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Summary

In the following thesis, I argue for an interpretation of *relationality* on the basis of the *opacity* that separates perceiving subjects. Although a great deal has been written about relationality, my own project tries to demonstrate that paying close attention to the role of *language* and *time* in the explication of *separation* can provide us with further insights into the conditions upon which relationality is based.

The structure of the thesis directly supports, at a formal level, my interpretation of *subjectivity* as that which, because it revolves around the *absence* of a unified identity "I" could call its own true self, is always in the process of arriving out of obscurity. The link between the structure of the thesis and its thematic development is inscribed in the question that guides my interpretation of relationality: How to name the *anonymous*? My invocation of this long-standing and recurring question in the disciplines of philosophy and the practice of narrative is intended to highlight the important role *signification* plays in the explication of opacity as itself a name appropriate to the discussion of relationality.

In the first section I provide an introduction to terms that will figure prominently throughout the thesis against the background of *Emmanuel Levinas*' critique of the *Other* and *Jean-François Lyotard*'s critique of the *sublime*. In the *Interlude* I provide an argument supporting the inclusion of a number of Latin American authors in the thesis (namely, *Alejo Carpentier*, *Gabriel García Márquez*, *Carlos Fuentes*, *Juan Rulfo* and *Octavio Paz*) on the basis of their relation to absence. It is this relation that helps to clarify the terms introduced in the first section and which provides a close analysis of duplicity in the explication of the separation of relation.

Finally, in section five, I take the reader back to the middle, to the very *temporality* of the between, the separation which conditions relationality, in an explication of *postponement*, a term I employ in varying degrees throughout the thesis. My critique of postponement is based on *Carlos Fuentes*' reading of *Denis Diderot* and *Nikolai Gogol* and *Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth*'s *Sequel To History: Postmodernism and the Crisis of Representational Time*, both of which provide us with a language by which to conceptualise the role of postponement in the approach to the question 'How to name the anonymous?'. In this way, I hope to construct, through the tight linkage between form and content in the thesis itself, the very thing which the language and the temporality of the thesis are seeking to name.

The Unknown Tongue:
Postponing Language and the Anonymous

**A Thesis in Fulfilment of the Degree of Doctorate of Philosophy in the
Department of Philosophy, University of Warwick**

by

Eoin S Thomson

1996

For my parents, Rev. Dr. James A. Thomson & Evelyn J. Thomson

'Now to sum up', Bernard said. 'Now to explain to you the meaning of my life. Since we do not know each other (though I met you once, on board a ship, going to Africa), we can talk freely. The illusion is upon me that something adheres for a moment, has roundness, weight, depth, is completed. This, for the moment, seems to be my life. If it were possible, I would hand it to you entire. I would break it off as one breaks off a bunch of grapes. I would say, "Take it. This is my life".

'But unfortunately, what I see (this globe, full of figures) you do not see. You see me, sitting at a table opposite you, a rather heavy, elderly man, grey at the temples. You see me take my napkin and unfold it. You see me pour myself a glass of wine. And you see behind me the door opening, and people passing. But in order to make you understand, to give you my life, I must tell you a story - and there are so many, and so many - stories of childhood, stories of school, of love, marriage, death and so on; and none of them are true. Yet like children we tell each other stories, and to decorate them we make up these ridiculous, flamboyant, beautiful phrases. How tired I am of stories, how tired I am of phrases that come down beautifully with all their feet on the ground! Also, how I distrust neat designs of life that are drawn upon half-sheets of note-paper. I begin to long for some little language such as lovers use, broken words, inarticulate words, like the shuffling of feet on the pavement...

'But meanwhile, while we eat, let us turn over these scenes as children turn over the pages of a picture-book and the nurse says, pointing: "That's a cow. That's a boat". Let us turn over the pages, and I will add, for your amusement, a comment in the margin'.

Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* 1931.

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Eoin S Thomson
Warwick, England,
May, 1996.

Abbreviations

In order to facilitate readers in their work, I have abbreviated the most common texts used throughout this thesis. In those cases where I have used a non-English language text I have provided references both to the original and to a translation. In the body of the thesis I have referred to the original first and then to the translation. I have also elected to include Spanish text only when I have provided my own translations and, in the case of Octavio Paz's poetry, where plain prose translations of that poetry is quoted.

- A* Gabriel García Márquez, *El otoño del patriarca* (Barcelona: Plaza y Janés, 1975). *The Autumn of the Patriarch*, tr. Gregory Rabassa (London: Picador, 1976).
- AA* Reina Roffé, *Juan Rulfo: Autobiografía armada* (Barcelona: Montesinos, 1992).
- c/C* Gabriel García Márquez, *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* (Barcelona Plaza & Janés Editores, S. A., 1981). *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, tr. Gregory Rabassa (London: Picador, 1982).
- CPP* Emmanuel Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, tr. Alphonso Lingis (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Pub., 1987).
- FI* Wolfgang Iser, *The Fictive and the Imaginary: Charting Literary Anthropology*, tr. David Henry Wilson and Wolfgang Iser (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U P, 1993).
- GGM* Michael Bell, *Gabriel García Márquez: Solitude and Solidarity* (London: Macmillan P., 1993).
- IC* Maurice Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, tr. Susan Hanson (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1993).
- IE* Gabriel García Márquez, *La increíble y triste historia de la cándida Eréndira y de su abuela desalmada*. (Barcelona: Barral, 1972). *Innocent Eréndira and Other Stories*, tr. Gregory Rabassa. (New York: Harper, 1978).
- in/IN* Frank Janney, ed. *Inframundo* (México: Instituto de Bellas Artes, 1980) *Inframundo*, tr. Frank Janney et al (México: Ediciones del Norte, 1983).

- JL* Andrew Benjamin ed. *Judging Lyotard* (London: Routledge, 1992).
- JR* Luis Leal, *Juan Rulfo* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1983).
- I* Jean-François Lyotard, *The Inhuman: Reflections On Time*. Tr. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991).
- LAB* Michael Bell, *D. H. Lawrence: Language and Being* (Cambridge, Cambridge U P, 1992).
- III/BP* Juan Rulfo, *El llano en llamas* (México: Fondo De Cultura Económica, 1953). *The Burning Plain*, tr. George D. Schade (Austin: U of Texas P., 1967).
- LR* Andrew Benjamin ed. *The Lyotard Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989).
- ls/L* Octavio Paz, *El laberinto de la soledad* (México: Fondo De Cultura Económica, 1959). *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, tr. Lysander Kemp et al (London: Penguin Books, 1990).
- LSS* Gabriel García Márquez, *La hojarasca* (Bogota: SLB, 1955). *Leaf Storm and Other Stories*, tr. Gregory Rabassa (London: Pan Books, 1979).
- LW* Jorge Luis Borges, *Labyrinths: Selected Stories And Other Writings*, ed. Donald Yates and James Irby (London: Penguin Books, 1970).
- MN* Bruce F. Kawin, *The Mind of the Novel: Reflexive Fiction and the Ineffable* (Princeton: Princeton U P, 1982).
- MO* Carlos Fuentes, *Myself With Others: Selected Essays* (London: André Deutsch, 1988).
- NR* *Gabriel García Márquez: New Readings*. (Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1987).
- ob/C* Carpentier, Alejo. *obras completas de alejo carpentier*. volumen 3. (Mexico: siglo veintiuno, S.A., 1983). (This volume contains *guerra del tiempo*, *el acoso* and *otros relatos*. These were originally published in *Guerra del tiempo. Tres relatos y una novella*. Mexico City: Cía. General de Ediciones, 1958). *The Chase*, tr. Alfred Mac Adam (London: Minerva, 1991).
- OV* Octavio Paz, *The Other Voice*, tr. Helen Lane (Manchester: Carcanet, 1992).
- PEC* Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Explained To Children*, tr. Julian Pefanis and Morgan Thomas (Australia: U of Sydney, 1992).
- PF* Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1989)
- PH* Roberto González Echevarría, *Alejo Carpentier: The Pilgrim At Home*

(Texas: U of Texas P., 1990)

- PL* Santiago Colás, *Postmodernity in Latin America: The Argentine Paradigm* (Durham: Duke University P, 1994)
- pp/PP* Juan Rulfo, *Pedro Páramo* (México: Fondo De Cultura Económica, Ediciones Cátedra, 1993). *Pedro Páramo*, tr. Lysander Kemp (New York: Grove P., 1959). At times, I have supplemented Kemp's translation with a new translation by Margret Sayers Peden. Where this occurs the reader will be given appropriate notice.
- ps/LS* Alejo Carpentier, *Los pasos perdidos* (Madrid: Cátedra: Letras Hispánicas; Edición de Roberto González Echevarría, 1985). *The Lost Steps*, tr. Harriet de Onís (Middlesex: Penguin, 1968)
- PT* Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth, "Ph(r)ase Time: Chaos Theory and Postmodern Reports on Knowledge", *Time and Society* (London: SAGE, 1995). Vol. 4(1): 91-110.
- SH* Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth, *Sequel To History: Postmodernism and the Crisis of Representational Time* (Princeton: Princeton U P, 1992).
- SL* Maurice Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, tr. Ann Smock (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P., 1982).
- SP* Octavio Paz, *Selected Poems*, ed. Charles Tomlinson (London: Penguin Books, 1979)
- t/OE* Octavio Paz, *Tiempo Nublado* (Barcelona: Editorial Seix-Barral, S.A., 1983). *One Earth, Four or Five Worlds: Reflections on Contemporary History*, tr. Helen R. Lane (Manchester: Carcanet, 1985)
- TI* Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality And Infinity*. Tr. Alphonso Lingis. Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1969.
- TN* Carlos Fuentes, *Terra nostra* (Mexico: Editorial Joaquín Mortiz, S.A., 1975). *Terra nostra*, tr. Margaret Sayers Peden (London: Penguin Books, 1976)

Preface

In the following thesis, I argue for an interpretation of relationality based on the interrelation between various concepts that receive treatment throughout the thesis as a whole. Inscribing linkages between these concepts is indeed the primary work of the thesis in its attempt not only to offer an interpretation of relationality but also to attend to the question from which this interpretation arises: how to name the anonymous? My own approach to this question is grounded on the conceptual network through which the thesis is developed because it is in the very activity of inscribing linkages between concepts that the question of anonymity, as a question, will remain possible and not be foreclosed by a presignification of the field in which I place the question for investigation (the field of relationality). If there is a prior possibility for naming the anonymous and thereby of prefiguring it before we attend to its nature, then it seems to me that that possibility is going to be difficult to grasp conceptually because any conceptual system invoked to perform the task of an exemplary model would employ relations between concepts as a methodology. These relations would then serve as the nexus around which the unnameable would 'appear'. But it is precisely these relations that do not have a name. Therefore, I am prepared to take us into the field of relationality as a justifiably head-on approach to the question of anonymity. In this respect, the question requires us to remain hesitant, for it is the hesitation between the announcement of the question (as we now have it) and its being answered that the inscription of these linkages will take place. In short, I do not seek an answer to the question of anonymity through an interpretation of relationality. Rather, I seek a process that prioritises the passage between the asking and the answering of the question as a central operative mechanism in my effort to attend to anonymity.

Two central concepts that help to organise the network of concepts deployed in the thesis are 'opacity' and 'extimacy', both of which I introduce in the first section against the background of Emmanuel Levinas' critique of the Other and Jean-François Lyotard's critique of the sublime. In the case of my critique of Levinas' discourse, which figures more prominently than Lyotard's in my overall aims, I am not so much

concerned with clarifying, denigrating or spurning the conclusions offered by Levinas as with providing an accentuation of his claims in order to vivify what others have occluded in their own clarifications, denigrations and inflections on Levinas' arguments. Hence, Levinas is important here not because of his delineation of Otherness per se, but because of the relation *between* self and other that subtends much of Levinas' own formulations. Since many approaches to the question of anonymity have turned toward the inadequacy of language in its attempt to reveal its putative referential objects in all their fullness, employing the term 'the ineffable' as a focal point for discussion, and because I read most of these arguments as failing to comprehend what is central to language as a referential system, I unpack my own introductory terms against a reinterpretation of ineffability. This reinterpretation is not principally a corrective to misconstruals about just what 'the ineffable' really is, but more importantly a reinterpretation of the role language plays in our apprehension of the unnameable itself. I will argue later in the thesis that an understanding of anonymity must not turn towards the failure of language because language itself is implicated in the very impossibility embodied by the unnameable. Our attention must therefore turn towards the condition which makes the very relation between word and thing possible.

In the *Interlude* I provide an argument supporting the inclusion of a number of Latin American texts in the thesis on the basis of their relation to absence. It is this relation that helps to clarify the terms introduced in the first section and which provides a close analysis of duplicity in the explication of the separation of relation.

Once I have set these terms in motion through the first two sections it then becomes possible to return, in the third section, to a further elaboration of opacity as a significant term in the thesis as a whole. This elaboration is offered in a close analysis of two works by Gabriel García Márquez that concentrates on the role of death and absence in the development of their central themes. But it is also a section which structurally highlights the importance temporality - that is, the structure of time - plays in my overall aims. Hence, in section four - *The Time of the Between* - I concentrate specifically on temporality as it evolves in the work of Octavio Paz and Juan Rulfo.

My interpretations in this section inevitably lead to a reconsideration of linearity and the role simultaneity play in my approach to relationality and the question of anonymity. Therefore, although a great deal has been written about relationality, my own project tries to demonstrate that paying close attention to the role of language and time in the explication of separation can provide us with further insights into the conditions upon which relationality is based.

Finally, in section five, I take the reader back to the middle, to the very temporality of the between, the separation which conditions relationality, in an explication of postponement, a term I employ in varying degrees throughout the thesis. My critique of postponement is based on Carlos Fuentes' reading of Denis Diderot and Nikolai Gogol and Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth's *Sequel To History: Postmodernism and the Crisis of Representational Time*, both of which provide us with a language by which to conceptualise the role of postponement in attending to the question of anonymity.

In addition to the attention given to concepts I have also given specific attention to the structure of the thesis as is evident by the Table of Contents. This has a direct and, I would like to believe, important correlation to the thematic development of my argument. Because the thesis eschews beginnings and endings it is always in the process of arriving as something to which a unified identity could be attributed. This structure directly supports, at a formal level, my interpretation of subjectivity as that which, because it revolves around the absence of a unified identity "I" could call its own true self, is always in the process of arriving out of obscurity. In this way, I hope to construct, through the tight linkage between form and content in the thesis itself, the very 'object' which the language and the temporality of the thesis are seeking to name. Hence, a point which I hope is becoming clearer, my intention in this thesis has been to mobilise concepts over and against any primary philosophic or literary author(s). If I seem to be prioritising various texts from Latin America that is because they embody, in a particularly clear way, a number of key concepts I employ to advance my own claims. Notwithstanding this, there will be those who feel that certain authors, whose

work has been instrumental in the continuation of specific philosophic projects and traditions, are excluded from this thesis without justification. A few clarifications here will, I hope, help to explain these exclusions.

My intention throughout the thesis has been to include authors whose work pays specific attention to concepts which either receive a different inflection in my own work or which are used as contrary cases of concepts I invoke to elaborate my central theme. Hence, the reason for invoking Wolfgang Iser's latest work lies in Iser's use of absence as a concept central to his own formulations of the fictive and the imaginary. As we will see, absence is a central concept in my argument as well, but one which takes on a radically different tone than that offered by Iser. His use of the concept is therefore a good way into my own use because it offers a clear and contrary understanding of absence than the one I am offering. And while similar claims about the importance of, say, Heidegger's work, or that of the existential theologians (Buber, Feuerbach, Jaspers, Barth, Tillich ...) may seem legitimate here, there is a further requirement upon which the choice of texts has been based that made inclusion of their work very difficult. The industry that now surrounds Heidegger's work, for example, calls to be assessed in any response a writer might want to give to Heidegger's work in light of their own. However, filtering through this industrial smog in order merely to justify the importance of Heidegger's work in relation to problems in my own seems not only unnecessary to the advancement of my own claims but far too repetitive to be original. This does not mean that everything has been said. It only means that what is said here does not require Heidegger's work for its legitimation or for its successful articulation. My work does not suffer because Heidegger is excluded from it though it would suffer, I believe, if either the Heidegger industry was allowed to become a demarcation point for my own thinking or if any justification for the exclusion of his work was raised to the level of a critical perspective on the concepts I deploy throughout my own work. In the latter case, the action would only reinscribe those concepts back into the problem of attributing concepts to proper names, a problem I have tried earnestly to avoid. Other authors have presented themselves in my research

with key conceptual elaborations that required attention, and those are the authors that hold out against the requirement to maintain scholastic agendas and traditions. And in the case of the existential theologians, it has been my intention throughout this thesis to place the theology of language (and the language of theology) decidedly in abeyance since I have not wanted to immediately weigh my arguments down in any authorising language that would, once again, presignify or preordain the field of study.

This apparently abrupt dismissal of membership in 'the' tradition, or even of the applicability of certain projects within that or any other tradition, does not imply anything about the status that critical work receives in my own work. On the contrary, I am no more interested in denigrating 'the' tradition than I am in upholding it. Rather, in order to open the thesis to its own possibility, I have often had to avoid becoming embroiled in fixing it and its subject to a class of proper names whose identity would serve to strip the thesis of its own. This is not merely an anxiety of influence. It is a critical necessity. Readers who feel alienated by this strategic manoeuvre should consider the difficulty in attending to the question of anonymity through an invocation of proper names who have become synonymous with specific names attributable to the anonymous as such, that is, as something which is unnameable. In order to attend to the question of anonymity that maintains it as a question it is critically necessary to maintain an important distance from a tradition that has thoroughly delineated anonymity, thereby giving it a name. I have attempted, very early on in the thesis, to raise concepts that provide a critical perspective on this question by placing these names in abeyance. At the moment we realise that this strategy delivers us to a field of critical thinking that is not foregrounded in the proper names of 'the' tradition we are then able to begin an analysis of anonymity that is proper to it; that is, an analysis that does not know in advance of its own work what the name and therefore the identity of its 'object' are. If Heidegger has appeared to employ such a strategy in his own critical approach, how could naming him benefit my own attempt to stand at the boundary of a field I do not yet recognise? As we will see, the confrontation with the unrecognisable,

with the foreign, is central to my own approach to anonymity and helps to underscore once again how the form and strategic unravelling of the thesis merges with its content.

I realise that these clarifications about my choice of texts do not settle the issue of my exclusions. However, as we will see as the study moves forward, many of the reasons I have offered above for those exclusions drive to the heart of what this thesis attempts to argue.

§ -1: Terms of Ineffability

Otherness and Ineffability

Common conceptions of ineffability place it at the border between what language is capable of representing and what it fails to represent, as "that which ... cannot be adequately verbalised" (*MN*, 5), and as a moment experienced in a particular silence. As we will see, this definition immediately opens the problem of anonymity for us by prioritising language, and silence, in the construal of a putative Outside that is beyond expression, and our attention to it here will help to provide a framework for exploring that problem throughout the thesis.

Bruce F. Kavin argues, referring to mystical experiences, that "In the presence of the ineffable Oneness, there would be no "other" to mandate terminology, and no question of *différance*. If this experience is possible, it is not linguistic" (*MN*, 233).¹ The relationship between ineffability and the *failure* of language is therefore seen as an essential one. In Emmanuel Levinas it is the analysis of this relationship that allows him to say that "the ego is ineffable, above all because it speaks, it responds and is responsible" (*CPP*, 36). Levinas' assertion seems to proffer the most damaging equivocation: the ego cannot be represented by language *because* of language and, precisely, speech. Furthermore, as we will see shortly, Levinas argues that the other is beyond conceptuality, beyond representation and, therefore, necessarily beyond language. In some sense the other is ineffable as well. In order to approach the question of anonymity, of the possibility of its being named, communicated, brought forward out of its own silence, in such a way that the approach did not merely reinstate otherness at its core, we need to problematise the notion of the failure of language, for it is this notion which underlines the conceptualisation of otherness in Levinas' arguments: to move away from the discourse of the Other, we need to move away from the failure of language. In order to approach the question of anonymity we must, therefore, abandon the notion that anonymity's name lies behind its own apparent lack

¹ Kavin continues: "When a text pays attention to the limits of its means of expression and the limits of its being — when its self-consciousness attempts self-expression — then the ineffable is most certainly at issue" (*MN*, 229).

of communication. I propose to engender this movement through a set of concepts which are vital to the general questions this thesis asks. In many respects, it is the ideological force of the discourse on otherness to effect political and social policy that has allowed it to bury the central theme from which it developed through philosophers such as Levinas: how can we allow the other to speak for itself? How can we affirm differences without reducing them, by virtue of our very language, to mirror images of ourselves? As we will see, Levinas' work has provided others with the material by which to subdue difference under the banner of social, political and religious freedom. What the alternative conceptual network offered throughout this thesis attempts to open then is precisely what a normalised discourse on otherness has occluded.

* * *

How are we to comprehend the differences between the ego and the other if both are conceptualised in relation to the ineffable? Any serious attempt to treat this question must first approach the face-to-face encounter, since it is in this encounter that the ego, by being drawn from a first order, inward-turning externality to the more radical, second order exteriority of otherness and alterity, is distinguished from the other.

"A face *enters* into our world from an absolutely foreign sphere, that is, precisely, from an absolute, that which in fact is the very name for ultimate strangeness. The signifyingness of a face in its absoluteness is in the literal sense of the term extraordinary, outside of every order, every world" (CPP, 96).² For Levinas the movement from a first to a second order exteriority is accomplished in the ego's recognition of an other whose alterity cannot be recuperated into the ego's own self-representations. The separation between the ego and the other is one 'filled' by language and, precisely, the command to speak. There is a tendency on first reading

² On the question of the absolute and justice, Levinas writes: "The absolute which supports justice is the absolute status of the interlocutor. His modality of being and of manifesting himself consist in turning his face to me, in being a face. This is why the absolute is a person" (CPP, 32-33). I will refer to this again near the end of this discussion.

Levinas' argument to see in it a mere disposing of oneself to this command. Levinas tells us however, that recognition of the other is not merely submitting oneself to the other, for such submission "would take all its worth away from my recognition; recognition by submission would annul my dignity, through which recognition has validity. The face which looks at me affirms me" (*CPP*, 43). In this respect, both one and other are affirmed in the speech, the expressivity that erupts in the face-to-face encounter (*CPP*, 43). And yet, "the other does command me" (*CPP*, 43). I am faced by the other such that "the command I receive must also be a command to command him who commands me" (*CPP*, 43). Recognition of the other, respect for the other, submission and commandment become meaningful only in the reciprocal relationship between the ego and the other, this *shallow* rift.

* * *

Exteriority, Expression, Opacity

To understand the face-to-face encounter we first need to understand how exteriority sets the framework for Levinas' arguments as a whole. Exteriority arises at the intersection of two important relationships in Levinas' *oeuvre*: the relationships between the ego and the totality and the ego and the other. The distinction between these two relationships is not one of opposition. Rather, they are distinguished on the basis of an exteriority that appears in the first but finds its fulfilment in the second. This fulfilment is found in the recognition of commandment, responsibility and obligation in the face-to-face encounter with alterity.

In "The Ego and the Totality", Levinas tells us that "thought begins at the very point that consciousness becomes conscious of its particularity, that is, conceives of the exteriority which lies beyond its nature qua living being and encloses it" (*CPP*, 27). This first order exteriority represents the ego's inward-turning self-referentiality. "The individuality of the ego is distinguished from every given individuality by the fact that its identity is not constituted by what distinguishes it from others, but by its self reference" (*CPP*, 28). Levinas argues that this "inwardness which, for a thinking

being, is opposed to exteriority, occurs in a living being as an absence of exteriority. There is nothing mysterious in the identity of a living being throughout its history: it is essentially the same, the same determining every other, without the other determining it" (*CPP*, 26). Thought becomes possible as the consciousness of an exteriority the ego nonetheless encloses.³

In addition to self-referentiality, Levinas argues that the ego is also "exterior to itself, but with an exteriority which is not that of a body ... Here we have really an exteriority of the inward" (*CPP*, 4). Levinas' comments here follow a discussion of rhythm in its relation to a "poetic order" where Levinas argues that rhythm is "not so much an inner law of the poetic order as the way the poetic order affects us" (*CPP*, 4). This analysis suggests to Levinas that the "closed wholes" of rhythm and the "poetic order" "impose themselves upon us without our assuming them. Or rather our consenting to them is inverted into a participation" (*CPP*, 4). To recognise in the "poetic order" that the ego becomes cognisant of an exteriority "not assumed" by it is not to suggest that the ego is simply confronted with an alterity that commands it. Rather, the ego, in its "participation" with the "closed wholes" of the "poetic order" and rhythm, is still involved in "its own representation" (*CPP*, 4), and thus with "an exteriority of the inward".

The ego's exteriority to itself is established by Levinas in terms of resemblance. Levinas argues that resemblance is not "a result of a comparison between an image and the original, but as the very movement that engenders the image. Reality would not only be what it is, what is disclosed to be in truth, but would be also its double, its

³ Levinas argues that "thought begins with the possibility of conceiving a freedom external to my own" (*CPP*, 28). Such a conception is "the first thought. It marks my very presence in the world" (*CPP*, 28). But this conception, indeed thought itself, cannot begin unless there is a conscience (*CPP*, 29). What this suggests to Levinas is that "the problem of the relationship between the ego and the totality thus comes down to that of describing the moral conditions for thought" (*CPP*, 29). Without such conditions thought remains bound within the self-referentiality of an ego reducing all exteriority to itself and thus remains "opposed to exteriority". And while "the moral conditions for thought ... are realized ... in the work of economic justice" (*CPP*, 29), they are essentially worked out in terms of a second order exteriority; that is, in the relationship between the ego and the other. Nonetheless, what is fundamental to the analysis of "economic justice" is the participation-separation structure that figures prominently at the beginning of "Reality and its Shadow", a structure I will deal with shortly.

shadow, its image" (*CPP*, 6). Hence, insofar as an ego is concerned,

there is ... a duality in this person, this thing [among things], a duality in its being. It is what it is and it is a stranger *to itself*,⁴ and there is a relationship between these two moments. We will say that the thing is itself and is its image. And that the relationship between the thing and its image is resemblance (*CPP*, 6).

Both the ego's exteriority to itself in its image (the ego which is exterior to itself and which is therefore its own double) and the self-referentiality that allows the ego to position itself within the totality, a positioning which is "simultaneously a position in the totality, and a reserve with respect to it or a separation" (*CPP*, 27), are what constitute the participation-separation structure central to this first order exteriority, a structure that "marks the advent of ... thought, in which the bonds between the parts [of the totality] are constituted only by the freedom of the parts" (*CPP*, 28). It is also this structure that constitutes "a society", a totality of "beings that speak, that face one another" (*CPP*, 28). The second order exteriority confronts this structure in an attempt to radicalise it by pursuing the ego beyond itself, beyond its inward self-referentiality, in the face-to-face encounter with alterity. This alterity is the central feature of the second order exteriority.

In "Meaning and Sense", Levinas asks: "Does not sense as orientation indicate a leap, an outside-of-oneself toward the *other-than-oneself*, whereas philosophy means to reabsorb every Other into the Same and neutralize alterity?" (*CPP*, 90). Understanding "sense as orientation" reflects what Adrian Peperzak says about the meaning of the French "sens". "In French "sens" designates both "meaning" and "direction"" (*CPP*, 76, n. 4). Levinas' "sens" is orientation toward an exterior, the "other than

⁴ Being a stranger to oneself is not, presumably, the "ultimate strangeness" spoken of earlier since that would suggest that the ego or the ego's double is this absolute *from which* the face enters into our world. (See above, pg 13). This would be entirely antithetical to Levinas' project and begs an important question about what he means by these two different uses of 'the strange'. In some sense we see just how shallow the rift is that separates the ego and the other, since the foreignness of the absolute appears to be the radicalisation of the ego's own exteriority to itself. And yet, Levinas leaves us with no method of differentiating between these two employments of the term 'strange', especially with respect to 'the foreign'. Again, in some sense the ego is foreign to itself, and yet it is not the radical foreignness which situates the other beyond the ego's self-representations.

oneself", "a movement going outside the identical, toward an other which is absolutely other" (CPP, 91). The differences between this and the first order exteriority described above are telling. In the first order exteriority there is no movement outside of oneself but a cycling back into oneself as image and double - the image as doubling the ego. Such resemblance allows the ego to say that it is identical with beings in the world, except when it is confronted by the alterity of the other. The other refuses to be recuperated into the same via the identical. This also gives sense to Levinas' later argument that "we call a *face* the epiphany of what can thus present itself directly, and therefore also exteriorly, to an I" (CPP, 55). In the second order exteriority the ego cannot simply enclose the exteriority, the other within itself, within its own representation. Rather, the ego is commanded to respond, to speak, obliged insofar as the other is concerned, an obligation which is delineated in terms of a specific notion of transcendence. Commandment and transcendence are intricately linked, for it is the transcendence of the ego and the other "with respect to each other" that creates a distance between them (CPP, 43).⁵ This distance is the space "in which language occurs" and prevents either the same or the other from being "reducible to a relation between concepts that limit one another" (CPP, 41). In this respect, "the other is not invoked as a concept, but as a person" (CPP, 41). And it is this aconceptuality that allows Levinas to "situate" the other "beyond every attribute" which would "reduce him to what he has in common with other beings" (CPP, 41). In the absence of such conceptual reduction, we encounter a "self-identical being that [Levinas calls] the presence of the face" (CPP, 41). The other must be self-identical if it is to remain other - radical exteriority.⁶ *The other is not merely the ego's double as the inward-turning externality of the image was for the ego.*

⁵ This reciprocity between the ego and the other, expressed in terms of commandment and transcendence, is precisely a reaffirmation of the participation-separation structure outlined above.

⁶ And yet, "the epiphany of a face is wholly language" (CPP, 55). This points us back to my earlier reservation about the use of the term 'ineffable' in relation to language. How is an epiphany, which must be exterior if it is to remain the face it is, related to language such that it *is* "wholly language"?

* * *

Levinas' version of the otherness-alterity axis cashes itself out in a discourse on ethics that centralises, amongst other things, notions of exteriority, expression, commandment (responsibility) and transcendence. Alternatively, the reconceptualisation of the ineffable, offered here as a way of problematising the notion of the failure of language and thereby of opening a different conceptual network than that offered by Levinas and the discourse of the Other, will delineate *ineffability* in terms of opacity structured by extimacy.⁷ By opacity I mean the *distance shared* by individuals, the mediation point that makes their relation possible, the very between that, at one and the same time, allows them to approach each other by holding them apart; that is, opacity is the impossibility of unification and the condition that makes intimacy possible. In this sense, opacity *subtends* exteriority; it is the point at which the outside is intimate with an inside that appears to deny it. Opacity is therefore structured by extimacy, the intimate exteriority of the outside. Consequently, opacity is not exteriority's opposite and it would be pernicious to weigh it down with a terminology of 'the inside'. Even Levinas' exteriority is an outside that is on the near-side of the ego, looming on a horizon the ego participates in in its "commanding a being to command" it (*CPP*, 43): exteriority is not a "simple spatial or temporal remoteness" (*CPP*, XIII). Similarly, opacity is not localised inside a psyche as the prior possibility of the psyche or the gap over which the psyche must leap in order to encounter itself in the fullness of its being.⁸ But again, this does not leave us with one alternative alone, that opacity is outside the psyche, outside the ego making itself felt or present to the

⁷ While I will be dealing with this shortly, it is important to indicate here that extimacy is based upon the *intimacy* of the relation between the inside and the outside, an intimacy that is important to Levinas' own arguments.

⁸ In *Postmodernity In Latin America: The Argentine Paradigm*, Santiago Colás' close reading of Julio Cortázar's *Rayuela* [*Hopscotch*] pays specific attention to the main character's leap from a third story window near the end of the novel's first narrative sequence. While I will be paying closer attention to Colás' text later, it is important to point out that the relation between the notion of a leap and that of a gap is fundamental to the broader issues explored in my closer reading of various texts from Latin America.

ego, since that would place it prior to the unfolding of that psychic life: it would place opacity back before us as the origin of our desires and motivations or above and beyond us as a type of progenitor. Clearly this is where the task becomes difficult. If opacity is not (an) inside nor (an) outside where and what is it? What the analysis of opacity aims to prevent in answering this question are any simple reductions to ontological categories based on hasty definitions. Opacity is not a being-in-the-world nor a being-outside-the-subject (as some prior truth of the subject covered over by the subject's own confusions about itself or some truth to come which, nonetheless, is constantly deferred by the subject's language). Hence, the analysis of opacity, seeking to subdue the temptation of ontology, also seeks to pinpoint opacity in everyday life, as the fabric of life and its events.⁹ Opacity, and indeed subjectivity, cannot be conceived in terms of frescos, as walls infused with levels of meaning. The suggestion is not that subjectivity is not stratified, but that it is not a palimpsest, that the quality of it being stratified is better understood not in terms of a tiered edifice we descend as if towards hidden truths, but of voices whose simultaneous vocality does not suggest a true identity buried beneath articulation.¹⁰ When Levinas argues that "the relationship between the thing and its image is resemblance" we must immediately ask how Levinas is able to conceptualise this resemblance without saying something about the nature of *the between* resemblance traverses or bridges. The concept of opacity responds to this

⁹ An awkward terminology: daily living, the ordinary, the day-to-day! A terminology that seems to slide so easily towards the pedantic. Again the labour is in demonstrating the importance of this terminology in the abeyance of the otherness-alterity axis, an axiological force catching every discourse within its gravity. The importance is not a centralising one, as if the attempt here were to propose an '-ism' of the market-place, a back-to-basics communitarianism founded on a McCarthy-like moralism. Not that, above all not that.

¹⁰ Recent work in the analysis of communication has had to take this seriously or, where that analysis has seemed weak, it should have taken it seriously. It is no longer viable to conceive communication, as so many psychiatrists, philosophers and psychologists had, as the transportation of encoded messages to a receiving decoder. Such a notion grounds itself in what Godfrey Vesey has called "the myth of the sense behind the sentence" (Godfrey Vesey, "Foreward", *Communication and Understanding* (New Jersey: Harvester P., 1977):xii). We need to critique the employment of this myth in the analyses of subjectivity; the myth that behind the actions, expressions and appearances of the subject there exists the true kernel (or the kernel of truth) of the subject's identity - that these actions, expressions and appearances are only variegated manifestations of a unity yet to be discovered. I will explore this in greater detail later.

Levinasian portrayal of relation by redirecting the problems and concepts Levinas raises away from exteriority, alternatively underscoring the notion of impossibility and, precisely, the impossibility of experiencing the experiences of others, as a central motif in any analysis that concentrates on the between; that is, on the space which governs relation.¹¹ Being exposed to an exterior makes a detour around this impossibility and, while it does not suggest a transparency at the heart of our experiences of others, our experiences *in* their lives, it nonetheless obfuscates the importance this impossibility plays in any movement an ego makes beyond itself *in view of another*. Furthermore, the exteriority of the ego to itself, its own doubling of itself, cannot but find in this 'outward' mobility an 'inner' reflection: that the ego's 'outward' impasse reflects a similar impasse in its own experiences of itself insofar as the articulation of those experiences is concerned. Not only am I not able to experience the experiences of others, but I am also unable to determine which voice in my own psyche is the voice that marks out or defines my authentic and singular identity. My own psyche is a wall mortared with ineffability in the same manner in which relations between others are and, therefore, neither my identity nor those relations can be said to be singular. This is why ineffability is not merely a lack of experience but an impossibility. The voices of subjectivity resist conformity with a language that would make their identities transparent to an 'ego'. The contrast between opacity and geotemporal distance is informative here.¹² Geotemporal distance is the distance that stretches out between our tables - here I am at this table across from you while you cry. The opaque is not simply a lack of experience - I have never experienced such sorrow - but the impossibility of experiencing the experiences of others. Empathy or sympathy belong to geotemporal distance, to the active participation in a set of representations communally distributed across the stitching of society. The opaque is the impossibility

¹¹ The concept of impossibility is central to what I am offering throughout the thesis in my general response to the question of anonymity and will receive a more detailed appraisal further on. However, it is vital to introduce the concept here in order to prepare us for what follows.

¹² As we will see, there is a significant difference between geotemporal distance and separation.

of experiencing your tears even with these representations, this language in hand. In this sense, ineffability is an experiential limit; ineffability fails, fails to conform to the language of the commune.

* * *

Transcendence and Extimacy (The Ex-fimate Relation)

The reciprocal relationship between the ego and the other, founded on the other's affirmation of the ego vis-à-vis commandment and obligation realised in expression, can only be guaranteed in a strict maintenance of the transcendence of the ego and the other. As such transcendence is vital to the whole configuration whereby the ego's exteriority is radicalised or 'undone' in terms of recognition.¹³ Consequently, any affirmation can only arise where both the ego and the other are "transcendent with respect to each other". Transcendence here means that the ego and the other are not intimate with each other, "for any intimacy, any affection would already alter the pure vis-à-vis position characteristic of an interlocutor" (*CPP*, 43).¹⁴ This transcendence, Levinas writes, "is characteristic of speech" (*CPP*, 41), specifically the commanding speech of the interlocutor, and recalls his affirmation that "the epiphany of a face is wholly language".

In Levinas' lexicon the interlocutor is the "unimpeachable and severe witness [who inserts] himself "between-us"" (*CPP*, 43), between the intimate and "closed society" of the couple (*CPP*, 32). Such an insertion "awakens in me and in the other what is common to us" (*CPP*, 36). As the "third man", the interlocutor "essentially disturbs [the] intimacy" which excludes it (*CPP*, 30). This disturbance is enacted by the interlocutor's "speech making public [the couple's] clandestinity" (*CPP*, 33). Here

¹³ Mark C. Taylor points out that Levinas' conception of the 'undoing' of the ego "is brought about by what Levinas describes as ""good violence" ... As a result of this violence, the subject is always *sub-jectum*, i.e., is always "thrown under" by an Other more powerful than itself" (Mark C. Taylor, *Altarity* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1987):207.

¹⁴ Recall here my parenthetical remark concerning the relationship between the absolute and justice in Levinas' text (see above pg. 13, n. 2). The "absolute status of the interlocutor" is a status maintained in transcendence.

we confront the centrality of language in the progression of Levinas' argument. Not only does language disturb the intimacy that excludes the "third man" by giving "access to the other" (*CPP*, 36) - "Language in its expressive function is addressed to, and invokes the other" (*CPP*, 41) - language also conceptually 'secures' the "transcendence of the interlocutor" (*CPP*, 36) - "The interlocutor appears as though without a history, outside of systems. I can neither grant nor deny his claims; in expression he remains transcendent" (*CPP*, 43). Such an interlocutor "affect[s] me" in the reciprocal relationship of recognition, affirmation and commandment I outlined earlier, a relationship which depends upon the transcendence of "freedoms" (*CPP*, 43). "Speech is thus a relationship between freedoms which neither limit nor negate, but affirm one another" (*CPP*, 43).

The being of the interlocutor must remain "self-identical" in order to remain "beyond every attribute" (*CPP*, 41). Self-identity is that inability I treated above to "reduce [the interlocutor] to what he has in common with other beings, to make of him a concept". Language then, in the face-to-face encounter with a "hard and substantial interlocutor" (*CPP*, 41), severs intimacy in the maintenance of self-identity. But what is common for self-identical beings? Is Levinas not forced into the uncomfortable position of segregating individuals such that alterity would refuse to make itself heard? Is this not what forces Levinas to say, at one and the same time, that the aconceptuality of the interlocutor is the interlocutor's self-identity, that self-identity which makes it impossible to "reduce him to what he has in common with other beings", *and* that the interlocutor's insertion "between-us" "awakens in me and in the other what is common to us"? To argue that opacity is structured by extimacy is to suggest that what is common *between* subjects is the radical unknowing at the heart of their relation, an unknowing which is not reducible to language but resides in excess of it. Is this not what is really at stake in Levinas' argument? A radical unknowability that is not reducible to the endorsements and successes of language? And does Levinas refuse to approach such unknowability directly because of his indebtedness to

language? The analyses of ineffability and opacity avoid this equivocation by placing Levinas' lexicon in abeyance. And in order to fully set that lexicon aside in preparation for what follows in the next few sections, it is important to explicate what is meant by the concept of extimacy and the ex-timate relation.

Extimacy, by which I mean the intimate outside, is not the inside on the outside; that is, not the subject's perceptions transmuted to or singularised in the perceptions of others. Nor is it the perceptions of others transmuted to the subject. Keep in mind that we are talking about a subject for whom the experiences of others are removed from the purview of their gaze; that is, experiences that exist, as *totalities*, on the otherside of opacity. And yet something strikes through, penetrates the mist of opacity and gives us a glimpse of that otherside. What is this something and what is the nature of opacity such that it permits of these breaches of the between? At the moment of the insertion through the opaque, at the moment a collision occurs between two horizons of experience, at that moment we become fully aware of the ex-timate relation. This does not mean that the subject has some direct access to the perceptions of others: the ex-timate relation is not a means by which to overstep opacity. *The exterior can never be intimate to a subject unless by way of the opacity that structures relation.* Hence, ineffability, conceived within the axiological coordinates of opacity and the ex-timate relation, is embedded in relation itself. The imbeddedness of ineffability makes the distinction between geotemporal distance and separation an important one. To be aware of separation is to be aware of opacity. Opacity is the distance that separates me from your tears; it cleaves me in the approach of your sorrow. Such cleaving should be understood in all the nuances of the verb 'to cleave'. Thus not only as division or splitting but also as adhering, sticking and clinging: "Cleaving, therefore, simultaneously divides and joins".¹⁵ Hence, it is not the case that an increase in the distance between us will increase our intimacy. There is never an exponential relationship between separation and intimacy such that an

¹⁵ See *Altarity*, 48.

increase in the former would multiply (even the 'quality') of the latter. Proposing such fulguration of intimacy in the growth of geotemporal distance would be puerile.

Separation is not a phenomenal distance, a measurable space, but an opaque surface through which any passage must remain incomplete, that is, completely postponed.¹⁶

As such, cleaving opposes itself to geotemporal distance, affirming separation in all its duplicity: I am separated from you in the approach of your tears, tears which cling to me in the most profound way. This profundity brings us into contact with an intimacy more fecund than any exteriority, more fecund than any alterity making its command bear upon me from an absolute exterior. Recognising opacity as a cleaving opens us to an intimate sharing of the unknown that we are. In the encounter with this unknown we experience an intimate refusal¹⁷ to be subjugated one onto the other, a refusal to be "thrown under" by an Other more powerful than ourselves; our being intimate in an irrefragable separation as this refusal.

While intimacy is marked by separation, it is precisely this separation that provides the condition for our intimate encounter. Such an encounter does not erase the separation *we share*¹⁸ but exposes us to it. Separation gives us the possibility for intimacy, for it is separation, founded on our experience of ineffability and opacity, which we cannot experience alone. We do not experience a radical exteriority in withdrawal: *we are separated in an intimacy that exposes us to each other.*

* * *

Ineffability, Language, Ontology

I have tried to differentiate ineffability from Levinas' notion of otherness and alterity through the development of an alternative lexicon and I have made the claim

¹⁶ The notion of postponement will receive fuller treatment later.

¹⁷ A refusal that is mutually asserted *because* of the recognition that separation keeps subjects in contact with each other.

¹⁸ Separation cannot continue to be thought as a negative setting apart by some force which, otherwise absent, would allow people to unify themselves. We are irredeemably held apart in the most fecund way, an argument I will develop more fully in the next two sections.

that this lexicon resists the temptations of ontology. The terms of ineffability gesture towards an encounter, that is the encounter with nothing we know. These terms inevitably remain tied to the endorsements and successes of language. But the affiliation with language approaches a liminal space by a refrain these terms commit against language and, necessarily, against themselves. One primary condition of the ineffable is that it cannot be talked about or represented. This, at least, seems to be Kawin's argument when he writes that "secondary first-person narration ... allows the ineffable to be framed and, within that frame, examined; this is the case whether or not the ineffable's manifestation is a fiction" (*MN*, 79). Kawin ultimately wants to argue for a sense of the failure of language to represent that portion of reality that is beyond or outside normal ways of perceiving and knowing. Kawin, therefore, is in search of an outside or a beyond only attainable outside normal epistemic frameworks. He argues that "the ineffable is a category of extrasystemic awareness and that the limits of the personal and textual systems are analogous. The ineffable is the All, both of holistic intuition and of the universe - an All that is regularly identified as God, but that can easily be considered an irreducible Oneness" (*MN*, 102). Kawin is thus after a "different kind of knowing (intuition or direct experience) that can render the other side accessible but still leave it undiscussable" (*MN*, 83). Kawin's argument suggests two directions for him: one, an immersion in pure existence and two, an immersion in a fragmentary time. In the first, where one simply exists, "there is no need for language, and in fact, no language. Everything exists; nothing requires expression" (*MN*, 106). In the second, a fragmentary time, a time of divisible moments set off from a unity or simultaneity of temporal segments, engenders "partial perception" and "the illusion of separate personal identity, death and so forth" (*MN*, 106). For Kawin then, the ineffable is linked to language and time vis-à-vis the act of speaking. "In the world of time, then, the way to deal with the ineffable is to *speak*" (*MN*, 106). Language is akin to God's immersion in time "in order to discover himself behind all the masks and so return to atemporal oneness", but language "cannot achieve insights or return to its

own original nature" (*MN*, 107). The problem with this is clear: by framing the ineffable in order to examine it, Kawin implicitly puts his faith in language's ability to point beyond itself. "Often one proceeds by using language against itself, making it aware of its boundaries ... trying to get words to see past themselves or the listener to join their battle on that level until he or she can jump levels ... and see the world correctly" (*MN*, 106). The failure of language is turned into a productive force: it allows us to apprehend the unspeakable in an exacerbation of the limits of language.

The real problem with Kawin's approach is that he seeks to frame the ineffable: what is the ineffable? This question singularly dictates the whole process by which Kawin will interpret the novels he sees as particularly good examples of reflexive fiction. But the question already implies that the ineffable can be ontologically grounded, a ground Kawin seems to deny, at least in any concrete sense. Why then ask the question if he has already done away with the ground? Even this would be too simplistic. For Kawin, it appears that the ineffable may constantly change in relation to the "frames of reference set up for its definition" (*MN*, 22). But this implies that it has a fleeting ontological ground. Contrary to a definition of the ineffable that supports an ontological reference point, I am arguing that the ineffable never achieves a position within any ontological framework. This is precisely why any discussion about the ineffable is extremely difficult and why linking the ineffable to language is problematic. In this respect, it is vital to assert that the ineffable is itself ineffable; that is, it refuses itself, postpones itself in any of our attempts to ground it ontologically, even when that ground remains temporary. Constructing terms of *ineffability* gets us as close as we can to the ineffable by exposing us to the impossibility of identifying a linguistic construction with any 'real' object or condition in the world.¹⁹ In this sense, ineffability is the active transgression of language, the refusal to be reduced to any ontological ground or category vis-à-vis language. This does not mean that we avoid ontology but that we confront ineffability; that is, the act of transgressing language. Hence, the

¹⁹ In my analysis of Juan Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo* I will develop this argument more fully.

terms of ineffability are not constructed *ex nihilo* but *in absentia*. They are not definitional (that is, they do not belong to an order of correspondence and referentiality) but erupt out of the passage through ineffability itself. As we pass through ineffability, through the transgression of language - which, as we will see, is not merely the staging of some new battle against the hegemony of literature as both an academic discipline and a cultural, ideological construct - the terms of ineffability begin to unfold.²⁰

* * *

Sublimity and Ineffability

In the early stages of his analysis of D. H. Lawrence, Michael Bell argues that Lawrence's attempt to move "towards a confident use of ... a symbolic representation of feeling", a representation Bell labels "emotional symbolism", leads Lawrence to underscore the ontological obscurity that exists not only between self and world but between individuals as well (*LAB*, 19). Bell argues that this movement represents the beginning of Lawrence's mature articulation of the problematic relation between language, being and the representation and communication of inner states of self-awareness. Bell points out that Lawrence's concern with self-consciousness and the obscurity of self and other, an other which for Lawrence is located particularly in nature, does not lead Lawrence to conclude "that individual feeling cannot be communicated within this mode of self-consciousness; only that there is something else seeking to get expressed as well" (*LAB*, 19). The attempt to redirect our thinking about ineffability beyond its equivalence to a failure in language is an attempt to

²⁰ Similarly, Levinas wants to argue that the other is not a concept but a person and that the 'personness' of the other cannot be reduced to a subjectivist description. Yet, this argument is cashed out in strict conceptual terms, terms which differentiate themselves from each other in a systematic way. This criticism would be puerile if it were not for the aconceptuality of otherness. Hence, the analysis of an aconceptual difference indebted to a rigorous conceptual lexicon. Is this not an inevitable contradiction? Is contradiction not the site of the most intimate separation? That is, the copresence of mutually exclusive orders which are brought together vis-à-vis the separation of relation? And does this not encourage the very discourse Levinas constructs insofar as the grasping of the ungraspable is concerned? These questions expose us to the demands of our next task - the differentiation of ineffability from sublimity.

approach the question of this "something else" and, specifically, the notion that *expression* is central to our perception or communication of it. Jean-François Lyotard, noteworthy for his attempts to rethink the avant-garde within the problematic of the sublime and, more generally, to propose alternative readings of Western culture against the problematic of legitimation and performativity within "capitalism's regime of pseudorationality" (*PEC*, 86), is an important figure for such a redirection since he situates both these problematics within a more generalised notion of the paradoxical relation between expression and the inexpressible. Lyotard argues, for example, that Barnett Newman's artistic success in respect of this "something else" is not only his ability to bear witness to the inexpressible but the ability to provoke "the advent of an 'unheard of' phrase" (*LR*, 245). This provocation is essential to Lyotard's reading of the avant-garde as heir to a Kant-Burke axis which, according to Lyotard, privileges art as the vehicle for the "vocation of the sublime" (*PC*, 79). Such a vocation is grounded in the notion of incommensurability that is developed in the "allusion to the unrepresentable by means of visual presentations" (*PC*, 79). While Lyotard sees such a vocation and its relation to incommensurability "implied in the Kantian philosophy of the sublime" (*PC*, 79), he also locates it squarely within the experimentation of the avant-gardes, an experimentation which eschews unity - of self, of community, of discourse - in favour of dissipation.

Rather than foster in the addressee a lamentable turning back to self or in the commentator the morbid jubilation of having proved with examples that his system 'works' in every case, [the avant-garde artist] instead breaks his discourse, and those to whom it is directed, into the discipline of incommensurables, which is the discipline of the infinite (*LR*, 185).

Such a discipline makes its moves in a field that does not maintain the narratives of self or emancipation, narratives which delimit the purpose of art on the basis of a "horizon of universality" and "the Idea that rationality and freedom are progressing" towards some ultimate telos or finality that would represent the end of a long linear (chronological) order (*PEC*, 89-90). For Lyotard, postmodernity, at least in the

arts, is a turn away from the "idea of a possible, probable or necessary progress ... rooted in the belief that developments in the arts, technology, knowledge and freedoms would benefit humanity as a whole"; the "belief that initiatives, discoveries and institutions only had legitimacy insofar as they contributed to the emancipation of humanity" (PEC, 91).

In an important essay, Bill Readings takes up Lyotard's notion of incommensurability in his reading of Werner Herzog's film *Where The Green Ants Dream*. Readings argues that the closure of commensurability employed by Western imperialism, evidenced in the relation between the Ayers Mining Company and the Australian Aborigines in Herzog's film, could never erase the untranslatability and therefore incommensurability of the Aborigine identity (JL, 172). Such an identity

remains in that the very energy required for its extinction bears mute witness to a non-identity, to the imperialist terror inherent in the western notions of justice and humanity as universal abstractions. It remains as the encounter that Herzog's film evokes, *an encounter which lacks a language that might phrase it adequately*, an encounter in which *language encounters silence* rather than silence being simply language's absence (or visa versa) (JL, 172; my emphasis).

The centrality of language and, specifically, of expression in the complementary notions of incommensurability and the sublime will be the focus of my distinction between ineffability and sublimity. As in the analysis of Levinas' notion of otherness and alterity, the demand here is to demonstrate how any equivalence made between ineffability and the "failure of the word" (LR, 245) or the "failure of expression" (LR, 203), failures which are intimately connected to a pleasure-pain axis that helps to ground both a Kantian and a Burckean notion of the sublime, can only serve to hinder any understanding of the terms of ineffability especially as they lay the groundwork for our approach to the question of anonymity vis-à-vis an analysis of the between of relation, the latter of which will concern us in the next section.

Creation, Shock, Experimentation

As I intimated, Lyotard situates Newman alongside the Kant-Burke axis as heir to an implied notion of the experimentation which, Lyotard argues, leads Newman to confront the limits of the perceptible. This confrontation takes the form of a "flash", the "t̄z̄imt̄zum" or "z̄ip" of "artistic creation itself" (LR, 243-246). As such, (artistic) creation becomes the central subject-matter of Newman's art. And yet, as Lyotard quickly points out, while "subject-matter is not ... eliminated from Newman's painting" (LR, 243) as the result of disrupting the organisation of space "around a sender, a receiver and a referent" (LR, 242), it is nonetheless a subject-matter that must be understood beyond the simple transmission of "a message to a viewer Any commentary must be guided by the principle that these works are non-figurative, even in a symbolic sense" (LR, 244). According to Lyotard, it is this sense of the non-figurative that must adjudicate our understanding of creation in Newman's work. Creation is not a message sent from an individual for a receiver: "creation is not an act performed by someone; it is what happens (this) in the midst of the indeterminate" (LR, 243). Creation is the moment of the immediate, the "it happens here and now" (LR, 243). Creation is an annunciation, announcing the "instant itself" (LR, 240), the fact that there is "something happening, rather than nothing, suspended privation" (LR, 205). The notion of privation is Burke's and is central to his analysis of the sublime as the "secondary privation" that suspends the "threat of nothing further happening" (LR, 204-205). For Burke this threat comes in the form of a privation mixed with terror:

privation of light, terror of darkness; privation of others, terror of solitude; privation of language, terror of silence; privation of objects, terror of emptiness; privation of life, terror of death. What is terrifying is that the *It happens that* does not happen, that it stops happening. What is sublime is not only the occurrence, this rather than nothing, but, in Burke, the suspension of the "terror-causing threat" (LR, 204).

As Lyotard tells us, "This suspension, this lessening of a threat or a danger, provokes a kind of pleasure that is certainly not that of a positive satisfaction, but is, rather, that of

relief" (*LR*, 204). For Burke, relief is the privation of being "deprived of light, language, life" (*LR*, 205). What is central in Burke's analysis then, is the fear or terror of nothing happening and the suspension of the agent of that fear or terror.

Newman's place alongside this Burkian configuration rests in the 'here and now' of creation; the occurrence, the instant.²¹ "What is sublime is the feeling that something will happen, despite everything, within the threatening void, that something will take 'place' and will announce that everything is not over. That place is mere 'here', the most minimal occurrence" (*LR*, 245). And yet, such an affinity between Burke and Newman would be too simplistic if it did not take into account Burke's reservation about the possibilities open to painting in the exercise of this annunciation. For Burke, painting was "incapable of fulfilling" the "twofold and thwarted finality of inspiring terror (or threatening that language will cease, as we would put it) and of meeting the challenge posed by this failure of the word" (*LR*, 245) because it could not "escape the figurative prison" (*LR*, 246). Such an escape was impossible because painting "can never be in excess of what the eye can recognize" (*LR*, 245). In poetry, or "what we would now call writing" (*LR*, 245), Burke found the arena for such excess

²¹ I have not dealt with Lyotard's treatment of temporality in Newman's notion of the instant because it has seemed to go outside the bounds of this first section. Essentially, Lyotard argues that Newman's creation implies a time which is not the "present instant", the one that tries to hold itself between the future and the past, and gets devoured by them ... Newman's *now* which is no more than *now* is a stranger to consciousness and cannot be constituted by it. Rather, it is what dismantles consciousness, what disposes consciousness, it is what consciousness cannot formulate, and even what consciousness forgets in order to constitute itself. What we do not manage to formulate is that something happens" (*LR*, 197). Lyotard wants to demonstrate that the avant-gardes do not seek the "technological manipulation of time" on the basis of the "calculation of profitability, the satisfaction of needs, [and] self affirmation through success", three tiers in the late modernist valorisation of "the availability of information" against the "disappearance of the temporal continuum through which the experience of generations used to be transmitted" (*LR*, 209-211). According to Lyotard, Newman's avant-gardist paintings make witness to an inexpressible which simultaneously bears witness to the temporality of the immediate. The notion of the immediate extends out of Lyotard's efforts to readjust our perception of the synchronicity of time: "there is no single time; a society (or a soul) is not synchronous with itself, nor a sector of society, or an institution like art, or even ... a segment of an institution like sculpture or film. There are only parachronisms all around; it is the observer's timepiece that judges what is present-day" (*LR*, 186). In my analysis of Octavio Paz's *El laberinto de la soledad* [*The Labyrinth of Solitude*] and Juan Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo* I will provide a critique of the notion of 'the now' and 'the instant' which helps to support my own particular approach to the question of anonymity in connection to the between of relation, a between, as I will argue, which is not that of 'the present' conceived within a ternary time system.

in "the power of language in all its sufficiency" (LR, 245).

How then, can Lyotard claim that Newman effectively invokes the "vocation of the sublime"? Precisely in Newman's combination of both plastic and linguistic elements in his painting. For Burke, "figuration by means of images is a limiting constraint on the power of emotive expression since it works by recognition. In the arts of language, particularly in poetry ... the power to move is free from the verisimilitude of figuration" (LR, 205). Language has a priority over visual images because "words enjoy several privileges when it comes to expressing feelings" not the least of which is the "power to effect ... combinations that would be impossible by any other means" (LR, 205). For Burke, and even more for Lyotard, "the arts, whatever their materials, pressed forward by the aesthetics of the sublime in search of intense effects,²² can and must give up the imitation of models that are merely beautiful, and try out surprising, strange, shocking combinations. Shock is, *par excellence*, the evidence of (something) happening, rather than nothing, suspended privation" (LR, 205). According to Lyotard, this is precisely what Newman accomplishes. Hence, in viewing Newman's art, "if we examine only the plastic presentation which offers itself to our gaze without the help of the connotations suggested by the titles, we feel not only that we are being held back from giving any interpretation, but that we are held back from deciphering the painting itself" (LR, 244).²³ In Newman's "determination of pictorial art, the indeterminate, the 'it happens' is the paint, the picture.²⁴ The paint, the picture as occurrence or event, is not expressible, and it is to this it has to witness"

²² As Lyotard tells us, "for Burke, the sublime was no longer a matter of elevation ... but of intensification" (LR, 205).

²³ I would be remiss if I didn't mention the work of René Magritte as an exemplary case of the combination of plastic and linguistic elements in the production of shocking, intense effects. See Michel Foucault's delightful essay *This Is Not A Pipe* for a discussion of Magritte.

²⁴ In his treatment of temporality in Newman, Lyotard also argues that Newman's question concerning time leads to "an unexpected answer ... that time is the picture itself" (LR, 240). Not only is the picture the indeterminate of a 'here and now' but the immediate time which transgresses that "'present instant'" which is constantly consumed by the future and the past. Newman's paintings, according to Lyotard's interpretation, transgress the ternary time system in the indeterminacy of their own temporality.

(LR, 199). For Lyotard, the sublime is this very indeterminacy: "Here and now there is this painting, rather than nothing, and that is what is sublime" (LR, 199).

In Lyotard's understanding of the sublime, the Burkian problematic is shored up by a Kantian notion of the incommensurability between Ideas and the imagination's (failed) attempt to present an example of those Ideas, an example that would satisfy the strictures of a representational or figurative model. In Kant, "an Idea of reason" cannot be adequately represented by the "faculty of presentation, the imagination" (LR, 203): "while we have an Idea of the world (the totality of what is) ... we do not have the capacity to show an example of it ... we cannot illustrate it with a sensible object which would be a "case" of it" (PC, 78). Lyotard argues that this

failure of expression gives rise to a pain, a kind of cleavage within the subject between what can be conceived and what can be imagined or presented. But this pain in turn engenders a pleasure, in fact a double pleasure: the impotence of the imagination attests *a contrario* to an imagination striving to figure even that which cannot be figured, and that imagination thus aims to harmonize its object with that of reason (LR, 203).

The pleasure-pain axis in Burke, as the "secondary privation" of threat, is seen in Kant as the incommensurability between perception and reality. In Newman, this axis takes its shape, as Lyotard sees it, in the confrontation between creation and chaos, a confrontation indebted to language. For Newman, the 'there is', the *Is it happening* of artistic creation is the "instant which interrupts the chaos of history and which recalls, or simply calls out that 'there is', even before that which is has any signification" (LR, 247). If "like a flash of lightning in the darkness or a line on an empty surface, the Word separates, divides, institutes a difference, minimal though it may be, and therefore inaugurates a world" (LR, 243), and if, as Newman writes, "the subject matter of creation is chaos", then, in accordance with Burke's notion of "suspended privation", Newman's "flash of tzimtzum, the zip, takes place, divides the shadows [of a threatening chaos], breaks down the light into colors like a prism, and arranges them across the surface like a universe" (LR, 246). All this is accomplished by the

combination of both pictorial and linguistic elements such that the intense effect could not be achieved with the omission of either. This means that Newman is indebted, if we take Lyotard at his word, to a Burkian notion of the "power of language in all its sufficiency". And while Lyotard is correct in arguing that Newman's sublime "is still the sublime in the sense that Burke and Kant described and yet it isn't their sublime anymore" (*LR*, 199), we must still recognise the centrality language and expression play in this 'new' sublime.

For Lyotard then, the combination of plastic and linguistic elements in Newman's art suggests that "the powers of sensing and phrasing are being probed to the limits of what is possible, and thus the domain of the perceptible-sensing and the speakable-speaking is being extended. Experiments are being made. This is our postmodernity's entire vocation, and commentary has infinite opportunities open to it" (*LR*, 190). Postmodernity represents a break with a "classical aesthetics" that understood being (subjects) as substitutive manifestations of Being, the One, a unity that "speaks only one language" (*LR*, 190). Experimentation becomes that vocation which asserts dissipation, "permutability" - aesthetics as "paraesthetics", commentary as "paralogy", the work as "parapoetics" (*LR*, 191). This experimentation avoids collapsing into a notion of experience that determines the world, the socius, the self as a unified totality that art can make cognisant to us. If the artist has any responsibility in the awareness that "we have been abandoned by meaning", it is to "bear witness that *there is*, to respond to the order to be" (*LR*, 248). Philosophy enters the experimental laboratory of the avant-gardes by refusing to "head towards the unity of meaning or the unity of being ... but towards the multiplicity and the incommensurability of works. A philosophical task doubtless exists, which is to reflect *according to opacity*" (*LR*, 193; my emphasis).

Encountering and Ineffability

With this we return to the concerns Bell clearly articulates as central concerns for Lawrence as he came closer to his mature writing. Broadly speaking, the concerns Bell highlights in Lawrence are similar, if not identical, to those Lyotard explores in his analysis of Newman and the sublime: language, expression of feeling, the "unheard of phrase" - Bell's "something else" trying to get expressed - and opacity. The odd man out in this respect is Readings since he underscores the *insufficiency* of language evidenced in the encounter between the Ayers Mining Company and the Australian Aborigines. Recall Readings' remarks: the Aborigine identity "remains as the encounter that Herzog's film evokes, an encounter which lacks a language that might phrase it adequately, an encounter in which language encounters silence...". Not only is language insufficient to capture or fully expose the Aborigine identity, but the very encounter itself fails to be reduced to the strictures of a representational model. Once again, opacity can assist us in the explanation of this notion of encountering. Opacity is the separation that structures the *relation between* the mining company and the Aborigines. The mining company accomplishes the oppression of the Aborigine by attempting to smooth over this opacity with a linguistic imperative, an imperative to speak the language of the West.²⁵ As Readings points out, such an imperative nonetheless fails in its mission because it "bears mute witness to a non-identity". As such, language only serves to highlight the very opacity that separates the world of the mining company and the world of the Aborigine, an opacity language vainly attempts to circumvent, an opacity evidenced in the encounter in which "language encounters silence".

Bell has written in another context that Lawrence

used the image of the stranger, or 'foreigner', to enforce an intuition of the radical, and proper, otherness of all human beings, where that intuition of a radically different centre of life is lacking, other beings become merely opaque or, more commonly, they are unwittingly

²⁵ Recall Levinas' notion that the other, in the face-to-face encounter, commands the ego to speak.

absorbed into our own emotional perception as we fail to see their separateness at all (*GGM*, 15).²⁶

Bell's remarks create some confusion about the relation between opacity and separateness and, laterally, about the relation between language and the inexpressible. **When we succeed in recognising the separateness of others²⁷ we simultaneously recognise their opacity.** The failure to recognise separateness is a failure to recognise this opacity not, as Bell argues, that these others become "merely opaque". Opacity and separateness cannot be contrasted.²⁸ On the contrary, they announce each other by signalling the arrival of the outside, of the very allusiveness of our own subjectivity. The confusion Bell's remarks evoke can be unpacked in the following manner.

We believe, 'in the beginning', that language is transparent or offers a transparent view of the world 'at large', thereby capturing it in all its fullness. The move beyond this initial conception, offered in varying forms by post-structuralism and some deconstructionist and postmodernist narratives, towards the recognition of the limits of language really doesn't clear up the confusion. Recognising that language fails to provide us with a clear, transparent and universal perception of the world only serves to smooth over the question of opacity by giving us the vain pretence that we can get on with life's opaqueness by merely making a humble recognition of language's insufficiency in the face of such opacity. A more radical response would suggest that there can be no adequate representation of the 'world' since such a totality could not reasonably exist. The evidence of this dual impossibility lies in the failure to achieve a totalising, epistemic criterion that would satisfy those partial perceptions of what constitutes the 'world' in the first place; a criterion that would unify all those perceptions into a universal image. A reconceptualisation of the ineffable as

²⁶ Bell seems to approach a Levinasian perspective here. See above pp. 13ff regarding my analysis of the first order exteriority in Levinas.

²⁷ Bear in mind what has already been said about Levinas' otherness and alterity.

²⁸ Similarly, opacity and isolation cannot be contrasted once we get beyond thinking isolation as removal; that is, once we start thinking isolation as solitude and solitude as a being in community absently - the foreigner within, what Bell calls the "opacity of solitude" (*GGM*, 17). We will return to this in more detail later.

ineffability, as opacity and extimacy, allows us to recognise that the ineffable is not a condition language *fails* to circumvent but that language itself belongs to this very opacity. Contrary to the ordinary analysis, the failure or limit of language produces no insights into what structures those limitations and failings. In contrast to this claim, ineffability makes an affirmative gesture: ineffability does not seek to circumvent opacity but upholds opacity as the very fabric of relation.

The notion Readings offers, that Herzog's film evokes an encounter which lacks a language, further underscores the affirmative character of ineffability. This affirmation is best explored in the notion of encountering rather than the problematic notion of expression. It doesn't seem sufficient to talk about the limitations, inadequacy or outright failure of language to represent 'reality', without asking ourselves what an adequate representation would look like and, further, how we would *know* that such a representation was in fact adequate in the first place. As we have seen, expression, especially in its relation to the inexpressible, tells us very little about the opacity that structures the very relations that constitute the expressed. On the other hand, encountering pinpoints that opacity, bears witness to it and suggests that what is central to ineffability is the invocation of an encounter which is itself opaque. Ineffability, therefore, underscores an encounter with an unknown, a foreigner. But we need to ask what conditions make an encounter with this foreigner possible? It would almost require something like a complete forgetting²⁹ of what we knew in order that this "unheard of", this "something else" could resound in our ears.

²⁹ Lyotard takes up the notion of an "initial forgetting" in his "Note on the Meaning of "Post-" as a way of confronting some confusions about the use of "postmodernism" in his writing. Lyotard wants to make clear that the modernist claim that "it is both possible and necessary to break with tradition and institute absolutely new ways of living and thinking" is not to be equated with his sense of the "post-" in "postmodernism" (PEC, 90). For Lyotard, the "post-" of "postmodernism" needs to relieve itself of this connotation by elaborating an "initial forgetting" in the form of "a "perlaboration" (*durcharbeiten*) performed by modernity on its own meaning" (PEC, 93). The intimate link between modernity and postmodernity - what Lyotard describes as the postmodern in the modern (PEC, 81) - should not therefore be confused with modernity's efforts to uphold a sense of linear development or progress within the self or society. Instead, the "initial forgetting" would represent this inward turning *anamnesis* modernity would perform on itself. In this sense, Lyotard argues, postmodernity is "not a movement of repetition but a procedure in "ana-": a procedure of analysis, anamnesis, anagogy and anamorphosis which elaborates an "initial forgetting" (PEC, 93).

But how could such a forgetting be accomplished *in view of* an absence our epistemic 'condition' nonetheless suggests? There appears to be no way out of the circular repetition of shared perception.³⁰ But it has never been the intention here to suggest such vulgar departures. Rather, the intention has been to explore what Lyotard calls the extension of perceptibility. I want to suggest that that extension, to be an extension, must face opacity directly and not attempt to circumvent it. While Lyotard is forthright in his conviction that this is exactly what constitutes the vocation of the sublime within the 'project' of the avant-gardes, indeed what constitutes postmodernity as the assault on metanarratives, his attempts to maintain the paradox of expressing the inexpressible suggest a slipping back into the, albeit unwanted, effort to smooth over opacity. Ineffability doesn't provide us with a way out of shared perception but indicates that such a perception is first and foremost opaque.

³⁰ I take this to be, roughly, Derrida's claim in "Sending: On Representation". There are significant problems with Derrida's thesis, not the least of which is the attempt to read representation representationally. See Veronique Foti's essay "Representation and the Image: Between Heidegger, Derrida and Plato", *Man and World* (Martinus Nijhoff P, V. 18, 1985):65-76 for an informative discussion of Derrida's claims.

§ 0: Interlude

The relationship between society and literature is not one of cause and effect. The link between the two is at once necessary, contradictory, and unpredictable. Literature expresses society; by expressing it, it changes, contradicts, or denies it. By portraying it, it invents it; by inventing it, it reveals it. Though society does not recognize itself in the portrait that literature puts before it, this fantastic portrait is nonetheless real: it is that of the stranger who walks at our side from our earliest infancy and whom we know nothing, except that he is our shadow (or are we his?).

Octavio Paz
One Earth, Four or Five Worlds

Writing the Between: Latin American Fiction¹ and the Separation of Relation

I argued above that Levinas' employment of resemblance requires for its fulfilment an attentiveness to the between. In preparation for the closer readings I will provide of some Latin American fiction throughout the next section, it will be valuable to offer a sense of the importance the question of the between holds for the thesis as a whole and, more specifically, how that fiction offers us a particularly valuable conceptual network by which to investigate this question.

In one of the most recent and comprehensive texts to come out of Latin American studies, Santiago Colás' *Postmodernity in Latin America: The Argentine Paradigm* argues for a rereading of contemporary Latin American fiction, and especially that of Julio Cortázar, within a substantive analysis of a specifically Latin American modernity. The shift from this modernity to a notion of postmodernity in Latin

¹ It is important to point out immediately that my analyses throughout this section are not intended to represent Latin America as a totality, as if *the* Latin American text could be described irrespective of the various cultures out of which Latin American writing arises. As Octavio Paz has written: "For almost two centuries now, misapprehensions about the historical reality of Latin America have been accumulating. Even the names used to designate it are inexact: Latin America, Hispanic America, Iberoamerica, Indioamerica. Each of these names leaves out a part of reality We Latin Americans speak Spanish or Portuguese; we are or have been Christians; our customs, institutions, arts, and literatures descend directly from those of Spain and Portugal. For all these reasons we are one American border of the West; the United States and Canada are the other. But we can hardly claim that we are an overseas extension of Europe; the differences are obvious, numerous, and, above all, decisive" (*OE*, 159-160). While it is important for Paz to distinguish Latin America from European ideologies, especially those ideologies which lead to Western modernity, and the ideologies of the United States and Canada, it needs to be said that Canada and Mexico share some important similarities with respect to the United States. First and foremost Canada is not simply an extension of the United States. Secondly, the variety of experiences and perceptions that make up the Canadian psyche, a variety created out of differing responses to differing geographic and historical realities which make up the 10 provinces and two territories of our enormous country, prevents any easy reduction of that psyche to any one category. The imminent creation of a third territory, stretching from Northern Quebec through the Hudson Bay islands and into The Northwest Territories, whose political influence has already been felt in the 1995 Quebec referendum on separation, testifies to a continuing and positive response to differentiation. As we Canadians have known for some time, it is impossible to determine exactly what 'the Canadian' is. And, in fact, only when we realise that 'the Canadian' does not exist will we be able to overcome the internal divisions that have caused and continue to cause us so many hardships. We must affirm our particularisms against the totalizing notion of a fixed, stable, unifying identity in much the same way that Paz argues Latin America must affirm its own against the incursions of a monopolising United States. Our relationship with the United States carries similar anxieties as does Mexico's relation, and it would benefit both our countries to engage in dialogue on this issue. Even the *United States* can no longer achieve its ill-fated desire for unity of identity and purpose. The regional, local differences seem to disrupt any attempt at homogenising a particular area or a particular people. In short, we are experiencing everyday in greater and greater degrees that 'we' are a multiplicity. The arguments that follow are a means of critically exploring what this might mean.

America allows Colás to explicate the complex relation Latin America has had with Europe, an explication which exposes the limitations of popular readings of Latin American fiction that isolate it from its cultural and political context. Colás singles out Linda Hutcheon's *A Poetics of Postmodernism* here principally because her portrayal of Latin American fiction outside the specific cultural and political exigencies to which that fiction responds greatly limits her employment of that fiction as an example of "an international literary trend" in the 60's that forms the basis of her claim that literary postmodernism prioritises questions of historical revisionism. For similar reasons, I would single out Brian McHale's cursory treatment of Latin American fiction in his *Postmodernist Fiction* primarily because his "incidental interpretation[s]" and his attempt to "construct the repertory of motifs and devices ... shared by a particular class of texts" (*PF*, xi) completely ignores the singularity at work in Latin American fiction. Of particular note here are McHale's references to Alejo Carpentier that reduce Carpentier's writing to a localised example of a European notion of the fantastic derived from Todorov. McHale tends to mortify the singularity of Carpentier's *lo real maravilloso* (that is, marvellous reality) by coupling Carpentier with other writers from Europe under the general sign of the "fantastic genre" (*PF*, 16).² McHale's attention to the incidental blinds him to the fact that Carpentier had abandoned the notion of *lo real maravilloso* by the time he had finished *Los pasos perdidos* [*The Lost Steps*] in 1953 and certainly well before he began writing *El siglo de las luces* [*Explosion in a Cathedral*] in 1962, the latter of which McHale still sees as standing within the general category of "magical realism".³ In short, McHale never really approaches the problems

² Carpentier introduced the term *lo real maravilloso* into the general semiotic economy of Latin America in the Prologue to his *El reino de este mundo* [*The Kingdom of this World*].

³ The extent to which the explication of *lo real maravilloso* offered in the Prologue to *El reino de este mundo* marks out Carpentier's writing in the 1940's is clearly articulated in Roberto González Echevarría's *Alejo Carpentier: The Pilgrim At Home*, a text I have depended upon in charting the emerging significance of certain terms which arise in Carpentier's writing during this period. (See, in particular, *PH*, 107-129 for Echevarría's discussion of *lo real maravilloso*). Echevarría's text, whose breadth testifies to that of its subject, explores in an intricate and complex manner what I will be offering on a microscopic level. Echevarría's charting of the influences which have helped to shape Carpentier's writing between the early 1920's to the late 1970's cannot be substituted by this microscopic analysis. However, because the nature of my project is to locate terms which can be of assistance in the elaboration of the separation of relation, of that between within which an adequate

opened by Carpentier's novels. Rather, he only seems to bring to light the characteristics that mark out the avant-garde in a very broad sense as a movement, and labelling a contemporary expression of these characteristics 'postmodernism' without distinguishing how it differs from the avant-garde generally seems pointless.

In both Hutcheon and McHale, Latin American fiction appears as a local example of European movements. Even if the notion of a literary postmodernism could be applied to the work of authors such as Alejo Carpentier, Gabriel García Márquez, or Julio Cortázar, both Hutcheon and McHale would need to clearly articulate just exactly what modernism they see these authors responding to. Both Hutcheon and McHale assume that that modernism is straightforwardly European, that even a European modernism remains unambiguously evident to their readers and, as Colás points out, in Hutcheon's case that the notion of a 'literary postmodernism' has been sufficiently and clearly articulated. Without these important clarifications we are left with the impression that Latin American fiction merely responds to European modernist preoccupations; principal among these the desire for immediacy as the most legitimate response to the alienation of technological advancement and the ensuing dislocation of self and society. And Colás will tell us that the notion of alienation is central to Cortázar's *Rayuela* [*Hopscotch*], a novel Colás sees as marking the high point in and crystallisation of Latin American modernity. So it is essential for Colás to develop in what sense European preoccupations are not merely taken on board by Latin American authors, otherwise the whole assumption of a Latin American

response to anonymity can be pursued, I have had to relegate a good deal of Echevarría's superb analysis to a number of marginal citations. The reason for denigrating McHale here is only to suggest that the status of Latin American fiction within my own text must not be seen as forwarding any reductive affiliations between that fiction and any of a number of literary and theoretical texts from Europe and North America. While a careful reading of these latter texts may prove valuable in relation to the question of anonymity and the between, I have concentrated on a number of Latin American texts because they embody, in a particularly clear way, the concepts I will argue are vital in understanding the notion of the between of relation and its value in a discourse on anonymity. Nonetheless, what is of equal importance is the very question of a reductivity at the heart of McHale's analysis, a question which drives to the heart of what Carpentier and others in Latin America have accomplished in their continuing appreciation of their relationship with Europe and North America and their attempts to achieve self-realisation. McHale's attention to the incidental seems to blind him to the importance of this larger issue.

modernity and postmodernity will seem misplaced. This development is pursued by Colás in a crucial observation that the concepts of Latin American modernity and postmodernity really only exist in relation to a European and North American model. This is crucial for more than obvious reasons. Latin America is not only concerned with the problematics of colonisation as such but, more importantly, with the conditions which make transformation towards the postcolonial possible. Such transformation does not proffer the discovery of an authentic identity buried beneath the contours of a dominating and oppressive outside. Rather, it offers Latin Americans, especially in the wake of the Cuban revolution and the success of narrative in the early 60's, the possibility of *constructing* their own identity. It is that possibility that essentially marks the transition from Latin American modernity to Latin American postmodernity. It was only in actively pursuing "issues of political and cultural purity and impurity ... [the] questions of revolution, utopia, subversion, and democracy ... of high and mass culture, of vanguardism and the role of the writer and of historical knowledge and representation" (*PL*, 24), elements Colás sees as endemic to Latin American postmodernity, that Latin American's were able to construct a sense of their own modernity. What this retrospective analysis revealed to many theorists in Latin America was that, in fact, much of the boom narrative of the 60's was constituted by a whole "modernising, utopian and totalizing aesthetic" (*PL*, 26) in much the same way the Cuban revolution was, and that that aesthetic rested upon the very "same Western philosophical and political soil" both the narrative and the revolution "had intended ... finally to cast off from" (*PL*, 27). Latin American modernity, Colás argues, is therefore marked by the attempt to ground Latin America in the purity of the Latin American soil through the impure language of Europe. This contradiction would ultimately dissolve Latin American modernity. As a result, however, theorists realised that the "inability to acknowledge and live with contradiction, this intolerance to impurity, this radical utopian impulse ... marks Latin American modernity. And, more than anything, the realisation that such impurities are not only inevitable but can also be fruitful marks Latin American postmodernity" (*PL*, 27). For Colás, *Rayuela* marks

the high point of Latin American modernity because it opens the floodgates through which the questions and problems take shape that make this transition possible.

Transformation towards the postcolonial is therefore marked not by a search for what Latin America authentically is beyond or, even better, behind the façades of a European literary or philosophic tradition. Rather, transformation is marked by the constant redistribution of those façades within the context of a tradition always in the process of being created.⁴ Latin America does not say 'No' to Europe. Rather, it takes the harder line that hybridisation is the principal path by which the affirmation of Latin America can be achieved: that is, Latin America places the discussion of identity within a different register than that posited by this European tradition.

Alejo Carpentier's *Los pasos perdidos* provides us with a clear example of this sense of transformation embodied in the tension of contradiction. The protagonist of *Los pasos perdidos*, a composer and musicologist, after reluctantly accepting a museum curator's invitation to travel to the Orinoco in search of rare musical instruments, once in the presence of the Venezuelan landscape and people becomes aware of a way of life he feels he has abandoned. His return to this life is marked by a renewed sense of a past at once his own and simultaneously the deep past of human history and time. Everything begins to change for him. Where before, at the instigation of his mistress who has travelled with him, he would have agreed to pay a forger to make fake instruments from the drawings he could supply on his return from the jungle, now he feels so completely enveloped in a pure immediacy as to make such simulation and fakery utterly detestable to him. The protagonist tells us that "little by little [his mistress] was turning into something foreign, incongruous" while, by contrast, Rosario, a woman he meets in a village at the mouth of the Orinoco river, one who erupts in him the sense of a telluric world he has buried within him, "grew more

⁴ That is, a tradition whose identity is always postponed by the active inclusion of an outside that appears to deny it. Given what I argued above, that opacity is the point at which the inside is intimate with an outside (see above, pg. 18), it should be clear that the connection between opacity, extimacy and postponement is central to our understanding of the response I am offering to the question of anonymity, a connection I will develop throughout the remainder of the thesis.

authentic, more real, more clearly outlined against a background that affirmed its constants as we approached the [Orinoco]. Relationships became established between her flesh and the ground ... relationships proclaimed ... by a unity of forms giving the common stamp of works from the same potter's wheel to the waists, shoulders, thighs that were praised there" (*ps*, 170-171; *LS*, 97). I know of few works that could embody the desires of such romanticism with such passion and conviction as *Los pasos perdidos*. And yet, all is not what the protagonist takes it to be, and while his desires are truly Romantic, the object of those desires is not.

Shortly after his colourful ruminations on the unity between Rosario and the Venezuelan jungle, the protagonist has occasion to witness a festival of dance "on the feast of Corpus Christi" (*ps*, 181; *LS*, 107) in a ruined city along the banks of the Orinoco river. The protagonist tells us that "A kind of fear came over me at the sight of those faceless [aborigine dancers], as though they were wearing the veil of parricides; at those masks, out of the mystery of time, perpetuating man's eternal love of the False Face, the disguise, the pretence of being an animal, a monster, or a malign spirit" (*ps*, 180; *LS*, 105-106). And, later still, as he and the company he is travelling with enter into the remotest part of the Venezuelan jungle, the protagonist fully awakens to a fundamental duplicity at the heart of virgin America. "What amazed me most was the inexhaustible mimetism of virgin nature. Everything here seemed something else, thus creating a world of appearances that concealed reality, casting doubt on many truths ... The jungle is the world of deceit, subterfuge, duplicity; everything there is disguise, stratagem, artifice, metamorphosis" (*ps*, 227-228; *LS*, 149). What can we make of this praise of pretence and duplicity? This is still Romanticism to be sure, for the protagonist believes himself to be in the immediate presence of a pure and singular existence; fully in awe of the slippage of time and history, of the emptying of the years, of his approach, as he nears the absolute centre of the jungle, towards "the year 0" (*ps*, 240; *LS*, 161).⁵ But there is something subtly

⁵ "But dates were still losing figures. In headlong flight the years emptied, ran backwards, were erased, restoring calendars, changing centuries numbered in three figures to those of single numbers. The gleam of the Grail has disappeared, the nails have fallen from the Cross, the money-changers

at work within this Romantic vision, making it aberrant. This aberration becomes evident in the protagonist's inability to separate his concepts of temporality and historicity and his need of the written work from his involvement in the community of aborigines he meets on the other side of the vegetal threshold he crosses in order to fully enter the zero moment of creation, the Valley Where Time Had Stopped. Immersed within the purity and immediacy of virginal America, a purity and an immediacy, mind you, that is marked by the very duplicity and artifice the Romantics believed could be eliminated through the marriage of "nature and creative consciousness" (*PH*, 190), such immersion reveals to the protagonist his need for the tools and the conditions of his life "back there". In order to fully explore the possibilities opened to him by the subtleties and intricacies of tone gleaned from the new instruments he finally comes into contact with, he realises that he will need to acquire a great many more notebooks than the few he has brought with him, for they alone would not satisfy his need to compose the countless scores that were germinating in his imagination.⁶ "I could not do without paper and ink, without things expressed or to be expressed by these mediums" (*ps*, 292; *LS*, 211). And so, the

have returned to the temple, the Star of Bethlehem has faded, and it is the year O, when the Angel of the Annunciation returned to Heaven" (*ps*, 240; *LS*, 161).

⁶ In an interview with Ennio Morricone, undoubtedly one of the greatest composers of the twentieth century, in which Morricone is asked to reflect upon the composition of the music for Roland Joffé's monumental film *The Mission*, Morricone has these important words to say: "[*The Mission*] is set in South America, in 1750. The Jesuits had gone to America to spread Christianity. But they also brought their musical experience and their liturgy. The music of the Post-Renaissance. The theme that I wrote was conditioned by Jeremy Irons' fingers on the oboe; the native music and Western music taught by the Jesuits had to be combined into a whole. The union of these elements is very important. In them I see myself, spiritually and technically. These three ideas, unified in one idea clearly symbolize a new spirituality. These two spiritual forces [that is, Jeremy Irons and Robert De Niro, the latter of which is a converted slave herder] are very different but find a way of communicating. And finally they die together - the ultimate sacrifice". In his response to the score of *The Mission*, the musicologist Sergio Miceli tells us: "In this relationship between spiritual and musical values, Morricone, in his own words, saw enacted something he had always believed in: Music as a means of salvation. It is very significant that a young girl among the survivors [after the slaughter of the missions by the Portuguese and Spanish armies] should rescue something from this moment of civilization. She sees a violin and a candlestick. Without hesitation, she takes the violin. At this moment we hear one of the loveliest themes ever written by Morricone". (A BBC2 Production, tr. Amanda Malia, 1995). The parallel between Morricone and Carpentier, as we will see as the rest of this study unfolds, is intimate, and we would do well to hold Morricone's words close at hand as we progress ahead.

protagonist returns to the world he thought he had left behind. But it is this return to his life "back there" which, in securing the possibility of writing similarly secures the impossibility of following the steps back to the purity of the origin. When he finally finds his way back to the village at the centre of the jungle⁷ he has become fully aware that the contradiction of belonging to both the jungle and to the world "back there" would annul any choice he made to remain in that virginal space. "I would sail [the next day] towards the burden awaiting me", we are told.

Within two days the century would have rounded out another year, and this would be of no importance to those around me. There the year in which we live can be forgotten, and they lie who say man cannot escape his epoch. The Stone Age, like the Middle Ages, is still within our reach. The gloomy mansions of romanticism, with its doomed loves, are still open. But none of this was for me, because the only human race to which it is forbidden to sever the bonds of time is that race of those who create art, and who not only must move ahead of the immediate yesterday, represented by tangible witness, but must anticipate the song and the form of others who will follow them, creating new tangible witness with the full awareness of what has been done up to the moment" (*ps*, 329-330; *LS*, 249).

And yet, the protagonist seems to be claiming that the immediacy which is founded upon a vision of purity is, in some sense, beyond the perception of the artist. How then, can the artist appear within the immediacy that, by definition of his craft, excludes him? To put it another way, how can the artist, who is bound to time, even appear within the timelessness of immediacy? What the protagonist demonstrates to us is that the steps back to primeval purity are, at one and the same time, made possible because of his artistic pursuits and lost because those pursuits will inevitably alienate him from the immediacy the temporality of those pursuits denies, a temporality which is completely ternary in nature. *Los pasos perdidos*, therefore, embodies what I referred to earlier as the ex-timate relation, one which we now see is based upon contradiction. The possibility of being intimate with the immediacy of the jungle,

⁷ Upon his return to the Venezuelan jungle, the protagonist discovers that the threshold he had earlier crossed has been covered over by the floods the tropical rains have swept across the jungle; the steps back to the Valley Where Time Had Stopped lost in the duplicity of the jungle's signs.

represented in the protagonist's erotic encounters with Rosario, is based upon an artistic pursuit which, by definition, excludes him from the very intimacy he seeks. This is precisely what is meant by the ex-timate relation: being intimate with an outside that denies the unification between an identity in search of itself in a past it can never reach. Such a contradiction exposes identity as essentially and continually postponed. What we need to ask now is how this postponement is inscribed; that is, what is the concept that best articulates the condition by which this postponement is inscribed?

In *Los pasos perdidos*, the artist appears condemned to linearity, to the thrust towards the future, to the thirst for "new tangible witness", one that is based upon the awareness of the precolonial and colonial texts which have been responsible for the construction of Latin America for Europe. Since Latin American fiction emerges out of a "world already conjured up by the European imagination",⁸ it seems condemned to creating itself from "within a fiction of which it is a part". In this sense, "America is a literary and fictional place, a new beginning that is already a repetition" (*PH*, 28-29). Appearing captured within a whole network of converging textual inscriptions from without, many Latin American writers attempt to "escape [the] literary encirclement" that this represents by "constantly striv[ing] to invent themselves and Latin America anew" (*PH*, 27). In this sense, "born of Modernity, Latin American literature appears to be condemned to the delusions of newness in order to expose them" (*PH*, 28-30). Fuentes echoes this when he writes that the "relationship between time and the manifestation of time" is intimately connected not only to Latin American fiction but to the complex sense in which to situate a Latin American modernity. Fuentes argues that having been "born into modernity ... during the Enlightenment" Latin American's

⁸ "In this sense, the discovery of America was the actualization of a fiction, the founding of a world that had its origins in books before it became a concrete and tangible *terra firma*" (Edmundo O'Gorman, *The Invention of America: An Inquiry into the Historical Nature of the New World and the Meaning of its History*. As Carlos Fuentes tells us, "in his classic book *The Invention of America*, the Mexican historian Edmundo O'Gorman maintains that America was invented rather than discovered. If this is true, we must believe that, first of all, it was desired then imagined" (*MO*, 183). Fuentes' enormous *Terra nostra* attempts to point out that, in the face of its own decline Spain desires its own rebirth in the virginal and edenic New World. In this sense, the *absence* of America is the condition that makes it possible to imagine and invent America, a notion I will be exploring shortly.

were "told to forget the instantaneous, circular, and mythical times of our origins in favor of a progressive, irreversible time, destined to an infinitely perfectible future". The linear time of Enlightenment thought promises a continually emerging and new society into which the poor, savage Indian can finally find truth; the truth of progress and the "secular eternity" it engenders (*MO*, 75). However, in order to understand the condition in which identity finds itself postponed as it begins to be articulated in *Los pasos perdidos*, we must not only read the time of the novel as a response to the time of the Enlightenment, but also as an annunciation of the time of Carpentier's own writing. This time mirrors the distance that the protagonist cannot escape in his relation to the people who inhabit the Valley Where Time Had Stopped. The protagonist is immersed within immediacy while, at the same time, completely bound to the linearity of his life "back there". The contradiction implied by the conjunction of these two times is opened by the work of art in its testimonial response to a present-in-history; that is, the present-time of Carpentier's novel, of our reading, of the protagonist's narration. Carpentier "is caught in the paradox of being "in the entrails of virginal America," the fruit of a fatherless, unmediated conception; the product of an originality which denies anteriority while affirming at every step that his own text [that is, *Los pasos perdidos*] is a repetition - a new version, perhaps, but one whose lineage can be traced" (*PH*, 174). It is only through the medium of "paper and ink" that Carpentier can discover the hidden tradition whose lineage can be traced back through what Echevarría calls the traveller writers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: Alexander von Humboldt, Chateaubriand, Richard and Robert Schomburgk, to name just a few. "If the steps leading to [the origin of a "Latin American literary tradition"] indeed are lost, the novel [as a form] presents itself not as a keeper of the tradition, but as a new beginning" (*PH*, 162). The contradiction of being immersed within an immediacy that is accessible through the *mediation* of the literary text exposes us to "the revolutionary nature of writing, its perpetual shifting around an absent source" (*PH*, 33). The connection between history and narrative is therefore intimate; or, more precisely, ex-timate. History is not merely reflected in the narrative that seeks a

representation of it nor is the narrative simply a means of creating history anew. Rather, the history to which a narrative responds always remains in circulation; its meaning, the kernel of truth that would finally settle the questions about just what this or that historical moment meant, is always postponed because of the necessary and unimpeachable gap that separates the time of the historical moment and the present-time of the narration and, of course, of our reading, the time right now. Every work of art makes witness not only to the impossibility of returning to primeval purity, but also to the possibilities opened by that impossibility; that is, the possibility of art in its testimonial response to a present-in-history. As Fuentes argues, it is precisely this gap, this divorce between the two, which constitutes the possibility of art itself. Early on in Fuentes' "Reasonable People" for example, the narrator tells us that

... in art a project and its realisation, a blueprint and the construction itself, can never correspond perfectly ... there is no perfection, only approximation, and that's the way it should be, because the day a project and its realisation coincide exactly, point by point, it will no longer be able to design anything: at the sight of perfection ... art dies, exhausted by its victory. There has to be a minimal separation, an indispensable divorce between idea and action, between word and thing, between blueprint and building, so that art can continue to attempt the impossible, the absolute unattainable aesthetic.⁹

The space of art is that opaque gap or distance shared by word and thing, image and reality in which any unification between the sign and its signified is prevented. But this prevention is, in effect, an affirmation of the individual since it demands the active participation of the artist in the construction of meaningful works of art. Rather than merely reproducing a stock of images held in common by a culture, the artist can break open the image allowing its multiple meanings to become manifested for an audience.

⁹ *Constancia and Other Stories for Virgins*, tr. Thomas Christensen. (London: Picador, 1990):261-262. When writing of this issue in another context, Fuentes has this to say: "Gaston Bachelard has written that all great writers know that the world wants literature to be everything and to be something else: philosophy, politics, science, ethics. Why this demand, asks the French thinker. Because literature is always in direct communication with the origins of the spoken being, at the very core of speech where philosophy, politics, ethics and science themselves become possible. But when science, ethics, politics, and philosophy discover their own limitations they appeal to the grace and disgrace of literature to go beyond their insufficiencies. Yet they only discover, along with literature itself, the permanent divorce between words and things: the separation between the representative uses of language and the experience of the being of language" (*MO*, 70).

The demand placed on the artist by the opacity of the between is thereby transferred to the perceiving subject. Once confronted by opacity, the relation between word and thing, image and reality becomes a productive source of self-creation and self-identification. Again, it is not the failure of the sign to adequately represent reality, but the impossibility of opacity, embodied in the very resources employed to fill in the gap or to bridge it, that provides the condition for productive relations. Contra Levinas' assertion that it is the transcendence of the ego and the other "with respect to each other" which creates a distance "in which language occurs",¹⁰ the distance of opacity is mirrored in the "minimal separation", the "indispensable divorce ... between word and thing".

Earlier I argued that Levinas speaks of the relationship between the ego and its double as resemblance and that he gives language a primary role in the fundamental duplicity which he correctly sees as the hallmark of human identity.¹¹ And yet, language suffers from the cleavage that separates it from the very ground Levinas still seems to rest upon: a sense that the duality of identity and the image is founded upon a minimal first order exteriority wherein the ego is caught up in its own self-referentiality. Alterity can only be engendered for Levinas when this self-referentiality is pushed through to the excesses of an Other beyond resemblance. This structure is limited by its prioritisation of resemblance at the expense of what, for us here, is at work in the relation between identity and the image; that is, the interruption of identity in the subject's encounter with an image which, in being "a stranger to itself" (*CPP*, 6), is simultaneously both familiar and yet foreign to that subject. While Levinas is keenly aware of these configurations, he does not question towards the between; he does not make the between *the* question but remains tied to a discourse that is indebted to the resurrection of an Other whose death has been the result of the tradition Levinas is indebted to. Levinas' work is, in this respect, the hardest and cruellest work of all: to

¹⁰ See above, pg. 17.

¹¹ See above pg. 15ff.

work with the language of what has been for him a constant companion and enemy, a language whose betrayal must remain a source of recompense for the deaths it has guaranteed.

If space permitted, we could discover similar convergences between identity and the image in Fuentes' *Terra nostra*, convergences that prioritise the between in the explication of the simultaneity of temporal and historical modalities. And convergences that allow us to directly confront and affirm the between as the possibility of relation. Notwithstanding this, *Terra nostra* demands too much for the rewards it offers to the unrelenting reader, rewards which when lacking refuse one of the fundamental aspects the novel attempts to affirm: the duplicity and subsequent postponement of identity, time, history, narrative. This refusal is the result of Fuentes' constant attention to lengthy and often fully scholastic complaints; a tendency when writing longer works to produce too much detail in the form of intellectually informed debates between characters in the work itself. These debates soon become tiring, their questions so often falling with both feet heavily on the ground. And it is precisely this heaviness that strips *Terra nostra* of the duplicity and postponement it so desperately wants to enact. The constant deformation of chronological time and linear narrative, the constant repetition of encounters between characters whose sole purpose, it appears, is to create disequilibrium and instability in the reader, only serve, because they are belaboured, to cloud over the sense of duplicitous signification the novel intends to convey. It is as if Fuentes thinks that only in a work that enacts duplicity through the subterfuge of a singularity produced by repetition can the duplicity of the sign - of language, of history, of story - be engendered in the reader. The constant debates Felipe, El Señor has with his secretary and chief huntsman, Guzmán are a case in point. These debates all revolve around El Señor's intolerable fear: that he will never be able to acquire a complete and absolute death, a death which would not be "the material guarantee of a new life, a second life, another life, but simply that: my absolute death..." (*Tn*, 235); a fear engendered in that image which stares back at him from the glassy surface of his hand mirror, confronting El Señor with the radical

duplicity of existence: "the life of the mirror, of all the mirrors that duplicate the world, that extend it beyond all realistic frontiers, and to all that exists, mutely says: you are two" (*Tn*, 229). El Señor believes that only through an act of writing can he escape the commandment of the duplicity which denies an absolute death, for "what is written remains, what is written is true in itself, for it cannot be subjected to the test of truth, or to any proof at all; that is the full reality of what is written, its paper reality, full and unique" (*Tn*, 224). It is this uniqueness that alone can save El Señor from the duplicity he sees engendered by the countless generations that stare back at him whenever he faces "the sterile lake captured within the frame" of his hand mirror, the same hand mirror which has belonged to countless people before him; an emblem, then, of the impossibility of escaping the destiny of a deathly repetition. Write, El Señor commands Guzmán, write; because "nothing truly exists if it not be consigned to paper" (*Tn*, 131).

El Señor's trust in the power of writing to supplant the rigors of duplicity fails to grasp what is, for Fuentes, central to language: the unimpeachable separation between signs and referents, "a modern divorce between words and things" (*MO*, 51). El Señor comes close to realising this when he asks Guzmán whether or not any singular story is, in fact, always on the verge of succumbing to this haunting duplicity.

Does a Devil never approach you and say, that wasn't how it was, it was not only that way, it could have happened that way, depending upon who was telling it, depending on who saw it and how he chanced to it; imagine for an instant, Guzmán, what would happen if everyone offered their multiple and contradictory versions of what had happened, and even of what had not happened, wouldn't that be the limit, wouldn't that turn us over and throw us to the wind ... then what would happen ... if everyone could write the same text in his own manner, the text would no longer be unique (*Tn*, 224).

In this loss of uniqueness all political and social power is dissolved "for upon what is government founded but the unity of power? And this unitary power, upon what is it founded but its privileged possession of the unique written text, an unchanging norm that conquers" (*Tn*, 224-225). Even though El Señor faces the realisation that a text which records an event may be multiplied endlessly through the multiplicity of voices

employed to write that text, he still fails to realise that this multiplication is at the heart of the very language he uses to escape duplicity, the language which he believes will allow him to write the one unique text. *Terra nostra* is a testament to the impossibility of fulfilling El Señor's desire for a unique text, an absolute death which is not, in itself, the source of constant rebirth. The 'memoirs' El Señor dictates to Guzmán as a means of writing the one unique text thus become a text in which El Señor's desire to grasp the one unique text is forever frustrated by his inclusion in yet another text - the text of *Terra nostra* itself - which offers its own story, its own version of the decline of Spain and the discovery of the New World.

What really marks the transformation between Latin American modernity and Latin American postmodernity then, is the manner in which the contradiction of being both itself and its other, of being identifiable through its own fictionality, supplies many Latin American writers with the tools by which to create themselves through the very *fragmentation* of self. As Echevarría has pointed out, because Latin America "is not the direct descendent of an autochthonous tradition going all the way back to a primal birth in the colonial period" (*PH*, 20), it must continually search for a means by which to create itself in relation to the founding condition of an *absence*, the absent centre around which it revolves. It is the investment in this absence that dramatically marks the turn Latin America takes towards itself; a turn towards the *foreignness* of the very language through which Latin Americans achieve self-identification. Juan Marinello has clearly worded this in his *Americanismo y cubanismo literarios* where he writes: "We are through a language that is our own while being foreign" (*PH*, 29). Echevarría points out that Marinello prioritises the language in which identity is spoken as a principal problem of identification itself. Although the centrality of language is not peculiar to Latin America, "for language, to any writer, is always foreign, a given code within which [the writer] must labour" (*PH*, 29-30), Marinello argues that "what is distinctly Latin American ... is a double sense of otherness that mirrors and magnifies the initial otherness of language" (*PH*, 30). Colás' attention to the centrality of alienation in *Rayuela* thus seems crucial. The alienation to which *Rayuela* responds is

not a European alienation forged by Romanticism's response to modernisation. Rather, *Rayuela* responds to colonial alienation. This is why Colás will maintain that "even the problem of the appropriateness of a concept like 'postmodernism' for Latin American culture should be inscribed within this history of colonial alienation" (PL, 35). Latin America sets itself apart from Europe by exacerbating its contradictory relation to Europe. By refusing to seek an ideal unity of identity, *Latin America confronts its own otherness in the space between itself and its other*. In this sense, Latin American writing in the 60's and 70's raises to the forefront of critical and artistic attention the sense in which Latin Americans are condemned to live in the interstitial space between the Idea and its representation, between the sign and its signified, between identity and difference, self and other; a sentence that is, in fact, their very liberation. .

Consequently, it is the separation of the between that is central to this period of transformation, this transition from the modern to the postmodern in Latin America.

What is therefore required in the continuing analysis of the tension between Latin America and Europe and North America is an understanding of the transformative power of many forms of Latin American fiction by underscoring what Colás calls the "avant-garde mediator", "the *bricoleur*" who, by "reworking the stolen tools of the enemy" transforms that enemy into something different. Latin America recognises itself in the process of differentiation that mediation produces via the hybridisation of European categories and concepts. Latin America is therefore differential in mediation. And this is why Colás draws attention to the notion of mediation, since "the *cita* is, at the very least, a way of purchasing and securing the authority of the writer at the expense of the authority of the source" (PL, 46-47). Hence, where immediacy, plenitude and purity were central to Latin American modernity, of that failed project of defining what was particularly, uniquely Latin American, postmodernity in Latin America is marked by the attention to the productivity of mediation. We need a terminology then, that would focus directly on the form and effects of mediation in Latin America.

* * *

In order to drive to the heart of mediation and the specific accomplishments some Latin American fiction achieves in respect of mediation, we need to pay close attention to the role of separation in relation. And it is precisely because certain types of Latin American fiction arise from the between in the sense I have been exploring that it is particularly advantageous for an analysis of the separation of relation. Much of this advantage arises as a result of their prioritisation of the fictional act as a means of constructing their own identity. In short, because of the contradiction of being both itself and its other, the Latin American fiction I will be exploring embodies in a particularly clear way the role of separation in relation, and specifically in the relation between self and other. In coming to understand this fiction, we come to understand the role of separation in relation precisely by employing a critique of that role in the very reading and critique of the fiction.

First and foremost, relation is always a factor of encountering - the face-to-face between a subject and an object. And yet, what presides over this encounter is neither the subject nor the object but the between, the separation which makes relation possible. "I" is incapable of knowing "you" completely because something always remains outside the face-to-face encounter. This remainder is marked by the very separation that brings us together. Since perception is always partial - the eye that cannot know the totality of what it perceives - then the perceived is always a nearness that is remote; that is, is always *ex-timate*, an intimate exteriority. This intimate exteriority is not reserved for the relation between "I" and "you". As the eye looks inward, turns toward itself, it encounters the intimate exteriority of an "I". Even on the inside something remains outside, a remainder once again marked by the separation that permits of partial perception. In this sense, intimacy is not a simple exposure of one's self in the face of another, nor is it simply the "closed society" of the couple as Levinas has thought.¹² Intimacy is impossible without separation. That is to say, there is always something that remains impossible, something which remains opaque;

¹² See above, page 21ff.

something which prevents the fulfilment of that nostalgic hope for a simple achieved Oneness, whether temporal, social or psychical. Unable to pin itself down to any one unit of referential meaning (that is, the impossibility of gaining itself in a totality), the eye perceives an "I" in circulation. When "I" becomes identical with itself it ceases to exist, or, at least, ceases to be capable of perceiving and recognising itself; that is, it folds into itself and disappears. The "I", in order to be itself, must be other than itself: the "I" is differential. Separation, therefore, is an impossibility; not only the impossibility of experiencing the experiences of others, but also of experiencing all of one's own psychical attributes as a unified totality. Otherness is therefore not a destination, not an outside beyond the self. As Octavio Paz has argued, "if man is double or triple, so are civilisations and societies. Each people carries on a dialogue with an invisible colloquist who is at one and the same time, itself and its other, its double. Its double? Which is the original and which the phantasm? As with the Moebius strip, there is neither inside nor outside, and otherness is not there, beyond, but here, within: otherness is ourselves" (*OE*, 288).

Many Latin American writers have been keenly aware of this. For example, in Gabriel García Márquez's "Dialogue with the mirror" a solitary protagonist encounters a familiar yet foreign face in the mirror of his morning shave. While the protagonist is "giving the last touches to his left cheek with his right hand, he managed to see his own elbow against the mirror. He saw it, large, strange, unknown, and observed with surprise that above the elbow other eyes equally large and equally unknown were searching wildly for the direction of the blade. Someone is trying to hang my brother. A powerful arm. Blood! The same thing always happens when I'm in a hurry" (*IE*, 96). When the protagonist searches his face for the injury he cannot find it. "There were no wounds on his skin, but there in the mirror the other one was bleeding slightly" (*IE*, 96). As the protagonist attempts to rationalise this encounter he asks himself whether "the image had taken on its own life and had resolved - by living in an uncomplicated time - to finish more slowly than its external subject?" (*IE*, 96). To complicate things more, we are told earlier on in the story that the protagonist, when

he first looks into the bathroom mirror, was caught by "a quick shudder ... as he discovers his own dead brother, newly arisen, in that image" that stares back through the mirror (*IE*, 93). Without the possibility of identifying the protagonist with the image in more than the most superficial way, our attention turns towards the mediator of their relation - the mirror. Without any concrete identification between the protagonist and his image, our attention turns to the only identity that has meaning for us: the between, the separation of relation.

As I argued above, separation is not to be confused with a spatial and temporal distance; that is, separation is not a geo-temporal gap.¹³ Put very briefly, Levinas conceives of separation in terms of the "distance that separates *ideatum* and idea" (*TI*, 49) which he derives from the Cartesian *cogito*; that is, in Descartes, "the knowing being remains separated from the known being" (*TI*, 48). This sense of separation prioritises transcendence as "the sole *ideatum* of which there can only be an idea in us; it is infinitely removed from its idea, that is, exterior, because it is infinite" (*TI*, 49). Hence, what is of particular concern for Levinas, at one level, is the distinction he wishes to make between objectivity and transcendence whereby transcendence is seen to enact separation as temporal and spatial distance; that is, as stemming from or produced by the idea of Infinity. And this is why Levinas will also say, following on from his critique of the Cartesian terminology, that "by virtue of time this being [that is, the Cartesian ego, or at least the Cartesian "inner life", its "psychism"] is not yet - which does not make it the same as nothingness but maintains it at a distance from itself" (*TI*, 54). What I want to argue is that separation *as* opacity registers relation in a different field than that which pertains to separation as the "infinite distance of the Stranger" (*TI*, 50), a field embodied in a particularly clear way by a number of Latin American texts. But opacity also, because it is a term that recuperates what the rhetoric of Otherness has occluded; that Lyotardian 'unheard of phrase'.

But what of this opacity? Does it not point to an outside beyond conceptuality, to

¹³ Nor is it Hegel's *Kluft*; that is, the "insurmountable cleavage between the being of God and the being of men" (*Altarity*, 7).

an Other more radical than myself? No matter how radical the alterity of this Other, it is always another *subject* and therefore cannot escape the inimitable separation upon which subjectivity is based. Separation *as* opacity cannot be imitated by the subject/object duality that subtends Levinas' discourse. Otherness is that unspoken remainder that we refer to by speaking a language unknown to us: the unknown tongue referring to an allusive subject. What the discourse of the Other has failed to pursue is the question of this remainder. Levinas' prioritisation of language and communication serves transcendence as that which is beyond conceptuality vis-à-vis the Idea of Infinity. Alternatively, separation *as* opacity prioritises the very otherness of language as the vehicle through which the relation between self and other is mediated; that is, conceptualised, made cognisant through the concept. In short, "I" and "you" are relational in separation, in part, because of a wounding, a fracture in language itself. Consequently, the proximal relation between "I" and "you" is "mirrored and magnified", to use Echevarría's words, by the proximal relation between signs and signifieds. In order to think this remainder it is vital to attend to that sense of intimacy I spoke of earlier. Opacity is itself grounded in the dialectic of intimacy, the ex-timate and proximal relation of two who never touch as the possibility of their touching. On the one hand, the intimacy of two who are separated and, on the other, a language which exacerbates this separation in the divorce between words and things. In both these proximal relations we are made foreigners and orphans who can only speak "wandering, orphaned words" (*MO*, 54). The desire for intimacy (and love) is, therefore, a desire for the impossible; that is, a desire founded upon separation *as* opacity. Paz comes very close to this when he argues that

society denies the nature of love by conceiving it as a stable union whose purpose is to beget and raise children. It identifies it, that is, with marriage ... The protection given to marriage would be justifiable if society permitted free choice. Since it does not, it should accept the fact that marriage is not the supreme realisation of love ... Whenever [love] succeeds in realising itself, it breaks up a marriage and transforms it into what society does not want it to be: a revelation of two solitary beings who create their own world, a world that rejects society's lies, abolishes time and work, and

declares itself to be self-sufficient" (*Is*, 179-180; *L*, 199-200).¹⁴

It is for similar reasons that Cortázar says that "all love goes beyond the couple, if it is love" (*PL*, 50), since love is best served by the risk to plunge into obscurity, into the unknown, that opacity which stretches out between the couple, holding them together in the most radical and creative separation imaginable.

* * *

My contention that separation as opacity is the condition for relation affirms the act of self-fictionalisation by placing that act at the forefront of self-creation. This affirmative reading is often eclipsed by an equally important, though misguided attempt to soften the harder edge of these fictionalising acts. Bell has pointed out in his study of García Márquez's *El otoño del patriarca* [*The Autumn of the Patriarch*] that "Fictional 'relation' is always double-edged. It may be a means of emotional insight into others or it may be a way of seeing the other as a fiction ... *Autumn* is a book which studies, and enacts, this sinister underside of fiction as a model of de-realisation The polyphony of narrative voices in *Autumn* creates a mutual play of mirror images in which everything you see may be illusory" (*GGM*, 78). Bell augments these reflections with the contrast García Márquez provides in *Autumn* between the figure of Ruben Darío and the patriarch himself. Bell argues that "for the reader ... there is the deeper contrast that the patriarch, apart from his personal vacuity, is ostentatiously a fictional being, a product of words, while Darío's splendour of language is an historical fact. Darío's reality caps the patriarch's tawdry fiction" (*GGM*, 78). While this may be the case, appealing to facts to prove the point about the relation between the fictive and the real seems misguided. Such an appeal misses the point about the relation itself. It would be comparable to asserting that what is at stake in reading "Dialogue with a mirror" is something like a process of determining who the protagonist and, even

¹⁴ Bataille's famous consideration of eroticism should not go unnoticed here. See *The Accursed Share V. II & III*, pp. 123ff. Similarly, Blanchot's own articulation of this problem deserves at least a partial repetition here: "The community of lovers - no matter if the lovers want it or not, enjoy it or not, be they linked by chance, by "l'amour fou", by the passion of death (Kleist) - has as its ultimate goal the destruction of society" (*The Unavowable Community*, 48).

more, who or what the mirror image are. The very fact that Darío is a *figure* in a text already suggests that the question of his status as a living historical person cannot simply be assumed as holding out over and against his status as a fictional character on the basis that he really exists outside the text; that is, in the real world. That world, especially Darío's, is only real for us because of the texts which have created it. There is no reason to accept that Darío is any more nor any less real or fictional *because* we can say he was born in Nicaragua in 1867 and that he was a "great modern ... poet" (*GGM*, 78). The question is about the nature of relation, that is, of separation *as* opacity, and not one about the difference between the fictive and the real: the relation between the fictive and the real is still one structured by the tension of extimacy, the tension of an intimate exteriority, the tension of the between which the concept of separation *as* opacity expresses. Appealing to dates and descriptive phrases as Bell does only underscores this issue, since Darío can only be known to us through the *mediation* of both García Márquez's text and Bell's analysis of that text. But the stronger line is also that, even in the face-to-face encounter with the corporeal Darío, separation, as *the* mediating condition of all relation, prevents any simple and pure identity, some totality from (transparently) shining through the mist of opacity. Immersed within the dialectic of the ex-timate relation, "I" encounters nothing it knows, the intimate exteriority of a "you". Whether that "you" is fictional or real is completely beside the point. As I argued above, opacity, structured by the dialectic of the ex-timate relation, is the separation that cleaves "I" and "you" in the duplicitous sense Taylor exhumes from the etymological grave of the verb 'to cleave': our rending is the condition for our communion and our communion the possibility of our rending. Therefore, rending is never a simple tearing asunder nor is communion a simple achieved oneness. Hence, the encounter with an "I" in circulation is the encounter with an "I" which circulates around an absent kernel of representational meaning; that is, an absent centre. Opacity then, is the separation in which we encounter absence.

* * *

What Latin American fiction demonstrates to us is that our identity is irreducible

and, in that irreducibility, multiple. Hence, there can be no founding narratives to which we could appeal to acquire a sense of our true, authentic identity: the steps back to the source of human history and time are truly lost. What those who have made the journey back to this absent source have discovered is the very absence that, all along, has provided them with the possibility of making the journey in the first place.

Absence is the centre to which this Latin American fiction responds in its attempt to create an identity for itself, an identity which arises out of the self-creating act of fiction revolving around an absent centre. The response to this absence is foreshadowed in the divorce between words and things, in the separation between "I" and "you", in opacity structured by extimacy. But to speak towards absence is, in fact, to lose language in the speaking of language since language itself is subjected to the very encounter it seeks to unfold; that is, language is always subjected to opacity. To speak towards absence, to *figure* absence in speaking towards it, we must speak the language beyond language, a language which is spoken by an unknown tongue. The Latin American fiction I am principally concerned with speaks this unknown tongue and is one of the pre-eminent forms by which many Latin American authors have given form to absence: an unknown tongue which speaks in the space of opacity that little language Bernard so desperately desires, the language lovers use, the language of the erotic event. Such an event should not be seen, to use Colás' words, as "a genuine blurring or merging of self and other". The problem is not to overcome "the cleavage between self and other" (*PL*, 40) but to affirm that cleavage as the radical possibility for intimacy. Merely to seek a "blurring or merging" of horizons would completely frustrate and defer that cleavage I spoke of earlier. The erotic event must be seen as the encounter between identities in circulation, circulating around temporary names and temporary decisions: an eventation, the letting out that is a creation, a renewal, a creating anew. In this sense, the erotic event embodies opacity as an emblem of absence: the impossible here now.¹⁵

¹⁵ As we will see nearer the end of our study, this now is always a time postponed; that is, the time of postponement which subtends the between of relation, and offers us a competing interpretation of the present than that given by either Lyotard's reading of Newman or, as we will see, Paz's

* * *

The Duplicity of Fiction

Indeed, the insurmountable distance between "being" and "having" oneself is one of the discoveries of literature, highlighted by its explorations of the space between.

Wolfgang Iser
The Fictive and the Imaginary



As I have tried to show, the approach to the question of anonymity requires an attentiveness to the concept of opacity, a concept which has a direct connection to the notion of duplicity engendered in the contradiction at work in Carpentier's *Los pasos perdidos*. What Carpentier's novel opens for us is the role of absence in the configuration of duplicity and contradiction: the duplication of identity in the face-to-face encounter with the absence of any source to which that identity could refer in order to acquire a (transparent) view of itself. In short, the relation between (word and thing, "I" and "You", Latin America and Europe) is one based upon the opacity in which we encounter absence. My intention now is to explore duplicity and absence more thoroughly in order to demonstrate how they combine to offer a more complete understanding of the between itself. Wolfgang Iser's recent study of literary fictionality is informative here because it provides us with a critical language by which to highlight the close connection between duplicity and absence as invaluable concepts in the explication of the between of relation and, subsequently, allows us to further explore Carpentier's relation to the latter in a close reading of *El acoso* [*The Chase*], the novel which directly follows *Los pasos perdidos* and which radicalises the discoveries made there.

conceptualisation of the return to origins. The key term in this competing interpretation is the notion of impossibility and its relation to postponement, one that will become clearer as we proceed.

* * *

Iser writes in his analysis of "Renaissance Pastoralism as Paradigm of Literary Fictionality", that

Psychoanalysis speaks of a core self that can view itself in the mirror self.¹⁶ As their own doppelgänger, however, human beings are at

¹⁶ In outlining various traditional conceptions of the imaginary, Iser has this to say about the common link made between the imaginary and fantasy: "A glance at foundational discourses reveals an unmistakable reduction, whereby fantasy is always subordinated to something else. Fantasy was regarded as perfection, in which art enabled human beings to participate ... [which] implies that perfection gains its character by running counter to existing realities; it takes on its form by means of something that has to be overcome". Similarly, conceived as otherness, fantasy is understood as the form by which to bring "something into the world that was not there before. In this view, the appearance of fantasy creates an impact that cannot be deduced from anything that existed earlier". And, finally, as a concept recovered by psychoanalysis, fantasy is linked "to the unconscious, subordinating it to "the laws of the primary process" [Rolf Vogt et al., "Experimentelle Rorschach-Untersuchung zur 'pensée opératoire'", *Psyche* 33 (1979): 834], although its vagrant "offsprings", which appear only before the conscious mind, require another reference if they are to be identified. And as desire, fantasy needs a "mirror stage" (Lacan's term) of the self in order to bring to light the reverse side of the ego". According to Iser, in "all these definitions ... fantasy appears not as a substance but as a function preceding what is, even though it can manifest itself only in what is" (*FI*, 172). Iser then provides a historical overview of the imagination as it was conceived by idealist and empiricist philosophy in order to show that, in being defined primarily as an act of combination, imagination was seen to be a foundation for cognition. This is important for Iser's project as a whole (although he spends far too much time throughout his text locating ideas historically) because he will want to argue later that the imaginary, once it is realised in an analysis of play, cannot be defined a priori through any particular function. "To say, however, that the imaginary manifests itself as play is to employ a discursive language which may distract us from the fact that it can never be perceived, let alone defined as a "whole" or as whatever it is. Designating the imaginary as play entails making a cognitive statement, but this cannot be taken as an ontological foundation of the imaginary Play would appear to be a prominent aspect of the manifest imaginary that can take on a variety of functions by way of its manifestations but can never be pinned to any one of them. Every statement about play is eo ipso a philosophical one, and there is no shortage of philosophies of play. But the philosophical statement seeks to define the function of play, while the basic to-and-fro play movement within which the imaginary bodies itself forth can never be defined a priori through any particular function" (*FI*, 223). Iser will finally argue that writers such as Samuel Beckett completely disrupt any connection that could be made between the imaginary and function by "depict[ing] a consciousness that has suspended its own intentionality, with the result that the imaginary can no longer be fashioned by a particular application. Consequently, what is thematized is not the imaginary but the gap between consciousness and the imaginary. This gap can be experienced through endless cognitive efforts to bridge it. A consciousness that blocks itself off, and an imaginary that can only run in circles - these are the last remnants of a game in which we no longer know whether it is ending or beginning. These remnants are nothing more than a dynamic emptiness that also imposes itself on language; only language that consumes itself can give articulation to the imaginary" (*FI*, 246). The reason for this lengthy note is not only to indicate where Iser grounds his own analysis of the imaginary but to show that his prioritisation of certain key concepts - the gap, postponement, language - are ones that, in my analysis, will receive a slightly different inflection. And, since Iser does not provide us with any sense of how language consumes itself, or what such a language looks like, it seems necessary to bring our attention to bear upon it in a thesis that openly problematises language vis-à-vis postponement. The question remains as to what a postponed language (and a language that postpones) might look like, a question I hope to deal with in the concluding section of the thesis.

best differential, travelling between their various roles that supplant and modify one another. Roles are not disguises with which to fulfil pragmatic ends; they are means of enabling the self to be other than each individual role. Being oneself therefore means being able to double oneself (*FI*, 80-81).

In Iser, doubling is the effect of the disguises that are necessary for humans to encounter the beings that they are, a form of encountering he locates squarely within the movements of the fictive¹⁷ and the imaginary. Doubling is not a simple (that is, uncomplicated) replication of oneself nor an unveiling of a true, authentic self buried "behind the screen of social position, bureaucratic function, the false identity others give us, and, above all, behind a falsifying use of language" (*MO*, 102).¹⁸ The key notion through which doubling is delineated in Iser's text is that of *simultaneity* modelled on the relationship between *subterfuge*, which serves to conceal the identity of the characters in the literary text, and the *recognition* of an identity lurking behind a character's self-concealment. Clearly, there is a tension between Iser's desire to conceive human identity in terms not reducible to the assumption of a core self and a reading of the pastoral romance that relies specifically on the existence of some initial ground upon which a character can begin to conceive *himself*. Therefore, in an attempt to understand the applicability of Iser's arguments here, it is important to pay attention to the relationship between subterfuge and recognition, the role of contradiction within it and the manner in which it feeds into and supports Iser's notion of boundary-crossing, the latter of which prioritises the notion of relationality at its core.

¹⁷ By 'fictive' Iser means "an intentional *act*, which has all the qualities pertaining to an event and thus relieves the definition of fiction from the burden of making the customary ontological statements regarding what fiction is" (*FI*, 3; n.3). Although Iser will go on to argue at length about the role of temporality in the relation between the fictive and the imaginary as sites for the doubling of human identity, at no point does he question the appropriateness of 'the event' as a concept which can unfold that relation for us. Of particular note here is Iser's analysis of "the eventful nature of fantasy". See *FI*, 171ff. As I will argue in my analysis of Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo*, the temporality of 'the event' as standing squarely within a ternary time system that is based upon linearity runs contrary to the temporality opened by Rulfo's novel, one that more adequately responds to the between of relation in the service of a response to anonymity.

¹⁸ Here we would need to ask Fuentes what an authentic use of language would look like, one which, presumably, did not falsify but affirmed its subject. Would this be the language that consumes itself which appears in Iser's formulations?

Iser's conceptualisation of the relationship between the employment of masks as an act of subterfuge and the recognition of an identity constantly striving for self-recognition and self-identification is based upon the reinterpretation signification underwent during the Renaissance. This reinterpretation is the foundation upon which Iser develops all his later arguments since it is during this period that "the old "conjuncture"" that bridged the gap between the letter and the spirit in medieval scholasticism is transformed into a series of "similitudes" and "resemblances" (FI, 34-38). Briefly, the Renaissance problematised the medieval cosmic order by dissolving the "conjuncture" between "the significant" and "the signified", replacing it with a series of "resemblances" that bring together what had been previously construed as two distinct and completely separated worlds. Since the gap between the two worlds was bridged by a conjuncture whose instigation satisfied the medieval desire to "bring about clearly distinguishable significations by means of which the inherent polysemy of the linguistic medium is channelled in such a way that tangible solutions may arise" (FI, 36),¹⁹ then any disruption of the conjuncture would greatly disrupt the relationship between letter and spirit, signifier and signified. By the seventeenth century this relationship will have become strictly binary in character and will be the progenitor of a correspondence theory of representation that completely welds the sign to its referent.²⁰ And, even though, during the Renaissance, this relationship was still ternary

¹⁹ Goal directed behaviour as a model for reacquainting theoretical approaches to fiction vis-à-vis intentionality has a significant function in Iser's argument as a whole. As I pointed out above (n. 15), it is the movement away from conceptualisations of the fictive and the imaginary within the constraints of function and intentionality that motivates Iser's enterprise in this text.

²⁰ For an in-depth analysis of the historical underpinnings and reinterpretations signification underwent during the seventeenth century, see Michel Foucault *The Order of Things*. The decision to employ Iser's latest work rather than Foucault's indispensable study is based purely on the need to orient our attention towards the importance of absence in my own project. Foucault's analysis cannot go unnoticed here. In particular, the priority given to literature in making the distinction between a Classical understanding of language and a 'modern' understanding (that is, one which arose from the nineteenth century onwards) in which "literature began to bring language back to light once more in its own being" bears important similarities to a number of writers I have had occasion to explore here. And it is not without consequence that Foucault would touch upon the importance of this distinction for the space of literature itself. After regaining a sense of the being of language, "language was to grow with no point of departure, no need, no promise. It is the traversal of this futile yet fundamental space that the text of literature traces from day to day" (*The Order of Things*, 44). This "futile yet fundamental space" I call the space between, the gap, the opaque. Both Iser and Foucault prioritise literature in their particular and quite different analyses, and my project here is really an attempt to

it was developing in such a way that "the preordained interdependence" of letter and spirit "begins to fade" (*FI*, 38). What arises in the place of this ternary system is a proliferation of interconnections that "transform the ternary sign system into a semiotic game" (*FI*, 69). The play element in language and the semiotic relation has been central to the majority of texts Iser has written since the 1970's and it is not surprising that he would underscore the importance of experimentations into the realms of play in the Renaissance that would become significant in his own work. For Iser, the semiotic game is played out primarily in the alternation between subterfuge (the employment of masks) and recognition characterised by the pastoral romance. As Iser argues, "'conjunction is supplanted by the play space, which in turn prevents the two worlds²¹ from establishing themselves as the binary opposition of a logocentric order; instead the two worlds interact" (*FI*, 69). It is this interaction which is the hallmark of doubling and mirroring endemic to the pastoral romance.

The two models by which Iser delimits doubling unfold in his reading of the pastoral romance as the articulation of the interaction between "mutually exclusive semiotic systems" (*FI*, 70). In the first model, the identity of the protagonist is said to reside *in absentia* behind the mask he employs to achieve certain goals in certain situations. In the second model, the mask is pushed to the background allowing the full presence of the protagonist's identity to surface as, again, a response to the requirements of a

give my own response to the question posed by these and other writers: "What is language? What is a sign? What is unspoken in the world, in our gestures, in the whole enigmatic heraldry of our behaviour, our dreams, our sicknesses - does all that speak, and if so, in what language and in obedience to what grammar? Is everything significant, and, if not, what is, and for whom, and in accordance with what rules? What relation is there between language and being, and is it really to being that language is always addressed - at least language that speaks truly? What, then, is this language that says nothing, is never silent, and is called 'literature'?" (*The Order of Things*, 306): "What is the work? What is language in the work? When Mallarmé asks himself, "Does something like Literature exist?," this question is literature itself. It is literature when literature has become concern for its own essence. Such a question cannot be relegated. What is the result of the fact that we have literature? What is implied about being if one states that "something like Literature exists?" (Maurice Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, 43). These are the indispensable questions that haunt the pages of my response (and its possibility) to the question of anonymity.

²¹ That is, the world of the prince and that of the shepherds upon which the pastoral romance takes shape.

certain situation. For Iser, this oscillation between models constitutes the "dual unity of simultaneous veiling and unveiling [as] an illustration of fictionality that allows the hidden to be revealed through deception" (*FI*, 73). This revelation is the key to the relationship between subterfuge and recognition since this "veiled unveiling drives the protagonists into a startlingly revealing relationship with themselves. While in disguise they have to stage their real selves in order to achieve something that does not yet exist. Thus the person is not left, as it were, behind himself, but "has" himself as something that the person himself cannot be" (*FI*, 73-74). The relationship between subterfuge and recognition is one in which the protagonists double themselves in order to reach themselves in the "multiplicity of possibilities" open to them by staging themselves through disguise (*FI*, 74).

Consequently, in the interaction between subterfuge and recognition, Iser argues, something is always made absent while something else is made present. While the prince stages himself as a shepherd, his "royalty is made absent, even if this absence remains present in its guidance of the actions of the mask" (*FI*, 75). At the point when the protagonist reveals himself to his "beloved", he makes the mask absent. And yet, "the absent mask becomes present partly through reflections on its possible strategic uses and partly through the doubts it casts on the credibility of the prince himself. What is present remains in close relationship to what is made absent" (*FI*, 75). It is this alternation between presence and absence and its relation to doubling, mirroring and boundary-crossing that will concern us here.

For Iser, doubling is the possibility for achieving self-identification because, insofar as "We ourselves are separated from ourselves by the very fact that we exist but cannot know what existence is", doubling opens us to the recognition that, as actors, "the phantom images" we employ to achieve certain goals "lack authenticity insofar as we believe we have ourselves through them. The fact that we cannot capture ourselves in any absolute role lifts all limits on the number of roles that can be played" (*FI*, 82). Here encountering ourselves would mean approaching near to that which we are but which could not be understood by first looking inside ourselves; that is,

encountering that aspect which lays bare consciousness and, especially, consciousness of oneself.²² Doubling thus opens us to the infinite possibilities of changing roles and changing perspectives, changes which never deny that we encounter ourselves but affirm that the "I" which is encountered is an "I" in circulation; that is, an "I" that lacks any grounding in one particular role as the result of the gap between our phenomenal appreciation of existence and any epistemological awareness of that existence as a totality. Such an "I" circulates around the various and multiple roles opened to it: the "I" in circulation *is* this multiplicity.

In the context of literary construction, fictionalising acts comprise the "selection" and "combination" of elements from an author's social, cultural and historical "fields of reference" that, through a mode of self-disclosure in the literary text, not only offer themselves for observation but "permit the perception of all those elements that the selection has excluded. These, then, form a background against which the observation is to take place. It is as if what is present in the text must be judged in light of what is absent" (*FI*, 4-5). This is why Iser finds the pastoral romance valuable in his analysis of the fictive and the imaginary since it embodies in a particularly clear way what he sees as endemic to the literary text as a mode of expression: the conjunction of and oscillation between presence and absence as a mode of self-identification and self-creation. For Iser, literary texts are therefore necessary in the approach to this identification.²³ Through fictionalisation, a process of masking and disguising

²² In speaking of the play in language, Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth argues that the liberation of language from the constraints of representation becomes apparent when we recognise that the stress on the grammatical nature of tense in language is "an historically limited phenomena" and needs to be set alongside a sense of the nongrammatical function of tense which stresses what Ermarth, somewhat loosely, refers to as "aspect" (*SH*, 140). Ermarth's attention to the notion of play, simultaneity and the relation between language and history offers an alternative to Iser's conception, one I will deal with later.

²³ And yet, the possibility of perceiving a set of norms against which one's own set is distinguished is surely a positive way of placing those other norms into view; that is, precisely, giving them presence through a gesture of non-committal; a non-committal, that is, to the unveiling of subtle and intricate devices by which others (cultures, perceptions, norms) are occluded from one's own culture or perspective. Hence, it is not absence which is at issue here but the making present of alternatives for the perceiver. This, it seems to me, is at the heart of Iser's overall aim in *The Fictive and the Imaginary*. While such an aim may or may not be a worthwhile one, it nonetheless does not afford us an adequate perspective of the notion of absence because it prioritises a politics of inclusion rather than a phenomenological understanding of the absent. Such an understanding would, of course,

ourselves, we are able to construct ourselves only by way of a deconstruction of those elements to which any given role is indebted, a process in which "the constructing tendency ... always leads to a deconstructing tendency as a precondition for liberation. The constant switching from one to the other is potentially endless, and herein lies a minimal condition for the creative act" (*FI*, 77-78). Liberation from the roles we are destined to fulfil requires an act of fictionalisation in order that, by being both "simultaneously inside and outside" ourselves we can, in fact, create ourselves (*FI*, 78).

The initial problem that arises from Iser's very close reading of the pastoral romance is the distinction he makes between the hidden and the absent. In his conjunction between the pastoral and dream, Iser remarks that the former exceeds the latter because, while the dreamer is "imprisoned in his or her own images", the protagonist of the pastoral romance is able to "unfold himself" in his manipulation of the interaction between subterfuge and recognition. His very ability to disguise himself is his ability to take control of the construction of his own identity. Iser argues that the ability to be "simultaneously themselves and not themselves" means that the princes are never in hiding, but are constantly presenting and unrepresenting themselves; that is, making their identities absent (*FI*, 74).²⁴ There is a great deal that is appealing about this formulation, especially in light of contemporary issues concerning the multiplicity and plurality of self, of cultures, of histories, a number of which Iser has been instrumental in articulating. And yet, what remains problematic in terms of including such a formulation here is Iser's insistence that, in the interaction between subterfuge and recognition, neither the mask nor the prince's true identity as prince is ever truly hidden behind the other but, rather, made absent. In what sense, we need to ask, can we adjudicate between the two: the hidden and the absent in Iser's text?

As quarrelsome as this may seem, the distinction between the merely hidden and the

return us to Ermarth's use of 'aspect', to the notion of language and history articulated in her work and, therefore, as preparation for such a return, to the important role foreignness (as an emblem of opacity) plays in situating absence within the relation between. This preparation can only follow the preliminary observations I am making here, while a return to Ermarth can only come after the consideration of time offered in §2: *The Time of the Between*.

fully absent is important in distinguishing the status Iser's project affords to fiction, doubling and boundary-crossing. Iser's position requires him to maintain a duality with respect to the self as a means by which to affirm the "multiplicity of possibilities" open to the protagonists of the pastoral romance. Invariably, this duality cannot escape the limits of the hidden even though Iser wants to argue that the self is always "travelling between ... various roles" that, on the surface of things, appear temporary. The princes of the pastoral romance, however, always return to the ground of their identity as royals. While they are able to do so on the basis of being "simultaneously themselves and not themselves", they nonetheless have a fundamentally secure position in the knowledge that they are princes. In this sense, whenever any other identity is employed by them as a deception, their constant identity as princes remains intact and must, therefore, be seen to be *hidden* behind the mask of their subterfuge and not, in fact, absent. To be absent, a subject must lose itself, must disengage itself from itself in order to encounter itself. The princes always have themselves *as* princes even while they have themselves as something they are not; namely, shepherds. If anything is absent, it is this identity as shepherd. But even this identity is guided by the ever present identity of the prince as prince.

The sense of this becomes clear in Iser's use of 'mask' and 'identity'. Iser argues that "Being outside oneself" as a result of disguising ourselves as something we are not "does not ... mean transcending oneself; it means staging oneself. Overstepping oneself by means of the mask allows the self always to be with itself in a different manner" (*FI*, 78). However, this model is based upon an implicit moment of recognition whereby the subject says to itself 'That is me', thereby grounding the relation between selection and combination, which engenders the interplay between construction and deconstruction, on a prior possibility for decision making and goal direction; namely, the sense of oneself as possessing or having already created some sort of identity *for* oneself.²⁵ While this may hold within Iser's general claim that self-

²⁵ In this way, the ego in Iser's formulations appears to correspond to Levinas' first order exteriority.

creation and self-identification are founded upon this interplay, it is a formulation which actively negates absence on the basis that a prior identification is necessary in order to put the system into operation.²⁶ If absence is fundamentally at work in the alternation between subterfuge and recognition, it would be impossible to adjudicate at what point a mask was a mask and an identity an identity; that is, at what point either was *identical* with itself since there would be no transcendental position from which to guide perception or cognition. It seems impossible to establish any criteria by which to separate a mask qua mask from identity qua identity. Iser seems to come close to this when he argues that "the lack of any transcendental reference and the impossibility of any overarching third dimension show literary fictionality to be marked by an ineradicable duality, and indeed this is the source of its operational power. Since the duality cannot be unified, the origin of the split eludes capture, and yet it remains present as the driving force that constantly seeks to bring separated entities together" (*FI*, 80).²⁷ Again, while this remains a consistent point within the context of Iser's argument it actively negates the notion of absence which is central in understanding the separation of relation and the place Latin American fiction takes within it.²⁸ Absence, in the way I am using it, is neither analytic nor allegorical. That is, it neither conforms

²⁶ This, it seems to me, is essentially Locke's problem as well insofar as he attempted to locate subjectivity within an empirical epistemology that required for its fulfilment the grounding of human identification in an external reality as the precondition for self-creation. Iser is not unaware of this. However, he appears not to be aware of the similarities between the assumptions he makes in relation to those made by Locke nor that the inclusion of 'absence' in his own work does not sufficiently distinguish him from Locke's own misconstrual. See *FI*, 110-117, *passim*.

²⁷ What my criticisms here are leading to, of course, is the suggestion that while the pastoral romance might open this question for us through Iser, it is only in a literary form such as we find in Latin America that the role of absence can be legitimated and not undermined by a sense of the prior possibility of a subject upon which recognition (*vis-à-vis* intentionality) is based. In fact, as we will see shortly, a number of key Latin American texts provide us with a sense of the subjectless nature of the subject as a meaningful access point to the notion of absence.

²⁸ In this respect, Iser does a considerable service to the overall argument I am pursuing with respect to the question of there being, properly speaking, a Latin American literary tradition. In distinguishing my own project from that put forward by Iser, the latter of which reaches a long way back into a European tradition, Latin American fiction can emerge under the constraints of a terminology it has engendered and to which it constantly responds. The appropriation of terms from Europe must therefore be seen as an active means of distinguishing themselves from a tradition they do not belong to but which has had considerable effects on their own writing.

to an empirical, material world on the basis of which it could be ontologically grounded nor is it merely a symbolic making present of that which exceeds language. Absence is neither subtraction nor the hypostatizing of an outside or a beyond accessible only through the disunity inscribed between letter and spirit. The reinterpretation signification underwent is, therefore, not sufficient in and of itself to lead us towards this absence. Absence, therefore, avoids or resists both these definitions by failing to arrive as such, as a concept for which a definition is appropriate or forthcoming. As such, absence must be seen as active postponement, refusal to arrive, impossibility to be present as anything other than this hesitation, this postponement of itself. The contradiction implied in this is necessary for absence to operate within an analysis of the between since it is contradiction that opens the between for us, an opening we have already seen inscribed in Carpentier's own contradictory writing.

Iser has told us that his argument seeks to reinterpret the role of fiction in human life by concentrating on what fiction makes possible for that life on the basis that each shares a common ground; the duality implicit in the relation between the fictive and the imaginary. However, Iser argues in his reading of the significance of double meaning in the pastoral that the princes always want to disclose their true identities as princes to the princesses. This revelation is accomplished through the employment of tales which describe adventures the princes have actually been through. Hence,

if the one meaning (that of the heroic deeds) serves as a sign for another (the protagonists' desire to be taken for what they are), a mutual displacement [of either] is out of the question, and this inseparable duality presents itself as the structure of double meaning. The latter entails that there is always a manifest meaning adumbrating a latent one The disguise must completely fictionalize all its utterances so that it can be understood as the image of a hidden reality. What is said is not what is meant, and the manifest meaning must give way to the latent (*FI*, 62-64).

Consequently, "only the fictionalization of what is said allows for the simultaneity of mutually exclusive meanings" (*FI*, 65). In no way does this remove us from the trap of psychoanalysis as Iser maintains. Rather, the language of latency completely ties Iser's

conceptualisation to the notion of the hidden and prevents him from moving fully in the direction of the absent, a movement which is necessary if we hope to move beyond the conception of subjectivity as a palimpsest, as a tiered edifice we descend as if towards *hidden* truths. This has repercussions for Iser's delineation of absence because it grounds the relation between the prince and the princesses on the basis of a true identity constantly striving to achieve full presence through the "unified duality of double meaning" (*FI*, 63). This clearly undermines what Iser argues in his use of absence. Absence, he argues, is the sign of a duality that cannot be unified by the literary text, and because the duality of literary fictionality, which is inscribed by a lack of a transcendental position, cannot be unified, it testifies *ipso facto* to an *absent* origin²⁹ constantly at work trying to unify "separate entities". Furthermore, Iser argues that the task of preserving the mask and yet revealing the prince's true identity entails the "simultaneity of the mutually exclusive, and demands increasing fictionalization" (*FI*, 63). However, this entire schema depends upon a distinct idea of what exactly the prince is for himself, what his goals are and what strategies would best allow him to achieve those goals. In this sense, the prince never has himself as something he is not in any radical sense implied by Iser's conceptualisations and formulas. Granted, doubling in the pastoral romance opens us towards the importance of literary fictionality, but it does not reach the radical extremes of its own position until doubling is seen as a response to absence. As we will see, Carpentier's *El acoso* provides us with precisely this radicalisation by placing its protagonists in the full presence of the postponement and, in the end, utter fragmentation of self, one based on the very absence Iser is unable to engage with.

* * *

The analysis of doubling and literary fictionality leads Iser to conclude that "if the

²⁹ Again, Foucault's *The Order of Things* gives a detailed accounting of the ways in which the concept of the origin is reconceptualised at the close of the Classical period. Of particular interest for us here, especially with what comes later, is the relationship between the origin and historicity: "It is no longer origin that gives rise to historicity; it is historicity that, in its very fabric, makes possible the necessity of an origin which must be both internal and foreign to it" (*The Order of Things*, 329).

main concern is success ... fiction does not mediate between reality and cognition but takes effect by boundary-crossing, that is, by bringing imagination into play as a process that cannot be captured by cognition and that, in the final analysis, defies referentiality" (FI, 170). Iser's notion of boundary-crossing arises out of the reading of the pastoral because it is in the pastoral that he sees the attempt to conjoin two mutually exclusive worlds as emblematic of literary fictionality and its anthropological consequences; namely, that literary fictionality provides a form through which we double ourselves and thereby reach beyond our own limitations. What stands out for Iser is the way in which this conjunction is made possible in the breakdown of the relation between signs and signifieds that occurs in medieval scholasticism. When the "conjunction" between the two is severed, with the result that the pastoral, as a genre, could "no longer be identified with the state of affairs it [was] supposed to represent" (FI, 42), the pastoral turns to the "nesting of literary genres" as a means of constructing its own world. This "nesting" in turn reveals the copresence of different genres within the space of the pastoral romance itself. And it is the border between these genres that the protagonists cross when they "take back with them into the ways of life [what] they have temporally left behind" (FI, 47). Contrary to McHale's rather simplistic understanding of boundary-crossing in postmodernist fiction (namely, that "the ontological structure of the projected world is essentially the same in every case: a dual ontology, on one side our world of the normal and everyday, on the other side the next-door world of the paranormal or supernatural, and running between them the contested boundary separating the two worlds Another world penetrates or encroaches upon our world ... or some representative of our world penetrates an outpost of the other world, the world next door" (PF, 73-75)), Iser argues more convincingly and more pertinently that the pastoral world is itself a doubled world; that is, a world in which two worlds collide.³⁰ "Instead of being joined the pastoral and

³⁰ In Iser's examination of the pastoral romance he argues that the predominant, ternary sign system is problematised in Jacopo Sannazaro's *Arcadia* and brings to light important issues concerning the role of simultaneity, difference, repetition, memory, doubling and boundary-crossing that allow Iser to pursue the relation between the fictive and the imaginary. The point for Iser is to demonstrate how Sannazaro not only sets out to construct two mutually exclusive worlds - that of the shepherds and the

sociohistorical worlds in the pastoral romance³¹ are separated by a boundary that poses the problem of their correlation. They are presented through two different sign systems ... the pastoral romance does not set the pastoral world against another that lies outside itself' but inscribes a difference³² between the two on the basis of the interconnections between "two mutually exclusive semiotic systems" (*FI*, 46-47). However, as with his analysis of doubling, Iser's understanding of boundary-crossing is once again indebted to the hidden and not the absent. In his reading of the historical determination of fiction in philosophic discourse, Iser argues that Jeremy Bentham's attention to the function of fiction finally leads to the awareness that "as a particular genus fiction cannot be understood, because - although it depends on discourse - it is also the main reason for the increasing complexity of discourse" (*FI*, 128). As such, fiction is understood here as a "linguistic determination" brought forth in discourse

royals who enter their folds - but to demonstrate that the exchange between the two, one in which the two are actually combined, is no longer covered by the conjuncture of the ternary sign system. Rather, the difference created by the combination of these two worlds "creates an empty space that Sannazaro virtually allegorizes when, in the transition from Arcadia to Naples, he speaks of the great emptiness stretching between the two worlds that he can bridge only through dreamlike sleepwalking." (*FI*, 51). Iser argues that these two worlds are not so much in confrontation with each other as they are telescoped in and through the other: "The [artificial pastoral world] gains its significance only by functioning as a mirror, and the [historical world] by being refracted in the reflected image" (*FI*, 48). For Iser this is a vital element in articulating "literary fictionality" since the boundary-crossing at play in the pastoral romance prioritises neither the artificial nor the historical worlds but the act of combination that "allows for worlds to be surpassed within the world" (*FI*, 48).

³¹ The importance of the sociohistorical world in Iser's reading at this point arises from the reinterpretation representation underwent at the moment the pastoral ceased to reflect its own outward historical boundaries. As Iser argues, "the nesting of literary genres epitomizes a departure from the received notion of representation, whose patterns were meant to give presence to the represented and not to be strategies of concealment. The telescoped genres serve to indicate both the limitations of representation and the necessity of conceiving what cannot be grasped. This two-tiered arrangement is itself a form of representation, though it is no longer geared to the stratification of the social pyramid. Instead, the disputed correspondence between the genre and the social hierarchy points to the growing expansion of the sociopolitical world The upshot of this recasting of the traditional notion of representation is the emergence of two worlds: one that can be represented and another that cannot, and that therefore is only to be impinged upon" (*FI*, 44).

³² It is important to note here that Iser employs the term 'difference' not as a way of demonstrating an opposition between the two worlds of the pastoral romance. Rather, since the protagonists "maintain the presence of the first [world] in the second, a network of possible connections arises. The difference does not, therefore, stabilize opposition but allows for the readability of two mutually exclusive semiotic systems as their interconnections evolve from and intend to bridge that difference, which - having no content of its own - cannot indicate any particular way of reading" (*FI*, 46-47).

whose operational power "doubles the partial presence of things with their absence This fictional designation always tells us of the absence of what it makes present as quality, conceivability and intention", three tiers in Bentham's overall conceptualisation (*FI*, 129). While Iser moves away from Bentham's ideas, principally because they remain tied to the functionality and intentionality of fiction, he nonetheless incorporates the notion of doubling as the making present of an absent into his own work: "Being something else within one's consciousness *without giving up what one thinks oneself to be* - this turns out to be a human need that literature uncovers by meeting it in a striking variety of ways" (*FI*, 246; my emphasis) not the least of which is the simultaneity of mutually exclusive semiotic systems upon which the pastoral takes shape. In the first instance then, boundary-crossing is made possible by the awareness of the relation between a recognisable hidden reality and the subterfuge employed to achieve certain ends. Furthermore, according to Iser, the threshold that is crossed between the mask and the identity of the prince entails an act of doubling as the copresence of imagination and consciousness initiated by fictionality: "Fictionality thus becomes a medium for the manifestation of double meaning" (*FI*, 69). However, Iser also argues that the prince stages his identity behind a mask by appealing to fantasy "in the service of a hidden reality that was to find expression through language" (*FI*, 69). Hence, language enables the hidden to appear (even as such) vis-à-vis fictionality. As I noted above, fictionality in Iser's work is the conjunction between the acts of selection and combination that, working together, produce "relationships in the [literary] text" (*FI*, 8) out of the "fields of reference" authors have available to them. The emphasis on relationality allows Iser to argue that not only do authors constantly cross the boundaries that ostensibly separate each of these fields, but that, in the text itself, the components of these fields similarly break the confines of their own reference points and conjoin with others in a new "intertextual field of reference" (*FI*, 9) opened by the initial acts of selection and combination. This new field of reference coils back on the language of the text itself, stripping it of its denotative function and transforming it "into a function of figuration" (*FI*, 10). It is this function that ultimately allows

language to "indicate, through its figurations, the linguistic untranslatability of its references" (*FI*, 11). Hence, from the beginning of his analysis, Iser conceptualises language as the medium through which an 'unheard of phrase' gets expressed; or, more accurately, is exposed as such, as a phrase which is beyond the pale of language. Not unlike Kamin and Levinas, Iser gives language the role of bridging the rift between an inside and an outside on the basis of which boundary-crossing has meaning. Doubling in Iser is therefore, a direct response to language's ability to open an outside to us. While this outside is not, to be sure, a world that is not implicitly located in the semantic relations of the text itself, it is nonetheless not reducible to those semantic relations. As such, there is a gap between the two that is bridged by a consciousness striving to unify the two through a language whose failure, as in Kamin, becomes a productive force in its own right.³³

As in Levinas, where the transition from a first to a second order exteriority is accomplished in the ego's awareness of an other the ego cannot accommodate or make equal to its representations of itself, an awareness in which language bridges the rift that separates the ego and the other in the commandment to speak, the priority of language in the making present of a putative Outside not reducible to language is upheld in Iser's formulations as well. In Iser, language inserts itself between the initial movement of selection and the more complex associations accomplished in the movement of combination. The difference between selection and combination rests upon the latter's ability to "endow the imaginary with a specific form according to the relations to be established", a form which "eludes verbalization" (*FI*, 11), whereas selection "encapsulates extratextual realities into the text, turns the elements chosen into contexts for each other, and sets them up for observation against those elements it has excluded" (*FI*, 6). Selection provides a contextual and intertextual site for the combination of lexical and semantic elements that, finally, give a form to the imaginary. As fictionalising acts, both selection and combination operate on the basis that they

³³ See above pp. 12, 25-26.

bring together elements from different fields of reference; that is, on the basis of boundary-crossing. But the movement of combination is, strictly speaking, a linguistic one, one that employs the conjunction of various different lexical and semantic modalities. The transition from the movement of selection to that of combination is therefore accomplished by language, by a combination of linguistic elements that points to the very extralinguistic form of the imaginary the combination gives access to. Language is therefore employed in order to point towards the outside of language; that is, the ineffable conceived within the ordinary analysis as that which cannot be adequately verbalised. As Iser argues,

there is no verbalization of the relatedness of semantic enclosures, let alone of the revolutionary event of their transgression Thus, the cardinal points of the text defy verbalization, and it is only through these open structures within the *linguistic* patterning of the text that the imaginary can manifest its presence. From this fact we can deduce one last achievement of the fictive in the fictional text: It brings about the presence of the imaginary by transgressing language itself. In outstripping what conditions it, the imaginary reveals itself as the generative matrix of the text (*FI*, 20-21; my emphasis).

This entire configuration is important in Iser's overall intention to give response to the apparent need humans have for literature. By positioning the text's creation within the relationship between selection and combination that is grounded by an extralinguistic matrix, Iser is able to argue that

if the plasticity of human nature allows, through its multiple culture-bound patternings, limitless human self-cultivation, literature becomes a panorama of what is possible, because it is not hedged in either by the limitations or by the considerations that determine the institutionalized organizations within which human life otherwise takes its course. To monitor changing manifestations of self-fashioning, and yet not coincide with any of them, makes the interminable staging of ourselves appear as the postponement of the end (*FI*, 297).

In the same way that the imaginary finds its form through the boundary-crossing upon which the relation between selection and combination is based, human life finds its form through its own attempts to double itself, thereby allowing itself to be equal to itself only by being its own other, its double. For Iser, the pre-eminent form through

which this doubling is accomplished is literature since literature, as a medium grounded upon "literary fictionality" whose own mode of operation brings about "the coexistence of the mutually exclusive" (*FI*, 79), demands for its communication a reader who is, at one and the same time, present in the book and necessarily absent from it.³⁴ In Iser's present work, it is this need for literature and, more precisely, "literary fictionality" - our ability to double ourselves through the fictive nature of the fictional text - that promotes literature's anthropological importance.³⁵ Because it is grounded on the relation between selection and combination that opens us to an imaginary that lacks a name, literary fictionality is the movement of doubling that, Iser argues, is integral to the play element in human life.³⁶ This play element in the fictionalising acts of selection and combination, and thus of literary fictionality itself, inevitably leads to the notion of fiction as essentially a differential act, one Iser explores in his analysis of Jeremy Bentham, Hans Vaihinger and, finally, Nelson Goodman. Iser's analysis leads him to conclude that, since Kant, "the thematization of fiction has ... developed as a series of changing predications, all of which lead ultimately to providing fiction with

³⁴ As is well known, for Iser the reader is both a character in and an observer of the text he or she reads. For a detailed analysis of this relation, see *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U P, 1976) and *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U P, 1978), two essential texts in the development of Iser's reader-response theory.

³⁵ Should we not say literatures' importance since it is not clear that 'literature' refers to a class of writing which easily exceeds cultural boundaries? Iser tends to employ totalising concepts - 'literature', 'human life' - that, left unbroken by the development of his argument, appear to undermine the importance he places on the copresence of mutually exclusive worlds. A portion of this arises from his support of Nelson Goodman's rather commonplace notion that worlds are only ever constructed within a world; that is, within a set of preconditions as a ground from which an outside can enter or be recognised as such. How then, would Iser explain the relationship between mutually exclusive worlds that are introduced to each other through the foreignness of a text itself; that is, a text which did not fit the category or character of literature as it is defined by Western discourses? What, for example, would Iser say about a text like Edmund Jabès' *The Book of Questions* or any one of Blanchot's novels? Are these texts not, in some specific sense, foreign to the institutionalised reading that is allowed for and engendered by academia on the basis that they conjoin two ways of writing that, traditionally, have been construed as completely distinct and, in some cases, mutually exclusive? Or, for that matter, does the copresence of precolonial and colonial texts within the boundaries of Carpentier's novels not suggest, on the basis once again of the very foreignness of those texts, that Goodman's approach to the problem is rather simplistic in nature and does not drive to the heart of what is essential to it; that is, in terms of the study I am involved in here, the very space that makes the relationship possible?

³⁶ See above, pg. 68-69.

some kind of substratum" (*FI*, 166).³⁷ Since this substratum invariably provides foundations for fiction that force fiction, as a mode of communication, to "appear as something determinate" but which, because of varying systems, can always appear "as something else" (*FI*, 166), Iser concludes that the elemental 'nature' of fiction can only be realised when fiction "becomes the differential between decomposition and composition" (*FI*, 166). The between then, of the differential function of selection and combination that identifies literary fictionality. Again, this differential function "makes it possible for [human beings] to operate beyond their limitations. This may entail bringing within the necessary pragmatic bounds states of affairs that transcend language (Bentham) or consciousness (Vaihinger) or existing world versions (Goodman), as well as enabling human beings to reach out into an otherwise inaccessible reality by way of adjusting it to prevailing exigencies" (*FI*, 170). However, when absence becomes the mediating condition of the between that separates mutually exclusive worlds, as is evident in Carpentier, then the between itself must be reconceived beyond the act of differentiation as a means by which human's overstep their own limitations (as an end or goal).³⁸ That is, the between as *act*

³⁷ In Bentham's epistemology, this substratum is founded upon a notion of usefulness which he derives from his reinterpretation of Locke's concept of the subject in relation to what Bentham considers are the indispensable fictions of law and his understanding of experience. This reinterpretation then turns towards the 'as-if' character of the fictitious quality of fiction which, in turn, leads Bentham to inscribe an inseparable link between fiction, language and discourse. In Vaihinger's nominalism this 'as-if' character is, of course, pursued more forcefully in Vaihinger's attention to the "link between fiction and consciousness" which Bentham had ignored (*FI*, 130). The substrata for fiction in Vaihinger becomes a question of functionality that would be accessed by breaking the strict link inscribed between fiction and language that subtends Bentham's arguments. What this finally allows is a sense of the functionality of fiction in the attempt to "calculate and process reality" (*FI*, 150). "By pin-pointing this function Vaihinger makes fiction itself the object of cognition, and it emerges as a particular hybrid" (*FI*, 152). Finally, in Goodman's constructivist approach, the notion of the function (and location) of fiction, which was central to both Bentham and Vaihinger in varying degrees, is removed "so that only traces are left of this strange intent to provide a tangible base for the function of fiction. Indeed it is only these traces that still permit a degree of insight into fiction, which otherwise remains ungraspable, even though it continues to function prolifically" (*FI*, 167). The removal of old paradigms finally allows Goodman to shift the emphasis from "fiction as representation to fiction as intervention" (*FI*, 167). For a full discussion of these writers see *FI*, 87-170.

³⁸ My attention to Iser's analysis of the pastoral is intended to open the question of the role absence plays in the relationship between subterfuge and recognition. While Iser asserts that his own conceptualisations move away from the notion of the function of fiction, his attention to and affirmation of overstepping the limitations imposed upon us through the roles we are destined to fulfil reinscribes intentionality and goal direction back into the reinterpretation of fiction vis-à-vis the

becomes, in the encounter with absence, the impossibility of identification (with a prior possibility) as the affirmation of an identity in circulation around absence. The possibility for *self*-identification is therefore made possible in this encounter with absence.

Consequently, once we understand absence as active postponement, refusal to arrive, impossibility of being present, then we are required to rethink identity in ways subtly dissimilar to Iser. Rather than the movement between subterfuge and recognition whereby the mask is employed by an ego whose self-identity is constantly at work, as prior possibility for the division between the two, absence requires us to conceive the mask *as* identity. This would, in turn, require us to think the relation between subterfuge and recognition in a manner that would correspond more accurately to a sense of duplicity informed by absence, one we have seen at work in Carpentier's *Los pasos perdidos*. To conceive the mask *as* identity Iser's models would need to be replaced by a set of multiple crossings; a chiasmus then, where no priority is given to one 'signature' as the founding principle for all the others. The founding principle is the absence around which all the 'signatures' revolve. This model is founded only upon absence, the absence of a kernel of truth or meaning to which we could refer in order to establish a singular identity as that which the mask conceals; that is, in the pastoral romance, the prince as prince. And, contrary to Iser, it is not the case that we simply determine the employment of one mask from a set of possible masks that would best suit the achievement of certain goals, since this would immediately reinscribe a singular identity at the core of this model, one which guided the employment of certain strategies to achieve goals *it* set before itself. Such a singular identity is always absent. In this sense, masks *as* identity are always in circulation around absence as a precondition of their own multiplicity.³⁹

fictive and the imaginary. Iser's protestations to the contrary, in his formulations the purpose of fiction is to allow us to overstep our limitations by becoming something we are not.

³⁹ As we will see in the analyses of García Márquez's *La hojarasca* [*Leaf Storm*] and *El otoño del patriarca* [*The Autumn of the Patriarch*] and Juan Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo*, the literary text that self-consciously invokes a multiplicity of voices as a mode of expressing its central themes has this

Identity as multiplicity of masks means that the boundary between (an) inside and (an) outside - mask and identity - is never inscribed in order to be crossed. The principal factor that structures the relation between mask and identity is absence; that is, the absence of any kernel of representational truth to which we could appeal in adjudicating the real "I" hidden behind or beneath the false propriety of the mask. The mask constructs identity in the absence of identity, and is therefore the creative source of its own identity. In this sense, all fiction is a mask, the creative production of an identity. This productivity is not a sure way of eliminating absence but remains, always, as a response to absence: absence remains, for the mask always constructs identity as a substitute for the anonymity of "I". In this respect, Iser's attention to the notion of disguising is revealing. Once again, Colás' analysis is helpful here.

In his reading of Cortázar's *Rayuela*, Colás argues that Horacio's commitment to rational mediation as a way of ordering his own world is a direct response to his unwillingness to make an ethical commitment to the process of dealienation. Such a commitment can only arise when Horacio finally discovers the significance of "participatory processes over meaningful endings" (*PL*, 62), when he discovers that freedom from alienating structures can only be experienced when one gives up the planned opposition involved in contemplating the structure of things; that is, when one agrees to take a leap.⁴⁰ Until then, Horacio is committed only to a rationality that

concept of circulation around absence as a precondition. Not surprisingly, in both García Márquez and Rulfo, this absence is formally inscribed in the figure of a dead body or bodies as emblematic of the presence of absence as itself a precondition for expression, self-identification and self-creation: Not surprisingly because death and, more importantly, the relation between the dead and the living embodies emblematically the very between from out of which this writing emerges, a condition I will explore shortly.

⁴⁰ "In my view, interpretations that dwell on whether Horacio kills himself, goes insane, or both, miss the point of the scene's open-endedness. It is not that we don't know what happens, but rather that the leap itself is what happens. Horacio has learned to valorize participatory processes over meaningful endings. And we should be forced, deprived of an ending, to attend to the act itself, precisely as Horacio has learned to do. It is the leap itself, the act or experience, and not what follows it, its meaning, that we must focus on" (*PL*, 62). I will be dealing with the notion of the leap later in my discussion of the differences between Paz and Rulfo. In preparation however, recall that Carpentier clearly refused the Romantic desire for immediacy and plenitude because he began to realise that his *mediation vis-à-vis* narrative and, precisely, the presence of the authorial figure in the text, brought to light the inherent literary conceit of such a gesture. In this respect, Colás never seems anxious to ask whether or not "unalienated immediacy" is either possible or, what is more, desirable.

cannot accommodate any sort of detour because, as Colás points out, "Only a searcher is annoyed by detours. Indeed only when one is searching does a detour appear as such. Authentic wandering cannot be interrupted because it presupposes no stationary standpoint" (*PL*, 58). For Colás, the leap is vital in Horacio's transformation or conversion to an "unalienated immediacy" because it requires no necessary ending or plan for its fulfilment as leap; that is, as commitment to "participatory, material, and ethical practice" (*PL*, 62). In the same sense that authentic wandering can never be confronted with a detour, one can never, strictly speaking, disguise what one did not have; that is, an identity the perception of which corresponds to an inward turning self-referentiality which Iser's efforts have been trying to avoid. The prince has himself as prince because of a global understanding of his place in his social, historical and cultural order. Similarly, in Goodman worldmaking is possible on the basis of a tacit knowledge of shared realities or, at least, components of those realities. But it is precisely this global understanding which we cannot have a representation of, even according to Iser's own admission.⁴¹ In the pastoral romance, there is always a common ground upon which the prince stands even while he might be said to be beside himself. In this sense, the prince is never absent, but rather hidden behind his ulterior motivations; that is, his sexual desires. In contradistinction to this position, the presence of absence requires us to redefine mask *as* that present image whose anonymity is not evidence of "I" peering through from behind the cover of subterfuge. Rather, anonymity *is* the face of identity. To be anonymous is to be oneself in the midst of the anonymity of existence, in the midst of all that is unknown to us, in the mi(d)st and separation of relation.

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⁴¹ See above pg 70: "We ourselves are separated from ourselves by the very fact that we exist but cannot know what existence is" (*FI*, 82).

Fiction's Absent Source

I argued earlier, following on from Echevarría, that Carpentier's *Los pasos perdidos* represents a moment in the Cuban writer's awareness that the possibility of there being, properly speaking, a Latin American literary tradition was founded upon a direct confrontation with absence as the mediating element in his own efforts and discoveries during the early 1950's. At that time, I also argued that the awareness of absence leads directly to the notion of the separation of relation as it is developed in response to mediation, a response which we have seen is also essential to Colás' reading of *Rayuela*. Given the addition of my critique of Iser's conceptualisation of absence, it is now possible to pursue Carpentier's relation to the concept of absence more fully by exploring the intricacies of *El acoso*.

We have already seen how Echevarría clearly pinpoints the relationship between Carpentier's desire to return to virginal America vis-à-vis the literary text and how that return is marked in Carpentier's writing by the awareness of the repetition of certain European texts which have been instrumental in creating and disseminating a vision of that virginality. It is important to point out here the importance in Carpentier's writing of the desire to conjoin history and narrative. As Echevarría argues, "the question of history and the narrative was at the very core of the experiments in the forties and the concept of "marvellous American reality". There ... it was the recovery of history from the texts that contained it that motivated Carpentier's enterprise - turning the fictional text into a pastiche of the texts from which history was recovered, and recovering with those texts the concert of history, already present as an organic continuum with nature" (*PH*, 236). In my analysis of *Los pasos perdidos* within the context of the separation of relation I have tried to show that Carpentier discovers the impossibility of returning to primeval purity, to the origin, as emblematic of the duality inherent in the subject of Latin America itself. Echevarría is able to locate the problem: if Latin America is the product of texts that have been written during the precolonial and colonial periods, then any attempt to discover the origin of its own history will inevitably lead Latin Americans back through those texts, thereby exposing that history

as essentially duplicated - it is theirs while it remains generatively possible because of another - with the consequence that any possibility of there being an origin of that history is irretrievably erased. The absence of any origin then becomes the possibility of self-creation vis-à-vis the amalgamation and hybridisation of those texts that preceded Carpentier's own text. The subject of *Los pasos perdidos* (which is not to be confused with what the novel may or may not be *about*) circulates around absence as a precondition for its own self-identification and self-creation. What this circulating around absence suggests to Carpentier is that history and narrative conjoin in the present-time of the author's own writing. The reason for this is twofold: firstly, by positioning the narrator in the awareness of his own duplicity, Carpentier demonstrates that not only is "the fantastic as stemming from the fusion of nature and creative consciousness ... unveiled as a literary conceit" (*PH*, 190),⁴² but also that the impossibility of returning to one's origin places (the transparency of) the self and the history to which it could belong in order to be identical with itself in abeyance; and, secondly, that once the narrator is suspended as a self-identical being, the text in which the narrator finds him/herself becomes recognisable as a 'historical drama' only through the constant bifurcation of the past through its own (that is, the text's) multiple, intertextual connections. The subject is, therefore, recognisable to itself (only) as the multiplication and bifurcation of itself through these textual convergences. Not unlike Iser's argument, in which he underscored the importance of the slippage of the sign for the pastoral romance, one which demanded the incorporation of different literary genres into the genre of the pastoral itself, Carpentier's protagonist in *Los pasos perdidos* becomes aware that he, as artist, can only make witness to the textual interconnections present throughout history as a means by which to know himself; that is, to return to himself, the protagonist writes in a present which conjoins history and narrative as an act of self-identification.

⁴² Echevarría tells us he is using the word 'conceit' "both in its present meaning and in the old poetic sense of binding image and concept" (*PH*, 22). Also, recall the complete misreading McHale offers regarding Carpentier and *lo real maravilloso* I alluded to above. See above pp 41-42.

Echevarría claims that one of the difficulties in the analysis of Carpentier's writing as a whole is locating a singular voice in an *oeuvre* that consistently reappropriates precolonial and colonial texts in the construction of its own works. These reappropriations are so extensive Echevarría believes that only a rigorous genealogical research could afford him a glimpse of that *oeuvre*.⁴³ In addition to this, Echevarría also discovered that Carpentier's own statements about his writing, about his place in a literary tradition it may, in fact, be impossible to locate, his reflections on the relationship between that anonymous tradition and certain European movements such as Surrealism, statements that appeared to contradict each other, undermined the possibility of easily locating a singular authorial voice at the heart of Carpentier's *oeuvre* itself. More importantly, however, Echevarría, as if infected by the process Carpentier will eventually become fully cognisant of, discovers a "series of infinitely repeated and receding sequences" (*PH*, 183) of texts from which *Los pasos perdidos* has disseminated, a discovery which is at the heart of Carpentier's own writing: not only did Echevarría discover an important "discord at the centre of Carpentier's production" (*PH*, 17), but an indispensable relation between the return to origins, fiction, and the possibility of constructing a new beginning that could arise out of the sequence of texts that contain the historical and cultural memory of Latin America

⁴³ It is important to distinguish between two methods of performing genealogical research. In the first method, which I will call the surface-depth relations analysis, proper names are attributed with specific socio-historical functions within a set of relations which branch out from a source at the top to an, albeit in principle, infinite subdivision of proliferating proper names. This analysis is typically employed in determining and illustrating the influences that have affected the development of an author or authors in relation to their forbears. It is an analysis that attempts to read both an author's life and their works on the basis of a movement from surface to depth whereby the degrees and details of symbolic meaning grow exponentially as one passes through the stratifications on the way, in principle, to the kernel of (representational) meaning which will bring us unto the truth of the author's life and works. All good attempts to construct or represent an author's *oeuvre* are studies that invoke this analysis. The second method, which I will call the non-linear, shallow rift analysis, deals in concepts rather than proper names, attempting to demonstrate at what point certain concepts affect the writing of certain authors, rather than attempting to demonstrate how one author inherits concepts supposedly engendered or, at least, redeployed by a previous author. This analysis does not move from surface to depth in order to discover that kernel of (representational) meaning, but is focused on the remaining 'husk' left over by a reading that attempts to locate the convergence of concepts within a large body of textual practices. It is this latter analysis that is at work in this thesis as a whole. In principle, it is an analysis that, in reaching back by bringing forth, locates a depth that is not deep; that is, precisely, a *shallow rift*.

itself. Consequently, in the process of attempting to portray Carpentier's writing within the moth-eaten notion of a unified *oeuvre*⁴⁴ Echevarría discovers instead an uncontrollable proliferation of voices, a type of fragmentation of both the subject of Carpentier's writing and of the very subject of Carpentier himself. What we discover in reading Echevarría reading Carpentier is that the centre of a writing which constantly reveals itself through a series of autobiographical misprisions⁴⁵ is one that is, properly speaking, always slipping away, always postponed. In the end, Carpentier's *oeuvre*, in the proliferation of its voices, seemed to annul the notion of a unified, progressive, linear development which is a necessary element in the possibility of locating an *oeuvre*. Carpentier's many voices seem to undo the *oeuvre* itself and, thereby, undo unity, progress and linearity. The difficulty in locating the origin of/in Carpentier is therefore consistent with Latin America's exile from any zero moment of creation, an origin to which any considered reading of the appropriate *texts* could return us or Latin American's themselves. The only reality that can, therefore, be returned to is the reality of those texts, the reality of fiction. In the absence of any clearly definable origin from which to piece together an *oeuvre*, Echevarría inadvertently locates the centre from which Carpentier's writing springs; that is, the absence of any "organic

⁴⁴ In Echevarría's defence, I feel it necessary to point out that he is aware of the problems involved in the attempt to unify Carpentier's writing. In fact, Echevarría sees such an attempt as fundamental to understanding Carpentier's writing as a whole precisely because of the impossibility of achieving it. "The order in which Carpentier's works were written constitutes a way into the mechanics of the texts, a route, as it were, full of meanderings and retracings. The recharting of such a route is of necessity a charting of error, both in its connotation of mistake and in the etymological sense of wandering. But because of the nature of the route and the metaphorical quality of its temporal unfolding, such an itinerary cannot arrive at a synthesis, which would amount to a total and final fiction about Carpentier. At the same time, the diachronic unfolding of such a structure renders the very form of fiction unavoidable, and in a sense turns this book [that is, *The Pilgrim At Home*] into a sort of metanovel" (PH, 24). Echevarría therefore, seems to be giving priority to the contradiction inherent in Carpentier's writing as a clue to the *need* for an attempt at synthesising his works. However, if synthesis is ultimately impossible, then a vain attempt at achieving a transcendent viewpoint from which the 'metanovel' could take shape betrays an unwillingness to respond to the nomadic quality of Carpentier's works. Nomadic, that is, in the sense that they are not attached to any singular identity as a guiding thread for their construction or for our ability to understand them.

⁴⁵ Carpentier's "disavowal of early works such as *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!* and his defence of the theories of the prologue to *The Kingdom of this World* years after its publication, while holding views blatantly opposed to them, is a clear indication that Carpentier is always a problematic and persistent context for Carpentier" (PH, 24). I will be addressing a similar formulation in Fuentes' reading of Nikolai Gogol at the end of this study.

connectedness" (PH, 21).⁴⁶ The principal difference between Echevarría's analysis and my own is the degree to which this absence becomes central to our various readings of *Los pasos perdidos* and *El acoso*. Nonetheless, from these preliminary reflections on Echevarría's own difficulties in his approach to Carpentier's writing, it should be apparent that for Carpentier the "revolutionary nature of writing" is grounded in the co-axial relationship between the lost steps, which could not lead him back to the origin (either of existence and time or of a Latin American literary tradition), and the perception of an absent centre around which his and perhaps all Latin American writing revolves. It is therefore precisely this absence that fosters the creative and re-creative activities of a fiction perpetually moving back and forth across the shallow rifts of a textual convergence. Echevarría's sophisticated response to the challenge put forward by Carpentier's writing is a credit not only to Echevarría's own skill at synthesising a vast network of influences that have made their mark on Carpentier, but to the complex and dynamic *historia* of Carpentier's own writing. However, what seems particularly perplexing in Echevarría's analysis is his decision to conform to the dictates of genealogy (as surface-depth relations analysis) when he admits that such a lineage is, in the final analysis, incapable of dealing with what is at the heart of Carpentier's writing. If the journey back to the source of human existence is gauged in terms of a Romantic desire to join human consciousness with nature, it is vital to attend to the manner in which the *impossibility* of such a return is worked out within Carpentier's texts, ones which, by including specific texts from the "Romantic *Naturphilosophie*" (PH, 28), demonstrate the contradiction inherent in the proposition itself: in order to return to virginal America, Carpentier must first have a conception of the very purity and immediacy which is ascribed to America, a conception conveyed to Carpentier through the writing (that is, the mediation) of the Romantics. In short, the return to virginal America is mediated by the Romantics, a mediation which problematises the notion of their being a singular, pure and unmediated origin to return

⁴⁶ Echevarría concludes his study by affirming the importance of the notion of absence in Carpentier's *Explosion in A Cathedral*, *Reasons of State* and *Concierto barraco*.

to.

Although Echevarría does fall back into the old habit of topographically and thematically inscribing Carpentier within an apparently rigorous set of temporal bands,⁴⁷ he does make it clear that the primary difficulty in achieving any lasting success in such an inscription is Carpentier's own problematisation of the relation between author and work. The inclusiveness of birth and death, which I will attend to shortly, eventually leads Carpentier to reassess the Romantic trust in the fusion of meaning with a sign system whose emergence is seen in the transcendental code of nature. As we have seen, by *Los pasos perdidos* Carpentier had already conceived nature, and especially the jungle, as "the Unknown" (*PP*, 144; *LS*, 132) which emerged in all its anonymity out of the impossibility of attributing any meaning to its signs. However, at the close of *Los pasos perdidos* there is a sense that this anonymity has not yet taken its toll on the subject of the novel itself. The musicologist has discovered that he cannot return to the origin, but he has not yet called himself into question; that is, the *possibility* of his own identity. This radicalisation of the dislocation from any return to original innocence is pursued in *El acoso* where, as we will see, the impossibility of a return *to oneself* is inscribed in the language of death and fragmentation.

* * *

With these preliminary comments in mind, we can now turn to *El acoso* where, as Echevarría argues, Carpentier reworks the Romantic semiotic system by placing his protagonists in the position of utter and irresolvable duplicity. It is within this duplicity that the notions of fragmentation and death become increasingly important in

⁴⁷ These are: The period between "the mid-twenties to 1939" in which Carpentier attempts "a unique and different form of narrative ... grounded in the symbolic plenum of Afro-Cuban religion"; the period "1939-1949 ... encompassing what has come to be known as "magical realism" and which "centres on the conceit of the natural fusion of Latin American history and a process of writing which excludes the conscious author" - my concern with Carpentier beginning midway within this period; "the third moment ... from 1949 to the mid-fifties" which reassess the relationship between the author and "his product" by responding to "the alienation of the writer" within the "context of contemporary political history"; and, finally, the period from "the mid-fifties to the present" (Echevarría's study was written in 1977). See *PH*, 32-33.

Carpentier's writing and ones he will explore in increasing detail in those novels that follow *El acoso*. As I have already indicated, my interest in *El acoso* is the degree to which the absence that was a consequence of the protagonist's journeys in *Los pasos perdidos* places certain demands on Carpentier himself, as an artist for whom the question of self-identification could not be posed within the confines of Romanticism; that is, within the confines of a unification with original innocence fostered by a Romantic sensibility that sought to unify signs with their putative meanings by achieving ultimate forms from Nature to which human consciousness could be fused. As Echevarría points out, by casting himself in the literary work itself,⁴⁸ Carpentier calls into question the possibility of locating an authorial voice whose efforts could fulfil themselves in the very unity of that work. In *El acoso* these configurations are pursued through the complete duplication of the protagonists and the resulting dislocation of subjectivity. If in *Los pasos perdidos* we come to recognise the impossibility of returning to the prior possibility of a Latin American literary tradition and, indeed, of a Latin American identity rooted in that tradition, in *El acoso* we come to recognise the more radical impossibility of returning to the prior possibility of the self.

The impossibility of achieving a union between the significant and the signified is foregrounded in *El acoso* in the separation that frames the development of characterisation and the interaction between the protagonists themselves. As we will see, this separation is not, strictly speaking, a phenomenal distance but the very space that is opened by the impossibility of unification, one which the two protagonists share and one, therefore, which drives to the duplicity at the heart of the novel. In fact, the

⁴⁸ "The war of time is waged [in *Los pasos perdidos*] in the act of writing, and the only mythic figure that can emerge is that of the modern writer, who is by definition the undoer of myths, including his own" (*PH*, 162). Echevarría pursues this in a detailed accounting of the relation between the text of *Los pasos perdidos* and Carpentier's own statements about its construction which leads Echevarría to consider the problematisation of autobiography as indicative of Carpentier's decision to fictionalise himself rather than maintain a clear cut distinction between author and narrator. This decision ultimately had the result that, because the narrator remains anonymous throughout the novel and there is therefore no way of establishing what his identity is, "the narrator [becomes] the space between the "I" and the "he""; that is, between the first and third person pronouns through which the narrator is 'disclosed' to us at the beginning of the novel (*PH*, 165).

notion of sharing is important to any understanding of duplicity and one that is lacking in Iser's formulations. Duplicity would never appear as such, that is, as a concept in its own right, without a background against which the concept distinguished itself. While this seems a commonplace, it drives to the heart of the assumptions at work in Iser's arguments; namely, that identity is assumed to be duplicitous prior to any conceptual grounding of that duplicity in the reconceptualisation signification underwent during the Renaissance. In short, Iser requires us to accept the former in order to understand the significance of the latter in the broader context of understanding the role fiction plays in supporting our efforts (and our need) to reach beyond ourselves by doubling ourselves. But why should we accept that identity is, in fact, duplicitous in the first place? The answer to this requires us to attend to the question of the possibility of relation generally speaking and, more specifically, of the relation we have with ourselves and with others. By locating that possibility in the *separation* of relation, I hope to show that identity is duplicitous because of an elemental unknowing, an impossibility grounded in part by the inability to experience the experiences of others, one that points directly to an opacity at the heart of relation itself: that is, opacity *as* separation as the condition of possibility for relation. Duplicity therefore arises when we are faced with the impossibility of unification, either between signs and meaning, between self and other,⁴⁹ or, indeed, between one culture and another. In the following analysis it will, therefore, be necessary to attend to the sharing⁵⁰ of separation as an affirmation of duplicity.⁵¹

⁴⁹ This is why Levinas pays particular attention to the notions of doubling and resemblance, since they are suggestive of the field opened when the ego confronts an outside it cannot recuperate into its own identity; that is, its attempts to be identical with itself through a negation of that which is beyond it or by enfolding that beyond back into itself, thereby appropriating it for itself.

⁵⁰ The notion of sharing is particularly important to Bataille's formulations of the erotic. As I mentioned above, the examination of eroticism exceeds the limits of this thesis but needs to be sign posted here in order to point to the suggestive nature of my claims. Bataille's analysis would be instrumental in developing those claims in the direction of eroticism, towards that moment in which the erotic is exposed as the sharing of what it is impossible to share.

⁵¹ This sharing will come to be recognised as the only prior possibility for self-identification conceived within the broader parameters of philosophic discourse and thereby reaffirms the need to break from a tradition that either attempts to locate that possibility in a material world or, equally, in an origin which exceeds time and space. I am what I have given away, that essential part of me that,

From the very first pages, separation frames our encounter with the protagonists of *El acoso*. "Sinfonia Eroica, composta per festeggiare il sourvenire di un grand'Uomo, e dedicata a Sua Altezza Serenissima il Principe di Lobkowitz da Luigi van Beethoven, op. 55, No. III delle Sinfonie ... The startling crash of the slamming door shattered his childish pride at having understood those words" (*ob*, 85; *C*, 3). The first protagonist, a ticket seller at a theatre in a nameless city, occupies his time during those moments of inactivity that are a mark of abject (that is, deferential) labour by reading a biography of Ludwig van Beethoven. The ticket seller believes that this apparent diversion from the monotony of subservient labour allows him access to a world (even a truth, a complete metaphysics) the audience to the performance of Beethoven's 'Eroica' can only feign an appreciation of. That world is, of course, the world of Beethoven himself: Beethoven's inner psychism. From the very start, then, this protagonist places his trust in the power of the text to deliver him to the truth that lingers behind all the falsifying appearances of Beethoven handed out by poor conductors. "If he was there, perched on the stool, leaning against the worn damask curtain, in that ticket booth as narrow as a desk drawer, it was so he could learn to understand great things, because he admired things others kept behind closed doors, locked away from his poverty" (*ob*, 87; *C*, 6). And yet, we can already detect a betrayal of the ticket seller in the very text that we are reading, suggesting that the text, as a form, may not hold out in the way the ticket seller believes it should: as the bearer of truth. The ticket seller is described as having a "childish pride" and as being engulfed in a "poverty" others appear to be aware of. If the ticket seller recognises this it would only confirm our suspicion that he is, in fact, an impoverished man whose attempt to "understand great things" through the mediation of the written word testifies to his lack of recognition that he constantly withdraws from the existence he believes the text gives access to, a lack inscribed in the apparent gap that separates him from the world he inhabits. This gap is foreclosed in the distance that separates the ticket seller from the people in the theatre lobby.

in being essential, is not mine to give away.

The furs [the women] wore in spite of the heat made moisture collect on their necks and bosoms. To relieve themselves of the weight, they would let their stoles slip down, draping them from elbow to elbow across their backs as if they were thick festoons in a painted scene. His eyes fled from what was so near yet so unattainable. Beyond the flesh lay the park with its columns abandoned to the cloudburst, and, beyond the park, behind the doorway in shadows, the mansion with the Belvedere - once upon a time a manor house surrounded by pines and cypresses (*ob*, 86; *C*, 5).

The desire that erupts in the ticket seller at the sight of the erotic gestures of the women drives his imagination to bridge the gap that separates him from their bodies. However, this drive only propels him towards a mythic world he cannot reach because of his enclosure within the narrow world of his occupation as ticket seller and, more importantly, the narrowness of textuality expressed in the contradiction of attempting to achieve unity of form and intention, signs and meaning through a text - the biography - that offers one version of the great Romantic composer Ludwig van Beethoven. The impossibility of bridging the gap between himself and the women's bodies drives his imagination to prefigure an impossible world as a solution to the unattainability of their impossible bodies: one impossibility supplants another, thereby reinscribing and reaffirming the insurmountable gap that marks out his existence. In a moment of uncontrolled nostalgia (as an emblem of his vain attempts to bridge this gap), the ticket seller, as if reaching the absolute outer limits of his existence, imagines a woman lying in wait for him and him alone, waiting with her legs spread open like the biography he reads, the biography "whose pages were spread open before him" (*ob*, 89; *C*, 9) so that he alone could penetrate to the kernel of truth that lies behind all outward appearances.

Enter the second protagonist: "At that very moment, an ambulance passed in front of the building at top speed, swerved, and brutally slammed on its breaks. "A seat," said an urgent voice. "Any seat," the man added impatiently, while his fingers slid a bill through the bars of the ticket booth" (*ob*, 88; *C*, 7). Having failed to bridge the gap through the efforts of the imagination, the ticket seller, as if by divine providence -

for it is, after all, Truth that he seeks, the Purity of the One, the Unique - believes he is given the possibility of reconciling his desire with its object immediately that he recognises the bill as a sign: since all the cash books had been closed, that bill "became a bridge, parting the bars, piercing walls, stretching [him] toward the woman who was waiting - he could not imagine her in any way except *waiting*" (*ob*, 89; *C*, 8). And yet, the princess of his fairy tale is none other than a prostitute; that is, a substitute for the unattainable and *real* object of his desire. The bank note "would make him owner of the house without clocks - whose doors would stay locked even if visitors knocked and shouted - for an entire night" (*ob*, 90; *C*, 10). Hence, the bank note becomes a sign for the unification between his desire and its object by bridging the gap that separates him from his lover-in-waiting who, in being a prostitute, is never in waiting for him and can never be his. Because the object of his desire is substituted for by a prostitute who is, by definition, no one man's possession, the bank note actually signifies the impossibility of uniting desire with its object. And, because the bank note supports this dual signification, it testifies to the impossibility of uniting signs to a putative meaning resident in a True and Unique (that is, Absolute and Eternal) beyond. In this sense, everything is ordered for the ticket seller by the impossibility of unification; that is, precisely, the separation which drives the operations of the imagination. But, because it is this impossibility that frustrates the ticket seller's desires, he attempts, through a union with the prostitute, to close the gap he can not bridge. Unable to *bridge* the gap between desire and its object, the deprived and impoverished ticket seller believes he can nonetheless *fill* it up by embracing what, it happens, is only a substitute for an unattainable object. What the ticket seller does not realise is that, on the one hand, it is precisely this gap that cannot be filled and, on the other, constantly resists any puerile attempts to circumvent it.

This separation is pushed further in the characterisation of the second protagonist, the one for whom the novel gains its name, the one who rushes into the theatre in a desperate fury. The introduction of the second protagonist comes at the end of his story, just moments before he is shot at the conclusion of Beethoven's 'Eroica'. A step

back is decisive in understanding this protagonist's condition. We learn, as we move backwards through the novel, that he is a student at the local university and that he took up residence in the Belvedere in the old mansion. He soon leaves the closed quarters of the room, leaving behind a trunk with an assortment of personal belongings he has no more interest in. But, years later, when he is on the run from the authorities, he returns to the Belvedere "in search of some final protection, bearing the weight of a hunted body Now, breathing in the scent of termite-eaten papers, of the camphor of dried ink, he found in that trunk something like a symbol, one only he could decipher, of Paradise before the Fall" (*ob*, 114; *C*, 43). This perception of time lost, of a purity unsullied by the duplicitous actions of people whose motivations lie concealed behind the veils of their subterfuge, their secrecy (the hunted one belongs to a radical movement through which a plot to murder a government official was planned and executed), is mirrored in the other protagonist who, having arrived at his lover's house, is completely betrayed by the bank note he had earlier seen as a type of ultimate sign for restoration and unification. The prostitute he caresses with all the delusions of a man in search of Truth does not respond in kind but proceeds to complain about a recent visit by the police to her sacred chambers. Her complaints soon turn to outright fear at the prospect of being sent to the women's prison for involvement in a crime she has only recently become aware of, the murder committed by the second protagonist and for which he is being hunted. The ticket seller, feeling oppressed by her complaints, gives her the bank note telling her to treat herself to a drink only to find out that the bank note is a forgery. Immediately the prostitute realises that he has no money to pay for her services, she makes her excuses and sends him on his way. As soon as the ticket seller is ejected from the prostitute's house his imagination again strives to unify what she has made impossible for him, taking him off to places beyond the pale of time and the rain-soaked streets of his rejection. As if to overcome his despair, his imagination reaches back to his childhood, to the days of innocent games played with a female friend, to lost opportunities which are nonetheless preserved in all their purity in the image he has of them in his memory. And in that pathetic moment

Despair gave way to shame. He would never get anywhere, never free himself from that maids' room, from pressing his handkerchiefs on the mirror to dry, from worn socks tied up at the big toe with a piece of string, as long as the image of a prostitute was all it took to distract him from the True and the Sublime. He opened the book, whose pages turned blue in the flash of a neon sign (*ob*, 101-102; *C*, 27).

Once again, having failed to achieve a union between desire and its object, one that would bring about an encounter with the Truth, the ticket seller turns to the body of the biography for that flash of recognition that precedes all such encounters. The ticket seller's life is therefore marked by the oscillation between the duplicity of semiotic systems and of a failure to recognise that the text of the biography is, in this respect, no different than the text of the prostitute's body, the body he attempts to penetrate in order to break through the veils that conceal the True and the Sublime: both betray the sign as subterfuge, duplicity and pretence.

Both protagonists share the space of this duplicity represented by the bank note and the mansion with the Belvedere: on the one hand, a sign of lost purity and, on the other, a refuge from the terrors of lost innocence after the fall. In this sense, after the disaster of the fall, nothing will ever again be unified. The nostalgic hope for reunion with that lost purity in the ticket seller is mirrored in the hunted one's sentimental reminiscence of a lost time he can only dream about. In both, separation is the possibility for their relation to an external world and is, in fact, the condition which finally brings them together in the theatre at the end of the story.

The significance of separation as the condition that brings the two protagonists together is foregrounded, once again, in the role of the bank note in the process of the narrative. After spending some time in the Belvedere, the hunted one's refuge is breached by the death of the mansion owner, a woman who looked after him in his youth and who gave him lodging during those early days of his education. With her death, the apartment below the Belvedere soon becomes filled with the crowd of people who have come to the old women's wake. The hunted one is now forced to leave his refuge, "to turn himself over to freedom - to the street, the crowds, the eyes -

which was like being called before a judge" (*ob*, 124; *C*, 58). When he finally gathers his courage and escapes the crowd forming in the old lady's apartment, he is immediately gripped by the fear of his new found and undesired freedom. He knows he needs shelter and in order to acquire it he heads farther and farther away from the centre of the city, farther and farther away from contact with people. Like the ticket seller, he moves beyond the field of contact with others, into the very deep of night itself, into the blackness of a dark street and the shadows of a house, the only house where he knows he can find shelter: the house of the prostitute the ticket seller will later be thrown out of because his bank note is a forgery; the very bank note the ticket seller receives from the hunted one after the hunted one is also forced to abandon the prostitute's house.

The hunted one arrives at the prostitute's house with the bank note in his pocket. After a brief sleep and an exchange of sexual embraces, the hunted one requests that the prostitute contact his superiors in the underground movement he is involved with and, to that end, gives her the bank note to expedite her transportation across the city. However, when she returns to her house and attempts to pay a taxi driver his fare, he exclaims that the bank note is a fake. The ensuing argument draws the attention of a nearby policeman and, in the mounting tension, the hunted one makes a hasty retreat through a back window. In both cases, then, the bank note leads each protagonist to the house of the prostitute under the sign of unity and protection only to immediately cast them out because it is a duplicitous sign: it delivers exactly the opposite of what it promises: it is a lie that exposes both protagonists to a world they believe they are abandoning through the very sign of the bank note itself. The bank note therefore never signifies what the protagonists believe it signifies and, in this way, they are joined through the very duplicity of the sign opened by the separation of relation. And, as if this were not enough, after the hunted one is shot dead at the end of the novel, we discover that, in fact, the bank note is genuine: in the end, even *simulation* is a sign that betrays the protagonists.

* * *

I argued above that Iser makes great work of the double meaning implied by the collision of mutually exclusive semiotic systems in the pastoral romance. At that time, I also argued that Iser's attempt to read this double meaning on the basis of the connection between "the image of a hidden reality" (brought forth through fictionalisation) and the duplicity of the sign did not avoid a psychoanalytic model that bases itself on the tension between latency and self-revelation.⁵² What we are seeing in Iser is the retreat from the implications engendered by his own work to the prior possibility of meaning embodied in the latent meaning to which subterfuge always refers. Such a configuration undermines the use of absence in Iser's work, throwing that work back upon the ground it seeks to abandon. In *El acoso*, on the other hand, the radical implications of absence are fully embraced in the utter annihilation of the prior possibility for meaning and, indeed, for subjectivity. This annihilation is engendered in the impossibility of attributing any meaning to the signs that the protagonists believe lead them towards certain Truth. In the duplicity and duplication of the sign, itself signified by the almost empty quality of the bank note - empty, that is, because it signifies prolifically - both the protagonists are constantly separated from the meanings they seek: in the ticket seller a purity embodied in the True and the Sublime; in the hunted one a refuge from the afflictions bestowed upon him after the disaster of his fall from grace. Both, therefore, seek a return to themselves vis-à-vis the purity and innocence of a before that is constantly retreating or being deferred through the very signs which they believe can fulfil their need for a return in the first place. In this way, *El acoso* completely dissolves any question of latency to which the duplicity of the sign would ultimately refer. Instead, that duplicity testifies to the very absence of a source for which latency can gain its meaning as the sign of a *hidden* reality. Locked within a semiotic system that eschews unity, reconciliation and return, the protagonists wander endlessly through the dark and shadowy streets of a city which is itself duplicated through the collision of its various and contradictory architectural signs: the

⁵² See above, pp. 75-76.

mansion with the Belvedere become a tenement set alongside a row of modern buildings. In the end, meaning is endlessly fragmented throughout these streets, neither pointing towards a homeland, an origin for self and society, nor to the promise of a tomorrow that would see the reconciliation between dismembered realms of existence. In the end, the two protagonists are left, the one dead and the other disowned by the world, utterly fragmented in an existence whose only centre is absence itself; that is, in an existence whose own identity is fragmented and postponed.

* * *

In Carpentier, the need for self-realisation and self-creation turns toward an origin that cannot be reached *as* the possibility for self-realisation and self-creation. Carpentier thus finds in fiction's impossibility to return him to the origin the very possibility of a self-creative act, the *decisive* act allowing Latin America to create itself anew: a new Latin America engendered in the confrontation between the indispensable fictions of Europe and the fictionalising acts of self-creation. Hence, there is a tension between a search for an origin which, through an allegorical sign system, the pre-eminent form of expression in Romanticism and the post-Romantic sensibility to which Carpentier aligns himself, "would affirm the unshakeable certainty of transcendence", and therefore guarantee the union between meaning and signs, and the realisation, by *El acoso*, of "the impossibility of attaching a permanent meaning to signs except when ordered and fixed by death" (*PH*, 202). But the fixity of death is ultimately cast in the mould of a fictionalising act that must reach out to the immediate and intimate exteriority of the reader for its fulfilment, since it is only in the reader that the "perpetual present of memory ... can be re-enacted" by the reader's awareness of what "is foreclosed to the protagonist" (*PH*, 203).⁵³ The only event that can unite the past,

⁵³ Fuentes echoes the importance of the reader in the fulfilment of the temporality of the text in his reading of Denis Diderot where Fuentes argues that "Diderot saves time from the tyranny of the calendar by producing movement. He writes novels with the purpose of uniting movement, time and desire, which in reality are separated". This purpose, whose fulfilment underlines Diderot's enterprise, is inscribed in Diderot's reinterpretation of time, in part, through the demand he places on the reader "as co-producer of the work". Hence, while "Diderot is not coy" about his presence in the work as author, it is an "authorial presence [that] will need another presence: that of the reader Diderot constantly instates the reader within the book and finds in the book the common ground (the common-place) between author and reader Diderot is telling us that the author's freedom is

present and future in the absence of the origin is the event of death, an event that has its fixity in the unifying present of the text-reader relation. As such, death is the "only permanent presence: the true apex where all the different lines will merge and become one uninterrupted continuum" (*PH*, 200); a continuum which is one for us now.⁵⁴

This sense of contemporaneity is important for understanding why Echevarría makes an, albeit weak, defence of Carpentier's *Los pasos perdidos* on the basis that being self-consciously contemporary, the novel avoids grounding its assertions in the essence-giving historicity they nevertheless suggest. In the present-time of writing and the present-time of reading - the two coordinates of the present-time of history engendered through textual coalescence and convergence - transcendence is elided in the fluidity of the text-reader relation. The materiality of the origin cannot be maintained where Romantic allegory is dissolved into an allegory that affirms the dissolution of textual fixity, a fixity dissolved in the present-time of the text-reader relation. As Echevarría points out in his reading of *Explosion In A Cathedral*, "the shifting of allegories in the novel uncovers the ultimate fluidity of the emblem⁵⁵ The fluidity stems from its being a code rotating around an empty centre ... which can signify only by its elusive and allusive movement" (*PH*, 255). Completely detached from any meaning, signs

inseparable from the freedom of the reader recruited so as to give relief, ... with his presence, to the presence of the writing: to its immediacy" (*MO*, 78-81). The temporality of the book is therefore dependent upon the between both the author and the reader share. I will return to this in my concluding section.

⁵⁴ It seems that Carpentier's textual origin transgresses an origin it displaces in the very effort to locate or return to it. But this transgression must be seen as the irreducibility of time now; that is, of the present-time of writing. A present-time as the time of fragmentation and death. As Octavio Paz has also written: "I believe that the poet hopes to find in death (which is, in effect, our origin) a revelation that his temporal life has denied him: the true meaning of life. When we die,

*The second hand
will race around its dial,
all will be contained in an instant...
and perhaps it will be possible
to live, even after death.*

A return to original death would be a return to the life before life, the life before death: to limbo, to the maternal source" (*L*, 56; *Is*, 62).

⁵⁵ Echevarría argues that the emblem, as in Ortega, is "the physical, visible manifestation of a codified system - an allegory" (*PH*, 255).

float in the fluid stream of dissolution. The materiality of the origin cannot be fixed by a sign which "has [always] already moved on", leaving behind "an epitaph for its source": a trace and only a trace that snakes its way perpetually and eternally elsewhere (*PH*, 255).

Fernando Ortiz has written that Cuba is populated by people who, "since the sixteenth century ... have all been exogenous and have been torn from their places of origin" (*PH*, 26). But, as Echevarría quickly points out, it is precisely this alienation and orphanhood which provides Latin America with "a general condition for writing" (*PH*, 26). In this sense, writing provides a way back to the seed of one's creation, to the virginal source of history and time. If many Latin American writers are searching for a way in which to create a history, a beginning, an origin, an authentically Latin American time, this will always be impeded by the conquest and colonisation, a condition which makes of Latin America an orphanage within which, without parents, without a direct lineage, Latin Americans embrace the fiction to which they are condemned and to which they respond in their fictionalising, self-creative acts. Latin Americans realise that they are foreigners within, essentially set adrift in a body they call their home: on the one hand, a history which is not theirs and therefore the need, on the other, to create their own history, an act which is always performed while walking in the footsteps of the history of conquest. This is, precisely, the tension of extimacy.

Being condemned to a fiction is the immediate possibility of writing faced as it is with the absolute absence of any origin. Language does not arise between us and this absence but is our response to the impossibility of returning to any primeval purity. Language, in this sense, is not the impossibility to represent this absence but the very embodiment of opacity. Language testifies to our foreignness with respect to the impossibility of returning to any primeval purity. We are (made) foreign precisely in the space of this impossibility: fiction's impossibility in its testimonial response to absence. Fully aware of his place within a fiction, Carpentier seeks to overcome this

foreignness by appealing to the possibility of the written work, the work of art, to return him to the origin of his culture. In the process, however, he becomes fully aware that language itself is implicated in this foreignness, as an embodiment of it. In the search for immediacy, restoration, the origin, Carpentier discovers that "only the order of writing emerges - a simulacrum" (*PH*, 186).⁵⁶ In the process of this discovery, he also becomes aware, once the one-to-one correspondence between meaning and significance has been irreparably severed, of "the betrayal of art, religion, and love as paths back to innocence" (*PH*, 201). What Carpentier discovers then, is that the "longing for restoration" (*PH*, 30) can only be situated in a desire continually moving outside itself, a desire perpetually moving towards its object within fiction, but one which, as we have seen, is continually postponed.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Iser echoes this argument when he writes that conceiving fiction in relation to functionality requires the development of a substrata in order that fiction would "appear as something determinate, whereby the substrata imputed reveal themselves to be a mode of ascription that can quite easily be replaced by other ascriptions of fiction as something else. If a mode of ascription is taken for the 'nature' of fiction, the result is reification This applies from Kant to Goodman. It is therefore logical that in postmodern discourse, reification has been totally expunged from fiction, so that the wiped-out traces of all imputed substrata expose fiction as a simulation" (*FI*, 166).

⁵⁷ As I remarked above, the significance of this conception of fiction and fictionalisation in relation to temporality will be brought into sharper relief when it is read through Fuentes' reading of Gogol. For us, the principal concern is to trace the movement of this concept of fiction and fictionalisation throughout various texts from Latin American writing in order to map out a cartography of a Latin American nervous system which runs through a number of its key authors. This cartography will inevitably provide us with a lens through which a response to the question of anonymity can be gauged. Again, we need to recall Iser's claim that "the person must fictionalize himself in order to reach beyond himself" and the problems I have raised about his understanding of this configuration in relation to absence.

§ 1: Return To Opacity

D. H. Lawrence used the image of the 'foreigner' to highlight the separateness and unknowability which are necessary to true relatedness. In his view, relationship is never a merging; it is only a relationship because the beings are distinct and should indeed, in a personal relationship, even be polar. True relationship is always a polar tension between unknowable entities. Something comparable is implied in [Gabriel García] Márquez. Where the tension between difference and relationship collapses it is possible to fall into the abyss of solitude, as happens to the doctor in *Leaf Storm*. Or it is possible to become one of the herd like the townspeople in the same story. The former may be a greater suffering but the latter is the greater ignominy.

Michael Bell
Gabriel García Márquez

only what belongs to the greatest opacity is transparent

Maurice Blanchot
The Space of Literature

As I argued above, the claim that language is constituted by an initial otherness helps us to understand Carpentier's awareness that writing revolves around the absence of an origin to which that writing could return as a way of uniting (or reuniting) with itself. Carpentier discovers that writing, in fact, disposes the author of his or her authorial voice through the duplication and multiplication of voices opened through the repetition of those texts which have preceded the author's own text. In this way, no text (indeed, no system of signification) can purport to be the one unique text, the text which could, through its own unity, lead us towards a unified totality. Rather, the disposition towards absence engenders in both the text and the author the dislocation of a unified identity. The notion of a unified literary tradition in which a singular voice could take on the value of the whole is therefore constantly dissolved in the multiplicity of voices that the tradition is constituted by. What this finally opens us towards is the radical foreignness of the authorial voice, its constant circulation around the absence of any concrete and stable identity, its lack of a reference point in an Outside that could be seen to be its progenitor.¹

¹ Paz has written that "Before becoming a reality, the United States was an image to me. That is not surprising: we Mexicans begin as children to see that country as the *other*, an *other* that is inseparable from us and that at the same time is radically and essentially alien. In the north of Mexico the expression "the other side" is used to mean the United States. The other side is geographical: the frontier; cultural: another civilization; linguistic: another language; historical; another time (the United States is running after the future while we are still tied to our past); metaphorical: it is the image of everything that we are not. It is foreignness itself" (*OE*, 137). The concept of foreignness therefore has a political and cultural dimension embedded within it. This cultural dimension is also evident in many of Fuentes' stories. In *Del Jardín de Flandes [In A Flemish Garden]*, for example, the protagonist, after coming face-to-face with the ghost of a Belgian woman who roams the secret pathways of a garden at the back of a house the protagonist has agreed to occupy as a favour to a friend, after this strange encounter, the protagonist finds himself held back from leaving the house by some mysterious force. He tells us "There's no telephone in the house, but I could go out on the Avenida, call up some friends, go to the Roxy After all, this is my city; these are my people! Why can't I leave this house; more accurately, my post at the doors looking onto the garden?" (*Los días enmascarados* (Biblioteca Era S.A., 1954): 40. Translated in the English collection *Burnt Water* as *In A Flemish Garden* (*Burnt Water*, tr. Margaret Sayers Peden. London: Secker and Warburg, 1981):19). The protagonist has become a foreigner within the familiarity of his own city, his own people. But this only underscores the difficulty Mexicans experience in understanding what they are as individuals, as Mexicans. What does it mean to be Mexican? This is the question Fuentes constantly asks himself as the writer who, having been born and raised outside his 'homeland', constantly experiences the conjunction between the familiar and the foreign in his own attempts to achieve self-identification through a 'return' to Mexico rooted in the decision to write and speak in Spanish.

The anonymity of the authorial voice is therefore in direct relation to the foreignness of that voice, a foreignness inscribed within the familiarity of a tradition which, while it can be traced, is nonetheless duplicitous: or, to be more precise, is duplicitous precisely in being a trace of multiple texts. The resonances of that tradition in Carpentier's writing never conjoin to form a totality or a unity, but highlight the impossibility of locating the condition that could unify them in the first place: the multiplicity of voices brought together as an image of the *absence* of a unifying principle. In this sense, each voice in the chorus of Carpentier's texts is a foreign voice because it does not, properly speaking, belong within the temporality of the other voices to which it is conjoined. At the same time, however, the present voice of Carpentier's own narrative is made possible by the familiarity of the texts that have preceded it. Tangible witness is therefore a response to the voices that have preceded the present voice of Carpentier's writing. It is precisely in this sense that Iser's conjunction between absence and duplicity vis-à-vis the hidden fails to comprehend what is, for us, central to the question about the possibility of naming the anonymous: "I" is, properly speaking, anonymous because of the impossibility of achieving self-identification within a tradition it nonetheless cannot fully transcend. This contradiction is vital in understanding the role of foreignness in the delineation of anonymity since it underscores the constant shifting between voices that is endemic to the notion of circulation I introduced above. Therefore because the concept of foreignness is vital to the discussion as a whole, especially in our understanding of how opacity shifts the discussion of anonymity away from the discourse of otherness, we need to dwell on it here.

* * *

Foreignness As An Emblem of Opacity

It is not too early to say something about the impossibility of returning to any prior position given what I have argued in my reading of Carpentier's *Los pasos perdidos* and *El acoso*. Even by way of underscoring the centrality of temporality in this discussion as a

whole, and as a way of anticipating what will come later in my reading of Octavio Paz and Juan Rulfo. To say here, then, that the return must always fail, must remain an impossibility is to make urgent our need for a language that could open this impossibility as such. A language then, that would find its own annunciation difficult, its own ability to speak about itself held back by a condition it imposes on itself and on its communication to us. How to name the anonymity of a language, the voice which speaks at the edge of communicability, at the edge of sound, almost silently, quietly like a whisper? This is the question we approach in the impure return to opacity that is offered here, a return which must not lose sight of the voices we have already engaged in at the level of language's duplicity and of its role in fabricating the impossibility of any pure return. Every return is therefore made impure in the duplicity proffered by language, whether that return is to oneself or to the possibility of self-identification in an origin which exceeds time and space.

To return to opacity here requires our attentiveness to foreignness, for it is in this concept that opacity can open itself as the impossibility itself; the impossibility of the subject to return either to itself or to a prior possibility of itself because it is always in circulation around an absent source. Gabriel García Márquez's *La hojarasca* [*Leaf Storm*] and *El otoño del patriarca* [*The Autumn of the Patriarch*] provide us with two clear cases of this configuration by developing characterisation through the presence of a dead body, a body which is, properly speaking, *in absentia*; that is, a foreign body, a body that is not a body anymore even while we relate to it as a body, as something which needs caring for, as a loved one, or a friend, or even an enemy for whom our life must pause in order to reach the temporality of death and, within that time, to fulfil our debts and our promises and, finally, to lay the dead to rest: an impossible body, an anonymous body.² In this

² In *The Space of Literature*, Blanchot underscores the problem for us: "The image does not, at first glance, resemble the corpse, but the cadaver's strangeness is perhaps also that of the image. What we call mortal remains escapes common categories. Something is there before us which is not really the living person, nor is it any reality at all. It is neither the same as the person who was alive, nor is it another

sense, our relation to the dead is mediated by the gap that separates our two bodies, our two times. It is precisely this configuration that subtends both *La hojarasca* and *El otoño del patriarca*: in both stories, it is the relation to the dead that allows each character to become a character for us; that is, we identify with them and, even, they with themselves through the space of death as absence, *as the anonymity of the outside*.³

* * *

The Strangers of La hojarasca

Even before his death, the doctor who arrives one evening at the house of a nameless Colonel asking for lodging and financial support because he finds himself without any resources, is a complete foreigner. From the very first page, the sense of foreignness as a guiding thread for the whole story becomes evident. An anonymous voice, one which we never hear from again, introduces us to the infamous village of Macondo. This anonymous voice tells us of the "whirling leaf storm" that descended upon Macondo one day, bringing with it all the accumulated rubbish of other towns: "And all of a sudden that rubbish, in time to the mad and unpredicted rhythm of the storm, was being sorted out, individualized, until what had been a narrow street with a river at one end and a corral for

person, nor is it anything else. What is there, with the absolute calm of something that has found its place, does not, however, succeed in being convincingly here. Death suspends the relation to place, even though the deceased rests heavily in his spot as if upon the only basis that is left him. To be precise, this basis lacks, the place is missing, the corpse is not in its place. Where is it? It is not here, and yet it is not anywhere else" (*SL*, 256).

³ Again Blanchot: "Writing, the exigency of writing: no longer the writing that has always (through a necessity in no way avoidable) been in the service of the speech or thought that is called idealist (that is to say, moralizing), but the writing that through its own slowly liberated force (the aleatory force of absence) seems to devote itself solely to itself as something that remains without identity, and little by little brings forth possibilities that are entirely other: *an anonymous, distracted, deferred, and dispersed way of being in relation*, by which everything is brought into question - and first of all the idea of God, of the Self, of the Subject, then of Truth and the One, then finally the idea of the Book and the Work - so that this writing (understood in its enigmatic rigor), far from having the Book as its goal rather signals its end; a writing that could be said to be outside discourse, outside language" (*IC*, xii; my emphasis). Even to this point, I have been constantly returning us to the possibility of such a relation founded in the effort to name the anonymous through writing.

the dead at the other⁴ was changed into a different and more complex town, created out of the rubbish of other towns In the midst of that blizzard ... the first of us came to be the last; we were the outsiders, the newcomers" (*LSS*, 1-2). The leaf storm brings foreigners who, because of their numbers and their affects, transform Macondo into the village of the leaf storm. The storm's village transforms the inhabitants into foreigners within the familiarity of a transformed village.⁵ In this sense, the villagers of Macondo are no longer themselves even while they remain tied to the remnants of the village in which their identity is formed and cast because the vehicle through which identity is achieved has itself been transformed: while the mode of identification may remain the same (the connection to the village), the objective reference has changed. The doctor arrives in Macondo with the leaf storm and, like the leaf storm itself, he is a drifter, someone who floats around within the community while remaining simultaneously absent from it.

But this stranger is even more strange because he comes without himself; that is, he lacks presence, and even before his death he has become a kind of spectre, an opaque space, a border between this world and another:

Even though he hoped it would be the opposite, [the doctor] was a strange person in town, apathetic in spite of his obvious efforts to seem sociable and cordial. He lived among the people of Macondo, but at a

⁴ Much could be said about modern society by the manner in which we dispose of our dead. Until recently, rural communities in Canada always buried their dead on the familial property of the deceased. Now such proximity is prohibited on the basis that the decomposing body represents a health threat to the living. Now we bury our dead at the edge of our communities, at the frontier that separates us from the rest of the districts that surround us, and thereby procure our own survival by increasing our distance from death. Does this disposition towards death not suggest the most recalcitrant manias known to 'civilised' society: The presumption that space alone could secure our own survival against the persistence of the dead's effect on us and our community? Doesn't this mania for life misconstrue that effect by conceptualising it within the framework of a ternary time system which says that, to survive, we must reach towards the future, possess it by abandoning the past to the furthest limits of perceptibility? Does the trust in that system hold out against the very distance we *share* with the dead as a possibility for our very survival, our living on in the future?

⁵ Transformation towards the postcolonial, as I argued above, is not a jettisoning of external influences, but the hybridisation of the outside within an inside that is always shifting its boundaries. Transformation is therefore, the result of a culture's contact with another.

distance from them because of the memory of a past against which any attempt at rectification seemed useless. He was looked on with curiosity, like a gloomy animal who had spent a long time in the shadows and was reappearing, conducting himself in a way that the town could only consider as superimposed and therefore suspect (*LSS*, 54).

We can only achieve presence by coming tied to the past that preceded and defined us. The doctor, on the other hand, arrives empty, without a past, for "no one ever knew where he came from" (*LSS*, 11), speaking in a voice that is his while it belongs to another, even to the hollow empty air, a "parsimonious ruminant voice" (*LSS*, 73) that, like a phantom, can fill that empty air only by gesturing to its own lack of a body.⁶ We are told that when the doctor first arrived in Macondo he followed the main street to the Colonel's home saying that he urgently needed to speak to the Colonel. After receiving the stranger, the Colonel's wife, Adelaida, tells her husband that "When I smiled at him he remained serious, but he nodded his head very formally and said: 'The colonel. It's the colonel I have to see.' He has a deep voice, as if he could speak with his mouth closed. As if he were a ventriloquist" (*LSS*, 34). The doctor's voice is like a ventriloquist's because it is a mirage, an object that is not an object, a bodiless sound that neutralises the presence of the mouth that uttered it, making the voice the nonlocalised presence of absence: the voice (and voiceless speech) *as opaque*.⁷ Opacity is the mark of a division, a rift, a borderland between conception and the image,⁸ between word and thing, between a body and a voice.

⁶ I do not mean to suggest that concealment or obscurity could disturb all our familiar habits of ascribing to others certain characteristics and meanings. But, if it is true that we *see* only when objects acquire a certain determinacy as things which immediately affirm or negate our own referential codification, then the doctor, because he lacks a past - that is, because he arrives without himself - does not appear as an object to which we could ascribe any meaning. He exists outside our codification and this is why he has such a strange effect on the people of Macondo: In the most profound sense, *they do not recognise him*.

⁷ The doctor is strange and foreign not *because* he speaks, but because his speaking arises out of the opacity that makes speaking possible. The doctor's voice has become identical with its condition of possibility, with opacity, and this is what is strange; this strange identification with the unknown: That self-identification is achieved through the mist of opacity. In my analysis of Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo* I will explore the notion of voiceless speech more fully in connection to the silence engendered by Rulfo's novel.

⁸ Again, Blanchot's approach to this problem can focus our attention to what is vital in the relation between conception and the image: "The image, according to the ordinary analysis, is secondary to the

In this sense the doctor is a foreigner because he arrives out of an opacity that separates *us* from his past. This foreignness structures our relation to him, the between of an opacity in which he and we meet, a meeting point that is constructed by the voices of the three principal characters in the story as they stand around the doctor's dead body and remember. In *La hojarasca* these voices are the voices of memory speaking in response to the doctor's dead body, a body, therefore, which is the condition that makes those voices possible for us.⁹

The extent to which foreignness structures relation in *La hojarasca* goes beyond the merely formal and unfamiliar posture one takes in the presence of a dead body, a posture vaguely and roughly formed only at the moment that body says to us 'I am a body without substance, an object which is not an object'. In the silent vocality of the dead body, even the most familiar responses and perceptions are transformed into the most unfamiliar, the most foreign. For the three characters who, with reluctance, enter the doctor's house in order to prepare him for burial, this transformation is immediate and lasting. The Colonel, to whom the doctor had given a letter of recommendation twenty-five years previously as his only sign that he was, in fact, someone, the Colonel's daughter and her son are the only ones who, because of a promise the Colonel had made years before, have arrived at the

object. It is what follows. We see, then we imagine. After the object comes the image. "After" means that the thing must take itself off a ways in order to be grasped. But this remove is not the simple displacement of a moveable object which would nonetheless remain the same. Here the distance is in the heart of the thing It is not the same thing at a distance but the thing as distance, present in its absence, graspable because ungraspable, appearing as disappeared. It is the return of what does not come back, the strange heart of remoteness as the life and sole heart of the thing" (*SL*, 255-256). While it has gone beyond the confines of my project here, an analysis of the image as a concept appropriate to the relation between writing and self-identification is warranted. My intention throughout this project has, however, been primarily concerned with relationality and, specifically, establishing concepts which could unfold the significance of the between in the adumbration of relationality. Only after this initial work can we move to a more specific analysis of the image.

⁹ Not only is the identity of these characters made possible in relation to a dead body, but the identity of us as readers is similarly made possible because of the absence that dead body represents. And as outsiders ourselves, as bodies to which Macondo is a foreign space, we only achieve identification with this foreignness through the conduit of an absence. In this sense, the doctor's dead body as a formal absence is the centre around which all the relations in *La hojarasca* are constructed.

doctor's death bed to fulfil the Colonel's word. The young boy, already confused by the rituals being performed before he and his mother left their house, because, as he tells us "It's Wednesday but I feel as if it was Sunday because I didn't go to school and they dressed me up in a green corduroy suit that's tight in some places" (*LSS*, 3), when he finally looks upon the doctor's dead body, is overcome by its ubiquity, as if, when he finally *recognises* the body as a dead body, he cannot help but see him "everywhere, with his bulging eyes and his green, dead face in the shadows" (*LSS*, 6). The ubiquity of death confirms the unfamiliarity of the child's surroundings, transforming even himself into something foreign, an object his own mother finds strange: "Mama is dressed up as if it was Sunday too. She put on the old straw hat that comes down over her ears and a black dress closed at the neck and with sleeves that come down to her wrists. Since today is Wednesday she looks to me like someone far away, a stranger ..." (*LSS*, 4). The young boy is thinking this at the same moment his mother tells us that her son "has looked at me several times and I know that he finds me strange, somebody he doesn't know, with this stiff dress and this old hat that I've put on so that I won't be identified even by my own forebodings" (*LSS*, 9). The ubiquity and foreignness of the doctor's dead body mediates the relation between the mother and her son, transforming both into foreigners, strangers even unto themselves. But such foreignness is not to be conceived as some Outside rubbing against the familiarity these two people share with respect to each other. Rather, the foreignness has penetrated that familiarity, marked out the space in which these two people know each other at this moment: foreignness is now a part of that familiarity precisely by becoming the mediating point of the relation between these two people. In this way, the doctor's dead body as a formal absence around which these characters achieve self-identification is based upon its infiltration into the familiarity of the between which structures the relation of one character to the other.

This tells us a great deal about anonymity and about the possibility of naming the anonymous. In the first instance, the doctor does not bring the outside with him on that

day when he enters Macondo. Rather, he is the gap in which or because of which the outside and the inside are brought into relation. As a foreigner he is an emblem of the opacity in which the outside and the inside are brought into relation. And this is why I argued that opacity is structured by the ex-timate relation. But, more importantly, this structuring of opacity is brought into full relief in the relation the characters have to the doctor's dead body. By achieving self-identification in relation to absence, to the nameless presence of the cadaver, opacity comes to be seen as the impossibility of the subject itself, of its subjectlessness. That is to say, opacity prevents any relation from being grounded on the basis of unity and thereby prefigures all relation on the basis of its anonymity: we encounter a thing and the thing is utterly opaque, and sometimes the thing is ourselves. We are, therefore, *made* anonymous in the very process of attempting to give ourselves a name through the unimpeachable opacity *as* the separation of relation. Similarly, the leaf storm does not merely represent the outside's invasion into the relative enclosure of an inside, but the incorporation of that outside into the fabric of Macondo's life. The relation between the foreign and the familiar is therefore, properly speaking, an ex-timate relation, a relation whereby the outside remains *as such* on the inside. The doctor's dead body is the remains of an outside - the past he belongs to - on the inside of a familiarity inscribed between three people: the Colonel, his daughter and her son. And this is why I say that "I" knows itself, identifies with itself only by becoming aware of itself as another. This awareness is guaranteed by the opacity of the between, the clouded space that makes relation possible.

As I argued earlier, any model that deals directly with the relation between must not reserve itself for the interaction between two bodies alone. Such a reservation would confuse 'the between' with a geotemporal distance that is not appropriate to it.¹⁰ Even on

¹⁰ And this is also why Blanchot argues that the remove of the object is not to be confused with a "simple displacement of a moveable object" but that "distance is in the heart of the thing". I have tried to clarify this notion by depending upon 'separation' as a demarcation point. It also needs to be said, however, that I am reserved about placing too great a stress on Blanchot's notion of distance without giving some detailed

the inside, opacity mediates the relation between "I" and its consciousness of itself, its own self-identification. When the young boy is about to leave his house with his mother, he passes a mirror in the hallway and sees himself as something both familiar and yet foreign: "I saw myself in the round mottled looking-glass and I thought: *That's me, as if today was Sunday*" (LSS, 3). In this sense, the mirror does not provide the young boy with a *reflection* of himself but allows himself to *see* himself, that is, to *recognise* himself as another. Psychoanalysis thus confuses relationality, especially the ego's relation to itself, by asking the subject to look inside itself to achieve a mirror image of itself *for* itself. Psychoanalysis searches for the hidden and true reality behind the falsifying language the subject employs to guard against the intrusion of the outside and, specifically, of exposure to that outside. But in its efforts at protection, the subject only finds that language has betrayed it in the duplicity which is a hallmark of language itself, thereby, in effect, delivering the subject unto itself by exposing it to its own duplicity; that is, by exposing the subject to its subjectlessness. In this sense, psychoanalysis must always fail since "I" never arrives as anything other than the impossibility of arriving.

In this sense, we are always abandoned, fragmented, and postponed *in* the foreign not *because* of it. The misconception that prioritises guilt and blame in surrendering to the notion of the foreign as enemy, as scapegoat, turns us away from what is truly unique in the encounter with the foreign. There is a threat in such an encounter, but it is not a threat engendered by the foreign as our enemy but by the foreign as our double. This relation is not the confrontation between an outside and an inside where either could maintain its own self-sufficiency, a simple relation we could adjudicate through the language of

analysis of the phenomenological implications imbedded within it, an analysis which is suspended here in the interest of conserving space. The reservation really concerns the search for essences that marks out one particular development of phenomenology from Husserl. It seems difficult to fall back on such a search after making the claims that I have. However, it is not immediately evident that Blanchot's relation to Husserl is not, in fact, antagonistic and contrary. One of the notions that would play an important role in adjudicating the relation between Blanchot and phenomenology would be that of 'aspect', one I will return to later.

otherness and alterity, a language which has now become cliché precisely because it has become a household word; that is, it has become disembodied from the anonymous voice which had uttered it, becoming the 'property' of the community. In becoming the voice of everyone, Otherness has become familiar and no longer announces the anonymity of the opacity that structures the relation between the Inside and the Outside, of the very possibility of our *speaking* of a nearside and a beyond. On the contrary, opacity sets itself apart from both a conception of otherness as exterior and doubling as reflection of the same. Foreignness and doubling are emblems of the ex-timate relation, that intimate exteriority which structures opacity, that echo of our shadow which reverberates around us; the shadow because of which the subject is abandoned, fragmented, postponed.

It is important here to come to terms with the status the voice is afforded in this whole configuration, a status García Márquez's *El otoño del patriarca* brings fully to light and which requires us to pause here and dwell upon it. This will, in turn, allow us to return to *La hojarasca* with a conception of voicing that will be invaluable to our continued analysis of it.

* * *

The Voices of Autumn

The reason that the mother and her son have become strange to themselves and to each other in *La hojarasca* is grounded in the irrational command the dead body has over them. This command is irrational because it is based on a contradiction: the dead body lies in absence of itself and we of it, but it is this absence which bears down upon us. It is, as if, in the impotence of its body upon which absence would be grounded, the dead body achieves all its force and vivacity, its power over us. In *El otoño del patriarca* the relation between power and impotence is explored in detail in the memories of those who, in their approach to the dead body of the patriarch, speak to us. The voices that gave us the world of Macondo in *La hojarasca* become, in *El otoño*, a cascading multitude which collide with each other, rebound, collide again, constantly fragmenting the space within

which they achieve their own identification; that is, precisely, the space of literature.¹¹ In *El otoño* that space becomes the fragmented space of the voices for whom death has allowed them to become real for us. The real here then, would only be the requirement to speak in response to the absence the dead body represents, a requirement fulfilled in the duplicity of the voices of autumn, of the approach towards death that recalls the fullness of its life. Reality is that which, from the shadows of writing, speaks to us. What can be said of this speaking and its appropriateness to our understanding of voicing in *El otoño*? Here, as elsewhere, Blanchot's work is indispensable. In *The Infinite Conversation*¹² Blanchot writes that dialogue is a moment in which unity is eschewed since, "in the interrelational space, dialogue, and the equality dialogue presupposes, tend to do nothing other than increase entropy, just as dialectical communication, requiring two antagonistic poles charged with contrary words and provoking a common current through this opposition, is itself, after brilliant bursts, destined to die out in entropic identity" (*IC*, 81). The desire for unity will always be frustrated in the encounter between two who speak to each other because that encounter is based upon "a distortion preventing any possibility of symmetry and introducing between things, and particularly between man and man, a relation of infinity" (*IC*, 81).¹³ What is this distortion? Blanchot tells us that the equality

¹¹ This is indicative of one of the unique gifts of literature, indeed of writing itself: Writing agrees to its own fragmentation, at times almost demands it. Writing embraces its own death as a way of identifying itself with the shadow from which it came. An infinite question approaches: What is writing's death? That is, how can we name and thereby identify with the death that is writing? In approaching the possibility of naming the anonymous we similarly approach the space of this death, for it is in the very question of the possibility of recognition *through* the name that anonymity is made possible. Anonymity approaches through the name; "I" approaches by being another *through* the duplicity of language. In this way, *La hojarasca* and *El otoño* open us towards a question that is indispensable in our approach to anonymity: Upon what would recognition be based? I will return to this shortly.

¹² The brief engagement I am offering here cannot do justice to Blanchot's complex work. And yet, as brief as it is, the engagement can help to focus our attention on certain concepts that, it seems to me, are vital to the implications of the voicing produced in García Márquez's writing.

¹³ You will recall that the notion of infinity plays an important role in Levinas' arguments and therefore, that my assertions here tend to bring Levinas and Blanchot together, as well as implicate my own movement away from Levinas in the very criticism I brought to bear upon him (see above pp. 19ff and 60-61). A good deal has been written about the relation between Levinas and Blanchot and I do not want to

presupposed by dialogue is engendered by the "reciprocity of words and the equality of speakers"; that is, by the ascription (to the interrelational space) of an essential identity between speakers, "between two men who speak on equal terms" (*IC*, 81). However, Blanchot argues, the presupposition of identity excludes an element that is vital to the interrelational space: difference, "a difference that nothing should simplify, nothing can equalize and that alone, mysteriously, gives voice to two instances of speech by keeping them separate even as they are held together only by this separation" (*IC*, 81). The distortion of the interrelational space of communication is, precisely, the separation which holds the speakers, grips them, and brings them together in the ex-timate relation that structures opacity. Distortion is therefore possible on the basis of opacity. Later, while analysing the relationship between Freud and Lacan on the question of language as mediating relation, Blanchot writes that "it seems evident that Freud's principal merit lies in having enriched "human culture" with a surprising form of dialogue A dialogue that is nonetheless strange and strangely ambiguous due to the situation without truth of the two interlocutors. Each one deceives the other and is deceived with regard to the other" (*IC*, 233). Any truth that can emerge from the interrelational space, the space of distortion made possible as such by opacity, is thereby always postponed in the duplicity of the deceiving subject. Hence, speech is not a sure and final way of establishing a mutual and reciprocal self-identification with an other in and through which "I" is affirmed as a totality and a unity. Rather, in the distortion of the interrelational space between "I's", the subject who speaks is affirmed in all its duplicity. This has important consequences for a reading of *El otoño* that seeks to understand the role voicing plays within it, since it

provide any derivative analysis of that friendship which has been more fluently explored by others. What I am particularly interested in here is Blanchot's adumbration of relationality on the basis of distortion. For Blanchot this distortion engenders infinity and, in that respect, given what I argued above concerning the notion of distance in Blanchot, Levinas' "infinite *distance* of the Stranger" could be seen, in Blanchot, as the ground upon which the Stranger could appear as such, as something to which we could not apply a name. An analysis of distortion and the relation between speaking subjects will help to clarify my own position here.

points directly to the question of duplicity which subtends the novel and which, as we will see, leads directly to the question of anonymity.

* * *

In her essay on the relation between language and power in *El otoño*, Jo Labanyi argues that García Márquez holds to the traditional notion that "writing is a decadent form of speech inasmuch as it is the indirect expression of a voice which is absent, as opposed to speech which is assumed to be the direct expression of the speaker's voice" (NR, 149). Labanyi claims that the patriarch loses his power when he transfers it from the realm of speech to that of writing. She tells us that "the displacement of the patriarch's power from speech to writing converts it into a trail of words referring back to an absent source. The implication is that, like myth, writing separates man from a source with which at the same time it seeks to reestablish contact. Writing is a circular, counter-productive process, in that it causes the problem it sets out to solve" (NR, 140). At first glance, there are reasons to be intrigued by Labanyi's claims, and it seems that her reading opens up a number of interesting possibilities in understanding the relation between language, power and authority in *El otoño*.¹⁴ However, Labanyi retreats from these possibilities the moment she treats "the image of the trace which has lost touch with its source" (NR, 141) in a completely negative way. Her reading implies that, in asserting that "the distance of the *written* word from its source undermines its authority" (NR, 142; my emphasis), García Márquez believes that only through speech is it possible to come into contact with one's own origin; that is, self-identification would only be truly possible through speech. The patriarch would only be able to hold onto *his* power by holding onto *himself*; that is, by

¹⁴ Labanyi's short essay does not allow her to quote at length from *El otoño*, though some indication where she thinks this displacement takes place in the novel would have helped. In rereading the novel with Labanyi in mind, the reader might pay particular attention to the following page references as possible evidence in support of Labanyi's claims: A, 10, 118-120, 160, 163-164, 172, 184. I think that a number of these references can work to undermine Labanyi's arguments which, as we will see, draws us to the heart of what is put in play in a text like *El otoño*. My attempt to offer a different reading than Labanyi's will focus on a few instances in the novel where speech is principally active.

asserting *his* will through speech. However, given that Labanyi is equally prepared to argue that "what looks at first sight like an authoritative/authorial account of what the patriarch is really like is, it seems, hypothetical speculation on the part of the *uninformed* collective narrator" (NR, 142; my emphasis), she seems to suggest that a mere unveiling of the facts would set the *record* straight, ~~an unveiling presumably achieved through speech.~~ But the question is really about the possibility of anything like objective information existing in the first place.

This question is pursued in García Márquez's *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* [*Chronicle of A Death Foretold*] and highlights the difficulty in accepting Labanyi's general claims. Briefly, *Crónica* is framed by the narrator's attempt to establish the truth of a historical event by piecing together certain bits of evidential information. The narrator acquires this information by returning to the village where, some years before, his friend was murdered for violating the honour of a young woman. What is particularly interesting about *Crónica* insofar as my present argument is concerned is the role the spoken word plays in the novel's overall impact. As the narrator collects the information pertinent to the crime and to those events leading up to it, he discovers that the two murderers, the twin brothers of the injured woman, had been boasting of their plan to commit the crime but that no one in the village had taken them seriously. "'We're going to kill Santiago Nasar,' [Pablo] said. Their reputation as good people was so well founded that no one paid any attention to them. 'We thought it was drunkards' baloney,' several butchers declared, the same as Victoria Guzmán and so many others who saw them later" (c, 61; C, 52). However, in the course of his investigations, the narrator comes upon a number of discrepancies in what the people admit to knowing. At the beginning of the novel, the narrator tells us that "Victoria Guzmán, for her part, was categorical with her answer that neither she nor her daughter knew that they were waiting for Santiago Nasar to kill him 'I didn't warn him because I thought it was drunkards' talk,' she told me. Nevertheless, Divina Flor confessed to me on a later visit, after her

mother had since died, that the latter hadn't said anything to Santiago Nasar because in the depths of her heart she wanted them to kill him" (c, 13; C, 11). And, right near the end of the novel, the voice of Victoria Guzmán reappears through the recollections of Cristo Bedoya, the one and only villager who makes an attempt to warn Santiago Nasar of the plot on his life.¹⁵ "Victoria Guzmán had just put the rabbit stew on the stove when [Cristo Bedoya] entered the kitchen. She understood immediately. "His heart was in his mouth," she told me. Cristo Bedoya asked her if Santiago Nasar was home and she answered him with feigned innocence that he still hadn't come in to go to sleep. "It's serious," Cristo Bedoya told her. "They're going to kill him." Victoria Guzmán forgot her innocence. "Those poor boys won't kill anybody," she said" (c, 118; C, 106). Who are we to believe? Victoria Guzmán? Her daughter? Cristo Bedoya? *The narrator?* *Crónica*, at one very important level, demonstrates the unreliability of all written accounts. But, because this written account is based upon a succession of *spoken* testimonies that consistently contradict each other, there is no way for the narrator to finally come upon the immediate truth lingering behind the falsifying descriptions of the events leading up to the murder, the reasons why the people hadn't prevented it nor, even, whether Santiago Nasar was, in fact, guilty of the crime he was murdered for. Even in speech, meaning is duplicated endlessly through the multiple voices that describe an event to another.¹⁶ Therefore, it seems far too hasty to assert that García Márquez's claim about writing necessarily means that he

¹⁵ An anonymous letter is pushed under Santiago Nasar's door describing the motive and likelihood of the murder taking place, but he never actually sees it. Cristo Bedoya's is the only outright attempt to prevent the crime from happening.

¹⁶ This requires us to ask whether reading is like performing an investigation where the reader searches for the truth lingering behind the story? *Crónica* problematizes any affirmative answer to this question insofar as the novel's central truth or meaning, the one the narrator (and we with him) actively seeks, is constantly postponed in the very act of searching for it. Reading, in this book, is therefore a form of postponement, of postponing language and the anonymous; that is, the reader-text relation is configured by a language which postpones its referent, thereby bringing us into contact with the anonymity upon which both signifier and signified are based. In this way, the text also postpones language as a referential or representational code.

ascribes to speech the value of leading the self back to itself; that is, that the voice of the "I" is necessarily *identical* with itself in the immediate moment of its annunciation (its *anunciando*; that is, its announcing or foretelling of itself). How would we be able to *recognise* the equality between the "I" and 'its' voice? On the basis of what condition would this equality come to be *recognised* as such? Labanyi offers no clues.

This brings us back to *El otoño* where vocal multiplicity reaches feverish and festival proportions. It would be impossible to adequately represent the effect of this multiplicity in a short quotation. However, a few reference points will help to focus our attention on the question of the mediation of language - whether written or spoken - and the impossibility of the immediate.

El otoño takes the notion of absence and foreignness to an extreme by placing the patriarch in a position of complete duplicity, a position which, even upon his death, helps to guarantee his continual presence throughout the country.

...voices were muffled, life came to a halt, everybody remained stone-still with a finger to his lips, not breathing, silence, the general is screwing, but those who knew him best had no faith even in the respite of that sacred moment, for it always seemed that he was in two places at once That simultaneous presence everywhere during the flinty years that preceded his first death, that going up as he came down, that going into ecstasy in the sea while in agony in unsuccessful loves, were not a privilege of his nature, as his adulators proclaimed, or a mass hallucination, as his critics said, but his luck in counting on the complete service and doglike loyalty of Patricio Aragonés, his perfect double ... (A, 10-11).

While the patriarch believes he has found in this double the possibility of avoiding that dreaded autumn, he becomes so attached to Patricio Aragonés as to lose himself in his own image: "so far removed from the world that he himself did not realize that his fierce struggle to exist twice was feeding the contrary suspicion that he was existing less and less" (A, 19). And it is only, as if by a sublime fortune, when Patricio Aragonés is poisoned and is "facing the demands of death" (A, 21) that the patriarch can achieve full

and unremitting presence by capitalising on the death he can simulate with the treachery of a man who has lived forever. The patriarch is rescued from a diminishing presence by dying, for it is this first death that allows him to witness, then torture, and finally eliminate his dissenters, reasserting not only his power and ubiquity, but his mystical command over death itself. Unlike *La hojarasca*, *El otoño* conjoins duplicity and death such that the possibility of identification is based completely on the absence of the patriarch. And it is for this reason that the people of the South American country the patriarch governs approach the dead body of the patriarch not knowing whether or not the body is truly his: "It hadn't seemed strange to us, of course, that this should be so in our days, because even during his time of greatest glory there had been reasons to doubt his existence and his own henchmen had no exact notion of his age" (A, 69).

For this reason, the people approach the dead body (dead again) in the palace office with reservation.

The second time he was found, chewed away by vultures in the same office, none of us was old enough to remember what had happened the first time, but we knew that no *evidence*¹⁷ of his death was final, because there was always another truth behind the truth. Not even the least prudent among us would accept appearances because so many times it had been a given fact that ... he had lost his speech from so much talking and had ventriloquists stationed behind the curtains to make it appear that he was speaking ... but the more certain the rumours of his death seemed, he would appear even more alive and authoritarian at the least expected moment to impose other unforeseen directions to our destiny (A, 37).

To maintain and exercise power, the patriarch throws his voice. Like the voice of God which speaks from the burning bush, from the clouds, from the mouth of Moses and Jesus and, if you accept the tales, the countless messengers in our own day, the patriarch is

¹⁷ Recall that Labanyi seems to suggest that a simple unveiling of the truth would be enough to settle the issue of the relation between speech and writing and that, presumably, this unveiling would come as a result of providing the appropriate evidence in support of the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, a truth "the *uniformed* collective narrator cannot" provide.

supreme and all powerful because his voice spreads out over all the land. If speech is power as Labanyi argues, it gains its power through ubiquity, through a complete break with the identity of the speaking subject; that is, precisely, the power of the voice in its disembodiment from a stable unit of referential meaning. And, even for the people, speech is not a sure way of overstepping subterfuge. Rather, through their speech - their rumours - the patriarch reasserts his absolute mastery. Speech cannot lead us back to the source of its annunciation because it is constantly employed as a means of concealing that identity.¹⁸

Finally, at the very end of *El otoño*, a terrible moment of recognition:

... [the patriarch] had known since his beginnings that they deceived him in order to please him, that they collected from him by fawning on him, that they recruited by force of arms the dense crowds along his routes with shouts of jubilation and venal signs of eternal life to the magnificent one who is more ancient than his age, but he learned to live with all these miseries of glory as he discovered in the course of his uncountable years that a lie is more comfortable than doubt, more useful than love, more lasting than truth, he had arrived without surprise at the ignominious fiction of commanding without power, of being exalted without glory and of being obeyed without authority when he became convinced in the trail of yellow leaves of his autumn that he had never been master of all his powers ..." (A, 205).

Neither through the written nor the spoken word has the patriarch ever been master of all his powers. Unlike the patriarch, Labanyi does not come to this realisation remaining tied to the illusion that life goes about its business because "I" organises it so. What is intimately at work in *El otoño* then, is the deception and subterfuge of the sign. This deception gains its own authority through death - the ultimate sign of absence and

¹⁸ In *Crónica*, the narrator receives a letter from his mother announcing the arrival of "a very strange man" who, like the doctor of *La hojarasca*, arrives without himself, without his past: "Nobody knew what he'd come for. Someone who couldn't resist the temptation of asking him ... received the answer: "I've been going from town to town looking for someone to marry." It might have been true, but he would have answered anything else in the same way, because he had a way of speaking that served him rather to conceal than reveal" (c, 32; C, 25). Like the doctor and the patriarch, both of whom exist behind the obscurity of a voice thrown out like the deception of ventriloquists, this strange man *remains absent through his voice*, not, as Labanyi wants to argue, directly expressed by it: Speech conceals. Or, to be more precise, whether it is written or spoken, the sign conceals, attesting to the effect the duplicity of language has on the possibility of recognition and self-identification.

dispersion - because it is the death of the patriarch at the beginning of the novel that puts the whole network of counterpoints into motion. What *El otoño* prioritises then, is the impossibility of any uncomplicated and immediate return to one's origin or to the origin of one's culture through the sign. That return is always mediated by the sign, a mediation grounded in *El otoño* in the memories of the people, memories which, because of their interpretative character, always rewrite the steps back to the source, thereby reinscribing that source within different fields of reference. Consequently, while Labanyi is correct to assert that *El otoño* demonstrates that writing is untrustworthy, she fails to realise that this applies to speech as much as to writing and that, what is more, our relation to each other is grounded upon this untrustworthy and duplicitous thing called writing. What is insightful about Labanyi's essay is the priority it gives to the relation between absence and writing. However, it seems misplaced to assert that that relation is a deplorable one. Here, as with my analyses above, I want to argue that it is precisely this relation, understood against the backdrop of specific notions I have ascribed to the concept of relation itself, that gives power to *writing*; that is, to its voice.

When Labanyi argues that "Just as the patriarch discovers he is not in control of the words that are designed to perpetuate his power, so the reader discovers that there is no omniscient author in control of the text he is reading" (NR, 142), she pinpoints one of the conditions our relation to absence engenders. As in Carpentier, García Márquez actively pursues the postponement of authorial identification by highlighting the absent centre around which his writing revolves. If *El otoño* lets loose "a bewildering profusion of intermediary narrators, all of them unreliable" (NR, 142), the result is not simply that writing itself lacks authority, but that the possibility of identifying ourselves with any one story, with any one version of the way things really took place, is constantly postponed in the very profusion of voices enlisted to make response to absence. Consequently, identification itself is also postponed. But it is precisely this postponement that offers us the possibility for self-creation and self-invention since we are not limited by any one

narrative which might make claims upon us or we upon it. The priority Labanyi ascribes to speech in *El otoño* needs to be diverted therefore by an attentiveness to the relation between speaking subjects, the condition that makes such a relation possible and its implications insofar as the multiplicity and foreignness of the voice is concerned.

* * *

In an essay on the intertextual relations in *El otoño*, an essay which never goes beyond the mere charting of those relations and is therefore startlingly empty, Michael Palencia-Roth has occasion to quote at great length from an interview with García Márquez entitled *Gabriel García Márquez habla de García Márquez*. I shall not pain the reader with such a long quotation here. However, this short quotation should provide us with a wealth of insight into what is fundamental to *El otoño*. In speaking of Christopher Columbus, García Márquez says that "he is perhaps the only man in history for whom there are three tombs in different parts of the world, and no one knows for certain in which of the three his cadaver is really to be found. There is a tomb in the Cathedral in Santo Domingo, one in Havana, and another in Seville".¹⁹ What seems to stand out so brilliantly about this is the ubiquity of the tyrant's dead body. As in *La hojarasca*, the cadaver's absence feeds its ubiquity. This is essential in understanding the development of characterisation in relation to the absence of the dead body and, subsequently, the foreignness engendered by that dead body and its relation to language and anonymity. Both the doctor in *La hojarasca* and the patriarch in *El otoño* announce the anonymity of the outside by being themselves the embodiment of absence. By intruding into the life of Macondo as the doctor does or by duplicating himself as the patriarch does, both become foreigners within the familiarity of the inside: the daily life of Macondo and the on-going struggles of the nameless country in *El otoño*. Hence, in order to approach the question 'How to name the anonymous?' we

¹⁹ *Gabriel García Márquez and the Powers of Fiction*, ed. Julio Ortega (Austin: U of Texas P., 1988): 42-43.

would need to invoke a language that, in its own annunciation, *spoke* through foreignness and absence on its way to anonymity. Such a language can only be *spoken*, precisely, by an *unknown tongue*; that is, a tongue for whom self-identification could not be achieved by first looking for a prior possibility of its own annunciations in a before time which corresponded to its origin. This tongue is unknown because the inherent duplicity of language and the semiotic system remove the subject who speaks from any simple correspondence or identification, any equality with the words "I" uses. Language disowns the subject and "I" can never be equal to the words "I" speaks.

This is indicative of what is perplexing and confusing in Labanyi's analysis. Labanyi argues that "the power of speech [presumably: over the decadence of writing] is referred to at the beginning of the novel. 'We did not have to force an entry [to the palace], as we had thought, because the main door seemed to yield to the *mere* force of the human *voice*' [A, 7]. The patriarch's authority resides in his voice: 'he spat out a lethal blast of authority with his *words*' [A, 73]. But, for most of the novel, the patriarch exercises his power via reported speech" (NR, 135; my emphasis). Labanyi frames her essay in the distinction between reported and direct speech arguing that "the authority of language derives from the notion of authorship, the assumption that language is the direct expression of a central, unified voice. The statement which does not have a direct relationship to the voice that speaks it does not have authority. Reported speech is less authoritative than direct speech because its relationship to its source has become adulterated" (NR, 135). It is never clear just what the difference is between reported and direct speech, although the implication is that the latter is directly tied to a central, unified voice since, to lose authority, words must lose their source. The problem with such an assertion is the assumption that, in the full presence of the voice, we as listeners are privy to the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth since the one before us speaks in their own voice and that the unity between the voice and the subject who speaks is self-evidently clear. But the voice which speaks speaks a language and, as I have been arguing, if language is indeed founded upon an

initial duplicity, then it would be impossible to ascertain how direct speech remained tied to its source to any greater degree than reported speech. When García Márquez equates the patriarch's power with his words, as in the reference provided by Labanyi, especially against the backdrop of the force of the voice of the people, there is a real sense that he does not make this simple distinction between written and spoken language. And, if Labanyi is correct in asserting that the voice of the people is untrustworthy, then where in fact does that voice gain its power to part the doors of the presidential palace? What, we need to ask Labanyi, is the power of the voice rooted in? If it is rooted in the words themselves, then what is the difference between reported and direct speech? If it is rooted in the different relation each of these has to a central, unified identity, then how do we determine that direct speech is directly tied to such an identity? Surely the only way *back* to that identity would be through the words spoken. But this would, ultimately, bring us into contact with those words as the mediating force or condition between us as listeners and this *anonymous* identity. The gap between, the separation, would still be maintained and we would, therefore, not be able to adjudicate at what point this identity came shining through the distortion and opacity that holds us together in a communicative relation.

While the question of authority is central to *El otoño* it is not one dealt with in the rather misguided manner that Labanyi has put forward. On the contrary, it is precisely the absence of any authorial source, any central identity to which we could return, that allows the voices of *El otoño* to gain their power, a power founded upon their speaking in and through the written text. Blanchot argues that once we take hold of the notion of distortion in understanding the relation between two who speak to each other, then speaking must come to be seen as the manner in which "to bring the other back to the same in a search for a mediating speech: but it is also, first of all, to seek to receive the other as other and the foreign as foreign; to seek *autrui* [an other], therefore, in their irreducible difference, in their infinite strangeness, an empty strangeness, and such that only an essential discontinuity can retain the affirmation proper to it", an affirmation of

"interruption and rupture in order to come to the point of proposing and expressing - an infinite task - a truly plural speech. Precisely speech that is always in advance destined (and also dissimulated) in the written exigency" (*IC*, 82).²⁰ In Labanyi on the other hand, there is the sense that García Márquez's critique of authority proposes a central, unified identity lingering behind the falsifying use of language employed in the written text. That is, Labanyi is haunted, as with so many others, by the need to establish the existence of a kernel of representational meaning as the core of identity expressed in an act of direct speech. There is no justification for this in *El otoño*. And, for similar reasons, though this criticism must always remain cautious here, we would need to ask Blanchot why, having located an elemental distortion at the heart of the relation between speaking subjects, having located, in his analysis of Freud, "the situation without truth of the two interlocutors", why he would retain any affiliation with the notion of an other? Does this notion not reinscribe the possibility of identification in an outside or a beyond which is accessible, in terms of recognition, through language? And yet, as I have been arguing, it is precisely language that announces, through the speaking subject of the written text, the very anonymity of the outside, its nameless identity. How then, could we become identical with ourselves or achieve recognition of this nameless outside if not through the very distortion, the very opacity that grounds relation and that engenders the most uncontrollable proliferation and multiplication of voices? Again, these are cautionary criticisms of Blanchot's complex articulation of the relation between self and other and the role of language, speech and writing in that relation. Nonetheless, because of the obvious and often contradictory relationship between Levinas and Blanchot, and given what I have

²⁰ And, in another context (which is always adjoining that of *The Infinite Conversation*), Blanchot writes that for Kafka, "an infinitely reserved man, opaque even to his friends and, moreover, not very accessible to himself", for Kafka "I am nothing but literature, and I neither can nor want to be anything else" (*SL*, 64-65). Blanchot is wise to resist drawing any monumental conclusions from Kafka's "passing notes". And yet, as we will see nearer the end of this study, the importance of literature for the inner life of human beings is its ability, in the simultaneity of its own inner vocality, its multiplying voices, to open us to ourselves vis-à-vis our own duplicity - the duplication of our voice.

argued regarding language in Levinas' arguments, it is necessary to draw attention to my own need to employ a terminology that does not merely reinscribe the discourse of otherness in my attempt to approach the question of anonymity. In short, speech reaffirms duplicity and the impossibility of unification, of a return to oneself through the image of self-identity, by arising from the very between of relation, the very between structured by the opacity and distortion of the interrelational space between "I's" that speak. Levinas' alterity is not a mere passive intrusion into the life of an 'ego'. Rather, "the alterity of the alter ego ... is a force" which is "absolutely exterior" (*CPP*, XIV). And then this note: "A face that is only moral, i.e. absolutely exterior. Thus not a force but interdiction that one cannot even touch" (*CPP*, XIV). Levinas is prevented from touching an alterity wholly exterior to him because of an authoritative prohibition. This sense of impossibility must not be confused with the impossibility of recognition. This latter impossibility is the confrontation with the strange, the foreign, that "wounded place, the bruise of the dying body already dead of which nobody would know how to be proprietor".²¹ The foreigner is "subjectivity without a subject", a subject I can only "touch in vain".²² I "touch in vain" the stranger whose relation to me is founded upon opacity, whose own ineffability exceeds not only representation but the imperative of an interdiction. I "touch in vain" because of opacity. Hence, ineffability and opacity are embedded within the very fabric of relation and not exterior to the subject's involvement in the world. This is why it was important to raise the ambiguous use of 'the strange' and 'the foreign' in Levinas' text, in order once again to mark out the differentiation between the terrain of ineffability and opacity and the terrain of otherness and alterity.

²¹ Blanchot writes that "Levinas speaks of the subjectivity of the subject; if one wishes to preserve this word — why? — it would perhaps be necessary to speak of a subjectivity without a subject, the wounded place, the bruise of the dying body already dead of which nobody would know how to be proprietor ..." (*Altarity*, 207, n. 27).

²² Maurice Blanchot, *The Unavowable Community* tr. Pierre Joris (New York: Station Hill, 1988):49.

What *El otoño* provides us with in the approach to anonymity is a direct confrontation with the importance of multiplicity and simultaneity in the postponement of an identity in circulation around the absence of any ground upon which it could secure itself in and for itself. Labanyi is right to say that the patriarch is a constant absence throughout the novel. But we need to realise that the people whose voices litter the pages of *El otoño* are also fundamentally absent and fundamentally foreign as well. The foreigner is strange not because he or she is "outside every order, every world" as Levinas has said. Rather, the strangeness of the foreigner is precisely their voice. When, in *La hojarasca*, Adelaida tells the Colonel that there is a man to see him, she describes the doctor with these words: "He looks like someone, or rather ... he's the same person that he looks like, although I can't explain how he got here I'm sure it's not that he looks like someone but that he's the same person he looks like. I'm sure, rather, that he's a military man. He's got a black pointed moustache and a face like copper. He's wearing high boots and I'm sure that it's not that he looks like someone but that he's the same person he looks like" (*LSS*, 34-35). Although what appears to stand out in this passage is something like the question or distinction between how we see and what we see, since Adelaida thinks that this stranger is, in fact, a military man of some importance when, in fact, he is only a doctor of little importance, I am much more interested in the tonality of the passage, this strange expression and the degree to which it is suggestive of foreignness as an important concept for the question of anonymity. As I argued above, the doctor speaks in a voice that has become identical with the opacity from out of which it arises, and this is what makes that voice strange. This sense of the strangeness of the foreigner is echoed in the strange description Adelaida offers to the Colonel. Her description is not just strange because she seems to hesitate or even avoid saying what is literally on the tip of her tongue, but, more importantly, that the object to which her words could refer is itself outside the normal commerce of exchange. The doctor is not identical with himself and this is what makes Adelaida's misrecognition even more humorous and even more important insofar as

foreignness is a concept appropriate to the discussion of anonymity. The doctor is anonymous, without a past we can come to know, without a voice that reveals its source, without a name proper to it. And this is what is strange. Only an errant language, a language that consistently postpones itself, can reach the space of this strange quality of the foreigner: a language, therefore, that in postponing itself postpones the identity of its putative referential object. And it is a language, as I have tried to show through the discussion of Labanyi's essay, that is consistently spoken by an unknown tongue, a tongue for whom self-identification is always postponed through the postponing language of the written text.

* * *

The return to opacity is not, in the final analysis, a mere going back to the ground from which it was possible to make the return in the first place. Although clarifications have, I hope, been made, here return is a means of reaching out to the possibility of responding to the question of anonymity, of the anonymous source of writing and, even, of the reader; of the very opacity that structures the relation between. In order to better understand that relation, having in hand a few indispensable concepts, it will be helpful to turn towards the other consideration implied by return; that is, the attempt to locate and delimit the relationship between temporality, historicity and the between of relation.

§ 2: The Time Of The Between

for Ward Brownell

Retired to the peace of this desert,
with a collection of books that are few but wise,
I live in conversation with the departed
and listen to the dead with my eyes.

Francisco de Quevedo

The Persistence of the Past

Every poet wishes to be read in the future, and in a profounder and more generous way than in his own time. It is not a thirst for fame; it is a thirst for life. The poet knows that he is simply a link in a chain, a bridge between yesterday and tomorrow. But suddenly, as this century draws to an end, he discovers that the bridge is suspended between two abysses: the past that is retreating in the distance, and the future that is crumbling. The poet feels lost in time.

Octavio Paz
The Other Voice

The conjunction between the past and the present is a suggestive instance of the priority of separation in understanding relation. A good deal of misunderstanding lingers about this conjunction, a misunderstanding generated by an unwillingness to conceptualise the past and the present outside the linearity to which our ternary time system has lent itself, and our understanding of relation will suffer for it. Linearity has always relegated the past to a distant region whose apparent inaccessibility is thought to be a symptom of the limits (or defects) of memory and the putative constraints of critical reflection and interpretation. Furthermore, within a linear system the present is ordinarily conceived as a unavailing passage point: time is succession constantly moving forward to the promise of what, above all else, is new. This is the promise of linearity. Linearity impels us to reach the future in order to fully engage in what the past has denied us: the new, progress, advancement. Linearity impels us to turn away and actively repress the residue of the past that persists in the present. Consequently, the complete cohesion to linearity that is a hallmark of our ternary time system has made it difficult to think this persistence in terms appropriate to it. It appears then, that turning away from linearity offers us a horizon for thinking this persistence. But how can we turn away from linearity?

When Octavio Paz writes that "the past reappears because it is a hidden present" (*Is*, 289)¹ he has begun to turn away from linearity. The turn for Paz will always be a

¹ This is taken from Paz's essay "Crítica de la pirámide" ("Critique of the Pyramid") which originally

return to what is closest to us; not the simple past, but the shadow of an archaic voice. "I am speaking of the real past", Paz claims, "which is not the same as "what took place": dates, persons, everything we refer to as history. What took place is indeed in the past, yet there is something which does not pass away, something that takes place but that does not wholly recede into the past, a constantly returning present" (*Is*, 289). What is this something? Does it have a name? Can Paz name it? Can we?² For Paz, modernity has made it virtually impossible to speak a language in which this 'something' could be heard. Modernity is guided by the time not of the past but of the future; and the time of the future, a progressive time through and through, makes "returns to the past and historical resurrections ... either unthinkable or reprehensible" (*t*, 93; *OE*, 89). Modernity, which speaks the language of the bourgeoisie, of science and technology, liberalism, pragmatism and capitalism,³ has sealed the graves of history and the voice of the past by turning us "towards a deceptive tomorrow that is always beyond our reach" (*Is*, 42; *L*, 47-48). In response to the language of modernity, Paz speaks of a return that has as its object the persisting, archaic voice of time. The object of Paz's return is the very residue of a past that is, nonetheless, lived now, in a present-time that exceeds linearity. What is intriguing about Paz's conceptualisation of the relation between the past and the present is his attempts to maintain two contradictory elements: the past is resurrected right here now. To return to the beginning is to return to the time buried in or by time, a time, nonetheless, that is lived

appeared in *Posdata* (Mexico: siglo veintiuno editores, s. a., 1970).

² Recall Bell's argument that, in the face of the obscurity between self and other, Lawrence affirmed that there was "something else seeking to get expressed" rather than conceiving obscurity as the impossibility of ever communicating inner states of self awareness to another. As I pointed out before, I am offering a similar affirmation here vis-à-vis an analysis of various Latin American texts with the exception that the structures of time and history become central to the conceptual appreciation of obscurity (that is, for our discussion, opacity) and the significance of its affirmation. See above pp 27-28.

³ Paz employs these terms in his analysis of certain historical relations between the United States and the Middle East. For a full discussion of these problems, especially of the relationship between religious sentiment and nationalism in Iran and its relation to Paz's critique of modernity, see *t*, 94-103; *OE*, 90-99 and 192-197.

now, in our time. Therefore, the present is the space where this return is enacted. As Paz tells us, "the supreme value is not the future but the present. The future is a deceitful time that always says to us "Not yet", and thus denies us. The future is not the time of love: what man truly wants he wants *now*. Whoever builds a house for future happiness builds a prison for the present". The value of the present supersedes any value for the future because it is only in the present that the voice of history is spoken and heard. In what is surely a personal testimony, Paz tells us that it is the poet who has always been the bearer of the demands of the past. As a progeny of modern poetry, Paz is unwilling to separate his theoretical notions concerning time and history from his own poetic experience. Paz writes as the poet for whom poetry alone will return us to the origin by resurrecting in us the voice "of the beginning" (*OV*, 153). The poet returns us by speaking the tongue of the other voice, an archaic voice resurrected by the "accent" of the poet, one whose "indefinable and unmistakable modulation ... makes it *other* ... the mark of original difference" (*OV*, 153).

In his treatment of Walt Whitman's *Song of Myself*, Paz argues that "The poet sings of an *I* that is a *you* and a *he* and a *we*. He is one among many, and a unique being; a wanderer on foot, and a cosmos. Whitman regains the archetypal nature of time not by way of a legendary past but through the immersion in the present moment. What is happening right now is happening always" (*OV*, 29).⁴ Later, Paz argues that

Even when [poetry] is identified with the void ... it appears, paradoxically, as a presence. It is not an idea: it is pure time. Time without measure The poetry that is beginning with this century's end does not really begin, nor does it return to its starting point; it is a perpetual re-beginning and a continual return. The poetry that is beginning now, without beginning, is seeking the intersection of times, the point of convergence ... the present is manifest in presence, and presence is the reconciliation of the three times. A poetry of reconciliation: the imagination made flesh in a *now* that has

⁴ "The time of the song is also unprecedented, for it is neither a mythical past nor an atemporal present. It is a closed present, 1855, and a present that has no dates at all: the here and now that comes and goes every day, ever since human beings became human." Paz argues that Whitman radicalises the Romantic tradition by turning the topos of the "legendary hero, behind whose physical form the poet conceals himself" into a "poetic expansion" (*OV*, 28-29). I will have more to say about Paz's own relationship to Romanticism later on.

no dates (*OV*, 57-58).

And yet, the sense of the positive importance of the present for the voice of poetry at the end of this century seems to be negated at key points in Paz's writing. Paz argues that the market economy of the late twentieth century places the poet and the reader in a "here" that is "nowhere and everywhere" because it is "right now". As such, both poet and reader are divorced from the past which gives substance to the voice of poetry. "The preeminence of the *now* weakens the ties that join us to the past We are immersed in a now that never stops blinking and that gives us the feeling of constant acceleration Whether illusory or real, the past whirls away at a dizzying pace and vanishes" (*OV*, 114). And this is why the other voice is "never the voice of here and now, which is the modern voice, but the voice from beyond, the other one, the one of the beginning" (*OV*, 153).

How are we to reconcile these seemingly contradictory claims: the future imprisons the present, the present is the house of a now without dates that allows the voice of poetry to speak towards the past *and* the present accelerates us beyond and divorces us from the very timelessness of the instant? To make this situation more troublesome, Paz argues that "The expansion of the present in the domain of literary tradition manifests itself in the trend towards instantaneous communication. Endurance, the attribute of perfection, yields its place to quick consumption. The past and future vanish, and the present intensifies into a single instant: the three times are exhaled in one breath. The instant explodes and dissipates" (*OV*, 114-115). Paz seems to argue that the voice of poetry is not at home in the present and yet belongs there intimately, a contradiction which results from Paz's unwillingness to overcome his adherence to a ternary time system. Paz needs to maintain the ternary time system in order to speak of the reconciliation of the past, present and future which he sees as the defining mark of poetry at the end of this century. This reconciliation empowers society against the loss of the future by retaining the past in the present: only in the recognition and affirmation of the persistence of the past in the present will society gain a future. Hence, to "forget poetry" (*OV*, 160) is to forget the past since poetry is the constant

announcement of "what has been obstinately forgotten by centuries. Poetry is memory become image and image become voice" (OV, 155). The poet sings to us of ourselves, of what is closest to us but constantly repressed by the present-time of modernity, that now which "gives us the feeling of constant acceleration". The poem thus guarantees the future in the affirmation of the past and is, therefore, a means of binding a community around a central identity; that is, precisely, the identity of the origin. But poetry is not only the possibility of communion between individuals but between the individual and the cosmos. Poetry realises that great Romantic desire of uniting mind and nature through its process of "imagining" which "consists, essentially, of the ability to place contrary or divergent realities in relationship" (OV, 158). Paz's return is therefore a return to unification in a now that contains both past and future through a poetry of reconciliation, a poetry that "offers living proof of the brotherhood of the stars and elementary particles, chemicals and consciousness."

The confusion in Paz is really the result of using 'the instant' and 'the present' in different ways at different points in his arguments. In the critique of modernity and linearity, Paz focuses attention on the dislocation and disunity of time in the process of instant communication which he sees as a hallmark of modernity. However, in his treatment of poetry as the embodiment of a temporality that exceeds linearity through the unification or reconciliation of the past, present and future, the present-instant represents the very time of the poem, the time of reconciliation itself, a time which is beyond linearity because it brings together and unifies what linearity had dismembered. (And we must always remember that, for Paz, to be *beyond* in the realm of poetry is to be before or outside linear time). In this latter conceptualisation we can hear resonances of Lyotard's analysis of Newman's notion of the instant. As I pointed out above, Lyotard reads Newman's paintings as invocations of a time that, by dismantling consciousness in the process of their own creation, cannot be placed within the boundaries of linearity; that is, between the past and the future. Rather, Lyotard tells us, Newman's now is the immediate moment of the painting itself, a moment which cannot be consumed by the past or the future. In this way, Newman is able to counter

the drive towards "the technological manipulation of time" on the basis of the "calculation of profitability, the satisfaction of needs [and] self affirmation through success".⁵ Similarly, Paz's 'instant' embodied in the poem - or rather the instant the poem announces - the poem's essential temporality, disrupts the drive towards instant communication by exposing us to the elemental connection all people have to the time before time, a present-instant of reconciliation and not one that is devoured by the now-time of modernity. This clarification is vital in understanding how Paz reconceptualises temporality and to any worthwhile critique of his own inability to shake off linearity as a starting point for that reconceptualisation, the latter of which I will deal with shortly.

For Paz, we become aware of the need to return to the origin, to the beginning, when we become aware of our immersion in the solitude that is a defining mark of human existence. "Solitude", Paz writes, "is not an exclusively Mexican characteristic. All men, at some moment in their lives, feel themselves to be alone. And they are Man is the only being who knows he is alone, and the only one who seeks out another Man is nostalgia and a search for communion. Therefore, when he is aware of himself he is aware of his lack of another, that is, of his solitude" (*Is*, 175; *L*, 195).⁶ The awareness of our immersion in solitude not only impels us to return to the beginning but, in so doing, to transcend the confines of our solitude and, thereby, to communion with ourselves and our culture, a transcendence which is not only a return but a rebeginning, a recreation. In short, transcendence for Paz would entail making accessible to consciousness that which is not accessible to it while consciousness remains confined to the linearity of modernity. The temporality of modernity is not the temporality in which this accessibility is guaranteed. A careful examination of solitude

⁵ See above, pg. 31, n. 21 and pg. 33, n. 24.

⁶ Recall that in § -1: *Terms of Ineffability* I distinguished 'opacity' and 'ineffability' from a notion of lack which appeared in Lyotard's analysis of Burke, Newman and the sublime. It is important to reaffirm that distinction here with the addition that Paz's conception of solitude as lack needs to be replaced, especially with what has gone on up to this point, with a notion of solitude as *shared* abandonment, one I will develop in my analysis of Fuentes' reading of Nikolai Gogol.

will help to unfold these notions further.

In *El laberinto de la soledad* [*The Labyrinth of Solitude*], Paz writes that "we are condemned to live alone, but also to transcend our solitude, to re-establish the bonds that united us with a paradisiac past" (*ls*, 175; *L*, 195). Here, as elsewhere, Lysander Kemp's translation of *El laberinto de la soledad* is misleading. In Spanish we read: "estamos condenados a vivir solos, pero también lo estamos a traspasar nuestra soledad y a rehacer los lazos que *en pasado paradisiaco nos unían a la vida*" (*ls*, 175; my emphasis). Kemp's translation obscures the force of the original: not then, a unity with a paradisiac past but, more accurately, "the bonds⁷ that in a paradisiac past united us to life". The question we must attend to now, one obfuscated by Kemp's translation, is the question concerning the nature of this life, the past to which it is attributed and the conditions that make transcending our solitude possible. This question is necessary if we are to understand the nuances of Paz's later arguments, arguments which Kemp's translation not only obscures but, in some cases, completely buries.

To assess these later arguments we must pay very close attention to the subtle transformation from a literal to a much more figural use of language in "La dialéctica de la soledad" ["The Dialectic of Solitude"]. In charting this transformation I will be paying specific attention to Paz's use of 'vientre', 'claustro', and 'seno', all of which Kemp translates as 'womb', and their connection to his conceptualisation of the relation between life and death.

In the second paragraph of "La dialéctica de la soledad", Paz writes: "Uno con el mundo que lo rodea, el feto es vida y en bruto, fluir ignorante de sí. Al nacer, rompemos los lazos que nos unen a la vida ciega que vivimos en el *vientre materno*, en donde no hay *pausa* entre deseo y satisfacción" (*ls*, 175; my emphasis). Kemp translates this rather straightforward passage in the following manner: "The foetus is at one with the world around it; it is pure brute life, unconscious of itself. When we are

⁷ *los lazos*: literally 'lassoes'.

born we break the ties that joined us to the life we lived in the *maternal womb*, where there is no *gap* between desire and satisfaction" (L, 195; my emphasis).⁸ But then, in the fifth paragraph, we begin to detect a subtle but decisive transformation in locution:

[4]Nacer y morir son experiencias de soledad. Nacemos solos y morimos solos....

Death and birth are solitary experiences. We are born alone and we die alone.

[5]Entre nacer y morir transcurre nuestra vida. Expulsados del *claustro materno*, iniciamos un angustioso salto de veras mortal, que no termina sino hasta que caemos en la muerte

When we are expelled from the *maternal womb*, we begin the painful struggle that finally ends in death

(Is, 176; my emphasis).

(L, 196).

Kemp not only omits the first sentence of the fifth paragraph - "Entre nacer y morir transcurre nuestra vida." - he also extracts the first two sentences of the fourth - "Nacer y morir son experiencias de soledad. Nacemos solos y morimos solos" - a paragraph he fails to translate in its entirety, and appends them to the beginning of the fifth. The result is an indiscriminate dissection of the original. The fifth paragraph literally reads:

Between to be born and to die passes our life. Expelled from the maternal cloister, we begin an anguished leap truly deadly [*mortal*] that does not end until we fall down in death.

The literal translation is intentional. Paz's use of the infinitives 'nacer' - to be born - and 'morir' - to die - lends a specific inflection to his argument. Paz is referring to the *events* of birth and death, the being born and the being (unto) death of all humanity.⁹

⁸ While this will become of greater importance later, it is important to flag Kemp's translation of 'pausa' as 'gap'. Such a translation unwittingly elides the important sense time plays in the underlying argument of Paz's essay. Alternatively, a more literal interpretation would in fact underscore temporality right from the start: In the maternal womb, there is no pause between desire and satisfaction; that is, in the maternal womb we experience a present which stretches out all around us. This notion of temporality will also become increasingly important in my discussion of Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo* as an important example of the need to affirm the gap and not, as in Paz, to search for a temporality that would bridge it, and, subsequently, the significance of postponement centralised in Fuentes' reading of Diderot and Gogol.

⁹ For Paz, birth and death appear as event horizons; they are the boundaries which condition the possibility of life and, therefore, are not horizons of possibility themselves. In this sense, birth and death are events because they conform to the first and last movements of linearity. As I will argue later, in order to move beyond linearity we would need to rethink the value of retaining 'the event' as a critical expression which could respond to the separation of relation in approaching the question of

Life is that which passes between birth and death: life is this 'between', this separation. By refusing to translate "Entre nacer y morir transcurre nuestra vida", Kemp completely obscures this vital understanding of the relation between life and death in Paz's essay. Is this 'life' the life to which we were united in the paradisiac past Paz refers to earlier? To address this we must turn to the missing paragraph, the paragraph Kemp excludes in his translation. I quote it here in its entirety since its hidden questions are central to my analysis:

Nacer y morir son experiencias de soledad. Nacemos solos y morimos solos. Nada tan grave como esa primera inmersión en la soledad que es el nacer, sino es esa otra caída en lo desconocido que es el morir. La vivencia de la muerte se transforma pronto en conciencia del morir. Los niños y los hombres primitivos no creen en la muerte; mejor dicho, no saben que la muerte existe, aunque ella trabaje secretamente en su interior. Su descubrimiento nunca es tardío para el hombre civilizado, pues todos nos avisa y previene que hemos de morir. Nuestras vidas son un diario aprendizaje de la muerte. Más que a vivir se nos enseña a morir. Y se nos enseña mal

To be born and to die are experiences of solitude.¹⁰ We are born alone and we die alone. There is nothing so grave as this first immersion in the solitude which is birth, if it were not for this other fall into the stranger which is death. The existence of death transforms itself quickly by the awareness of [the event and encounter with] death. Children and primitive mankind do not believe in death; they do not know death exists, although she works secretly in their soul. Their revelation is never late for civilised mankind, which warns us and foretells that we must die. Our lives are a daily apprenticeship in death. More than to live we must teach ourselves to die. And we teach this with difficulty.¹¹

(*Is*, 176)

anonymity.

¹⁰ I have translated this literally in order to accent the sense in which the events of birth and death are ones which *encounter* solitude. Kemp's translation - "Death and birth are solitary experiences" - while it confuses much, is grammatically correct.

¹¹ It is important to note that, according to Paz, Mexicans are drawn between the experience of solitude and the eruption of the fiesta. The tension between these poles is expressed in two conceptions of death: "Así, frente a la muerte hay dos actitudes: una, hacia adelante, que la concibe como creación; otra, de regreso, que se expresa como fascinación ante la nada o como nostalgia del limbo" (*Is*, 55) | "one, pointing forward, that conceives of it as creation; the other, pointing backward, that expresses itself as a fascination with nothingness or as a nostalgia for limbo" (*L*, 61). Paz argues that Mexicans have never approached the first of these two notions. "La muerte como nostalgia y no como fruto o fin de la vida, equivale a afirmar que no venimos de la vida, sino de la muerte Regresar a la muerte original será volver a la vida de antes de la vida, a la vida de antes de la muerte: al limbo, a la entraña materna" (*Is*, 56). That is, they are committed to viewing death as nostalgia and, as such, do not conceive of death as "the fruition or end of life": death as nostalgia can only mean "death as origin

Life encounters death, constantly walks in the shadow of the death that must precede it. Only the confrontation with death can bring us into contact with life: life and death are twins, born of a common source, the source of all existence; that is, prenatal and presocial life. In order to understand the dimensions of this prenatal life, especially as they take up a central role in Paz's argument, we must turn to the final transformation in Paz's language.

As I pointed out, Kemp's translation of 'claustró materno' as 'maternal womb' obscures the first transformation of language in Paz's essay. By the fifth paragraph, Paz has moved from an explicitly literal use of language - 'vientre materno' - to a much more figural use - 'claustró materno'. It will only be in the final stage of this transformation that any literal reference to 'womb' is completely left behind. This final transformation comes mid-way through the fifth paragraph where Paz tells us: "Pues si todo (conciencia de sí, tiempo, razón, costumbres, hábitos) tiende a hacer de nosotros los expulsados de la vida, todo también nos empuja a volver, a descender al *seno creador* de donde fuimos arrancados" (*Is*, 176; my emphasis). Whereas in Kemp we read: "Everything - self-awareness, time, reason, customs, habits - tends to make us exiles from life, but at the same time everything impels us to return, to descend to the *creative womb* from which we were cast out" (*L*, 196; my emphasis). An unfortunate translation. Literally 'seno creador' means 'creative breast' which, it seems to me, has no *literal* meaning whatsoever. That is to say, Paz has moved from the literal 'vientre materno' to the poetic and figural 'seno creador', a movement that is completely

.... A return to original death would be a return to the life before life, the life before death: to limbo, to the maternal source" (*L*, 62). The oscillation between a life of solitude and a desire for a death that is original, that returns Mexicans to themselves, is one which points to the recognition every Mexican has of "la presencia de una mancha"; "the presence of a stigma" on the body of every Mexican and on the "carne"; "flesh" of Mexico itself: "no por difusa menos viva, original e imborrable" (*Is*, 57) | "It is diffused but none the less living, original, and ineradicable" (*L*, 63-4). And it is this very stigma which cleaves Mexicans from and to themselves; a rending which offers Mexicans the hiding place of solitude and an adhering to themselves in the explosions of their fiestas. Hence, solitude is not merely a moment of isolation. Rather, it is the expression of an oscillation "entre la entrega y la reserva" (*Is*, 58) | "between intimacy and withdrawal". While the Mexican never "trasciende su soledad" (*Is*, 64) | "transcends his solitude", he nevertheless continually floats in that middle-space between life and death, "entre el grito y el silencio, entre la fiesta y el velorio" (*Is*, 58) | "between a shout and a silence, between a fiesta and a wake" (*L*, 64).

consistent with the status he affords to the language and voice of poetry as the language that will return us to the origin;¹² an origin which is, precisely, *not* the maternal womb, *not* a geotemporal space, but the space and time buried in time itself. What does this transformation into a completely poetic use of language suggest about the movement away from any literal reference to the womb?

As Paz will say later, while it is difficult, if not impossible, to determine whether or not death is a "return to the life that precedes life", whether or not death is "the truest kind of life", it is nonetheless a characteristic of "our whole being" to "attempt to escape the opposites that torment [*desgarrar*: to tear (up); to shatter; grief] us" (*Is*, 176; *L*, 196). The need to move increasingly away from a conception of life rooted in the physical characteristics of our (literal) birth responds to the "double significance" of solitude; that is, "solitude is both self-awareness, and ... it is longing to escape from oneself" (*Is*, 175; *L*, 195). Everything in Paz's language suggests this transformation: his reference to the foetus when speaking of a 'we' that emerges from the maternal womb; his use later, after references to a specific temporal succession, of a 'we' in the approach and constant *proximity* of death - "A medida que crecemos" | "As we grow"; "Y más tarde" | "And much later"; and then these questions: "¿Morir será volver allá, a la vida de antes de la vida?" | "Is death a return, to the life before life?"; "¿Será vivir de nuevo esa vida prenatal en que reposo y movimiento, día y noche, tiempo y eternidad, dejan de oponerse?" | "Is it [death] to live again in this prenatal life in which rest and movement, day and night, time and eternity, are abandoned as objecting to each other?";¹³ "¿Morir será dejar de ser y, definitivamente, estar?" | "Is death [to die] itself

¹² I will be exploring this in greater detail shortly.

¹³ Again the literal translation is intentional. Paz constantly applies his local arguments to larger political and social exigencies. This application tends to come in the form of reflections on the interaction between political and social systems that seem completely incongruous with each other. For Paz, this incongruity is suggestive not only of the role revolution plays in the construction of internal political and social systems, but the way in which one particular system interacts with another. As I have argued on several occasions throughout this text, postcolonial transformation is realised in cultural contact, in a contact between two or more peoples who do not *object* to their mutual caresses.

to cease to be and, definitively, to be?" In a conversation with Claude Fell, Paz says "Spanish has an advantage over French and English; We have *estar* and *ser*. "*Estar* in history" means to be surrounded by historical circumstances; "*ser* in history" means that one is, oneself, historical circumstances: that one is, oneself, changing. That is to say, man is not only an object or subject of history: he himself is history, he is the changes" ("Return to the Labyrinth of Solitude", *L*, 333). In Spanish *ser* is used to denote conditions that are permanent - one's gender or nationality for example - while *estar* is used to denote conditions that are not - one's occupation or health. In this sense, I am in history because I am surrounded by the ebb and flow of *changing* historical circumstances. But I am in history also because I *am* those very changes that only *appear* to operate on the periphery of my own existence. When Paz asks "¿Morir será dejar de ser y, definitivamente, estar?" he is asking whether or not death is ceasing to be what we permanently and usually are (*ser*) *here* in the geotemporal condition of existence and to become what we unusually are (*estar*) beyond this apparent permanence. Is death to end the existence that is permanent and to live, in death, the life that is temporary? The 'we' in the *proximity* of death is not the 'we' that emerges from the maternal womb. Only after we become aware that we are beings unto death does death *impel* us to return, to *leap* back across life itself - that is, the life which appears permanent, this life here - to the life prior to life. Modernity's temporality gives way to the temporality of death conceived as the return to the origin. As we will see, Paz's analysis of the Mexican Day of the Dead is not merely employed as a local detail in the adumbration of Mexican culture. The Mexican Day of the Dead foregrounds the importance of death's demand in understanding solitude, temporality and the impulse to return to a prenatal existence. Death's demand is precisely the demand to return to our origins, origins which are *not* the physical origins of the maternal womb but the very essence of undifferentiation. If we experienced this undifferentiation in the maternal womb, death will not drive us back to it but to the source of all undifferentiation: that source is announced by Paz in the figural and not the literal use of language. Expelled from the unity of our prenatal existence, we begin

an anguished leap into the between of separation, a leap which affords us no rest until our death, the death we earn in the labour of our anguish.¹⁴

* * *

Paz tells us that Mexico has an embedded history which is, almost always, lived silently by every Mexican, a history that erupts in the images of the dead and their resurrection in memory during the time of the fiesta. For Paz, the fiesta is not primarily a recuperation of ancient economic practices, where the wastefulness of society generates health, where "wasting money and expending energy affirms the community's wealth in both" (*Is*, 44; *L*, 50).¹⁵ On the contrary, the fiesta is primarily "a sudden immersion in the formless, in pure being" (*Is*, 46; *L*, 51), an immersion that is directly aligned to a "revolutionary explosion" (*MO*, 201), but one that must be read through Paz's notion of "revolt as resurrection" (*t*, 94; *OE*, 90).¹⁶ The fiesta is a revolt precisely because, in the "revolutionary explosion" it generates, it returns Mexicans to the beginning and allows them to confront "the other Mexican" (*MO*, 201): "The fiesta is a cosmic experiment ... reuniting contradictory elements and principles in order to bring about a renaissance of life The fiesta is a return to a

¹⁴ For a close analysis of the notion of earning one's death and of the process of living in the presence of one's own death in the context of mass death see Edith Wyschogrod's intriguing work *Spirit in Ashes: Hegel, Heidegger, and Man-Made Mass Death*. (New Haven: Yale U. P., 1985).

¹⁵ Paz argues that this particular interpretation was common among French sociologists in the 1940's and brings into focus Paz's desire to constantly reread Latin American culture in light of the European imagination that helped to create it. It should be pointed out that, given the increased interest in Latin America as a theoretical site for the arguments put forward by European writers (such as Bataille for example), we need to be constantly attentive to the fact that the perceptions many Latin American writers have of themselves are a reflection of their desire to assess and reassess their relationship to this European imagination.

¹⁶ We must not lose sight of this particularly Pazian language: "The movement born of [the French and American revolutions] runs through the twentieth century like a river that repeatedly goes underground and resurfaces. As it flows, it changes; as it changes, it ceaselessly returns to its source" (*OV*, 145). For Paz any return is pregnant with change and indicates the vital importance the notion of beginning, which is always a rebeginning and a re-creation, is for his overall project. As Fuentes writes in *Myself With Others*: "The revolution", wrote my compatriot, the great poet Octavio Paz, "is a sudden immersion of Mexico in its own being. In the revolutionary explosion ... each Mexican ... finally recognizes, in a mortal embrace, the other Mexican." Paz himself, Diego Rivera and Carlos Chávez, Mariano Azuela and José Clemente Orozco, Juan Rulfo and Rufino Tamayo: we all exist and work because of the revolutionary experience of our own country" (*MO*, 201).

remote and undifferentiated space, prenatal or presocial. It is a return that is also a beginning" (*Is*, 46; *L*, 51-52).

The dialectic of solitude must be understood as the condition that impels us to return to the beginning, a return which is, precisely, the attempt to exceed ourselves, and as the very possibility of achieving that return. In the awareness of our solitude lies the precondition that will allow us to "rend ourselves open" (*Is*, 47; *L*, 53), allow us to tear ourselves from ourselves in order to apprehend ourselves. The dialectic of solitude thus foregrounds the ex-timate relation: to encounter themselves

Mexicans must exceed themselves, must explode out of themselves into the intimate exteriority of an other which they themselves are. By immersing themselves in their "own origins", in the "womb from which they came",¹⁷ the Mexican "denies society as an organic system of differentiated forms and principles, but affirms it as a source of creative energy. It is a true "re-creation"" (*Is*, 46; *L*, 52). The return to the beginning is never a simple restoration in the Heideggerian sense, but a rebeginning. The destructive element in the fiesta is the possibility for its "creative energy", a dialectic of creation and destruction which Fuentes is also keenly aware of: "Burnt water, *atl tlachinolli*: the paradox of the creation is also the paradox of the destruction. The Mexican character never separates life from death, and this too is the sign of the burnt water that has presided over [Mexico's] destiny in birth and rebirth".¹⁸ The dead origin then, whose rebirth, phoenix-like from the ashes of its

¹⁷ "Se ha sumergido en sí, en la entraña misma de donde salió". By no stretch of the imagination can 'entraña' - heart, entrails - be translated as 'womb'. The point I am making here will not be undermined by Kemp's poor translation.

¹⁸ At the beginning of *Agua Quemada* [*Burnt Water*] Fuentes quotes these lines from Paz's poem *Vuelta* [*Return*]:

se quebraron los signos

atl tlachinolli

se rompió

agua quemada

For the purposes of this section it is important to offer the full stanza from which this extract has been taken:

El viento
en esquinas polvosas

Wind
on the dusty corners

own being, reappears in the present-time of a now bursting under the pressure of its own solitude, of its creations and recreations.

In 1990, Paz writes:

No one in his right mind can think that the crisis that today brings chaos to the countries that have lived under the despotism of bureaucratic Communism will not spread to the rest of the world. We are living through a change of times: not a revolution but, in the long-standing and profoundest sense of the word, a revolt - a return to the origin, to the beginning. We are witnessing not the end of history ... but a rebeginning. The resurrection of buried realities, the reappearance of what was forgotten and repressed (OV, 145).

Revolt, the return that resurrects, is enacted beyond the physical violence that characterises the revolutionary movements throughout history and, most especially, throughout the modern age. These movements would never have fulfilled themselves in victory and defeat were it not for the language of revolt, the language which is not spoken primarily by violence or physical confrontation, but by "the other voice". While the social, religious, economic and political circumstances may have changed, the aspect which fuels the eruption of all revolutions and sustains their revolutionary fury has remained the same: the other voice. The poet is the individual alone who can

Noticias de ayer	hojea los periódicos	Yesterday's news	turns the papers
que una tabilla cuneiforme hecha pedazos	más remotas	than a cuneiform tablet smashed to bits	more remote
Escrituras hendidas		Cracked scriptures	
se quebraron los signos	lenguajes en añicos	the signs were broken	languages in pieces
	atl tlachinolli		atl tlachinolli
	se rompió		was split
No hay centro	agua quemada	There is no centre	burnt water
no hay eje	plaza de congregación	there is no axis	plaza of congregation and consecration
desbandada de los horizontes	dispersión de los años	horizons disbanded	the years dispersed
en cada puerta	Marcaron a la ciudad	on every door	They have branded the city
	en cada frente		on every forehead
	el signo \$		the \$ sign

(SP, 191; tr. Eliot Weinberger)

hear the other voice, the voice of the archaic and buried realities smothered by the language of modernity, the time of linearity, the voice of progress; all of which drive us towards a utopian, always promised tomorrow.

Paz's critique of progress appears to miss a vital point about the relation between the past, the future and renewal characteristic of modernity, a point which bears on his understanding of "revolt as resurrection". In an important study on the relation between secularisation, progress and the value of the new as *the* relation which defines modernity, Gianni Vattimo writes that "from the beginning of the modern era ... art has found itself in the same ungrounded condition that science and technology only today explicitly recognize themselves to be in".¹⁹ This "ungrounded position" is the result of secularisation - the transference of the value of the sacred to "the affirmation of the realm of profane value" (101) - which jettisons the metaphysical grounds of truth and "the value of 'usefulness for life'" in the creation of works of art. Paz appears to think that art and science/technology are completely different activities in relation to history. It appears that poetry responds to history in a way in which science and technology do not. But, as Vattimo points out, "faith in progress", which Paz clearly aligns with the operative mechanisms of science and technology, is intimately allied to a vision of the future in the same way that "twentieth century artistic avant-garde movements, whose radically anti-historicist inspiration is most authentically expressed by Futurism and Dadaism ... is still accompanied by an appeal to the authentic, according to a model of thought characteristic of all *modern* 'futurism': the tension towards the future is seen as a tension aimed towards a renewal and return to a condition of originary authenticity" (100). What Vattimo is arguing is that maintaining a division between the arts and science/technology when speaking of modernity fails to appreciate the defining characteristic of this era; that is, "the era in which being modern becomes ... *the* fundamental value to which all other values refer" (99). If the 'logic of progress', which affirms that "progress is just that process which leads towards a state of things

¹⁹ Gianni Vattimo, *The End of Modernity*, tr. Jon R. Snyder (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988):101.

in which further progress is possible, and nothing more" (101), appears to drain any value to be placed on the past and "historical resurrections" by creating a "dependence of the present on the future" (105), it accomplishes this by appealing to "the value of the new" *as* "originary authenticity". How then, can any appeal to renewal and return made by Paz not be complicit with this futurism which, as Vattimo sees it, is the defining characteristic of modernity?

The real problem for Paz is the relationship between return and rebeginning and the question is whether or not there is a more subtle relationship between his conception of modernity and 'the return of the repressed' that would require us to distinguish his reading of modernity from Vattimo's. In the first instance, Paz understands the return to origins to be gauged in relation to the present such that the return does not seek a time outside time in the conventional sense; that is, precisely, the time of "originary authenticity". The time buried in or by time is the authentic time that underlies all temporal and historical process. This authenticity, however, has no meaning for Paz outside the demand the past places on us, a demand which we respond to in our critical reflections upon that past and, in the encounter with that 'something' which does not slip away, in our re-creation of ourselves and our cultures.²⁰ In order to understand

²⁰ In his attempt to articulate the problem of applying the term 'modern', in its European context, to the countries of Central and South America, Paz argues that "People have never known the name of the age in which they live, and we are no exception to this rule. To call ourselves "postmodern" is merely a naive way of saying that we are extremely modern. And yet what has not been called into question is the linear concept of time and its identification with criticism, change, and progress - time opening to the future as the promised land. To call ourselves postmodern is to continue to be the prisoner of successive, linear, progressive time" (*OV* 54-55). Years earlier, Paz had argued that "Criticism is, for me, the *free* form of commitment ... for me criticism is creative. The significant difference between France and England on the one hand and Spain and Hispanic America on the other is that we had no eighteenth century. We had no Kant, Voltaire, Diderot, or Hume. Criticism made the modern world" (*L*, 350). Or again, "the key concepts of the Modern Age - progress, evolution, revolution, freedom, democracy, science, technology - had their origin in criticism" (*OV*, 33). And just one more to push the point: "The Modern Age began with the criticism of Christian Eternity and, accompanying it, the appearance of another kind of time. On the one hand the finite time of Christianity, with its beginning and its end, became the nearly infinite time of the evolution of nature and history, a time ever open to the future. On the other, modernity devalued Eternity: perfection was transported to a future that lay not in the next world but in this one. In Hegel's famous image, the rose of reason is crucified in the present. History, he said, is Calvary, a transformation of the Christian mystery into historical action. The road to the Absolute travels by means of time; it *is* time. Change and revolution are the embodiments of the human march toward the future and its paradises" (*OV* 35-36). My intention in quoting these lengthy passages is to underscore two concerns: One Paz's and one my own. In the first, Paz is concerned to draw attention to the impact European

this relationship we must attend to the language and voice of poetry and, precisely, what the origin is as rebeginning.

The language of poetry is not the poet's language since the poet does not command a language that has been acquired through some pedagogic process. The language of poetry is not taught, is not given over (communicated) from mentor to student: the language of poetry is heard. The language of poetry is the language that no one acquires and that cannot be spoken outside the voice of the poet. The poet's voice is other because it has "heard, not outside but inside" itself the archaic voice and the archaic language of its own culture. As Paz has written in another context,

the poet is a man whose very being becomes one with his words. Therefore, only the poet can make possible a new dialogue. The destiny of the poet, particularly in a period such as ours, is 'donner un sens plus pur aux mots de la tribu'.²¹ This implies that words are rooted out of the common language and brought to birth in a poem ... words are inseparable from men. Consequently, poetic activity cannot take place outside the poet, in the magic object represented by the poem; rather does it take man himself as the centre of its experience. Opposites are fused in man himself, not in the poem alone. The two are inseparable (*SP*, 17).²²

modernism has had on conceptions of Latin America and Latin American modernity. Any reconceptualisation of the latter must, according to Paz, take this into consideration. However, and this is my concern, Paz upholds the value of criticism as a road to self-creation, suggesting that one limitation to self-awareness and self-identification in Latin America is the absence of a critical tradition, a tradition that is linked to linearity and, therefore, to a concept of time that is antithetical to the identification of Latin America with the time that, after colonisation and Enlightenment thinking, they were told to forget; that is, the time in which, according to Paz, the three times of the ternary system are reconciled. How then, can Paz uphold these two contradictory assertions? The answer to this rests finally in Paz's inability to reconcile two distinct desires in his writing, an inability I will deal with presently.

²¹ 'To give a more pure meaning to the words of the tribe'.

²² "Poetry and History", the short essay from which this extract was taken, originally appeared in a translation by Samuel Beckett in the *Anthology of Mexican Poetry*, Thames and Hudson, 1959. With a similar tone, Paz has written that "Romanticism ... introduced a subjective element as the subject of the poem: the *I* of the poet, his very person The Romantic poem has as its subject the song, the singer: the poem, the poet" (*OV*, 24). Also recall Paz's remarks on Whitman's *Song of Myself* (see above pg. 139, n. 4). What we are witnessing here is Paz's close relationship not only to Romanticism, but to linearity as well: The eventuality of the human, of the subjective *I* (eye) of poetry that sees the hidden. As Paz tells us: "We are now witnessing the breakdown of the two ideas that have constituted modernity since its birth: the vision of time as a linear, progressive succession toward a better future, and the notion of change as the best form of time's succession. Both these ideas were conjoined in our conception of history as a march toward progress: societies change continually, sometimes violently, but every change is an advance. Archetypal time ceased to be the past and a

This archaic voice is not "the voice from beyond the grave" but the voice that lies buried in the graves of a culture's history. In Mexico, Paz tells us, these graves are continually reopened in the Mexican's attempt to breach the confines of solitude, an exhuming, as we have seen, that is performed in the violence and turbulence of the Mexican fiesta. In his "Poetry and History", Paz writes that "the nature of a poem is analogous to that of a Fiesta which, besides being a date in a calendar, is also a break in the sequence of time and the irruption of a present which periodically returns without yesterday or tomorrow. Every poem is a Fiesta, a precipitate of pure time" (*SP*, 15). We have already seen how Paz conceptualises the fiesta as a revolutionary explosion that brings Mexicans into contact with that other that they themselves are by bringing them out of their solitude. It should be clear now that poetry as fiesta performs a similar revolutionary explosion: the poem is revolutionary because it is "a universe of opaque, corruptible words which can yet light up and burn whenever there are lips to touch them By exploiting language to the utmost the poet transcends it. By emphasizing history, he lays it bare and shows it for what it is - time" (*SP*, 16). That is, the pure time of the beginning resurrected now, in the present time of the revolutionary voice of poetry as fiesta. As a "cosmic experiment" that reunites "contradictory elements", the fiesta embodies a poetic process that "conceives of language as an animated universe traversed by a dual current of attraction and repulsion" (*OV*, 158). But, as Paz writes, "If a poem is a Fiesta, it is one held out of season, in unfrequented places - an underground festivity" because the modern world has allowed history to dominate it; history, that is, as the succession of events that always say to us 'what will you do next' and thus forces us towards a future that will forever deny us (*SP*, 17). Clearly Paz believes that poetry and the fiesta break down the tyranny of history as linearity by giving us to pure time and, thereby, bringing us

chimerical Golden Age; and time outside time ... was dislodged by progress" (*OV*, 3). This drives to the heart of what is problematic in Paz's arguments; namely, that he prioritises a mode of self-identification and self-recognition with a *hidden* and true self buried in a time outside or beyond the time of linearity, the latter of which he himself cannot escape. Given what I have already addressed in §1: *Return To Opacity*, it should be clear that Paz's language will need to be replaced.

into communion with ourselves, allowing us finally to "say No to all those powers which, not content with disposing of our lives, also want to rule our consciousness" through an affirmative "Yes which is greater than [the negation] itself" (*SP*, 18). Not only is the language of poetry revolutionary but revolt is poetic. As both revolutionary and poetic, the fiesta returns Mexicans to an "undifferentiated state" in response to solitude: the fiesta is a revolt against this solitude, a means by which Mexicans can hear the voice of the "Other Mexico, the submerged and the repressed, [which] reappears in the modern" (*L*, 287).

Consequently, the fiesta is a unique expression of the notion of "revolt as resurrection" read through the "dialectic of solitude". The fiesta allows Mexicans to respond to the demands of the many pasts which it is impossible to fully suppress. "We have any number of [pasts]", Paz tells us, "all alive and all continually at war with one another within us How to live with all of them without being their prisoner? This is the question we ask ourselves without having yet arrived at an answer" (*OE*, 153). Consequently, the voices of the past both suffocate the Mexican and allow the language and voice of poetry, embodied in the fiesta-as-revolt, to liberate the Mexican through a moment of unification. Inundated by the voices of the past, poets, whose eyes have no lids, whose ears can refuse nothing, condemned by the chorus which tears along the inside of their psyche, release themselves into the world as the creative product of an otherwise destructive multitude. The voices of the past are legion and the language of poetry the product of their conquests, their resurrections into the diurnal activities of a culture littered with the dead. And it is precisely this productive energy that allows that culture to constantly create itself anew. This re-creation is vitally important in understanding what Paz means by origins and the return to and resurrection of the beginning: the beginning is a starting over which is always an already begun.

* * *

The other voice places demands on the poet, demands which are structured by an "original difference" spoken in the language of another time, a time *now* which is other

spoken in the other language and the other voice of poetry. As we have already seen, the source of all undifferentiation is announced by Paz in the figural and not the literal use of language: the language of the other voice, the poet's voice, a voice which is the poet's while it remains the voice of another. The poet arises out of separation speaking an unknown tongue; that is, a tongue which is familiar and yet foreign. It is this duplicity that fosters the resurrection of the buried realities that refuse to pass away.²³ From Paz then, we sense that the approach to the question of anonymity is made possible in the self-identifying language of poetry; that is, the language which gives us over to ourselves and to our culture by exposing us to what we are *as* another that we are, as our own shadow. It would appear that to begin to name the anonymous is to begin to hear the other voice and, in the process of this hearing, to become a poet.²⁴

* * *

²³ While I think that there are monumental differences between Paz and Lyotard (or rather, Paz and Newman à la Lyotard), Paz's essays nevertheless resonate with a similar frequency as those whom I have upheld through this text. Recall, for example, what Blanchot has written regarding the image. (See above, pg. 111, n. 3 and pg. 114, n. 9). There are many problems with Paz's arguments which I hope to expose and reach beyond in my analysis of Rulfo's work and the temporality it suggests.

²⁴ At the close of his introduction to "La dialéctica de la soledad", Paz writes: "What we ask of love ... is that it give us a bit of true life, of true death. We do not ask it for happiness or rest [*reposo*], but for an instant, only an instant, of that full life in which opposites vanish, in which life and death, time and eternity are in agreement Creation and destruction are fused in the act of love, and during a fraction of a second mankind catches a glimpse of a more perfect state of being" (*Is*, 176-177; *L*, 196-197). The remainder of "El dialéctica de la soledad" is an articulation of modern eroticism in light of modern societies' attempts to conceal difference by erasing or subduing the dialect of solitude. I will have occasion to return to this later. (See below §0: *Postponement: In Lieu of An Ending*). Here, however, it is important to keep in mind what I have argued earlier concerning the nature of intimacy contra Levinas; that is, that the desire for intimacy (and love) is a desire for the impossible, a desire founded upon separation *as* opacity. This dependency on separation suggests an alternative to Paz's affirmation of unification as well as a means of working beyond Levinas' restricted understanding of intimacy and love.

The Place Over The Embers

It's better not to go back to the village,
the subverted paradise silent
in the shatter of shrapnel.

Ramón López Velarde²⁵

²⁵ Paz begins his poem *Vuelta* with this extract from Velarde's *El retorno maléfico* [*Ill-starred Return*]. As we will see, the connection between the image of the village, paradise and the intimation of revolution in the image of the shrapnel is important for my reading of Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo* inasmuch as that reading will differ from Paz's own praise for Rulfo's novel. In anticipation of that reading I have provided a complete representation of Velarde's poem:

Mejor será no regresar al pueblo,
al edén subvertido que se calla
en la mutilación de la metralla.

Better not to rerun to the village, to the ravaged
Eden that lies silent after its mutilation by
bombardment.

Hasta los fresnos mancos,
los dignitarios de cúpula oronda,
han de rodar las quejas de la torre
ascribillada en los vientosde fronda.

The lamentation of the tower, riddled by the
winds of civil strife, will blow as far as the
maimed ash-trees, those proud cupola-ed
dignitaries.

Y la fusilería grabó en la cal
de todas las paredes
de la aldea espectral,
negros y aciagos mapas,
porque en ellos leyese el hijo pródigo
al volver a su umbral
en un anochecer de maleficio,
a la luz de petróleo de una mecha,
su esperanza deshecha.
Cuando la tosca llave enmohecida
tuerza la chirriante cerradura,
en la añeja clausura
del zaguán, los dos púdicos
medallones de yeso,
entornando los párpados narcóticos,
se mirarán y se dirán: <<¿Qué es eso?>>

Now the rifle shot has pitted in the whitewash
of all the walls of the spectral village black and
ill-omened maps, so that the Prodigal Son may
read in them by the oily light of a wick as he
returns home on some ill-starred night, the ruin
of his hopes.

When the clumsy, rusty key turns the raspy lock
of the old hall door, the two chaste plaster
medallions will raise their narcotic lids, look at
one another and say 'What is it?'

Paz remains tied to the possibility of conjoining nature, that is, the cosmos and creative consciousness through the language and voice of poetry, a language and a voice which arises from the between in order to bridge the gap that separates the past, present and future. For Paz, the time before or buried within time is a time in which there is no pause between the past, present and future because their union or reconciliation is immediate; that is, unmediated by the linearity of Modernity. This is

Y yo entraré con pies advenedizos
hasta el patio agorero
en que hay un brocal ensimismado,
con un cubo de cuero
goteando su gota categórica
como un estribillo plañidero.

Si el sol inexorable, alegre y tóxico,
hace hervir a las fuentes catecúmenas
en que bañábase mi sueño crónico;
si se afana la hormiga;
si en los techos resuena y se fatiga
de los buches de tórtola el reclamo
que entre las telarañas zumba y zumba;
mi sed de amar será como un argolla
empotrada en la losa de una tumba.

Las golondrinas nuevas, renovando
con sus noveles picos alfareros
los nidos tempraneros;
bajo el ópalo insigne
de los atardeceres monacales,
el lloro de recientes recentales
por la ubérrima ubre prohibida
de la vaca, rumiante y faraónica,
que al párvulo intimida;
campanario de timbre novedoso;
remozados altares;
el amor amoroso
de las parejas pares;
noviazgos de muchachas
frescas y humildes, como humildes coles,
y que la mano dan por el postigo
a la luz de dramáticos faroles;
alguna señorita
que canta en algún piano
alguna vieja aria;
el gendarme que pita. ...
... Y una íntima tristeza reaccionaria.

And I shall go with an intruder's step through to
the prophetic inner court, where there is a
brooding well-stone, with a leather bucket,
dripping its categorical drops like the refrain of
a funeral-dirge.

If the inexorable, cheerful, and restorative sun is
making the water boil in the prentice fountains,
where bathed my recurring dream; if the ant is
hurrying, if the call from the doves' crops that
throbs and throbs among the cobwebs echoes
and dies on the rooftops, my thirst to love will
be like a ring sealed into the slab of a tomb.

The newly arrived swallows, restoring the early
nests with beaks unused to working the clay,
beneath the famous opal of monastic dusks, the
lowing of new-born calves for the flowing and
forbidden udder of the ruminant and pharonic
cow, who frightens the little one; the bell-tower
with its strange new peal; altars restored to
youth; the tender love of couples two by two; the
betrothals of fresh and modest girls, like modest
cabbages; who stretch out a hand through the
shutter by the light of dramatic lanterns; some
young lady singing an old song at some piano;
the policeman whistling ... And a secret,
revulsive sadness.

*(The Penguin Book of Spanish Verse, ed. & tr.
J. M. Cohen. London: Penguin, 1956).*

why Kemp's translation of *pausa* as 'gap' is an unfortunate one.²⁶ For Paz, the gap between times inscribed by linearity and progress must be bridged in the process of returning to the immediacy of a pause in which the reconciliation of the three times is enacted; reconciliation because Paz's conception of temporality places authentic time prior to the time of modernity, the time of linearity, prior to the succession of *events* that have dismembered authentic time into discrete segments. Poetry provides us with the language appropriate for the leap back over this linearity to authentic time. As Paz tells us:

although tied to a specific soil and a specific history, poetry has always been open, in each and every one of its manifestations, to a transhistorical beyond. I do not mean a religious beyond: I am speaking of the perception of the *other side* of reality. That perception is common to all men in all periods; it is an experience that seems to me to be *prior* to all religions and philosophies (*OV*, 153-154).

However, in order to inscribe a leap towards this "transhistorical beyond", a leap over life to the life before life, to the Outside, Paz needs to maintain the ternary time system the leap seeks to overcome: to leap we must first belong to linearity otherwise we would feel no driving need to exceed what did not appear as a limit, a confinement or an inauthenticity. And this is why Paz argues that the "poet knows that he is simply a link in a chain, a bridge between yesterday and tomorrow" (*OV*, 116) because the poet has seen or, more precisely, has heard the voice of a *hidden* reality buried beneath the veil of the inauthentic temporality of Modernity. But it is precisely in this that Paz cannot reconcile his desire to disrupt linearity and his critical notion of the structure of authentic time - the pause - where the latter is theoretically grounded on the reconciliation of the first and last moments of linearity. To put it another way, Paz cannot reconcile his desire to uphold and affirm differences with his desire to conceive poetry as "living proof of the brotherhood of the stars and elementary particles, chemicals and consciousness ... a practical lesson in harmony and concord ...". In

²⁶ See above, page 144, n. 8.

order to affirm the persistence of the past in the present beyond linearity either the structure of authentic time must be rearticulated in order to set it off from linearity or the notion of authenticity must be abandoned in favour of an alternative conceptual network that would set temporality off from a notion which seems destined to fulfil linearity. The paradox Paz confronts is poetry's attempt to bridge the gap between an internalised conceptuality - the union of time - and an external order or reality - the cultural dynamics of a society grounded upon linearity, progress and advancement - on the bases of an immediacy formulated through the very mediation poetry (at least as Paz conceives it) would intuitively reject as inauthentic.²⁷ If the poet arises from the between and, through his or her language, *mediates* the relation between the past and the future in the now of the poem's creation, then we need a conceptual language that focuses attention on this point of mediation and not one, as in Paz, which attempts to bridge it. One of the most influential writers in twentieth century Latin American fiction who has accomplished this is Juan Rulfo whose *Pedro Páramo* provides us with an alternative by which to affirm the persistence of the past beyond immediacy and linearity.

* * *

One of the central themes that runs throughout *El llano en llamas* [*The Burning Plain*] and *Pedro Páramo* which is important to our discussion as a whole is the theme of silence. This theme does not merely receive attention by Rulfo as an idea to be explored but becomes one of the literal manifestations of his unique use of language. In an attempt to produce silence in the text, Rulfo thematises silence as a guiding thread through which we as readers come to understand the complex relations his stories construct. In many respects Rulfo is able to produce an encounter with silence not unlike that encounter Readings underscores in his reading of Herzog's *Where The Green Ants Dream*,²⁸ and I am interested here in exploring how that encounter might

²⁷ As I argued before - see above pp. 51 and 56 - it is precisely the doubling effect in language which makes this paradox stand out.

²⁸ See above, pp. 29, 33 - 37.

work to offer us an alternative to Paz's conception of temporality.

One immediate difference that stands out between Paz and Rulfo is their differing descriptions of how the dead make demands upon the living. In Paz, there is a sense that the dead allow us to reach back across the temporal existence of ordinary life to the unusual, mysterious time of the beginning. The dead give us over to the life before life and therefore affirm us as beings inseparable from that life. In Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo*, on the other hand, the dead appear as a constant burden to the living, binding them to the infinite repetition of the life they have both lived. Consequently, there is no leap over life to authentic life, to authentic time: there is only this life, the life our death remakes. Hence, in both Paz and Rulfo there is a sense of a telluric world, but in Rulfo the burden of the dead implies the impossibility of death *as* repetition. While referring to Jalisco, the province in Mexico where he was raised as a young boy and to which many of his stories refer, Rulfo has commented that

En la actualidad los pequeños agricultores de Jalisco ya no tienen medios de vida. Viven en una forma muy raquítica. Se van a la costa o se van de braceros. Regresan en la época de lluvias a sembrar algún terrenito allí. Pero los hijos, en cuanto pueden, se van ... Los antepasados son algo que los ligan al lugar, al pueblo. Ellos no quieren abandonar a sus muertos. Llevan sus muertos a cuestras

(AA, 15)

In reality the small farms of Jalisco do not have resources for life/the means for survival [*ya no tienen medios de vida*]. They live by very inadequate means. They go to the coast or they go as farmhands. They return by the time it rains to sow some little land there [*algún terrenito allí*]. But the children, as soon as they can, they go The ancestors are bound to that place, to the village.²⁹ They do not want to leave behind/neglect [*abandonar*] their dead. They carry their dead as a need/burden [*a cuestras*].

Because the dead are bound to the village in which they lived, their descendants are also bound to it since they are unwilling to abandon the very thing which obliges them never to leave. Even when villagers do leave for economic reasons, they are always finding themselves back in the village whose dead will not let them go.³⁰ This sense of

²⁹ In Spanish, *pueblo* means both 'village' and 'people'; even the language refuses to separate the two.

³⁰ Again, the connection between the cultures of rural Mexico and parts of rural Canada is noteworthy. In particular, one might mention the case of the people of the small villages dotting the landscape of rural Newfoundland for whom a legendary past and a deep connection to their fishing

fatalism is embedded in *Pedro Páramo* in the voices of the dead that permeate the walls of the empty houses and litter the streets of the small village of Comala, the village in and around which the novel's complex web of relations unfolds. Indeed, as José Carlos González Boixo argues in his introduction to *Pedro Páramo*

Muerte y vida son inseparables y como tal aparecen en *P.P.* Si, en definitiva, la temática de la novela viene a ser, simbólicamente, la exposición de lo problemática que resulta la existencia humana, *ésta encontrará su máxima expresión en un mundo en el que no existen fronteras entre la vida y la muerte.* En este punto radica el pesimismo más acentuado de Rulfo

(pp, 40-41; my emphasis).

Death and life are inseparable and appear as such in *Pedro Páramo*. If, definitively, the theme of the novel comes to be, symbolically, the explanation of the problematic that turns out to be human existence [the human condition], *this [idea] receives its maximum expression in a world where there are no frontiers between life and death.* In this moment takes root the pessimism much accented by Rulfo

In response to these assertions, Rulfo has commented:

Me obra no es de periodista ni de entógrafo, ni de sociólogo.
Lo que hago es una trasposición literaria de los hechos de mi conciencia.
La trasposición no es deformación sino es el descubrimiento de formas especiales de sensibilidad

(AA, 32-33).

My work is not journalism nor ethnography, nor sociology.
What I make is a literary transfer of the events of my conscience. The transfer is not a deformation but the revelation of unique, perceptible forms.³¹

and mining towns has produced a very similar effect as it does in Rulfo's Mexico. Every year, dozens of people leave Newfoundland to find work in other parts of the country. And every year, they all return to reconnect with the town and the people who will not let them go. Much of this is worked out in their oral tradition and their mythic literature, both of which have been explored and capitalised upon in Harold Horwood's rich stories. See, for example, *The White Eskimo*, which is, in part, a translation of the Gilgamesh epic into terms appropriate to Newfoundland and Labrador.

³¹ And those forms are historical forms embodied in or expressed through writing. In an interesting observation Rulfo says that "Some North American professors of literature have gone to Jalisco looking for a landscape, people, some faces, but the people of *Pedro Páramo* don't have faces and only through their words might one guess how they were, and as you might imagine, these professors found nothing. They spoke to my relatives who told them that I was a liar, that they knew of no one with such names and that none of the things that I wrote about had happened there. It's just that the people from my province do not distinguish fiction from history. They think that the novel is a transposition of facts, that it should describe the region and the people of it. Literature is fiction and thus is a lie" (*In*, 17). I will be dealing with this relationship between fiction and history more closely later.

In this sense, Rulfo does not see himself as offering any pessimistic view of the world but, rather, in some sense to be offering a *realist* impression of that world. While this might be true, Boixo correctly highlights the sense in which Rulfo's characters, and especially the narrator of *Pedro Páramo*, are either unable or unwilling to escape the demands of death as burden; burden, that is, for those who are dead because they must remain tied to a world which is their world while, at the same time, it is no longer their world, and burden to the living because the dead keep calling them back to the villages the living can never really leave. Death is an orphanage and the voices that speak from the pages of *Pedro Páramo* resonate with a fatalistic tone precisely in the demands of death as burden. A close reading of *Pedro Páramo* will help to clarify this.

At the behest of his dying mother Doloritas Preciado, the narrator of the novel, Juan Preciado, journeys to Comala in search of his father, Pedro Páramo, a man he has never met. There are a number of telling descriptions in the first few pages of Juan Preciado's journey. Juan Preciado tells us that he had not intended to keep his promise to his mother: "I didn't intend to keep my promise. But then I began to think about what she told me, until I couldn't stop thinking and even dreaming about it, and building a world around the hope that was that Señor named Pedro Páramo, the husband of my mother. That's why I came to Comala" (pp, 65; PP, 1; translation altered). In his edition of *Pedro Páramo*, Boixo points out that in the initial fragment of the novel³² Rulfo had used the preterite form of the verb *Ir* (to go), that is, *fui*, rather than *vine*, the preterite form of *Venir* (to come). The difference is subtle but significant: "Por eso *fui* Comala" - "For this I *went* to Comala"; "Por eso *vine* Comala" - "For this I *came* to Comala". I am highlighting this here to draw attention to the temporality of Juan Preciado's narration. At the moment of narration, Juan Preciado has already arrived in Comala and, since he never actually leaves the village by the end

³² This first appeared under the title "Pedro Páramo: Un cuento" ["Pedro Páramo: A Story"] in *Las Letras Patrias*, number 1, January-March, 1954, Mexico, pp. 104-108 and under the title "Los murmullos" ["Murmurs"] in *Revista de la Universidad de Mexico*, VIII, 10, June, 1954, pp. 6-7. See pp, 51.

of the novel, we are left with the impression that the entire novel is a memory or a dream passed on to us through Juan Preciado's narration, somewhat in the same sense that his mother passes on her desires to him when she requests that he return to Comala. In a way, Juan Preciado is only a surrogate of his mother's unfulfilled desire to return to Comala and hence is ruled by a desire that only becomes his by a type of viral infection. This is why Juan Preciado says that when he saw Comala from the high plateau he

expected it to look the way it did in my mother's memories. She was always sighing for Comala, she was homesick and wanted to come back, but she never did. Now I was coming back in her place, and I remembered what she told me: "*There's a beautiful view when you get to Los Colimotes. You'll see a green plain ... it's yellow when the corn is ripe. You can see Comala from there. The houses are all white, and at night it's all lighted up.*" Her voice was soft and secret, almost a whisper, as if she were talking to herself (pp, 65-66; PP, 2).

In short, even before Juan Preciado enters Comala there is a strong sense that he is not in control of his own destiny, that Comala is at work paving a return for him. This seems to be clarified for us later when Juan Preciado dies. Just after he becomes aware of his own death and of the condition that led to it, Juan Preciado is asked by another newly deceased villager why he had come to Comala:

'I told you at the beginning. They said that Pedro Páramo was my father, and I came to look for him. That was the illusion that brought me here.'

'Illusions are bad. It was an illusion that made me live longer than I should have. That's how I paid for trying to find my son, who was only another illusion'
(pp, 128-129; PP, 58).

Given that his reason for returning is to meet his father in fulfilment of his mother's dying wish and that, by the end of the novel, he has still to meet Pedro Páramo, we are left with the distinct impression that Juan Preciado's return to his absent father is motivated by an author other than himself. While this return might appear to conform to a Pazian notion of the resurrection and eventual unification between the present and the past, between a son and his father, the very absence of the father as a guiding mark

of the relation between Juan Preciado and Pedro Páramo conjoined with the absence of Juan Preciado's mother in her death suggests that Rulfo, or at least *Pedro Páramo*, registers the conjunction between the past and the present in a different field than that of reconciliation; that is, the field of absence represented by Juan Preciado's death which is, itself, motivated by his mother's dying wish to have her son return to his origins, origins which, in the final analysis, are themselves absent. In the end, absence is the guiding thread by means of which the relation between characters (and their desires) is inscribed in the novel.

Paz's own praise for Rulfo's novel is interesting in this regard. In his "Landscape and the Novel in Mexico" Paz writes that

the theme of Juan Rulfo's novel *Pedro Páramo* is the return to Paradise. Hence the hero [Paz means Pedro Páramo] is a dead man; it is only after death that we can return to the Eden where we were born. But Rulfo's main character returns to a garden that has burned to a cinder, to a lunar landscape. The theme of return becomes that of an implacable judgement: Pedro Páramo's journey home is a new version of the wanderings of a soul in Purgatory. The title is a (unconscious?) symbol: Pedro: Peter, the founder, the rock, the origin, the father, the guardian, the keeper of the keys of Paradise, has died; Páramo (the Spanish word for wasteland) is his garden of long ago, now a desert plain, thirst and drought, the parched whispers of shadows and an eternal failure of communication. Our Lord's garden: Pedro's wasteland [Rulfo's] vision of this world is really a vision of *another world*" (JR, 65).

Not surprisingly, Paz singles out the father, the voice of a history Juan Preciado has never known, a history and a time literally buried beneath the graves of Comala's past. For Paz, Pedro Páramo symbolises the poetic voice because he offers Juan Preciado the possibility of a return. But what of this return? Where (and to when) does Juan Preciado return? Again Paz's *Vuelta* is helpful here.

At the close of his poem, Paz says:

Camino hacia mi mismo
hacia la plazuela

El espacio está adentro
no es un *edén subvertido*
es un latido de tiempo

I walk toward myself
toward the plaza

Space is within
it is not a *subverted paradise*
it is a pulse-beat of

Los lugares son confluencias	Places are confluences
aleteo de presencias	flutters of beings
en un espacio instantáneo	in an instantaneous space
Silba el viento	Wind whistles
entre los fresnos	in the ash trees
surtidores	fountains
luz y sombra casi líquidas	almost liquid light and shadow
...voces de agua	voices of water
brillan fluyen se pierden	shine flow are lost
me dejan en las manos	a bundle of reflections
un manojo de reflejos	left in my hands
Camino sin avanzar	I walk without moving forward
Nunca llegamos	We never arrive
Nunca estamos en donde estamos	Never reach where we are
No el pasado	Not the past
el presente es intocable	the present is untouchable

(SP, 193)

Paz is clearly making a response to Velarde's suggestion, in *El retorno maléfico*, that the space of paradise embodied in the space of the village is subverted by the shrapnel of revolutionary violence.³³ Paz's response is to suggest that the space of paradise is, in fact, in us as pure possibility once we have reconceptualised time beyond linearity: "I walk without moving forward" not because I make a regressive turn towards the past, but because both the past and the future conjoin in the "pulse-beat of time", the "instantaneous space" of the present. "The present is untouchable" because the space of the present, like the space of the village and of paradise, is a space of "confluences"; the resurrection and eventual unification between present and past, a son and his father; that is, the space where the three times are reconciled.³⁴ Interestingly, after his death, Juan Preciado is found in the village plaza, again suggesting some similarities to Paz's conception of the return to the centre of one's culture and oneself. Similarly, Rulfo's claim that his intention in writing *Pedro Páramo* was "to give life to a dead

³³ See above, pp. 158, n. 25.

³⁴ Recall those remarks I highlighted earlier: "The poetry that is beginning now, without beginning, is seeking the intersection of times, the point of convergence ... the present is manifest in presence, and presence is the reconciliation of the three times. A poetry of reconciliation: the imagination made flesh in a *now* that has no dates" (OV, 57-58). See above, pp. 139-140 and the clarification made between the two different employments of the 'present-instant' in Paz's arguments.

town" and that the conjunction between the living and the dead in Comala occurs in a "simultaneous time which is a no-time" appears, on the surface of things, to support Paz's conceptualisation of the relation between time, memory, the voice of the past and so on.³⁵ However, contrary to Paz's claims, Rulfo has said that the main character of the novel is, in fact, the village itself.³⁶ Furthermore, *Pedro Páramo* disrupts this Pazian conception of return and rebeginning by placing Juan Preciado and, more importantly, his *relation* to the other characters in suspension. Juan Preciado's return to Comala is, in fact, a return to death *as* suspension. In *Pedro Páramo*, death is the

³⁵ Again and again we must return to *Vuelta*. Here the opening stanza is significant:

Voces al doblar la esquina		Voices at the corner's turn
	voces	voices
entre los dedos del sol		through the sun's spread hand
	sombra y luz	almost liquid
casi láquidas		shadow and light
	Silba el carpintero	The carpenter whistles
silba el nevero		the iceman whistles
	silban	three ash trees
tres fresnos en la plazuela		whistling in the plaza
	Crece	The invisible
se eleva el invisible		foliage of sounds growing
follaje de los sonidos		rising up
	Tiempo	Time
tendido a secar en las azoteas		stretched to dry on the rooftops
Estoy en Mixcoac		I am in Mixcoac
	En los buzones	Letters rot
se pudren las cartas		in the mailboxes
	Sobre la cal del muro	The bougainvillea
la mancha de la buganvilla		against the wall's white lime
	aplastada por el sol	flattened by the sun
escrita por el sol		a stain of purple
	morada caligrafía pasional	passionate calligraphy
Camino hacia atrás		written by the sun
	hacia lo que dejé	I am walking back
o me dejó		back to what I left
	Memoria	or to what left me
inminencia de precipicio		Memory
	balcón	edge of the abyss
sobre el vacío		balcony
		over the void

(SP, 185).

³⁶ See JR, 76 which originally appeared in Joseph Sommers, "Los muertos no tienen tiempo ni espacio (un diálogo con Juan Rulfo)" ["The Dead Have Neither Time Nor Place: A Dialogue With Juan Rulfo"], in *La narrativa de Juan Rulfo*, ed. Joseph Sommers (México, 1974):19. As we will see, the identity of the village - and its status as character - is constituted by the multiple voices that circulate around the absence of any unifying principle which could bind them together into a totality.

mediation point between damnation and salvation, hell and Eden, eternal suffering and eternal paradise. And this is why Comala is the real protagonist of the novel, since *Pedro Páramo* gives form to the mediation point between this life and the next. In order to understand this mediation we must view the novel through the central mediator of the conjunction between the living and the dead in Rulfo's novel:

Purgatory. Rulfo's decision to name the village Comala is pertinent here:

The town of Comala is a progressive, fertile town. But the derivation of comal - a comal is an earthenware utensil that is placed over the embers for the purpose of heating the tortillas -, and the heat that prevails in that town was what gave me the idea of the name. Comala: the place over the embers (*JR*, 72).

The image of purgatory is central in bringing us to understand why *Pedro Páramo* is a good example of the notion of separation I am developing. Purgatory is a middle-space between absolute death - the death which knows no hope - and resurrection - the actualisation of hope in and through eternal life.³⁷ And given that Juan Preciado had arrived in Comala with an image of hope attached to the figure of his absent and unknown father and that he never actually meets Pedro Páramo, it appears as though his hope, or at least the question of hope, remains suspended. As we will see, this suspension is central to what *Pedro Páramo* achieves insofar as our discussion of separation is concerned and how that discussion leads us inevitably to the postponement upon which any response to the question of anonymity must be gauged.³⁸

³⁷ Given the appeal some might have to link Paz and Rulfo on the question of there being any hope beyond the violence and suffering and general misery of existence, we need to stress that while Rulfo may not provide us with a fatalistic and pessimistic view of existence, we would go equally too far in the other direction to suggest that he is providing us with some pure hope. Rulfo seems rather more agnostic about the question of hope, fatalism and pessimism than some of his readers and critics. Paz's stress on the purple, passionate calligraphy - the passion of Christ, the great return, the return to make all returns possible - should not be equated with the stress Rulfo places on the simultaneity of life and death.

³⁸ Throughout this thesis we have been attending to the demands of the question; that is, the demand to suspend or interrupt every truth, every foundation, making everything shake and tremble like the ground upon which Juan Preciado walks. In this sense, the past persists not as an emblem of a beginning but as a question mark. This putting into question has clearly been philosophy's strength; in its better moments to suspend us over existence and over ourselves by placing both in question. And this is why Lyotard says that, in the face of the avant-garde, philosophical work is opened

* * *

In an interesting misreading of his own work, Rulfo comments that "When Juan Preciado arrives in town with the muleteer he is already dead. Then, the town comes back to life once more. That has been my purpose, to give life to a dead town" (*JR*, 75). Leal takes this reading as a starting point in his discussion of the purgatory imagery that is emblematic of the novel's central theme. Leal argues correctly that Rulfo "is not establishing a transition from life to death" (*JR*, 76), one that would place him more intimately alongside Paz inasmuch as Paz conceives the events of birth and death within a reconceptualisation of linearity that attempts to rework the transition between the two in terms of a reconciliation in which, as events in a linear, chronological chain, birth and death achieve their rightful coincidence in a union that is based upon the authentic time of the beginning. Rulfo's novel, on the other hand, does not conceptualise an outside to which consciousness must become aware; a before-time whose perception would constitute the marriage between and reconciliation of the putative oppositions that linearity has inscribed. "Furthermore", Leal argues, "the reader is not told that the personages are dead. Since [Rulfo's] purgatory is located on this earth and not in an imaginary space, he must deduce that fact himself When Juan Preciado arrives at Comala he finds a dead town; but he himself is already dead and is only remembering his arrival sometime later, in the grave" (*JR*, 76). The novel seems to support this reading, and a good deal of its success in producing a type of silence out of Rulfo's use of language is indebted, as we will see, to the relation Juan Preciado has with the dead vis-à-vis the inner dialogue of his memory.

Approximately half-way through the novel, we become aware that Juan Preciado has died. Just before he dies, he tells us that "the heat made me wake up. It was midnight I went out into the street for a little air, but the heat followed me out and

towards opacity. But this strength, this force of the question, is common to literature as well. Philosophy and literature meet in the space of interruption and suspension opened by the question. To suspend all identification with a prior truth that we could call our own. To interrupt the One and unification with self and other by giving us over to a duplicity which knows few bounds: This is what it means to reflect according to opacity.

wouldn't go away. There wasn't any air. Only the silent, stupefied night, scorched by the August dog days" (*pp*, 125; *PP*, 55). Juan Preciado is telling us this from the grave which he shares with a woman named Dorotea, who explains to him that he has died of fright, the fright instilled in him by the legion of voices that blow through the streets of Comala's purgation. "You're right Dorotea, it was the voices that killed me" (*pp*, 127; *PP*, 56). But even in the grave, Juan Preciado can find no rest from these indefatigable voices. At one point, Juan Preciado asks Dorotea if the voice he hears is hers, telling him the story of Pedro Páramo's late wife, Doña Susanita.

'I heard someone talking. A woman's voice. I thought it was you.'
'A woman's voice? It must be the one who talks to herself. Doña Susanita. She's buried in the big tomb near us. The dampness must have reached her and she's turning in her sleep' (*pp*, 147; *PP*, 76).

And near the end of the novel, approximately forty pages after she tells Juan Preciado this, forty pages during which we are made privy to certain relationships Pedro Páramo had with members of the village, including Doña Susanita, Dorotea's voice re-emerges abruptly and exclaims

'I was there. I saw Doña Susana die.'
'What did you say, Dorotea?'
'What I just got through saying' (*pp*, 185; *PP*, 114).

What I just got through saying: it is impossible for us to say with any certainty whether Dorotea means either the last forty pages or just this one line about Doña Susanita's death. The implication is that Juan Preciado is not the only narrator of the novel, that in fact he is *narrated* more than he actually narrates. Leal argues that "the narrative does not formally begin with the arrival of Juan Preciado at Comala at the opening of the novel, but later with the conversation between Juan and Dorotea in their graves, where they are buried together. This interpretation helps the reader to account for the events that take place between the arrival of Juan in Comala and his death two days later" (*JR*, 81-82). Here I am not particularly interested in determining whether or not Juan Preciado's death actually occurred two days after he arrives at Comala. Rather, my concern is to establish the problem of taking Rulfo at his word in regards to some

of the remarks he makes about the novel and, more importantly, to suggest that the novel is itself much more concerned with the suspension of time, death and life in the interstitial space that Comala represents; a reading which has been occluded by an often myopic interest in the more factual details of Rulfo's Jalisco and the manner in which time and narrative are coproductive. The question is not really when Juan Preciado dies nor even establishing just who is or is not dead in the novel. Rather, the question is how the dead place such a burden on Juan Preciado that he cannot avoid being consumed by death itself.

As Juan Preciado makes his way towards Comala he tells us that the August heat was making the road heave: "The road rose and fell: *It rises or falls according to whether you are going or coming. If you are going away, it's uphill: But, if you are coming back, it's downhill*" (pp, 65; PP, 1-2; translation altered). Incidental remarks it would seem. However, Juan Preciado enters Comala by walking downhill from the surrounding ridge that seems to enclose and isolate the village from the rest of the world: "After we crossed the ridge we started downhill again. We have left the hot air up there and go sinking³⁹ into the pure heat without air. Everything appeared to be waiting for something" (pp, 67-68; PP, 3; translation altered). Juan Preciado's entrance to Comala is easier than his attempt to leave. At one point, after he enters Comala, Juan Preciado says that "Pensé regresar. Sentí allá la huella por donde había venido, como una herida entre la negrura de los cerros" | "I intend to go back. I sense over there the track⁴⁰ through which I have come, like a wound in the black hills" (pp,

³⁹ Hundir - to sink. The sense here is that the valley below is like quick-sand swallowing Juan Preciado and his companion.

⁴⁰ Kemp elects to translate 'la huella' as 'gap', but there is no sense here that such a translation is warranted. Although I prefer 'gap' since it allows me to stress what I believe to be important theoretical issues that arise from a close attention to the image of Comala in the novel, Rulfo's choice of 'la huella' instead of 'el hueco' seems to suggest that 'gap' is not what he had in mind. Nonetheless, 'la huella' not only means track but footstep, footprint and trace as well and I will be employing these nuances to support the argument that follows. It is also important to recall my earlier remarks regarding Blanchot's notion of distance and strangeness and Labanyi's problematic understanding of the trace of the voice in *El otoño del patriarca*. (See above pg. 111, n. 4, pg. 114, n. 9 and pp. 121ff). As we will see, the no-time of Rulfo's Comala provides us with a means of redirecting Labanyi's attention by affirming distance, understood as gap, as suspension and postponement.

113). Juan Preciado, of course, never leaves and this suggests that Comala has drawn him in and contained him, a condition which recalls Rulfo's remarks that the bond between the people and the village in which they live is unimpeachable and inseparable. What is important here is the manner in which Juan Preciado enters Comala and his subsequent inability to leave. Not only has Juan Preciado been ruled by desires that are not his own, those desires lead him into the silent, empty scorching bowl of Comala, a village that is more purgatory than rural community, a village where people wait to be received into Heaven or plunged into the depths of Hell.⁴¹

I argued above that Juan Preciado makes his way into Comala through an important and decisive descent. Our own entrance to Comala is made through the conjunction of first and third person narrative that structures the dialogue between the living and the dead in Comala itself. This structure allows Juan Preciado to share with us the otherwise private dialogue of his memory. "I was walking down the main street, past the empty houses with their broken doors and their weeds. What did what's-his-name call that weed? "Captain's wife, señor. It's a pest that just waits till a house is empty, then it moves in. You'll see what it's like" (pp, 70-71; PP, 5).⁴² Juan Preciado's memory, recalled to us as privileged voyeurs on his journey, produces a silent encounter between us and Juan Preciado - his memories and the voices he hears. In this sense, *Pedro Páramo* produces an encounter with silence: language frames silence in the encounter between characters and between us and the novel. The relation

⁴¹ This impression seems confirmed for us when, on her arrival in Heaven, one of the characters, Dorotea, is told by a saint to "Go to rest a little more in the earth, daughter, and try to be good that you will be less long in purgatory" (pp, 129; PP, 59). Dorotea never makes it to heaven by the close of the novel: She waits permanently in Comala's suspension.

⁴² I have used Kemp's translation here in order to draw attention to and caution the reader about a new translation of *Pedro Páramo* by Margaret Sayers Peden. In that translation the above passage has been translated as follows: "This was the hour I found myself walking down the main street. Nothing but abandoned houses, their empty doorways overgrown with weeds. What had the stranger told me they were called? "La gobernadora, señor. Creosote bush. A plague that takes over a person's house the minute he leaves. You'll see" (*Pedro Páramo*, tr. Margaret Sayers Peden (London: Serpent's Tail, 1994):7-8). There is no reason whatsoever for the translation of *la capitana* as *la gobernadora* and, furthermore, the sense of the anonymity of the stranger is better maintained in Kemp's translation. I will return to Peden's translation in a moment.

between is therefore a relation of silence framed by language. Once again, as we began to detect in Readings, language gestures towards its own ineffability; the duplicity of its signs opening towards the silence of the referential object; that is, precisely, the object in its distance suspended, postponed - silent.

Rulfo has remarked that this encounter with and centrality of silence in his own life are central motifs he hopes to open through the text.

The practice of writing the short stories [in *El llano en llamas*] disciplined me and made me see the need to disappear and to leave my characters the freedom to talk at will, which provoked, it would seem, a lack of structure. Yes, there is a structure in *Pedro Páramo*, but it is a structure made of silences, of hanging threads, of cut scenes, where everything occurs in a simultaneous time which is a no-time (*in*, 16).

This simultaneity is particularly exemplified in the structure of *Pedro Páramo*. Rulfo divides his novel into 70 different segments, each of which has its own particular temporality. This allows Rulfo to produce a rush of discordant temporal and vocal segments which, at one point in particular, collide into each other. The result of this collision is a shattering of the apparent succession of dialogues, even where that succession is often reversed and turned in on itself. At the moment of collision, even this sense of linearity is broken and we are left with shards of voices flying off in all directions, shattering the night that surrounds Juan Preciado's confusion:

'The village is full of echoes. Perhaps they got trapped in the hollows of the walls. When you walk you can sense other footsteps. You hear creaks. Laughter. A laughter now very old, as if tired⁴³ of its own laugh'...

This is what Damiana Cisneros was telling me as we roamed the village [...]

'Did my mother tell you I was coming?'

'No. What happened to your mother?'

'She died'

'Died? What from?'

'I don't know. Sorrow, perhaps. She was always sighing.'

'That's bad. Everytime you sigh, a little bit of your life goes out of you. Is that how she died?'

⁴³ Cansadas is feminine: Women's voices then.

'Yes. I thought you'd know.'

'How was I going to know? I haven't known anything for years now.'

'Then how did you know I was here?'

---...⁴⁴

'Are you alive, Damiana? Tell me, Damiana!'

Suddenly I found myself alone in those empty streets. The windows of the houses were open to the night, with the weeds peering out of them. The walls were peeling, showing their rotted adobes.

'Damiana! Damiana Cisneros!'

And the echoes answered me: '...ana..neros...! ...ana...neros!'

I could hear the dogs barking, as if I had wakened them.

I saw a man cross the street:

'You!'

'You!' he called back in my own voice.⁴⁵

And I could hear women gossiping, as if they were just around the corner.

'Look who's coming. Isn't that Filoteo Aréchiga?'

'It is he' [...] (*pp*, 107-110; *PP*, 39-41; translation altered)

The connection between *Pedro Páramo* and *El otoño* is significant here. In both, it is the collision of voices which actively dismantles any putative awareness of a unified identity or totality. But in *Pedro Páramo* (in my opinion, the more successful of the two attempts at this form of narrative multiplicity) this dismantling of identity (this dismantling of consciousness in the temporality of Comala's no-time)⁴⁶ is prefigured in the silence of the speaking voice; or, rather, of the voice as essentially giving forth to silence.⁴⁷ This is particularly evident in the visual discordance of the above reference

⁴⁴ The ellipsis is Rulfo's. Kemp betrays himself as intrusive translator when he translates Rulfo's sentence (which is almost not a sentence) with the words 'She was silent'. Kemp invades the silence framed by the words around it, tries to penetrate the suspension and interruption of the dialogue which silence enacts, tries to fill the void with a language. Rulfo, on the other hand, knows the importance of the silence, of the gap between the vocal segments which suspends and postpones the voice to which the silence refers.

⁴⁵ Juan Preciado has become a resident in the village represented by the echo of his voice. Here the echo is a double, a shadow that arises, as if it existed on its own, from within Comala itself, as if Juan Preciado - or at least his double - has always been a resident who could never really leave.

⁴⁶ As we will see, Comala's no-time, while it is based on the notion of simultaneity, disrupts any notion of the present-instant as employed by Newman or Paz. Rather, we are given the temporality of death opened in the strange encounter with the cadaver, an encounter framed in the silence of the foreign words we speak in the presence of this foreign and absent body.

⁴⁷ This alone would make us flinch at the suggestion that direct speech is an expression of the true inner psychism of a subject. Comala's voices are only Comala's because they *have* no home to go to. In this way they are voices that speak wandering orphaned words. Recall what I argued before

(the ellipsis as the gap of silence) and in the conjunction between and therefore simultaneity of mutually exclusive temporal periods. It is also interesting to note that Juan Preciado not only dies at midnight, that time which is a no-time between a past he has just lost and a future he will never gain, but in the process of doing so seems gradually to lose all connection to a life set-off from the life of the dead town. The novel expresses this by conjoining what at other times had been discriminate temporal periods; that is, Pedro Páramo's time and Juan Preciado's time. In the example below, the dialogue occurs between Dorotea and Juan Preciado and therefore belongs within Juan Preciado's time, while the action at Pedro Páramo's hacienda belongs to the time appropriate to him, a time chronologically years prior to the time of his son, Juan Preciado.

'When I sat down to die, [my soul] told me to get up again and keep on living, as if it still hoped for some miracle that would clean away my sins. "This is the end", I told it. "I can't go any farther." I opened my mouth so it could leave, and it left. I felt something fall into my hands. It was the little thread of blood that had tied it to my heart.' They pounded at the door but [Pedro Páramo] didn't answer (pp, 135; PP, 64).

Here there is no longer any break between the different narrative times that appeared before, as if in his own death, Juan Preciado has become one with a history he never lived, thereby giving an expression of hope to Rulfo's story: Juan Preciado gains both a past and a future, if that future only means living in the fullness of death as return to this (newly acquired) history. However, while I think this is the case, the long quotation given above provides an interesting alternative. The man the women look at is simultaneously Filoteo Aréchiga and Juan Preciado. Since their time is not the time of Juan Preciado, they in fact see Filoteo Aréchiga. This suggests that Juan Preciado is not dead since the dead, by belonging to another time, see a different person. And yet, it seems quite clear that Juan Preciado is dead. How then do we make sense of this apparent contradiction in the narrative?

regarding language and intimacy. See above, pg. 61.

I want to suggest that what stands out here is that Juan Preciado and Aréchiga collide at this point, or rather, the time of Juan Preciado collides with the time of Filoteo Aréchiga, which is the time of Pedro Páramo. This collision, this simultaneity cracks open the normal succession of events, breaks apart linearity, allowing the legion of voices trapped inside the walls of Comala's purgation to pour out into the streets where Juan Preciado silently loses his mind.⁴⁸ In fact, what Juan Preciado really loses is a significant world; that is, a tangible, tactile reality, one that could assure him of the unity between the letter and the spirit, one in which he could pause in the unity implied by resurrection and the return to his paternal source. Instead, Juan Preciado (only) gains a world of suspension: an interrupted world: a world postponed. The only 'real' object is an echo, a vapour; that is, a mist.⁴⁹ In this sense, the relation between the living and the dead produces a simultaneity in which the reader encounters the

⁴⁸ Boixo remarks that when Juan Preciado hears the echo of his own voice (as we saw in the long quotation above) this testifies to "el proceso de degradación física y mental de Juan Preciado" | the process of physical and mental degradation in Juan Preciado (*pp*, 109, n. 97). To lose a world of perceptible and recognisable forms: This alone would be madness. Nonetheless, I do not want to stress this notion of madness too strongly, since I think it detracts from the effects *Pedro Páramo* produces by giving us an easy way out of the difficulty generated by the simultaneous vocality of the narrative.

⁴⁹ When Juan Preciado first looks over the plain from the high ridge he is crossing at the beginning of the novel he tells us that

En la reverberación del sol, la llanura parecía una laguna transparente, deshecha en vapores por donde se traslucía un horizonte gris. Y más allá, un línea de montañas. Y todavía más allá, la más remota lejanía (*pp*, 66).

In the reverberation of the sun, the plain seemed like a transparent lake, undone in vapours where it revealed a grey horizon. And further on, a line of mountains. And yet further still, the most remote distance.

Later, Juan Preciado's mother's voice emerges from the multitude and says to her son: "... Every morning at dawn the village trembles with the rumbling of the wagons. They come in from everywhere, loaded with saltpetre, with corn, with hay. The wheels creak and creak, rattling the windows and waking up the village. That's the hour when the ovens are opened and the air smells of new-baked bread. And suddenly the sky might thunder. Rain falls. Perhaps spring is coming. You will learn there what 'perhaps' means, my son" (*pp*, 113; *PP*, 44; translation altered). Rulfo's use of language is important. Perhaps it will thunder. Perhaps it will rain. The 'perhaps' is a type of suspension or interruption between seeing something and recognising what it is, a type of *fata morgana*, a mirage. The echoes are mirages. They are not real, but nonetheless apparent to the senses. The echoes are objects without substance. When we are confronted with the opacity of the gap between this life and the next, we can only speak a postponing language, a language of 'perhaps', of suspension and interruption. In Comala, language postpones unity of identification, breaking apart and duplicating referential objects (Filoteo Aréchiga and Juan Preciado for example; or, indeed, Juan Preciado and the echo of his own voice) by speaking in the manner of this 'perhaps'.

unreality of the world in the unreality of words, an unreality produced by the silence engendered in the simultaneity of past and present, the voice of the dead in the mind of the living; that is, in us as readers.

After hearing the voices that take us through the next three or four pages of the novel, Juan Preciado tells us that, in the approach of morning,

The dawn dimmed my memories.
From time to time I heard the sound of words, and noticed the difference. The words I had heard up till then didn't have any sound, they were silent words you could sense but not hear, like those in a dream (*pp*, 114-115; *PP*, 45).

The impression throughout this section, especially in the simultaneity of the two times, and the conjunction between various voices which breaks apart linearity, is that these echoes, of which Juan Preciado is one, act as a recollective narration which uses Juan Preciado as a conduit through which to voice itself. Given that the novel ends with a recollection of Pedro Páramo's death, Comala comes to represent a no-time in which there is no exit from the simultaneity of death and life: the dead persist indefatigably in the present of the living - in the present of our reading. Consequently, the voices Juan Preciado hears are the multiple voices of Comala itself and not the voices of individuals. Listen to some of their names: Abundio (I abound), Preciado (the esteemed, the valuable), Páramo (bleak plateau). These are not names of real people: they are Comala's names: Comala who abounds, Comala the esteemed, Comala the bleak plateau. Comala is the space of abounding subjectivities. When Juan Preciado remembers what his mother told him, that

<<Allá me oirás mejor. Estaré más cerca de ti. Encontrarás más cercana la voz de mis recuerdos que la de mi muerte, si es que alguna vez la muerte ha tenido alguna voz.>>

You will hear me better there. I'll be nearer to you. You will be surrounded by the voice of my memories of my death, if sometimes the dead have some other voice

(*pp*, 71)

we could easily interpret this through a Pazian notion of the resurrection of that which does not pass away; that is, not Juan Preciado's mother herself but the life she

embodies, that is, the life of Comala, Comala's life. This interpretation would bring us close but it would still cloud over Juan Preciado's response to his mother's posthumous existence made evident through her voice. When Juan Preciado meets Eduviges Dyada, his mother's close friend, she proceeds to tell him that his mother had only told her about her son's journey to Comala a day prior to his arrival there.

"Mi madre - dije - mi madre ya
murió"

"Entonces ésa fue la causa de que su voz
se oyera tan débil"

"My mother. My mother is dead".

"That is why her voice was so weak"

(pp, 74).

It seems as though, after her death, Doloritas Preciado's soul has returned to Comala; that is, precisely, her *voice*. This should not be misconstrued: Comala uses Juan Preciado to voice to us its *multiple* personalities, its *multiple* voices. In this, we can clearly see that neither Pedro Páramo nor Juan Preciado are the real protagonists in this novel. All along it has been Comala, the place over the embers, the place where silence is produced by the most clamorous conjunction of voices.

In order to explore this notion of silence we must ask what is meant by the unreality of the world expressed in the unreality of words? In '*Nos han dado la tierra*' [*They Gave Us The Land*], Rulfo provides us with a clear example of the unreality of the world expressed through the unreality of words. The story describes the journey a group of men take across an immense, barren plain. The plain has been given to them by the government for the purposes of agricultural development but is, according to the principal character in the story, wholly bereft of any qualities that would make it good agricultural land.⁵⁰ When the government official arrives to hand over the land to these men, they voice their complaints about the land's inability to sustain agricultural development. However, their voice falls upon deaf ears, since "the official

⁵⁰ As Leal tells us, Rulfo's story refers directly to the long standing problem of land reform in Mexico and the attempt to return land to local farmers, especially after the end of the Cárdenas presidency. Although land distribution did not end after Cárdenas was overthrown by revolutionaries in 1940, the land distributed by those revolutionaries was barely suitable for agricultural development. "The old revolutionaries, now in positions of leadership, became the new owners of the most productive areas. The farmers were given land where water was not available" (JR, 29).

hadn't come to converse with us. He put the papers in our hands and told us, "Don't be afraid to have so much land just for yourselves" (II, 12; BP, 13-14). As they walk across the parched earth, Melitón, one of the four men, says "This is the land they've given us" (II, 13; BP, 14). The main character disputes his friends remarks: "What land have they given us, Melitón? There isn't enough here for the wind to blow up a dust cloud" (II, 14; BP, 15). What the official has really given them is a linguistic document, a document of words that do not refer to any object in the world. And, what is more, the very land to which the document ostensibly refers, the land which is supposed to be agricultural land but which is, in fact, arid and inhospitable, this land, in fact, robs these men of their ability to speak. "We don't say what we're thinking. For some time now we haven't felt like talking. Because of the heat. Somewhere else we'd talk with pleasure, but here it's difficult. You talk here and the words get hot in your mouth with the heat from outside, and they dry up on your tongue until they take your breath away" (II, 9; BP, 12). The land given by the government for agricultural development is not only completely unsuitable for such development and therefore not the land referred to in the document, it strips and exhausts these men of their language, their ability to speak. The unreality of the land as agricultural land is expressed in the unreality of the language used in the document, a document that refers to no land whatsoever. The official has therefore not given them the land; he has given them a language - the document - that strips them of both land and speech. In this sense, '*Nos han dado la tierra*' has no object, expresses no real object in the world, expresses no real (that is, significant) world. But neither does it express a fantastic world: '*Nos han dado la tierra*', properly speaking, expresses nothing but its own unreality, its own lack of expression. It is the conjunction between these two 'objects' - the land and the document - and the resulting exhaustion of speech that produces a silence central to Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo*. This silence combined with the images of purgatory that litter *El llano en llamas* and *Pedro Páramo* provide us with an alternative language to that given by Paz in his portrayal of the conjunction between the past and the present. In Rulfo, there is a very strong sense that language is powerless to adequately phrase our

identities. And yet, those identities are affirmed in the duplicity of language. Silence then, bears mute witness, to use Readings' words, to language's powerlessness.

* * *

Comala as purgatory subverts Paz's idealisation of *Pedro Páramo* as an expression of a return to paradise, albeit a paradise burnt to cinders. (The very fact that it is burnt to cinders would, in fact, appeal to Paz given his claim that the poet constantly resurrects the culture in which he or she lives through their poetic voice and language). Comala as purgatory means that the village is neither subverted paradise (Velarde) nor the instantaneous time of reconciliation (Paz); neither hell⁵¹ nor the return to Eden. Rather, Comala is the middle-space between life and resurrection. Once Juan Preciado has returned to Comala, he will never achieve life nor, in his death, the possibility of resurrection, and our immersion in the text via the silence produced by the voice of the dead prevents us from achieving either as well; we are both left in the middle-space that Comala represents. Both Velarde and Paz seem to concentrate too intently on the question of paradise, its loss and the hope of returning to it, rather than the silence the impossibility of any such return produces: it is this silence which is productive.

Pedro Páramo concludes at Pedro Páramo's hacienda in la Media Luna - that is, the middle or half moon - where, years before, Pedro Páramo, is stabbed by his other son, Abundio Martínez, the very same Abundio that Juan Preciado met along the road to Comala at the beginning of the story. When Juan Preciado first meets Abundio Martínez he tells him he is looking for his father, Pedro Páramo, Abundio Martínez responds that "Yo también soy hijo de Pedro Páramo" | "I am also the son of Pedro Páramo" (pp, 67; PP,). But, at that moment, "una bandada de cuervos pasó cruzando

⁵¹ When the voice of Pedro Páramo speaks about his love for Susana Son Juan, it calls out with words not unfamiliar to those traditions which have conceptualised hell as a place where the voices of the dead can never reach the ears of their Father in Heaven: "Susana, you are miles and miles away, above all the clouds, far away above everything, hidden. Hidden in His immensity, behind His Divine Providence, where I can never find you or see you. Where my words can never reach you" (pp, 77 PP, 11). As with the protagonist of *El acoso* and *Los pasos perdidos*, Pedro Páramo cannot achieve a union with his lover. The difference here is that Pedro Páramo's voice cannot lead him to this unity, again giving us reason to be sceptical about Labanyi's arguments regarding speech.

el cielo vacío, haciendo cuar, cuar, cuar" | "a flock of crows flew across the empty sky crying caw, caw, caw" (pp, 67).⁵² The road Juan Preciado travels is not the road to Damascus; that is, not a conversion experience. Nothing traverses the space of death to the space of resurrection; nothing is converted. Rather, everything is left in the between that separates. Comala then, is the mediation point, the space that mediates the relation between the living and the dead. Contrary to Paz's conception of authentic time, Comala is not a space of immediacy: it is a no-time, a *gap*. In contradistinction to Paz's language of reconciliation and the paradox he encounters when he attempts to reconcile his own desires, when Rulfo leaves us in the gap that Comala represents he disowns linearity by abandoning eventuality. Simultaneity is therefore not the union of or reconciliation of the three times: it is a no-time. And this no-time is, properly speaking, an extension. That is, a no-time is a time that is both mine and not mine; a past and a present, not in union, but extending into and out of each other. The past extends out of me as much as I extend out of it. Simultaneity is not merely the past or the present in union at the moment of some other time; the time buried within time itself. Simultaneity as no-time is the extension of the past into the present, the present into the past. One of the differences between Paz and Rulfo then, is the solitary nature of the between which separates the past and the present. For Rulfo that solitude is more properly a sharing of what it is impossible to share, a being towards what one can never actually encompass in the time of one's desire. Here then, a solitude of abandonment, of shared abandonment structured by the time of the between; that is, the between time of opacity and the ex-timate relation. Contrary to what Susan Sontag has recently said in her introduction to Peden's translation - that "This new translation is an important literary event" - *Pedro Páramo* must not be seen as an event; that is, it does not conform to the notion of eventuality, of coming after so many

⁵² Boixo tells us in a note that "En este caso su importancia radica en el valor simbólico de Abundio, guía de Juan Preciado en su descenso al mundo de los muertos, donde encontrará su identidad | "In this case [we see] the radical importance in the symbolic value of Abundio, guiding Juan Preciado in his descent to the world of the dead, where he will encounter his identity" (pp, 67, n. 6).

other events, of helping to complete them or to set the story straight about things those other events had gotten wrong. And while Sontag feels a sense of satisfaction in the completion of what, she tells us, was Rulfo's wish before he died - "This new translation, which fulfils the wish Juan Rulfo expressed to me when I met him in Buenos Aires shortly before his death that *Pedro Páramo* appear in an accurate and uncut English translation⁵³ ..." - she fails to appreciate one of the driving forces of the novel: without any concrete beginning - *Pedro Páramo* never really begins - nor any concrete ending - even after death the voices continue to carry on their dangling conversations - *Pedro Páramo* gives us over to a simultaneity that disrupts linear time. And that disruption gives us over to a between that is completely opaque. In that opacity we discover the possibility for our own self-creation, since it is only by being held apart from Pedro Páramo that Juan Preciado comes to recognise himself, a recognition, as Boixo points out, symbolically represented in the duplicity of identification inscribed in the relation between Juan Preciado and Abundio Martínez. The notion of simultaneity is therefore fundamental not only in understanding the temporality of Comala but in understanding the between of relation, since it embodies, once again, the dialectic of the ex-timate relation. While Iser has come close to this notion of simultaneity he fails to push it to its extreme because he remains tied to a notion of simultaneity that breaks apart linearity precisely because self-identification is grounded in the copresence of the mutually exclusive made possible in and through

⁵³ Interestingly, there are significant problems with Peden's translation, not the least of which is her rendering of the closing lines. In the original we read: "Dio un golpe seco contra la tierra y se fue desmoronando como si fuera un montón de piedras" (pp, 195). While in Peden's translation we are offered the following: "He [that is, Pedro Páramo] fell to the ground with a thud, and lay there, collapsed like a pile of rocks" (Peden, 122). The original actually says: "He gave a sharp blow against the earth and eroded as if he were a heap of stones". While Kemp's translation of *El laberinto de la soledad* has been seen to be lacking, here his translation is much closer to the original: "He struck a feeble blow against the ground and then crumbled to pieces as if he were a heap of stones" (PP, 123). The difference is crucial. Pedro Páramo, after being stabbed by Abundio Martínez, futilely attempts to exert his control, his mastery over life and death. The futility of his attempt mirrors the whole thematics around which the central character has been developed; the central character, that is, who must be seen to be Comala itself. No one 'survives' Comala because Comala is *the* distance, *the* between, *the* unending mediator between life and death, and no one can be merely alive or dead within Comala's walls.

absence; that is, the absence of the origin itself. And it is in this absence that *Pedro Páramo* stretches beyond Paz's attempt at reconciliation. In the end, absence prevails, guaranteed by the very opacity of the relation between.

§ 0: Postponement: In Lieu of An Ending

These pages can end here, and nothing that follows what I have just written will make me add anything to it or take anything away from it. This remains, this will remain until the very end. Whoever would obliterate it from me, in exchange for that end that I am seeking for in vain, would himself become the beginning of my own story, and he would be my victim. In darkness he would see me: my word would be his silence, and he would think he was holding sway over the world, but that sovereignty would still be mine, his nothingness mine, and he too would know that there is no end for a man who wants to end alone.

Maurice Blanchot
death sentence

"The pages of the book are doors. We go through them, driven by their impatience to regroup, to reach the end of the work, to be again transparent.

"Ink fixes the memory of words to the paper.

"Light is in their absence, which you read."

Reb Hati

Distance is light, as long as you keep in mind that there are no limits.

"We are distance."

Reb Mirshak

Edmund Jabès
The Book of Questions

As I have tried to show throughout this thesis, one of the central issues that unfolds in the approach to anonymity through the between of relation is that of absence, an issue that is particularly well served by some exemplary Latin American fiction. In Paz and Rulfo, a vital distinction can lead us to a clearer idea of the role of the between in this approach. In Paz, the time of the pause, of reconciliation, is a time of hesitation for a moveable object, a subject hesitating on the *bridge* that unites the three times. In contradistinction, Rulfo's no-time is a *gap* between times which provides the condition for the simultaneity of the mutually exclusive. In this sense, simultaneity is not, as in Iser, a factor of the duplicity which is evidence of a hidden reality awaiting to be revealed through disguise and subterfuge. Rather, Rulfo's no-time is a time postponed, thereby bearing witness to the impossibility of locating either the time or the identity proper to the subject. In this sense, identity is always in circulation around an absent kernel of representational meaning we could call the unity of our being. Throughout this study I have referred to various conceptual relations on the basis of postponement or, rather, that these relations ultimately lead to the postponement of self, of other, of time itself. The role of postponement in the approach to the question of anonymity is an important one since, as I have tried to show in Rulfo, the question, properly speaking, postpones: Rulfo's no-time is a question mark, a sign that only signifies the *impossibility* of an identity arriving, of an answer awaiting to be revealed by conscientious and rigorous scholastic labour. Such labour is always committed in the full presence of this impossibility. As a way of offering a concluding remark to the question of anonymity (which, as a question, must always remain suspended in the opacity which makes it possible as a question), I will now offer a more direct analysis of simultaneity and postponement vis-à-vis Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth's conjunction between language, time and history and Fuentes' reading of Denis Diderot and Nikolai Gogol.

* * *

Simultaneity, Language, History

In her *Sequel to History: Postmodernism and the Crisis of Representational Time*, Ermarth argues that "the term "event", like "text" or "self" or "historical", retains the essentialism that postmodernism challenges. In a postmodern process, every event may be a text, but no text is single. It is the nature of the process, the series, the sequence that most interests me in this book and that can scarcely be called an "event" in any traditional sense. The revision of sequence at the level of language is where the practical, embedded resolutions of postmodernism become available" (*SH*, 3). Ermarth conceives the practice of postmodernism "as an act of restoration" that gives back to language its "paratactic and semiotic value" (*SH*, 139). Far from being revolutionary - "that modernist concept" (*SH*, 139) - postmodernist fiction attempts "to restore the "play" of language at all levels of magnitude: from sentences to discursive boundaries" (*SH*, 139). Ermarth underscores this notion of play because she thinks that the "discursive, aleatory, paratactic and semiotic disposition" of language is best served by liberating language from the "narrow conceptions to which historical habits of thinking increasingly have confined it" (*SH*, 139-140). In short, Ermarth's attention to the relationship between language, time and history in the context of postmodernism turns towards the restoration of play in language as the element that would allow us to comprehend how language rather than history is the field within which we confront the simultaneity of dissimilar historical periods. It is in language that the past is kept "ready at hand", where "all times and spaces" are contained within a single universe, the universe of language (*SH*, 142).

In another text which is intimately connected to *Sequel*, Ermarth makes a similar assertion insofar as her use of the term 'historical' is concerned. Ermarth argues in her increasingly popular "Ph(r)ase Time: Chaos Theory and Postmodern Reports on Knowledge" that postmodern narrative enacts "a very different treatment of perspective, a very different kind of sequence, than that available in historical, realistic, humanist time" (*PT*, 94). Near the end of this essay, Ermarth argues that "the

experience of postmodern narrative temporality is, for habitual humanists, quite new. Growing multi-level awareness blocks the temporal mediations between here and there, now and then, that create historical time in narrative" (*PT*, 106). In both *Sequel* and "Ph(r)ase Time", Ermarth contrasts her understanding of the temporality opened by an attentiveness to the play in language, to the "formality of sustained interruption and ... an emphasis of the semiotic *surpluses* of language and of linguistic systems" (*PT*, 105), with an understanding of historicity which roots historical time in Newtonian science, realism and Renaissance and Reformation humanism. While I think Ermarth is correct in this contrast and its value for rethinking temporality, it nonetheless provides us with few suggestions concerning how historicity might be seen as a function of language, a conceptualisation which is important in much of the fiction I have been paying attention to throughout this study. Ermarth is, perhaps, directly moving away from this very question. That is to say, that my use of the terms 'history' and 'historical' is not the use employed by Ermarth, though my usage remains consistent with that of the authors I have been exploring. In my own analyses I have implied, and at times directly inferred from the fiction I have employed, that the structure of history is completely bound to the duplicity of language. My concern has been similar in kind to Ermarth's insofar as we are both interested in underscoring the impossibility of achieving unity or a unified totality on the basis that the sign is singular and unique and corresponds directly to an individual, singular and unique referent. And we are both concerned, as I have tried to demonstrate in my analyses of voicing in relation to temporality, to address the question of time's intimate connection to language. There is, therefore, much to recommend in Ermarth's continuing interest in what is central to my present work.

Nonetheless, my arguments throughout this study have led inevitably to the need to reconsider historicity beyond the notion of linearity which has been a hallmark of modernity (as emphasised by Vattimo's critique) and which has been the object of those reconsiderations of time and history offered by the Latin American authors I

have employed. In order to redirect our attention towards the structure of history in such a way that my own concerns as well as Ermarth's are maintained, I will set her arguments alongside Fuentes' reading of Diderot and Gogol since it is in this latter reading that we get a sense of the relation between language and history which assists us in a reinterpretation of history based on our previous investigations.

Ermarth uses 'history' and 'historical time' to designate a process that the representational uses of language and time have been employed to support. For Ermarth this process is founded upon a conception of the neutrality of time, since the "convention of historical time ... is the neutral and homogeneous medium that acts as the critical common denominator for the mutually relevant measurements so critical to scientific and historical inquiry, to representational art and politics" (*PT*, 91).

Conceiving language beyond the restrictions of this representational model, a model which not only draws an equivalence between signs and signifieds but also inscribes temporal processes within a movement that is always moving forward, allows us to recognise the ability of language to "collapse the dualism between words and things" (*SH*, 142). Given my brief analysis above regarding the position Fuentes' takes with respect to language,¹ it would seem impossible to get any closer to the priority of language over history implied by Fuentes' claims. And yet, there are some very important differences between Ermarth's conception and the conception articulated in Fuentes' stories and essays. Insofar as Fuentes is concerned, a notion he openly admits adopting from Diderot, time is a factor of both presence and desire. "The critical concept can be presented, almost, like an equation: the greater the intensity of presence, the greater the intensity of time and the greater the sensation of the simultaneous" (*MO*, 77). "Two Centuries of Diderot" is an invaluable essay in understanding the relationship between language and history beyond a mere denigration of the 'historical' conceived within the ordinary analysis of representational thinking because it prioritises a productive and affirmative notion of separation. What

¹ See above, pp. 50-55.

this means, as we will see in greater detail later, is that the relationship between language and history is intimate, precise and demanding, for the majority of Fuentes' texts come back to a question which is endemic to this relation and one that has concerned us throughout this thesis: How to overcome the separation between art and life, the past and the present, desire and its object? Whether Fuentes has ever been anything like a late-modernist (as McHale at times has chosen to label him) or a postmodernist seems completely irrelevant to what is clearly important to him: An examination of the separation between words and things, the past and the present, desire and its object, and, of course, Latin America and the United States. For Fuentes this examination demands the response of a writing that always fails to fulfil itself, a writing that attempts to bridge the between of relation but ultimately confronts, as we saw in *Pedro Páramo*, the unimpeachable and unrelenting gap of opacity as separation. This failure to bridge the gap of separation, of the no-time of Rulfo's Comala, is the power of a writing that, to be sure, employs language beyond its merely representational modalities, but a writing that is primarily concerned with the impossibility of its task: A postponed writing, a writing always in the process of arriving. What my study has been, in part, trying to demonstrate is that a number of key Latin American texts are emblematic of such writing because they self-consciously belong to a tradition always in the process of arriving, a tradition (to put it in more abstract terms) that arises out of opacity as the separation of the between of relation.²

Consequently, the impossibility of language embodied in the duplicity of the semiotic system becomes writing's greatest power. In this impossibility the obligation to create, to tell a story, is transformed from author to reader. For Fuentes, this transference, which he sees enacted in Diderot's attempt to rescue time from the "demands of chronology" in turn bringing about the coincidence of time and desire in the only space that can fully oblige us, the space of literature, is intimately bound up in the separation that marks out the relation between desire and its object. Diderot's

² See above, pg. 44, n. 3.

response to this separation is the transference of the creative act to the reader, an act within which we are required to choose between a multiplicity of stories we could tell. "We choose to tell a story by sacrificing all the other stories we might tell. We do not have twenty mouths. We have only the comical, the humble, the superb possibilities of the mouth of fiction" (*MO*, 82-83). Given what I have been arguing, a slight change in locution can serve to push the point: We do not have twenty tongues. We have only the comical, the humble, the superb possibilities of the tongue (and multiple voices) of fiction. For Fuentes then, Diderot "writes novels with the purpose of uniting movement, time, and desire, which in reality are separated.³ He writes to clear the obstacles enacted by chronology on the way to the fulfilment of our desires" (*MO*, 78-79). Because of the impossibility of uniting desire and its object, the demands of writing are the highest demands of all, for it is writing that makes response to this separation.⁴ If we have any moral responsibility at all it is to the cause of freedom not only to choose one's own destiny, but the time and place of that destiny, which, for Fuentes, is the time and place of desire.⁵ This freedom is radicalised by language for it is in the duplicity of language that choice becomes possible. As Ermarth argues, "'History' is consigned for better or worse to the sequences of language. Here and not in some 'objective' universe, is moral responsibility really revived and reconceived. One then becomes responsible - because it is now profoundly important - for one's language: for what one reads and writes and imagines and dreams" (*SH*, 142).⁶

³ How to make ourselves present? This is the question Fuentes' argues is central to Diderot's attempt to unite time and desire. And Diderot answers Fuentes by saying: "We make ourselves present through movement. We overcome obstacles and obtain what we want because we move. It moves therefore it desires" (*MO*, 77).

⁴ As I have intimated before, I consider eroticism as being emblematic of separation in the context of opacity and the between of relation but have had to curtail any detailed analysis of the erotic encounter in the interests of space. It may please the reader to know that Ermarth has given some consideration in *Sequel* to the erotic and that this is worth consulting in any appreciation of the broader implications I am offering here. See *SH*, 188ff.

⁵ See "Luis Buñuel and the Cinema of Freedom", *MO*, 125-139 where Fuentes argues that, for Buñuel, "freedom is the activation of desire" (*MO*, 133).

⁶ Recall that for Lyotard the task of philosophy is to "reflect according to opacity", a task which erupts for the artist as for the philosopher in the responsibility to "bear witness that *there is*, to

History is only what is written and the putative separation between the past and the present is collapsed in an act of writing which never fulfils itself in the complete unification between the two. In this sense, the creative act that Ermarth attributes to language is central to articulating history. As Fuentes correctly points out in his reading of García Márquez' *Cien años de soledad* [*One Hundred Years of Solitude*], "like More's Utopia, Macondo is an island of the imagination From this island José Arcadio invents the world, points things out with his finger, then learns how to name things and, finally, how to forget them, and so is forced to rename, rewrite, remember" (*MO*, 191). What this means is that "the saga of Macondo and the Buendías ... includes the totality of the oral, legendary past and with it we are told that we cannot feel satisfied with the official, documented history of the times: that history is also the things that men and women have dreamed, imagined, desired, and named" (*MO*, 192-193).

What is vital to the relationship between language and history is the doubling effect in language itself, for it is this effect which splits apart and multiplies referential fields. If, as Ermarth correctly points out, "the term "sign" does not properly describe anything more than the site of a differential function" (*SH*, 143), then the sign of history inscribed in a system that is founded upon the separation between words and things is itself differential: *History becomes differential in the differential signs of language*. Both language and historicity - that is, the structure of history - are therefore fields for the manifestation of this differentiation engendered by separation. Again, my usage is significantly different than Ermarth's since, as I pointed out above, Ermarth's analysis of history is grounded in the concept of neutrality and not that of linearity. Notwithstanding this difference, it is necessary to draw the reader's attention to a number of key moments in *Sequel* where the problem of linearity seems to arise despite Ermarth's well argued attempts to avoid it.

respond to the order to be", a response engendered by the separation of relation, since it is this separation which allows us to abandon the principle of unity that subtends representational thinking.

In "Time As Rhythm", Ermarth argues that "a postmodern narrative submits to the sequential nature of language grudgingly and at every juncture keeps alive for readers an awareness of multiple pathways and constantly crossing themes" (*SH*, 53). In the first instance, if this "sequential nature" is not wholly linear then why does Ermarth emphasise, just one page later, that "in Robbe-Grillet's *Jealousy* ... the reader is confined to a present tense and thus to a continuous present that constantly erases past and future Gone are the linear coordinates that make possible the description of a stable [that is, neutral] world" (*SH*, 54)? Linearity appears as if in the service of neutrality and therefore cannot be passed over in favour of a term whose own independence relies upon the notion of linearity in the first place.

Secondly, at the end of her study, Ermarth argues that Nicholas Rowe's "description of the "intricate network of echoes" [in Nabokov's works] suggest how "timelessness", by which I take him to mean the absence of time conceived as history and project, is achieved by language. The temporal framework depends on the forward and backward action of consciousness constructing its "thematic anathemia", working cumulatively and by superimposition to create not the neutral medium of history but a medium where so-called "rational" perspectives are perpetually tilted and distorted..." (*SH*, 202). The problem here is that we began with a conception of time that eschews past and future (and, therefore, presumably neutrality) only to end with a time that requires the forward and backward movement of consciousness in order to fulfil itself. And then, to make things more problematic, we hear that this latter conception of time is grounded on a notion of timelessness guaranteed by language, presumably the very same language whose "sequential nature" it seems somehow impossible to avoid. How is time, we might ask, both asynchronous with sequence but dependent upon an awareness and direct involvement in the "sequential nature" of language? The importance of reconsidering linearity does not seem to escape Ermarth's text. But, more importantly, we also need to ask why Ermarth never questions the assumption that the "sequential nature" of language is not, in fact, undermined by the groundwork

upon which language is based; that is, the duplicity of the semiotic system as an operative mechanism in language itself? What I have been, in part, exploring throughout this thesis is the question of this duplicity and its relevance to a reinterpretation of linearity, the latter of which is vital to our understanding of a good many Latin American authors.

Because it is always in a state of constant revision, constantly being rewritten and renamed, history is not tied to the linear conception of time in which chronophiles⁷ have taken refuge. And, by extension, our identities are always in a process of becoming through these revisions, changing as we change the history that, through writing and in time, will become us. While this seems a commonplace historical revisionism, it is based on a notion of the impossibility of achieving any teleological end to the succession of attempts to rewrite and rename. Those attempts are what are important and are made possible because of the opacity of the between. And, for Fuentes, what drives us constantly towards these successive revisions is desire, need: "I need therefore I imagine" therefore I write (*MO*, 17). What Fuentes needs is an identification with his country and therefore with himself, an identification fulfilled in this impossible task called writing. And this is why Fuentes says that when he arrived in Mexico for the first time he discovered "the imaginary, imagined country, finally real but only real if I saw it from a *distance* that would assure me, *because of the very act of separation*, that my desire for reunion with it would be forever urgent, *and only real if I wrote it*" (*MO*, 17-18; my emphasis). Writing embodies the possibility of self-identification and self-recognition precisely through its embeddedness in opacity as separation. In this sense, we do not disown 'historical thinking' by giving up Newtonian, progressive, linear time. Rather, we gain the power to write history, the power to achieve freedom through an identification with our desires and our dreams. Fuentes' separation is, of course, not a geotemporal distance; it is the very separation which makes relation possible, a separation which language and especially writing

⁷ I have borrowed this term from *Sequel*.

embody. Therefore, no unity between signs and signifieds for Fuentes: Only the exacerbated desire whose impossibility engenders a writing through which identification is constantly postponed: "Time is movement, it is rhythm, it is an interrupted story, it is a postponed story; it is even, at times, a repeated story" (*MO*, 83).⁸

* * *

In a revealing title to a collection of short stories - *Los días enmascarados* [*The Masked Days*] -Fuentes encapsulates the importance of the simultaneity of the past and the present in the context of the buried reality of Mexican culture. Not only are Mexicans hidden behind the masks of their solitude, as we saw in Paz, but so too is time. The breach of the mask occurs when the protagonists of Fuentes' stories (but also, as we have seen, Carpentier's and García Márquez's as well) breach the façades of their own identities and enter into the simultaneity of identities and the simultaneity of times. Hence, it is vital to recognise that the protagonists in any of the stories we have been dealing with never move from outer obscurity to inner clarity, but always into duplicity: The duplicity of identity, of time, of Latin America itself. This duplicity is emblematic of the suspension and interruption that subtends those stories. What obtains then, when the individual looks inward is the postponement of identity and time in that duplicity which is simultaneity.

Fuentes' essay on Nikolai Gogol is informative in charting the significance of this position. Fuentes writes that for Gogol time is constantly deferring itself, constantly frustrating our attempts to decipher it. Time thus "develops through time, a hidden time: a succession of masked days Time, almost by definition, flees, disguises itself, shrouds itself in fog; time is an impostor, a disguised being who always refuses to show

⁸ The reference to rhythm again brings us back to Ermarth's analysis of language, time and history. In *Sequel* Ermarth argues that in postmodern narrative rhythmic time replaces linear time. She goes on to say that "the emphasis on rhythm is consistent with an appreciation of language as speech. Writing without the activation of a reader is, as many have pointed out, just black marks on a page; and that enactment moves easily from silence through consciousness toward language voiced, toward language in play and in fullest life" (*SH*, 47-48). What is important here is the sense in which rhythmic time is a function of language.

us his face Time is a constant postponement: a perpetually deferred identity" (*MO*, 90). Any response to this refusal cannot transcend the limits of postponement. Or, if it can, Fuentes asks, why should it? "The art of Nikolai Gogol swirls around the problem of identities and identification which is postponed, or deceptive" and allows Gogol to reach "but one identity, and that is his own identification with the problem of existence" (*MO*, 91). Fuentes argues that Gogol's response to the refusal of time is to offer up the refusal of the author. That is, "the irony of the writer who postpones his own destiny and his own identity, in the same way that time and space ... do so, so that all these elements are transformed into the only reality that is truthful, worthy of our attention, or, at least handy: the reality of literature" (*MO*, 92). The postponement of identity within a time postponed means that closure is similarly deferred. Hence, in the postponement of identity lies the infinite possibilities of self-creation in and through fiction. But the creative act does not bring us into contact with an origin, with a pure and immediate reality. Quite the contrary, the creative act that erupts from the conditions of postponement, foreignness and orphanhood, conditions which are embedded in the very being of language itself can (only) offer the postponement of any immediate and pure identity.

In his essay, Fuentes pays particular attention to a letter written by Gogol on the eve of 1834 where Gogol writes: "At my feet burns my past; above me, through the fog, shines the indecipherable future. Life of my soul, of my genius, I implore thee: Do not hide" (*MO*, 89). Fuentes reads this letter alongside various passages from Gogol's *Dead Souls* in order to expose what he sees as Gogol's own deferral; the deferral of his own identity and his own destiny in response to the "perpetually deferred identity" of time and, subsequently, of Russia in the face of its longing for a future in the fullness of its destiny. Fuentes writes that it is impossible to "separate in the letter, the vital statistics - the dates, the commonplace of good resolutions for the New Year ... from the writing; that is, from imagination as applied to time, from the postponement of certitude" (*MO*, 91). For Fuentes then, Gogol responds to the "enigma of a national

destiny" with the "reality of literature", the writing of a letter in the presence of a time in constant deferral. The mask of time must, therefore, not be seen as an opaque border between what "I" truly is and what "I" pretends to be, but what "I", through pretence, is as another. The mask of time does not conceal a hidden and truer time. Rather, it exposes us to identity and identification which in reality are constantly postponed: Masks reveal the duplicity of identity and do not *refer us back* to a prior possibility for our unification with our own true life. The act of writing embraces this revelation by disowning the authorial voice, giving both author and work over to the reader and, ultimately, to the plurality of its own voices. And this is why both Kafka and Gogol have said "I" has no life outside literature. As Fuentes maintains: "The life of Nikolai Gogol occupies this singular position in relation to his own work: It lacks any interest except if it is seen as the creation of Nikolai Gogol" (*MO*, 95). A creation which is a fiction: Life and art are co-productive and can in no way be separated. And it is only in this inseparability that we come not only to understand the "creation of Nikolai Gogol" but that the space where that creation manifests itself is, precisely, the space of literature. This space has its own temporality, not the time outside time as in Paz, but the time of the between, the between time of separation in which the simultaneity of the mutually exclusive finds its own being. The between is never inscribed in a linear chain, a chronological order. When, for example, we encounter the past we are embraced within the ex-timate relation which exceeds chronology. This encounter occurs in the time between times, the no-time of opacity. In this sense, the past is not a home to return to and does not belong to us even while we identify with it. The past does not belong to us because we do not simply and unproblematically belong to it. This mutual impossibility of belonging, of being possessed by something we are intimately connected with goes beyond the obvious impossibility of returning to some pre-existing temporal-historical space. More fundamentally than this, the impossibility of belonging is the impossibility of the outside as such, as that to which we are intimately connected, an impossibility

embodied, as so many Latin American writers are aware, in this duplicitous and impossible thing called writing.

* * *

Postponing Language and the Anonymous

What I have tried to demonstrate throughout this thesis is that the question 'How to name the anonymous?' exposes us, in the very attempt to approach it, to the condition which makes relation possible; that is, to opacity structured by extimacy. In order to understand the question of anonymity, what the question was asking of us, it was therefore necessary to understand something about relationality which, as I attempted to work through in the *Interlude*, inevitably leads to the duplicity embedded in the very language we use to approach anonymity's name. In order to identify with this name and the very question of naming this identification entails, we first need to appreciate the role duplicity plays in the whole process of identification and recognition. This appreciation is the result of our attempts to "reflect according to opacity"; that is, to reflect under the influence of opacity, to reflect in such a way as to be guided by the very multiplicity, duplicity and impossibility that identifies opacity itself. And this is why the method I have employed is strict and precise, and why the question of temporality has always been an important one throughout this study. By definition, anonymity's name postpones itself and any writing seeking to name the anonymous must be prepared to mix and remix its own voices in the approach to the question of anonymity itself. It is also for this reason that I began with an analysis of ineffability since, as I argued at the very beginning, the ineffable is itself ineffable; that is, it refuses itself, it postpones itself in any of our attempts to ground it ontologically. The only ground upon which to situate the ineffable is the ground of its haunting duplicity. To say that the anonymous is ineffable, that anonymity's name cannot be spoken without giving a detailed accounting of what the impossibility of the ineffable is would get us no where. This accounting has lead us through the delineation of a set of concepts - absence, foreignness, the divorce between, the separation of relation, orphanhood -

which have been indispensable in the approach to anonymity.

The divorce between words and things engenders foreignness and orphanhood which in turn open us toward the multiplicity of our identity and of our time. In the divorce between, in the separation which is opacity, we encounter the absence of any homeland to which we could return and the absence of any promised land we could hope to acquire as the seat of some prior identity. And yet, we are not without our names, our histories, our sense that we belong. In this sense, we are exiled (as Carpentier was all too aware) within a foreign yet familiar world, a world we must therefore name through the broken language of an unknown tongue, a tongue which speaks a language exiled to the space of opacity, a tongue at home in literature. In outlining the terms of ineffability I argued that the analysis of opacity suggests that what is common for subjectless subjects is the radical unknowing at the heart of their encounter, an unknowing which is not reducible to language but which resides in excess of it. In short, that what is common for subjectless subjects is the absence around which "I" circulates and upon which language acquires its being. But, to speak towards absence is, in fact, to lose language in the speaking since language is subjected to the very encounter it seeks to unfold; that is, language is always subjected to opacity. To speak towards absence, to *figure* absence in speaking towards it, we must speak the language beyond language, a language spoken by an unknown tongue, a language which is no longer fooled by the representational uses it has been forced to comply with: A language that surrenders to its own foreignness, surrenders to the inescapable multiplicity of its referential codification and encounters the foreign within itself, its own opacity, its own intimate exteriority. What I have tried to show in my attention to various authors from Latin America is that not only fiction itself, but particularly a fiction which arises from the between of relation, a fiction such as we encounter in Latin America, speaks in this unknown tongue and is one of the pre-eminent forms by which to give voice to absence. And, in the end, it is this voice that allows us to continually approach, in our time, the question of anonymity.

Bibliography

As with the rest of this study, I have used Kate Turabian's *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations*, 5th Edition as a guide to footnote and bibliographic entries. I have also given a comprehensive list of texts from those authors who have figured prominently in the study as a whole. In the case of Alejo Carpentier, the reader is advised to consult Roberto González Echevarría's comprehensive bibliographic material at the conclusion to his study *Alejo Carpentier: The Pilgrim at Home*.

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