-Europeanism the gigantism of Irish exuberance mentioned above, and we will get an approximate notion of what we can expect from Joyce] (95). With this method, Joyce not only temper his abnormal Irishness; he also succeeded in opening new paths for contemporary fiction by soaring above "decadent kinetic art" ("el decadente arte kinético") (98). Therefore, the threat of an unwanted "dissociation of sensibility" that Joyce's deviant Irishness might pose is conveniently pressed into shape by his pan-European outlook and his "static" narrative method.

Gilbert himself continued this line of argumentation by summarizing the main points of his James Joyce's "Ulysses" in an article titled "El fondo latino en el arte de

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<sup>13</sup>On the Victorian tradition of the romanticized Celt and its contribution to racist discourse in England, see L. P. Curtis, Anglo-Saxons and Celts: A Study of Anti-Irish Prejudice in Victorian England and Apes and Angels: The Irishman in Victorian Caricature; and Luke Gibbons, "Race Against Time: Racial Discourse and Irish History."

James Joyce” [The Latin Background of James Joyce’s Art] and published in Sur in December 1944. After reading the first few pages we realize that “Latin” stands for “classical” and, more specifically, for “classical order”: “Porque en Ulises--una de las obras maestras mejor ordenadas y más racionales que ha conocido el mundo--prevalece el espíritu latino y la lógica estricta de la antigua religión” [Because in Ulysses--one of the better organized and more rational masterpieces that has come into the world--it is the Latin spirit and the old religion that prevail] (15). It is from this “old religion,” Catholicism, and the teachings of Aquinas that, according to Gilbert, Joyce inherited his ideal of “static beauty.” Taking Stephen’s aesthetic theories in A Portrait as the author’s own, this scholar maintains that Joyce willingly shaped his work according to this “static” order prescribed by scholasticism and embodied by Greek sculpture and literature, an order that he calls the “Mediterranean ideal” (“el ideal mediterráneo”). And it is away from Ireland and in the heart of Paris, the only place where Joyce’s genius could find the freedom it needed to fully blossom, that he could be in touch with this ideal (11). Thus Gilbert, like Duff, Eliot, and Pound, found in the nuanced complicity between geopolitics and aesthetics an effective dialectical tool to distance Joyce’s Ulysses from its Irish background and place it firmly within the genealogy of modern thought.

Gilbert’s and Duff’s critical views on Joyce established a solid foundation for subsequent analyses of the Irish author’s work by Spanish American scholars publishing in Sur. Four years after the publication of “El fondo latino en el arte de James Joyce,” Emir Rodríguez Monegal, who was destined to become one of the main promoters of the “boom,” offered a panoramic appreciation of the main features of the twentieth-century novel. In “Aspectos de la novela en el siglo XX,” he advances some views that would

later become critical commonplaces in discussions of Joyce's work in particular and modernist narrative in general (including Spanish American "modernism"). According to the Uruguayan critic, one of the main aspects of the twentieth-century novel is what José Ortega y Gasset called the "dehumanization of art," that is, the elimination of realist or anecdotal material from the artistic object, which now stands out for its form and metaphorical language.<sup>14</sup> The tendency towards "pure invention" that Rodríguez Monegal recognizes in authors such as Chesterton or Kafka is paradigmatically typified by the prose of James Joyce: "La obra de James Joyce--toda la obra--puede ofrecer ejemplos de una transcendencia casi total de lo narrativo" [the work of James Joyce--all of his work--can offer examples of an almost total transcendence of the narrative] (91). From this perspective, the real protagonist of Joyce's work is language, experimental audacity thus becoming the true message of his writing. Besides this linguistic transcendence of narrative specificity (which groups Joyce along with Woolf), Rodríguez Monegal also stresses that despite the apparent disorder that a superficial reading of *Ulysses* might suggest, the book possesses a rigorous and intentional structure untouched by improvisation or chance (94). It is this strict order under the guise of disorder that he recognizes as the main feature of twentieth-century narrative. In order to render the richness of experience in meaningful ways, "el novelista necesita inventar hoy no sólo acciones significativas o conflictos absorbentes; debe inventar estructuras, multiplicar los ángulos, encerrar en la malla ubicua de la narración todo un universo" [the novelist today

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<sup>14</sup>When referring to the avant-garde poetry of the early twentieth century, Ortega tellingly claimed that "La poesía es hoy el álgebra superior de las metáforas" [poetry is today the superior algebra of metaphors] (36). For Ortega, the vulgarity of the contents of an artistic object can never be the source of refined aesthetic experience. Only a select few ("una minoría especialmente dotada") can perceive the complexity of the purely formal elements that structure a given work of art. On the notion of the "dehumanization of art" and related issues, see Ortega y Gasset, *La deshumanización del arte y otros ensayos estéticos*, especially 11-54.

needs to invent not only significant actions or absorbing conflicts; he should invent structures, multiply angles, capture in the ubiquitous net of the narration a whole universe] (96). “Hacia una interpretación del hombre James Joyce” (1959), Carlos Altschul tacitly supported Rodríguez Monegal’s views, as he also emphasized that the main goal of Joyce’s intricate narrative architectures (“las intrincadas arquitecturas de este novelista”) was to create an autonomous work of art. Of course, that autonomy demanded a distancing from the messy specificity of the writer’s cultural and national background. Joyce’s interests were “universal,” and, therefore, Dublin should be regarded only as a frame, or even an excuse, for Joyce’s technical monuments (“las construcciones monumentales como Ulysses y Finnegans Wake”) (25).

It is not by chance that Rodríguez Monegal’s treatment of Joyce and the twentieth-century novel in “Aspectos de la novela en el siglo XX” overlaps in significant ways with his opinions on the new novel, expressed years later in his well-known El boom de la novela latinoamericana: ensayo (1972). Originally a series of articles published in Octavio Paz’s review Plural, El boom is, along with Fuentes’s La nueva narrativa hispanoamericana (1969), one of the first attempts to theorize the aesthetics of the Spanish American new novel. Rodríguez Monegal argues here that the new novel can be defined as a “novela del lenguaje” [novel of language], a language that derives directly from Ulysses. Novels such as Rayuela, Paradiso, or Tres tristes tigres are Joycean books since they revealed in their structures “una unidad de un sistema completo de significaciones” [a unity of a complete system of significations] (89) which does not originate in the contents of the narration, but in its linguistic structures: “No hay otra profundidad que la de la superficie, no hay significados sino significaciones, no hay otro

compromiso que el de la escritura misma” [there is no more profundity than that of the surface, there are not meanings, only significations, there is no other compromise than writing itself] (89).

Rodríguez Monegal’s Joyce, like the Joyce in Sur, emerges as a cipher of the modern novel, a modern novel that is unambiguously celebrated for its dehumanized formal architectonics, not for its cultural contents. This emphasis on narrative technique and formalist order afforded the possibility of promoting a cultural consistency much-needed for rapidly eroding Western cultural values. Therefore, the treatment of Joyce in Sur should not be isolated from the larger picture of the journal’s mission, a mission that, in Ocampo’s words, was to uphold the kind of tradition and culture that T. S. Eliot defended and “stood for.” Just as Ocampo tried to narrow the distance between the “inferior” culture of South America and Europe, the articles on Joyce engaged in a thorough process of assimilation whereby the Irish writer’s aesthetics were presented as “static” and “pan-European” rather than “kinetic” and “Irish.” This critical appreciation placed Joyce unambiguously within the scope of Western modernity and away from the colonial setting of Ireland. Similarly, Rodríguez Monegal’s approach to the new novel and its connections with Joyce’s work is not politically innocent either. His promotion of the boom through the edition of the Paris-based journal Mundo Nuevo (1966-1971) fostered the consolidation of a modernist approach to the works of its main representatives that was consistent with the US strategic support of formalist aesthetic and condemnation of the overt representation of politics in literature during the post-World War II, Cold War years.<sup>15</sup> It was hardly surprising that the institution supporting

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<sup>15</sup>See Lawrence Schwartz, Creating Faulkner’s Reputation: The Politics of Modern Literary Criticism for a discussion of the canonization of Faulkner as a cosmopolitan, modernist author as part of

the magazine, the Congress for Cultural Freedom, was revealed to receive its funds from the CIA.

These connections between Joyce's "static" aesthetics, modern(ist) narrative, and the core of Western culture proved to be persistently long-lasting, since they created the critical context that allowed the articulation of Fuentes's ideas on Joyce and the new narrative discussed in the previous chapter. In fact, one could trace a continuum between Rodríguez Monegal's "modernist" characterization of Joyce's narrative (coextensive to his views on the new novel) and Fuentes's "postmodern" and "poststructuralist" approach. In both cases, Joyce is detached from his Irish background and placed in a purely linguistic or textualist realm that remains within the limits of Western modernity. It is this idea of Joyce as a stylistic virtuoso--not as the author that Cortázar took as a point of reference for Fuentes's local specificity in La región más transparente--that would later predominate in the scholarly discussions on Joycean narrative in Spanish America. But if it is true, as John King indicates, that the Spanish American new novelists first learned about Anglo-American modernists through the pages of Sur, I would also argue that the Joycean features of their fiction often clash with the "static" and "cosmopolitan" aesthetics attributed to the author of Ulysses in the Buenos Aires publication. As we shall see in subsequent chapters, writers such as Jorge Luis Borges, Julio Cortázar, José Lezama Lima, Guillermo Cabrera Infante, and Fernando del Paso can show us that Joyce's aesthetics need not be read exclusively as a modernist reaction to the crisis that afflicted the Western spirit during the first few decades of the twentieth

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the US Cold War cultural project to depoliticize art. Deborah Cohn has traced the influence of this project in the translation and promotion of contemporary Spanish American writers in the US, focusing on Carpentier, in "Retracing The Lost Steps: The Cuban Revolution, the Cold War, and Publishing Alejo Carpentier in the United States."

century; Joyce's fiction can also (and alternatively) be taken as a point of departure to negotiate the position of the peripheral intellectual with regard to that spirit.

### 3

One can argue that this type of intellectual negotiation has been a constant concern for Spanish American thinkers ever since political independence from Spain was achieved for most republics in the early nineteenth century, and Andrés Bello demanded the "cultural autonomy of America." As Dominican literary critic Pedro Henríquez Ureña maintained in 1928, the literary history of Spanish America could be described as the history of the search of a specifically American mode of expression (Seis ensayos 39). However, the historical period during which the critical assimilation of Joyce took place within the covers of Sur coincided with an intensification of this search for continental identity. This period witnessed the publication of Mariano Picón Salas' De la Conquista a la Independencia (1944), Pedro Henríquez Ureña's Harvard Lectures, Literary Currents in Hispanic America (1945), Leopoldo Zea's La filosofía como compromiso y otros ensayos (1951), Edmundo O'Gorman's La invención de América: El universalismo de la cultura de Occidente (1958); and Julieta Campos's translation of Frantz Fanon's Los condenados de la tierra (1965).<sup>16</sup> It also coincided with the years of the triumph and consolidation of the Cuban Revolution and with the effervescent period of political decolonization of the nation-states in Asia and Africa that formerly integrated the British and French Empires.

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<sup>16</sup>See Martin Stabb, In Quest of Identity for an overview of this search for continental identity during the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century.

In “Fanon y América,” originally published in 1965 in Casa de las Américas, Roberto Fernández Retamar established valuable connections among the liberationist movements in Spanish America and the decolonizing world. The Cuban poet and critic maintained that, despite the fact that the anti-colonial arguments of Fanon’s The Wretched of the Earth were originally intended for the decolonizing African nations, they could be satisfactorily applied to Spanish America as well. As the concluding words of his essay state, “Fanon tiene muchas cosas que enseñarnos a nosotros los latinoamericanos” [Fanon has many things to teach us Latin Americans] (234). The decolonizing process that Fanon theorized so brilliantly and that Fernández Retamar interpreted mainly in Marxist terms (“Fanon” 230 and passim), also sparked a vigorous struggle for what Leopoldo Zea felicitously called the “emancipation of the mind” (La filosofía como compromiso 57), a phrase reminiscent of Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s “decolonization of the mind.” The Mexican thinker, like Fernández Retamar, presented this struggle as extending to the decolonizing world, which, in his view, also included Spanish America.<sup>17</sup> In general terms, this decolonizing attitude is certainly at odds with the universalist claims of the discourse of modernity and the Western cultural supremacy that T. S. Eliot, Pound, and Ocampo acknowledged and upheld. Zea, Fernández Retamar and Fanon openly and actively supported the necessity of new ways of thinking that would radically depart from the epistemological frame that the West had constructed as a universally valid norm. Quoting Fanon, Zea expressed this philosophical urge

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<sup>17</sup>In spite of the historical fact that the Spanish American republics gained political emancipation over a century before the nation-states of Africa and Asia, Zea argued in a series of important publications that in order to overcome intellectual dependence, Spanish American intellectuals should adopt a philosophical perspective common to that of the colonial peoples. See La filosofía como compromiso y otros ensayos, “La filosofía latinoamericana como filosofía de la liberación” (in Dependencia y liberación en la cultura latinoamericana (1974).



compellingly in “Filosofía latinoamericana y filosofía de la liberación”: “Fanon . . . dice [que] si queremos hacer del mundo no occidental una copia del mundo occidental, dejemos que sean los occidentales los que se encarguen de hacerlo. Pero si queremos participar en la hechura de ese nuevo mundo, de ese hombre nuevo, sin que deje de ser hombre, entonces inventemos, descubramos” [Fanon says that if we want to turn the non-Western world into a copy of the Western world, then we should let the Western man carry out this task. But if we want to participate in the creation of this new world, of this new man, without keeping him from being human, then let us invent, let us discover] (47). This emancipatory program seeks a source of decolonizing innovativeness precisely in the differences between the colonial and the European that intellectuals like Ocampo arduously tried to overcome.

Eleven years after the first issue of Sur was released, Zea founded Cuadernos Americanos in Mexico, and in its third issue he published his groundbreaking “En torno a una filosofía americana,” where he advocates a mode of philosophizing that is aware of the cultural and social specificities of Spanish America. Here he maintains that the problem that an emancipated or decolonized Spanish American mind needs to tackle is the conflict between an American experience and European ways of reasoning: “El mal está en que queremos adaptar la circunstancia americana a una concepción del mundo que heredamos de Europa, y no adaptar esta concepción del mundo a la circunstancia americana” [the problem is that we want to assimilate the American circumstance to a conception of the world inherited from Europe, not to assimilate that conception of the world to the American circumstance] (67-68). In Eliot’s terms, it may be reasonable to say that the philosophical problem that Zea tries to solve involves an obvious case of

“dissociation of sensibility.” In fact, Eliot’s phrase has been frequently used to signify the self-estrangement felt by the colonized individual. Declan Kiberd has discussed how turn-of-the-century Irish scholar Daniel Corkery, in Synge and Anglo-Irish Literature, presented the conflict between the Irish child’s intellectual schooling in the imperial culture and his emotional response to that culture as “a reworked version of T. S. Eliot’s notion of the dissociation of sensibility” (“Modern Ireland” 90). Ngugi wa Thiong’o also made explicit use of this expression to make a point analogous to that of Corkery. He claimed that the use of the colonial language for formal education in the British colonies in Africa “resulted in the dissociation of sensibility [of children] from the natural and social environment, what we might call colonial alienation. The alienation became reinforced in the teaching of history, geography, music, where bourgeois Europe was always the centre of the universe” (18). Zea’s ideas find a meaningful context in this postcolonial theorization on the “dissociation of sensibility,” for he claims that the Latin American mind is constantly aware of a persistent mismatch between ideas and experience deterring the possibility of reconciling what is felt and what is thought go into intellectual wholes.

It is in this interstice between European ideas and immediate circumstances that a truly American way of thinking should situate itself:

El no haber podido ser europeos a pesar de nuestro gran empeño, permite que ahora tengamos una personalidad; permite que en este momento de crisis de la Cultura Europea sepamos que existe algo que nos es propio, y que por lo tanto puede servirnos de apoyo en esta hora de crisis. Qué sea este algo, es uno de los temas que debe plantearse una filosofía americana. (68)

[The fact that we could not become Europeans in spite of our great endeavors allows us to have a personality; it allows us to know that, at this moment of crisis of European Culture, there is

something that belongs to us, and therefore can serve as support in this time of crisis. What that something might be is one of the themes an American philosophy must posit.]

Contrary to what Ocampo proposed (namely, persisting in the attempt to become European or “modern”), Zea identifies in the difference between the European and the American the source of a sort of philosophy that could dispute the universalistic postulates of Western culture. Rather than striving to palliate the “dissociation of sensibility” that assailed Western culture, Zea builds his case for a truly Latin American way of thinking precisely on the rupture that characterizes such dissociation.

Just as we could trace a continuum between Ocampo’s Europeanist slant, the treatment of Joyce’s aesthetics in Sur, and Rodríguez Monegal’s and Fuentes’s “extraterritorial” and “(post-)structuralist” discussion of the Spanish American new novel, Zea’s decolonizing views can be taken as a paradigm against which to read alternative critical appreciations of Joyce, the new novelists, and their interrelations. In other words, by pursuing possible connections between the discussion of Joyce’s aesthetics in Spanish America and the larger discursive framework of cultural decolonization (or the “emancipation of the mind”), I believe we could establish the necessary critical conditions for a reassessment of the new novel’s relation to Anglo-American modernism. This type of analysis would not only deepen the decolonizing potential of Joyce’s writing (a potential that has gained critical attention in the Anglo-American academy only over the last decade), but would also take decisive steps to reconstruct a context for the new novel that does not necessarily involve an assimilation to the development of Western literary history.

As already discussed, authors such as Gilbert, Duff, and Rodríguez Monegal took a formalist stance in their analyses of Joyce's prose, often characterizing its aesthetics as "static" as opposed to "kinetic." It is instructive to recall at this point that for Kant there is a fundamental relationship between this static ideal and the integrity of Western rationality. Arguably, an emphasis on kinetic aesthetics can disrupt the foundations of this integrated rationality and the global project it spawned: modernity. A disruption of the foundations of that modernity (which craftily sutured normative ways of thinking and feeling) affords an epistemological space for that "something" intrinsic to the Latin Americans that Zea identified as the basis of his decolonizing project.

Published in Zea's Cuadernos Americanos, Arturo Usler Pietri's "La tentativa desesperada de James Joyce" (1946) presents a perceptive exploration of the "kinetic" aesthetics of Joyce's Ulysses. Unlike Eliot, Usler does not interpret Joyce's novel as a recuperative effort to give shape to the crumbling monuments of Western culture. Rather, he claims that the Irish author must have "unlearned" ("deseducarse") the teachings of tradition and culture prior to writing his novel. For Usler, Joyce is concerned with creating an "other" kind of literature, not with piecing together the fragments of a culture in crisis. One of the "taboos" that Joyce had to unlearn was the reluctance to accord artistic and philosophical value to the body as a whole. In Usler's words, "Todos nuestros órganos nos expresan. Nuestro sexo es como nuestros ojos o como nuestra inteligencia" [All our organs express us. Our sex is like our eyes or our intelligence] (261). Ulysses is an inspired exemplification of this holistic view, since a relevant feature of Joyce's creative effort is the integration of the bodily and spiritual dimensions of the individual within the covers of his book. According to the Venezuelan novelist, the "kinetic" or

“obscene” details of Ulysses are not--as they were for Gilbert and others--raw materials subordinated to a rigorous narrative technique, but elements that help provide a more accurate view of human existence.<sup>18</sup> If we appreciate Ulysses just as a structural reconstruction of the Homeric myth, Usler contends, then the book is nothing more than an ostentatious archeological boast (“un alarde arqueológico”). Instead, Joyce’s Ulysses is, in the Venezuelan author’s opinion, “la odiseíca aventura presente del ser humano ante las mil formas de la circunstancia” [the Odyssean adventure of contemporary human beings facing the thousand forms of circumstance]. Notice the contrast between this emphasis on the multilayered and ever-changing (kinetic) perception of experience and Gilbert’s classicist contention that in Ulysses we find the ideal silent stasis of the artist nearly realized and that one of the main achievements of the novel is “to ban kinetic feelings from his readers’ mind” (James Joyce’s “Ulysses” 30-31).

It appears, then, that Joyce’s “desperate attempt” is the utopian effort to transcend the limitations (or, the “taboos,” as Usler puts it) imposed by Western culture. For Usler, Joyce’s efforts to transcend the constrictions and laws of “method, logic, and expression” are “magic,” and his “attempt” to “torturar las formas y extraviar los sentidos” [torture the forms and displace the senses] (260) is “Baroque.” Instead of appreciating Ulysses for his classical “mythical method” or his tempered “order,” like T. S. Eliot and Stuart Gilbert, Usler attributes qualities to Joyce’s narrative that he was to use elsewhere to characterize Spanish American literature as opposed to the Western tradition. In “Lo

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<sup>18</sup>In “James Joyce tras el interrogante” (1957), also published in Cuadernos Americanos, Hispanist Marcelino Peñuelas also focuses on the “human” elements of Ulysses and disregards its formal and technical aspects, since, he argues, they are of secondary importance, or even fallacious. It is Peñuelas’ conviction that the formal features and Homeric parallels that commanded so much critical attention from Gilbert, Richard Levin, or Charles Shattuck add little to the overall appreciation of the work (“añaden muy poco a la obra, a su valor humano o literario”).

criollo en la literatura” (1950), originally published in Cuadernos Americanos and later anthologized in Las nubes, Uslar set out to outline the literary features that distinguish Spanish American letters from Spanish literature in particular and Western literature in general. Perhaps the most prominent of these features is the baroque tendency to express reality in convoluted ways. For the Spanish American mind, life is not conceived of as a balanced relation between intellectual forms and felt experience, but as a tragic fatality that resists rational explanations. Thus reality is more “felt” than “thought”--the Spanish American is “sentidor más que pensador.” This disparity can only be expressed through Baroque and magical modes of expression that effectively voice the differences between the European ways of thinking and those of the Latin Americans of European descent or “criollos.”<sup>19</sup> Recall Borges’s opinion that whereas the world for the European is a cosmos where everybody is linked intimately to his own function, for the Argentine, it is a chaos (OC 2:40). It is this “criollo” feeling of displacement or inherent difference (what Zea identified as the “something” that distanced the Spanish American mind from European culture) that Baroque and magical ways of expression succeed in voicing.

That Uslar used the same terms to refer to both Joyce’s Ulysses and the distinctive features of Spanish American literature suggests that he intuited a non-Western dimension in the Irishman’s novel. This terminological coincidence also implies that Joyce’s process of “unlearning” is analogous to the “criollo” distancing from Western literary orthodoxy. In both cases, the “Baroque” signifies not a historical or artistic period, but a decolonizing attitude that brings to the fore the mismatch between ideas and reality that Zea took to be the foundation of a truly (Spanish) American epistemology. As

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<sup>19</sup>In 1949, Alejo Carpentier also seized on the category of the “magical” to refer to the intrinsic characteristics of American reality in his well-known essay “Lo real-maravilloso en América,” included in his novel El reino de este mundo.

Alejo Carpentier argued, the Baroque in Spanish America is not constrained to the seventeenth century, since it is “a spirit and not a historical style” (“The Baroque and the Marvelous Real” 95), to which Uslar Pietri added that the Baroque is “almost a condition of being Hispanic” (Letras 27). During the 1940s and the 1950s authors such as Carpentier, Lezama Lima, and Uslar Pietri himself were proposing the Baroque (along with Carpentier’s historico-critical notion of the “marvelous real”) as a category that could successfully capture and embody the essence of the Spanish American “spirit.” This early theorization of the Baroque among Spanish American scholars would later (in the 1960s and 1970s) crystallize into what has come to be known as the “Neobaroque,” whose main literary practitioners were Carpentier, Lezama Lima, and Sarduy.<sup>20</sup>

Lois Parkinson Zamora has recently claimed that the “kinetic energy of Baroque space” in Spanish America, along with its “impulse to expand and displace,” is an “instrument of postcolonial self-definition” (xvi-xvii). It is her conviction that this Baroque sensibility is “countermodern, not postmodern,” meaning that it contests the ideological values of modernity not just to question and deconstruct its foundations in a poststructuralist fashion, but also to find alternative orders of being and knowledge (294-295). Zamora is, therefore, drawing a useful distinction between the internal development of Western thought and the intellectual production of the periphery. According to her theoretical proposal, the periphery does not necessarily need to have Western modernity

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<sup>20</sup>For the epistemological genealogy of the “Neobaroque,” see Monica Kaup, “Becoming-Baroque: Folding European Forms into the New World Baroque with Alejo Carpentier,” where she argues that “the recovery of the Baroque is linked to the crisis of the Enlightenment and instrumental reason. The twentieth-century crisis of Enlightenment rationality opens the way for the rediscovery of an earlier, alternate rationality” (108). Here I argue, along with Lois Parkinson Zamora, that the recovery of the Baroque among Spanish American intellectuals is not simply an internal critique of Western rationality, but also a strategy to find new epistemological routes that depart from that rationality. On the differences between the genealogies of (post)modernity and the Neobaroque, see Irlemar Chiampi, “El (neo)barroco y la postmodernidad” in Barroco y modernidad, 17-41.

as its epistemological horizon or goal.<sup>21</sup> The epistemological space that allows this departure from the overarching scope of modernity is the rupture between modern rational systems and a kind of experience that exceeds those systems. While this “Baroque” rupture was historically perceived as an epistemological crisis in Europe, in Spanish American it provided the means for self-definition and self-representation.<sup>22</sup> Michel Foucault has discussed this crisis in The Order of Things in the following terms: “At the beginning of the seventeenth century, during the period that has been termed, rightly or wrongly, the Baroque, thought ceases to move in the element of resemblance. Similitude is no longer the form of knowledge but rather the occasion of error” (51). This cessation of what Foucault calls the “element of resemblance” might well be the same intellectual phenomenon that T. S. Eliot called the “dissociation of sensibility.”

As noted above, this “dissociation” also took place in the seventeenth century: “a dissociation of sensibility set in, from which we have never recovered. . . . while the language became more refined, the feeling became more crude” (“The Metaphysical Poets” 231). But while Eliot lamented the failure “to find the verbal equivalent for states of mind and feeling” (232) provoked by this “dissociation of sensibility,” Spanish American thinkers seized on it as a decolonizing strategy. One way to assess Eliot’s critical and poetic production is by considering it a sustained intellectual endeavor to

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<sup>21</sup>It is important to notice, however, that the postcolonial and the postmodern/poststructuralist merge in some instances, thus confusing the distinct geopolitical genealogies that Zamora and others before her, such as Uslar Pietri, delineate carefully. A clear example of this confusion of epistemological genealogies is Severo Sarduy’s 1972 essay “Lo barroco y lo neobarroco,” where he discusses the “NeoBaroque” using terms and concepts borrowed from poststructuralist theory. See also his book-length study Barroco.

<sup>22</sup>Walter Mignolo has identified the Baroque as the decolonizing “ethos,” arguing that “The Baroque of the Indies--at the level of the state and the civil society--cannot therefore be placed together as one more chapter of the European Baroque” [The White Spanish American creoles] formed a Baroque that emerged out of the colonial difference of a displaced Spanish elite in power and of a wounded Creole population” (The Idea of Latin America 62).



remedy the literary and epistemological effects of the “dissociation of sensibility.” He believed that while “the ordinary man’s experience is chaotic, irregular, fragmentary,” the poet’s mind that is “perfectly equipped for its work” is “constantly amalgamating disparate experience” in such a systematic way that “the noise of the typewriter or the smell of cooking. . . are always forming new wholes” (“The Metaphysical Poets” 231). In other words, the immediacy of even the most prosaic experiences can be refined and elevated into poetic material after they are adequately filtered through the organizing mind of the poet. It was this modernist perspective that also informed his analysis of Ulysses, as he interpreted Joyce’s novel as a monumental attempt to create a “new whole” out of the fragments of a disintegrating Western culture. For Eliot, the relentless dynamism stemming from “the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history” (“Ulysses” 270) could be effectively arrested by the technical precision of Joyce’s methodic rigor.

By contrast, Usler Pietri calls attention to the dissonance between feeling and thinking (between sensory experience and words) that Eliot laments, in order to characterize the specificity of both Spanish American literature and Joyce’s narrative. In so doing, he not only configures a literary space that can articulate the cultural distinctiveness of the Spanish American “criollo” mind (i.e. Zea’s “something”). He also includes Joyce’s narrative within this decolonizing, “baroque” sphere. Unlike Eliot’s classical and modernist Joyce, who stands as a champion of Western culture, Usler Pietri’s “baroque” Joyce actively devises ways to “unlearn” the teachings of that culture. Indeed, in “La tentativa desesperada de James Joyce,” the Venezuelan critic telescopes Joyce’s kinetic aesthetics and his “countermodernity” (to use Zamora’s term), thus

implying a transatlantic connection between Spanish American literature and Joyce's narrative moves beyond modernity and Anglo-American modernism. Rather, this implied connection takes place against the background of the intense debate on cultural decolonization that permeated literary criticism, philosophy, and political thought in Spanish America after World War II: during the years that Leopoldo Zea was advocating the "emancipation of the mind" and laying the foundations of an "American" philosophy, Usler Pietri and Carpentier were theorizing on the liberational potential of the Baroque as a decolonizing strategy, and Frantz Fanon was articulating his powerful anti-colonial discourse in Peau noire, masques blancs (1951), L'An V de la revolution algérienne (1959), and Les Damnés de la terre (1961).

Eliot's and Usler Pietri's contrasting approaches to Joyce's fiction parallel their clashing perspectives on the seventeenth century and the Baroque, and, by extension, on the development of Western modernity. If Eliot situates himself within the epistemological limits of this modernity, taking up the challenge of preserving its integrity and viability, Usler Pietri, like Borges and Zea, assumes an external position to it, arguing for the necessity of a Spanish American literary voice that does not merely replicate the European norms. Eliot's positioning was shared not only by those European critics that fostered a "static" appreciation of Joyce's narrative, but also by the Spanish American scholars who elaborated on that appreciation and also applied that formalist approach to the analysis of the Spanish American new novel. From this perspective, the links among Joyce, the Spanish American new novel, and Anglo-American modernism take place against the discursive background of modernity. Usler Pietri's exteriority opens up a critical space that remains largely uncharted. But what is clear is that the

literary map where that space would appear radically upsets the boundaries of a universalizing modernity. That space actually provides the possibility of looking at the links between Joyce and the new narrative in Spanish America from the perspective of those whom Kant considered as lacking in “finer feeling.” By validating this perspective as epistemologically legitimate, Usler Pietri and Zea, like Borges, Cortázar, and Fernández Retamar (see chapter 1), make the powerful claim that knowledge and experience should go hand in hand. And when that experience is articulated as the basis of an alternative literary and cultural tradition, the universalistic claims of the “philosophical discourse of modernity” come under heavy fire.

#### 4

In the 1970s and the 1980s, Uruguayan literary critic Ángel Rama produced an important body of scholarship that distinguished itself from formalist approaches for its serious attention to the historical and social dimensions of the new narrative. Ángel Rama applied Fernando Ortiz’s concept of “transculturation”<sup>23</sup> to Latin American literature, specifically to the inter-war period when the European vanguard and Anglo-American

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<sup>23</sup>In *Contrapunteo cubano*, Ortiz coined the term “transculturation” to emphasize a multidirectional movement in instances of cultural contact which denied the preeminence of one source of influence and the passivity of a cultural recipient. For Ortiz, such contacts imply a partial “de-culturation” of the previous cultures and the creation of new cultural phenomena through a process of “neo-culturation” (96). This is the case of his native Cuba, which he maps as a meeting point of indigenous, African, European, and Asian cultures. It is not hard to see the similarities between Ortiz’s “neo-culturation” or “transculturation” and the concept of “hybridity.” García Canclini’s notion of “hybrid cultures” is a critical re-elaboration of Ortiz’s concept. See Néstor García Canclini, *Culturas híbridas: Estrategias para entrar y salir de la modernidad*. For a Marxist critique of García Canclini’s “hybridity,” see Neil Larsen, *Determinations*. Within the field of postcolonial studies, the concept of “hybridity” has gained wide currency, largely due to Homi Bhabha’s popular and influential collection of essays, *The Location of Culture*. For Bhabha, hybridity is concerned with unsettling “the mimetic or narcissistic demands of colonial power” by turning “the gaze of the discriminated back upon the eye of power” (159-160). From this perspective, anticolonial struggle can only emerge as a constant deconstruction of the colonial system. My aim here is to subvert that colonial system by charting *alternative* (literary) histories that transcend the deadlock of a reciprocal mirroring between colonizer and colonized.

modernism clashed against the regionalism of the first three decades of the twentieth century. Rama argued that the process of transculturation affected literature in the realms of “language, literary structure, and worldview,” thus synthesizing in the transculturated literary work elements that would have otherwise remained irreconcilable opposites.<sup>24</sup> Thus, his concept of “narrative transculturation” moves beyond the ahistoricist formalism of Rodríguez Monegal and Fuentes. What Rama calls the “transculturators”—including Juan Rulfo, José María Arguedas, and also Julio Cortázar—were fundamental in forging an aesthetics that reconciled the innovative experimentalism from overseas with the local realities of the American continent (Transculturación 29).

This proposal seems to move along the critical lines proposed by Uslar Pietri. Indeed, Rama valorizes the specificity of culture in his discussion of contemporary Spanish American narrative, arguing that the worldview (“la cosmovisión cultural”) of the transculturated narratives is eminently local. However, it is evident that Rama does not locate this phenomenon of transculturation beyond the limits of Western modernity. From a materialist perspective, he argues that changes in society are reflected by the modifications of literary systems. Echoing Fredric Jameson’s concept of the “political unconscious,” Rama contends that literary form registers social change before it materializes historically.<sup>25</sup> In this regard, the experimentalism of the new narrative both

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<sup>24</sup>Peruvian critic Antonio Cornejo Polar proposed the term “heterogeneity” as an alternative to Ortiz’s and Rama’s “transculturation” in a variety of influential essays and monographs. “Heterogeneity,” Cornejo argued, better captures the texture of Latin American culture and society, since it does not reduce the complexity of Latin America to a simple formula. Cornejo maintained that social and cultural processes of transculturation frequently masked severe cultural and political imbalances. See Escribir en el aire.

<sup>25</sup>See “La tecnificación narrativa” in La novela en América Latina, where he argues that “las mutaciones estilísticas son lo propio de la historia de la cultura, siendo habitualmente las que detectan anticipadamente los cambios en curso dentro de la sociedad” [stylistic mutations are characteristic of cultural history, being usually the ones that detect in an early manner the changes occurring within society] (301).

prefigures and responds to the economic modernization of Latin America between the two world wars. The adoption of modernist literary techniques in Spanish America is, therefore, a strategy to articulate “los conflictos que vive el continente en la circunstancia de su mayor integración al mercado--económico, técnico, social, ideológico” [the conflicts experienced by the continent during its integration into the market—economic, technical, social, ideological] (*La novela* 294). The experimental “modernization” ushered in by narrative transculturation is a consequence of the incorporation of Latin America into a market of capital and ideas dominated by the West. It is the literary charting of Latin America’s centrifugal movement toward the orbit of this market that Rama pinpoints as one the most central contexts of the new narrative (“uno de los marcos definidores del movimiento”). It should be clear then that, according to this critical picture, the internal development of modernity is still the overarching discursive paradigm against which to read the formal innovations of the new narrative.

Rama, for all his valorization of the local component, still situates the “new narrative” within a literary map that gravitates towards the economic and cultural development of Western modernity. To put it differently, Rama’s critical model does not interpret the new narrative as a response to cultural decolonization, but rather as a literary reflection of the position of Latin America within the capitalistic world system. Although he successfully emphasizes the relevance of place and cultural specificity for literary production, he still places the development of contemporary Spanish American narrative within the scope of Western literary, cultural, and economic history. If what is sought is a de-linking from that history, then the model of transculturation needs to be abandoned for

one that actually asserts the differences of local histories when confronted with the universalistic claims of modernity.

Walter Mignolo's critique of cultural hybridity and transculturation is apposite here. According to Mignolo, to "recognize that the world is hybrid. . . . changes the contents of the conversation, but not its terms" (Local Histories 170). Translating this claim into literary terms, one can argue that registering the composite nature of transculturated narrative does not automatically reposition it within a critical framework that contests the assumed universality of Western modernity. That is, Rama's narrative of transculturation does not take place in the decolonizing exteriority that Usler Pietri intimated in his discussions of Joyce's narrative and Spanish American "criollo" literature alike. The "countermodern" (Zamora) or decolonizing potential of Joyce, Spanish American narrative, and their interrelations can only come to the fore if the colonial difference that constituted the periphery is taken as a starting point for a radical epistemological departure from Western modernity.<sup>26</sup>

How can this colonial difference be articulated in meaningful ways? And, closer to our concerns, how can alternative literary histories emerge from this difference? For thinkers such as Aníbal Quijano and Walter Mignolo, the silenced side of modernity, what they call "coloniality," not only questions the universalism of modernity, it can also open up new epistemological routes. "Coloniality" should be distinguished from colonialism. While colonialism refers to the actual historical period of occupation and exploitation of imperial possessions, "coloniality" is the epistemological manipulation that justified European supremacy and, simultaneously, occluded the radical difference of

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<sup>26</sup>Of course, this is not to say that the colonized "other" should embrace the colonial stereotypes previously ascribed to him. This move would amount to turning into a virtue what the colonists had demonized as a vice, which would therefore leave the imperial configuration of "otherness" intact.

the colonized cultures. Mignolo has proposed the term “de-coloniality” to refer to the strategies of cultural resistance which aim at recasting coloniality as a space that can regain epistemological legitimacy and accommodate other world narratives beyond the Christian and Eurocentric ones (Local Histories 67-75). This re-legitimization of a previously silenced cultural sphere involves a “de-linking” from the logic of modernity/coloniality rather than a negotiation according to its terms. This de-linking, Mignolo argues, abandons the possibility of emancipating projects (such as Marxism) that try to refashion or re-articulate the logic of modernity to include the peoples that it had dominated previously. The cultural diversity that would ensue from this disenfranchisement involves the friction between the “subalternized” or neglected cultures of the colonial “other” and modernity. Indeed, there is no “elsewhere” from modernity that would enable the reactivation of a pure cultural system untouched by the influence of the West. In this context, Mignolo argues that a preliminary step towards cultural liberation or de-linking is “border thinking.” Border thinking works towards the restitution of the radical difference that the colonial project attempted to erase, and points towards the reemergence of a global order constituted by multiple universalities that coexist and respect their differences. This is what Mignolo has denominated “pluriversality as a universal project.”

As articulated by Mignolo, border thinking and cultural liberation largely depend on the existence of a repressed system of knowledge. For a writer like José María Arguedas, who was thoroughly bilingual and bicultural (Quechua and Spanish), the “decolonial de-linking” involved a vindication of Peru’s indigenous culture. In novels such as El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo, he openly resists and condemns the

influence of modernization and “progress,” which he considers threats to the purity of Quechua culture. As Mario Vargas Llosa argued, Arguedas’s rejection of modernity stemmed from his conviction that the social model he envisioned for Peru could only emerge from the “rural, traditional, and magical” society that he deemed “lo mejor de Peru” [the best of Peru] (28). Arguedas’s plea for a cultural and social decolonization is testimony to a persistent disharmony between the native civilization and Western culture that ultimately renders transculturation impossible. But does a “de-colonial shift” necessarily require an indigenous substratum? Borges once wrote that the Spanish American intellectual handles European culture without excessive reverence, but added that trying to continue the indigenous cultures is “una afectación o un alarde romántico” [an affectation or a Romantic boast] (*Borges en Sur* 60). Years later, in an interview with Irish poet Seamus Heaney and Richard Kearney, he claimed: “When I went to Mexico I loved their rich culture and native literature. But I didn’t feel anything in common with it. I couldn’t identify with their cult of the Indian” (73). Are we to conclude, then, that Borges, along with other “creole” Spanish American writers who are unable or unwilling to write or think in indigenous terms, cannot claim cultural and literary autonomy from Europe?

I believe that the aesthetic “dissociations of sensibility” that Uslar Pietri perceived in both Joyce’s *Ulysses* and Spanish American literature provides an effective way to articulate this autonomy. If for Arguedas decolonization operates at the levels of language and race, for the main representatives of the new narrative, as for Joyce, it operates at the level of aesthetics. The disruption or “dissociation” of the abstract universal matrix configured by Kantian rationality, aesthetics, and the discourse of



modernity can unveil the artificiality of Western cultural supremacy as pervasively and effectively as the re-valorization of indigenous traditions silenced through colonization. The sort of literary criticism that stressed Joyce's "static" narrative and also fostered formalist approaches to the new narrative left that matrix intact. It also paved the way for the postulation of a "Spanish American modernism" in the wake of the Anglo-American original. By contrast, the criticism that seeks to bring out the decolonizing dimension of Joyce and Joycean fiction in Spanish America should stress how narrative can dislocate the relations between the constituting elements of that matrix. Examined in this way, the new narrative moves away from or counter to (rather than towards) the orbit of Western literary history. Thus, by interpreting "Joycean" Spanish American narrative as the embodiment of an "aesthetic decolonization," we can reexamine the specific ways in which Joyce's fiction and the new narrative intersect.

THE LIMITS OF PARODY: ALLUSION AND COSMOPOLITANISM IN JORGE  
LUIS BORGES

Michael Robartes remembers forgotten beauty and,  
when his arms wrap her round, he presses in his arms the  
loveliness which has long faded from the world.  
Not this. I desire to press in my arms the loveliness  
which has not yet come into the world.  
James Joyce, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man

## 1

In La nueva novela hispanoamericana, Carlos Fuentes holds that without Borges the new novel in Spanish America simply would not have existed. It was Borges's accomplishment, Fuentes contends, to have created a truly Latin American language--a language characterized by its playfulness and openness, by its corrosive reaction against the constraints of a calcified, oppressive, and imposed literary tradition. This new language is also identified with the iconoclastic renovation of Western literary forms at a time when it becomes glaringly obvious that the universality of European civilization is merely a myth: "lo que debe indicarse en seguida es que este signo de apertura que se impone al mundo cerrado de la tradición y el poder latinoamericanos coincide con la única posibilidad de la literatura occidental cuando ésta se vuelve consciente de haber perdido la universalidad" [what should be immediately noted is that this sign of openness that imposes itself on the closed world of Latin American tradition and power coincides with the only possibility of Western literature when it becomes aware of losing its universality] (32). Driven by the honest desire to incorporate contemporary Latin

American narrative within a global literary canon, the Mexican novelist tends to flatten out in his analysis the historical and social dimensions of the sort of writing that Borges inaugurated and epitomized. An immediate consequence of this reading practice is the surreptitious leveling of geopolitical differences under the sign of a postmodern “openness”: the liberating inventiveness of the Latin American writer is thus made to coincide with the nostalgia for past certainties of the Western intellectual.

For Fuentes, the “new language” of Borges and the new novelists elides the distinctive accent that differentiates their prose from metropolitan experimentalism: it is as if the linguistic playfulness taking place on both sides of the Atlantic could erase the centuries of political, economic, and cultural imbalances between the metropolis and its periphery. Although Borges’s foundational role for the new narrative is an almost incontrovertible fact, it would be a mistake to overlook his persistent resistance to accommodating his fiction to totalizing designs, even when these designs stem from the demise of cultural certainties. It would be no doubt hard to find an author whose range of literary, cultural, and philosophical reference is broader than Borges’s. And yet, this apparent universalism is deployed so as to make the attentive reader conspicuously aware of an inherent displacement or “sentimiento de no estar del todo,” as Cortázar would put it. I would like to concentrate on the ways in which Borges’s literary allusions signal this displacement and on how that displacement can be read as a strategy to create a distinctive locus of political and social enunciation that refuses to merge with an ahistorical universality. What I suggest, then, is that Borges’s groundbreaking fictional procedures (and the sort of narrative generated in their wake) might not be necessarily read as the type of discourse that would fulfill the Spanish-American “desire to be

modern.” Thus, rather than reading Borges as a “rootless” internationalist or cosmopolitan author, as he has been frequently categorized, I choose to look at the strategies he deploys to dismantle a unified textual and cultural space that tends to absorb and reinscribe the displacement of the peripheral writer.

As so often, one can gain useful insights into Borges’s convictions on literature and culture by analyzing his nuanced treatment of other authors. James Joyce is a case in point. Emir Rodríguez Monegal argued that Borges’s “ficciones,” the conspicuous precursors of the Spanish American new novels, could be read as “scale reductions” of Ulysses. Like Rodríguez Monegal, I wish to recognize in the interrelation between Borges and Joyce a foundational moment of the new narrative in Spanish America. However, my final aim is not to propose a linguistic formalism shared by Anglo-American modernism and the new novel. Rather, by teasing out the political implications of their literary intersections, I set out to contest and reverse the persistent assumption that Joyce and Borges (two peripheral writers) wrote as Europeans.<sup>1</sup> By reading Joyce through Borges, I will take their interrelations as a node between aesthetics and politics, arguing that the displacements perceived at a textual level can be read not only as a critique of modernist discourse, but also as a negotiation for alternative subjective models that do not necessarily set the epistemic norms of modernity as their ultimate goal.

As social analysts Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe have shown in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, textual indeterminacy can be presented as an ideological

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<sup>1</sup>Joyce’s critical reception in the Anglo-American academy is uncannily similar to Borges’s. Borges, like Joyce, was accepted into the Western literary mainstream only after he had been cleansed of his nationality. More often than not, that cleansing of culture-specific residues has allowed literary critics and theorists to claim their narratives as the point of departure for postmodern and poststructuralist critiques of modernity. On Borges and theory, see Emir Rodríguez Monegal, “Borges and the Nouvelle Critique” and Carlos J. Alonso, “Borges y la teoría”; On Joyce and theory, see Geert Lernout, The French Joyce and Alan Roughley, James Joyce and Critical Theory.

nomadism of sorts: as a liberating critique of modernity and its foundational inconsistencies. In a similar fashion, my discussion will draw attention to how the textual dynamics of Borges's fiction, particularly his use of parody, can give rise to dissociations of both aesthetic and political sensibilities. But rather than proposing an alternative way to fulfill the promises of modernity (Habermas, Žižek) or performing its deconstruction (Derrida, Bhabha), these dissociations stand as the origin of rhetorical and political alternatives to modernity. Whereas Fuentes invokes textual and linguistic indeterminacy to suggest a cultural synthesis between the center and the periphery, I concentrate on how Borges articulates an unsubordinated particularity through quotations from and parodies of texts belonging to the Western tradition. Following Beatriz Sarlo, I should like to read Borges as an author "who is at once cosmopolitan and national" (Sarlo 4)--who is cosmopolitan but from a local and differential vantage point.<sup>2</sup>

Historically, Borges's "cosmopolitanism on the edge," to use Sarlo's felicitous phrase, may be interpreted as an attempt to resolve the debate between the "nationalists" and the "cosmopolitans" that dominated Argentine society since the late nineteenth century. Those who advocated linguistic and racial purity as the essential cornerstone for a strong Argentine nation perceived in the massive influx of immigrants during these years a dangerous social threat, dreading the "degeneration" of the Spanish language. A reaction to this "nationalist" perspective came from a group of intellectuals, including Domingo Faustino Sarmiento and Juan Bautista Alberdi, who embraced immigration and the "Europeanization" of culture and society as the foundation for a truly cosmopolitan

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<sup>2</sup>Besides Sarlo's superb *Jorge Luis Borges: A Writer on the Edge*, other works that have delved into the relevance of Borges's "Argentinness" in his literary work are Sylvia Molloy, *Signs of Borges* and "Lost in Translation: Borges, the Western Tradition and Fictions of Latin America"; and Daniel Balderston, "Borges: The Argentine Writer and the 'Western' Tradition."

society that would turn Argentina into a “civilized,” Western country. The value of Borges’s intervention is to demonstrate the fallacious nature of the debate by recognizing that both alternatives remain deeply entrenched within a colonial mentality. In his essay “Las alarmas del doctor Américo Castro,” for instance, Borges disarticulated with merciless lucidity historian Americo Castro’s complaints about the “corruption” of the Spanish language in South America, revealing the imperialistic nature of the arguments sustaining Castro’s defense of peninsular Spanish as a universal linguistic norm for the Hispanic world. More nuanced is Borges’s critique of the uprooted cosmopolitanism which disguised a servile imitation of metropolitan cultural and intellectual fashions (mainly French and English) as a rejection of the restrictive essentialisms of nationalism. Borges’s mature fiction, particularly Ficciones and El Aleph--written during the period that witnessed the spectacular rise of the staunch populist nationalism of Peronism--might seem to defend a cosmopolitan stance beyond all local attachments. However, Borges’s achievement is to have articulated his marginality--his “Argentinness”--without renouncing to incorporating in his fiction the most diverse foreign materials.

In this sense, Borges’s “cosmopolitanism on the edge” constitutes a relevant example of the phenomenon that James Clifford has identified as “discrepant cosmopolitanism”--that is, a conception of cosmopolitanism imagined from the displaced perspective of colonial histories and peripheral spaces within modernity. These histories and spaces stage a response to the variegated Western culture and structures of power that differs dramatically from the type of response that, say, a French or British encyclopedist might have. Cosmopolitan affiliations imagined from a displaced perspective produce “wordly, productive sites of crossing; complex, unfinished paths between local and

global attachments” (Clifford 362), not unitary and universalistic systems of power and knowledge associated with colonial projects. Along these lines and grounding his argument on a conception of modernity as always already colonial--the modern/colonial world system--Walter Mignolo, in “The Many Faces of the Cosmo-Polis,” has differentiated the totalizing and universalistic cosmopolitan projects emerging from modernity from “critical cosmopolitanism” which, like Borges’s “cosmopolitanism on the edge” and Clifford’s “discrepant cosmopolitanism,” is articulated from coloniality.<sup>3</sup>

## 2

In order to elucidate how this cosmopolitanism is articulated at a textual level in Borges’s fiction, I find it useful to discuss his use of parody and allusion in light of his critical treatment of Joyce’s work. In my view, both aspects intersect to enable a reading of Borges which brings to the foreground his positionality within the modern/colonial world system and interprets his narrative as a “wordly, productive site of crossing” where allusions to the Western literary tradition are redeployed to articulate “complex, unfinished paths between global and local attachments” (Clifford). As we shall see, this type of reading may be applied to Borges’s use of parody as accurately as to his nuanced response to Joyce, thus offering a solid starting point for a geopolitically-conscious reevaluation of the new narrative in Spanish America and its links with Joyce’s work.

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<sup>3</sup>“Cosmopolitanism” as a theoretical category has sparked a notable amount of critical attention in recent years. See Timothy Brennan, *At Home in the World: Cosmopolitanism Now*; the essays in Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins, *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling beyond the Nation*; and the special issue of *Public Culture* (12.3) on “Cosmopolitanism.” On “cosmopolitanism” within a Latin American context, see Noël Solomon, “Cosmopolitanism and Internationalism in the History of Ideas in Latin America”; and Jacqueline Loss’s lucid *Cosmopolitanisms and Latin America*, 1-42.

Borges's well-documented interest in Joyce spanned decades: from his 1925 review of Ulysses and his partial translation of its last page in Proa to his attendance at the centennial Joyce symposium held in Dublin in 1982. My intention here, however, is not to provide an exhaustive catalogue of the literary parallels and contrasts between these two authors. Partial attempts to carry out this task have been completed with variable success and bear witness to the fruitful interaction between the Irishman and the Argentine.<sup>4</sup> Here I want to focus on a very particular aspect of that interaction, namely Borges's response to Joyce's allusive technique. These comments not only constitute a valuable contribution to the debate on Joyce's aesthetics taking place in Spanish America in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s; they can also be taken as an illuminating "meta-commentary" on Borges's own method of allusion and its relevance for the configuration of his "cosmopolitanism on the edge."

A convenient starting point for our discussion may be "El acercamiento a Almotásim," an early fictional piece which is particularly relevant for our concerns here because it includes an explicit reference to Joyce's Ulysses and to its Homeric parallels as an allusive technique. Borges's short story consists of a review of an imaginary book, *Mir*

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<sup>4</sup>There are a substantial number of studies that focus on the literary ties between Borges and Joyce: Luis Murillo, in *The Cyclical Night: Irony in James Joyce and Jorge Luis Borges*, studies the presence of irony in both authors, though in separate chapters and rarely establishing connections between them. Andrés Sánchez Robayna, in "Borges y Joyce," offers an appraisal of Borges's reception of Joyce's work in his critical writings and comments on the Argentine's general reaction to such an influence in his literary output. Along the same lines, Antonio Ballesteros in "Controversias, exilios, palabras y cegueras: Joyce en Borges" and Suzanne Jill Levine in "Notes on Borges's Notes on Joyce: Infinite Affinities," focus on Borges's explicit references to Joyce and Joyce's work as well as on the biographical parallels between the authors. César Salgado, in "Barroco Joyce: Jorge Luis Borges's and José Lezama Lima's Antagonistic Readings" delves into Borges's agonistic relation to Joyce's aesthetics. Beatriz Vegh's "A Meeting in the Western Canon: Borges's Conversation with Joyce" studies Borges's 1925 article on and partial translation of Ulysses and their shared status as "semicolonial" writers. Sergio Gabriel Waisman also assesses this Borgesian translation in "Borges Reads Joyce: The Role of Translation in the Creation of Texts." Thomas Rice offers insightful connections between both authors in "Subtle Reflections on/upon Joyce in/by Borges. Andrés Pérez Simón has recently published another article ("Borges' Writings on Joyce: From a Mythical Translation to a Polemical Defence of Censorship") documenting the reference to Joyce in Borges's critical writings.



Bahadur Ali's The Approach to Al-Mu'tasim. The plot summary provided in Borges's note recounts the quest of a young law student from Bombay who embarks on a journey to find Almotásim, a man from whom intellectual clarity irradiates to humanity as a whole. The narrative finishes just as the protagonist is about to see Almotásim's face, which is never described in the narrative. The short commentary following this summary dismisses the kind of literary scholarship devoted to the search for sources, which appears to contradict the thematic and structural configuration of The Approach. That contradiction is clarified if we understand that for Borges the failed search of the young protagonist of The Approach might dramatize his own agonistically displaced relation to the literary and linguistic tradition into which he has been born. Just as the young lawyer is frustrated in his attempt to see Almotásim, Borges can never feel at home in an inherited cultural tradition, regardless of how much he tries to assimilate to it. From the estranged perspective of the Argentine writer, the order predicated by the Western tradition remains a chaos (to paraphrase Borges himself in "Nuestro pobre individualismo"). It is in this context that we should understand his disapproval of the search for Homeric parallels in Joyce's Ulysses: "Los repetidos pero insignificantes contactos del Ulises de Joyce con la Odisea homérica siguen escuchando--nunca sabré porqué--la atolondrada admiración de la crítica" [the repeated though insignificant connections of Joyce's Ulysses with the Homeric Odyssey keep attracting--I would never know why--the foolish admiration of critics] (OC 1: 417-8; my emphasis). The "order" and "myth" that Eliot praised in Ulysses, Borges dubs "insignificant." While Eliot insists on preserving an order that he identifies with Western literary tradition, Borges stresses displacement and discontinuity.

Borges also emphasized the dualism between order and chaos apparent in Ulysses in a 1937 short biographical sketch about Joyce. The novel, Borges argued, is chaotic at first sight. In order to perceive its “occult and strict laws,” the reader is referred to Stuart Gilbert’s James Joyce’s “Ulysses” (1930) (OC 4: 251). As is well known, this classic book delves into the Homeric parallels in Joyce’s novel, and so it epitomizes the sort of criticism Borges despised in “El acercamiento.” Four years later, in a short opinion piece published in Sur on the occasion of Joyce’s death, Borges again referred to his novel as “indescifrablemente caótica” [indecipherably chaotic] (Páginas de Jorge Luis Borges 168). In this short note, he openly dismissed the Homeric parallels that Stuart Gilbert made the object of his study, and Eliot took as the foundation of his mythical method, referring to them as “tics voluntarios” [voluntary tics]. Similarly, for Borges, the revered “severa construcción y la disciplina clásica de la obra” (severe construction and the classic discipline of the work) (Páginas 168) was simply “insignificante.” It should be clear that, although published in Sur, Borges’s note offers an appreciation of Joyce’s Ulysses that openly clashes against the formalist orthodoxy associated with Eliot’s order of myth and Gilbert’s detailed critical elaboration.

The labyrinthine chaos that Borges saw in Ulysses is what he considered the perfect expression for the descendant of the novel form. In “Vindicación de Bouvard et Pécuchet,” Borges recognized in Ulysses the death of the novel as genre (OC 1: 262). In this, he coincided with T. S. Eliot, who also saw in Ulysses the beginning of a new genre. The novel, he argued, “ended with Flaubert and with James” (“Ulysses, Order and Myth” 270), and Joyce inaugurated a more ambitious and “orderly” form with his book. In fact, T. S. Eliot’s immediate intention in “Ulysses, Order and Myth” was to refute Richard

Aldington's assessment of Joyce's novel as "an invitation to chaos" ("Ulysses, Order and Myth" 269), but his real agenda was to offer a normative interpretation of Joyce's chaotic narrative by selectively reading its "mythical" side as a paradigm of (classicist) order.

Instead of emphasizing the recuperative value of its order, Borges focused on the chaotic features of Ulysses to typify this new form. In "El arte narrativo y la magia," he proposed that the causality of narrative should reproduce the haphazard disorder of life through a contrived set of correspondences, presenting chaos under the guise of order and determinism as coincidence. This arrangement would emphasize the interrelation of the transient, the fleeting, the contingent of experience, irrespective of an overarching organizing model. According to Borges, Ulysses is the most accurate illustration of this arrangement, as it is an "autonomous world" (orbe autónomo) "de corroboraciones, de presagios, de monumentos" [of corroborations, of omens, of monuments] (OC 1: 222). What Borges saw in Ulysses is, therefore, neither a prefigured organization of literary materials nor an avatar of a classical text in modern garb. Rather, he perceives in Joyce's novel an alternative approach, perhaps magical, to conceptualizing experience. Borges suggests that despite its implicit Homeric subtext, the allusive texture of Ulysses is not mainly intended to anchor the contents of the book to a pre-existing literary model. On the contrary, this texture is envisioned as a web of intratextual parallels that provides the book with internal coherence which, like the tangled logic of superstition or magic, resists the imposition of abstract explanatory or organizing principles.

For Borges, allusion in Ulysses does not constitute the link between individual texts and a unified literary tradition. As noted above, this approach contrasts with Eliot's "mythical method," which relies on the dual nature of parody as both repetition and

critique. As Linda Hutcheon has claimed, what differentiates parody from other kinds of allusion is its critical edge, a critical edge that, according to Eliot, is present in Joyce's rewriting of the Odyssey: Ulysses turned to Homer's epic not only to offer a mimetic rendering of the poem, but also to stress that the cultural values that it represents were at risk at the turn of the twentieth century. Hutcheon affirms that "Eliot could be said to use parody in order to capitalize on its doubleness, to harmonize within art the schisms within culture" (A Theory of Parody 99). Thus, the textual dynamics triggered by parody parallels in significant ways Eliot's notions of tradition and individual creation. In his familiar piece "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919), he asserted that individual originality depends heavily on what has been inherited from literary predecessors, to the point of declaring that "the past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past" (101). Hence, literary value derives from the lessons imparted by past poets, a standpoint that is radicalized by Eliot's proposal of "an impersonal theory of poetry" (104). Thereby, poetry is an "escape from personality" (107) and individual feelings, a move that is underscored by making ultimate appeal to the ancients. In order to find a true poetic voice, Eliot points out, the artist should write "with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order" (100). The difference from previous models that parody and the individual talent enact is equally reinscribed with the pervasive sameness of tradition. It is precisely this space of sameness that controls the measure of difference allowed to literary change. Thus, Hutcheon's concise definition of parody as an "authorized transgression" (xii) also holds true for the individual talent.

Parody, along with Eliot's classicism and, of course, Eliot's Joyce, has been frequently taken as a constitutive element of literary modernism.<sup>5</sup> Fredric Jameson claims that "parody found a fertile area in the idiosyncrasies of the moderns and their 'inimitable' styles." These styles deviate from a norm "which then reasserts itself" (Postmodernism 16), thus maintaining the order and coherence of the cultural fabric while registering historical and social change in aesthetic terms. But the sameness that parody refuses to obliterate is not only aesthetic, but also epistemological. Douwe W. Fokkema characterized modernism as an attempt of the artist to provide "a valid, authentic, though strictly personal view of the world in which he lived," adding that modernist writers "tried to climb on the empty throne of God in order to spread the gospel of their private semantic universe" (40-41). Modernists believed that the artwork could provide through these "semantic universes" a new symbolic transcendence which could palliate the devastating effects of war, colonialism, and epistemological relativism that plagued Europe at the turn of the twentieth century. In the face of social squalor, the "high modernists" retreated to an aesthetic realm where Western values could be healed and reactivated. And parody is of high instrumental value for a textual politics representing this kind of unified aesthetics.

This aesthetics still relies on the fixed value of an overarching paradigm: tradition. If we develop the implications of Fokkema's suggestion that modernist art was meant to replace religious beliefs or the idea of God, it would not be completely inaccurate to suggest that Eliot's tradition and the impersonality it demands constitute a transindividual ideological framework akin to religion. This connection was actually

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<sup>5</sup>For an historical study of parody, see Margaret Rose, Parody: Ancient, Modern, and Post-Modern. Rose argues that in Ulysses, as in Don Quixote and Tristram Shandy, the author has used parody "to create the structure and stories of the works as a whole" (47).

suggested by Eliot himself, who in Religion and Literature (1934) declared that literary criticism “should be completed by criticism from a definite ethical and theological standpoint,” adding that the “‘greatness’ of literature cannot be determined solely by literary standards” (Points of View 145). Ethical and mythical models work along the same lines in Eliot’s poetics, since they seem to be interchangeable as dogmatic touchstones for literary worth. As Timothy Materer has put it, “the terms ‘Tradition and the Individual,’ or ‘Classic and Romantic,’ are drastically narrowed down when they are transformed, in After Strange Gods, into ‘Orthodoxy and Heresy’” (58). Just as individual consciences should follow the dictates of religious dogma, individual talent should express emotion by reference to pre-existing models. Eliot’s reliance on tradition was accompanied by a marked distrust of the poetic value of everyday experience. As he put it in “Tradition and the Individual Talent”: “It is not in his personal emotions, the emotions provoked by particular events in his life, that the poet is in any way remarkable or interesting” (106). To understand what true feeling or experience is one is compelled to turn away from the sordidness of reality and absorb the universal teachings contained within the lines of the Aeneid or Paradise Lost. This is, in short, what we might call understanding emotion as citation.

It should not be difficult now to see the theoretical resemblance between the textual dynamics triggered by parody, the interdependence between tradition and the individual talent, and the Kantian aesthetic judgment of the enlightened subject. This is not to say that modernist parody and Eliot’s idea of tradition derive from Kant’s aesthetic postulates. That would be a blatant overgeneralization hard to document.<sup>6</sup> Rather, my

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<sup>6</sup>On the interrelations between continental philosophy and Eliot’s ideas on literary history, see William Skaff, The Philosophy of T. S. Eliot and Richard Shusterman, “Eliot as Philosopher.”

argument is that modernist parody, Eliot's tradition, and Kant's taste are particular embodiments of the same epistemological matrix: Western modernity. In all three cases, individual creativity or "aesthesis" is a mirage, or better, a projection of a totality, be it a literary model, the unified textual system of tradition, or enlightened rationality. This is not to say that this totality overrules difference: no one would dispute that Virgil's Aeneid and Dante's Divine Comedy are "different" from the Homeric poems that inspired them. But that difference is ultimately reinscribed at the heart of the all-encompassing continuity of a unified and undisputed literary tradition: do not forget that Virgil begins his epic poem where Homer's Iliad left off (the fall of Troy), and that Dante's literary guide in the Inferno is no other than Virgil. So, just as the Kantian faculty of taste ensures that individual perceptions of beauty result in aesthetic judgments of universal value, Eliot's notion of individual talent preserves the integrity of tradition by the way it makes its particularity a constitutive part of a larger literary system.

The question now is: how does Borges's narrative exceed this literary system? How can his allusive technique point towards an "outside" from it? Let me venture a preliminary conclusion: Borges exceeds the aesthetic totality postulated by Eliot's tradition (and, by extension, by Kantian taste) by enunciating citation as emotion. By this I mean that Borges does not use allusive technique to relate emotive individuality to a totalizing (and impersonal) system of representation. Rather, allusion becomes a radical strategy to rupture that system, thus letting emotion or individuality dissociate itself from tradition: citation for Borges frustrates the possibility of aesthetic wholes (be it tradition or the universality of aesthetic judgment). Hence, I would argue that the difference that Borges's allusive technique enacts does not simply parody a pre-existing literary model

within the system, but rather the idea of system itself. This sort of difference involves, therefore, a meta-parodic gesture that points toward the limits of parodic representation. And in so doing, this gesture radically departs from the epistemological investment of modernism in salvaging the integrity of Western culture.

In order to sharpen our understanding of Borges's relation to parody and the aesthetics of modernism, I wish to return to his opinions on Ulysses in "El arte narrativo y la magia." I find it intriguing that within the same sentence, Borges can define Ulysses as both "predestined" and "autonomous": "el predestinado Ulises de Joyce" is the best illustration of "un orbe autónomo de corroboraciones, de presagios, de monumentos" (OC 1: 244; my emphasis). If this novel may have the semblance of a modern (and modernist) copy of a Homeric original, its abrogation of causality undoes its derivative quality. Put differently: whereas the Homeric subtext makes Ulysses a "predestined" work, the "magical" logic that it epitomizes endows it with "autonomy." This is not autonomy from a previous literary model, but from a cause-and-effect order which filters out randomness and fits disparate events into congruent and hierarchical structural systems or wholes. These wholes, which at a textual level might be called plots or fables, also correlate with Eliot's idea of tradition. Indeed, what Borges calls "natural" causality, that which organizes experience through "incontrolables e infinitas operaciones" [incontrollable and infinite operations] (OC 1: 245), is also the type of causality that governs the parodic relation between an original (cause) and its copy (effect) and, by extension, between individual emotion and tradition. This causality ensures that any newness that enters the literary system is meaningfully and univocally related to a pre-existing structure. By contrast, the "magical" causality that Borges attributes to Ulysses



short-circuits this hierarchical layering by refusing to rationalize experience according to a set paradigm. Instead, this “precise and frantic” causality gives rise to a textual field that exceeds the limits of tradition, for the “autonomy” that Borges intimates here does not derive from difference created within the closed and stable literary system of tradition, but from difference stemming from a relational logic that interrupts the parodic revising and inverting that sustain said system. It is this second type of difference that I want to relate to the distinctive (“autonomous”) locus of enunciation of Borges as an Argentine writer, to his emotive positionality as a peripheral writer. No doubt Borges must have felt deeply the contradiction involved in asserting his creative independence through a language and a tradition that he was somehow “predestined” to inhabit. Like the young lawyer in “El acercamiento,” or even like Zeno in the famous paradox so dear to Borges, the author of Ficciones is always at one remove from the tradition and the language that nonetheless determine his creation.

In fact, the paradoxical conjunction of adjectives--“predestined” and “autonomous”--that Borges used to describe Ulysses is also apt to describe his famous discussion of the position of the Argentine writer with regard to the Western tradition. In “El escritor argentino y la tradición” (1932), an essay that recalls Eliot’s “Tradition and the Individual Talent” in its main points, Borges, like Eliot, posited an unavoidable (“predestined”) link between tradition and individual expression. However, he went against the grain of a unified and totalizing literary tradition as advocated by Eliot. Instead, Borges dislocates that tradition from the ex-centric point of view of the Argentine writer. Despite the fact that Borges affirms that the tradition of this writer is “toda la cultura occidental” [all Western culture] (OC 1: 272), he abandons any pretence

of literary hierarchy. And he does so not only by assuming a marginal position in relation to such culture, but also by relativizing the question of tradition as a matter of arbitrariness. According to Borges, what an Argentine writer produces is to be considered a part of Argentine tradition irrespective of what the past prefigured: “Todo lo que hagamos con felicidad los escritores argentinos pertenecerá a la tradición argentina” [Everything we Argentine writers do felicitously will belong to Argentine tradition] (OC 1: 273). With this assertion, Borges leads us to think that tradition does not necessarily conform to a cause-and-effect, “natural” logic. For Borges, it is the effect rather than the cause that retrospectively leads to an interpretation of the latter as such: whatever individual Argentine writers compose, and not what the past determines, will configure Argentine tradition. Again, the “autonomy” of personal emotion or individuality takes precedence over (and disrupts) a transindividual conception of tradition.

In “Kafka y sus precursores,” a recasting of his ideas on influence, authorship and tradition, Borges reuses the argument of “El escritor argentino y la tradición” to further destabilize the invariable influence of tradition upon artistic creation defended by Eliot. Borges maintains that Kafka’s writing creates its own literary antecedents, not the other way around. Echoing T. S. Eliot with an ironic intent, Borges writes that “cada escritor crea a sus precursores. Su labor modifica nuestra concepción del pasado, como ha de modificar el futuro” [each writer creates his precursors. His labor modifies our conception of the past just as it will modify the future] (OC 2: 90). This last sentence, to which a footnote citing T. S. Eliot’s Points of View (1941) is appended, conforms to the British writer’s critical views, but its contextual significance reverses them. The reference is to pages 25-26, which correspond precisely to the part of Eliot’s “Tradition and the

Individual Talent” where he claims that no poet “has complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation, is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists” (Points of View 25). Nevertheless, Borges dislocates the direction of influence posited by Eliot as he makes the emergence of a literary lineage contingent upon individual talent. Therefore, for Borges, influence responds to a backward-forward—or “magical”—dynamics instead of depending on the canonical authority of the dead poets.

Borges’s critique of Eliot’s idea of tradition is further elaborated in his short essay “La eternidad y T. S. Eliot,” originally published in 1933. In this piece, Borges makes the connection between “predestination” and “tradition” explicit as he relates Eliot’s tradition to the Christian notion of eternity. As Borges explains, this notion elevates the Holy Trinity out of historical time: the triangular relationship between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost is forever happening and it pervades and predetermines the past, the present, and the future. The Argentine writer goes on to argue that Eliot’s “Tradition and the Individual Talent” postulates an aesthetic eternity akin to the Christian one. In Eliot’s scheme, the European literary tradition since Homer occupies a place analogous to that of the Holy Trinity in the Christian paradigm. Within this tradition, the literary pantheon of the classics creates a totality from which there is no escape. The new artist is condemned to acquire a consciousness of the past and to submit his poetic endeavors to it. Borges is quick to react against this oppressive aesthetic eternity, an eternity which, like its Christian variant, leaves no room for radical dissension or originality. In his own words, Eliot’s classicist hypothesis is “inept” (Textos recobrados 51). Borges conclusively shows that this classicism involves a fundamental absurdity: the dogmatic rigidity that elevates the classics out of literary history for the sake of coherence and order denies the

possibility of variations of taste or preference over time and, most importantly for our concerns, over space. No matter what the future might bring, or the place from which one reads, one can always rest assured that what Borges calls the “illiterate” Odyssey or El Quijote, an “unsophisticated novel” (“una novela popular”), will forever offer unchanging and dependable values.

In light of Borges’s instructive comparison between the Holy Trinity and Eliot’s “tradition,” we are led to conclude that if dissension from tradition ever came to happen, it should be condemned as an aberrant heresy. Borges’s short story “Los teólogos” elaborates on this implication. Set in the six century in Europe, this story revolves around the intellectual rivalry between theologians Aureliano and Juan de Panonia. Despite the fact that they are both church doctors who set out to condemn the same heresies in order to construct a universal Christian orthodoxy, Aureliano feels the compulsive need to refute Juan’s arguments out of personal pride. “Los teólogos” thus stages the drama of two opposed sensibilities trapped within the same religious and philosophical tradition. Aureliano’s compulsion to supersede Juan in argument and style indicates the individual’s urge to be original (or different) against the backdrop of a set of shared beliefs. Paradoxically, however, Aureliano succeeds in defeating Juan only after he misquotes him and reveals that one of Juan’s refutations of a heresy is itself heretical (thus condemning him to the stake). Aureliano’s strategy of misquotation does not only turn orthodoxy into heresy, but also allows him to attain personal glory and intellectual distinctiveness. To put it differently, distinctiveness comes as a result of attacking tradition, not the other way around. Borges is suggesting, therefore, that heresy might have philosophical value precisely because it can establish differences which, though

stemming from a common epistemological background, can valorize individual specificity.

The fact that Juan and Aureliano become the same person in the omniscient eyes of God after they die does not diminish the importance of (heretical) differences to articulate meaning. As a whole, the story implies that difference is a possibility even when one is under the conviction that such a possibility evaporates if considered from a universal (or god-like) perspective. In literary terms, the message might be that an aesthetic orthodoxy or tradition is not an immutable monolith, but actually the result of the conflict between conservative forces and the innovative power of heresies. In fact, the dialectical fights between these church intellectuals can be cast quite accurately in terms of tradition and the individual talent. Even if Borges might concede that the weight of tradition is ineluctable, he also intimates that heresy, understood as a revalorization of individual talent, is valuable to pose unexpected challenges to tradition. In other words, order as heresy can create the conditions of possibility for the exteriority from tradition that the decolonizing writer seeks.<sup>7</sup>

### 3

Borges's short story "El Immortal" perhaps constitutes the best fictional illustration of his dissension with the aesthetic totality of Eliotic tradition as well as a nuanced expression of his "cosmopolitanism on the edge." "El Inmortal" can be regarded as a narrative response to the polemics between tradition and personal expression, in general, and to the implications of Eliot's literary prescriptions, in particular. Just as

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<sup>7</sup>On heresy in Borges's fiction, see Ted Lyons and Pjers Hangrow, "Heresy as Motif in the Short Stories of Borges."

Borges's critical essays distort Eliot's well-arranged classicist system, "El Inmortal" poses an ironic questioning of the possibilities of allusion and parody to uphold a stable and systematic notion of literary tradition. In this regard, the interrelations between Borges and Joyce become illuminating once again. Contrasting Eliot's reading of Joyce's Ulysses with the function of Borges's allusions to this novel in "El Inmortal" provides a convenient illustration of the distinctive differences between Eliot's universalistic idea of tradition and Borges's displacing stance. As we shall see, the central image of the city in the story provides a powerful metaphor for Borges's "cosmopolitanism on the edge" as well as for his critical response to Joyce's Ulysses. The multilayered metaphor of the city constitutes an excellent point of entry into Borges's differential relationship with modernity as well as a point of departure from which to illuminate the political implications of the Argentine writer's literary project.

As already noted, Eliot's treatment of Ulysses is integral to his larger poetic and philosophical project. His agenda was to offer a normative interpretation of Joyce's multifaceted narrative by selectively reading it as a paradigm of classicist order. This order is the order of a tradition which, on closer scrutiny, turns out to be just "the whole of the literature of Europe." This reduction of the universe to the size of Europe is also apparent in Eliot's appraisal of Ulysses. In a 1922 article, the British poet unambiguously presents Joyce's novel as an "international" work, where "international" actually means "European." The relevance of the passage demands full quotation:

Ulysses is the first Irish work since that of Swift to possess absolute European significance. Mr. Joyce has used what is racial and national and transmuted it into something of international value; so that future Irish writers, measured by the standard he has given, must choose either to pursue the same ideal or to confess that they write solely for an Irish,

not for a European public. (“The Three Provincialities” 11; my emphasis)

It follows, then, that addressing an Irish readership and elaborating on local concerns amounts to jeopardizing the literary value of a given work of literature. This value seems to be, by definition, “international,” as opposed to “racial and national.” An immediate consequence of this literary equation is that to gain entry into the realm of tradition, one does not only need to heed the example of the “dead poets,” but also to erase all traces of particularity. This particularity is not only personal, but also communitarian. Just as Eliot’s idea of tradition demands a commitment to “impersonality” and a suppression of immediate emotions, his idea of Ulysses stands as an “international standard” that demands the dismissal of cultural specificities.

In “El Inmortal,” Borges’s allusive method relates to the central thematic aspects of the story and subverts this cultural template, reversing the hierarchical relationship between individuality (or emotion) and tradition, on the one hand, and between universalism and particularity, on the other. As we will show, this subversion runs parallel to Borges’s iconoclastic reading of Ulysses in illuminating ways. For Eliot, the main aspects to be admired and imitated in Joyce’s masterpiece are the parallels between the wanderings of an average man around the streets of Dublin and the Homeric journey of Odysseus. Those parallels endow the Irish author’s novel with “universal value” and a distinguished place within tradition. Superficially, Borges’s “El Inmortal” appears to be a precise application of Eliot’s literary prescriptions: a common Roman soldier, Marco Flaminio Rufo, attains immortality and becomes Homer, but also Odysseus, a fact reinforced not only by his endless journey, but also because he claims he is “Nadie” [Nobody] (OC 1:541), the name Ulysses assumes when confronted by Polyphemus in the

Odyssey. Similarly, the narrative that documents his pilgrimage all over the globe and across the centuries is a miniature replica of Homer's epic and of Western literary history. This allusive texture is emphasized in the postscript to the story, where a reference to the commentary of a fictional Doctor Nahum Cordovero enumerates the interpolations found in the narrative. Cordovero's work also compares "El Immortal" to Eliot's works, and, most interestingly, to an unspecified narrative attributed to antique dealer Joseph Cartaphilus as well. This puzzling detail leads us to consider that Rufo-Homer-Ulysses's narrative might actually be Cartaphilus's work, in which case he would merge with those three characters. Therefore, Rufo not simply turns into Homer after he drinks the sacred waters of the immortal river; he also becomes the legendary Wandering Jew, one of whose names is no other than Joseph Cartaphilus.

This blending of Homer and the Wandering Jew connects Borges's story and Joyce's Ulysses. Ulysses is also the story of a wandering Jew, Leopold Bloom, whose actions gain mythical proportions through association with Ulysses's trials. However, if we take Borges's story as a commentary on Eliot's ideas on Joyce's Ulysses, we are led to conclude that instead of emphasizing the redemptive powers of myth and tradition, it elaborates on their devastating effects on originality and personality. The all-encompassing grip of immortality, tradition, and poetic impersonality, Borges seems to suggest, is deadening rather than liberating; instead of facilitating order, it catches the non-European in an alien web or labyrinth. His own words about the differences between the Europeans and the South Americans are worth remembering at this point: "el mundo, para el europeo, es un cosmos, en el que cada cual íntimamente corresponde a la función que ejerce; para el argentino es un caos" [the world for the European is a cosmos where



everybody is linked intimately to his own function; for the Argentine, it is a chaos] (OC 2:37). As he responds to Eliot's method from his Argentine perspective, he seems to find in Joyce not the mythical order that Eliot suggests, but a labyrinthine worldview close to his.

This labyrinthine worldview is suggested not only by the specularity of the narrator's personality but also by the allusive texture of the story. Instead of expanding Western tradition through a process of parodic accretion, this allusive texture short-circuits it, as it were. As noted above, while Eliot embraces parodic allusion to past texts as a meaning-producing mechanism, Borges uses the same allusive technique precisely to show the arbitrariness of the claims of Western tradition as the only legitimate horizon of literary (knowledge) production. Radical exteriority from such a frame of reference is implied by ironic labyrinthine decentering stemming from allusion. This labyrinthine system of literary references is suggested in "El Inmortal" by the dream that Rufo has right after he envisions the towers of the City of the Immortals: "Insoportablemente soñé con un exiguo y nítido laberinto: en el centro había un cántaro; mis manos casi lo tocaban, mis ojos lo veían, pero tan intrincadas y perplejas eran las curvas que yo sabía que iba a morir antes de alcanzarlo" [Unbearably, I dreamed about an exiguous and clear labyrinth: there was a jar in its center; my hands could almost touch it, my eyes could see it, but the curves were so intricate and perplexing, that I know I was going to die before reaching it] (OC 1: 535).

Michael Evans, in a perceptive article that traces the sources of the intertextual references in "El Inmortal," has related the decentered textual universe that this dream suggests to the evanescent figure of Homer: "Homer is the name which stands for the

source of all writing: a source which, like the water jar in Rufus's dream, remains eternally out of reach" (280). Indeed, Homer and his Odyssey are constantly evoked by the allusive tissue of "El Inmortal," but not as a strategy to foreground poetic meaning. The text frustrates any claims to originality or to the centrality of any sort of meaning precisely through these allusions to the Homeric epic and their author: for Borges, the pure place of origins that Homer represents becomes an absence. Thus, the reader is sent, along with Flaminio Rufo, in a wild-goose chase for an original source that does not exist after all: the allusions of the text, like the labyrinthine underside of the City, produce an estrangement that calls to mind the young lawyer's fruitless search in "El acercamiento a Almotásim" as well as Borges's opinions on Ulysses.

The links between Borges's allusive technique and his views on Ulysses gain additional strength if we contrast the symbolic implications of the city in "El Inmortal" and The Waste Land.<sup>8</sup> The city in The Waste Land is the material representation of Eliot's negative conception of contemporary life. London is presented as an "Unreal City" (l.60, l. 207) that evokes Dante's Inferno. Also, it merges with urban centers past and present to conjure up the idea of chaos, destruction, fragmentation and sterility that runs throughout the poem:

What is the city over the mountains  
Cracks and reforms and bursts in the violet air  
Falling towers  
Jerusalem Athens Alexandria

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<sup>8</sup>Critical studies bringing these two texts together have focused on their similarities rather than their differences. Ronald Christ sees The Waste Land as providing "not only an analogous form but parallel content as well. In a word, both The Waste Land and 'El Inmortal' are centos which come to pretty much the same conclusion" (214), namely fragmentation. He goes on to offer a list of parallels that is expanded and complemented by Joseph Rosenblum's study of the themes and symbols common to both texts. Rosenblum does not problematize the relationship between them either, presenting it as a matter of dependence or influence (183, 186). Departing from these superficial similarities, it can be argued that "El Inmortal" casts an uncanny, ironic light on The Waste Land as well as on the critical program that it epitomizes.

Vienna London  
Unreal. (ll. 372-77)

The modern city is, thus, associated with the threat of disorder. The poet's reaction to this bleak scenery is ciphered in his rhetorical question "Shall I set my lands in order?" (l. 426). And the answer is, we might venture, yes. To undertake this enterprise, he is only left with "These fragments I have shored against my ruins" (l. 431). Those fragments, fragments from a better past, correspond, in literary terms, to the lessons of the dead poets and tradition, which are the only adequate means to buttress the chaos that the city and modern life represent. In this context, Desmond Harding has characterized the modernist, post-Great War, industrial city as "a menacing force beyond the capacity of human experience to control or even sometimes comprehend" (13), offering Eliot's poem as a paradigmatic negative response to modern life. Therefore, for Eliot, the threat of the modern city elicits a response similar to the disruptive, unruly aspects of Joyce's prose in Ulysses that he blatantly strove to fit into an organized, mythical pattern.

It is in this light that we have to read the notes appended to The Waste Land. These scholarly notes detailing the literary sources of several lines scattered throughout the poem might have stemmed from Eliot's compulsion to order what he called the "immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history" ("Ulysses" 270). This acknowledgement of the material borrowed from past poets can be read as an act of control aimed to arrest the fragmentation of the broken images that compose the poem. Thus, disorder is presented just to be re-inscribed into an authoritative frame that signifies order. Eliot's allusive method is, then, designed to underwrite his sense of tradition as firm grounding. Within this context, the metaphor of the modern city as chaos gains special significance when contrasted with the image of the "monument" that Eliot

used to refer to the “dead poets” configuring tradition. In his own words, the “existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves” (“Tradition and the Individual Talent” 101).

Interestingly, Ronald Bush has pointed out that “Ulysses, Order and Myth,” often invoked to identify the techniques lying behind the construction of The Waste Land, “belongs to the period when Eliot was reshaping, not composing, his poem” (71), when he was adding, among other things, the notes. Eliot wrote the first version of the poem while suffering from severe bouts of depression and anxiety, completing its last two sections in a sanatorium at Lausanne (Bush 70). When he recovered, he was horrified at what he characterized as a “sprawling, chaotic poem” (Eliot as qtd. in Bush 70). Therefore, the notes comply with a strategy to regain control over personal and literary turmoil, eventually leading to the re-inscription of order, authority, and tradition. They are a critical move to turn ruins into monuments.

Eliot’s process of allusive reconstruction through his references to the original sources is countered by Borges’s ironic endless mirror images of a non-existing model. Borges’s practice of allusion, like his treatment of Homer and his foundational legacy, frustrates the reinscription of any departures from an original source. The postscript to “El Inmortal” distorts the contours of the notes in The Waste Land and sets up a mise en abyme through the ironic implications of fictional critic Nahum Cordovero’s study on “El Inmortal”: “A coat of many colours” (OC 1: 544). Cordovero categorizes “El Inmortal” as a “centón,” comparing it to Eliot’s poems, and drawing the reader’s attention to the borrowings from previous sources embedded in the story. His attribution of the manuscript to the antiquarian Joseph Cartaphilus strengthens the connections between

him and Flaminio Rufo-Homer-the Wandering Jew. However, instead of reestablishing order with his identification of sources, Cordovero becomes one more mirror reflection of an unreachable original image: Homer. As Ronald Christ has observed, both “the title, A Coat of Many Colours, and the author’s name, Nahum Cordovero, . . . disclose an artifice within artifice which is the hallmark of Borges” (212). Indeed, Cordovero’s Jewish name relates him to Joseph Cartaphilus, and, by extension, to Homer, to the Wandering Jew and, ultimately, to “No one.” Similarly, the title of his book is reminiscent of the biblical Joseph and his “coat of many colors.” This coat is, etymologically, a “cento,” which is Latin for “patchwork quilt.” This etymology ironically relates Cordovero’s study to its subject matter in a specular fashion. This specular relationship is also noticed in the merger of author, critic, and character through the identification of Cordovero with Cartaphilus-Rufo-Homer. Therefore, whereas Eliot’s notes restore canonical authority, Borges’s postscript fictionalizes and ultimately dissolves it through an endless and labyrinthine succession of mirror reflections.

As in The Waste Land, the motif of the city in “El Inmortal” metaphorically represents the author’s relation to tradition and literary creation. Flaminio Rufo describes the entrance to the City of the Immortals as a dark labyrinth consisting of an indefinite number of geometrically regular chambers with doors endlessly leading from chamber to chamber. When he eventually emerges from this symmetrically arranged chaos, Rufo encounters a fascinating city of great antiquity that strikes him as endless and atrocious. Accordingly, the Roman official describes the city and its buildings as a purposeless labyrinth, where order and symmetry coexist with chaos and purposelessness. Given this description, the City can be interpreted as a symbolic projection not only of Borges’s

allusive technique as suggested by Rufo's unsettling dream about the water jug, but also of Joyce's Ulysses as read by Borges. Ulysses, Borges suggested in "El arte narrativo y la magia," is, like the City of the Immortals, a labyrinth of symmetries that lacks any finality: an enigmatic conflation of order and disorder, of "predestination" and "autonomy." The analogy between the City and Ulysses is further strengthened by the fact that the city Rufo sees is merely a replica of the original City of the Immortals. The immortals, like Eliot, also endeavored to reconstruct a new city from the ruins of an old one. But instead of recapturing the harmony of the old monuments, they could only build a place described as a "parodia or reverso" [parody or reverse] of the original city. This urban parody is not, however, an image that reinforces the value of its model. It becomes a terminal point, instead; an inhospitable space that forces the immortals, including Homer, to leave its confines.

In this sense, the arrangement of the City parallels the narrative composition of Ulysses. Both city and book spawn ordered chaos--rather than mythical order, as Eliot would have it--from fragments of a previous model. In an interview with Roberto Alifano, Borges was asked whether he thought that Joyce used Homeric symbolism to provide an integral and ordered vision of human experience. To this question Borges answered that that vision was never fully integral, arguing that after finishing Ulysses the reader is left with a feeling of chaos. He went on to claim, however, that the work abounds in symmetries, and its chaos is really a cosmos, but a secret one ("ese caos es más bien un cosmos, pero un cosmos secreto") (114). This secret cosmos, which does not depend on the archetypal authority of the Homeric model but on a mysterious code proper to the individual work itself, might be the most accurate articulation of Borges's

peripherality within the Western tradition, of his “cosmopolitanism on the edge.” Like the perplexing architectonics of the City of the Immortals and Borges’s allusive technique, the “secret” or “magical” logic that he attributed to Ulysses stresses the eccentricity of at the heart of its construction as a novel. It might not be a coincidence that Borges’s laudatory “Invocación a Joyce” referred to the Irish writer’s works as “arduos laberintos, / infinitesimales e infinitos” [arduous labyrinths / infinitesimal and infinite] (OC 2: 409). The same labyrinthine eccentricity that he recognized in Ulysses must have also inspired him to state that the world for the European is a cosmos and for the Argentine, a chaos.

Eliot, by contrast, harmonized tradition as he harmonized Ulysses. Tradition, like Joyce’s novel, is a structured whole for the British author. Borges, by contrast, de-centers both tradition and Ulysses, and in doing so, he conjures up an idea of literature as a labyrinth. Instead of underplaying his peripherality in order to attain the “universal value” granted by tradition, Borges made it the hallmark of his literary production. He conclusively demonstrated that attaining “international value” need not be necessarily at odds with the articulation of “racial and national” differences (cf. Eliot’s “The Three Provincialities”). As implied in “El escritor argentino y la tradición,” writing as an Argentine (or a South American) should not involve turning one’s back on the Western literary tradition, a gesture that might be an impossibility after all. What Borges teaches us with his programmatic essay is precisely what texts such as “El Inmortal” illustrate: that being a national writer is not necessarily synonymous with being a nationalist writer. Obviously, Borges’s national identity in this short story is not expressed through folkloric details and themes; rather, the “chaotic” perception that such an identity entails manifests itself in the “labyrinthine” patterns created by the story’s allusive techniques. And, as

shown above, these patterns respond to a “magical” causality that Borges identified with Joyce’s Ulysses. Thus, “El Inmortal” subverts the universalism posited by Eliot’s tradition not by reverting to the localism of nationalist literature, but by stressing the limits of that tradition from a peripheral perspective. Similarly, he undermines Eliot’s reading of Joyce’s Ulysses as he connects the novel’s “magical” causality to the construction of the City of the Immortals and to his conception of literary tradition. Seen in this light, Borges’s story and Joyce’s novel share a similar ex-centric position that inevitably leads to an interruption of the parodic logic supporting Eliot’s idea of a monumental tradition.

If we agreed with Claudio Guillén that “a cultural whole or a literary system could be visualized, metaphorically speaking, as the verbal and imaginary equivalent of an ancient yet living, persistent yet profoundly changing city” (12), then we would be compelled to claim that, in light of the foregoing analysis, Eliot inhabits the monumental surface of this civitas verbi, while Borges, like Flaminio Rufo, wonders aimlessly around its labyrinthine underside. As Malcolm Bowie has put it in memorable terms, “Borges inhabits literature as one might inhabit a great city--surprised by its curiosities, pausing at its crossroads, crossing and recrossing its thoroughfares endlessly, switching from its surface to its underground routes, and never wanting it to be a single portentous thing”(126; my emphasis). Similar conclusions could be drawn from Borges’s reading of Ulysses when contrasted with Eliot’s: the Argentine writer perceives an “other” order where the British poet sees a portentous enterprise to restore and preserve the monolithic foundations of the “monuments” of Western culture. Borges reads Joyce as he inhabits



tradition: from a perspective which, through its labyrinthine dislocation of Western culture, succeeds in voicing the situatedness of the peripheral writer and reader.

While Borges frequently argued that individuality is merely a mirage, that all men are really one man, and all books one book written by avatars of the same author, he envisioned this cultural commonality or cosmopolitanism from the differential (or chaotic) perspective afforded by his Argentine nationality. The Janus-faced Immortal (Cartaphilus-Rufo-Homer), despite admitting to being both everybody and nobody, does not fail to speak the variety of languages he masters with a distinctive accent: he switches frantically from French to English and from English to Spanish and Portuguese. But his Spanish is from Salonika and his Portuguese from Macao. Salonika, or Thessaloniki, is a large Greek city where a substantial number of Sephardic Jews settled after being expelled from Spain in 1492. This detail reinforces the connection between the Immortal and the Wandering Jew; but it also thematizes the dissolution of the cultural ties between a transplanted community and its former metropolis. The predicament of the Sephardic Jews is here masterfully linked to the colonial distance suggested by Macao, a former Portuguese colony in Asia. Both places, Salonika and Macao, represent the fringes of the world-system emerging after 1492, when the European powers, mainly Spain and Portugal, assumed a central racial, economic, and epistemological position in the globe. The Immortal thus ciphers the emergent modern cosmopolitanism of the turn of the sixteenth century, and yet his “accent” belies the universalistic pretence of such cosmopolitanism. The Immortal’s ambivalent position within this centralized ordo universalis parallels Borges’s relation to the civitas verbi of Western tradition. Borges, like the Immortal, might well be an avatar of Homer, just as Ulysses might be a parody of

the Odyssey. In both cases, however, the parodic act of imitation and repetition does not underscore the intrinsic sameness holding original and copy together. Instead, it manifests the fissures of the literary and cultural systems by exceeding its representational limits and pointing towards “other” orders.

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In “Tema del traidor y del héroe” Borges reveals the political implications of these “other” literary orders. This fable provides the common rhetorical ground that connects the textual interruption enacted by Borges’s allusive technique to his ideas on cultural nationalism and cosmopolitanism.<sup>9</sup> It will also allow us to establish further links between Joyce and Borges regarding their respective views on community and nation. “Tema” is presented as a preliminary draft of what should later become a story. It opens with “Borges” the narrator presenting another narrator, historian Ryan Kilpatrick. Ryan plans to write the biography of his grandfather, Fergus Kilpatrick, an Irish revolutionary hero murdered in the early 1820s. One of the first aspects of Fergus’s life that catches Ryan’s attention is the uncanny similarity between his grandfather’s death and those of Macbeth and Julius Caesar. After some research, Ryan discovers that James Alexander Nolan, a comrade-in-arms of Kilpatrick, might have staged the hero’s death. After Kilpatrick declared that he was the mysterious traitor that had been trying to sabotage the revolution, Nolan conceived of an ingenious way to save the cause: he would make Kilpatrick’s execution look like an assassination, modeling his death on scenes from

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<sup>9</sup>See Silvia Rosman’s *Dislocaciones culturales* (109-133) for a discussion of Borges’s ideas about collective identity and national culture that focuses on “El Aleph.” On Borges’s critique of cultural nationalism, see also William Rowe’s “How European Is It?” and Gabriel Riera’s “‘The One Does Not Exist’: Borges and Modernity’s Predicament.”

Shakespeare's Macbeth and Julius Caesar. The ploy succeeds and Kilpatrick's death sparks the revolution while a conspiracy among the leaders keeps the details of the death secret. The conspiracy continues with Ryan over one hundred years later, as he chooses to write a celebratory biography that deliberately omits his grandfather's act of treason.

In a typical Borgesian move, the traitor becomes the liberating hero by drawing on (indeed by parodying) the culture of the oppressor. This paradox applies not only to Kilpatrick, but also to Nolan. Ryan finds out that Nolan had translated into Gaelic Shakespeare's main dramas, including Julius Caesar. His labor as a translator turns him into an intermediary between two historically opposed cultures: the English and the Irish and so into a traitor too. The well-known Italian adage, traduttore traditore, acquires full significance in this context.<sup>10</sup> But the ultimate goal of this act of treason (or translation) is to achieve cultural and political self-determination. This self-determination is attained not because the colonizer and the colonized finally coalesce under the same cultural aegis (here signaled by Shakespeare), but because the colonized successfully pillages the hegemonic culture to preserve his particularity. Nolan's translation, like Kilpatrick's martyrdom, does not reinforce the authority of the dominant culture: it interrupts it. The result is that by becoming both traitors and heroes, Nolan and Kilpatrick abolish the binary logic of colonial domination and, at the same time, avoid a synthesis between the colonizer and the colonized.

In this regard, Borges's choice of the Gaelic name Fergus Kilpatrick for his hero/traitor is not devoid of historical significance. The nineteenth and early twentieth century witnessed the rise of a brand of Irish cultural nationalism that sought to reactivate

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<sup>10</sup>On Borges and translation, see Efraín Kristal, Invisible Work: Borges and Translation and Sergio Waisman, Borges and Translation: The Irreverence of the Periphery.

the dying Gaelic culture as an act of resistance. This cultural revival reached its peak after the Great Famine of the 1840s, when the decimation of the peasant population nearly eradicated the Gaelic substratum. In his famous 1892 lecture, “The Necessity of De-Anglicizing Ireland,” Douglas Hyde, a staunch defendant of the Gaelic native culture, claimed that within “the last ninety years,” the Irish had become “the most assimilative” people in Europe, running to the neighboring island for “books, literature, music, games, fashions, and ideas” (160-161). In order to counter this assimilative tendency, Hyde, along with other revivalists such as Patrick Pearse and Michael Cusack, engaged in an intense campaign to reactivate the native Irish language and culture. David Lloyd has noted that this urge to find a national essence in the Gaelic past responds to the need for an “ahistorical ground on which the defining difference of ‘Irishness’ can be established over against the homogenizing/hybridizing influence of ‘Anglicization’ ” (103). Though originally it was solely a cultural movement, the Gaelic Revival was soon adopted as a political move towards administrative independence from Britain. The nationalists embraced Gaelic culture, thus turning into a virtue what the English colonists had demonized as a vice.<sup>11</sup>

As Declan Kiberd has put it, “Ireland became not-England, an apophatic construct which was as teasing to the mind as the notion of a horse as a wheelless car” (Inventing Ireland 151). This brand of nationalism is then a dialogic inversion of British imperialism, and the recovery of a pure Irish cultural essence it proposes is ultimately the construction of a monologism conforming to the imperial configuration of otherness. The logic of modernity is thus transferred from an empire-building enterprise to a process of

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<sup>11</sup>On the complex relation of Ireland to modernity and imperial ideology, see Seamus Deane, Strange Country and Luke Gibbons, Transformations in Irish Culture.

nation formation. In both historical junctures, the long shadow of modernity is strongly felt as political and cultural unity is sought at the expense of those who do not fit in the hegemonic pattern. Either under the guise of an exotic savage or as liberating inspiration for a Westernized elite, the “other” is assimilated by modernity as a mute supplement that is either repressed or “ventriloquized.”

The cultural nationalism that Fergus Kilpatrick symbolizes is indeed a parody of the imperial system, but a parody that assimilates difference to the sameness of modernity. As Benedict Anderson and Ernst Gellner have demonstrated, the political idea of “nation” is intrinsically a Western product. Either as an “imagined community” (Anderson) or as the communal form corresponding to the “industrial society” (Gellner), the nation represents a cultural homogeneity that preserves the continuity between individual subjects and a superordinate political sphere. Underlying this homogeneity there is an aesthetics that secures the seamless transition from the individual to the group, thus enabling the creation of a collective sensibility through a model of individual consciousness that integrates itself within a larger rational structure.<sup>12</sup> As it happened with Eliot’s individual talent, the individual subject attains citizenship only when he merges with a pre-existing community of selves: the nation-state.

This organic continuity between the nation and its individual components is, therefore, a consequence of modernity. The sociological structure of nationalism derives from the homogenizing effects of Reason, the same Reason that divided the globe

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<sup>12</sup>Kantian aesthetics provides an adequate referent for our discussion. Kant frequently used political metaphors to illustrate the authority of enlightened reason. On this aspect of Kantian philosophy, see Onora O’Neill’s *Constructions of Reason: Explorations of Kant’s Practical Philosophy*. She writes: “The reason why Kant is drawn to explicate the authority of reason in political metaphors is surely that he sees the problems of cognitive and political order as arising in one and the same order. In either case we have a plurality of agents or voices. . . and no transcendent or established authority. Authority has in either case to be constructed” (16).

between “us” and the “others.” Thus, one cannot help detecting an embarrassing contradiction whenever the “others” seek liberation from colonial oppression by embracing the cognitive and political mechanisms used for the construction of citizenship (the “us”). Joyce must have had in mind the ironies plaguing cultural nationalism when he named the nationalist bigot in “Cyclops” (modeled after Gaelic revivalist Michael Cusack) the “Citizen.” As Partha Chatterjee has aptly put it,

Nationalism denied the alleged inferiority of the colonized people; it also asserted that a backward nation could “modernize” itself while retaining its cultural identity. It thus produced a discourse in which, even as it challenged the colonial claim to political domination, it also accepted the very intellectual premises of ‘modernity’ on which colonial domination was based. (30)

Read in this light, Ryan’s “revival” of his Gaelic grandfather reinforces the notions of cultural integrity and unity that sustain the colonial system. Cleansing the figure of Fergus Kilpatrick of his act of treason implicitly sustains the binary opposition that separates the colonizer from the colonized and positions them in a hierarchical relationship. Borges exposes the limitations of Ryan’s strategy by showing that it is precisely Nolan’s act of translation and Kilpatrick’s treason that ultimately spark the revolution. The creator of national consciousness is not a hero, but a traitor or translator. Nolan, like Borges himself, resorts to the colonial culture to assert the independence of his nation, but in doing so, he does not reinforce such culture, as Ryan’s revivalist stance does. Instead, Nolan’s translation disrupts the logic of binary oppositions that sustains the colonial order, as it demonstrates that the oppressed can lay claim to the culture of the oppressor. This act of translation also avoids the erasure of the colonial difference, since the hegemonic culture is used precisely to underscore its limits, i.e., its colonial side. Nolan, like Borges, interrupts the aesthetics that ground the politics of nationalism by

underscoring the discontinuity between subject and nation in colonial situations. In this light, Nolan's parody of Shakespeare, far from constituting a tribute to the metropolitan culture, becomes a fissure that literally turns into political resistance.

Brazilian theorist Roberto Schwartz claimed that "in countries where the culture is imported, parody is almost a natural form of criticism" (40).<sup>13</sup> As we have seen, parody can either re-inscribe within sameness the transgression it involves, or it can point to an exteriority unassimilable by a given cultural and political system.<sup>14</sup> The first use of parody fails to transcend the epistemological limits of such a system were it operates as it ultimately upholds the stability of the system it attempts to exceed. This parodic mechanism underlies what Homi Bhabha has called "hybridity" or "mimicry."<sup>15</sup> As Bhabha argues, "hybridity" is concerned with unsettling "the mimetic or narcissistic demands of colonial power" by turning "the gaze of the discriminated back upon the eye of power" (Location of Culture 159-160). This backward glance, Bhabha contends, has the unnerving effect of revealing that the colonizer depended on the construction of an "other" for self-definition. The relationship between colonizer and the colonized is, in this light, a game of masks that conceals an ultimate lack of stable identities. But

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<sup>13</sup>See Roberto Ferro's "Introduction" to the collective volume La parodia en la literatura latinoamericana, where he claims that parody is the discursive mode through which Latin America has questioned hierarchies of authority and paradigms of center/periphery, model/copy, and original/translation (7-9). On parody and Latin American culture, see also Else Viera, "Ig/noble Barbarians: Revisiting Latin American Modernisms."

<sup>14</sup>According to Jacques Derrida's theorization of this issue, "[t]o use parody or the simulacrum as a weapon in the service of truth or castration would be in fact to reconstitute religion," but parody also "supposes a naivety withdrawing into an unconscious, a vertiginous non-mastery. Parody supposes a loss of mastery, or were it to be absolutely calculated, it would become a confession, or a law table" (qtd. in Rose 191).

<sup>15</sup>On Bhabha's application of these notions to the question of nation construction, see "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation." David Lloyd's "Adulteration and the Nation" (in Anomalous States) draws on Bhabha's "hybridity" to refer to the resistance of both Irish cultural nationalism and British imperialism. For a critique of Bhabha's theory from an Irish perspective, see Declan Kiberd, "On National Culture," in The Irish Writer and the World.

hybridity, one could contend, still ties up the cultural and political destinies of the colonial “other” to the metropolis, this time not owing to the demands of a project of imperial expansion, but over a primal absence. Despite the disruption of power relations that the “cannibalization” of colonial discourse entails, the hybrid subject still finds in both the metropolitan model and the essential difference demanded by hybridity the coordinates limiting his resistance to the model’s authority. From this perspective, anticolonial resistance can only emerge as a constant deconstruction of the colonial model, a model whose status as “original” remains unchallenged.<sup>16</sup>

Nolan’s transgressive translation of Shakespeare exceeds this reciprocal act of deconstruction. We should not forget that the Irishman’s parody of the English playwright ultimately results in a revolution that constitutes a radical break leading to new and unmediated communal and cultural configurations. In this sense, Nolan illustrates Walter Benjamin’s contention (expressed in a somewhat different context) that “it is the task of the translator to release in his own language that pure language which is under the spell of another, to liberate the language imprisoned in a work in his recreation of that work” (*Illuminations* 80).

A possible critique of this utopian reading of Nolan’s parody is that it also results in death. And it might be argued that Kilpatrick’s death is the ultimate act of nationalist fervor, its disinterestedness turning him into the arresting emblem of the nationalist martyr. In dying for his “patria,” Kilpatrick is literally staging the ultimate sacrifice of

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<sup>16</sup>With this theoretical move, the crisis of Eurocentrism marked by the Nietzschean collapse of metaphysics and, later, by French poststructuralism, is expanded to its cultural periphery, which is now denied the initiative to articulate alternative epistemologies. As Bhabha explains, his own “insistence on locating the postcolonial subject within the play of the subaltern instance of writing is an attempt to develop Derrida’s passing remark that the history of the decentered subject and its dislocation of European metaphysics is concurrent with the emergence of the problematic of cultural difference within ethnology” (*Location of Culture* 84).



personality that the supraindividual realm of the nation demands from its citizens. But his death is the result of loyalty as much as it is the consequence of his act of treason.

Viewed in this way, Kilpatrick's death might also function as a reminder that the monolithic nationalism that he symbolizes and upholds is indeed an absence, a lack that, very much like Homer in "El Immortal," can turn into radical agency only when it becomes the site of translation/treason. His death also links his condition to that of Borges's Immortal himself, for whom individuality and freedom could only be attained after regaining the gift of death. As the Immortal puts it: "La muerte (o su alusión) hace preciosos y patéticos a los hombres. . . . Todo, entre los mortales, tiene el valor de lo irrecuperable y de lo azaroso. Entre los Inmortales, en cambio, cada acto (y cada pensamiento) es el eco de otros que en el pasado lo antecedieron, sin principio visible, o el fiel presagio de otros que en el futuro lo repetirán hasta el vertigo" [Death (or its allusion) makes men precious and pathetic. . . . Everything among the mortals has an irretrievable and perilous value. Among the Immortals, on the other hand, every act (and every thought) is the echo of others that preceded it, without a visible origin, or the faithful premonition of others that will repeat it to oblivion in the future] (OC 1: 580).

These remarks could be reformulated in terms derived from our discussion on both cultural nationalism and Eliot's modernist classicism. If death can symbolize the ultimate act of individual abnegation for the integrity of the nation, the experience of the Immortal allows us to read it as an interruption of the aesthetic synthesis pairing the individual to the community to which he belongs. Viewed from this perspective, death marks the precise moment at which the symbiotic relationship between citizen and nation comes to an abrupt halt: it is at the time of death that the citizen ceases to be a citizen and becomes

an individual. In literary terms, death might be taken as a metaphor for a dissociation of the individual talent from an all-encompassing tradition. By emphasizing the irreducibility of the individual, death suspends the creative economy whereby all innovation is the echo of a preceding work: the act of dying is inalienably individual. Both implications of death merge in Nolan's translation/treason. His Shakespearean parody points towards the limits of cultural nationalism because it associates the creative moment precisely with the interruption of the systematic identification between the individual and a superordinate cultural and/or political structure, and so avoids the continuity between the subject and a pre-established model, be it the almost extinct Gaelic culture or the hegemonic tradition symbolized by Shakespeare.

Borges's political point here seems to derive closely from his literary views in "El escritor argentino y la tradición." His principal contention in this essay was that establishing what might qualify as Argentine literature should not depend on separating what belongs from what does not belong to a pre-fabricated national tradition. It should not depend on ethnic differences either. Rather, it is the irreverence of the Argentines with respect to the culture of Europe--an aspect that Borges also recognizes in the Jews and the Irish--that truly marks the difference between the Western tradition and the writer "on the edge." Nolan's parody can be read as a fictional illustration of this kind of irreverence; an irreverence which is much more profound than the mimetic folklorism that formed the basis of the cultural nationalism that Borges overtly decries in "El escritor argentino." It is more profound because it does not resist the dominant culture by adopting its aesthetics. Instead, it dismantles the aesthetic grounds for identification between the citizen and a unified idea of the nation, on the one hand, and the individual

poet and a given tradition, on the other. The discontinuity or gap caused by this dismantling of cultural and political loyalties is what Borges suggests as the site of enunciation for the decolonizing writer.

It might not be a coincidence that Borges gave his parodic revolutionary the last name Nolan. Nolan is, of course, a last name of Irish origin (Ó Nuallain). But it is also the patronymic of the famous heretic against the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, Giordano Bruno.<sup>17</sup> As Timothy Materer argued, Eliot transformed the terms “Tradition” and the “Individual” into “Orthodoxy” and “Heresy” respectively. Given that Borges supported this association in “La eternidad y T.S. Eliot,” it is likely that he played on it in order to characterize Nolan in “Tema.” If Shakespeare, like Homer, is to be taken as an icon standing for the Western tradition, then Nolan’s revolutionary deployment of the English playwright is to be considered a forceful (and heretical) assertion of individuality. In this sense, Nolan’s parody is a heretical de-linking from the impersonality (and immortality) of tradition, just as the death it provokes is a de-linking from the totality of a nation. Nolan’s heresy, like Kilpatrick’s death, constitutes then the kind of parody that marks the limits of modernity. Heresy and death do not preserve (or deconstruct) an unchanging and normative totality: they signal a fissure in the system that opens up “other” political and literary alternatives.

The name James Alexander Nolan might carry even more symbolic connotations than those just mentioned. It might be that, besides Giordano Bruno, Borges also had Joyce in mind when composing his story. Joyce, like Bruno, considered himself to be a heretic escaping from the religious and political orthodoxies of his native Ireland.

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<sup>17</sup>On Borges’s interest in Giordano Bruno, see Robert Carroll, “Borges and Bruno: The Geometry of Infinity in ‘La muerte y la brújula.’”

Towards the end of A Portrait, Stephen Dedalus confronts his fellow student Ghezzi about his comment that Bruno was a heretic: “Other wrangle with little roundhead rogue’s-eye Ghezzi. This time about Bruno the Nolan. Began in Italian and ended in Pidgin English. He said Bruno was a terrible heretic. I said he was terribly burned” (355). Furthermore, Finnegans Wake contains hundreds of references to Bruno’s life and work, and the rebelliousness against authority of one of the author’s alter egos, Shem, connects Joyce to the Italian heretic.<sup>18</sup> But if nothing else, these conjectures suggest deeper connections between Borges’s story and Joyce’s fiction, connections that become evident when we realize that the points raised about “Tema” can be applied quite accurately to Joyce’s political views in Ulysses.

Nolan’s revolutionary use of tradition can be used as a guide to unpack the political implications of Joyce’s parody of the Odyssey in Ulysses. In both cases, the Western literary tradition is deployed to articulate a decolonizing locus of enunciation that avoids the pitfalls of cultural nationalism. Declan Kiberd’s description of Joyce’s use of the Homeric epic clarifies the links between the Irish writer and Borges’s fictional character: “Joyce’s use of ancient Greece is rather like Robespierre’s employment of ancient Rome--both served to glorify newness while at the same time creating the impression that it might be a reassuring revival of something quite old. The mask worn was but a temporary expedient” (Irish Classics 474). Within the context of our discussion, we might also compare Nolan’s translation and staging of Shakespeare to Joyce’s use of Greek mythology. Joyce, like Nolan, had no intention to reconnect with the foundational values that Homer or Shakespeare represent. Rather, they used those

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<sup>18</sup> On Joyce’s references to Bruno in Finnegans Wake, see Thornton Wilder, “Giordano Bruno’s Last Meal in Finnegans Wake.”

canonical figures to unleash the revolutionary potential that they might engender when read/translated/staged in an irreverent manner.

This irreverence is not, to be sure, the kind of parodic mimicry represented by Buck Mulligan in Ulysses. Like Joyce, Mulligan dons a series of literary masks in order to display the inconsistencies inherent in the constructions of nation and empire. In the opening lines of Ulysses, he intones his famous mockery of the Introit: “Introibo ad altare Dei” (U 1.5). The original source for this line is Psalm 43, sung by the Hebrews while in exile. Pronounced by an Irishman living in a British fortification on the Dublin coast (the Martello Tower), the quotation carries with it a strong subversive effect, since it stresses the Irish colonial experience by linking it to the Hebraic displacement and diaspora. But Mulligan’s critique is always already reinscribed within the colonial system that he tries to subvert. Take, for instance, his response to Stephen’s embittered claim that Irish art is “the cracked looking glass of a servant”:

Cracked lookingglass of a servant! Tell that to the oxy chap downstairs and touch him for a guinea. He’s stinking with money and thinks your’re not a gentleman. His old fellow made his tin by selling jalap to Zulus or some bloody swindle or other. God, Kinch, if you and I could only work together we might do something for the island. Hellenise it. (U 1.154-58)

Mulligan clearly acts as mediator between the colonizer and the colonized as he unembarrassingly encourages Stephen to assimilate his despair into an economy of domination represented here by the English student Haines (the “oxy chap”) and his ethnographic interests in Irish folklore. While he fully unveils the internal construction of the imperial system, he is unable to transcend it. As what V. S. Naipul called a “mimic man,” Mulligan simply appropriates the language and discourse of authority to reinsert it in the colonial imagery. It is this subservient act of compliance that Stephen deems

proper of “a jester at the court of his master, indulged and disesteemed, winning a clement master’s praise” (U 2.43-44).<sup>19</sup>

By contrast, Joyce, like Borges, finds in irreverence a political and cultural strategy to imagine alternative ways to conceptualize both artistic creation and communitarian models in (post-)colonial situations. Joyce’s critique of the revivalist movements that dominated the Irish cultural and political scene during his lifetime has been traditionally read as his refusal to seriously engage in political matters: this aloofness to the revivalist tendencies of his time was also taken as proof of his “cosmopolitan” stance.<sup>20</sup> But reading Joyce’s parodic text from the vantage point afforded by the insights of Borges’s “Tema” surely lifts it from the reductive national-vs.-cosmopolitan deadlock. Joyce, like Borges and Nolan, exposed the shortcomings of cultural nationalism by showing that what lies behind it is a painful absence. This absence, symbolized by Kilpatrick’s death in Borges’s fable, might either give rise to the revivalism that Ryan’s laudatory biography represents, or elicit an exposure of the artificiality of this same revivalism. But this exposure is not, like Mulligan’s mimicry, simply a deconstruction of a normative order. It is rather a foundational moment which paves the way for new forms of interaction between individuals and culture.

The labyrinth in which Flaminio Rufo wanders in “El Inmortal” might offer a close visual representation of these alternative orders. The labyrinth lacks a fixed origin, but that lack does not turn it into a chaotic space, for its organization follows a strict

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<sup>19</sup>Vincent Cheng offers a thorough analysis of Mulligan’s role as “native informant” and Joyce’s critique of it in “Imagining Selves,” Joyce, Race, and Empire (151-184). On Mulligan and mimicry, see Eric D. Smith, “The Mimetic ‘Spirit of Denial’: Buck Mulligan and the Cultural Limits of Mockery.”

<sup>20</sup>This “apolitical” portrayal of Joyce has been countered by a number of publications: Dominic Mangianello, Joyce’s Politics; Seamus Deane, “James Joyce and Nationalism” in Celtic Revivals; Emer Nolan, James Joyce and Nationalism; and Christy Burns, Gestural Politics.

geometrical pattern. This paradoxical combination of precise order and perplexing disorder (remindful of the “magical” order of Ulysses, as read by Borges) captures and embodies the displaced situation of the colonized “other” while it suggests an alternative order, an order that does not derive from an unchanging principle or abstract universal (Reason, the Nation, Tradition). The metaphor of the labyrinth might present itself as an adequate expression of what Frantz Fanon has defined as the post-nationalistic stage in anti-colonial struggles. In The Wretched of the Earth, he charts the phases towards decolonization experienced by oppressed groups: occupation, nationalism, liberation. This third stage marks the point at which the ties between the colonizer and the colonized are completely severed. This is not to say, however, that the colonized is banished from the cultural materials of the hegemonic culture. Rather, it means that the colonized allows himself to speak from a locus that is not defined according to the desires of an alien authority. As we have shown, the articulation of this final stage of liberation in the writings of Joyce and Borges is as postnationalist as it is post-parodic--postnationalist because the cultural and political model of the nation-state is exposed for what it is: a recasting of imperial modernity under a provincial guise; postparodic because it ruptures the aesthetic space that enables continuity between a dominant model and a subservient copy. In this regard, a character in Ricardo Piglia’s Respiración artificial is right when he argues that for Joyce, as for Borges, there is no teleological history, but only parodies (112), parodies that open up new vistas on a future yet to come.

Let me finish by delving into the significance of the title of Borges’s fable, “Tema del traidor y del héroe.” Borges’s choice to call it “tema” [theme] and not “story” highlights its lack of closure and its provisional shape. We are told that the story is a draft

describing a political situation that could be equally true in a number of countries, all of which are “oppressed and tenacious” and share a colonial past: Poland, Ireland, Venice, or any South American or Balkan state. And it is in regard to that shared historical experience that they are interchangeable. This openness is relevant for two reasons. First, it stresses that if the histories of these countries were fictional plots, they would lack closure. Liberation, as theorized by Fanon, is in fact antagonistic to teleological masterplots. Otherwise, liberation would simply amount to “inventing a tradition” modeled on the hegemonic culture, a gesture symbolized in the story by Ryan’s biography. Second, it configures a shared rhetorical and epistemological space where the colonized groups can interact through encounters “in the periphery.” It is the locus of enunciation from which a “cosmopolitanism on the edge” is likely to emerge; a cosmopolitanism that interprets the relation between Joyce and Borges not as a consequence of their transcendence of local particularism in favor of a universalizing modernity, but as an act of recognition between decolonizing writers.

Borges’s reading and rewriting of Joyce distances both writers from the conception of modernism derived from Eliot’s poetics and from the associated discourse of cultural nationalism. The connections between their artistic projects and political views suggest a departure from the normative discourse of modernist aesthetics, nationalism, and, by extension, of modernity. Far from heralding the “modernization” of Spanish American narrative, the intersections between the narrative fiction of Borges and Joyce configure a space of radical difference that contests the universalistic claims of modernity and modernism. That is, their literary ties stress the fissures and discontinuities between the European literary and philosophical traditions and the decolonizing periphery. Read



in this way, Borges' work is pivotal in Spanish American literary history not because it directs the course of Spanish American narrative towards the innovations of Anglo-American (post-)modernism, but rather because it effects a decolonizing shift away from modernity as the only valid cultural and epistemological horizon.

## DOUBLE CONSCIOUSNESS AND COUNTER-MYTH IN JULIO CORTÁZAR'S RAYUELA

The question is: can one do something different, set out in another direction? Beyond logic, beyond Kantian categories, beyond the whole apparatus of Western thought--for instance, looking at the world as if it weren't an expression of Euclidian geometry--is it possible to push across a new border, to take a leap into something more authentic?

Julio Cortázar, Interview with Luis Harss and Barbara Dohmann

. . . la hotelera, irlandesa y por lo tanto no euclidiana, comprendería sin esfuerzo que donde cabían dos cabían tres.

Julio Cortázar, 62. Modelo para armar

In Dialectic of Enlightenment Adorno and Horkheimer interpreted Odysseus's voyage in the Homeric epic as a metaphor for the configuration of modernity. For them, Odysseus's resistance to the seductive attractions of the pre-rational powers represented by Circe or the Sirens embodies the cultural moment in which bourgeois rationality emerges by setting itself in self-conscious opposition to myth. Odysseus's eventual return to the security of his homeland in Ithaca thus provides a powerful symbolic image of the dialectic process whereby modern rationality conceals the contingency of its origin through the repression of pre-rational modes of thought. Indeed, while the Homeric hero's successful return establishes rationality as norm, the image of the voyage reveals the artificial discursive ground on which the Enlightenment is erected: it exposes its double nature as universal "Spirit" and nihilistic "anti-life force" (Adorno and Horkheimer 44). The value of Adorno and Horkheimer's critique resides, then, in its successful demonstration that the epistemological legitimacy of modernity necessitates

for its configuration the destruction of myth as the antithesis of reason. In this respect, the universalistic master narrative of modernity is set on no firmer ground than the irrationality it sets out to control and suppress.

But this neat dialectic between reason and myth, thesis and antithesis, home and abroad, tends to become blurred when the symbolic significance of the Ulyssean journey is imagined and re-enacted by those for whom modernity is an imposed discourse. In colonial situations in which the subordinated population tries to construct hegemonic narratives of cultural and political emancipation, embracing the authority of modernity often leads to the embarrassing contradiction involved in articulating one's act of rebellion with the rhetorical strategies of the dominant power. Since political independence from Spain was mainly achieved in the early decades of the nineteenth century, this paradox has characterized Spanish American cultural and literary discourse in a persistent manner.<sup>1</sup> Either in metaphorical or thematic terms, as a means of psychological characterization or as a plot-structuring device, the metaphor of the journey has been frequently deployed in Spanish American letters to delve into the vexed relation between the New World and Europe.<sup>2</sup> But authors concerned with the articulation of an American (as opposed to European) identity often faced the uncomfortable historical fact that what they were striving to conceptualize as "home" was actually the "abroad" of

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<sup>1</sup>Carlos J. Alonso has referred to this paradox as "the burden of modernity," a burden he presents as both a legacy from colonial structures of power and as an emancipating horizon. He affirms that "the Spanish American text argues strenuously for modernity, while it signals simultaneously in a number of ways its distance from the demands of modernity's rhetoric as a means of maintaining its discursive power" (*The Burden of Modernity* 26).

<sup>2</sup>In *Questing Fictions*, Djelal Kadir has argued that the search for cultural identity staged in Latin American literature takes the shape of a self-thwarting "quest romance," a romance of "recurrent homelessness" that frustrates the fulfillment of the colonial narrative of discovery and conquest. See also Fernando Ainsa, *Identidad cultural*.

European modernity, for America was, since its “invention” (to use Edmundo O’Gorman’s apposite term) at the turn of the sixteenth century a mythical space destined to fulfill the utopian longings of European rationality and history.<sup>3</sup>

Deliberately or not, foundational texts of the Spanish American canon such as José Eustasio Rivera’s La vorágine, Rómulo Gallegos’ Doña Barbara, Alejo Carpentier’s Los pasos perdidos, and Ernesto Sábato’s El túnel expose the inconsistencies of this totalizing, universalistic narrative. Caught on the cusp between the redemptive rhetoric of European modernity and the utopian and mythic American space, these texts posit a metaphorical voyage of homecoming and discovery “in reverse,” as they document the incompatibility between a model of consciousness stemming from modernity and a geographical and intellectual space that resists assimilation to such consciousness. Some of the most representative fiction of Julio Cortázar could be added to this list. His first novel, Los premios (1960) recounts the trials of a group of Argentineans who, having won a lottery prize, embark on a European cruise liner whose destination remains a mystery. Soon the cruise passengers become painfully aware of the absurdity of their existence on board and engage in a persistent search for a “center” (indeed, a “home”) that would endow their lives with transcendental meaning. Similarly, 62. Modelo para armar (1968) presents an interconnected web of characters without psychological consistency or vital purposes who remain in constant transit around evanescent spaces simply called the “city” and the “zone.”

But perhaps the most complete exploration of the symbolic possibilities of the Ulyssean voyage to articulate the discontinuities between Spanish America and

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<sup>3</sup>Hegel’s views on the immaturity of the “New World” are frequently quoted in this respect. See Lectures on the Philosophy of World History, 162-170.

modernity is found in Cortázar's most famous work, Rayuela (1963). The protagonist, Horacio Oliveira (who is explicitly characterized as a "Hodious Hodyseus") is an Argentine intellectual who embarks on a search for transcendental meaning beyond what he feels are the constrictive and alienating structures of Western rationality. Joining Oliveira in his journey towards the "other side" of conventional reality and habit, I would like to theorize Cortázar's critique of the myth of modernity. Contrary to what criticism attuned to postmodernist theories of the text has generally suggested, I will not propose that this critique simply exposes the internal conflict and eventual dissolution of the binarism between rationality and myth. Roberto González Echevarría, for instance, has claimed that Cortázar's "mythology of writing," his aesthetic grammar, revolves around "a hegemonic struggle" between myth and reason "for the center, which resolves itself in a mutual cancellation and in the superimposition of beginnings and ends" (The Voice of the Masters 102).<sup>4</sup> Without trying to discredit this sort of interpretation, I would argue that rather than merely engaging in a deconstruction of the dialectic of Enlightenment, Cortázar finds in the constitutive contradictions of this dialectic fertile ground to imagine an alternative counter-myth to the universalistic myth of modernity. This counter-myth is not an Archimedean "elsewhere" or "kibbutz of desire," as Oliveira would like to think.

Nor is it a definite point of arrival, an alternative Ithaca that simply reverses Odysseus'

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<sup>4</sup>See also Jaime Alazraki, "La postmodernidad de Julio Cortázar"; Ursula Heise, Chronoschisms 77-112; Santiago Juan-Navarro, "Postmodernist Collage and Montage in A Manual for Manuel"; and Dominic Moran, Questions of the Liminal in the Fiction of Julio Cortázar. I am persuaded by Lucille Kerr's powerful critique of the facile conflation of poststructuralist theory and contemporary Spanish American fiction in Reclaiming the Author (whose chapter 1 is devoted to Cortázar). However, she forecloses the possibility of ever abandoning Western philosophical models, which is what I set out to do here. Although the narratives she examines "have been shaping their own authorial tale, the story that needs to be told here is the European/Anglo-American one. For that is the story that has imposed itself as the predominant way of thinking about the author in Western culture. Inevitably, it is also the story that frames the reading and writing of Spanish American fiction and the alternate stories it may (or may not) have to tell" (16). For a cogent critique of deconstructive approaches to Cortázar, see Doris Sommer, "Grammar Trouble" in Proceed with Caution.

voyage and redirects it towards a valorization of irrationality and myth. Instead, it embraces the double consciousness afforded by the experience of modernity from the margins as a creative space where radical transformations of culture and subjectivity can materialize.

In order to conceptualize this creative space and the counter-myth that it engenders, I should like to contrast it to modernist aesthetics, given that the formal and linguistic experimentation that characterizes Rayuela has been customarily associated with literary modernism. In Journeys through the Labyrinth, Gerald Martin has asserted that Cortázar's novel stands as the epitome of what he calls "Spanish American Modernism" and that its publication in 1963 marked "the precise moment at which 'Joycism' appeared to assume the main thrust of Spanish American fiction" (204).<sup>5</sup> For Martin, Rayuela constitutes a nodal point uniting Joycean poetics (or what he calls the "Ulyssean novel" in reference to Ulysses), the development of Spanish American fiction, and modernist aesthetics. This association has been discussed to emphasize the dated quality of Rayuela, as well as its lack of "authenticity," when read from a contemporary, post-modern perspective that exposes the reductive ethnocentrism of modernist aesthetics.<sup>6</sup> I would agree that reading Rayuela as a modernist or postmodernist work disables its capacity to generate inventive alternatives to modernity that could go beyond a politically sterile exposure of its inescapable contradictions, or a utopian desire to create

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<sup>5</sup>See also Raymond Williams, The Twentieth-Century Spanish American Narrative and The Postmodern Novel in Latin America.

<sup>6</sup>See Neil Larsen, "Cortázar and Postmodernity," where it is argued that Cortázar's "modernism" has been perceived as politically inauthentic ever since a "global shift within what we might call the ideology of reading" has affected Latin American literature. Larsen contends that the recent attention to "testimonial" works has exposed the limitations of Cortázar's avant-gardism to engage culturally and politically with Latin American reality.

aesthetic structures to transcend historical discontinuities. In this light, I would also concede that interpreting the interrelation between Joyce and Cortázar against the background of modernism ignores their respective peripheral positions as well as the aesthetic and political implications that such positions might have. However, I contend that one could forcefully dispel Cortázar's political "inauthenticity" by revisiting the connection between the Argentine author and Joyce not to claim that the intersection between their works represents a meeting point of modernism across the Atlantic, but to find in Cortázar's reading of Joyce an apt starting point to conceptualize what we have called his creative counter-myth.<sup>7</sup> I shall identify in this counter-myth a projection of Cortázar's political engagement with the decolonizing cultural and political struggles in the 1950s and 1960s. Once this counter-myth has been sufficiently theorized, we will be in a position to reassess the ties between Joyce and Cortázar beyond the scope of modernism.

That the Argentine writer admired Joyce's artistic achievement in Ulysses is a well-documented fact. This admiration finds its most obvious expression in an interview with Evelyn Picón-Garfield, in which Cortázar was asked to name five books that he would save from a bonfire which would consume all the books in the world. He could only name Ulysses, a book which, he believed, summarizes universal literature ( Cortázar and Picón-Garfield, Cortázar por Cortázar 41). He also took Joyce's novel as a point of reference for his own artistic endeavors in Rayuela. Shortly after its publication, his novel

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<sup>7</sup>There are relatively few studies that compare Joyce and Cortázar. Aronne Amestoy, Rayuela: La novela mandala offers some parallels between Ulysses and Rayuela; Antonio Ballesteros González bases his study on the narrative category of parodic digression; Robin Fiddian includes a few pages on Ulysses and Rayuela in his study of Fernando del Paso's novels, arguing that Cortázar's novel stands as a bridge between the early Joycism of Leopoldo Marechal's Adán Buenosayres and del Paso's Palinuro de México.

received a scathing review penned by Juan Carlos Ghiano and printed in the Argentine newspaper La Nación. In his rejoinder, Cortázar retorted that the reviewer had failed to see the radical novelty of his work just as (Cortázar imagined) contemporary reviewers might have censured Joyce for failing to adopt the conventionalisms of the “language of the tribe” or the realistic style of Thomas Hardy or John Galsworthy (Cartas 1:628). It seems obvious then that Cortázar was reading in Joyce the act of irreverence against a normative culture with which he identified his literary preferences. In another interview, this time with Luis Harss and Barbara Dohmann, he admitted that as a young man he was drawn to the poetry of Valéry, Eliot, and Ezra Pound, that is, to what he called “the Goethian tradition” in obvious reference to the classicism of these authors. But this is a tradition from which he found himself departing as a mature writer just because “it’s entirely circumscribed within the mainstream of the Western tradition.” He argued that he became more interested in what he called a “literature of exception,” since exceptions offer “an opening or a fracture and also, in a sense, a hope” (Harss and Dohmann 57).

But to what extent can we identify this “literature of exception” with modernism? In Chapter 79 of Rayuela we find what is perhaps the most concise and illuminating formulation of what Cortázar might have understood as a “literature of exception.” The chapter consists of fragmentary and seemingly unconnected theoretical notes where the novelist and critic Morelli (arguably Cortázar’s alter ego) describes the characteristics of a new type of narrative fiction, the roman comique. The main aim of the roman comique is to sever the ties with Western knowledge by finding alternative ways (“otros rumbos”) of characterization, textual organization, and authorial presence. Morelli affirms that the method to achieve this narrative revolution is irony and constant self-criticism (“la



autocrítica incesante”), and its model, Joyce’s Ulysses (Rayuela [R] 561). On a superficial level, it might seem that Morelli is simply describing the most salient textual features of Rayuela and then establishing a close correspondence between these features and the aesthetics of modernism via Joyce. However, the implied similarities between Morelli’s narrative theory and literary modernism begin to dissolve as soon as we focus on the implications of irony and self-criticism for Cortázar and for modernist discourse. If irony for Cortázar-Morelli means a dislocation of coherence (a “fracture”) opening up new discursive spaces beyond the dialectics of Western modernity, in modernist literature irony functions as a mechanism of epistemological restitution.

To distinguish the use of irony in Cortázar’s narrative from that found in modernist discourse, let me first return to the dialectic between myth and rationality. In Literature, Modernism and Myth, Phillip Bell has argued that modernist literature is characterized by “mythopoeia,” which he defines as a mode of expression that consciously presents rationality as myth. This imbrication of the mythical and the rational generates the kind of ironic distance that is needed to preserve the universal viability of modernity after the value of its cognitive and epistemological structures has been eroded. According to Bell, philosophical works published in the teens and the twenties of the twentieth century widely registered this loss of faith in the exclusive uniqueness of Western thought. Referring to Heidegger’s notion of the “age of the world picture,” Bell asserts that the characteristic feature of modernity is to be aware of its own relativity (Bell 9). The ironic distance stemming from this awareness materializes in the “double consciousness of living a world view as a world view. . . of recognizing a world view as such while living it as conviction” (Bell 1, 2). Now what is held as rational is self-

consciously lived as mythical. From this perspective, the relationship between myth and rationality ceases to be dialectical and becomes supplemental or symbiotic, thus configuring a symbolic space from which any sort of radical “opening” or “fracture” towards new forms of rationality is foreclosed.<sup>8</sup>

In “A Note on Modernism” (in Culture and Imperialism), Edward Said was more precise about the historical determinations of this literary configuration and related the ironic stance that Bell had attributed to “modernist mythopoeia” to the growing metropolitan awareness of other cultures at the turn of the twentieth century. This awareness became the source of discomfiting anxiety in characters such as Marlowe in Conrad’s The Heart of Darkness or Aschenbach in Mann’s Death in Venice. And through these characters, that anxiety seeped into the very core of the metropolis. If Marlowe reports Kurtz’s African horror back in London, on the quiet waters of the River Thames, Aschenbach dies from an Asian plague in one of the most splendid centers of European culture, Venice. This anxiety, Said argues, also conditions and shapes the formal innovations of modernist narrative. The realist faith in mimetic representation, as well as the triumphalism of the literature of Empire (e.g. Kipling), was undercut by the disquieting conviction that European culture is just one among many others. This conviction changed the way in which that culture began to look at itself: it could no longer take itself seriously, but merely ironically. In modernist literature, irony manifests itself as “a desperate attempt at a new inclusiveness” (189): the encyclopedic form of

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<sup>8</sup>The interruption of dialectics that irony brings with itself was theorized by Georg Lukács in The Theory of the Novel, as he related it to the alienation of individual subjectivity from material experience. See, in particular, his chapter, “The Historico-philosophical Conditioning of the Novel and its Significance.” Cortázar, like Lukács, sees in irony an attempt to transcend the historical conditionings of material dialectics. However, I contend here that Cortázar’s final purpose is not to lament the alienating effects of modernist irony, or to redirect the utopian excess signified by irony back to the fold of history, but to find in that excess a space for cultural and social production beyond the totalizing scope of Western dialectics.

Ulysses (as read by Said) and In Search of Lost Time, or the self-conscious juxtaposition of cultural fragments drawn from diverse cultures in The Waste Land are elements that can be read as a “response to the external pressures on the culture from the imperium” (188). Thus, modernist irony with the double consciousness that it generates is basically an aesthetic strategy to maintain the totalizing capacities of the West alive: “the irony of a form that draws attention to itself,” Said contends, is a means of “substituting art and its creations for the once-possible synthesis of the world empires” (189).

Nothing could be further from Cortázar’s purpose than upholding an aesthetic Ersatz in relation to world empires. Cortázar’s apparent association with modernism begins to break down as soon as we realize that his critical engagement with modernity stems from a post-colonial perspective. And while the case for a “postcolonial modernism” can be made on a purely formal basis (fiction by writers from the British ex-colonies, such as Salman Rushdie or Arundhati Roy frequently displays experimental features traditionally related to Euro-American modernism), the critical validity of such a label diminishes if we focus on the ideological and political import of modernist aesthetics. Cortázar intimated the contradictions of using metropolitan forms to express revolutionary impulses when he acknowledged that anti-totalitarian gestures might be inescapably doomed to resort to the language of power. However, he offered one possibility to escape the panoptic purview of this language: a “revolución constantemente inventiva” [constantly inventive revolution] (“El compromiso del escritor” 74).

Commonly associated with the utopian political anti-imperialism of the sixties in Latin

America, Cortázar's revolutionary inventiveness sets itself in radical opposition to the restitutive maneuverings that Bell and Said attribute to modernism.<sup>9</sup>

But my intention is not to substantiate my analysis of Cortázar's critique of modernity by placing it within the political horizon set by the leftist ideology that revamped the anticolonial stirrings of the 1960s and beyond. As Morelli contends the "yonder" beyond the constraints of Western civilization "no está en la historia" [is not to be found in history] (R 619). Likewise, Cortázar's critique of modernity cannot be reduced to the dialectic of a brand of historicism which restages the philosophical dialectic of the Enlightenment in the materialist terms offered by class struggle. Thus, I want to link Cortázar's "revolución constantemente inventiva," not to Marxist materialism, but to an ironic double consciousness that, rather than repairing the structural duplicity of modernity (Bell), exacerbates it: a double consciousness that does not cement myth and rationality into a Hegelian symbolic synthesis, but opens up the revolutionary space where such synthesis is held apart perpetually. It is in this revolutionary space of ceaseless invention where I should like to theorize Cortázar's notion of "literature of exception" and the counter-myth it spawns. Once this theorization is complete, we will be in a position to return to the interrelation between Joyce and Cortázar to extricate it from the interpretive frame that places them within modernism.

The narrative dramatization of this double consciousness is best exemplified by Horacio Oliveira in Rayuela. Argentine by birth, Oliveira emigrates to Paris for reasons that are never clearly stated, and once there he becomes emotionally involved with a Uruguyan woman known as "la Maga." To a large extent, the dynamic between Oliveira

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<sup>9</sup>For a reading of Cortázar's narrative through the cultural politics of the New Left, see Santiago Colás, Postmodernity in Latin America, 21-75; as well as his "Inventing Autonomies: Meditations on Julio Cortázar and the Politics of Our Time."

and la Maga parallels that between Odysseus and the pre-rational, mythical forces that he finds during his voyage back to Ithaca (note that Circe was a “maga” or enchantress, and that her name in Spanish is frequently preceded by that word in the common expression “la maga Circe”). Oliveira’s hyperintellectual mind sharply contrasts with la Maga’s natural and untutored intuitiveness, which he interprets as the cure for his metaphysical tribulations: “Hay ríos metafísicos, ella los nada como esa golondrina está nadando en el aire, girando alucinada en torno al campanario. . . . Yo describo y defino y deseo esos ríos, ella los nada. Yo los busco, los encuentro, los miro desde el puente, ella los nada” [There are metaphysical rivers, she swims them just like that swallow is swimming in the air, spinning around the bell tower. . . . I describe and define and desire those rivers, she swims them. I search them, find them, and look at them from the bridge, she swims them] (R 234). From these lines, it seems obvious that Oliveira takes la Maga as the endpoint of the search which propels his thoughts throughout the novel. It is not by chance that the opening words of Rayuela are “¿Encontraré a la Maga? [Will he find la Maga?] (R 121). This search, like Odysseus’ voyage as read by Adorno-Horkheimer, stems from an original discursive duplicity that ought to be overcome by enabling one of the terms of such duplicity to control the other. Oliveira is painfully aware that there is something tragically wrong with the very structures of Western rationality that are supposed to determine his life. Referring to the Cartesian cogito, he affirms: “en mi caso el ergo de la frasecita no era tan ergo ni cosa parecida” [in my case, the ergo in the little phrase was not so ergo or anything like it] (R 135). To this rationality, he opposes a vague transcendental alternative which he designates with a variety of labels (“kibbutz of desire,” “paradise lost,” or the “mandala”) and identifies with la Maga. The obvious

difference between Oliveira's search and Odysseus' journey (as interpreted by Adorno-Horkheimer) lies in the fact that the former reverses the destination point of the later. If Odysseus strays from the corruptive allure of Circe, Oliveira--staging what might be interpreted as a dialectics in reverse--rushes into it with the intention of exposing and transcending the rationality that the Homeric myth valorizes. In either case, however, the dialectic framework is left intact as the double consciousness that it engenders is constantly perceived as an obstacle or intermediary phase prior to a revelatory moment of synthesis.

Contrary to what happens in modernist discourse, Cortázar's irony in Rayuela is not oriented towards the production of a representational space where the double consciousness provoked by the constitutional dialectics of modernity is aestheticized and so resolved on a symbolic level. Showing that by striving towards a transcendental "oneness" Horacio is simply duplicating the structures of thought that he tries to escape, Cortázar makes the powerful point that a true transcendence of rationality should rupture the closure that the sequence of thesis-antithesis-synthesis yields. Cortázar's ironic stance as regards Oliveira's grand metaphysical designs is perceived in multiple circumstantial details. Perhaps the most obvious one is the fact that la Maga's genuine and immediate experience of reality, which Oliveira takes as the horizon of his search, does not really stand as a static antithesis to Oliveira's rationality. Just as Oliveira strives to see through la Maga's eyes, she makes a concerted effort to acquire the kind of learning that Oliveira perceives as an obstacle to a fuller existence. As la Maga tells Oliveira: "Vos buscás algo que no sabés lo que es. Yo también y tampoco sé lo que es. Pero son dos cosas diferentes" [You look for something and you don't know what it is. I do too, and I don't

know what it is either. But they are two different things] (R 212). This crossing of intellectual destinies implies that the pristine space that Oliveira looks for and la Maga is supposed to embody is always already the site of the type of culture that he tries to overcome. The irony of this detail, if still deriving from the interplay between myth and rationality, exposes rather than supports the modernist transformation of myth into a supplement securing the self-transcendence of a reified and bankrupt rationality.

That there is not really a utopian “other” side beyond Oliveira’s alienating intellectual structures is further underscored by the irony involved in Cortázar’s division of the novel into two main parts: “Del lado de allá” [That Side] and “Del lado de acá” [This Side], corresponding respectively to the chapters about Oliveira’s time in Paris and to those narrating his return to and life in Buenos Aires. The division of the novel, like the intellectual interplay between Oliveira and la Maga, deceptively suggests a play of opposites between self and other, culture and nature, Europe and America. One of the most memorable passages in the novel, the climactic plank episode in chapter 41, provides a nuanced illustration of how these pairs of opposites do not stand in dialectical opposition, but are rather mirror reflections of each other. This chapter, the first that Cortázar drafted for the novel, invites a metaphorical interpretation of the circumstantial event that it narrates. The opening scene shows us Oliveira trying to straighten up bent nails using a hammer. The task, whose purpose is never explained, requires extreme care and skill, since striking the nail beyond what is necessary might bend it in the opposite direction and not only render the task useless, but also hurt Oliveira. That Oliveira ends up with his hands covered in blood and bruises prepares us for the message of the chapter

as a whole, that is, that Oliveira's philosophical pursuits end up simply reversing the metaphysical problems he seeks to solve and transcend.

Frustrated by his failure to straighten the nails, he decides to ask his friends and next-door neighbors, Manuel Traveler and his wife Talita, for some new nails (as well as some mate weed). Cortázar's characterization of Traveler and Talita is another indication that the duplicity that informs Oliveira's thinking is as much of a mirage as the synthetic unity that he pursues. Traveler is Oliveira's Doppelgänger and uncannily embodies all the aspects that Oliveira tries to evade (R 504-506). Oliveira, a contemporary avatar of Odysseus (albeit a frustrated one), returns from Paris to Buenos Aires and to Traveler, a man who has hardly ever left Argentina. He also embodies the tawdry and sedentary bourgeois mentality which Oliveira vehemently opposes but can never overcome: at forty, Traveler "seguía adherido a la calle Cachimayo, y el hecho de trabajar como gestor y un poco de todo en el circo 'Las Estrellas' no le daba la menor esperanza de recorrer los caminos del mundo more Barnum" [was still stuck in Cachimayo Street, and the fact that he worked as manager and as a little bit of everything at "Las Estrellas" circus frustrated his hopes to travel around the world like Barnum] (R 373). Oliveira sees him as an accomplished Odysseus that never needed to embark on a perilous journey to be the personification of "la rendición, de la vuelta a casa y al orden" [of surrender, of the return home and of the return to order] (R 503).

However, these differences actually constitute the measure of their profound similarities. As Oliveira cryptically puts it, "la diferencia entre Manú y yo es que somos casi iguales" [the difference between Manú and myself is that we are almost the same] (R 410). One important similarity relates to how they both fail to achieve their goals: just as



Traveler faces and eventually comes to grips with his frustration that he might never leave the Buenos Aires area, Oliveira becomes gradually and painfully aware that there might be no final destination for his spiritual journey, no metaphysical unity that would resolve the discontinuities of his thought: “A Oliveira le iba a doler siempre no poder hacerse ni siquiera una noción de esa unidad que otras veces llamaba centro” [It was always going to hurt Oliveira that he could not even get a notion of that unity that other times he would call center] (R 491). Thus, the conspicuous irony of Traveler’s name could also apply to the futility of Oliveira’s “search”: while Traveler’s name indicates the ironic distance between his goals and his actual condition and actions, Oliveira’s failed attempt to proceed toward a metaphysical unity in a dialectic fashion exposes the conflict between end and method. By encountering in Traveler the personification of the rationality that he tries to surpass, Oliveira also returns “home” not to find la Maga, as he had originally intended, but to the “order” that he recognizes (and despises) in his Doppelganger, and so meets a fate similar to that of the man who (as Borges wrote in the Afterword to El hacedor)

se propone la tarea de dibujar el mundo. A lo largo de los años puebla un espacio con imágenes de provincias, de reinos, de montañas, de bahías, de naves, de islas, de peces, de habitaciones, de instrumentos, de astros, de caballos y de personas. Poco antes de morir, descubre que ese paciente laberinto de líneas traza la imagen de su cara. (OC 2: 248)

[sets out to draw the world. Throughout the years, he inhabits a space with images of provinces, of kingdoms, of mountains, of bays, of ships, of islands, of fish, of room, of instruments, of stars, of horses and of people. Shortly before dying, he finds out that that patient labyrinth of lines outlines the lines of his face.]

The ironic implications of Oliveira's inability to transcend his rational condition are strengthened by the description of yet another attempt to move from one side to the other. Since the Travelers live right across Oliveira, and their windows face each other, Oliveira devises a complicated plan to avoid going down the stairs to the Travelers' apartment: he decides to build a bridge between the two facing windows using planks so that Talita could cross it and deliver the nails and mate. This episode can be taken as a scale reduction of Rayuela as a whole. In one of his drafts for the novel, Cortázar actually wrote that the scene is intended to symbolize "el paso de un mundo a otro" [the passage from one world to another], a comment followed by the annotation "BA [Buenos Aires] → Paris" (Cuaderno de bitácora 172, 173). In this particular episode, as well as throughout the Buenos Aires chapters, Talita doubles as la Maga. Oliveira sees in Talita what he saw in la Maga: an unmediated mythical recess than can cure his metaphysical ailments and help him with his "passage" from one side to the other. Oliveira proceeds dialectically, for he tries to extricate the mythical force represented by Talita from the reified rationality of Traveler in order to find a passageway toward a dealienated intellectual sphere. This co-option of the mythical space that la Maga-Talita are made to represent is the same formative strategy that Adorno-Horkheimer exposed as the origin of modernity and that modernist discourse aestheticized to preserve the representational powers of the Western mind. Unlike the modernist mythopoeia, however, Oliveira's effort to move beyond Western rationality proves as fruitless as his attempt to bridge the gap between the two windows with the planks.

Talita eventually fails to cross from one side to the other and goes back to Traveler, showing how Oliveira's aspirations to find an "elsewhere," a transcendental

“home,” trap him in an endless process of self-conscious repetitions of the structures he intends to destroy. She is not the escape route that Oliveira needs, but merely a replica of his alienating rationality. Like la Maga, she deceptively appears to be the solution to Oliveira’s existential dilemmas, but functions as just another, perhaps even more ironic, reminder of the inexistence of a metaphysical locus untouched by rationality. After all, she is first introduced as a “reader of encyclopedias” with an anthropological interest in “los pueblos nómadas y las culturas transhumantes” [nomadic tribes and itinerant cultures] (R 373), aspects which can be taken as a synecdoche of the self-imposed privilege of the Cartesian cogito to categorize the world. This categorizing drive is also perceived in her profession as a pharmacist, which involves organizing and labeling. It is Oliveira himself who, in one of his frequent moments of insight, reveals Talita’s true role in his relationship with Traveler and Oliveira: “Es un hecho que vos te sumás de alguna manera a nosotros dos [Traveler y Oliveira] para aumentar el parecido, y por lo tanto la diferencia” [It is a fact that that you add yourself to us [Traveler and Oliveira] in such a way that you accentuate the similarity, and therefore the difference] (R 411).

By continuously showing Oliveira’s failure to attain a non-dualistic form of being, Cortázar exposes the appropriative configuration of occidental thought, just as Adorno and Horkheimer do in Dialectic of Enlightenment. But Cortázar does not simply offer a critique of the constitutive “cunning” (to use Adorno and Horkheimer’s term) of modernity. He dramatizes through Oliveira’s search how that “cunning,” which permits Odysseus to establish rationality as norm, is not even a valid possibility, simply because the otherness of the mythical powers that it sets out to suppress are themselves a self-generated projection devoid of actual existence. Cortázar’s message is that there is no real

dialectic because there is no real antithesis to the thesis of rationality. Reconsidering such a central episode in Odysseus's voyage as that of the Sirens from the vantage point afforded by Cortázar's perspective on Western thought, one could argue that Odysseus could never have heard their song, a song which, incidentally, is undistinguishable from silence. For Cortázar that silence is absolute, just as the mythical power of the Sirens, which is supposedly neutralized by the "cunning" and self-restraint of bourgeois mentality (allegorized by Odysseus's chaining himself to the mast of his ship), is simply a wishful projection of such mentality. Odysseus's failure to hear the Sirens' song would symbolize the incapacity of the Western mind to move towards an elusive and imaginary "other side," a symbolic space that Rayuela constantly and teasingly evokes only to demonstrate its inexistence.

But if we assume that there is no "other side" beyond modernity, how can we speak of "double consciousness" in Cortázar's text? Through our discussion of Oliveira's frustrated search, we have already established that such "double consciousness" does not stem from the aesthetic synthesis of myth and rationality observed in "modernist mythopoeia," given that Cortázar presents the space of myth as a "utopia" in its most negative sense, that is, as a "non-space" that can be summoned neither as an antithesis to reason nor as its supplement. In a powerfully humbling gesture, Cortázar is placing Western thought face-to-face with its embarrassing contradictions, with the artificiality of its dialectical make-up. In this sense, the "double consciousness" that I recognize in Rayuela is an interruption of the self-effacing duality of consciousness that Hegel presented as the motor of the Western "Spirit." As Hegel puts it in Phenomenology of Spirit:

There exists for Self-Consciousness another self-consciousness; Self-Consciousness has come out from itself. This has the following double signification: Self-Consciousness has lost itself, since it finds itself as another being; thereby it has superseded the other, since it also does not view this other as a being, but sees itself in the other. Self-Consciousness must supersede this otherness (which is its own otherness). (50-51)

However, when a reciprocal acknowledgement of otherness is not received, this process of self-conscious transformation of the same is interrupted. It is this denial of otherness that allows Cortázar to both impede the Hegelian synthesis and to configure a place of enunciation from which to expose the constitutive contradictions of Western thought.

This place or locus of enunciation emerges precisely when what the West constructed as its “other” claims the right to speak and think in terms other than those imposed by the established structures of power. W. E. B. Du Bois expressed this moment of self-awareness in his famous formulation of the Afro-American “double consciousness”: “It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings” (2).<sup>10</sup>

Cortázar referred to a similar sensation when he discussed what he called the “sentimiento de no estar del todo” [feeling of not being all there], which he explained as an interstitial sense of dislocation in relation to “cualquiera de las estructuras, de las telas que arma la vida y en que somos a la vez araña y mosca” [any of the structures, of the webs that life spins and in which we are both the spider and the fly] (Vuelta al día 21).

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<sup>10</sup>Sandra Adell claims in Double Consciousness, Double Bind that this formulation was actually influenced by Hegel’s ideas in The Phenomenology of Spirit, showing that Du Bois was a student at Berlin when a “Hegelian revival” took place (12).

According to Cortázar, this restlessness is the driving principle of his fiction and his life, both of which, he argues, can be placed under “el signo de excentricidad” [the sign of eccentricity]. But if Du Bois’s “double consciousness” derives from his racial difference and from the vindication of humanity for African-Americans, we can argue that Cortázar’s “sentimiento” relates to his condition as a Spanish American intellectual and his effort to guarantee legitimate cultural agency for Spanish-Americans that does not involve assimilation to Europe.<sup>11</sup> In both cases, however, Du Bois and Cortázar refuse to ignore their sense of dislocation (or eccentricity) to fully assimilate to the ebb and flow of dialectical thinking. Their act of resistance consists in the affirmation of a true “otherness” that can never become the object of desire of the hegemonic culture, an “otherness” that could also be taken as the starting point to think otherwise.

Argentine philosopher Enrique Dussel has theorized this otherness from a Latin American perspective in a series of influential publications. Dussel, drawing on the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas, attempts to articulate a standpoint for radical alterity with his proposal of a “philosophy of liberation” for Latin American. Dussel’s philosophical program shares central aspects with the ideological implications of Cortázar’s writing. In Filosofía de la liberación (The Philosophy of Liberation), first published fourteen years after Rayuela, Dussel argued for the relevance of location in the global economy of philosophical production and consumption. He contends that it is from the peripheral locations occupied by those that only consume rather than produce legitimate knowledge that an emancipating dissociation from Western rationality can be

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<sup>11</sup>In recent years, the term “double consciousness” has been increasingly used within the field of Latin American Studies as a critique of transculturation and to signify a locus of enunciation emerging from the colonial difference. See Alberto Moreiras, “Hybridity and Double Consciousness,” Walter Mignolo “La colonialidad a lo largo y a lo ancho: el hemisferio occidental en el horizonte colonial de la modernidad,” and Doris Sommer, “A Vindication of Double Consciousness.”

effected: “Distant thinkers, those who had a perspective of the center from the periphery. . . these are the ones who have a clear mind for pondering reality” (4). This perspective is not to be conceived as deriving from a rift within the imperialist scope of reason--that is, as a “mythical,” pre- rational consciousness destined to assimilate to reason. Instead, for Dussel, a fully liberated Latin American thought stems from “non-Being, nothingness, otherness, exteriority, the mystery of no-sense” (14). This space of non-Being enables a position or locus from which the unmasking of the aporias of Western rationality is made possible.

But how does one speak from this locus? What sort of speech is articulated from this space of exteriority? Of course, as Oliveira’s experience has taught us, this exteriority cannot be reached through dialectical means. Nor can Oliveira, an Argentine intellectual like Cortázar and Dussel, claim that exteriority on ontological grounds (like Du Bois as an Afro-American could), but only in spatial terms. It is the double consciousness of not being what one is supposed to be--or, the “sentimiento de no estar del todo,” to use Cortázar’s apposite expression--that creates the “fracture” or “rupture” that Cortázar associated with his idea of the “literature of exception.” Cortázar’s central message might be that the only successful way in which Oliveira can achieve true “otherness” is by heeding his implicit advice to position himself in “This Side” (Buenos Aires) to look at “That Side” (Paris). It is this perspective--suggested by the titles of the two main sections of Rayuela--that can give Oliveira “a clear mind for pondering reality” (Dussel) and invent alternatives to received ontological and epistemological norms.

Significantly, it is in the part called “De otros lados (Capítulos prescindibles)” [Of other places (Dispensable chapters)] that we find illuminating proposals for alternative

ways of thinking that escape the dualistic trap. Mainly composed of quotes and excerpts from a wide variety of sources, this section contains brief notes by Oliveira's favorite novelist, Morelli, which could be read as a theoretical elaboration of the main philosophical issues of the other two sections. In Chapter 71, Morelli addresses the driving concerns of Oliveira's search in theoretical terms. His opening question seems, to a large degree, to be addressed to Oliveira: "¿Qué es en el fondo esa historia de encontrar un reino milenario, un edén, un otro mundo?" [What is, after all, that story about finding a millenary kingdom, a paradise, an other world?]. Morelli's position (like Dussel's) is that this world does not exist, that is, it does not have a pre-established ontological shape. "Ese mundo no existe, hay que crearlo como el fénix" [That world does not exist, it must be created like the phoenix]. With this, he suggests that a radical undermining of the habits and stale structures of rationality and language primarily depends on ceasing to think in teleological or linear terms. An exteriority from the linear narrative that shapes the discourse of modernity cannot be reached "[h]asta no quitarle al tiempo su látigo de historia, hasta no acabar con la hinchazón de tantos hasta" [until we take from time his whip of history, until we finish with the swelling of so many until] (R 540-541). Morelli instructs us that this radical act cannot be carried out unless we stop thinking about history in terms of a univocal progression from a set beginning to a set end: "Error de postular un tiempo histórico absoluto: Hay tiempos diferentes aunque paralelos" [The error of postulating an absolute historical time: there are different, albeit parallel, times] (R 659).

Morelli's proposal opens up an epistemological and historical space where a multiplicity of vital models can coexist, where humankind is not forced to walk down the



same path predetermined by modernity. The fundamental difference between this space of exteriority and the linear pattern informing modernity might be understood in metaphorical terms if we contrast the homecoming journey of Odysseus to Morelli's compelling image of the phoenix. While the former signifies a univocal progression toward a closed order, the latter stands for a contestatory alternative to this order. Dussel's notion of the "analectic," which he opposes to the dialectic of Western thought, can be taken as an appropriate philosophical expression of Morelli's phoenix-like approach. The "analectic" moment occurs when the radical "other" constitutes itself as "other," and not as a mere prosthesis to be later assimilated by the sameness of rationality and the historical development of the West. To put it in Cortázar's evocative terms, the "analectic" signifies the moment when one breaks free from "el cangrejo de lo idéntico" [the crab of identity] to acquire the "simultaneidad porosa" [simultaneous porosity] of the sponge (Vuelta al día 7).

Morelli relates the porosity of his a-theological perception of history to the central concept of figura: "Digamos que el mundo es una figura, hay que leerla. Por leerla entendamos generarla" [Let's say that the world is a figure: we have to read it. By reading it we should understand generating it]. The term "figura" has been traditionally associated with allegorical interpretation, frequently of biblical texts. In his classic definition of concept, Eric Auerbach explained that figura involves "the interpretation of one worldly event through another; the first signifies the second, the second fulfils the first. Both remain historical events; yet both, looked at in this way, have something provisional and incomplete about them; they point to one another and both point to something in the future, something still to come, which will be the actual, real, and

definitive event” (58). What Morelli seems to take from this concept is not the promise of an “actual, real, and definitive event,” but the phoenix-like provisionality and incompleteness of the relationship among the elements forming a figura. The sort of writing and reading that these figuras would inspire departs from any form of putative transcendence, and so acts as a strong corrective against Oliveira’s thirst for unity and, on a larger scale, against the grand narratives of history and modernity as imagined by the Western mind. Indeed, if we reconsider the relationship between Traveler and Oliveira as the embodiment of one of the central figuras in the text, it could be suggested that they complement each other in a non-dialectical manner, each marking differential aspects that both complement and distance the other, and so perpetuates their tension without ever reaching an “actual, real, and definitive” moment of conciliation or stasis. In this light, the Oliveira-Traveler compound (like Oliveira-la Maga and Oliveira-Talita) displaces habitual assumptions about psychological coherence and invites us to read with an awareness and respect for a residual otherness which can never be fully comprehended from a univocal perspective good for all; that is, it invites us to read “from the interstices,” as Cortázar would put it.<sup>12</sup>

I would like to elaborate on this practice of reading “from the interstices” to further theorize on the differences between Cortázar’s narrative method and the aesthetics of modernism. The process of endless “interstitial” creation suggested by Morelli’s conception of figura might be seen as integrally connected to the “constantly inventive

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<sup>12</sup>In “Del sentimiento de no estar del todo,” Cortázar writes: “Escribo por falencia, por descolocación; y como escribo desde un intersticio, estoy siempre invitando a que otros busquen los suyos y miren por ellos el jardín donde los árboles tienen frutos que son, por supuesto, piedras preciosas” [I write because of lack, because of dislocation; and since I write from an interstice, I am always inviting others to look for their own and to look at the garden where the trees bear fruits that are, of course, precious stones] (La vuelta al día 21)

revolution” that Cortázar viewed as the driving principle of a liberated literary practice.<sup>13</sup> The mechanics of the Cortazarian figura and the “inventive revolution” it produces are at extreme odds with the textual procedure of the “modernist mythopoeia” (Bell). The modernist text, we should recall at this point, still relied on the dualism of modernity and believed that the universality of the representational capacity of the Western I/eye could be still preserved by co-opting the irrational powers of myth. In what could be called a typically homeopathic operation, myth is placed at the core of representation so as to simultaneously acknowledge and palliate its constitutive faultlines. By contrast, Cortázar seeks to interrupt that operation and to create a space where other meanings could be articulated. If the modernists approached modernity as myth, Cortázar strives to enable the possibility of counter-myths that open up the field of representation for the diverse subjectivities that have “a perspective of the center from the periphery” (Dussel). To put it in simpler terms: the modernists react to the critical realization that modernity is after all a myth from within modernity; Cortázar does the same thing, but from its exteriority: from the differential locus of enunciation afforded by “double consciousness” in the Du Boisian sense.

In order to further elucidate this distinction between critique from the inside and critique from the outside, let me take a brief detour from our discussion of Cortázar to look at Roland Barthes’s reflections on myth. In Mythologies, Barthes wrote that “myth” can be understood as the mechanism of making things look “falsely obvious.” More specifically, a “myth” for Barthes is a historical system of signification that presents itself

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<sup>13</sup>Cortázar has often commented on the importance of the concept of “figura” for his own writing. For Cortázar on “figura” see Picón-Garfield, Cortázar por Cortázar, 36. Cortázar’s use of “figura” in his narrative has been amply studied. On the function of “figura” in Rayuela, see Daniel González, Las figuras de Julio Cortázar, 238-248.

as universally legitimate, thus transforming “History” into “Nature.” As such, the configuration of a myth involves a radical act of interpretation that eradicates all potential disputes about its legitimacy. Myth is indeed based on “a robbery by colonization” (132). This general statement becomes especially apposite when it refers to the myth of modernity. Barthes adds that there are three different ways to read or receive a myth, which we could take as an equal number of ways of relating to modernity. The first way relies on a full acceptance of the legitimacy of the myth as a structure from which to look at the world. This is the type of approach adopted by “the producer of myths.” The second way stems from the realization that there is nothing “natural” about the way in which a given myth organizes meaning. This is the type of approach adopted by the “mythologist,” that is, he who “deciphers the myth [and] understands the distortion” but does not question the truth of the myth. Finally, the third type of focusing “is dynamic, it consumes the myth according to the very ends built into its structure: the reader lives the myth as a story at once true and unreal” (128). This hermeneutical position is the place that Barthes reserves for himself as a historical reader of myths. It is also the place of anyone who, like the modernist writer, critiques the myth of modernity from the inside, understands its falsity, but somehow salvages it as a viable representational framework. Barthes’s formulation of the third approach describes the same epistemological mechanism--indeed the same “myth”--signified by Bell’s conception of “modernist mythopoeia” and the “double consciousness” that nurtures it.

Barthes’s three approaches leave the limits of the myth in question intact: whether convinced of its authenticity or aware of its falsity, the positions above still remain within the semantic and ideological realm created by the myth. Barthes’s example to illustrate

his three approaches might be useful to consider a fourth one that could be linked to Cortázar's "double consciousness." Barthes's example is a magazine picture of a black French soldier saluting the French flag. The first approach is taken by the journalist who presents this image as a particular embodiment of the abstract concept "French imperialism." The second approach is taken by the critical observer who realizes that the saluting soldier is an "alibi of coloniality" (129) and that the myth of imperialism is based on an act of repression and appropriation. The third approach is taken by the critical thinker who theorizes that act of repression and understands that imperialism itself is an imposture or a myth. In all three cases, the voice that we fail to hear is that of the Black French soldier. To be sure, the soldier is fully entitled to take any of the approaches above. But he also has a fourth option, namely become aware of his otherness and articulating the double consciousness that, as Du Bois put it, stems from the "sense of always looking at oneself through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity." This fourth approach abandons the limits of the myth of modernity and situates itself in a position "external" to it.

As our discussion of Rayuela suggests, Cortázar occupies this position external to the myth of modernity, and so his narrative aesthetics should be differentiated from that of modernism. Modernist mythopoeia can hardly be credited with the potential to transcend the limits of the myth of modernity. Barthes himself eschews the possibility of ever "vanquish[ing] the myth from the inside: for the very effort one makes in order to escape its stronghold becomes in its turn the prey of myth." But he intimates a possible way out of this circularity, which offers us a possibility of considering the form that the fourth approach to myth might take: "Truth to tell, the best way against myth is perhaps

to mythify it in its turn, and to produce an artificial myth: and this reconstructed myth will in fact be a mythology.” Barthes adds that the power of this artificial myth is that it gives the myth it “mythifies” “its basis as a naivety which is looked at” (135-136). These considerations might bring to mind Homi Bhabha’s idea of the “returned gaze” of the colonized as an act of subversion of the imperial subject. However, while this act is intransitive in the sense that it limits itself to pointing out the inconsistencies and limits of the dominant culture, Barthes’s “artificial myth” is transitive, given that it produces “counter-mythical” meaning that stands as a system of signification in its own right.<sup>14</sup>

Once again, focusing on Barthes’s examples will advance my argument, finally bringing it to address the connection that originally prompted our discussion: that between Joyce and Cortázar. According to Barthes, Flaubert’s Bouvard et Pécuchet constituted the best example of what he had theorized as a counter-myth or “second-degree” myth, that is, a myth that questions the legitimacy of a prevailing and preceding myth and superimposes on it a further layer of signification derived though independent from it. In his view, the ludicrous intellectual pursuits of Flaubert’s eccentric characters are not only a demystification of Western culture. This demystification itself becomes a new myth, a new form to organize reality that belies the universality of the original myth in a more radical manner than a mere deconstructive critique could instigate. For Barthes, “the rhetoric of Bouvard et Pécuchet becomes the form of the new system” (136), not the deconstruction of the old one. In less technical, though no less sophisticated terms,

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<sup>14</sup>Due to this autonomous productivity, I want to differentiate what I mean by “counter-myth” from Foucault’s idea of “heteropia.” A heteropic space or “counter-site” is, according to Foucault’s definition, “a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted” (“Of Other Spaces” 24). Heteropias, unlike counter-myths, remain within the bounds of the discourse that creates them. The source of the counter-myth is extra-discursive: it does not stem from the coordinates of a normative discourse from which it receives its ultimate meaning, but from a differential locus of enunciation beyond those coordinates.

Borges had anticipated Barthes's insights in his note, "Vindicación de Bouvard et Pécuchet," where he argued that the "idiocy" of Flaubert's characters should be considered as separate from the ideas they ridicule: "Inferir de los percances de estos payasos la vanidad de las religiones, de las ciencias y de las artes, no es otra cosa que un sofisma insolente o que una falacia grosera. Los fracasos de Pécuchet no comportan un fracaso de Newton" [To infer from the trials of these clowns the vanity of religions, the sciences, and the arts, is nothing else than an insolent sophism or a gross fallacy. Pécuchet's failures do not involve Newton's failure] (OC 1: 275). While this statement could be easily read as a vindication of Western knowledge and an indictment of the fictional characters and their distortions of this knowledge, the title that Borges chooses for his article suggests otherwise.

Indeed, Borges might have seen in the actions of Flaubert's characters a dramatization of the irreverence that he associated with the South Americans (along with the Jews and the Irish) in "El escritor argentino y la tradición." The irreverence of Bouvard et Pécuchet, who copied thousands of treatises on a wide variety of disciplines without understanding them, is comparable to Borges's peripheral position with respect to Western culture, or to what Dussel called a "perspective of the center from the periphery." Taking this connection to its logical conclusion, one could argue that the counter-mythical productivity derived from these characters' copying activities signifies, for Borges (as it would for Dussel and Cortázar), an epistemological frame liberated, though derived, from the myth of Western culture (modernity); a space that belies the universality of this culture, but which is not restricted to simply critiquing this lack of universal legitimacy.

This exterior, counter-mythical space is the frame that I would propose for a reassessment of the literary ties between Joyce and Cortázar. Borges himself saw behind the distortions of Flaubert's characters the shape of the author's anti-realistic transformations of the novel form, transformations that Joyce's Ulysses epitomized: "¿No es el Ulises, con sus planos y horarios y precisiones, la espléndida agonía de un género?" [Isn't Ulysses, with its maps and schedules and precisions the splendid agony of a genre?] (OC 1: 277). If, as Borges subtly implies here, we should take the meticulous construction of Ulysses as an exercise analogous to Flaubert's generic transformations and, by extension, to Bouvard and Pécuchet's painstaking and distorting reproduction of Western knowledge, then we could argue that the value of Joyce's book resides in its imprecision, in the "counter-mythical" excess it generates when confronted with the orders it distorts and reshapes. In "El arte narrativo y la magia," the Argentine writer advanced a similar argument, recognizing in Ulysses the best example of a narrative causality that, like magic, escapes a rigid, univocal, and linear concatenation of causes and effects.<sup>15</sup> This causality involves an imaginative, even superstitious productivity capable of offering alternatives to "logical" organizations of reality. These alternatives are themselves orders or "myths," to use Barthes's term, which are also structured precisely according to a system of "vigilancias, ecos y afinidades" [vigilances, echoes, and affinities] among a given set of narrative episodes and details. In a way that recalls the inception of imaginary country of Tlön in his famous short story, Borges's proposal of a magical order in narrative constitutes an epistemological space which, like Dussel's

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<sup>15</sup>Borges's short story "El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan" might be read as a narrative dramatization of the ideas presented in "El arte narrativo y la magia." Interestingly, César A. Salgado in "Barroco Joyce" has persuasively connected the "magical" book at the center of this narration to Joyce's Ulysses.



exteriority and Joyce's Ulysses as read by Borges, becomes "un orbe autónomo de corroboraciones, de presagios, de monumentos" [an autonomous orb of corroborations, of presages, of monuments] (OC 1: 244).

This productive autonomy closely overlaps with Morelli's notion of figura. In one of the short sketches included in "De otros lados" [Of Other Places], Oliveira achieves a state of mind through which he imagines a world that, in a figural fashion, escapes from the constraints of a prearranged order of things. He perceived "un universo cambiante, lleno de maravilloso azar, un cielo elástico, un sol que de pronto falta o se queda fijo o cambia de forma. Ansié la dispersión de las duras constelaciones, esa sucia propaganda luminosa del Trust Divino Relojero" [a changing universe, full of marvelous chance, an elastic sky, a sun that suddenly disappears, or stands still, or changes its shape. I longed for the dispersion of the hard constellations, of that filthy and luminous propaganda of the Divine Watchmaker Trust] (R 532). It is the mechanical and univocal logic of the "watchmaker" (mythmaker?), of the Cartesian cogito allied with a globalizing capitalism and a universal religion true for all which, as so many faces of the myth of Western modernity, constitutes the common epistemological ground from which the following alternatives depart: a) the fourth way to look at myth emerging from "double-consciousness"; b) the structural possibility of a "counter-myth" that Barthes suggested and which he illustrated with Flaubert's Bouvard et Pécuchet; c) the "magical" narrative organization that Borges recognized in the "orbe autónomo" [autonomous orb] of Joyce's Ulysses; d) Morelli's figura.

With this insight, we can now retrace our steps and reconsider the relationship between James Joyce and Julio Cortázar, as well as the place of Rayuela within the

development of Spanish American narrative. Cortázar's reading of Joyce as the model for Morelli's roman comique converges with the Argentine writer's ideas of a "constantly inventive revolution" for literature and with Morelli's conception of figura. In light of our analysis, this convergence does not take place against the background of Euro-American modernism, but rather in a counter-mythical space that finds various projections in Du Bois's "double consciousness," Borges's "magical" narrative order, and Morelli's figura as so many articulations of what Dussel theorized as an "exteriority" from the myth of modernity.

Despite the fact that this space is non-historical in the sense that it remains as an epistemological possibility open to a plurality of voices and political and cultural projects, it does enable a fully-historicized reconsideration of the relationship between James Joyce and Cortázar, in particular, and of "Joycism" (Martin) in Spanish America, in general. Of course, there exists the possibility of comparing Ulysses and Rayuela on the basis of stylistic similarities or circumstantial details and claiming that both works represent the type of narrative widely associated with modernism and characterized by spatial form, multiple temporalities, and linguistic experimentation. But this naïve formalistic exercise would fail to acknowledge the geopolitical positioning of these works with respect to modernity. I have chosen instead to investigate the ties between these two novels from the perspective afforded by the counter-mythical exteriority discussed above.

This is the type of analysis that Roberto Fernández Retamar suggested when he compared both novels with regard to Oliveira's and Stephen Dedalus's responses to the cultural landscape of Argentina in the 1950s and 1960s and Ireland at the turn of the

twentieth century, respectively. Commenting on Oliveira's existential predicament, Fernández Retamar writes: "En cierta forma ese ahogo, esa opacidad de la sociedad argentina actual, y de casi todas las sociedades de la América Latina, se expresan en Oliveira en forma similar a aquel ahogo de la sociedad irlandesa que se manifiesta en Esteban" [In a way, the stifling opacity of contemporary Argentine society (and of almost all societies in Latin America) is expressed in Oliveira in a way similar to that oppression of Irish society manifested by Stephen] (Simo et al. 33). This claim suggests a geopolitical argument that grows out of concern for the local specificities of particular historical experiences and configurations. From this perspective, Ulysses and Rayuela are analogous not only because they share a certain number of formal characteristics, but also because they constitute aesthetic responses to parallel historical determinations.

While separated by more than forty years, Ulysses and Rayuela were conceived and written when major cultural and political transformations were taking place in Ireland and Spanish America. These transformations occurred against a common background of cultural and political decolonization. 1922, the year Ulysses was published in Paris, was also the year when the independent Irish Free State was created, an event that many saw as the culmination of an intense process of cultural and political decolonization against British colonial domination whose origins could be traced back to the first stirrings of the Gaelic League in 1843. This decolonizing struggle prefigured the massive wave of Third World liberation movements in the 1950s and the 1960s. Before its eventual turn to the left, the utopian longings of the Cuban Revolution stemmed from the same ideological source as the anti-imperialistic struggles in the former British and French colonies. But those utopian longings were soon to be reabsorbed by the ideology of institutional

representation in Cuba as they were in Ireland forty years before. Joyce and Cortázar stood in opposition to this ideological re-absorption that took the shape of narrow-minded nationalisms or strong political party lines. It is not by chance that Cortázar recognized in nationalist ideologies the same metaphorical pattern that Adorno and Horkheimer used to illustrate the dialectics of modernity: Odysseus' journey. In "Acerca de la situación del intelectual latinoamericano," an open letter to Roberto Fernández Retamar, Cortázar compared the nationalist to an Odysseus that returns to the safety of home. Joyce took a similar stance when he made his Jewish Odysseus, Leopold Bloom, debunk the one-sided bigotry of the nationalist "Cyclops" in Chapter 15 of Ulysses.

Joyce and Cortázar set their aesthetic agendas against these post-revolutionary reinscriptions and replications of the hegemonic culture. Their involvement with the decolonizing cause did not derive from the mimetic representation of specific social conditions that a compromised perception of literature in a more traditional Marxist sense would expect. Instead, what charges their writing with political energy is its counter-mythical value, its capacity to continuously disorient the potential Odysseus searching for comfortable homelands of stable order--another term for which could be what Joyce called "paralysis." Cortázar addressed on several occasions the issue of the place of literature within revolutionary struggles, arguing that in his creative work he was striving for a "revolution in literature," not for "literature in the revolution."<sup>16</sup> In "Politics and the Intellectual in Latin America," he expressed this position in unambiguous terms:

I understand the reproach of hermeticism which I have received through the years; it always comes from those who demand a step backward in creativity in the name of a supposed step forward in the political struggle. It is not in this way that we will contribute to

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<sup>16</sup>See his "Literatura en la revolution y revolución en la literatura," a response to socialist-oriented critic Oscar Collazos.

the final liberation of our countries. (44)

Indeed, Cortázar's idea of revolution never aligned itself with unified party orthodoxies or nationalistic programs. As he showed us through Oliveira's experience, this sort of unity will just mirror the power structures against which one is rebelling.

From this perspective, the way to connect the revolutionary energies embedded in Ulysses and Rayuela to their respective historical backgrounds of political and cultural decolonization is not by focusing on content or on a superficial catalogue of formal innovations. That could lead to the wrong conclusion that they are representative of an aesthetic escapism that tries to remain above or beyond historical conditions. Rather, the common rhetorical ground that enables a historicized comparison between these two texts is provided by the type of textual dynamics leading to a figural interpretation of reality and history; an interpretation that prevents the radical force of the counter-myth from being accommodated to established discursive paradigms. Fritz Senn has identified in Ulysses a process of textual organization analogous to Morelli's figura, which he designated with the label "dynamics of corrective unrest" and described with the pun "righting as writing." "Righting as writing," he argues, is "a convenient, compact, synecdochal illustration of a process that characterizes Ulysses," adding that the "book itself tends toward ameliorative diversity. Ulysses, as an event in words, seems to try to right itself through more words, as though it wanted to undo the damages of all previous presentations" (65).

The "righting as writing" that Senn observes in Ulysses might be interpreted in terms of the counter-mythical productivity that we have associated with Morelli's figura in Rayuela. In Ulysses, the word "righting" is frequently associated with Leopold Bloom.

From his first appearance in the novel in Chapter 4, Bloom is characterized by his obsession with “righting” things. Just a few examples should illustrate the point. As he prepares breakfast while his wife Molly is still in bed, “[k]idneys were on his mind as he moved about the kitchen softly, righting her breakfast things” (U 4.006-7; my emphasis). He continues preparing Molly’s breakfast tray, making sure everything is in order: “Another slice of bread and butter: three, four: right. She didn’t like her plate full. Right” (U 4.011-12). Then, his mind turns to whether his wife’s Italian pronunciation is correct: “Voglio e non vorrei. Wonder if she pronounces that right: voglio” (U 4.327-8). In the next chapter, as he observes a Catholic mass, he tellingly applies the term “right” to the ceremony: “[p]ious fraud but quite right. . . Queer the whole atmosphere of the. Quite right. Perfectly right that is” (U 5.393).<sup>17</sup> It is not for nothing, then, that Bloom is at a certain point called a “conscious reactor against the void of incertitude” (U 17.2210-1). Just as the edifice of Catholic religion secures a stable conception of the world, Bloom wants to get things right.

But as happened with Oliveira, Bloom’s righting process never comes to a standstill. Ulysses as a textual artifact frustrates Bloom’s righting obsessions as much as Rayuela frustrated Oliveira’s metaphysical aspirations. By continuously trying to “right itself through more words,” the text of Ulysses resists a definitive “righting,” thus confronting Bloom’s organizing inclinations with a text that continuously deflates all attempts to impose final orders. To a large degree, the kind of figural interpretation of Ulysses that I propose is prefigured in the text by Bloom’s attempts to make sense of the

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<sup>17</sup>Additional examples include: “Your hat is a little crushed, Mr Bloom said, pointing. . . It’s all right now, Martin Cunningham said” (U 6.1018-24); “Must get those old glasses of mine set right” (U 8.554).

reality of 16 June 1904. At a certain point during his ramblings around Dublin, Bloom thinks of two people--John Howard Parnell and George Russell--just before running into them. This strange case of coincidence leads him to conclude that “[c]oming events cast their shadow before” (U 8.526), a conclusion that also holds true for Ulysses.<sup>18</sup> Just one example among many others: in “Circe,” Bloom overhears a tale about someone defecating in a plasterer’s bucket of porter and then mutters “[c]oincidence too” (U 15.593), implicating that he is the person they are talking about, precisely at a point in the episode where he was about to confess to such a “crime” to Mrs. Breen. This infiltration of coincidences into the narrative alters our normal expectations about plot, as the constant possibility of potential “shadows” cast before us unsettles the “logical” concatenation of cause and effect. Readers aware of this possibility are forced to change their reading strategy, to abandon the comfort of shared sense given by the representation of a Dublin day in 1904, and to engage in a frantic search for underlying connections lurking under the surface of the circumstantial events narrated.

In “Nausicaa,” Bloom realizes that his watch has stopped at four thirty--the time he reckons sexual intercourse between Molly and Boylan is likely to have been consummated--and wonders if there is “any magnetic influence between the person because that was about the time he” (U 13.984-5). The fact that there is no empirical way to prove a connection between Bloom’s broken watch and Molly’s adultery teases Bloom’s “righting” compulsion. At the same time, the alternative “logic” of coincidence liberates the text from the uniformity of a unique time and space and opens it up to

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<sup>18</sup>On the role of coincidence and chance in Ulysses from a postmodernist perspective, see Derek Attridge, “The Postmodernity of Joyce: Chance, Coincidence, and the Reader,” in Joyce Effects; Thomas Rice has connected coincidence to the new physics in Joyce, Chaos, and Complexity.

multiple possible readings. This is what Cortázar would call reading “from the interstices,” a sort of reading that keeps colliding with a residue of meaning that cannot be assimilated to the predictability of plot. In this light, one should break free from expectations of sequentiality when approaching Ulysses, and stay tuned to a type of order that Borges associated with superstition, magic, and James Joyce’s novel itself.<sup>19</sup>

This subversion of the superficial causality of plot might be easily read in postmodern or poststructuralist terms, arguing that Joyce’s novel is in fact an infinite web of textual elements which, in the absence of transcendental signifiers, abandon all hierarchical pretensions.<sup>20</sup> This interpretation of the text often embraces “contingency” and “arbitrariness” as an inescapable state of affairs, inviting the reader to rejoice “in the patterns of repetition thrown up by the chaos of history” (Attridge, Joyce Effects 124). However, reading history as a textual tissue ruled by arbitrariness and repetition carries with it the shocking implication that radical change is simply not possible. The indeterminacies of postmodern theory can surely act as a corrective to the essentialist reinscriptions of imperial reason that nationalist ideologies perform and to which Joyce was so opposed. However, they also dovetail the crisis of modernity with the claims for liberation from the periphery. As Seamus Deane has clearly put it, to move from “the

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<sup>19</sup>Speaking of the fantastic in his own work, Cortázar writes: “Se ha dicho que en mis relatos lo fantástico se desgaja de los “real” o se inserta en él, y que ese brusco y casi siempre inesperado desajuste entre un satisfactorio horizonte razonable y la irrupción de lo insólito es lo que les da eficacia como materia literaria. Pero entonces, ¿qué importa que en esos cuentos se narre sin solución de continuidad una acción capaz de seducir al lector, si lo que subliminalmente lo seduce no es la unidad del proceso narrativo sino la disrupción plena de apariencia unívoca?” [It has been argued that in my short stories the fantastic splinters from the “real” or is inserted in it, and that the abrupt, and almost always unsuspected irruption of the unusual within a satisfactorily reasonable horizon is what endows those stories with efficacy in literary terms. But, why should it be important that those short stories stage a seductive action without solution or continuity, if what seduces subliminally is not the unity of the narrative process, but a full disruption of univocal appearance]. To this he adds that Rayuela is the “filosofía de mis cuentos” [the philosophy of my short stories] (La vuelta al día 25)

<sup>20</sup>For a poststructuralist analysis of Ulysses, see the by now classic study by Colin MacCabe, James Joyce and the Revolution of the Word.



search for a legitimating mode of nationalism and origin” to “the postmodernist simulacrum of pluralism . . . is surely to pass from one kind of colonizing experience into another” (“Introduction” 18-19). Thus, instead of arguing with Derek Attridge and others that meaning in Ulysses “is never grounded or guaranteed; but, as the product of the complexity of our cultural systems, it is always available, utilizable” (124), I would contend that meaning in Ulysses, like meaning in Rayuela, is interrupted, letting the “shadow” of alternative beginnings (or counter-myths) puncture and disorient the superficial stability of a linear plot as well as the inescapable confines of textuality.

If we heed Morelli’s advice, we should generate the multiple readings that Ulysses and Rayuela afford through an active process of invention, not by letting the ebb and flow of textuality take us adrift. In both novels, we are left with scattered pieces that can give rise to endless patterns of signification, indeed to endless figuras. This dynamic functions according to what Cortázar called a “constantly inventive revolution,” a revolution that never settles for a pattern good for all and forever. As he declared, this undoing of representational models also constitutes “an opening or a fracture and also, in a sense, a hope”; or, to put it differently, a radical point of exteriority from which to generate counter-myths. It is from this space that Ulysses and Rayuela propose their alternative forms of representation, their figural poetics, and their decolonizing politics. It is also by creating such a space that these texts abandon the “mainstream of Western literature” and become part of a “literature of exception,” to use Cortázar’s apposite formula, that is, a literature that does not thrive on establishing coherence, but on its constant and alert interruption. This is a literature that de-naturalizes literature as a myth and abandons all pretensions to become an institutionalized space of representation where

political and cultural discontinuities can be aesthetized and solved, never to be undone (as happened with modernist mythopoeia). Instead, it is a literature that creates and organizes meaning according to patterns that cannot be controlled by or reduced to the dialectic of Enlightenment.

## THE AESTHETICS OF JOYCEAN NARRATIVE IN SPANISH AMERICA

Y así, a la enteca visión del hombre propuesta por  
cierto humanismo periclitado y por su correspondiente literatura  
(visión según la cual el ser humano es en esencia masculino,  
blanco, burgués, occidental. . ., siendo lo otro la excepción),  
la literatura latinoamericana contribuye a sobreponer la visión  
enormemente más rica que estamos construyendo en todo el planeta,  
y según la cual el ser humano esencial es también mujer, negro, amarillo,  
mestizo, obrero y campesino, asiático, latinoamericano y africano.  
Roberto Fernández Retamar, “Para el perfil definitivo del hombre”

## 1

Borges’s short story “El Aleph” suggests two possible types of aesthetic apprehension: one static, the other kinetic. Both of them attempt to capture the Aleph, a miniscule luminous point where all spaces and all times converge in a haphazard fashion. On the one hand, the poetaster Carlos Argentino Danieri is confident that he can shape the immensity of the Aleph into the well-wrought verses of a poem which he entitles La Tierra (The Earth). On the other hand, Borges the narrator underscores the impossibility of translating into words the limitless immensity of the Aleph, providing instead a chaotic and fast-paced enumeration of the images he perceives. Danieri’s formalism is “static”; Borges’s jumbled enumeration, “kinetic.” The statism of La Tierra is, of course, the target of a multitiered critique. Borges is openly criticizing the regionalism and narrow nationalism of the realistic novelas de la tierra through his sarcastic presentation of Danieri’s poem. But Danieri’s totalizing design and his penchant for formal and linguistic rigor seem to characterize him as a prototypically modernist author as well. His

painstaking search for the mot juste and his conscious borrowings from the masterpieces of the Western literary tradition bring him close to the by now legendary linguistic virtuosity of James Joyce and his “mythical method.” Similarly, Danieri’s exhaustive and prosaic description of the planet in La Tierra might be taken as a reductio ad absurdum of Joyce’s totalizing attempt to encapsulate the minutiae of a single day in the pages of Ulysses.<sup>1</sup>

But contrary to what these similarities might suggest, there is reason to believe that for Borges, Joyce’s narrative was closer to his chaotic enumeration than to Danieri’s ludicrous poem. In another of his well-known short stories, “Funes el memorioso,” Borges stresses the incapacity of language to capture and order reality. Funes, the protagonist, possesses an inordinate memory, which keeps him from forgetting, and hence from organizing his perceptions meaningfully. The stream of stimuli that incessantly plague Funes’s mind may be taken as an avatar of the limitless inclusiveness of the Aleph. Interestingly, Borges associated his prodigious character, together with his boundless memory, with Joyce’s Ulysses. In “Fragmento sobre Joyce,” a short article published in Sur in 1941, Borges drafted the basic plot and characters of “Funes el memorioso,” which first appeared a year later. Here he affirmed that to read Ulysses would require no less than a memory like Funes’s. With this remark, he underscores the novel’s chaotic aspects and dismisses as imperceptible and insignificant “tics” the Homeric parallels that had generated so much scholarly attention. The multiform variety of styles that the novel features, he argued, frustrated any attempts to claim a “classical discipline” for its construction: the narrative of Ulysses transcends all systematic efforts

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<sup>1</sup>Suzanne Jill Levine seems to agree with this interpretation, as she has suggested that Borges’s Aleph “supersedes and mocks” Joyce’s totalizing attempt in Ulysses (“Infinite Affinities” 349).

to reduce it to a set of Homeric parallels (just as Funes's memory frustrates all systems of ordering reality). In Funes's mind, the Aleph, and Ulysses, the structures of "order" so celebrated by those who saw in Ulysses the paradigm of modernist form dissolve into a whirlwind of disparate details and incomprehensible exceptions.

The fragmentary enumeration of what Borges sees in the Aleph may be taken as a paradigmatic expression of the "dissociation of sensibility," since it stems from the inherent mismatch between the act of feeling (seeing) and the thinking and verbalizing process (speaking). However, rather than presenting it as a reason for despair (as Eliot would), Borges presents this conspicuously "kinetic" enumeration as an alternative (and liberating) way of "seeing" things. Unlike Danieri, who feels compelled to resort to traditional forms and classical texts to render the Aleph, Borges reiterates that what he writes is simply what he "sees": "Vi el populoso mar, vi el alba y la tarde, vi las muchedumbres de América. . . ." [I saw the populous sea, I saw the dawn and the sunset, I saw the multitudes of America. . . .] (OC 1: 666). By claiming the right to "see" things anew, without the aid of tradition, Borges proposes an aesthetic apprehension where the significance of bodily sensations is not dictated by an aprioristic set of cognitive norms. Borges's enumeration of the Aleph, together with Funes's memory and Ulysses (as read by Borges), de-naturalizes the ties between a given way of saying things and the perception of reality, and so it marks the beginning of an alternative sort of narrative, one in which a direct, unmediated apprehension of the world is at odds with a normative tradition of writing. As Julio Ortega has affirmed, in order to "remake literature, to make a new literature, language must be used in another way," adding that "the postulation of another language emblematically represents Borges's work, which is a rereading of

tradition through criticism” (Poetics of Change 15). To this apposite remark I would add that such a language largely gains its innovative power and its critical dimension from the dissociation of thinking and feeling--of reason and sensation--that the Aleph and Funes’s memory enact.

The implicit critique of modernist aesthetics posed by Borges’s enumeration can serve us both as a point of departure and as a model for our reassessment of the association between what Gerald Martin has called the “Ulyssean” novel in Spanish America and Euro-American modernism. Already in his 1925 review of Ulysses, Borges relates, quite fittingly, Joyce’s book to an apprehension of reality characterized by the mismatch between the “abstract operations of the soul” and sensory perception:

En las páginas del Ulises bulle con alborotos de picadero la realidad total. No la mediocre realidad de quienes sólo advierten en el mundo las abstraídas operaciones del alma. . . ni esa otra realidad que entra por los sentidos y en que conviven nuestra carne y la acera, la luna y el aljibe. La dualidad de la existencia está en él: esa inquietación ontológica que no se asombra meramente de ser, sino de ser en este mundo preciso, donde hay zaguanes y palabras y naipes y escrituras eléctricas en la limpidez de las noches. (5)

[A total reality teems tumultuously in the pages of Ulysses. Not the mediocre reality of those who notice in the world only the abstract operations of the soul. . . nor that other reality that reaches us through the senses and where our flesh coexists with the sidewalk, the moon, and the well. The duality of existence inhabits this book: that ontological unrest that is amazed not only at being, but at being in this precise world where one can find entranceways and words and playing cards and electrical writing in the clarity of the nights.]

The chaotic enumeration closing Borges’s observation strongly suggests that, contrary to what happens in Kantian aesthetics, the two “halves” of reality coexist but fail to cohere into a whole in the narrative of Ulysses, just as they do in Borges’s own writing. As

Sylvia Molloy has shown, the recurrent enumerations in Borges's fiction--which she illustrates primarily through the Aleph and Funes's memory--are series of heterogeneous elements that consistently fail to crystallize into a coherent image. By disrupting all attempts at closure and all efforts to organize materials according to a satisfactory syntactic causality, the openness of these enumerations points towards the limits of those systems of representation that presume an all-inclusive and universal value (Signs of Borges 112-129). Elaborating on Borges's reflections on Joyce's Ulysses, I would like to recognize in the "kinetic" openness that characterizes Borges's enumeration the common epistemic territory where the aesthetics of James Joyce and those Spanish American authors frequently labeled "Joycean" converge. As should become apparent from my argument, this openness does not simply involve a process of textual deconstruction that would perpetuate the value of "literature" as a colonial form of institutionalized discourse (cf. Beverley). Instead, my contention here is that the questioning of totalizing regimes of aesthetic representation (notably modernist aesthetics) can be consistently linked to a decolonizing articulation of place and the body that resists the globalizing and homogenizing effects of modernity. Thus, I will expand my argument from the previous two chapters to make the larger point that the Spanish American "Joycism" (Martin) prefigured by Borges, epitomized by Cortázar, and exemplified by Leopoldo Marechal, José Lezama Lima, Guillermo Cabrera Infante, and Fernando del Paso, might be brought under the same decolonizing roof if we locate the common rhetorical ground enabling our comparison in the radical transformations of the discourse of aesthetics found in the prose of these authors. To do so, I will follow Borges in elucidating the ways in which they articulate their sense of "being in this precise world," that is, a particularized locus of

aesthetic enunciation that exceeds the “universal” scope of the “abstract operations” of Western consciousness.

## 2

If we agree with Borges that every writer creates his own precursors, then we should search for the origins of Cortázar’s Joycism among the several hundred pages of Leopoldo Marechal’s Adán Buenosayres (1948),<sup>2</sup> a book that might indeed be read as a transition between “El Aleph” and Rayuela. Borges’s short story is like a miniature version of Marechal’s massive book, says Argentine novelist Ricardo Piglia (“Notas al margen” xvi), for both texts attempt to encompass the universe from an Argentine perspective. And Marechal’s book prefigures in precise ways the main features of Cortázar’s major novel. Both novels revolve around the process of intellectual maturation of their protagonists and address a wide variety of philosophical and cultural issues, ranging from the significance of erotic love to questions of nationalism and cultural identity. Adán Buenosayres charts in ambitious detail the rambles of the eponymous hero through the streets of Buenos Aires over a forty-eight hour period and displays a range of cultural reference and a daring mixing of genres unprecedented in Spanish American letters. However, due to Marechal’s Peronist affiliation, his work was the victim of a notorious critical silencing for decades and only gained critical attention retrospectively. This silencing was suddenly broken after Rayuela made a seismic impact on Spanish American literature and its antecedents began to be diligently sought. It was then that a

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<sup>2</sup> Adán Buenosayres is one of the first “Joycean” or “Ulyssean” novels published in Spanish America. The many parallelisms of themes, styles and content between Ulysses and Adán have been studied by Ambrose Gordon, “Dublin and Buenos Aires, Joyce and Marechal,” Robin Fiddian, “James Joyce and Spanish-American Fiction” (30-31), and Javier de Navascués, “Marechal frente a Joyce y Cortázar.” For Marechal’s comments on the links between his novel and Joyce’s, see “Las claves de Adán Buenosayres.” Published a year before Adán, Agustín Yáñez’s Al filo del agua employs some “Joycean” techniques (such as the frustration of linear plot) to portray the stagnant life of a small village in pre-Revolutionary Mexico.



forgotten review of Adán Buenosayres written by Julio Cortázar in 1949 was exhumed as evidence of the literary paternity of Rayuela. Cortázar's review was one of the few laudatory voices against a background of critical condemnation.<sup>3</sup>

Shortly after the novel appeared, one of the editors of Sur, Eduardo González Lanuza, published a review in that magazine that recalls in its main points H. G. Wells' 1916 review of Joyce's A Portrait. González Lanuza, a former literary fellow of Marechal's, scathingly attacked Adán for its blatant obscenity and its Joycean features. It was his opinion that these aspects, along with the markedly Catholic beliefs that frame the protagonist's spiritual search, turned the novel into a grotesque Ulysses that might have been written by a priest and "splattered with manure."<sup>4</sup> Like Joyce's novel, Adán broke the rules of literary decorum, exposing aspects of reality that should remain outside of the realm of artistic representation. With this critical attitude, González Lanuza endorses the "taboos" that, a year earlier, Uslar Pietri had recognized as the target of Joyce's innovative prose. For Uslar, shattering those taboos was a requisite to "unlearn" the limitations of Western culture; for González Lanuza, they are a set of values to be upheld for the sake of literary propriety.

In 1949, Emir Rodríguez Monegal expanded and complemented González Lanuza's views in a piece entitled "Adán Buenosayres: Una novela infernal" and published in Marcha. Here he criticizes the palpable discrepancy between the explicitly religious intent of the work--what Rodríguez Monegal ironically calls its "angelic tone"--

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<sup>3</sup>Adolfo Prieto, "Los dos mundos de Adán Buenosayres" and Graciela de Sola, "La novela de Leopoldo Marechal: Adán Buenosayres" are longer studies that also assessed Marechal's novel positively.

<sup>4</sup>An illustrative example of these scatological aspects is found in Section II of Book II, where high class ladies converse about feces and constipation (306-307). Book VII, which narrates Adán's descent into the "City of Cacodelphia" also abounds in naturalistic details.

and the scatological details of some of its passages. But his main criticism is perhaps that the novel lacks “unity”: the multiplicity of circumstantial details filling the book fails to harden into a static and ordered image of Buenos Aires. Rather than capturing the “true and definitive face of the city,” the novel leaves the reader with “a myriad of unconnected snapshots, of counterfeit and transitory effigies” [inconexas instantáneas, efigies aparenciales y transitorias] (924). Ulysses is here summoned as a point of reference too. But instead of being a source of obscenity and depravation, it stands as the model of ordered totality to which Adán aspires without successful results. Marechal only copies the external details of Joyce’s masterpiece without achieving its integral vision, a vision that derives from the attempt to “cercar la realidad desde todos sus ángulos para agotar su significado y su escandalosa riqueza” [encompass reality from all its angles in order to exhaust its meaning and its scandalous richness] (925). These terms echo Rodríguez Monegal’s characterization of the modernist novel of Woolf and Kafka in “Aspectos de la novela del siglo XX” (1948): it is argued that the novelist “debe inventar estructuras, multiplicar los ángulos, encerrar en la malla ubicua de la narración todo un universo” [needs to invent not only significant actions or absorbing conflicts; he should invent structures, multiply angles, capture in the ubiquitous net of the narration a whole universe] (96). This critical positioning not only relates this critic’s opinions to modernism and Kant’s formalism. It also brings him close to Carlos Argentino Danieri and his plan to “versificar la redondez de la tierra” [versify the roundness of the world] (181). For Danieri, as for Rodríguez Monegal, literary value is linked to the ability to enclose the elusive circumstances of reality into stable (static) forms.

In a postscript added to his review in 1969, six years after the publication of Rayuela, Rodríguez Monegal qualifies some of his previous opinions, arguing that in 1949 he did not assess Adán for what it really was, namely an Argentine novel. He adds that it was Julio Cortázar, in his 1948 review, who perceived its “perdurable values.” In fact, Cortázar’s text stages an almost complete reversal of Rodríguez Monegal’s and González Lanuza’s opinions. Whereas these two critics censured Adán for its unfiltered realism and its lack of structural unity, Cortázar perceives in those aspects the beginning of a truly Argentine narrative, of which Rayuela might be its triumphal culmination. Carlos Fuentes once quipped that if the Mexicans descended from the Aztecs, the Argentines descended from ships. It is precisely this lack of a distinct Argentine cultural identity that, for Cortázar, Adán began to remedy. In the opening chapter, Marechal’s alter ego, L. M., lays out the plan for the book, carefully emphasizing its unity of purpose: the documents he sets out to transcribe recount the protagonist’s search for spiritual salvation.<sup>5</sup> Like Rodríguez Monegal and González Lanuza, Cortázar stresses the “deep contradiction” between this purpose and the chaotic materials that constitute the novel. But instead of identifying that contradiction as a problem, he finds in Adán a precursor of his Horacio Oliveira. Marechal’s hero, like the protagonist of Rayuela, is uprooted from “perfection,” “unity” and “eso que llaman cielo” [that which they call heaven] (880). “Heaven” here can be related to the last square in the game of hopscotch, which in Cortázar’s novel receives that name and metaphorically refers to the elusive spiritual and philosophical horizon of Oliveira’s search. This inability to reach “heaven” derives from the persistent “mismatch” or “displacement” (“desajuste”) that affects the Argentine “en todos los planos mentales, morales y del sentimiento” [on all levels:

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<sup>5</sup>In “Las claves de Adán Buenosayres,” Marechal stressed the spiritual consistency of his novel.

mental, moral, sentimental] (880). Rather than the folklorism and local color that characterize several parts of Adán, it is this “desajuste” that can best perform the task of articulating a distinctive Argentine voice. If this “desajuste”--this lack of “order” and “unity”--has produced the works of Borges, Güiraldes, and Mallea, why fight it, Cortázar wonders. Owing to this valorization of the mismatch between reality and perception, between feeling and thinking, Cortázar’s argument runs counter to González Lanuza and Rodríguez Monegal, while it intersects with Borges’s “Alephian” language and aesthetics. Cortázar’s “desajuste,” like Borges’s self-consciously chaotic enumeration of the Aleph, evokes a state of constant movement (kinesis) that nonetheless succeeds in conveying the differential positioning of the peripheral intellectual with regard to the mental and linguistic structures that he has inherited from Europe.

For Cortázar, Adán’s “desajuste” refers not only to the displaced status of the Argentine, but also to the “angustia occidental contemporánea” [contemporary Western angst] (880). That “angst” sparked an atmosphere of existentialist pessimism in Europe, a deeply-felt realization that the once-deemed universal values of Western culture were then on the verge of dissolution. But what in Europe is a reason for misery and desolation, in Argentina became the promise of a new beginning: an “enérgico empujón hacia lo de veras nuestro” [energetic push toward what is truly ours] (883). As is well-known, that angst started permeating European philosophy and literature at the turn of the twentieth century. In “Situación de la novela,” an article published in Cuadernos Americanos in 1950, Cortázar traced the changes that this new European sensibility had inflicted on contemporary novelistic discourse. The modern novel is primarily characterized by a deep questioning of the “linguistic conquest” of the realistic novel, of

its totalizing representational capacities. The type of novel that predominated in Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries deployed “técnicas racionales para expresar y traducir los sentimientos” [rational techniques to express and translate feelings] (230), while the modern novel questions the validity of these techniques to render reality by either looking for new ways of expression to resume the rapport between feelings and language (e.g., Virginia Woolf) or by pessimistically sounding the death knell for such a rapport (e.g., Sartre). A third option is found in Joyce’s Ulysses, which for the Argentine writer stands as the prototypical example of the search for “a new metaphysics” that would transcend the naïve rationalism of the previous novel with the creation of new representational models. According to Cortázar’s scheme, Adán is definitely a modern novel whose characteristic self-questioning derives from “la empresa sinfónica que es Ulysses” [the symphonic enterprise of Ulysses] (233).

But does Cortázar consider this “new metaphysics” radiating from Joyce’s novel an internal mutation of what he calls “el espíritu de Manuel Kant” [the spirit of Immanuel Kant] (231)? Or would Ulysses mark, like Adán, a fresh start, the beginning of something radically new? In Chapter 4 we argued for the second option. But a cursory perusal of Cortázar’s personal correspondence during these years can cast some new light on the links between the inception of an Argentine narrative tradition (originating in Adán Buenosayres and culminating with Rayuela) and Joycean aesthetics. In 1959, nine years after he wrote “Situación de la novela,” and four years before the publication of Rayuela, he wrote a letter to his friend, Jean Barnabé, in which he explained the aesthetic and philosophical principles that should inform a novel--and which he would later apply to and theoretically elaborate in Rayuela. Cortázar invited Barnabé to think of Ulysses in

order to understand his ideas on the novel: “Piense en algunos capítulos de Ulysses. ¿Cómo escribir una novela cuando primero habría que des-escribirse, des-aprenderse, partir ‘a neuf’, desde cero, en una condición pre-adamita, por decirlo así?” [Think of some chapters in Ulysses. How can one write a novel when everything should be first unwritten and un-learned; when one needs to start from scratch, in a pre-Adamic condition, as it were?] (Cartas 1:396). Notice the resemblance in tone and content between these lines and Usler Pietri’s views on Ulysses (see chapter 2). In both cases, the novel is celebrated for its subversion of Western rationality and normative aesthetic patterns, not for its restitutive potential (as Eliot and Pound would have it). And this subversion becomes, like the “desajuste” of Adán, a space where new alternatives to that rationality can emerge.

### 3

The terms that Cortázar uses to refer to Ulysses and his projected Rayuela recur in his discussion of another Joycean novel, José Lezama Lima’s Paradiso (1966). In “Para llegar a Lezama Lima” (1967), the Argentine novelist claims that Paradiso is testimony to Lezama’s distance or difference from European culture. Unlike European authors, who owe strong allegiance to their cultural backgrounds, Lezama “amanece con su alegría de preadamita. . . y no se siente culpable de ninguna tradición directa” [wakes up with this pre-Adamic joy. . . and doesn’t feel guilty of any direct tradition]. This freedom from the constraints of Western tradition are patent in Paradiso, whose style and message might make us wonder, Cortázar argues, how it is possible to dismiss so thoroughly “los tabúes del saber” [the taboos of knowing] (La vuelta al día 141). At the same time, Paradiso is

grouped with such “Ulyssean” works as Robert Musil’s The Man Without Qualities and Hermann Broch’s The Death of Virgil. However, Lezama’s work does not constitute, to use Cortázar’s felicitous phrase, “un eslabón de la cadena” [a link in the chain] of Western literary tradition.<sup>6</sup>

As happened with Adán Buenosayres, it is not the local color that distances Paradiso from the European tradition. The main thematic thread of the novel is the genealogy of José Cemí’s family on the maternal and paternal sides. The narration of the development of this Cuban family tree is characterized by a profuse amount of circumstantial detail depicting the Cuba of the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. But for Cortázar, it is the lack of structural unity, and, most importantly, the complex redefinition of the relations between language and reality that really signal Lezama’s radical inventiveness in Paradiso. This redefinition relies on what Lezama called the “image,” one of the most central themes in the novel. The “image” is an elusive term that broadly refers to the poetic inspiration and the verbalization of feeling as an escape route from a universal and impersonal conception of historical time. The image reunites disparate sensations, trivial incidents, and casual memories to configure personal histories that evade the surveillance of pre-established ontological or epistemological norms. In many ways, the “image” recalls the Joycean concept of “epiphany,” which Stephen Daedalus defined in Stephen Hero as “a sudden spiritual manifestation, whether in the vulgarity of speech or of gesture or in a memorable phrase of the mind itself” (188). The “spiritual manifestation” that the configuration of the image

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<sup>6</sup>As indicated in chapter 1, Lezama also compared Cortázar’s Rayuela to Joyce’s Ulysses, even though he believed that the former did not have the radical potential to “habitar una nueva isla, una nueva región” [inhabit a new island, a new region] (Simo, Cinco miradas 47). In a later piece, “Cortázar y el comienzo de la otra novela,” he qualifies his previous opinions on Rayuela, arguing that this novel indeed inaugurates an “other” type of novelistic discourse whose only valid point of reference is Ulysses.

provokes becomes a rupture with the dead weight of tradition and marks the beginning of a new way of expression.<sup>7</sup>

During the course of his literary and philosophical conversations with his friends Foción and Fronesís, Cemí progressively realizes that he is destined to transcend the stifling influence of tradition through his liberated poetic imagination. In a passage that summarizes the aesthetic theories exposed in these conversations, the narrator writes that the three friends

Sabían que el conformismo en la expresión y en las ideas tomaba en el mundo contemporáneo innumerables variantes y disfraces, pues exigía del intelectual la servidumbre, el mecanismo de un absoluto causal, para que abandonase su posición verdaderamente heroica de ser, como en las grandes épocas, creador de valores, de formas, el saludador de lo viviente creador y acusador de lo amortajado en bloques de hielo, que todavía osa fluir en el río de lo temporal. (499)

[Knew that conformism in expression and ideas took in the contemporary world countless variants and disguises, since it demanded from the intellectual servitude, the mechanism of an absolute causality, to make him abandon his truly heroic position of being, as in the great eras, creator of values, of forms, greeter of the living creating force and accuser of what is shrouded in blocks of ice, which still dares to flow in the river of temporality.]

What Lezama demands from the writer is the rearticulation of the relations between language and the world in new and stimulating ways. These relations need to be fluid, engaged in an incessant “avanzar retrocediendo y retroceder avanzando” [receding advance and advancing recession] (499), in order to generate a poetic space that expands the expressive and epistemological possibilities handed down by the Western tradition.

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<sup>7</sup>On the Lezamian concept of “image,” see Emilio Bejel, *José Lezama Lima: Poet of the Image* and Raymond Souza, *The Poetic Fiction of José Lezama Lima*; on the relation between Joyce’s “epiphany” and “image,” see Gustavo Pellón, *José Lezama Lima’s Joyful Vision*, chapter 4.



One of the fragments that Cortázar selected to offer a panoramic view of Paradiso may illustrate this generative process of poetic inventiveness. The fragment narrates how Cemí observes some objects in the window of an antiquarian and focuses on some in particular, which then are isolated and elevated over the others, thus becoming centers of reference: “esa pieza que se adelantaba era un punto que lograba una infinita corriente de analogía” [that piece that came forward was a point that gained an infinite current of analogy] (530). Later, he takes two of the objects that stand out in such a way to his study and contemplates them in order to gain insights into the nature of aesthetic perception. He discovers that when the objects are placed in a different context, the chaotic fluidity of the window of the antiquarian is arrested. Cemí reflects that the perceptual changes associated with the different acts of observation open up a temporal dimension that stems from individual perception. This cognitive space-time continuum is what Lezama-Cemí calls the “gnostic space,” a sphere that mediates between human perception and a higher sense of reality to generate a poetic world of “images.”

Cemí’s aesthetic theories, like Stephen Dedalus’ in A Portrait, place great emphasis on stasis or, to use Lezama’s term, “fijeza” [fixity]. In his collection of poems La fijeza (1949), Lezama elaborates on this poetic concept, which, like Stephen-Aquinas’s integritas, involves the isolation of an object from the flow of perceptions and experiences for its aesthetic appreciation. Drawing on Thomistic scholasticism, Stephen distinguishes three stages in the process of aesthetic perception in A Portrait: integritas, or the apprehension of the object as one whole; consonantia, or the apprehension of the organic relations among the component parts of that object; and quidditas, or the “whatness” of a thing. This last stage is, Stephen Dedalus argues, the “instant wherein

that supreme quality of beauty the clear radiance of the esthetic image, is apprehended luminously by the mind which has been arrested by its wholeness and fascinated by its harmony in the luminous silent stasis of esthetic pleasure” (213). Stephen, like Kant and Eliot, identifies the formal and static harmony of aesthetic “wholes” as the cipher of beauty. This formal approach, with its exclusive attention to structural relations and to the stages of apprehension, secures consensus among peoples with different cultural and historical backgrounds, and so creates a transhistorical aesthetic sphere with universal validity: “The Greek, the Turk, the Chinese, the Copt, the Hottentot, said Stephen, all admire a different type of female beauty. . . . though the same object might not seem beautiful to all people, all people who admire a beautiful object find in it certain relations which satisfy and coincide with the states of all esthetic apprehension” (A Portrait 208-209). Stephen’s views on art largely correspond to the classicism of Eliot’s modernist aesthetics: the severance of art and life, the formalistic concern with creating harmonic and systematic wholes, and the universalistic pretensions of those views situate Stephen within the Enlightened and aestheticist tradition that informed Eliot’s theories.

César A. Salgado has argued that “the prominence of the notion of stasis in the aesthetic theory of A Portrait is an important influence and component in the evolution of the central topos of fijeza in Lezama’s system” (73). As noted, “stasis” recurs in both Cemí’s exercises of aesthetic apprehension and in Stephen’s theory. However, it is important to stress that the poetic systems of Joyce and Lezama converge on this concept negatively. That is to say, these two authors do not rely on “stasis” or “fijeza” to configure a transindividual aesthetic formalism that transcends cultural differences. One would be missing Joyce’s point about aesthetics if Stephen were taken as a straight

mouthpiece of the author's ideas.<sup>8</sup> In fact, the contrast between Stephen's views and Joyce's creation is the source of much tension and irony.<sup>9</sup> Stephen's artistic notions are consistently subverted in Joyce's narration. Indeed, Stephen's formalism is constantly undercut by urges of sexual desire, hunger, and other sensory perceptions. Real events are ever-present in the narrative, acting as a constant ironic reminder that Stephen's idealism can never soar above the actuality of the external world. An illustrative example of this sort of irony is found in Chapter 5. When Stephen comes to a crucial point in the exposition of his aesthetic theory, his rarefied musings get interrupted by the "harsh roar of jangled and rattling metal" (313) of a truck carrying iron and by Lynch's curses about the incident. This contrast between the demands of the circumstantial world and Stephen's hyperintellectual consciousness is also a central aspect of Ulysses. In Chapter 3, "Proteus," Stephen walks along Sandymount Beach trying to make sense of the changeability of nature. In order to organize his perceptions, he claims that the sand under his feet is "language" that the tide has silted on the shore. Similarly, when he hears the rustling of the waves, he is compelled to interpret it as "wavespeech" (U 3.457). His medieval slant of mind also tries to transform the fullness of experience into a system of emblems and symbols with allegorical meaning. When he sees a dog, he turns it into a

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<sup>8</sup>The relationship of the author to his character in A Portrait has attracted considerable scholarly attention. While authors such as Harry Levin defended an identification between Joyce and Stephen (see James Joyce: A Critical Introduction), others such as Maurice Beebe ("Joyce and Stephen Dedalus: The Problem of Autobiography") argued against such an identification. On this relationship as regards Stephen's aesthetic theory, see A. D. Hope, "The Esthetic Theory of James Joyce," where it is claimed that this theory can be attributed to Joyce himself. While this contention might hold true when discussing the aesthetic reflections of a young Joyce, it begins to lose strength when faced with Joyce's mature critical views and literary creation. See Jacques Aubert, The Aesthetics of James Joyce for the progression of Joyce's aesthetic thought from a Hegelian conception of art to a complex questioning of aesthetic formalism.

<sup>9</sup>Joyce's ironic stance with regard to Stephen Dedalus was first articulated by Wayne Booth in "The Problem of Distance in A Portrait of the Artist," The Rhetoric of Fiction (322-36). For a recent consideration of Joyce's use of irony, see Tim Conley, Joyce's Mistakes: Problems of Intention, Irony and Interpretation.

heraldic emblem. Ironically, however, this dog keeps changing forms in Stephen's mind, as he envisions it as a hare, a bear, a buck, and a wolf. Despite Stephen's commitment to reading the "signatures of all things" (U 3.002), nature proves conspicuously elusive of intellectual orders.

Among other narrative aspects, this subversion of the formalism that informed modernist aesthetics has led critic Weldon Thornton to claim that far from being modernist texts, A Portrait and Ulysses are testimony to Joyce's "antimodernism."<sup>10</sup> Thornton reads Joyce's subversion of Stephen's ideas as an extended ironic attack against modernist aesthetics. However, his perceptive reassessment of Joyce's response to modernism becomes somewhat precarious when he tries to find a theoretical framework that would justify his reading. Thornton is careful not to confuse Joyce's "anti-modernism" with deconstruction or postmodernism avant la lettre. But he tries to reconcile the anti-essentialism of Joyce's narrative with a markedly humanistic agenda that still believes in abstract universal values. While he insists that Joyce handles modernist notions of self and art "ironically," he also claims that in doing so, the Irish author invokes "such traditional ideas as the continuity of history and the unity of the self and an array of traditional values such as charity and openness to experience, and [criticizes] xenophobia, mawkish sentimentality, scientific objectivity, scholarly abstrusities, etc." (22).

This awkward conflation of ironic perspective and universalistic designs might be resolved if we read Joyce's ironies from a decolonizing perspective. This perspective, like deconstruction, demands the questioning of Stephen's enlightened ideas. As a

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<sup>10</sup>See Thornton, "Authorial Omniscience and Cultural Psyche: The Antimodernism of Joyce's Ulysses" and The Antimodernism of Joyce's "A Portrait of the Artist".

compelling manifestation of decolonizing aesthetics, Joycean irony keeps us oscillating endlessly in our readings of the text, of the social fabric of Irish cultural politics, and of the universe. But irony for Joyce does not construct a superordinate sphere that smoothes over social, cultural, and political fissures, as it does in modernist aesthetics. Rather, it emerges as a sophisticated strategy to come to grips with the painful contradictions and split consciousness of the decolonizing writer. Irony, like Borges's enumeration in "El Aleph," opens up a radical perspective that permits the elaboration of alternatives to normative discourses (an exteriority from them) without embracing pure relativism in an unproblematic way. Joyce's differential position with regard to the Western tradition makes him keenly aware of its lack of universal legitimacy. But he also realizes that a deconstruction of this legitimacy does not amount to escaping its epistemological grip. As Stephen claims, "there is no such thing as free thinking inasmuch as all thinking must be bound by its own laws" (A Portrait 187). So Thornton's perceptive analysis of Joyce's ironic subversion of the "stasis" of modernist aesthetics should be accompanied by attention to Joyce's complementary ironic perspective on the perils of unproblematic anti-essentialisms.

One can draw similar conclusions from the connection between "fijeza" and Lezama's ideas about wider cultural and aesthetic issues. As Salgado has aptly noted, in "Paradiso there is more consistency between the protagonist's speculations and the aesthetic praxis of the novel" than there is in A Portrait or Ulysses (From Modernism 74). But as happens in Joyce, "stasis" for Lezama does not sustain a universalistic formalism like Stephen's, Eliot's, or Kant's. For the Cuban poet, aesthetic "stasis" or "fijeza" is a moment previous to the configuration of the image which, as we indicated above,

generates an expressive space that escapes the normative limits of Western rationality and history. In his collection of essays La expresión americana (1957), Lezama explicitly associates the “image” with the cultural specificity of the American continent. While Western rationality gives rise to a teleological historicism, the “image” configures “imaginary eras” (“eras imaginarias”).<sup>11</sup> Just as individuals can construct their own “gnostic spaces,” cultures can produce “imaginary eras” that mark the difference between a given tradition and a specific way of relating to that tradition. In this sense, American “criollo” culture, while largely deriving from Western culture, can still generate a distinct “imaginary era.” Within this context, Lezama identifies in the aesthetics of the Spanish American Baroque the crystallization of the artistic and imaginative expression of the American sensibility. Both in this baroque aesthetics and in Cemí’s meditations, the “image” does not result in a transcultural formalism, but in a specific cultural determination. The cultural specificity that the image elucidates is, for Lezama, a movement of “counterconquest” (“contraconquista”). In Lezama’s words, “podemos decir que entre nosotros el barroco fue una arte de la contraconquista” [we can say that, among us, the baroque was an art of the counterconquest] (La expresión americana 80).

The Baroque “counterconquest” that derives from the American “image” represents, like Joyce’s ironic “antimodernism,” a decolonizing strategy, for it embodies

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<sup>11</sup>Lezama Lima openly reacted against Hegelian historicism and its familiar European exceptionalism. To the teleological and organic development of history dictated by the European “Spirit” that Hegel postulated in Lectures on the Philosophy of World History, Lezama advocated a new type of historical causality directed by the poetic imagination and deriving from the “gnostic space.” In addition, Lezama opposes the American “imaginary era” to Hegel’s familiar remark that America remains underdeveloped and childish, both physically and spiritually. For Lezama’s explicit attack on Hegelian historicism, see, for instance, La expresión, 73-74. On Lezama’s discussion of culture and history in La expresión americana, see José María Bernáldez, “La expresión americana de Lezama Lima”; Julio Ortega, “La expresión americana: una teoría de la cultura”; Emilio Bejel, “Cultura y filosofía de la historia (Spengler, Carpentier, Lezama Lima)”; and Gustavo Pérez Firmat’s “The Strut of the Centipede: José Lezama Lima and New World Exceptionalism.”

a point of resistance to the undisputed authority of Western culture. Lezama's "Neobaroque" is far from being a Caribbean transposition of European modernism or a celebration of dehumanized form, as it was for Ortega y Gasset and the Spanish poets of the Generation of 27. Lezama clearly separates the European and the American Baroques, arguing that the former lacks the "plutonismo" of the latter. By "plutonismo" he means a "primordial fire" that breaks apart cultural fragments and then reunifies them into new combinations (La expresión 80). But rather than configuring a static unity, the artistic object resulting from those regrouped fragments remains in constant tension or, we might add, "kinesis." With the reappropriation and redeployment of the Baroque forms of the colonizer, the colonized redefines his position within the inherited culture. Lezama's aesthetic considerations thus become connected with the broader context of americanismo and cultural decolonization that characterized the 1940s, the 1950s, and the 1960s and that had been a cultural invariant in Spanish American thought ever since Uruguayan critic José Enrique Rodó published Ariel in 1900.

On closer scrutiny, José Cemí's aesthetic theories are ultimately related to a broader interest in cultural self-determination and decolonization, not to Stephen's or Eliot's modernist views. The American "era imaginaria" that Lezama documents in La expresión americana is a sustained effort to articulate the differences between the cultures of Europe and America in aesthetic terms. In this sense, the use of the cultural legacy of the West that the Baroque counterconquest necessitates clashes with the formalist classicism of T. S. Eliot. In Lezama's words, the British poet was not interested in "la búsqueda de nuevos mitos, pues él es un crítico pesimista de la era crepuscular" [the search for new myths, since he is a pessimist critique of the crepuscular era] (La

expresión 57). Referring to “Ulysses, Myth and Order,” the author of Paradiso explicitly distances himself from Eliot’s “mythical method,” arguing that he is not interested in the recovery of the values of the past, but in the creation of new realities. For an American “counterconquest” or cultural decolonization to materialize “todo tendrá que ser reconstruido, invencionado de nuevo, y los viejos mitos nos ofrecerán sus conjuros y sus enigmas con un rostro desconocido” [everything will have to be rebuilt, invented anew, and the old myths will offer their incantations and enigmas with an unrecognizable face] (La expresión 58).

It is no coincidence that Lezama’s Joyce is far from being the neoclassical architect of “Ulysses, Order and Myth” and Gilbert’s James Joyce’s “Ulysses”. Lezama alludes to the perplexity of the critics that faced a “realismo que creaba su propia realidad” [a realism that created its own reality] when confronted with Joyce’s prose. Instead of submitting the fluidity of contemporary life to the molds of the past, Joyce’s “realism” stems from an unprecedented artistic position “no precisada por referencias anteriores” [unannounced by previous references]. It is Lezama’s opinion that Joyce’s work crystallizes “una nueva forma de manifestación del hombre en su lucha con la forma” [a new form of manifestation of man in his fight with form] (La expresión 160). It is obvious that Lezama recognizes in Joyce’s narrative the same creative potential that he ascribed to the “image” and the Spanish American Baroque. Like Uslar Pietri and Cortázar, Joyce for Lezama is far from being a champion of Western culture and its universal values. In his necrology of Joyce, “Muerte de Joyce” (1941), the Cuban author discouraged a reading of Ulysses focused on its technical experimentation, arguing against linking the novel to the aesthetics of the avant-garde, including surrealism.



Instead, he claims that the Irish writer's work opens up unexplored aesthetic territories that closely resemble the Lezamanian "imagen."

It might be argued that if Lezama is to be considered a "Ulyssean" or "Joycean" author, then the connection between the Irish novelist and the Cuban author should not take place against the background of European modernism. It would be more accurate to read the ties between these writers as stemming from a shared postcolonial condition and a shared project of aesthetic decolonization; a project that, like Borges's haphazard enumeration of the Aleph, looks at reality afresh to denaturalize the artificial ties between form and feeling, between language and perception. Despite Borges's well-documented aversion to the aesthetics of the Baroque, his enumeration in "El Aleph" may be considered Baroque not in style, but in inflection. Like Lezama's "image" and Joyce's "antimodernist" narrative, this enumeration reproduces microscopically the displacement, tension, and "plutonismo" that Lezama recognized in the Spanish American Baroque.<sup>12</sup> It is this displacement and tension that carries strong decolonizing potential, as it disrupts the universalistic matrix that combined Kantian formalist aesthetics and Western rationality in order to cement a globally valid epistemological norm: modernity. What we have called Borges's "Alephian" aesthetics, as well as Joyce's "antimodernism" and Lezama's Baroque "counterconquest," converge in their analogous proposals for alternatives to such a norm.

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<sup>12</sup>Lois Parkinson Zamora, in *The Inordinate Eye*, devotes her final chapter to "Borges's Neobaroque Illusionism." There she proposes that "our reading of Borges will be enriched by an understanding of Baroque modes of expression, and vice versa: that Borges's work will enrich our appreciation of the Baroque and the variety of its forms and purposes in Latin America" (237). Discussing "El Aleph," Zamora argues that the refusal to re-present the world in realistic terms (as Danieri would) that characterizes Borges's enumeration can be taken as a "trompe l'oeil trick," which is "more than to simply undermine realistic representation; it is also to amplify the . . . reader's experience of the real by pointing to orders of being that are impossible to represent realistically" (244).

Published a year before Paradiso, Guillermo Cabrera Infante's Tres tristes tigres (1965) has been frequently related to both Lezama's novel and to Joyce's Ulysses. In "Joyce and the Contemporary Cuban Novel: Lezama Lima and Cabrera Infante," Leonard Orr has argued that Paradiso and Tres tristes tigres are both Joycean, but in different ways. In Orr's view, Joyce straddles modernism and postmodernism: The "formalism," "organicism," and "stasis" of modernism characterizes A Portrait and the first three chapters of Ulysses; the "fragmentation" and "indeterminacy" of postmodernism typifies the linguistic texture of the second half of Ulysses and all of Finnegans Wake. While Lezama shares, in Orr's words, the modernist concerns "for structuring verbal patterns, the use of myth and order and coherence" of A Portrait and the opening chapters of Ulysses, Cabrera's Tres tristes tigres displays the linguistic playfulness of the postmodernist Joyce. Orr underscores the fact that this transition in narrative styles is intimately related to the development of European history. The shock of World War I resulted in the collapse of traditional narrative and in the modernist attempt "to recreate in art the order that was now lacking in the outside world," an attempt that was later parodied by the fragmentation of postmodernism, which Orr connects to the Neobaroque (20-21).<sup>13</sup> From this perspective, the "counterconquest" potential of Lezama's Neobaroque and the "imaginary" exteriority it originates become neutralized within the development of contemporary European literature represented by Joyce's (post)modernism.

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<sup>13</sup> For an argument for the structural consistency of Cabrera Infante's novel, see Emir Rodríguez Monegal, "Estructura y significaciones de Tres tristes tigres."

Despite the clarity of Orr's argument, I find it difficult to reconcile his Eurocentric perspective with the explicit caveat with which Cabrera greets the readers of Tres tristes tigres: "El libro está en cubano" [The book is in Cuban]. It would also be complicated to relate the static, modernist formalism of the canonical Joyce--or even the purely linguistic subversion of that formalism--with the author that narrated "el día en que Moll y Bloom sentadas en la taza defecaron el largo stream-of-consciousness que sería un mojón de la literatura" [the day in which Moll and Bloom, sitting in a pot, defecated the long stream-of-consciousness that would become a milestone/turd of literature] (Tres tristes tigres 162). Cabrera's playful pun on "mojón" (Spanish for "milestone" and "feces") acknowledges the centrality of Ulysses in the history of literature (Joyce's novel is certainly a literary "milestone"), but at the same time, it associates it with the excremental aspects that most of its detractors had criticized in order to exclude him from a European canon. Some early reviewers of Ulysses (e.g., Wells), we should recall at this point, interpreted those aspects as symptomatic of the "backwardness" of Joyce's Irishness; a backwardness that was at odds with the modern and cosmopolitan characterization of Joyce that Eliot and Pound sponsored. It seems then that the "Cubanity" of the language of Tres tristes tigres and the "backwardness" of Joyce's excrementality suggest a type of literary discourse that departs from the Eurocentric narrative of modernism/postmodernism.<sup>14</sup>

These details suggest a reading of Cabrera's Tres tristes tigres that takes the novel not as a manifestation of postmodernism, but as a concerted attempt to find a truly Cuban expression. In this light, Tres tristes tigres and Ulysses relate to each other as independent

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<sup>14</sup>On Joyce and excrementality see Vincent J. Cheng, "'Goddinpotty': James Joyce and the Language of Excrement."

(albeit obviously similar in stylistic and linguistic terms) subversions of the same literary tradition. It is this shared act of subversion and deviation (as well as the alternative literary spaces they open) that allows for their encounter in the periphery of Western modernity. In this sense, Tres tristes tigres is Joycean not because it is (post)modern, but because it is truly Cuban. In fact, Cabrera's novel may be seen as belonging to a later stage of the search for a "Cuban identity" that began during the decades after the island's independence from Spain at the turn of the twentieth century. The americanist concerns of works such as Nicolás Guillén's Motivos de Son (1930), Alejo Carpentier's Ecue-Yamba-Ó (1933), and Fernando Ortiz's Contrapunteo cubano del tabaco y el azúcar (1940) provide an idea of the scope and relevance of the question of identity during those years. It is true that Tres tristes tigres avoids the local color that permeates the pages of Guillén's poems or Carpentier's novel; but the inflection that Cabrera gives to the polymorphous materials that he includes in his novel successfully marks the distance between the European literary tradition and the Cuban self.

Tres tristes tigres is a gallery of Cuban voices recording the vibrant nights of pre-Revolutionary Havana. The musings and ramblings of Códac, a photographer, Eribó, a bongo player, Arsenio Cué, an actor, and Silvestre, a writer and journalist, intertwine with other minor voices in a kaleidoscopic narrative that reads like an extended conversation on the essence of Havana nightlife. But there are two figures that tower over the rest to shape the texture and style of the novel: La Estrella, a mastodontic black singer of cosmic proportions, and Bustrófedon, a virtuous linguistic experimentalist. La Estrella's untrained musical genius (she always sings without musical accompaniment) and Bustrófedon's verbal playfulness are the sources of the language of the novel, and so

of its “Cubanity.” An obvious approach to analyzing the overlap between Joyce’s and Cabrera’s work would be to concentrate on the shared linguistic experimentalism of Tres tristes tigres, Finnegans Wake, and some sections of Ulysses. In fact, Bustrofedón’s linguistic experimentalism of Tres tristes tigres has usually provided the grounds for considering Cabrera’s text Joycean and postmodern.<sup>15</sup> However, I will direct my attention to the character of La Estrella, recognizing in her body a stubbornly material excess that resists the homogenizing gaze of Western modes of aesthetic representation. This act of resistance will allow me to abandon the metropolitan categories of modernism and postmodernism in order to connect Cabrera Infante to Joyce.

The relevance of La Estrella is so central that a running section of the novel, “Ella cantaba boleros” [I heard her sing], is entirely devoted to her. The narrator of this section is Códac, a photographer whose job is to spend his nights hopping from club to club and trying to capture in pictures the glittery surface of Havana nightlife. However, La Estrella seems to elude his photographic focus. In his first encounter with her, Códac laments not having his camera to photograph this elephantine singer. Her strange beauty, Códac feels, is “different,” “horrible,” and “new,” as it glaringly breaks with the traditional canons of feminine beauty sanctioned in the West. Rather than representing the ideal of refinement and whiteness of the Petrarchan lady, La Estrella is “la salvaje belleza” [the savage beauty] which, in any event, would have eluded the lens of Códac’s camera had he

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<sup>15</sup>On the linguistic similarities between Joyce’s work and Tres tristes tigres, see Michael Wood, “Cabrera Infante: Unruly Pupil.” Kadir’s argument in “Stalking the Oxen of the Sun and Felling the Sacred Cows: Joyce’s Ulysses and Cabrera Infante’s Three Trapped Tigers” is that Joyce’s and Cabrera’s novels stage an analogous parodic subversion of tradition and “Literature.” However, Kadir contends that these novels are chapters “in the evolving book which the pantheistic scribe of Emerson or Coleridge’s Spirit of Literature have been elaborating” (18). I should like to take a different route in my analysis to demonstrate how these novels do not locate themselves within Emerson’s or Coleridge’s “Spirit” or the Western literary tradition, but rather exceed them and belie their universality as simply a local (Western) metaphysical configurations.

carried it with him. That this might have been the case is suggested by Códac himself after La Estrella's death. In the absence of the massive body of the singer, the photographer is only left with her recorded voice and her picture on the jacket cover of her only record. That picture fails to capture the strange beauty that the artist exuded in real life and represents instead "la mujer más fea del mundo" [the ugliest woman in the world]. Códac argues that those who knew her could clearly see that the woman in the picture is not really La Estrella: "los que la conocimos sabemos que no es ella, que definitivamente ésa no es La Estrella" (312). It appears then that some fundamental element of La Estrella's beauty is lost in the act of arrestedness that the photographic gaze instills.

In the latter part of the book, Silvestre and Cué converse about different topics, including photography. Cué argues that "una foto transforma la realidad cuando más exactamente la fija" [the more a picture fixes reality, the more it transforms it] (372). The relentless flow of impressions that the photograph captures creates a "metarreality," to use Silvestre's coinage, different from the reality of the photographed object. The luminous impressions left on the photographic film hold in abeyance the dynamism of the object, which thus lends itself to careful analysis.<sup>16</sup> In this sense, the photographic snapshot has an arresting effect analogous to that of the Kantian aesthetic judgment. For Kant, the contemplation of an object involves a distancing process of abstraction in which the observer's "interests" are left aside. The purgation of the observer's desires and

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<sup>16</sup>The representative homogeneity of the photograph has been analyzed and also contested by Walter Benjamin and Roland Barthes in "Little History of Photography" and *Camera Lucida* respectively. What Benjamin calls "inconspicuous spot" and Barthes the punctum stands as a rift or interruption in the surface homogeneity of the photograph which seems to address the reader personally. This rift breaks the impersonal coherence of the photographic referentiality. It is important to note, however, that Códac is not disrupting photographic representation through the perception of a punctum; rather, he is stating the inability of that kind of representation to capture the essence of La Estrella. What is needed for this task is, therefore, an "other" sort of perception.

physical urges ensures that the object, “apart from all matter,” will be perceived in rational terms.<sup>17</sup> Since no material or empirical conditions interfere in this purified act of perception, the aesthetic judgment derived from it can claim the universality that Kant bestows on reason. Therefore, an observer who has followed this rational path to arrive at his aesthetic judgment can also presuppose the universality of this judgment, given that it stems from reason and reason is universal. Of course, that rational universality and its associated faculty of taste only applies, as the German philosopher discussed in his Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime, to Europeans, and within Europe, to Germans especially. In both the photograph and the Kantian judgment, the sensory perception of the object is transformed into a stable, fixed reality that, as Cué puts it, is “otra realidad. Una irrealidad” [another reality. An irreality] (373). This conception of photography might have been endorsed by Borges himself. I find it intriguing that Borges the narrator arrives at Danieri’s house to see the Aleph, the housemaid tells him that Danieri—who is presumably observing the Aleph to add some new lines to his monstrous poem—is in the basement where the luminous sphere is developing pictures: “El niño estaba, como siempre, en el sótano, revelando fotografías” [the master was, as always, in the basement, developing pictures] (OC 1: 665). This elusive detail invites a comparison between Danieri’s formulaic writing practice and picture-taking.

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<sup>17</sup>Paragraph 38 in the Critique of Judgment delves into the “Deduction of Judgment of Taste”: “If it is admitted that in a pure judgment of taste the satisfaction in the object is combined with the mere act of judging its form, it is nothing else than its subjective purposiveness for the Judgment which we feel to be mentally combined with the representation of the object. The Judgment, as regards the formal rules of its action, apart from all matter (whether sensation or concept), can only be directed to the subjective conditions of its employment in general . . . and consequently to that subjective [element] which we can pre-suppose in all men (as requisite for possible cognition in general)” (165; my emphasis). Needless to say, the “men” Kant talks about here are European men.

Elaborating on the implications of Borges's suggestive comment, Cué tells Silvestre at a certain point during their conversation about photography: "Lo que a ti te perturba de las fotos es la fijeza. No se mueven" [What perturbs you from photos is their fixity. They don't move] (375). These words could also apply to Códac's reaction when faced with La Estrella's picture. Códac's perception of La Estrella in real life very much feels like "another reality," the difference being so great that the photographer does not even recognize the singer in the picture. When he observes La Estrella in real life, Códac is caught between the involvement of the music enthusiast and the detachment of the observer and the professional photographer. When he listened to her singing for the first time, he experienced "verdadero sentimiento" [true feeling], as the singer's almost palpable voice flowed from her body and reached the photographer, making him shudder and laugh frantically: "Hacía tiempo que algo no me conmovía así y comencé a sonreirme en alta voz" [it had been a while since something moved me like this, and I started laughing out loud] (73). Far from partaking in a dehumanized or disinterested appreciation of her music, Códac is compelled to abandon his position as a spectator and become part of La Estrella's spectacle.

In The Cuban Condition, Gustavo Pérez Firmat has identified this liminal position between involvement and detachment as a defining aspect of the Cuban and Spanish American intellectual. The distance between the culture of the Old World and the "derivativeness of New World culture" turns this intellectual into an "impassioned spectator." In Pérez Firmat's words, an "impassioned spectator is someone who is both involved in and removed from the objects of his attention. Even if he is physically distant, his passion constitutes an effective link to the reality he contemplates. To some



degree, such a spectator is himself part of the spectacle” (12). If we take Códac’s attraction to La Estrella as an example of this process, then we could argue that his involvement overrules the possibility of stilling her unruly beauty, and so it represents the type of aesthetic perception generated by the tension between European expressive models and an American sensibility.

This aesthetic perception evidently departs from the arrestedness of the photographic image and the “universal” rationality of the Kantian judgment. In this regard, La Estrella’s beauty may be compared to the Neobaroque excess that, in Lezama’s poetic system, ultimately transcends the “fijeza” of the act of perception. Lezama’s “fijeza” was an intermediary aesthetic stage compellingly leading not to a universally valid formalism, but to the constant tension of the plutonic “image.” La Estrella’s untrained voice and the almost boundless immensity of her physical appearance parallel the plutonic tension of the Lezamian “image.” Both the “image” and La Estrella’s unconventional “beauty” tap esoteric sources of knowledge that clash against formative discourses of Western modernity, notably Hegelian history and Kantian aesthetics. As noted above, the “image” was the origin of a truly American cultural space, the space from which a “counterconquest” could be launched. This “counterconquest” can be broadly defined as the undoing of the colonialism that subordinated America to Europe in historical, philosophical, and symbolic terms. In this regard, it is worth noticing that Códac explicitly relates La Estrella to colonialism in Cuba. She is a descendant of the African slaves that Dominican friar Bartolomé de las Casas recommended to bring to Cuba in order to spare the indigenous population from hard labor. But instead of lamenting this historical event, Códac celebrates it, because it made possible La Estrella’s

art: “si no hubiera existido el padre Las Casas y le dije, Te bendigo, cura, por haber traído los negros de África como esclavos para aliviar la esclavitud de los indios” [if Father Las Casas had not existed, and I told him, I bless you, priest, for bringing the blacks from Africa as slaves to alleviate the slavery of the Indians]. Or, to put it differently, if colonialism had not transformed the pre-Columbian social texture of the island, the movement of counterconquest flowing from La Estrella’s voice and body would have never occurred. The racial layering that in the sixteenth century upheld the colonial structure now provides the grounds for the liberating irreverence that La Estrella represents.

In transcending the arresting gaze of the photographic lens and demanding a different kind of aesthetic perception, La Estrella metaphorically eludes the founding discourses of modernity. The metaphor of the “gaze” has been frequently invoked in contemporary postcolonial theory to refer to the discursive appropriation of the other by the metropolis. A familiar case is Homi Bhabha’s notion of the “structured gaze of power whose objectivity is authority.” For Bhabha, the colonized can subvert those structures of power only by returning the gaze, an operation that is still performed “under the eye of power, through the production of ‘partial’ knowledges and positionalities” (Location of Culture 169). But what the incommensurability of La Estrella’s “strange beauty” and the camera lens suggests is an “other” space that radically departs from the “eye of power.”<sup>18</sup>

La Estrella demands looking otherwise, not looking back.

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<sup>18</sup>The relations between colonialism and photography have been explored by Wolfram Hartmann, Jeremy Silvester, and Patricia Hayes in The Colonizing Camera: Photographs in the Making of Namibian History. These authors underscore the central role of photographic technology for the production and circulation of colonial images in the late nineteenth-century, cogently arguing that photography was an active agent in the construction of colonialist discourse during the British Empire.

It would be instructive to compare at this point Códac's "impassioned" apprehension of the Afro-Cuban singer to the counterpoint between Stephen Dedalus' well-known vision of the girl at the end of A Portrait and Leopold Bloom's voyeuristic escapade in Chapter 13 of Ulysses. Bloom's vision stands as an ironic counterpart to Stephen's aesthetic formalism, and so it represents another example of Joyce's "antimodernism." As they subvert the aesthetic norms buttressing the philosophical discourse of modernity, Códac's "impassioned" aesthesis and Bloom's ironic subversion of Stephen's aesthetic "stasis" emerge as acts of cultural counterconquest or decolonization.

As noted above, Thornton reads Joyce's subversion of Stephen's aesthetic ideas in A Portrait as a sustained critique of modernist aesthetics. Joyce's ironic approach to Stephen's modernism extends to the contrasts between Stephen himself and Leopold Bloom in Ulysses. In many ways, Bloom is what Stephen is not. Bloom is a pragmatic empiricist where Stephen is an idealist rationalist. Bloom does not compare his life to a divine theorem as Stephen does, but to the movement of his bowels while defecating. If Stephen sees the world through literature, Bloom uses a literary magazine he reads in the bathroom to wipe himself. The ironic counterpoint to Stephen's intellectualism that Bloom's attention to the body introduces is first announced by the sharp transition between the philosophical musings of "Proteus" and the almost naturalistic invocation of Bloom's culinary preferences at the beginning of "Calypso" (Chapter 4): he delights, we are told, in the tangy taste of "the inner organs of beast and fowls" (U 4.001-002). Similarly, some episodes of Bloom's day can be read as an ironic recasting of Stephen's epiphanic moments in A Portrait. For instance, the climactic scene at the end of Chapter 4

in A Portrait, where Stephen becomes aware of his calling as an artist after he observes a girl wading in the sea, is ironically echoed in Chapter 13 (“Nausicaa”) in Ulysses. Here Leopold Bloom also observes a girl by the sea, Gerty MacDowell, and the scene contains certain elements that invite an ironic comparison between Stephen’s divine muse and Gerty. Besides the similar location of these two episodes, both girls are divinized. Stephen invokes heaven and God when he first perceives his girl-muse; Bloom looks at Gerty as if “worshipping at her shrine” (U 13.564). The divinization of Gerty is consistently sustained throughout the episode by the periodic interpolation in the narrative of prayers to the Virgin Mary from a nearby chapel. Gerty comes even closer to Stephen’s muse when Bloom idealizes her to the point of believing her the result of an artist’s dream (U 13.583-584). However, instead of inspiring the idealistic aesthetic theory, as Stephen’s girl does, Gerty leads Bloom to masturbation.

After Bloom masturbates, his idyllic presentation of Gerty quickly dissolves. She ceases to be a perfect goddess to become a vulgar girl who limps and wears cheap perfume. If Gerty becomes an ironic caricature of Stephen’s muse, Bloom’s thoughts cast an ironic glance on his modernist art theory. Rather than positing a transcendental aesthetic realm where the artist detaches himself from the material world, Bloom ruminates on the qualities of different kinds of odors shortly after the masturbatory climax. Likewise, whereas Stephen compares the artist to the God of the creation in his theory, Bloom’s reflections lead him to the more pedestrian conclusion that humans, like animals, use odors to orient themselves. For instance, he meditates on how the female menstrual scent may be intended as a warning against sexual intercourse. Bloom’s naturalistic mind and Gerty’s physical defects ironically deflect Stephen’s aesthetic

norms, norms that recall Kant's "disinterestedness." In this regard, Bloom's act of perception comes close to Códac's "impassionate" apprehension of La Estrella. As deviations from the regulations of disinterested perception (Kant), Bloom's and Códac's aesthetic experiences make us painfully aware of the vulnerability and shortcomings of an exclusively idealistic outlook. Joyce underscores this vulnerability by playing Stephen's much sought-after aesthetic "stasis" off against Bloom's "kinesis" in a patently ironic way. Later in the book, Bloom is defined as a "kinetic poet" (U 17.410) and as having a "kinetic temperament" (U 17.638). So while Bloom presents himself as a "waterlover" on account of the "hydrokinetic turgidity" of water and its protean changes of state (from vapor to mist to rain to hail), Stephen can only be a "hydrophobe" due to his scholastic distrust of "aquacities of thought and language" (U 17.240). Therefore, Bloom's kinetic corporeality is a constant reminder of the impossibility of the modernist resolution to conceptualize life according to pre-arranged mental schemes—to order and myth as understood by Eliot.

But as it happened with La Estrella's "savage" beauty and Códac's impassioned involvement, Gerty's imperfections and Bloom's involved sensuality can be read not only as deviations from the norms of aesthetic idealism, but also from the discourse of colonialism. Andrew Gibson has suggested that "Nausicaa" constitutes a subversion of the feminine magazines that shape Gerty's psyche. The section of the chapter revolving around her desires and aims in life reflect the influence of these magazines to the point of adopting their stylistic texture.<sup>19</sup> Magazines such as The Princess's Novelettes and

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<sup>19</sup>Karen Lawrence has argued that the style of this episode makes us aware of the inconsistencies between Gerty's material situation and the romantic rhetoric of the magazines in order to expose her delusional views ironically (122-123). It might be, however, that the target of Joyce's irony here is not Gerty's inadequacies, but that of the magazines.

Ladyland, Gibson argues, defended a conception of womanhood that was largely complicit with the ideology of empire, thus becoming “part of a colonial culture” (145). Casting women in the roles of angelic wives minding their beauty, the British establishment aimed at creating normative gender models that replicated the structures of colonial and patriarchal authority. These magazines had wide circulation, reaching the furthest corners of the British Empire, thus becoming an effective way to impose the metropolitan norms in the field of cultural politics.

Joyce ironizes this type of discourse just as he ironizes Stephen’s modernist aesthetics. While Gerty strives to follow the dictates of these journals, she nonetheless emerges as a recalcitrant deviation from the female ideal that they propose. Her physical imperfections, along with Bloom’s furtive masturbation, effect an ironic reversal of the idealized portrayal of the female featured in these journals. Gerty’s aspirations to become a loving spouse and a devoted housewife do not elicit the attentions of a hard-working and protective husband, but only Bloom’s leering glances. The masturbatory act brutally dissolves the rhetorical smokescreen of the magazines and lays bare, once again, the mismatch between normative discourses and material reality. The ineffectuality of Stephen’s idealism in the face of external reality reflects and reproduces the shortcomings of the imported forms of imperialistic cultural discourse in the colonies. This mismatch results in an ironic double exposure of both modernist aesthetics and colonial discourse akin to the subversion of Kantian disinterestedness provoked by La Estrella’s “strange beauty” and Códac’s passionate involvement in her musical performances. Seen in this light, “Nausicaa” and Códac’s “Ella cantaba boleros” bring about an Eliotic “dissociation of sensibility” in the aesthetic sphere that amounts to a critique of the universal validity

of imperialistic ideology: the world and the rationalistic mind are no more compatible than the lived experience of the colonized and metropolitan culture.

The similarities between the models of aesthetic apprehension proposed in Ulysses and Tres tristes tigres allows a reading of these texts not only as direct refutations of Kantian formalism, but also as anti-colonial interventions. By putting to artistic use the sensorial and affective elements that Kant held in abeyance, Joyce and Cabrera Infante endow the act of aesthetic perception with a potential of “counterconquest.” It is this aesthetic counterconquest that makes us aware of the positionality of these writers and their texts with regard to the normative cultural patterns of the West. H. G. Wells might have been right to connect the “cloacal” features of A Portrait to Joyce’s Irishness, since, as we have seen in our analysis of “Nausicaa,” those features mark the distance between an imperialistic reason and a colonized or peripheral sensibility. But if Wells could take that “Irishness” as a sign of “backwardness” with respect to a “civilized” modernity, it could be also consider a space of cultural expression that transcends modernity--that is, a “de-linked” or “countermodern” resistance to it. In fact, the dislocation of normative, hegemonic aesthetics found in Ulysses and Tres tristes tigres can be read as a strategy of cultural decolonization. Against this epistemic background, these two novels do not converge within the boundaries of European literary history as representatives of modernism or postmodernism. Rather, they relate to each other as specifically situated points of resistance to Western modernity and its historical models of literary evolution. Hence, Tres tristes tigres becomes closer to Ulysses not because its fragmentary structure and language reflect changes in European culture, but because it asserts that that kind of culture is as awkwardly ineffective in the Tropics as it is in Ireland.

The linguistic virtuosity of Tres tristes tigres is also apparent in novels such as Salvador Elizondo's Farabeuf and Fernando del Paso Palinuro de México, whose formal experimentation contributed decisively to further change the realistic contours of the Mexican novel begun by Agustín Yáñez's Al filo del agua (1947) and Juan Rulfo's Pedro Páramo (1955). While Elizondo openly acknowledged Joyce's relevance to his work and even translated the first page of Finnegans Wake, del Paso is perhaps the contemporary Mexican novelist who has shaped his narrative according to Joycean patterns most consciously and conscientiously. Palinuro de México (1977), an audacious and polymorphous text recounting the trials of a twenty-year old medical student in Mexico City, parallels Ulysses in numerous stylistic and thematic ways, with its the use of a mythical subtext, its encyclopedic scope, and its disruption of linear storytelling. But as happened with Marechal, Lezama Lima, and Cabrera Infante, the ties between Joyce and del Paso would be inadequately addressed if we limited our discussion to the formal aspects of their work or to the thematic parallels between specific passages. In stressing the connection between the textual and the political that Joyce's work embodies, del Paso himself expressed the aspects that would allow an informed and integral comparison between his narrative production and the Irish writer's:

I consider that Ulysses is a sort of sun installed at the center of the Gutenberg Galaxy, which illuminates not only all the works which followed it but all of universal literature that preceded it. . . . Joyce's most important aspect for me is what has been called his "total" or "totalizing" practice of fiction, because I'm interested in books not only as macrocosms but also as microcosms. This attitude implies two further aspects: the mythical background and linguistic revolution. But it also implies an anticolonial posture, because it presupposes a very highly personal analysis by the writer of history,



that of his country, the West as a whole, and the world--quoting from memory, "History, that nightmare from which I am trying to awake." But it also implies sexuality, of course, which only acquires human dignity when it is liberated. (qtd. in Martin 140)

Del Paso suggests that if one is looking for affinities between Ulysses and his own work, one should not simply document a shared linguistic exuberance or emphasize the structural complexity common to both. Robin Fiddian has convincingly shown how "the structural and thematic coherence of Palinuro de México, together with its mythical and archetypal scaffolding, narrative exuberance, and message of life sacrificed and then restored" are all elements constituting a common rhetorical ground enabling a formalistic comparison between del Paso's novel and Joyce's Ulysses, a comparison mediated via previous "Ulyssean" Spanish American texts such as Adán Buenosayres and Rayuela (The Novels 92). This emphasis on formal aspects leads to his conviction that the experimentalism and structural unity that Palinuro de México shares with Ulysses places the Mexican novel in "an undifferentiated community of world literature" (99) which can be conveniently segmented into transcontinental literary categories such as modernism and postmodernism. Fiddian's general conclusion is that Joyce's Ulysses and the Spanish American "Ulysseses" he discusses (Adán Buenosayres and Rayuela) converge in the conceptual and historical space between modernism and postmodernism. Fiddian's lucid analysis shows, nonetheless, how framing the formal intersections between Joyce and del Paso within a postcolonialist perspective that differs little from the metropolitan models of postmodern theory, obliterates the significance of the colonial difference for the configuration of literary histories.

One way to approach the anticolonial stance shared by Joyce and del Paso and thus to call into question their assimilation to the metropolitan narrative of

modernism/postmodernism might be by focusing on their subversive aesthetic proposals and the radical transformations of hegemonic concepts of literature and representation that these proposals enact. In this regard, I want to concentrate on another aspect that del Paso emphasized in his assessment of Joyce's novel: the desiring body and sexuality. As in Ulysses, Adán Buenosayres, and Tres tristes tigres, the presence of the body is a distinctive feature of Palinuro de México. In an episode that closely parallels Bloom's defecating scene in "Calypso," Palinuro describes his toilet as a library where pornography and high literature stand side by side: "tengo en el baño toda la literatura que te puedas imaginar desde Penthesilea hasta las revistas que se leen con una sola mano como el Playboy" [in the toilet I have all the literature you can imagine, from Penthesilea to the magazines like Playboy that one reads using only one hand] (643). He adds that he reads while defecating and then uses the pages he has read to wipe himself. The implication here is that for Palinuro, as for Bloom, literature is far from being an aseptic form of artistic representation that remains above the palpable dreariness of the material world. In both cases, literature is quite literally brought face to face with the "kinetic" aspects that it has tried to avoid traditionally. Similarly, the Western canons of beauty are consistently ironically undermined and deflated in del Paso's novel, most notably in Palinuro's complex description of his cousin and lover, Estefanía in the section entitled "Unas palabras sobre Estefanía" [A few words about Estefanía]. This description shockingly juxtaposes the lyric commonplaces of Petrarchan love poetry and crude scenes of sexual intercourse. The result here, as in the toilet scene, is the violation of the barriers between a "disinterested" aesthetic realm and the kinetic affects of the body, on

the one hand, and the subversion of an artificial separation of artistic beauty from bodily sensation, on the other hand.

This flagrant violation exposes the limits of Kantian aesthetics as well as uncovers the shortcomings of the Cartesian dualism that separates the body from the mind and demonizes the former as a material excess with no bearing on the mental operations of the intellect. As we noted regarding the ironic effect of Bloom's masturbatory maneuver, when the body surges within the limits of aesthetic discourse, the immediate effect is a de-naturalization of the abstract universality of such discourse. This act of epistemological violation is thematized in the novel through the incestuous relationship between Palinuro and his cousin Estefanía, which occupies well over half of the novel's twenty-five chapters.<sup>20</sup> The implications of incest in the novel can help us further articulate the vexed relationship between desire, language, and aesthetic representation in colonial and postcolonial situations, and so to elucidate the anti-colonial kinship between Joyce and del Paso. The descriptions of the often sadistic sexual intercourse between Palinuro and Estefanía are frequently related in the narrative with Palinuro's recurrent concern about the nature of language.<sup>21</sup> It is precisely through his unconventional and transgressive sexual involvement with his cousin that he finds the way to both expose the artificiality of the rapport between objects and words and to explore the limits of referentiality. In the section entitled "La muerte del espejo" [the mirror's death], Palinuro and Estefanía reflect on the difficulties they find in expressing their perception of the objective world around them, as well as their feelings for each other, through language.

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<sup>20</sup>In an interview with Ignacio Trejo, del Paso defends the liberating power of those "incestuous bonds" which could be wonderful had not our society condemned them as something appalling (9).

<sup>21</sup>On the interrelations of language and sex in the novel from a Bakhtinian perspective, see Claude Fell, "Sexo y lenguaje en Palinuro de México de Fernando del Paso."

This uneasiness with language results in a period of surrealist experimentation with highly metaphorical language, which first gives way to paranoid questioning of the meaning of the most trivial utterance, and, finally, to silence as a radical reaction against the constraints and shortcomings of linguistic systems. It is at this point that they reach for each other to make love in silence, communicating simply

con el lenguaje de nuestras lágrimas, nuestros besos y caricias, nuestros eructos y nuestros gestos, sin decirnos ni una sólo cosa ni en español ni en ningún otro idioma. Pero a cambio de esto, y para que mi prima viera que en efecto yo hablaba más de un idioma vivo y más de una lengua muerta, un día la besé en francés. Ella se limitó a bostezar en sueco. Yo la odié un poco en inglés y le hice un ademán obsceno en italiano. Ella fue al baño y dio un portazo ruso. Cuando salió, yo le guiñé un ojo en chino y ella me sacó la lengua en sánscrito. Acabamos haciendo el amor en esperanto. (672)

[with the language of our tears, our kisses and caresses, our burps and our gestures, without saying a single thing either in Spanish or in any other language. But to compensate for this, and to show my cousin that I could actually speak more than one living language and more than one dead tongue, one day I kissed her in French. She just yawned in Swedish. I hated her a little in English and made an obscene gesture in Italian. She left for the bathroom, slamming the door in Russian. When she came out, I winked at her in Chinese, she stuck out her tongue at me in Sanskrit. We ended up making love in Esperanto.]

After this cathartic point, the lovers decide to approach reality without letting language “bewitch” their intelligence, refusing to think of the material world and the words used to describe it in “symbolic terms.”<sup>22</sup> Palinuro realizes that this operation involves an act of “unlearning,” a return to “la infancia misma de la especie humana” [to

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<sup>22</sup>The significance of the setting where their sexual intercourse takes place is equally illuminating in this respect. The “cuarto de la Plaza de Santo Domingo” [room in Santo Domingo Square] becomes a sort of utopian space that literally comes to life with Palinuro and Estefanía’s erotic and linguistic playfulness. It is interesting to note that the first object that they bring to the room is a picture of Estefanía taken by their Francophile aunt, Luisa. For them, the picture becomes a starting point to reinvent a whole universe around it, conjuring up unexpected strings of cause-and-effect that eventually lead to the taking of the picture.

humanity's infancy itself] (673) that would allow the proliferation of new linguistic configurations. For Palinuro, then, words do not inhabit a detached, idealistic sphere from which one could abstract and represent every aspect of reality. Instead, language for him is an almost erotic force which, like his sexual experimentations, uncovers areas of experience that social and aesthetic norms tend to repress.

This linguistic jouissance might suggest del Paso's affiliation with a literary tradition of the celebration of the body and unbridled desire that finds its best-known exponent in Rabelais and that has entered contemporary philosophical discourse through the works of Nietzsche, followed by those of Roland Barthes, Herbert Marcuse, and Giles Deleuze and Felix Guatarri.<sup>23</sup> Likewise, del Paso's search for alternative modes of expression, as well as his critique of normative discourses about the body and sexuality, would link him to the iconoclastic stance of Surrealist aesthetics and the Freudian exploration of the subconscious. But what would make this transgressive presence of sexuality in the novel an anti-colonial strategy? What makes del Paso's inclusion of the body within the text different from surrealist and other metropolitan subversions of norms of sexuality? I believe the answer to these questions may be found in the Mexican writer's use of incest. As Robin Fiddian has aptly put it, del Paso's reclamation of the body from repressive discourses is common to a large list of European and Spanish American authors, including George Bataille, Octavio Paz, and Julio Cortázar; but where he "breaks new ground is in the elaboration of a utopian scenario of incest, independent

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<sup>23</sup>See Herbert Marcuse, Eros and Civilization; Roland Barthes, The Pleasure of the Text and Sade, Fourier, Loyola; and Deleuze and Guatarri, Anti-Oedipus. For an analysis of Rabelais's work which is also relevant to del Paso's novel, see Mikhail Bakhtin, Rabelais and His World. However, if we apply Bakhtin's idea of "carnivalization" to Palinuro, we would be interpreting its subversive aspects as emerging from the demands of a hegemonic cultural system, since the carnival is eventually aimed at the revitalization of established structures of power.

of the regime of Oedipal prohibitions that has exercised so profound an influence on the organization of western societies and the theoretical apparatuses that have served to legitimate them” (The Novels 81) As Michel Foucault has taught us, the economic and social structure of the West largely rests on a set of historical codes regulating the appropriate uses of sexuality. According to these codes, incest is (to use Christian terminology) a sin “contrary to nature,” a “nature” that, as Foucault reminds us, is “still a kind of law” (38) which cunningly passes a discursive interpretation of reality for reality itself and transforms alternative ways of conceptualizing sexuality and the world as taboos. The ultimate goal of these systems of repressions and taboos is the optimal functioning of a given society, and within such systems, incest occupies a central position, since the “threshold of all culture”--understanding “culture” as in the Western, anthropological sense of the term--might be “prohibited incest” (Foucault 109).

Although there is nothing intrinsically anti-colonial in the literary use of incest, this theme has found a fertile literary ground in contemporary Spanish American fiction, in which incest has been presented not so much as an “anti-natural” transgression of a “social universal” (Foucault) as a foundational act in the formation of colonial and postcolonial societies.<sup>24</sup> The multiple incestuous relationships among the Buendías in Cien años de soledad or the mysterious affair between Alejandra and her father Fernando in Ernesto Sábato’s Sobre héroes y tumbas mark the beginnings or continuations of family romances that symbolically represent the origins of Latin American

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<sup>24</sup>Otto Rank’s classic book, The Theme of Incest in Literature and Legend remains a standard reference for those interested in this topic.

communities.<sup>25</sup> As presented in these novels, these communities originate through a sexual act that from a Western perspective qualifies as a severe act of transgression, one that jeopardizes the very stability of society. As Foucault argued, incest poses a threat to the symbolic and material economy assuring the perpetuation and expansion of Western societies (106-111). While the outcomes of incest in these two novels are ultimately disastrous--a pigtailed son followed by apocalyptic destruction in García Márquez's novel, death and suicide in Sábato's book--its symbolic implications point towards a separation from Western models of societal organization. This literary treatment of incest lays bare the artificiality of the "natural" laws of the West (as Surrealism would) and at the same time explores the generative potential of its taboos. In this light, this heretical empowerment of the incest taboo, endowing it with foundational value, might be interpreted as a fruitful strategy of anti-colonial contention against the naturalization and universalization of Western social discourses.

By relating its Neobaroque creativity to what in the West is considered a taboo, del Paso's Palinuro de México extends the critique of Western norms to the realm of language and representation.<sup>26</sup> Through its attention to the body, this creativity dissolves the artifice of aesthetic representation as a "natural" apprehension of the material world that achieves universal value by transcending the desiring body. In a Kantian sense, representation (Vorstellung) presupposes an inalterable intellectual plane analogous to

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<sup>25</sup>The theme of incest in García Márquez has been amply studied; see Donald Shaw, "El tema del incesto en Faulkner y García Márquez," Suzanne Jill Levine, "La maldición del incesto en Cien años de soledad", Benjamin García Torres, Gabriel García Márquez o la alquimia del incesto. In Sobre héroes y tumbas Martín's Oedipal involvement with his mother and Alejandra, and Fernando's troubled relationship with his own daughter are related to his Argentiness and to the origins of Argentine history and identity through the complex symbolic treatment of independence hero, general Lavalle's death.

<sup>26</sup>On the neobaroque features of del Paso's novel, see Alfonso González, "Neobarroco y carnaval medieval en Palinuro de México."

the abstract set of prohibitions and taboos needed for the smooth functioning of society. The kind of cognitive operations giving rise to this representation are performed in a philosophical language which, like the aesthetic faculty of taste, is transindividual, for it informs experience according to the universal categories of reason.<sup>27</sup> But just as García Márquez and Sábato dispel the universality of incest as a transcultural taboo, showing how that taboo can in fact become the origin of a whole community, del Paso's association of incest and linguistic experimentalism suggests that the sort of representation this experimentalism produces emerges precisely from the transgression of Western aesthetic norms. In The Political Unconscious, Fredric Jameson has alerted us to the deep connections between the social and the aesthetic, arguing that aesthetic production is indeed an ideological act, "with the function of inventing imaginary or formal 'solutions' to unresolvable social contradictions" (79). As we have been discussing it, incest in some contemporary Spanish American fiction symbolically stands for a social contradiction, but a contradiction of a peculiar kind, since it derives from a colonial structure of power. By choosing to relate the origin of postcolonial societies to the repressed taboo of incest, this sort of fiction not only deconstructs the systematic web of codes that sustains Western society; it also makes the bold point that that what is repressed as a taboo might be revalorized as an escape route from the constraints of metropolitan surveillance. If aesthetic production in del Paso's text is explicitly linked to incest as taboo, it seems obvious that he means to imply that one possible "formal solution" to the deep contradiction of resorting to metropolitan norms (aesthetic, cultural, social) for self-expression and social organization in a (post)colonial setting might be

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<sup>27</sup>See Section III, "On the Concept of Philosophy in General," in Kant's Logic.



found in the transformation of the repressed taboos hidden by those norms into fertile spaces of cultural and social production.

In order to further reveal the anti-colonial affinity between del Paso's and Joyce's fiction, it would be instructive to recall Arturo Usler Pietri's observations on how what he called the "baroque" and "magical" prose of Ulysses grows out of his iconoclastic subversion of Western norms and taboos (see chapter 2). David Lloyd's analysis of Ulysses in Anomalous States bears out Usler Pietri's ideas. The Irish critic contends that Joyce's book is governed by a stylistic principle of "adulteration" which undermines the autonomy of the speaking subject through the interpolation of extraneous textual material. Lloyd goes on to argue that this stylistic adulteration is analogous to the threat that adultery poses to patriarchal structures and the nation-state. Bloom's constant preoccupation with adultery throughout the novel provides a thematic leitmotif linking style and ideological content metaphorically. Thus, the subversion of Western social and aesthetic norms staged in Ulysses and Palinuro de México emerges as a contact zone between Joyce's and del Paso's aesthetics. This aesthetics is not the intellectual product of a universal Western consciousness in its "disinterested," Kantian garb or a modernist restitution of such a consciousness. Rather, it positions itself within a space that falls beyond that consciousness and the type of representation that it enacts. In situations of colonial domination, this intellectual space might receive the name "coloniality." If we find in coloniality the epistemic zone where the aesthetic programs of not only del Paso and Joyce, but also those of Marechal, Lezama Lima, and Cabrera Infante, intersect, then we might conclude that their subversion of Western rationality, aesthetics, and social formations is owing more to their shared historical position in the periphery of the West

than to the demystification of the universal subject of aesthetic judgment or to a metropolitan loss of faith in the legitimacy of the project of modernity.

This position found its initial and paradigmatic expression in Borges's enumeration of the Aleph, which I have taken as a model and point of departure for my reconsideration of the aesthetics of Joycean narrative in Spanish America. This enumeration signifies the limitations of Western modes of representation (identified in the text with Danieri and his monstrous poem) as much as it points toward alternatives to them. "El Aleph" certainly affords a great variety of readings, almost as many as the visions of reality that the homonymous luminous point permits: it can be read as a story of unrequited love, written at a time when the author was infatuated with Estela Canto (to whom he dedicated his short story); it can be read as ironic rewriting of Dante's Divine Comedy; it can be read as a document registering the changes brought about by the advent of capitalist modernity in Buenos Aires, notably the demolition of Danieri's ancestral house due to expanding businesses in its vicinity; it can be even be read as a story about the shocking uncovering of an incestuous relationship between cousins, thus creating a further link between Borges's subversion of Danieri's aesthetics and del Paso's exploration of the possibilities of incest. While all these interpretations enrich and complement mine, I have chosen to throw into relief the metaliterary significance of the story, focusing on how it allows the articulation of the position of the literary artifact in the modern/colonial world system. In this sense, I have approached its central enumeration as an aesthetic paradigm that subverts the universality of Kantian aesthetic judgment and opens up a way of reading contemporary Spanish American fiction and its relationship to Joyce's work that does not dissolve the geopolitical dimension of such an

association. As I have presented it here, the subversion of Kantian aesthetics carries with it a strong decolonizing potential, as it exposes the limitations of the “universal” consciousness of the Western subject and, at the same time, enacts symbolic alternatives emerging from the fissures (or “darker side”) of the totalizing representational regimes (historical, social, literary) associated with this type of consciousness. In the last analysis, the reading that I have proposed here is an attempt to locate a central strand of the new narrative in Spanish America, that characterized by its “Joycean” aesthetics, within a global literary map that registers the relevance of geopolitical situatedness and the colonial difference for aesthetic production.

## EPILOGUE

### LITERARY HISTORY OTHERWISE

Carlos Fuentes's Cristóbal Nonato is, in many respects, a Joycean novel. The playful puns that pervade the text are probably the narrative aspect that brings Fuentes's novel closer to Ulysses. The source of these puns is the eponymous hero, Cristóbal Nonato, an unborn child who, as a disembodied consciousness, is only language, a language that encircles and nurtures him like the liquid in the motherly womb (105). But what language is Cristóbal really going to speak when he is finally born and grows up?-- as his mother, Dolores, asks Cristóbal's father, Ángel. To answer this question, Ángel alludes to the linguistic development of Mexico, from pre-Columbian times to the present moment, focusing at a certain point in his discussion on the evolution of the contemporary Latin American novel:

J' AIME JOYCE o GÓCELA CON JOYCE: lo cierto es que Leopoldo BOOM substituyó al desgastado astro del auge de la novela latinoamericana, Marcelo Chiriboga, como principal bautizador de las calles de la ciudad que crecía tan rápido y tan vástamente rebasaba la capacidad nominativa de sus propios habitantes. . . . (104)

[J' AIME JOYCE or REJOYCE WITH JOYCE: the truth is that Leopold BOOM replaced the worn-out star of the rise of the Latin American novel, Marcelo Chiriboga, as the main name-giver of the streets of the city, which grew so fast and so vastly that exceeded the naming capacity of its own dwellers.]

These lines can be read as a concise articulation of an evolutionist view of literary history according to which Latin American narrative successfully supersedes the "worn

out” autochthonous discourse of the fictional Ecuadorian writer, Marcelo Chiriboga to embrace the linguistic experimentation of the type of novel that the allegorical “Leopoldo BOOM”--an obvious pun on “Leopold Bloom” and the literary “boom”--represents. In this light, the association of the aesthetics of the new narrative in Spanish America with Joyce’s Ulysses sets the works of the boom writers apart from the regionalist novel, the so-called novela de la tierra, to finally integrate Spanish American literature within an international literary paradigm.<sup>1</sup> This qualitative leap from regionalism to “modernism” is achieved, to a large degree, through the type of linguistic audacity that characterizes Cristóbal’s discourse in Fuentes’s novel. Spanish American narrative discourse abandons the antiquated realism of the regionalist novel only after it becomes disembodied language severed from the material world, like Cristóbal himself. From this perspective, this narrative transformation coincides with the development of modern thought, particularly with the “linguistic turn,” which conceives of the real as always already mediated by the structures of language and culture.<sup>2</sup> An immediate consequence of this coincidence is that literary change in Spanish America is observed through the lens of modernity, recognizing in what Emir Rodríguez Monegal labeled the “novel of language” the culmination of the persistent Spanish American “desire to be modern,” to use Octavio Paz’s well-known phrase.

Through my analysis of Joycean fiction in Spanish America I have sought to challenge teleological schemes of literary history as well as “modernism” as a universally

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<sup>1</sup>In The Spanish American Regional Novel, Carlos Alonso, reexamines the most representative novelas de la tierra to argue for an epistemological continuity between these novels and the “boom,” thus challenging evolutionary models of literary history in Spanish America.

<sup>2</sup>On the “linguistic turn” of Western philosophy see Richard Rorty’s edited volume, The Linguistic Turn: Essays in Philosophical Method.

valid historico-literary category, or a stage that all literatures have to reach necessarily. Of course, there have been several attempts to rethink Eurocentric paradigms of literary history from a postcolonial position, including the well-known cases of Edward Said's Culture and Imperialism and Homi Bhabha's essays in The Location of Culture. Said's main contention is that one should use a "contrapuntal" approach to study the cultural production of Europe, focusing not only on how this production was conditioned by social factors emerging from the internal development of the European countries, but also by the imperial enterprises of these countries overseas, particularly France and England. For instance, Said urges us to read Jane Austen's Mansfield Park bearing in mind the cultural and political contexts of nineteenth-century English society as well as England's colonial activities in the Caribbean. In a similar vein, Bhabha argues that colonial models of domination can be contested through a dislocation and "hybridization" of the sort of cultural essentialisms that sustain the differentiation between the colonizer and the colonized. Bhabha explains that the colonized can imitate the culture of the colonizer, thus "returning the gaze" that intends to control and subdue him. In literary terms, it has become customary to refer to this reversal of cultural essentialisms as a process of "writing back" from the ex-colonies to the metropolis, assimilating and using the same literary techniques employed in Western literature to assert cultural identity vis-à-vis normative paradigms of culture.<sup>3</sup> While Said's and Bhabha's theoretical proposals bring awareness of the integral part that colonialism plays in the configuration of European culture, the type of literary histories that could derive from such proposals would still be positioned within the philosophical and cultural development of the West. These literary

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<sup>3</sup>On the idea of "writing back," see the by now classic The Empire Writes Back, by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin.

histories would usher in a widening of scope, but not a change in perspective in the study of literary change; they would provoke an unveiling of the colonial underpinnings of metropolitan culture, but not the formation of a separate place of cultural enunciation whose epistemological legitimacy does not depend necessarily on the deconstruction of the cultural certainties of the West.

In this study, I have attempted to theorize the association between Joyce's Ulysses and contemporary Spanish American narrative to which Cristóbal's father alluded with the fanciful pun, "Leopoldo BOOM." However, my intention was not to uphold a paradigm of literary history that conflates narrative change in Spanish America and the development of modernity as a philosophical discourse, either as a consequence of a "postmodern" erasure of the cultural imbalance between the centre and the periphery, or as a result of a "postcolonialist" awareness of the colonial foundation of modernity. Rather, I have argued that Joyce's work, particularly Ulysses, provided authors such as Marechal, Borges, Cortázar, Lezama Lima, Cabrera Infante, and del Paso--customarily categorized as the "modernizers" of Spanish American literature--with a solid referent for a situated critique of modernity that stresses the relevance of place for the enunciation of narrative discourse. By highlighting the importance of "place" for narrative, I did not intend to advance a nationalist or ethnocentric argument, advocating an absolute rejection of modernity and a blind and rather utopian celebration of uncontaminated indigenous aspects of culture. Nor did I attempt to read Spanish American novels as "Third-World," national allegories, an interpretive perspective that still reduces postcolonial literatures to some homogenous "other" of modernity--to a utopian space that could fulfil the designs of a global Left progressively dislodged from the political sphere in the post-industrial

West.<sup>4</sup> As Linda Hutcheon aptly points out, a nationalist model of literary history might be of strategic value in those postcolonial situations where a narrative of progress might be conjured up to counter the effects of colonialism: it might be “a question of using the most effective model to compete with the dominant one” (Hutcheon, “Rethinking the National Model” 15). However, as Hutcheon herself is quick to acknowledge, this teleological framework fails to depart radically from modernity as a universally valid masternarrative, for it simply internalizes a model manufactured in the West and then exported to the ex-colonies.

The “place” that I have stressed as regards the connection between Joyce and Borges, Joyce and Cortázar, or Joyce and Lezama Lima, is one that derives from their positioning with regard to modernity understood as a discourse that is always already colonial. As I have read it, this connection constitutes a nodal point emerging from an encounter in the peripheries, from the recognition of the decolonizing potential of Joyce’s work by the Spanish American authors analyzed here. As Cuban writer Edmundo Desnoes--who translated Joyce’s A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man into Spanish--put it, Joyce’s experience “tiene muchos puntos de contacto con la circunstancia social del escritor hispanoamericano. Irlanda, en la época en que escribió, era una colonia subdesarrollada de Inglaterra” [has many points of contact with the social situation of the Spanish American writer. At the time when he wrote, Ireland was an underdeveloped English colony] (4). In this light, the encounter between Joyce and the new narrative in Spanish America takes place in the repressed underside of modernity--in what Aníbal Quijano and Walter Mignolo have called “coloniality”--and is, therefore, inassimilable to

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<sup>4</sup>See Fredric Jameson, “Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism” and Aijaz Ahmad’s response in “Jameson’s Rhetoric of Otherness and the National Allegory.”



a periodization following the development of Western literary history--Renaissance, Baroque, Neoclassicism, Romanticism, Realism/Naturalism, Modernism/Postmodernism.

Consequently, I have emphasized the shortcomings of the term “modernism” when applied to postcolonial literatures. Modernism, like nationalism, is a Western category that assumes universal value by transforming a culturally specific label into one that applies to the literary production of any part of the globe. It is not by coincidence that, as Pericles Lewis has persuasively argued, literary modernism can be interpreted as an attempt to redefine the idea of the nation through the employment of literary techniques--such as the conflation of first- and third-person perspectives within the same narrative--that go beyond the limitations of realism to represent a given society from a vantage point which overcomes the conflicts created by the turn-of-the-century crisis of theological certainties and subjective representation. Therefore, nationalism and modernism are transindividual paradigms that seek to provide a representational framework valid for all the members of a given community. The process whereby this type of “local universalism” becomes a global norm is what I have set out to critique in this study. Instead of interpreting Joycean fiction in Spanish America against the general background of transnational modernism, I have discerned in it an aesthetic space of resistance to modernity that legitimates the cultural production of the periphery without assimilating the forms and values of Euro-American modernism in an unproblematic manner. From this perspective, the temporal “newness” of modernism only applies to Western literary history as a local tradition, while the “newness” of Joyce, on the one hand, and Marechal, Borges, Cortázar, Lezama Lima, Cabrera Infante, and del Paso, on the other hand, should be understood in spatial terms. In other words, this spatial newness

cannot be inserted within the teleological development of modernity and Western literary history, as it signals a point of departure for an alternative model of literary change that exceeds the limits of the universalistic paradigms of the West. For instance, the originality of Borges's fiction resides in its eccentricity--in its reworking of the Western literary tradition from an Argentine perspective--not in the precision with which it prefigured Foucault's or Derrida's poststructuralist theories. By the same token, what makes Borges's and Joyce's work comparable is not their shared affinities with metropolitan literary norms, but their concurrent decolonization of those forms from the fringes of modernity--from Argentina and Ireland.

The literary map emerging from this type of spatial periodization takes full account of the "colonial difference"--or the compartmentalization of the globe into metropolis and colonies, center and periphery, or modernity and coloniality--but it does not reduce it to a mirage that vanishes once reality is conceived as a linguistic construct. Rather, this map brings to the foreground the silenced side of the hegemonic discourse of modernity to recognize in it an epistemological space from which legitimate cultural production can emerge. Thus, this map arises from the colonial difference, but instead of silencing one side (coloniality) to endow the other (modernity) with uncontested universal value, it recognizes multiple temporalities beyond the masternarrative of modernity, as well as aesthetic forms capable of articulating the situatedness of the peripheral author within the modern/colonial world. My widening of perspective has not involved an act of inclusion of peripheral authors within modernity (Rodríguez Monegal, Fuentes), or a dislocation of the colonial model that fails to transcend its limits (Said, Bhabha). Rather than postulating a literary history that talks about the colonial side of

modernity, I have stressed the possibility of speaking from it. While still within the global configuration of the modern/colonial world, this peripheral locus of enunciation disrupts a cultural economy that places the only source of cultural legitimacy in the modern side of the divide. This disruption is achieved through the verbalization of the displacement or “double consciousness” that the peripheral author experiences when forced to use the language and narrative forms of the metropolis, a displacement that Stephen Dedalus expressed in memorable terms in A Portrait as he conversed with the Dean of Studies at University College, an Englishman:

The language in which we are speaking is his before it is mine. How different are the words home, Christ, ale, master, on his lips and on mine! I cannot speak or write these words without unrest of spirit. His language, so familiar and so foreign, will always be for me acquired speech. I have not made or accepted its words. My voice holds them at bay. My soul frets in the shadow of his language. (189)

Walter Mignolo has argued that “what is missing in literary histories written until today is precisely the focus on double consciousness, which is to say, on the enunciation from the colonial difference” (“Rethinking the Colonial Model” 175). I have analyzed the intersection between Joyce and the new narrative in Spanish America as a transatlantic materialization of this “enunciation from the colonial difference.” The questioning of modern models of the subject, representation, and “literature” that has informed my analysis should not be confused with an internal critique of modernity or with a postcolonialist widening of focus to include the “other” within cultural discourse. My premise throughout has been that the transatlantic connection analyzed here challenges the universality of the categories derived from European literary history, particularly modernism and postmodernism. This limitation arises from coloniality as a legitimate

epistemic space, not from a deconstruction of the foundations of modernity. An accurate expression of this reconfiguration is offered by Jean-Paul Sartre in his magisterial preface to Fanon's The Wretched of the Earth. Sartre wrote that when the Martinican psychiatrist "says that Europe is heading for ruin, far from uttering a cry of alarm, he is offering a diagnostic. . . . As an outsider, he bases his diagnostic on the symptoms he had observed. As for treating it, no: he has other things to worry about. Whether it survives or perishes, that's not his problem" (xlv). The indifference to the fate of Europe as a geocultural site that Sartre alludes to applies as accurately to Fanon's decolonizing project as to the interrelations between Joyce and the Spanish American new narrative as I have read them here.

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