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TECTONICS OF THE POIETIC SELF
THE FORMATION OF JUAN LARREA AND LORENZO GARCÍA VEGA

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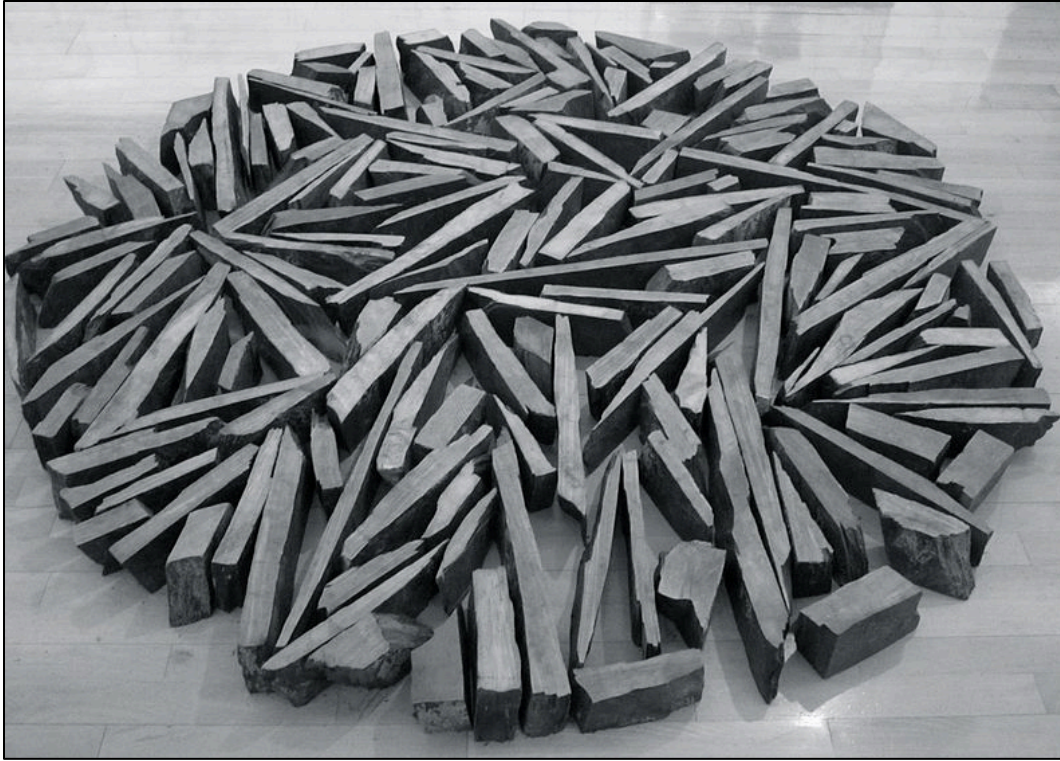
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Richard Long, *Summer Circle* (1991)

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This dissertation examines the literary discipleship and poetic formation of Juan Larrea (Spain, 1895-1980) and Lorenzo García Vega (Cuba, 1926-2012) through a multidisciplinary model of *poietic tectonics* that brings together geological, psychoanalytical, and artistic structures of creation. As writers of complex prose works, Juan Larrea's cultural hermeneutics and Lorenzo García Vega's fragmentary testimonies appear to have little in common. However, when their trajectories are placed in parallel, a shared evolutive sequence becomes evident. This study concentrates on the first of a proposed two-cycle transformation process, tracing each poet's psychic and writerly growth from pre-literary adolescence to the publication of their first works. The four chapters correspond to four tectonic stages in magma production as they occur within the geological subduction zone. The first explores the oceanic plate period that I describe, using Harold Bloom's terminology, as a *framing darkness* characterized by national crises, unsatisfactory religious educations, and psychological suffering. Compelled to

seek a guide out of these environments, the next chapter considers the period of convergence and subduction between the oceanic and continental plates describing the encounters between Larrea and Vicente Huidobro, and between García Vega and José Lezama Lima, as well as the completion of their literary apprenticeships to these *maestros*. At a certain point during its descent the oceanic plate releases essential elements that initiate an ascent into a magma chamber, equated with Larrea and García Vega's respective appearances in the literary magazines *Favorables París Poema* and *Orígenes*, and a reconciliation of influence with instinct through psychological individuation. The cycle concludes when the magma reaches at the Earth's surface, and similarly, the publication of two small books of poetry, Larrea's *Oscuro dominio* (1934) and García Vega's *Suite para la espera* (1948), signaled the eruption of each poet's self, prepared to continue their growth into the writers that they would later become. The multiple points of contact between the two poets and the methodology for identifying such commonalities provide a unique approach to the formation of the artistic personality and offer dialoguing exegeses between the works of two significant, yet understudied authors.

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INTRODUCTION. Structures of Self-Realization

*And the Angel which I saw stand upon the sea,
and upon the earth, lifted up his hand to heaven,
And sware by him that liveth for evermore,
which created heaven, and the things that therein are,
and the earth, and the things that therein are,
and the sea, and the things that therein are,
that time should be no more.*

REVELATION 10.5-6

This dissertation presents a comparative hermeneutic study of the first cycle in a proposed two-cycle process inscribing the psychic and literary transformations of Juan Larrea (Spain, 1895-1980) and Lorenzo García Vega (Cuba, 1926-2012) as they moved first from wordless, suffering adolescents to inspired avant-gardist poets, and then from poets to writers of prose, each creating their own style of labyrinthian text. It consists of an interpretive process with varying methodologies demanding identification between life and work. Coursing through these two cycles is a shared search for an expressive structure to draft a revelatory truce between the word and the object, that is, to understand the confrontation between themselves and the world in which they existed. At play is a consideration of Larrea and García Vega as models for a process of emotional growth towards self-realization versus historical examples of points along humanity's diachronic march towards the revelation of the unknown, both arguments being measured through the individual's poetic creations. Though distanced one from the other, each undertook a similar multi-stage cognitive journey determined by the intricate accumulation and interplay of successive selves with successive others, and of successive selves with

successive literatures. At its end, by assembling those fragments, they arrived at a sense of meaning, a particular truth emitted from the bonding medium, and through their particularly dependent alliance with the Symbolic function, that medium was indistinguishable from their essence.¹ The impetus for the first cycle was a composite of two essential forces, psychological anguish and literary influence, each emitted from impacting entities during vital encounters. The first was the result the early self's failure to negotiate its external reality, which manifested neuroses and a creative need to uncover order and meaning. The second was the result of a critical meeting between that early self's disordered vision and the systems of the powerful poets who became their literary *maestros*: Vicente Huidobro and José Lezama Lima.² Under the instruction of these two founders of new Latin American poetry, each learned a way forward in the poetic word and in the perception-altering potential of metaphor.³ The result was a new writerly self increasingly capable of independent expression, albeit a false transitional self anticipating a later second metamorphosis into an original true creator.

¹ Lacan explains the Symbolic function as “a double movement within the subject: man makes an object of his action, but only in order to restore to this action in due time its place as a grounding. In this equivocation, operating at every instant, lies the whole process of a function in which action and knowledge alternate” (*The Language of the Self* 48). He significantly writes later: “I identify myself in Language, but only by losing myself in it like an object” (Lacan, *The Language of the Self* 63).

² In this study I have chosen to refer to Vicente Huidobro and José Lezama Lima as “maestros.” My primary motivation in doing so is that it allows me to retain the Spanish word for “teacher” or “master” that Juan Larrea, Lorenzo García Vega, and others used to designate these great poets and emphasize their roles as artists as well as guides. At the same time “maestro” suggests a level of expertise and renown beyond that of “teacher” and avoids the complex connotations of “master.”

³ From the title of Saúl Yurkievich's book *Fundadores de la nueva poesía latinoamericana* (1984). He also includes César Vallejo, Jorge Luis Borges, Oliverio Girondo, Pablo Neruda, and Octavio Paz as part of this influential group.

Though not explored in detail due to the limited scope of this dissertation, I suggest that there is a subsequent second cycle hinging upon a central biographical line marking their transformation from creature (false self), that is, a young poet, the product of an encounter between maestro and apprentice, to creator (true self), a writer individualizing his voice from that of the maestro and the greater literary world of which he is now a part.⁴ Juan Ramón Jiménez suggested the existence of such a stage when in his celebrated *Coloquio* with Lezama Lima he affirmed that a young poet initially learns from all parts of the world, especially from those actively experiencing expressive awakenings, but that later after this first exploratory phase of development and “una vez orientado en su camino ideal, el poeta consciente vuelve en espíritu y forma su patria” (64). The first and second cycles are comparable, each following a symbolic progression from dark to light indicative of an increasing coincidence between intention and form, between intuition and reality, in other words, a gradual discovery of meaning, and consequently, a healthier mental state. At the conclusion of the first cycle the created false self reaches a fulcrum moment at which point, finding itself once again in the darkness of existential crisis, the overwhelming weight of influence, it is swung back into revolution around the transformative process of the spirit that, at its conclusion, brings the true self into existence.

I title this study and the processes explored throughout it *Tectonics of the Poietic Self*, where *tectonics* is intended to suggest the dynamic interaction of geological plates

⁴ In Joseph Chiari’s *Art and Knowledge*: “The true poet, painter or sculptor looks upon his work as an organic manifestation of his essential self, intent upon expressing and revealing various aspects of truth – whether it is the truth of the human psyche, or the truth of human society at a given point in time, or a truth which transcends time” (3).

making up the Earth's lithosphere and overlying crust. The purpose of such a reference is to offer a scientific object for the image of psychic approachment between apprentice and maestro, and between artist and environment. The visual solidity of this perpetual, quantitative mechanism serves as an objective backdrop on which to periodically fasten the elasticity of the qualitative psychological, historical, and literary concepts that I will investigate. When considering the formation of Juan Larrea and Lorenzo García Vega in particular, subduction zones, because of the violent collisions that take place within them, are the most elucidative of tectonic sites. A subduction zone is classified as a destructive boundary where an oceanic plate and a continental plate expanding in opposing directions converge (See Figure 1).⁵

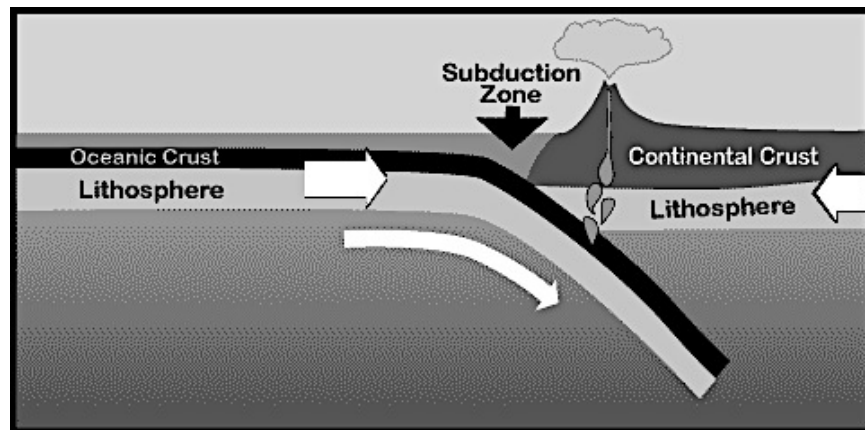


Figure 1: Subduction Zone (<http://whyfiles.org/031volcano/2.html>)

⁵ Other tectonic sites include constructive divergent rifts and conservative transform faults. In the first, the plates expand away from each other from a central volcanic site of creation. In the second, adjacent plates shift laterally along a shared line. In both cases, neither plate experiences a compositional change effected by the existence of the other.

The oceanic plate's higher density forces it beneath the continental plate and it descends deep into the Earth's mantle. As pressure and temperatures rise the oceanic plate releases defining liquid and gas components that ascend into the overlying mantle. The new mixture provokes a series of chemical reactions that melt the surrounding rock into lower-density magma that continues its seeping ascension. Much of the magma solidifies in large chambers before reaching the Earth's surface while some will escape the crust through a volcanic eruption whose explosiveness is determined by the particular chemical makeup of the magma. Therefore, while initially destructive, this site presents a constant sequence of confrontation, destruction, interaction, and creation, including descending and ascending processes of extension and retention, valuable for the study of the development of an individual conscious and congruent with the poietic functioning of the metaphor essential to the poetic systems described herein. The philosopher and Jesuit priest Pierre Teilhard de Chardin considered there to be "certain 'events' in the human mass, just as there are in the world of organic matter, or in the crust of the earth, or in the stellar universe" (13).⁶ Through a similar effort to translate human moments and to provide ground to the groundlessness of temporality, I propose that the four stages of the subduction zone cycle offer counterparts to the stages of artistic transformation

⁶ In his essay "The Function of Art as an Expression of Human Energy," Teilhard de Chardin announces his interdisciplinary approach the following way: "I am no artist: I am a geologist – in other words I am simply a prospector whose field is the past [...] Nevertheless, I have recently had occasion to concern myself with human energy, its value, its use, and its future; and in doing so I have had to examine the various activity of the world we live in" (*Toward the Future* 88).

In his foreword to Sarah Appleton-Weber's translation of *The Human Phenomenon*, Brian Swimme recounts a type of Socratic apprenticeship to Thomas Berry focused on the thinking of Teilhard de Chardin. Berry, the maestro in this case, considered Teilhard to be "one of the first scientists to realize that the human and the universe are inseparable. The only universe we know about is a universe that brought forth the human" (xv).

experienced by Larrea and García Vega. Accordingly, I will use them to organize the four principal chapters of this dissertation.

The idea of physical construction at the onset of the title is bestowed a transcendent quality with the word *poietic*. In addition to the material rendering of subduction, *poiesis* also supposes in its Heideggerian sense a metaphysical “bringing-forth,” that is, an act of revelation of being. Poiesis is an act of giving existence to that which is waiting to exist. As “*poiesis* does not consist in an imitation of a projected model of stable presence,” but is instead “a response to an overpowering experience of absence and instability” (Ferrari 32), Larrea’s apprenticeship to Vicente Huidobro and García Vega’s apprenticeship to José Lezama Lima provided the necessary poietic awakening during their early suffering, as well as technical instruction, to carry each *self*, the title’s final word, out of their paralytic emptiness into activity. Their poietic self was revealed to them just as that same poietic self would later attempt revelations through the word. The self then acted as both a constructed object and a constructive subject. As a *tectonic self* each experienced their formation between the conflictive forces of influence and instinct, a convergence of opposing plates causing each to become something else both particular and common. As a *poietic self* each attempted to divulge through poiesis a structure of reality in accordance with their own perceptions: the subject’s order brought forth inside the object. By the end of their lives both had spent 85 years passing through comparable points of change assembled inside a culminating personal independence and a literary aesthetic of fragmentary accumulation, while reaching contrary conclusions regarding the adhesion and syntheses of those fragments. In short, Juan Larrea and

Lorenzo García Vega are locations from which structure attempts to emerge as well as components of structures in motion; they are subduction zones in and of themselves as well as participants within them.

Juxtaposing these two writers may seem peculiar at first. This is in part due to the fact that save for a handful of interested scholars, few are familiar with the literary production of each beyond partial or overgeneralizing asides relating them to a more established canon. Their tremendous individuality drew them into activity with the acknowledged artists of their time, just as it also compelled them to tirelessly explore a personal faith in literature and experiment freely as their psychic needs dictated without regard for professional repercussions. As a result, their works comprise a wide range of forms placed uncomfortably between categories, consequently encouraging a disconnected understanding of each life where certain moments are isolated from others, or ignored altogether. In this investigation, I reevaluate these fragments by bringing them together and examining the resulting wholes. At the same time, by comparing the two wholes their perhaps unanticipated commonalities shed light on particular cyclic transformations while underscoring their ultimately divergent views on poetry's conversation with reality and on the writer's ability to comprehend such a dialogue. In positioning them here, side by side, I hope to provide a unique perspective on each person as a writer, with implications towards a grander sort of liminal system-searching writer, as well as bring attention to the trajectory of the innovative works that they left behind. At the same time, I will consider the extent of the distance between them through

the significance of the various historical congruities and incongruities revealed by these dueling portraits.

There is an undeniable geographical and temporal space separating one writer from the other. The prospect of comparing the two was unexpected even for García Vega. When I asked him in 2011 for his opinion of Juan Larrea, he responded, “No sé qué decir. Me siento muy alejado de Larrea” (García Vega). They were born on opposite sides of the Atlantic and on opposite sides of a generation. As writers they were also from opposite sides of the avant-garde: Larrea at its conception and García Vega as its inheritor. With such a multitude of variables, so many opposing sides to be taken into account, this distance is not insignificant, but it is my argument that this is precisely what enables the comparative aspect of the analysis. By placing them in contact as individuals—as in a Darwinesque grouping of like species from distinct spaces and times, or an experimental tectonic convergence, a Lezamian *vivencia oblicua*,⁷ a historical metaphor—the resulting resemblances cannot be explained as exclusively regional ontologies, and instead suggest a transcultural occurrence of a particular psychological type detecting and responding in a similar manner to that which affected them as nonsensical in their environments. They support the idea of cycles of transformation and the existence of a writerly totality that, though the composition of each whole varies, are equivalent in achieved fulfillment. Alternatively, the disagreements serve to measure the

⁷ In Lezama Lima’s poetics, *vivencia oblicua* describes a metaphorical space determined by coincidences outside of historical causality. “La metáfora genera una situación simbólica que, al penetrar en la imagen, deviene oblicuamente configuración de un espacio hechizado abandonándose a la infinitud causal” (Yurkievich 306).

effects of environmental deviations specific to historical moments and personal encounters.

* * *

THE STRUCTURES OF AN ENCOUNTER

I divide this study into the four sequential stages of the first cycle in Larrea and García Vega's formation: pre-literary adolescence, poetic apprenticeship, entry into the artistic collective via the literary magazine, and emergence of the individual creators with the publication of their first books. As mentioned earlier, I arrange these four components over the blueprint of the subduction zone: the movement of the early self (the dark oceanic plate) towards the powerful other (the bright continental plate) whom it will eventually meet and become deferential to (subduction). The early self travels the metamorphological phases of an apprenticeship where it frees itself from the constraints of an incomprehensible reality into which it was born, releasing its instincts (ascension) through the teachings of a maestro, reevaluating itself inside the literary world (melting) and struggling to re-individualize itself and realize the initial quest towards a new self (eruption). The subduction zone offers a heuristic linearity to better understand the polysemic mechanism of psychological encounters; it functions as the objective encounter antedating the subjective encounter. The subduction zone serves as a referential anchor as we explore the imaginative character of the stages for each writer. I argue that for Larrea and García Vega the self does not transform into a reconciled entity, which would be congruent with igneous formations, but rather into a fragmented self

more-capacitated for movement towards emergence, but in disaccord with certain newly-acquired elements. Still, the aspired eruptive culmination at the end of a subduction cycle assists us in indicating a direction in the healthy progression experienced by the psyche.

Exterior Structures: Otto Rank, Harold Bloom, and Murray Stein

Although the four stages distinguish themselves quite effortlessly inside the biographies of each poet, and with equal facility coincide from one poet's biography to the other's, the resulting individuals and their works risk being reduced to products of a localized chronological order. To more effectively consider the non-linear components of poesis significant to each stage, I assemble an alliance of various theories, all with their own contributions to the greater idea of creation through encounter. Firstly, concerning the psychological development of the artist, I use the work of Otto Rank, Harold Bloom, and Murray Stein to provide a structure *exterior* to the participants. By this I mean that while Rank, Bloom, and Stein offer progressions that are strikingly compatible with the written testimonies of Larrea and García Vega, their proposals do not explicitly involve the ideas of the participants (maestro or apprentice) in these poetic relationships. Otto Rank in *Art and Artist* (1932) adopts Freud's ongoing organization of the human psyche into the id, ego, and superego, but rejects the invincible conflict with the father figure to contend instead for possible self-resolution through the creation of meaning.⁸ He offers a schema that places the artist in a position of well adjustment between that of the neurotic

⁸ "Rank emphasizes dynamic change, the gradual evolution of the individual and collective psychology as a result of changing ideologies about life and death. The vital constant is the human need for significance and a way to balance the awe and terror of self-consciousness" (Liebermann xviii).

and the dreamer, the former extreme being reality overpowering the id and the latter extreme being the id overpowering reality. He outlines the role of art as mediator between the individual self and the exterior reality, and the psychic health afforded by its successful realization. The created object then is significant both for its potential as a hermeneutic bridge and as the container for a curing practice of hermeneutics. Rank's work informs the neurotic symptoms of Larrea and García Vega as they struggled to discover their expression in the poetic word and aids in measuring creative satisfaction versus psychological suffering as an indirect indicator of perceived truth. Furthermore, Rank's scale anticipates fluctuation between states relative to the particular union of factors at a given moment with no assurance that an individual will progressively evolve into that perfect balance that he calls the artist.⁹

Harold Bloom's concept of literary formation involving the *ephebe* (the young poet), the encounter with the strong poet, and the former's will to creativity through a "misreading" of the latter's influence offers an explanation for how the artist pursues that beneficial equilibrium of Rank's model. In *Anxiety of Influence* (1973) he writes, "Poetic influence [...] is necessarily the study of the life-cycle of the poet-as-poet" ("The Poet" 7). In this cycle he details a "framing darkness" that surrounds a young poet who then encounters a "strong" poet whose "burning brightness" provokes a "dire imaginative need" within the ephebe that compels them to seek Poetry. He also outlines six varieties of deliberate misinterpretation of that strong poet's work that the young poet employs to

⁹ Emerson wrote of an artistic equilibrium where "the poet is the person in whom these powers [sensual awareness and intelligent production] are in balance, the man without impediment, who sees and handles that which others dream of, traverses the whole scale of experience, and is representative of man, in virtue of being the largest power to receive and to impart" (321).

reach their own originality. Larrea and García Vega both describe in their memoirs and correspondence a distinct dark period prior to their respective encounters with the prominent Vicente Huidobro and José Lezama Lima, as well as a subsequent struggle to move away from them as they learned from and reacted against their teachings. In this first formative cycle the “misreading” is not only taking place between emerging self and maestro-poet, but also between the emerging self and the former self stemming from the desperate struggle to definitively move beyond the dark period. In this sense Bloom’s idea of influence is significant, while not accounting for the whole of the young poet’s struggle forth. As the cycle progresses they realize that along with the acquired ability of expression, they have perhaps misread their own selves within the newly entered literary world. To realize the separation from the other-maestro it becomes necessary to undergo a second apprenticeship (a second formative cycle) to one’s own self-maestro releasing the true self from the experience of the false self. It is not until this second cycle that the “misreading” of literary influence becomes more critical now that the self senses it can stand alone. However, it is also simply “reading,” that is, not escaping the learned methods of knowledge acquisition, but cultivating them. At this point failed re-individualization would invalidate the transformation of the previous cycle.

Murray Stein in *Transformation: Emergence of the Self* (2004) explores art’s ability both to promote and to record one’s progression through a two-staged journey towards self-realization. Structuring Rank’s *why*, and Bloom’s *how*, Stein, an adherent of Jungian psychoanalysis, proposes a universal *what* where individual growth is composed of “two great developmental eras, a first and a second half of life” (8). The first is the

development of an unrealized “false self” that in the second stage discovers its self-*imago*, the ultimate form into which the true self is born. Furthermore, Stein’s studies of Rilke, Jung, Rembrandt, and Picasso both encourage the cross-biographical analyses realized here and support my proposal that the complete formation of Juan Larrea and Lorenzo García Vega took them through two cycles (two tours through the subduction zone), the first of which is the focus of this study. The first cycle culminates in their initial literary self, the result of their apprenticeships to Vicente Huidobro and José Lezama Lima. Where Bloom describes a “dire imaginative need” activated by one’s experience of another poet, which compels one to and through an apprenticeship, Stein, utilizing the work of zoologist Adolf Portmann, adapts the idea of “imaginal disks” to suggest a latent self structure-in-formation awaiting its full realization in the *imago*.¹⁰ Both speak to a particular unconscious disposition that undergoes awakening to guide an individual into the appropriate incubating environment. The “falsity” contained in the self that emerges from this stage is equal to that which was unnecessarily absorbed in the process, and then revealed through each poet’s move to free himself from the influence gained from his maestro and to create a self of “more-exact” expression. Together, Rank, Bloom, and Stein present psychological sequences of artistic formation that proceed

¹⁰ For Portmann in his essay “Metamorphosis in Animals: The Transformations of the Individual and the Type,” the imaginal disks are nascent forms that through biological act of *poiesis* will come into existence inside the fully developed *imago*: “In insects with complete metamorphosis, i.e., with larva, pupa, and mature form (= *imago*), the egg already contains the rudiments of all the organs that distinguish the three stages, and in addition all the equipment for the processes leading from one stage to the next,” and later, “In the caterpillar stage certain organs function fully, but certain others that will develop in the *imago* are no more than little groups of cells that we call imaginal disks” (299).

firmly parallel to the tectonic processes of subduction zones while allowing for unpredictable eruptions of the human spirit.

Interior Structures: Vicente Huidobro and José Lezama Lima

I also relate the previous psychological structures to maestros Vicente Huidobro and José Lezama Lima's aesthetic theories of poetic creation founded, each in their own way, on the encounter's resolution within the individual and released to the outside world through the image. These *interior* literary structures, considered as such because of Larrea and García Vega's conscious engagement in their formulations, articulate the accomplishment of the work of art as the result of an interaction between the artist and their environment. Contrary to their psychological counterparts, but to whose sequencings they run parallel, the focus here is placed upon the resulting artistic product, not the resulting artistic personality. In their role as Bloomian strong poets, Huidobro and Lezama Lima's systems of poetic and historical processes operating in the world were central to the formation of Juan Larrea and Lorenzo García Vega and represent a significant portion of the influence the apprentices received, both in what they accepted and what was rejected.

The subduction zone gains an additional layer at the moment each maestro-apprentice pair intersects. The encounter of one with the other is more precisely an encounter of one with a specific instant of that other. The lifelines of Larrea and García placed symmetrically in this study cross through those of Huidobro and Lezama Lima at a precise period in the latter's own formation. Their advantage though, what causes the

descent of one plate rather than the other, is the strength of personality, in possession of an approach to reality, the plate bearing the decisiveness of a method, albeit one in constant evolution, meeting the plate of painful uncertainty. There is a subductive system *managing* this encounter, and informed by the psychological concepts above, and within this is the apprenticeship *to* a subductive system, each maestros poetic theory of the image. Each system contains a process of encounter with its governing methods for a successful culminating poiesis.

Each maestro has a particular relationship with literary influence, that is, with tradition, which will leave its mark on the apprentice. Huidobro emerged amid the avant-garde explosion of modern aesthetics, in the period of aesthetic *isms*, where his own *Creacionismo* arrived as a groundbreaking Latin American poetry ushering experimentation and rebelliousness into stagnant Spanish letters. Originality received a significant amount of priority and Huidobro succumbed in many instances to this pressure, notoriously pre-dating his works so as to have been first, engaging in polemics both real and fabricated. The avant-garde need for rupture created inside Huidobro a stress to suppress the signs of influence and to build up the individual poet as the most prominent. Larrea was awakened by Huidobro's innovative, life-giving poetics of the image, the poietic bringing forth of new worlds, but ultimately reacted against or, more precisely, looked beyond Huidobro's self-centric creativity.

Lezama on the other hand, and not so differently from Larrea, found the avant-gardist need to stand apart and to reject as an insufficient and insubstantial posture. He embraces tradition and influence as something to be ingested, processed, and employed

as the natural flow of historical poesis. The image is exactly that, influence received from a prior moment of creation, and one gazes upon it and interprets amid one's present day to find what it can say now. Thus his approach opens up his writing to a wealth of images, references, associations that do not need to be hidden, only employed. And he employed them in mass creating a task of decipherment, brought forth through the necessary language, and therein lies *lo difícil*, which he famously said stimulates, to uncover the unknown. This method gave García Vega a way to approach the environment that overwhelmed him, to impose himself upon it and return his image of it back out into the world. Lezama's method led to a resolution, a historical totality in ascendance influenced by his Catholic beliefs, but García Vega could never accept this end, perhaps due to his atheism, perhaps from what has been called when referring to Camus as a madness of sincerity, to not say more than what he feels, and thus he could never justify that totality, the resolution of everything. Instead he rested his vision of reality on the fragment, in fragments.

The exact influence acquired from each subductive apprenticeship during that period of subservience that encompasses learning is comparable to those elements from the overlying continental plate that will remain with the oceanic plate magma floating upwards nearing eruption, the writer in formation, his imaginative spark activated after sufficient time descending, now approaching emergence. What is and what is not incorporated determines the self just as the self has determined those very same quantities, but each passed through the foundational systems of Huidobro and Lezama Lima, and the experience of them provided the impetus to independent poesis.

Vicente Huidobro and Creationism

Vicente Huidobro (Chile, 1893-1948), a “precursor de nuestros movimientos de vanguardia” (Yurkievich 58) and maestro to Juan Larrea, considered the modern poet, and himself in particular, to be at an evolutive landmark in possession of mounting powers of creation allowing for the novel opportunity to rival Nature. Thanks to a privileged relationship with the unknown, the poet could potentially strike first, anticipating or deviating from Nature’s plan in search of an original truth. He placed authority in intelligently devised metaphorical associations to liberate the individual subconscious from the constraints of existing reality and alter the perception of the outside world through poesis. He consolidated these ideas inside his poetic movement *Creacionismo* wherein the poem must be composed “d’images créées, de situations créées, de concepts créés; il n’épargne aucun élément de la poésie traditionnelle [*sic*], seulement, ici, ces éléments sont tous inventés sans aucun souci du réel ni de la vérité antérieure à l’acte de réalisation” (“Le Créationnisme” 1330). In contrast with the later Surrealism, this creation was not automatic, but consciously structured through the use of reason.

His move towards complete poetic independence took shape through such works as *Espejo de agua* (1916), *Poemas árticos* (1917), *Automne regulier* (1925), and reached its peak, and valley, in his monumental *Altazor* (1931) whose seven cantos prod poetry to the point of aphasia, a Babelic toppling of the Creationist poet whose attempts to free language from Nature’s grasp through language itself are inevitably in vain; the seventh and final canto of *Altazor* becomes a proclamation of mere utterances: “Lalalí / Io ia / i i i

o / Ai a i ai a i i i i o ia” (807), nonsensically begging for sense and an inexistent eighth canto filled instead with Cagean silence. Huidobro was amidst his grand quest for rupture and individuality when in 1919 Juan Larrea, desperate and uninspired in Spain, discovered the Chilean’s innovative poetics and unwavering dedication to poetry. The ethic was contagious for the young poet empowered by the possibility that he could break through the meaninglessness he perceived in his immediate environment, ascend out of the depths of his neurotic suffering, and, as a god-like individual, make visible the universal truths he sensed existed.

Huidobro in his 1921 essay “La Création pure,” published in *L’Esprit Nouveau*, outlined with intentionally scientific language a history of Art enclosing three cyclical stages: art of reproduction, art of adaptation, and art of creation. During the three stages the art form transitions from an inferior position with regards to its environment, through a state of equilibrium, and finally superior, rises above it; he found the final stage the most relevant to the artists of the early twentieth century (1302). Just as Bergson in *Introduction à la Métaphysique* wrote that the observer of an actor in movement will detect the individual moments within that action while the author of the movement will experience it as a simple whole,¹¹ Huidobro, using less metaphysical terms, wrote that the evolution of “L’Homme-miroir” to “L’Homme-Dieu” is as “visible à l’observateur que peut l’être en géologie l’évolution de Paloplothérium en passant par l’Anchitérium pour arriver au cheval” (1304). Both Bergson and Huidobro in their distinct fashions reason

¹¹ “When you raise your arm, you accomplish a movement of which you have, from within, a simple perception; but for me, watching it from the outside, your arm passes through one point, then through another, and between these two there will be still other points” (Bergson, *An Introduction to Metaphysics* 23).

access to an interior impulse towards change: Bergson expounding on his concept of *intuition* as the understanding of the absolute (movement experienced, not perceived), and Huidobro looking outside of himself to draw parallels between points of psychological change in *l'homme* and points of physical evolution in paleontological records to evaluate a current point inside the spiritual whole.

Each stage of Art, he continues, contains three phases determined by the relative balance of intelligence with sensibility as the form follows its course from inception to decadence. In this subsequence intelligence brings about the initiation of a new art form by using reason to develop solutions to problems and outdueling sensibility for control. Once the art form achieves a resolution of its problematic (its reason for being), sensibility gains influence, entering into equilibrium with intelligence to give the work “une certaine chaleur qui le rend moins sèche et plus vivante” (1303). This represents the apex of the form, effectively receiving the creator’s totality of spirit. During the final phase, however, sensibility overpowers intelligence pushing the art form into a decadent state where technique is repeated from habit and without the logic that brought about its need. In both sequences —from reproductive to creational art and from intelligence-driven to sensibility-driven art— Huidobro indicates an equilibrium point of varying desirability that emphasizes his empowerment of the artist as an individual. While in the primary sequence, art, and consequently the artist, must seek to be superior to the environment, in the secondary sequence the artist should seek to achieve a stability of intelligence and sensibility, a healthy balance reminiscent of Rank’s artistic personality scale.

Huidobro’s organizing of Art’s cyclical rise and fall continues to telescope inwards towards his primary interest: the mechanism of the individual artist. The poet is unavoidably a part of Nature, but the artist encountering the objective world, according to Huidobro, employs a system to select from the available elements. The self then processes these within the subjective world before returning the elements to reality inside the artistic object. He offers a diagram of this interaction between artist and Nature that produces the work of art (See **Figure 2**).

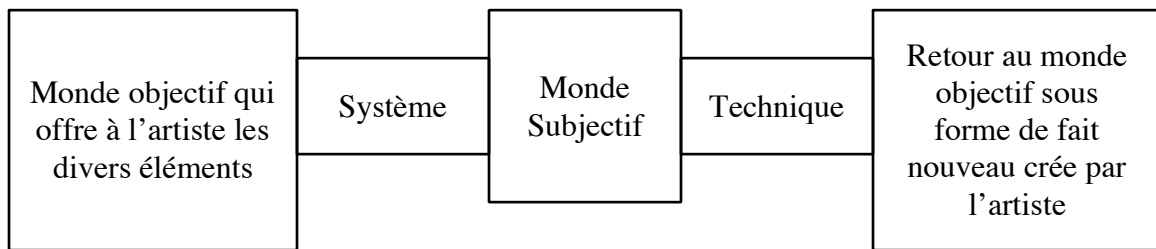


Figure 2: “La Création pure,” Vicente Huidobro

Like Teilhard de Chardin, Huidobro equates this human act with any other located in the natural world. In a description with echoes of the subduction process, Huidobro summarizes, “l’artiste prend ses motifs et ses éléments dans le monde objectif, les transforme et les combine, les rend au monde objectif sous forme de faits nouveaux, et ce phénomène esthétique est aussi libre et indépendant que n’importe quel autre phénomène du monde extérieur” (1305). In this *zone*, however, Nature’s *plate* undergoes transformation beneath that of the dynamic artist. The individual’s particular imaginative need directs the search inside the exterior reality for those elements that will, through

technique, render the self's creation back into the objective world, carrying elements of the self along with it. What the elements are will be revelatory of the self and of a style.

Huidobro's privileging of intelligence, technique, and creation is consistent with Heidegger's rehabilitation of poiesis from its classical association with mimesis, converting the work of art (*techne*) into a revelation of Being and a site of truth. The poietic force of *Creacionismo* and the potential power of the poet is exemplified in the poem "Arte poética" from *Espejo de agua* whose memorable verses urged: "Por qué cantáis la rosa, ¡oh, Poetas! / Hacedla florecer en el poema" (*Obra poética* 391). Heidegger uses a similar image in his "The Question Concerning Technology" (1953), associating poiesis at its "highest sense" with an example of the flower blooming since here bringing-forth occurs inside the same object that is brought forth,¹² while the work of art is a bringing-forth that occurs "not in itself, but in another, in the craftsman or artist" (317). Huidobro unrealistically aspired to a literary poiesis equal in potential to that of nature.

The three phases of Huidobro's sequential structures fluctuate between a linear evolution of the poet's will, where the result places him at the top, and a repetitive human process centered on encounters with their environment and on the ultimate artistic product. Although his models were more intent on conferring prestige and originality upon the poet rather than understanding an individual's psychological need for poetry, they provide insight into Juan Larrea's early ideological formation including the poetic

¹² "For what presences by means of *physis* has the irruption belonging to bringing-forth, e.g., the bursting of a blossom into bloom, in itself" (Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology" 317).

techniques that he initially imitated, while maintaining significant structural correspondences with the psychological models of Rank (the subjective and objective world managed through artistic interaction), Bloom (the ephebe's selective interpretation of the strong poet), and Stein (the cyclical growth of the self recorded in the exterior art form). Huidobro's personality and his need to be at the forefront often outshined his ideas and various polemics have been historically detrimental to the consideration of his poetry, but in the words of Larrea, "nos guste o no nos guste a todos, Huidobro genio fue" ("Vicente Huidobro en vanguardia" 246).

José Lezama Lima and His Sistema Poético del Mundo

For José Lezama Lima (Cuba, 1910-1976), maestro to Lorenzo García Vega, the poet is an individual who engages perceived images to carry out a poiesis of the unknown through the newly created image, which is sealed inside the poem where poetry finds a temporary material stability: an act of perpetual valuation and renewal. Lezama's perspective extends beyond the accomplishments of the individual great poet, although he bestows heroic status upon each one. The new image, the poetic end result, ripples concentrically outward shaping a community locally, nationally, and globally, creating "la nueva casualidad, la posibilidad infinita, la imagen como un potencial entre la historia y la poesía" ("La posibilidad en el espacio gnóstico americano" 104). As with Huidobro, Lezama's poet creates by processing elements from Nature, but this Nature for Lezama, via Pascal, is no longer that governing mechanism from which Huidobro wanted to free himself. Original Nature has been lost and what remains is a palimpsest of subjective

perceptions (related to the idea of literary tradition) solidified as dormant images advancing chronologically as a landscape emerging from the imago. Only poetry affords that sought-after freedom through self-creation in language that makes possible future resurrection when that language (image) —“lo telúrico de la palabra devuelta en la metáfora [...] y en la imagen, como cubrefuego de lo estelar” (“Al llegar la poesía a su identidad” 130)— is observed.

With his foundational poem *Muerte de Narciso* (1937) published in the second issue of the magazine *Verbum*, Lezama Lima begins to reveal the articulation of the components in his assimilatory *Sistema Poético*, resting them upon an eternal spiraling renewal of conflict and resolution that ascends towards a finality.¹³ The idea of rupture driven by rebelliousness among the avant-gardists of the previous literary generation in Cuba associated with *Revista de Avance*, also shared by Huidobro, was cast off by Lezama and replaced with a historical détente privileging instead the constant cognitive search of the *sujeto metafórico*, his term for the poetic interpreter.¹⁴ Rupture is exchanged for union in an inclusive formulation from which knowledge continues to emerge.¹⁵ With

¹³ Remedios Mataix writes in *La escritura de lo posible: El Sistema Poético de José Lezama Lima* (2000), “Lezama presenta su Sistema Poético del Mundo como ese lugar de confluencia de lenguajes, tiempos y culturas; en él una poderosa fuerza de asimilación acaba por borrar los ecos, absorbiéndolos y modificándolos según los postulados de un pensamiento que parece delirante a primera vista, pero resulta inobjetablemente lógico dentro de sus propias leyes” (12).

¹⁴ Livon-Grosman uses Huidobro’s *Creacionismo* to illustrate what precisely Lezama’s poetics were not when considering tradition: “If we compare the poetics of Lezama to those of Vicente Huidobro, the Chilean poet who founded *creacionismo*, one of the most visible avant-garde poetry movements in Spanish America, we will find that while *creacionismo* was trying very hard to break away from literary canons, Lezama was trying not only to include them all but in effect to expand them beyond the more programmatic avant-garde” (xxxii).

¹⁵ On the divisiveness or the early twentieth-century quest for originality, Lezama Lima states “Su ruptura era tan superior a su deuda generacional, que su espinazo histórico era diluido en lo amorfo y protocelular” (*La expresión americana* 177).

his particular concern for the national, such comprehensiveness was intended to concretize a cultural history, which he continued in the magazine *Espuela de plata*, of whose participants he wrote: “Querían hacer tradición, es decir, reemplazándola, donde no existía” (“Después de lo raro, la extrañeza” 52). This is the underlying mechanism in his account in *La expresión americana* (1957) of the American Baroque, a dynamic plenitude powered by forces of *tensión* and *plutonsimo*¹⁶ to create meaning through “una relación simple de los elementos (una ‘interpretación’, una ‘hermenéutica’)” (Chiampi 16). Poiesis occurs concurrent with the act of interpretation of approached images inside the poetically-constructed metaphor. Though to my knowledge Lezama never referred to subduction zones explicitly, his illustration of poiesis through an orphic descent and procession of dismantling and recreation, often theorized with a geological lexicon, exactly reproduces this tectonic process. The tension and plutonism that he finds inside the baroque are also primary energies in subduction, the latter taking from an idea first proposed by the Scottish geologist James Hutton who, countering the theory of Neptunism, argued that certain rocks were formed within the Earth from the solidification of magma. The former, *tension*, refers to the force within a language overcharged with significance, images bursting with other images and made visible through a “condensación de conocimiento” (Salgado 76).¹⁷ From that image then, according to

¹⁶ “Primero, hay una tensión en el barroco; segundo, un plutonismo, fuego originario que rompe los fragmentos y los unifica” (*La expresión americana* 90)

¹⁷ Cintio Vitier, commenting on the phrase “que todo tiene que estar penetrado primero por los sentidos” in an endnote to Chapter 2 of *Paradiso* wrote, “Esta función ancilar de la imagen sensible, se convierte para Lezama en una función poética, es decir no meramente receptora de la realidad y mediadora en su proceso de abstracción inteligible, sino creativa y generadora de nuevas realidades, cuya vida comienza en la imaginación como posibilidad proyectada siempre,

Lezama, “el hombre recupera su naturaleza, vence el destierro, adquiere la unidad como núcleo resistente entre lo que asciende hasta la forma y desciende a las profundidades” (“Carta a Armando Álvarez Bravo” 8). The subduction zone, thus, becomes an even more appropriate model for artistic poiesis.

In his essay “Epifanía en el paisaje” Lezama described his conception of the revelatory poietic act in the following way: “La aridez terrenal lleva el secreto de lo plutónico. Lo seco cobra nueva vida al alentarse en las pavesas” (131). In these two short sentences he aligns a series of opposites where one seeks to be resuscitated via interaction with the other. The surface (*terrenal*) beckons the subterranean (*lo plutónico*), its barrenness (*aridez, seco*) suggests the fertility of the underworld in its character of being ignited (*pavesas*), as contrasted with extinguished. Fertility thus counteracts death (*nueva vida*) by providing a body for the unknown (*el secreto*). Not only do his descriptions diagram the various geographical areas of a subduction zone, but the volcanic dynamism of the converging plates also follows the orphic passage that he requires of poiesis; “Todo lo que el hombre testimonia lo hace en cuanto imagen y el mismo testimonio corporal se ve obligado a irse al pozo donde la imagen despereza soltando sus larvas” (“Las imágenes posibles” 153). Descent allows for the image to awaken, for the “dry earth” to find “new life” in the “hot ash,” and returning to Portmann’s imaginal disks, the descent releases the larva, herald of the imago. The mystical plunge into darkness, embarking on the heroic journey after the cognitive boon, provokes the challenge, *lo difícil*, which ignites the creative fire to recast the nascent form. To assess this process, Yurkievich also borrowed

aunque su contenido o tema sea el pasado, hacia el futuro, o más bien hacia la futuridad” (*Paradiso* 465).

lexically from the geological discipline: “Lezama Lima desobjetiva y desdibuja. Todo está entre la licuefacción (magma) y la volatilidad (nebulosa), todo es muelle y alabeado” (298). A sketch of plotted points tracing his geological descriptions and marking the movement with vectors yields the rotation of tectonic convergence, subduction, and eruption where the immortality of the poetically rejuvenated magma distorts the dimension of time, and exposes “la cúspide de la espiral lezamiana: el mito cristiano de la resurrección” (José Javier Franco 109).

When Lorenzo García Vega met Lezama in 1944 the well-established maestro had recently launched the ecumenical *Revista Orígenes* (1944-1956). Lezama’s enthusiastic poetic faith spoke to García Vega’s readiness for a trustworthy literary guide offering a consoling method, and Lezama’s philosophy for national cultural reformation through the Hellenistic concept of *paideia*¹⁸ led the neurotic youth directly into Lezama’s didactic *Curso Delfico*. At the conclusion of this formational process García Vega had gained entry to the literary world and began writing, creating poems, a particular form that represents an “espacio donde conversan el aprendiz y la sabiduría percederamente encarnada” (“Las imágenes posibles” 166). From his state of adolescent suffering, Lezama’s *Sistema Poético* offered a process that supposed a new relationship with reality up until that point. It was a way for García Vega to independently structure his own environment while still collaborating with it, to step out of the oppression of an

¹⁸ On the influence of Werner Jaeger’s work *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture* on the thinking of Lezama Lima, Salgado specifies that “La *paideia* que postula Jaeger en su libro es ‘el estado biológico de la cultura’ cuando ésta busca un mayor grado de permanencia y perfección a través de la formación intelectual y ética de sus miembros (Jaeger 6-7)” (78).

apparently fixed and alienating structure and into “un orden en perpetuo hacerse” (Mataix 15).

Huidobro and Lezama Lima, as distinctive as they were, each gazed from their side at the new image revealed through poietic logos, the product of an artist’s creative reason in words. That they differed in their definitions of *new* does not affect the compatibility of their poetic mechanisms with that of the subduction zone. More so than Huidobro, Lezama felt the significance of a worldly literary inheritance as a history of the image in continuous creation, uniting a dense variety of readings to explain the reality of the evolution of the poet. The encounters between the self and the other then become collaborations, though favoring the poietic self, through active interpretation, in the sense of Bloom’s misreading, but also in the sense of Lezama’s reactivation of literary fragments and reincorporation inside the new image. The Orígenes gatherings represented one more manifestation of this tectonic joining for the edification of a space through cultural enrichment and historical bricklaying.

With the explanations of these multiple cyclical processes, of the exterior and interior structures involving psychological and literary creation, recurring to the model of the subduction zone is advantageous. Juan Larrea and Lorenzo García Vega emerged from a complex juncture point where the spectrums of Rank, Bloom, Stein, Huidobro, and Lezama Lima crisscross, each one measuring a distinct component in the young artist’s growth. When assembled they delineate an evolving yet irreversible march forward toward self-realization paralleling the movement of plates undergoing tectonic subduction. It serves as a stable and verifiable foundation, (like Huidobro’s use of natural

selection and Lezama's use of plutonism) for analogous, but ever-immaterial psychological and literary formulations. Subduction zones are perceptible dialectical models, neutral in essence for the synthesis's scientific objectivity, but reliably dynamic.¹⁹ Its physical space shelters the process of self-growth and serves to frame a collaborative arrangement of the sequences just described to analyze the first transformative cycle of each poet.

* * *

THE STRUCTURE OF THIS STUDY

In my analysis of the first cycle, "The Formation of Juan Larrea and Lorenzo García Vega," chapters one through four examine each poet's pre-literary period, their literary apprenticeships and concurrent entry into literature, their individuation within the literary collective via the literary magazine, and their poietic emergence with their first independent literary publications. The first chapter examines the precursor stage to the onset of their formation. Each subsequent chapter is presented as a bidirectional meditation on transformation: the literary object as an organizing space for psychic understanding, and the psychic state as a provocation for a specific literary object. It is within this persistent interaction so indispensable to the development of each that the distance between them diminishes and suddenly, as individuals, a strain of writerly

¹⁹ Portmann writes, "The discovery of this mechanism does not reduce the egg to a mosaic of patterns, functioning together as a machine; rather, it leads us to view the mechanism of growth as a system "developing itself," a process embodying the whole specific nature of the living creature" (299).

evolution steps into the foreground. Their formation is divided here according to the following structure:

Chapter One: “A Framing Darkness: Faith and the Reality of Youth”

Chapter Two: “The Descent into Literature: Appropriate Encounters”

Chapter Three: “Individuation within the Collective: Ascent into *Favorables París Poema* (1926) and *Orígenes* (1945-1955)”

Chapter Four: “Eruption of the Poietic Self: *Suite para la espera* (1948) and *Oscuro dominio* (1934)”

CHAPTER ONE, titled “A Framing Darkness: Faith and the Reality of Youth” and corresponding to the oceanic plate as it approaches the subduction zone, is divided into three sections. In the first, I examine Juan Larrea’s early life from 1895 to 1919 between Bilbao and Madrid, Spain, while the second section is dedicated to the analogous moment for Lorenzo García Vega from 1926 to 1945 and his move from Jagüey Grande to La Habana, Cuba. For both adolescents this period was an agonizing time of maladjustment as they attempted to make sense of their surroundings, the *framing darkness* to which Bloom refers. I use their memories to reconstruct environments they saw as riddled with political instability and opportunism, including the instruction they received from religious educations that were unsuccessful at providing them with satisfying answers. I simultaneously refer to the studies of historians and historical testimonies of others to corroborate the corrupt character of these eras that was so

influential to their development. I then use a psychoanalytical approach, an integral part in each poet's process of self-understanding, to dissect the individual's unsuccessful negotiations between interior and exterior worlds and present this as the operating structure in the psychological suffering that provoked their search for an alternative to the existential darkness.

In the third and final section, I argue that poetry emerged for them as the primary artistic liberator because to a large degree their suffering found its origin inside a meaninglessness experienced in their environment's mistreatment of the word, a result of many around them mistakenly believing themselves, as Heidegger states, to be the master of language ("Building, Dwelling Thinking" 46). Their distinct sensitivity to the disjunction between word and image, and to an apparent absence of meaning were at the root of their feelings of alienation and were the reasons why they turned to literature in particular as the art form in which to place their faith. In this way they could give material to their instincts, restore a certain power to the word by realigning it with the image, and therefore remedy reality with the meaning it lacked. Their suffering first appeared due to an imaginative need that laid a foundation for the arrival of a maestro to then lead them forward into the literary world.

CHAPTER TWO, "The Descent into Literature: Appropriate Encounters," examines each poet's first step into the literary world via their *appropriate* encounters with the great poets who would take them into their confidences as a maestro does with an apprentice; the oceanic plate collides and descends below the weight of the continental plate. At the conclusion of Chapter One, the early suffering of Larrea and García Vega

had expanded to include a feeling of artistic paralysis where, once sensing literature to be a viable outlet for their expression, they were unsuccessful at accomplishing this next leap alone. They expressed their need for a guide to open literature's door to them, to teach them the vocation of the poet. The encounters with Vicente Huidobro and José Lezama Lima, respectively, gave form to that lacking by opposing their sterile attempts at selfhood with the fullness they perceived in these poets' dynamic selves in possession of poetic tools. I divide this chapter into two sections, in each of which I consider both the biographical developments, the autobiographical testimonies of this moment's significance, and the particularities of the aesthetic and ideological influence communicated by each maestro at their own stage of development by comparing their writings with those of the maestro. Also, throughout the chapter but particularly in the conclusion, I consider a conference that each apprentice gave after their maestros' deaths: García Vega's "Maestro por penúltima vez" (2009) and Larrea's "Vicente Huidobro en Vanguardia" (1979). When revisiting their apprenticeships fifty years later, they recognized not only their indebtedness and the vital importance that this period represented in their lives, but also the faults of their teachers and the substantial influence that each later needed to escape.

In the first section I look at Lorenzo García Vega's encounter with José Lezama Lima in 1944 as it marked the start of a two-year apprenticeship known as the *Curso Delfico*. This period consisted of his participation in a Lezamian style of Socratic maieutics where García Vega read works chosen particularly for him from the maestro's library, the first of which was Lautréamont's *Les Chants de Maldoror*, then to return later

and engage in discussion through a series of questions.²⁰ For the adolescents who experienced the *Curso*, it revealed a dimension of reality accommodating “la lucha contra la desidia y la abulia” (Prats Sariol, “El Curso Delfico” 20). García Vega’s early disposition for the aesthetics of the avant-garde, for Cubism in particular, was channeled into and through the three formative steps of his literary education under Lezama’s poetic system, recognizing the image as a historical protagonist, and he set about externalizing his inner chaos. During these two years, he wrote in 1993, he became “una especie de solitario monje loco que sólo vivía para leer y para escribir los poemas de mi primer libro” (*OP* 13), several of which would later appear in the *Orígenes* magazine (Chapter Three), as well as in 1948 in his first book *Suite para la espera* (Chapter Four). He develops an architectural confidence and experimentalism in genres that demonstrate a clear Lezamian utilization of the poem as the ground on which to bring together the innumerable pieces of his psychic view.

The second section turns to Juan Larrea’s apprenticeship to Vicente Huidobro itself composed of two distinct stages: an initial textual revelation in 1919 after his discovery of Huidobro’s *Poemas árticos* (1918), and a later friendship and personal loyalty in 1921 when they met at the Ateneo in Madrid. This period marks the moment Larrea declared his decision to give himself fully to literature, placing his trust in

²⁰ Describing his own experience in the essay “El Curso Delfico” Manuel Pereira wrote, “Siempre que yo le devolvía un libro, comenzaba un ciclo de preguntas, nada académicas, que podía originarse en *La Eva futura* de Villiers de L’Isle-Adam para terminar en un monólogo sobre el yin y el yang o las delicias de un mamey. Su abrumadora erudición, expresada en un torbellino de citas y anécdotas –que iban desde las *Vidas paralelas* hasta *La montaña mágica*– entreveradas con golpes de humor popular, hacían de su charla todo un acontecimiento. Cuando Lezama empezaba a hablar, el mundo se detenía para escucharlo” (599).

Huidobro and the radical newness of Creationism as an illuminated path forward. With the guidance of Huidobro he managed to separate himself from his early years of uncertainty, redirecting his personal trajectory as he discovered meaning and power in the image brought into existence by the poet. He began vigorously writing, forming poems both explicitly and implicitly determined by the work of his maestro. Some of these poems made it to the pages of contemporary avant-garde literary magazines, but most were left unedited in letters and manuscripts until they were recovered more than fifty years later and published under the title *Versión celeste* (1969). As directed by Huidobro's poetics, Larrea chose his poetic elements from reality, formulating his concept of sense, and from this creationist freedom allowed his self to begin to build. He would eventually recognize the limitations of Huidobro's thinking and move beyond them, but it was during these several years of formation that that *beyond* became conceivable.

CHAPTER THREE, "Individuation within the Collective: Ascent into *Favorables París Poema* (1926) and *Orígenes* (1945-1956)," looks at each emerging poet's participation in the literary magazines with which they were associated immediately after their apprenticeships: Larrea in *Favorables París Poema* and García Vega in *Orígenes*. This coincides with the stage of subduction when sufficiently high temperatures and overlying weight cause the oceanic crust to release essential gases and liquids upwards into the mantle provoking melting and the formation of magma. A certain amount of the magma remains inside a subterranean magma chamber, while the rest continues its ascent towards eruption. In this chapter I draw a parallel between that

separation and reincorporation of metamorphic elements and Jungian individuation amongst the collective space of the literary magazine. Following the periods of apprenticeship each self was in possession of an organizing knowledge and a new language through which they were eager to undertake expression. However, these new forms were not authentically theirs having gained them from the maestro. Individuation refers to the process through which the unconscious and conscious enter into greater collaboration, and Larrea and García Vega write in their early texts of certain dualities, concepts at odds that they struggle to resolve. I identify the two components of each duality with the poets' unconscious (early self / framing darkness) and their conscious (transforming self / apprenticeship). With the progress of this stage their creative self-assurance grew and the degree of receptivity began to shift as each evaluated their position among the numerous encounters they experienced as part of the literary world. Surrounded by artists, and through a developing poetic apparatus, Larrea and García Vega published their first creations, appearing as part of a collective that I choose to represent synecdochically with the literary magazine. The instinct, that which had originally refused their incorporation into the adolescent environment, finds its voice through the learned language of the maestro to bring the apprentice to greater self-definition.

At the end of 1923 Larrea considered his apprenticeship to Huidobro over and after years of wavering moved to Paris to start, together with César Vallejo, the literary magazine *Favorables París Poema*. This brought him into direct collaboration with Huidobro as well as with Vallejo, Gerardo Diego, Pierre Reverdy, Juan Gris, Pablo

Neruda, Dadaists Tristán Tzara and Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes, and others. The magazine was short-lived —only two issues were printed—, however, it marked a moment of burgeoning originality for Larrea as he established himself alongside and against his colleagues. He took the lead opening the first issue with his anti-manifesto manifesto “Presupuesto vital” and included several poems that would later appear in his poetic anthology *Versión celeste*. These works struggle with the duality of intelligence and emotion, addressed directly in “Presupuesto vital.” His increased concern with vitality, that is, humanity engaged in its dramatic adventure, replaced Huidobro’s intellect-governing poetry for the sincerity of embattled spirit in crisis, the two forces in constant interaction. He demonstrated early indications of distancing from Huidobro’s polemical self-importance, and towards a conceptual poetry concerned with universal evolution of a transcendent poetic spirit. His work in *Favorables* also paralleled an intense period of writing leading to the publication of his first work, *Oscuro dominio*, and his critical decision in 1932 to abandon verse altogether, a choice that signaled the end of his first formational cycle, that of his provisional false self, and the start of the second.

For García Vega, his encounter with Lezama also meant his acceptance as the youngest member of the Orígenes group, an uncomfortable and incomplete absorption as one the ten Cuban poets: Lezama Lima, Ángel Gaztelu, Virgilio Piñera, Justo Rodríguez Santos, Gastón Baquero, Eliseo Diego, Cintio Vitier, Octavio Smith, and Fina García Marruz. The *Curso Delfico* ended, García Vega began putting his literary formation to practice, and the results appear starting in 1946 with his first poem “Variaciones.” For all of the benefit that Orígenes had offered —he had to choose between Lezama Lima and

electro-shock treatments—, the Orígenes spirit shaped by the “catholicity” of the group’s members awarded a transcendental religious level to the image that García Vega resisted. He was inspired by an ethical intellectualism favoring active creation and individual expression, but his acceptance did not extend beyond a certain faith in the poetic word to search. He was a part of the group until its dissolution in 1956, but a study of the texts he published in its pages reveals a solitary figure, a poet ill at ease as he suffered to give expression to his obsessive skepticism through his learned Orígenes language of trust. In this dualistic struggle his poietic voice (the *reverso*) ascended to the pages of the magazine, searching for the other side of the word. With time and advancing further in the individuation process, he became more critical, processing or discarding interactions with the system he had learned during his apprenticeship.

CHAPTER FOUR, “Eruption of the Poietic Self: *Suite para la espera* (1948) and *Oscuro dominio* (1934),” centers on the emergence of each poet from the initial formational experiences of their maestros, apprenticeships, and the literary communities that surrounded them. The subduction zone cycle concludes once the oceanic plate has descended, metamorphosed, risen, and erupted from the previously prevailing continental plate. I analyze this ascent by way of an exegetic study of their first published literary works: García Vega’s *Suite para la espera* (1948), and Larrea’s *Oscuro dominio* (1934).

García Vega’s *Suite para la espera* was published in 1948 reuniting what he called “textos cubistas con inventarios surrealistas” that he had began writing while shut inside his mother’s house obsessively learning the literary profession in the assigned readings of his Maestro (*OP* 353). Though several of the poems had appeared earlier in

Orígenes, Suite para la espera was his first published work. By way of his newfound writerly confidence he employs a method of self-reflection which permeate the 38 poems of this book, collections of repeated and disassembled objects, sometimes reassembled, sometimes left in pieces, broken apart to allow for the poet's searching gaze to recover the reminiscences they encapsulate. They vary between cubist and surrealist in character, but, as a student of Lezama's poetic system, he practiced the "digestión metamorfósica" freedom letting psyche, not fashion, dictate form, and even adding a playful character to his writing that differed from the Catholic solemnity of Orígenes poets such as Vitier, Diego, and García Marruz. He simply built, at times in a way similar to automatic writing, while at others consciously constructing the words of his Joseph Cornell assemblage, Duchampian *boîte surréaliste*, or Proustian *bœuf en gelée*,²¹ fragments in suspension inside poetic matter, but jointly the poems of *Suite para la espera* emit the optimism of the young creator finally gaining control over his suffering adolescent self by exploring the power of poiesis and the self-organizing structures of language.

Larrea's 1919 discovery of Huidobro and subsequent individuation set him about a feverish period of poetic composition, poems largely written in French, traversing a shifting layer of influence as he migrated through and out of his apprenticeship. Embracing Huidobro's lesson of poetic commitment but rejecting his maestro's need for recognition, he demonstrated little interest in publishing, and his poems only occasionally appeared in contemporary literary magazines (*Cruz y Raya*, *Grecia*, *Cervantes*). Nevertheless, he was respected and became an example of poetic authenticity for many of

²¹ "...une daube de bœuf où la gelée ne sente pas la colle, et où le bœuf ait pris parfum des carottes, c'est admirable !" (Proust, *Du côté de chez Swann* 458).

Spain's Generation of 1927 poets, though his reclusiveness led some to suspect that *Juan Larrea* was merely a pseudonym for Gerardo Diego. It was on Diego's insistence that the short-run 50 copies of *Oscuro dominio* were published in México in 1934. Its eight prose poems, written between 1926 and 1927 during the renewed period of creative activity that followed his move to Paris, represent his first published work, and the only book of his poetry to exist for the majority of his life. When it was published Larrea had already abandoned writing poetry, bringing to a close what he called his "experiencia poética total" and signaling the end of his first metamorphic cycle. The poems of *Oscuro dominio* represent a generic shift giving discursive primacy to the latent vision in his early creationist, ultraist, and surrealist poems. As poetry, he continued to construct the evocative image, but he tautly stretched it over prose, an anticipation of the mystical essayistic studies to come. Larrea gradually approached a second existential crisis that would march him once again into the subduction zone, but *Oscuro dominio* was the brief eruption of his poetic self that enabled his subsequent metamorphosis into his true self, a writer of a particular prose qualitatively elucidating poetry's visionary power to expose the world's meaning.

Larrea and García Vega reached the end of their first transformative cycle having given shape to indecisive early selves and found movement out of their early paralysis. They became poets actively finding order in the world. Nevertheless, they would feel the weight of the formational experiences that had created them and the confident momentum returned to neurotic suffering as the reality of being the product of an apprenticeship revealed itself in the disagreement between the impulse of their new poiesis and the still-

present adolescent instinct beckoning for fulfillment. The next cycle began, both surrounded again by the darkness of incomplete authenticity due to the overbearing influence that had provoked a concurrent revelation and deviation of self. The false self (the result of the first cycle) would again be subducted, advancing onward and downward before the eruption of the new, true self.

* * *

CONCLUSION

This study brings together the paths of four poets, four tectonic plates producing two subduction zones cycling in parallel, with the spotlight following the transformative journey of the oceanic plate sent into the metamorphic temperatures of the Earth's mantle. Two poets collide and are arranged alongside two other colliding poets. What is it exactly that emerges here from placing each pair next to one another? A metaphor for poetic discipleship? An Huidobrian key unlocking a new reality? A Lezamian image revealing new meaning through critical interpretation?

Juan Larrea's "Razón" from *Favorables París Poema* presents an idea of sequence, a progression reasoned from one moment to the next in language through time (13).

Sucesión de sonidos elocuentes movidos a resplandor, poema
es esto
y esto
y esto
Y esto que llega a mí en calidad de inocencia hoy,
que existe
porque existo y

porque el mundo existe
Y porque los tres podemos dejar correctamente de existir.

Complete comprehension of that moment's significance may be beyond the individual; the object innocently perceived and its perceiver unaware of the scope of the journey. Similarly, the present innocently precedes the future where the form in emergence passes from the self towards the imago. The young poet apprentice learns to construct verses building a "sucesión de sonidos elocuentes," the sequential stages wherein a poet translates perception to image and image to words, wherein a word forms and then a verse and then a poem. The eruption of poetic brightness, "movido al resplandor," associated with inspiration and the interior self, marks that threshold occasion in Heidegger's poiesis, or in Bloom's encounter, or in Stein's transformation, or in Rank's artistic personality, or the conclusive fourth stage of the subduction cycle. The Axiom of Maria, a medieval alchemical formulation recovered by Jung to describe the process of individuation, stated that "One becomes two, two becomes three, and out of the third comes the one as the fourth" (Jung 23). In "Razón" a sequence of three poems is completed—"poema / es esto / y esto / y esto"—yet a fourth emerges. An enumeration of three existences follows: the poem, the self, and the world, three occurrences of the verb "existir"—"que existe / porque existo y / porque el mundo existe"—where again a fourth form emerges in which the previous three are unified.

Juan Larrea and Lorenzo García Vega pass through three successive states during this formative cycle; from three moments of self emerges a fourth, a new self and a poet capable of expressing all of the others. At the conclusion of this study I hope to have

deciphered certain particularities of the forces driving artistic transformation forward and of the material resulting from those transformations: the evolving flesh of the poetic self. I hope to approach that intricacy located within the fuzzy chronology of self and literature where at times literature emerges from the new self, a shadow of the psyche, while at other times the new literature is the substance in which the self is formed. I hope to create a vantage point situated beside the Angel in Revelation, *upon the sea and upon the earth*, from which to interpret the advancing cycle.

* * *

CHAPTER ONE. A Framing Darkness: Faith and the Reality of Youth

*Poetry... comes only to those in dire imaginative
need of it, though it may come then as terror.
And this need is learned first through the young poet's or
ephebe's experience of another poet, of the Other whose
baleful greatness is enhanced by the ephebe's seeing him as
a burning brightness against a framing darkness.*²²

HAROLD BLOOM

INTRODUCTION

“Poetry... comes only to those in dire imaginative need of it,” writes Harold Bloom, where the direness of the subject’s *imaginative need* exposes a degree of psychic debilitation, and where poetry steps forth as a remedy. The creative self, waiting for a method to govern creation productively forward, helplessly attempts to discover sense inside a space of emptiness that Bloom calls a *framing darkness*. Poetry, as he explains it, is a path to meaning that one may choose after experiencing the violence of finding the world’s signs incomprehensible. As of yet incapable of deciphering them, having the impression of existing in the shadows, one sets about acquiring the necessary knowledge for their successful interpretation, driven by a faith, i.e. one’s instinct, that that knowledge exists. “La douleur force l’intelligence à chercher,” writes Deleuze, and through searching encouraged by an Other, a *burning brightness*, the poet attempts to bridge the gap between faith and intelligence, and arrive through meaning-bearing *poiesis*

²² *The Anxiety of Influence* 35.

at the poetic text, the concrete form: the palpable structure of the decoded darkness (31).²³

In the first two sections of this initial chapter, I examine the pre-literary years of Juan Larrea and Lorenzo García Vega, drawing a parallel between Bloom's *framing darkness* and the Spain and Cuba of the early twentieth century, while in the third section I formulate a proposal for why literature in particular presented itself as the appropriate art form to answer their imaginative need. Here, *darkness* implies the spiritual void of their childhood where each suffered the oppression of absent meaning, substantiated by the symptomatic neuroses that each poet testified to have battled during this period. This is of course not a uniform mass of negative experiences, but includes the shocking moment when one's childhood language no longer protects one from the world and reality renders it ineffective; García Vega called this the moment when one cannot resist reality (*OP* 335). Bloom's division of the components in a young poet's formation already suggests the Freudian psychic structure of the id, ego, and super-ego; the unrelenting *dire imaginative need* is the suffering id overpowered by the *framing darkness* that is an external reality. The *burning brightness* is the maestro poet, examined in Chapter Two, akin to the psychoanalyst whose expert Word assists the analysand towards a more-complete realization of self. Thus, I identify this darkness, exterior circumstances under observation, as a cause of illness, that is, the gap that holds the non-realized, producing physical and mental symptoms that resulted in their impeded

²³ Similarly, recalling Vicente Huidobro's systematic proposal of Art's evolution described in the introduction, for each phase "les premiers pas vers son extériorisation sont effectués par l'Intelligence que cherche et qui tâtonne" ("La Création pure" 1303).

participation in society (Lacan, *Seminars* 22). In order to make the leap from neurosis to poetry, my primary work of reference is Otto Rank's *Art and Artist* (1932), which directs Freudian psychoanalysis to the formation of the artistic personality in particular. While this is a well-documented idea, what is ultimately of interest for me here is to arrive at a parallel description of each poet's particular darkness —first Spain, then Cuba— as a geographical place from which an individual, via literature, emerged, and as a historical space that shaped the character of an individual's art. In this way we can twist the phrase “the milieu *produces* the writer” into a statement that would be more acceptable to Sartre by making the milieu a framing darkness, the environment determined by the self's experience of it.²⁴ The comparative aspect of this juxtaposition will then reveal curious points of contact at similar starting points that ultimately diverged as each poet reasoned extremely different assessments of poetry's capabilities.

The major part of the biographical information that exists on this period of their lives is in fact autobiographical, recorded within their literary works, correspondence, and interviews. These texts have the character of self-examinations evidently shaped by their own readings on psychoanalysis. For this reason I consider it advantageous, if not unavoidable, to use a psychoanalytical interpretation of their childhood experiences. The life of Juan Larrea, writes David Bary, was “una marcha paulatina pero inevitable hacia una salud mental y física cada vez más robusta, hasta convertirlo con el tiempo en un

²⁴ In *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?* Sartre wrote, “Et je suis si loin de repousser l'explication de l'œuvre par la situation de l'homme que j'ai toujours considéré le projet d'écrire comme le libre dépassement d'une certaine situation humaine et *totale*” (82). In this sense writing will be for Larrea and García Vega an assertion of self within and in spite of their perception of a particular environment.

prodigio de energía, de optimismo y de equilibrio” (*Larrea* 22). The significance of Chapter One is to detail what origin provoked such a march and how it determined its direction. As for García Vega, Jorge Luis Arcos, in the chapter titled “Psicoanálisis y creación” of his book dedicated to the work of the author, poses the question, “¿Se podría comprender el sentido de la obra de Lorenzo García Vega sin su componente psicoanalítico?” which he answers affirmatively, if we were only interested in its literary qualities, but we would miss its ultimate meaning (183). This implies that I will consider the authors’ descriptions of their childhood experiences as the initial conscious confrontations of each self with their reality, that is, with their physical and historical environments, and their interactions with the Other. Furthermore, I identify the individual suffering they describe as the result of a dynamic conflict between the two in which their instinct, not finding its needs reciprocated by its surroundings, felt threatened with destruction.

In a neurosis the internal world is less powerful than the exterior world, resulting in a repression of the id due to “the predominance of the influence of reality” (Freud, “The Loss of Reality in Neurosis and Psychosis” 183). In this situation, the id’s demands are incompatible with its environment, which limits its expression, and as a consequence, the ego invokes a variety of defense symptoms. The primary symptom to which Larrea and García Vega attested was a paralyzing anxiety before an impenetrable reality. “Toda alma humana,” writes María Zambrano in her essay on Freudianism, “parece estar sometida a un hechizo o a un dragón, y espera, a veces con angustia espantosa, ser desvelada, comprendida. Es esa edad bella y terrible que es la adolescencia esta angustia

llega a extremos peligrosísimos” (130). Their anxiety grew as their wait for the arrival of answers was prolonged, an anxiety that Freud aligns with an expectation of something that cannot as yet be defined (*Inhibitions* 91). Other symptoms included varying degrees of depression, confusion, phobic avoidance, compulsive ritualized acts, lethargy, obsessive repetition, negativity, and cynicism. The suffering of such symptoms are extensively expressed throughout the writing of Larrea and García Vega, all of which inhibited their active participation in the world of their childhood, and sent their early self in search of a method for survival. However, as we will see in later chapters, their psychological suffering was not limited to this period alone; indeed, they would describe serious bouts intermittently at multiple stages of their lives as they faced new realizations in their personal and literary evolution. For this reason, opposing Freud’s ascription of all neuroses to infantile sexual fantasies, I am more convinced by Jung’s proposition that the cause of a neurosis is to be found in the present, not in the past (“Psychoanalysis and Neurosis” 52). In this sense, the details of a historical moment acquire more importance because it is specifically through their consideration that one can identify the origin of the illness and subsequently the origin of the response.

I am compelled to place trust in their recollection of this formational period, though it forms a part of their own writerly self-analysis and invention. The degree to which a testimony reshapes an already-unreachable historical truth is difficult to measure, but in this chapter, to lend greater validity to the writers’ representations I propose a trilateral collaboration between their confessions, historical texts, and psychoanalytical studies. Firstly, by complementing their descriptions of early twentieth-century Spain and

Cuba with the observations of other historians who extensively analyzed the various crises of each country during this period, the reality individually perceived as a darkness becomes less a product of a particular experience and approaches instead a more-objective historical moment shared with others. Secondly, the inclusion of psychoanalytical studies on neurosis will further explain and corroborate the reactions of each writer to the historical moment they describe. It is problematic to construct a psychoanalytical case study from source material wherein the analysand, well informed on the topic of psychoanalysis, presents their own extensive self-examination; however, “anxiety is that which does not deceive” (Lacan, *Seminars* 41), and the words used in the face of anxiety is the void making itself heard, therefore, I consider this autobiographical information, with all of its probable distortions, as an indispensable revelation of the childhood subject.

In the third section, I focus more intently on the psychological facet that dominated this stage of their self-portrait to formulate a proposal for why it was literature in particular that presented itself as the appropriate art form to answer their imaginative need. My intention is to further substantiate the move that Bloom argues takes one from a framing darkness to poetry. Where for him it is instigated by the young poet’s encounter with the greatness of another poet, I propose an interim step that explains why the attention of Larrea and García Vega was directed towards the poet. I begin my argument with Heidegger’s “Building Dwelling Thinking,” from which I use his suggestion that from a corrupted relationship with language stems the modern sentiment of alienation (146), not dissimilar from Lacanian alienation of “the subject who loses his meaning and

direction in the objectifications of the discourse” (*The Language of the Self* 44). Then, based on each writer’s experiences, and their reactions to those experiences, as they are outlined in the first two sections, I propose that the specific neuroses of Larrea and García Vega originated in a crisis of faith, largely religious in nature, but that extended outwards to encompass the Other as a whole, provoked by their distrust of the language produced by authority figures during their youth. Language, as it was imposed upon them, appeared insincere, manipulative, and thus, meaningless. A Freudian gap appeared between the word and meaning, an abyss of incompatibility between knowledge and faith mediated through concrete examples of a loss of trust in the Other. Finally, with Otto Rank’s *Art and Artist*, and Freud’s “Neurosis and Psychosis,” I conclude that it was only by becoming a writer, through the active creation of words whose relationship with meaning coincided with their own psychological needs, that they would be able to assemble their own identity, empowering the instincts of the id, thus treating their mental suffering. “Part of what is peculiar to the thinker and the poet is that they receive their meditation from the word and shelter it in saying, such that thinkers and poets are the genuine preservers of the word in language,” also writes Heidegger (*Introduction* 5). When the great other poet guide finally appeared, which I will take up in Chapter Two, Larrea and García Vega were already waiting for them.

By way of this structured argument buttressing historical and psychoanalytical theorists against the testimonies of Juan Larrea and Lorenzo García Vega, wherein the particular substantiates general observations and proposals, and vice-versa, where the theoretical arguments contribute an explanation of an individual’s experience of self, I

hope to arrive at a convincing depiction of a moment that approaches neurosis with a literary cause, and propels each man to seek a literary answer through creation. A neurosis, as Jung states, is “an act of adaptation that has failed” (“Psychoanalysis and Neurosis” 53), and consequently, each poet’s explicit portrait of the particular surroundings that caused his psychological suffering is the historical moment to which he failed to adapt, and that which displaced adaptation instead to a future space that they were to define through literature.

* * *

JUAN LARREA IN “AN INFINITE SEA OF INDECISIVENESS” (1895-1919)

Juan Larrea died in 1980 leaving behind an unfinished manuscript for an intended autobiography, several pages of which were published four years later in its incomplete form under the title “Veredicto” in Madrid in the spring issue of *Poesía*. According to the magazine’s editors, via Larrea’s grandson Vicente Frederico Luy, it was started just months before his death, the poet himself knowing that he would need “cinco años de vida para acabarla” (4).

Se sabía en mí, desde hace largos años, que algún día tendría que hacer lo que por fin hago en este instante: sentarme ante una mesa para empezar a referir las conexiones complejas y significativas que han venido entretejiéndose en el curso de mi experiencia personal, cargadas, a lo que entiendo, de sentido. (9)

This was his last work, the conclusion of a life that traveled through genres of literature studiously searching to make evident what for him was a palpable truth: that an illuminating reason underlay our visible reality and that the poetic word, from that of the biblical Apocalypse to César Vallejo, testified to the human spirit’s advance towards a coming universal enlightenment, a Hegelian order emerging from chaos. His role in this teleology is concealed inside an intricate thread that connects his poems of *Versión Celeste*, his considerations of the individual and the collective in his poetic diary *Orbe*, —both composed between 1926 and 1932—, and his many lengthy cultural essays, beginning with *Rendición de espíritu* in 1943, where the first person is implicitly present only as a compiler of details, an examiner of symbols, and a perceptive historical notary

who exceeds his note-taking responsibilities to also include their decipherment. His biography became sublimated within the literature he primarily dedicated to the Other, where life and literature were interchangeable as he attempted to comprehend a greater system in which the individual and the collective were united.

In this section of the opening chapter I analyze Juan Larrea's pre-literary years when, driven by a psychological frustration with the absence of meaning in the country's gloomy atmosphere and the empty words of the authority figures around him, he attempted to become a poet, but consistently failed because of his own mental paralysis. "Su peripecia vital y su peripecia poética, paralelas en muchos sentidos, se entienden desde esa doble tensión de rechazo y de búsqueda," asserts Díaz de Guereño (19). During his adolescence the devout faith in literature as a vessel for understanding, so characteristic of the adult Larrea, was only an instinctual hunch, and it was constantly under attack by the mental suffering of his neurosis brought on by the chaos of early twentieth-century Spain. To reconstruct his experience of this period I refer to the letters that Larrea wrote to Gerardo Diego between 1919 and 1980, compiled and commented in 1986 by Juan Manuel Díaz de Guereño and Enrique Cordero de Ciria, his personal reflections in *Orbe* (1990), the aforementioned unfinished autobiography "Veredicto," among other texts written by Larrea in which he alludes to this stage of his life. I also consider secondary works such as David Bary's *Larrea: poesía y transfiguración* (1976), Robert Gurney's *La poesía de Juan Larrea* (1985), and the recent biography by José Fernández de la Sota's *Juan Larrea: Versión terrestre* (2009), as well as others. Through this mixture of primary and secondary materials, I give special attention to the

psychological conflict Juan Larrea experienced with his surroundings, a testimony to a personal and national history as it shaped a particular mental state, eventually impelling an individual to a search for answers through literature.

To substantiate this subjective experience, I complement Larrea's biography with the observations of several historians and philosophers who wrote on the well-documented crises of this period in Spanish history, namely Manuel Tuñón de Lara, José Luis Comellas, and Santos Juliá, as well as José Ortega y Gasset and Miguel de Unamuno. In this sense, I intend for this section to serve as a corroboration of a particular historical environment, thus confirming its character, and justifying Larrea's reaction to it. At the same time, I will consider the development of the threatening symptoms of a neurosis that appeared during Larrea's search for his identity as he moved between the conservative world of his parents in Bilbao and the liberal house of his aunt in Madrid, where he struggled to satisfy the demands of both the exterior voice of authority and a dissenting interior voice of self. Through a parallel employment of Larrea's own self-evaluation, and Freud, Jung, and Lacan's psychoanalytical arguments on neurosis, the id, the ego, and language, I reinforce to what extent his mental state was derived from a conflict between his self and the historical moment within which he was born, and how this prepared him to see in Vicente Huidobro a trustworthy past master.

This is the *framing darkness* to which Bloom refers, and it is from here that the poet Juan Larrea emerged when pushed towards the possibility of meaning-creation through art to remedy the oppressive effects of the surrounding chaos on his spirit. From a feeling of betrayal towards earlier generations, he suffered to find his way, to overcome

the cultural stagnancy of the failed empire and move forward in search of “ese estado decisivo de concienciación cuando el entendimiento de la realidad desvanece los nudos de las neurosis” (“Veredicto” 35).

Prior to 1919 Bilbao was a place of spiritual emptiness for Juan Larrea; it was a place where “todo era gris” (Bary 41). Around that year he was writing, intermittently, but alone and unconfidently in the shadows of his room while his days were devoted to complying with family wishes: studying for a career as an archivist, working in his brother’s machinery business, and living at home. “Visto de fuera,” he told David Bary, “debió dar la impresión de un señorito vagamente literario, conformista, abúlico, casi enfermizo” (Bary 41). *Slightly literary*: he read sporadically and without discipline; he had tried his hand several times at poetry and theater, but was not yet convinced that he should dedicate himself to literature. *Conformist*: he obediently carried out his studies, and, at the urging of his parents, searched for a career, while setting aside his instinct that there was something else for him. *Apathetic*: he did not believe in what he was doing and he felt trapped in the mediocrity of conservative Bilbao and in the sluggishness of Spanish society. *Sickly*: he suffered from anxiety before a world that appeared limited and lacking sense —“el espíritu está enfermo,” he wrote in July 1918 (*Cartas* 51)— which weighed on him physically making his neurosis was visible.

However, during his 24 years of life before this he had traveled many times between Bilbao and Madrid, between his parent’s home and the house of his aunt and uncle, two worlds separated by extreme ideological distance: one, oppressively conservative; the other, stimulatingly liberal. As he moved back and forth with the pushes

and pulls of personal loyalty, fragilely loyal to himself and unenthusiastically loyal to his family, his developing personality melded components of each space into an obsessively unsatisfied individual searching for intuited new answers and guided by an ability to have faith in the unseen towards what he saw as “aquella región del espíritu en que la vida y la obra adquieren un sentido transcendental.” (Amón). At the time of Larrea’s birth, Spain as a world empire had long been in decline. While opinions vary on when the country took its decadent turn and descended into seemingly perpetual crisis, ideas range from the country’s very inception in Middle Ages, according to Ortega y Gasset (Juliá 34), to any number of national poor decisions or disasters including the loss of their American colonies to the wars of independence culminating in 1898, the failure of the First Republic in 1874, the Spanish Civil War from 1936 to 1939, and the thirty-six year dictatorship under Franco. However, there is a consensus that this is the reality and this makes it impossible to consider any moment in Spanish history without mentioning the Spanish malaise. Still today, as noted in Juliá’s introduction to his 2010 collection of essays *Hoy no es ayer*, Spain must continue to convince itself that while it’s necessary to know one’s past, it’s just as necessary “no quedar atrapados en sus redes” (21).

The crisis of Spain is a prevailing, well-documented theme that in the works of a multitude of writers, philosophers, and historians alike who explore symptoms and search for explanations through their own historical and cultural diagnoses. In *Cánovas* (1912), the last volume of his *Episodios nacionales*, Pérez Galdós projects a gloomy future for Spain moving forward from 1880. At the conclusion of his novel, which spans the decade and a half after the overthrow of the First Republic, he dejectedly predicted, which was

his historical assessment after the fact in 1912, a country that would remain in constant upheaval because of the dueling self-interests of its leaders who unfailingly abused language to their advantage, stringing together words whose true intent was contrary to their apparent meaning.

Los políticos se constituirán en casta, dividiéndose hipócritas en dos bandos igualmente dinásticos é igualmente estériles, sin otro móvil que tejer y destejer la jerga de sus provechos particulares en el telar burocrático. No harán nada fecundo; no crearán una Nación; no remediarán la esterilidad de las estepas castellanas y extremeñas. (277)

The dissociation of words from their meanings was continuously diagnosed as the ruling aesthetic in national discourse, shaping the citizens' ability to trust their government to work for the betterment of the country's situation. Instead, a sense of resignation took hold of a population increasingly permissive of the ever-corrupt fight for political power. Ortega y Gasset substantiates Pérez Galdós' *prediction* with his own characterization of 1890 Spain as "un cauce de miserias donde rodaba altisonante un torrente de falsas palabras" ("En defensa de Unamuno" 9), which the historian Santos Juliá also upholds: "Eso era España de 1890: raza canija, políticos infames. De eso no había duda" (31). In 1895, the year of the José Martí-led revolution in Cuba that set Spain on a path to an eventual war with the United States, Miguel de Unamuno wrote his essay "Sobre el marasmo actual en España" in which he described the "espectáculo deprimente el del estado mental y moral de nuestra sociedad española" as it filled Spain's "atmósfera de bochorno" (252). The pessimism of the great writer from Bilbao not only shrouded his

present, but also extended beyond to future generations, as he took up Pérez Galdós' analogy of sterility.

He aquí la palabra terrible: no hay juventud. Habrá jóvenes, pero juventud falta. [...] Se dice que hay gérmenes vivos y fecundos por ahí, medio ocultos, pero está el suelo tan apisonado y compacto, que los brotes tiernos de los granos profundos no logran abrir la capa superficial calicostrada, no consiguen romper el hielo. [...] caen heridos de anemia ante el brutal y férreo cuadrículado de nuestro ordenancismo y nuestra estúpida gravedad; nadie les tiende a tiempo una mirada benévola y de inteligencia. Se les quiere de otro modo que como son; a nuestro rancio espíritu de intolerancia no le entra el dejar que se desarrolle cada cual según su contenido y naturaleza. (253-54)

For Unamuno there was an authoritarian air maintaining the population mediocre by forbidding anyone to be otherwise. The barrenness of the politicians' words in Pérez Galdós infiltrated the soil of Unamuno's Spain to poison the spirit of all who attempted to survive it well and unbroken. That same year, 1895, Juan Larrea Celayeta was born in Bilbao, three weeks after Cuba's war of independence broke out, from the *tamped-down ground* of Spanish rigidity through which he would try to emerge, still himself, *according to his content and his nature*.

Larrea was one of seven children in the affluent Catholic Larrea family. His father, Francisco Larrea, was a distant, withdrawn man who had received his wealth from his father and subsequently made a living managing this inheritance. He had an affinity for literature and throughout his life he had compiled a select library —Virgil, Ovid,

Dante, Shakespeare, Spanish Romantic poets, and the novels of Pérez Galdós (Gurney 55)—that would be a large influence on his son (Bary 28). His authoritative father would always be very critical of him and often intervened in the decisions of his son.

His mother, Felisa Celayeta, was a fervent Catholic and similarly authoritarian who “vivía con los ojos puestos, más que en este mundo, en el otro, en el cual creía con toda su alma y de manera literal” to the point of fanaticism (Bary 27). While Larrea shared this mystical sensibility with her, the meaning of that *other* world was very different for each of them. Under the orders of his mother, the family celebrated communion daily with a Jesuit priest, prayed the rosary several times a day, and had frequent confessions (Gurney 59). But for Larrea, in a letter written to Gurney, the things she said were “contre la vie-la vie! La merveille des merveilles” (54). Not surprisingly, the family home held a repressive air that seemed like a convent in a Basque city that at the end of the nineteenth century was populated with “curas y empresarios con idéntica fe en su propia salvación” (Fernández 21). Religion was the governing system in his family, where two of his sisters became nuns and his older brother Francisco became a Jesuit theology professor and rector at the Oña Seminary in Burgos (Fernández 22).

In 1899, at the age of four, he was sent to live in Madrid with his aunt Micaela Larrea from whom he received more attention and affection than he ever could have from his austere mother. The initial shock of being *on loan* to his motherless aunt was soon forgotten when his time in the capital offered a liberating and joyful life, counter to his suffocating home in Bilbao. He remained with them for four years, until the age of eight, and upon being pulled back to Bilbao, he experienced his first sensation of loss. Larrea

considered this traumatic separation to be at the “racines de ma personnalité, surtout du côté poétique” (Gurney 51). The early experience of an initial *elsewhere* would not soon abandon him after his return to Bilbao and he grew increasingly restive. Between these two worlds, as between his interior and exterior worlds, there lay an existential abyss. “En su mentalidad infantil,” writes Miguel Nieto, “tal abismo se cifraba en los recuerdos de la felicidad pasada, en los ideales de enajenación religiosa que respiraba a todas horas en su casa, en la recepción de lo inmediato no ya como envolvente sino lejano” (14). The geographical displacement, preceded by the sound of the train whistle promising a departure from the present, was the earthly invigoration underlying the ideological traverse that equally excited as he approached the freethinking house of his aunt. He sought to locate himself somewhere along this passage.

Meanwhile, Spain was in the aftermath of its historic fall in 1898 when it had lost the war in Cuba, and consequently, all of its remaining territories in the Caribbean and Pacific. Its Empire dismantled, it was transformed, according to historian José Luis Comellas, into a country of problems in a period of crisis (536). This crisis, writes Tuñón de Lara, “era múltiple o polifacética” involving a systematic collapse that disgraced the economic, political, and social character of the Spanish people (*La España del siglo XX–I* 16). Comellas identifies a period of crisis that began here and whose end he places at 1912, after which, he suggests, appeared a new attitude of moving forward, though the state of crisis itself had not been remedied; he also expounds on the many political and social failures of the 1920’s and 30’s, the fall of the Second Republic, and the “tragedia de 1936-39” (610). But during this initial period of crisis, when the “sistema tradicional

español crujó hasta sus cimientos” (Tuñón de Lara, *La España del siglo XIX–2* 129) and that encompassed Larrea’s childhood and adolescence, Comellas also describes a crisis of the Spanish soul (565), as Unamuno and so many others had already pointed out. However, the conservative historian extends blame to Unamuno and the *Generation of 98* writers also, particularly Pío Baroja, Azorín, Antonio Machado, and Ramón del Valle-Inclán, who in his opinion displayed a critical obsession for the country’s problems akin to wallowing in their own analyses. Though his criticism is not strictly literary, one can derive the implication of a literature that failed to break free of the shackles of the nation’s sickly spirit.

While Tuñón de Lara, disagrees and praises this group for their “amplio espíritu crítico” and their “ruptura de todo conformismo” (*La España del siglo XX-I* 17), it was precisely against this literary generation that Juan Larrea would later react looking for inspiration outside the country to more dynamic examples of change. In 1926 he asked rhetorically in “Presupuesto vital,” the preliminary text to the first issue of his literary magazine *Favorables París Poema*: “Nuestros jóvenes ¿qué obra comenzada han heredado? ¿A qué manos han venido a sustituir las suyas?” (3). César Vallejo, who co-founded the magazine, followed Larrea’s text with his own diatribe “*El estado de la literatura española*,” and pronounced the younger generation’s disappointment. In it he criticizes Unamuno, amongst others, for having failed to inspire the current “juventud sin maestros” leaving them “sola ante un presente ruinoso y ante un futuro asaz incierto” (7),

while echoing the same sentiment expressed by writers decades earlier.²⁵ Vallejo's initial sounds of dissatisfaction then turn to condemnation and a call to action that was so characteristic of the avant-garde artists.

De la generación que nos precede no tenemos, pues, nada que esperar. Ella es un fracaso para nosotros y para todos los tiempos. Si nuestra generación logra abrirse un camino, su obra aplastará a la anterior. Entonces, la historia de la literatura española saltará sobre los últimos treinta años, como sobre un abismo. (7)

The *last thirty years* that Vallejo decried an *abyss*, having been written in 1926, would span the period 1896-1926, and, in effect, the entire life of Juan Larrea until that point. This void, literary in principle, but indicative of the much greater crisis of the Spanish soul to which Comellas referred, was that which contributed to Larrea's existential neurosis and corroborates his accounts of early despair. The abyss he had felt between Bilbao and Madrid was in fact much larger, engulfing the entire country and he would have look even farther to move beyond it.

As a child, Larrea was “un alumno triste e inadaptado que soñaba con cosas lejanas y no veía el sentido en lo que hacía” (Bary 31). At age 10 he elected to attend the Franciscan *Sagrados Corazones* boarding school in Miranda de Ebro near Burgos because it implied a minor escape from Bilbao. However, “su educación reforzó su concepción de que la vida carecía de sentido” and he began to feel even more alienated

²⁵ Emerson similarly asked in his 1843 lecture “The Transcendentalist,” “Where are they who represented to the last generation that extravagant hope which a few happy aspirants suggest to ours?” (96).

(Gurney 51). He found no consolation in the words of his teachers or classmates and his “ensoñaciones acudían a su imaginación para remediar un estado de conciencia deficiente, pero le vaciaban a la vez los afectos en lo irrealizable, procurándole mayor soledad” (Nieto 14). At the age of 12, feeling trapped and despondent, he composed his first verses, a moment that he recounted in a paragraph from a January, 1933 entry in his poetic diary *Orbe*:

Encontrándome al filo de mis doce o trece años, una tarde en el colegio, durante uno de los largos estudios, sentí en mí una emoción interna que se traducía en un deseo de juntar palabras de un modo rítmico. Hasta entonces sólo había gustado y ávidamente de los libros de aventuras. Había oído hablar de versos, pero siempre había sentido el más profundo desdén, así como la más grande incompreensión. Ninguno de mis compañeros de sección había hablado nunca de tal cosa. Me parecía absurdo. Pero esa tarde de Marzo o Abril de 1908 las palabras de un modo espontáneo llevadas por mi emoción interior trataban de reunirse en versos. La emoción era gustosa y agradable. Dándome cuenta de la cosa pensé que para escribir versos hacía falta un asunto. Y el asunto que encontré, quizás porque en los libros había visto algo semejante, ya que es tema propio de cierta poesía española del siglo XIX, fue a la muerte de mi hermana Micaela, ángel volado al cielo, a la que en verdad nunca con anterioridad había pensado. A partir de esa tarde mi destino estaba determinado. (268)

Neither this poem nor any others have survived from this initiatory phase that recalls an experience of Lacanian jubilation upon recognizing his alienated self inside his words.

According to Bary they shared a theme that would characterize the entirety of Larrea's work: "ir más allá de un ambiente estrecho y asfixiante" (31), and Larrea's discovery of an urge to *bring words together* caused him to explore literature more deeply, reading the Romantic poetry of Bécquer, Zorrilla, and Núñez de Arce. Although he had an amicable relationship with his classmates and was appreciative of his teachers, several of whom were priests from France who introduced him to the poetry of Lamartine and Musset (Bary 31), his reality was not fulfilling. The new experience of literature had placed in his hands a method for self-actualization that camaraderie could not equal.

His strong desire to be elsewhere was reinforced by his particular sensibility for the synchronicity of events, a reference to the Jungian concept of meaningful chance.²⁶ Of note is the event he shared with David Bary in which during a carnival lottery at *Sagrados Corazones*, having bought 20 numbers, he announced to his friend that the winning number would be his 846. He was right and won the grand prize: a watch. During the next two carnivals he was equally successful, gathering two more watches (Bary 32). It was Larrea's feeling that this was not simply due to luck, but to a greater reality that his instinct had known to follow.²⁷ Immersed in a setting where his reasoned life of serial causes and effects had resulted so far in a dismal existence, these acausal happenings were promising for Larrea's developing spirit, suggesting to him that there

²⁶ "Synchronicity therefore means the simultaneous occurrence of a certain psychic state with one or more external events which appear as meaningful parallels to a momentary subjective state" (Jung, *Synchronicity* 36).

²⁷ Juan Larrea wrote of innumerable synchronistic events in his life and the symbolic meaning they carried. The tendency to experience such coincidences, and to be aware of them, is common in the Larrea family. His grandson, the poet Vicente Federico Luy Larrea, also spoke of them, including the fact that in the plane crash that killed his parents when he was just one year old, there was another couple who also perished, and who had a son who had been born on the same day as him and who also became a poet.

was perhaps some alternative ontological order to be discovered, greater than his mother's Catholicism, and that he was able to perceive it.

In 1911, as he finished his high school studies and suffered the approaching moment to choose a professional degree, he confessed to one of his teachers, Father Engelberto, that he found no meaning in anything, but no friendly advice from his superior could console him (Bary 33). While his classmates were excited at the idea of their approaching careers, he felt “un profundo sentimiento del aparente sin sentido de la existencia” (Gurney 62). Amidst this crisis, his parents forced him to seek answers undergoing a week of St. Ignatius Loyola's Spiritual Exercises, “a structured and well-ordered procedure of prayer, meditation, and self-examination to be undergone” (Olin 12). His mother had wanted him to join the Society of Jesus, however, in an act of compromise, later that year at the age of 16, he began his university studies in letters at the Jesuit university of Deusto in Bilbao. As a student of letters he felt “aburrido y abúlico,” recalling the incompetence of his professors and the process of being inculcated with “una cultura ritual y oficial, hueca de contenido real y como atrofiada” (Bary 35). However, during this period he made several friends through a Jesuit student club called the Centro de los Luises, amongst them José de Valdivieso with whom he wrote a play titled *Las alas rotas* (Nieto 15), and Gerardo Diego, an acquaintance that began a 67-year conversation on life and poetry: confessing worry and euphoria for all topics, proposing projects, exchanging writings, critiquing and motivating one another, and remaining friends for the rest of Larrea's years.

In 1914, he examined Greek and Historical Grammar with Unamuno in Salamanca (Bary 35), but his encounter with the formidable writer neither furnished him with answers nor produced the inspiration he was waiting for. When *elsewhere* World War I was breaking out, meaning for Larrea would appear to exist only on the exterior of what was expected of him, in his insatiable readings of Rubén Darío and French poetry found in his father's library (Bary 35). He moved about his environment, yet his self still searched for a logical agreement and reality, and such frustration exacerbated his neurotic swings of depression, isolation, and laziness. "Efectivamente, mi estado de entonces era un estado de disociación, de dualidad, operado gracias a la cuña de la enfermedad en potencia que dentro de mí llevaba, en el desequilibrio *sin forma aún*, sin manifestación, latente, semi-abstracto" he wrote reflecting on his psychological suffering that threatened to deteriorate his capacity to participate actively in the world (*Orbe* 72). Out of desperate need occasional verses sprung from his hands. Of his early poetic endeavors few have been preserved, however David Bary writes of a text from around 1914 titled "Yo" from which Juan Larrea managed to recall several verses. According to the biographer it was a "poema corta de métrica regular, termina expresando su anhelo de «morirme de amor en una playa remota»" (*Larrea* 37). The formal aspects of the poem and the poet's preoccupation with the self are characteristic of the Romantic influence upon him at the time. The existence of this poem is worth mentioning if nothing else but as an indication of a poetic starting point so contrary to the direction his writing would later take. He wrote only as he those he had read, yet he could not find himself in this poetry, and dejected, abandoned his project again and again.

He finished his degree in 1915, and was forced by his family to complete once again Loyola's Spiritual Exercises, a meditation that would surely illuminate the path he was meant to follow, but, as he told Bary, the "sin resultados satisfactorios para su familia" (38). Uncertain of what to do next, he began to prepare entrance exams for archivists, librarians, and archaeologists where, for the way it was taught to him, all of the themes were "muertas y vacías de contenido vital" (Bary 38). While this career choice provided a way back to Madrid and his Aunt Micaela, where he would remain from 1916 to 1918, it would be only a minor escape with regards to quality and duration. Despite his new half-hearted purpose that was carrying him toward the security of a future public position and calmed the insistence of his parents, he continued to experience the anxiety of "sus propios impulsos creadores, medio ahogados en aquel ambiente" (Bary 38). Though plagued by lethargy he expanded his readings of the French Symbolist poets. Additionally, he read works of philosophy, for example *El ideísmo* (1883) by Ramón de Campoamor against which he reacted strongly for its biased defense of systems over a sincere search for Truth, concluding "los sistemas filosóficos son detestables," and:

No me cabe en la cabeza [*sic*] exista un hombre tan prodigiosamente lógico que sentados unos principios vaya sacando y deduciendo consecuencia tras consecuencia hasta formar un sistema filosófico complete, renunciando a los supremos placeres de contradecirse y divagar. (*Cartas* 34)

He also read Wagner's ideas surrounding *Lohengrin* and *Tristan und Isolde*, having been asked to compose a libretto for the opera *Amaya* that would be scored by Guridi. From this collaboration, however, Larrea's unwavering universal sensibility rejected the composer's art as incompatible with his own and this, like most of his projects at the time, was abandoned (Fernández 35).

He was similarly frustrated in his relationships with women confessing to Diego that he was "exigente en exceso" needing a love "formado por la compenetración absoluta de dos espíritus que se completan" (*Cartas* 31). On one failed occasion he wrote of being unable to break his silence with a girl he felt he loved: "Tuve miedo de mí mismo. Tan acostumbrado estoy a permanecer hermético que me asustaba y me asusta la menor expansión" (*Cartas* 29). Despite his inability to escape his crisis, he continued to experiment with his own poetic possibilities, composing verses that were "barrocos y difíciles," and "narraciones de carácter simbólico con oscuras resonancias ontológicas" (Bary 39). Though none of these were ever published, nor did any survive in their original form, one, "Transcarnación," was reconstructed by Larrea in a letter to David Bary written in 1974.

Qué viejas sois,
qué viejas sois, mis manos.
Qué viejas ya cuando os heredé...

Y vosotros, mis pies,
qué cansados de errar itinerarios...

Y vosotros, mis ojos,
qué de cosas no habréis visto

que yo he llegado tarde para ver.

Y tú,
sobre todo tú, mi corazón...
Cuánto habrás brincado
como a la comba, con tu lazada azul,
al compás de tu vieja canción.
¡Qué viejo eres, mi corazón!

Sin conoceros
os compadezco, mis herederos,
los que heredéis la triste herencia de mi carne,
de mis pies, de mis ojos, de mis manos,
cada vez más viejos...

Mas sobre todo
a quienes heredéis mi corazón
os tengo, en verdad, compasión. (Bary, *Larrea* 191)

The poem, dating from around 1917, differs in structure and content from those Larrea asserts to have expressed in “Yo,” while simultaneously adding a teleological dimension to the perspective of the suffering poet. “Transcarnación,” a neologism that suggests an existence that exceeds the flesh,²⁸ outlines an evolutive procession for the hands, feet, eyes, and heart of the poetic voice, which he has inherited from earlier possessors, and which he will consequently leave for the following generation. Time advances linearly as each transferal of the flesh produces corporal portions always older

²⁸ David Bary notes the early linguistic audacity of this title crossing “transmigration” with “reincarnation” while modifying the meaning of both. See chapter six in his *Nuevos estudios sobre Huidobro y Larrea* for a detailed analysis of this poem. In 1999, Phillip Savage defined *transcarnation* as “a system of multiple identities within multiple dimensions, existing all at the same time.” (Bryant, Clifton D. *Handbook of Death and Dying*. New York: Sage Publications, 2003. 66). As he describes it, time is not a separate lineal dimension, but rather a simultaneity of existences, as in parallel universes.

(*cada vez más viejos*). In this sense it differs from the linearity of reincarnation. Here the consciousness is not reborn into a new body, but instead the body and its parts retain the weight of their memory and are reborn around a new consciousness: his hands are old when he receives them (*Qué viejas ya cuando os heredé...*), the feet are already tired from wandering directionless, the eyes have seen many things that the poet arrived too late for, and the heart has long been beating, skipping rope, to the rhythm of its ancient song. The implication is that the individual self is small when considered within the history of the human body.

The poem initially resounds romantic, as must have “Yo,” through the series of exclamations and apostrophes directed towards the personified body parts. However, what at first suggests a tortured poet’s ode to self is tempered by the diminution of the individual’s place in process. While the first four stanzas employ a second person, plural (*vosotros*) then singular (*tú*) when referring to the pieces, the fifth and sixth stanzas move to a future moment succeeding the poetic voice, passing over the present represented by the composition of the poem itself. They express a sense of futility as the poetic self is already resigned to what his contribution will be: the sad inheritance of my flesh (*la triste herencia de mi carne*). The voice of “Transcarnación” fulfills the role more of the annotator who records, while inserting his personal lament, his position inside an idea that is much greater than himself. What exactly that structure is remains unclear, perhaps even unknown, and the unending struggle to comprehend, marred by mishandling and missteps, is the root of the voice’s suffering and frustration. Poetry becomes an

inescapable weight to bear for the chance of achieving freedom through it, which David Bary likens to “karma” (*Nuevos estudios* 102).²⁹

Spain was again in crisis while Larrea was “metido en la cama casi lloraba con una angustia indecible en el corazón” (*Cartas* 27) and constantly tortured by his “afán de explicarlo todo” (*Cartas* 28). 1917 was the year that initiated the country’s “crisis contemporáneas, y marca el final económico, político e ideológico del siglo XIX,” according to Aubert’s conference delivered in Pau in 1977 (246). National unity was in question as provinces sought autonomy from the chaotic Spanish government being pulled apart by military movements and a striking proletariat who continued to suffer poverty despite the economy’s boom from exports to belligerents in World War I. As for the intellectual in particular, it was “la ocasión de examen de conciencia,” Aubert continues. “Una vez más, pero ahora de manera urgente, tratarán de explicar la realidad española. Buscaban en 1898 una interpretación histórica que sincronizara la evolución de sus espíritu europeo” (258). Tuñón de Lara, using Gramsci’s term, sees this time as a “crisis de hegemonía” in which “los partidos tradicionales, en su forma habitual de organización, y con sus dirigentes, dejan de ser reconocidos como expresión de su propia clase or fracción de clase” (“Rasgos” 15), implying unrest through the disappearance of general consent.

Larrea, pushed by national and personal disarray, demonstrated such a crisis of authority, and during this time he reacted negatively to any expression of art he encountered that he considered incorrect, insufficient, or dishonest. “Vivía, sí, consciente

²⁹ Lorenzo García Vega explained his arrival at poetry with similar mysticism: “vine con un karma literatoso, y ya desde chiquito tuve noticias de él” (*Espinosa* 18).

de mi entrega a la verdad viviente en oposición al mundo circundante de la mentira,” he wrote in his memoirs (“Veredicto” 11). No guide appeared to him amidst this *framing darkness*, no *burning brightness* emerged in art or an artist, and despite confidently identifying what he deemed wrong around him he was always inevitably confronted with an inability to formulate a satisfactory response of his own. Such frustrated artistic expression, according to Otto Rank, is tantamount to a repression of the id’s petitions and at the root of a neurosis (21), and Larrea doubted his sanity: “Mi cerebro, esta temporada, parece una casa de orates y a mí mismo me pregunto si no estaré loco de atar: Porque hay en él una algarabía y una inconsistencia que le convierten en la más desafortada grillera de cuantas he conocida” (*Cartas* 34). He underwent bursts of inspiration, which he communicated in his correspondence, but they quickly faded and he would again sink into lethargy when his creations did not satisfactorily alter the order and logic of his environment. Inescapably, troughs of inactivity succeeded the occasional creative crests. In January 1918, he bemoaned such feelings of stagnancy to Gerardo Diego: “Sigo paseando mi indiferencia con toda la prosopopeya de que es capaz un cerebro idiota. Soy una esfinge inmóvil, pero una esfinge huera, esfinge sin secreto” (*Cartas* 38).

The glimpse at slight freedom he had had in Madrid ended in 1918 when, for lack of an alternative authority figure, he conformed with his parents’ order to return to Bilbao: “La familia se preocupa por mi porvenir e ignora las soluciones que me propondrán. Yo las acataré sumiso esperando mi redención” (*Cartas* 62). He found himself once again living under their orders, and he spent the next year working in his brother’s machinery business like “un autómeta, cumpliendo sin oponerse directamente

los deseos de su familia, en parte porque en el vacío espiritual en que se encontraba no veía nada por lo cual valiese la pena de luchar” (Bary 41). Juan Larrea was in waiting, stalled inside a space between the voice of authority, that of his family, and the voice of discovery, his own underdeveloped whisper, each suffering from inadequate words. He didn’t trust in the words he was obeying and he didn’t trust his own to lead him out of his abyss. He could not break free from the harsh discord that was provoking such emptiness of self, though he continued to try: “He hecho un cuento, he comenzado otros dos y a medio terminar –como siempre– tengo varias poesías, en las que despliego, buscándome a mí mismo, un lirismo más moderno y menos oratorio” (*Cartas* 63). His friendship with Gerardo Diego provided him with a confessional outlet, but not with a direction.

Yo venía pugnando en mi interior contra una atrofia incomodísima que me había impuesto el medio familiar y social, de la que me daba cuenta, buscando oscuramente en la poesía una especie de puerta de salvación, y aspirando a eliminar cuanto me separaba de lo que lejanamente sentía ser la Vida, con mayúscula. (“Vicente Huidobro en Vanguardia” 217)

In a letter dated March 12, 1919, he wrote to Diego, “navego un mar de indecisiones infinito,” waiting anxious and distressed, asking himself, “¿Cuándo llegará mi resurrección de Lázaro? Para ella me prepare, por si alguna vez viene” (*Cartas* 81). One month later on April 18, 1919, his letter continued the same expectant desperation, again mentioning the rescued Biblical figure.

Quizás quede algún chispazo latente, como la vida persiste en el trigo aún no molido. Porque si me molieron los quijotescos huesos el espíritu permanece intacto, y en esta paralización espiritual, en este seno de Abraham, tiene un loco presentimiento, nacido de una última esperanza, de que ha de aparecer un Mesías, de voz bella y rotunda que intentará mi redención y mi resurrección lazarina. (*Cartas* 83)

The reoccurring Lazarus, not coincidentally from the Gospel of John, was, in Larrea's passion for symbolism, the self, his id dying in the absence of a mediator to open up a path for it towards artistic expression. Larrea was suffering a division of self, a duality as he called it earlier, which for Jung is the "rupture between faith and knowledge as a symptom of the split consciousness which is so characteristic of the mental disorder of our day" (*The Undiscovered Self* 86). For Larrea, a healthy reuniting of two, of faith (the transcendent) and knowledge (language) needed a Messiah, that extraordinary Other, that burning brightness, he was waiting for to show him the way out of darkness.

On May 2, 1919 Gerardo Diego appeared at his door holding three poems he had copied from Vicente Huidobro's *Poemas árticos* (1918), and everything changed. Huidobro's innovative verses through dynamic images and metaphors brought a new world into existence and ignited that waning latent spark in Larrea's spirit. Huidobro's Creationism presented him with a technique for a new language moving the poetic word from the subjective to the objective, a means to his instinctive need to get beyond himself. He was suddenly aflame with literary enthusiasm and the possibility of breaking "la enorme cantidad de cadenas que me retienen," seemed attainable (*Cartas* 80). Juan Larrea was instantly awakened and became a faithful disciple, along with Gerardo Diego,

of this new, invigorating poetry seeking through creation to leave behind the fruitless and stifling subject-centered tradition. That *elsewhere* he sought was written on the pages before him, captured in words, providing him with a glimpse at the material he had always sensed, but never yet seen. Poetry was confirmed, through Huidobro's verse, as the word that could resurrect the spirit. Nothing belonging to his teachers, to the poets he had read previously, or any other figure had moved him to joyful allegiance. With Vicente Huidobro a new authority of an alternative order had managed to inspire his trust, and he became the devoted defender of a maestro.

* * *

LORENZO GARCÍA VEGA IN “A WORLD OF ILLNESS” (1926-1944)

In the second transformative cycle I argue for the ultimate arrival of Lorenzo García Vega’s independent true self, equally as a writer and as a man, by way of a discernible liberating evolution recorded through his works *Rostros del Reverso* (1977), *Los años de Orígenes* (1979), and culminating with *El oficio de perder* (2004). I reason this because of the way in which he progressively became the author of his life, that is, the author of a literature that revisited and reconstructed his past, together with a section of his environment’s past, as he perceived it, intrinsically embedded within. The form able to hold this story, he writes in the opening pages of his prodigious *El oficio de perder*, is that of the intricately deceptive labyrinth, with its mistaken turns, false hopes, and unresolvable escape.

Así que me meto en el libro. Creo, por lo pronto, que la cosa debe ser como proponerme entrar por un gran número de puertas, o como soñar que estoy construyendo un Laberinto que tenga una buena cantidad de pasillos. Un Laberinto. (27)

Already, his divergence with the thinking of Juan Larrea is evident; where for Larrea there was an impending order poised to separate itself from the chaos, for García Vega there would always only be chaos: the unknowable order of the structured labyrinth holding the subject captive. But for both, in the beginning, there was a chaos, biblically *without form and void*, and they were adolescents paralyzed with the psychological suffering caused by such a world. Both were confined inside the symptoms of neuroses, a

darkness over the face of the deep. Liberation, however, would come to signify different ideas for each writer, though both reached that particular shade of freedom that creation bestows upon an artist: vitality through an active present. García Vega's present, while still a painful conglomeration of muddled past moments, belonged to him. It was his creation, and the freedom of self he achieved was expressed through an original literary style composed of words that wished to remain loyal to the discernment of his neurosis, dictated to him by a governing psychological need. According to Jorge Luis Arcos, "lo que distingue a Lorenzo García Vega del común de los mortales (y permítaseme esta frase hecha) es su voluntad creadora, su capacidad (o necesidad o fatalidad) de devolver, transfigurar sus experiencias personales (su enfermedad), en literatura o, mejor, en testimonio de la imaginación" (15). From chaos would emerge Larrea's order, and García Vega's chaos, each a resultant concreteness provided by the written word that seized and lent structure to a lifetime.

This section is dedicated to the initial darkness of García Vega's childhood, before his encounter with Lezama Lima, before *Orígenes*, and before he held a means of expression through literature. I focus on the trauma he experienced when in 1936 the García family moved from his hometown of Jagüey Grande to La Habana in the tumultuous Cuba of the early twentieth century, and how the earliest of faiths, a faith in one's heroes, was gradually dismantled, and later worsened during his years at the Belén Jesuit Preparatory School to include a distrust of authority altogether. From the psychological shock when he realized he was on the outside of reality he advanced to the inconsolability of finding the Other to be a deceitful purveyor of words absent of

meaning. To assemble this portrait, I refer to the three works mentioned previously for the insight they contribute to the pre-literary period of the García Vega biography, relying primarily on the greater autobiographical scope of *El oficio de perder*. In addition to these, I also consult other texts by the author including the short narrations of *Ritmos acribillados* (1972) and his article “Maestro por penúltima vez” (1993). This section further benefits greatly from tremendous investigation realized by Jorge Luis Arcos in his recent work, *Kaleidoscopio: la poética de Lorenzo García Vega* (2013), the first study of its kind dedicated to the works of García Vega.

As with the previous section on Juan Larrea, García Vega’s testimony, an intertwining of personal and national history that reveals the effect each aspect had on the molding of his mental state, is accompanied by remarks from the research of several Cuban historians who have written on the chaotic character of Cuba in the first decades of the twentieth century, principally Emilio Roig de Leuchsenring, Manuel Moreno Fragnals, and Rafael Rojas.³⁰ In this sense, I reiterate here my intent to produce a more-objective corroboration of a particular historical environment that will help justify García Vega’s reaction to it. I similarly continue to balance García Vega’s own self-analysis with the psychoanalytical proposals of Freud, Jung, and Lacan regarding the arrival of a neurosis through a conflict between the id and the ego. This way, combining the

³⁰ Salgado mentions Roig de Leuchsenring and several other who were engaged in the chronicling and contextualizing of this particular period in Cuba: “Fernando Ortiz, Jorge Mañach, Félix Lizaso, Francisco Ichaso, Emilio Roig de Leuchsenring, Ramiro Guerra, Juan J. Remos, Emeterio S. Santovenia y Juan Marinello, entre muchos otros —asumieron como divisa confrontar, documentar y conjurar la profunda erosión que el oportunismo partidista, las intervenciones norteamericanas y la dictadura habían suscitado en el proyecto de realización nacional y en el propio carácter cubano durante las primeras décadas de la República—” (*Orígenes ante el Cincuentenario de la República* 169).

historical with the psychological, I reinforce to what degree his mental suffering was derived from the self's alienation within its historical moment, and how his anxiety prepared him to enter at the age of 18 into a literary apprenticeship with José Lezama Lima.

García Vega's *framing darkness*, which included a psychiatric diagnosis of an obsessive-compulsive neurosis at the end of his adolescence, was the Cuba in which he suffered a crisis of faith upon discovering that heroes were romantic illusions and authority figures were no more than manipulative politicians. Presented with such emptiness and lacking the personal strength and knowledge to locate a remedy alone, the crisis attacked the developing self and aggravated his neurotic symptoms. Inside this darkness he searched, directionless, and waited for help to arrive.

In a certain moment of *El oficio de perder*, Lorenzo García Vega works his way through a confused scene from his childhood that he hesitantly associates with his literary beginnings. In 1936 at the age of 10 he traveled by train from Jagüey Grande to La Habana, definitively leaving his hometown behind to live in the capital. In Navajas he is forced to change trains, and here he is suddenly overcome by a sensation triggered by a unique interaction between the imposing houses of the town, the back and forth movements of the train and a stream of water pouring from it, the iodine-quality of light that is switched off, the taste of his coffee with milk, and the anxiety of this transitional voyage. Each segment mixes with the others to create an *amazing image*:

La luz yodo, acabada de apagar. Había como un chorro de rocío, pero no, no era un chorro de rocío, sino un chorro de agua, disparado por una locomotora. Y el café con leche de aquel momento, y el polvo negro de la locomotora, y la luz yodo: todo uniéndose, mezclándose, o confundiéndose, hasta convertirse en una imagen alucinante. El niño, en aquella madrugada en que iba para La Habana, después del portazo a la casa de su infancia, lo sentía así, en imagen alucinante.

El niño sentía que él estaba para ver aquello, para registrarlo, para decirlo alguna vez.

Y no hay duda de que se trataba de un niño delirante, ¿pues quién otro, sino un niño delirante, podría enamorarse hasta las lágrimas de un caserío tan feo como aquel, el caserío más feo del mundo?

Lo rancio, lo feo e insalvable de lo rancio, en un caserío de mala muerte, convertido para un niño en paisaje que él tendría que relatar. ¿Qué karma me llevó a esa vocación, oficio de perder, tan estrafalaria? ¿Por qué fue aquello? (*OP* 135)

What struck him most was not the material aspect of the objects, but a sensibility beyond his comprehension that allowed him to notice such an image inside a landscape he had considered horrid for its “pesada carga de lo horrible colonial español” (*OP* 134). Regardless, it moved him to the joyful tears of possessing a “paisaje que él tendría que narrar” (*OP* 135).³¹ As he wanders about this memory he recalls a quotation from Bernard Roger’s *The Secrets of Alchemy* (1998):

³¹ Aristotle speaks of a similar antithesis in *Poetics*: “The habit of imitating is congenital to human beings from childhood [...] There are things which we see with pain so far as they themselves are concerned but whose images, even when executed in very great detail, we view with pleasure” (20).

The exercise of an art, like that of poetry, cannot be realized in just any conditions, under just any sky or in the middle of any spiritual climate. The luminous air of Athens inspired Phidias; Fra Angelico needed the silence of the cloister; Villon, the taverns; Gauguin, Tahiti, and the Surrealists, Paris and their encounters. (56)

From this idea, taken from a text subtitled “The Way to the Interior Knowledge of All Things,” García Vega speculates whether during his years before leaving Cuba in 1968, faced with the oppressive “ranciedad plomiza” of the Cuban landscape, he had found his “verdadero clima espiritual,” the necessary environment that carried him forth to a life of poetry (*OP* 135-36).

Outside of his testimony, the spiritual climate saturating Cuba through which this young, awakening García Vega travelled was a complex palimpsest of the political and social upheaval it had undergone in the decades prior to his birth and of the rampant hypocrisy that prevailed inside the words of its participants vying for power: “En Cuba nada tenía sentido” (*OP* 338). Such exterior disorder left its mark on the maturing youth, and quickly manifested in his sensitive nature as a to-be-diagnosed obsessive-compulsive neurosis, setting him upon a permanent path of self-examination out of a need for stability through understanding. “Yo tuve, siempre, que ver con el psicoanálisis,” he wrote, and continuing, “demasiado neurótico he sido toda mi vida, como para no tener que ver con el psicoanálisis” (*OP* 272). In psychoanalytical terms, then, García Vega’s neurosis can be explained as a conflict between the ego and the id. According to Freud, in the case of a neurosis, the ego, the region of the id most closely in contact with reality, is

guided by the demands of the external world and refuses “to accept a powerful instinctual impulse in the id or to help it find a motor outlet” (“Neurosis and Psychosis” 150). The internal and external worlds are unable to peacefully align, the ego having sided with the latter deeming the instinctual self to be incompatible with reality. Under the ego’s repression of the id, the instinctual self suffers and, in reaction to its mediator and to reality, produces the neurotic symptom.

At the age of 10, García Vega was not “psíquicamente equipado” (*OP* 157) to successfully handle his family’s relocation to La Habana, implying deficient knowledge to process the distress caused by the chaos of this new imposing reality. Already an illness was threatening to surface, he concluded, “una neurosis, una tremenda protomateria, que apareció desde el principio” (*OP* 37). The symptoms brought on by such overwhelming confusion were depression and anxiety, both exposed by private obsessive rituals, and physical trembling whenever he was confronted with social situations. He was incapable of making sense of his surroundings and sought refuge in activities he directed.

Lo peor de una neurosis, es la sensación espantosa de vacuidad, de vivir como alrededor de la verdadera vida, y sin poder penetrar nunca en ella. Esta ha sido, sin duda, la peor constante de mi enfermedad, el sentimiento que nunca dejé de experimentar durante toda mi juventud. (*Rostros del Reverso* 63)

García Vega’s self, in a state of development, fell into conflict with an aggressive external world where words and actions did not coincide, and instead entered into a

“mundo de la enfermedad” that ran parallel to the Cuba of the 1930’s (*OP* 157). Contrary to Freud’s conclusions, I suggest that at the root of his neurosis was the repressed instinct of a sensibility to untruth, to the wavering signifier, to the deceptive image. Because he was incapable of resolving this disagreement through compromise, i.e. playing the game of the corrupt exterior world to which he was witness, he would continue to suffer. His only possible remedy was to acquire a method that would allow him to inject his own truthful creations into reality.

On the Cuban side of the watershed year of 1898, opposite the period of crisis into which Larrea’s Spain fell after their demoralizing loss in the Spanish-American War, the spirits of the island’s autonomists were vitalized by the Treaty of Paris’ conferral of a de jure independence from Spanish rule. With this, they welcomed an era of possibility and self-determination into Cuba: “el primer paso—grande y transcendental, sin duda,—en la senda de la transformación general y completa” (Roig de Leuchsenring, “La colonia superviva” 11). However, with the conclusion of the military war came the outbreak of a “war of discourses,” writes Rafael Rojas, where the “weapons are well-known forms of knowledge: eugenics, ethnology, history, sociology, ethics, anthropology, esthetics, and literature” (“The Moral Frontier” 25). Considering the state of the individual amidst these competing discourses, we can recall Lacan’s assertion that the subject suffers alienation when he “loses his meaning and direction in the objectifications of the discourse” (*The Language of the Self* 44). The battle to design the best course forward for the country was filled with conflicting ideologies filtered through a rhetoric plagued by self-interest. With the new spatial synthesis of homeland and nation, the previous dual appellation of

Spanish and Cuban that had identified the island's inhabitants for so long underwent a division wherein a citizen was no longer both, but rather one or the other (Fraginals 220); the latter (Cuban) was now the self and the former (Spanish) became the other. However, this sudden prospect of empowered identity was not easily settled and, as a result, was filled with decades of political instability characterized by “endless violence, dramatic corruption, military revolts, *gangsterism* and sporadic military intervention by the United States” (Gott 113), as well as growing resentment and imperialistic concerns towards the newly-emerged world power to the north.

In 1903, the United States passed the Platt Amendment, in large measure counteracting the 1897 Teller Amendment's assurance of limited interference in the course of an independent Cuba and effectively established a suzerainty whereby the quality of the country's political activity was contingent on the judgment of the United States government. “¿Será Cuba jamás un Estado independiente?” Senator John Morgan asked rhetorically in 1901 during the Platt Amendment debates. “No. Esa es una falsa pretensión. Es un acto de hipocresía por parte del Congreso de los Estados Unidos hacer semejante declaración,” he replied (Roig de Leuchsenring, *Historia de la Enmienda Platt I* 107). Accordingly, the historian Roig de Leuchsenring addressing the Cuban Society of International Rights in 1924 proclaimed, “La colonia superviva.” During his speech of the same name, he took inventory of Cuba's twenty years since becoming a republic and called attention to “las lacras y las corruptelas políticas y sociales” hindering the country's progress, as well as identifying many other vices prevalent within the

population that he described as equivalent to those which the Revolution had attempted to eliminate (11). Of these destructive flaws he included:

los odios enconados, el egoísmo, el afán de lucro, la burla al derecho, a la libertad y a la justicia, la falta de amor a la patria, de respeto a la ley—que ya era ley cubana,—el abuso en los que mandaban, y la complicidad unas veces y la nefasta pasividad y tolerancia otras, en los que obedecían. (14)

He called for reform to liberate Cuba once more from the state administrators who had learned the trade of governing from its European colonizer, those who were “incapaces y amorales, que apoyados por caciques y *politicians*, por la fuerza o por su propio dinero, solo persiguen su interés personales el de su camarilla, con absoluto desprecio de las necesidades de la patria” (19). But the following year the “atmósfera *disolvente* de la república” (Mataix 48) was invaded by the “dark atmosphere of the Machado years” (Gott 133). It was into this world that in 1926, Lorenzo García Vega was born.

One year into Gerardo Machado’s presidency, which began on May 20, 1925, the abuse of executive power in Cuba, under the sanction of the United States, had already resumed along with the violence of a “larga, interminable, lista de asesinatos,” wrote Roig de Leuchsenring in 1935, two years after the fall of the dictator (*Historia de la Enmienda Platt I* 289). In an echo of his speech a decade earlier, the Cuban historian provided the following description of the Machado government:

el abandono de los vitales problemas nacionales; los perjuicios inherentes a la imposición, a favor de unos cuantos privilegiados y en perjuicio de

todo el país, de monopolios, favoritismos, concesiones, impuestos; confirmaron la falta absoluta de honradez administrativa imperante en todos los órdenes de la administración pública, tanto nacional como provincial y municipal. (*Historia de la Enmienda Platt* 290)

Julio Antonio Mella, a young revolutionary and founder of the Cuban Communist Party, assassinated at the age of 25, memorably referred to Machado as the “Mussolini tropical” because of the dictator’s sanguinary rule. Mella, along with Rubén Martínez Villena, were romantic heroes for García Vega, for the way in which these students “sacrificaron sus vidas en lucha contra el Tirano” (*OP* 79). And thanks to their efforts the tyrant’s rule came to an end, followed by the 22-day Céspedes presidency that was interrupted by the disorder of revolution. “Había habido un golpe militar el 4 de setiembre de 1933, había lo que pareció una revolución pero que no era una revolución, y todo en Cuba giraba en el revolico,” wrote García Vega (*Los años de Orígenes* 84). It wasn’t a revolution because it only facilitated the emergence from the chaos of this caustic environment Cuba’s next president and dictator, Fulgencio Batista. García Vega remembered his father’s dejection with the succeeding government, and he came to associate heroism with an “extraña esperanza cubana,” read false, since though many sacrificed their lives, many others “arriesgaron sus vidas para después convertirse en unos desvergonzados” (*OP* 79). In the eyes of Lezama Lima La Habana had become “una zona pesimista, necrosada, indecisa, donde la frustración era la norma de acatamiento” (“Recuerdos: Guy Pérez Cisneros” 34).

Though Batista’s term in office did not begin until 1940, he was a powerful military figure who worked the strings of the various short-lived presidencies during

these “años sórdidos donde, junto a la corrupción política, todo mundo pareció envilecerse” (*OP* 243).³² Batista later staged a military coup in 1952 that ended the Republic and delivered him control of the government until the triumph of Fidel Castro and the Cuban Revolution in 1959, more than six decades after winning their independence from Spain. With this an end had come the various shades of colonialism that had determined Cuba’s history, and a period that Jean-Paul Sartre characterized as a “degrading mixture of power and impotence” (155).

In the midst of such political turmoil, caught on the battlefield between agents competing for ideological and economic power, Lorenzo García Vega recalls that he was a hypersensitive, terrified child, carrying inside him a monster guided by “un karma que tenía la neurosis y el oficio de perder,” the latter referring to the moniker that he would use to describe his existence as a writer no one would read (*OP* 30). He was anxious by nature, —“fui un niño lleno de miedo” (*OP* 85)—and was, as a result, a difficult child in Jagüey Grande, Cuba where he was born. Yet, he was often innocently happy thanks to the way in which his village sheltered him, “como si fuera un útero” (*OP* 36). He was the only child of Lorenzo García, a distant and uncommunicative father, as well as a respected doctor and politician who died when Lorenzo was 13 years old (*OP* 88). His mother, Ramona Vega, was a fearful woman who was similarly always anxious from

³² García Vega continues with the following exhaustive enumeration of faults: “fechorías de funcionarios, desfalcos de aduanas, robos del desayuno escolar de los niños pobres, pucherazos en las elecciones, secuestro de documentos importantes, magistrados vendidos, gangsters ejerciendo como profesores, profesores convertidos en gangsters, legisladores apoderándose de los bonos de la República, hospitales sin camas, carreteras inexistentes, fondos públicos extraviados, escamoteo de pensiones de viudas, cuarteles de bomberos inexistentes, botellas a nombre de bombines ilustres, contratos remunerados de obras inexistentes, etc., etc” (*OP* 249).

having grown up in “ese sórdido mundo campesino” of Jagüey Grande (*OP* 89). Though she was largely unaffectionate with her son, she was tender and supportive, reading from the Bible in the evenings (*Ritmos* 11), amongst other “cosas inolvidables, como pasarme a mano en una libreta los poemas del Trilce de Vallejo, o como asegurarme de que lo único que valías la pena era ser un poeta” (*OP* 90). Looking back, he characterized Cuba at this time as a world of illusion where everything simultaneously was and was not (*OP* 79).

In 1936, with the election of Miguel Mariano Gómez to the presidency, his father was promoted to the House of Representatives on behalf of the province of Matanzas, but for García Vega it meant a painful relocation to a capital city that felt like a prison (*OP* 177). His entrance into La Habana, such a symbolic act of victory in Cuban history, was a moment of vanquish for García Vega’s infant spirit, and marked the transition into his difficult adolescence. Now ten years old and removed from the protective shell of Jagüey Grande, he suffered the shock of the world’s confusion. Although this trajectory was opposite to that of Juan Larrea’s first traumatic experience of loss (Larrea at age eight was taken away from Madrid and his beloved Aunt Micaela, and returned to live with his family in Bilbao), García Vega, like Larrea, identified this move as the fulcrum moment in his personality. 1936 was his first traumatic experience of loss, the roots of his need for poetry, possibly even discovering it at that stop in Navajas along the way; his innocent impression of understanding reality was fractured and his illness was brought to the surface. “No solo sentía hasta el ahogo el polvo negro de la ciudad [...] sino que me parecía como que todo me escapara,” he wrote (*OP* 149). As he grew older and the space

dissipated between his self and the reality he realized he did not understand, his happiness faded, and his father's distance and his mother's anxiety became more evident in García Vega's own psychology: "La cosa no fue nada linda, no, por lo que yo me convertí en lo extraño de un niño que [...] si no lo odié todo, por lo menos lo odié casi todo" (*OP* 146).

While for Juan Larrea the move to the capital represented freedom, a release from the stifling conservatism of his family life in Bilbao, García Vega's move, in the company of his family, meant his *internment* in the "mediocre y asfixiante atmósfera" of the Belén Jesuit Preparatory School (*OP* 220).³³ The Society of Jesus, founded by St. Ignatius Loyola, promotes a militant loyalty to God, the Pope, and the Church, and through its Spiritual Exercises proposes a disciplined approach to a joyful life in which God's presence is rendered more evident among the temptations of human weakness. The structure that the Jesuits offered was therefore an attractive option for those who "sought escape from the confusion and perils of their world" (Alden 37). For García Vega, however, the confusion he felt in La Habana was only multiplied by the imperious self-contradictory demands placed upon him within the walls of this school.

Se estaba, en Belén, bajo un hueso duro que se traducía en un amasijo de estereotipias, pero tras esa estructuración [...] lo que resaltaba era una carencia absoluta de espiritualidad, mantenida por unos españoles curas falangistas (recordar que se estaba bajo la Guerra Civil Española, y con el

³³ The Belén Jesuit Preparatory School was founded in 1854 by Queen Isabella II of Spain and operated until 1961 when Fidel Castro, a former student of the school, closed it and expropriated the building from the Jesuit priests.

sombrío Pío XII jodiendo la pita), en un espacio donde el orden era la máscara de ese desintegrado vacío que era la vida cubana de aquel entonces. (*OP* 290)

Despite being a first-class institution of many resources including a library, a museum, and an observatory, it was run under the “el palurdismo clerical español” (*OP* 219). García Vega, then, presented an early darkness with striking parallels to that of Larrea, a darkness of Spanish influence, as if Cuba had not only welcomed the priests, but also Spain’s “atmósfera de bochorno,” where “debajo de una dura costra de gravedad formal extiende una ramplonería comprimida, una enorme trivialidad y vulgachería” (Unamuno, “Sobre el marasmo...” 252). In fact, though 1898 had ended political ties between Spain and Cuba, the invention by the United States ultimately reunited the two countries in their mutual national frustration, and as Moreno Fragnals concludes, “no cercenaron el proceso de españolización de la sociedad cubana. Es después de proclamada la república de Cuba que las sociedades regionales alcanzaron su más alto nivel” (299). The same “suelo tan apisonado y compacto” that, according to Unamuno, was preventing the development of Spanish youth also filled the Belén (Unamuno, “Sobre el marasmo...” 253).

The Jesuit priests acted as strong spiritual guides who demanded the unwavering obedience of the novitiates while they were learning Loyola’s Exercises. As Olin describes in his introduction to the Jesuit founder’s autobiography, these exercises are “a structured and well-ordered procedure of prayer, meditation, and self-examination to be undergone” (12). However, as beginners, the students were to defer their own judgment

to the experience of the priests until such a moment arrived when each would be capable of mastering their own discernment of spirits.³⁴ Until then, they were not to “question what is bidden, or why, but all [their] effort is directed to the faithful and humble accomplishment of what [their] superior commands [them] to do” (van Ginhoven Rey 182). But García Vega was never convinced and the priests never proved to be a model to follow, stunting the development of his faith in their doctrine and in God. Certainly he was formally part of a community, a group of students and their spiritual educators, but he saw the latter as “unos burdos y soturnos palurdos españoles, genéticamente predispuestos contra el menor asomo de espiritualidad” (*OP* 208), and the former an impenetrable mass of camaraderie where he was “irremediabilmente, a estar solo” (*OP* 188). He suffered the shock of not belonging and of not knowing how to access those communal feelings.

Of the stories that García Vega shared from this time, few are positive, yet all present foundational fragments for his future understanding of himself and his relationship with the outside world. They each illustrate his isolation from his contemporaries and betrayal by religious authority. He recalls how on his first day of school all of the children were enjoying the swimming pool, where everyone knew each other and he was unable to understand their friendship. They were symbolically united inside the water, boxed in as if in one of those by Joseph Cornell that fascinated García Vega. But at the Belén he was a stray element who was overwhelmed by the noise and

³⁴ *Discernment* in the Jesuit *Spiritual Exercises* is the ultimate goal through which one is capable of separating the forces of consolation from those of desolation thus realizing the presence of God in one's life.

activity, and desperately clung to the side. “¡Cuánto ruido, salpicaduras del agua! ¡Qué alegría, todos eran amigos! Fue la primera vez que supe que había una enorme alegría *fuera*, pero que ésta no tenía nada que ver conmigo” (*OP* 190). He sat perched upon the dark oceanic plate looking in toward the subduction zone.

Thanks to autobiographical details like these offered in *El oficio de perder*, García Vega’s earlier texts are better understood as attempts to resolve this trauma while maintaining a certain distance between the author and the narrator through fiction. In this new light, though, they provide even more insight into his reoccurring conflict between the inside and the outside, mirroring the meditative individual before the impenetrable collective. In “El Santo del Padre Rector” in *Ritmos acribillados* (1972), a recognizable frightened protagonist confronts the chaos of a school celebration: “En las filas, en el comedor o en los juegos: palpitante, un solo organismo lleno de ruido y sudor, surge de sus cuerpos unidos. Y él intenta vivir un poco como ellos, doblar para sí, como si fuera un pañuelo, el tapiz de sus gritos” (*Ritmos* 27). In this passage his peers form a whole, a unified *organism*, and due to his own powerlessness he is reduced to superficial acts of imitation, hollow mimicry of their joy, like a *tapestry of the yells* coming from those *united bodies*.³⁵ And as he began to recognize the difference between him and the others, unsuccessfully making efforts to access their spirit, those he was trying to understand

³⁵ Compare with this passage from Chapter III of Lezama’s *Paradiso* in which Don Andrés, referring to Andresito, says: “Hay a sus quince años como la primera prueba en relación con su mundo exterior, como recibir a los invitados nuestros, comer por primera vez en casa de un amigo, o esperar, como en la sala de concierto, una reacción multánime. Ver un desfile, una teoría de peces, como dirían los griegos, una multitud presentándose en sus misteriosa unidad, o cualquier ceremonia en que ya se empieza a actuar con el otro yo colectivo, diríamos paradójicamente. Él está demasiado encerrado, es huidizo, y cuando conoce a alguien, como para abandonar la imagen nueva que camina hacia él, se sobresalta, y quisiera tirarse al río para liberarse de ese fantasma invasor que lo ciñe.” (57)

were themselves busied with their own mindless imitation of the priests. They carried out their religious studies, as if suffering of echolalia, and learned to walk everywhere single file with their arms crossed.

As for the priests, he denounces the exaggerated stories they told to scare the students into obedience, for example the “burdo embuste de Faviolo,” the tale of the young boy who went to Hell for a single impure thought (*OP* 187). Or the time he was sent to the Father Prefect’s office as an involuntary messenger made to deliver a note that informed the director of students in the school who were of influential parents, only to then be interrogated himself about the political posts held by his father and uncle (*OP* 216). There is also the story of the one priest with whom he felt a connection only for this trust to crumble away when he became the object of his teacher’s ire for contradicting the statements made by the latter in favor of the Spanish Falange (*OP* 218). From the fraudulence of the storyteller to the political maneuverings of the religious figure, at the Belén the authoritative word was stretched to limits rendering it meaningless. The atmosphere inside was filled with the “rígida y sombría disciplina impartida por unos patanes que, pese a su tiesura, no dejaban de estar empapados por la churumbela de la flojona vida cubana de entonces” (*OP* 289-290). The symptoms of his already unquiet personality were exacerbated by the slight regard in which he held their strict rules, riddled, as he saw them, with injustice and corruption, and the repetitions of senseless actions. On the one hand he was the odd child out who didn’t share the students’ friendship, enthusiasm, or “la estéril pantomima de sus gestos” (*Ritmos* 28), while on the other he was the student who couldn’t believe the *frauds* charged with teaching him (*OP*

211). This was for him the death of his Ideal self, that is, the self that had previously existed innocent of any incongruence with the world. It meant the dismantling of his former identity, and the birth of his new Jesuit character (*OP* 189).

In many of the descriptions in which García Vega condemns the character of the Jesuit priests at the Belén, his criticisms of the world inside the school are often juxtaposed with reproaches of the world outside the school. The priest's *rigid and gloomy discipline* and their *firmness* mentioned earlier are offset by *lazy Cuban life*. He is critical of these two qualities, antithetical extremes, locating fault in each for their illusory character: Apollonian solemnity covering calculating politics and Dionysian revel romantically beautifying idleness; treachery in Reason and ignorance in Emotion.

Se era un niño aterrorizado con todas las jodiendas de los ejercicios espirituales, se era un niño con cadenita al cuello para evitar el Infierno, pero tan pronto se salía del colegio se estaba en la melaza de un paisajito desintegrado [...] lleno de boleros y de rumbas. (*OP* 208)

In such pairings the multifaceted denunciations expand concentrically outwards from the suffering individual to the encompassing country. He constructs a picture of escapeless confusion within which he could find no remedy for the incessant disappointment caused by the institutions designed to provide answers. His heroes fell to the wayside, and the teachings of the Church were rendered empty by the artificial words of its purveyors just as was the political enthusiasm of the Republic managed by self-interested figures whose power came from obedience to influences external to Cuba. In his testimonies, what is

revealed, at times bitterly and at others subtly, is a deep *mise-en-abîme* of insincere, unethical fathers. At each turn where one could potentially find solace in the wisdom and guidance of the more powerful being (religion, politics, the priest, the teacher, the state, the politician), the foundational sentences that one must accept are proved hollow of truth. García Vega felt incapable of *penetrating* life because when presented with the formative roads intended to gain entry, he was met with the discord of their unbelievability, their wavering signifiers too unstable to stand upon. The feeling that he lived on the outside of his environment, being witness to a similar disappointment his father felt when the heroic revolutionary sentiment of change that had rid Cuba of the dictator Machado transformed into a game of shameful politics (*OP* 78) in a “sucio mundillo parlamentario” (*OP* 243), and finally, the death of his father in 1939 added to the desperate chaos of this time.

At age 14 he left Belén to avoid being expelled after confessing that he did not believe in God.³⁶ As Mario Parajón recounts, Lorenzo was irritated by the daily mass and its sermons: “era demasiado oír del infierno, del pecado, el escrúpulo, los libros prohibidos, el “fuera de la Iglesia no hay salvación” [...] ¿Por qué el autoritarismo y no el desarrollo de la personalidad?” (*Ritmos* 12). This period, however, had a lasting influence on his personality and he would consistently return to the idea of structure, as we will see later, to the extent that it governed the self-discipline and self-reflection of the “personaje jesuítico” he had become (*OP* 189). Released from the priests, he read freely from works

³⁶ Mario Parajón in his introduction to *Ritmos acribillados* writes that García Vega spent six years at the Belén, leaving at the beginning of the Forties (12), while García Vega writes in *El oficio de perder* that he left at age 14 after finishing his first year of Bachillerato (182), making his time there between four and five years until 1940 or 1941.

of philosophy, discovering Ortega y Gasset, Nietzsche, and Unamuno, the latter being particularly influential on him: “El alma, para Lorenzo García Vega, está esencialmente protegida y vivificada por el chaleco de don Miguel de Unamuno,” wrote Parajón (*Ritmos* 14), and the Spanish philosopher and writer represented a model for suffering captured by the written word and for the exteriorization of the internal struggle. Even more importantly, he took the grand universal systems and returned them in a sort of existential empowerment to *el hombre de carne y hueso*. Instead of philosophy explaining the world and life to inform a sentiment that leads to an action, he declares the reverse: that the sentiment, with its actions, is the generator of philosophy: “Nuestra filosofía, esto es, nuestro modo de comprender o de no comprender el mundo y la vida brota de nuestro sentimiento respecto a la vida misma. Y ésta, como todo lo afectivo, tiene raíces subconcientes, inconcientes tal vez” (*Del sentimiento trágico de la vida* 21). With the individual so passionately affirmed, even one wedged inside a space of *not understanding the world and life*, there was an implicit way forward, born of one’s personal psychological battle, and freed of the requirements of an external system. What consolation this must have offered García Vega after years of having the severe Jesuit doctrine he did not believe in imposed upon him.

He enrolled in high school with his friend Mariano Alemany who had also quit the Belén, to finish their diplomas, but they never studied and did not attend classes. Instead they frequented bookstores and cafés, filling their days and nights with philosophical conversations “mientras esperábamos lo absurdo: una revelación, o una lectura, que al entregarnos la verdad, nos permitiera actuar en el mundo” (*OP* 306). Just

like Juan Larrea, García Vega felt paralyzed, filled with a “fuerte y enfermiza timidez adolescentaria” (OP 326). And just like Larrea, he was waiting while with each passing year of inactivity his illness intensified, a Freudian “*angst vor etwas*”, anxiety before something.

Estaba yo metido dentro del gran revolico de los fines de la adolescencia, pero no sólo era eso, sino que estaba fuertemente agarrado por un tremendo desajuste psíquico para el cual el primer analista que consulté me recomendó unas sesiones de electro shock, sesiones que no me dí, aunque estuve alrededor, o rozando una esquizofrenia. (“Maestro” 12)

García Vega’s move to La Habana was the event that drew back the curtain to those obstacles, revealing to him the reality of his dislocated existence in the world that had been concealed while living in Jagüey Grande, and now, also like Larrea, he desperately needed to remove the obstacles that separated him from life. And he was drawn to literature, a desire born of a creative need, perhaps since his experience at age ten in Navajas, on his way to the capital, where he witnessed such a wonderful image and for whose communicating he felt responsible. Here was an experience of an immanent other-worldliness, not a Larrean instinct of an *elsewhere*, but a visible reality that was not, that is, a palpable reality that did not correspond with that with which his ego was in conflict. It only needed to be described. This divergence between the two authors, arising from inside a comparable darkness that framed their agonizing youth, will with time explain the contrary values they would ultimately award to the poetic word. Literature offered possibility inside a medium in which he, as well as Larrea, could repair reality through

personal honesty, and create an environment that would treat his psychic dissonance, however, this was a skill he had never exercised: “Quería ser escritor, pero no sabía cómo ser un escritor, ni sabía como meterle el diente a la literatura. Así que estaba en la espera de alguien que me pudiera orientar” (“Maestro” 12). He had the need, but not the knowledge.

One day in 1944, García Vega stood reading, waiting, in the Victoria Bookshop in La Habana, when an unknown voice filled with inspiring confidence called out to the struggling 18-year-old. “Muchacho, ¡lee a Proust!” commanded José Lezama Lima, and García Vega obeyed, setting aside his philosophy books to learn the literary bookshelves of his new maestro. In Lezama he found a figure whose authority ushered him into the world of literature, presenting him with a structure built on sincerity and an ethical literary refuge. From within a chaotic environment of unending contradictions, where heroism became corruption, where actions and words did not align, and where the grand ideas of patriotism and religious faith were belied by personal plots for power, Lorenzo García Vega anxiously sensed something in the interrelations between elements that could be called beauty, a structure in the shadows underlying the hypocrisy of those who attempted to rule it. With the guidance of Lezama Lima he began to learn how to express it.

* * *

PRELUDE TO A LITERARY APPRENTICESHIP

Before proceeding to Chapter Two, which focuses on the literary apprenticeships of Juan Larrea and Lorenzo García Vega, I want to suggest a bridge between their pre-literary lives and their literary education that explains the move to literature in particular, rather than to another art form. This proposal brings together the major biographical components already described: their neurotic condition, the confusion surrounding them, and their relationship to the Other's word, to present poetry as a logical culmination. In addition, this will contribute to my characterization of their ultimate literary originality in later chapters.

It is unnecessary to say that Juan Larrea and Lorenzo García Vega are poets *of* words, but the way in which each ultimately manages to assign a function *to* words is at the center of this investigation. García Vega, fifty years after initiating his apprenticeship to Lezama Lima reflected on the project he and the other Orígenes poets undertook where they had attempted to “olvidar el significante común del lenguaje, sin caer en otra retórica” (OP 283). While a seemingly inexplicable instinctual force pushed both Larrea and García Vega towards literature, a simultaneous instinctual dissatisfaction pushed them from environments that they had difficulty accepting. However, a slightly more tangible explanation for this attraction, and one that echoes that poetic proposal *to forget the common signifier of language*, can be found in a short passage from Heidegger's essay “Building Dwelling Thinking,” which describes a connection between the psychological sufferings of the individual, like those described in this chapter, and the application of the word in human life. It appears almost in passing amidst his analytical

retracing of *building* that reveals its etymological link with *being*, and his rediscovery of the nurturing aspect of *dwelling*, which he considers as lost truths due to modern-day lexical simplification in terms of means and ends. Between the foundational creative power of the word and its contemporary use a desert has been inserted, and this must ultimately bear repercussions for the human spirit.

Man acts as though he were the shaper and master of language, while in fact language remains the master of man. Perhaps it is before all else man's subversion of this relation of dominance that drives his nature to alienation. That we retain a concern for care in speaking is all to the good, but it is of no help to us as long as language still serves us even then only as a means of expression. (146)

With his *perhaps*, Heidegger momentarily digresses into psychology to suggest a correlation between one's inner isolation in the chaos of modern times and one's improper relationship with words. We are reminded of Viktor Frankl's identification of a twentieth-century existential vacuum that he attributes to the decline of faith in the governance of the religious word, and the increased necessity of the individual to discover one's own meaning. Heidegger reasons that this individual responsibility has led to corruption and reversal of the proper relationship. He argues not for a renewed allegiance to theological Logos, but instead for the educated employment of the power that words bestow, as well as caution in the face of their potential to construct our beings. Inversing this relationship, he implies, provokes underestimated psychic damage by distorting the lexical cells that define our very existence, pulling the individual away

from the collective. Huidobro addressed the idea similarly in “Total”: “Habéis perdido el sentido de la Unidad, habéis olvidado el verbo creador” (1370). If current word meanings could be better understood (completed) inside their historical origins, one would be more aware not only of the veracity (or falsity) of one’s statements, but also of their ontological force provoking a faithfulness to the communicative nature of language. His conclusion that the prevailing problems of dwelling as they concern building ultimately address problems of identity construction and existence underline the importance of language for arriving at a fuller understanding of ourselves.

An analogous idea of lexical corruption permeates the early experiences of Larrea and García Vega. As adolescents they perceived the misuse of words by the authority figures participating in the development of their identities, confounding their innocent self; *a ditch of miseries where flowed a grandiloquent torrent of false words*. The word’s meaning was too often elsewhere, detached from its use, provoking a disturbing feeling of alienation and opening a dark chasm between the young men’s external reality (the Other’s word) and their internal logical world (the self’s word). The religious word of the priests was judged mediocre, manipulative, or incomplete; the political word of the tumultuous state was judged untruthful and insincere, and the cultural word was judged delusional and romantic. They consequently searched for a *proper* use of words elsewhere: in philosophy, in poetry, and in conversations with their few trustworthy friends, who were particularly valued as confidants. Challenged by environments such as those that have been described, and having been born psychologically sensitive to discord in the details of their reality caused them to be susceptible to illness. Their diagnosis as

neurotics is not surprising, and the role of the illness again will be taken up in chapter 4, when each again suffers a grand spiritual and emotional crisis, though this time from well inside the world of literature. What is of interest here, in the initiatory stage of their careers, is what course of action they take to deal with the symptoms of an illness whose roots are located in a psychological frustration with an environment they recognize to be wrought with the mishandling of words. Also, how could this response potentially provide them with relief?

Otto Rank, in his study of the origin of the creative personality, places the artist “psychologically intermediate between the dreamer and the neurotic” (Rank 21), between one individual suffering to live in the external world and the other lost in their internal world. This same opposition, in Freudian terms, corresponds to that of the psychotic and the neurotic, making the dreamer sound considerably less desirable, while stressing the unhealthy character of each. As Freud explains in “Neurosis and Psychosis”: “neurosis is the result of a conflict between the ego and its id, whereas psychosis is the analogous outcome of a similar disturbance in the relations between the ego and the external world” (149). In other words, the ego of the psychotic (the dreamer) has sided with the desires of the id thus putting itself at odds with the external world, while for the neurotic, we recall, the id has been abandoned by the ego that has sided with the demands of external world. Returning to Rank’s classification, where the Freudian structure is taken and expanded to a cultural setting, the artist is equated with a stable position of mental health by managing the coexistence of the id and external world. The artist, through creation, overcomes

spiritual paralysis resolving the neurotic's repressed needs and the dreamer's excessive allegiance to those very same needs.



If, adhering to the testimonies in this chapter, we allow Larrea and García Vega to occupy the neurotic position in Rank's continuum, then, in order for each to approach a healthier position in society they must learn to exteriorize their repressed logic, as does the artist. "The man is only half himself, the other half is his expression," wrote Emerson (320). They must give authorization the id to assume a more powerful role in their construction of identity, that is, cultivate the self and allow it to stand on more equal ground with the external world.

The initial challenge facing their psychological health becomes the same that had left them uncertain as to how they could gain entry to literature: the learning of an artistic method. The method would need to provide a way to counter the debilitating senselessness of their external world with the concretion of sense from their internal world. For this reason, both describe a waiting period. This moment corresponds to the threshold between having an awareness of purpose and the knowledge to accomplish it. There is a comprehension that they need to become the artist, undertaking the profession of creation, because in this way they produce words in agreement with the id's demands. Additionally, out of the oppressive framing darkness, this is a step toward freedom. "Nul

n'est obligé de se choisir écrivain," writes Sartre, "aussi la liberté est-elle à l'origine: je suis auteur d'abord par mon libre projet d'écrire" (*Qu'est-ce que la littérature* 84). A compromise can be negotiated between the incapacitated self and the overpowering Other. Here we introduce the concept of an artistic dialectic that will become more important in this study. In art, a duel of forms takes place where what has been created is supplemented by what the artist sees as lacking. According to Octavio Paz, language is "el instrumento más perfecto para producir significados y, asimismo, para destruirlos" (20); for Emerson it is a "tomb for the muses" ("The Poet" 329). In the case of Larrea and García Vega, what are lacking are words that adequately place their honesty within the material that can later reveal truth, even if they are unsure of exactly what form truth that will take. Consequently, with the proper training, they intuit the possibility of correcting the mediocre and the insincere word through poesis, through what Lezama called "el artificio verbal, esa segunda naturaleza asimilable ya por la secularidad, y en el cual el hombre ha realizado una de sus más asombrosas experiencias: otorgar un sentido verbal, destruirlo y verlo como de nuevo se constituye en cuerpo" ("Respuesta y nuevas interrogaciones" 688). Each will seek to insert their words into the external world, making use of what is now correct and correcting what they deem false. Such a move to action, to aesthetic creation, facilitates an "assertion of self," argues Rank, opposing the "renunciation of self" that comes from aesthetic pleasure, or displeasure in the case of Larrea and García Vega with their environments (Rank 23). Once again Heidegger's supposition calls out that "it is language that tells us about the nature of the thing,

provided that we respect nature's own language" (*Building* 146), and the adolescents' need for literature, given their experiences, becomes more obvious.

As they proceed forward towards their literary vocation, both learning from their respective maestros, they begin to formulate their own aesthetic that will remain recognizant of the power of words, faithfully attempting to avoid the falseness they had previously suffered. Juan Larrea will conclude that "cada individuo tiene consciente e inconscientemente su lenguaje que no puede ser sistematizado. Pero sí podría proporcionarnos una luz para ver la manera de expresarse que tiene la vida" (*Orbe* 121). He believes in an internal language that can reach beyond the individual and extend into the external world of words where it may share some new truth. García Vega will confess a similar reverence to the will of language when, doubting the truthfulness of his memoirs, he wonders if in fact "nunca narramos lo que pasó, ni lo que tenemos enfrente, sino la manera en que nuestro lenguaje está soñando la realidad. Pues, quizás nuestra palabra narra su sueño, cuando nosotros creemos que estamos contando nuestro pasado. ¿Quién lo sabe?" (*OP* 94). Here lies the resemblance as well as the divergence between the two. Larrea proposes with optimism towards a future revelation (*an individual's language could offer us a light into reality*) while García Vega proposes with distrust of any possible resolution (*an individual's language dreams reality*). However, for both of them reality forever rests in the grasp of the words that we cannot be sure to have properly understood, resulting in a persistent humility and an endless drive to meaning.

In the next chapter we will see how Juan Larrea and Lorenzo García Vega, after an adolescence of deception, elected to put their trust in the ethics of an Other, Larrea in

those of Vicente Huidobro and García Vega in José Lezama Lima. They allowed, out of psychological need, for a temporary suspension of their suspicion of authority, and became apprentices not only to formidable poets, but also to the literary word. If this is indeed the first step of what Heidegger contended could treat the feeling of alienation, a therapeutic realization that “language remains the master of man,” it follows that an ontological recovery could result from this epistemological adjustment. If they could acquire the proper knowledge, learn to work with words in such a way that would eventually permit them to give form to the desires of the id, make them concrete and provide a foothold for the id in the external world, they would have gained a tool to maneuver back and forth within the constant struggle for psychological balance. At the same time, they would have to take care that their production of meaning did not force their internal world beyond the healthy limits of art whereby they might cross into the realm of the dreamer. The remaining chapters of this dissertation will track the struggle of each along Rank’s spectrum, while determining the similarities and differences of each position as it was for one and the other.

* * *

CHAPTER TWO. The Descent into Literature: Appropriate Encounters

*Lo larval sólo podemos captarlo en sus mutaciones,
en su devenir para llegar a ser
forma, cuerpo, materia artizada.*³⁷

JOSÉ LEZAMA LIMA

INTRODUCTION

At the end of their adolescence, Juan Larrea and Lorenzo García Vega had amassed a melancholy glossary of shared terms that included words such as *asphyxiating*, *cold*, *mediocre*, *impenetrable*, *emptiness*, and *void*. Such a lexicon was symptomatic of each youth's suffering psychic state, confused and aimless when confronting a duplicitous reality too often determined by corrupted language. They were coming to terms with the reality that becomes visible at the moment the family shield weakens, an environment they saw wrought with the empty words of political and religious hypocrisies managed by oppressive dictatorships, deceitful arrivistes, and false-hearted priests; the new authority figures who had superseded the parents. At this early stage of development such instability denied a platform from which to cultivate faith in something exterior to their selves so as to regain the confidence of childhood, and without that faith the psyche would not locate the impetus out of their directionlessness. Deleuze writes, "Il faut d'abord éprouver l'effet violent d'un signe, et que la pensée soit comme forcée de chercher le sens du signe" (30). The framing darkness of Chapter One was this violence,

³⁷ From "Paralelos. La poesía y la pintura en Cuba (siglos XVII y XIX)." *La materia artizada*. 126.

the oceanic plate creeping through desolation and accumulating signs (people, objects, words) to which each youth unsuccessfully attempted to attribute sense. Naturally, they wanted respite from their neuroses and something told them that perhaps poetry, through poetic rendering in the written word, was an apposite method for the signs' decipherment and correction. On an early instinctual level, they were looking for a new language that would allow for an exteriorization of self and penetration into an oppressive reality; however, they were not capable of finding the starting point alone. Larrea and García Vega wrote of waiting for a guide towards a literary profession, a tool Heidegger also affirms as necessary for those "who are already thinking ones [to] become more thoughtful," and to "become more contemplative and more reflective, and thereby, learn to genuinely think" (*Introduction to Philosophy* 3). Once found, the experience of this guide would instigate an inner transformation by providing each with a program for language creation. They wished to exit their darkness through a trustworthy Other, despite the threat that such reliance could pose to their subjectivity.

If approached differently, these apprenticeships may also be seen as periods of self-concealment in the sense of the pupa that seeks temporary refuge inside the chrysalis; the first step in an action system that presumes an ultimate revelation. In this protective environment the apprentice profits from its security to become who they always already were with the dissolution of inhibiting characteristics effected through increasing subterranean temperatures: "El nuevo saber órfico está en los sonos que su lira va a extraer de los infiernos" (Lezama Lima, "Introducción a los vasos órficos" 412). This is equally a biological process referred to as histolysis whereby an animal's corporal

tissues break down during metamorphosis so as to later solidify into its new form. Here, hormones are released raising temperatures and sending it into the next stage of life. Anticipating reemergence, we find ourselves at Murray Stein's psychoanalytical adaptation of imaginal disks, where the innate structures of the self-in-waiting are stimulated into formation towards the fulfilled imago.³⁸ The Larrea and García Vega of Chapter One, the neurotics of Rank's scale, endure throughout while hidden under the poetics of their maestros who rouse within them a reordering shift of self towards the healthy position of the artist, the achievement of poiesis. E. James Lieberman refers to this as a *psychopoiesis*, or *soul-making* in Rank's thinking as the psychoanalyst deemed "the therapist as the midwife to a psychological rebirth that occurs when one moves from creator to creator" (xv). In this sense Huidobro and Lezama Lima served as therapists. Similarly, to appropriate a phrase from Portmann, the maestros are necessary as intermediaries; without them the potentiality cannot be realized, but they do not create it.³⁹ In other words, counter to Bloom's proposal that *need is learned first through the young poet's experience of another poet* (emphasis mine), the maestro does not create the apprenticeship, but he is necessary for it to take place. Larrea and García Vega carried

³⁸ To add yet another illustrative line to the transformational process, Heidegger, reworking Husserlian phenomenology, states that "there necessarily belongs to the conceptual interpretation of being and its structures, that is, to the reductive construction of being, a *destruction*— a critical process in which the traditional concepts, which at first must necessarily be employed, are deconstructed down to the sources from which they were drawn" (*The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* 22-23).

³⁹ Discussing the hormonal glands of insects as they relate to the particular physical qualities of different insects Portmann writes, "These 'specific' characteristics are not brought about by hormones. They result from hereditary reaction patterns in the tissues, which are in every case endowed with form potentialities peculiar to the species. The hormones are necessary as intermediaries; without them the potentiality cannot be realized, but they do not create it" (305).

this stage within them during their framing darkness and once they experienced the appropriate encounter it was activated.

This chapter is divided into two sections each examining the respective passages of Lorenzo García Vega and Juan Larrea from their pre-literary neurosis and isolation to the potential remedy of poetic expression via a foundational literary moment: the apprenticeship to the Other-poet, the maestro. Here, I suggest a correlation between Bloom's *burning brightness* and the poets Vicente Huidobro and José Lezama Lima who became maestros to Larrea and García Vega, respectively. These encounters represent the collision of the submersed oceanic plate with the raised continental plate and the initiation of a subduction process of the former below the latter. Although there is a differing age-gap between the two maestro-apprentice pairs —Huidobro and Larrea born only two years apart while Lezama Lima was sixteen years older than García Vega—, both youths resemble each other as disciple-like apprentices, rather than contemporary epigones of their maestros, by the way in which each fully “descended” through and out of the latter's poetics, carrying along essential pieces, and eventually shedding what they deemed as incompatible with an unconscious set of standards that resisted destruction during the apprenticeship. This similarity is testament to a shared weakened psychic state confronting a strong poetic personality. Even so, I do not pretend that their experiences were identical. García Vega's apprenticeship was an intense period of learning literature as Lezama offered it to him: reading what was assigned, discussing what he read, and preparing for the moment when he would be ready to write his first poems for *Orígenes* and *Suite para la espera*. Larrea's apprenticeship was such that it set him directly to

writing his own poetry through the aesthetic of Huidobro's Creacionismo. This difference is indicative of Larrea's already extensive literary readings, his previously unsatisfactory attempts at writing, and also perhaps the fact that he was slightly older than García Vega when he encountered his maestro. García Vega, on the other hand, declares to have read very little literature before meeting Lezama, and written even less. His apprenticeship would thus be more consuming than Larrea's, and consequently, more difficult to escape.

I analyze the content and nature of this clearly demarcated learning period and the influence it had on the young poet, considering it both in terms of an opportune redirection and an imposing deviation, meaning that while the apprenticeship formed the apprentice, it also to a certain extent deformed the pre-apprentice self. Additionally, I analyze the manifestations of this transformation in the texts written during this time remarking on their synthetic qualities, an imperfect hybrid between the instinctual needs of the apprentice and the molding effects of the maestro. In the first section I begin with García Vega, inverting the order of the previous chapter sections to diminish the effects of Larrea's chronological precedence, a detail that is irrelevant to their similar evolutive self-growth, and hopefully with this thematic pivoting create a type of structural latticework with Chapter One. For García Vega, his transformational phase started in 1944 when he met José Lezama Lima in the Victoria Bookshop in La Habana. Before then he had never read the work of his maestro and was only vaguely familiar with Lezama's *Orígenes* magazine. The relationship was personal from the start, acquiring the function of a salvation for a fatherless 18-year-old in the throes of a psychological crisis. That meeting initiated a two-year apprenticeship for García Vega who completed

Lezama's *Curso Delfico*, an instructional process during which he read and discussed the books of his maestro's bookshelves. Although formally part of the Orígenes group, during this time García Vega appeared only once in the pages of *Orígenes* with a review of Julian Marías' work *Miguel de Unamuno*, the publication of which he considered a "generosidad" on the part of the magazine.⁴⁰ In his consideration of the difficult task Marías had undertaken to give structure to the "complicado andamiaje unamunesco," he wrote a revealing phrase as to his mindset at this moment: "Ordenar, o más bien dominar, así lo requiere nuestro espíritu harto de desórdenes" (42). He also offered indispensable insight into the private world of this inner transformation bent on self-ordering in his critical recollections, including *Los años de Orígenes* (1979), "Maestro por penúltima vez" (1993), and *El oficio de perder* (2004). Additionally, the opening chapter of Jorge Luis Arcos' *Kaleidoscopio: La poética de Lorenzo García Vega* (2012) provides an exceptional study of the youngest Origenist's experience of Lezama Lima's *Curso Delfico* and a valuation of his particular discipleship compared to that of others who also laid claim to the maestro's inheritance.

In the following section, I move to Juan Larrea's apprenticeship, which he experienced under the supervision of the Chilean poet Vicente Huidobro and lasted from 1919 to 1923. As he confessed in his correspondence with Gerardo Diego and in his later writings reflecting on this time, the first year and a half his apprenticeship was that of an inspired reader of Huidobro's Creationist poems, never having met the poet himself and only obsessively imitating the technique that they offered as a way to get beyond his self,

⁴⁰ "Fue una generosidad publicarme esa reseña. No valía gran cosa" (Lorenzo García Vega, e-mail message, October 1, 2011).

beyond subjective wallowing and closer to objective creation. However, when he met Huidobro at Madrid's Ateneo in 1921 the apprenticeship took on a personal aspect. They developed a friendship that included extensive correspondence where ideas, projects, and poems were exchanged. These letters were published in Huidobro's *Epistolario* edited in 2008 by Gabriele Morelli. He also visited Huidobro in Paris where he was introduced to many of the active avant-gardists of the time and began to assert his own ideas in their conversations. These visits anticipated the eventual move to the French capital, initially in 1924 and then more permanently in 1926 when with César Vallejo he founded the magazine *Favorables París Poema*, a period explored in Chapter Three. Throughout this time several of his poems appeared in various avant-garde magazines and, together with abundant unedited material, were eventually recovered and published in the collection of his poetry *Versión Celeste* (1969). I will compare poems from this time, including fragments in letters sent to the maestro for revision, with Huidobro's Creationist poetics, giving particular attention to the melding of Larrea's reserved mystical predisposition with the audaciousness of the avant-garde metaphor. These textual analyses are considered within the psychological influence of the apprenticeship. Much of the information revealing its character is found in the letters of Larrea's *Cartas a Gerardo Diego (1916-1980)* and those he shared with Huidobro published in the latter's *Epistolario*. Larrea's conference "Vicente Huidobro en Vanguardia" published in 1979 in *Revista Iberoamericana*, provides a detailed account of the historical events of the apprenticeship together with his estimation of its significance in his development and of Huidobro's character as a genius with many faults. It is a comparable piece of writing to

García Vega's "Maestro por penúltima vez," where the recognizant disciple both remembers the importance of such an influence and responds to the public's curiosity to know about their more-renown educator. David Bary's essays in *Nuevos estudios sobre Huidobro y Larrea* (1984) also shed further light on this relationship benefitting from first-hand information gained through his own friendship with Larrea.

A preliminary other self was emerging verifiably in a newly acquired means of creation capable of concreting that self within the material of the poetic word. When considering the chronology of self and word, here the self predates the word. That initial personal need for a new language grows in scope informed of an on-going literary struggle defined by just such a need. Their individual missions find support with the projects of others poets, such as Rubén Darío, Lautréamont, Arthur Rimbaud, Stéphane Mallarmé, and Guillaume Apollinaire, and suddenly the instinctual isolation seems to be less. The maestro provided the spark that informed their perceptions of reality, initiating a cognitive journey after the necessary tools for a vocation as a vital project, an Orteguian *raison d'être* amidst the particular circumstances of each youth's life; *circumstances* also as Ortega y Gasset used it—"Yo soy yo y mi circunstancia, y si no la salvo a ella no me salvo yo" (*Meditaciones del Quijote* 77)—to signify not only a set of exterior conditions, but also the interior world of the self.⁴¹ This came at a cost, however, as once received, the influence of the Other would need to be escaped.

⁴¹ Julián Marías in *Miguel de Unamuno*, as well as in a footnote to Ortega y Gasset's formula in *Meditaciones del Quijote*, explains it the following way: "El momento de *yoidad* del hombre —el segundo *yo* de la frase orteguiana— no agota al ente humano, como creyó el idealismo. Pero ahora nos interesa más bien el primer *yo*, el que incluye la circunstancia, el que no es puro *sujeto* del vivir, *centro* de una circunstancia" (94).

The biographical and textual analyses assembled in Chapter Two interpret each poet's transition from neurosis to the early written works born of their improved psychological focus and literary knowledge, gained through an apprenticeship that marked their entry into the writer's profession. This is a stage mediating Chapter One's paralysis and Chapter Three's participation in the collective of the literary magazine. It was a transformation that took place during a period of semi-dependence that produced a literature. Imaginative need was thus treated by exercising their active imagination in their first poems, showing indications that adaptation was underway now that reality could be captured with a language different from that of their adolescent glossaries.

* * *

**LORENZO GARCÍA VEGA:
AN APPRENTICESHIP TO JOSÉ LEZAMA LIMA (1944-1946)**

*Reconozco y agradezco la tremenda, pero sencilla ...
manera en que un Maestro cubano... pudo ayudar a situarme,
a través de la literatura, en el camino de « Lo que voy siendo ».*⁴²

LORENZO GARCÍA VEGA

Introduction

Before Lorenzo García Vega was aware of José Lezama Lima he inhabited a paralytically silent waiting room listening for a revelation, for a reading to deliver a truth that explained how to participate in the world (*El oficio de perder* 306). García Vega, along with many others, considered the Thirties in Cuba to be a dark period for the multiple reasons argued in Chapter One. Hope was overrun by futility when promising events and heroic figures produced nothing better, only different. Commonplace frustration was exacerbated for the adolescent García Vega who obsessed neurotically over his own inability to interact meaningfully with his environment in La Habana. However, upon leaving the Belén School he had formed a few close friendships with others who shared his rejection of the rigid Jesuit education as a dogma riddled with principles left empty and hypocritical by their religious purveyors. He wrote of a shared language that allowed him to finally in some minor way reach outside of himself: “Fuera como fuera alcancé un lenguaje, y esto fue una gran cosa para mí. Me pude abrir al esplendor del mundo exterior y esto, fuera como fuera, en la escasa manera en que lo pude conseguir fue, para mí, lo muy bonito” (*OP* 325). This language, underlining the

⁴² “Maestro por penúltima vez.” *Encuentro de la Cultura Cubana* 53/54 (2009): 23.

medium that delivered him peace, was also shaped, he writes, by their Jesuit education.⁴³ In essence, he describes an embedded subduction zone cycle, a moment of self-growth, of psychic molting where the completed cycle led to a minor metamorphosis. The ten-year-old child encountered the Jesuit priests, underwent their influence, and emerged separate, but not without retaining certain elements learned.⁴⁴ Among those elements was the discipline of crossing his arms, a ceremonial and ascetic act collaborating with his obsessive-compulsive disorder and want of structure.⁴⁵

However, he had also brought with him a resentment of the priests that incapacitated his faith, while his limited ability to connect with his classmates negated the psychological comfort one could find from belonging to a community. When he was ten, his father's death left him without that hereditary guide and with only the memory of the weak and distant man he had known him to be. Not even the memory of his father served to lead him.⁴⁶ He read extensively from philosophical works looking to counter this void

⁴³ “Pero resultó que, al salir del colegio acompañado por un grupo de ex-colegiales, ex-colegiales que rechazábamos lo que nos había formado, pude salir hacia fuera a través de ese lenguaje que compartíamos, pero para mayor contradicción, estaba hecho con las piezas que manejaban los jesuitas del lugar donde habíamos estado” (OP 325).

⁴⁴ “Car si l’aspect immédiat de la liberté est négativité, on sait qu’il ne s’agit pas de la puissance abstraite de dire non, mais d’une négativité concrète qui retient en elle-même ce qu’elle nie et s’en colore tout entière” (Sartre, *Qu’est-ce que la littérature?* 78)

⁴⁵ Freud in his essay “Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices” (1907) describes a correlation between the repetition religious ceremonials and obsessive-compulsive disorders, stemming from a common effort for repression. He identifies “neurosis as an individual religiosity and religion as a universal obsessional neurosis. The most essential similarity would reside in the underlying renunciation of the activation of instincts that are constitutionally present” (126-127).

⁴⁶ “En la foto, esa mirada, casi tristonada, de mi padre, no es para sentirse seguro. Mi padre, pese a su gran figura, no me pudo apoyar. Siempre que pienso en él aparece, como telón de fondo, el espectáculo de sus sudores, de su sangre (las hemorragias de la enfermedad que lo llevó a la muerte). Por lo que me sospecho que él pesa, en mi inconsciente, como lo fuerte que, en el fondo, está tocado por la debilidad” (OP 87).

with explanations arrived at through verifiable reasoning: a sequence of visible steps as opposed to blind leap. To develop reason implies building trust in a latticework of propositions. These readings, unlike the *Spiritual Exercises*, did not demand his allegiance, but to enter freely into a structure of ideas and opine. He had been unable to obey the directions of those he did not trust, but given the appropriate encounter, conversely, García Vega was willing to follow someone forward at the chance of a progressive exit from his chaos.

The disciple out of such need as to have willfully moved into the apprenticeship in the first place and out of the enormous respect for the mastery of an ability they wish to reach possesses a predisposition to accept the maestro's teachings if not blindly, with greater permissiveness than their discerning self made available to others before them. Such acquiescence led García Vega on his literary odyssey pitting his disbelieving, atheistic vision against the Lezama's Catholicism, in which a faith in the transcendent underlay the *Sistema Poético del Mundo* through which García Vega discovered poesis. A misreading would be unavoidable in García Vega's relationship with Lezama simply because of the disciple's continued inability to take the leap, just as he could not when at the Belén Jesuit School, to a radiant solution, or resolution, of his obsessions inside a totality. His suffering was his truth and finding relief with a literature that offered him a mask would then be untruth. He struggled to enter a suspension of disbelief to develop a Coleridgean poetic faith, though the enthusiasm present in his first works show an attempt at such. He was only able to reinterpret so much of his maestro's faith before needing to flee it. He was always the *interested* poet in Kantian terms, reading for a truth

behind the words, what he called *el reverso*, and so, arrived via a path indicated by Lezama as “por la negación al posible y por el posible a la gravitación de lo inexistente” (“La dignidad de la poesía” 355).

Octavio Paz places poetry alongside other vital activities like lighting fires, hunting, fishing, collecting fruit, and planting where each demands an apprenticeship equal to a set of rules and regulations to be learned.⁴⁷ The assembly of accepted procedures implies one’s involvement in a community and Larrea and García Vega would need to recognize a set of peers, but such acceptance was preceded by this first step: an encounter with a single individual powerful enough to act as a bridge bringing them out of isolation and into a group of like artists.

The Poetic System for an Apprenticeship

José Lezama Lima (1910-1976) was 16 years García Vega’s elder and described the Cuba of his adolescence as also a cultural darkness lacking in ethical models and during which he felt trapped by society, where truth was “más conversable que estruendosa” and “la tertulia en el café se convertía en noble pereza erudita” (Bianchi Ross 56). In his 1949 response to the critical letter of Jorge Mañach, the central figure of Cuba’s avant-garde Generation of 1923 and the *Revista de Avance*, he described that legacy as “cínife sombrío, o soledad brumosa del alción, que llevaron nuestras adolescencias a desgarrarse en la soledad del que se sabe en una labor sin compañía, del que se sabe sobre una lámina estática y grosera” (“Respuesta” 689). When in 1926 César

⁴⁷ “Si la poesía es una práctica social, requiere un aprendizaje y, por lo tanto, su transmisión se realiza a través de un conjunto de reglas y principios” (Paz, “Prólogo” 17).

Vallejo reproached, “la juventud literaria de España y América carece en estos momentos de maestros,” he was defending the likes of Lezama, corroborating the literary solitude of his generation (“Estado de la literatura española” 6).⁴⁸ Resembling Larrea’s appraisal of Ultraism, Lezama found the *Avance* movement directionless, *lacking a sensible line or projection*, and of sterile innovation and ostentatious rupture: “sus cualidades eran [...] de polémica crítica, mas no de creación y comunicación de un júbilo en sus cuadros de escritores” (“Respuesta” 688).⁴⁹ From this, Lezama’s framing darkness, an exterior shadowed in *pro domo sua* of “generaciones anteriores, las que se creen haber hecho, su logro, y como es frecuente, el apocalipsis y la peste consiguiente” (“Señales” 194), emerged the mission:

Pero de esa soledad y de esa lucha con la espantosa realidad de las circunstancias, surgió en la sangre de todos nosotros, la idea obsesionante de que podíamos al avanzar en el misterio de nuestras expresiones poéticas trazar, dentro de las desventuras rodeantes, un nuevo y viejo diálogo entre el hombre que penetra y la tierra que se le hace transparente. (“Respuesta” 689)

Out of this suffering, described by Remedios Mataix as “un legado [que] se recibió como una *parálisis* que interrumpía las enormes posibilidades que ellos atribuían a la creación” and where poiesis had been relegated to the background, Lezama formulated a poetics of

⁴⁸ Vallejo continues his denunciation: “Nadie allá [en América] sabe lo que quiere, adonde va ni por donde va. Los más son unos magníficos arribistas. Los otros, unos inconscientes. En cada una de esas máscaras está pintado el egoísta, amarillo de codicia, de momia o de vesánico fanatismo” (“Estado de la literatura española” 6).

⁴⁹ Also, from Chapter XI of *Paradiso*: “Lo que es tan solo novedad se extingue en formas ornamentales” (326).

continuity (Mataix 38-39).⁵⁰ Contrary to the previous generation, through this *new and old dialogue* he favored multigenerational and international collaborations, typified by the enormously varied participants in the pages of *Orígenes*, for edifying cultural production uniting with “la fuerza de impulsión enorme de su *poiesis*” and the “*ocupatio de la totalidad*” of the great literary creators.⁵¹

Unlike García Vega, Lezama entered into literature at an early age. In an interview with Bianchi Ross he named Salgari as among his earliest readings, followed by Dumas and completing *Don Quijote* at the age of eight; later “vinieron Proust, Valéry, Ortega, Unamuno, Antonio Machado, en fin, como usted sabe, como creo habérselo demostrado, he sido un lector voraz” (50). He also shared that he began writing early on, but that his first experiences with publishing led him to create independent magazines as an outlet for his work and that of his colleagues. Responding to questions about his beginnings, Lezama described the moment that his sensibility to the image was awoken, the image that would call out for poetry.

Uno nunca se dedica a la poesía. La poesía es algo más misterioso que una dedicación pues yo le puedo decir a usted que cuando mi padre murió yo

⁵⁰ In Remedios Mataix: “Según [Lezama], esos autores habían traicionado la entrega a su *poiesis* al relegarla a un segundo plano, atraídos por la «inmediatez» de lo que él llama «la ganga mundana de la política positiva» (por oposición a la política «esencial»)” (39).

⁵¹ On the divisiveness of the previous generation, Lezama writes: “Su ruptura era tan superior a su deuda generacional, que su espinazo histórico era diluido en lo amorfo y protocelular” (*La expresión americana* 177). He opposes this group of writers with these: “Los dieciocho años de Rimbaud, los cuarenta y dos de José Martí, los ochenta y dos de Goethe, no forman parte de una generación. ¿Qué es lo que nos sigue atrayendo? Su *ocupatio de la totalidad*, la fuerza de impulsión enorme de su *poiesis*.” (“Encuesta generacional.” *La Gaceta de Cuba* 5 (1966): 8. Quoted in Mataix 37).

tenía 8 años y ese hecho me hizo hipersensible a la presencia de una imagen. Ese hecho fue para mí una conmoción tan grande que desde muy niño ya pude percibir que era muy sensible a lo que estaba y no estaba, a lo visible y a lo invisible. (54)

The death of the father broke the comfortable shell of childhood exiling the personality into an unsympathetic exterior reality that it would have to negotiate, and during those negotiations the already-seen and the now-perceived began to assemble; Deleuze's *pain forces the intelligence to seek*. For Larrea this traumatic experience was moving back to Bilbao away from the affection of his aunt in Madrid, the solitude of boarding school, and the death of his sister when he was 13; for García Vega it was his move from Jagüey Grande to La Habana when he was 10, the sense of isolation at the Belén Jesuit School, and the death of his father when he was 12. The mysterious nature of poetry, as Lezama called it, that places it outside of what an individual can voluntarily choose, is perhaps found in the same imaginative need of the young poet that Bloom proposes. Circumstantial developments in both the interior and exterior of oneself propel one to search and toward that other search running parallel that is poetry. It is interesting to note that while that first moment of sensibility when recalled by Juan Larrea gave way to words seeking to link together guided by the waves of his emotions, for García Vega it was the realization of a beautiful chaos of images, that is, an unveiling of an image composed of its many parts. The distinct manifestations of need propel García Vega towards the sensibility of Lezama's description: an individual perception of an image with its material and ethereal components that one is compelled to communicate. But

such similarities between these elemental formational moments in both Lezama and García Vega's memories beg the question as to whether García Vega's discovery of poetic need as he narrated it in *El oficio de perder* might be another product of his apprenticeship, his origin of self formulated *a posteriori* and configured in some way out of Lezama's influence. We recall from Chapter One García Vega's epiphanic moment during his traumatic move to La Habana when he first became, as did Lezama, *hipersensible a la presencia de una imagen*, but also aware that it was an image that he felt compelled narrate.⁵²

Lezama also explained in his interview with Bianchi Ross another component of this early stage in his literary development: a waiting period, like that desperately experienced and described by Larrea and García Vega. However, for Lezama the nature of the wait was very different.

Yo siempre esperaba algo; pero si no sucedía nada, entonces percibía que mi espera era perfecta, y que ese espacio vacío, esa pausa inexorable tenía yo que llenarla con lo que al paso del tiempo fue la imagen [...] Alrededor de una palabra, de una pausa, de un murmullo, se iba formando la novela imagen. (54)

⁵² From Chapter One: "La luz yodo, acabada de apagar. Había como un chorro de rocío, pero no, no era un chorro de rocío, sino un chorro de agua, disparado por una locomotora. Y el café con leche de aquel momento, y el polvo negro de la locomotora, y la luz yodo: todo uniéndose, mezclándose, o confundiéndose, hasta convertirse en una imagen alucinante. El niño, en aquella madrugada en que iba para La Habana, después del portazo a la casa de su infancia, lo sentía así, en imagen alucinante" (*OP* 135).

Lezama reveals his confidence that the wait was part of a larger process, in sharp contrast with Larrea and García Vega's anxious uncertainty. While the latter two waited for a guide from the outside to show them what to do with the paralyzing imaginative need that they felt, Lezama's wait was active. He fulfilled the role of the one who waited and the one who arrived to answer the wait, as if the mere act of waiting signified an objective lack desirous of subjective completion; he was simultaneously Vladimir, Estragon, and Godot. This is undoubtedly an indicative characteristic of Bloom's strong poet undaunted by his precursors, and as a strong poet his understanding of a wait was not overwhelmed by his individual experience, but able to comprehend it in larger terms, telescoping outwards to Cuba, its literary tradition, and farther. From an individual poetic need to a poetic mission, in "Introducción a un sistema poético" Lezama writes of the consciousness of being as existing as a fragment, an incomplete plurality "concebido en imagen" (8). When one realizes this incompleteness, one attempts to extract fragments and sculpt completion within the image, a process of destruction and reconstruction powered by poetry concluding with "el imposible sintético" rendering new meaning through poesis (10). In this ordination, Lezama sees the word bursting to contain the image. This follows Larrea and García Vega's search for the word that could structure the image—to "traducir aquello –lo inmaduro-, intraducible, que a uno le ha sucedido" (*OP* 437)— while suggesting a more assertive self who was less reliant on the Other's conveyance of a means.

The image out of words or words out of the image, poetry is the momentary stabilization of *el imposible sintético*. As proposed in the Introduction, Lezama's poetic

system closely follows the dynamics of a subduction zone tectonic site through the use of geological terminology and the cyclical progression from orphic descent to eruption of the synthesis. This is a mechanism in perpetuity as the synthesis becomes “contaminada [...] de toda grosera visibilidad” until one realizes that “conducidos por Anfiareo [*sic*] o por Trofonio,” referring to two chthonic oracles, “buscamos la cueva del dictado profético o las profundidades de la plutonía” (“Introduction...” 9). The search becomes a descent and the descent carries the sense contained within an eroded synthesis pursuing downward its renovation in the volcanic depths of creation. The movement of the descent is the engagement with the historical image, confronting that aged synthesis not without truth but held inside a friable material crumbling under time, and undertaking its reinterpretation assembling the fragments located by the self before erupting through poesis in the imago. Emerson wrote, “Language is fossil poetry” (“The Poet” 329), therefore conversely, Poetry is resuscitated Language. Such a Lezarian act was heroic and dangerous in tales of mythology, and summarized as necessarily “difficult” for the modern writer, demanding a commitment to ethical erudition. He opened *La expresión americana* (1957) with the oft-quoted phrase: “Sólo lo difícil es estimulante,” defining *lo difícil*, i.e. the material manifestation of “difficulty” as:

la forma en devenir en que un paisaje va hacia un sentido, una interpretación o una sencilla hermenéutica, para ir después hacia su reconstrucción, que es en definitivo lo que marca su eficacia o desuso, su fuerza ordenancista o su apagado eco, que es su visión histórica. Una primera dificultad, es su sentido; la otra, la mayor, la adquisición de una visión histórica. He ahí, pues, la dificultad del sentido y de la visión

histórica. Sentido o el encuentro de una casualidad regalada por las valoraciones historicistas. Visión histórica, que es ese contrapunto o tejido entregado por la *imago*, por la imagen participando en la historia. (57)

Here are multiple characterizations of the object found within the subduction zone. There is the objectification of difficulty as a larval form of the image and its equivalent, a meaning (*una primera dificultad, es su sentido*). At the same time it is the larval form of the writerly self, an objectification of the process of apprenticeship (*la otra, la mayor, la adquisición de una visión histórica*). In both strains a decision must be made to engage the mechanism of decipherment wherein a form actively *becomes*: knowledge interpreted becomes image; the adolescent self understood becomes poet. Such an undertaking risks tumult and requires the perseverance to apprehend it in order for the unknown to be brought forth. Freeing the imagination to dictate method and form places great strain on all words charged with housing the results. When confronted with indictments of the textual difficulty produced by his poetic system, Lezama responded: “El incentivo de lo que no entendemos, de lo difícil o de lo que no se rinde a los primeros rondadores, es la historia de la ocupación de lo inefable por el logos o el germen poético” (“Respuesta” 688).⁵³ Difficulty becomes indicative of the high standard to which Lezama holds the poet as a moral renovator, where “creación y conducta puedan formar parte de la

⁵³ Reinaldo Arenas writes in 1969 in defense of Lezama: “Vivimos en una época en la que son muchos los fabricantes, pero pocos los creadores. Cuando la obra de un creador cae en manos de un manufacturero, éste trata en seguida de someterla a las leyes de su construcción; y si no se ajusta a esas leyes la ataca o la rechaza, la evade o trata de reducirla a su dimensión interpretativa. Entonces surgen las muletillas que se esconden tras las palabras conocidas: hermetismo, oscuridad, o la mezquina teoría de que en la novelística cubana predomina un solo personaje, la palabra” (*Necesidad de libertad* 146).

corriente mayor del lenguaje” (“La dignidad de la poesía” 347). This supposed a principled education of the gaze committed to history but not limited by it as it is preliminary to arduous imaginative interpretation. The ethical component molding poetic creation then mediates the worlds of the individual and the collective.

The polysemic descent that represented for Lezama the encounter with *lo difícil* was a wide-reaching gesture encompassing many components involved in an ascensional self-building process with intended reverberations for the surrounding cultural nation. Such ethical improvement afforded sought-after enthusiasm during the destructive early twentieth century and was encouraged in part by the resurgence of Hellenistic studies. Werner Jaeger’s three-volume work *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture* (1939-1944) played an important role in this resurgence, and was exceptionally influential in Lezama’s thinking, as Salgado argues in his article “El periplo de la paideia: Joyce, Lezama, Reyes y el neohelenismo hispanoamericano” (2001). Salgado notes, for example, the important presence in Lezama’s *Paradiso* of Jaeger’s interpretation of the Greek *paideia*, a cultural community in a state of evolution seeking improvement through intellectual and ethical formation (Salgado 79). The ideals of the *paideia* directly addressed and offered an alternative to the political disorder in Cuba described in Chapter One.⁵⁴ Enveloped by that framing darkness, the *paideia* emphasized for the young citizens a “nobleza de alma y principio” and promoted a “heroísmo moral, una seguridad lograda a través de un cultivo del ser propio” (Salgado 79). For Lezama, assertive inside

⁵⁴ “De acuerdo a Jaeger, la “paideia” abarca varias esferas —cultura, intelecto, educación— pero es sobre todo una ética de perfeccionamiento—un programa de ideales que una cultura establece para sí misma a través de estrategias espontáneas y orgánicas de instrucción que operan fuera de la coerción o imposición de burocracias o estructuras estatales” (Salgado 79).

his environment, the *paideia* was a method of repairing the Other, including those fallen heroes of García Vega's childhood.⁵⁵ Such aspirations return us to *lo difícil*, then, where Jaeger's *paideia* realized through "el intercambio dinámico entre maestro y aprendiz que ocurre en un taller o bajo el tutelaje de filósofos independientes" (Salgado 79), echoes inside Lezama's *adquisición de una visión histórica*, the subductive apprenticeship culminating in the interpretation and compression of understanding into images through the poetic word, and his maieutic education with which he would provide García Vega called the *Curso Délfico*.

A Close Encounter

García Vega, impotent before reality, would turn to Lezama's word as a means to repair himself and enter the exterior world. His discovery would be sudden and clearly demarcated within a first sentence from Lezama Lima. However, the path leading up to this encounter was more uncertain. He was desperate to find a guide, yet skeptical of his own judgment among abundant equivocal characters. In *El oficio de perder* he recounted

⁵⁵ Walt Whitman used a similar idea modeled after the example of Ancient Greece in his essay *Democratic Vistas* (1871) to argue for the central role that culture, namely literature, must occupy in order to lift the post-Civil War United States out of its moral crises: "In short, as, though it may not be realized, it is strictly true, that a few first-class poets, philosophers, and authors, have substantially settled and given status to the entire religion, education, law, sociology, &c., of the hitherto civilized world, by tinging and often creating the atmospheres out of which they have arisen, such also must stamp, and more than ever stamp, the interior and real democratic construction of this American continent, to-day, and days to come. Remember also this fact of difference, that, while through the antique and through the mediaeval ages, highest thoughts and ideals realized themselves, and their expression made its way by other arts, as much as, or even more than by, technical literature, (not open to the mass of persons, or even to the majority of eminent persons,) such literature in our day and for current purposes, is not only more eligible than all the other arts put together, but has become the only general means of morally influencing the world" (*Democratic Vistas* 934).

a failed meeting with the Spanish poet Mercedes Pinto, his almost-maestro, that would have dramatically altered his formation and the character of his future work. From Bloom's idea of the encounter, this episode can consequently be considered a *close* encounter.

Yo, cuando ya era adolescente, a pesar de ser un lector de Ortega y de cuanto filósofo me cayera en mano, no dejaba de leer a Mercedes. ¡Dios!, ¡qué horrible confusión podía tener en el desierto cultural de Cuba, un adolescente de mi época! Y así, leía a los filósofos y quería dedicarme a la literatura, pero no me decidía a leer ni novelas, ni poemas, ni nada literario, hasta no llegar a encontrarme con alguien que me llegara a orientar en el oficio de perder, por lo que, entonces, soñé con encontrarme con Mercedes Pinto para poder pedirle que se convirtiera en mi Virgilio. (OP 166)

The negativity García Vega attributed 70 years later when remembering his reading of Mercedes Pinto resembles embarrassment, but it serves less to condemn a particular writer than to highlight his opinion of the cultural deprivation in Cuba that offered limited options from whom the youth could choose.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, his relief at this missed encounter is unmistakable. Though García Vega was drawn to avant-garde poetics, not the romantic, emotion-laden verses of Pinto, he confessed that he longed to meet her so that she might *become his Virgil*. She was indeed a strong poet emerging from a dark backdrop and pulling the pre-disciple in need toward her. Mercedes Pinto

⁵⁶ Mercedes Pinto was exiled from Spain in 1924 by Primo de Rivera and arrived in Cuba in October 1935, only months before García Vega's own deracination from Jagüey Grande for the capital.

was an established writer with a decided set of principles.⁵⁷ Her renown produced an impression of stability and a successful maneuvering of self through reality. Furthermore, as an Other from outside of the country she was a promising candidate to offer him a very different path from that of Cuban poets, representing an ethical invigoration of stagnant culture. At this early moment in his development, the likely aesthetic discord between the two mattered little. Instead she stood out as a source of guidance, and so occurred their close encounter:

Fue en un tranvía vacío. Yo era el único viajero, pero pasadas unas cuadras, subió al tranvía Mercedes Pinto, y se sentó delante de mí. ¡Qué emoción! Me dije que me había llegado el momento de encontrarme con mi iniciadora, y casi que me levanté para ir hacia su asiento y decirle que yo amaba la literatura, pero en aquel preciso momento mi destartado aparato psíquico me ayudó, pues fue que, como siempre me sucedía con personas que me intimidaran, me entró un temblor, en manos y piernas, de tales proporciones que, asustado, decidí no encaminarme hacia la socióloga Pinto, temeroso de que ésta, al verme frente a ella, creyese que yo padecía del mal de Parkinson. Así que mi enfermedad con sus tembleques y su timidez espantosa, me libró de comenzar mi oficio de perder iniciado por Mercedes Pinto. (*OP* 166-67)

⁵⁷ With the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, her stay in Cuba was prolonged until 1943. During this time she was an active participant with associations in defense of the Republic, ex. the *Círculo Republicano de La Habana*, the *Centro Republicano Española*, the *Círculo Español Socialista*, and the *Centro Asturiano* (Llarena 141); “Hay en la obra de Mercedes Pinto, cumplida con tanta gallardía, una conciencia rectora insobornable y una voluntad decidida. Cree buena la humanidad—no se olvide la limpieza ejecutoria de su liberalismo— y aspira a ser, dentro de ella, digna de sí misma. Ese es el sentimiento-eje, la razón motriz de toda su vida. La paz interior consigo mismo.” (Marquinas 141, in Llarena 32-34).

In this passage García Vega reiterates certain elements central to the anticipation of his literary apprenticeship: his neurosis (his *enfermedad* or *destartalado aparato psíquico*), to which he attributes the symptoms of timidity, fear, and emotional volatility; and his will to find an *iniciadora*, actively seeking this Other during his wait, and the indenture that would take place once the initiator was found, as compared to the freedom awarded him by not meeting Mercedes Pinto. His hindsight awards certain benefits of his illness much in the way that Jung writes of a positive neurosis where an individual owes “his entire usefulness and reason for existence to a neurosis” by preventing “all the worst follies in his life” (*Two Essays* 46). Approached differently, García Vega’s apparent inability to act, to approach Mercedes Pinto in the trolley, was an action in itself provoked by his very personal inner struggle and carried out in accordance with his self. In this instance, García Vega does not suggest that his neurosis prevented an apprenticeship to Pinto by holding him true to any unconscious values, but instead by nothing more than its serendipitous interference. Nevertheless, one might argue that it “forced him to a mode of living that developed his valuable potentialities” (*Two Essays* 46). For the retrospective García Vega, relieved that the encounter never took place, he pejoratively qualifies her as a “lamentable alternativa” and though she was “increíblemente respetada,” would have been a “consejera cursilona” (*OP* 167). When Pinto left Cuba in 1943, placing their coincidence in the trolley at a moment prior to age 17, he was still in search of a maestro within the “infernial vacío de un ambiente cultural cubano” (*OP* 167).

The Appropriate Encounter

Reaching the end of his teenage years he was immersed inside his insufferable wait to become a writer, “fuertemente agarrado por un tremendo desajuste psíquico para el cual el primer analista que consulté me recomendó unas sesiones de electro shock, sesiones que no dí, aunque estuve alrededor, o rozando una esquizofrenia” (García Vega, “Maestro por penúltima vez” 12). In 1944, the Virgil he failed to find earlier finally found him when he coincided with José Lezama Lima in the Victoria Bookshop. He captured this moment in *Los años de Orígenes* (1979), published three years after Lezama’s death, in a chapter whose title characterizes the meeting with the fatefulness of Bloom’s language to refer to the sudden, yet long-awaited moment: “Encuentro en La Victoria.”

Bombilla, mortecina. Estaba, él, frente a la estantería de la derecha. Estaba pasando las páginas de la *Paideia* de Jaeger. Era un adolescente. Tenía puesto un saco negro —quizás quería parecerse a Unamuno—, y una corbata —nunca dejaba de usar corbata—. Tenía, también, él, unas manos temblorosas. (182)

This is where the oceanic and continental tectonic plates came into contact, where García Vega’s apprenticeship began. This passage, however, was written by the quinquagenarian writer García Vega post-apprenticeship describing his younger self in the third person and transforming himself into a character of his own memory. It is a scene, as Lourdes Gil observes, that could be read as “una versión cubana del *Retrato del artista adolescente* de Joyce” (44). He assembles his fragments of memory, just as he

would learn to do from Lezama, and brings forth the image of an encounter, searching to locate a sense through its contemplation. If we are to trust his recollection, at the precise moment of his encounter he was reading Jaeger's *Paideia*. Such a coincidence results in impressive symbolism: a work outlining the Ancient Greek methodology for educating its youth to a level of excellence was in the hands of a Cuban youth surrounded by anything but excellence when he was discovered by a maestro enthused by this very book's proposals for cultural renewal. García Vega recalls the trembling of those hands as they were holding that book, again evoking the constant presence of his illness, his black coat and tie likening his image to that of Unamuno, and the room's light bulb whose pale light could not quite reach the corners, a recurrent image in his writing.⁵⁸ This is certainly the portrait of the searching Bloomian ephebe: the anxious youth dressed in the fashion of a literary giant while perusing a philosophical text promoting an improved reality under the failing light of the Victoria Bookshop. As the account continues Bloom's formula is fulfilled and the author discovers that the character was not alone.⁵⁹ There was another, "the spectator," standing in the doorway to the back room where the adolescent was reading.

Pero el espectador estaba allí, en la pequeña puerta de la trastienda
—no una puerta precisamente, sino la abertura de un tosco biombo de
cartón—. Y el espectador dijo:

⁵⁸ For example, in the story "El álbum" in *Cetrería del títere* (1960): "Era que llegaba la noche, que ninguna luz ocuparía el sitio de los rincones" (117).

⁵⁹ "Poetry [...] comes only to those in dire imaginative need of it, though it may come then as terror. And this need is learned first through the young poet's or ephebe's experience of another poet, of the Other whose baleful greatness is enhanced by the ephebe's seeing him as a burning brightness against a framing darkness" (Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence* 35)

—Muchacho, ¡lee a Proust!

Era José Lezama Lima. (*Los años de Orígenes* 183)

Under the bookshop's pale light the silence was suddenly interrupted by the authoritative voice of José Lezama Lima giving his first order to the 17-year-old García Vega: *¡Muchacho, lee a Proust!* This phrase has received mythical treatment from scholars of García Vega, and with good reason given the precision it represents as a biographical turning point. It is an event equal to Larrea's first reading of Huidobro, when he immediately began to feel like another person.⁶⁰ García Vega was a young reader of philosophy with a desire to learn to read literature, but, "a borde de una gran crisis," his neurosis greatly hindered his advancement. Fortune intervened inside a scarcity of words and in an instant he received his first literary assignment: "de esta crisis pudo salvarme la entrega absoluta al aprendizaje literario" ("Maestro" 23).

In the limited pages of "Encuentro en La Victoria," García Vega also provides a portrait of the impressive figure of his maestro. With a tone of admiration, he wrote: "Pero era, eso sí, toda una presencia aquel espectador. Toda una presencia, y muy cubana. El adolescente lo recordaba con un tabaco, con un traje blanco, con una risa

⁶⁰ Lezama Lima describes a similar defining moment that was his own encounter with a Maestro: "Pero entonces tuvimos una suerte, una dicha sin término. Oímos una voz, vimos un gesto, sentimos un misterio, conocimos de cerca un gran poeta. Juan Ramón se hizo amigo de todos nosotros" (Bianchi Ross 56). The arrival of Juan Ramón Jiménez in Cuba in 1936 was the opportunity, according to Lezama, for young Cuban poets, including himself, who had not been able to experience the presence of José Martí or Julián del Casal to finally feel the spirit of a "great poet."

increíble” (183).⁶¹ In addition to offering a revealing contrast with the memory of his father who was “un gigante, pero el ser más vulnerable del mundo,” “incapacitado para poderme ayudar,” and “la figura lejana, la figura que no me podía sostener” (*OP* 221), the details of his description bring into the question the significance of his memory. Is it simply a realistic description that García Vega wore black in imitation of Unamuno,⁶² and Lezama white, which then gains the imagery of a desired maestro (Unamuno) versus the available maestro (Lezama) after the fact? Or is it representative of his difficult relationship with Lezama that shaded his memory and influenced the description of their attire? In either case, the opposing colors of the maestro and apprentice create an ominous sketch prefiguring the damaging influence that accompanied “el inmenso privilegio” of knowing Lezama (*Los años de Orígenes* 183).

The Delphic Course

Lezama had written *Muerte de Narciso* (1931), his first work that nevertheless showed the foundation of an already highly-developed style, and founded the literary magazines *Verbum*, *Espuela de Plata*, *Nadie parecía*, and had recently formed the *Orígenes* group with several other young Cuban poets and published the first issue of a literary magazine of the same name. García Vega’s encounter led to an invitation to join this group and he became its youngest member, the other bookend to the *Orígenes*

⁶¹ García Vega’s tone of admiration is evocative of Emerson’s poet who “stands among partial men for the complete man, and appraises us not of his wealth, but of the common wealth. The man reveres his genius, because, to speak truly, they are more himself than he is. They receive of the soul as he also receives, but they more” (“The Poet” 320).

⁶² Consider Baudelaire’s declaration, “L’homme finit par ressembler à ce qu’il voudrait être” (*Le peintre de la vie moderne* 882).

opposite Lezama, its oldest member. García Vega's apprenticeship to Lezama Lima lasted two years during which he experienced what was known as Lezama's *Curso Délfico*. Of his life prior to 1944, he wrote that "aunque mi deseo era llegar a ser un escritor, no me acerqué a un poema, ni a un relato, ni a nada que tuviese que ver con las escribanías. Desconocía a Neruda, a Lorca, a Juan Ramón, a todo el mundo" (OP 306), but with his meeting in the Victoria he began an intense period of reading: "Estuve dos años seguidos, día y noche, leyendo los libros que me prestó Lezama" (OP 336). For the young poet still without words this demanded approaching book after book from the maestro's collection, in an order determined by the maestro, beginning with Lautréamont's *Les Chants de Maldoror*, and reading each according to a method also designed by the maestro.⁶³

El curso délfico fue de dos años. Dos años en los que Lezama me prestó libros todas las semanas. Comenzamos con el Conde de Lautréamont. Me dijo: "Por aquí hay que empezar." Después Proust. En el momento que conocí a Lezama casi no tenía lecturas literarias. No había querido hacer lecturas de ese tipo hasta no tener una persona que me orientara. (Aguilera 59)

He had acknowledged a need for help to become the person *he was supposed to be*, and now inside the structure of Lezama's bookshelves, García Vega dedicated all of his energy to acquiring the historical vision his maestro deemed an essential precursor to

⁶³ Manuel Pereira on his experience of the *curso délfico*: "Primero, organizándome las lecturas de acuerdo con un diseño único, irrepitible, que él iba tejiendo intuitivamente como una tela de araña y cuyo énfasis estaba en los clásicos" ("El curso délfico" 600).

poiesis: “Aquellos dos años fueron una experiencia alucinante. Dos años alucinantes, como de monje loco, leyendo día y noche” (*OP* 336). The *Curso Delfico* is the apprenticeship component assumed in Lezama’s *Sistema Poético*, “una excelente articulación del *paideia* jaegeriano” that Salgado also finds in the “reuniones cuasi-rituales que evocan simposios platónicos” between the characters of Fronesis, Foción, and Cemi in Lezama’s novel *Paradiso* (80). It was an anti-authoritarian method designed to teach the student to think by himself, in contrast to the Jesuit education García Vega received at Belén. During this time he began, and learned how, to gather the images surrounding him, both his own and those others had written,⁶⁴ and as his framing darkness descended farther under the guidance of Lezama, his self edged closer to imaginative activation —“Todo el objetivo del Curso parece estar encaminado a despertar el poder creador en el discípulo” (Arcos 28)—, to that subterranean melting point or the initiation of the self’s histolytic metamorphosis towards the dynamism of poietic thought.

Within this stage, José Prats Sariol elucidates the three distinct phases of the *Curso Delfico* system as the character Editabunda described in Lezama’s *Oppiano Licario* (1977). The process of literary comprehension and absorption began with the *Overtura Palatal*, followed by the *Horno Transmutativo*, and culminating in the *Galería Aporética* (“Opus Ícaro” 308). The first stage, says Editabunda, “despierta el paladar de la curiosidad por aquello que cada cual tiene que hacer suyo, estableciendo entre él y el

⁶⁴ “[...] el Maestro, sentado en los parques habaneros, nos enseñó una actitud, una actitud del poema que podía servirnos para enfrentar la vida” (García Vega, “Maestro por penúltima vez” 21).

curso una continuidad inagotable” (*Oppiano Licario* 210), and to which Prats Sariol adds, “aquí la intuición tiene un papel decisivo, es la que determina la simpatía, en el ángulo donde el lector se abre a lo novedoso, busca una complicidad instantánea y desde ella entra al juego intelectual de las *dislecturas*” (“Opus Ícaro” 308). In *Oppiano Licario* the first of the *Curso*’s 2000 works⁶⁵ to be read is *One Thousand and One Nights*, epitomizing the foundational importance in this phase of “la posibilidad infinita de la imaginación y engendradora de una apetencia de lectura incontrolable (Prats Sariol, “El curso délfico” 24).⁶⁶ Why might Lezama have chosen *Les Chants de Maldoror* as García Vega’s initiation? Perhaps it was simply because the new disciple was already drawn to the avant-garde and Lautréamont’s *Maldoror* contained the rebellious spirit and unbridled associations of images that had been rescued by the Surrealists.⁶⁷ Or perhaps recognizing García Vega’s mental crisis,⁶⁸ the maestro offered up a cathartic literary model in author-Lautréamont (Isidore Ducasse) / character-Maldoror who operated within a hatred

⁶⁵ “Lo cogió de la mano y lo llevó a otra pieza de la casa, donde estaban tres estantes con unos dos mil libros” (*Oppiano Licario* 210).

⁶⁶ As for the experience of Pereira, he writes: “Mi *Obertura* fue la novela de Alain-Fournier, pero en todos casos no era igual, pues Lezama decía que cada discípulo tenía su *iniciación* particular. En cierta forma se trataba de una apuesta, ya que si *El gran Meaulnes* no hubiera provocado un chispazo en mí, entonces habría buscado otra obra capaz de excitarme poéticamente. En mi caso adiviné, pues según me confesó luego: *Yo supe desde el primer momento que ése era el libro destinado para su sensibilidad.*” (“El Curso Délfico” 599)

⁶⁷ The narrator warns the reader at the opening of the first *Chant* of their need for a strong, decided character before proceeding or they risk a poisoning of their soul by the images awaiting them. This does not describe the state of 18-year-old García Vega. “Plût au ciel que le lecteur, enhardi et devenu momentanément féroce comme ce qu’il lit, trouve, sans se désorienter, son chemin abrupt et sauvage, à travers les marécages désolés de ces pages sombres et pleines de poison; car, à moins qu’il n’apporte dans sa lecture une logique rigoureuse et une tension d’esprit égale au moins à sa défiance, les émanations mortelles de ce livre imbiberont son âme, comme l’eau le sucre. Il n’est pas bon que tout le monde lise les pages qui vont suivre; quelques-uns seuls savoureront ce fruit amer sans danger” (Ducasse 45).

⁶⁸ In *El oficio de perder* García Vega writes, “Lezama, desde un principio, pudo darse cuenta de la gran crisis en que yo vivía” (339).

stemming from “des complexes, des névroses, des inhibitions ou des frustrations sur lesquels la trop concise biographie d’Isidore Ducasse ne nous renseigne pas, mais qui assurément ont influencé son évolution mentale” (Walzer 26). This may have been the imaginative jolt the maestro deemed necessary, the literary alternative to the electroshock treatments García Vega had been recommended, but did not accept.

The second work in his education, Proust’s *À la recherche du temps perdu*, had an enormous effect on his thinking, providing him with abundant images and a rich story of apprenticeship through which to understand his own.⁶⁹ He recalls precisely the uncontrollable reading it provoked in him and that this stage was intended to awaken:

Leí a Marcel Proust de una manera obsesiva. Una lectura (de tal manera quería empaparme con el mundo del divino Marcelo) con fetichización, o con lo que Rank llamaría una fragmentación, pues me leí (¡cosas de loco!) toda la *Búsqueda del tiempo perdido*, utilizando un endemoniado método de repetir frases, párrafos, y páginas. Un método enloquecido que me obligó (y confieso que me da vergüenza decir esto), cuando mi lectura se interrumpía por cualquier motivo, a anotar con números, al borde de la

⁶⁹ The last line of the final story “El Caballero del Frío” in *Cetrería del títere* (1960) reads, “Y, se diría que, mientras los objetos gesticulan, con inquietante inocencia, un poco al revés de un silencio, con trazos fotográficos un romántico Caballero del Frío está bajando por las cortinas, a la manera de aquellos personajes medioevales proyectados por la proustiana linterna de Combray” (180).

In *El oficio de perder* he briefly compares Lezama to Baron de Charlus: “[Lezama] no pudo evitar un tipo de relación manipuladora con escenas a lo barón de Charlus, que siempre me resultaron abominable [*sic*] por no merecerlas yo, ya que yo nunca fui homosexual” (339).

Jorge Luis Arcos writes, “Pero hay algo más que no puede obviarse. Esa su poética de la memoria, de ascendencia proustiana (tal vez legado de Lezama, su maestro iniciático) no lo abandonará nunca” (53).

página de la novela, las veces que me faltaba por volver a leer la página, el párrafo, y la frase en la que se había interrumpido la lectura. (*OP* 336)

García Vega read with a commitment to procedure and *to soak up the world* of the novel. Such necessary repetition would not normally be surprising given Proust's complex prose, but García Vega's dedication is more than that. It is the demonstration of his faith in the *Curso Delfico*'s intention for the reader to systematically overtake the written word for the creation of the new poetic image: “una digestión metamorfósica y un procesional espermático, que trueca el germen en verbo universal, complementaria hambre protoplásmica que engendra la participación de cada palabra en una infinita posibilidad reconocible” (Lezama Lima, “Confluencias” 418). García Vega latched onto the process, his obsessive-compulsive disorder combining with instructed purpose.

The methodically-repeated readings promoted his *digestion* of the content stimulating the absorption of images and structures to become his own following the second phase in the *Curso* called the *Horno Transmutativo*, “el estómago del conocimiento, que va desde el gusto al *humus* [...] a la materia que quiere ser creadora” (*Oppiano Licario* 210). This apprenticeship, the second stage of poetic-self formation holds a secondary subduction process where the *horno* parallels the plutonic magma chamber *transmuting* oceanic crust into a generative substance, the humus, the organic component of soil produced by the decomposition of other organic material. In other words, this was a chamber of a “collage de influencias,” decomposing Reverdy, Vallejo, Macedonio Fernández, Raymond Roussel, Juan Emar, Gombrowicz, Pessoa, any many others (at least 2000) into fragments of new meaning (Espinosa 25). Within the unique

amalgam, a mixture of the maestro's direction and the disciple's selective retention, poiesis is ignited bringing forth out of the imago, that is, "la semilla asciende hasta la flor o el fruto," (*Oppiano Licario* 210), reminiscent of Heidegger's poiesis in its *highest sense*. Such poietic ascension concedes the conceptual, temporal, and (consulting the blueprint of the subduction zone) physical distancing from the formative process towards the third and final phase of the *Curso*, the *Galería Aporética*, "la burla ante los conocimientos adquiridos" (Prats Sariol, "Opus Ícaro" 309). The ability to overcome what was learned, in a sense mocking the truths received as incomplete in order to reveal a new truth, is a step of self-assertion where, with a *visión histórica* in hand, the apprentice attempts to mold the unique form of their interpretation into meaning. García Vega, the disciple, spent two years entering "por cuanto berenjenal bendito de oscuridades, toques de piano aprendidos de oídas y cuantos atajos laberínticos se me presentaron" (Espinosa 25), and in the final phase was met with the task of assimilating "todo ese carajal de imágenes que recibía" (*OP* 338).

To consider but one example, though maybe more suitable for a later study of the second cycle as it considers the aesthetics of a passage from *El oficio de perder* written fifty years after García Vega's experience of the *Curso Delfico*, but nevertheless, suggests the extent to which the three phases shaped not only his writing, but also his perception of self and possibly even his own memories of his childhood. In the first chapter I reproduced a passage in which García Vega recalled an imaginative epiphany linked to his first awareness of the image's ability to bring forth the invisible and of his

feeling of an obligation to write it.⁷⁰ If we look closely inside his *collage of influences* we can discern Proust's young Marcel powerless and frustrated in his attempts to become a writer when mid-journey to Combray perched upon a coach, he is also suddenly overcome by the image presenting itself out of the visible to him which rouses his first overwhelming need to write:

On m'avait fait monter près du cocher [...] Au tournant d'un chemin j'éprouvai tout à coup ce plaisir spécial qui ne ressemblait à aucun autre, à apercevoir les deux clochers de Martinville, sur lesquels donnait le soleil couchant et que le mouvement de notre voiture et les lacets du chemin avaient l'air de faire changer de place, puis celui de Vieuxvicq qui, séparé d'eux par une colline et un vallée, et situé sur un plateau plus élevé dans le lointain, semblait pourtant tout voisin d'eux.

[...] Je ne savais pas la raison du plaisir que j'avais eu à les apercevoir à l'horizon et l'obligation de chercher à découvrir cette raison me semblait bien pénible' j'avais envie de garder en réserve dans ma tête ces lignes remuantes au soleil et de n'y plus penser maintenant.

[...] Bientôt leurs lignes et leurs surfaces ensoleillées, comme si elles avaient été une sorte d'écorce, se déchirèrent, un peu de ce qui m'était caché en elles m'apparut, j'eus une pensée qui n'existait pas pour

⁷⁰ “La luz yodo, acabada de apagar. Había como un chorro de rocío, pero no, no era un chorro de rocío, sino un chorro de agua, disparado por una locomotora. Y el café con leche de aquel momento, y el polvo negro de la locomotora, y la luz yodo: todo uniéndose, mezclándose, o confundiéndose, hasta convertirse en una imagen alucinante. El niño, en aquella madrugada en que iba para La Habana, después del portazo a la casa de su infancia, lo sentía así, en imagen alucinante./ El niño sentía que él estaba para ver aquello, para registrarlo, para decirlo alguna vez./ Y no hay duda de que se trataba de un niño delirante, ¿pues quién otro, sino un niño delirante, podría enamorarse hasta las lágrimas de un caserío tan feo como aquel, el caserío más feo del mundo?/ Lo rancio, lo feo e insalvable de lo rancio, en un caserío de mala muerte, convertido para un niño en paisaje que él tendría que relatar. ¿Qué karma me llevó a esa vocación, oficio de perder, tan estrafalaria? ¿Por qué fue aquello?” (*El oficio de perder* 135)

moi l'instant avant, qui se formule en mots dans ma tête, et le plaisir que m'avait fait tout à l'heure éprouver leur vue s'en trouva tellement accru que, pris d'une sorte d'ivresse, je ne pus plus penser à autre chose. (*Du côté de chez Swann* 180-181)

Both this passage and the passage from *El oficio de perder* operate through a landscape's quotidian contours being pierced by the unexpected dynamic association of forms. The realization of each boy that they are alone in their perceiving an assemblage in process excites an emotion akin to beauty that is independent of the objects in themselves. Although the drive to narrate the occurrence is similar, the tones are markedly different. Marcel is compelled to write while seated atop a horse-drawn carriage as he looks out over the picturesque countryside at the steeples of Martinville and that of Vieuxvicq. On the other hand, García Vega's passion is melancholic and appears from inside the churning, clattering machine of the train and in spite of the ugliness of the surrounding environment (*Lo rancio, lo feo e insalvable de lo rancio, en un caserío de mala muerte, convertido para un niño en paisaje que él tendría que relatar*). Like Baudelaire's *carcasse superbe*,⁷¹ García Vega locates splendor inside his Cuban gloom by penetrating the circumstantial with an architectural gaze and sentimental mortar, and he seems to achieve this through the metamorphosis of images from his literary formation. During the *Galería Aporética*, the final stage of the *Curso*, Editabunda states that the apprentice will create a space "donde el hombre convierte en un cristal pineal su circunstancia, el espacio

⁷¹ From Baudelaire's "Une charogne": "Et le ciel regardait la carcasse superbe / Comme une fleur s'épanouir. / La puanteur était si forte, que sur l'herbe / Vous crûtes vous évanouir. [...] Les formes s'effaçaient et n'étaient plus qu'un rêve, / Une ébauche lente à venir, / Sur la toile oubliée, et que l'artiste achève / Seulement par le souvenir" (*Les Fleurs de mal* 106).

exterior e interior, como si toda interrupción o ruptura de la comunicación se rompiese para vivir nuestro verdadero enigma” (*Oppiano Licario* 210-211).

Conclusion

This period in García Vega’s evolution lasted from 1944 to 1946 and stands opposed to the accumulated darkness of the years prior to that, particularly those after 1936 when García Vega, ten years old, felt the unavoidable reality of La Habana that he failed to adapt to and whose active participants he failed to befriend. Just as the anxiety and neuroses that drove him to obsessive isolating habits were pushing him to his breaking point, bordering on schizophrenia and electroshock treatments that would have been tantamount to suicide, a destruction of self, Lezama Lima beckoned him into the *Curso Delfico*; “El proceso, no necesariamente lineal, se define por su objetivo, por el carácter germinativo. Tal carácter posibilita que la angustia de finitud sea llevadera, soportable, al otorgar una razón de ser” (Prats Sariol, “El curso delfico” 24). Once with a purpose in hand and in control of the creative power, the apprentice no longer has to “passively [accept] the gift and burden of life but [take] it up actively, refusing suicide, and adopting oneself” (Lieberman xv). It was also a way back to himself, or better stated, a way to save himself out of his self and acknowledge an existential responsibility. Through metamorphosis he learned to activate his look outwards toward the world and combat the alienation of the world looking back at him.⁷² It could lessen the anxiety of

⁷² Adolf Portmann argues, “as long as the conservation of species has precedence over the formation of individuals, metamorphosis remains a satisfactory mode of development, providing

estrangement, and as in Rank, give him the ability to undertake the difficult task of artistic production and realize a healthy exteriorization of self.

However, *actively taking up the gift and burden of life* can be fashioned in many ways and those ways affect the self one believes one is *adopting*. Following these two years García Vega entered into literature with a new identity as a writer.⁷³ Five poems that would later form part of *Suite para la espera* (1948) appeared in the magazine *Orígenes*: “Variaciones” (Summer 1946); “Baladas que terminan en entierro de paisano” (Winter 1946); and “Oda,” “Conjuros de lector,” and “Nocturno” (Fall 1947). The opening of “Conjuros de lector” suggests its conception during his time as a monkish reader managing the forceful fragments destined to shape his own writing: “LIBRO: en noche irisa sus recuerdos,/ palpitan retornos, serpenteos, y brisa ha dicho lastimada euforia” (*Suite para la espera* 18). According to García Vega, Lezama had a hand in many of these poems, even editing their content; “Yo le debo mi primer libro a Lezama,” he said in an interview with Carlos Aguilera (59). Lezama’s influence, the weight of the continental plate, would be difficult to overcome. “Yo pude expresarme, sí, a través de la ayuda que pudo darme Lezama,” he reflected, “pero también me enfermé más de lo que

an excellent solution to certain problems and allowing of extreme variation in the form of the larva and mature animal” (312).

⁷³ García Vega in “Maestro por penúltima vez”: “O sea, que logré, a través del aprendizaje que me ofreció un Maestro [...] una especie de identidad desde la que, convertido en un literato, me convertí en una especie de solitario monje loco que sólo vivía para leer y para escribir los poemas de mi primer libro” (12).

estaba como consecuencia del peso de su relación” (*OP* 339).⁷⁴ This would lead to a new framing darkness requiring a second cycle of subduction to release his true self.

* * *

⁷⁴ More specifically, García Vega suffered from how Lezama’s “demonios, y su alucinatorio fetichizar la realidad en un complejo fragmento que más que un puro juego de imágenes, o que un delirante, supuestamente gnóstico, o lo que carajo se le ocurrió soñar *Eros*, resultaba ser un amasijo de contradictorias y enfermiza visiones, [que] a veces lo llevó a confundir su ayuda a mi dramática incapacidad para poder afrontar del todo lo que me rodeaba, con una perversa (masturbatoria) perspectiva de ser él como el maestro manipulador de un discípulo jodido” (*OP* 339).

JUAN LARREA:

AN APPRENTICESHIP TO VICENTE HUIDOBRO (1919-1923)

*Vicente fue para mí... como una llave que hizo posible la apertura de la multitud de puertas que desde niño habían acumulado sobre mí sus cerrazones.*⁷⁵

JUAN LARREA

Introduction

Before Juan Larrea was aware of Vicente Huidobro he inhabited a paralytically silent waiting room listening for what he called the voice of a messiah. He had attempted to write many times before, as discussed in the first chapter, but always with results that were not sufficiently satisfactory to overcome the pressure of his restrictive environment. Larrea lacked the stable, powerful father, as had García Vega; the conservative Francisco Larrea opposed his son's literary endeavors. Even so he was drawn to poetry, but his lack of self-confidence weighed heavily on his personality provoking bouts of depression and nervous crises.

Creía también en las posibilidades innúmeras de la Imaginación, a la que, en cuanto creyente en la Poesía, tenía un principio de veneración ilimitada. Pero su manifestación no dependía de mí, puesto que carecía de fe en mi pobre voluntad individual, combatida incluso por mí mismo, cuyas posibilidades de operación eran mínimas. ¿Qué oficio podía yo desempeñar uncido a la carroza de la Historia, académica o revolucionaria, ante las figuras más o menos gigantes del pasado? (“Veredicto” 11)

⁷⁵ “Vicente Huidobro en Vanguardia” (223).

In order for Juan Larrea to exit his *framing darkness*, he sought someone who represented a *burning brightness*, a Bloomian strong poet capable of influencing the young poet desirous of direction. The strength of that poet must be not only that of a skilled writer, but also of a commanding authority figure. Spontaneously, like the appearance of his first verses, Gerardo Diego appeared at his door with three hand-copied poems from Huidobro's *Poemas árticos* (1918) and immediately Larrea's creative will was revived inside a method set in action. His encounter with this new language changed everything: "Me impresionó la novedad en tal forma que a partir de ese día empecé a sentirme otro" ("Vicente Huidobro en Vanguardia" 218). Huidobro's work gave form to the absence he had sensed until then. The poetic word in Huidobro's Creationism spoke independently, dazzling Larrea with images building worlds into which he could descend and subsequently return with greater knowledge informing reality, offering change and renovation to his dire imaginative times. Huidobro was also an example to Larrea of complete dedication to Poetry together with the successful practice of the *oficio*. Larrea's predisposition towards alternative causalities and his desire to make instinctual invisibility visible found empowerment in the system of Huidobro's poetics. For Huidobro, the poet, "entra en contacto con lo sobrenatural. Percibe lo desconocido, lo enigmático; es un revelador de misterios. Conjuga el pensamiento iluminado con la pasión enardecida" (Yurkievich, "Vicente Huidobro" 65). If indeed Larrea felt the weight of history intimidating his potential, as he wrote above, and the obligation to *unyoke himself from its wagon*, Huidobro represented sufficient defiant rupture together with

depth of thought as to present him with vital possibility where before he had always found dead-ends. This precise moment when Larrea recognized Vicente Huidobro to be an indicator of the path towards a personal meaning, when he *began to feel himself another*, marked the beginning of his apprenticeship. The brightness that drew his eye was the resilient self-confidence emitted by the literary Other, that is, an Other who had seemingly discovered their self in literature. Huidobro possessed a bolstered identity projecting stability, an ethical departure from the surrounding chaos. This served to confirm for Larrea that he could put his faith in literature, shaping his will to write, setting him off to actively order his own world, and summon a newly-ordered self.

Larrea's apprenticeship differed from that of García Vega in many aspects, most significantly in that for him the maestro's personality did not determine its content. Huidobro's poetry was Larrea's first maestro, followed a few years later by Huidobro himself; Larrea's partial encounter was with *Poemas árticos*, which initiated an apprenticeship that only intensified once it was fulfilled when he met the poet. There was no systematic *Curso Delfico* overlying a paideic design to elevate a culture. Huidobro inspired through his metaphoric audaciousness and polyglotic universality. As Yurkievich wrote, "Huidobro quiere romper las barreras aduaneras, provocar una expansión englobante, acabar con los parcelamientos culturales y geográficos" (77). Huidobro resolved his apprentice's initial imaginative need bringing his spirit out of the darkness, and eventually out of the country as Larrea followed him to Paris. This geographical mobility available to Larrea allowed him to be a disciple with options,

options that were not available to García Vega.⁷⁶ Thus, Larrea's relationship to his maestro would not be as complex as was the relationship between García Vega and Lezama, and it would not be as difficult to break away from. Certainly, a second framing darkness would befall him as well as he realized the limits of Huidobro's influence, and it carried him into a second subduction cycle anticipating the emergence of his true self. This was a period he recorded in journal entries between 1926 and 1933, and which were eventually published in *Orbe* (1990), a work comparable to García Vega's *Rostros del Reverso*. However, his separation from the maestro was facilitated by his abandonment of poetry altogether in 1932 for an essayistic qualitative prose whose project was even grander in scope, although humbler in character than that of his maestro.

Nevertheless, Larrea's apprenticeship was an equally and overwhelmingly decisive moment in his formation as Huidobro showed him into the literary world, carried him through his *experiencia poética total*, and gave him the foundation to understand that his ideas were not meant remain in verse. It was a time that Larrea characterized as "un arduo periodo de empozamiento y preparación," depicting the apprenticeship as descending into a well ("Prólogo del autor" 61). Lezama Lima gave a similar description of poiesis in "Las imágenes posibles," referred to in the Introduction of this dissertation, in which he stated: "Todo lo que el hombre testifica lo hace en cuanto imagen y el mismo

⁷⁶ In his interview with Carlos Aguilera, García Vega stated, "porque era un mundo donde eran pocas las opciones, tuve que optar por lo que no era lo mío" (53). Related to such limitations, he later shared the following anecdote: "Recuerdo que una vez le dije, dentro de estos complejos que uno tiene con respecto a la formación intelectual de uno: 'Lezama, pero yo no he podido viajar, no he podido estar en el extranjero nunca...' Y él me dijo: 'Veguita —él me decía Veguita—, pero tuviste como maestro a la principal figura de la literatura cubana. Ni te quejes de eso ni te hacía falta haber ido a ninguna parte. La principal figura de la literatura española e hispanoamericana soy yo, y yo fui tu maestro. Así que tuviste completa la cosa'" (59).

testimonio corporal se ve obligado a irse al pozo donde la imagen despereza soltando sus larvas” (4). Through Huidobro, Larrea went in search of the revived image and the release of his larval self beginning in May 1919, with his first reading of *Poemas árticos*, and continued until December 1923 when he declared that he understood Huidobro completely, that his maestro no longer taught him anything new, and that he sensed still more work needed to be done. Larrea’s apprenticeship comprised two distinct periods: the first textual, and the second personal, with the dividing date being December 1921 when Larrea, after a year and a half of reading and studying Huidobro’s poetry, finally met the poet. A friendship began, and Larrea’s respect took on a personal quality. During three and a half years Huidobro, with his supreme faith in the poet’s power to create, was the force necessary to repeatedly lift Larrea out of his indecisiveness to provoke his long-awaited resurrection.

The Maestro is a Little God

Vicente Huidobro (1893-1948) set forth on a vigorously deliberate mission to be the next Latin American after Rubén Darío to influence European literature. He was a highly travelled, cosmopolitan writer —compared with Lezama Lima who rarely ventured outside of Cuba— with a strong character fortified by an obdurate will to be at the forefront of innovation, to be a poetic originator. Juan Larrea, remembering the authoritative drive inherent to the personality of his former maestro, recalled how Huidobro “era inducido compulsivamente a manifestar su ansia voluntariosa de asumir un puesto dirigente en varios aspectos, mas sobre todo en cuestiones de poesía y

literatura” (“VHV” 215). Such goals led him to Paris in 1916 where at the age of twenty-three he began a fertile and tumultuous relationship with early avant-gardists. While personally he often clashed with other artists and became embroiled in polemics, poetically his genius and dedication brought about a shift to a new period of experimentation in Hispanic letters. Saúl Yurkievich places him alongside César Vallejo and Pablo Neruda to form “el tríptico mayor de la poesía contemporánea hispanoamericana” (“Vicente Huidobro: el alto azor” 58).

Huidobro is often remembered for his many quarrels with other poets such as Guillermo de Torre, Pierre Reverdy, and Pablo Neruda, as well as for the Creationism movement and many prodigious works including the canonical *Altazor o el viaje en paracaídas* (1931). While many attested to his egomania: “el personaje les resultaba irritante; sin duda la militancia vanguardista lo volvía intolerante y agresivo” (Yurkievich, “Huidobro” 59), many others measured their judgments praising the impassioned generosity through which his *militancia* represented needed guidance to that *generación sin maestros* lamented by Vallejo. It was in this sense that Gerardo Diego wrote upon the death of his “inolvidable amigo y maestro”:

Era Vicente Huidobro, cuando yo le conocí, hace treinta años, un muchacho lleno de vida, de ímpetu juvenil, de simpática petulancia y simpatía abierta y generosa. Era, sobre todo, aparte sus virtudes de artista, un amigo leal, óptimo y optimista. Sus terribles pasiones y sus pueriles vanidades quedaban olvidadas ante el espectáculo pintoresco que la vida le deparaba al pasear del brazo de cualquier amigo de buena fe. (“Vicente Huidobro” 1174)

For Gonzalo Rojas, “Huidobro fue la libertad: el que sembró más hondo. En mí, y en tantos: en la medida de nuestra propia medida. Una libertad que nos hizo hombres: poetas responsables” (Costa 112).⁷⁷ And Nicanor Parra in the poem “Antes de comenzar” asked and answered: “¿Qué sería de Chile sin Huidobro? / ¿Qué sería de la chilena poesía sin este duende? / Fácil imaginárselo: todos estaríamos escribiendo / Sonetos / Odas elementales / O gemidos” (“Also sprach Altazor” 639). Huidobro’s multi-lingual literature, along with his harried aesthetic treatises, mark a clear evolutive point from Modernismo. This crusade wherein he refused to be satisfied with the reality at hand, and “se desvive por difundir en los países hispanos las novedades artísticas del gran mundo que entonces se cifraba en París,” persuaded David Bary to call him a “misionero o viajante de la poesía” (*Huidobro* 10-11). As a result of his intense transcontinental activity he influenced the poets and poetry of many countries, leading by example and drawing disciples as he moved throughout the literary channels of Latin America and Europe seeking to position Creationism at the center of the avant-garde.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ The complete quotation of the praise offered by Gonzalo Rojas reads: “Huidobro fue la libertad: el que sembró más hondo. En mí, y en tantos: en la medida de nuestra propia medida. Una libertad que nos hizo hombres: poetas responsables, con utopismo y todo, con anarquismo. Pero sin servidumbre. No es que haya sido el único progenitor pero, sin él, todo hubiera sido otra cosa entre nosotros. Bebió en la roca viva del ESPÍRITU NUEVO (*l’esprit nouveau*, de Apollinaire), y fue de veras el gran dador: el que nos dio todo sin que le pidiéramos nada; ni obtuviera nada de eso. Amó a la juventud y supo oírla siempre, como ninguno... Nos enseñó a ser el ser que somos” (Costa 112).

⁷⁸ Diego recognized Huidobro as a maestro who “directly” influenced both “direct” and “indirect” disciples: “Directamente o a través de Larrea o de algún otro discípulo directo, algo de lo mejor de Fernando Villalón, de Rafael Alberti, de Pablo Neruda, de Leopoldo Marechal, de Federico García Lorca, de otros poetas de lengua española y de otras lenguas procede de fuente huidobriana” (Diego, “Vicente Huidobro / I Despedida” 18).

Huidobro confessed that his poetry was influenced by “ciertas frases de Rimbaud y de Mallarmé,” and by “casi todos los grandes poetas de épocas anteriores” (Huidobro, “El creacionismo y sus apóstoles” 33). By expressing his admiration for a long list of *great poets*, he acknowledged a literary lineage, however, his list also placed a spotlight on the individual poet exalted for their distinction, for standing apart from, or even above, the rest. It is not surprising then that his own vigorous individuality and desire for recognition, accompanied by an exceptional poetic ability, would draw him into the modern poet’s search for the unknown, and for the prestige that would come if one were to find it. Just as Rimbaud called for the poet to become a seer through a systematic alteration of the intuited real,⁷⁹ and Mallarmé sought a horizon beyond the real via the poetic word,⁸⁰ so too did Huidobro endeavor to comprehend more than those of his own generation. He shared his predecessors’ literary faith in the poet’s capacity to envisage change through poetry. In this way he was also particularly inspired by the ideas of personal exceptionalism and Idealist possibilities found in Emerson’s Transcendentalism.⁸¹ In 1926 Huidobro confidently testified to his lofty objectives:

⁷⁹ “Le Poète se fait *voyant* par un long, immense et raisonné *dérèglement de tous les sens*” (Rimbaud 251).

⁸⁰ “[...] nous ne sommes que de vaines formes de la matière, — mais bien sublimes pour avoir inventé Dieu et notre âme. Si sublimes, mon ami ! que je veux me donner ce spectacle de la matière, ayant conscience d’être, et cependant, s’élançant forcénement [*sic*] dans le rêve qu’elle sait n’être pas, chantant l’Ame et toutes les divines impressions pareilles qui se sont amassées en nous depuis les premiers âges, et proclamant, devant le Rien qui est la vérité, ces glorieux mensonges !” (Mallarmé 59).

⁸¹ “The poet is the person in whom these powers are in balance, the man without impediment, who sees and handles that which others dream of, traverses the whole scale of experience, and is representative of man, in virtue of being the largest power to receive and to impart” (Emerson, “The Poet” 321).

A los diez y siete años me dije: “Debo ser el primer poeta de América”; luego, al pasar de los años, pensé: “Debo ser el primer poeta de mi lengua”. Después, a medida que corría el tiempo, mis ambiciones fueron subiendo y me dije: “Es preciso ser el primer poeta de mi siglo”; y más tarde, estudiando la poesía con un amor cada vez más profundo, llegué a convencerme de que la poesía nunca ha existido jamás y que era necesario constituirnos unos cuantos en verdadera secta para hacerla existir. (*Vientos Contrarios* 795)

In this series of ambitions, the division between personal greatness and the meaningful poetic revelation becomes muddled. Challenging the respect Diego held for an Huidobro who valued before all else “la lealtad y la comunicativa humanidad” (“Vicente Huidobro” 1175), when compared with the inspiration of Lezama cited earlier where before a horrible reality they sensed they could “trazar un nuevo y viejo diálogo entre el hombre que penetra y la tierra que se le hace transparente,” Huidobro’s project appears isolating and incommunicative (“Respuesta” 689). Certainly the times were distinct when considering the discourses on the new and the old, but nevertheless, the need to be first and the reinforcement of the restrictive systematization of the avant-garde *-isms* dismantled a certain instinctual assimilatory poetics for which Huidobro was predisposed. This was precisely the duality that brought Huidobro both his success and his failures.

Five months prior to Gerardo Diego’s life-altering visit, Larrea in a letter to his friend expressed reservations concerning the so-called modern poetry and continued their debate on the nature of the poet. “Los verdaderos poetas,” he argued, “son los que imponen las modas y los que tú llamas artesanos del verso son los que entran en la reata

de imitadores, pequeños astros que a veces lucen pero sin luz propia” (*Cartas* 71). His judgment gives insight into the type of poet he admired as well as which Virgil could attract his attention. His ultimate esteem for the *luz propia* of a poet also produces an informative lexical resonance with Bloom’s *burning brightness*. He expanded on this idea by drawing a distinction between originality and personality, laying preference upon the latter: “Yo no juzgo la primera cualidad de un poeta la originalidad. Si la posee tanto mejor. Pero de lo que no puedo prescindir es de la personalidad que no es lo mismo” (*Cartas* 71). Here, for Larrea personality denotes poiesis, an authentic presence of spirit inside the word. This made one a good poet, a *poeta creador*, whereas originality would make one a creator, but only because the result was new.

At this early stage Larrea saw the written word as Lezama would come to see the image: substances that “con el uso se desvirtúan, se ajan y pierden su perfume” (*Cartas* 71). Their reignition was essential to meaningful poiesis and the required spark came from the individual spirit, not the repetition of a superficial method. Larrea venerated boldness, surely as an affront to his conservative upbringing and apathetic national landscape, accompanied by technique and reason, but he deplored shortsighted innovation. Such a pairing of qualities intimated a certain set of ethics indicative of one standing before an inner struggle in good faith where ostentatious novelty would be considered cowardly. When the resolute Huidobro appeared, with his Creationist quest in search of the “último límite de la imaginación para rescatar el temblor ardiente de la palabra interna, el genio recóndito, el pasado mágico,” it is not surprising that Larrea was overwhelmed with enthusiasm (Yurkievich 85).

As described in this dissertation's *Introduction*, Huidobro emphasized a systematic process guided by the intellect over the emotion to discover such revelations inside the constructed image. Words were manipulable objects since "se atribuye en el orden del lenguaje las eficiencias del Creador domiciliado en los cielos" ("VHV" 225). The diagram he provided in his essay "La Création pure," published in 1921 in *L'Esprit Nouveau*, the year of his greatest push to unite the avant-gardists behind Creationism, typified his formulization of poetic creation. However, his method wherein the self selected elements from the objective world to be transformed through a personalized technique before being returned to reality with its new truth contained in the substance of the poem, was limiting to a certain material product, not the multiform invisible. At a certain moment in order to pursue originality, the technique would have to be altered in detriment to any standardized Creationist movement of particular precepts (Costa 114). As Huidobro continued to evolve moving constantly forward through new experimentation, he foresaw the approaching dead end of an independent metaphor refusing to associate with reality and knew that the possibilities of Creationism were running out. His dedication had fueled an individualism that pushed him to the impossible poetic leap of a complete break with the outside world.

In 1931 Vicente Huidobro published *Altazor*, the poem most synonymous with his name, and with it he effectively declared the end of Creationism. Subtitled *El viaje en paracaídas, poema en VII cantos (1919)*, it recounts the poetic descent (not ascent) of Huidobro's alter ego, Altazor, and with it a sort of biographical rise and fall of the Creationist poet and his struggle with the limits of language. It has seven cantos as the

title indicates, but contrary to what is insinuated by the inclusion of the year 1919 in the title, it is a composite of fragments written at different moments between 1919 and 1931.⁸² Later revised and placed together, they resulted in the longest poem of his works. As René de Costa's meticulous analysis points out, the various cantos of the poem relate a journey from a belief in the power of the poet's gaze, to a discarding of past and present aesthetics in a compendium of the shortcomings of multiple poetic techniques attempting to breach the space between word and image, and tragically concludes with the absence of any hope for future success.⁸³

Larrea in his conference dedicated to Huidobro traced a long list of poets who failed for following the same doomed path of ambition taken by Dante's Ulises character in search of the Promised Land. His examples ran notably parallel to many on Huidobro's original list of influences: Nerval, Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Mallarmé, Apollinaire, and the Surrealists. The last person on the list was Vicente Huidobro. Still, in his view, Huidobro's failure "lo fue sólo a medias, en cuanto a voluntad individual, por ser el suyo un fracaso creador que lo convierte en signo positivo, plantado reveladoramente a la entrada del último trecho del camino" ("VHV" 249). The cultural and poetic theories Larrea developed after his separation from Huidobro are apparent in his interpretation of failure. For him, as language is a collective substance and the revelation of Logos is a collective function materializing in the consciousness of the individual will to the extent that that individual is part of a culture. What is most significant at this early stage in

⁸² The intention of "1919" is of course to suggest that the work was composed entirely in 1919, but published 12 years later, however Huidobro's reputation at this point preceded him and it was received as one more example of his predating of texts for recognition as an innovator.

⁸³ See Chapter VIII, p.185-211 in René de Costa's *Huidobro: los oficios de un poeta*.

Larrea's self development as he moved through anxious darkness towards a formational apprenticeship is how despite being in possession of an instinctual, grander conception of poesis that included lesser concern for self, he was nevertheless in need of Huidobro's self-confidence and poetic mission to jump start his own creative personality.

A Partial Encounter

When Gerardo Diego travelled from Madrid to Bilbao on May 2, 1919, he had recently learned of Huidobro's Creationism and of the Spanish movement Ultraism founded the previous year by Guillermo de Torre after Huidobro's first talk at the Ateneo in Madrid. Diego carried with him an issue of *Grecia*, the Ultraist literary magazine, as well as three poems from Huidobro's *Poemas árticos*. After his first reading, Larrea, literarily lethargic and uninspired —“Yo mismo me asombro de mi indiferencia por todo,” he had written just months earlier (*Cartas* 79)— instantly began to write with a renewed determination. The critic David Bary, who enjoyed a close relationship with Larrea, wrote that out of the liberation of this moment Larrea “empezó de golpe a escribir de una manera nueva y a entrever la esperanza de vivir de un modo hasta entonces insospechado, libre de trabas de una cultura rezagada e inflexible” (*Nuevos estudios* 13). Larrea's correspondence with Diego also intensified and was increasingly populated with new verses and optimistic plans burgeoning from his transformed spirit. He wanted to move from Bilbao to Madrid —“abandonar mi yermo estéril” (*Cartas* 86); he thought of joining the literary world asking Diego if he felt his new poems were worthy of publishing; the process of finding a publisher; personal introductions to Diego's friends

including Cansinos-Assens; the location of a particular bookshop in Madrid; etc. He was twenty-five and enlivened with promise: “la nueva simiente me inculca optimismo” (*Cartas* 85). Concerning his Ultraist and Creationist readings, he would side with Huidobro. Commenting on the Ultraist poems of *Grecia*, he wrote to Diego a few weeks after his visit:

Buena orientación pero positivamente cero. En realidad su labor es negativa, es la dinamita que derruye sin pararse a construir. Otros luego edificarán. ¿Por qué no hemos de ser nosotros? La ciudad nueva nos espera; planeemos sus calles, pero jamás en línea recta, sino en curvas graciosas y sorprendentes. (*Cartas* 87)

Larrea’s tone of confidence, critical and hopeful, is significant as with the slightest of sparks given from the revelation of a few of Huidobro poems he set discernment in motion. He held two poetics before him. Both approaches excited him in their departure from convention to express a current reality, i.e. new techniques centered upon the creation of image-objects, but only Huidobro’s work suggested a reconstruction after the necessary break from the past. Consistent with his previous idea of the true poet, Ultraism, inasmuch as a poetry that did not construct, was originality without personality, conceived by “espíritus mediocres” (*Cartas* 92). He found it to be a superficial adaptation of Creationism, “el gongorismo con pantalón largo, cuya oscuridad nace de un deseo de distinción y no de una emoción” (*Cartas* 92). While it effectively dynamited tradition to *look* forward towards a new poetic language, it did not *move* forward, resulting instead in stationary novelty. Creationism, on the other hand, bore the promise of an advancing

verse from “por lo menos, un admirable poeta,” something he found lacking with Ultraism, as well as “una grandísima razón de ser” (*Cartas* 93).⁸⁴

Throughout these letters he confesses to his deficient readings, expressing, like García Vega, unfamiliarity with many important literary works of the time, but he does so more assertively than García Vega, indicative perhaps of his seven years of additional maturity than the apprentice García Vega, and of a less fragile psychic state. After only six weeks of reading Huidobro’s *Poemas árticos* and subsequently, *Ecuatorial* and *Horizon carré*, he was drawing insightful distinctions between Creationism and the French avant-gardists, though he only shared them with Diego claiming not to be confident enough to reveal his ideas with the literary groups of Madrid.⁸⁵ The image received special attention in his reflections, remarking on its vitality and profoundness —“la imagen se mueve, vive por sí misma y es capaz de abrazarse a otra imagen en movimiento, suprimiendo intermedios y saltando de acorde a acorde” (*Cartas* 93)— and its momentum carried him in the same direction towards what he called a *conquest of the system* in its beginnings. In a later portion of this same analysis, Larrea reached a conclusion and made a prediction exceptionally relevant to this study’s proposed parallel

⁸⁴ “Razón de ser” became the title for a work that Larrea would publish in 1956 in which he undertakes “un interesante repaso del devenir de las ideas que sobre la filosofía de la historia han ido poblando las distintas etapas de la civilización occidental” (Sanduvete 44).

⁸⁵ From a letter to Gerardo Diego dated June 22, 1919: “De todos los franceses es tan poco lo que conozco que estoy casi imposibilitado de referirme a ellos. No sé si tú habrás comprendido bien el prólogo de Max Jacob sobre el poema situado. Yo confieso que no lo he dominado por completo, y me parece un poco pretenciosa la definición del poema *cerrado*. Creo, además, que existe gran distancia entre la manera de comprender el sistema entre Huidobro y los franceses. Estos, *creo*, son más externos y aquel más profundo. Probablemente le echarán en cara esa profundidad, lo que no es obstáculo para que sea un gran poeta” (*Cartas* 93).

between Larrea and García Vega, and approaches his thinking (and Huidobro's aesthetics) with the essential components of Lezama's *Sistema Poético*:

Huidobro, además, gusta del símbolo lo que le distancia de los otros poetas, porque éste en general, ha incorporado la nueva estética a los viejos sentimientos. El sistema por necesidad resulta tenebroso. Muchas cosas no se llegan a comprender aunque se sientan. Se me ocurre preguntar ¿Es necesaria la comprensión para la sensación estética? Y estoy por estampar un rotundo NO. Y un poeta venidero, estoy por asegurarlo, nos hará llorar con las imágenes y palabras solas, sin que comprendamos la sucesión, como con sonidos dispersos. Y ésta será la perfección. (*Cartas* 93)

In this passage Larrea extols the use of an aesthetic (an effective aesthetic) to elucidate the spirit, that is, new revelations of a same evolving being, a break in approach paired with a continuation of a human quest to understand, coinciding with what Huidobro himself would say two months later in an interview for Chile's *Diario El Mercurio*: "Yo considero que el creacionismo no significa una revolución tan radical como han creído los críticos en el primer momento, sino la continuación de la evolución lógica de la poesía" (Huidobro, "El creacionismo y sus apóstoles" 33).⁸⁶ While Huidobro's words do not invalidate Lezama's future evaluation of the avant-garde's rupture being superior to their generational indebtedness (*La expresión americana* 177) —Larrea would demonstrate critically how Huidobro's personal mission limited the extent of his

⁸⁶ In this interview titled "El creacionismo y sus apóstoles" neither Larrea nor Gerardo Diego had yet become associated with the movement. When asked about promising young Spanish poets, Huidobro mentions only Ramón Prieto, Eliodoro Puche, and Mauricio Bacarisse.

creation— it does suggest that within the attitude of rupture particular to Huidobro ran a significant current of literary perspective beyond the visible novelty of the poetic pages. From this emerged the *dark* aspect of the verses and the difficult task of deciphering the images that Larrea notes. Lezama's conditions of orphic descent into interpretation and a difficulty that stimulates are identified and praised decades earlier by Larrea. Though between Lezama and Huidobro the intent of the image differs, it reached groundbreaking creative protagonism with Huidobro.⁸⁷ Otto Rank calls this act of understanding the self “grasping conquest, violation and creation.” He writes that the neurotic personality will carry out its interpretations based on a *guilt-self* while “the creative personality forms the world with his or her conscious will-self” (*Psychology and the Soul* 125). Prior to Larrea's discovery of Creationism, his guilt-self managed the interpretive act looking beyond reality to an instinctual understanding disconnected from his present. Upon finding Huidobro's emphasis on creating, not a new thing to poetry, but newly energized by the profound image linking with other images, Larrea's interpretations had a bridge to his perception of reality. Accordingly, guilt transformed to conscious will and paralysis to creation accompanied by optimism defying the despair Larrea had hitherto experienced.

Of the three decisive poems from *Poemas árticos* given to him by Diego, one was “Luna” (562).

⁸⁷ Cedomil Goic goes so far as to say that “el creacionismo igualmente ha sido el que con mayor penetración ha llegado a la conciencia de la técnica poética que ha llegado a ser la técnica poética de toda la poética moderna; que ha fijado su carácter de tal frente a la poesía anterior y que ha venido a significar un paso más en la conciencia de sí” (*La poesía de Vicente Huidobro* 100).

Estábamos tan lejos de la vida
Que el viento nos hacía suspirar

LA LUNA SUENA COMO UN RELOJ

Inútilmente hemos huido
El invierno cayó en nuestro camino
Y el pasado lleno de hojas secas
Pierde el sendero de la floresta

Tanto fumamos bajo los árboles
Que los almendros huelen a tabaco

Sobre la vida lejana

Medianoche

Alguien llora

Y la luna olvidó dar la hora

The meaning produced by the reality inside the poem radiated with the idea of an undiscovered logic that Larrea had always sensed existed, but was so far unable to capture. It seemed to be an expression of the irrational synchronicity of his youth. The verse “LA LUNA SUENA COMO UN RELOJ” marked him for life, causing what he called *un traumatismo poético*, as if it had emerged directly from those watches he had won as a schoolboy. It was an awakening to possibilities. The traditional cause and effect were distorted through the construction of a false simile, suggesting the same presence of an unknown system, acausal in tradition, to which as a child he felt a belonging. The simile was false inasmuch as the moon did not typically *sound* like a clock, but through the re-ascription of the sign it could. The signifier *moon* acquired the potential of the

signifier *clock*, and it was purely through this creation, in the reality of this particular poem, that the moon was then capable of forgetting *to give the hour*. Nevertheless, what categorically marked Larrea was that “no se trataba... de un estado mental, literariamente abstracto, sino de un hecho correspondiente al mundo concreto de nuestros sentidos biológicos” (“VHV” 218). It pointed to a new rationality (because it could be expressed by the imagination), yet with the capacity to reach beyond the poem (because it could be understood).

Larrea’s stirring first reading of “Luna,” the collision of oceanic and continental plates, triggered an advance in his developing subjectivity. Of his initial reaction after the poem he wrote, “sentía su realidad como de extrema lejanía, coincidente sin duda con mi estado psíquico y quizás por ello no del todo ajeno a mi conciencia personal” (“VHV” 218). By suggesting a coincidence between the reality of the poem and his own consciousness he is in fact describing an act of recognition provoked by Huidobro’s verses. From a feeling of alienation the verses serve as a reflection of his self and he discovered a physical representation comparable to his mental sensibility. The possibilities he sees in Creationism preceded by a prolonged feeling of insufficiency, present him with a new self and an improved state, confirmed by the abatement of his neurotic symptoms and the sense of a resolving duality between Life and Poetry. The verses seemed to offer the sought-after truce between the id and exterior reality, a collaboration which brought forth a healthy ego: “Yo sentí que el universo, con sus infinitas posibilidades, se me había introducido en la cabeza, y de aquí que desde ese día mi actitud ante la actividad poética, aunque balbuceante, fuese otra” (“VHV” 220).

In the months following Diego’s visit, Larrea immediately began composing new poems. Many of these were published in the magazines *Grecia* and *Cervantes*, though against his will as Diego had delivered them to the editors without his knowledge (“VHV” 221). Several would also be rediscovered for inclusion in the opening section of Larrea’s 1969 poetic anthology *Versión Celeste* under the title “Metal de voz.” Despite his disapproval of the movement, the poems of this time are often considered to be Ultraist poems, even by Larrea himself who at first did not distinguish between Huidobro and Ultraism.⁸⁸ However, considering the particular deficiencies he identified in Ultraism, the forward-searching tones of Larrea’s work poems place them more aptly into the category of Larrean experimentations in the direction of Creationism.⁸⁹ One of these, “Evasión,” originally appeared in *Grecia* in October 1919, and later served as the opening poem for “Metal de voz” (*Versión Celeste* 67):

Acabo de desorbitar	1
Al cíclope solar	
Filo en el vellón	
de una nube de algodón	
a lo rebelde a lo rumoroso	5
a lo luminoso y ultratenebroso	
Los vientos contrarios sacuden las velas	

⁸⁸ In a letter to David Bary dated August 24, 1974, Larrea wrote, “Quiere ello decir que los diversos poemas que escribí ese mes de mayo y principio de junio, están compuestos quizá más bajo el influjo inmediato del ultraísmo que de Huidobro, quien para mí en aquel primer momento formaba parte de aquél, a la vez que hacía uso de mis libertades personales adquiridas en mis lecturas francesas del simbolismo, unanimismo, etc” (*Juan Larrea: Epistolario* 181).

⁸⁹ Robert Gurney divides the poems of Larrea’s apprenticeship period into two periods: 1919-Ultraism/Creationism and 1920-1926-Creationism, and a third period of poetic mysticism lasting until 1932 (*La poesía de Juan Larrea* 10).

de mis carabelas

¿Te quedas atrás Peer Gynt?

Las cuerdas de mi violín
se entrelazan como una cabellera
entre los dedos del viento norte

10

Se ha ahogado la primavera
Mi belleza consorte

Finis terre la
Soledad del abismo

15

Aún más allá
Aún tengo que huir de mí mismo

He returned to the theme of escape common to his earlier verses, but in “Evasión” it is accompanied by the vague notion of a destination. Compared with “Transcarnación” examined in Chapter One, also new are the surprising nouns as the bearers of emotion. Bary in his analysis of that lost 1917 poem Larrea recalled for him by memory noted that what separated it from Larrea’s later poetry were the “metáforas radioactivas que se extienden en series ininterrumpidas por estrofas y poesías enteras” (*Nuevos estudios* 103). “Evasión” reveals his first step in that direction. Formally, it is not a Creationist poem, according to strict Huidobrian definition, but it is evident that Huidobro is the inspiration for his new, vibrant images. Just as the moon and the clock were united through their circularity in Huidobro’s “Luna,” here the shared shape establishes an association between the sun and the eye (the solar cyclops). Its removal from orbit suggests that a

change of universal proportions has occurred. Subsequent linked nouns (fleece-cloud-cotton and violin strings-locks of hair-fingers) form images that enhance the poem's otherworldliness serving to illustrate, not narrate, the conceptual exposition of his search for self. Peer Gynt, Ibsen's self-serving title character of procrastination is necessarily an allusion to Larrea's constant failings and inactivity. He hopes to have put this stage behind him as he continues forward on his journey to a distant "Finis terre" (end of the earth), like the pilgrims following St. James Way. Formally however, Larrea still bestows importance on the musicality of the verse varying the meter, but maintaining regular couplets, a single tercet and quatrain, as well as coupled and alternating rhyme. As he wrote upon sending these poems to Diego, "el verso libre me atrae terriblemente. Sin embargo, percibirás en estos ensayos poco fervor acaso. Es que aún me hallo en los comienzos de la liberación y mi paso es convaleciente. Espero para dentro de poco, sobre todo si mi entusiasmo me empujara la plenitud maquina" (*Cartas* 86). He was not yet wholly comfortable as he would later become with the free rein of the page that Huidobro's verses enjoyed. Other poems also from "Metal de voz," such as "Diluvio," "Otoño," and "Cosmopolitano" would approach the concrete visual arrangement of "Luna" with its uneven and free-floating verses, certain ones written with all capital letters, but this was early experimentation and would never become typical of his poems.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ In his conference on Huidobro he recognized a particular indebtedness of his work from this time to his maestro: "No necesito descubrir que bajo su influencia [*Ecuatorial*] escribí *Cosmopolitano*, referente a la soñada ciudad cósmica" ("VHV" 220).

His new enthusiasm prompted him to travel to Madrid more frequently, abandoning his isolation in Bilbao to show his new work and to continue poetic exchanges with Cansino-Assens. In clear recognition of his maestro's work and its influence on his recent poetic boom, yet with an already-burgeoning impulse to surpass it, he wrote to Diego, "Lo que he hecho arranca de Huidobro en línea recta, pero aguardo un despertar con nuevos derroteros. A Huidobro lo comprendo tan perfectamente que a veces me parece anticuado. Hay que hacer mucho más. No sé si lo conseguiré" (*Cartas* 91). He hopefully expected to have a book of poems ready for publishing by the end of the year. However, as the time lengthened from his initial discovery of *Poemas árticos*, his enthusiasm waned and he descended again into his self-doubt and unproductive ways. Though he had been exploring Creationism and composing his own poems, his environment remained unchanged.⁹¹ The same surroundings that had contributed so little to any significant meaning continued to be inadequate and seemed to counteract the potential advances provided by Huidobro: "Me encuentro vacío interiormente, como una armadura antigua, y agotado hasta el extremo [...] y sobre todo los nervios, los nervios, como secos, insensibles y desafinados" (*Cartas* 139). The suit of armor, used by Lacan to illustrate the final stage in the subject's development, that of the armor-clad confirmed identity,⁹² is for Larrea the vacuity of his current state as he renewed his wait for the next sign to guide him onwards.

⁹¹ After apparently being scolded by Diego, he replied, "Tengo voluntad y ganas de producir como nunca, pero me falta la emoción creadora o situadora y no hago más que recoger materiales dispersos preparándome para cuando salte el cierzo" (*Cartas* 99).

⁹² "The mirror stage is a drama whose internal thrust is precipitated from insufficiency to anticipation – and which manufactures for the subject, caught up in the lure of spatial

The Encounter Fulfilled

After two and a half years with Huidobro's work, reading it and attempting to create on his own directly from it, on December 19, 1921, Larrea met his unknowing maestro in a conference that Gerardo Diego had arranged in Madrid's Ateneo. With this, the epebe's Bloomian encounter with the other poet, partial until then, reached fruition. In this confrontation of self-consciousness, Larrea's underdeveloped self was inspired by Huidobro's self-certainty after having recognized himself within him. Huidobro was the maestro who acted as an intermediary facilitating a transition from the apprentice's anguished self to his deliberate self. At this conference Huidobro read an aesthetic treatise simply titled "La Poesía." He proclaimed, "El poeta representa el drama angustioso que se realiza entre el mundo y el cerebro humano, entre el mundo y su representación" (1297). The struggle inherent to this duality and the quest for a semblance of synthesis using a poetic language, necessarily *new* given ever-previous failures, defined the work of the poet. The poet was the being capable of a poetic resolution to strike peace between interior and exterior worlds, for it was in their throat that "el universo busca su voz, una voz inmortal." Through what Rank termed an *intellectualized will-phenomenon*, an interpretation carried out within the self (*Psychology and Soul* 125), Huidobro conferred upon the individual poet the role to make visible the latent reality that would otherwise remain in its larval state.

identification, the succession of phantasies that extends from a fragmented body-image to a form of its totality that I shall call orthopaedic – and, lastly, to the assumption of the armour of an alienating identity, which will mark with its rigid structure the subject's entire mental development" ("The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of *I* as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience" 5).

El poeta conoce el eco de los llamados de las cosas a las palabras, ve los lazos sutiles que se tienden las cosas entre sí, oye las voces secretas que se lanzan unas a otras palabras separadas por distancias inconmensurables, hace darse la mano a vocablos enemigos desde el principio del mundo, los agrupa y los obliga a marchar en su rebaño por rebeldes que sean, descubre las alusiones más misteriosas del verbo y las condensa en un plano superior, las entreteje en su discurso, en donde lo arbitrario pasa a tomar un rol encantatorio [...]

Las palabras tienen un genio recóndito, un pasado mágico que sólo el poeta sabe descubrir, porque él siempre vuelve a la fuente. (1297)

Various ideas mentioned previously align in this passage from Huidobro's conference. Firstly, the poet is a creator in a way similar to the artist who crafts a mosaic, or to the maestro who instructs an apprentice: a mediator attuned to the awaiting imago and enabling its poetic emergence. Secondly, the manner in which the poet's ear must be attentive to the *secret voices* and the *magic past* of words endorses Heidegger's assertion that language is the shaper of man. While the poet assembles the words themselves, it is language, Huidobro says, that calls out to the poet to do so.⁹³ And thirdly, the *mysterious allusions* held by the word and that must be *condensed in a superior plane* recall Lezama's renovation of perceived images through the act of interpretation, the precipitant inside the *Horno Transmutativo* for the new image. By *always returning to the source*,

⁹³ Huidobro's *words* hold in their interior the same poetic potential as Lezama's. He writes in "Confluencias": "El residuo de lo estelar que había en cada palabra se convertía en un momentáneo espejo. [...] Una palabra solitaria que se hacía oracional. [...] Encontraba en cada palabra un germen brotado de la unión de lo estelar con lo entrañable, y como en el final de los tiempos la pausa y el henchimiento de cada uno de los instantes de la respiración estarán ocupado por una irremplazable palabra única" (417).

Huidobro's poet is guided by the blueprint of the subduction zone in the same direction as Lezama's plutonic magma chamber, and as maestros they both guide their apprentices along the same decent.

Juan Larrea was again impressed and his earlier enthusiasm revived. He recalled, "Yo salí del acto deslumbrado por los conceptos que Huidobro expuso sobre la Poesía, y creo que a Gerardo le sucedió lo propio" ("VHV" 222). Larrea remembered this conference as being the day he learned from Huidobro this "concepto de los dos lenguajes" and the deliberateness with which the poet creates continued from "la intención conscientemente constructiva de Poe-Mallarmé" ("VHV" 239).⁹⁴ Huidobro had positioned Poetry as being simultaneously the end and the antecedents traveled to and through by a progressive objectification of the inexistent in the poem with the poetic word sought by the poet's imagination; "Al llegar a ese lindero final el encadenamiento habitual de los fenómenos rompe su lógica, y al otro lado, en donde empiezan las tierras del poeta, la cadena se rehace en una lógica nueva" ("La Poesía" 1298). Beyond the horizon of present logic lay *the land of the poets* where a new logic could reorganize phenomena and where invisible causality could find explanation. These statements arrived as messengers delivering answers directly to Larrea's framing darkness.

⁹⁴ As a testimony to his renovated apprenticeship and the lasting influence that it held, he wrote how these two concepts "fue enseñanza que Huidobro me transmitió oralmente a partir de su disertación de 1921 en Madrid, y que quedó en vigencia entre nosotros como un axioma compartido y apadrinado por Juan Gris. En lo que me concierne, ello explica el giro que tomaron desde entonces mis actividades líricas hasta que desembocaron en otro campo poético y, por intervención de los hados, en el entendimiento de lo que estimo ser un logos cultural de otra especie y trascendencia" ("VHV" 239).

After the conference, the days he spent in Madrid with Huidobro confirmed in person what he had felt when first reading *Poemas árticos*, and the apprenticeship intensified, providing him with the unwavering presence that had been lacking when only the Chilean's verses were available to him. The solemnity with which Huidobro enveloped the poetic profession ascribed a sacred value to the creative process. For Larrea Creationist poetry became a "poesía redentora" ("VHV" 222), freeing the new object from its captive state inside a lifeless substance to rise to a higher plane. Such a conception of poetry as a liberator of the spirit, the image freed by the word, and the poet as the originator of a new logic, although possibly unwittingly so, would constitute the dominant overarching principle of his later work in prose.

With the establishment of a personal connection between maestro and apprentice the two began to correspond, maintaining "un trato más seguido y profundo, en el que aprendía no pocas cosas importantes para las que estaba ya predispuesto por naturaleza, y nuestra Amistad plantó sus primeras y definitivas raíces. ("VHV" 222). Unlike Gerardo Diego, who had always remained enticed by traditional poetics of form as well as the new, Huidobro was an unrelenting voice urging Larrea forward in his flight from convention. Having reaffirmed his allegiance to Huidobro, Larrea felt increasingly isolated in the literary world of Spain as many poets, mainly those of Ultraism, disparaged Creationism and its founder.⁹⁵ However, this simply reinforced Larrea's

⁹⁵ During this time the relationship between the Ultraists and Huidobro worsened. The latter was altogether unimpressed by the former, considering them to be Futurism's "hijos espurios, inferiores a aquéllos" (Huidobro, *Epistolario* 103), while the former, namely Guillermo de Torre accused the latter of plagiarizing his metaphors from the Uruguayan poet Herrera y Reissig. Larrea sided with his maestro, confessing throughout the polemic a growing "interna adhesión a

desire to break with what he saw as an outmoded, incomprehensive Spain, while the continued encouragement of Huidobro prevented any grave redescend into the neurosis, a shift to the left on Rank's scale, that might keep him from actively writing. Attesting to his healthy state, alongside his solitude, he wrote to Diego on the final day of 1921: "Poseo ideológicamente una paz tan óptima y un equilibrio de fuerzas que me gustaría comunicarlas con los demás, y estos *demás* eres tú solo. ¿*Creas*? Animo, la vida es magnífica y sus matices cuando son nuevos son incomparables" (*Cartas* 144).

Inherent in Huidobro's proposals was the creation of an object whose universality meant that it exceeded any particular language and was thus attainable through any translation of a verse. His call to write in other languages —"Se debe escribir en una lengua que no sea la materna" (*Altazor* 732)—⁹⁶ was another precept that Larrea took from his apprenticeship and after their meeting he began composing almost exclusively in French. It was both a flight from his environment and an adherence to the model of his maestro, who since 1917 when he met Reverdy and Juan Gris and published *Horizon carré*, had also been composing in French. While Gerardo Diego later translated some of Larrea's poems to Spanish for inclusion in his notable Spanish avant-garde anthologies from 1932 and 1934, the greater part of Larrea's work remained in French, inedited, unpublished, and unknown. It was not until 1969 when Victor Bodini translated Larrea's poems to Italian for the first edition of *Versión celeste*, followed one year later with Luis

Huidobro" (*Cartas* 115) even as he formulated his own aesthetic "en contacto con mis maestros en el pasado, en contacto con él [Huidobro] y en contacto conmigo mismo" (*Cartas* 127).

⁹⁶ Not being restricted by one's maternal language argues for both the universality of Creationism's poetic image as well as the continuous search for that *new* language.

Vivanco and Carlos Barral's translations for the first Spanish edition. This linguistic *problem* would later hinder his due recognition for the major role he played in bringing the avant-garde to Spain. But for Larrea reception would always be secondary to the poet's responsibility to create. In 1921, he was finally convinced, and the ethics put forth by Huidobro's faith in poetry allowed for his subsistence in the still harsh and unreceptive environment in which he was living.

As Larrea improved his linguistic competence he sent many of his poems to his maestro to be commented and corrected, sometimes allowing them to be published in his maestro's literary magazine *Création*. He was not prolific, but he was now working, because as he wrote to Huidobro, "cantar es muy sencillo, pero *construir* requiere un esfuerzo de voluntad que cuando se está tan solo, estéticamente, como yo lo estoy, no es fácil conseguir todos los días" (Huidobro, *Epistolario* 134). One of Larrea's poems from this period, "Longchamps," was translated from French by Gerardo Diego and published in *Verso y Prosa* in June 1928. The original French text did not come to light until Diego found it amongst his archives, noting that it was dated December 15, 1922, and allowed its inclusion in *Al amor de Larrea* (1985), the 1984 proceedings from the conference dedicated to the author. Huidobro in a letter to Larrea on January 4, 1923 refers specifically to this poem citing various verses and lauding their quality as the work of a *master poet*.⁹⁷ It serves as a point of comparison with "Evasión" quantifying to a certain measure Larrea's growth during three and a half years of apprenticeship (*Versión Celeste* 340).

⁹⁷ Larrea sent "Longchamps" to his maestro in a letter from Bilbao and dated December 30, 1922 (Huidobro, *Epistolario* 140-142).

Tricot du violon qui nul n'écoute 1
 Le rossignol [*sic*] sans nuit fait un nœud dans ma route

Les yeux gardent la mer au fond de la boutique
 et le poisson noyé dans la boussole arctique

La poussière des vagues alourdit l'automne 5
 La mer tombe de ses mâts
 j'aime plus qu'un voyage l'arc-en-ciel sur l'hippodrome [*sic*]
 et le jockey qui port la pluie entre ses bras

Du bout de ma baguette la fumée qui s'éloigne [*sic*]

Je n'ai cependant les barbes de Moïse 10

Mais je regarde la terre qui se tord au loin

Ta poitrine où se cache le dernier paysage
 et le jour qui te suit plus fidèle qu'un tatouage

Plage aimée des saisons

[Knitting of the violin that listens to no one / The nightingale without night ties a knot in my path // Eyes keep the sea in the depths of the shop / and the drowned fish in the arctic compass // The dust from the waves weigh down the Autumn / The sea falls from its masts / Even more than a voyage, I love the rainbow over the hippodrome / and the jockey who brings the rain in his arms // From the tip of my baton the smoke floats away // Even so I have not Moses' beard // But I watch the earth that twists in the distance // Your chest where the last landscape hides / and the day that follows you more devoutly than a tattoo // Beloved beach of the seasons]

The title of the poem certainly refers to the Longchamp Racetrack (Le Hippodrome de Longchamp) on the outskirts of Paris, though Larrea's title adds an 's'; one of several orthographic errors in this unedited version written in Larrea's developing French. A first look at "Longchamps" reveals verses longer than those of "Evasión" and that occupy a space more regular in form. Unlike the short, shifting verses of his earlier Ultraist (or

early Creationist) poems, here they are all of comparable length (roughly alexandrines, varying perhaps due to Larrea's unperfected French prosody) save for verse 6 and the final indented hexasyllabic verse. The summed 14 verses suggest a sonnet, and on closer inspection their strophic arrangement easily divides into a form similar to the expected 4-4-3-3 structure. Likewise, the mostly syllabic rhyme is regular (AABB-CdCD-EFE-GGh), though verses 5 and 7, and 9 and 11 demonstrate oblique rhymes, again perhaps due only to Larrea's newness to the language.

The image continues to be the primary component of his poetry, but now it is notably more compact and thus more powerful when unfastened from the words holding it. For example, the violin is an object present both in "Evasión":

Las cuerdas de mi violín
se entrelazan como una cabellera
entre los dedos del viento norte

...and in the opening verse of "Longchamps":

Tricot du violon qui nul n'écoute

In the first occurrence the violin's strings are designated as such ("cuerdas") and are the subject of the verb "se entrelazan." From the verb the image is developed through the accumulation of an adverbial phrase "como una cabellera" and a prepositional phrase "entre los dedos del viento" forming a complete sentence divided amongst three verses. In the second example, the entire process is condensed into the single noun "Tricot." *Knitting* simultaneously evokes the strings and the interlacing of "Evasión," while also suggesting a less explicit act of creation. Furthermore, "Tricot du violon" is followed by the relative clause "qui nul n'écoute" which acts as an adjective phrase amplifying the

noun, but leaving the sentence as a fragment. The result is an image solely occurring inside the vitality of the object, as opposed to “Evasión” where the image emerges from the object’s participation in an activity, a clear demonstration of Larrea’s progress from the Ultraist to the Creationist image.

When turning to a more-detailed reading, the theme of escape and the struggle for subjectivity experience another advancement. From the self-preoccupation in Larrea’s early poetry for an escape from his environment as in “Transcarnación,” to an escape from his current self towards a new state in “Evasión,” in “Longchamps” the escape becomes a journey and the emphasis is placed not on the self, but on the new poetry that is the objective. The sonnet is divided in three thematic sections: frustration, creation, and destination. The first six verses are comprised of antithetical images of negation: “Tricot du violon qui nul n’écoute,” “Le rosignol sans nuit,” “Les yeux gardent la mer au fond,” “le poisson noyé,” “La poussière des vagues alourdit l’automne,” and “La mer tombe.” Each construction is rendered impotent by the opposing forces it contains.

The next five verses mark a transition from negations in the third person to an affirmation expressed entirely in the first person by way of the ninth verse of creation: “Du bout de ma baguette la fumée qui s’eloigne.” The subjective “j’aime plus” in verse 7 offers a positive alternative to the negative images of the beginning: “l’arc-en-ciel sur l’hipodrome” and “le jockey qui porte la pluie entre ses bras.” The empowered position of the conductor leading this concert of creation gives way to a verse 10 of humility, “Je n’ai cependant les barbes de Moises,” in which the first person declares itself not at the level of Moses, leader of the Israelites towards the Promised Land, but in verse 11

subsequently restores itself to a level comparable with the biblical figure by opposing its deficiency with possibility: “Mais je regarde la terre qui se tord au loin.” Just as Moses died atop Mount Nebo in sight of his destination, the poetic voice sees the twisting land in the distance and realizes it may possibly be out of reach.

The final three verses shift to a second person identified with the envisioned destination that is described as the location of “le dernier paysage,” “le jour qui te suit plus fidèle qu’un tatouage,” and the “plage aimée des saisons.” The sonnet’s progression consists of the transformation of a stagnant third person by a visionary first person into a utopic second person. If we recall from Chapter One the recovered last verse of Larrea’s 1914 poem “Yo”: “morirme de amor en una playa remota,” we could say that “Longchamps” concludes similarly with a beach, but while in the first instance it is a romantic tragedy for the self upon the hypothetical beach, in the second it is a visual jubilation at the existent beach, beloved, not isolated, even though he may never reach it.⁹⁸ These verses reveal a maturing of Larrea’s vision and a mounting confidence in his trajectory.

On January 4, 1923 Huidobro wrote to Larrea praising “Longchamps”: “Todo su poema es hermosísimo; el verso que dice «[et] le jour qui te suit plus fidèle qu’un

⁹⁸ An interesting comparison can be made between the broken meter in this last verse by Larrea and the last two verses of Darío’s “Lo fatal”: “¡y no saber adónde vamos, / ni de dónde venimos!...” (297). Both disrupt the classical form for the same purpose of rhythmically opposing the sentiment created in the initial quatrains. However, while Darío’s broken verse expresses the sadness of uncertainty, Larrea’s is for the joy of possibility; Darío’s is broken as if to create a failing sonnet, while Larrea’s is broken as in an escape from the tradition of the sonnet, the journey of his search. Also of note is that “Lo fatal” from *Cantos de vida y esperanza* (1905) was composed towards the end of Darío’s life, while “Longchamps” is from the start of Larrea’s.

tatouage» no es de un poeta, sino de un gran poeta, de un maestro de la lírica” (*Epistolario* 143). The maestro recognized the apprentice as an emerging master of the trade, and correspondingly identified him as in greater possession of his subjectivity. Larrea approached a new self, the Larrea who could match Huidobro and then move beyond him. In his letter, Huidobro continued to mark this transition, suggesting that Larrea was also prepared to serve as maestro to other poets: “Ojalá se decida usted a trabajar con más entusiasmo y se convierta pronto en un verdadero guía de esa juventud española tan desorientada y tan poco comprensiva de los verdaderos valores” (*Epistolario* 143). While Larrea’s certainty flourished and he steadily advanced towards a moment of liberation, Huidobro concurrently benefitted from the loyalty of Larrea and Diego as adherents to Creationism. His objective to raise his movement, and himself, to international status hinged on having more followers, and he contently mentioned the interest shown by important writers from Ortega y Gasset to Ezra Pound. The other side of the apprenticeship is thus brought to light wherein the maestro is such only to the extent that the apprentices recognize him.

Larrea’s first visit to France was on September 13, 1923 by invitation of Huidobro to spend five days with his family in a villa near La Rochelle before travelling to his house in Paris. He had a pleasant seaside stay during which he asked his maestro questions, had him read his new poems, and listened to his views on religion, art, and politics. He then spent the next eight days in Paris where he strolled, had coffee, and conversed with Huidobro and his new acquaintances Juan Gris, Amédée Ozenfant, Jacques Lipchitz, Maurice Raynal, and Waldemar George. Larrea decided, as he

expressed to Gerardo Diego on November 21, 1923 after his return, that Paris was “el punto del planeta que yo debí habitar” (*Cartas* 170). He found the French capital to be a place where he would not be *aesthetically alone* as it was filled with artists also eagerly seeking that new language. The support he had desperately needed of Huidobro was in part to compensate for the deficient environment that had always surrounded him in Spain. His trip offered him a better option, an authentic remedy to the original cause of his noögenic crises independent of his maestro. Paris was a geographical solution aligned with the self’s imaginative need and a subduction zone hotspot of unending encounters. His potential relocation to the center of avant-garde experimentation was evidence of a shift in the maestro-apprentice relationship that had taken place during his visit. In the same letter to Diego, Larrea described his time in France and triumphantly declared:

Saqué la impresión de que este año ha sido para él [Huidobro] de poco provecho literario y creí observar en nuestras charlas un decidido propósito de esquivarme toda solución de estética y de técnica, lo que no dejó de envanecerme. Puedo decir con satisfacción que lo mucho o poco que sé formaba parte de mis conocimientos antes de ponerme en camino y que sostuve e intervine en los diálogos de Huidobro y Gris con perfecto conocimiento de causa y sin que nada nuevo me enseñaran. (*Cartas* 169)

His latest interaction with Huidobro, as well as with his artist companions, had taught him nothing new. He felt equal to his maestro’s knowledge and equal to that of his maestro’s colleagues. During this stage the *knowledge* that Larrea had gained was that to which Heidegger refers where the learner becomes capable of engaging the transmitter of

that knowledge (the thinker or the poet). Larrea felt himself fully prepared “to pursue and accompany the thinker by thinking and to pursue and accompany the poet by poetizing” (*Introduction to Philosophy* 45). Accordingly, his psychic state improved, as did his poetic activity. Out of this visit flourished, as he described it, “un orgullo personal que antes no tenía y cierto método en el trabajo que me he impuesto desde entonces” (*Cartas* 169). He felt no more *need* for a guide, no *need* to continue to wait, and at this point, as the critic Díaz de Guereñu has argued, Larrea no longer saw his situation as that of a disciple (*La poesía de Juan Larrea* 40). His descent through the experience of a maestro had concluded and the period of apprenticeship was over.

Conclusion

Larrea’s apprenticeship to Huidobro lasted from 1919 to 1923 and was the decisive experience needed for his search for self to achieve the level of independence from which he could confidently continue alone. Larrea had been in a perduring state of subjugation inasmuch as he was developing his subjectivity. The framing darkness was his subordination to his family in conservative Jesuit Bilbao and to Spain’s apathetic, corrupted environment. In 1919 he experienced a subsequent subordination to Huidobro and the Creationist aesthetic. However, the early symptomatic darkness latter became the darkness of poetic engrossment, the descent towards the spark, the histolytic cocoon. Gonzalo Rojas was grateful to Huidobro because “nos enseñó a ser el ser que somos,”

and in this same way it was through Huidobro that Larrea came out of himself;⁹⁹ he managed *to flee beyond himself*, from his *Peer Gynt* self in “Evasión” to bring this period to a close and become his own maestro. With optimism he wrote to Diego at the end of the year, “Prepárate a encontrarme bastante cambiado en casi todos los términos” (*Cartas* 171). And, indeed, he was no longer lethargic or disillusioned and, filled with determination, he felt an urgency to move to Paris the following year. David Bary summarizes this moment for Larrea in the following way:

Empieza a ver la posibilidad de dejar sus obligaciones profesionales y familiares y de “entrar en poesía”, pues ya concibe a la poesía como actividad que envuelve la totalidad de la vida de los individuos a ella dedicados, entrega parecida a la de sus hermanos que habían entrado en religión. (*Larrea* 57)

After his first visit to Paris he felt sufficiently self-assured to stand beside Huidobro not as an apprentice but as a poet and to begin to make his own way in literature having as a result of his apprenticeship been afforded the confidence that his faith in literature was not misplaced. Huidobro’s poetics offered an apprenticeship, but it was directed at the formation of the *verdadera secta* that he sought for Creationism, and this was a corruption of Poetry’s true mission and to which Larrea could not subscribe. When Gerardo Diego referring to Huidobro asserts, “La plenitud de nuestro profundo Juan

⁹⁹ In the well-known “Lordship and Bondage” passage of *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel writes, “Self-consciousness is faced by another self-consciousness; it has come *out of itself*. This has a twofold significance: first, it has lost itself, for it finds itself as an *other* being; secondly, in doing so it has superseded the other, for it does not see the other as an essential being, but in the other sees its own self” (111).

Larrea le declara mentor y guía esclarecido,” he reveals to what extent Larrea moved beyond his maestro while incorporating him into his thinking (“Vicente Huidobro / I Despedida” 18). Huidobro and Creationism would in fact become a fragment in a teleological vision arrived at after Larrea managed to remove himself from Huidobro’s influence, using this experience instead “como un trampolín para tirarse por completo a fondo” (Larrea, “Considerando a Vallejo” 172). To have remained a Creationist would have meant a stall in his ascension of self, an unrealized individuation process, and the prevention of his ultimate arrival, through a second subduction zone cycle, at his true self.

* * *

CHAPTER CONCLUSION

The exchange between the maestro and disciple is complex, a mixture of gratitude for the pivotal formation that is accomplished; resentment for the power that that influence holds over the disciple's definition of self; and nostalgia embracing pride and regret. In a conference that García Vega gave in 2009 titled "Maestro por penúltima vez" the 81 year old, having broken his dependence on the maestro —the "desvío creador" argued by Arcos, following Bloom, realized through polemical works like *Los años de Orígenes* (1978) and *El oficio de perder* (2004)—, returned to this defining period in his life and to his relationship with Lezama who had died in 1976 (Arcos 104).¹⁰⁰ Now at the end of his own life (he died three years later), he considered the possibility of having erred in his choice of maestro. However, he remained indebted to Lezama on several accounts, especially for having been able to experience Lezama's devotion to literature. Beyond the Catholic solemnity that embraced Lezama's poiesis, unsuited for García Vega's vanguardist levity (which he found instead in writers like Macedonio Fernández and Witold Gombrowicz), he learned "el tratar de asimilarlo todo" (15), the reading of everything that later through assimilation (inside the *Horno Transmutativo*) rendered its spirit to the psyche in need. Thanks to Lezama he learned that one could move forward out of the darkness through the poetic word. "Efectivamente," he wrote, "creo que el Maestro me enseñó que la literatura era una gran ayuda para crecer" (23).¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ See Jorge Luis Arcos's chapter "Lezama y Orígenes" in his *Kaleidoscopio: La poética de Lorenzo García Vega* (2012) for an excellent analysis of the multiple psychological, political, and poetic layers of this relationship.

¹⁰¹ "Lo que le debo, principalmente, es haber conocido su devoción por la literatura. Pero esto, como creo que siempre debe ser cuando se tiene una relación con un Maestro, me llevó a

Similarly, in 1979 Juan Larrea read at a conference dedicated to the work of his former maestro who had died in 1948, a text titled “Vicente Huidobro en Vanguardia” in which he proposed, through his personal insight and cultural poetic theories on Huidobro’s significance, to lay the foundations for “una comprensión equilibrada del poeta chileno frente a las incomprendiones que padeció en su existencia y en especial a partir de su muerte” (“VHV” 213). This seminar, given just a year before Larrea’s own death, came more than fifty years after the end of his apprenticeship and forty years since his literary activity “derivó hacia otros rumbos no menos poéticos en realidad, aunque sí más objetiva y concretamente culturales” (*Versión Celeste* 61). By this time his conception of poetry had moved well beyond Huidobro’s Creationism. Huidobro’s notion of poiesis was based on the biblical logos of Genesis and the idea of the poet as a divine-like creator, a little god positioned at the origin, speaking existence. Larrea’s instinct directed him to the end, to Revelation, where through poiesis history’s poets were participants in the advent of the universal spirit made visible in the image. At this conference he did not spare Huidobro his many personality flaws, but placed them in a context that maintained his importance as “el iniciador del movimiento moderno en

distanciarme partiendo de lo que éste me enseñaba. // Sí, una asimilación del Maestro que, al final, me condujo a situarme en una posición absolutamente distinta a aquella en que la que [*sic*] él estaba situado. // Y es que, mientras él siempre exaltó la letra, considerándola dentro de un espíritu católico y romántico, yo sentí el apego a la letra, pero por la letra misma. Es decir, sentí un apego a la letra por la letra que, entre otras cosas, me condujo a la pasión por las estructuras cubistas, así como a la pasión por el juego. // También, lo que le debo, y aunque ya se me han perdido las huellas de su enseñanza, ha sido lo que pudiera resumiré en el título de mi último texto: “Lo que voy siendo”. Efectivamente, creo que el Maestro me enseñó que la literatura era una gran ayuda para crecer” (“Maestro por penúltima vez” 23).

lengua española” (“VHV” 217).¹⁰² And personally, he confessed, “Vicente fue para mí, inicialmente a causa de los poemas a que me he referido y después a causa de nuestra confiada amistad, como una llave que hizo posible la apertura de la multitud de puertas que desde niño habían acumulado sobre mí sus cerrazones” (“VHV” 223). His metaphor echoes the famous opening verses of Huidobro’s “Arte poética”: “Que el verso sea como una llave / que abra mil puertas” (*Poemas árticos* 391). Even at the end of his life the words of the maestro were still present in his own.

During their apprenticeships Larrea and García Vega moved from their particular dark beginnings through an encounter with a powerful master poet, to a descent into a deep period of instruction and preparation. Larrea likened it to an arduous period spent inside a well. García Vega became a solitary monk. At their conclusions the downward motion of influence ceased, the stasis of a transitional moment to metamorphosis was replaced with the early rumblings of the new self in artistic activity. With differing degrees of facility, Larrea and García Vega were now immersed in the literary world with the means to realize the potential of the imago.

* * *

¹⁰² Included amongst his failings of self were various instances of his predating texts so as to appear to be the forerunner, the attention-grabbing kidnapping farce in Paris that cost him the friendship and respect of many of his colleagues, and the abandonment of his family for the love of a young girl that almost cost him his life; “el raptor de Ximena Amunátegui” (Parra, 642). In Larrea’s words, “Cuando no podía alcanzar sus pretensiones de altura por las buenas, no desdeñaba recurrir a representarlas, o sea, a servirse de la ficción. Podía simular algunas cosas, alterar la realidad, predatar ingenuamente sus escritos, mentir si lo estimaba conveniente para mantener el orgullo constitucional de su egolatría” (“VHV” 216).

CHAPTER THREE. Individuation within the Collective:

Ascent into *Favorables París Poema* (1926) and *Orígenes* (1945-1955)

*Desafinarle la guitarra al padre*¹⁰³
NICANOR PARRA

*La búsqueda de sí mismo, que es también la de la virtud y la de la justicia, es búsqueda del verdadero saber y de la mejor manera de vivir, pero a conciencia de que sólo es alcanzable, hipotéticamente, en comunión con los demás y sobre bases lógicas, dialécticas.*¹⁰⁴
JOSÉ PRATS SARIOL

INTRODUCTION

The darkness fled, the encounter experienced, the descent into literature ceased, Juan Larrea and Lorenzo García Vega had reached the end of their apprenticeships and moved into the next stage of their evolutive cycle. After the four years and two phases of Vicente Huidobro's Creationism, Larrea acknowledged in 1923 that his maestro could teach him nothing new. Lorenzo García Vega, in 1946, had completed the two years and three phases of José Lezama Lima's formational *Curso Delfico* having read the entirety of his maestro's library and absorbed the works through a method of maieutics intended to awaken the particular poietic capacity of the student. However, when compared with one another, despite the common moment, the nascent poets were considerably different in their psychic capacitation as individuals. It was Larrea who had declared that he understood Huidobro completely and who decided he was ready to move independently beyond him, whereas García Vega's more-structured apprenticeship had run its set two-

¹⁰³ "Pasatiempos." *Emergency Poems*. (297)

¹⁰⁴ "El curso delfico." 21.

course course independent of his development at its conclusion. This distinction as well as their differing experiences within the literary magazines, finds an explanation in further correlation between subduction and literary influence. In *Earth as an Evolving Planetary System* Dr. Kent C. Condie cites Uyeda's 1983 suggestion of two major types of subduction zones "each representing an end member in a continuum of types": high-stress zones and low-stress zones (84). In high-stress subduction the oceanic plate is "relatively young" and results in "large shallow earthquakes." At the opposite side, during low-stress subduction the descending plate is "relatively old" with very "few large earthquakes." In the same way, each poet's age, along with other factors, will shape the character of the various developmental stages; their apprenticeships ended when Larrea was 28 years old while García Vega was still only 20. Condie further explains the difference between the two stating, "in the high-stress type, the descending and overriding plates are more strongly coupled than in the low-stress type" (84). García Vega admitted the strong bond that occurred when Lezama found him in the midst of a serious crisis and that his dependence on his maestro continued long after the official formational period had ended. Even Lezama, after reading what would be García Vega's third book *Cetrería del títere* published in 1960, would be compelled to say to him, "un día tendrás que separarte de mí" (García Vega, Personal Conversation), but to do so would require a second stage of crisis before a true self could finally emerge. On the other hand, Larrea rapidly moved forward, albeit not without his own crisis and a few earthquakes.

At a given point of subduction, the geological apprentice reaches a critical depth determined by a combination of the weight of the overlying continental plate and the surrounding temperature. At this profundity liquids and gases defining the oceanic plate escape upwards into the overlying mantle. This heated distillation preserves only the vital active elements primed to continue the metamorphosis abandoning the dense plate below. This turning point can be paired in insect metamorphosis with the completed histolytic breakdown of the pupa as it passes into histogenesis (biological poiesis) where the latent structures of the imago will begin to emerge. For the human psyche of the apprentice, the enduring vital elements are the unconscious instincts or the id rising out of a state of repression by the seemingly unalterable approach to reality that must be left behind. The same pain that forced the intelligence to search continues to propel the self in the direction of meaning. Rank, defying Freud, spoke of the soul as an adaptive ideology that creates new ideologies in order to continue its existence, another counterpart to the geological vital elements and the biological imago (*Psychology and the Soul* 61).¹⁰⁵ Following these various parallel upward-trending vectors, the apprentice's quest pulls them from the apprenticeship just as it had previously taken them out of the framing darkness. "All truth-seeking," wrote Rank, "is in the end the old struggle for the soul's existence and its immortality" (Rank, *Psychology and the Soul* 60), and the self ascends in search of the surface as if obeying the biological "elevation" described by Portmann as

¹⁰⁵ Murray Stein also affirms the congruence of these images in *Transformation*: "The soul is fundamental, and the imago is its incarnated form. It is absorbed, as it were, into her [the butterfly's] earlier body form and character structure, a new psychic constellation that will guide and orient her through the course of her future life" (22).

“the attainment of higher degrees of inwardness, of a richer structuring of the world through the experience of the individual” (312).¹⁰⁶

As indicated by the title, the concentration of Chapter Three is on the individuation of the self, a process Jung defines as one “by which a person becomes a psychological ‘in-dividual,’ that is, a separate, indivisible unity or whole” (“Conscious, Unconscious, and Individuation” 212). Chapter One considered a framing darkness that was such both due to the adverse historical and political conditions of the period, but also primarily because of the disjunctive effect they caused within Larrea and García Vega’s developing adolescent psyches. The neuroses they suffered were symptoms of a discontinuity between id and ego when confronted with a certain reality. Chapter Two described the construction of a healing bridge between the id and the exterior world in the form of learned artistic activity, the intermediary to a healthy psyche as postulated by Rank in *Art and Artist*. What followed was for that bridge to be crossed, the tools of creation employed, and to bring about collaboration between the id and ego in order to allow the self to participate in the exterior world. The primary objective of individuation, then, is not to disaffiliate oneself from a society or group, but to reach an awareness of self through the unification of one’s conscious and unconscious. Nevertheless, a byproduct of accomplishing this is a degree of authenticity that forcibly makes one an original component of a community. Larrea would write in 1926, “sólo un furioso

¹⁰⁶ Similarly, Heidegger states, “The thinking of a thinker is true if it guards the advent of being. Thinking guards being by tending being’s advent thoughtfully in its saying, by sheltering being in the word of the saying, and at the same time thereby concealing being in language” (Heidegger, *Introduction* 15).

individualismo en lo que tiene cada hombre de peculiar podrá hacer una colectividad interesante” (“Presupuesto vital” 354). I propose that the “peculiar” is the approachment of the early instinctual self with the reformulated learned self, a fusion achieved in progressive individuation equivalent to the adaptation of the maestro’s teachings to the apprentice’s needs.

For Larrea and García Vega, I locate this undertaking inside the collective, but what specifically is the collective here? In Chapter One it was an amorphous incomprehensible chaos typified by corrupt words, disingenuous actions, and unconvincing campaigns for faith. It was associated with the idea of a reality ill-defined with respect to the instincts of the adolescent. Reading from the tectonic blueprint it was the oceanic plate where the self was embattled by the aggressive currents of the dark waters. The apprenticeships of Chapter Two provided a momentary shelter from the storm and from the debilitating interaction with that incomprehensible collective. It represented the controlled reality of a formational escape under the tutelage of a stronger will. A semblance of a collective is found within the books whose ideas were to be absorbed and whose unaggressiveness was emboldening for the individual’s mastery of self. It was a period that, while intense, was cocoon-like and dedicated to one task: learning literature. With the descent stage of subduction realized, the self is once again released into the world as it gradually frees itself from the protected space of a maestro’s influence. The stated goal for both Larrea and García Vega was to enter into the literary world (a specialized collective), which would imply an engagement with literary activity,

exchanges with other writers, and exercising a position in the society by way of the written word.

In Chapter Three I have chosen to represent the literary collective synecdochically through the entity of the literary magazines *Favorables París Poema* and *Orígenes*. The primary reason for this is that both Larrea and García Vega emerged from their apprenticeships first into collaboration with the respective magazines before publishing any independent works. However, certain complexities emerge in the subduction process due to the differing nature of the each poet. Certainly, each began in their respective magazines before publishing their first book, Chapter Four's eruption of the poietic self, but whereas Larrea's *Favorables* had ceased printing when *Oscuro dominio* was published in 1934, García Vega was part of the more-durable *Orígenes* magazine for eight more years after he published *Suite para la espera* in 1948. Nevertheless, I account for these irregularities in sequencing as representative of the two types of subduction explained earlier. The high stress kept García Vega within his metamorphosis longer while still erupting poetically, albeit with works of a false poietic self influenced by his maestro. The low stress allowed Larrea to ascend faster to his poietic self and enter sooner into his next subduction cycle.

A second reason for locating individuation within the magazines is that their composite nature easily lends itself to the notion of a literary collective as its pages bring together individual writers under a single title, while also evoking the *chamber* inside which the rising magma accumulates mixing the various participants in the subduction process. In the case of *Favorables París Poema*, it published many of the Paris avant-

gardists that Larrea had befriended thanks to Huidobro during his first visits to Paris. *Orígenes* was of course the eponymous magazine of the Orígenes group with Lezama Lima at the center. In literary history the two magazines have very little in common, but for Larrea and García Vega they were biographically the next stage of evolution.¹⁰⁷ They served as a first site of ascent, a staging ground for the emerging self's material debut in the written products of the apprenticeship. The chapter is accordingly divided into two sections in which I propose to measure their growth through exegeses of the various genres of texts that each published in this medium including manifestos, critical articles, narratives, and poems in verse and in prose. The analyses focus on the fingerprints of the maestro's thinking inside the apprentice's early writing, as well as indications of the apprentice's Bloomian misreading of the maestro's poetics as a preservation of the instinct. The disorientation that the individual experiences when confronting the problem of opposites receives a voice in a new poetic language, while challenging this language to faithfully represent the intentions of the older inadequate language. Additionally, I consider the relationship of Larrea and García Vega to the other members of the collective to illustrate further steps of self-definition and to provide perspective on the process of individuation.

¹⁰⁷ Despite the distance between the two magazines, they were slightly brought into contact, granted still with several degrees of separation when Octavio Paz wrote to Cintio Vitier praising his anthology *Diez poetas cubanos*, that which defined the Orígenes group of poets. "Creo que, como en el caso de la PRIMERA ANTOLOGIA de Gerardo Diego o de la de Jorge Cuesta, de su libro se irán desprendiendo algunos nombres, llamados a ser excepcionales en la poesía de nuestra lengua y de nuestro tiempo" ("*Carta a Cintio Vitier*" 47). Diego insisted on including Larrea in his *Poesía Contemporánea Española*, exposure that he had largely avoided. In the biographical note written by Diego, he highlighted Larrea's collaboration with Vallejo to found *Favorables París Poema* and included a passage from "Presupuesto vital" as Larrea's poetic statement (356-357).

Once again reversing the order of the preceding chapter's sections to highlight the metamorphosis, the first section is dedicated to *Favorables París Poema*, the short-lived magazine the Juan Larrea founded with César Vallejo after his definitive move to Paris in 1926. Despite only publishing two issues, Larrea's leadership in its formation is significant. Building upon the confidence he demonstrated when bringing his apprenticeship to an end, he inverted the maestro-apprentice roles by publishing Huidobro, as well as selecting contributions from Gerardo Diego, Tristan Tzara, Juan Gris, G. Ribemont Dessaignes, Apeles Fenosa, Antonio Riquelme, Pierre Reverdy, and Pablo Neruda. I analyze Larrea's five works appearing in these pages, dedicating special attention to the introductory essay "Presupuesto vital" in which he describes at length a poetic philosophy divergent with Huidobro's many Creationist manifestos. While his poems still demonstrated certain traces of Creationist formalisms, the content had developed considerably beyond his maestro's individual rebelliousness in favor of a common artistic insurrection. It was the poetic voice of "Transcarnación," but who was no longer submissive to reality, suggesting a union between the poet's apprentice and pre-apprentice selves and offering an indication of Larrea's new trajectory. Such dualisms receive particular attention in Larrea's texts in *Favorables*, most notably in "Presupuesto vital" where the confrontation of intelligence with emotion is presented not as an opposition to be resolved, but instead embraced as the essential human condition and the origin of sincere poetic revelation. Another indication of such progression was his return to Spanish as the magazine's language and an intended audience of young Hispanic artists, reminiscent of Juan Ramón Jiménez's statement, "una vez orientado en

su camino ideal, el poeta consciente vuelve en espíritu y forma su patria” (Lezama Lima, “Coloquio” 64). *Favorables París Poema* did not represent a particular group or movement, but instead was a minor ecumenical step inside the intensely active and combative avant-garde Paris demonstrative of Larrea’s attempt to integrate learned poetics with his grander vision of a universal spirit evolving in poetry.

Alternatively, García Vega continued in La Habana as part of the celebrated Orígenes group, the youngest of the members who included José Lezama Lima, Ángel Gaztelu, Virgilio Piñera, Justo Rodríguez Santos, Gastón Baquero, Eliseo Diego, Cintio Vitier, Octavio Smith, and Fina García Marruz. Although his apprenticeship had come to an end, he still lived and published within the gaze of his maestro’s poetics and the city that had always overwhelmed him. He found himself still inside this new protective cocoon, like the “protective uterus” that Jagüey Grande had been for him during his childhood. As mentioned, even in 1960 when he published *Cetrería del títere*, fourteen years after his completion of the *Curso Delfico*, he was still strongly under the influence of Lezama and Orígenes. Incidentally, in his May 29, 2010 post in the online blog *Ping-Pong Zuihitsu* he shared with Margarita Pintado he reflected on *Cetrería del títere*, the last work that he published in Cuba, describing it as “una de las calderas infernales de mi juventud” and later calling it, “mi magma, el magma conque me encontré en mi juventud [...] es el magma que está detrás de todas las experiencias que he intentado y que sigo intentando” (“Mayo 29, 2010”).¹⁰⁸ The signs of his budding independence could not, and did not, come in the form of his own magazine or a move to a new city; he remained

¹⁰⁸ See also “Sean Manning reseña y traduce Lorenzo García Vega, *Cetrería del títere* al inglés.” *El Roommate: Colectivo de lectores*. Luis Othoniel. 21 Aug. 2012. Web. 5 Mar. 2015.

inside the magma chamber enduring high-stress subduction. Instead, his slow process of individuation came from a voice of negation sounding inside his writing still associated with the Orígenes group. After his 1945 debut with his review of Marías' *Miguel de Unamuno*, between 1946 and 1956 he authored 21 other texts that appeared in *Orígenes*, many of which represented the birth of later books to be published. In examining these works I analyze García Vega's perception of the famed collective's bond, his relationship to the language of Orígenes, and his instinctual search for the *reverso*, a perpetual dualism of the visible and the hidden, the said and the unsaid, that searches for a consolidating certainty. There is a dissension in his developing literary voice harkening back to his days as a student at the Belén. The influence of Catholicism and the group's transcendental vision placed a limit on García Vega's potential adherence and despite the Orígenes movement's poetics of inclusion and Lezama's ecumenical vision, García Vega never felt that he belonged. "Me agarré a un grupo que nunca fue mi grupo," he would later say (*OP* 339).

Even though this newfound activity resulting from "a new inner center of value and direction" (Stein 22), providing each poet with a sense of responsibility and belonging that was absent prior to their apprenticeships, the literary community did not fully illuminate the original framing darkness. The fragmentary vision of the individual would remain as well as the search for meaning, but now it could be rendered visible in the poetic word. Entry into the collective was not the completion of their first metamorphosis. They exited the "concealment" of the previous stage into the magazines of this one, but the struggle for self, that is, the act of individuation resisting further

concealment in the Other, led them to fight against limiting group associations and instead reveal and conceal themselves through poiesis. It was now that they would decide whether to stagnate and solidify inside the magma chamber or to continue to eruption, and they were both carried onwards in their ascent by their ultimate common realization that crisis meant truth.

* * *

JUAN LARREA AND THE VITAL SPIRIT OF *FAVORABLES PARÍS POEMA*

*cuando —primera escala de tu viaje de bodas
con la Poesía intacta— a París tiendes vuelo
y rasgas impaciente las vestiduras todas
de cinco años de célibe y de cinco de celo,
permite amigo mío, que mientras te acomodas
en tu nupcial carruaje yo te tienda el pañuelo.*¹⁰⁹

GERARDO DIEGO

Introduction

At the end of his apprenticeship Larrea was decided that he must relocate to that “punto del planeta que yo debí habitar” (*Cartas* 170). His first attempt in 1924 to establish himself in Paris lasted only several months before it was interrupted by the illness of his beloved Aunt Micaela; in Chapter One, Larrea identified his relationship with Micaela in Madrid and the trauma of his subsequent separation from her as fundamental in the formation of his poetic personality. With her death in July 1925, his last significant tie to Spain severed and provided another level of traumatic freedom finally resolving his wavering between family responsibility and personal calling. This not insignificant event,¹¹⁰ in addition to various trips to the French capital and his constant exchange of letters and ideas with Huidobro, Diego, and his new friend César Vallejo had convinced him. At the age of 31, Larrea took leave of his position with the National Historical Archives and in February of 1926 decided to put his life in the hands

¹⁰⁹ From the poem “A Juan Larrea” in Diego’s 1924 *Poemas humanos* (229). A contextualizing epigraph reads “En su partida de España.”

¹¹⁰ David Bary, sharing his insight from extensive correspondence with Larrea, wrote: “En este caso, cree que la muerte de su tía fue un elemento importante en la crisis que se refleja en la poesía de *Versión celeste* y los textos en prosa de *Orbe*” (*Larrea* 62).

of literature, setting up residence in Paris where he “entró en poesía como quien entre en religión” (Bary, *Larrea* 65).

More than two years would pass between the end of his apprenticeship and his move to Paris. During this time he was writing more than ever. In February 1924, Gerardo Diego wrote to Huidobro recounting how changed he had found his friend Larrea since the latter’s visit to Paris and how he would even soon have a book ready (Huidobro, *Epistolario* 163). The book, whose proposed title was *Chanson meublée*,¹¹¹ was to be entirely of poems composed in French, including “Longchamps” seen in the previous chapter. Nevertheless, it was never completed and most of the poems were lost (Bary 60).¹¹² Together with his own poetry was a second component of his developing plan: to found a literary magazine that broke away from the “ridícula inanidad” that Ultraism had become and that matched his “ansia de proyectarme a lo esencial, a un orbe donde rigiesen otras categorías” (Larrea, “Considerando a Vallejo” 171). Prior to his move there was mention of creating a magazine with Huidobro, and Diego also refers to a shared project with Larrea to create what would be the magazine *Cármén*,¹¹³ but Larrea’s magazine, an instrument in his search for “una razón de vida más satisfactoria,” would wait for Paris, but he discussed the idea earlier with Vallejo in Madrid in 1925:

¹¹¹ In a letter to Diego dated November 21, 1923: “Preparo in mente un libro, con alguno que otro caligrama, que es posible que se titule “Chanson meublé”, [sic] título también de uno de los poemas que ya tengo” (*Cartas* 170).

¹¹² A year later on February 28, 1925 Larrea wrote to Huidobro: “Esta última temporada he escrito algunas cosas de modo que tengo ya un libro casi listo” (Huidobro, *Epistolario* 192).

¹¹³ In a letter from Diego to Huidobro on January 29, 1926: “Ya le habrá dicho Juan [Larrea] nuestro proyecto de revista” (Huidobro, *Epistolario* 196).

Le expuse mi intención de publicar, cuando me trasladase a París, una especie de revista que, bajo el nombre de Favorables–París–Poema, sostuviera una actitud poética de verdadera vanguardia y que al mismo tiempo fuese algo así como un acto de discriminación y repudio contra la literatura vigente en la península, cuya posición vitalmente epidérmica y como lacustre, esquivaba, a mi entender, los problemas oceánicos de la mente creadora predestinados, en aquella hora tan aguda del mundo, a abrir horizontes imaginativos nuevos. (“Considerando a Vallejo” 171)

It is essential to note that the *Favorables* project was conceived for Paris, yet it was intended, as he said, to be an act of discernment and a repudiation of contemporary peninsular literature. Paris was an escape only to the extent that he felt the superficiality of Spanish literature as detrimental to his fragile psyche and by leaving he could continue to define his instincts against a common energy. It was simply a deliberate step beneficial to his own personal development, just as was his use of the French language. Though Larrea may have felt intuitively beyond Huidobro’s Creationist proposals, if still experimenting with the formal techniques he had gleaned during his apprenticeship, he nevertheless wrote to Huidobro July 17, 1924: “Entre usted y yo, cuando menos por mi parte, no solo existe comunidad estética sino gran afecto personal” (Huidobro, *Epistolario* 179). All of this suggests the clarifying of a mission where for Larrea, life and poetry began to align, where through poetry he could “entregarse en forma total a los azares supremos de la vida” (Bary, *Larrea* 21). The alignment required his incorporation into Parisian avant-garde community, the magma chamber through which he would ascend, but the process of individuation that he undertook as a result of his move implied

not an escape from the *framing darkness* of Spain, but his unification with it. This explains why despite composing his poetry almost exclusively in French, *Favorables* would explicitly use Spanish, even translating works from the French contributors like Reverdy and Tzara. “Traducir es pedagogía y es amor,” affirms Octavio Paz. “He traducido por amor, por necesidad de compartir con los de mi lengua algo escrito en otra” (“Poesía de circunstancias” 18), and as we will see in the first issue’s opening text, Larrea’s “Presupuesto vital” intended to enliven young Spanish artists to the artistic march of dynamic optimism he was experiencing so that they need not suffer as he had. With Vallejo’s participation the call to arms extended to Hispanic American artists as well. Larrea moved to Paris, but had not abandoned Spain.¹¹⁴ His native country would become another participant in his vision, as had Huidobro, playing its role as an emissary of images revelatory of an emerging universal culture.

His idea for the magazine did not fall on deaf ears, as confirmed by the excited anticipation in the letter that the awaiting Vallejo sent to him on November 25 later that year: “Siempre pienso en la revista en París. Hay que madurar todo esto para Enero o Febrero, en que tú vendrás. No te olvides de ello” (*Correspondencia completa* 134). Vicente Huidobro, meanwhile, was involved in various ongoing polemics including Guillermo de Torre’s accusations of plagiarism and the fallout from his supposed kidnapping in 1924 that had cost him the friendship of several of his colleagues,

¹¹⁴ Though Larrea never identified himself entirely with the Surrealist movement, the manner in which Spain would stay at the center of his universal preoccupations, receiving influence through him, led Vittorio Bodini to place Larrea first in his 1963 anthology of Spanish Surrealism and consider him the “padre misconosciuto del surrealismo in Spagna” (*I poeti surrealisti spagnoli* xlix).

including Juan Gris. Larrea, as a friend and follower, often found himself defending him because although recognizant of his maestro's shortcomings he was also able to comprehend his maestro's poetic heroism within the grander trajectory of Poetry. Huidobro's magazine *Création* increasingly counted on fewer participants; the final issue was published in 1924 with more of his own work than that of others. He continued to elaborate a poetry that bore the markings of Cubism, Dadaism, and Surrealism, but with its own independent bent so as to always be considered Creationist. Of these works *Automne régulier* and *Tout à coup*, both published in 1925, marked the height of Creationism's development. That same year he also published his *Manifestes* in an attempt to formalize the precepts of his movement and to distinguish it from both Reverdy's *Nord-Sud* aesthetic —whom he had also been accused of plagiarizing years earlier—, and Breton's first *Surrealist Manifesto* published the previous year.¹¹⁵ This was the environment into which Larrea entered, that of a strengthening disciple and a weakening maestro, of a disciple transforming into a master poet.

A Prophetic Encounter

César Vallejo was an important part of Larrea's continuing transformation and further evidence of his assertion of self. Before Larrea had identified Vallejo as a "poeta transcendental de Hispanoamérica" and dedicated numerous cultural studies to the

¹¹⁵ Robert Gurney in his article "Larrea y la poesía francesa" highlights Larrea's various interactions with French poetry, including the effect of Larrea's absence from Paris and being concerned with the care of his aunt precisely at the time of Surrealism's appearance (14).

significance of the Peruvian in his vision of culture,¹¹⁶ he began a friendship, “una de esas raras amistades sin reservas, de ser humano a ser humano,” during his first visits to Paris. To do so, however, “tuve para ello que desoir [*sic*] las sugerencias de mi gran amigo de entonces en París, Vicente Huidobro, que no apreciaba literariamente a Vallejo,” he revealed (“Considerando a Vallejo” 171). The initiation of his friendship with Vallejo accompanied the emancipatory act of disregarding his former maestro’s advice, a small indication of Larrea’s instincts’ involvement as guide. In Jungian individuation, this is the unconscious’ re-alliance with the conscious, where “the collaboration of the unconscious is intelligent and purposive [...] as if it were trying to restore the lost balance” (“Conscious, Unconscious, and Individuation” 219). The search for balance had long been the implicit goal inside his poetic explorations and its apparent arrival measured his progress towards the end of his first metamorphic subduction cycle. Not only did he step away from Huidobro to a certain extent, but befriending Vallejo also placed him in the position to be a guide to another poet inside their own *framing darkness*. In a letter to David Bary dated July 23, 1966, he clarified their partnership for the origin of *Favorables*:

Mi deseo de escoger a Vallejo como compañero en aquella aventura, cuando en Europa no lo conocía ni estimaba prácticamente nadie, fue ayudarlo a salir del hoyo en que se encontraba, cosa que en alguna medida se logró. Por la misma razón le presenté entonces a diversos artistas. Por

¹¹⁶ *César Vallejo: o Hispanoamérica en la cruz de su razón* (Córdoba 1958); *Aula Vallejo*, a journal founded by Larrea at the University of Córdoba from 1961 to 1974 dedicated to Vallejo studies; *César Vallejo: héroe y mártir indo-hispano* (Montevideo 1973); *César Vallejo y el surrealismo* (Madrid 1976); *Al amor de Vallejo* (Valencia 1980).

ejemplo, el 13 de mayo de 1926 [...] lo llevé a conocer a Juan Gris (conservo la carta de éste que lo corrobora), de quien César, por lo demás nunca tuvo la oportunidad de ser amigo. También lo llevé a conocer a Tristan Tzara, a Pierre Reverdy, etc. (Larrea, *Epistolario* 84)

The encounter with Vallejo as an experiential friendship that contributed to the circumstances through which Larrea evolved, again indicative of the advanced stage of transformation within this first cycle, would later garner transcendent symbolism in Larrea's vision of Poetry as a cultural teleology. The existence of such a unique poet represented proof to him of an emerging new being heralding humanity's cultural synthesis.¹¹⁷ He would base his argument on both the poetry and life of his friend though especially empowered by their shared experiences. When in Chapter Two Larrea gave his list of poetic failings during his 1979 conference "Vicente Huidobro en Vanguardia," the list that included Huidobro's *fracaso a medias*, Vallejo was not amongst them. He justified Vallejo's absence explaining:

Si Vallejo no se incluye en el fracaso general, se debe a que es un verdadero caso aparte. Nada se propuso en el orden de la literatura y sí en el de la Vida genérica, ante la que derramó por Amor su esencia propia de manera que, definiendo el significado de España que en él cristalizó sus trascendencias verbales, su fin significó la muerte metafísica de la Muerte." ("VHV" 249)

¹¹⁷ See Larrea's *César Vallejo: héroe y mártir indo-hispano* (1973) for his wide-ranging symbolic interpretations of many moments in Vallejo's life and poetry towards his confirmation as a key stepping stone in the death of Western culture and the birth of universal culture in America.

To provide perspective on Larrea's relationship with Vallejo and his decision to found *Favorables* with him, it is advantageous to take a brief glance forward into the second transformative cycle that will be set to begin where this dissertation concludes. It will show in which direction Larrea is heading, a direction significantly divergent to that of Lorenzo García Vega, though not completely dissimilar to Lezama Lima's idea of the poetic image. Some critics have identified the beginning of Larrea's academic activity dedicated to Vallejo on April 15, 1957 when marking the anniversary of Vallejo's death he read a conference paper titled "César Vallejo, o Hispanoamérica en la cruz de su razón" (Bary, *Larrea* 149). However, in 1938 six years after Larrea had abandoned poetry and one month after Vallejo's inexplicable death he wrote a short text titled "Profecía de América." This text later served as a prologue to the first edition of *España, aparta de mí este cáliz*. He wrote of the difficult life Vallejo had endured, "una vida difícil, inaparente, miserable" (19), as well as expounding upon the as-of-yet unrecognized importance of his poetry and his spirit to the future of America. It is a true homage, a preliminary sacralization of the figure of César Vallejo who would become a central voice, alongside that of Darío, Martí, and Whitman, in Larrea's interpretation of poetic revelation. Extracting the images from the particular circumstances and historic context of Vallejo's death, he wrote:

Poeta en el alto sentido de la palabra, Vallejo [...] ha dejado de existir el día de Viernes Santo, el día en que se conmemora la trascendencia mortal de la víctima que ha de resucitar y el mismo día en que las legiones italianas, siguiendo el curso del río español que «va a dar en la mar que es

el morir», llegan, como una lanzada en el costado, a las orillas mediterráneas. ¡Cuán coherente y lleno de significaciones se manifiesta esta coincidencia múltiple! ¡Cómo adquiere sentido y se transfigura así su «España, aparta de mí este cáliz»! (26).

In this passage verse and history are sublimated into meaning typical of his later cultural studies. Even when lamenting the loss of his beloved friend, Larrea's sensibility to imaginative synchronicity is constant. He perceives a correspondence between the events of April 15, 1938. The death of César Vallejo in Paris specifically on Good Friday, the day commemorating the crucifixion of Jesus, and just as the Nationalist forces broke through the Republican lines reaching the Mediterranean coast at Vinaroz and splitting Republican Spain in two parts, [*como una lanzada en el costado*], all to give meaning to, or to take meaning from, Vallejo's verse, and to his death. For Larrea this is a system of poetic empiricism, the alternative causality made visible at privileged moments and through astute observation. "Si la ciencia medica ignora la causa material de su muerte, el pensamiento poético sabe que Vallejo ha muerto de España —figura histórica de universalidad—, o sea, que ha « muerto de universo », como él mismo dice, y que *en las manos de España ha entregado su espíritu*" (26-27). This is but one of countless poetic correlations that articulated his thinking, an assimilation of the literary image, although for Larrea it was beyond, not from, him. It was the anterior periods rendering their spirit forth through death to fulfill the prophecy of supreme synthesis in America.

However, returning to thirteen years earlier before Vallejo became a *hero and martyr*, he was Larrea's accomplice, a like spirit —"uno y otro nos encontrábamos en la

cresta de una crisis transformativa y delicados de salud” (“Valor de la verdad” 185)—seated beside Larrea at the famous La Granja de Henar in Madrid. Finding themselves in a shared stance before life, poised to break with everything, they agreed to publish *Favorables* together once Larrea had arrived in Paris (“Considerando a Vallejo” 173).¹¹⁸

Favorables París Poema

Larrea wrote in his 1966 prologue to *Versión Celeste* that following “un arduo periodo de empozamiento y preparación,” i.e. his apprenticeship, he began in February 1926 a period he later called his “experiencia poética total” that lasted until 1932 (“Prólogo” 61). His poetic experience then began with his first creation after his arrival in Paris: the publishing of the first issue of *Favorables* in July 1926 through which he intended to discover the possibilities offered by Poetry for an absolute break with everything that had made him reticent before, including family expectations, self-doubt, Spanish letters, and Creationist limits.

Favorables París Poema was entirely of Larrea’s design and he was responsible for its conception, title, format, collaborators, and printing costs. The unusual three-word title is itself striking and indicative of a specific fragment in Larrea’s transformation. The humbly praiseworthy plural adjective *Favorables* divides its modification between the

¹¹⁸ In “Valor de la verdad” Larrea provided more details on the differences within this mutual position: “Ambos estábamos en disidencia de buena voluntad con los mundos en que habíamos nacido, y buscábamos por los caminos de la vivencia poética, algo de otro género. El carácter de nuestras rupturas era diferente: en César más espontánea, en mí más reflexiva. César no dejaba nada atrás, yo había roto con un mundo donde tenía resuelta una posición social y una carrera vitalicia, ventajosa en no pocos aspectos. El problema inmediato en que César se debatía entonces era en buena parte económico-social, mientras que el mío, desprendido de estas preocupaciones, era más bien psico-esencial” (186).

two singular nouns that follow it. Both nouns denote a space: a geographical space, *París*, and an artistic space, *Poema*. Though no study that I am aware of has commented on this title in detail, given Larrea's sensitivity to symbolism and the word, as well as the preoccupations he would express in "Presupuesto vital," the opening text of the first issue in which he wrote, "Sólo un furioso individualismo en lo que tiene cada hombre de peculiar podrá hacer una colectividad interesante" (5), it seems significant that a plural entity encompasses the multiple singular. In other words, as early as the title, the collective is visually separated into the individual, but united, the three words collaborate to suggest a fertile communal space for mutual benefit of the growing selves.

Between the only two issues published —July and October 1926— there were contributions of varied poetics and genres, but the 11 participants largely shared an analogous avant-garde enthusiasm as well as reservations concerning Surrealism, if not a complete rejection of it.¹¹⁹ Jorge Urrutia suggests that this position with regards to the reigning movement in Paris at this time is perhaps an explanation for why no further issues appeared (22). As a product of friendship, some of the collaborators are not surprising; Besides Larrea and Vallejo, both Gerardo Diego and Huidobro also appeared in the two issues. In the first issue Diego provided a brief *ars poetica* that harmonized optimistically with the phrase cited earlier from "Presupuesto vital" and bore a familiar

¹¹⁹ Referring to his 1925 conversations with Vallejo in Madrid, Larrea wrote, "No puedo precisar si pronuncié —si pronunciamos— o no el nombre a la sazón tan flamante de *Surrealismo*. Mas si lo hice, fue con mediocre aprecio, no como es lógico, por su búsqueda de otra realidad, sino por lo viciado que para mí estaba desde el principio por el sensacionalismo publicitario de sus adherentes, vertidos hacia el afuera social con sus pobres egoísmos, en vez de orientarse por completo hacia la conciencia de la más honda altura" ("Considerando a Vallejo" 172).

echo with Huidobro's own 1918 "Arte poética": "Ante todo el hombre y después el poeta. Calidad íntima y última. Después todas las estéticas. La máxima libertad inicial. Sólo en pleno albedrío puede florecer la Poesía" (8). Diego's advocacy for freedom before aesthetics, is followed in contrast a few pages later by a translated passage from Huidobro's Creationist *Manifestes*: "Os diré lo que entiendo por poema creado. Es un poema [...] cuyo entero conjunto presenta un hecho nuevo, independiente del mundo externo," together with a poem translated from his pinnacle Creationist work *Tout à coup* (12). In the second issue of *Favorables* Huidobro published a poem titled "Venus" that after various changes became a fragment of Canto IV from *Altazor* (6).

The only other poet to appear in both issues was Tristan Tzara. With Dada/Surrealist tones, his opening "Advertencia" favored the dream over reason, and called for a "dictadura del espíritu" that supported "la independencia de la palabra" and "la autonomía de los instintos" against "géneros, catálogos y teorías" and "los traficantes de arte y de ideas" in order to bring allow for "el advenimiento de la poesía" (10). The objective that was poetry's "advenimiento" was a word that would become a mainstay in Larrea's new glossary, though emphasizing the ascension of the Spirit to which Poetry was witness as opposed to Tzara's ascension of a poetry that, despite his noble decrees, still rang of avant-garde rebellious ambition. Juan Gris closed the first issue with a short passage he credits to a conference he gave in 1924 on the role of painting as a mediator between the painter and the outside world. It is remarkably similar to Huidobro's 1921 "La Création pure," and through a structuring terminology including *técnica*, *sistema*, *elementos*, and *mundo externo*, also evokes a diagram like that provided by Huidobro in

his essay. Poems from the French Dada writer G. Ribemont Dessaignes, the Catalan sculptor Apel·les Fenosa (credited as “Apeles” in *Favorables*), the actor Antonio Riquelme, Pierre Reverdy, and Pablo Neruda filled the more-diverse October issue. Larrea’s publishing of Neruda’s “Tentativa del hombre infinito,” was against the advice of Huidobro, another example of Larrea’s personal independence. This was the first time Neruda was published in Europe. Larrea could not have foreseen to what extent Neruda would later become not only an outspoken enemy of Huidobro, but also of his, even mocking him in verse in “Oda a Juan Tarrea” from *Nuevas odas elementales*.¹²⁰

The subversive tone of many of the texts united in *Favorables* is complemented by the playful irreverence of the artists as revealed in the second issue’s closing list of “colaboraciones rechazadas” and the behind-the-scenes stories that Larrea shared in his “Valor de la verdad” published in *Aula Vallejo*. Despite its short run, *Favorables* managed to capture significant moments in the development of major poets, as well as offer testimony to the excited activity of a changing Larrea.

“Presupuesto vital”

In previous chapters, when describing the Spanish literary environment of the early twentieth century, I briefly referenced *Favorables*, specifically Larrea’s “Presupuesto vital” and Vallejo’s “Estado de la literatura española.” “Presupuesto vital,” in true avant-garde fashion, took the shape of a manifesto with its literary condemnations

¹²⁰ For the history of this polemic see Larrea’s “Carta a un escritor chileno interesado por la ‘Oda a Juan Tarrea de Pablo Neruda’” (1964): p.101-130 in *Del surrealismo a Machupicchu* (1967), p.403-432 in *Ángulos de vision* (1979), and David Bary’s “Larrea y Neruda: Razón de una polémica”, p.125-143 in *Nuevos estudios sobre Huidobro y Larrea* (1984).

and corrections, including a call to action directed at its readers. It is fundamental in understanding Larrea's development; this is the first instance outside of his correspondence that he formally presented his poetic philosophy.

This text has received ample attention in the analyses of most Larrean scholars.¹²¹ Although they vary in focus when considering its role within the Larrea-Huidobro relationship, it is clearly, as Robert Gurney calls it, "a public declaration that he had distanced himself from the shadow of Huidobro and beyond Creationism" (*La poesía de Juan Larrea* 215). Larrea was gradually removing the mediating Other from his literary activity and elaborating a unique vocational mission based on an accumulating grasp of historical circumstances, a growing intimate passion, and the goal of gaining knowledge ("Presupuesto vital" 5). As mentioned, despite at this point composing his poems primarily in French, having followed in the footsteps of Huidobro, this text, and the whole of *Favorables*, is published in Spanish, and Larrea's introductory "Presupuesto vital" addressed a first-person plural of Spanish speakers: "Hoy por hoy en *nuestra lengua española* [el conocimiento] es el puntal que reclama atención más inmediata" (*emphasis mine* 3). Such a decision demonstrated his belief in language's potential to repair the environment he had always attempted to escape. It is also a further sign of his distance from the Creationist precepts. We recall that in Creationism, according to Huidobro the poem is an independent created object and thus free to move from one

¹²¹ See Gurney's *La poesía de Juan Larrea*, p.212-215; Díaz de Guereñu's *La poesía de Juan Larrea: creación y sentido*, p.40-55 and *Juan Larrea: Versiones del poeta*, p.75-86; Laemmel-Serrano's *Juan Larrea ou La suicide en poésie*, p.79-90; Bary's "Sobre la poética de Juan Larrea," p.108, and Escourido's article "Avecinamiento al *Presupuesto vital* de Juan Larrea."

language to another.¹²² Larrea on the other hand shows particular concern for Spanish that is in part a reflection of his intended readership, but is also more in agreement with Vallejo's view of the importance of a language's unique participation in the poem,¹²³ as is his more human conception of the poet; the demiurgic role of the poet so prominent in Huidobro's vision, is lacking in Larrea's proposal (Laemmel-Serrano 81). On this particular subject Díaz de Guereñu summarizes the various critical views including the distance that David Bary and Robert Gurney perceive between "Presupuesto vital" and Huidobro's ideas, while commenting that the essential similarity that Pedro Aullón de Haro finds in the attention each poet gave to the dichotomy of sensibility and intelligence is in fact a contrast as Huidobro aspired to a synthesis of the two while Larrea proposed an acceptance of this infinite internal struggle (*La poesía de Juan Larrea* 43-44).

This unresolved dichotomy is at the center of Larrea's concerns with his discussion encompassing the larger themes of the individual and their art in history, the existential building blocks of his developing vision. From the title, the two words of the title already suggested this duality: —*presupuesto* (an assumption or presupposition) refers to an idea implicitly accepted as a motive or pretext so that a belief or an act is logical, while *vital* (relative to life, of great importance, and full of energy) invigorates

¹²² "Insiste [Huidobro] además en la naturaleza mental del fenómeno poético, creación autónoma que tiene una vida independiente del medio lingüístico que la transmite. La poesía es, según Huidobro, completamente transferible de una a otra lengua" (Yurkievich 77).

¹²³ From Vallejo's *El arte y la revolución*: "Lo que importa principalmente en un poema, es el tono con que se dice una cosa y, secundariamente, lo que se dice. Lo que se dice, en efecto, es susceptible de pasar a otro idioma; pero el tono con que eso se dice, no. El tono queda inamovible en las palabras del idioma original en el que fue concebido y creado [...], se traduce las grandes ideas, pero no se traduce los grandes movimientos animales, los grandes números del alma, las oscuras nebulosas de la vida, que residen en el giro del lenguaje, en una *tournure*, en fin, en los imponderables del verbo" (*El arte y la revolución* 413).

the preceding rationalist term with the individual perspective. Vitality is the product of the self and, for Larrea, it is the presupposition for a sincere constructive art, therefore, this introductory text, in the form of a manifesto addresses the challenge for each person to preserve and maximize their vitality. While Paris was bustling with a multitude of these documents, all of them offering up their various ground-breaking ideologies and their various theories of art, “Presupuesto vital” implores for an anonymous, inhabitable poetics whose intention is for the individual, not the collective, to generate, new each time, the ever-changing path of artistic creation so as never to stultify individualism inside a group, movement, or ideology; in other words, so that the vitality of the individual may transform them into the vital artist, so that art may maintain that which gives it life, that which makes it art. The artist is one who, writes Larrea, “sin desmayos ni transigencias, selecciona y desecha, exigiendo más y más de las potencias proveedoras para conseguir su máximo rendimiento” (2) and since “al verdadero artista las pequeñas fortunas de sensibilidad no le interesan” (4), through such profound sincerity as to likely be disadvantageous in questions of personal renown, unsuspectingly achieves visionary poiesis.

The individual is both the cause of and the resolution to Larrea’s call to rise above the unproductive way in which intellect and emotion have been placed in opposition, and he uses the human body to illustrate spatially the errors when approaching this duality. He constructs his argument and justifies his resolution through a series of corporal metaphors, simultaneously promoting the individual over the group while physically reassembling this new person.

En tierras de arte las relaciones entre inteligencia y sensibilidad mal planteadas inveteradamente han sido causa del más elevado número de males. El hombre ha comprendido oscuramente que entre sí ambas eran enemigas y ha tomado partido en por o contra como si estuvieran fuera de su pecho. Máximo error. (2)

In this passage Larrea introduces his primary argument, setting the stage for a proposed solution in the form of a passionate acceptance of creation's driving forces that the sincere individual has no choice but to confront. As he sees it, a person cannot select one and discount the other since both exist together within; both are integral parts of the human conscious. To attempt to argue otherwise is an illusion that treats them as if they were two debating politicians with whom indeed one could side. By placing this error in logic outside of the human body (*fuera de su pecho*), Larrea suggests that the location of its correction must then be spatially opposite this point, that is, inside of his chest.¹²⁴ By favoring this turning inward for the artist, he also is assigning fault to the competitive ostentatiousness of the collective, interpreted as an organization exterior to the individual, for its misguidance. In this way an individual's return inward is the space in which to find the answer.

Larrea's proposals and word choice were not unprecedented and in fact bear a resemblance to passages from Ortega y Gasset's *El tema de nuestro tiempo* (1923) and to his idea for reconciling reason and life in what he called *raciovitalismo*: "La razón pura

¹²⁴ In the poem "Longchamps" from Larrea's apprenticeship stage analyzed in Chapter Two he wrote the verse: "Ta poitrine où se cache le dernier paysage" (*Versión Celeste* 240).

tiene que ser sustituida por una razón vital, donde aquélla se localice y adquiera movilidad y fuerza de transformación” (87).¹²⁵ In Ortega’s theorizations on a historical moment of transition between generations he considered to be suffering from *desorientación vital* (where culture’s compass had been called into question), he found promise in the avant-garde’s repositioning of art at the service of life, opening up a field of new directions to be established (*El tema* 75). Aside from the basic shared concept, much of the language is also very similar, from their association between a poetic solution and physical movement (mobility) to their use of the interior/exterior space of the human body to illustrate their ideas.¹²⁶ However, in Larrea’s case the latter exercise is exploited much further allowing the metaphor’s lexical field to reach throughout all sections of the text: “cada nueva noche nos sorprende teñidas de corazón las manos” (1); “un irascible impulso, no tanto íntimo como nacido más atrás de su espalda” (1); “¿Y no son estas las dos coincidentes mitades del tórax artístico?” (3); “la misma que enemista dos palabras en el cráneo del poeta” (3); “la misma que obra terminada levanta en el sujeto recipiente a brazo partido contra todo lo que en él preexiste” (3); “carecer de suficientes manos” (3); “¿A qué manos han venido a sustituir las tuyas?” (3); “dar la

¹²⁵ Larrea proposes a similar statement: “Hay que sustituir el sistema apriorístico por la fecunda hipótesis de trabajo y la conformidad muelle con el dinamismo optimista” (“Presupuesto vital” 4). Kant’s pure reason is an a priori system of principles to be substituted by perspectivist vital activity.

Also, Ortega defines the individual subject as “ni un medio transparente, un “yo puro” idéntico e invariable, ni su recepción de la realidad produce en ésta deformaciones. Los hechos interponen una tercera opinión, síntesis ejemplar de ambas. Cuando se interpone un cedazo o retícula en una corriente deja pasar unas cosas y detiene otras; se dirá que las selecciona, pero no que las deforma” (84). This recalls Larrea’s definition of the artist as one who “selecciona y desecha.”

¹²⁶ From Ortega y Gasset’s *El tema de nuestro tiempo*: “La vida humana es un proceso interno en que los hechos esenciales no caen desde fuera sobre el sujeto –individuo o pueblo–, sino que salen de éste como de la semilla fruto y flor” (22).

espalda de una vez y para siempre” (4). These examples are reminiscent of the early poem “Transcarnación” from his period of *framing darkness* where he dissected the body’s activity among those of the hands, feet, eyes, and heart to lament his self’s frustrated participation in an inherited history that would later be passed on to another. Now, however, instead of cloaked with woeful passivity, this new self becomes the critic of the old self and those like it.

In addition to the previous examples, the central corporal image Larrea used in “Presupuesto vital” was that of the feet, identified with intelligence and sensibility. Larrea, living in manifesto-rampant Paris, warned against the dangers of the artistic collective in his criticism of previous literary movements’ alternating adherence to these two concepts and condemns the election of one creative force over the other as a dishonest simplification that serves only to maintain secret the individual’s complex existence: “No se escamotee, pues, el hombre su propio drama” (3).¹²⁷ Such conciliatory favoritism nullifies passion and is therefore fruitless. Larrea implored liberation from the stagnant swaying between infertile ideologies. He continued his use of the human body by alluding to this side-taking as the mistaken impression that, while watching a person walk, only the foot stepping forward is responsible for creating motion.

Viendo en la marcha cómo ambos pies alternan y pensando esta imagen al
ralentí y considerablemente agrandada un espectador ligero puede, durante

¹²⁷ There are certain similarities here with Martin Buber’s dialogical existence: “Whoever would settle the conflict between antinomies by some means short of his own life transgresses against the sense of the situation. It is the sense of the situation that it is to be lived in all its antinomies—only lived—and lived ever again, ever anew, unpredictably, without any possibility of anticipation or prescription” (143-44).

el tiempo que un pie avanza, creer que aquél sólo es el encargado de engendrar el movimiento. (2)

Once again this misjudgment, according to Larrea's representation, originates in the exterior of person. It is not the walking person who mistakenly places all importance on one foot over the other, but rather a spectator, an onlooker disconnected from the kinetic operations of the individual. It is a reiteration of his warning against the group. The spectator derives their conclusion by choosing in favor or against their perception of another's foot, not their own, and erroneously chooses to imitate that; the spectator also exists *fuera de su pecho*. The suggestion is that they would not come to the same conclusion if they were to carefully consider their own feet. By reflecting on their own movement they would avoid the flight from sincerity that comes from relying on external observation and instead would engage in a search for the answer within themselves.¹²⁸

Such emphasis on movement and dynamism reflected avant-garde's rejection of Mallarmé's Symbolism in favor of the mechanism, life, and change. Also, Larrea's choice of metaphor brings to mind Aristotle's differentiation between activity and motion. An activity, he states in the *Metaphysics*, has no limit so is thus its own end and is complete, for example, "he who is thinking has his thought, and he who is knowing is in possession of knowledge" (189). In contrast, a motion is incomplete, having a limit and directed towards an eventual end, for example, "he who is learning has not yet

¹²⁸ Henri Bergson, explained his concept of duration through the metaphor of observed motion and experienced motion: "When you raise your arm, you accomplish a movement of which you have, from within, a simple perception; but for me, watching it from the outside, your arm passes through one point, then through another, and between these two there will be still other points" (*Introduction to Metaphysics* 23).

learned, and he who is being healed is not in possession of health” (189).¹²⁹ Returning to Larrea’s pedestrian, the spectator who judges steps individually renders walking, and by extension creation, a motion awaiting an end that is therefore incomplete. Larrea’s proposal, then, is to shift perception from motion to activity, from action to poiesis, removing the limits and entering completion. To remedy the incomplete was precisely his desire since adolescence.

The impression at the end of “Presupuesto vital” is that of an individual emerging from a state of fragmentation, excitedly reuniting the parts into a functioning whole, a fragmentary Larrea confronting his own psychic division and aspiring to create through poiesis a space to capture an honesty necessary for culture to advance.

Hablo del hombre valeroso de sí mismo y de su ignorancia y cuya serenidad inteligente posee la suficiente fuerza para neutralizar el fluído ensortijado que se desprende del rebaño. Él sabe que su complejo personal carece de otro modelo que el que le da el espejo su potencia. (4-5)

At the same time, Larrea’s own psychic disjunction is awarded expression inside a matching fragmentary prose aesthetic (*el espejo de su potencia*), while his faith in a solution describes a reintegration to a whole, optimistically accompanied with anticipation for what that whole would be capable of accomplishing, evidence of a personal transformation. Albeit with youthful confidence, he saw an order beyond the actual, and had begun to systematically bring it into the concrete of his writing. With

¹²⁹ See also Mark A. Stone’s article “Aristotle’s Distinction between Motion and Activity.” *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 2.1 (1985): 11-20. Print.

such an enlivened advocacy for bringing out the present from behind the curtains of the past and raising it up to reveal the truth of our *now* partnered with a belief in moving forward through the union of opposites, Larrea's cry emanates mystic tones, a faith in a certain brighter future brought about by a proper functioning present. It is clear that for Larrea this world is teleological and its progress is to be stimulated, if not carried out, by the artist. Larrea's existential empowerment of the individual is to be accompanied by humility that frees them to rejuvenate, and therefore realize, the potential of evolution in motion. There is freedom for the individual, but it comes with a plan.

"Presupuesto vital" is therefore a manifesto demanding each individual to design their own manifesto, or as Juan Manuel Escourido Muriel succinctly puts it, "supone su poética una incitación a escribir tantas poéticas como poetas haya, renegando así del proselitismo y sus agrupaciones" ("Avecinamiento" 40). There are only three stipulations: passion as the primary driving force, the forging of contemporariness and a concern for the present, as well as intention towards the expansion of knowledge. For Larrea, no one direction is proposed by the literary magazine and through its opening text initiates only a call to vitality, to individuality announced not to gain adherents, but to encourage the ardent pursuit of each contributor passionately finding his own way, obeying his interior manifesto before all others.

Larrea's Favorables Poems

“Razón,” the first of four poems by Larrea to appear in *Favorables*,¹³⁰ has sometimes been identified by the eponymous title “Juan Larrea.” This was mistakenly deduced from the magazine’s decision to place the name of the author above untitled texts using the same style as other titles. Even so, it frequently appeared under this title first in Gerardo Diego’s important anthologies from 1932 and 1934, in *Poetas en el destierro* (1943) by José Ricardo Morales, and in Luis Cernuda’s *Estudios sobre poesía española contemporánea* (1957), until it was compiled into Larrea’s *Versión Celeste* (1969) and the author gave it its current title.¹³¹

Sucesión de sonidos elocuentes movidos a resplandor, poema
es esto y esto y esto
Y esto que llega a mí en claridad de inocencia hoy,
que existe porque existo y porque el mundo existe
y porque los tres podemos dejar correctamente de existir. (13)¹³²

In the *Introduction* I referred to “Razón” pointing out how during its *sucesión de sonidos* each sound, each poem (*esto*), and each existence (*existe*) emerge sequentially out of their

¹³⁰ “Sucesión de sonidos...” (1, 1926); “Afueras periódicas” (1, 1926); “Dulce vecino” (2, 1926); “Tierra al ángel cuanto antes.” (2, 1926).

¹³¹ In *Según la costumbre de las olas* (2013), Jenaro Talens defends the book’s project, a collaboration with Clara Janés that paired his texts with her images, by reproducing this poem from Juan Larrea. “Ver cómo fluyen las palabras o escuchar la música callada de las imágenes aún es algo que mueve o estremece. No se trata de echar de menos unos tiempos mejores, ni de revivir un universo cultural donde nos formamos y que ha dejado ya de tener sentido. No tenemos respuestas que ayuden a salir del marasmo, pero aún nos queda la capacidad para formular preguntas que ayuden a encontrarlas. Este diálogo inter-textual no es otra cosa que una manera particular de articularlas” (68-69).

¹³² Here I have maintained the original textual distribution of the verses as they appeared in *Favorables*, rather than the revised version on p.84 of *Versión celeste*.

previous form recreating the Jungian structure of individuation. I also proposed that it is illustrative of the metamorphic cycles used here to measure the poet's evolution towards poietic eruption. In the light of "Presupuesto vital," the poem's impression of words participating in collaborative individuality is of added importance, as well as its preoccupation with Being.

The coordinating conjunction "y" is used five times to offer a piecing-together of various parts to make the whole. When this act of collage occurs, it appears in the form of the two insistent lexical sequences already referred to: *esto* and *existir*. In the first sequence, "esto" is repeated four times; three within the same verse followed by a single fourth,¹³³ and are separated by "y" without commas. In posing the boundless potential forms of a poem it emphasizes multiple individualities. In suppressing the use of the comma, besides producing a forceful tone of persistence, Larrea also amplifies modern poetry's concreteness to reach the meaningful ideal he proposed in "Presupuesto vital," the furious individualism of the members in a collective. The four *esto* are placed together, but remain independent.

In similar fashion, Larrea repeats this idea in the second sequence involving various conjugations of the verb *existir*, again linking the first three within the same verse followed by the single fourth. In verse 4, the verb alters to agree with the changing subject —[el poema] *existe*; [yo] *existo*; *el mundo existe*—, where the three subjects present the three primary entities identified in so many of the formulations that have been described: the self, reality, and the work of art. All three *exist* and all three are joined by

¹³³ This contrasts with the typographical cascading added to "Razón" in *Versión Celeste*.

the rationalizing conjunction “porque”; each existence explains the existence of the next. In the final verse, Larrea’s reveals the crux of his vision, both visually and expressively. The fourth occurrence and the poem’s concluding word is the subject-less infinitive “existir.” It reads as the ultimate reason, the final “porque,” clarifying that all three existences can cease to exist, but not in such a way as to be tragic, rather they “correctamente” cease to exist, as if part of a plan. Also, by using the first person plural “podemos,” the three participants (the self, the poem, and the world) are again united. “Razón” is Ortega’s vital reason inside Larrea’s articulating teleology, poetically brought forth by his individuating self.

We can also approach Larrea’s poems in *Favorables* as post-apprenticeship creations marking a distance between disciple and maestro. Aullón de Haro notes in his analysis of *Versión celeste* that “Razón,” “Afueras periódicas,” “Tierra al ángel cuanto antes,” and other poems from this period are representative of “la superación de la técnica de construcción de imágenes y metaforizaciones, en su valor primigenio creacionista de autónomas, pasando a integrarse ahora en un propósito ordenador superior” (54).¹³⁴ Related to the superior ordering in these poems, María Helena López observes in the last two poems the imposition of “sus propias leyes, las de un mundo maravilloso donde tienen cabida las más inesperadas relaciones: arbitrariedad causal” (116). Her observations are appropriate, but “maravilloso” and “arbitrariedad” are too frivolous of

¹³⁴ Larrea’s fourth poem “Dulce vecino” is a prose poem from the October issue of *Favorables*, which later became the opening text of his first book of poetry *Oscuro dominio* (1934). It also appears separately from the other three in *Versión Celeste*. I will look at this poem together with the rest of *Oscuro dominio* in Chapter Four as the result the eruption of his poetic self.

adjectives for Larrea's purposes. She finds in the syntactic and semantic subversion of these verses the possible influence of Vallejo's *Trilce*, but notes a more fluid narrative character likening them to Surrealism. When compared to Larrea's apprenticeship poems, the increased lexical adhesion of the longer verses is evident, however, Larrea is not engaging in automatic writing, and instead of causal arbitrariness, he is elucidating the precise alternate causality he perceives. To look at only one of her examples: "Yo siento que un anciano me olvida hacia este lado" from "Afueras periódicas" (*Favorables* 1.13), the same causality is that of "Razón," a spirit emerging from the previous. The poem identifies this progression with the verse "es el árbol del contorno que predica con el ejemplo," and Larrea's logic permeates coherently throughout the poem.

What is also evident here is the reduction of Creationist images, created objects whose only reality is inside the poem. It is useful to consider as Daniel Balderston did when testing the veracity of Huidobro's translatable Creationist poem, Pound's three categories of poetry: *melopoeia* (the sound of words), *phanopoeia* (the use of images), and *logopoeia* (the connotative power of language) (61). Using the characteristics of each kind he determined how many were present in Huidobro's poems that lay outside of the translatable *phanopoeia* and were thus difficult or impossible to communicate in another language. Applying this technique to "Hijo" from Huidobro's *Poemas árticos*, he determined that the poem "probably does not offer insuperable problems for the translator, since it describes a scene through juxtaposition of images" (66).¹³⁵ Returning

¹³⁵ However, he calls Huidobro's proposal into question in the rest of his evaluation by saying, "but, containing as it does such untranslatable elements as rhyme, assonance and paronomasia, it is not as readily translated as the passage in "El creacionismo" implies" (66). Huidobro had

to the verse from Larrea's "Afueras periódicas," it shows features of *melopoeia*, for example, with the assonant "o" of *yo, siento, anciano, olvida, and lado*, but in its thought it is especially representative of *logopoeia*, which Pound stated "did not translate; though the attitude of mind it expresses may pass through a paraphrase" (Balderston 62). In this instance, following Balderston's use of Pound, Larrea's poetry did not belong to Creationism.

Through a reduced importance of imagery and more intimate relationship with reality, Larrea's new poetry moved away from the initial spark that he found when reading Huidobro's *Poemas árticos*, and away from that other person he became.¹³⁶ In agreement with Vallejo's instruction, "los materiales artísticos que ofrece la vida moderna, han de ser asimilados por el espíritu y convertidos en sensibilidad" (*Favorables* 1.14), Larrea was assimilating Huidobro as his spirit ascended through his poetry.

Conclusion

Favorables París Poema was Larrea's first major periodical, but he would also occupy important roles in the founding and editing of *España Peregrina* and *Cuadernos americanos*, both in Mexico, and *Aula Vallejo* in Córdoba, Argentina. It was an early indication of his inclination to order the larger world of culture rather than an obsession to artistically create. His poetic activity became that of identifying Poetry's activity in humanity, in much the same way, albeit with more optimism, as Lorenzo García Vega

written "la poésie créationniste devient traduisible et universelle car les faits nouveaux restent les mêmes dans toutes les langues" ("Le Créationnisme" 1332).

¹³⁶ "Me impresionó la novedad en tal forma que a partir de ese día empecé a sentirme otro" (Larrea, "Vicente Huidobro en Vanguardia" 218).

would consider himself to be a notary rather than a poet. Necessarily, Larrea had to reach beyond one maestro's teachings or one movement's presuppositions and his poems were that first extension beyond his early self. "Presupuesto vital" represented a shift in genre that Larrea seemed to bestow with greater responsibility, increasingly using prose to assemble his expression. Díaz de Guereñu remarks on the images this text shares with the 1926-1927 prose poems of *Oscuro dominio* (1934), subject of Chapter Four, and how in terms of genre it can also be connected with the confessional prose of his 1926-1933 diary entries published in *Orbe* (1990) (*La poesía de Juan Larrea* 41). All three texts "Presupuesto vital," *Oscuro dominio*, and *Orbe* date from this period within Larrea's *experiencia poética total*, and are in hindsight depicting a new framing darkness foreshadowing the initiation of a new subduction cycle and his approaching abandonment of verse altogether.

In contrast to the period prior to his apprenticeship, Larrea's conception of Poetry now includes crisis as an event that, while not desirable, is promising inasmuch as it is proof of truth, of not avoiding oneself, and as the opportunity to discover, through that struggle and interaction of intellect and sensitivity. Jung, in the same way, promotes "open conflict and open collaboration at once" between the conscious and unconscious to avoid the neuroses of unconscious repression (*Conscious, Unconscious, and Individuation* 225). Engaged in what Jung calls "the old game of hammer and anvil" Larrea's maturing ego is dialoguing with the id, validating its suffering before reality while not surrendering completely to its needs. The intellect, so highly promoted by Huidobro, remains active, taking greater interest in the reality of its day, in the reality of

its birthplace, and in its native language. Poetics is no longer associated with a technique for the individual, but rather an individual's technique. While participating in the avant-garde, *Favorables* takes a noticeably less spectacular route, taming the self-promoting artists and their movements for the benefit of a greater more-comprehensive perspective. In doing so, it also defined the disperse collective through which Larrea's ascent carried him and against which his process of individuation can be detected; away from adolescent suffering, away from the influence of a maestro, and towards the eruption of his poietic self.

* * *

LORENZO GARCÍA VEGA AND THE REVERSO IN *ORÍGENES* (1945-1956)

*La puerta por donde tú seguías entrando día y noche,
después me hablaba con callada afirmaciones baritoniales,
me decía la puerta que la compañía de hondura laberíntica,
tú la traías con tibieza criolla de alucinación y temblorosas manos.*¹³⁷

JOSÉ LEZAMA LIMA

Introduction

Establishing a parallel between *Favorables Paris Poema* and *Orígenes* would be in most contexts inconceivable, like placing Juan Larrea beside Lorenzo García Vega. The two sole issues in the four-month existence of the Paris-based *Favorables* hardly approach a comparable scale of consequence as *Orígenes*, which lasted from 1944 to 1956 and published forty issues. *Orígenes* represented a broader cultural conception as well, including not only poetry, but also encompassing narrative, art and literary criticism, as well as philosophical texts. Its very existence is considered by Prats Sariol a foundational act of “denodada heroicidad” emitting “una fuerza expansiva y una cohesión en la diversidad que es la sorpresa del grano de oro en el polvo de aquella época ruinoso y desintegradora” (“La revista “Orígenes”” 37). In other words, *Orígenes*, founded by Lezama Lima out of earlier periodical efforts—for example, *Verbum* (1937) and *Espuela de plata* (1939)—was a burning brightness inside a framing darkness.

As this chapter examines Juan Larrea and Lorenzo García Vega’s process of individuation within a collective, what comprises that group is significant and in the cases

¹³⁷ From “Primera glorieta de la amistad - (Para Lorenzo García Vega)” (*Dador* 311).

of these two magazines is also very different. The eleven collaborators in *Favorables* that I consider a symbolic collective of certain shared attitudes were never deemed, neither by themselves nor by others, a group. In contrast, *Orígenes* was the literary magazine of the Orígenes group made up primarily of the poets anthologized in Cintio Vitier's *Diez poetas cubanos* (1948), and even then counted on the participation of numerous other national and international artists. But then I reiterate that the magazine is but a synecdoche and the collective an initial backdrop to distinguish the contours of the nascent poets.

Nevertheless, there are interesting points of contact justifying such a pairing. The title itself in choosing the plural “origins” over the singular “origin” dialogues with the interaction between individuality and plurality, as did *Favorables París Poema*. In one sense, *Orígenes* can be seen as a similar perspectivist association encouraging the furious individuality of the artist, a view upheld in the first sentence of the first issue's opening editor's note: “No le interesa a Orígenes formular un programa, sino ir lanzando las flechas de su propia estela” (“Orígenes” 5). The same anti-programmatic intentions are present in Larrea's “Presupuesto vital” that concludes, “Véase que no presento una estética entre las numerosas que cualquier espíritu puede formular dando una pequeña vuelta filosófica alrededor de las cosas. Nuestra literatura no es ni literatura, es pasión y vitavirilidad por los cuatro costados” (5). There is a vague concept of the magazine as a corporal unity: that of *Orígenes* whose movement forward leaves a wake (*estela*) behind it, and that of *Favorables* whose activity produced a literature surrounded by passion and vitality (*por los cuatro costados*). At the same time there is a differing voice highlighting

a dissimilar perception of that body as a formalized group; the loosely affiliated *Favorables* more as Larrea's construction as read in his singular first person, or later with the explicit individualization in the plural "Vallejo y yo presentamos" (5),¹³⁸ versus the delineated *Orígenes* in the singular third person, or the more-frequently used implicit plural first person: "No nos interesan superficiales mutaciones, sino ir subrayando la toma de posesión del ser" ("Orígenes" 5). There are also numerous additional echoes from one "manifesto" to the other. Some of them include:

1. *The error of unbalanced dualisms.* Both examples describe the resulting superficiality and corruption from siding with one over the other. In *Favorables*, it is intelligence and emotion: "En tierras de arte las relaciones entre inteligencia y sensibilidad mal planteadas inveteradamente han sido causa del más elevado número de males" (2); In *Orígenes* it is life and culture: "Cuando la vida tiene primacía sobre la cultura, dualismo solo permitido por ingenuos o malintencionados, es que se tiene de ésta un concepto decorativo. Cuando la cultura actúa desvinculada de sus raíces es pobre cosa torcida y maloliente" (6).

2. *The artist as a discerning subject selecting elements from the exterior world.* Just as the passage from Larrea was linked earlier to the influence of Ortega y Gasset's *El tema de nuestro tiempo*, the Spanish thinker was also "un modelo deslumbrante" for Lezama (Mataix 66). In *Favorables*, "Artista es el que, sin desmayos ni transigencias, selección y desecha, exigiendo más y más de las potencias proveedoras para conseguir su

¹³⁸ "En consecuencia Vallejo y yo presentamos aquí diversas obras imperfectas por muy diversos estilos pero coincidentes en más de un punto esencial: en su actualidad, su pasión íntima y su orientación al conocimiento" ("Presupuesto vital" 5).

máximo rendimiento” (2); In *Orígenes*, “Frente a ese mundo de violentos ofrecimientos, el hombre muestra su fiera selección, las cosas de las que ha querido hacerse acompañar hasta el final” (9).

3. *The rejection of systematic doctrines and philosophies.* Again, this stance aligns with the advocated vitality and perspectivism in Ortega y Gasset. In *Favorables*, “La filosofía sistemática [...] no es sino la indumentaria espiritual encargada durante siglos de ocultar nuestra desnudez” (4); In *Orígenes*, “Ya están dichosamente lejanos los tiempos en que se hablaba de arte puro o inmanente, y de un arte doctrinal, que soportaba una tesis, sumergido en un desarrollo que partiendo de una simplista causalidad se contentaba con un final esperado, impuesto y sobreentendido” (6).

Together these commonalities underlie a shared transcendental vision expressed in the Orígenes opening editor’s note “Nos interesa [*sic*] fundamentalmente aquellos momentos de creación en los que el germen se convierte en criatura y lo desconocido va siendo poseído en la medida en que esto es posible y en que no engendra una desdichada arrogancia” (7), revealing their faith in “a class of ideas or imperative forms, which did not come by experience, but through which experience was acquired” (Emerson, “The Transcendentalist” 93). In Fernández Retamar’s anthology *La poesía contemporánea en Cuba (1927-1953)*, the poets of the Orígenes group are placed under the title “Poesía Trascendentalista,” to the extent that their poetry “no se detiene morosamente en el deleite verbal, o considera al poema como intermediario de una exposición afectivo-conceptual, sino como “posibles apoderamientos de la realidad” (86). He later clarifies that such classification should not be taken to imply obedience by these poets to the movements of

Kant, Emerson, or Thoreau, but instead *transcendental* in the Heideggerian sense signifying “aquello que realiza el traspaso, aquello que traspasando permanece” (87). Nevertheless, Transcendentalism as Emerson described it promoted artistic, visionary thoughts meant to reach beyond and outlast transitory materialist degradation in order to “reorganize themselves in nature, to invest themselves anew in other, perhaps higher endowed and happier mixed clay than ours, in fuller union with the surrounding system” (“The Transcendentalist” 103). In other words, the artist in tune with actuality looks forward and brings forth the new form, poiesis, that then becomes part of the landscape for future generations. This also resonates with Lezama’s poetic system resurrecting meaning inside the image through historical hermeneutics.¹³⁹

Huidobro had derived his self-conviction from the example of Emerson’s Transcendentalist poet, the visionary genius standing “among partial men” announcing new causality into existence (“The Poet” 320), but in practice he tumbled into superficial vanities, the “desdichada arrogancia” *Orígenes* denounced. Did not Emerson also say, “the spiritual measure of inspiration is the depth of the thought, and never, who said it?” (“The Transcendentalist” 90)? Huidobro’s apprentice, Juan Larrea, was enlivened by the depth of thought inherent in his maestro’s devoted labor, despite the personality flaws exacerbated by the times. Larrea’s poet resembled more the quiet, fastidious interpreter of the world’s secrets, a believer “in miracle, in the perpetual openness of the human mind to new influx of light and power” (“The Transcendentalist” 90), possessing a certain innocence, or at the very least humility, before their own revelations. In his view Vallejo

¹³⁹ See Ben A. Heller’s *Assimilation/Generation/Resurrection: Contrapuntal Readings in the Poetry of José Lezama Lima*. Lewisberg: Bucknell UP, 1997.

was a transcendental poet because of his engagement with life that gave original form to future experience.¹⁴⁰ Larrea saw the poetic image revealing Culture in a coming New World spirit and “Presupuesto vital” was both an early proposal of such activity and an appeal to rededicate oneself to its creation.¹⁴¹

Orígenes was also a culture-building movement to be realized through poetic creation. Larrea would judge the death of Old World, especially with the onset of Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), as integral to a cultural teleology comprising spiritual rebirth in America. Lezama’s neobarroco implied a similar rebirth where “las formas congeladas del barroco europeo, y toda proliferación expresa un cuerpo dañado, desaparecen en América por ese espacio gnóstico” (*La expresión americana* 185). While the imperatives of *Favorables* reflecting the avant-gardist aim to generate a spark to action were directed at awakening the individual to this reality, *Orígenes*, opposing the rebellious attitude of Cuba’s avant-garde *Avance* group, was less concerned with attracting adherents, and more with locating itself within this creative reality *taking possession of Being*. We recall Lezama’s response to Jorge Mañach:

Pero de esa soledad y de esa lucha con la espantosa realidad de las circunstancias, surgió en la sangre de todos nosotros, la idea obsesionante de que podíamos al avanzar en el misterio de nuestras expresiones

¹⁴⁰ See Chapter Two and Larrea’s interpretation in “Profecía de América” of Vallejo’s verse “España, aparta de mí este cáliz.”

¹⁴¹ Fina García Marruz identifies such a split between the maestro and apprentice, as well as Larrea’s union with Vallejo when she describes the two branches of the what she considered “el ultraísmo español”: “la que abrazaba a América —línea Larrea-Vallejo— y la eurocentrista, que tan pronto olvidó las conferencias —a que habían asistido con fervor los jóvenes poetas españoles— de Huidobro en Madrid” (*La familia de Orígenes* 65).

poéticas trazar, dentro de las desventuras rodeantes, un nuevo y viejo diálogo entre el hombre que penetra y la tierra que se le hace transparente. (“Respuesta y nuevas interrogaciones. Carta abierta a Jorge Mañach” 689)

Confronted with an oppressive environment, they delighted in Emerson’s thinking of the Universe as the externalization of the soul —“Wherever the life is, that bursts into appearance around it” (“The Poet” 325)—, and formulated by way of the “comunidad de fe y artesanía” (Vitier, “Prólogo” 10) a new starting point from which a brighter potential reality could emerge.¹⁴² The assimilatory dialogue between old and new, inherent in the *Curso Delfico*, converted poetry into “el vehículo de conocimiento absoluto, a través del cual se intenta llegar a las esencias de la vida, la cultura y la experiencia religiosa” (Vitier, *Lo cubano en la poesía* 441). After all, Lezama declared, “La aridez terrenal lleva el secreto de lo plutónico. Lo seco cobra nueva vida al alentarse en las pavesas” (“Epifanía en el paisaje” 131). Faith powered the poetic mechanism, which began with an orphic descent into *lo difícil* and subsequent ascension towards the resulting artistic object, but to reach the surface one had to pass through the magma chamber where the contours of the revelatory image would be defined.

¹⁴² Chiampì considering the implications of the magazine’s title writes: “Si la noción de *origen* implica la autoridad de un *locus* que emana el Sentido, que lo garantiza y perpetúa, la de *orígenes*, en cambio, permite aludir a algo previo y fundante, la condición o estado latente, pero no ya como el *locus* coherente y unívoco; *orígenes* sugiere, más bien, una suerte de “caos original” que preexiste [*sic*] al evento inaugural que es el lenguaje poético” (“La revista “Orígenes”” 130).

The Question of the Magma Chamber

When considering the individuation of García Vega, recent apprentice and graduate of the *Curso Delfico*, inside the literary world in which he was now prepared to participate, it is unavoidable to address the complex debate concerning the spirit that existed amongst the poets who worked together in the Orígenes literary group. There are many competing perspectives in this issue, derived from heterogeneous places charged with motives as political and personal in nature as they are literary and historiographical. Implicated is an interpretation of the legacy of several of the most important poets from twentieth-century Cuba as well as the inheritance of many others in the twenty-first century. Such risk springs from calling into question the sanctity—divine and unmodifiable—in which the word *group* has been conserved when referring to the Orígenes poets. To what degree did José Lezama Lima, Ángel Gaztelu, Virgilio Piñera, Justo Rodríguez Santos, Gastón Baquero, Eliseo Diego, Cintio Vitier, Octavio Smith, and Fina García Marruz constitute a collective in which García Vega participated and what exactly was the nature of that collective for him as a space against which he would further define his evolution.

An initial problem is that of defining the group. If García Vega's texts can be classified as *Origenistas* simply because they were published in *Orígenes*, then the very nomenclature supposes a certain grouping based on the platform through which they came to light. To be specific, the debate does not center on the traditional meaning of the word *group*: "a number of people or things that are located close together or are considered or classed together." In this case there is no doubt that they were indeed a group. Instead the

group in question with Orígenes concerns the second exception and its grammatical application: “a collection of words, structured and associated about a nucleus. Generally, a unified syntactical behavior is attributed to it.” The *Orígenes* poets as a *collection of words* situated about a nucleus is a legitimate perception; none would argue the central and founding role fulfilled by Lezama Lima. But with respect to its unified syntactical behavior, a dissonance arises in the appreciation of that period. Fernández Retamar denominated the Orígenes poets, those whose poetry he also considered transcendental, the *Tercera Generación Republicana*. He established the bounds of this generation using Lezama’s birth year at one point end and García Vega’s at the other. As far as their nature as a collective, he wrote:

En lo que respecta a “comunidad personal”, esta generación nos ofrece también el ejemplo de estrechísimos contactos; está demostrada esta “comunidad” por la serie de actividades culturales emprendidas en común y, en especial, las revistas, casi todas bajo el magisterio directo o mediato de José Lezama Lima. (83)

Of the magazines that he listed, García Vega only participated in the current one of the time, *Orígenes*. In other words, he was a latecomer to that community defined by Fernández Retamar. Cintio Viter, while seemingly recognizing the various individualities of the ten poets —“No se trata, pues, de un grupo exteriormente homogéneo. Lo que a estos poetas los unifica es más bien un sabor inicial de búsqueda secreta y reconcentrada” (“Introducción” 4), he implied that the differences were only superficial and attested to the presence amongst them of “la amistad como un misterio y una decisiva fuerza

aglutinante,” (*De peña pobre* 122).¹⁴³ However, for García Vega, as José Antonio Ponte writes, “la amistad [era] imposible entre los origenistas” (*El libro perdido de los Origenistas* 88). For all of the psychic organization he gained through his apprenticeship and the sequential phases of the assimilatory *Curso Delfico*, followed by the opening to him of the pages of *Orígenes* as a space for self-expression and self-creation, he was perhaps the most combative voice regarding the group’s history. García Vega was never convinced by such sanctification, or any for that matter, which was precisely why he had found his Jesuit education insufferable, fled it, and, in crisis, sought a literary maestro. Decades removed from Orígenes, he would write:

Me agarré a un grupo que nunca fue mi grupo [...] así como me agarré a una figura como Lezama. Un personaje que quizá fue una encarnación de la figura arquetípica del Sabio (la capacidad poética de Lezama era verdaderamente alucinante), pero también un personaje que encarnaba todo el endiablado reverso que puede haber en la figura del Sabio.” (*OP* 339)

However, Jorge Luis Arcos locates García Vega’s confessed equivocation still within the collective, deeming him, together with Virgilio Piñero, an anti-Orígenes component coexisting with Orígenes (*Los poetas de “Orígenes”* 9). He attributes the divergence of García Vega and Piñera, representing what he also calls a tradition *del no*, to their avant-garde character, versus the “asimilación clásica de la cultura” of the other poets, in the

¹⁴³ These are Lezama Lima’s words from the unedited text “Un día del ceremonial” published after his death in *Imagen y posibilidad* edited by Ciro Bianchi.

end only enriching the movement as a whole (9). Because of their participation in the artistic and cultural world of Cuba during a given time, because of their poetic collaboration in the *Orígenes* literary magazine, and because of the ceremonial component of their association, attending and celebrating weddings, baptisms, and birthdays, they are easily considered a group. But did communication triumph between the members of that group, or was it fabricated and obligated in order to ignore the limits of their impossible reality and validate their cultural mission?

The Question of the Individual

Perhaps it was due the obsessive-compulsive neurosis carrying him into his apprenticeship, that which turned him into a solitary monk dedicated to reading and writing his first poems, that García Vega developed such talent as to lead Cintio Vitier to extol the young poet declaring, “no había aparecido entre nosotros una voz de calidad y pureza comparables, una voluntad de poesía tan radical y certera en sus inicios” (*Diez poetas cubanos* 141). Later, however, in his memoirs Vitier evoked the darker side of that same talent observing, “Este joven ardía como una llama atormentada, oculta y fija” (*De peña pobre* 103). Between Vitier’s descriptions of the same poet, we see two sides: the tormented Lorenzo and the García Vega who María Zambrano described as possessing “una ancha, casi triunfal alegría que suena como un coro” (9). In this complex picture of his presence in *Orígenes*, I identify the particular character of García Vega’s early contesting voice implicated in his search for a more suitable language with the imaginal disks described by Portmann that prefigure the biological imago, the fully-developed

mature form. The voice itself is also in transformation towards one of greater clarity and assertion and is the primary indicator of García Vega's Jungian individuation, the unconscious joining with the conscious, the early self joining with the evolving literary self. Or, in another sense, it is García Vega's atheistic Orígenes.

Unlike Larrea's low-stress subduction that allowed him to quickly assimilate and move beyond the influence of Huidobro and Creationism, García Vega was twenty years old in La Habana with very few options from which to choose and without the same financial means or the mobility that were available to Larrea. "¿Qué iba a hacer? Cuba no era Francia, donde había cuarenta lugares con grupos diferentes," he told Carlos Aguilera (53). Comparably, García Vega's subduction process was high-stress, where Duanel Díaz's observation that "García Vega se mantuvo siempre en la órbita de Lezama durante los años de *Orígenes*" (*Límites del origenismo* 348) corroborates Condie's assertion that in high-stress subduction zones "the descending and overriding plates are more strongly coupled" (84). Their relationship was one of greater dependency, a fact that also complicates his individuating ascent and poietic eruption as explained in this chapter's introduction. Immediately following the apprenticeship, the optimism of the new creator shaped the construction of his first book, *Suite para la espera* (1948). This work, the subject of Chapter Four, represents the eruption of García Vega's poietic self. Nevertheless, it falls amid the 22 texts that were published in *Orígenes* —from Issue 7 (Autumn, 1945) to Issue 40 (1956)—, five of which appeared before the publication of

Suite and were later included in it.¹⁴⁴ His complete ascent through this chamber would not happen until much later and as a result the poetic imago, persisting latent, takes the reins inside the textual voice that sounds through the pages of *Orígenes*. In the *Orígenes* environment characterized by the degree of incompatibility that García Vega would eventually make so explicitly clear, if during this time he did not fully revert to his neurotic crises and undergo the electro-shock treatments suggested to him, then it was certainly because he still found himself positioned near the center of Rank's scale, engaged in artistic activity.

In 1952, issue 31 of *Orígenes*, García Vega published a sequence of diary entries titled "Rostros del Reverso," the same title of the *diario espiritual caleidoscópico* he would publish 25 years later and in which this text would appear as the opening pages.¹⁴⁵ The final section of his February 27, 1952 entry opens with a quotation from Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*: "The Other is on principle inapprehensible: he flees me when I seek him and possesses me when I flee him" (30).¹⁴⁶ It is from this supposition—both the idea expressed by Sartre, and García Vega's use of it—that I identify the process of individuation within García Vega's *Orígenes* texts. The irresolvable relationship with the

¹⁴⁴ "Julián Marías: Miguel de Unamuno" (7, 1945); "Variaciones" (10, 1946); "Baladas que terminan en entierro de paisano" (12, 1946); "Oda" (15, 1947); "Conjuros del lector" (15, 1947); "Nocturno" (15, 1947); "Historia del niño" (18, 1948); "Historia del Santo" (20, 1948); "Las astas del frío" (22, 1949); "Tierra en Jagüey" (25, 1950); "Siesta de hotel" (26, 1950); "Homenaje: Arístides Fernández" (26, 1950); "Espirales del cuje" (27, 1951); "Túnel" (29, 1951); "Poemas" (29, 1951); "Rostros del reverso" (31, 1952); "Gallo" (33, 1953); "Una aventura" (34, 1953); "Mirada de las cosas" (35, 1954); "Pequeño sucedido" (37, 1955); "Otro sueño" (38, 1955); "Piel de estatua" (40, 1956).

¹⁴⁵ Juan Larrea also began at this stage in his transformation to write his poetic diary *Orbe*, not published until 1990, concurrent with his move to Paris and his founding of *Favorables París Poema*.

¹⁴⁶ In *Being and Nothingness* (408).

Other, dueling possession and flight, is the same duality of García Vega's desire "olvidar el significante común del lenguaje, sin caer en otra retórica" (*OP* 283). His apprenticeship had taken him into another language, one through which he could exit paralysis into activity, yet there was always an obsessively palpable reverse equivalent to that which was not being said and perceived as the extent to which the current language was false. Again citing Sartre, but 52 years later in *El oficio de perder* (2004), he wrote:

"Los poetas son hombres que rehúsan utilizar el lenguaje", había dicho Sartre. Y quizás por eso los origenistas, como buenos poetas que fueron, rehusaron, al querer inventar el paisaje que nos rodeaba, todo tipo de complicidad con unos significantes que tuviesen relación con lo horrible que era nuestra circunstancia. (283)

There is a consistency in García Vega's mad search—in this case bookended by the years 1952 and 2004, and joined by his readings of Sartre—, and as his time in *Orígenes* progressed the inability to find a suitable language sufficiently truthful became more apparent. The strength of his expression increased as his dependence on Orígenes decreased. Jung suggests that the conscious and the unconscious are collaborators more often than not, but "when an individual or a social group deviates too far from their instinctual foundations, they then experience the full impact of unconscious forces" ("Conscious, Unconscious, and Individuation" 219). Such a struggle by the instinct to remain effectively represented by the artistic self is revealed when examining García Vega's *Orígenes* production. It was a solitary voice unconvinced of belonging to a collective and distrustful of the language of that community, a language that because of

an apprenticeship to the center of that community was the only poetic language he knew. Through a critical reading of these texts published in *Orígenes*, observing the literary genres of essay, diary, verse and prose poetry, and narrative, I will show that Lorenzo García Vega's bitter description in 1979 of the Orígenes poets as "escritores cuyo mundo reminiscente [estaba] plantado sobre ese desafortunado aquelarre de absurdas solemnidades, y caprichosas pretensiones de encerrar la vida dentro de un agujereado estilo" (*Los años de Orígenes* 55), did not stem from any vendetta posterior to his original experience with them, as García Marruz claimed,¹⁴⁷ but was rather a more-pointed critique voiced from a position of improved psychic capacity that expressed the inherent irreconcilable differences existing from the moment Lezama spoke, "Muchacho, lee a Proust."

A Philosophical Debut

García Vega published for the first time in 1945, one year into the magazine's existence and only months into his apprenticeship to Lezama. His first text is the often-ignored review of *Miguel de Unamuno* (1942) by Julián Marías, about which he said, "Fue una generosidad publicarme esa reseña. No valía gran cosa" (García Vega). It is significant for identifying a transition in process. Not yet ready, or capable, of poesis, still in the early phase of his apprenticeship, he acted within the established structure of a book review to summarize and critique already-produced content and to exercise his

¹⁴⁷ She suggested that his experience in *Orígenes* was positive and accepting, but that "fue sólo al abandonarlo, por causas, por cierto, no políticas —aunque luego devinieran, como pasa siempre, cuestionamiento político— y empezó a malentender situaciones" (*La familia de Orígenes* 69).

expanding self-organization. “Ordenar, o más bien dominar, así lo requiere nuestro espíritu harto de desórdenes,” he wrote, inserting a slight first-person confession into the analysis (42). With this he leaps into the interior of an ideological *mise en abîme* and, in a still intangible space between the adolescent aspiring writer (García Vega) evaluating the portrait of the literary giant whose image he imitated¹⁴⁸ (Miguel de Unamuno) that had been created by another notable writer (Julián Marías), he enters the spiritual dilemma of individual responsibility as it relates to the idea of community and history. The content of this debut text becomes so strikingly relevant to García Vega’s situation that the levels of reality are easily confused, identifying a tone of personal interest within this short literature critique that inaugurated his permanence with *Orígenes*, and paralleling the voice and structure his later expression would adapt in his many novelistic, essayistic testimonies.¹⁴⁹

García Vega opens his review with a reference to *Ideas y creencias* (1940) by Ortega y Gasset, Julián Marías’ former professor and maestro, and in this way initiates his approach within a genealogy of the self that is key to the exploration of Unamuno’s work. *Ideas y creencias*, in its Alianza edition, is preceded by the short essay, *Tesis para un sistema de filosofía*, published for the first time in 1965, which provides a reflection of man confronting the impossibility of total knowing (*conocer*). At the same time it reveals

¹⁴⁸ Mario Parejón wrote in his prologue to García Vega’s *Ritmos acribillados*: “El alma, para Lorenzo García Vega, está esencialmente protegida y vivificada por el chaleco de don Miguel de Unamuno” (14). Equally, García Vega described his adolescent self: “Tenía puesto un saco negro —quizás quería parecerse a Unamuno” (*Los años de Orígenes* 182).

¹⁴⁹ For example, *Rostros del Reverso* (1977), *Los años de Orígenes* (1979), *El oficio de perder* (2004), “Maestro por penúltima vez” (2009).

itself as an important text for situating García Vega in the formation of his own ideas.

Ortega y Gasset writes in his *Tesis I*:

Conocer es lo que el hombre hace *por que* ha caído en la duda sobre algo y *para* llegar a estar en lo cierto sobre ello, o saber.

El saber es aquella situación del hombre frente a algo, en la cual le ha dejado de ser cuestión, está perfectamente seguro de qué es lo que tiene que hacer con ese algo. Por tanto, saber algo es saber a qué atenerse respecto a eso que le fue cuestión.

[...]

Si el hombre supiese no se ocuparía en conocer. El hecho y el nombre mismo de la filosofía impiden definir al ente humano como *sapiens* a no ser que se entienda este atributo no como una posesión, sino al revés, como una privación y necesidad y se diga que es el hombre el ente que necesita, que ha menester saber y porque lo necesita se esfuerza en lograrlo, se ocupa en conocer, *hace* lo que pueda para saber. (14)

Saber is an illusion in which man participates to reduce the abysmal infinitude of doubt. It implies a final destination, a place of rest found when uncovering the answer, while *conocer* is the process of searching for that terminal moment of *saber*. To identify one's own location in the journey towards total comprehension, as does the Ulysses of Dante's *Inferno*,¹⁵⁰ requires a dedicated exploration of self, *Mihi quaestio factus sum* [I have

¹⁵⁰ From Canto XXVI of *The Inferno*: "Not fondness for my son, nor any claim / Of reverence for my father, nor love I owed / Penelope, to please her, could overcome / My longing for experience of the world / [...] Consider well your seed: / You were not born to live as a mere brute does, / But for the pursuit of knowledge and the good" (222-223).

See also Jorge Luis Borges' "El último viaje de Ulises" in *Nueve ensayos dantescos*. Buenos Aires: Emecé (1999): 45-52.

become a question to myself] (Marías, *Miguel de Unamuno* 266), which explains Marías' decision to approach Unamuno's literary work by way of philosophy. Marías makes use of this phrase by San Augustine in order to point out the circumstantial importance for self-definition, as opposed to generalizing questions, *what is man?* for instance, and thus locates the self within its particular environment. In this way the falsity of the answer is reduced because according to Marías, on asking "¿quién soy yo?, la pregunta y la respuesta envuelven el ser del que pregunta, y solo él da su sentido a lo preguntado" (Marías 267). Only here do the subject and the object become the same. The otherwise impossibility of reaching the Other or of being understood by them returns us to the García Vega quotation from Sartre that he copied into his diary.

García Vega recognizes the discouraging assignment that Marías has undertaken, by his account *promising*, in identifying Unamuno's intimate self, while maintaining the impossibility of it. Through Marías' personal relationship with the philosopher García Vega emulated in his adolescence, he identifies a "peculiaridad individual que deseamos a veces desentrañar agónicamente. Y es esa cercanía cultural al unirnos a él, nos pide terriblemente al otro Unamuno, al Unamuno indescifrable, pero con gran poder de encantamiento" ("Julián Marías: Miguel de Unamuno" 43). The Sisyphean work of defining the indefinable, while at the same time being aware of and drawn to it, is explained by the Orteguian postulates of man deficient of truth: "El hombre tiene siempre certidumbre y verdades, pero las tiene sin poseer su última instancia que dirima su antagonismo" (*Ideas y creencias* 14). García Vega also inhabits that "complicado andamiaje unamunesco que Julián Marías, al comenzar su libro, quiere ordenar" and his

review in *Orígenes* in 1945 of this process of ordering Miguel de Unamuno taken on by Julián Marías demonstrates that already, at 19 years old, he recognized within himself a “espíritu harto de desórdenes” (“Julián Marías: Miguel de Unamuno” 42) that would make order seemingly impossible.

Futile Unreality

When moving towards the state of knowing (*saber*), towards the ordered disorder, towards the possible impossibility, any sensation of conclusion will be deceitful. Nevertheless, the march continues forward through a reality that is an accumulation of discernments disguising their reversals, in effect, an unreality that surrounds the individual and destabilizes the ground beneath them. In *Los años de Orígenes*, García Vega assessed the experience of *Orígenes* writing, “Lezama, Orígenes, fue, debió ser, la expresión de una revolución, de una revolución que pareció llegar a ser, que casi llegamos a tocar, y que como tantos espejismos cubanos, nos volvió a dejar en un peor descampado” (274). The mirage of a revolution that he distributes amongst the *revolutionaries* also implies an equivalent mirage of the self, unattainable and insufficiently realized. For García Vega, Unamuno was a self lost in true disorder, a kindred suffering, while Orígenes was a self hiding in a false order that was their expression allowing them to avoid the circumstantial. In the dated journal entries of *Rostros de Reverso* (1977), highlighting the circumstantial context of the self responsible for writing them, he expresses the anguish of one living in an environment in which he does not believe: “La palabra empieza a tropezar hirientemente en el rostro de nuestra

irrealidad” (“Rostros del Reverso” 30), writes García Vega noting later the “frialdad irreal” of daily life that imposes its interpretations on the citizen as if they were absolute norms.¹⁵¹ The text is in and of itself is an act of separation from Orígenes in that at this moment, the occasion for the text being to reflect on the fifty years of the Cuban Republic, “la decisión de mantener un diario sistemático sobre el presente en vez de redactar un ensayo de poética especulativa es ya una excepción en el proceder origenista” (Salgado 19). Instead of following the poetic system of Lezama’s assimilatory counterpoint, García Vega seeks a missing component indicative of a search for his early self’s suffering. The circumstantial diary is in a sense the reverse of the Orígenes *truth*, of the collective’s “«rechazo de las circunstancias» que eventualmente la revista compensaba con el refugio en la poesía [que] adquirió un sentido de búsqueda de «otra realidad» y ganó un sentido profético de anuncio de «otras posibilidades»” (Chiampi 128).

The imaginative results in “Rostros del Reverso” were similarly the reverse of those realized in the work *Espirales del cuje* (1952), García Vega’s most faithfully Origenist text and the recipient of the *Premio Nacional de Literatura* that year.¹⁵² What Salgado classifies as “una severa revisión de su poética en pleno «éxito literario» y, por extensión, de la del grupo *Orígenes*” (177), is at a deeper level the fulfillment of Jung’s

¹⁵¹ In *Los años de Orígenes* he also noted, “La atmósfera de Orígenes había sido siempre lo frío, lo convencional, y lo estereotipado; una atmósfera desde donde no podía surgir ninguna amistad” (110).

¹⁵² “Ahora, en contraste radical al éxito de su método aplicado al paisaje nostálgico de la provincia, escribir sobre el Cincuentenario produce un corto circuito, una parálisis, en el procedimiento poético de García Vega. A diferencia del fértil “cuje” provinciano, los motivos omnipresentes del Cincuentenario que García Vega contempla en el ambiente urbano no generan resonancias en su imaginación” (Salgado 180).

warning in the case that an individual were to deviate *too far from their instinctual foundations*. “Rostros del Reverso” is the unconscious clawing its way out to level ground with the conscious *Orígenes*. The Sartrean nausea present in the narrator expresses the lack of correspondence between what is seen and what is perceived, the realization that the visible face is only the mask of the reverse’s face. This was a crisis similar to that of García Vega and Juan Larrea’s *framing darkness*. However, in that case reality came forth through false or unsatisfactory words, and for lack of a remedy they suffered symptoms of neurosis and hypersensitivity. Following the apprenticeship, they were in possession of a poetic language through which to combat those false words, even if those words were their own, as was the case of García Vega’s *Espirales del cuje*.

Experiencing the full impact of the unconscious forces, the idea of the reverse is repeated through the length of the text insisting upon the contrariety of things: “Emoción del reverso. Pienso en hechos contradictorios que se unen en mí: la irrealidad de nuestra circunstancia, su frialdad, los ecos sobre nuestra subjetividad de los objetos” (36). The echo, the residue of something originitive but lost, is set in opposition with subjectivity. That is, again the individual only perceives the remote echoes of the world, as in Lezama Lima’s *Muerte de Narciso* (1937) where the reader perceives the nymph Echo, but does not see her; the word “eco” appears only once in the poem, preceded by the negation *sin* (without), while the verses refer to her continuously: “olvidada por un aliento que olvida y desentraña” (11). In search of that further knowledge, García Vega considers another possibility to approach it:

Porque algo me llama a inmiscuir la subjetividad. Pero inmiscuir la como un auto-mirarme, en que ese yo que mira se me independice, recortándose irónicamente como un personaje de Kafka. Independiente he dicho, sí, quisiera que ese otro yo, en su sucesivo alejarse de mi [*sic*] a medida que lo objetivizo con mi mirada, se fuera confundiendo con el hálito. (“Rostros del Reverso” 31-32)

The goal of his concept, Borgean and Kafkaesque in its splitting of the self, but with mythical reverberations of Narcissus (self-observation) and Echo (confuse itself with my breath) perhaps from Lezama’s influence, he seeks to eliminate the contingent duality by way of an initial separation from the spirituality of the being and a subsequent alchemical union of the unconscious with reality. However, this unrealistic attempt to find protection from “el frío, que se desprende de las cosas cuando están verdaderamente presentes en su terrible estar, en la desolación del mundo” (47), as he would write three years later in “Otro sueño,” his penultimate appearance in *Orígenes*, he shifts to another theme accompanying unreality: futility.

In “Tierra en Jagüey,” a text dedicated to Lezama Lima from issue 25 in 1950, Lorenzo García Vega returns to his birthplace by way of a poetic prose composed of a sonorous repetition of questions and phrases that negate the possibility of expressing oneself. “A veces estamos tan solos con el recuerdo,” the narrator says, establishing the setting from where the images would come (52).

Viento de tu lejano, tierra, no sabemos hablar. No sabemos aún si todavía hay sangre en la muerte triste del guajiro. No sabemos si recordar es un

eco, si es un paso por el barracón nocturno. ¡No sabemos si es sangre ya el recuerdo! Porque tu recuerdo, tierra, no puede ser relatado [...] Los instantes, tus instantes, tierra, son de todos, los que hablan, los que no hablan... Relatando la historia que no existe. (52-53)

This litany to not knowing, of Orteguian insufficient truth, repeatedly laments the distancing from a reality, a product of time, and the shadow of unreality that remains in the form of the memory. “Oh, mi espíritu” (53), insists the first person narrator multiple times in the conclusion of “Tierra en Jagüey,” objectivizing itself while maintaining itself as a narrating voice, provoking a textual separation of the character, which intimates the impossibility of knowing oneself. Nevertheless, as suggests its earlier composition with respect to *Espirales del Cuje*, his Orígenes conscious is taking the lead. Reaching its conclusion, it reads, “la cruz, la cruz de tierra, que ya siento en el recuerdo en sangre de mi espera” (53), and the poet in dialogue with the land assimilates it into their blood through memory and the image is reborn in the poem.

In a passage from the story “Siesta de hotel,” published in the following issue of *Orígenes* of that same year, the individual moves from being the third person (*él*) in part I to the first person (*yo*) in part II, only to return to the third person (*nuestro personaje*) in the third and final part. Likewise, between the first and third parts, the nameless protagonist traverses the onirical world of the second part, the moment when the narrator seems to unite with *him* to form an *I*. It is during this dream state that the character becomes a subject and achieves consciousness of the unreality.

Así, pues, el más insignificante quehacer se me convertía en centro de innumerables búsquedas. Una vez, recuerdo, una estampa con unas deliciosas figuras chinas finamente dibujadas, me hicieron creer que quizás, con el estudio de esos contornos, pudiese yo abrir el misterio que se me negaba. Pero, fué en vano. Es verdad que al principio, cierta como niebla que se desprendía para mí de aquellas figuras coloreadas, me traían, con un absurdo que me esperaba, el recuerdo —vano en apariencia y de difícil unión con esas figuras— de un redondo estanque donde me placía contemplar la imagen de los árboles bamboleándose al inclinarlo yo, niño entonces, y hacer que el agua se moviese ligeramente humedeciéndome las manos con sus salpicaduras. ¡Pero, ah, inútiles fueron todos esos cuidados! (55)

He finds himself inside the labyrinth of images emerging from his memory, but each of his attempts to create a degree of stability within them fails and he ends in disillusionment. He dreams memories that in turn string together the lines of the character's story until he is awoken and the story can no longer continue. Given this futility, his only recourse is to accept the illusory as a constant and participate in it. In this way, with echoes of the mystical destiny of Unamuno's character Augusto Pérez, "Siesta de hotel" manages in the end to highlight the fictitiousness not only of the story, but also of the image: "Y ya, nuestro personaje, está dispuesto a vivir como actor los últimos momentos de su sueño!" (59).

Carlos M. Luis in *El oficio de la mirada* (1998) found that the language of Orígenes made characters out of the poets themselves, dreaming them out of that transcendental form not discovered from experience.

El espíritu origenista fue, desde luego, otra cosa. Los que abrevamos en su fuente fuimos contagiados por una fiebre afectiva que en gran medida impidió ver las cosas como eran. Muchos de sus testimonios, como lo prueba el reciente libro de Fina García Marruz criticado en esta obra, fueron conducentes a crear una atmósfera arcádica que desdibujó a los participantes del grupo. (13)

This is the same mechanism of fictionalized appearances that Lorenzo García Vega's reverse seeks in everything, and even before considering himself to be the object of a distorted vision of the group, he combats the idea of a transcendental aura in his early *Orígenes* writings, always aware that his *inútil poema*, as he called his writing in "Las astas del frío," an earlier manifestation of his eventual *oficio de perder*, would not succeed in correcting it (31).

The Solitude of Existence

With the accuracy of human perception called into question, the sensation of solitude that emerges frequently in these *Origenist* texts contributes to the general distrust that he feels for the Other. Between the intimate voices of the narrators, the solitary characters, and the illusion of community as a greater tormenting isolation, it is difficult to perceive the radiant spirit of the group promoted by Cintio Vitier and Fina García Marruz. García Vega's second publication in issue 10 of *Orígenes* in 1946 marks the appearance of his first poem, "Variaciones," which would also be the first poem in *Suite para la espera*. In this work of poetic prose, the narrative *I* experiences existence's

unbearable despair of doubt, exaggerated through his sensitivity when facing the deficiency of a total understanding of reality: “Mi mirada inmadura quiere besar las cosas. Tengo el miedo terrible de perder el devenir, perseguido en la colina y en el río” (31). In irrepressible anticipation, a young García Vega of 20 years of age was in amazement before the infinitude of nature, but his precociousness soon turned to horror. The feeling of insignificance brought on by his immature gaze conceded the word to the “solitario buitre. Por su mirada madura, témole a tu pico y a tu canto, desesperadamente” (32). The transcendental hawk of Walt Whitman’s *Song of Myself* (1855) —“The spotted hawk swoops by and accuses me ... he / complains of my gab and my loitering” (87)—, transforms into a threatening vulture, and instead of confronting its poetic force with the ambitious voice of the North American —“I too am untamed. I too am untranslatable, / I sound my barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world” (87)—, García Vega’s fear results in vacillation: “He de seguir tocando el fantasma dormido” (32).

Two issues later, García Vega reappears in the pages of *Orígenes* with another prose-like poem, “Baladas que terminan en entierro de paisano,” that offers a similar affirmation of human solitude. The narrator explores a nature full of oppositions in which flourish the inhabitants’ screams: “las piedrecillas chillan” (24), “aullan [*sic*] las palmas lejanas” (24); and silences: “los insectos preñados de rocío y su juego inaudito” (21); timelessness: “Es la hora perdida, más vacía que llano, en que todos se vuelven octogenarios quedos y relojes disparan andanadas pesadas” (21), and the hypertemporal: “Meditador del instante... ven al instante” (21); the solitary: “el monocorde de mis reminiscencias” (23) and the communitarian: “el cortejo de guajiros callados” (24). The

ballad, seemingly the expression of a journey where the *I* and the *you* are united, concludes as the title indicates, with a burial, the isolation of the deceased and the march of the detached mourners.

Hora de entierros, con su cortejo de guajiros callados masticando sopores, mientras aullan [*sic*] las palmas lejanas.

Es la hora de la aridez más honda. Eco olvidado y solo el cascoteo de los caballos, como son de recatados fantasmas.

Y la marcha cúmplese pronto, porque los cementerios están muy cercanos a los pueblos y hay que ver a los paisanos llegar con sus sopores y sentir su ritmo lento. Y los cañaverales prosiguen su voz interrumpida.

Preparamos nuestro regreso, sin ningún eco, pero con la tristeza del rocío. (24)

The weight of the air charged with melancholy, with pessimism caused by the unavoidable confinement of death, individualizes the members within the collective categories: cortège, peasants, cemetery, town. For Maurice Blanchot, death is the force that reveals the true community by uncovering the impossibility of any communion in life. In *The Unavowable Community* (1984), he quotes Jean-Luc Nancy who opines, “the community does not weave a connection to a superior life, immortal or transmortal, between subjects... It is constitutive... ordered at the death of those who calls perhaps incorrectly their members” (23). The word *member* then turns out to be deceiving due to its implication of an intersubjective action, frustrated in “*Baladas...*” Instead, what García Vega accentuates is the division amongst the participants by comparing the

silence of the deceased with the somnolence of the living peasants, contrasting it with the incessant clamor of the landscape.

The reality of the self's isolation is made clear in another of García Vega's early texts. The first sentence of "Historia del niño": "El niño con su abulia "que te pun" en el carcaj del invernadero" (22), underlines the condition of withdrawal what he understood as inseparable from existence. Reminiscent of his memory of the Belén swimming pool filled with boys he did not know: "Fue la primera vez que supe que había una enorme alegría *fuera*, pero que ésta no tenía nada que ver conmigo" (OP 190). The definite masculine article in the title "Historia del niño" designated the boy, the solitary figure of the poetic story who is alone with his apathy. Although later we find that he makes up part of a community, the suffering of the individual enclosed within himself persists: "El niño se preguntaba Y volvía siempre se preguntaba Había [*sic*] otros niños vocingleros que se dirigían [*sic*] a él Pero él lloriqueaba como un caminante" (22). In addition to the incommunicability, the condition of solitary person's servitude is also revealed, like a walker or footman holding the horses of the dominant speakers. He sinks deeper within himself, even more aware of his solitude while in the presence of others. And again:

Así el niño creció entre las abuelas Y sus tropos encallaban en las persianas del comedor

Todos los días [*sic*] lo llamaban como a un lebril Y las chispas conversaban Un día se sentó entre los invitados Pero el niño quedó solo Como si su nuca se hubiera convertido en polvorín. (23)

It is a description that seems to apply to the *Origenist* ceremonial banquets during which García Vega, the youngest amongst them, observed decades later in 2001 that he began “a tomar consciencia de que no pertenecía a ese grupo” (Aguilera 53). It is a textual portrait functioning as an *ekphrasis* of the photographs taken at those events, placing inside one of them the apathetic boy. José Antonio Ponte states that “el ceremonial es una pantomima en el vacío” (97), an observation that García Vega agreed with. Just as with Daniel Pérez, a character in “*Una aventura*,” from 1953 issue 34, who was “poblado con su sonrisita para adentro, con el adefesio de sus pensamientos” (51), the solitude that this unreality produced existed inside García Vega, inside his work, and inside the group from the beginning.

The Silence of Friendship

If the writings of Lorenzo García Vega promoted the perception of an unreal and unknowable world that restricts the individual to their interior life, is it possible for some form of friendship to exist? Is it only in the case of Orígenes, while reflecting on the past, that García Vega denied that there was a spirit of family between the poets or is friendship something unconceivable? In “*Las astas del frío*,” the fear provoked by the march of time dominates the attitude of the verses. The friend appears as a figure that forms a part of that prominent unreality, that unreality caused by one’s incapacity to control their surroundings.

Mi amigo esperaba en la esquina.

En la esquina, eran horas... ella no había salido.

Mi amigo ha girado, ha girado los ecos
y todos caminábamos despacio.
Se dejaba el chaleco o la sordina cursi.
Sí, una tras noche, despacios.
No miremos, no importa
y el pez o la estrella, ¿quién se acoda?
Oh, viejas lámparas y la fiesta extática
huyendo del amanecer en el paso destruido [*sic*].
Oh mi ropa, la piedad, las horas
y lo lastimero del silencio que es el humo detenido o las botellas.
Yo lo dije: el amigo, una vez... en la mañana. (28)

The hours disappear and the friend, *my friend*, passively waits together with the echoes, another image of the illusory. Friendship, writes Derrida, “ne garde pas le silence, elle est gardée par le silence. Dès qu’elle se parle, elle s’inverse. Elle dit alors, se disant, qu’il n’y a plus d’amis, elle s’avoue en se l’avouant. Elle dit la vérité – toujours ce qu’il vaut mieux ne pas savoir” (71). The reverse, where García Vega sought knowledge, is inscribed in the idea of friendship as Derrida defined it. Its impossibility is manifested when speaking, where the articulated friend cannot be a friend because friendship is unpronounceable. That is, outside of silence the roles are inverted and, revealing the emptiness, fraternity dies. Ponte declared, regarding his valuation of the proposed Origenist family spirit, “sospechamos la inexistencia de cuanta cosa afirman todos esos síes. Tantos síes, tantas cabezas inclinándose de arriba a abajo, tanto optimismo satisfecho parece repetir una mentira, forzarla a ser verdad de tanto repetirse” (100). The *yes* undoes that which it claims to affirm. According to Lezama Lima, “Lo que prueba

demasiado, no prueba nada” (“Las imágenes posibles” 165).¹⁵³ The *yes* is friendship made impossible, the dispersed community. Even in Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, any political motive for friendship is identified bringing into question the reality of that friendship. In her *Aristotle and the Philosophy of Friendship*, Lorraine Smith Pangle writes, “Friendship also seems to hold the polis together, and lawgivers seem to be more seriously concerned with it than with justice. For concord seems to be something similar to friendship, and they strive most to attain concord and to drive out faction, its enemy” (17). Here, Ponte’s distrust would not be inappropriate; the need to affirm the existence of the Orígenes spirit implies its own falsification. As in the verse from García Vega’s “Oda” (1947): “Su lento devaneo...—frío—recorre las callejas y la voz del amigo—punto— / sigue su onda y onda en labios extinguidos” (19), the voice of the friend is that which is cognizant of its insufficiency and, instead, maintains its silence. Sounds, which fill the spaces in the verses, interrupt the perception of reality, covering it with the affirmation of knowledge as to what it is. “Oh amante, yo no te había conocido / hasta ese dormido silencio” he says in “Nocturno” (1947), exalting the silent *conocer* and discarding the imaginary *saber* of the sound (22).

His unconscious dictating a continued crusade against feigning faith, García Vega offered an atypical proposal for optimism: “Y al final, como en los años de Orígenes, lanzaremos la carcajada. Pero ya ésta será la risa brutal que tuvo Lezama. Pero ya ésta será la risa sin risa de los jóvenes que vinieron después. Quizás, entonces, logremos la

¹⁵³ The first part of “Las imágenes posibles” was published in issue 17 of *Orígenes* in 1948, the same issue that concluded with Lezama’s “Un libro de Lorenzo García Vega” honoring his apprentice’s *Suite para la espera*.

unidad” (*Los años de Orígenes* 275). Laughter without laughter, (laughter that does not exit the realm of silence), —laughter and its reverse—, friendship without friendship, instead of the *yes*, there is the *maybe* (*quizás*), so indispensable because it is the only option that allows for possibility. On this Derrida could add, “il n’est pas de catégorie plus juste pour l’avenir que elle du peut-être. Telle pensée conjoint l’amitié, l’avenir et le peut-être pour s’ouvrir à la venue de ce qui vient” (46). If those ten Cuban poets truly constituted an Origenist group, it seems that it would be one that from 1945 was present in the writings García Vega published in *Orígenes* as inexistent. It would be a group about which no one could write.

Conclusion

Decades later in New York, Lorenzo García Vega occupied an important role in the magazine *Escandalar* directed by Octavio Armand, and later in Miami, founded *Újule*, whose short existence rivaled Larrea’s *Favorables*. Even in name, these later titles are more in accordance with his ludic avant-gardism. The *Orígenes* magazine embodied a collective inside which García Vega’s newly-capacitated conscious voice dialogued with his environment. Prior to his apprenticeship his conscious was overwhelmed and paralyzed. After it, he began to actively participate within it. However, he gained this capacity at a price, learning to speak with a language that was not exactly his. Such a compromise provoked further repression of his instinctual voice, but the repression was provisional as the instincts developed a path upwards through the conscious language and into reality. During this stage beside Lezama, he said, “sentí la posibilidad de la ligereza,

pero estaba en un mundo, el mundo de la revista *Orígenes*, donde lo que había era una trancazón” (“Maestro por penúltima vez” 17); where levity is self-criticism and the freedom to explore the incomplete without the obligation of a culminating transcendence. But the Orígenes spirit, its language, maintained the possibility that García Vega felt as unconscious intuition, barricaded out.

The growing collaboration between his id and ego, then, surfaced as a dissenting voice at times negating Orígenes procedures, as was the case of “Rostros del Reverso,” and at others, letting gusts from the reverse —competing dualities of collective and individual, silence and noise, friendship and animosity, possibility and impossibility, structure and chaos —blow through his Origenist texts. Similar to individuated Larrea for whom Poetry is conceived as the incorporation of, or even synonymous with, crisis, the strength of García Vega’s instincts pulling him unavoidably after the reverse of the image, of the word, begin to give shape to the voice of his eventual true self. “No se escamotee, pues, el hombre su propio drama,” petitioned Larrea in “Presupuesto vital” (3), and increasing individuation meant precisely that for García Vega, where his developing “poética del reverso,” writes Arcos, “es una forma peculiar de leer la realidad desde una identidad compleja, vulnerable, siempre en crisis” (47).

One might even argue that García Vega was realizing Lezama’s imaginative counterpoint to its logical and obsessive end —“El Maestro [...] dijo que existía una “primera mentira”, y que eso era la imagen, y que la imagen nos hacía entrar en la verdad” (“Maestro” 5). His reinterpretations distrusting of the image, distrusting even of his own ability to reinterpret despite having descended into the poetic depths of *lo difícil*,

could fly off the handle: the *Curso Delfico* cycling incessantly, transformed into Chaplin's conveyor belt, carrying him farther from his maestro and towards the eruption of his poietic self.

* * *

CHAPTER CONCLUSION

Regardless of the differences in scope and influence between *Favorables París Poema* and *Orígenes*, each offered a collective space hailing the new poets Lorenzo García Vega and Juan Larrea. The ascent into the literary world prompted the next metamorphic advancement in the pages of the literary magazines where the hand of the apprentice could receive the voice of the self prior to the encounter with the maestro. Huidobro's Creationism formed Larrea to the extent that his discovery of it placed him on a productive literary path, but the creationist word was quickly insufficient to hold Larrea's search for the greater method of the universe. His early instinctual need reached through the language of his apprenticeship for a word located beyond it. Likewise, Lezama's *Curso Delfico* and the language of Orígenes formed García Vega, but the atheist adolescent forced his way to the surface to search through Orígenes for the *reverse* of the image. The new course laid by the words of the maestro, in all of their beneficial guidance sparking enthusiasm, motivation, and productivity, were not able to resolve the disorder of the framing darkness through repression of the crisis between id and reality.

The individual's resurgent instinct joined the new Creationist Larrea and the new Orígenes García Vega following a process of individuation that prolonged their transformations rather than abandon them to be proselytes to a movement. The encounter of the unconscious with the conscious inside the psyche forced the individual to face an interior duality at this moment more dominant than the duality of self and Other. The pull of sincerity drew each into a particular crisis that they were now better capacitated to manage in Art. Furthermore, they arrived at an appreciation of crisis as indicative of the

pursuit of truth rather than denoting a personal shortcoming before the exterior world; neurotic crisis evolved to artistic crisis.

Larrea's preoccupations shifted from the intellect-driven Creationist images and poetry that wished to liberate itself from Nature to the Orteguian vitality of an irresolvable intellect and sentiment duality informing thought, with additional influence from the companionship of César Vallejo. His move to Paris brought about new energy and new concerns, but also the individual independence to reflect the changes he had experienced. Circumstances and instincts contended for a place in his expression and Larrea entered a new phase of poetic mysticism, a direction that was of no interest to Huidobro, according to a letter he wrote to Robert Gurney.¹⁵⁴ His "Presupuesto vital" was testimony to the adjusted course, and as a manifesto it was an assertion of a strengthening poetic self.

García Vega who had written very little during his apprenticeship, instead garnering readings—"no quise ser un auto-didacta" (*OP* 336)—, when he had completed his *Curso* applied Lezama's guidance to his words and the first results were even edited by the maestro. In subsequent issues of *Orígenes*, however, the uncomfortable voice made itself more audible pronouncing solitude over community, silence over ceremonial

¹⁵⁴ In *La poesía de Juan Larrea*, Gurney considers the period 1926-1932 to be one of poetic mysticism. The excerpt of this letter dated December 7, 1973 that Gurney uses to open his chapter VI "Larrea y el misticismo: 1926-1932" reads, "Para Huidobro, que yo sepa, no era lícita, ni siquiera soportable, la experiencia mística en poesía puesto que no creía en más ser que el de su propia racionalidad. No hablé con él de estas cosas, le interesaba más bien la parodia, su autocontemplación en el espejo imaginario" (217).

clamor,¹⁵⁵ and questioning possibility that the Orígenes poets posited with such certainty. The encounter, he determined, was “casi una fatalidad,” decades later determining, “estoy cada vez más convencido de que yo no tenía mucho que ver con ellos, y creo que toda mi búsqueda se dirigía hacia otra cosa, incluso hasta en los puntos en que coincidíamos” (Aguilera 53). As for Larrea, crisis becomes the accepted condition for a vigorous psyche rather than a symptom of its weakness. García Vega searched for the other face of the word, of his own word taught to him by Lezama, and in the quest for its union the voice of negation sounded to the extent that the truth was not yet found.

Individuation takes place when the unconscious finds a more visible place alongside the conscious, joining its chaos with its more-systematized counterpart. The melding of instinct and knowledge prepares the self for poiesis, for the revelation of the imago. Larrea and García Vega’s ascent into *Favorables* and *Orígenes* generated the necessary self-awareness for a possible continued ascent out of it. Although the psychological realities of the each poet do not necessarily strictly adhere to the sequential material formation of the subduction zone, each poet was prepared for the publishing of their first works, the eruption of the poietic self.

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¹⁵⁵ “El ceremonial de *Orígenes* se desplegaba en varias direcciones concurrentes. Era su primera forma el ceremonial litúrgico (bodas, bautizos y santos). Después hablaríamos del ceremonial de la amistad. Eran las veces que nos reuníamos en torno al padre Gaztelu, en la pequeña iglesia de Bauta, exornada con pinturas y vitrales de Portocarrero y de Mariano. Otro era el ceremonial de la conversación, que mantenía avivados los comentarios y las noticias literarias” (Lezama Lima, “Un día del ceremonial” 46).

CHAPTER FOUR. Eruption of the Poietic Self

Suite para la espera (1948) and *Oscuro dominio* (1934)

Out of three sounds he frames, not a fourth sound, but a star.¹⁵⁶

ROBERT BROWNING

INTRODUCTION

Lorenzo García Vega and Juan Larrea exited their apprenticeships to the Other poet and instinctually undertook a reconciliation with the self in their writings published in *Orígenes* and *Favorables París Poema*. To reconcile implied shaping the poetic language of the maestro to their unconscious needs. The apprenticeship did not resolve the *dire imaginative need* that Bloom locates at the onset of the young poet's journey. Its function was to shine a light representing a system of approach through which each poet began to act and, in acting, they also began to benefit from the materiality of art to process the indecipherable signs that had shrouded them in early darkness. Retracting for greater perspective, each poet's apprenticeship, then, continued, but not to the maestro with whom the encounter was an integral step forward, rather to the same signs that provoked their psychic disorientation. They could confront crisis through the word and allow the poietic dialogue between the self and the ego to take place, the unconscious and the conscious collaborating to mold the objectivity of the artistic substance and bring forth the structures of the imago. From within a collective they released fragments of this project in the texts scattered about the literary magazine. In this chapter, García Vega's

¹⁵⁶ From the poem "Abt Vogler."

Suite para la espera and Larrea's *Oscuro dominio* reveal that dialogue in greater coherence by reducing the presence of the members of the collective, and offering an intimate dialogue between the chosen poems of the constructed book. I consider the publishing of these two first works to mark the eruption of their poetic selves, that is, the conclusion of a subductive cycle and the emergence of a newly formed poet.

I propose that *Suite para la espera* and *Oscuro dominio* can be approached in a way similar to that of Murray Stein's examination of the early self-portraits of Rembrandt and Picasso as externalizations of the imago's growth. He compares these with later self-portraits to locate each artist's position in his respective metamorphic journey analyzing their trajectory towards the true self. Stein remarks on the evident conviction given to the images of the depicted individual each exercising his new trade as a creative artist in Rembrandt's *Self-Portrait with Saskia* (1636) and Picasso's *Yo, Picasso* (1901). In the first he notes the lavishness of the content to be an indication of the thirty-year-old Rembrandt's self-assuredness, approaching self-centeredness, that had come from his recent success (111), while in the second he identifies the "confidence and bravado of the young artist" in the bold lines that delineate the jaw and eyes of the twenty-year-old Picasso (125). In the case of Picasso, Stein also notes his vacillation of perception as demonstrated by another self-portrait from the same year portraying him in a contrary light, depressed with a "sallow face, eyes sunk back in their sockets, and only the red lips indicating any life at all" (125). The struggle between dualities as the self weighs competing truths plays out in the art produced establishing a psychological timeline as well as an ideological workshop. Likewise, *Suite para la espera* and *Oscuro dominio*

present a new poet optimistically exercising his role as creator. The works are different in almost every aspect from form to tone, yet in both the poets are confidently present as the architectural voice of this new structure. Stein finds that Rembrandt and Picasso's early self-portraits demonstrate a concentration on superficial truth still searching for a more profound understanding, and equally García Vega and Larrea, pulling away from the influence of their maestros, amid differing degrees of individuation, emerge as poetic selves carrying out an ideological diagnostic of their transformations.

As individuals following the subduction zone blueprint, their paths are parallel sharing comparable sequential stages of growth. The quality of each stage, as we have seen, has varied due to particularities of personality, location, and economic freedom, but these deviations influenced only the speed with which the individual advanced through the cycle rather than the direction. However, when shifting the focus to aesthetics, the poetic word used by each, and the power attributed to it, differences that were less visible in the framing darkness become evident in the light of their first works. In addition to the continued parallel march along a shared need for psychological health through poetic expression, the aesthetic paths they choose diverge in opposing senses. As if standing side-by-side upon an advancing tectonic plate, they turned their backs to one another and began walking forward. The simultaneous motions of progression and divergence lead them to significantly different writing expressing contrary conclusions regarding the poetic word, and explaining the distance García Vega felt from Larrea. In essence, rather than turning their backs on one another, they in fact looked towards each other via the aesthetics of the avant-garde. Larrea looked forward through Creationism and Surrealism

rejecting the predominance of the conscious in the first and that of the unconscious in the second to a transcendent humanist teleology in action, revealing itself in Poetry and into which Christianity was integrated. The result, in *Oscuro dominio*, is the abandonment of the structured Creationist poem for the prose poem, incorporating the dynamic image into Surrealist exposition, but governed by a mysticism that set Larrea apart from both movements. This was more aligned with Lezama's poetics, where García Vega stood looking backwards past the deception of the transcendent word towards Surrealism and especially Cubism for what he saw as a playful structuring more-honestly capturing the limitations of the word itself. *Suite para la espera* demonstrates that deliberate use of the page, for longer, expository verses in the first poems of the book more-influenced by Lezama, and shifting to shorter verses of isolated words meandering downwards that were more independent of the maestro.

The capacity for faith was significant in determining the direction of each poet's gaze, as it established the reach of the poetic word. Larrea believed in Poetry as one believes in a religion and found the word to contain latent truth comprised in greater human Spirit, and accordingly he obsessively sought the beyond. He rejected Surrealist atheism and would grow disappointed with Paris. His search took him to Peru in 1930, and with the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, to México, New York, and finally Córdoba, Argentina. Strictly united with his vision, as meaning advanced so did he, and his writing evolved with it. In contrast, García Vega rejected Orígenes Catholicism and the idea of a resurrection through poiesis. Instead, the poetic word captured only an aspect of the self, incomplete and misleading inasmuch as it was created by that same

self, and with equal obsession pursued those *aspects* to accumulate a semblance of truth. The evasive reverse of the word lent itself conceptually to an idea of *sides*, both psychologically and geometrically. Surrealism's exploration of the unconscious agreed with García Vega's penchant for self-analysis while Cubism contributed a structure in which to assemble them. Surrealism promoted the discovery of the *sides* and Cubism constructed the self-portrait. García Vega's *reverse* is the obverse of the word, its shadowed posterior, while Larrea's *beyond* is the word's latent anterior, the coming. Standing before the word, García Vega looked suspiciously for what was located deceptively behind it, whereas Larrea looked mystically within it and for its encompassing projection outwards extending past him and reducing him to only an atom of the word's composition. The privileged vision of Huidobro's poet remained relevant, but Larrea's poet comprehends the error of the excessive individual. García Vega did not trust the encompassing projection back and, therefore, could not affiliate himself with a grander authorship of the word or of what he distinguished inside of it, the reverse that he attempted to find.

This culminating Chapter Four is divided into two sections where, switching the order a final time, the first is dedicated to Lorenzo García Vega's *Suite para la espera* and the second to Juan Larrea's *Oscuro dominio*. The first section, titled "Reminiscence and Aesthetic in *Suite para la espera*," examines García Vega's use of Cubist and Surrealist aesthetics to accomplish a Proustian exploration of the word. He completed the *Curso Délfico* in 1946 and then spent two years appearing sparingly in *Orígenes* before composing and publishing in 1948 his first book, which included five of his *Orígenes*

poems.¹⁵⁷ I relate Surrealism's ludic approach to words that was so appealing to him with Wittgenstein's language games and lexical family resemblance to identify the components of the constructive process undertaken. Apollinaire, Breton, and Proust were amongst the readings of García Vega's apprenticeship and, consequently, I also consider them as methods that were interpreted, and their interpretation as a method taught to him by Lezama Lima. Both aspects include a notion of selection, accepting and rejecting meaning, intended for activity rather than contemplation. *Suite para la espera*, I argue, was the apprentice's assertion of self after a wait culminating in action. It is the application of knowledge akin to a certain plateau reached during formation when art appeared marking the completion of a metamorphosis. It is the eruption of the poietic self where eruption and poiesis are synonyms for movement from the interior to the exterior, the first being material (the book) and the second spiritual (the self). He wrote in *El oficio de perder*, "siempre he creído que uno tiene aquello de que hablaba Ortega: un proyecto de hacerse donde se incluye, cuando uno es literatoso, el discurso del escritor que uno debe ser" (255). *Suite para la espera* is the first "sentence" of that discourse through which García Vega the writer began his project to become the writer and the individual he should be, putting into practice what he had learned in order to recover who he was.

¹⁵⁷ In *El oficio de perder* he explained the haste with which he wrote the poems of his first work: "Comencé con una *Suite para la espera* escrita apresuradamente (y no voy a decir que *febrilmente*, para no parecer que estoy haciendo literatura) Una *Suite* escrita diariamente, durante unos meses (¿cuántos meses fueron?), y cuando yo tenía veinte y dos años" (347). This necessarily refers to those possessing a greater Cubist structure and not those that were more Surrealist and had already been published in *Orígenes* as early as 1946, including "Variaciones" (10, 1946); "Baladas que terminan en entierro de paisano" (12, 1946), "Oda" (15, 1947), "Conjuros del lector" (15, 1947), "Nocturno" (15, 1947).

The second section, titled “Prophecy and Aesthetic in *Oscuro Dominio*” analyzes Larrea’s first published work as a mystical space revealing a transitional moment for the individual both, from poet to essayist and within his developing notion of the revelatory poetic word. It also marks the eruption of his poietic self and an endpoint in his first subduction cycle, as well as being closely associated with the start of his second cycle.¹⁵⁸ Its appearance, though limited, allowed for the self’s passage into that previously overwhelming reality of his adolescence where his instinctual poiesis could inform contemporary logos with the restorative notion similar to Heidegger’s *language remains the master of man*. While the prose poems making up *Oscuro dominio* were composed between 1926 and 1927, they were not assembled into a collection until 1933. “Dulce vecino” had been published in the second issue of *Favorables* in October 1926. Diego published “Diente por diente” in the second issue of *Carmen* in 1928, and later included sections I and III of the poem, the only instances in *Oscuro dominio* of poetry in verse, in his two Anthologies from 1932 and 1934. The poem “Cavidad verbal” was also the 1926 opening entry in his poetic diary *Orbe*, which remained unedited until 1990. Together, the eight poems present symbolic narrations either recounted or experienced by a lone voice. Just as in “Presupuesto vital,” dating from the same time, the dualisms and the crisis that results from avoiding the simple solution are the predominant themes and

¹⁵⁸ There were several potential moments for an alternative eruption of Larrea’s poietic self. His proposed book of poetry *Chanson meublée* was never completed. In 1935, José Bergamín requested Larrea’s poems to publish *Versión Celeste* as well as the prose texts of *Orbe*, but the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War interrupted that process and both were left unedited (Larrea, “Prólogo” 63). When, through Diego, the publishing house Alcantía in México expressed interest in Larrea’s poetry, *Oscuro dominio* became his first and only work from this period, his *experiencia poética total*.

representative of the poet's psychic state. In 1931 he wrote, "Porque la poesía es asimismo un elemento de tránsito de la época filosófica, síntoma de desequilibrio de la evolución del espíritu humano hacia su madurez" (*Orbe* 30). *Oscuro dominio* captures Larrea's necessity to still be present within the work before disappearing in later writing into the exegeses of what he discovers as the profound truth. Employing poetry as the *elemento de tránsito*, the individual is awakened to the impending union of opposites, suffering their confrontations in the anguish of the transition, but witnessing the prophetic light emitted by the poetic word.

García Vega and Larrea unknowingly crossed paths in their aesthetic searches the first looking back to the avant-garde and the other looking ahead past it, both electing a suitable word to express, finally, their poetic selves. Subduction had run its first course and the moment arrived for the individual to return to the surface in possession of self-knowledge to be put into practice. Magma became rock and the structures of the maturing imago became visible inside the work of art.

* * *

REMINISCENCE AND AESTHETIC IN *SUITE PARA LA ESPERA*

*Siempre he creído que uno tiene aquello de que hablaba Ortega:
un proyecto de hacerse donde se incluye, cuando uno es literatoso,
el discurso del escritor que uno debe ser.*¹⁵⁹

LORENZO GARCÍA VEGA

Introduction

Apprenticeship giving way to activity was repeated cyclically as García Vega searched for the hidden reverse of the material word that was not also hiding its own reverse. Looking back he perceived there to have only been two possible solutions to his impossible pursuit of the ineffable whole. One, the most appropriate description of the second half of his life's work, was "el haber estado siempre en tensión, advertidos de que lo que pudiera sustituir al significante no era ninguna iluminación, ni ningún apriori [*sic*] místico, sino sólo la máscara del inconsciente que nos determina" (*OP* 283). This line of exploration carried him to the existential poetics of his autobiographical and testimonial works *Rostros del Reverso* (1977), *Los años de Orígenes* (1979), and *El oficio de perder* (2004). The second possibility was "el mantenerse en un puro juego (este puro juego, surrealista, yo lo soñé en mi primer libro, *Suite para la espera*, pero desgraciadamente, no pude sostenerme en esa cuerda)" (*OP* 283). *Suite para la espera* was the first attempt of García Vega's poetic self to resolve his dire imaginative need in all of its varieties

¹⁵⁹ From *El oficio de perder* (255).

including erupting into worldly circumstances, those of pre-revolutionary Cuba as well as those of Orígenes.

“On n’imite pas l’aspect; l’aspect c’est le résultat,” wrote Georges Braque in his 1917 article “Pensées et réflexions sur la peinture,” published in *Nord-Sud* in 1917 (4). It is within a similar line of Cubist deduction that Lorenzo García Vega, incessantly suspicious of the images’ perceived aspect, founds his distrust of the preciseness of the written word: the poetic sign intent on communicating that aspect. Such an approach to words as being primarily the expression of the aspect of the object (the result of the result of the object), locates writing one position greater-removed from the object’s center than the painting of Braque. The task of the poet to penetrate the object is then a more complicated one; not only should the perception that the words hope to convey not be imitated, but also the words themselves are not to be automatically assumed as concrete and trustworthy signifiers. In Chapter Three García Vega’s solitary voice confronted the deceptive unison of the literary collective with the dissenting voice of the *reverso*. In this chapter, it is García Vega’s solitary word that distrusts what it is capable of expressing. The written word, in this sense, is similar to a literary collective in that through its use a single signifier will tend to minimize the multiple possibilities for the signified that it may contain. It therefore must also be questioned and the labyrinth of language explored.

I examine Lorenzo García Vega’s *Suite para la espera* as a product of a literary apprenticeship to José Lezama Lima and his *Curso Delfico*, —as García Vega recognized, “Yo le debo mi primer libro, *Suita para la espera*, a Lezama” (Aguilera 59)— and as the eruption of his poetic self, that is, his debut work marking the

realization of the subduction cycle. The 38 poems making up this work are collages of repeated and disassembled objects, at times reassembled, at others left in pieces, broken apart to facilitate the poet's search within them and to recover the reminiscences they encapsulate. At twenty-two years of age, having found a path only four years earlier that led him away from the electroshock therapy he had been prescribed, these poems contain the competing emotions of a neurotic state exploring its transforming self and creating matter out of such elusory breezes, doctoring existential anxiousness with the act of writing. This work has been characterized by many, including Lezama Lima, as cubist, and by others, including the author himself, as surrealist automatic writing. These two classifications are both relevant and possible, but the most important underlying force behind the formation of *Suite para la espera* is that of García Vega's desire to structure his intellectual involuntary memory with the end of elucidating sense, to decipher his world through writing, much in the same way as the aspirations of Marcel Proust's young writer-apprentice. Remembering that Lezama Lima's first words to García Vega were "Muchacho, lee a Proust," and that *À la recherche du temps perdu* was a text that he read obsessively during his *Curso Delfico*, I propose here that the young poet's obedience to his maestro increased his attention to life, as Bergson conceived it (*Matter and Memory* 14). In other words, in the shadow of Orígenes, but with the language of the apprenticeship, he reached a greater awareness of his psychic state, funneling it into the text through the action of writing, uniting the self with *its motor accompaniment*.¹⁶⁰

¹⁶⁰ Bergson associates inactivity with less attention to life and activity with greater attention to life. Greater attention implies a healthier relationship between the self and the exterior world, while an unhealthy relationship is one where the self has retracted its attention from reality:

García Vega's sifting through the substance of time found in memory and shaping it in the poetic word characterizes the majority of his work, comprised of abundant variations of the autobiography, testimony, and diary. However, in *Suite para la espera* we see how this use of memory as a form of self-analysis is carried out through cubist and surrealist aesthetics as the means to present this very process typified by Proust's masterpiece: an apprenticeship to the signs of his existence. At the same time García Vega's debut work serves to foreshadow a continued struggle for independence from the weight of the transcendent Orígenes word, indicating the fundamental direction his poetics would take during the next 65 years of his vocation as a writer.

Rule-Following and Family Resemblance

Ludwig Wittgenstein in his seminal work *Philosophical Investigations* (1953) argued to identify the logical limits of explanation, perceiving that more often they result in a fruitless complication whereby the signs designated towards exegesis are incapable of illuminating those that they pretended to explain. He is looking at words and at the misleading muddle brought on by interpretations no closer to solving the problem than what has been interpreted. "Interpretations themselves do not determine meaning" (*Philosophical Investigations* 80), wrote the philosopher, arguing instead that to approach the meaning of a sign we must look outside of language, at a word's context and the

"There are then, in short, divers tones of mental life, or, in other words, our psychic life may be lived at different heights, now nearer to action, now further removed from it, according to the degree of our *attention to life*. [...] That which is commonly held to be a disturbance of the psychic life itself, an inward disorder, a disease of the personality, appears to us, from our point of view, to be an unloosing or a breaking of the tie which binds this psychic life to its motor accompaniment, a weakening or an impairing of our attention to outward life" (Bergson 14-15).

behavior that it brings about. Here context is the *acting* that surrounds a sign, a demonstrated agreement in the use of the language equal to the following of a rule. This is the point where one questions no further, but instead obeys in the form of an action. Meaning comes not from the use of more language, but by its own generation through an action.

Lorenzo García Vega's understanding of his extensive discussions with his maestro, of his readings of Apollinaire's Cubism, Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*, Breton's Surrealism, or any of the numerous other influences to which the Cuban poet attests, are not confirmed by his own further explanations, but instead by the demonstration of a technique that expresses their apprehension.¹⁶¹ As an apprentice, a writer-in-waiting learning tenets, he can only exhaust the answers to the question *why*, and eventually the student must simply act; the *Galería Aporética* stage of the *Curso Delfico*, "la burla ante los conocimientos adquiridos" and the overcoming of what was learned for self-assertion (Prats Sariol, "Opus Ícaro" 309). He must demonstrate his interpretation of that which has been described to him through language, by way of what Wittgenstein identifies as "*obeying the rule and going against it* in actual cases" (81). When deciding to obey or to disobey one confronts once again the inexactness of words to which García Vega is so sensitive, and the final decision reveals the interpretive action that indicates one's participation in Wittgenstein's language games.

¹⁶¹ From Carlos Espinosa's "*Lorenzo García Vega: Entrevisto*": "Siempre me he estado haciendo de un collage de influencias en las que Macedonio Fernández, Raymond Roussel, Juan Emar, el *Ferdydurke* de Gombrowicz y Pessoa, son los ancianos de esa tribu mía [...] Collage de influencias, pues, que se inició con *Los cantos de Maldoror*" (25).

In his January 2012 article in *PMLA*, Andre Furlani traces inside the literature of Samuel Beckett a literary parallel to Wittgenstein's doubt of language's capacity for interpretation. "Said is missaid" (43), writes Furlani quoting from Beckett's *Westward Ho* echoing the linguistic entanglement brought on by "a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing" between potential meanings signified by a given signifier, a concept which Wittgenstein terms *family resemblance* (32). In particular, Furlani highlights in his article the shared example of the verb "to wait" appearing both in Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigation* (86), and in Beckett's drama *Waiting for Godot*.¹⁶² *To wait* has no single meaning, but is infinitely interpreted by the actions one chooses to occupy the emptiness of the wait. In Beckett this interpretation is memorably taken to the extremes of absurdity:

Vladimir: What do we do now?

Estragon: Wait.

Vladimir: Yes, but while waiting.

Estragon: What about hanging ourselves? (Beckett 12)¹⁶³

And the two men continuously wait, filling the play's pages with proposals for a meaningful use of their free space and time: exercising, relaxing, eating, leaving, not waiting, hanging themselves. When told to wait, what should they do? In the words of Estragon, "We always find something, eh Didi, to give us the impression we exist?"

¹⁶² *Waiting for Godot* was written at the end of 1948, the same year as *Suite para la espera* and premiered in 1953, the same year of publication as *Philosophical Investigations (PI)*.

¹⁶³ Also quoted in Furlani, p.41.

(Beckett 44). Still, because they are waiting for Godot to arrive, expecting him to appear at any moment, Vladimir and Estragon are always dependent upon an Other to give their existence meaning. The something that they are looking for to give them the impression that they exist is constantly postponed, put on hold because they must wait for Godot. An Other has summoned them to a purpose. It is an opportunity, yet at the same time that Other has placed the self in a pending state of reaction, a delayed action, rendering it immobile until a necessary degree of independence can occur. This separation of course never takes place in Beckett's play. The wait remains ambiguous because it never manages to be understood, and thus never translated into a defining activity. Vladimir and Estragon are effectively frozen in indecision inside their void, an appropriately barren landscape containing nothing but a country road and a tree.

Suite para la espera is evidence that for Lorenzo García Vega an act of emergence through separation, of self-determination, is being initiated. To be an apprentice, a student of a vocation, is to wait during a period of learning for a future moment to demonstrate what has been learned. In Art the subject, in contrast with the object, is "le résultat de l'emploi des moyens de création que l'on s'est acquis: c'est le tableau lui-même," wrote Reverdy (7). García Vega had acquired a means of creation, the Orígenes language in which he felt ill at ease, yet as a result he gained a certain independence of subject that his unconscious then sought to realign with its instinctual needs. *Suite para la espera* is his first book and it marks that decision of the student to act, the decision Beckett's characters were incapable of making. The decision to write, to exercise the craft of the writer, was a deliberate one for García Vega. "Quería ser escritor,

pero no sabía cómo ser un escritor, ni sabía como meterle el diente a la literatura. Así que estaba en la espera de alguien que me pudiera orientar,” he confessed (“Maestro” 12). After two years of Lezama Lima’s *Curso Delfico*, and his admittance into the Orígenes group, literature’s door had been opened to him. The encounter with the Other had successfully delivered their part and now it is García Vega’s poietic self writing its way in language’s “labyrinth of paths” (Wittgenstein, *PI* 82).

A Labyrinthian Title: The Book

Looking no further than the lexical components of the book’s title, *Suite para la espera*, we find an intricate example of the divergence in meaning characterized by Wittgenstein’s concept of family resemblance, each word designating a certain space of indeterminacy within its own impreciseness of meaning. García Vega is initiating a process of construction with a title that resists interpretation, building his own labyrinth that encloses what he is unable to explain. Asks Wittgenstein, “but do you really explain to the other person what you yourself understand? Don’t you get him to *guess* the essential thing?” (*PI* 83). An initial understanding of this title, remembering García Vega’s entrance into the collective, is to take the suite as referring to the cenacle that was Orígenes, of which he now had been a member for two years. In this case the suite of poets are likened to the waiting room where García Vega finds himself seated, the apprentice searching for self-awareness. In this room he comes into contact with the Other who returns him to his self. The wait itself becomes internalized as an

apprenticeship to the literary vocation, the interpretation of signs, and the arrival at one's self.

But the words are much too inexact to settle for this highly metaphorical interpretation. The noun "suite" has both a spatial and a temporal sense; most commonly it is used to denote the inclusion of the multiple into a whole, such as in a musical arrangement, though from its French origin it means *to follow*, expressing subsequence and thus is, at its root, more chronological than local. Then there is of course the noun "espera" (*wait*) whose infinite interpretations have already been pointed out in Wittgenstein's and Beckett's explorations of its implications. And finally, the preposition "para" (*for*), which establishes the relationship between the two nouns, is equally diverse, often being used to identify the cause of an action, its resolution, or just the direction of the action towards its end. In this way we cannot be sure if the suite is the result of the wait or vice versa. It is perhaps of note that the title does not contain a single verb, yet does use two nouns derived from verbs. That is to say, the words of the title are static, pending the understanding the title, a "consensus of action," resulting in an according action. *Suite para la espera* is then meaningfully multiple in all of its concatenations.

Among the many possibilities, *Suite para la espera* designates a work that could be: 1) a union of 38 poems that fills the wait, 2) a book of poetry that follows the wait, or even 3) a book of poetry that is a waiting room, that is, a space where images are placed for future use. However, in both the first and second sense, exactly what it means to *fill* a wait versus what it means *to follow* a wait can only be understood by the nature of the activity that *fills* or *follows*, not by further explanation. In other words, the wait may have

been *filled* by composing this book of poetry or also by reading it. With both actions, reading and composing, the wait has been *occupied*. The same two options are also available for defining the space *following* the wait; the wait may have been *followed* by composing this book of poetry or also by reading it. But the act that one elects for the interpretation of this wait will determine the role being played by the subject of the action. In the presented options the wait has been defined with an action, either that of reading or of writing, resulting in an equivalence where *to wait=to write* or *to wait=to read*. In the former sense the wait becomes a moment of activeness for the writer, while in the latter sense the wait is passive and it would be the reader who filled their time with García Vega's poems.

In the act of writing, the subject is then the writer who generates. If the act consists of reading, the subject is then the reader who receives. This reestablishes the opposition of maestro and apprentice. In the title, *Suite para la espera*, García Vega achieves a synthesis of the duality wherein he evokes his simultaneous existence as the apprentice who has been summoned by a maestro to write these poems and as the now maestro who summons a reader to learn to read these poems. The indeterminate title, resistant to any one straightforward interpretation, does not simplify one's understanding, instead capturing authentically the complication of the void he is struggling to fill. In an interview with Carlos Espinosa in 2001, he addressed his "miedo de no ser más que el autor de textos ininteligibles" (Espinosa 27), García Vega identifies his literature's need for an equally exploratory audience:

Me dirijo a un lector que todavía no existe, y al cual yo tengo que contribuir a crear, en lo que pueda: el lector albino. O sea, algo así como un lector que ya vive en un paisaje extraño y que, por no saberse como tal, no busca ya ninguna imposible raíz, ni ninguna imposible vuelta a una Ítaca inexistente, sino que acepta su desarraigo como rizoma al que hay que recorrer y recorrer. (Espinosa 27)

García Vega's reader is one who does not need improvable distant explanations, yet searches for them all, facing their present through the acceptance of activity, that is, descriptively searching and traveling about in the knowledge of their surroundings. *Suite para la espera* is then a book in need of their hands, but what of the poems inside?

A Labyrinthian Title: The Poem

This title, already offering up its panoply of possible meanings, enveloping the book of poetry as a whole, is then used a second time naming the tenth poem of the collection. Where exactly do the signs of the title's two appearances intersect? How does one instance used to identify the whole relate to a second instance identifying only one part? A suite within a suite, a wait within a wait; does this reuse limit meaning or multiply its possibilities? "Suite para la espera" is an object-filled narrative poem composed of nine lines: three two-line sections and one three-line section where each first line of the final three sections is indented. Because of the evocative imagery the distinction between verse and sentence is blurred. If the phrases are to be considered verses, then they are enjambed free verse interrupted by abundant commas, linked by

occasional alliteration, and ending in periods. Otherwise they are short sentences sometimes lacking verbs that are organized spatially into miniature paragraphs.

“RAPIDOS”, en delfines de algodón, risa. Tropos de la tarde funden espejos congelados, poniente.

El “por qué”, como una malicia idiota. Como ironía de la nieve. Veleros suben, retroceden, traman peces de cristal: ballet de cisnes decapitados.

Me brindo con el ramaje de mi frente, humo del mármol;
Con mi viejo payaso, sin, su rubí cursi, su esfera de conejo.

Y tranquilamente degüello flautines roncós. Así el Dios Pan morirá en el libro de texto. (31)

“RAPIDOS,” yells the first word of the poem “Suite para la espera.” Placed between quotation marks, the imperative is articulated by an unknown authority commanding velocity, but instead of obedience the voice is countered by its antithesis, “delfines de algodón”;¹⁶⁴ a dolphin swimming through the sea, if made of cotton, would be anything but fast, absorbing water, gradually slowing and eventually sinking under its own weight towards its immanent immobility. With great effort it would attempt to meet the demands laid upon them, but it is an impossible challenge. To expect any other result is absurd; such an opposition leads to “risa,” set apart from the rest of the verse with a concluding comma. In the second phrase the descent and destruction continues. The “tropos de la tarde” act as a subject calling attention to poetic artificiality through formal techniques

¹⁶⁴ There exists an image structure here (animal + of + material) that curiously parallels that of one in Neruda’s “Walking around”: “Sucede que me canso de ser hombre. / Sucede que entro en las sastrerías y en los cines / marchito, impenetrable, como un cisne de fieltro / Navegando en un agua de origen y ceniza” (*Residencia en la Tierra II* 165). However, whereas in Neruda’s image, the swan is strengthened by the metaphor, García Vega’s image results in the dolphin’s weakening and destruction.

situated within a melancholy end as the day expires. The activity carried out by these tropes is to “funden espejos congelados,” the destructive antithesis of heat opposing cold, as well as the conversion of the static (frozen) into the active (melt) with an insinuated downward movement similar to the expected sinking of a dolphin made of cotton. And following another concluding comma, the word “poniente” brings to a close the day and the descent.

In the second section the quoted voice returns asking “por qué,” but it is not an intellectual interrogation, but rather “una malicia idiota.” The *why?* is more suggestive of a futile probing like that to which Wittgenstein was opposed, also likened to the “ironía de la nieve,” further condemning the senseless “insistence on interpreting what is open to view” (Furlani, 38). The motion of the melting mirrors and the setting sun in the first section is repeated in the second section when the “veleros suben, retroceden” while the *dolphins of cotton* become the “peces de cristal.”¹⁶⁵ The soft, absorbing cotton becomes the solid, resistant glass, abandoning the fish to a more immediate submersion than that of the dolphins, yet still with a similar immobile end. Following the colon, the entire scene is characterized by the image of a “ballet de cisnes decapitados.” The ballet is both movement and destruction towards stillness, yet another animal perishes as the swan can no longer fly nor would it float above water for much longer, and finally the ballet would lose its grace, transformed into a chaos of arrhythmic movements.

In the third section there is a reversal from the objective “being-spoken-to” of the first two paragraphs to a subjective “speaking-to” as a lyrical *I* emerges: “Me brindo con

¹⁶⁵ See previous note.

el ramaje de mi frente.” The offering comes on the heels of the destructive first two sections, as if responding by jumping into action, action that is reaction, no longer capable of remaining the silent listener, no longer capable of waiting. The first person is emphasized with the reflexive “me brindo” and then once again with the possessive adjective “mi,” modifying the forehead from which emerge the branches, or the imagination, that he is offering. This transitional phrase is populated with the presence of an *I*. A subsequent noun phrase following a comma reiterates and renames the *I* as “humo del mármol.” Just as in the first section’s *melting mirrors*, movement springs from the immobile, brought about by the suggestion of heat, but here the sense is the contrary. The heat increasing the kinetic energy of the marble liberates the smoke from its solidity. The smoke then rises, not sinks, and separates, not merges, from the motionless matter. Additionally, the *I* is accompanied by his “viejo payaso,” his memories of childhood, but simplified of all excess ornamentation: “sin, su rubí cursi, su esfera de conejo.”¹⁶⁶

The fourth and final section confirms the rebellion of the lyrical *I* as they carry out their actions “tranquilamente,” unconcerned with the previous order to be quick. Furthermore, the first person insists on remaining the subject of the act: “degüello flautines roncós.” With representational echoes of the decapitated swans of the second section, here the *I* takes the initiative to destroy the *piccolos*, a delicate symbol of artistic production. But the *piccolos* are already in decadence (hoarse), and the poetic self carries

¹⁶⁶ The rabbit sphere resembles the Poincaré conjecture: “The conjecture is fundamental to topology, the branch of math that deals with shapes, sometimes described as geometry without the details. To a topologist, a sphere, a cigar and a rabbit’s head are all the same because they can be deformed into one another. Likewise, a coffee mug and a doughnut are also the same because each has one hole, but they are not equivalent to a sphere” (Overbye n.pag.).

the destruction to its conclusion. The last phrase starts with the adverb “así,” introducing what will be the result of the first person’s actions. “Así el Dios Pan morirá en el libro de texto.” Plutarch writes that Pan was the only Greek god to die, thus the death of Pan, already confirmed by mythology, must be of a different nature when in García Vega’s poem the lyrical voice hopes for such a future action. In the poem, Pan’s death will take place in the textbook. The textbook contains the myth, but a degree removed from the original texts of mythology, placed instead into a space of explanation and interpretation. The textbook teaches the myth. The death of Pan in the textbook is a call for an end to the exhaustive interpretations of the bottomless signs of mythology; in other words, it is a call for the death of the death of Pan, the death of overused imagery.

If we recall García Vega’s previous description of the reader he hopes to help to create, he says that they would be one who *ya vive en un paisaje extraño*, and who *no busca ninguna imposible raíz* or for *ninguna vuelta imposible a una Ítaca inexistente*. Like the *I* of the poem, he seems to also be calling for the death of myth, specifically that of Ulysses and Ithaca. The death of Pan in the poem is the destructive conclusion to a collection of destruction. The discarded victims include dolphins, mirrors, fish, swans, marble, piccolos, rubies, rabbit spheres, and finally Pan. Given the selected victims, the destruction appears to revolve about Latin American modernist tradition, decapitating the swan whose head and neck symbolized the question mark of modernist interrogation,¹⁶⁷ condemning the preciousness of their poetic objects (crystal, marble, rubies, piccolos), the

¹⁶⁷ “¡Oh Cisne! ¡Oh sacro pájaro! Si antes la Blanca Helena / Del huevo azul de Leda brotó de gracia llena, / Siendo de la hermosura la princesa inmortal, / Bajo tus blancas alas la nueva Poesía / Concibe en una gloria de luz y de armonía / La Helena eterna y pura que encarna el ideal.” (Rubén Darío, “El cisne.” *Prosas profanas*, 213).

cult of the self-consumed poet (the mirror).¹⁶⁸ Tradition is portrayed by weighty, static objects that are to be left to their own sinking, while the poet, the lyrical *I*, through their own active imagination in movement separates from such anchors. But this destruction does not imply a discrediting of, but rather an emergence from, assuming an assimilation of their influence while destroying what could result in meaningless repetition.

“Suite para la espera,” the poem, is a shifting collage consisting of the kaleidoscopic addition and subtraction of particles to form images. The representations of these objects are perceived through memory as pieces of landscape, components of childhood and traces of literary influence acquired prior to and during his apprenticeship, yet they are not left as simple reminiscences. They are recaptured and reactivated in the poem, forced into motion via the undoing and dismantling of the manner in which they had been originally recalled. Amidst so much destruction there emerges a reconstruction of a new image is given form, [the product of the self’s disassembling of the Other], through the activity of writing. In both instances of direct speech the unidentified voice acting as subject expects a response from its interlocutor, i.e., in neither case is the quotation passively informative. This voice substantiates the presence of the Other: an Other who would obey the command or an Other who would answer the question. But in both instances the voice is ridiculed, presumably by the poetic *I*. The voice that summons an Other is rejected and an *I* subsequently steps forward, as if that Other had found their

¹⁶⁸ The dolphins of the poem may be associated with "los cuatro delfines," which have been used to identify the poet-heirs to Rubén Darío’s modernism: Julio Herrera y Reissig, Leopoldo Lugones, Amado Nervo y Ricardo Jaimes Freyre. Herrera y Reissig’s “Las madres” from *Los peregrinos de piedra* (1909) contains the verse: “la escultura musgosa de los cuatro delfines” (18).

own voice and identified their self through an act of destruction. The initial subject is related to the object and the Other (the interlocutor) becomes self. A reversal of roles takes place wherein the apprentice emerges as the poetic speaker.

Within the multiple meanings offered for *Suite para la espera*, the correspondence between the book and the poem by way of their shared title, is not restrictive. On the contrary, the intercept defends the indeterminable variation within the title. Both the book and the poem bring together the many. Just as the book can be seen as evidence of the action that emerged from the wait, so does the poem express a similar materialization of the mobile from the immobile. To fill and to follow become synonymous, as do to write and to read. *Suite para la espera* is populated by images waiting for the arrival of the reader to see them, summoning them into their act of destruction and construction. And though Lezama Lima wrote that it is also a book for “los nombres ya diferentes que logran aislarse y ensalzarse en la cámara de espera” (“Un libro de Lorenzo García Vega” 356) the names and objects in the poem are not just on display.¹⁶⁹ Those images are signs of minute searches for truth asserting their own active self-approval or disapproval inside the poem. They are the expression of dissent and destruction of representation before an authoritative voice. The voice belongs to a maestro, whether that of Lezama Lima or of a personified literary tradition, and the dissent comes from the apprentice. *Suite para la espera* is Lorenzo García Vega’s

¹⁶⁹ Related to the creative function that the lexical particles carry out beyond their mere accumulation, Stéphane Mallarmé expressed in an interview with Jules Huret, “L’enfantillage de la littérature jusqu’ici a été de croire, par exemple, que de choisir un certain nombre de pierres précieuses et en mettre les noms sur papier, même très bien, c’était *faire* des pierres précieuses. Eh bien! non! La poésie consistant à *créer*” (“Sur l’évolution littéraire” 701).

existential seizing of the reins. He separates himself from Vladimir and Estragon, relegating their indecisive chatter to a posterior psychic position and sitting down to work, determining meaning through the very meaning of writing.

The Means to an End

Lorenzo García Vega, like Wittgenstein and Beckett, saw language as a labyrinth and that he also doubted language's ability to find its own way out of that labyrinth. His title is one of action, of movement within and without the wait where a turn taken or a straight walked inside the maze is equivalent to an action carried out, an act of participation in language's game, a demonstration of a behavior. The existential void felt by García Vega, his neurosis, and the labyrinth of language are all one in the same. They are the emptiness of chaos and for the poet the answer did not lie in the creation of a metaphysical explanation, "hanging in the air along with what it interprets" (Wittgenstein, *PI* 80). That the ancient Greek inventor managed to escape from his own inescapable labyrinth by flying into the air upon wings of feather and wax is just mythology for García Vega; remember, "Así el Dios Pan morirá en el libro de texto" (31). As he sees it there is no exit to find. The only question is whether to sit and wait, discussing why or how one came to be there and what one might do now, or to stand up instead and wander about defining time and space with actions; "We always find something, eh Didi, to give us the impression we exist?" Not only does García Vega not intend to escape, which would be akin to what Larrea considered man cheating himself of his own drama —"No se escamotee, pues, el hombre su propio drama" ("Presupuesto

vital” 3)—, but instead to confront it, with all the suffering that it must bring, and to describe it in writing. *No mueras sin laberinto*, a title Liliana García Carril gave to a 2005 anthology of García Vega’s poetry, using the name the poet at one time had intended to give to his memoirs (*No mueras sin laberinto* 24) expresses even a vital need on the part of the poet not to ignore, or to imagine away, that insurmountable and incomprehensible structure. The answer to his void is to write it; to write that there is a void and that he has no definite answer. Altering Beckett’s words, to write is to miswrite, but it is still to write, and thus García Vega’s *reverso* is perpetually unresolved, but also perpetually in motion. The remaining question is then only by what means could García Vega’s miswriting properly write his reality. To answer this requires a closer look at the aesthetics and influences in the poems of *Suite para la espera*, that is, the means to his end.

The Means

According to Lezama Lima, in *Suite para la espera* “se percibe un alejamiento de la fluencia surrealista, y una búsqueda de planos cubistas” (“Un libro de Lorenzo García Vega” 355), but to pinpoint precisely where each movement exerts their influence is complex, given that the two demonstrate the surprise produced by the juxtaposition of disparate realities, and unnecessary.¹⁷⁰ García Vega was not a Cubist or Surrealist poet.

¹⁷⁰ Reverdy’s described his theory of disparate images in the text “L’Image,” published in *Nord-Sud* in 1918: “L’Image est une création pure de l’esprit. / Elle ne peut naître d’une comparaison mais du rapprochement de deux réalités plus ou moins éloignées. / Plus les rapports des deux réalités rapprochées seront lointains et justes, plus l’image sera forte—plus elle aura de puissance émotive et de réalité poétique” (3).

“Yo siempre he sido un vanguardista anacrónico” he told Pablo de Cuba Soria in a 2003 interview (“Lorenzo García Vega” n.pag.). He was a student of their proposals and aesthetics as he had read them via his maestro. “Tuve la nostalgia del surrealismo durante el tiempo que recibí sus enseñanzas...” he recalled in 2009 (“Maestro” 16). What is certain, however, is that such *distancing from* one and *search for* another indicates the intersection of both fingerprints, and that Lezama’s identification of *flow* and *planes* can be of great use in determining what means García Vega had elected to adopt for his poetic expression.

Between Pierre Reverdy’s poetic Cubism and André Breton’s Surrealism what differs, according to the latter, is whether the disparity in realities is the cause or the effect of the created image; for Breton, Reverdy’s aesthetic is an “esthétique toute *a posteriori*” (31). Breton’s Surrealism aspires to uncover a superior reality translated through art; art substantiates, it does not invent this reality, contrary to Huidobro’s Creationist arguments. As Breton defines in his 1924 *Manifeste du surréalisme*, the movement proposes an “automatisme psychique pur” (36) where the thought-act is freed from the restraints of traditional reason unleashing the power of the dream-state through the resolution of the existing duality between it and its waking counterpart. This allows for the discovery of “la réalité supérieure de certaines formes d’associations négligées jusqu’à lui” (36). Because of the way in which the dream-state gives the appearance of being continuous and organized, the revealed reality is three-dimensional in nature, and the *flow* detected confirms temporal succession and a completeness that can be more

straightforwardly followed and explored.¹⁷¹ This manifests itself textually in part through the continuity of syntax, a faith in the connecting grammatical thread, even though the individual components seem to be semantically incoherent.

Cubism on the other hand, seeks to fix a moment in space by condensing it into two dimensions and creating a concrete image that approaches its true reality. Primarily a movement within the plastic arts, perspective (depth) is eliminated as every object, and object part, is brought forward into the singular *plane* of the canvas. The resulting disparate juxtaposition is not the revelation of a superior reality, but instead an attempt at a clarification of the current reality by freezing time and allowing for the contemplation of simultaneity, viewing an object's multiple sides in a single moment. This produces what Admussen calls the “jerky” aspect of Cubist paintings, distinctly contrary to Surrealist *flow*. When in text form, he continues, “sentences are broken up—decomposed; words and phrases are isolated and dislocated” (24). This is typified by Reverdy's poem “LUMIÈRE,”¹⁷² reproduced in Admussen's article, and supports what Gray considers to be the “greatest effect of the ‘cubism’ of the painters on poetry”: the importance of the form as a means of expression (100).

¹⁷¹ Also from *Manifeste du surréalisme*: “Dans les limites où il s'exerce (passe pour s'exercer), selon toute apparence le rêve est continu et porte trace d'organisation” (21).

¹⁷² Reverdy, Pierre, “Lumière.”

Midi
La glace brille
Le soleil à la main
Une femme regarde
Ses yeux
Et son chagrin [...]

In *Suite para la espera*, there is evident aesthetic oscillation between the flow of Surrealism and the planes of Cubism. The first ten poems, from “Variaciones” to “Suite para la espera,” display the *flow* of expression associated with Surrealism. The written text takes full advantage of the space allotted to it by the page and they are, in appearance, works of prose. They share a consistent division of paragraphs, single indentation of those paragraphs, and a traditional respect for punctuation. However, from “Después de la tarde del poema” onwards, the poems’ prosaic qualities begin to disappear. The white of the page competes to reclaim space from the black of the text as the sentences become verses, the indentions become greater and irregular as words are arranged with intention, positioned where they belong, and as a result, all *flow* turns “jerky.” These analyses are mainly formal. They are indications of influence, and not guidelines for a categorization of García Vega’s early poems. But from a sampling from *Suite* we can observe the young poet who is not quite yet himself. *Suite* has directly within it the hand of Lezama, making *Suite* a site of confrontation between maestro and apprentice, between the influences as they had been passed on, and of course between the anxieties of each as well.

In the opening lines of “Variaciones,” the first poem in *Suite para la espera*, the reader is immersed into a scene that does not require them to carry out a large degree of imaginative reconstruction in order to complete it. The necessary pieces have already been assembled.

De la tarde a la noche no hubo tránsito. Estaba ahí. La lluvia la presiente, la envuelve. Va como encapsulada en cada gota. Promesa de un otoño eterno. Con acre sabor en los oídos.

El chubasco al lado de la noche persistía. Lamiendo en ondas el agua emponzoñada. Ligeras corrían en breves presagios. Juego minúsculo: pequeñas amazonas que agitadas atravesaban la calle. (9)

An effort to penetrate the subtle interiority of things, of a landscape that contains parts of oneself, but that menacingly keeps them at a distance, “Variaciones” evokes the melancholy of an environment that threatens the observer who waits to see where it will direct them. The sentences are descriptive—a moment stilled in eternal autumn, of poisonous rain and brief omens—poetically elaborated with devices including the personification of the rain and the night: “La lluvia la presiente,” “[la noche / el chubasco] lamiendo,” and synesthesia involving taste and sound: “Con acre sabor en los oídos.” Of the phrases, most are grammatically complete with subjects, verbs, and objects, while only a few are noun and adverbial phrases. Punctuation is employed in a traditional manner, facilitating a reading where the emphasis is placed on the expository, verb-driven, subject matter and which, in this case, stimulates curiosity through the vagueness of setting and by tinkering with the functions of the senses. To the eye, “Variaciones” fills the page in a way expected of prose: extending from the left to the right margin and divided into paragraphs with the first line of each indented; no particular attention is given to form, it does not stand apart visually. In a subsequent passage, however, the imagery is intensified through the more frequent use of adjectives:

Despaciosos pinos se mueven. Carretera de cristal por
la luna empapada. Cañaverales meciendo sus ensueños:
Torpes. Quedo guiños de estrellas.

La locomotora cargada de tesoros sucios.
Me hieren los minutos. Siento el estremecimiento de-
lirante. Desgarrésemme las carnes: percibo el devenir
plástico del día. (10)

In this section related phrases are strung together logically to create a landscape, i.e. no disparity of reality occurs between sentences. The quieting of time continues and the landscape in pieces lulls, but does not soothe, the observer with its fragmentariness. But unlike the first passage, the noun, not the verb, is favored and coupled with unexpected adjectives bringing about images that provoke the surprise akin to that found in Surrealist poetry: “Despaciosos pinos,” “Carretera de cristal,” “luna empapada,” and “tesoros sucios.” Still, the phrases are largely grammatically complete, each with their subjects and verbs, while capitalization and punctuation identify the beginning and ending of each. A sense of *flow*, however caustic, is still present.

As a point of formal comparison, if we place “Variaciones” beside “La Glace sans tain,” the opening text from what is considered to be the first work of Surrealist poetry, André Breton and Philippe Soupault’s *Les Champs magnétiques* (1920), we find a comparable organization and textual structuring, as well as a similar evocation of dejection within a mysterious scene and amongst provocative images:

Prisonniers des gouttes d’eau, nous ne sommes que des animaux
perpétuels. Nous courons dans les villes sans bruits et les affiches

enchantées ne nous touchent plus. A quoi bon ces grands enthousiasmes fragiles, ces sauts de joie desséchés ? Nous ne savons plus que les astres morts ; nous regardons les visages ; et nous soupignons de plaisir. (27)

Besides the noticeable parallels in content and desperation, possibly suggesting a direct influence, “Variaciones” also structurally resembles this declared Surrealist poem. In this case, the two French poets do not privilege the poetic form and though the sentences are longer than those of García Vega’s poem, they are equally grammatically intact while the punctuation performs its expected duties. Also there is a similar use of adjectives to create highly elaborated objects, bringing the noun to the forefront as the more intriguing lexical aspect of the writing: the “perpetual animals,” the “noiseless villages,” the “enchanted posters,” and the “withered leaps.” In García Vega’s *Suite*, several poems following “Variaciones,” including “La noche del cometa,” “Cerbatanas,” and “Baladas que terminan en entierro de paisano” continue to demonstrate these same formal characteristics of Surrealist aesthetic with regards to their predominantly integral sentences. Even the poem “Suite para la espera,” as we saw earlier, although much shorter in extension when compared to previous poems, appears as a block of text whose sentences stream together, organized logically with the assistance of punctuation, despite the battle of imagery fragments within.

And for one final consideration of the Surrealist fingerprint in these early poems by García Vega, let us not forget the influence of Lautréamont’s *Les Chants de Maldoror*, the first book of Lezama’s *Curso Delfico* and one of the few precursors salvaged from

literary tradition by Breton and the Surrealist group.¹⁷³ “Si, he sido lector de Lautréamont,” confesses the poetic *I* in “La noche del cometa” (13). Lautréamont’s *Maldoror* contains the rebellious spirit that characterized the nascent Surrealist movement. A poetic novel, it defied convention narrating non-linearly and shocking readers with the imagery and dynamism of its graphic scenes. Besides its insubordination with respect to the literary world, what Lautréamont inspired most in Surrealism was the willingness to unleash one’s imagination through bizarre and unexpected juxtapositions—“la rencontre fortuite sur une table de dissection d’une machine à coudre et d’un parapluie!” (*Maldoror* 224-225)—free of any obligation to reason. Considered Surrealist, Lautréamont’s text does obey grammar, its innovation appearing in content rather than in form. Let us consider a passage from the fifth canto describing a funeral procession:

Le cercueil connaît sa route et marche après la tunique flottante du consolateur. Les parents et les amis du défunt, par la manifestation de leur position, ont résolu de fermer la marche du cortège. Celui-ci s’avance avec majesté, comme un vaisseau qui fend la pleine mer, et ne craint pas le phénomène de l’enfoncement ; car, au moment actuel, les tempêtes et les

¹⁷³ From Breton’s “Second manifeste du surréalisme”: “Je tiens à préciser que, selon moi, il faut se défier du culte des hommes, si grands apparemment soient-ils. Un seul à part : Lautréamont, j’en vois pas qui n’aient laissé quelque trace équivoque de leur passage” (76). [I would like to make it very clear that in my opinion it is necessary to hold the cult of men in deep distrust, however great they may seemingly be. With one exception—Lautréamont—I do not see a single one of them who has not left some questionable trace in his wake.]

écueils ne se font pas remarquer para quelque chose de moins que leur explicable absence. (*Maldoror* 207)¹⁷⁴

The coffin is the dominant image, personified into leading the procession unassisted. The faithful participants, at the mercy of its guidance, follow closely behind as it metaphorically parts the sea, and nature stands aside to let it pass. If we turn now to a passage from “Baladas que terminan en entierro de paisano,” a similar scene takes place wherein the participants are equally powerless, though here it is to nature, not to the coffin.

Y al mediodía... también: su entierro. ¡Entierro de paisano! Porque en los pueblos la muerte no asoma en sus perezas y sus trajes de sol de mediodía ocultan la vergüenza de sus cortejos fúnebres. (27)

[...]

Hora de entierros, con su cortejo de guajiros callados masticando sopores, mientras aullan [*sic*] las palmas lejanas. (28)

There are subtle parallels within the scene, equivalent to the similarities between “Variaciones” and Breton and Soupault’s poem, ex. the funeral procession and the mourners’ clothing acting as a barrier, obscuring the coffin in the first, and the feeling of shame in the second. But in the passage from “*Baladas*” we find a more pronounced elaboration of sentiment: the exclamation announcing the burial, the idleness of the town,

¹⁷⁴ “The coffin knows its way and moves behind the billowing vestment of the comforter. The relatives and friends of the deceased, demonstrating their position, have decided to bring up the rear of the procession. The latter advances majestically like a vessel that cleaves the open sea, and does not fear the phenomenon of sinking; for at this moment tempests and reefs are conspicuous only by their understandable absence.”

the shame of the procession, the silent laziness of the peasants, the howling of the palm trees. Also, the role of the landscape is reversed; In Lautréamont, the procession overpowers nature, while in García Vega, the howling palm trees drown out the silent peasants. Nevertheless, the method of extracting from such a scene an energy extending from the relation between its objects and participants, while expressing this greater reality through complete sentences, traditional punctuation, and paragraphs inserts into the two texts the fluidity more characteristic of Surrealism than Cubism.

But during the composition of the poems included in *Suite*, García Vega's assimilation of influences increased, as did the depth of his self-analysis as a literary creator. In his reflective diary, published in 1977 under the title *Rostros del Reverso*, he summarizes in an entry dated May 26, 1957 his struggle to understand his pursuit of expression and his evolving approach to writing after failed approaches at mastering the trade.

Entonces, en el esfuerzo de buscar la causa de esa atracción especial, que alguna frase podía producirme, he llegado a convencerme de que tenía que abandonar la búsqueda del por qué su contenido ejercería una fascinación sobre mí, yendo en busca de no sé qué contorno de las palabras, de no sé qué doble significado de ellas a través de imágenes lineales. (*Rostros del Reverso* 26)

His abandoned search for a definitive reason moves him to instead explore the family resemblance between words, both in terms of multiple related objects gathered inside a single poem, and of the multiple responses a single object rouses from one poem to the

next. This is a search for what he does not yet understand by way of observing change, that is, the movement of meaning depicting resemblance through a concretization of images. Such a lexical representation must produce a dynamism, which in this way approaches *Suite para la espera* to the conceptual precepts of Cubism. With a turn of the page to the next poem, “Después de la tarde del poema,” the eleventh of the collection, a sudden, but clear, shift in aesthetic occurs. The fragmentation detected within the earlier poems now becomes visible without.

Ello
visto por los carceleros de Euforión por las lagartijas
de papel
por los carniceros blancos de alelí por la fuerza del pájaro
de algodón
El reloj tarta vacía tic tac
para deglutir el humo de la tarde
Como topo abúlico friega las azoteas de Dios
Como los tatuajes de la tarde corrigen la prisa
de los büeyes [*sic*]
Como las espuelas del rey manco
Como las serpientes de algodón (32)

A brief glance at this passage and it is obvious that something has changed from the previous poems, and likewise it has no visual counterpart in *Les Champs magnétiques*. Instead, its use of space is more reminiscent of Reverdy’s “Lumière” cited earlier, or other “Cubist” poems from Dermée, Apollinaire, or Huidobro published in *Nord-Sud*. All punctuation has been eliminated; there are neither periods marking the ends of verses, nor commas separating enumerations of noun-phrases designated by the repeated “por” and “como.” Additionally, unlike the earlier filling aspect of the text, full lines are rare, at

times of only one or two words, and are often set off by multiple indentions. Unlike in “Variaciones”, the reader is now forced to determine syntactical groupings, decide pauses, and imagine associations. The expected qualities of objects are altered into new genetic species (paper lizards, cotton birds and snakes), while words like *carceleros*, *carniceros*, *vacía*, *abúllico*, and *manco* induce hesitance and futility. With “Después de la tarde del poema,” a chaotic element invades the poems of *Suite* and, in this grand disorder of objects, the reading becomes tense and erratic, i.e., “jerky.” To achieve this “perpetuo movimiento de creación continua” (Sainz 37), this “incesante desfile de sus imágenes” (Lezama, “Un libro de...” 358), the verbs have been all but eliminated. The expositional progression present in the poems of a more Surrealist flow becomes the spatial structuring of images constructed from combinations of disrupted objects, as is clearly evident in this passage from “Reflejos”:

Volteretas de tablas
 si fuera a caer
Euforión
 heraclitanos cometas
 péndulos de rosario
Tanto como un rosal
 Uf (57)

To read the text one must sway one’s gaze back and forth as the eyes leap over the voids between verses. To compound the sense of vertigo, the images assembled within are essentially objects defined by movement (somersaults, comets, pendulums), augmenting the dynamism with circles and arcs. And Euphorion, that son of Faustus and Helen who

fell like Icarus to his death, who was imprisoned, motionless, in “Después de la tarde del poema,” appears again in “Reflejos,” now alone and hovering over the white chasm of the page. These later poems in *Suite*, through a reduction of words and of the grammatical ties between words, seem to illustrate Wittgenstein’s famed phrase, “I cannot get beyond language by means of language” (*Philosophical Remarks* 54). Profusion is replaced with the space containing that which language cannot express, as grammar is called into question, the first condition of philosophizing according to the philosopher. As García Vega methodically advances towards those “unknown surroundings of words” he seeks, the concentration of images increases as does the collage aspect of the poem, because as Beckett wrote: “Being is not syntactical,” (Furlani 42).

But while there are poems characteristic of these two general descriptions, so far referred to as Surrealist and Cubist, there also exist many poems that display a multiplicity of combinations of these aesthetics. Thus, it is neither practical, nor useful, to definitively divide *Suite* into a Surrealist section and a Cubist section, though there are general tendencies within the poems that tempt such an observation. Nevertheless, this sort of classification would defy and ignore the assimilatory nature of the many multiform influences that characterized García Vega’s apprenticeship, “el aceptarlo todo, el tratar de asimilarlo todo” (García Vega, “Maestro” 15). The real question that we want to ask, and the question that the apprentice must stop asking and simply act, is: Accept everything, assimilate everything, but to what end?

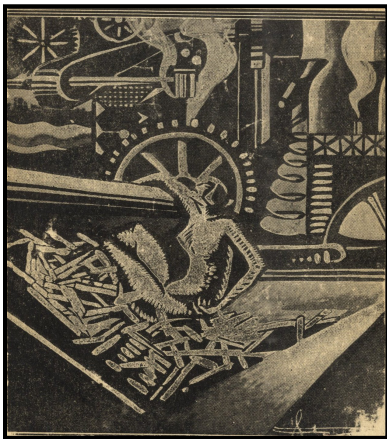
The End

The means enable assembly, a method of construction often easily recognizable as characteristic of specific movement or artist, and therefore prone to be imitated, Art most certainly, but of an unaccomplished end, a form hollow of essence. As previously discussed, the Cubist and Surrealist avant-garde artist sought a new reality, more valid in its higher degree of completeness, and more capable of providing its creator with a recognizable reflection of the world as he sees it. García Vega's world was the Cuba of the 30's and 40's, the Cuba of a dictatorship and a failed revolution. The avant-garde means could not lead him to the same end as that of Picasso and Braque, or of Apollinaire or Breton, and still resemble something authentic. His anticipated end was reality, composed of Cuba, and there his *Suite para la espera* was without precedence, as Enrique Sáinz asserts, unmatched “precisamente en la filiación vanguardista del autor y en su extraordinaria capacidad para asimilar el espíritu de las propuestas transformadoras de los decenios 1910-1930” (34). García Vega's Cuba was not the avant-garde France of the early twentieth century—“Yo siempre he sido un vanguardista anacrónico.” Then in a state of aesthetic temporal displacement, his condition of avant-garde writer after the fact, memory must assume a central role in the apprenticeship process of assimilation, even more so since it was not primarily as a student that García Vega initially arrived at Cubism. He recalled in 2005 during an interview with Pablo de Cuba:

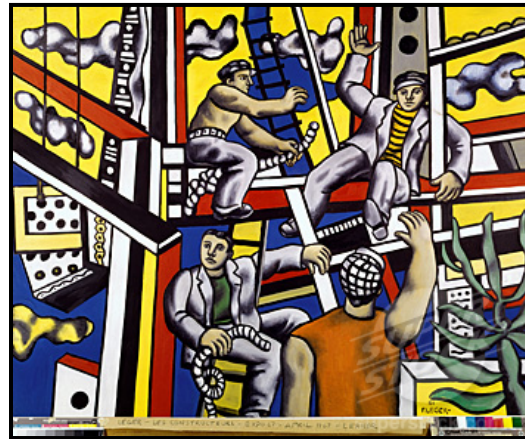
Leonardo Acosta, un pintor vanguardista, fue el que, en 1926, año de mi nacimiento, metió en la portada de *La Zafra*, el libro que ese año publicó su hermano Agustín Acosta, una visión del Central Australia (el Central

que quedaba cerca de Jagüey, y donde yo pasaba largas temporadas, ya que ahí vivía la familia de mi padre) cubista, y con estructura a lo Fernand Léger. [...] me di cuenta de lo que enseñaba la portada de Acosta, pude entonces criarme, diríamos, alimentando mi mirada con la visión de un Central cubista. (“Lorenzo García Vega” n.pag.)

The concrete construction of reality as put forth by Cubism, exemplified in Acosta’s illustration, is a filter that adhered itself to García Vega’s childhood *mirada* as they were becoming memories.



Cover of *La Zafra* (1926)
José M. Acosta



“Construction Workers” (1951)
Fernand Léger

It influenced the way he perceived his surroundings, emphasizing an attention to the object and to form, prior to any notion of aesthetic assimilation. Bergson tells us that “memory is just the intersection of mind and matter” (*Matter and Memory* 13), and when

García Vega identifies himself as *un niño cubista*¹⁷⁵ he concurrently engages the object's materiality and the mind's intellectual scrutiny merged within memory. The primary impulse of his artistic creation is then the critical retracing of memory, i.e. recapturing lost time, so as to provide it with a suitable form in which the signs of the world reveal their sense.

It is here that the Proustian aspect of García Vega's education becomes evident. Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* was the second of Lezama's assigned readings, and contrary to the popular conception of this masterpiece, it does not recount the story of remembering. Though translated as *In Search of Lost Time*, "recherche" is not only "to search for," but also "to research" or "to investigate," which emphasizes the analytical approach the novel takes to the first-person protagonist's memories. Proust's novel is the story of an apprenticeship, a *Bildungsroman* of Marcel's development into an *homme de lettres*, and in which, according to Deleuze, "la mémoire n'intervient que comme le moyen d'un apprentissage qui la dépasse à la fois para ses buts et ses principes" (8). The apprenticeship to which he refers is one to signs, entailing not the narration of one's past, but the deciphering of and learning from it, wherein "la vocation est toujours prédestination (8). García Vega wanted to be a writer, his apprenticeship to Lezama Lima projected his eventual transformation and ingression into the craft of writing, and his exigent engagement with substance, the objects within and without him, provided him with the content.

¹⁷⁵ In an interview with Pablo de Cuba, García Vega stated, "Yo, entre tantas cosas bonitas de mi infancia, tuve no sólo el privilegio de tener la visión de un Central cubista, sino que también, desde esa temprana edad, me convertí en un niño cubista" (n.pag.).

In the earlier poems of *Suite* memory occupies a more explicit role, announced as the process being undertaken in the poem to permit the poetic voice's approach to the materiality of the object. Memory in these examples shows up inside the verb, and it is only in these poems that García Vega uses the words "recuerdo," "memoria," and "reminiscencia." In the following passage from "Cerbatanas" memory is an overt mechanism for recounting the poetic self's conflictive relationship with remembered objects:

Los muros ensánchase. ¡Allí había estado! Mi memoria
estrujaba serpentillas y el revoloteo de las cosas, dando
más fuerte en la aparente tiesura de mi cuerpo.

Para auxiliarme di con libros. Y vi su hilo de luz que
se extendió como abanico sobre mi sien. ¡Aunque aver-
güenza su saber menudo! (22)

The sixth poem of *Suite*, "Cerbatanas" is amongst those with which I previously identified Lezama's description of Surrealist flow. This flow is still obvious in its expositional nature, and it stands to reason, given the syntactical completeness of the texts, that it is in these where the action of memory would be less ambiguous. The first person tells of his confrontation with the past, with the material of his memories swarming about him ("el revoloteo de las cosas") and the anxiety that this meeting caused him. The description suggests a neurotic episode where disorder engulfed his reality and left him immobile and incapable of living normally ("la tiesura de mi cuerpo"). He reacts by turning to books, a subtle allusion perhaps to the *Curso Delfico*, which enlightened him ("su hilo de luz"), and comforted like the gentle breeze from a fan upon his head ("como abanico sobre mi

sien”). Despite the embarrassment caused when confronting knowledge by the realization of how much one does not know, it is still preferable to the previous chaos since it provides him with a method through which he can reapproach his memory, but with an advantage, similar, at least in sentiment, to the Cubist need to make reality more concrete than did the Impressionists.

Similarly, in this passage from “Variaciones,” the poetic voice, flooded with interrogations and doubt, reflects upon the evening and his surroundings, which stimulate images from his past. The action of remembering in turn generates the objects remembered.

¿Tentación? ¿Cruce de calles? ¿Caminar? Oh, si, tarde
como manto, vívido paisaje. Reminiscencia de cansados
niños en el portal tendidos. (9)

The questions the *I* asks himself imply an inner torment regarding choices to be made: to follow or not the impulses of one’s desires and in which direction, when there are several (“cruce de calles”), one should move. Such confusion explodes in an exasperated sigh (“Oh”), and the beleaguered voice turns towards the landscape, which provokes his retreat into the past for temporary shelter. This act is clearly identified within the phrases of the poem; we are told that he is remembering. The boys (“niños”) and the doorway (“portal”) in the poem are only memories of such things, as is their condition of being tired (“cansados”) and leaning (“tendidos”). The nouns form a part of the action being declaimed; they are not the cause of the action themselves.

And lastly, another passage from “Baladas que terminan en entierro de paisano” in which an object, in this case an ox (“büey”), marks the site where the poetic first-person will experience his nostalgia, brought about like the Proustian madeleine.

Oh büey [*sic*], tú también henchido en el monocorde de mis reminiscencia [*sic*]. Allí... tus entrañas manoteando cajas de música, y las flautas, oboes. Destilando la ausencia—caminos—. Onda pasada. Encantamiento. (26)

The voice is overrun by memories that find their path through the ox that swells with them. The monotony of the reminiscences is contrasted with the polyphony of the music boxes, the flutes, and the oboes. Just as in the previous passage, memory “emanates absence,” here specifically through its inability to reproduce the music of which the original objects were capable. Nevertheless, the poem narrates the remembering, providing it with substance, like a wave or a spell that envelops the objects recalled or that stimulates the recalling.

The same shift from Surrealist flow to Cubist planes also marks the general moment when the explicit act of remembrance becomes implicit. Each of these later poems resembles a workshop that finds García Vega tirelessly mixing elements, constantly varying the combinations, and testing the results. The chaotic swarming of things described in “Cerbatanas” reappears, but now carefully guided by the hands of the poet. It is no surprise that García Vega confesses to an “afición hacia la alquimia, porque lo alquímico trata de trabajar la material, y a mí lo que me gusta en el destartalo es su materialidad pura, su textualidad pura, su posibilidad de manipularlo concretamente”

(Aguilera 50). The poet who likens himself to the alchemist investigating the materiality of objects places supreme emphasis on the ingredients and on the compounds they produce. The minimization of verbs, and the fact that he ceases to use the words “memory” or “reminiscence” suggest that he is no longer telling us what he is doing, instead just simply doing it. These poems advance towards the pictorial, as memory makes itself known through the repetition as objects, reappearing again and again in mutating contexts. Seeking to gain control of the space occupied by the object as well as that of the page, he explores the various ways in which he perceives these objects (Bergson 32).¹⁷⁶ He is building with the materials at hand, those of his surroundings, while searching for each object’s exact function within his reality.

To demonstrate one example, while in “Variaciones” the “portales” are evoked within the process of memory, that is, as a reminiscence of itself, in later poems the same object reappears but is brought to the forefront inside the present of the text. In the following five other occurrences, “portales,” and its synonym “portones,” receive different treatments, each a slightly altered shade of the memory of the object, as García Vega seeks to improve his perception.

Miro, La madre en los lentos **portales**, las nuca de lloro,
las viejas campanas, taladrados sopores. (“La noche de los pasmosos” 34)

También el bodegón con sus ventanas cerradas ya
¡y afloran señoritas en **portales**! (“Nocturno para Matanzas” 35)

¹⁷⁶ According to Bergson: “Perception is the master of space in the exact measure in which action is master of time” (*Matter and Memory* 32).

Moluscos lagrimosos en las doce manos.

En los **portones** la rúbrica del taquígrafo. (“Caracol” 40)

Ay Dios la sombra de los lúpulos arrollaron

con cañeros portuarios ay Dios

A más tener los **portones** flautinplatillo (“Ronca salió cumbancha” 53)

Portones carreteando la estrella como una concha

a vista de paraguas encendidos (“Marfiles ahogados” 60)

In the first three excerpts doorways represent a location, a space containing other objects, but as the objects vary, so do the sentiments they produce. In “La noche de los pasmosos” doorways hold the “madre” and are described as “lentos.” Other words like “lloro,” “viejas,” and “sopores” contribute to the doorway as a melancholic place. In “Nocturno para Matanzas,” instead of mothers we find “señoritas” in the doorways; youth replaces old age, and the slowness of the first is opposed by the verb “afloran” that, when between exclamation points, suggests their lively and dynamic sudden appearance. In the third instance the doorways are lifeless, containing only the “rúbrica del taquígrafo,” while in the fifth excerpt—I’ll return to the fourth—the doorway is personified, the subject who transports the star from one place to another. The fourth example reveals the doorways as the limit of the exterior instead of that of the interior. It is where the countryside reaches the houses, instead of where those inside may see outdoors. After all five examples, the doorways have been explored as both entryways and exits, associated with the young and old, and with the human and the inanimate. Each verse evokes a different subtlety of the object, and somewhere they intersect to delineate its essence for García Vega.

This observation of the object's mutability, of the absence of anything universally essential, and instead defined by how one experiences them echoes Proust's young Marcel in *À l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs* as he interacts with the objects of Swann's library.

Car ce n'était pas la beauté intrinsèque des choses qui me rendait miraculeux d'être dans le cabinet de Swann, c'était l'adhérence à ces choses — qui eussent pu être les plus laides du monde — du sentiment particulier, triste et voluptueux que j'y localisais depuis tant d'années et qui l'imprégnait encore. (510)¹⁷⁷

And in this same fashion García Vega, via repetition, proceeds to identify, whether knowingly or not, the specific objects that crowd the images of his past, obsessively circling about them, investigating them in his poems from every angle, cubistically, to determine their true meaning to him as signs. Further examples include “niño” which appears 18 times throughout *Suite*, compared to “hombre” or “mujer” only used 2 and 3 times, respectively. Other nouns like “payaso,” “arlequín,” “flor,” “cañaveral,” “calle,” “bujía,” “brisa,” “lluvia,” “cristal,” and “fiesta” are employed repeatedly and differently from poem to poem, a true poetic demonstration of Wittgenstein's family resemblance.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁷ “For it was not the intrinsic beauty of the objects themselves that made it miraculous for me to be sitting in Swann's library, it was the attachment to those objects — which might have been the ugliest in the world — of the particular feeling, melancholy and voluptuous, which I had for so many years localized in that room and which still impregnated it” (Proust 437).

¹⁷⁸ Other examples, with their frequency in parentheses, include: *noche* (48); *payaso* (10); *arlequín* (6); *algodón* (10); *portal* (6); *cañaveral* (3); *cristal* (19); *lluvia* (11); *fiesta* (7); *flor* (12); *bujía* (6); *palmas* (10); *calle* (11); *serpiente* (6); *brisa* (12); *humo* (7); *silencio* (7); *niño* (18); *hombre* (2); *mujer* (3); *peces* (7); *tarde* (17); *mañana* (9); *sol* (11).

The most frequently used noun is “noche,” appearing 48 times compared with its more luminous counterparts, “tarde” and “mañana,” appearing 17 and 9 times, respectively. Such a lexical summation —though admittedly a word count can be misleading— suggests a meditation in *Suite* on the obscurity associated with childhood and the night, the first brought on the perceived distance in time and the second because of the mystery that darkness provokes, each requiring deliberate reflection and imagination of vision in order to infiltrate them.

And alongside the objects of daily life, shrouded in that darkness of the past, García Vega also includes the various influential people who marked his education. These historical figures appear within his poems receiving the same exploratory treatment as the other images, because now, transformed into memories, their true significance is equally in question. From writers, literary characters, actors, and political leaders, these proper nouns inhabiting of the films he saw and the books he read are scattered throughout the later poems of *Suite*, surprising the reader with their unexpected cameos. Lautréamont, Guillaume Apollinaire, Walt Whitman, Paul Verlaine, César Vallejo, and William Blake, Lord Jim, Don Juan, Tom Mix, Charlie Chaplin, Simón Bolívar, Carlos V, El Cid. For Lezama these influences that appear in García Vega’s book represent “...un encuentro, una conversación o ese polvillo que se desprende y flota, precisa y desconcierta al objeto” (“Un libro de Lorenzo García Vega” 359). They are equal to how they have been encountered, fragmentally, remembered incompleteness. In the poem, “Vallejo o Apollinaire recobran sus siluetas amargas y jocundas y nos

estrechan la mano...” (359), as experienced in the following poem, reproduced in its entirety, “Lima”:

Conquistadores a zancadas en los almohadones
En Lima
los galápagos jardineros Verlaine las trompetas
lagrimosas
los suburbios de naranja la pirámides de sal
para trinchar la luna
las polvorientas mesoneras a trompicones en el caracol
desnudan sus cabezas piden lila hasta el columpio
de Júpiter
las liebres en incienso de gaseosa a fecha de libro roto
en remiendo de algodónoso indio
los aviones de cartón César Vallejo
los cuentos “Simón Bolívar” en caja de sorpresa
del pez en el estambre de la abuela
los abruptos camafeos en la montaña
los roncós gañanes musitando las endechas del periodista
en las banderas del rey Don Juan acampados
en la lluvia como una niña sibilina como un agorero
cowboy

En Lima (54)

The images spill down the page and we can barely keep up with the relentless pace of the enumeration, which avoids monotony through the disparity of its elements. The connections cannot be created fast enough. Verlaine finds himself between gardeners and trumpets, Vallejo follows cardboard airplanes, and Bolívar is a mere title for a collection of stories placed inside a gift box. The somber funeral procession described in “Baladas...” transforms into the phantasmagorical parade of “Lima.” But this is not a product of automatic writing, or the blind dialogue of an *exquisite corpse*. The

associations are conscious constructions from the *Galería Aporética*, a collage of influences in search of what Proust described as the “rapport unique que l’écrivain doit retrouver pour en enchaîner à jamais dans sa phrase les deux termes différents” (“Le temps retrouvé” 35-36). García Vega’s unremitting exploration of the object, and of the word that designates the object, defines his apprenticeship to signs. In Proust, the famous *madeleine*, the steeples in Martinville, the cobblestones at the Guermante’s mansion, and the *petite phrase* of Vinteuil’s sonata are among the objects, tremendously French, that are often revisited by Marcel in his analysis of their true meaning. García Vega in turn writes of his own environment, resulting in a use of language that Sáinz de la Maza deems “cubanísimo,” and that because of its “enorme capacidad diversificadora” is one of the most significant victories of *Suite* (Sáinz 36).

Conclusion

According to Deleuze, “tous les signes convergent vers l’art ; tous les apprentissages, par les voies les plus diverses, sont déjà des apprentissages inconscients de l’art lui-même” (20-21).¹⁷⁹ From his apprenticeship, when he explored Lautréamont, Proust, Surrealism, Cubism, and all of the proposals, both the literature they offered and the memory of experiencing their literature poured into García Vega’s first effort to build himself and a structure to hold what he attempted to locate. Somewhere while writing the poems of *Suite*, he was certain that he had mixed “un poema cubista de Pierre Reverdy con el sabor de un quimbombó hecho por Mamá” (*OP* 337) or would recall reading the

¹⁷⁹ “All the signs converge on art; all apprenticeships, by the most diverse paths, are already unconscious apprenticeships to art itself. At the deepest level, the essential is in the signs of art.”

poems of Vallejo's *Trilce* that his mother had copied for him from the book lent to him by Lezama. His poetic self sought its own methodology, individuated, to allow him to break open his perceptions and in their fragmentary state, lessen the leap between his mind and the exterior world, and between his mind and the poetic word.

Con traducciones me moví en mi *Suite para la espera*, el libro de mis veinte años. Era el libro en que soñaba a Vallejo, soñaba a Apollinaire [...] soñaba a los cubistas. Y lo onírico era la traducción de las láminas surrealistas. Pero lo onírico era, también, el intento de decir que en mi prehistoria hubo una neblina, y que esa traducción era real. (*Los años de Orígenes* 321)

It is clear that the peculiar anachronicity of García Vega's avant-garde, favoring Cubism over the more recent Surrealism, was in part an act of freedom professing no allegiance to any manifesto. For this child of Cubism, his inheritance was not a passive birthright—this was certainly not the aesthetic of Lezama Lima—but rather a deliberate election whose intent was to find an expression in agreement with his psychic need towards a potentially healing order. Now, through literature, he could create an independent object, that, as T.S. Eliot described, could serve him not as “the expression of personality, but an escape from personality” (10), both in the sense of an entry into a strain of cultural tradition as a professional writer, and as a manner of a psychoanalytical self-examination, or self-extraction, and treatment. The incipient self began to write the individual he was supposed to be.

* * *

PROPHECY AND AESTHETIC IN *OSCURO DOMINIO*

*Porque la poesía es asimismo un elemento de tránsito de la época
filosófica, síntoma de desequilibrio de la evolución del
espíritu humano hacia su madurez.*¹⁸⁰

JUAN LARREA

Introduction

Larrea wrote in July 1931 that he had entered a new period of his life where “la realidad exterior e interior se funden, se completan, se intercambian, forman una única existencia” (*Orbe* 30). This had been his objective from the beginning, to traverse the distance between the self and the beyond, and poetry had been the vehicle of approachment. As he experienced it, “la poesía era para mí una válvula de escape, un medio consolador, una sublimación de lo que no encontraba en el mundo. Hoy he llegado a la identificación de la vida con la poesía” (*Orbe* 29). He had married Marguerite Aubry, his first child Luciana was born, and he had just returned to Paris from his first stay in Peru. He had now entered into his second subductive cycle during which he would move away from the genre that he saw as serving only himself to the ensuing mature period initiating “una actividad infatigable de ensayista” (Bary, *Larrea* 115), leading to his works *Rendición de Espíritu* (1943), *La espada de la paloma* (1953), and *César Vallejo: héroe y mártir indohispano* (1973).

The transition into the second subduction zone sequence followed his ascension out of the first, the eruption of his poietic self. On November 29, 1933 Larrea sent

¹⁸⁰ *Orbe* 30.

Gerardo Diego, at the latter's request, eight poems that were published the following year as his first book. "Bajo el título de "Oscuro Dominio" he reunido algunos pequeños poemas en prosa de 1926," he wrote indicating both their form, through an allusion to Baudelaire, and that they had been composed during the first stage of his stay in Paris concurrent with the publication of *Favorables Paris Poema*. "Es una época muy significativa para mí," he reflected, "y aunque la parte exterior de ellos muestra diferencias de estilo el espíritu que los anima es demasiado único para aislarlos" (*Cartas* 263). The poems in *Oscuro dominio* hold a poetic voice who travels alongside the voice of Larrea in *Favorables*, as well as in the early entries of *Orbe*. The two voices are allies from the same period, which Larrea also confirmed in his preface to *Versión celeste*, considering their composition relative to subsequent historical events as containing certain prefigurative elements; "algo simbólico e imprevisible en el desarrollo de su vida personal," he wrote referring to himself ("Prólogo" 62). The emergence was such that first, spiritually, his *realidad interior* interposed its vision into the *realidad exterior* of the poetic word of these texts, and later, physically, his first book of poetry was published; both aspects reinforcing the creation of an illuminated conceptual passageway into the *framing darkness*.

As with García Vega's *Suite para la espera*, *Oscuro dominio* is the product of an apprenticeship, however, due to the particular character of Larrea's metamorphosis, i.e. his low-stress subduction, as his poetic self reached the surface, the sway of Huidobro was not inhibiting. Instead, this influence, both to obey and to disobey, led to Larrea's original vision that was neither Huidobro's conscious poet, nor Breton's unconscious

poet. Larrea's poet was the individuated self, or the individual undertaking the difficult march in that direction. His "Presupuesto vital" advocated such an engagement with duality as part of his developing cosmic vision perceiving the paths of opposites progressively converging from the past and through the present upon a coming universal moment, related to Teilhard de Chardin's Omega Point.¹⁸¹ For the French philosopher "evolution is the rise towards consciousness" and such an ascent is only possible if consciousness is accumulative, storing our conquests, as he calls them, and trending towards a position of *hyperpersonalization* (183).

All our difficulties and repulsions regarding the opposition between the whole and the person would dissipate if we would only realize that structurally the noosphere and in a more general sense, the world represent an ensemble that is not merely closed, but *centered*. Because it contains and generates consciousness, space-time is necessarily *convergent by nature*. Consequently, followed in the right direction, its boundless layers must coil up somewhere ahead in a point—call it *Omega*—which fuses them and consummates them integrally in itself. (184).

Teilhard de Chardin's Omega Point was in Larrea's thinking a universal culture emerging in the New World after the death of the Old. This idea would be more extensively elaborated in his later works and find further confirmation with historical developments

¹⁸¹ José Antonio Sanduvete relates the importance in Larrea's thinking of the poetic word as a vessel for the true self and a conveyor of prophecy to a certain scientific/religious humanism found in Teilhard de Chardin. This idea, argues Sanduvete, "permite la entrada de nociones como la de "progreso", la de "evolución", en el sentido de más espiritual, de tal manera que se conforma una visión, en cierto modo próxima a la de Larrea, en la que una teleología si se quiere espiritual surge como culminación de un humanismo pasado por el filtro de la palabra profética" (14).

including the Spanish Civil War and World War II. A brief example of this *convergence* of signs was seen in Chapter Three in the passage from “Profecía de América.” Nevertheless, since that point had not yet arrived, any purported resolution was misguided or dishonest. Irresolution denoted the path of an emerging resolution, “es preciso puntualizarnos a la luz” (“Presupuesto vital” 2), and the artist must confront “esta esencia dramática [que] es su esencia, por la que existe; la misma que engendra movimiento, calor y vida; la misma que enemista dos palabras en el cráneo del poeta y obliga a todo el idioma a entrar en ebullición” (“Presupuesto vital” 3). *Oscuro dominio* is a moment of his mystic exploration of crisis, generating movement —Larrea’s “locomoción racional” (3)—, where passion and intelligence collaborate, jostling for position, but carrying the self forward through art, paddling on both sides to cross the river while experiencing the anxiety of being midstream.

Díaz de Guereñu pointed out the correspondences between “Presupuesto vital” and *Oscuro dominio*, citing the use of Castilian prose and the date of composition (*La poesía de Juan Larrea* 41), however, from Larrea’s letters we know that many, if not all, of the poems from *Oscuro dominio* were first written in French and later translated to Spanish as needed. More important is the relationship to mysticism that Gurney explores in the texts in prose “Presupuesto vital,” *Oscuro dominio*, and *Orbe*, as well as the verse poetry from this time. While Larrea’s increased use of prose presented a generic transition from the short spatially designed verses of his Creationist/Ultraist poetry towards the later expository poetic writing of his cultural essays, what it was more indicative of is the progress of his vision born in a search for revelatory images and

evolving into what Sanduvete terms Larrea’s “profética hermenéutica.”¹⁸² The prose poems of *Oscuro dominio* are a midpoint between the ecstasy of the first Larrea-poet and the ecstasy of the final Larrea-prose writer, a waiting room between greater metamorphic cycles. The poems are infused with created images at times linking passages similar the poetic proposals of “Presupuesto vital” and at other times more comparable to short accounts of defining experiences or the premonition of their arrival. As a prose of transition, and a prose narrating transition, Laemmel-Serrano’s classification of the poems as allegories or parables, is useful given the way in which they relate a formational spiritual moment. Making reference to the spatial aspect of the title, she writes

L’entrée dans ce domaine équivaut à l’obtention d’un premier degré dans l’épreuve initiatique : dans cette zone ténébreuse, zone de passage entre l’en-deça [*sic*] et l’au-delà, un révélation partielle a lieu. Il est significatif à ce propos que la majeure partie des textes de «Oscuro Dominio» se présentent sous forme d’allégorie, ou de parabole ; ils se trouvent [...] en étroite relation avec la recherche et l’énonciation d’une «vérité».
(Laemmel-Serrano 9)

¹⁸² Sanduvete explains, “En lo que denominamos “hermenéutica profética” se distinguen dos fases. Una primera, propiamente hermenéutica, de análisis de textos y testimonios del pasado, un ejercicio de interpretación de la historia a través de las señales legada por los sabios de la antigüedad; en segundo lugar, una fase, propiamente profética, de proyección hacia el futuro, de reinterpretación de los datos extraídos de los textos clásicos con la intención, más allá de la labor historiadora, de comprender el futuro, sus claves y su llegada” (23).

Larrea’s method is reminiscent of that of Lezama Lima who wrote, for example, in “Después de lo raro, la extrañeza” appearing in *Orígenes* in 1945, referring to the group of *Espuela de plata*, “Querían hacer también profecía para diseñar la gracia y el destino de nuestras próximas ciudades. Querían que la poesía que se elaboraba fuese una seguridad para los venideros” (52). However, worthy of a more extensive analysis is his use of the word *hacer* related to prophecy versus what Larrea would deem to be participation in prophecy.

Likening the ensemble of this work to a dark territory between the present and the beyond, she positions them as part of an orphic path generating poiesis, equally in agreement with Lezama's poetics: "todo nuevo saber, utilizando sentencias de los coros eleusinos, ha brotado siempre de la fértil oscuridad" ("Introducción a los vasos órficos" 412). What she terms an initiatory trial is the prolongation of the individuation process where the spirit is challenged to continue towards the revelation of truth pronounced. Larrea shares García Vega's obsessively unwavering search for truth, but the divergence between them becomes increasingly plain. Larrea's search is ultimately forward, descending and ascending, while García Vega's search leads him backwards, resting in the past, descending, but remaining unconvinced of the ascension. In this section I will examine that spirit unifying the eight poems of *Oscuro dominio* as that which Heidegger considered "presencing by means of *physis*" ("The Question Concerning Technology" 317), divulged in the tectonics of converging dualities, the individual between the opposing forces in alert observance from a vantage point distinguishing the possible union of the two.

The Ascending Individual: "Dulce Vecino" and "Atienza"

Furthering the association of the novice poet's first book with the early self-portraits examined by Stein, each poem of *Oscuro dominio* is governed by a prominent grammatical first person explicitly present in the text as the thinker, not necessarily the poet, of the ideas expounded. However, through the eight poems the role of that voice traces a fluctuation from commanding speaker to vulnerable participant,

recalling Picasso's contrasting images of self. In the first three texts, 'Dulce vecino,' 'Atienza,' and 'Diente por diente,' initially it appears that the only voice is that of a narrating storyteller, however, it ultimately reveals itself to be a first person making its presence known through a reflection on the communicated material or by evoking an inclusive *we*. In the next four texts: 'Camino de carne,' 'Fervor,' 'Color madre,' and 'Cavidad verbal,' the first person is the protagonist who experiences the text rather than relating it and, thus, is more affected by the developments. This is not wholly negative, as the result is often one of illumination. The final poem, 'La planicie y su espejo' returns to the assertive, yet agonizing, first person who recounts and reflects on a scene, completing an embedded journey of the poetic voice through the eight poems and exiting the *oscuro dominio* at its conclusion.

'Dulce vecino,' which Larrea placed first for the way it functioned as "una excelente introducción poética" to the work (*Cartas* 263), presents such a case where the approaching revelation, "el imposible físico encerrado en forma vaga de fruto" (2) comes only after a self-sacrificing traverse closing the distance separating one from their transformation. The task is exemplified first through the character of a traveler and in the second paragraph through a painter. Afterwards, the narrator establishes itself not only as sufficiently knowledgeable to tell the tales, but also to act as a voice of authority, employing a series of imperatives in the third paragraph in a new analogy for those readers who doubt the lesson being shared, and continues in the fourth paragraph with phrases of certainty such as "basta considerar..." and "es preciso..." In the fifth paragraph, similar phrases are used ("se necesita..."), but the narrator suddenly

transforms into a first person, initially plural, reuniting those interior and exterior to the text into one collective, reminiscent of “Presupuesto vital”:

Para caminar de dentro a fuera se necesita haber hecho antes el camino contrario, de fuera a dentro y viceversa; lo que aplicado a nuestra humana naturaleza nos demuestra que si en alguna parte somos, el tiempo no tiene realidad sino como respiración del espacio. (3)

Two sentences later the singular first person makes its first appearance, and emphatically so with agreeing reflexive pronouns and possessive adjectives: “En prueba de ello me asomo a un espejo, que evidentemente existía con anterioridad a mi impulso, y me encuentro en él y contemplo mi satisfacción al verme tenido en cuenta y hasta comentado por la materia que hemos dado en llamar insensible” (3). “Dulce vecino” demonstrates a slightly altered subject progression from that which Larrea used in the poem “Longchamps.” Whereas the Creationist poem began with the third person and then a first-person artist doubting his ability to achieve his goal, which he romantically addresses with the second person, here, he opens with third person, followed by the second, and finally arriving at the confident first-person self using such veridical words as *proof* and *evidently*. From the poems of his apprenticeship to those of his poetic self, the beyond loses its personificatory treatment for an ineffability that can only be explained through metaphorical experiences that indicate its existence. The traveler, the painter, the *you* who doubts, the *we*, and the *I*, i.e. the various persons in “Dulce vecino” are in fact people seeking to approach their essence located inside the truth of the spirit.

In this poem, the individual is always one half of the converging duality, beginning with the traveler interacting with the earth: “Llega un punto en que la tierra endurecida por los talones del viajero y en el fondo molesta por su silencio, se esconde entre rocas negándose a dejarse pisar” (1). Initially, the image of the hardened ground is reminiscent of the framing darkness of Chapter One and the image used by Unamuno in 1895 to describe Spanish apathy and the effect of the oppressive environment on the new generations.¹⁸³ However, instead of assigning blame to the ground for stifling the individual’s progress, in “Dulce vecino” the passively indifferent traveler is at fault for having ceased his dialogue with the earth. The first paragraph recounts the dramatic crescendo from walking monotonously over plains to a sudden mountain ascension generating “palabras y florecillas” before descending out of artistic euphoria. He again takes up the metaphor of the feet used in “Presupuesto vital” looking not left to right, but backward to forward, using the heel for the neglectfulness of the traveler and the toe for the engaged traveler exerting the energy of engaged communication. The opposite with whom the self must collaborate in order to arrive at such realizations is located increasingly inward as the painter and his painting replace the traveler/ground binary. As the painter struggles to close the space between self and art and to realize his self-portrait, he discovers the answer with the help of “el silencio de la noche,” effecting a mystical entry into the canvas. Truth becomes a destruction of self to disappear inside the answers revealed through poiesis, which is a spatial concept: “para caminar de dentro a fuera se

¹⁸³ From Chapter One: “Se dice que hay gérmenes vivos y fecundos por ahí, medio ocultos, pero está el suelo tan apisonado y compacto, que los brotes tiernos de los granos profundos no logran abrir la capa superficial calicostrada” (“Sobre el marasmo actual en España” 253-254).

necesita haber hecho antes el camino contrario, de fuera a dentro y viceversa” (3), as well as temporal: “El antes y el después son simples perspectivas parciales” (3).

The lesson concluded, the poet arrives in the final sentence as an emerging gemstone, “un zafiro sin pulir al llegar el alba montada en oro” (3). The poet and the sunrise converge, as had Larrea and Huidobro, and as were Larrea and his self, prophesizing a future sapphire. The association of the blue sapphire and the sunrise emits an interesting echo with Larrea’s epigraph from “Presupuesto vital” in which he wrote “No conocí a Darío, pero me doy por sabido que entre su pecho y el horizonte apenas cabía el canto de un pájaro” (1). The suggested approximation of the poet of *Azul* with the horizon suggests a successful moment in the illuminative search that he encourages the artist to pursue and, accordingly, the poetry of Darío would represent a key component in the teleology formulated in *Rendición de Espiritu*.¹⁸⁴ The dawn arrives riding its “asno de oro de puros dedos,” a curious image similar to those “radioactive” images David Bary in Larrea’s Creationist poetry. However, it is certainly a reference to Apuleius’ *The Transformations of Lucius* often called *The Golden Ass*, and its conclusion

¹⁸⁴ Larrea carried out an extensive prophetic interpretation of the poetry of Rubén Darío. In *Rendición de Espiritu* he began with a prosopopeiac work Darío wrote in his youth, “El porvenir,” seizing upon the poem’s climax: “¡América es el porvenir del mundo!” Then, through an interweaving of passages from a variety of poems, he unites Darío’s articulation of the second coming of Christ and the biblical apocalypse as a rebirth: “Y nuestro siglo [...] verá surgir a Aquel que fue anunciado / por Juan” (“Pax”); faith in the clairvoyance of the poetic word: “Falta la terrible trompeta. / Mas oye el alma del poeta / crujir los huesos del planeta” (“Santa Elena de Montenegro”); and faith in America: “¡Gloria a América prepotente! / Su alto destino se siente” (“Canto a la Argentina”); all to determine that this continent is “la proyección geográfica —histórica por tanto— de aquello que Rubén Darío denominaba “el alma universal” en que había pretendido hundirse, al modo como el cerebro, con sus dos lóbulos distintos, constituye la proyección sustantiva y estructural de la Realidad y sede de la vida consciente” (*Rendición de Espiritu* 363).

marked by the return of the protagonist to his human form after a year-long picaresque journey.

My bestial features faded away, the rough hair fell from my body, my sagging paunch tightened, my hind hooves separated into feet and toes, my fore hooves now no longer served only from walking upon, but were restored, as hands, to my human uses. (271)

With this context, the melancholic image of the “desmelenados días de otoño” surrounding the traveler at the beginning of “Dulce vecino” unites with that of the “asno de oro de puros dedos” at its conclusion to enclose the poem and the self in the anticipation of a successful metamorphosis not yet achieved, but forthcoming.¹⁸⁵

The solitary traveler reappears in the ensuing poem “Atienza,” transposed from the earlier metaphorical mountain ascension to the national landscape of the Spanish village in Castilla from which the poem takes its name. A similar shift of subject occurs after an impersonal introduction—“Si el camino que uno sigue se bifurca y en la opción se toma el conducente a Atienza, contraviniendo a toda norma no saldrá júbilo ni terrenal ornato a recibiros” (5)—, where the generalizing “uno” and “os” initiate the reader into the inhospitable surroundings through which they will pass if undertaking, as in “Dulce vecino,” the journey of the traveler. The storyteller soon becomes an involved witness, “Por lo menos así de cabizbajo llegué yo” (5), and proceeds with both a testimony of his

¹⁸⁵ In the Introduction to his translation, Robert Graves points out the cyclical structure of Apuleius’ work: “‘Transformations’ therefore conveys the secondary sense of ‘spiritual biography’; and Lucius had spent twelve month in his ass’s skin, from one rose-season to the next, constantly changing his House, until his death as an ass and rebirth as a devotee of Isis” (xv).

fruitless search and a verdict regarding its solution. On choosing the path that would lead him to Atienza, he arrives only to find it abandoned and soulless, and through *leísmo*, a dialectical variation where the indirect object pronoun “le” replaces animate direct objects, “Atienza” splits into two entities: the geo-political space and the spirit of its inhabitants. When upon arrival he recalls, “no tuve siquiera la suerte de encontrarle” (5), the absence being synonymous with the village’s passivity and resignation. It is not until after his ascent to an overlooking castle and the passing of several airplanes that the town briefly comes to life to watch from their stationary positions as the airplanes advance toward the horizon. Rather than producing the sensation of cold machines invading the bucolic countryside, the airplanes are another symbol for the journey, for the movement that seeks the horizon as its destination. However, the foreboding sign is only available for interpretation during a fleeting moment: “mas pronto el cielo recobró su paz y volvieron los ojos a sus puros y breves cauces” (6). The transient revelatory experience is to be pursued as much as it is to be witnessed, and the village’s return to its short-sighted channels is the portrayal of a fatalistic self withdrawn from the transformative struggle.

Distinct from in “Dulce vecino,” the individual is not part of the convergence, but within in it so that the traveler’s ascent and the nature of the wisdom obtained from on high bears a resemblance to that of Zarathustra. In contrast with Nietzsche’s prophet, Larrea’s narrator does not discover definite teachings to impart, but only a hypothesis, an interpretation of what he has seen—“Y comprendí o creí comprender muchas cosas ocultas para mí hasta entonces”—, his belief being that heaven and earth “se estaban suicidando lentamente” (6). The image of death and renewal is demonstrative of Larrea’s

developing conception of a New World culture as well as the influence of the biblical Apocalypse on his poetic imagination; the destruction of the Old World to make way for the coming light. Heaven and earth, from the perspective of the traveler above Atienza, are the immediate contours of his existence delimiting a declining self. As one nears the horizon the distance between them diminishes and they eventually cease to exist. Laemmel-Serrano further identifies this heaven and earth with acquiescent philosophical axioms defining reality, and through an opposition similar to Larrea's intelligence/emotion in "Presupuesto vital," she argues that the horizon in its convergence is the ultimate defiance of those "disciplines répressives" that "modeler et perpétuer un monde rigide, ou l'homme reste nécessairement aliéné de son «essence» propre" (96).

The mystical *silence of night* in "Dulce vecino" becomes *silence and clarity* in "Atienza," and the poetic voice undergoes a moment of progressing Jungian individuation as the unconscious recognizes the exterior reality and provokes a feeling of dislocation for the individual who saw himself suddenly "incluido en un destino ajeno, del todo extraño al intuitivo desarrollo de mi esencia" (7). The allegorical framing darkness portrayed in this text from 1926 is the poetic bringing-forth of Larrea's psychological framing darkness before 1919, incorporating itself into a method that would take him out of poetry and out of Europe.

Y hoy ya creo haber descubierto que su ausencia no es asunto de horas ni de días. Casi me atrevo a asegurar que como tantos y tantos pueblos españoles, como Trujillo al Perú, Córdoba a la Argentina, Medellín a Colombia, Guadalajara a Méjico, por solo citar algunos de los que ganaron

mejor fortuna, emigró en el siglo español de las emigraciones. Si bien se le busca, en América se le encontrará. (8)

The voice in this passage is more one of a poetic scholar than a prophet; he is not Huidobro's Altazor, a *pequeño diós*. His insight, lacking confidence and still in a state of development— “creo haber descubierto...” and “casi me atrevo a asegurar...” (8, *emphasis mine*)— originates from an intuition of the historical with the poetic and synthesized inside the geographical migration of the proper names of the cities, including Córdoba, Argentina, Larrea's eventual home from 1956 until his death in 1980. Ten years before the start of the Spanish Civil War, and 17 years before his *Rendición de espíritu*, Larrea was proposing, poetically, that America is the location where the Spirit shall be rendered with the decline of Spain, but still with the hesitance of the transitioning self and a “causal testigo del asomarse de una celestial ansia de roca” (8).¹⁸⁶

Mystical Evolution: “Diente por diente”

The critic David Bary, benefitting from his close relationship he established with the poet, learned that following the initial resurgence of optimism provoked by his arrival

¹⁸⁶ “Curioso poema,” Larrea wrote when sending it to Diego for publication; “Al releerlo he quedado estupefacto y me parece digno de un estudio analítico bien interesante. Análisis como el de los sueños” (*Cartas* 263). According to David Bary, Larrea completed this the “Examen poético de *Atienza*,” “un texto bien largo que llena todo un cuaderno y que estudia las implicaciones metafísicas del poema en prosa “Atienza”, pieza capital de *Oscuro dominio*” (Bary, *Larrea* 105). However, this study accompanying the other texts of *Orbe* was not included in Pere Gimferrer's 1990 edition published in Seix Barral.

Larrea's poetic village Atienza offers a similar image to García Vega's Vilis from the book of the same name published in 1998; that of an oneiric space holding “casi todo material en estado puro. Un material al que le di una forma: una estructura: una ciudad imposible donde hay determinados barrios. Lo mismo se pasa de un barrio de Madrid que a otro barrio de otra ciudad, o a otro” (Aguilera 52).

in Paris and the publication of *Favorables* in 1926, the following year he entered a period of “angustia acrecentada,” and “soledad desoldada,” described as a “crisis sicológica y metafísica” (Bary, *Larrea* 68). Larrea also shared with him that in this state he read Juan González Arintero’s work *La evolución mística* (1916), an interesting text and author informing Larrea’s thinking to a degree that has not been sufficiently explored. Arintero, a Dominican priest and professor of natural sciences formulated various arguments that attempted to resolve the divide between science and faith, incorporating systematic concepts into religious philosophy and enhancing scientific studies with spiritual meaning. Significant for consideration in this dissertation where I have suggested the idea of a *geopoiesis*, is Arintero’s first work, *El Diluvio universal demostrado por la Geología* (1892) in which, with the quality of a combatant fighting in defense of Catholicism, proposed to demonstrate the veracity of the Great Flood through tradition and historical accounts, then corroborated by geologic processes and their records (*El Diluvio* 10). His multidisciplinary approach presents questionable science, but compelling literature. “Al buscar en una poderosa energía de la Naturaleza la causa inmediata del gran cataclismo,” he argues,

estamos muy lejos de considerarlo como absolutamente natural en toda su manifestación. Eso quede para el racionalista, que abandonando la luz de la razón, no acierta a ver nada más allá de la esfera de los sentidos. Esto podrá maravillarse, y aun reírse, de que pensemos que un fenómeno natural, como la universal inundación que la Geología nos muestra, no sólo realizada verdaderamente, sino que también relacionada además con una prodigiosa manifestación volcánica, muy capaz de producirla, debía

acaecer precisamente cuando la malicia de los hombres había llegado a su extremo y exigía un castigo tan ejemplar. (390-391)

Flooding, volcanic eruptions, and spiritual decay make up the primary causes and effects, however, despite Arintero's argument for a non *a priori* system —“No tenemos ningún sistema preconcebido; no queremos tampoco preconcebirlo; los mismos hechos y la realidad lo establecerán mejor” (11)— from his sanctified starting point, resolute upon confirming the relationship between catastrophe and admonition, the circumstantial causality is already determined. Nevertheless, the study of terrestrial events as literary creations revealed in the poetic word written by the hand of God in Nature¹⁸⁷ follows closely with Larrea's own thinking, and in moments of Arintero's work when explicit indications of Christian devoutness are absent there are passages that seemingly could have been written by Larrea: “Esta coincidencia tan particular, y en realidad imprevista, como tantas otras que hemos hallado, es de lo que más nos persuade de la verdad de nuestro sistema; creemos haber dado con la clave, cuando todos los enigmas se descifran por sí solos” (360).

What Arintero calls *la evolución mística* is a reconciliation of positivist thought and the sciences, to which he attributes value, with supernatural divine grace that was under attack in those modern times for resisting reduction to a system of total

¹⁸⁷ Arintero unites prophecy, God, and nature into a system-forming literature: “Los infalibles hechos consignados en la Biblia por la mano de los Profetas y los escritos en el gran libro de la Naturaleza por la misma mano de Dios son los que han de decidir; el sistema que establezcan será el sistema verdadero será el sistema verdadero. Quererlo establecer a priori, escribir bajo la presión del espíritu de partido, es taparse voluntariamente los ojos, temiendo que les hiera los purísimos rayos de la luz” (*El Diluvio* 11).

comprehension. The evolution occurs through an application of Darwinian theory to mystic apprenticeship. Just as Larrea and César Vallejo had lamented the absence of leaders to inspire the new generation, “la juventud sin maestros” (Vallejo, “Estado de la literatura española” 7), Arintero also identifies a generation of young people searching for faith, but left without proper guidance: “se resfría la piedad y se pierde la misma fe por falta de maestros que sepan hablar con gracia y exhortar en doctrina sana” (6). With better orientation in mysticism, which he defines as “ciencia experimental de la vida divina en las almas elevadas a la contemplación” (18), the individual acquires first-hand experience that is esoteric by nature, but that must then be made exoteric —“extractar, ordenar o traducir en lenguaje humano” (18-19)— in order to lead effectively. The mystic journey suggests a sort of orphic *ascent*, a cognitive journey upwards together with an impending knowledge-bearing descent, recalling the traveler’s experience in Larrea’s “Dulce vecino” and “Atienza.” Arintero reasons that increased experiences would provide increased testimonies returning prestige to the supernatural and multiplying its number of adherents. It is difficult not to relate this logic with the evolutionary cultural improvement offered by the *paideia* and desired by Walt Whitman in “Democratic Vistas,” described in Chapter Two.

David Bary’s insight explains that Arintero further informed Larrea’s instinctual association of crisis with sincerity by incorporating it into a stage of transformation, “asimilable al estado que en los místicos se denominaba “noche oscura del alma”, estado de purgación negativa” (*Larrea* 68). The biblical book of Revelation was also fundamental for both as the culminating space to emerge out of destruction. “Diente por

diente,” the third poem of *Oscuro dominio* (9), takes its name from Exodus’ authorization of reciprocated violence and transforms it into reflexive, self-vanquishing activity. The poem’s four sections alternate between verse and prose beginning with four stanzas of verses in section 1 that present an enumeration of fragmentary aphorisms and simile-phrases expressing sequences of transformation, division and unification, and the sacrifice of self required to realize the process. The first tercet creates symbolic associations of noun-objects to evoke a coming light and, consequently, a present darkness that facilitates mystic illumination:

En el país de la risa la ceniza precede al fuego 1
La nieve precede al pájaro
Las lágrimas a sus tronos

The second tercet defines a state of spiritual incompleteness, beginning with the verse: “Lo que es esperanza en un comienzo se hace huella en el camino” (9). Hope, the sentiment produced in the first tercet, will become the footprint that gives testimony to the individual’s passage from the realm of *ceniza*, *nieve*, and *lágrimas* to that of *fuego*, *pájaro*, and *tronos*; it will be used up leaving only the trace of its motivating impulse forward. Arintero expresses a similar sentiment in *La evolución mística* writing, “la fe y la esperanza, que perseveran en el picador como últimas raíces para poder recobrar la vida” (189). In contrast with Larrea, however, Arintero’s religious orthodoxy leaves the imperfect individual incapable of achieving complete acquisition of virtue and identifies hope as an ever-present incentive. Larrea, on the other hand, speaks of a hope in times of darkness and that disappears as enlightenment resolves need.

Lo que es esperanza en un comienzo se hace huella en el camino 4
Lo que ocurre deja los colores desunidos
Pero sujetos a una especie de impostura oscura

Visible fragmentation (*colores desunidos*) is united by an agglutinative falseness (*impostura oscura*), where the darkness is that which still had not been revealed.

Para perder la vida no hay mas [sic] que un motivo el cielo 7
Las bocas huelen al deseo de descubrir un hermoso crimen
Un café nunca está lejos

The third tercet shifts to the need to get beyond oneself, a constant theme in Larrea's poetry, achieved through the loss of life with the goal not being death, but heaven. The following verse shares its synesthetic construction with a sentence from "Presupuesto vital": "así extraordinaria es la página donde las palabras no huelen a diccionario y sí a boca fresca" (3). In the first example taste and smell intertwine to produce a search (*el deseo de descubrir*) while in the second, occurring in manifesto prose, the relationship is reversed and the words are what give off the smell, in most cases the smell of dictionary and in great exceptions of vigorous taste (*boca fresca*).

The final stanza contains nine lines, summing the first three tercets into the crowning fourth, suggesting the same numerical symbolism as the Axiom of Maria associated with Jung's Individuation, the sequence described in Larrea's poem "Razón," and the epigraph to this chapter, a verse to which Lezama Lima alluded in "Introducción

a un Sistema Poético.”¹⁸⁸ However, this fourth is not the final fulfilled stage, but rather a symbolic unification of the first three.

Unidos por una misma tendencia	10
Cuando el alba paga las nubes con su vida	
Unidos por el bajo relieve de una voz venida a menos	
Unidos como monedas en el precio de una mujer desnuda	
Los miembros de un hombre no dejan allí nada que desear	
Como eclipses parciales	15
Como solos de arpa	
Como tiros al aire	
Como cerrillas	

The repetition of the word “unidos” insists on the stanza’s function, but it is a unification of the collective in darkness (“cuando el alba paga las nubes con su vida”) and a shared state of incompleteness, made plain in the four concluding similes.

The prose of the second section depicts the present state of the contemporary spirit within the setting of the city. A peripatetic flâneur observes the decaying environment and the wait in which the withered citizens find themselves: “La ciudad fruta mordida en torno nuestro se lamenta y agita un ramo de rostros casi mustios” (10). The onlooker demands that we too take note of this situation: “Miradlos ya tristes moralmente y cruzados de silencio como emigrantes que aguardan la hora de su desembarco” (10). He evokes a procession reminiscent of García Vega’s rural funeral

¹⁸⁸ Lezama misquotes, or mistranslates, Browning’s verse exchanging the verb “to frame” for “hacer” (to make). Such an adjustment is beneficial for his historical account of the role of poesis “Después del poderoso espíritu ascendente logrado en el ternario, se logra una extensión irradiante ocupado [*sic*] por una pausa creadora, aludida en el verso del abate Vogler: *Hacer de tres, no un cuarto sonido, sino un astro*” (16).

march —“Hora de entierros, con su cortejo de guajiros callados masticando sopores, mientras aullan [*sic*] las palmas lejanas” (“Baladas” 28)— but for Larrea those dying (*moribundo*) are the unenlightened participants extended throughout the urban streets, an image supported by the election of prose over verse. He furthers the description of the modern state’s desperate spiritual crisis in the verses of the third section:

Tanto progreso introducido en
nuestra jaqueca pálida miseria de estufa
sin dolor sin domador sin
nada parecido a vientre maternal ni
a tesoros ocultos

“Diente por diente” concludes with a lengthy section IV in prose in which the earlier flâneur incorporates himself into the group, abundantly employing the first-person plural, and demonstrating a similar expressive tone to that of “Presupuesto vital.” The almost sermonizing voice addresses the dying masses, the “raza de islas” lost in solitude, giving them hope and informing them of the gamble that must be taken in order to overcome this world. The image of disunited individuals is often reiterated in objects like “montañas desencadenadas,” “montañas descosidas,” “islas descosidas,” “botones descosidos,” “barbillas descosidas” that find themselves between converging opposites (“alto” and “bajo,” “dos labios,” “alba” and “poniente,” “mares” and “celajes”) proposing a future resolution where “un confuso torbellino traslada al infinito el punto matemático donde nuestras vísceras se juntan” (11). With a motive akin to that of Arintero, he insists on the restoration of the supernatural as the appropriate force to inform the individual: “Por eso

las supersticiones nos convierten en proximidad de pájaros” (11). With a manifesto-like call to arms—“En verdad no es sino la hora de nuestra venganza” (12)—, the poetic voice commands: “Nuestros poros son la única cosa que nos queda por perder. Apostémoslos” (12) to set in motion the mystical emergence from this darkness.

For a Mortal Coda

The three previous longer texts (“Dulce vecino,” “Atienza,” and “Diente por diente”) are followed by five shorter prose texts: “Camino de carne,” “Fervor,” “Color madre,” “Cavidad verbal,” and “La planicie y su espejo.” “Camino de carne” again presents the first-person traveler advancing along the path towards of his depurative journey where the feet carrying him are praised for their “falta elocuente de sandalias [que] forma parte de las gesticulaciones de los árboles que quedan rezagados, a lo lejos” (13), abandoning terrestrial objects to the nightfall behind him. The ensuing poem, “Fervor,” generates its title emotion in the discovery of what is identified as both the beginning and the end of the text as *the ancient current* (“la antigua corriente”). The individual stumbles upon this ineffability in a space between his words (“entre mis palabras”), and moved to excitement repeatedly insists on its location: “allí estaba, allí,” which he repeats four times. The ancient current is the *beyond* that Larrea is searching for blocked out by the umbrella (“sombrilla,” / “paraguas”) that our ancestors opened to protect them from their own anguish, a reference to institutionalized beliefs diverging from the original Spirit, a “religión sin creyentes, ni palmas, cánticos” (16).

“Color madre,” according to Juan Manuel Díaz de Guereñu, recounts what is by now the familiar theme of “la historia de un hiato, de una distancia entre seres humanos, escindidos por la intermediación de un mundo de irrealidades, de hojarasca poco transparente que impide una verdadera comunión” (*Juan Larrea: versiones del poeta* 129).¹⁸⁹ Discerning a distant light characterized by a woman on a beach, his attempts to approach her fail because of his unenlightened flesh. “Cavidad verbal” contains what Laemmel-Serrano calls “une vielle recherche, celle qui creuse les phénomènes verbaux pour toucher un «fond», un point fixe constituant une sorte de garantie de la signification” (108).¹⁹⁰ The space between words previously filled with the fervor of mystical spirit vacillates back to inadequate communication caused by the detection of a partitioning glass pane. Immediately this recalls the passage from Ortega y Gasset’s *La deshumanización del arte* (1925).¹⁹¹ Although perhaps influenced by the image (we have already found Larrea’s writing during this time to bear similarities to Ortega’s work), in “Cavidad verbal” the glass represents the distance between individuals that at times seems greater “según los agentes psíquicos” (19).

¹⁸⁹ This poem receives particular attention from Juan Manuel Díaz de Guereñu in the sixth chapter of his study *Juan Larrea: versiones del poeta* (1995). Consulting the archives of Gerardo Diego, he discovered various versions demonstrating different stages in its composition leading him to the important conclusion that Larrea did not practice automatic writing in this case (112).

¹⁹⁰ Laemmel-Serrano undertakes an extensive *commentaire de texte* of “Cavidad verbal” in the third chapter of *Juan Larrea ou Le suicide en poésie* (1995) titled “Vers une poésie de la déprise,” where *déprise* refers to the separation occurring during this final stage of his poetic activity that she dates in 1926 and also indicative of the mystical exploration of this period that includes *Oscuro dominio* (Laemmel-Serrano 104-121).

¹⁹¹ “Imagínese el lector que estamos mirando un jardín al través del vidrio de una ventana. Nuestros ojos se acomodarán de suerte que el rayo de la visión penetre el vidrio, sin detenerse en él, y vaya a prenderse en las flores y frondas. Como la meta de la visión es el jardín y hasta él va lanzado el rayo visual, no veremos el vidrio, pasará nuestra mirada a su través, sin percibirlo” (Ortega y Gasset 17).

The final poem, “La planicie y su espejo,” closes *Oscuro dominio* with a horizontal death emitting a vertical gaze. It is the proximate metamorphic phase lying between hope and revelation, yet it consumes the poetic voice with unavoidable desperation and self-doubt. Despite his understanding of the mystical sequence, he must accept his human weaknesses: “Las pasiones permanecen siempre allí confusas y deshinchadas” (21). If a certain symbolic death is to take place in order for the spiritual revelation to appear out of his current psychological crisis, the individual in Larrea’s coda poem does not achieve it. He stands beside death, his attention focused downward at the cadaver reduced to a “volumen aprisionado en la aureola de un postrer suspiro” (21). It holds him in place inside the chaos of his emotions while the dead has proceeded closer to the light, “a ver el lugar donde naciste” (21). “La planicie y su espejo,” and *Oscuro dominio*, conclude by lamenting the limitations of the flesh as a soul-bearing vessel —“la triste herencia de mi carne,” remembering the verse from Larrea’s “Trancarnación”— always insufficient, but always reaching for that space to which only the spirit can travel.

Un muerto, he aquí un muerto. Sus cabellos debieron haber sido dedicados a la conmiseración de los días. Su boca fue tan disputada por mañana y tarde que aun lograron arancarle [*sic*] algunas sonrisas. Hele aquí rígido como una flauta ofrecida a la resistencia de los aires más fríos, tirante entre dos intemperies, creyendo poseer de punta a punta la longitud entera, mas sin llegar siquiera a ser tan largo como su silencio. (21-22)

Conclusion

“Presumo que el fin de mi concepto de poesía es llegado” wrote Larrea a few years after writing the poems of *Oscuro dominio* (*Orbe* 29). In other words, while perhaps the mystical revelation did not take place in the final “La planicie y su espejo,” it did arrive and he underwent the transformation from being a poet of verse to a poet of Poetry, a writer of cultural essays poetically assembling images through such an interpretive method as to make evident the revelatory path of Spirit oriented towards America. As he wrote in *Orbe* on September 19, 1932:

Vida poética es la mía. Vida que no tiene otra razón de ser sino la poesía. Todo acto, toda esperanza, toda razón se apoya en un sistema arbitrario, del cual soy yo el primer sorprendido. No hay en ella un deseo de ganancia que no esté subordinado al triunfo de la vida impersonal, a la belleza, a la verdad, a la justicia. Y contra todas las asechanzas de la razón, del concepto lógico de la vida, se ha afirmado en mi consciente e inconscientemente una fe ciega, una esperanza sin límites en ese algo imaginario y fuera de toda norma que no sea la caritativa. Un gran amor me ha conducido, pero no un amor sensible, ardiente, sino un ansia de amor, ayudada por un razonar frío puesto a su servicio. (*Orbe* 179)

With *Oscuro dominio*, Larrea’s poetic self surfaces bringing forth the latent structures that guided him in his youth but were lacking the proper expression. The framing darkness became a mystical darkness potentially yielding its secrets to the contemplative traveler. Through poiesis erupted this first self, and from this self he ultimately discovered his true self, the adult imago of the artist who had suffered to be sincere.

CONCLUSION. The Two Labyrinths

*El laberinto en que vivimos puede ser la prueba del absurdo o el camino de una iniciación hacia la luz. En cierta medida, eso depende de cada uno de nosotros. Tenemos libertad para elegir.*¹⁹²

MARÍA EUGENIA VALENTIÉ

In this study of individual incommunication pursuing communication, of paralysis striving for motion, and of reading overcome by instinctual interpretation, each poet's decision to write was the mediator for transformation. This deliberate choice of activity cast a particular footprint, momentarily giving order to the entropy of an individual's dissipating meaning, ideas, and memories. My intention was to align moments that upon first inspection may seem unrelated and, until compared, chaotic like the labyrinthian slabs in Richard Long's *Summer Circle* that decorate the beginning of this dissertation.

The objective has been to reconstruct the first cycle in the metamorphic journeys undertaken by the adolescents Juan Larrea and Lorenzo García Vega during which they discovered through the poetic word a personalized structure of self that allowed for a healing shift from disordered neurotics to active artists who generated meaning. In order to juxtapose the exegeses of two portraits I proposed a multidisciplinary theory called the *tectonics of the poetic self*. I brought together multiple sites of poiesis into a heuristic model of shared imagery. I associated the material volcanic rendering of geological poiesis, specifically that of the destructive and constructive interaction of converging plates found in subduction zones, with the spiritual growth of psychoanalytical poiesis

¹⁹² From "Borges y sus laberintos" (*n. pag.*).

produced from the successful convergence of the id with the reality, or from the self encountering the other. I identified four primary stages in subduction over which I placed stages of literary growth that Harold Bloom describes in *The Anxiety of Influence*. Through this association, Juan Larrea and Lorenzo García Vega became the oceanic plate subducted beneath the continental plate identified with Vicente Huidobro and José Lezama Lima. By combining Bloom's sequence with Otto Rank's study of the creative personality in *Art and Artist*—in which he argues that creative urge reflects psychic disorientation to be healed through artistic activity—, as well as with literary poesis—the potential for a truth-bearing logos whereby from the word, the material worked by each poet, emerges the image—I recreated both the stages and the driving forces that define the dynamism of these poietic tectonics.

Following the work of Murray Stein, I related the four delineated developmental stages of the subduction zone with those of biological poesis found in the butterfly's larval metamorphosis, just as he did with the stages of psychic development in the artist, and determined that each poet had experienced two four-stage cycles, two journeys through the subduction zone: the first revealing a provisional false self and the second culminating in their true self. Due to the vast length of a study examining eight stages in each of two poets, I instead centered upon the four stages of the first, dedicating a chapter to each stage: the early situation of the oceanic plate, the encounter with the continental plate and its subduction beneath it, the transformation of the oceanic plate and ascent into the magma chamber, and finally the eruption of the magma at the Earth's surface. In Chapter One I described the *framing darkness*, using Bloom's terminology, of the

adolescent period, referring to the national crises of Larrea's Spain and García Vega's Cuba that included political upheaval and cultural stagnancy. Inside this environment I gave particular attention to the idea of the corrupted word as a deceptive signifier exacerbating instinctual disorientation and determining each writer's faith in language. For Larrea, the words of this early stage were insufficient to express the greater reality he sensed existed. For García Vega, the words of this same period were false and manipulative. This insufficiency and falsity directed the intuitive relationships each would develop with the concept of faith represented by Larrea's Sur-Christianity (exceeding beyond organized religious thinking into a greater poetic Spirit) and García Vega's Atheism (rejecting transcendent forms as obscuring rather than revealing the truth).

Chapter Two examined the nature of their encounters with the poets who became their maestros and their apprenticeship stages. García Vega met José Lezama Lima in 1944 and realized the two-year experience of the so-called *Curso Delfico*. This period of intensive reading and discussion designed to awaken the apprentice's capacity for self-knowledge brought García Vega out of a state of neurotic crisis redirecting his forces into the analysis of literary works as he approached a moment when he would begin to write his own poems. Juan Larrea first discovered the poetry of Vicente Huidobro in 1919 and was immediately inspired to follow the image aesthetics of the Creationist movement. He began writing poems modeled after those of Huidobro, and when Larrea finally met him in 1921, their friendship and literary discussions cultivated increased enthusiasm and greater self-confidence on the part of the apprentice, to the extent that at the end of 1923,

Larrea felt that his maestro could teach him nothing more. This chapter, then, offered both the biographical experience of the adolescent discovering a literary path out of childhood suffering as well as the particular poetic language that each path offered.

In Chapter Three I applied the Jungian concept of Individuation to the necessity of the emerging poets to reconcile their instinctual needs with the poetic word acquired from the maestro during the apprenticeship. As poets now part of a literary world, interacting with other writers, it became urgent to give expression to the psychological need that had initiated the original search. The collectives represented by way of the literary magazine offered a conceptual space in which to measure this process of increasing collaboration between the unconscious and conscious. Larrea's writing in the magazine *Favorables París Poema*, which he founded after his move to Paris in 1926, revealed a certain assertion of self and the formulation of his nascent vision that greatly deviated from that of Huidobro. Specifically, Larrea moved beyond his maestro's intelligent Creationism tenets to promote an artistic vitality incorporating intelligence and sensibility into a knowledge-seeking art that embraced the human crisis. In the case of García Vega, he was no longer an apprentice, but remained part of Lezama Lima's Orígenes literary group and began publishing in the magazine of the same name in 1945 until its final issue in 1956. For him, the individuation process was more complex as he was immersed inside the very poetic language from which he desired to separate, and instead revealed a textual voice bringing into question the power of language. Interrogation and doubt advanced towards negation in the form of a search for the reverse of the Orígenes word. Though differing in ascensional velocity, through their respective

magazines the improved communication between their selves and reality, while also initiating personal poetics that adapted what they had learned to what their instincts demanded of them.

Chapter Four analyzed the culminating stage in the first subductive cycle. Described as the eruption of the poietic self, the appearance of their first published books of poetry marked the insertion of their developing poiesis into the exterior world. It signified a validation of writerly activity confirming both the experience of the apprenticeship and the individuation that followed it. The 38 poems of García Vega's *Suite para la espera* (1948) made use of Cubist and Surrealist aesthetics to undertake a Proustian exploration of the word moving towards memories through verses of accumulated signs fractured to facilitate the poet's search within them and to recover the reminiscences they encapsulate. In *Oscuro dominio* (1934), Larrea expressed his mysticism and travelled in these eight prose poems across the multiple metamorphic phases through which the self was to emerge from the darkness of crisis into a state of enlightenment in the form of a symbolic death and spiritual rebirth. While Larrea grew past the avant-garde showing certain indications of its influence, García Vega reached back towards the avant-garde to translate it into his own particular circumstances, maintaining the parallel formative journey of the two poets, although in contrary senses.

The eruption of their first works marks the conclusion of the first cycle, but it is also the beginning of the second in the tectonics of the poietic self. The final half of this process carries the two poets once again through the four stages of subduction as their provisional false selves undergo a final transformation into what Murray Stein called the

artist's true self. The framing darkness of the first cycle finds its resurgence when both poets again experience psychological crises as they came to terms with the partiality of the self they had created. However, as poets rather than pre-literary adolescents this anguish finds expression in written form in the poetic diaries that they kept during this period. Larrea's *Orbe*, a manuscript that remained unedited and unpublished until 1990, contains entries from 1926 to 1933 recording a period of suffering, introspection, and the continued evolution of his teleological notion of a prophetic Poetry. Similarly, García Vega's *Rostros del Reverso* (1977), though started in *Orígenes*, is primarily composed of entries dating to his exit from Cuba in 1968 through his years in New York, and finishing in 1975 with his first stay in Miami. It is a text of self-analysis combining the inheritance of Lezama Lima with the anguish of exile and the poet's continued search for the *reverso* as he consistently doubted what his words were capable of saying.

In effect, Juan Larrea and Lorenzo García Vega will become apprentices to themselves during the second cycle of subduction, an intensified period of individuation producing works that extract the unconsciousness incrementally closer to the surface of their writing, drawing stronger bonds between life and poetry. As Larrea reaches farther beyond himself, he abandons the poetic voice of self-centered verse and disappears into Poetry by illuminating its prophets in cultural essayistic prose. His prophetic hermeneutics, as José Antonio Sanduvete classified Larrea's particular teleological exegeses, primarily begin with *Rendición de espíritu* (1943) in which, amongst many other components of his reasoning, he raises certain poets like Ruben Darío and José Martí to heroic status, foretelling the current threshold moment of the New World both in

spiritual and material terms. He became increasingly dedicated to the interpretation of one particular emissary's symbolic existence: César Vallejo, arguing in works like *César Vallejo o Hispanoamérica en la cruz de su razón* (1957) and *César Vallejo: héroe y mártir indohispano* (1973), that this Other was like none other before.

To the same degree that Larrea's poetic attention turns outward, García Vega turns inward, liberating himself of any conception of poetic heroism, refuting the heroic discourse that grew out of the Cuban Revolution and the adaptation of the Orígenes experience to its patriotic objectives. Following *Rostros del Reverso*, he publishes the polemical autobiographical essay *Los años de Orígenes* (1979) in which he is critical of many aspects of Cuban history and expresses both reproach and gratitude towards Lezama Lima. It is a sentiment contrary to Larrea's exalting of Vallejo, as García Vega pursues the many faces of his very human maestro. This work provides him with a preliminary independence that later flourishes into a prolific literary period in the second half of life that produced many autobiographical writings, both explicitly and lightly disguised in fiction, as he continues to structure through the poetic word the contours of his perception, inevitably encountering the limits of what he can express as he demonstrates in his crowning autobiography *El oficio de perder* (2004).

Of the two poets studied in this dissertation, both now deceased, I had only the privilege of meeting Lorenzo García Vega. When I mentioned comparing him with Juan Larrea and asked him his opinion of this poet who would become his Spanish counterpart thanks to my particular intentions, he said, as I shared in the Introduction, "No sé qué decir. Me siento muy alejado de Larrea" (García Vega). Indeed it would be a surprise to

hear of a comparison between these two writers so apparently unrelated if only viewed during the later stages of their lives. The one visible similarity if one were to place Larrea's *Rendición de espíritu* (1943) beside García Vega's *Los años de Orígenes* (1978), or Larrea's *César Vallejo: o Hispanoamérica en la cruz de su razón* (1958) beside García Vega's *El oficio de perder* (2004) would be the voluminous pages of essayistic prose. However, that in itself is not unremarkable now that we have seen how their first independent publications, their eruptions of self, were both small works of poetry.

I find an excellent illustration of each poet in what María Eugenia Valentié described as the two labyrinths of Jorge Luis Borges, also writing of two stages in the evolution of a poet, which she identifies through his use of this particular symbol. Among its different occurrences, she finds two types of structures holding two differing psychic states. "El laberinto en que vivimos," she writes, "puede ser la prueba del absurdo o el camino de una iniciación hacia la luz. En cierta medida, eso depende de cada uno de nosotros. Tenemos libertad para elegir" (n. pag.). Larrea's hermeneutics bring together collages of images collaborating to reveal the coming light. García Vega's autobiographical texts create collages of images always finding dead-ends, the only light being precisely the experience of the search for it.¹⁹³ Each are labyrinths constructed with the igneous slabs of a subduction zone, from tectonic plates converging into their

¹⁹³ Knowing the importance of the work of Marcel Proust to García Vega's literary education, I also asked him about an article from the 2011 July/August issue of *Le Magazine Littéraire* titled "Proust, la quête de calfeutré" in which the author Franc Schuerewegen argued that *À la recherche du temps perdu* is a quest for the perfect room in which Marcel can shut himself away to write. When I asked Lorenzo if, like Proust, he also was in search of the perfect enclosure, he answered, "No, al contrario. He buscado salir del encierro" (García Vega).

circumstantial positions and trapping inside them the poietic selves who have conceived them.

* * *

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