

**METAPHORS OF SUFFERING:
THE REPRESENTATION OF THE HOMOSEXUAL AND THE
LESBIAN AS SOCIAL AND DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTS IN
SPANISH PENINSULAR NARRATIVE TEXTS, 1970-2000**

Sheila M. Wilyman

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University of St Andrews
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1970 – 2000**

Sheila M Wilyman

Under the supervision of Professor Nigel Dennis
Dissertation submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
August 2005



University of St Andrews
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Department of Spanish

I, Sheila Wilyman, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 75,000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

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Dedicated to my late father,
Cyril John Carter,

and to my husband,
Michael Anthony Lloyd Bowyer.

Contents

Abstract	i
Acknowledgements	ii
Introduction	1
Chapter 1 – <i>El palomo cojo</i> by Eduardo Mendicutti	20
– Introduction	20
1.1 – Hate Speech: interpellated as a “chivato mariquita” and a “chivato maricón”, the narrator assumes a homosexual role	27
1.2 – Medicalising scripts: the narrator as both homosexual and clinically diseased	37
1.3 – The influence of both the written and the spoken word, as well as the pictorial image on the production of subjectivity and desire	50
1.4 – “Reverse Discourse”: the narrator answers back	56
Chapter 2 – <i>Julia</i> by Ana María Moix	61
– Introduction	61
2.1 – The infant Julia with her parents in their bourgeois city home	68
2.2 – The pre-adolescent Julia with her grandfather the anarchist, don Julio, in the country	74
2.3 – The adolescent Julia in her bourgeois city home and at school and university	80
Chapter 3 – <i>Calle Urano</i> by Jesús Álviz	90
– Introduction	90
3.1 – The director upholds the status quo and the tutor is dismissed	94
3.2 – The dismissed tutor of philosophy replies	95
3.3 – Anagni’s experiences at night (also known as Hafta by day).	97
3.4 – The closeted Hafta with his “novia” Katy and his friends	102
3.5 – Álviz’s narrator speaks directly to the reader	105

3.6 – The removal of the homosexual youth. Hafta is questioned by his “novia” and offers tentative replies	108
3.7 – The Church's role in the youth's dismissal	111
3.8 – The psychiatrist discusses the homosexual youth with the closeted Hafta	112
3.9 – Hafta’s final demolition and his exit from both society and the text ...	118
Chapter 4 – <i>La tribada falsaria</i> by Miguel Espinosa	125
– Introduction	125
4.1 – The text’s <i>dramatis personae</i> and the metaphoric listing of the homophobic pseudonyms that will be attached to the lesbian characters in lieu of their own personal names	129
4.2 – The denigration of Damiana both before and after she begins her lesbian love affair	131
4.3 – Damiana starts her love affair with Lucía and internalises the significance for her subjectivity and space of Daniel’s homophobic terms ..	133
4.4 – Juana sends a series of twenty seven letters to Daniel and in which she includes epistolary comments from various other characters on Damiana, Lucía and “las fricadoras”.	136
4.5 – An overarching homophobic scene	139
4.6 – Juana continues to protest her undying love for Daniel; Damiana is once again reduced to the level of an insect	143
4.7 – A decade later in the 1980s an anti-lesbian mood still prevails	145
4.8 – Daniel returns to Juana, and a Murcian scribe likens Daniel to “el Bien” and Damiana to “el Mal”	147
4.9 - Doubts are cast on the veracity of what Juana has to say	149
Chapter 5 – “Te dejo, amor, en prenda el mar” by Carme Riera and “El milagro” by Eduardo Mendicutti	151
– General Introduction	151
– Introduction to Carme Riera's “Te dejo, amor, en prenda el mar”	152
5.1 – The adolescent narrator and her female tutor: a Sapphic scene	155

5.2 – The narrator is sent away	158
5.3 – Countering the “grips of power” with the claims of bodies, pleasures, and desire: a Foucaultian move	160
– Introduction to Eduardo Mendicutti 's“El milagro”	163
5.4 – Silenced by his father’s blow. Ramón as a five-year-old	165
5.5 – Ramón the man	167
5.6 – "El milagro". An emerging element breaks through the residual and the dominant	170
Conclusion	174
Bibliography	180

Metaphors of Suffering: The Representation of the Homosexual and the Lesbian as Social and Discursive Constructs in Spanish Peninsular Narrative Texts 1970–2000

Studies of the homosexual and lesbian as he/she is represented in Spanish peninsular narrative texts of the twentieth century have spoken mainly of the silence that surrounds these particular identities and space and of their pathologisation by psychiatry and medicine. Although this thesis engages with both these problematic issues, its main purpose is to study the representation of the homosexual and the lesbian as social and discursive constructs in a selection of Spanish peninsular narrative texts published between 1970 and 2000. Relevant to this constructionist scenario are the ways in which the various authors represent the determining effect of discursive practices and codes, and particularly those of religion, medicine and the State, on the subject's self-determination as homosexual or lesbian. Equally significant is the representation of homosexual and lesbian identities as contingent upon the social, political, and historical moment in which the male/female is placed.

The selected texts include Eduardo Mendicutti's *El palomo cojo*, Ana María Moix's *Julia*, Jesús Álviz's *Calle Urano*, Miguel Espinosa's *La tribada falsaria* and Carme Riera's "Te dejo, amor, en prenda el mar" and Eduardo Mendicutti's "El milagro". In these texts characters are represented taking up either a homosexual or lesbian identity as the result of the discursive practices and codes of the surrounding social/sexual scene. Also represented are the suffering, pain and alienation that accrue to those categorised as sexually perverse, as well as the silence that surrounds closeted positionalities and space. In consonance with the liberal mood of Spain's "destape", the various texts also demonstrate the possibility of characters answering back and challenging the credibility of the status quo that labelled him/her as homosexual/lesbian in the first place.

The analysis of the selected texts is based on a variety of theoretical and philosophical observations relating to sexuality, language, identity, gender and desire. Particularly useful have been Michel Foucault's *History of Sexuality* Vol. 1, J. L. Austin's *How to Do Things with Words* and Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*. Raymond Williams's vignette entitled "Dominant, Residual, and Emergent" in *Marxism and Literature* has also proved illuminating and pertinent.

I would like to express my profound gratitude to Professor Nigel Dennis, my supervisor, for his invaluable guidance, support and encouragement. I have benefited much from his intellectual wisdom, meticulous supervision and enduring patience.

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Introduction

The notion that power is a positive characteristic of all social relations yields the idea that rather than being anterior to these relations the subject is in fact their effect. It is this work on the couplet of power and the subject that has had a fundamental influence on the radical rethinking of theories of identity that has taken place over the past twenty years or so.¹

Since the term “homosexual”² was first coined by the jurist K.M. Benkert in 1869, it has served both as a classificatory label for men who desire men, and later for women who desire women (although the term “lesbian” is usually conferred on the latter). It has also been used as a rallying point for what may be termed essentialist/universalist as opposed to social-constructionist/historicist points of view. The ongoing debate between these two opposing factions arises out of their different points of view in relation to what may be termed the “aetiology” of the bodies, sexual practices and gender codes that serve to delimit and define heterosexual and homosexual male and female identity and space. Whereas essentialists and universalists argue that the various qualities and quantities that go to make up the notion of identity are aprioristically cast, naturally fixed and perennially unchanging (and therefore outside the boundaries of the social and the historical), social constructionists and historicists argue that both heterosexual and homosexual identity is socially and discursively constituted by and within historically changing social, political, and cultural fields. As Steven Epstein usefully points out:

Where essentialism took for granted that all societies consist of people who are either heterosexuals or homosexuals (with perhaps some bisexuals), constructionists demonstrated that the notion of “the homosexual” is a sociohistorical product, not universally applicable, and worthy of explanation in its own right. And where essentialism would treat the self-attribution of a “homosexual identity” as unproblematic – as simply the conscious recognition of a true, underlying “orientation” – constructionism focused attention on identity as a complex development outcome, the consequence of an interactive process of social labelling and self-identification.³

¹ Lois McNay, *Foucault: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003), p. 164.

² My quotation marks indicate that there is nothing essential about the term “homosexual” and that it should, therefore, be read as an ideological construct. In order to avoid tiresome repetition, quotation marks will not be used in further usage of this term. The same proviso applies to the terms “gay”, “lesbian”, “masculinity”, “femininity”, “heterosexual”, “pervert” and “queer” in the sense of “strange/odd”.

³ Steven Epstein, “Gay Politics, Ethnic Identity: The Limits of Social Constructionism” in *Social Perspectives in Lesbian and Gay Studies*, ed. by Peter M. Nardi and Beth E. Schneider (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 134-59 (p. 138).

In the readings of the Spanish Peninsular texts that follow, my aim has been to explore the ways in which various Spanish writers during the last three decades of the twentieth century (1970-2000) represent homosexual and lesbian characters as social constructs rather than essential givens. Relevant to a constructionist and historicist point of view are a range of literary themes and scenes. These demonstrate not only the ways in which characters are formulated as homosexual or lesbian, but also the ways in which the discursive practices, knowledges, and power of religion, medicine and the State direct this social/sexual scene. Other issues that arise in relation to this particular phenomenon invite the following consideration. To what extent do homophobic practices and codes determine the self-determination of various characters as homosexual/lesbian and perverse? In what ways do the regulatory practices of religion, medicine and the State formulate that which is sexually normal (heterosexual), and that which is sexually perverse (homosexual/lesbian)? Is there a possibility of the homosexual/lesbian (or, indeed, the heterosexual) answering back and challenging the status quo in relation to this sexual/textual theme? What account, if any, is taken of the suffering that accrues to those categorised as homosexual/lesbian? And to what degree do the changing social and political scenarios in which the selected texts are grounded – the death of Francisco Franco and the transition to democracy that follows – produce determining effects on the social and the sexual? One additional but crucial point needs to be raised here since it relates to the issues outlined above. In demonstrating the ways in which the homosexual is represented as a social and discursive construct in the selected texts, I am not suggesting that same-sex sensibility and taste per se is necessarily a social construct. On the contrary, what I seek to show is how same-sex sensibility both in literature and in social praxis has been categorised as *the* defining principle of a subject's identity and space rather than as just one personal facet amongst many others.

The notion that there is such a person as the homosexual/lesbian (and the heterosexual) and that sexuality and same-sex object choice define a particular type of personhood and space is, as I have already noted, a relatively modern concept arising in the late nineteenth century. Previously, and certainly since the introduction of Christianity into the Western world, if not before,⁴ same-sex interaction had been viewed as an act of

⁴ The most ancient laws known against sodomy are found in tablets of the time of the Asyrian king Tiglath-Pilayer 12th century A. C., when sodomy was punished by castration. See Alberto García Valdés, *Historia y presente de la homosexualidad* (Madrid: Akal Editor, 1981), p. 15.

sodomy, a non-reproductive functioning and a category of sin. This condemnatory approach towards sodomy and its perpetrators is well documented by the scribes whose writings form the Christian bible. Beginning with the reference to Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19. 4-11, and continuing in Leviticus where it is pointed out that men who sleep with men will be put to death (18. 22; 20. 13), biblical pronouncements against sodomy and its participants reach a condemnatory peak with the writings of the evangelist Paul. In fact it is Paul, more than any other of Jesus' followers, who is responsible for the Church's censuring of, and animosity towards, what would later be termed, the homosexual and homosexuality. In his book entitled *Paul: the Mind of an Apostle*, A. N. Wilson ironically points out that what this apostle had to say "no doubt makes present day gays feel entitled to hate Paul for introducing this strand of puritanical Jewish theory into Europe and making it part of 'civilisation'".⁵ Equally, since Paul was "horrified by lesbianism" as well as by male homosexuality, this again "is not something which would endear him to many modern Europeans and Americans who, after generations of prejudice against homosexuals, have decided that it is wicked to 'discriminate against gays'" (Wilson, 140).

The historical censuring and punishment of sodomy in peninsular Spain is highlighted, for example, in the thirteenth-century "Fuero Real" of Alfonso X (El Sabio); the fifteenth-century dictates of "los tribulares seculares" during the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella (Los Reyes Católicos); and in the deeds and words of the Spanish Inquisition. While, as Alberto García Valdés points out, the "Fuero Real" ordered that "cualesquiera que sean que tal pecado hagan, que luego fuere sabido, que ambos a dos sean castigados ante todo el pueblo, e después, a tercer día, sean colgadas fasta que mueren", and that, "en nunca donde sean tollidos",⁶ later dictates proved equally severe. In the *Partidas*, for instance, "el abominable pecado" is recorded on several occasions as is the biblical story of Sodom and Gomorrah and those sentenced to death for sodomy (García Valdés, 43). Similarly, in the sixteenth century the tribunal at Zaragoza ordered that adults who had engaged in sodomy should be burned, while minors should be beaten and sent to the galleys (García Valdés, 50). Indeed, up to and including the middle of the seventeenth century, sodomites were still being burned at the stake in both Spain and many other parts of the West. While these sentences were not necessarily always carried

⁵ A. N. Wilson, *Paul: The Mind of an Apostle* (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1997), p. 141.

out, they remained on the statute books as a deterrent and a threat until, influenced partly, for example, by the humanitarian ideals emanating from the French Revolution, they were rescinded in the early part of the nineteenth century throughout the West.

What may be termed a specific revision of and/or shift in the attitude towards same-sex interaction and its perpetrators took place in the latter part of the nineteenth century. With the growth of scientific, medical, and psychiatric knowledge, on the one hand, and with the increasing intervention of the State in matters relating to the health, standard of living, and level of productivity of the individual, on the other, those who engaged in same-sex non-reproductive interaction began to be viewed in a different light. Now they were not only and necessarily seen as sinners who offended against the Church and the State, but also and increasingly as subjects who were medically and psychologically diseased. Concomitant with the intervention of medicine and the State into the social and the sexual was the categorisation of each subject according to his/her sexual tastes and inclination. Raised to the defining principle of subjectivity and space, reproductive sexuality (heterosexuality) came to represent the established, healthy, hegemonic norm, and non-reproductive sexuality (homosexuality/lesbianism) its abnormal, sickly other. Alberto Mira offers a pertinent review of the inaugural moments of this particular social/sexual and medical phenomenon:

A principios del siglo XX circulaba una imagen concreta de la homosexualidad en cuya creación habían tenido que ver tanto la ciencia médica como la paranoia burguesa. La primera contribuyó con materiales y legitimidad, la segunda ensambló las piezas de una determinada manera. Pero este homosexual no es más que una figura de contenido escurridizo y de características externas que responden a un estereotipo. [...] Una vez constituido, el estereotipo patológico-criminal se convertirá en un punto de referencia que determinará la percepción de cualquier homosexual, hasta el punto de que es el individuo el que se asimila al estereotipo. El mito del homosexual permanecerá vigente a lo largo de todo el siglo XX.⁷

In this sense, then, as soon as the category and concept of the subject as either heterosexual or homosexual is formulated in nineteenth-century Europe and the West, society begins to see corresponding social/sexual types and categories where before they had perceived only traits or sensibilities or tastes. Moreover, these changing social/sexual classifications and points of view bring with them an additional preoccupation as to

⁶ Quoted in *Historia y presente de la homosexualidad*, p. 43.

⁷ Alberto Mira, *De Sodoma a Chueca: Una historia cultural de la homosexualidad en España en el siglo xx* (Barcelona: Egales, 2004), p. 57.

whether homosexuality, as such, is congenital or acquired. This preoccupation installed itself, as Mira points out, “en el inconsciente colectivo” and “en la prensa y en la literatura” where both it and various other associated problematics “afloran” (*De Sodoma a Chueca*, 62).

Although Spanish writers introduced issues pertaining to the homosexual and homosexuality into their narrative texts from the late nineteenth century onwards, they only did so opaquely and indirectly, almost never referring directly to the homosexual as such. It is only necessary to recall Alas’s description of the homosexual acolyte, Celedonio, in his *magnum opus*, *La Regenta*,⁸ and Lorca’s dejected and, at times, abjected narrating voice in his poetry, to recognise the obfuscation and problematics that attach to this particular sensibility and theme. Thus, the former describes the acolyte as experiencing “un deseo miserable, una perversión de la perversión de su lascivia” (700), when he either enjoys “un placer extraño” on kissing la Regenta, or tentatively tries to. The latter similarly and, in effect, speaks of doves, society and sewers, when in reality and in fact he means homosexuals, society and pain. As he puts it: “Porque es verdad que la gente/ quiere echar las palomas a las alcantarillas”.⁹ Equally, Juan Gil-Albert’s groundbreaking account of the homosexual and homosexuality written in 1955 and which had suffered, as he put it, “veinte años de vida inédita”,¹⁰ is yet one more example of the obfuscation and problematics that attach to the homosexual and homosexuality as literary characters and themes.

However, given both the external and internal factors that immediately preceded as well as followed Francisco Franco’s death in 1975, it is not surprising that Spanish writers of the last three decades of the twentieth century enjoyed a freedom of artistic expression that had previously been denied both to them and to the country as a whole. Inspired internally by what has been termed Spain’s post Franco “destape”, reflected in the rescinding of censorship, the freedom to protest and, above all, in the transition to democracy that followed, what may be termed a sexual revolution took place both in literary culture and in social praxis. Free, at last, to write on sexual themes, writers included homosexual issues and events in their fiction, frequently having a homosexual

⁸ Leopoldo Alas “Clarín”, *La Regenta* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1994). (First published in 1885).

⁹ Federico García Lorca, “El niño Stanton” in *Poeta en Nueva York* (Madrid: Catedra, 1988), pp. 173-75 (p. 174). (First published in 1940).

¹⁰ Juan Gil-Albert, *Heraclés: Sobre una manera de ser* (Barcelona: Akal, 1987), p. 5. (First published 1975).

as the text's main character. Reaction to the student uprising in Paris May 1968¹¹ and to the confrontation between the police and homosexuals at Greenwich Village, New York in 1969¹² also contributed to an ongoing sexual revolution in the West.

Thus, in electing to review Spanish peninsular texts written in the last three decades of the twentieth century I open up this dissertation to a time of exciting social, political and sexual change. As Alfredo Martínez-Expósito pertinently observes:

En el régimen franquista la homosexualidad no era sólo una conducta prohibida, sino también un tema proscrito. Pocos escritores de ficción o directores de cine osarían coquetear con un tema que fácilmente podría desencadenar las iras del censor. [...] En los últimos años de la vida de Franco, cuando ya la transición estaba comenzada, la homosexualidad se convirtió en el tema de innumerables novelas, cuentos, obras teatrales, canciones, películas. La tendencia alcanzó su punto álgido cuando en 1977 la censura fue abolida y todo el espectro de la sexualidad se declaró abierto al gran público.¹³

Terry Eagleton's observations on this changing social/sexual scene are included because he so wittily and succinctly sums it up. Speaking ironically, if not disapprovingly, he pertinently points out: "In the early 1970's cultural theorists were to be found discussing socialism, signs and sexuality; in the late 1970's and early 1980's they were arguing the toss over signs and sexuality; and by the late 1980's they were talking about sexuality".¹⁴

Although I refer to various literary and cultural theorists in my reading of the Spanish texts that follow, I have decided to use Michel Foucault's *The History of Sexuality: Vol. 1. (La volonté de savoir)* as the theoretical backdrop to my thesis as a whole.¹⁵ The choice of this particular text was dictated by several reasons. First,

¹¹ In his essay "Demand the Impossible! Posters from the 1968 Paris Uprising", Mark Vallen describes the way in which the "pent-up anger and frustration over poverty, unemployment and the conservative government of Charles de Gaulle gave rise to a mass movement for sweeping social change. In the month of May, workers and students took to the streets in an unprecedented wave of strikes, walkouts and demonstrations. By May 18th, 10 million workers were on strike and all the factories and universities were occupied". See Mark Vallen, "Art for a change", <http://www.art-for-a-change.com/Paris/paris/html> [accessed 10 July 2004] (para. 1 of 8).

¹² In his preface to his book on the Stonewall riots, Martin Duberman describes the riots as "the emblematic event in modern lesbian and gay history. The site of a series of riots in late June-early July 1969 that resulted from a police raid on a Greenwich Village gay bar, 'Stonewall' has become synonymous over the years with gay resistance to oppression". See Martin Duberman, *Stonewall* (New York: Plume, 1994), p. xvii.

¹³ Alfredo Martínez-Expósito, *Los escribas furiosos: configuraciones de la narrativa homoerótica en español* (New Orleans: University Press of the South, 1998), p. 19.

¹⁴ Terry Eagleton, *The Illusions of Postmodernism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p. 24.

¹⁵ Michel Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality Vol. 1.* (London: Penguin Books, 1990). First published as *La volonté de savoir* (1976). All subsequent references to Foucault's work will be taken from the 1990 edition of *The Will to Knowledge* unless otherwise stated.

Foucault's philosophical and historical account of the influence of discourse, knowledges and power, on the constitution of identity as homosexual has enabled me to discuss sexual/textual themes and scenes from within a broad historical and cultural frame. Second, his constructionist position in relation to sexual identities in general, and homosexual identity in particular, offers an additional insight into, and to borrow a phrase from Kenneth Plummer, "the making of the modern homosexual".¹⁶ And third, both the first and second observations make it possible to satisfy Fredric Jameson's opening injunction in his seminal work *The Political Unconscious* – "Always historicize!".¹⁷

Since I frequently refer to Foucault's constructionist position in my readings of the Spanish texts, it seems only reasonable that I offer a brief outline of what he has to say on identity, sexuality and the surrounding social, cultural scene. First, however, a quotation from Diana Fuss's account of essentialist and constructionist points of view will help to underline the usefulness of Foucaultian theory for homosexual and lesbian literary and cultural criticism:

Recent gay theory [...] has increasingly rejected [...] adherence to a natural, essential, or universal gay identity and emphasized instead [...] the way in which the homosexual subject is produced not naturally but discursively across a multiplicity of discourses. The discourse theory of Michel Foucault has had perhaps the most profound and perceptible impact on the emerging field(s) of gay and lesbian theory; Foucault's efforts to de-essentialize sexuality and to historicize homosexuality as a modern "invention" have set the stage for the current disputes amongst gay theorists and activists over the meaning and applicability of such categories as "gay", "lesbian", and "homosexual" in a poststructuralist climate which renders all such assertions of identity problematic.¹⁸

Briefly then, one of Foucault's fundamental premises in *The History of Sexuality Vol. 1* concerns the various and covert ways in which the individual is "subjectivated", that is made a subject by, and subjected to, normalising and disciplinary practices and codes, or as he puts it in another text: "the modes according to which individuals are given to recognise themselves as sexual subjects".¹⁹ In elucidating the genealogy of this phenomenon, Foucault refers back to a particular historical transformation in the West

¹⁶ *The Making of the Modern Homosexual*, ed. by Kenneth Plummer (London: Hutchinson, 1981).

¹⁷ Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 9.

¹⁸ Diana Fuss, *Essentially Speaking* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 97.

¹⁹ Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure: The History of Sexuality Vol.2.* (London: Penguin Books, 1992), p. 5. (First published in 1976).

when the sovereign right of kings and juridical forms of power to take life yielded to more subtle and life-enhancing schemes that sought to foster life by promoting health and longevity. This specific “fostering” of human life was related, primarily, to the rise of the bourgeoisie and industrial capitalism during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and to the concomitant need for healthy, active, reproductive bodies to function in the fast developing industrial scene. Co-opted into political and governmental regulatory schemes that sought to optimise the reproductive functioning and labour capacity of both the body of the individual and the population as a whole, medicine and psychiatry, for example, began to categorise and label each individual according to his/her gender and sexual functioning. The reproductive heterosexual came to form the dominant component of a binary dialectic and the non-reproductive homosexual its negated other. Indeed, Foucault’s reference to “a hystericization of women’s bodies” (the hysterical woman), “a pedagogization of children’s sex” (the masturbating child), “a socialization of procreative behavior” (the Malthusian couple), and “a psychiatrization of perverse pleasures” (the perverse adult) (104-05) underlines the institutional and politicised concern with the reproductive functioning and economic viability of each subject as well as of the population as a whole. Thus, disciplinary “technologies of power” functioning in and through the social and discursive practices of medicine, religion, society and the State played a crucial role in categorising reproductive bodies as the healthy useful, standard norm (heterosexual), and non-reproductive bodies as abnormal, sick and other (homosexual/lesbian). In Foucault’s much-quoted words:

This new persecution of the peripheral sexualities entailed an incorporation of perversions and a new specification of individuals. As defined by ancient civil or canonical codes, sodomy was a category of forbidden acts; their perpetrator was nothing more than the juridical subject of them. The nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a life form, and a morphology. Nothing that went into his composition was unaffected by his sexuality. [...] Homosexuality appeared as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphroditism of the soul. The sodomite had been a temporary aberration, the homosexual was now a species. (*History of Sexuality*, 43)

In this sense then, the transformation of sex into discourse, and sex and sexuality into the signifying principles of individual identity and space, is governed, as Foucault rightfully observes, by various endeavours. For example, the endeavour “to expel from reality the forms of sexuality that were not amenable to the strict economy of

reproduction; to say no to unproductive activities; to banish casual pleasures, to reduce or exclude practices whose object was not procreation” (36). As he rhetorically points out:

All this garrulous attention which had us in a stew over sexuality, is it not motivated by one basic concern: to ensure population, to reproduce labor capacity, to perpetuate the form of social relations: in short, to constitute a sexuality that is economically useful and politically conservative? (36-7)

Although various novels, plays and poems offer themselves as suitable material for this thesis, for reasons of available space and to place this study within manageable bounds I have limited my choice to the analysis of the following texts: Eduardo Mendicutti’s *El palomo cojo*, Ana María Moix’s *Julia*, Jesús Álviz’s *Calle Urano*, Miguel Espinosa’s *La tribada falsaria*²⁰ and Carme Riera’s “Te dejo, amor, en prenda el mar”²¹ and Eduardo Mendicutti’s “El milagro”.²² The reader will note that I conclude my thesis with an examination of two short stories. These have been included for several reasons: first, although short in textual time their story time is equal to that of the larger texts; second, each story helps to clarify, embellish and reinforce the sexual/textual issues already raised; and third, each story introduces additional and significant elements not necessarily included in the novels previously reviewed.

I have chosen to discuss these particular texts because each demonstrates, whether explicitly or implicitly, the determining effect of discourse, knowledges and power on the subject’s self-determination as homosexual or lesbian. In these texts, characters are shown taking up psychosocial and sexual subjectivity and space as homosexual/lesbian, as a result of the discursive practices and codes of medicine, religion, and the State, as well as of the society that surrounds, delimits and pervasively defines them. Emotional and libidinal attachment to characters of the same sex and gender is not only categorised as *the* defining principle of identity and self as such – that is, as homosexual or lesbian –

²⁰ Eduardo Mendicutti, *El palomo cojo* (Barcelona: Tusquets, 1991); Ana María Moix, *Julia* (Barcelona: Tusquets, 1970),. Jesús Álviz, *Calle Urano* (Madrid: Nuevo Sendero, 1981); Miguel Espinosa, *La tribada falsaria* (Barcelona: Los Libros de la Frontera, 1980). In subsequent chapters of this thesis all references to these texts will be taken from the edition cited above with page numbers indicated in brackets.

²¹ Carme Riera, “Te dejo, amor, en prenda el mar” in *Te dejo el mar*, trans. and intro. by Luisa Cotoner (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1991), 53-68. In subsequent chapters of this thesis all references to these texts will be taken from these editions with page numbers indicated in brackets.

²² Eduardo Mendicutti, “El milagro”, *Reverso: Revista de estudios lesbianas, gays, bisexuales, transexuales, transgénero...*, 1 (2000), 91-8.

but also punished as an affront to heterosexist, patriarchal norms. As I hope to show, these various texts demonstrate the ways in which male-to-male/female-to-female emotional and libidinal interaction as well as gender-bending traits become the signifying principles of homosexual/lesbian subjectivity and space. No other personal quantities or qualities are allowed to influence this determining equation. No personal characteristic, however dominant, commendable or replete, takes precedence over sexuality, sex, and gender as the overweening principles that define identity, personhood and space at the same time as they produce the controlling hetero/homosexual binary.

The significance of sexual-object choice in the constitution of identity in a patriarchal, heterocentric milieu has been well documented by both literary and cultural theorists. For example, in her book entitled *Masculinity at the Margins*, Kaja Silverman underlines the fact that “homosexual self-definitions cannot be read in isolation from the dominant representations that coerced them and continue to coerce them”.²³ Equally, in his book *Sexuality*, which has been accorded the status of a classic in its field, Jeffrey Weeks makes a similar observation, indicating that homosexuals are the “products of a very complex process of social definition and of self-definition in which sexuality played an important but not decisive part”.²⁴ In his equally acclaimed *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality*, David Halperin supports a similar constructionist point of view in relation to sexual identities: “homosexuality is a cultural construct, such constructs operate at the level of individual subjectivities to determine personal identity”.²⁵

However, this is not the only issue that arises in the selected texts in relation to homosexual and lesbian characters. Other issues and events that I seek to highlight and define, and which act as corollaries to the constructionist scenario outlined above, concern the way in which the homosexual and the lesbian are represented as sad, frightened, silent, alienated and alone. This representation, as I discuss in the following chapters, meshes hauntingly with what Jonathan Dollimore, for example, has to say on the suffering of the homosexual in social praxis. As he tellingly points out: “No consideration of cultural and/or racial difference should ever neglect the sheer negativity,

²³ Kaja Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 342.

²⁴ Jeffrey Weeks, *Sexuality* (London: Routledge, 1986), p. 79.

²⁵ David Halperin, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality. And Other Essays on Greek Love* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 53.

evil, and inferiority with which ‘the other’ has been conceived throughout history”.²⁶ Although the texts under consideration do not necessarily fall into the category of high art, they are nevertheless of sufficient interest and merit to be included amongst the type of works to which Jameson refers when he points out that “the greatest aesthetic productions of capitalism prove to be the cries of pain of isolated individuals against the social order” (*The Political Unconscious*, 48).

Further issues that invite attention concern the ways in which the selected texts represent homosexual and lesbian characters answering back and challenging their homophobic definers and oppressors, even if the “answering back” and the “challenging” are mostly muted and/or expressed from an individual and local, rather than from a dominant and collective point of view. Surprisingly, perhaps, not just homosexual characters but also heterosexuals are depicted as undermining hegemonic practices and codes by encouraging a more liberal, free-wheeling and open-minded point of view in relation to identity, gender, sexuality, and desire. Or put another way, by refusing to become involved either in the critical or the labelling process. Thus, I also seek to show how the selected texts reflect the more liberal approach to the homosexual/lesbian that followed not only the *événements* of May in Paris (1968) and the uprising in Greenwich Village in New York (1969), but also the challenging work of the *Frente de liberación homosexual* in Spain (1970s and onwards). Pertinent here also is the social, cultural and political move towards democracy in the years immediately before and following Franco’s death.

In the concluding section to each chapter and, particularly, in the conclusion to this dissertation as a whole, I sum up the ways in which the various characters have been constituted as homosexual or lesbian on account of inappropriate gender traits and/or same-sex sensibility and taste. I also monitor the extent to which certain characters, both heterosexual and homosexual/lesbian, reflect the more libertarian approach to sexuality and desire which obtained in Spain during the transition to democracy and subsequently.

I read the literary representation of both the homosexual and the lesbian as social and discursive constructs as well as the way in which both answer back and challenge the status quo in the light of Foucault’s observations in his *History of Sexuality Vol. 1*. I also refer to Raymond Williams’s observations on the “dominant, residual and emergent”

²⁶ Jonathan Dollimore, *Sexual Dissidence: Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault* (Oxford: Clarendon

elements of the social, cultural and political and on the ways in which this triadic group arise, remain, become embedded (or deleted), and then intermingle across the years.²⁷ I consider that the remarks of Williams offer a useful addendum to what Foucault has to say in relation to the changing social/sexual scene and to the possibility of more open, liberal and free-wheeling points of view on bodies, sexuality and desire, emerging from and intermingling with, or even obliterating elements of the residual and the dominant. The works of various other literary and cultural theorists (J. L. Austin, on performative speech acts, Mari Matsuda and Judith Butler on hate speech and Althusser on interpellation), offer additional points of reference and help to facilitate a greater understanding of certain aspects of the texts in question.

In his book *Laws of Desire*, Paul Julian Smith suggests that the object of critical inquiry should not be “to award prizes to the texts that are astute enough to avoid essence and black marks to those that are not”. Rather the object of the inquiry should be to ask certain strategic questions of the texts under discussion, questions such as: “What is the motive of essentialism (of constructionism)? What work does it do in the specific context in which it is deployed?”²⁸

With this caveat in mind, I hope to take the reader through a literary journey of varied sexual/textual themes and scenes. This is a journey in which the determining effect of homophobic practices and codes on the self-determination of various characters as homosexual/lesbian is, as it were, exposed at every turn, as is the suffering that accrues to those categorised as sexually perverse. Similarly, albeit only on occasion, and then fortuitously, a glimpse of a more open and unprejudiced point of view in relation to same-sex sensibility and taste may be tentatively observed. Although the twists and turns of this expeditionary and literary scene may not exactly fulfil Foucault’s notion of countering “the grips of power with the claims of bodies, pleasure, and knowledges, in their multiplicity and their possibility of resistance” (157), nor for that matter Derrida’s dream of a “sexuality without number” that can protect us from “an implacable destiny which immures everything for life in the figure 2”²⁹ they do at least offer, albeit infrequently, more open, liberal, non-homophobic points of view.

Press, 1991), p. 329.

²⁷ Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 121-27 p.121.

²⁸ Paul Julian Smith, *Laws of Desire: Questions of Homosexuality in Spanish Writing and Film 1960-1990* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 15.

²⁹ Quoted by Jaques Derrida in “Choreographies” in *Diacritics* 12 (1982) 66-76 (76).

In each chapter I begin by offering a brief outline of the relevant author's published works and a resume of the text in question. I then go on to discuss the significance of the text (either novel or short story) in relation to the various issues outlined above. Readers will note that I do not necessarily review each text in the order of its date of publication. Rather, I order them in relation either to the historical location of their themes and scenes or to the ways in which they help to illuminate the issues that I seek to raise within the context of the thesis as a whole. Whilst the Spanish texts in question are selected from those published in approximately the last three decades of the twentieth century, I also refer, albeit at a subsidiary level, to various other texts taken broadly from twentieth-century Western literature in general. Although the issues that arise in relation to these texts bear testimony to a commonality of experience in the constructedness of identity as homosexual or lesbian, this does not mean that the characters themselves share mutual, pre-discursive and essentialising givens. Rather it signifies that they are subject to and subjected by the same essentialising practices and codes and, further, that they share the same experiences of alienation, suffering and pain. As Alberto Mira pertinently observes: "Lo único que tienen en común todos estos 'homosexuales' es el de responder a las presiones del estereotipo. Algunos tratarán de desafiarlas, otros buscarán la asimilación, pero su influencia es tan inevitable como determinante" (*De Sodoma a Chueca*, 20). And as he continues further on: "Una vez constituido, el estereotipo patológico-criminal se convertirá en un punto de referencia que determinará la percepción de cualquier homosexual hasta el punto de que es el individuo el que se asimila al estereotipo" (57).

In order to avoid discussing one biological sex and leaving the other unremarked, I have tried to maintain a balance between texts that represent the homosexual male and those that represent the lesbian female. This does not mean that I am unaware that the lesbian occupies a subordinate position in two significant dialectics (*male/female*, *heterosexual female/lesbian female*), and that the homosexual male occupies a subordinate position in only one (*heterosexual male/homosexual male*). However, I do not consider that this precludes both the former and the latter from being discussed together and from within the same parameters of reference, providing that the said parameters cover a broad social, sexual and cultural field.

One further and important issue needs to be noted here. Since Foucault's *History of Sexuality Vol. 1* and other of his works form the theoretical backdrop to my thesis as a whole, I follow his authorial advice on how best to use his various texts and propositions. As he explains in an article that he wrote for the French daily paper, *Le Monde*:

All my books (*Madness and Civilisation*) or this one (*Discipline and Punish*) are little tool boxes, if you will. If people are willing to open them and make use of such and such a sentence or idea, of one analysis or another, as they would a screwdriver or a monkey wrench, in order to short circuit or disqualify systems of power, including even possibly the ones my books come out of, well, all the better.³⁰

In the first chapter I discuss Eduardo Mendicutti's novel *El palomo cojo*. I have elected to begin with an examination of this particular text because, although published in 1991, it is set primarily in the Spain of the late 1950s and as such attempts to reflect the social/sexual scene contemporaneous with the dictatorship of Francisco Franco. Writing in the confessional genre, the text's narrator (a mature man at the time of writing) looks back upon his homosexual rites-of-passage and from his own point of view as a ten-year-old boy when the events he relates were occurring. His obsessive concentration on himself, to the exclusion of other characters and the outside world, reflects a tendency common to the narrator or narrators of the selected texts. Whether concentrating totally on their own existential state or on another character, each narrator returns obsessively, almost exclusively, to the same sexual/textual theme. The authors of *The Scripted Self* see this journey into interior space as a prominent feature of contemporary Spanish writing. As they put it in relation to the texts written after the social realism of the 1960s and 1970s:

The prevailing tendency of the new novel is seen as one of internalising, of a looking inward and a turning away from preoccupation with external social or political themes. The commonly held view [...] which takes into account both realist and modernist approaches to literature, sees the new novel in terms of subjectivity (or even egocentricity), in opposition to the apparent objectivity of the tradition of the 'novela social'.³¹

³⁰ Michel Foucault, *Le Monde*, 21 February 1975. Quoted in David Halperin, *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 52.

³¹ Ruth Christie, Judith Drinkwater and John Macklin, *The Scripted Self: Textual Identities to Contemporary Spanish Narrative* (Warminster: Aris & Philips, 1995), p. 5.

Since Mendicutti's narrator demonstrates the determining effect of homophobic discourse on his self-determination as homosexual, I read significant aspects of his narrative confession in the light of what J. L. Austin has to say on performative speech acts,³² Mari Matsuda and Judith Butler on hate speech,³³ and Louis Althusser on interpellation.³⁴ The observations of these three theorists are outlined in the chapter on Mendicutti's text. In this text only the homosexual narrator challenges the heterocentric status quo; the other characters reject the homosexual as perverse and other.

In the second chapter I discuss Ana María Moix's novel *Julia*. Although written some twenty years before Mendicutti's text, and told by an omniscient narrator, Moix's eponymous heroine, Julia, is depicted as growing up in the sixties and early seventies, a decade or more *after* the narrator of *El palomo cojo*. In the description of her rites-of-passage towards a lesbian identity and space, Julia's perception of herself as lesbian and perverse is predicated upon the reaction of her family and peers to what they perceive as her erotic interaction with tutors at her school as well as upon her gender-bending traits. Drawn emotionally and sexually towards older women (although any sexual interaction is registered in effect rather than in fact), Julia becomes the object of the homophobic taunts that define her identity and space as strange/queer: "rara". However, whereas in Mendicutti's text only the homosexual himself stands in opposition to the status quo (and that in a relatively neutered way), Moix's text introduces characters that are prepared to challenge the heterocentric, patriarchal norm, sometimes overtly, and sometimes tentatively and with reserve. One such character, a heterosexual male and fellow student, not only registers, but also sensitively accepts, Julia's same-sex sensibility and tastes.

Since what Elaine Marks has to say in her essay entitled "Lesbian Intertextuality" on the legends that have grown up around Sappho, the lesbian poet, could readily be applied to the plot of Julia's life (and Moix's text) a short citation from her account of the Sapphic legend will be useful:

Although there is no evidence in Sappho's poems to corroborate the notion that she did indeed have a school, religious or secular, for young women, the gynaeceum, ruled by the seductive or seducing teacher has become, since the eighteenth century, the perfect locus for most fictions about women loving women. The conventions of this topos are simple and

³² J. L. Austin, *How To Do Things With Words* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976).

³³ *Words that Wound: Critical Race Theory, Assaultive Speech and the First Amendment* ed. by Mari Matsuda, et al. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993).

³⁴ Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other essays* (London: Monthly Review Press, 1971).

limited, signifying in their constraint the marginal status of lesbians and lesbianism. In general men play secondary roles as fathers, spiritual advisors, or intrusive suitors. If as is usually the case when the author of the text is a woman, it is the younger woman who falls in love, the narrative is structured so as to insist on this love as an awakening. [...] The mother of the younger woman is either dead or in some explicit way inadequate. [...] The gynaeceum, particularly when it is represented by a school, also controls time. Time limits are set by the school calendar whose inexorable end announces the fatal separation, which may involve a death.³⁵

Jesús Álviz's *Calle Urano* is reviewed in chapter three. In this case the story is told, possibly, by more than one narrator, sometimes by an omniscient narrator who relates the greater part of the text, or by the homosexual José Hafta, also known as Anagni, who intervenes at certain moments in order to put forward his own personal experiences and point of view either in the former role as Hafta or in the latter as Anagni. This unusual and sophisticated text recounts the rites-of-passage of the main character, José Hafta/Anagni, from his experiences as a child up to and including his expulsion from society as a homosexual and a paedophile. Located temporally in the late 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, Álviz's text underlines the part played by discursive practices and codes in the constitution of Hafta/Anagni's homosexual "I" as well as the hostility towards the homosexual that continued to prevail in post-Franco Spain, as it moved towards democracy. However, it also underlines the birth of a more liberal climate in relation to same-sex sensibility and taste not only on the part of medicine and psychiatry, but also on the part of a more liberal state that gives the individual, here the homosexual, the freedom to protest. This freedom or answering back to use a Foucaultian term manifests itself in the slogans of the *Frente de liberación homosexual* which are reproduced throughout this text. Finally, the omniscient narrator solicits the reader's opinion on the highly charged issue of cross-generational sex between an older man (the main character, José Hafta/Anagni) and a sixteen-year-old youth (Miguel).

In the fourth chapter I discuss *La tribada falsaria* by Miguel Espinosa. This unusual text can be considered, as the author himself suggests, as a palimpsest, in that, for the most part, it offers a series of epistolary accounts written by various characters that repetitively and obsessively return to and re-assemble, with minor variations, one single, overriding theme. Or as Miguel Espinosa puts it: "*La tribada falsaria* es un palimpsesto,

³⁵ Elaine Marks, "Lesbian Intertextuality" in *Homosexualities and French Literature; Cultural Contexts/Critical Texts* ed. by George Stambolian and Elaine Marks (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), pp. 353-77 (p. 357).

es decir, un escrito sobre el que se han superpuesto otros escritos”.³⁶ Central to the text as a whole and to each individual epistolary offering is the lesbian love affair between Damiana and Lucía, the fury of Damiana’s former lover, Daniel, in that she has abandoned him to pursue a lesbian affair, and Juana’s philosophical and psychological epistles in which she tries to win him back. The determining effect on their self-determination as lesbian of hate speech, interpellation and discursive practices is underlined by both lesbian characters.

Whilst the texts reviewed within this dissertation demonstrate the ways in which the homosexual and the lesbian, and even, on occasion, the heterosexual answer back and challenge the essentialising notions of the status quo as they apply to gender, sexuality and sex, no such free-wheeling, liberal ideas disturb the anti-lesbian tenor of Espinosa’s text. Indeed, the overweening message of *La tribada falsaria* places the lesbian female on a par with “Satanás” and “el Mal”.

It is pertinent to note that in her essay, “Lesbian Intertextuality”, already quoted in relation to Moix’s text, Elaine Marks’s notion of what the male writer as opposed to the female writer has to say on lesbian characters and themes, in the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries, meshes in many ways with the derogatory epistolary remarks made by the heterosexual characters concerning the lesbians, Damiana and Lucía, in Espinosa’s text. As Marks points out:

The lesbian who appears in prose texts by male writers [...] may be a possessed hysteric, a charismatic evangelist, or a lascivious glutton, guilty of profaning either the law of God or the natural law or both. She is often responsible for the death of a male figure. She is always an outlaw, a power of challenge to one of society’s most cherished principles, sexual order. The world of the text in which she appears is immediately thrown into disorder. (361)

The fifth and final chapter is comprised of two short stories Carme Riera’s “Te dejo, amor, en prenda el mar” and Eduardo Mendicutti’s “El milagro”. In the first text, the unnamed female narrator recounts her rites-of-passage towards a lesbian identity and space and the determining effect on her self-determination as lesbian and other of the homophobic discourse of the characters who surround her. In the second, an omniscient narrator tells of a similar sexual/textual scene, but in relation to the ongoing rites-of-

³⁶ Miguel Espinosa, “Encuentros con las letras”: Entrevista realizada por Esther Benítez para TVE, 1981. <http://www.um.es/acehum/E.Benítez> [accessed 12 July 2005] (page 5 of 6).

passage-of the main character, Ramón Salazar. I have chosen to discuss these texts in the final chapter because together they sum up many of the issues raised by the previous texts. Thus, between them, they cover the representation of both homosexual and lesbian rites-of-passage as well as the determining effect on sexual identity, as such, of normalising practices and codes. Equally, both texts offer an example of a heterosexual character answering back and challenging the status quo, albeit at a minor level, in relation to gender, sexuality and desire. These liberal and open-minded moves mesh with the point of view of the narrator, as a man, in *El palomo cojo*, with the sensitive and open-minded student, Andrés, in *Julia*, and with the activities of the *Frente de liberación homosexual* in *Calle Urano*. They also introduce the new and more liberal elements that were emerging in relation to sexuality, identity and desire in the last three decades of the twentieth century.

In the conclusion, I sum up the ways in which the selected texts, taken all together, substantially reinforce the arguments of this thesis as a whole. Relevant here is the way in which what they have to say supports Foucault's notion of the constructedness of homosexual identity as well as of Williams's theorisation of the interaction between residual, dominant, and emergent elements in the social and the cultural field.

It will be useful to conclude this introduction to my thesis by offering three additional points of reference. First, in declaring myself as a) heterosexual in relation to my personal positionality and space; and b) constructionist and anti-homophobic in relation to the concept of the homosexual and homosexuality, I align myself with the circumspect remarks of Paul Julian Smith and of Edward Said on not dissimilar themes. For example, in the introduction to his book *Representing the Other*, Smith underlines the "primacy of positionality", pointing out that "no one can write on 'race' without acknowledging the specificity of their own position".³⁷ As he puts it: "I trust my own position as an anti-racist will not be compromised by my understanding of 'race' as a cultural construct rather than an innate characteristic determined by nature and heredity" (3). Similarly, Said in discussion with Raymond Williams in *The Politics of Modernism* argues that although he believes in "the authenticity and concreteness of experience", he does not believe in its "exclusiveness" – for instance, that "only a Black can understand

³⁷ Paul Julian Smith, *Representing the Other: 'Race', Text, and Gender in Spanish and Spanish American Narrative* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 2.

black experience” and that “only a woman can understand women”.³⁸ In both these citations the notions of either “the homosexual” or “homosexuality” can be substituted for the notions of “race”, “gender”, “woman”, “women” and “black”.

Second, my own personal constructionist position in relation to the determining effect of discourse, knowledges, and power on the subject’s perception of his/her identity as homosexual/lesbian does not necessarily apply to the question of whether or not same-sex sensibility and taste is, in itself, innate or socially/culturally acquired. It applies, rather, to the way in which this particular sexual sensibility, desire, disposition, taste, interaction or way of loving is construed as the defining principle of individual subjectivity rather than as just one facet among many others that go to make up a subject’s identity and space. Here, I align myself with Foucault’s observation on this particular theme. When asked whether or not homosexuality reflects an innate predisposition or social conditioning, he replied: “On this question I have absolutely nothing to say. No comment”.³⁹

And finally, since I borrow, principally, from Foucault’s observations on the homosexual as a social construct in my readings of the texts that follow, I conclude this introductory chapter with a Foucaultian citation that substantially reflects the arguments of my thesis as a whole:

Rather than ask ourselves how the sovereign appears to us in his lofty isolation we should try to discover how it is that subjects are gradually, progressively, really and materially constituted through a multiplicity of organisms, forces, energies, materials, desires, thoughts etc. We should try to grasp subjection in its material instance as a constitution of subjects.⁴⁰

³⁸ Edward Said as quoted in Raymond Williams, *The Politics of Modernism*, ed. & intr. by Tony Pinkey (London: Verso, 1989), p. 197.

³⁹ Michel Foucault, “Sexual Choice, Sexual Act”, in *Foucault Live: Interviews 1966-84* (New York: Semiotext[e], 1989), pp. 211-31 (p. 212).

⁴⁰ Michel Foucault, “Two Lectures” in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and other Writings 1972-1977* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), pp. 78-108 (p. 97).

Chapter One

El palomo cojo by Eduardo Mendicutti

Clever, but schoolteacher beat him anyway to show him that definitions belonged to the definers — not the defined.¹

Introduction

Eduardo Mendicutti was born in Sanlúcar de Barrameda, Cádiz, in 1948. One of eight brothers, he was educated first in a seminary and then later in Madrid, where he studied journalism and, in 1972, began his literary and journalistic career. His first publications *Tatuja* (1973) and *Cenizas* (1974) were followed by many others, including *Siete contra Georgia* (1987), *Una mala noche la tiene cualquiera* (1988), *El palomo cojo* (1991) (made into a film of the same name by Jaime de Armiñán), *Los novios búlgaros* (1993), and *El beso del cosaco* (2000). For some years he has had his own column in the daily, *El Mundo*, where he writes under the pseudonym of “La Susi”. The merit of Mendicutti’s writing lies not only in his witty use of humour, irony and colloquial language, but also in his depiction of homosexual characters and events.

I have chosen to begin this thesis with an exploration of Mendicutti’s novel *El palomo cojo* because it demonstrates, perhaps more than many other texts, the constructedness of identity as homosexual. While this is not the only issue that Mendicutti raises in this novel – for instance, he also underscores the homophobic functioning of medicine, religion, society, and the State, (or at least of their representatives) and the ways in which the latter deal with social and sexual issues – it is the one through which he offers the reader a penetrating insight into (and to quote from Plummer once again) “the making of the modern homosexual”.

Before beginning this reading of Mendicutti’s *El palomo cojo*, and with particular reference to his constructionist approach to the identity of the narrator and main character

¹ Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (London: Vintage, 1997), p. 90.

as homosexual, it will be useful to provide a brief outline of the novel's contextual setting and formal structuring. Set within the ambience of an Andalusian, bourgeois home, and in the Francoist Spain of the late 1950s, *El palomo cojo* is structured in the form of a confessional narrative and stream-of-consciousness in which the narrator, as the teller of the tale and the text's main character, revisits the issues and events that took place during his three-month convalescence at his grandparents' home, and from his own point of view as a ten-year-old boy in the past when the events he relates were occurring. Rendered dysfunctional by what appears, at least initially, to be a feverish chill, since he complains of stabbing pains in his chest and a general feeling of weakness and malaise, the narrator is prescribed bed rest and medication by the family doctor. Since his mother is unwilling to look after her ailing son (she prefers to spend time with her neighbours playing cards), he is taken to the home of his maternal grandparents to be cared for. Settled comfortably in the pristine surroundings of the personal rooms of his mother's younger brother, the absent tío Ramón, (a charming "balaperdida" and homosexual, although the latter quality is only ever connotatively conveyed), the narrator is attended, primarily, by la Mary, a sexually voracious family servant, who delights in regaling the young boy with gossip and sexual innuendos.

During the three months that he spends at his grandparents' home, his ongoing "destemplanzas" begin gradually to resemble not so much the physiological reactions of a patient to a feverish malaise, but rather the psychological reactions of an anxious ten-year-old boy. As the tale unfolds it becomes clear that the narrator's anxiety and nervous fretfulness are caused, primarily, by what is being said to him and, even more, by what he is being called. In what may be termed a young boy's sexual/textual awakening and/or rites of passage towards an identity and space as homosexual, the narrator shows how, as a gentle, sensitive, and somewhat inquisitive young boy, he becomes constituted as homosexual and perverse. This does not happen necessarily, or primarily, through any essentialising or pre-determined notions of his own in relation to his gender, sexuality or sex, but rather through the homophobic practices and codes of his family, the household servants, and Eligio a family friend. In this sense then, the narrator's confessional narrative deals primarily and, indeed, almost exclusively with the dialogic exchange that takes place between him and the characters that surround him, rather than with actions or with deeds.

One of the main events in *El palomo cojo* occurs towards the end of the text, when the narrator notices that the sexually voracious la Mary is wearing tía Victoria's missing ring. Jealous because the putatively homosexual tío Ramón is flirting with her, and angry with both of them for not including him in the intimacy and conviviality of this feisty scene, the narrator tells the assembled company that la Mary is a thief. Here, the homosexualising effect on the narrator of being labelled a "chivato maricón" by the irate family servant (in addition to the homophobic epithets and terms that have been variously and ongoingly attached to him earlier on) is underlined when he assumes a homosexual identity and role.² What the narrator seems to be demonstrating here, I suggest, as well as in the scenes that I discuss further on, is the way in which his identity as homosexual is (and to borrow a phrase from Judith Butler) "performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results".³

Written in the form of a *Bildungsroman* and confession, and with frequent excursions into the psychology of the characters that surround him, the narrator draws on metaphor, irony, humour and ellipsis, in order to display both homophobic and anti-homophobic points of view. For instance, the actantial presence of a lame pigeon in the narrative as well as the lame pigeon that figures as the title of the text, function as metaphors for the homosexual as clinically diseased⁴ – or put another way, for the homosexual as physically lame. Similarly, the text's doubleness and ironic point of view enable the narrator to represent not only the ways in which his identity is formulated and then re-formulated as homosexual during his convalescence at his grandparents' home, but also the ways in which, as a man, he answers back and challenges his oppressors – a markedly Foucaultian move that can be read in the light of the latter's observations on "reverse discourse". This formalistic prestidigitation is achieved by selecting scenes from his childhood that demonstrate the constructedness of his sensibility and self as

² I use the terms "homophobic" and "homophobia" in this thesis in the general sense of prejudice against or fear of exposure to lesbian, gay, bisexual people.

³ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 25.

⁴ See Victor León's definition of the phrase "ser más maricón que un palomo cojo" as "ser muy maricón" in his *Diccionario de argot español* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1998), p. 114. (First edition in "El libro de bolsillo", 1980).

homosexual, at the same time as they very wittily and craftily diminish the credibility of the institutions and their representatives who effect these sexually/textually contrived events. Significant, also, is the narrator's engagement with the dialectic of silence and discourse, and with the ways in which he utilises the components of this dichotomy both formally and rhetorically. For instance, by deleting his Christian names and patronymics from the narrative, at least until the closing scenes, he opens up a textual space which serves a dual function. On one level, it allows the various characters to fill in the narrator's nominal space with homophobic epithets and scripts, and on another, it signals the abnegated state of the homosexual both in literature and in social praxis. Even further, by naming every character in the text except himself, the narrator ironically underscores not only the silencing of the homosexual voice and the homosexual's closeted existence – metaphorically reaffirmed each time he refuses to disclose his personal names (19, 42, 182) – but also, and simultaneously, the onto-epistemological vulnerability of the individual (here himself) as a space waiting to be filled.

Synonymous with the sexual/textual scenario outlined above is the silence that surrounds the diagnostic definition of the narrator's general malaise – as he himself points out: “a mí nunca me dijeron el nombre de mi enfermedad” (13). Functionally similar also, is the way in which this clinical indeterminacy opens up the text, and by extension the narrator, to the medicalising scripts that label him (if not in fact, then in effect) as homosexual and diseased. In these ways then, a series of ellipses, gaps and hollows function as a rhetorical device through which the narrator structures not only the sexual/textual politics of the narrative as a whole – the homosexual as a social and discursive construct – but also, and simultaneously, the essentialising themes and scenes that support this particular phenomenon.

In order to separate and (hopefully) clarify the various convoluted sexual/textual issues and events that make up the body of this text, as well as demonstrating their contribution to the constructedness of the narrator's homosexual “I”, I approach this exploration of his rites-of-passage from four alternative, yet simultaneously accumulative and interacting points of view.

First, I chart the ways in which the narrator underlines the determining effect on himself as a ten-year-old boy in the past of homophobic practices and codes. I argue that the power of hate speech to bring about that which it names is demonstrated when,

having been addressed variously and ongoingly as “sarasa”, “extraño”, “mariquita” and “chivato maricón”, the narrator finally takes up a homosexual identity and role.

As a theoretical support to my reading of the text’s constructionist approach to the narrator’s homosexual identity, I use the observations of J. L. Austin and Mari Matsuda on the performative effects of speech acts and hate speech, respectively, as well as Louis Althusser’s on interpellation. In his book *How to Do Things With Words*,⁵ Austin underlines the ways in which what he terms illocutionary and perlocutionary speech acts produce performative effects on the individuals to whom they are addressed; illocutionary, in the sense that in the saying an immediate effect is produced (here, he offers the example of the marriage ceremony and the words “I pronounce you man and wife”); perlocutionary, in the sense that what is said produces an effect, or effects, over time, and as a consequence of the annunciation itself (133-47). For Matsuda hate speech is understood not only to act upon its listener (an illocutionary/perlocutionary scene), but also to contribute to the social constitution of the one addressed. As she pertinently points out: “For the victim [...] the angry rejection of the message of inferiority is coupled with the absorption of the message”.⁶ Since Althusser’s theory of interpellation contributes an additional dimension to the theories outlined above, it will be useful to offer a brief outline of what he has to say. In *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*,⁷ he suggests that ideology “acts or functions in such a way that it recruits subjects among individuals, or transforms individuals into subjects” by what he terms interpellation or hailing, and which, he suggests, can be “imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing: ‘Hey, you there!’” (174). As he continues further on: “Experience shows that the practical communication of hailings is such that they hardly ever miss their man: verbal call or whistle, the one hailed always recognizes that it is really him who is being hailed” (174). In clarifying further how ideology functions through interpellation, Althusser likens its determining thrust to that of the divine performative in the Scriptures, in the sense that, as he again puts it: “The Lord cried to Moses, ‘Moses’. And Moses replied ‘It is (really) I! I am Moses thy servant, speak and I

⁵ J. L. Austin, *How To Do Things With Words* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976).

⁶ Mari Matsuda, “Public Response To Racist Speech: Considering the Victim’s Story”, in *Words That Wound: Critical Race Theory, Assaultive Speech and the First Amendment* ed. by Mari Matsuda, Richard Charles Lawrence Delgado III, and Kimberly Crenshaw (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993), pp. 17-53 (p. 26).

⁷ Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (London: Monthly Review Press, 1971).

shall listen!” (179). What Althusser seems to be saying here is that the power of ideology to bring about that which it names can be fruitfully likened to the power of the divine performative, God, the Lord Himself.

Judith Butler’s gloss on the philosophical and linguistic observations outlined above helps to sum up, I suggest, their relevance to my reading of Mendicutti’s text and to its representation of the homosexual (the narrator) as a social and discursive construct. As Butler pertinently points out:

The utterances of hate speech are part of the continuous and uninterrupted process to which we are subjected, an on-going subjection (*assujétissement*) that is the very operation of interpellation, that continually repeated action of discourse by which subjects are formed in subjugation. Those offensive terms that mark out a discursive place of violation precede and occasion the utterance by which they are enacted; the utterance is the occasion for the renewal of that interpellating operation; indeed, that operation is only instanced by the “verbal conduct”, but the operation of interpellation happens with or without such conduct. Indeed, one can be interpellated, put in place, given a place, through silence, through not being addressed.⁸

In the second section, I show how the narrator demonstrates the equally determining effect on his identity and space as homosexual of medicalising and essentialising scripts that elide effeminacy in the male with homosexuality and homosexuality with physical disease. Foucault’s timely admonition that “we must not forget that the psychological, psychiatric, medical category of homosexuality was constituted from the moment it was characterised [...] less by a type of sexual relations than by a certain quality of sensibility, a certain way of inverting the masculine and the feminine in oneself” (43) is particularly useful here. For instance, not only the scandalous la Mary, but also Eligio, a family friend, as well as the narrator’s self-serving mother collapse his effeminate, gender-bending traits with an anticipated homosexuality and then this anticipated homosexuality with physical and/or psychological disease.

In the third section, I review the ways in which the narrator underscores the homosexualising influence on himself, as a ten-year-old boy in the past, of a series of spoken, written and pictorial events. Although these are not necessarily addressed to or concerned with the narrator himself, they nevertheless play a determining role in his perception of his social/sexual identity as homosexual and perverse. Thus what he reads and what he views in daily papers, magazines and in a personal *billet doux*, as well as

⁸ Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 27.

what he overhears – for instance, the sexual /textual chattering and gossip of the servants (97) – are represented as contributory factors in the constitution of his homosexual “I”. Also noted is what the narrator has to say about the social and cultural orchestration of desire.

In the fourth and final section, I highlight the ways in which it is possible to read certain themes and scenes not only from the point of view of the narrator as a ten-year-old-boy in the past but also and ironically from his own point of view as a man in the present and at the time of writing down his confession. This ironic *desdoblamiento* of the narrating point of view is achieved, I suggest, when the narrator selectively revisits specific childhood scenes. For instance, the selected scenes, as I go on to show, serve a dual function. On one level, demonstrating the part played by medicine, religion, and the State in the constitution of the narrator's sense-of-being and space as homosexual and, on another level, underlining the malpractice and malfunctioning of these hegemonic powers. As Foucault puts it in relation to the forms that resistance (“reverse discourse”) can take:

There is not, on the one side, a discourse of power, and opposite it, another discourse that runs counter to it. Discourses are tactical elements or blocks operating in the field of force relations; there can exist different and even contradictory discourses within the same strategy; they can [...] circulate without changing their form from one strategy to another, opposing strategy. (101-02)

And as Kathy E. Ferguson points out in relation to irony:

One can think about irony as a kind of doubleness that can take many forms. It can appear as the slippage between what is said and what is meant, or between what is said and what can be understood, or between stability and motion. [...] Irony is not without its own dangers, since as a political and epistemological strategy it requires participants who are attentive to doubleness. They must hear the gap between the spoken and the silent, between what is said and what is meant or can be heard. They must tolerate, even appreciate, the back-and-forth between competing insinuations while they keep sight of the connections between them.⁹

One further observation needs to be made here. Since *El palomo cojo* is structured in the form of a confession that keeps revolving around and/or returning to the same sexual/textual theme – the constructedness of the narrator's sense-of-being and space as

⁹ Kathy E. Ferguson, *The Man Question: Visions of Subjectivity in Feminist Theory* (California & Oxford: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 30-31.

homosexual, on one level, and the determining effect on this particular phenomenon of discourse, ideology, and written and pictorial images and themes, on the other – my examination of this text follows a not dissimilar pattern. Thus, while section 1.1 definitively demonstrates, I suggest, the overweening influence of discursive practices and codes on the constitution of the narrator's homosexual "I", the remaining sections serve to reinforce and underline the full and faceted extent of the homophobic themes and scenes that replenish and sustain this constructionist scenario.

1.1 Hate Speech: interpellated as a "chivato mariquita" and a "chivato maricón", the narrator assumes a homosexual role

As I have already noted, the narrator constructs his narrative around two elliptical gaps. One highlighting his nominal and, by analogy, onto-epistemological indeterminacy, as a space waiting to be filled; and the other, the indeterminate nature of his clinical malaise, equally as a space awaiting definition and closure. It is to the first of these structural contingencies and to the ways in which it is appropriated and filled in by the various characters that I address this part of my discussion.

In order to examine the ways in which the narrator demonstrates the determining effect on his self-determination as homosexual of being labelled with homophobic terms, I cite a series of discursive interactions that take place between him and household servants, la Mary, Antonia, and la tata Caridad. Here, he is addressed variously and ongoingly as a "chivato mariquita", "sarasa", "lila" and a "chivato maricón". Pertinent to each of the instances of hate speech that I go on to review are, on one level, the precipitating factors that promote and sustain the homophobic resonance and thrust of the epithets and terms that are attached to the narrator, as a boy – factors that relate, primarily, to his gender-bending traits and to society's reaction to effeminacy in the male. And, on another level, the determining effect on his social and psycho/sexual interiority and space of what has been said to him and of what he has been called. While many of the epithets that are attached to the narrator, in lieu of his own personal names, represent the type of endearment, or innocuous remark, that might readily be addressed to any ten-year-old boy, at the historical moment and location of this text, the homophobic signifiers used by the servants carry a very different ideology and freight. For instance, it is one

matter for the narrator to be called “machote” by his doctor (97), “cariño” by his aunt (69), “antipático” by his mother (13), and “picha” “guapo” and “niño” alternately, and as the mood takes her, by the servant, la Mary (30, 33, 35, 41). It is quite another to be categorised, often by the very same people, as a homosexual stool pigeon, a nancy-boy, a pansy, and effeminate and weak. Before proceeding to interrogate the underlying social/sexual agendas that encourage the articulation of these and other homophobic terms, as well as the determining effect they produce on the individual to whom they are addressed (here the narrator), a quotation from Jeffrey Weeks’s account of the constructedness of homosexual identity will help to flesh out the sexual/textual implications of this dialectical scene:

A homosexual identity is not given in nature, nor is it simply imposed as a social control on a deviant minority: it is the product of a long social process involving both definition and self-definition. It is a crucial stage in the rejection of stigmatisation, but at the same time it works very much within the definition presented. And all these definitions, categorisations, regulations are social impositions upon a flux of sexual possibilities there in the human animal at the time of birth. People are being defined narrowly as if they had a hidden essence, a true being which society has recognised. In taking this position, however, we are failing to challenge the restrictiveness of the definition and beyond this the social origins of the categorisation.¹⁰

One of the earliest occasions in which the unnamed narrator becomes the object of homophobic epithets and hate speech occurs a few weeks into his three-month convalescence at his grandparents’ home. Depicting himself as a boy who not only listens in to the conversations of his family and their friends (30, 31), but also enjoys gossiping and sharing confidences with the servants, he finds himself interpellated as a “chivato maricón”.

What precipitates this homophobic outburst is the narrator’s childlike inability to sense what will be acceptable for him to repeat and what will not. Thus, having been the privileged recipient of confidences from both Antonia and la Mary, he goes on to reveal to Antonia what la Mary has told him, and to la Mary what Antonia has said. As he himself, admits: “Una tarde vino Antonia a hacerme una visita y, como con ella tenía confianza, le dije lo que me había contado la Mary de sus novios y de los hombres. [...] Como con la Mary cogí en seguida también un montón de confianza, le dije lo que me

¹⁰ Jeffrey Weeks, “Capitalism and the Organisation of Sex” in *“Gay Left” Collective Homosexuality* (London: Allison & Busby and Gay Left, 1980), 11-20 (p.19).

había dicho Antonia” (42). Although the initial disclosure of what the servants have said to him passes without any problematical repercussions, when he goes on to reveal what the neurotic tata Caridad told him about her nether regions: “No tengo nada de cintura para abajo. [...] No siento nada” (45), and which she considers too devastatingly personal to repeat, she retaliates by bursting into tears and labelling him a homosexual stool pigeon “chivato mariquita”.

What is significant both here, and in the scenes that follow, is the association that is made, by the various characters, between effeminacy in the male and homosexuality, and the concomitant and significant overburdening of the narrator with effeminate traits. The notion that the propensity to gossip and betray confidences is stereotypically associated with the female rather than the male has been underscored by the literary and cultural theorists Lou Charnon-Deutch and Gregory Brooks amongst others. While Charnon-Deutch points out that “Clarín (the author of the nineteenth century classic *La Regenta*, referred to here) could have chosen a dozen ways to make Fermín aware of Ana’s adultery. Instead a woman’s voice is chosen to intervene at the most critical moment in the history of Ana’s affair. Woman, it is all too clear, abuses knowledge, breaking confidences and contracts when they please”,¹¹ Woods also argues from a similar point of view. In an essay devoted to Hemingway’s “voice of masculine anxiety” he underlines the active effeminacy of gossip: “Gossip is the discourse of the inadequate: women, gay men and straight men who do not pass muster”.¹²

Later on, la Mary will link both the narrator’s facial features – “si tú en vez de haber salido niño hubieras salido niña, con esa cara tan preciosa que tienes” (154) – and his emotional response to certain social/sexual events to effeminacy, and his effeminacy to an anticipated homosexual state. For instance, when he points out that he did not realise that he should treat women any differently from the way in which he treats men, la Mary is only too ready to read this innocent remark as an indication of the (stereotyped) effeminacy associated with the sexually perverse, rather than as an indication of the deficient social skills of a ten-year-old boy. As she derisively points out: “Pues ten cuidado, porque una cosa es saberlo y no echar cuenta, que es lo que hacen los hombres,

¹¹ Lou Charnon-Deutch, *Gender and Representation: Women in Spanish Realist Fiction* (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1990), p. 88.

y otra no figurárselo siquiera, que es el defecto de los sarasas” (42). “Sarasa” is the term used for an effeminate homosexual (León, 155). Similarly, when the narrator refuses to satisfy the bawdy servant, by watching the putatively homosexual tío Ramón undress, she labels him, once again, with a term that elides effeminacy in the male with homosexuality. Mocking him for what she considers his reticence and timidity, she informs him that he is “más lila que el novio de Luján que se murió de un empacho de burgaillos” (194). “Lila” signifies an effeminate homosexual, a wimp, and a fool (León, 107).

Two questions need to be asked in relation to the scenes described above. What are the underlying socio-political and sexual agendas that encourage and enable the household servants to read the narrator’s gender-bending traits as evidence of an anticipated homosexuality? What determining effects, if any, do homophobic epithets and hate speech have on the narrator’s self-perception of his identity and space as homosexual and perverse? In addressing the first of these two issues, I refer to what Foucault has to say in *The History of Sexuality: Vol. 2*.¹³ Here, he points out that “the association of homosexuality in the male with femininity can be traced back to Socrates’ first speech in the *Phaedrus*, where he ‘voices disapproval of the love that is given to soft boys’, and to the description of Agathon in *The Thesmophoriazusaie*, as ‘pale’ and with a ‘woman’s voice’” (19). In a similar vein, Randolph Trumbach writes of the way in which Englishmen in the eighteenth century “stereotyped all sodomites as effeminate and misogynist” pointing out that “when an author set out to titillate the public he portrayed only misogyny and effeminate passivity”.¹⁴ Continuing with a quotation from an eighteenth-century author, he goes on to note how one, Ned Smith, described “mollies” as “men so degenerated that they fancy themselves women, affecting to speak, walk, tattle, curtsy, cry, scold and mimick all manner of effeminacy” (12-13). Later in the nineteenth century, Karl Heinrich Ulrich, a German lawyer and sexologist, would refer to the man-loving man as “anima mulieris in corpore virili inclusa” – a female soul

¹² Gregory Woods, “The Injured Sex: Hemingway’s Voice of Masculine Anxiety” in *Textuality and Sexuality: Reading Theories and Practices*, edited by Judith Still & Michael Worton (Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 1993), pp. 160-172 (p. 166).

¹³ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Vol. 2. The Use of Pleasure* (London: Penguin Books, 1992).

¹⁴ Randolph Trumbach, “London’s Sodomites” in *Journal of Social History* 11/1 (1977) pp. 1-33 (p. 12).

enclosed in a male body.¹⁵ More recently, Kaja Silverman has argued that the notion of inversion is probably as old as the hierarchical binarising of “man” and “woman”:

Human culture has to date shown itself to be stubbornly resistant to conceptualising sexual positionality—and more recently, object choice – apart from the binary logic of gender. Since the category of masculinity has traditionally been a very restrictive one, – those defying its conditions find themselves relegated to the more accommodating category of femininity. (*Male Subjectivity at the Margins*, 342)

Particularly illuminating in that it helps to explain the reaction of the various characters to what they perceive as effeminacy in the male are Judith Butler’s comments in her informative book *Gender Trouble*:

The cultural matrix through which gender identity has become intelligible requires that certain kinds of “identities” cannot “exist” – that is, those in which gender does not follow from sex and those in which practices of desire do not follow from either sex or gender. [...] Precisely because certain kinds of “gender identities” fail to conform to those norms of cultural intelligibility, they appear only as developmental failures or logical impossibilities from within that domain. (17)

In this sense then, it is the ten-year-old narrator’s gender-bending traits alone that quantify and qualify him as “logically” perverse rather than any (homo)erotic functioning on his part. Indeed, as Butler goes on to point out: “Discrete genders are part of what ‘humanises’ individuals within contemporary culture, indeed we regularly punish those who fail to do their gender right” (*Gender Trouble*, 178).

In the light of the observations outlined above, it is perhaps not so surprising then to find male characters in literature represented as both effeminate and sexually perverse. Indeed, many novels approximate to what the narrator of *El palomo cojo* has to say in their representation of the effeminate male as a homosexual male. For instance, the anticipated homosexuality of the young Jacobo Santillana, in Mercedes Salisachs’s *Viaje a Sodoma*,¹⁶ is predicated, at a very early age, as is that of Mendicutti’s narrator, on his effeminacy and gender-bending traits. Here, the young boy’s father demonstrates the importance that both he, and a patriarchal order, attach to *machismo* in the male, by encouraging the young Jacobo to pattern his bodily movements when swimming on those of the cinematographic actor and olympic swimmer, Jonny Weismüller, who plays the

¹⁵ Quoted in Kaja Silverman, *Male Subjectivities at the Margins*, p. 340.

¹⁶ Mercedes Salisachs, *Viaje a Sodoma* (Barcelona: Planeta, 1977).

part of Tarzan, Jacobo's "ídolo trepador" (89). Urging his son to emulate this powerful swimmer: "acuérdate de Tarzán" (89), and leaving him to his own devices when he gets into difficulties in the water, the father explains to the boy's distracted mother that he would rather see Jacobo drown than see him turned into a "marica": "Era mejor verlo ahogado que convertido en un marica" (90). Later, in a scene that mirrors, almost exactly, what happens to the narrator in Mendicutti's text (an event that I review in the following section), the father once again labels his son a "mariquita," when the boy breaks down and cries. As he callously exclaims: "Mariquita, eso eres: un perfecto mariquita" (109). Similarly, in Truman Capote's *Other Voices, Other Rooms*,¹⁷ the anticipated homosexuality of the young boy, Joel, is also predicated on his effeminacy and gender-bending traits. Here, Capote has one of the female characters, Idabel Thompkins, call the young boy a "sissy britches" (108), telling him to "go home and cut out paper dolls" (109) when he whimpers, blushes, and weeps for his former home. In Edmund White's *A Boy's Own Story*, the narrator's pubescent same-sex eroticism and taste go hand in hand with a shortfall of masculine qualities. As his sister unconscionably points out: "You smell bad and I hate you. [...] And look at your big nostrils. And you're such a big sissy, you can't even throw a baseball, you throw like a girl, you can't even walk right, you're a gimp. You are. I'm not kidding".¹⁸

Having noted the various dialogic interactions between the narrator and the household servants in which the frightened ten-year-old is interpellated as a "chivato mariquita", "sarasa", and "lila", the question that needs to be asked now is: in what way do homophobic epithets and hate speech produce determining effects on the narrator's self-determination as homosexual and other? Or put another way, in what way do homophobic referents become the defining principle of identity and space as homosexual? That the narrator has indeed internalised the significance for his identity as homosexual of what has been said to him and of what he has been called is underscored by his anxious, even terrified psychological reactions. For instance, while he understands the social/sexual implication for his identity and space of being labelled a "mariquita"

¹⁷ Truman Capote, *Other Voices, Other Rooms* (New York: Vintage Books, 1948).

¹⁸ Edmund White, *A Boy's Own Story* (London: Pan Books, 1983), p.78.

(the sexually astute la Mary has already clarified this point [26]), he is still not so sure what the term “sarasa” signifies. Worried by the homosexual implications for his identity and space of being categorised as a “mariquita” (indicated, as on many other occasions, by having him relapse into a feverish malaise: “Subía un poco la fiebre [...] Aquella destemplanza no se me iba por más que me cuidaba la abuela” [46]), and not sure whether the word “sarasa” is indeed a homophobic term or someone’s family name, the tormented ten-year-old seeks reassurance that neither the one term nor the other could possibly be attached to he himself. In words that ironically underline not only his anxiety and torment, but also his fledgling ignorance of homophobic terms, he tries to allay his fears by asking his father’s cousin what the term “sarasa” really means. Highlighting even further his anxiety and childlike false reasoning, he tentatively reassures himself, by pointing out that “en eso yo estaba tranquilo porque un primo de mi padre que se llamaba como mi padre y como yo decía siempre que él no conocía nadie con ese nombre (sarasa) que fuese mariquita” (42).

Further evidence that what has been said to him and what he has been called produce ongoing and accumulative effects is demonstrated by his reaction to la tata Caridad’s rambling discourse and homophobic taunts. That he is tormented not only by the thought that what is happening to la Caridad’s sexual organs might not even now be happening to his own (“pensaba yo si no me estaría ya pasando lo que a la tata Caridad que no tenía nada de cintura para abajo” [45]), but also and equally by being labelled a “maricón”, and, further, that he gets both these issues tangled up in his mind, is highlighted by his haunted, fearful state. Thus, while his nervous fever returns and he feels as though he is weighed down by a burden, he also senses that he ought to be worrying about something, although he is still not quite sure why or what: “Tenía que preocuparme por algo y no supiera bien por qué. [...] Y me entraba un agobio grandísimo” (47).

While the examples that I have given underscore the ways in which homophobic epithets and hate speech produce demonstrable and performative effects on the narrator as a boy, it is only with the cripplingly prescriptive hate speech of la Mary that he finally assumes a homosexual identity and role. In highlighting the constructedness of his sense-of-being and space as homosexual, and the part that the servants play in this social/sexual

scene, it is necessary to refer to what takes place finally between the narrator and la Mary in the text's closing scenes.

During a private reading of Lorca's poems given by tía Victoria, the narrator's thespian great-aunt, and attended by la Mary and tío Ramón, the narrator notices that the servant is wearing the actress's missing ring. Already jealous because tío Ramón is sitting close to la Mary and fondling her, the narrator furiously draws attention both to the guilty servant and to the ring which she very foolishly displays on the little finger of her left hand (213). Running from the room, he makes both her guilt and his feelings clear by screaming: "¡Cochambrosa, cochambrosa, cochambrosa!" (213). As is to be expected, given la Mary's earthy disposition and colloquial use of words, her response to being labelled filthy, nauseating, stinking, vile, as well as being exposed as a thief, is to verbally attack her accuser. Labelling the narrator a stool pigeon and a homosexual, she goes on to tell him that even his face and features have begun to resemble those of a "maricón". As she so tellingly puts it: "Chivato, mariquita, embustero, asqueroso. ¡Qué mentira más grande! ¡Qué boca más sucia! ¡Qué bicho más malo eres, cochambroso! ¡Qué cara se te ha puesto de maricón!" (220).

That hate speech and the ideological notions that inform and sustain it, produce performative effects on the individual to whom it is addressed, is categorically underlined when the narrator admits that, haunted by la Mary's homophobic taunts, he is frightened to look at himself in a mirror lest he see the face of el Cigala, a "maricón", looking back: "No querría ni mirarme a la cara, sobre todo si era verdad que se me estaba poniendo como la de Cigala, el manicura" (223). Terrified that he might, indeed, be developing a homosexual look, he frenetically makes one of his many tautological rationalisations, rationalisations that always seem to validate that which he most dreads. Thus, as his tortured mind erroneously reasons, since his mother has always told him that el Cigala and tía Emilia look alike, and since he, himself, also resembles his elderly aunt then, *a fortiori*, he too must resemble el Cigala, a "maricón" (223).

However, one of the most definitive moments in this young boy's homosexual rites-of-passage occurs when la Mary, once again, verbally assaults him for revealing that she was wearing tía Victoria's missing ring. Categorising him as evil, wretched, depraved and vile, as well as the type of homosexual who will always play the passive, and most denigrated of sexual roles, she leaves him in no doubt as to his homosexual proclivities:

Chivato, cochambroso, malasangre, maricón. Así te zurzan el ojo del culo con una soga embadurnada de alquitrán. Y que se te encaje en las tripas un retortijón que te las deje como el escobón de desatascar el váter. [...] Que con las hembras se te quede lacio como una bicha en invierno, y que hasta con los hombres se te ponga chiquitujo, seco pellejón. [...] Y que te apedreen por cacorro, asqueroso y mamonazo. (227)

Both Judith Butler and Mari Matsuda have spoken of the performative effect of hate speech on the individual to whom it is addressed; Butler in the sense of hate speech as: “the injurious word that not only names a social subject, but constitutes that subject in the naming, and constructs that subject through a violent interpellation” (*Excitable Speech*, 49); and Matsuda in the sense of: “an integrated arsenal of weapons of oppression and subordination” (*Words That Wound*, 7). That this excruciating “maldición” does indeed, produce a determining and homosexualising effect on the narrator’s existential “I” (in the sense in which Butler and Matsuda speak of hate speech) is highlighted in the scenes that follow la Mary’s execrable remarks. In a monologic script that relies almost entirely on opaque referentiality for its meaning and effect and in which the lame pigeon plays a central and crucial, if silent role, the narrator describes what may be termed an epiphanic moment in his life. The moment at which he takes up a homosexual positionality (rather than identity) and a homosexual role. Or put another way, the moment at which he claims an identity that was discursively forced upon him.

Thus he begins, significantly, I suggest by disclosing his personal names and patronymics (thirteen in all) to a homosexual referent (the lame pigeon), rather than to a heterosexual member of his family or friends. This is a telling and ironic sexual/textual move since it not only fills up the ontological vacuity that accrues to the individual (here the narrator) who lacks a name, but also and simultaneously aligns him with a homosexual referent. Later, he suggests that both he and the lame pigeon should share and alternate his own personal names and patronymics between each other – a suggestion that even further, albeit figuratively, aligns his psycho/sexual identity and space with that of the lame bird. As he puts it to the “palomo cojo”: “No seas desagraciado, caramba. Cuando te sientas solo, vienes y te presto los apellidos que más te gusten” (239). And finally, and as if to shock both the reader and the bird, he almost immediately fragments this recently and tortuously determined positionality and space as homosexual into multiple and masked positionalities. As he rhetorically puts it to the attentive

bird/homosexual referent: “Seguro que una persona que tenga muchos nombres y apellidos es más difícil que vaya por ahí hecho un solitario, porque se puede llamar de una manera o de otra, y es como si se disfrazara, o mejor aún como si se dividiera en dos o en tres” (239).

The suggestion by the narrator that he both fragment and then conceal his recently acquired homosexual identity has much in common with what Diana Fuss has to say on a similar theme. As she pertinently observes:

Paradoxically, the “ghosting” of homosexuality coincides with its “birth”, for the historical moment of the first appearance of the homosexual as a “species” rather than a “temporary aberration” also marks the moment of the homosexual’s disappearance – into the closet. That the first coming out was also simultaneously a closeting; that the homosexual’s debut onto the stage of historical identities was as much an egress as an entry; and that the priority or “firstness” of homosexuality, which preceded heterosexuality in Western usage by a startling eleven years, nonetheless could not preempt its relegation into secondary status: all these factors highlight, in their very contradictoriness, the ambiguous operations of ins and outs. “Out” cannot help but to carry a double valence for lesbian and gay subjects. On the one hand, it conjures up the exteriority of the negative – the devalued or outlawed term in the hetero/homo binary. On the other hand, it suggests the process of coming out – a movement into a metaphysics of presence, speech, and cultural visibility.¹⁹

Similarly, Kathy Ferguson’s use of the term “mobile” rather than “multiple” as she applies it to identity is equally applicable to the narrator and to his immediate fragmentation of his homosexual “I”. For Ferguson, the notion of mobility “avoids the implication of movement from one to another stable resting place, and instead problematizes the contours of the resting that one does” (*The Man Question*, 158). Equally, her gloss on Linda Alcoff’s notion of the term “positionality” as a way to look at the “moving historical context” within which the individual’s notion of his/her identity is spawned, is also applicable to the constructedness of the narrator’s homosexual “I”, as well as to the way in which he challenges both the definition and the definers. As Ferguson explains: “It [“positionalization”, a term that Ferguson prefers to Alcoff’s “positionality”] names an outcome of a positionalizing practice; the evocation of the verb form stresses the activity that is involved, both in the ways that power acts upon us and in the ways we resist it” (159).

It is also pertinent to note that the disruption and concealment of identity and space has a certain long-term provenance in literary texts. To give one instance: in Oscar

¹⁹ *Inside/Out*, ed. by Diana Fuss (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 4.

Wilde's novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*²⁰ published at the end of the nineteenth century, the text's eponymous, and putatively homosexual anti-hero posits the notion that "insincerity [...] is merely a method by which we can multiply our personalities". And furthermore, as Wilde's omniscient narrator points out:

Such, at any rate, was Dorian Gray's opinion. He used to wonder at the shallow psychology of those who conceive the Ego in man as a thing simple, permanent, reliable and of one essence. To him man was a being with myriad lives and myriad sensations, a complex multiform creature. (164)

As I explained in the introduction to this chapter, in order to tease out the various layers of ironic and convoluted meaning that inform the narrator's text, it is necessary to approach his representation of the homosexual himself from the interlocking, accumulative and overlapping points of view that he himself presents. Thus, it is not only the homophobic hate speech and epithets of the household servants that serve to formulate the ten-year-old boy's sense-of-being and space as homosexual, but also, for example, the discursive practices and codes of medicine and psychology.

1.2 Medicalising scripts: the narrator as both homosexual and clinically diseased

Relevant to this part of my reading of the narrator's text is his representation of the determining effect on his subjectivity and self as both homosexual and diseased of medicalising practices and codes, as well as society's essentialising notions of sex, sexuality, and gender. Before examining the various issues and events that reflect these various phenomena a brief excursion into Foucault's *History of Sexuality: Vol. I* will help to place what the narrator has to say within a wider geo-historical and cultural frame. Similarly, a look at Martínez-Expósito's observations on the homosexual and clinical disease will further an understanding of certain aspects of *El palomo cojo*, as well as placing both it and its narrator within the context of Spanish literature and social praxis.

In his review of the various premises that informed much of the thinking in relation to sex and sexuality in the West, Foucault highlighted the late nineteenth century as the time in which the medical and legal professions began what he termed "a new

²⁰ Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (London: Penguin Books, 1994). (First published in 1891).

persecution of the peripheral sexualities” (42). Amongst the latter were numbered the homosexual, the pederast, the hermaphrodite, and the invert. As he notes further on:

Through the various discourses, legal sanctions against minor perversions were multiplied; sexual irregularity was annexed to mental illness: from childhood to old age, a norm of sexual development was defined and all the possible deviations were carefully described; pedagogical controls and medical treatments were organized; around the least fantasies, moralists, but especially doctors, brandished the whole emphatic vocabulary of abomination (36). [...] Since sexuality was now a medical and medicalizable object, one had to try and detect it – as a lesion, a dysfunction, or a symptom – in the depths of the organism or on the surface of the skin, or among all the signs of behavior. The power which thus took charge of sexuality set about contacting bodies, caressing them with its eyes, intensifying areas, electrifying surfaces, dramatizing troubled moments. It wrapped the sexual body in its embrace. (44)

Equally useful are Martínez-Expósito’s observations on the way in which the homosexual in Spain has been vilified and branded as both degenerate and diseased; and how up to and including the 1970s and 1980s homosexuality was still viewed by many as an illness which produced perverse and debilitating effects:

Incluso en la presuntamente adulta sociedad española de los años setenta y ochenta predomina no sólo la idea de que la homosexualidad es una enfermedad, sino de que esa enfermedad es en sí misma odiosa, abominable y terrible. Se trata, en efecto, de una enfermedad sin curación conocida (o difícilísima), que hace sufrir indeciblemente a quien la padece, con horripilantes efectos en la vida diaria (vicio compulsivo, delincuencia, nocturnidad...), que nadie desea contraer, de la que todo aquel que la padece, desea curarse (excepto en casos muy avanzados en que la enfermedad ataca al equilibrio mental del sujeto), que se puede contagiar con suma facilidad aunque por ignorados cauces, y cuyas causas se ignoran. (*Los escribas furiosos*, 96)

In highlighting the interplay between the medicalising and social/sexual concerns raised by both Foucault and Martínez-Expósito, and the personal and private concerns raised by the narrator in *El palomo cojo*, as well as the way in which the former facilitate an understanding of the latter, I begin by examining one of the text’s early scenes.

In a visit to his grandparents’ home, and immediately prior to his three-month convalescence there, the narrator and la Mary are discussing the plight of one of the pigeons that tío Ricardo keeps in the roof of the house and which, according to the narrator, appears to lead a sad and solitary life, always wandering about alone and apart from the rest. As he goes on to recall:

Una tarde, poco antes de aquel verano que pasé convaleciente y medio tarumba por culpa de la destemplanza y de las cosas que me pasaron en casa de mis abuelos, me fijé en una paloma que se paseaba, con un movimiento raro y como melindroso, por el pretil de la azotea chica y no sé por qué [...] en seguida pensé que era una paloma tristona y solitaria y que lo estaba pasando mal. (26)

While the narrator takes note of the pigeon's general air of solitude and desolation, la Mary concentrates on its crippled leg, pointing out that it is not a female bird but a male and that the only thing the matter with it is that it had turned out lame, and that the narrator already knew what was said about lame birds: "No era paloma sino palomo y que lo único que le pasaba era que había salido cojo y que *ya sabía* yo lo que se decía de los palomos rengos" (26; my emphasis). While this might seem an inconsequential and insignificant remark, it is, nevertheless, pertinent to an understanding both of the narrator and of the narrative as a whole; of the narrative as a whole in that it underlines the signifying part played by the lame pigeon not only as an actantial presence in the text, but also as a metaphor for the homosexual as clinically diseased (León, 114); of the narrator in that it not only demonstrates that he already knew ("*ya sabía*") the sexual/textual connotations that are attached to a lame pigeon in the Spanish language but also helps to clarify the performative effect of this homophobic, medicalising signifier on the narrator as a boy.

That the narrator does, indeed, already understand the metaphoric significance that is attached to a lame pigeon, as a homosexual referent, and that he has a fairly substantial working knowledge for his age of the sexual/textual signification of what has been said to him (and of what he also must have previously gleaned) is ironically underscored when he goes to be measured for a suit. Here, he ironically implies that he not only understands the homophobic implications of la Mary's earlier remarks, but is even now applying their medicalising/homosexualising resonance to his own maturing physiognomy and sex. This is connotatively achieved, I suggest, by having him preoccupied for "un montón de días" when the tailor who is measuring him for the suit informs him that he is a little bit lame in one leg, albeit by the tailor's fine yardstick. As the narrator once again recalls:

No sé por qué yo me acordé de pronto de cuando tuve que probarme el traje de primera comunión, que la hice de marinero y de pantalón largo, y el sastre, al probarme la primera vez, dijo uy este niño tiene una pierna más corta que otra, y era verdad porque el pernil izquierdo se me quedaba un poco respingón. (27)

In this sense then, the performative effect on the narrator's burgeoning sexuality and self of la Mary's previous remarks – remarks which collapsed homosexuality with physical disease at the same time as they reflected the ideology that spawned them and sustained them – is, as in so many other instances, connotatively implied, rather than directly noted.

Even more suggestive of the essentialising link that a homophobic order makes between homosexuality and physical disease as well as of the narrator's psycho/sexual internalisation of this medicalising theme is an event that takes place later when he is convalescing at his grandparents' home. Lying in bed and reviewing in his mind the people he has met, or perhaps only heard of, during the brief time that he has spent there, his thoughts turn to what has been said about tío Ramón, his mother's younger brother. Recalling how la Mary has spoken of the latter's handsome appearance, modish style and exciting adventures in foreign countries, the narrator is intrigued by all that he has heard about this charming if somewhat feckless older man. Attracted to everything that has been said about this "balarrasa" of the family – tío Ramón is evidently also very smart, and full of charm: "mucho encanto" (20) – the narrator's interest in and admiration for his mother's younger brother becomes interwoven and perfused with what la Mary and the tailor said to him earlier on. In a tautological, if misguided, rationalisation that has much in common with the one that he makes when he aligns his identity and space with that of the homosexual, el Cigala, (discussed in the previous section), he begins by feverishly thinking of the dashing if somewhat irresponsible, tío Ramón. Then he wishes that he could eventually grow to look like him: "Quería verme igual que él". Following that, in his excitement and emotional desire, he clumsily knocks his big toe on the foot of the bed and ends up worrying lest he has been permanently maimed. Almost demented with both fear and his burgeoning desire, he frenetically explains: "Y me pegué en el dedo chico del pie con la pata de la cama – me dolió tanto que pensé que iba a quedarme cojo para siempre" (63).

What the narrator seems to be describing in this convoluted scene is the way in which his feelings of admiration for the dashing and personable tío Ramón made him initially want to look like and be like the older man. But that after suffering a trivial blow to his toe, the feelings he had been experiencing changed to those of terror lest he was

permanently maimed. This transmigration of the narrator's feelings and emotions from those of admiration and joy to those of rejection and terror indicate, I suggest, that he has not only internalised the homophobic gist of the remarks made by la Mary and the tailor (or put another way, the ideological and essentialising notions that elide homosexuality with clinical disease), but that he is also applying their homophobic and medicalising drift to his own interiority and space. Terrified and haunted by the implications for his sexuality and self of what has been said to him, as well as of his feelings for a man whom he has yet to meet, he has the sensation that someone is pursuing him and terrified conceals himself beneath a sheet (63).

I argue here that, as in so many other instances in this text, representation becomes self-representation, definition self-definition, as the narrator first internalises what la Mary and the tailor have said to him and then aligns his feelings, thoughts, and sexual identity with the subliminal implications of their remarks. For instance, he sees himself as figuratively "cojo" in relation to the morphology of his own body and as if someone were pursuing him ("como si alguien me persiguiera") in relation to his burgeoning feelings and desires (63). Here, the "alguien" who pursues him is connoted rather than denoted as someone (homo)sexually perverse.

What needs to be noted both here, and in various other scenes, are the ironic layers of meaning that the narrator attaches to his feverish malaise. For instance, on one level, his "destemplanzas" can be read as his comment on the medicalising notion of the homosexual as clinically diseased and, on another level, as his physiological and psychological reactions to the knowledge that he himself is being labelled as homosexual and perverse. First, on account of his gender-bending traits, and then on account of his emotional attachment to tío Ramón, another man. Thus, it is *not* a pathological condition as his doctor and his homophobic detractors would have him believe that causes him to start trembling: "me di cuenta de que estaba tiritando" (63); shiver yet again in fever: "estaba temblando de fiebre" (93); have his heart beat fiercely: "tenía el corazón pegándome saltos" (63); and worry that someone whom he cannot see is following him in order to embrace him: "era como si alguien a quien ni veía estuviera acariciándome" (62). It is his maturing sensibility and taste, on one level, and, on another, his fear of the labelling process of the homophobic status quo. A citation from Alberto Mira will help to flesh out this particular scene:

Hay que decir [...] que “la homosexualidad” no es un rasgo interno, implícito. Lo que nunca habría que olvidar es que, en definitiva, lo único que une a los homosexuales, lo único que les da derecho a considerarse como una minoría es su oposición a discursos homofóbicos que leen esos comportamientos de un modo determinado. La homofobia es, pues, el problema, no los otros homosexuales.²¹

Later on, and as if to further emphasise the determining effect of homophobic discourse (with its attachment to gender-bending traits and physical and/or psychological disease) on identities and desire, the narrator describes how he almost dies of shame: “casi me muero de vergüenza” (153). First, when his mother tells him that he dances like a woman; and then later, when Antonia, his “niñera”, informs him that he always moves as though he has two left feet (153). Here, the insidious and homosexualising effect on the narrator’s psychic interiority and space of what la Mary and the tailor said to him earlier on, coupled now with what his mother and Antonia have to say about his gender-bending traits and the way he moves his legs, is underscored. Terrified by this cacophony of homosexualising themes and scenes he imagines, once again, that he has the misfortune of being “cojo”. With the added and unspoken implication, of course, that if he is “un poco respingón” then *a fortiori* he must be sexually suspect too:

Luego Antonia se chufleaba de mí y decía que lo que a mí me pasaba era que tenía dos pies izquierdos, y primero pensé que a lo mejor era verdad y, después, por las cosas que me imaginaba, que a lo mejor por eso tenía la desgracia de cojear un poco. (153)

While neither the narrator, nor la Mary, nor for that matter anyone else in the course of the narrative, actually articulate or give expression to the “unmentionable word” (homosexual), the reader must still be receptive to the text’s subliminally orchestrated cues. Or as Judith Still and Michael Worton put it: “The writerly obligation need not necessarily involve calligraphic scriptural activity, but signs have to be given and signs have to be read”.²²

Before going on to explore the performative effect on the narrator of an additional type of discourse that associates homosexuality with psychological disease, I want to highlight a dialogic interaction that takes place between the servant, la Mary, and the

²¹ Alberto Mira, *De Sodoma a Chueca* (Barcelona: Editorial Egales, 2004), p. 28.

²² *Textuality and Sexuality: Reading Theories and Practices*, ed. by Judith Still & Michael Worton (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1993), p. 58.

actress, tía Victoria, an elderly and sexually liberated relation of the narrator, who is visiting the family home after travelling abroad. Although the discursive interaction between these two protagonists has, perhaps, a greater relevance to what I have to say in the following section, I have elected to introduce it here, since it has the merit of illuminating a very different, non-censorious approach to the subject of the homosexual as an individual, and homosexuality in general. It also has the merit of demonstrating how the narrator begins to self-identify with the gist of tía Victoria's more liberal and emancipated points of view. A self-identification that serves to underline, I suggest, not only the ways in which subjectivities and space are constituted both socially and discursively in relation to available discursive practices and codes, but also the ways in which the individual (here, the narrator) has the opportunity of changing and adjusting to variable roles.

What is significant in the following scene is not la Mary's continuing and metaphoric configuration of the homosexual as physically lame, demonstrated when she points to the pigeon who is wandering nearby and exclaims to tía Victoria: "Ya ve usted que cojea" (97). Rather it is the latter's very different and more positive approach to the homosexual and bisexual men she has known that overrides, if only temporarily, the servant's previous and prurient remarks. Thus, when the actress declares not only that the lame pigeon looks like Visconti the cinematographer and a noted bisexual ("se parece mucho a él" [97]), but that from today, she will call the lame pigeon by that very name ("desde hoy, se llamará Visconti" [97]). And when she also, and with a coded reference to Freud, declares that men who limp are often very sensitive, even geniuses ("eso de cojear, si no era muchísimo, no tiene nada de malo, que hay muchos hombres que cojean y son muy sensibles y muy elegantes. [...] Algunos [...] eran verdaderos genios" [97]),²³ she is highlighting a more liberal and open-minded approach to sex and sexuality than that offered by la Mary, or indeed, by anyone else in the text (except, of course, the homosexual tío Ramón himself). That the narrator has internalised the liberal thrust of tía Victoria's free-wheeling remarks and that he is already applying their less censorious signification to his own identity and space is demonstrated when he almost gleefully

²³ In his writings on inversion, Freud notes that "It [inversion], is found in people whose efficiency is unimpaired, and who are indeed distinguished by specially high intellectual development and ethical culture". See Sigmund Freud, *On Sexuality Vol. 7* (London & New York: Penguin Books, 1991), p. 49. (First published as *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, 1905).

exclaims that he is “de acuerdo” (97) with what his aunt has said. Aligning himself, if only marginally and temporarily, with tía Victoria’s more amenable remarks, he agrees that limping (homosexuality) may not be such a bad thing after all; in fact, it might even be absolutely splendid: “O sea que aquello de cojear no era tan malo, podía incluso ser magnífico” (97).

However, this is not all that the narrator has to say about the determining effect of medicalising scripts on his (and the individual’s) self-determination as homosexual and perverse. For instance, in scenes that demonstrate how gender non-conformity in the male is collapsed with homosexuality and psychological disease, the narrator maps out the performative effect on his sense-of-being and space as homosexual of being categorised as turning out a little bit strange/queer: “saliendo raro”. That the ubiquitous la Mary is the first person to attach this negativising term to the narrator is perhaps not surprising, since it is the servants in this narrative who most readily label the narrator with homophobic epithets and terms. That the second person to use this homophobic signifier is Eligio, a friend of the narrator’s father, underlines the fact that this particular version of homophobia is equally acceptable to both servants and masters alike. Or in a classist interpretation of the term: to both the working class and the bourgeoisie.

In a scene that underlines, yet again, the performative effect of medicalising, gender-bending, homophobic terms and scripts on the individual to whom they are addressed, the narrator shows la Mary interpreting his interest in and knowledge of the style, colour, cut, and cost of women’s clothes as evidence that, as a male, he must be turning out a bit strange/queer: “saliendo raro” (86). As has already been demonstrated in the preceding section (in relation to the narrator’s propensity to gossip and betray confidences), as soon as gender quantities and qualities are called into question, so too is the nature of the individual’s sexual identity and space. Thus, the suggestion, by the narrator, that one only has to look at tía Victoria’s stylish clothes to see that “el corte era estupendo y, la tela, una divinidad, seguro que costaba una fortuna” (85) is sufficient to confirm for la Mary, not a ten-year-old boy’s sensitive and perceptive feel for fashion and the cut of women’s clothes, but rather her overweening view that this interest in fashion on the part of the narrator, as a male, signifies much more than just another gender-bending trait. As she meaningfully points out: “Los hombres no se fijan en esas cosas” (86).

The negativising effect on the narrator of being categorised by homophobic epithets is intensified by having him fall silent, not only in relation to matters that concern him personally, but also in relation to anything and everything that could possibly be used to question his sexuality, his gender, or his sex. As the narrator tries to explain: “Así que yo procuraba no hacer ni decir nada por lo que la Mary pudiera decirme ay, picha, qué rarito me estás saliendo, pero a veces tenía un descuido y la Mary o Antonia o hasta mi madre [...] me lo decían” (129). This mute and somewhat stoic inertia on the part of the narrator tells us a lot, I suggest, not just about the narrator as a character in a text but also about the homosexual and the homosexual experience *per se*. First, as an indication that the narrator has internalised the homosexualising implications for his identity and space of what has been said to him and what he has been called (“rarito”); and second, as an ironic reflection of the proverbial silence that surrounds the homosexual, and the silencing of the homosexual voice. That this whole process proves an angst-ridden experience for a ten-year-old boy is underscored by the narrator when he tellingly admits how much he suffers: “Y me aguantaba, pero siempre me entraban ganas de llorar” (129).

One further example of the crippling prescriptive implications for the narrator of being told that he is turning out strange/queer (“rarito”) occurs when he goes with his father and his father’s friend, Eligio, to catch the “tórtolas” that gather in the dunes. Unable to endure the sight of the animals that are wounded, and equally unable to put an end to their suffering by striking their broken bodies against the ground, the narrator breaks down and cries:

Y cuando llegaba al puesto con la tórtola tiritando en mis manos y mi padre o Eligio decían tiralas fuerte contra el suelo, así el animalito deja de sufrir, yo no era capaz y tenían que hacerlo ellos, uno de los dos, el que fuera, y a mí se me saltaban las lágrimas y se me ponía la piel de gallina y Eligio siempre decía este niño, Felipe, te está saliendo rarito, me parece a mí. (143)

What is noteworthy about this particular scene is not only the narrator’s sensitive and lachrymose reaction to the more bloody aspects of a sport enjoyed primarily by men, but also the reaction of the huntsman, Eligio, to what he clearly considers an inappropriate response to the suffering of the hunted prey. What the narrator seems to be signalling here is the way in which his anticipated homosexuality is predicated by Eligio

not only on the gender-bending traits of a ten-year-old boy who sensitively weeps, but also on what these traits signify in a homophobic, bourgeois milieu.

Eligio's repeated criticism of the narrator's gender-bending traits ("Eligio siempre decía") as well as the father's equally negative opinion of his sensitive and emotional son – since the father makes no effort to refute Eligio's sexist remarks, it is reasonable to assume that he is in accord with them – can be profitably read in the light of David Gilmore's observations in his book *Manhood in the Making*.²⁴ Here Gilmore's albeit essentialising remarks on the cult of *machismo* are particularly useful in that they highlight the significance that attaches to specific types of behaviour in the male, and in particular the Andalusian male, the subject of the narrator's text:

Even more than other Iberians, they (Andalusians) are fervent followers of what the Spanish critic Enrique Tierno Galván [...] has called the quasi-religious Hispanic "faith in manhood". If you measure up in this regard you are "very much a man" (*muy hombre*), "very virile" (*muy macho*), or "lots of man" (*mucho hombre*). If not, you are *flojo*, a weak and pathetic impostor. (32)

Equally pertinent are Gilmore's observations on the ways in which the "manliness" of the male is identified with, and textured by, activities associated with the hunt and the mastery of nature. For instance, his reference to the castaway English boys in William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, who (as he puts it) "kill a wild sow while experiencing their first erotic sensations and intimations of manhood" (117), and who subsequently feel that "they have established dominion over nature" (17), is particularly useful since it helps to highlight the discrepancy between the sensitive and empathic narrator of *El palomo cojo*, who breaks down and cries rather than finish off the wounded "tortolas", and the accepted *machista* role.

Similarly, the way in which the narrator's gender-bending traits and emotionalism are elided with homosexuality and clinical disease (signified by interpellating him as strange/queer: "rarito"), is also elucidated further by what Judith Butler has to say:

The term "queer" emerges as an interpellation that raises the question of the status of force and opposition, of stability and variability, *within* performativity. The term "queer" has operated as one linguistic practice whose purpose has been the shaming of the subject it names or, rather, the producing of a subject *through* that shaming interpellation. "Queer"

²⁴ David D. Gilmore, *Manhood in the Making: Cultural Concepts of Masculinity* (New York: Yale University Press, 1990).

derives its force precisely *through* the repeated invocation by which it has become linked to accusation, pathologisation and insult. This is an invocation by which a social bond among homophobic communities is formed through time. The interpellation echoes past interpellations, and binds the speakers as if they spoke in unison across time.²⁵

A quotation from Foucault will help to flesh out, even further, the homosexualising implication for the narrator of Eligio's remarks, as well the signifying interconnection that a homophobic order makes between gender non-conformity, homosexuality and psychological disease:

We must not forget that the psychological, psychiatric, medical category of homosexuality was constituted from the moment it was characterized [...] less by a type of sexual relations than by a certain quality of sexual sensibility, a certain way of inverting the masculine and feminine in oneself. (43)

It is also worth noting here that Mendicutti's *El palomo cojo* shares certain affinities with novels written in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century as well as in the present. For example, Aschenbach, the main protagonist, in Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice* dies, arguably, of a plague whilst watching the nubile body of the boy he desires outlined against the background of the beach and the sea.²⁶ Here, Mann underlines the association that is made between homosexuality and disease, by depicting the features and the body of the elderly Aschenbach, as ravaged and exhausted not only by the exigencies of the plague which was decimating Venice, but also by the emotions and the tensions that passion and desire have inflicted on his body and his mind. As Mann's narrator pertinently points out: "His head was burning, his body was covered with a sticky sweat, his neck quivered, a no longer endurable thirst tormented him" (264). Even the shimmering beauty of Venice that provides the backdrop to the text's erotically charged scenes, is described as fetid and humid and smelling of decay and the plague. Similarly, Marcel Proust in *Remembrance of Things Past*²⁷ also underlines the link that is made between homosexuality and disease. First, for instance, by having the narrator suggest that the lesbian Mlle. Vinteuil might free herself from blame by pretending that

²⁵ Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York & London: Routledge, 1993), p. 226. (Emphasis in the original).

²⁶ Thomas Mann, *Death in Venice & Other Stories* (London: Vintage, 1998), pp. 197-267 (pp. 266-67). Originally published in 1912.

²⁷ Marcel Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past Vol. 3* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1982). Originally published as *A la recherche du temps perdu*, 1913-1927.

she was mad, and by saying: “It wasn’t me. I was out of my mind. I can still pray for my father’s soul and not despair of his forgiveness” (264). And second, by describing the homosexual Charlus as if he were in the final stages of a malady. A malady that “pursued its development with ever-increasing speed” so that “the poor Baron could not be very far from the malady’s final term, from death itself, though this possibly would be preceded [...] by an imprisonment which at his age could only hasten its coming” (868-69). Even at the end of the twentieth century, however, writers were still describing the homosexual as both effeminate and diseased. For example, in Alvaro Pombo’s *El héroe de las mansardas de Mansard* the homosexual character, Julián, suffers from permanently inflamed eyelids, a “conjuntivitis crónica”.²⁸ Here, the uncontrollable outpouring of fluid that seeps from his eyes as well as the dark glasses that he wears to conceal his clinical condition serve as metaphors for the homosexual as both closeted and sick. As Pombo has his narrator point out: “Aquella desmesura irreprimible, aquel llanto, como un fastuoso don de lágrimas, fuera, de hecho, su máscara” (9). Further evidence of the homosexual as psychologically disturbed is given by Pombo in *Los delitos insignificantes*, where, having been sodomised by the handsome Quirós, a younger man, the tormented Gonzalo Ortega climbs onto the balustrade of his apartment and hurls himself to the ground: “Se encaramó a caballo sobre la barandilla, como de niño. Se abalanzó al vacío, ladeado, como un saco de noventa kilos de carne” (199).

I have examined the scene at the hunt and its sexual/textual implications in some detail, since it offers an interesting insight into the association that is made between gender-bending traits and sensitivity in the male and a homosexual disposition. I have also tried to relate this particular event and its determining effect on the narrator’s sense-of-being and space as homosexual to similar themes and scenes both in literature and in social praxis. The question that needs to be asked now is: what does the narrator have to say about the performative effect on himself as homosexual of being categorised as turning out strange/queer “saliendo raro”? Or put another way: what does he have to say here about the effect of representation on his self-representation, and of definition on his self-definition?

That the narrator has internalised the implication for his identity as homosexual of being addressed by medicalising and gender-bending epithets and scripts is made

²⁸ Alvaro Pombo, *El héroe de las mansardas de Mansard* (Barcelona: Editorial Anagrama, 1990), p. 9.

abundantly clear in a scene in which he admits the reader, yet again, into the innermost recesses of his mind. Mentally listing all the people whom he knows who have also been described as strange/queer, he begins by aligning himself with each one in turn. First, with tío Ricardo, his bachelor uncle and keeper of the lame pigeon, who walks about at night, dines early in the morning (24-5), has a long-standing “noviazgo”, but never marries (129). Then, with tía Victoria, a bohemian actress, who scandalises everyone with her many lovers, even introducing one of them into her parents’ home (129). Next, with the family doctor who treats the narrator for a feverish malaise when what he is suffering from is a nervous reaction to the homophobic environment in which he finds himself rather than any intrinsic disability of his own. Further on, with Federico the writer of a *billet doux* to the homosexual Ramón, and whose relationship with each other was always suspect on account of la Mary saying that “a ella no le parecía trigo limpio” (129). And finally, with the manicurist, el Cigala, who started off being labelled as “rarito” in his youth, and who ended up being described as both effeminate and a “maricón”:

Rarito había sido tío Ricardo cuando era niño, y ya se veía cómo había terminado el pobre. Rarito fue siempre, según tía Victoria, José Joaquín García Vela, y muchas veces me acordaba de pronto de la cara de lástima que tenía la última vez que le vi, en mi dormitorio [...]. Rarito era Federico, el que le había escrito la postal a tío Ramón, que la Mary me dijo que tenía que serlo para escribir a otro hombre una cosa así. [...] Y rarito había empezado siendo Cigala, el manicura, según él mismo decía, rarito desde chava, y había acabado siendo maricón. (129)

Although, at this stage in the narrative, the narrator does not actually say that he sees his own identity mirrored in any one of these socially and/or sexually suspect characters that invade his inner mind, and who, like himself, have been categorised as a little strange /queer “rarito” (or as in the case of the manicurist, el Cigala, not only “rarito” but also a “maricón”), that is, nevertheless, the unspoken implication behind this rationalising tautology.

In this and the previous section, I have been discussing the determining effect on the narrator’s self-determination as homosexual of a range of discursive practices and codes that refer either directly or indirectly to the narrator himself. In the section that follows I examine the determining effect on his subjectivity, space and desire of a series

of linguistic events that include both the written word and the pictorial image. Unlike what the servants and Eligio have to say, these themes and scenes are concerned primarily with sexual/textual issues and events, ostensibly extraneous to the narrator himself.

1.3 The influence of both the written and the spoken word, as well as the pictorial image on the production of subjectivity and desire

As I have already argued, the narrator of *El palomo cojo* demonstrates the ways in which identity (his own) is constituted as homosexual through the homophobic mechanisms of hate speech and the exigencies of medicalising scripts. In this section I chart the representation of the equally performative effect on his identity as homosexual of the written and the spoken word, as well as of the pictorial image. As with the homophobic scenes discussed in the previous two sections, the events charted here serve principally to support and sustain the homosexualising pressure exerted on the narrator by the surrounding social/sexual scene.

I begin this section by examining a scene that takes place soon after the narrator begins his convalescence in tío Ramón's meticulously kept rooms. Depicting himself as fastidious about cleanliness and hygiene, the narrator describes how he uses tío Ramón's immaculately kept personal bathroom and lavatory in preference to any other such amenity in the house. As he tellingly explains: "Yo siempre que estaba en casa de los abuelos y quería ir al retrete, me metía en aquél [tío Ramón's] porque en los demás me daba apuro" (38-9). Later, he points out that both he and his mother, not usually noted for their closeness or rapport, share a similar predilection for cleanliness. Both find it disagreeable if the bathroom and its facilities are not clean: "Mi madre se descomponía si el cuarto de baño no lo dejábamos limpio, sobre todo la taza del váter, y a mí me pasaba lo mismo" (39). Further on, the mother makes a similar observation when she points out that in matters of cleanliness "este niño ha salido a mí" (39). Although on this occasion the narrator does not actually specify that he has internalised the tautological implications for his identity, as homosexual, of this particular scene – in the sense that if he is similar to tío Ramón in fastidiousness, then *a fortiori* he might just as easily be similar to his

homosexual uncle in other matters as well – that is the subliminal message beneath what is being said. However, in a scene that takes place later on, and which involves la Mary, tía Victoria and Garibaldi, the latter's dog, the narrator has no hesitation in demonstrating the tautological implication for his identity as homosexual of what he overhears them say. Thus, when tía Victoria points out that Garibaldi did not cry when Carmen the narrator's great-grandmother died, because only common country dogs cry at a death, La Mary replies that the dog did not cry because he is a "mariquita". And furthermore, that is also another reason why he and the lame pigeon get on so well: "A Garibaldi sólo le pasaba una cosa, que era mariquita, y por eso se llevaba tan bien y congeniaba tanto con el palomo cojo" (187).

This somewhat bizarre conversation between the servant and tía Victoria, which if anything serves to emphasise la Mary's ongoing obsession with the lame pigeon and with sex, continues by having the bohemian actress actually agreeing with the servant when she points out that Garibaldi is not only sensitive, but also a little bit strange/queer: "Garibaldi era, además de muy sensible, un poco raro" (187). This dialogic interaction between the two women is significant in that it demonstrates the determining effect on the narrator of discursive practices not necessarily addressed to he himself. Listening in to what la Mary and tía Victoria have to say about both the "bisabuela" and the sensitive, strange/queer dog, and whether or not the latter barked when the old lady died, the narrator becomes increasingly anxious when he realises that, like the dog Garibaldi – who has been pronounced both an effeminate homosexual "mariquita" and a little bit strange "un poco raro" – he did not cry either when his great-grandmother died. As he anxiously points out: "Y no sé por qué yo empecé a ponerme colorado. A lo mejor porque me daba vergüenza no haberme puesto a gritar y a llorar a mares cuando la bisabuela Carmen se murió" (187). Once again, the narrator makes a tautological rationalisation between what is being said and its subliminal implication for his own identity and space. Thus, this train of reasoning leads him to believe that if the dog is a "mariquita" because he did not cry when the old lady died, then *a fortiori* he himself must also be a "mariquita" and "un poco raro" because neither did he cry.

That the narrator is also open to the seductive potential of both the written word and the pictorial image is indicated in a scene that takes place towards the end of the text between the narrator and tío Ramón. Of particular relevance here is a "postal" or *billet*

doux sent to Ramón by one, Federico, and which the narrator and la Mary discover amongst the older man's possessions, and which the narrator keeps, reads repeatedly, and learns by heart. Although Federico, the writer of the postcard, does not figure as an actantial presence in the narrative itself, what he has written as well as the picture on the front alludes both positively and negatively to sexual themes. Positive, in the sense that the picture shows a pigeon posing happily on the branches of a tree, while a street dog looks up adoringly, not as if it wanted to eat the bird, but as if it was "enamorado de él" (57). Negative, in the sense that both the writer and what he has to say seem to be tacitly referring to some form of forbidden eroticism and desire: "Ya sé que es doloroso pedir lo que no te pueden dar y ofrecer lo que no pueden aceptar, pero prefiero ese dolor a la cobardía de no intentarlo" (57). Anxious and frightened, on the one hand, by what is being said to him and what he is being called and, on the other, by his burgeoning feelings for the handsome and congenial tío Ramón, the narrator expresses his loneliness, fear and sensual feelings for the older man through the postcard's pictorial images. Thus when he wants to demonstrate how much he admires and wants to be admired in return, the only way he can envisage demonstrating how he feels is by emulating the way in which the dog in the "postal" looks at the pigeon in the tree. As he freely admits: "Y lo único que se me ocurrió fue ponerme a mirarlo como el perro callejero miraba al palomo en la postal" (235). Equally, when he wants to show his feelings for tío Ramón with a kiss, he recalls everything that la Mary, la tata Caridad, his mother, Antonia and Eligio have said about him, and despairingly draws back: "Le habría dado un beso. [...] Pero de pronto pensé que a lo mejor la Mary tenía razón y se me había puesto una cara clavada a la de Cigala" (235).

Judith Butler's observation that we ought to "consider the efficacy of written or reproduced language in the production of social effects and, in particular, the constitution of subjects" (*Excitable Speech*, 32) is useful here, in that it emphasises the significance of the written word as an enabling agent that produces change. Similarly, her re-visiting of Catherine M. MacKinnon's theorisation of the performative effect on the individual of the visual field in pornography, is equally valuable. As Butler points out: "She (MacKinnon) substitutes a set of linguistic imperatives for the visual field, implying not only a full transposition of the visual into the linguistic, but a full transposition of visual depiction into an efficacious performative" (67). "This visual field is then figured as

speaking, indeed, as delivering imperatives, at which point the visual field operates as a subject with the power to bring into being what it names, to wield an efficacious power analogous to the divine performative” (66).

It is noteworthy that Oscar Wilde’s observations in “The Critic as Artist” also offer an explanation of the way in which the narrator expresses desire by mimicking the words and the picture on a postcard. As Wilde puts it in relation to Form, expression and desire:

Yes; Form is everything. It is the secret of life. Find expression for a sorrow, and it will become dear to you. Find expression for a joy, and you intensify its ecstasy. Do you wish to love? Use Love’s Litany, and the words will create the yearning from which the world fancies they spring.²⁹

For instance, there is one particular aspect of what the narrator has to say that supports the notion that his erotic sensibility as well as his sense-of-being and self are culturally determined with reference to extraneous issues and events. The negative images emerging from the narrator’s heterosexual father, and the positive images emerging from the homosexual tío Ramón. Positive that is, in the sense that Ramón is depicted as handsome, personable and, above all, sympathetic, able to alleviate problematical situations and to calm fractious nerves. Thus, when the narrator is tormented by what la Mary has said to him, it is tío Ramón who calmly reassures him, pointing out that whatever the sexuality of the individual person, everyone has a good side to his nature and self: “Vaya, sobrino, eso no es tan malo. [...] Todo tiene su parte buena. Ya lo verás” (236). Similarly, when the half-crazed tata Caridad imagines that her limbs and her body are falling apart, it is this compassionate if socially and sexually unorthodox man who greets the hysterical servant with the encouraging and life-enhancing (although not strictly accurate) words that she is beautiful. And that she even looks like doña Carmen Polo, Franco’s spouse. Then, as if to promote even further, the health and wellbeing of this psychotic family servant, he promises that she will be attended by the very best doctor and then go on to enjoy a Caribbean cruise. “Le dije que no se preocupase, que él iba a hablar con un médico amigo suyo que trataba a todas las

²⁹ Oscar Wilde, *The Works of Oscar Wilde* (London: Spring Books, 1965), pp. 857-898 (p. 893). First published in 1891.

señoras de la alta sociedad de cosas parecidas, y que en cuanto se pusiera bien iba él a llevarla a un crucero por el Caribe” (186).

Of even greater significance for the narrator, as a troubled ten-year-old, is the way in which tío Ramón finds just the right words to console him on one of the many occasions that he becomes terrified that he may indeed be turning out strange/queer. Ever the peacemaker and soother of the troubled soul, he quickly challenges tía Victoria after she has admitted that her dog is very sensitive as well as little strange/queer “un poco rarito”, philosophically exclaiming: “Victoria, Victoria [...] todos somos raritos de vez en cuando” (187). Furthermore, as the narrator goes on to recall, tío Ramón knows exactly how to deal with each fractious individual according to his/her personal prejudices and needs. Thus, he embraces the mother who loves him and who keeps a picture of him on her bed-side table so that she can kiss it and feel close to him each night. He winks at tía Blanca in order to unlock the spiritual inflexibility with which she approaches people and events. He grins broadly at the brazen la Mary as if looking forward to an amorous embrace. And he promises la tata Caridad that he will speak immediately to his medical friend, who will soon cure her:

Tío Ramón sonrió con mucho estilo, le dio un beso a la abuela, le guiñó un ojo a tía Blanca, le puso los dientes largos a la Mary con una caída de ojos como los de Alfredo Mayo, y le prometió a la tata Caridad que al día siguiente sin falta hablaba con aquel amigo suyo que iba a quitarle todos los achaques. (189)

The very different and negative images that emerge from the narrator’s heterosexual father, in comparison with those that emerge from the homosexual Ramón, evolve frequently from the fact that the former lets himself be dominated by his self-absorbed, insensitive wife. As the narrator ironically recalls: “mi madre era muy femenina y tenía un estilo tremendo, pero en mi casa se hacía siempre lo que decía ella, y mi padre se lo tomaba a broma y decía tu madre es la que lleva aquí los pantalones” (13). This insipid and negative approach to his responsibilities, as both a husband and a father, is further underlined when he takes little or no active part in caring for his sick and troubled son, leaving it entirely to the boy’s mother to decide who shall look after the boy and where he shall convalesce. And as the narrator puts it further on: “cuando yo me puse malo, mi madre lo organizó todo y mi padre dijo amén” (13). Equally ineffectual and negative in comparison to the attentive and empathic tío Ramón is the father’s lack of

involvement with his sexually maturing and frightened son. Thus, when the narrator is troubled by what has been said to him and what he has been called, it is to tío Ramón and not his father that he turns for consolation and advice. As he sadly and somewhat scornfully observes of his father's role: "Lo suyo era el Instituto, donde daba clases de química, y leer todo el santo día en el despachito que mamá le había preparado en casa, un sitio donde no se podía entrar sino para darle las buenas noches; tanto yo como Manolín y Diego comprendíamos que a mi padre no se le podía molestar" (59).

The discrepancy between the personable and approachable tío Ramón and the narrator's distant and ineffectual father, is further underscored when the narrator takes note of the difference between the physique of his uncle, pictured on the beach in bathing attire, and that of his father similarly clothed. While the photo of the father shows him wearing a costume that does not suit him, and which reveals a body that lacks muscle tone and physical appeal, the photo of tío Ramón displays "una facha estupenda" (59). When the narrator asks his mother why his father does not have a more manly and muscular frame, she replies that his father possesses something much more important than muscles, an intelligent mind.

However, it is not only the personable and caring tío Ramón who influences the direction of the narrator's maturing sensibility and taste; many other issues and events, as I have tried to show, contribute to this sexual/textual theme. For instance, what also needs to be noted here are the ways in which la Mary draws the narrator's attention to issues pertaining to sexuality and sex, issues to which he might not otherwise have been so readily exposed or possibly have even noticed. Thus it is la Mary who deliberately stimulates his libido and his sex by manipulating his member when he is trying to sleep (46). It is also la Mary who ensures that he notes the fetching body of the homosexual Ramón's as it is displayed on the beach. As the narrator, once again, recalls: "la Mary me dijo fíjate qué jechuras tiene el mamonazo, y qué apretura de carnes y qué bulto tan grandísimo marca, por Dios" (59). And it is la Mary who encourages the narrator, as a ten-year-old boy, to spy on his homosexual uncle so that both of them could see him naked as he undressed for bed (199). Equally, it is la Mary and the bohemian actress, tía Victoria, who continue to stimulate the narrator's burgeoning eros and desire. Either by salaciously recounting what has been printed in newspapers and magazines concerning

lovers, assassins, violence, and sex or by showing him pornographic pictures, including those of naked men in sexual arousal (154).

That pornographic pictures have the potential to produce erotic effects is demonstrated by the narrator when he describes the reactions of Carmen who, although paralysed, is viewing the same pornographic scene (155). Here the ninety-year-old great-grandmother becomes so animated by the sexually explicit images of naked men that her dying process is temporarily and felicitously decelerated and deferred. What the narrator seems to be saying here, I suggest, is that if a pornographic picture of men in sexual arousal can titillate a moribund old woman of ninety, then it could very well do the same for he himself as a boy of ten (154). An assumption that can be sustained by referring back to Butler's gloss on MacKinnon's theorisation of the "performative effect on the individual of the visual field in pornography" (Excitable Speech, 67), which I discussed earlier on.

1.4 "Reverse Discourse": the narrator answers back

Although the main thrust of my reading of the narrator's confession has been to discuss his representation of the constructedness of identity and space (his own) as homosexual, it is also necessary to underline the ways in which he also answers back and challenges his oppressors and the status quo. His critical, often witty, and always devastating demolition of the institutions of the State and their representatives is ironically achieved by opening up a gap or faultline between his own point of view as an innocent child at the time the events he relates were occurring, and his point of view as a mature and knowledgeable man at the time of writing down his confession. This contestatory mood or "reverse discourse" (to borrow a Foucaultian term), humorously, even farcically, introduces a *desdoblamiento* or ironic point of view into the formalistic structuring of the text. Thus at the same time as the narrator highlights the ways in which various characters, issues and events serve as determining agents in the constitution of his identity as homosexual, and perverse, he is also, and simultaneously, underscoring a co-existent but very different point of view. A point of view that discredits and destabilises the overweening vectors of the hegemonic scripts and notions as well as the substance of what they have to say.

A citation from Foucault's essay on "The Subject and Power"³⁰ will help to clarify the rationale behind the narrator's representation of alternating points of view, as well as the temporal dichotomy that sustains them. As Foucault pertinently observes:

Between a relationship of power and a strategy of struggle there is a reciprocal appeal, a perpetual linking and a perpetual reversal. [...] The consequence of this instability is the ability to decipher the same events and the same transformations either from inside the history of struggle or from the standpoint of the power relationships. The interpretations which result will not consist of the same elements of meaning or the same links of intelligibility, although they refer to the same historical fabric and each of the two analyses must have reference to the other. (226)

What I am suggesting here is that the narrator's "strategy of struggle" is expressed by having him demolish the credibility and the professional standing, where applicable, of the characters and structures that categorised and defined him as homosexual in the first place. Equally, I am suggesting that he brings this about by using (and to paraphrase one of Foucault's insightful notions) the same vocabulary and often the same terms by which he was homosexually labelled and defined (101).

Since it is the medical profession that is primarily responsible for the categorisation of the homosexual as clinically diseased, it is the credibility of the medical profession and its practitioners that is called to account. This is achieved, I suggest, by showing how José Joaquín García Vela, the family doctor, diagnoses the narrator as suffering from a feverish malaise, when it is clear to the reader, to la Mary, and even more to the narrator himself, that his ongoing "destemplanzas" are related to what is being said about him and to what he is being called, rather than to any pathological condition. One typical example occurs when, distraught at having been labelled a "chivato maricón" by the hysterical tata Caridad, the narrator starts to shiver with fear and anxiety. While the astute la Mary reassures the narrator's grandmother and the narrator himself that "aquello ni era fiebre ni era nada" (46), José Joaquín continues to visit and treat the narrator as a patient, erroneously diagnosing him as clinically sick (46).

Similarly the credibility of medicine is further diminished by calling into question not only the doctor's clinical judgement but also his sartorial taste. For instance, tía

³⁰ Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power" in *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* by Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), pp. 208-26.

Victoria holds both the man and his profession in such low esteem that she insists on dismissing the great-grandmother's nursing attendant against his considered and professional advice (99-110). Equally he is brought into further disrepute when she makes him an object of even greater ridicule, by pretending that his trouser fastenings are undone: "Por Dios, José Joaquín, abróchate la portañuela que no repondo de mi reputación" (83). Additional, ironic contempt is directed at him and his profession by having him repeatedly referred to, and often within a few moments of narrative time, in a hyperbolic fashion as José Joaquín García Vela (81, 82), when nearly everyone else manages perfectly well with only one name, and in the case of the narrator with no name at all. Further scorn is then heaped upon him by describing him as like a nervous sparrow, a goatherd, and with a face "de pena y agobio" (108). Later on, the credibility of the young doctor, who takes up José Joaquín's vacated post, is also discredited by showing how he uses pretentious jargon that no one understands. – "la bisabuela" Carmen suffers from a "fonomotrix espontánea" and a "parálisis espontánea" (146, 147, 156). He is also discredited both personally and professionally by being attached to a father who is described as both effete and a fool. As tía Blanca spitefully points out: "Lo que no se explicaba era que le hubiese salido un niño tan listísimo a la pobre Sudor, que siempre había sido tan bobalicona y, encima, más cursi que un roquete. Obras misteriosas de Dios Nuestro Señor" (146).

Similarly the Church and its priests are equally discredited by rendering themselves, as well as what they have to say, as not only ineffectual, but also crass and effete. Here, the last words of the "bisabuela" to her family: "gloria bendita, gloria bendita" (155), are hugely misinterpreted by Father Anselmo, the priest in attendance, as an indication that the old lady died thinking of God and in grace. As he erroneously observes: "La bisabuela Carmen tenía ya un pie en el paraíso" (156). In reality, and as the narrator almost gleefully points out, his great-grandmother is ecstatically referring not to God and her imminent arrival in Heaven, but rather to the picture of the naked sportsmen "con tantos músculos y todos con perejil al aire, todos en pelota picada" (155) that the old lady has just glimpsed in one of tía Victoria's more salacious magazines.

Equally the Francoist State and its minions are discredited and defamed as tyrannical, homicidal, and obscene. This is achieved, for example, by having tía Victoria point out that Federico García Lorca, Spain's leading dramatist and poet, was murdered

by the State: “El hijoputa de Franco mandó que fusilaran a Federico” (123). It is also underlined by showing the fear that such a statement can evoke. For example, when tía Victoria decides that she will give a recital of some of Federico’s works – as she puts it: “aunque me metan en la cárcel” (123) – the dying Carmen, who overhears the actresses’s bold, but incautious remarks, screams with fear and goes on screaming. As the narrator ironically observes: “El chillido de la bisabuela Carmen, que se le había vuelto a atrancar en la garganta, era como el sonido de un cerrojo mohoso que alguien estuviera empujando para dejarnos encerrados en aquella habitación” (123).

And finally, since Cortés’s informative observations in *Identidad y diferencia* on what he terms “una identidad gay” approximate closely to what the narrator has to say both on the constructedness of his identity as homosexual and on its mobile and fractured functioning, a citation from the former will be useful:

Cuando nos planteamos la necesidad de construir una identidad gay, nos referimos a una identidad que, desprovista de cualquier carácter esencialista, es siempre provisional, inestable, dependiente, múltiple y enfrentada a un conjunto de aspectos históricos, sociales, personales y psíquicos cambiantes y evolutivos. [...] No es [...] una identidad hegemónica y homogeneizadora, sino múltiples y cambiantes identidades en las que se agrupan las diversas experiencias de la vida personal y social. Nos referimos a una identidad que, nada más asumida, debe ser puesta en cuestionamiento. (194)

What I have tried to demonstrate in my examination of this confessional text is the constructedness of the narrator’s identity and space as homosexual and the pain and suffering that accompany this ideologically orchestrated state. I have also tried to show the ways in which the social, political and ideological factors pertaining at the time of Mendicutti’s text support and sustain homophobic points of view. The project of actually challenging, and hopefully changing, the homophobic status quo is confined to a series of ironic sketches that diminish the credibility of medicine, religion and the State whilst still leaving society’s hegemonic sex and gender codes relatively intact.

Although the time spent at his grandparents’ home lasts only three months in the summer, the pressures that are brought to bear upon a boy who fails to conform to the hegemonic point of view on gender, sexuality and desire is graphically portrayed. Thus, the incessant revolving around and returning to the theme of his sexual sensibility and taste is an obsessive theme that excludes any possibility of the narrator enjoying an unencumbered carefree childhood and adolescence. Indeed, the narrator’s final words to

his reader verify this fact. As he pointedly explains: “De verdad [...] seguramente me tocaba ser una de esas personas que andan solitarias por el mundo” (240).

Before going on to broaden the scope of this thesis by examining the determining effect of essentialising practices and codes on the self-determination of a young girl as lesbian and other, it will be appropriate to conclude the examination of this text with reference to the narrator’s great-aunt, Victoria. Perhaps a surprising choice, but one that I consider useful. Although, as an actress, a bohemian and a woman who has had, and still has, many lovers, even introducing one into her bourgeois parents’ home, and who has previously shown a fairly liberal approach to sexuality and sex, even tía Victoria tellingly reflects the prevailing homophobic point of view. On learning that a handsome, virile, sensitive and intelligent young man who has befriended her has “opiniones” – her neologism for homosexuality – and in spite of subscribing to free-wheeling points of view, she immediately discards him (94).

Chapter Two

Julia by Ana María Moix

I mean the term *lesbian continuum* to include a range – through each woman’s life and throughout history – of woman-identified experience, not simply the fact that a woman has had or consciously desired genital sexual experience with another woman. If we expand it to embrace many more forms of primary intensity between and among women, including the sharing of a rich inner life, the bonding against male tyranny, the giving and receiving of practical and political support, if we can hear it in such associations as *marriage resistance* and the ‘haggard’ behavior identified by Mary Daly [...] we begin to grasp breadths of female history and psychology which have lain out of the reach as a consequence of limited, mostly clinical, definitions of *lesbianism*.¹

Introduction

Ana María Moix (1947–) is noted for her writing in various literary genres, including poetry, the novel and short story, as well as journalism, essays and translation. Her narrative fiction includes three novels *Julia* (1970), *Walter, ¿por qué te fuiste?* (1973), and *Vals negro* (1994) and two collections of short stories *Ese chico pelirrojo a quien veo cada día* (1971), and *Las virtudes peligrosas* (1985). While her novel *Vals negro* offers an historical version of the late Empress Elizabeth; *Julia* and *Walter, ¿por qué te fuiste?* (particularly the former) treat of the sexual/textual problematics that attach to characters whose sex and gender characteristics deviate from the hegemonic norm.

I have chosen to include in this dissertation a study of Moix’s novel *Julia* since it offers a not dissimilar approach to the rites of passage of its young, eponymous heroine to that offered by Mendicutti’s *El palomo cojo* for its equally young and vulnerable narrator and main character. As in Mendicutti’s text, Moix’s *Julia* demonstrates the determining effect of society’s discursive practices and codes on the self-determination of the main character as sexually perverse – homosexual in the former, lesbian in the latter.

¹ Adrienne Rich, “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence” in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, ed. by Henry Abelove, Michele Aina Barale and David M. Halperin (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 227-54 (p. 239). (Emphasis in the original).

While *El palomo cojo* is written by the text's narrator and main character in the form of a confession, the story of the eponymous Julia is told by an omniscient narrator and from the almost continuous point of view of the heroine herself. Recalling the last fifteen years of Julia's life, and the people and events that have contributed to her present confused and troubled social/sexual state, the narrator tells how at the age of twenty, and recovering from an attempted suicide, Julia is still tormented by the same nightmarish dreams that have haunted her since early childhood. Experiencing her interiority and space as not only socially and sexually perverse, but also claustrophobically constrained – socially and sexually perverse, in that she is still tormented by the events and sensuous desires that informed her early years; and claustrophobically constrained, in that she has become an alien presence in both her familial and social world – Julia tries to kill herself. On recovering from this failed attempt, she finds that, rather than having obliterated that part of her sensibility and self that sought solace and libidinal rapport with other women (and which she termed “Julita”), it is in fact that very part of her libidinal economy and space that has insistently survived her suicidal bid intact. As the narrator tellingly points out: “[Julia] había intentado matar a Julita y sólo ella permanecía ya” (218). Before examining the significance for the character Julia, and the narrative as a whole, of that part of her subjectivity and space (“Julita”) that she would wish to crush, I will outline, briefly, the characters and events that lead up to and productively define her sense-of-being and self as lesbian as well as her self-destructive state of mind.

Brought up within a bourgeois family milieu, Julia's initial loving interaction with her mother is frequently disturbed and fractured either by the latter's many absences from home or by the relocation of her affection and her time from her daughter to her lover or her sons. Julia's obsessive childlike need for her mother's love “la deseaba a todas horas, la soñaba a todas horas, despierta o dormida” (13), and her despair at the latter's frequently indifferent and inadequate response, is reflected in various scenes throughout the text. Particularly noteworthy is a scene that takes place early on in Moix's text, and in which Julia, as a five-year-old, is pictured wandering through the various upper rooms and corridors, waiting for her mother to awake and call her: “Julia recordaba perfectamente cuando tenía cuatro o cinco años y Mamá, al despertar por la mañana, la llamaba desde la cama. Ella, Julia, llevaba un par de horas levantada y desambulaba por las habitaciones cercanas al dormitorio de Mamá por si a ésta se le ocurría llamarla” (17).

Only if the mother had nothing else to do would she welcome the waiting child into her bed. What particularly troubles this very loving and emotionally needy little girl is both the lack of quantity and quality of her mother's love, and the knowledge that her mother only gives her love "a rachas" or "a temporadas" (17), and that, even worse, this love might very easily be withdrawn. Equally disturbing for Julia as both a child and an adolescent are the critical reactions of her family and her peers at school, to what they perceive as her lack of femininity and inappropriate gender traits. With little interest in her appearance or in fashion, and even less in men, Julia is soon indicted by the characters who surround her for being strange, unkempt, and lacking taste. While her mother and her grandmother critically point out that her room and its furnishings lack femininity "no femeninos" (33) and that her hair is untidily arranged "las trenzas medio deshechas" (63), Ernesto, her elder brother, emphasises her lack of style and grace. Comparing her to a scarecrow, he complains that he hardly dare acknowledge her when he meets her in the street: "casi no me he atrevido a saludarla" (161). Equally, the term strange/queer "rara" and very strange/queer "rarísima", as they are applied to Julia by her mother, carry the same homosexualising freight for the anxious teenaged girl as they did for the equally distraught narrator of Mendicutti's text. They also carry a similar medicalising sense. As the narrator has the distraught Julia point out:

Entonces Mamá empezaba como de costumbre: no tienes amigas porque eres rara, no hay quien te soporte, no tienes simpatía. Y se empeñaba en llamar por teléfono a cualquiera de sus amigas para: ver si tu hija no hace nada esta tarde porque chica, la mía está imposible. Pues sí, sí, se encuentra bien; no, precisamente el médico la vio hace poco, bueno, delgada, pero ya sabes, la edad y siempre este mal humor, es rara, rarísima. (40)²

Criticised for her gender-bending traits and her unwillingness to conform to bourgeois, patriarchal norms, and mocked for her propensity for emotional and libidinal interaction with women rather than with men, Julia is isolated and unhappy in both her college and her school. Deprived of the amount of maternal nurturing and care that her developing emotionality seems to require, she turns towards older women – first, tía Elena, then "la directora Mabel", and later on her tutor Eva – for friendship and emotional support. While "la directora" Mabel (for example) offers the emotionally

² As I have already noted and with reference to Mendicutti's text, the sexual/textual signification of the substantive "rara" carries not only the connotation of homosexuality but also the connotation of the homosexual as clinically diseased.

beleaguered adolescent girl the affection and tactile contact she desires, the dominant members of her immediate family – her mother and her “abuela” Lucía – read Julia’s friendship with an older woman, her lack of interest both in fashion and in men, and her derogation of bourgeois practices and codes, as evidence of a perverse sexuality and taste. Thus, while Julia seeks consolation in “la directora” Mabel’s welcoming arms “estrechándose contra su pecho” (155), her mother is already interpreting her maturing daughter’s sexual identity through the optics of a homophobic lens. As she caustically exclaims: “¿Se puede saber qué pasa contigo? Han dado a entender que mi hija es anormal. Eres un salvaje y te voy a encerrar interna” (132).

In her seminal essay entitled “Lesbian Intertextuality” Elaine Marks points out that when women began to write about women loving women, they did so from the point of view of a narrative voice that viewed the latter phenomenon as “an awakening and as a revelation of an unknown, unsuspected world which, once glimpsed, can never be ignored”.³ As she continues:

It is a momentous discovery whose importance within the text and beyond was until recently obscured by the weighty screen of psychological misreadings. Women’s narratives were examined for signs of deviant behavior that would reveal simplified, vulgarized Freudian categories. The lesbian had to be a pre-Oedipal polymorphous perverse child, full of rage, because of an early, deprived relationship with the mother, obsessed with death, voraciously hungry for love, exorbitantly demanding and dependent. (362)

While Moix’s representation of Julia’s sexual/textual rights of passage could reasonably be interpreted, for example, from a psychoanalytic point of view, I consider that bringing a Foucaultian and constructionist perspective to bear on both the text and its main character will offer a more comprehensive and appropriate interpretation. Thus, rather than examining *Julia* from the point of view of, say, the heroine’s pre-Oedipal fixation (obsessed with an indifferent and inattentive mother Julia seeks consolation in other women’s arms), or her schizoid personality and frame (Julia sees her emotional, sensual self as lesbian [Julita], and her cognitive, cerebral self [Julia] as differently arranged), I shall interrogate the way in which discursive practices and codes performatively determine her sense-of-being and self as lesbian and perverse.

³ “Lesbian Intertextuality” in *Homosexualities and French literature: Cultural Contexts / Critical Texts*, edited by George Stambolian and Elaine Marks (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), pp. 353-77 (p. 361).

Particularly relevant to this reading of Moix's text and to the way in which it underlines the influence of bourgeois practices and codes on the constitution of subjectivity and space, as homosexual/lesbian, is Foucault's articulation of power and sexuality in an interview that he gave in 1984:

I would say that if now I am interested in the way in which the subject constitutes himself in an active fashion, by the practices of self, these practices are nevertheless not something that the individual invents himself. They are patterns that he finds in his culture and which are proposed, suggested and imposed upon him by his culture, his society and his social group.⁴

In another interview given later the same year, he proffers similar views:

I think that people still consider, and are invited to consider, that sexual desire is able to reveal what is deep in identity. Sexuality is not *the* secret but it is still a symptom, a manifestation of what is the most secret in our individuality.⁵

Although Foucault's writings are invariably presented from an androcentric point of view and although his work does not engage primarily with feminine issues or events,⁶ it is still possible and, indeed, useful to apply his theories to both Moix's text and her main character. As Monique Deveaux, albeit reservedly, points out: "Although it is disappointing that his (Foucault's) work does not engage directly with feminism, this does not diminish the heuristic usefulness of certain of his insights on power, resistance and sexuality".⁷ Equally pertinent are Biddy Martin's observations in her article "Feminism, Criticism, and Foucault":

Foucault insists that our subjectivity, our identity and our sexuality are intimately linked; they do not exist outside of or prior to language and representation but are actually brought into play by discursive strategies or representational practices. [...] Sexuality and identity can only be understood, then, in terms of the complicated and often paradoxical ways in which pleasures, knowledges, and power are produced and disciplined in language, and institutionalised across multiple social fields. For Foucault, representation and discourse are

⁴ Foucault Michel, "The ethic of care for the self as a practice of freedom", *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 12 2/3 1987 pp 112-31 (p. 122). An interview with Michel Foucault on Jan 24 1984 conducted by Raúl Fornet-Betancourt, Helmut Becker, Alfredo Gómez-Müller.

⁵ Foucault Michel, "The Minimalist Self", in *Michel Foucault: Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings 1977-1984*, ed. Lawrence D. Kritzman (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 3-16 (p. 11). (Emphasis in the original).

⁶ The epigraph at the beginning of this chapter substantiates this point.

⁷ Monique Deveaux, "Feminism and Empowerment: A Critical reading of Foucault", in *Feminist Interpretations of Michel Foucault*, ed. by Susan J. Hekman (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), pp. 211-38 (p. 234).

themselves acts of power, acts of division and exclusion which give themselves as knowledge.⁸

I shall review Julia's rites-of-passage towards an identity and space as lesbian and other in the light of the Foucaultian framework outlined both above and in the introduction to this thesis, and in three successive (and accumulative) stages.

First, I chart the determining effect on the infant Julia's social/sexual interiority and space, and on the type of *jouissance* that she will come subsequently to need and find meaningful in relation to specific individuals, issues and events. Significant here is the indifferent and inadequate parenting that she receives from both her mother and her father; the violation, or attempted violation of her body by Víctor, her mother's friend; and the accompanying injunction by the violator to remain silent (and say nothing) about this traumatising scene.

Next, I examine the equally determining effect on Julia as a pre-adolescent and then early teenaged girl of the time spent with her grandfather, don Julio, in the country. Noteworthy, here, are the ways in which the latter's libertarian points of view (and equally libertarian deeds) are almost joyously taken up, internalised, and then reactivated by the stimulated and attentive girl. Likewise, the grandeur of the mountains, the free-flowing country air, and tía Elena's nurturing care, produce additional social, cosmic and libidinal effects on Moix's Julia.

Finally, I review the ongoing effect on Julia from adolescence to early womanhood of her bourgeois parents, peers, and social milieu. Here, the dominant social/cultural scene and its power relationships take precedence over don Julio's libertarian, free-wheeling points of view (points of view that Julia had previously and willingly internalised) and effectively and determinedly influence her sense-of-being and space as lesbian. What I hope to demonstrate in this reading of Moix's text is the way in which she represents the unremitting and accumulative effect on identity formation as homosexual/lesbian of the social and political agendas obtaining in a heterosexist milieu. Or put another way, Moix's representation of the way in which the subjectivity and space of her main character, Julia, is constituted as lesbian and perverse, by the essentialising practices and codes of the characters and events that socially and discursively define her.

⁸ Biddy Martin, "Feminism, Criticism, and Foucault", in *Feminism and Foucault*, ed. by Irene Diamond & Lee Quinby (Boston: Northern University Press, 1988), pp. 3-19 (p. 9) (Emphasis in the original).

Two further issues need to be noted here. While Mendicutti, for example, presents the reader with certain, albeit muted, sexual/textual referents and signs for his homosexual characters and scenes (the lame pigeon, the *billet doux*, tío Ramón), Moix relies almost entirely on connotation and insinuation for the scripting of her lesbian characters and themes. Although Mendicutti signals the homosexual specificity that the various characters bestow upon the narrator and tío Ramón (the term "mariquita" is meaningful enough), the reader is left to hypothesise and fill in the sexual/textual signification for Julia as lesbian of obliquely specified events. Thus, while Mendicutti categorises his narrator as a "chivato mariquita" and metaphorically compares him to a lame pigeon and homosexual referent, the nearest that Moix's text gets to actually denoting sexuality and/or lesbianism occurs, for example, when the mother categorises her daughter, Julia, as strange/very strange: "rara" and "rarísima" (40, 178, 211).

Several writers have discussed the shadowy, indistinct and obfuscating narratology that attaches to the subject of the lesbian and lesbianism in Spanish literature in general. As Brad Epps, in particular, notes: "Lesbianism, in Hispanic letters, does indeed seem all but lost: ghost written, as it were, in invisible ink. Its appearance is almost always a pledge to disappearance; its presence, an artful testimony to its absence".⁹ In a similar vein Elizabeth Meese points out that, "'Lesbian' is a word written in invisible ink, readable when held up to a flame and self-consuming, a disappearing trick before my eyes where the letters appear and fade into the paper on which they are written, like a field which inscribes them. An unwriting goes on as quickly as the inscription takes (its) place."¹⁰ Referring specifically to Moix's text, Ricardo Krauel makes several pertinent remarks:

En múltiples sentidos, el lesbianismo aparece a la vez inscrito y silenciado en el texto. Como una sugerencia permanente, como la dramatización de un deseo de afloramiento que una y otra vez es postergado y cuestionado desde sí mismo. Como una escritura que en efecto, se resuelve constantemente en la desescritura, dejando a ésta como testimonio supremo de su propia presencia.¹¹

⁹ Brad Epps, "Virtual Sexuality; Lesbianism, Loss, and Deliverance", in *¿Entiendes? Queer Readings, Hispanic Writings*, ed. by Emilie L. Bergmann and Paul Julian Smith (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1995), pp. 317-45 (p. 318).

¹⁰ See Elizabeth A. Meese, "Theorizing Lesbian: Writing-A love Letter" in *Lesbian Texts and Contents: Radical Revisions*, ed. by Karla Jay and Joanne Glasgow (New York and London: New York University Press, 1990), pp.70-87 (p. 83).

¹¹ See Ricardo Krauel, *Voces desde el silencio: Heterologías genérico-sexuales en la narrativa española moderna (1875-1975)* (Madrid: Ediciones Libertarias, 2001), p. 188.

2.1 The infant Julia with her parents in their bourgeois city home

The dynamics of the dominant practices and codes that effectively determine Julia's infant social/sexual interiority and space are filtered through the discourse and the actions of her parents, siblings and Víctor, a family friend. Of particular relevance to Julia's early days is the overtly female presence that dominates her parental home, in the sense that it is the practices and discourse of her mother and grandmother which take precedence over anything that her ineffectual, often absent, father might say or do. Equally, it is the women who most rigidly and dogmatically reflect and propagate patriarchal values and patriarchal norms. Significant for the determining effect that they produce on the infant Julia's evolving emotional identity and space are three specific areas of influence. First, her mother's capricious, often unreliable nurturing and care; then the violation, or attempted violation of her infant body (Moix does not specify which) by Víctor, a family friend; and finally the violator's subsequent admonition that Julia remain silent in relation to this overtly sexual and invasive scene.

Crucial to Julia's early life and emotional development is her obsessive fraught relationship with her mother. In the absence of a positive and caring father figure, the sensitive and sensuous child relies almost entirely on her mother for demonstrative affection and loving care. Included here are her earliest memories of her love and longing for her mother and her wretchedness and helplessness when she feels that this love is not sufficiently returned. Happiness for Julia is being allowed into her mother's bedroom and then leaping quickly into her mother's arms without even waiting to undress (17). Happiness is having her mother tickle her and pretend to bite her ears, when Julia would feel "la sangre agolpada en la cabeza y en las mejillas, y una alegría irresistible la obligaba a reír sin cesar" (18). So intense and overwhelming is Julia's filial devotion towards her mother that she even vomits back her morning glass of milk so that she can feign sickness and remain at home. Terrified of losing her beloved "Mamá", Julia suffers nightmares in which she is separated from her mother, who then recedes slowly into the distance before being engulfed in sheets of flame. In scenes that demonstrate the influence of pictorial images on her young and impressionable mind, the omniscient narrator shows the infant Julia interpreting the nightmare in which she loses her mother in the light of various cinematographic scenes. In a similar way to Mendicutti's narrator, who expresses his feelings for tío Ramón through the images printed on a postcard,

Moix's Julia recalls scenes that portray not only the separation from, but also the obliteration of, the mother figure:

Julia se enfadaba cuando Mamá se burlaba de ella, pero pensaba que aún sería peor cuando Mamá hubiera muerto: nunca más estaría con ella. Entonces se acordaba de Bambi, solo por los bosques después de que su mamá muriera en el incendio, y de otras películas como *Los marcianos llegan a la tierra* y *Cuando los mundos chocan*, en las que morían miles de personas y se veían las ciudades inundadas por las aguas. De vez en cuando aparecía algún niño solo, llorando en el tejado de una casa que permanecía en pie. Pensar en la muerte de Mamá le producía un dolor inmenso, apenas podía respirar. (25)

Since I shall offer a close reading of the mother's role in Julia's troubled rites-of-passage in the section which treats of her more mature and adolescent years, for the moment I give only brief examples of her insidious and determining effect on her daughter's social, sexual and emotional development. That Julia's early involvement with her mother and with her mother's fluctuating levels of maternal care influence her developing sense-of-being and self as well as the direction of her evolving libido and desire is evidenced by the narrator in various scenes. Relevant, here, on one level, is Julia's persistent and emotional need and desire to experience, and go on experiencing, the more tender aspects of her mother's love. And, on another, her ongoing disenchantment with her mother's self-serving interaction with other people and other things, particularly when these activities result in the latter's inattentiveness towards her own daughter's emotional and childlike requirements. Significantly, and early on in the text, the narrator underlines the debilitating effect on Julia's emotionality and space of being ignored and unattended by her mother, and especially on those occasions when she needs her most. For instance, when the frightened girl calls for her mother, after one of her recurring dreams, it is invariably, and disappointingly, the servant or her brother, but not her mother, who replies. This type of maternal negligence is akin to that experienced by Mendicutti's narrator who, when he calls for his mother at night, is answered not by the latter but by his nurse Antonia (*El palomo cojo*, 14). Equally, when she waits for her mother to return from a lover's tryst, and at an appointed hour, her mother invariably returns late, or not at all (42). And when she looks forward to a promised gift, her mother frequently, and mindlessly, forgets: "Mamá prometía traer una sorpresa a su regreso, sorpresa que generalmente olvidaba porque: se ha pasado el tiempo tan aprisa..." (23).

Later on, while revelling in the stimulating and liberating life that she experiences with her grandfather, don Julio, in the country, Julia will still miss that unique and very

special quality of a mother's love: "Al pensar en Mamá le pareció que el verano nunca llegaría y empezó a llorar" (95). Similarly, and again much later, whilst enjoying "un paseo" with her tutor Eva, with whom she is emotionally involved, Julia continues to equate this present bliss and happiness with events and people in the past. Thus, she recalls not only "un paseo por las montañas" in the company of the grandfather whom she so admired and loved, but also, and especially, with the brief, but happy walks she used to take in her childhood with her beloved "Mamá" (204). Joyous walks and times that seemed to Julia like "una fiesta interrumpida bruscamente hacía muchos años. [...] Una fiesta que prometía alargarse toda la vida, y de repente empezó a languidecer" (206).

One particular scene in which the mother pretends to throw Julia out of a window, and then draws back, has a certain metaphoric relevance to her relationship with her daughter, not only in Julia's early years but also later in her adolescence and maturity. As the all-knowing and ever-present narrator tellingly describes:

Julia se sentía elevada por los aires en brazos de Mamá. Te echo por la ventana, fea. Mamá, entre risas, abría la ventana y hacía como si fuera a arrojarla a la calle. [...] Gritaba de alegría, no podía contener los gritos ni las risas que salían entrecortadas de su garganta durante aquel continuo balanceo a que Mamá la sometía desde la ventana a su pecho y desde su pecho a la ventana. (37-8)

In her essay on Moix's text, Anny Brooksbank Jones refers to this particular scene, pointing out that for Julia "her mother's affection is intensely desirable precisely because it is 'uncontrollable', sporadic, and readily transferable (for example) to her sons or lover". And furthermore, "something of its effects can be inferred from a childhood game in which her mother pretends to throw Julia out of the window of their city home into the traffic below".¹²

So far, I have been suggesting that the mother's erratic, inconsistent and self-indulgent behaviour towards her daughter – in the sense that she makes a "balancing act" out of her affection for the infant girl – produce a destabilising and determining effect on the latter's emotionality and space. A destabilising and determining effect, as I demonstrate in the sections that follow, in that Julia will always seek to find in other, older, and professional women (Elena, Mabel, Eva) the stable, nurturing love that was

¹² See Anny Brooksbank Jones, "The Incubus and I: Unbalancing Acts in Moix's *Julia*", *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, LXXII.1 (1995), pp. 73-85 (p. 74).

denied to her earlier on. This is particularly demonstrated towards the end of the text, when the suicidal girl reluctantly acknowledges to herself that she would give her life to be young again and to love her mother as she loved her once before. Even perhaps to follow her closely as she used to like a little lap dog: “Daría mi vida por volver a serlo, quererte como antes, seguirte como un perrito faldero a todas partes...” (215).

While the narrator underlines the emotionally disturbing and determining effect on Julia’s sensibility and self of her problematic interaction with her mother, she also underlines the equally problematic effect on the developing and emotionally needy girl of her interaction with other people, other scenes. Two specific aspects of Moix’s text invite consideration here: her father’s negative, often absent role within the family home, and the adult Víctor’s putative or actual violation of Julia at the age of eight.

In many ways Julia’s father resembles the paternal figure in Mendicutti’s text in that he is equally ineffectual as a father figure, always functioning in a subordinate capacity to his more dominant wife. As Mendicutti’s narrator put it: “Mi madre era muy femenina y tenía un estilo tremendo, pero en mi casa se hacía siempre lo que decía ella [...] y mi padre dijo amén” (*El palomo cojo*, 13). Having left home on account of his wife’s infidelity with another man, Julia’s father eventually returns, not in order to fulfil a father’s role, but rather to spend his time apart, smoking and reading the daily papers and magazines. Asked to resolve a family problem, he unproductively replies: “Haced cuanto os plazca, pero dejadme en paz; no quiero preocupaciones” (33). The sense of disappointment and betrayal that Julia experiences when she sees her father sitting once again at the family table, and “desayunando en compañía de toda la familia, sonriente si nada fuera de lo normal hubiera sucedido” (34) makes her want to insult him and spit in his face. Furthermore, while she once felt that there was a special bond between her father and herself, in the sense that “Papá permanecía más ligado a ella por su pacto secreto que a ellos por la convivencia diaria” (35), she now sadly feels that her mother and her grandmother have destroyed the closeness that they used to share. Little by little they have taken her place “en la diaria y absorbente lucha” (35). Equally, and in the same way that she will eventually go on to hate her own mother, for the latter’s self-serving ways, she now begins to despise her father for selling himself to both her mother and grandmother for what Julia terms, an “asquerosa paz” (33). However, it is not only her mother’s capricious nurturing and her father’s equally indifferent paternal care that

influence Julia's developing emotionality and space, in the sense that she will begin to look for friendship, solace, reassurance, even *jouissance*, in other, older women's arms. It is also the traumatic violation of her body by Víctor, a family friend.

The rape or attempted rape of Julia as an infant girl takes place in a quiet part of a rocky beach, to which she and Víctor swim, leaving the others – her brothers, Ernesto and Rafael, and Arturo, another family friend – either swimming in the sea or having races in their pedal boats. Initially, Víctor helps Julia to avoid the prickly sea urchins that hide beneath the stones. Next, he watches her while she sits down to rest after their vigorous activities in the sea. Then, he suddenly begins to tease the infant girl, telling her that sea urchins are very dangerous and that if one pricks you, you can die. Having first terrified the little girl by holding an “erizo” close to her arms and then her neck, Víctor goes on to violently assault her infant body, knocking her to the ground and then seizing both her legs when she tries to get away. The psycho-sexual implications of this signifying scene are further underlined, not only by the look on Víctor's face while he is carrying out this frenzied act, “la miraba de un modo extraño” (61), but also by his heavy breathing “repiraba muy fuerte” (62). Equally significant is his injunction to the frightened girl that she must not say anything about what has happened here. As he viciously commands: “No dirás nada, idiota” (62).

That this attack on and/or violation of Julia's infant body and infant space produces ongoing and accumulative effects on her social/sexual sensibility and space is evidenced in various scenes throughout the text. For instance, Julia will experience an ongoing aversion towards any form of physical or sexual interaction with the male. Later when Carlos, a college friend, tries to find her lips, sliding his own against her cheeks, Julia feels nothing but a sickening recoil: “sintió el contacto húmedo de la boca de Carlos apretando la suya, y el estómago se le revolvió” (208). So great is her physical revulsion and fear she pushes him and runs away. Similarly, at a party, when the youth Romeo tries to hold her hand, she immediately jumps up and leaves. “¿Vamos a bailar?, preguntó el chico reteniéndola por la mano. No. Julia se dirigió hacia una de las primas. Me marchó” (167-68). Later, Julia's tendency to see her psychosexual and social identity and space as split into two separate parts can also be traced back in part, I suggest, to the violation of her infant body. Thus she sees her existential “I” as split; on the one hand between the infant Julia who was attacked/ravished on a beach and who then went on to relate

psychosexually to her own sex, but not to men; and on the other hand the adolescent and the woman who would revoke and wash away both the deed – that is the assault/rape – and her own evolving, same-sex desires in a self-purifying move. As the narrator tellingly reveals:

[Julia] Al despertar y recordar la pesadilla, reconoció aterrada que Carlos no era Carlos, sino su hermano Rafael muerto. Decidió no ver a Carlos nunca más, al tiempo que volvía a su mente la imagen de una playa, rocas, un erizo, el platín flotando sobre el mar. Miró la hora: las tres de la madrugada. Y sin hacer ruido, se dirigió hacia el cuarto de aseo *para ducharse*. (209; my emphasis)

Also relevant here is Julia's picture of herself as a little, anxious, frightened girl named "Julita", who was attacked and ravished on a deserted beach – a picture which she always carries hauntingly inside herself and which Moix has the narrator eloquently describe:

Julita, sentada en el portal de la casa, pequeña y delgada, los pies descalzos, las trenzas medio deshechas, el pantalón corto y el jersey azul marino con un ancla dibujada en el pecho, la mirada baja, fija en dos piedras que machacaba una contra otra, la obligaba a recordar cosas así, confusas, inconexas [...] Julita nunca le perdonó haberla abandonado allí, en un universo inmóvil, sin tiempo, en cuyas sombras se debatía y de donde nunca, nunca, Julia podría rescatarla. (63)

Several other matters need to be elucidated in connection with this particular scene. For example, in recalling the traumatic episode in her early life, Julia also recalls what her parents had to say concerning Víctor both before and after she experienced the terrifying attack/rape. It is significant that it is Julia's mother who demonstrates, yet again, the superficial qualities of her judgement and her taste, as well as her inadequacy as a protector of her child, by praising and befriending this rapacious male. As she so crassly and mistakenly observes: "Es un chico fino, educado, simpático y distinguido" (60). However, Julia's father has a more accurate view of this predatory male when he intuitively points out: "Otra cosa que me calló" (60). The mother's inadequate discriminatory powers are further evidenced when she fails to notice Julia's extreme distress on returning from the beach, giving her "bofetadas" for being late (62). It is significant, also that Victor's demand for silence after his violation of the infant girl (61-62), as well as the father's equally enigmatic response to his foolish wife (60), are internalised and then re-activated by Julia later on. Equally significant are the underlying

sexual/textual implications for Julia not only as an infant and an adolescent, but also as a woman, of what these two very different men have to say. As I discuss in the section that deals with Julia's time at school, her reaction as an adolescent to issues that involve her sexuality and desire is to fall silent and withhold comment, earning her the appellation "muda" (129).

Thus far, I have tried to highlight the determining effect on the infant Julia's developing sense-of-being and self of her parent's individual idiosyncracies and Víctor's violent assault/rape. I now go on to interrogate the impact on Julia as a pre-adolescent girl of the time spent in the country with her grandfather, the anarchist, don Julio.

2.2 The pre-adolescent Julia with her grandfather the anarchist, don Julio, in the country.

Arguably Julia receives some of the most formative experiences of her pre-adolescent years during the time spent, from the age of eight to thirteen, with her paternal grandfather don Julio in the country. These experiences produce radically determining effects on her developing sensibility and self, and prove difficult to either sway or dethrone. Significant, here, is a range of issues initiated by don Julio in which he forcefully underlines his political ideals of liberty and freedom as a revolutionary and anarchist, during Spain's civil war. He also demonstrates his disapproval of fixed gender frames and his intolerance of anything or anybody who assimilates to "la estupidez", "la irracionalidad", or "el hablar por hablar" (97). As the narrator pithily sums up: "El abuelo sólo admitía una única verdad, indispensable, indiscutible: la libertad. Para él todo lo demás era estupidez" (97). Equally significant, although in a more narrow and less politically trenchant light, are tía Elena's compassionate and caring interaction with her emotionally troubled niece and the impressive cosmic grandeur, spaciousness, and freedom of the natural surroundings in which don Julio's home is placed. Ricardo Krauel, in his informed account of what he terms the representation of "heterologías genérico-sexuales" in modern Spanish narratives, sums up the beneficial and productive advantages for Julia of this dramatic change of scene:

Aquellos años, lejos del sofocante entorno familiar de Barcelona, habían supuesto para la joven un paréntesis de libre expansión y expresión de su personalidad; un aprendizaje y

desarrollo espiritual que tuvo su correlato simbólico en sus prodigiosos progresos en latín y en la asimilación de las “lecciones” de libertad política – de “humanidades” – que le impartiera su abuelo anarquista (la continuidad espiritual entre éste y la niña queda señalada por la coincidencia en el nombre) juntamente con el estímulo y el progreso emocional recibido de su trato con la tía Elena. (*Voces desde el silencio*, p. 192)

In reviewing “aquellos años” and the way in which they become for Julia “un paréntesis de libre expansión y de expresión de su personalidad”, I begin by outlining don Julio’s political ideals of liberty and freedom. I also discuss the ways in which his “nieta”, Julia, first internalises, and then later reproduces and reactivates, the socio-political content of his philosophical remarks.

In the character of don Julio, Moix presents a brief but evocative account of a former militant anarchist during Spain’s civil war. As such, don Julio believes passionately in the individual rights of each and every person to liberty and in the elimination of all those who oppose these views. (Incidentally, he remains oblivious to the anomaly, indeed the irony, of holding such diametrically opposing points of view). Motivated by political idealism – and being something of a despot, albeit a benevolent one – don Julio frequently chides his daughter, friends and servants either for their “estupidez” or their “debilidad”. Valuing courage and forthrightness, and despising what he terms the superficiality and pretensions of the bourgeoisie, don Julio goes on to exalt the unpretentiousness and basic wisdom of his own people in a nearby village: “Hay más sabios en este pueblo que en el resto de España; éstos, al menos, son lo que son” (97).

Moix goes on to demonstrate the fundamental schism between these two opposing factions by underlining what Julia’s bourgeois grandmother, “la beatona” Lucía, has to say about the anarchist don Julio, and what he, a libertarian, freedom fighter in the Spanish civil war, thinks of her. Although both Julia’s mother and her father criticise don Julio – the first calling him “un viejo chiflado”, who shuts himself away in the country because his side lost the civil war; and the latter, don Julio’s son, expressing a more measured point of view: “Cada cual tiene su carácter y sus ideas; no todo el mundo sabe perder” (85) – it is left to the “beatona” Lucía to express the most virulently antagonistic views. As she confrontationally observes:

Un ateo, Dios mío, un anarquista, peor aún que si hubiera sido comunista. Un sanguinario. Vosotros no podéis saberlo porque no vivisteis las terribles jornadas de la Semana Trágica. Barcelona era un río de sangre y todo por culpa de hombres desalmados como don Julio.

¿Qué culpa tienen las monjas y curas de que los políticos se tiren los trastos por la cabeza? Anarquista, y encima grosero". (85)

Not surprisingly, don Julio expresses equally hostile views of Julia's grandmother as well as criticising his son, Julia's father, for marrying the daughter of such a religious hypocrite. As he scathingly points out: "[His son, Julia's father] Nunca debió casarse con una hija de aquella arpía: una beatona insoportable, una hipócrita, una ricachona asquerosa, y su hija una estúpida. [...] Matarlas, eso hay que hacer. [...] Matarlas" (99-100).

Scattered throughout don Julio's free-ranging points of view are opinions and remarks which are taken up, internalised, and then reactivated by the attentive girl. Committed to the principles of liberty (and anarchism), don Julio considers that these very codes and practices should apply not only to each and every person, but also, and especially at this very moment, to his granddaughter Julia, and to what she wants to say and do. Thus when tía Elena tells the pre-pubescent girl that she cannot visit the horses in the stables until she has finished her evening meal, don Julio immediately intervenes declaring that his "nieta" is free to choose whether she eats or not: "Si no quiere más, no quiere más. [...] Una de las cosas que voy a enseñar a mi nieta es demostrarle que puede vivir sin que nadie gobierne sus actos" (93-4).

Equally, and as if not only to instil his political ideals even further into the girl's receptive, youthful mind, but also to strengthen both her physical and emotional resolve, he encourages Julia to endure the sharpness of the mountain air. Similarly, he urges her to overcome her childlike fear of people and the dark. Thus, when tía Elena tries to curb don Julio's more outspoken remarks about both Julia's father and her family, explaining that he will disturb the anxious girl, he refuses to comply. As he rhetorically points out: "Entiende de una vez que mi nieta no tiene miedo de nada ni de nadie" (92). Later, when tía Elena wants her niece to wrap up warmly before going out into the wintry air, don Julio insists that his "nieta" does not feel the cold: "mi nieta no tiene frío" (94).

As a corollary to these scenes, and as if to instil his ideals even further into Julia's mind, don Julio continues to discourse on the theme of the unique and indispensable truth of "la libertad" (97). Equally, he continues to propagate his libertarian points of view by refusing to refer to Julia as a little girl, or by the diminutive "Julita". Here, he seems to be not only advancing Julia to an adult role, but also, and simultaneously, dismantling the

hegemonic gender codes that differentiate between the male and female, and masculine and feminine roles. For don Julio, each individual, and thus his “nieta” too, is primarily a “persona” and as such should unquestioningly be free from bourgeois normalising and constraining codes. As he ferociously insists: “¡Bah! Una niña, una niña ... Los niños no existen, ¿qué es un niño? Julia no es una niña, ¿entendido? [...] Es una persona” (92).

That Julia has internalised both the sense of don Julio’s political beliefs and the specific mood and spirit proper to the man himself is evidenced soon after she arrives at his country home. Ignoring the admonitions and political persuasions of her bourgeois mother and grandmother – the latter refers to don Julio as a “diputado anarquista” who provoked the war – Julia willingly both agrees and then complies with what he has to say. Thus, when he asserts that his granddaughter is not afraid, she spiritedly agrees: “No, abuelo, no tengo miedo” (92); and when he tells her that she does not feel the cold, she again willingly replies: “Es cierto, no tengo frío” (94). Later, having heard don Julio state that “únicamente somos libres”, and that in the name of freedom “uno tiene el derecho incluso la obligación de matar, si es preciso” (97), and further, having also seen him bring his fist down on the table as he speaks, Julia goes on to say and do the very same. Receiving a vindictive letter from her brothers, she also brings her fist crashing down, before vociferously claiming that they both should die: “Son estúpidos y charlatanes. Quiero matar a esos dos estúpidos” (102).

The determining effect of don Julio’s radical points of view on Julia’s self-determination is further evidenced when she bravely challenges one of his decisions, demonstrating both her freedom as an individual and her right to say exactly what she thinks. When don Julio has been particularly unpleasant and overbearing to his daughter, criticising both her and her choice in men, Julia informs him that he is a tyrant and that he should leave tía Elena free to marry whatever man she wants. Shouting at him angrily, she rhetorically exclaims: “Tu comportamiento es estúpido. Eres un tirano, ¿no es ella libre?” (121). When don Julio tries to defend his point of view by pointing out that his daughter’s “novio” is a cretin, “un cretino”, and his daughter weak, “débil”, Julia still continues to defy him, telling him to leave tía Elena alone: “Déjala. [...] Déjala” (121). What Moix seems to be underlining here, I suggest, is the determining effect on Julia of what don Julio has had to say, in the sense that as a pre-adolescent girl she has internalised and is now delivering back to him the thrust of his own social and political

points of view. Or put another way, don Julio's role as the one who determines and Julia's as the one who yields are now reversed. Noteworthy also is the analogy that can be made between Moix's fictional text, in which a young girl first internalises and then herself reactivates what she has heard and seen (her grandfather's libertarian words and deeds) and Foucault's theoretical observations on subjectivity and power. As the latter insightfully points out:

The individual is an effect of power, and at the same time, or precisely to the extent to which it is that effect, it is the element of its articulation. The individual which power has constituted is at the same time its vehicle.¹³

Years later, and long after Julia has left don Julio's country home, and influenced now by the determining factors of her bourgeois family, her school and college, as well as by society's disciplinary norms, Julia will still try to reintegrate her grandfather's libertarian points of view and actions into her own existential being and space. Musing wistfully over the happy time she spent with don Julio at his country home, she remembers how he gave her two kittens to care for, and how she tried to bring them with her when her parents came to take her home. While one kitten went on sleeping peacefully in the basket, the other struggled frantically to escape from her restraining arms. It was only when she heard don Julio's voice intoning "entre los animales también hay los que prefieren la libertad" (127), that she set it free. Back in Barcelona, and many years later, Julia will recall this particular event as well as its social and political significance both for her own identity and that of others as existentially free. Remembering that the cat chose freedom rather than captivity, even though that freedom meant that it might either die from cold or be devoured by wolves (191-92), Julia decides that she too ought to make a similar, albeit figurative, leap. As the narrator has her tentatively point out: "Quizá fuera necesario saltar como Porky hizo, arañar y protestar para liberarse del agobio que incluso a veces le impedía respirar" (192).

However, it is not only don Julio's politics and actions that influence Julia's developing interiority and space, but also the atmosphere of the mountains, the freely flowing country air, and tía Elena's attentiveness and care towards the emotionally needy girl. Later, in the city, and as an adolescent, Julia will long for her grandfather's country

¹³ See Michel Foucault, "Two Lectures", in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings: Michel Foucault, 1972-1977*, edited by Colin Gordon (London: Harvester Press, 1980), pp. 63-108 (p.98).

house, the village, and the mountains. She will wistfully recall not only the peaceful calm that she experienced through the day, but also the animated and fascinating social and political “discusiones violentas” that took place between don Julio and his friends at night. In comparison to those felicitous days with her grandfather, in addition to her cosmic affinity with nature, Julia finds the noise and the congestion of the city, as well as her experiences in her parent’s home, overwhelmingly claustrophobic and depressing:

La casa se le caía encima, le parecía pequeña y oscura [...] Salía al balcón para respirar más libremente, y al encontrarse con la fachada de los edificios de enfrente y el ruido del tránsito, añoraba el paisaje que divisaba desde cualquier ventana de la casa de don Julio; el espacio que parecía infinito más allá de los bosques y de las montañas. Se sentía apresada, enjaulada, le faltaba el aire. (128)

Equally significant for its determining effect on Julia’s interiority and space and particularly in relation to her burgeoning libido and desire is tía Elena’s welcoming and loving arms. Still missing her mother’s albeit sporadic, maternal nurturing and care, Julia turns to tía Elena, as the first of several women to whom she will easily relate. As the narrator tentatively explains: “Cuando pensaba en ellos [her mother and her brothers] se desesperaba y se echaba encima de tía Elena, la abrazaba, le llenaba la frente de besos, las mejillas, el cuello; hundía las manos en sus cabellos negros y los acariciaba. Tía Elena sin despertarse del todo, la abrazaba y devolvía los besos y la llamaba cariño mío” (98).

In these first two sections of my reading of Moix’s text, I have tried to underline the performative effect on Julia’s developing interiority and space of significant people and events who interact with and influence the developing girl. First during her very early infant years and then later, when she is approaching adolescence. This has entailed reviewing not only what the various characters say to her – particularly her mother, don Julio, her father, and Víctor, the family friend – but also what they do –. Víctor’s violation, or attempted violation, of her infant body, don Julio’s table-thumping deeds. It has also examined the equally performative effect on her of what they fail to do – her mother’s inadequate maternal nurturing and her father’s equally inadequate paternal role.

In the following section I trace the ongoing and accumulative effect on Julia as an adolescent and a woman of the discourse and events already introduced above, as well as those presented later on in the context of her family, home, school and college. Relevant here will be the determining effect on Julia’s self-determination as lesbian/sexually

perverse of what her parents, siblings, peers and others have to say about her gender-bending traits, propensity for solitude and silence, and antipathy towards physical contact with the male. Of equal, if not greater relevance, to this sexual/textual scene will be her libidinal and emotional interaction with other, older women – specifically, Mabel the director of her school, and Eva her college tutor.

2.3 The adolescent Julia in her bourgeois city home and at school and university

The positive and formative effect on Julia of the time spent with don Julio in the country – she enjoys the freedom and the freshness of the mountains and the country air, she internalises and then re-activates her “abuelo’s” libertarian points of view, she finds spiritual and emotional solace in tía Elena’s nurturing arms – is gradually eroded and impaired when she returns to Barcelona and her parents’ home.

Moix gives an early indication of her heroine’s intense disinclination to return to her bourgeois parents and the city, as well as the lingering effect on Julia of don Julio’s overriding political opinions and deeds, by having the narrator reveal Julia’s own, death-dealing inner thoughts. Standing at the window of don Julio’s library – the room in which she has enjoyed listening to and learning from his robust tuition and free-wheeling points of view – she sees her parents’ car approaching to take her home. So intense is her love and admiration for don Julio, and so meagre her feelings for her mother (and indeed at times her father) that she hopes their car will crash. Even worse, she hopes they both will die: “Lo divisó desde la misma ventana, la de la biblioteca del abuelo, y deseó que se estrellara contra un árbol antes de llegar a la casa y perecieran sus ocupantes, tanto si era Papá como Mamá” (118).

Back in the bourgeois atmosphere of home and school, Julia is now subjected to a very different scene. In this heterosexist, patriarchal milieu, the discourses and events that determined both her interiority and space, during the time spent with don Julio and tía Elena in the country, and which encouraged the pre-adolescent girl to take up a strong identity, as a “persona” free, for example, from hegemonic gender codes, are now demolished and derailed as other, different people, practices and codes take precedence over what has gone before.

That Julia has taken up and internalised the free-flowing sense of space and openness proper to the mountains and the country air, and that she is now both physically and spiritually constrained by the places in which she finds herself each day, is evidenced in her reaction to her rooms both at home and at school: “No había ido al colegio desde los cinco años, y de repente se veía obligada a permanecer cuatro horas por la mañana y tres por la tarde encerrada en un aula sentada detrás de un pupitre, entre veinte chicas más” (129). Later on, she still feels a “disgusto” in the sombre darkness of her college “donde nunca daba el sol, y por cuyas ventanas sólo podían verse los altos muros que separaban el oscuro patio de la calle. La ventana era tan pequeña y los muros tan altos, que desde el interior de la clase no se divisaba el cielo” (137). At times, she even experiences a sensation of desolation and “agobio” in the library at her parent’s home (145).

Tellingly, and in contrast to the positive approach to things and people that she acquired during the five years spent with the libertarian don Julio, Julia now drifts and lapses slowly into a frightened, alienated, silent state, in which she sits apart from the other students, fails to join in any communal talks or games, and answers only briefly when she is spoken to, even controlling the expression on her face. As her brother would often critically observe: “Eres la mujer del rostro impenetrable, no hay modo de saber qué efecto te producen las cosas mirándote a la cara” (45). So pronounced is her devastated withdrawal into her own psychic world and space that she is soon dubbed: “la que no habla” (129). Of course, while Julia’s unwillingness to communicate openly with either her parents, or her tutors, or her peers at school, can be read as a reaction to the stifling confines of a bourgeois patriarchal sphere, it can also, and just as validly, be read as an example of the way in which she has internalised both Víctor’s command for silence, earlier on, and her father’s similarly oblique and taciturn remark. Equally, it can be read as an attempt by Moix to demonstrate the silencing of the homosexual voice in both literary and social culture.

However, it is not only the topographical change of locality and scene – Julia’s return to Barcelona after five years with her libertarian “abuelo” in the mountains – that effect a change in her maturing sensibility and self. It is also the very different social, political and cultural scenes obtaining in this bourgeois, patriarchal milieu. In this sense, then, it is soon clear that don Julio’s parting words to Julia, when she returns to her

parents' home, that she must resist the advances of the bourgeoisie carry an ominous and prophetic freight. As he correctly pointed out: "Esa gente es capaz de destruir cinco años [the time she spent with him] en un par de semanas" (125). Similarly, his warning to his "nieta" that she must be careful that she does not let them hem her in and constrain her, carries an additional and prescient undertone of what is yet to come: "Te van a amarrar, Julia. Debes tener cuidado y prestar atención. No lo consentas" (125).

Particularly relevant to the bourgeois patriarchal scene obtaining in Julia's family milieu, and to its determining effect on the now adolescent girl is the critical reaction of her mother and her brother to her lack of interest in her personal appearance and in clothes. Equally pertinent is the unspoken implication that her gender-bending traits signal a lesbian sensibility. For instance, Julia is frequently compared adversely to Ernesto, her elder brother, by both her mother and the boy himself. While Julia is uninterested in fashion and self-adornment, her brother pleases both his mother and "abuela" by scrupulously attending to his appearance and his clothes. Described as "el vivo retrato" of his mother, Ernesto frequently reviews his image in a mirror, goes from shop to shop making sure that the colour of his socks, shoes and "pantalones" match, and that the colour of his jersey blends aesthetically with his skin. As he narcissistically enquires: "¿Qué te parecen estos calcetines para el pantalón y zapatos que compré el otro día?"; or "Fíjate bien y dime si este jersey no va con el color de mi piel" (161).

In contrast to her fastidiously groomed and trendy brother, Julia not only looks dishevelled and untidy, leaving her hair in an unkempt state, but also relies on the servant Aurelia to brush and cut it for her. When Julia returns from a recent outing, her mother greets her by criticising her appearance and her unruly hair. As she angrily exclaims: "Qué facha, con esos pelos. No me digas que has salido así a la calle" (33). Later, her brother calls her "antipática", and tells her that if she would only make herself look more attractive he might take her out. Other gender-bending traits emerge when Julia goes to see her father in his separate apartment. Although his rooms are dirty and disordered this does not prevent Julia from feeling happy and relaxed during the time she stays with him. She is equally indifferent to "la suciedad" and "la humedad" that cover the walls and tables of the café, where she eats each day, and where the "camarero" tries to remove the wine stains from the table with the same cloth with which he wipes the floor. Furthermore, it does not seem to trouble her that the clients finger all the hams and

sausages “antes de decidirse a elegir” (182). As the narrator ironically observes: “A pesar de todo, a Julia le gustaba desayunar en aquel lugar” (181).

That both Julia’s father and her mother subscribe to patriarchal sex and gender codes that require, as Butler has insightfully observed, that “certain kinds of ‘identities’ cannot ‘exist’ - that is those in which gender does not follow from sex and those in which the practices of desire do not ‘follow’ from either sex or gender” (*Gender Trouble*, 17) is underlined in various scenes throughout the text. For instance, Julia’s father considers that his son’s attention to his appearance, clothes and lengthy hair is evidence of the boy’s effeminate traits. When his wife asks him what he finds so distasteful about Ernesto’s clothes and hair, he angrily retorts: “Que es afeminado, que todo él es afeminado” (42). And when this designation upsets the boy, he orders him to dress himself “como es debido” and to cut his hair (42). Similarly, when Julia asks for something decorative and personal for herself, her mother is delighted. As she pointedly explains: “Una chica debe ser coqueta y presumida, de lo contrario, parece un hombre” (145).

The disparity between the mother’s attention to bourgeois practices and norms and Julia’s almost complete indifference to them, and particularly in relation to personal adornment and attire, can best be summed up with reference to another scene. While Julia goes around looking like a scarecrow “un espantapájaros”, as her brother puts it, her mother spends time each morning beautifying her face. Julia would sit on the edge of “la bañera” watching how her mother “seguía la línea de las cejas con la punta del lápiz, mientras le explicaba que: voy a la peluquería” (22). Sandra Lee Bartky has pointed out how “in the regime of institutionalized heterosexuality, woman must make herself ‘object and prey’ for the man: it is for him that these eyes are limped pools, this cheek baby smooth. [...] Woman lives her body as seen by another, by an anonymous patriarchal Other”.¹⁴

What I am suggesting here is that by underlining Julia’s gender-bending traits and her parents’ critical reaction to them, Moix also, and ironically, sets the stage for a sexual/textual reading of Julia’s sensibility and self as lesbian, not only for the reader of the text and Julia’s family and peers, but also for the anxious, isolated girl herself. What

¹⁴ See Sandra Lee Bartky, “Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power” in *Feminism and Foucault* ed. by Irene Diamond and Lee Quinby, (Boston: North Eastern University Press, 1988), p. 72.

also needs to be noted, both in relation to these scenes, and to the ones that follow, is the way in which (and to quote Brad Epps again) Moix's representation of a lesbian subjectivity and space becomes "all but lost: ghost written, as it were, in invisible ink".

Having internalised and re-activated don Julio's libertarian points of view on liberty, identity, and free will, Julia now finds herself subjected to a very different set of practices and codes. Feeling lonely and alienated from the other pupils in her class, Julia's only consolation during her time at school is her proficiency in Latin (one of the subjects that don Julio taught her), and her meetings with "la directora" Mabel in the latter's room, where she helps her tutor mark the other pupils' Latin papers (156). While Julia finds solace in the company of "la directora" Mabel in the same way that she found relief in tía Elena's nurturing arms, and even further back in her own mother's, her companionable and emotional involvement with another woman is read by both her family and her peers at school as evidence of her perverted sexual tastes.

The omniscient narrator underlines the critical reactions of the other girls to the time that Julia spends with "la directora" in her office. While for Julia these meetings offer an emotional and psychological release from the tension and the misery that she experiences on being enclosed each day in class, as well as the opportunity to demonstrate her knowledge of, and ability to translate Latin texts to the woman she admires, the other pupils are either jealous of her friendship with their tutor or consider that it underlines a perverse sensibility and taste. Thus the pupils' readings of, and reaction to, the time that Julia spends with her tutor, not only damage her credibility as both a person and a scholar, but also label her with derogatory, even homophobic terms. A citation from Jonathan Dollimore will help to place this particular aspect of Moix's text within a wider socio-cultural frame, as well as offering a cogent insight into the psychology of the oppressors rather than the oppressed. As he insightfully points out:

This much has become certain, deviancy is not a waste product of society, and nor is it intrinsic to the deviant subject. It is rather a construction, one which, when analysed, says less and less about the individual deviant and more and more about society – its structures of power, representation and repressive identifying or demonising of him or her.¹⁵

For instance, Julia has her notebooks stolen from her desk to make it seem that she has not done her set work:

Al empezar la clase, Julia buscaba entre sus cosas el cuaderno de la traducción, y no lo encontraba. Mientras hurgaba añanosamente una y otra vez en el interior de las carpetas, algunos de los compañeros la miraban entre curiosos y burlones. (171)

Then, the other pupils falsely malign her by claiming that it was she, Julia, who put an obscene letter in the priest's desk:

Lidia se puso en pie: no quería acusarla, pero...yo he visto quién ha sido. Y señaló a Julia. Julia, con un hilo de voz, dijo: no es cierto. Pero dos chicas y un chico, amigos de Lidia, aseguraron que también la habían visto depositando el papel sobre la mesa momentos antes de empezar la clase. (172)

Even further, they address the beleaguered, isolated girl, when she returns from Mabel's room, with words that carry an underlying homophobic freight. Having already been categorised as strange ("rara"), uncongenial ("antipática"), and mute ("muda"), by her family and her school, other and covertly homophobic epithets are added to the list. Thus, while some of the pupils call her the teacher's pet ("enchufada"), Lidia, a particularly spiteful girl, classifies her as the teacher's favourite ("la preferida de la solterona"), and a queer fish ("un bicho raro") (170). The epithet "raro", as in Mendicutti's text, signifies "strange", "odd", "peculiar", "homosexual", "queer".

Although Lidia does not directly threaten to expose the drift of Julia's libidinal object choice, that seems to be the underlying intention behind her veiled remarks. For instance, she tells Julia that she will befriend her only if Julia translates her Latin homework for her each day. That Julia perceives the danger to herself of thwarting Lidia's requests is underlined by the narrator, who reveals that Julia not only gives Lidia all the help she needs, but also lets this treacherous girl comb and dress her hair. Here, Moix underlines the fear of blackmail and exposure that haunts the sexually marginalised and oppressed in a patriarchal culture by having Julia demonstrate her fear of her oppressor. Although Julia does not willingly let anyone comb her hair, as the narrator tellingly points out: "no se atrevía a llevar la contra a Lidia" (170).

Equally noteworthy is the narrator's representation of the negative and homophobic reaction of the older generation and Julia's peers at school to her gender-bending traits and emotional rapport with another, older woman, and the very different approach of the more mature anti-bourgeois students whom she meets at college later on. For instance, Andrés, a decent and intelligent young man (the narrator describes him as

¹⁵ Jonathan Dollimore, *Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), p.15.

“bueno” and “inteligente” [31]), not only seems to comprehend and accept Julia’s pleasure in the company of Eva her college tutor, or put another way, her same-sex object choice, but also does not let this particular facet of her emotionality and space become a sexual/textual marker for her identity as a whole. Rather, he leaves her free to interact with the woman she admires and loves, by pretending that he has an appointment somewhere else each time that Julia and Eva have arranged to meet. As the narrator points out: “Andrés, cuando el reloj de la torre daba la una decía: te espero por ahí. Era mentira, Andrés siempre decía voy a ver si encuentro al doctor porque sabía que a ella, a esa hora, le gustaba ir en busca de Eva” (31).

This sympathetic approach to Julia’s same-sex sensibility and taste on the part of Andrés is obviously very different from that of the heterosexist, homophobic milieu that surrounds her and that determines and defines her identity and space as lesbian and perverse. One of the differences between Moix’s text and Mendicutti’s is that while the latter underlines the total isolation of the putatively homosexual narrator as a ten-year-old boy (apart from his friendship with the homosexual, tío Ramón, he is alienated and alone), Moix does, at least, offer her adolescent heroine the possibility of sympathy from and rapport with Andrés, an open-minded heterosexual.

However, it is not only the decent and intelligent Andrés who offers the hand of friendship to the beleaguered girl. Carlos, a revolutionary, who would rearrange the world, also has no intention of defining Julia’s subjectivity through the prism of her sexual tastes. Rather, he sees her as a person and another student with whom he wants to share his views. As a fervent socialist and radical, Carlos writes poetry about “las tierras secas y áridas de Andalucía”, “los campesinos con las manos endurecidas y encallecidas a causa de tanto afanarse”, and “las mujeres de los campesinos que lloraban por las noches la muerte de sus hijos por culpa del hambre” (189-90), amongst many other problematic social themes (189-90). Perhaps, surprisingly, since Carlos and his fellow students speak frequently about marginalised and oppressed social groups, suffering and injustice, Julia displays little interest in what he, or they, have to say. In fact, rather in the same way that Mendicutti’s narrator keeps on underlining his own less than perfect personal traits – he lurks in doorways to hear what is being said, and repeats what has been said to him in confidence – Moix’s narrator also alerts the reader to Julia’s faults. Thus she is portrayed as perpetually bored by what Carlos and the other students have to

say, notwithstanding the fact that they are campaigning for a better way of life for the masses:

Carlos la aburría mortalmente, y a veces, cuando se mostraba tan seguro de sí mismo, de su inteligencia, de su brillante porvenir, y de lo claras que tenía las ideas sobre lo que convenía al mundo para que todo marchara bien, conseguía sacarla de quicio. (190)

Possibly, Moix intends the reader to interpret Julia's boredom, even when exposed to a worthy cause, as a reaction to her experience of a hostile homophobic world or even as an example of the silencing of the homosexual/lesbian voice. As the narrator frequently points out: "[Julia] Se sintió tremendamente sola, completamente aislada de los demás, diferente" (152). Thus, although she acknowledges that Andrés "podría llegar a comprenderla", and that she herself wants desperately to love and to be understood – as the narrator puts it: "[Julia] podría llegar a querer, y dejarse comprender" (30) – she nevertheless declines to share her problems or her thoughts.

A useful analogy can be made here between Moix's text and (for example) Elizabeth Riley's novel *All That False Instruction*.¹⁶ As with Moix's Julia, the relationships that Riley's heroine Maureen forms with other women, while initially a source of pleasure, are soon eroded and destroyed by the people who surround her. In her excellent book on contemporary lesbian fiction, Paulina Palmer's account of the way in which the reader of Riley's text watches Maureen's friendships with other women "being distorted and derailed by the lack of a supportive network and the need for secrecy and subterfuge which the lesbian stigma imposes" could just as easily be applied to Moix's heroine and text.¹⁷ For instance, Julia begins by feeling emotionally and psychologically drawn towards her mother only to have their close relationship partially destroyed when her brother Rafael dies, and her mother turns her unreliable affection towards Ernesto her remaining son. Similarly, soon after Julia finds consolation in tía Elena's arms the latter becomes involved with her lover Félix, a new arrival on the scene. Later, Julia's emotional interaction with Mabel, the director of her school, is destroyed early on by the jealousy and homophobia of the other boys and girls. And finally, her mother and "abuela" soon shatter her involvement with her college tutor Eva when they order her to

¹⁶ Elizabeth Riley, *All That False Instruction* (London: Angus Robertson, 1975).

¹⁷ Paulina Palmer, *Contemporary Lesbian Fiction: Dreams, Desire, and Difference* (Buckingham and Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1993), p. 42.

keep away from the older woman and stay indoors. As the mother puts it: “Es rara, no hay quien la soporte, se me ha mentido para ir a casa de esa mujer. [...] No pondrás los pies en la calle, sola, mientras viva” (211).

Although she ultimately fails (in that she is driven to an attempt to kill herself), Julia does make a valiant attempt to retain the determining effect on her interiority and space as a free “persona” of don Julio’s libertarian points of view. For instance, when her “abuela” asks her why she has not dressed for mass, Julia challenges the old woman’s judgmental posturing by resolutely answering “No voy, no voy, no voy” (162). Similarly, when her “abuelo” tells her to burn the books of various noted authors, and particularly those by Sartre – “la reencarnación de Satanás” (162) – Julia challengingly sits down in front of her grandmother with one of the forbidden books in her hands (163).

As don Julio had foreseen: “Los del pueblo habían sido cinco años en blanco, cinco años felices que resbalaron sobre ella, y de los que no daban absolutamente nada” (177-78). However, Julia does not feel sad or hurt, neither does she want to cry; she only feels bitter with herself “por haberse dejado derrotar y por una soledad que prometía ser eterna” (177-78).

As with Mendicutti’s narrator, Julia, the eponymous heroine of Moix’s text is subjected to and made subject by the homophobic practices and codes of the characters who surround her and who discursively define her. Again, as with Mendicutti’s narrator, she too has an unhappy, troubled, anxious childhood beset by the problems that arise, primarily, out of her gender non-conformity and her sensual/sexual affinity for her own sex. While Mendicutti’s narrator masks his constituted homosexual “I” by fracturing it into multiple positionalities (a postmodernist move), Moix’s heroine similarly tries to conceal her same-sex predilection by splitting her subjectivity into equal parts, one part posing as Julia, and heterosexual, and the other functioning in secret as Julita, a lesbian. However, unlike Mendicutti’s narrator, who in his maturity challenges the status quo, Moix’s Julia succumbs to the surrounding social/sexual scene by attempting suicide. She does, however, have one benefit denied to the narrator of Mendicutti’s text in that she achieves a meaningful rapport with the heterosexual and open-minded Andrés, a friend and fellow student. Unlike any of the heterosexual characters in *El palomo cojo*, Andrés seems able to accept the possibility of same-sex libidinal interaction without having to raise this sexual propensity to the defining principle of the individual’s (Julia’s) identity

and space. Although he does not actually articulate this train of thought, this, I argue, is a feasible interpretation of his sensitive and convivial approach to Julia and her relationship with the tutor Eva.

In the following chapter I chart the rites-of-passage towards a homosexual identity and space of the main character and occasional narrator of Jesús Alvíz's novel *Calle Urano*. Here José Hafta/Anagni also experiences his identity and space as psychosocially and sexually split, and as with Julia and the narrator of Mendicutti's text succumbs eventually to the determining effect of homophobic discourse, knowledges and power. For the moment, however, I suggest that the open-minded acceptance on the part of Andrés, a fellow student, of Julia's emotional and (putatively) sexual proclivities and tastes offers the reader a glimpse of what Williams would describe as an emerging cultural element intermingling with and challenging the residual and the dominant (*Marxism and Literature*, 125).

Chapter Three

Calle Urano by Jesús Álviz

Fatídico juego de máscaras, que por asimilado de costumbre ya nos resulta natural. Mascarada necesaria para la sobrevivencia; por más que el Orden proclame que tenemos que ser lo que somos: por más que uno de los axiomas de la Filosofía occidental sea el Principio de Identidad (*Calle Urano*, back cover)

Introduction

Jesús Álviz was born in 1946 in Acebo, Cáceres, and studied philosophy at the University of Valencia. His first two books, *Luego, ahora háblame de China* (1977) and *He amado a Wagner* (1978), were followed by *El frinosomo vino a Babel* (1979) and *Calle Urano* (1981), his first Madrid publication. Engaged in writing plays for the stage, he published only two more books in the next ten years, *Concierto de ocarina* (1986) and *Española dicen que es* (1992).

Although *Calle Urano* was favourably reviewed by Luis Suñén in 1981¹ and by Rozas Bravo in 1995,² it was not well received by the reading public. Suñén praised Álviz's approach to homosexual themes and scenes, pointing out that: "Desde una perspectiva absolutamente carente de prejuicios en un sentido o en otro, desde una contemplación nada excluyente, Álviz plantea la cuestión homosexual como el resultado de una doble tensión con un entorno y con uno mismo". Similarly, the critic, Rozas Bravo admired the technical experimentation and expertise that Álviz displayed in this and previous texts: "La estructura narrativa de *Calle Urano* muestra una original y audaz disposición del material suministrado por la realidad. Aspecto ya anunciado suficientemente en sus obras anteriores" ("Aproximación", 234). Martínez-Expósito's critical account in 1998³ gave a detailed examination of this innovatory work as well as

¹ Luis Suñén, "Una novela sobre la homosexualidad", *El País*, 19 July 1981.

² José Luis Rozas Bravo, "Aproximación a la narrativa de Jesús Álviz", *Revista de Estudios Extremeños*, 51 (1995), pp. 231–37.

³ *Los escribas furiosos*, pp. 62-73, 137, 139.

offering an explanation for its perfunctory reception: “Heredero en muchos aspectos de *Tiempo de silencio* combina el alto riesgo comercial del intelectualismo con el riesgo moral implicado en el tema” (*Los escribas*, 64). This latter observation highlights, I suggest, the intellectual and/or sexual/textual inadequacy and prejudice of the general reader rather than that of Álviz or his text.

I have included *Calle Urano* among my primary texts for several reasons. Mainly because it demonstrates the determining effect of homophobic practices and codes on the self-determination as homosexual of the text's main character (José Hafta). This is in direct contrast to the texts previously reviewed, which treat primarily of the sexual/textual issues and events relating to a pubescent youth (Mendicutti's *El palomo cojo*) and an adolescent girl (Moix's *Julia*). It also offers a polemical approach to the institutions of medicine, religion and the state, highlighting the dominant and disciplinary role that each plays in the formulation of identity as homosexual. Significantly, it also introduces the belated efforts on the part of medicine and psychiatry to de-pathologise that which they had previously made a clinical concern. Of equal note is the way in which it courageously and sensitively explores the emotive issues that arise in relation to cross-generational sex between consenting males, without lapsing into gratuitous pornography. As in Mendicutti's text, it underscores the ongoing association of effeminacy in the male with homosexuality as well as the suffering, silence and psycho/social alienation that accrue to those categorised as sexually perverse. Highlighted also are the efforts of the *Frente de Liberación Homosexual* to challenge and contest entrenched homophobic practices and codes.

Divided into multiple and discontinuous scripts, including dialogue (reminiscent of the theatre), interior monologue, letters, pamphlets, poetry, analeptic and proleptic scenes, and extended passages which have the resonance of a polemical address, *Calle Urano* presents the reader with a dialectical account of both homophobic and anti-homophobic points of view. What emerges from this sexual/textual *pas-de-deux* is a demonstration of the ways in which the individual is formulated and then re-formulated as a homosexual subject by society and its normalising practices and codes.

The basic story line of *Calle Urano* tells of the homosexual love affair between the main protagonist, José Hafta, and a pupil at his school, followed by the inevitable demolition of the former, who is effectively removed not only from his socio-cultural milieu (his teaching post, the youth he loves, his “novia” and his friends) but also from

the text itself. A banishment that reflects the prevailing homophobic point of view of society as a whole, rather than that of the narrator of Álviz's text. However the main thrust of this complex and sophisticated account of the homosexual and homosexuality lies in its detailed explication of the formulative effect of homophobic practices and codes on the main character's perception of his identity and space as homosexual and perverse. To this end Álviz's narrator charts not only the homophobic scenes and themes that impinge upon José Hafta as a boy when he is categorised as a "maricón", but also and with ever gathering momentum as a man, when he is similarly labelled. He also has to witness the denunciation and destruction of a fellow tutor who dares to challenge the social/sexual norms, and then later the expulsion of a youth who exhibits same-sex sensibility and taste. Later on, he is also made aware of the ways in which certain groups and individuals, the *Frente de Liberación Homosexual* and a psychiatrist, respectively, challenge the anti-homosexual status quo.

In order to relate the sexual/textual significance of Álviz's text to this thesis as a whole, and in order, also, to bring the novel's structural complexities into a manageable frame (in his review of *Calle Urano* Rozas Bravo speaks of "descifrando las claves dispuestas en el texto, que exige una intensa lectura" ["Aproximación", 234]), I have collated the various, fragmented scripts into three sequential sections. Similarly, and again to facilitate interpretation, I discuss the novel's issues and events in their diegetic, rather than their textual ordering. For example, I review the text's inaugural and proleptic scene between Hafta, his "novia" and their mutual friends after, rather than before, the scripts which textually follow.

In the examination of the text that follows, my primary concern is to interrogate a range of issues in which the closeted José Hafta becomes the focal point for the dissemination of both homophobic and anti-homophobic points of view. Significant here are the anti-homosexual themes and scenes that serve to inscribe and then re-inscribe Hafta's sense-of-being and space, both as a boy and later as a man, as homosexual. For example, the discursive practices and codes of medicine, religion, and the State which direct and formulate that which is sexually normal and that which is not and the specific knowledges and "technology of power" which function in and through them. The overarching tendency of society as a whole to collapse effeminacy in the male with homosexuality is also a dominant theme. Particularly relevant to the issues that arise in

relation to the notions outlined above is what Foucault has to say concerning discursive practices and regulatory norms:

The disciplines may well be the carriers of a discourse that speaks of a rule, but this is not the juridical rule deriving from sovereignty, but a natural rule, a norm. The code they come to define is not that of law but that of normalisation (*Power/Knowledge*, 106).

In the first sections of this chapter, I explore the formulative effect on Hafta, a closeted homosexual, of two opposing points of view. On the one hand, that of his heterosexist friends and colleagues and the Director of the school where he teaches, all of whom subscribe to social/sexual norms. And, on the other, that of an unnamed tutor of philosophy, dismissed for advancing free-wheeling, libertarian points of view on education, society and life and for his (putative) homosexuality. Equally significant in these early scenes are Hafta's sexual experiences at night (described, perhaps surprisingly, in verse), his evocation of his childhood days, and the dialogic interaction between himself, a closeted homosexual, and his heterosexist male and female friends, when issues relating to the dismissed tutor and to freedom and homosexual rights are interrogated and critiqued, but not resolved.

In the second section, I review the continuing effect on the closeted Hafta of yet another homosexual scene, one in which a pupil at the college where he teaches, is dismissed for engaging in homosexual activities with other pupils. Before having the sexually active youth removed, the Director asks both a priest and a psychiatrist to intervene. Problematically for Hafta, he becomes the recipient of various points of view in relation to the homosexual youth, and whilst welcoming psychiatry's de-pathologisation of the homosexual and same-sex sensibility and taste, he remains deeply troubled by the entrenched anti-homosexual attitudes of both society and the Church.

In the third and final sections, I interrogate the events that lead up to Hafta's final demolition, a demolition proleptically depicted in what happens both to the freethinking tutor and to the homosexual youth. Having fallen in love with a youth who makes sexual advances to him in a darkened theatre, and who loves him in return, Hafta's closeted identity and space as homosexual are breached by the characters who surround him and who then remove him from their social, cultural scene.

My principal concern in this reading of Álviz's text is to interrogate the ways in which it represents the performative effect of society's hegemonic norms on the subject's

(Hafta's) perception of his identity and space as homosexual and other. I also seek to underline the liberating effect (albeit minimal) on Hafta and, indeed, on Álviz's text, of various scenes and themes associated with Spain's move towards democracy, psychiatry's de-pathologisation of the homosexual, and the work of the *Frente de Liberación Homosexual* and its activists to decriminalise homosexuality.

3.1 The director upholds the status quo and the tutor is dismissed

By making Hafta the principal recipient of what the Director and the dismissed tutor have to say about each other and each other's views, Álviz's narrator underlines the determining effect on the closeted homosexual of two opposing and discriminatory points of view. That the Director's conservative position is in consonance with the knowledges and truths disseminated by the anti-homosexual Church and State, as well as with the notions of the populace as a whole, is made abundantly clear in what he has to say to Hafta. What particularly infuriates the parochial-minded college principal is that instead of adhering to established practices and codes, the tutor introduces innovative and libertarian points of view into his tutoring at the college. Points of view that create problems not only among the pupils and the parents, but also among the dignitaries of the Church and State. The freight of the consensual and entrenched opinions of the populace as a whole is that the tutor "llevó la guerra a las casas de los muchachos, oponiendo a éstos contra los padres, a aquéllos contra las madres, y a ellas, las pobres, contra sí mismas" (25). Such is the consensus of opinion ranged against this libertarian man that when a meeting is called to discuss his proposed dismissal "nadie falta a la cita" (26). Furthermore, so intense is the animosity and naked fear on the part of the Director (for example) towards this enterprising member of his staff, that he feels, when he dismisses him, as though he has got rid of a pack of wolves, rather than, as he puts it, just one wolf in sheep's clothing: "Debajo de una piel de cordero ya no se esconde un lobo sino una camada; es así se lo digo yo" (22).

The significance of this part of Álviz's text lies, I suggest, in its sophisticated use of irony and double meaning, and in the way in which it encourages the reader to see Hafta's point of view rather than that of the Director and the status quo. For example, it can be argued that the narrator ironically demolishes and derails the credibility of the

Director by having him offer (unwittingly, of course, and here lies the irony) the tutor's vacant place to a closeted homosexual (Hafta), and as such, the execrated other of the surrounding anti-homosexual scene – or put another way, by having him offer the tutor's vacant place to a candidate whose sexual credentials make him even more unacceptable than the one who held the post before. Similarly, and in a scene that evokes the mocking treatment meted out to various anti-homosexual protagonists in Mendicutti's text, the narrator goes on to mock both the Director and his parochial points of view, by having him speak to the closeted Hafta in laudatory and conciliatory terms – Hafta merits all his respect “merece todos mis respetos” (21); he speaks to Hafta as a father to a model son “le hablé así [...] de un padre a un hijo modelo” (21); he knows Hafta as well as he knows himself “lo conozco tan bien como a mí mismo” (24).

Equally significant is the way in which the narrator underlines the accumulative effect of these various scenes and themes on the homosexual Hafta, by having him conceal both his sexual propensity and his knowledge of and friendship with his dismissed friend in order to survive socially, sexually, and culturally. Thus the fear and silence that accrue to closeted identities and space, which we have already witnessed in relation to the narrator in Mendicutti's text, is now evidenced by Hafta. First, when he pretends that he cannot remember either the name of the dismissed tutor or the reasons why he no longer teaches at the college: “¿Es que no se fue voluntariamente?” (22); then, when he says that he knew the man no better than he knew the rest: “Ah. No, no mucho, como el resto de los profesores” (25); and finally, when he refuses to occupy the tutor's vacant post: “No, mire, definitivamente no” (25).

3.2 The dismissed tutor of philosophy replies

In giving voice to the unnamed tutor, Álviz's narrator promotes a very different point of view from that held by the Director, a point of view that challenges the blinkered vision of the latter and of the society which he represents. In a move that approximates to Foucault's observation that “power is co-extensive with the social body” and that “there are no spaces of primal liberty between the meshes of its network” (*Power/Knowledge*, 142), the tutor refers to faceless principles which he calls “La Máquina” and “el Poder”,

and which, as he points out to Hafta, govern everything that the Director and “la mayoría” say and do, and to which they are no more than faithful servants: “Con esa aureola que lucen los amigos de la Máquina, seguros de que por muy arbitrarias que sean sus determinaciones son inapelables, pues detrás está el Poder, del que son sus reflejos y más fieles servidores” (22). In attacking Western society as a whole, he singles out the family, medicine, and religion as the primary vectors of everything that is rotten in the State. Speaking metaphorically through images of rotting food, that stand in for normalising practices and codes, he indicts, first, the heterosexual family for its inappropriate, even harmful, nurturing of its young: “Todo el mundo colaborando ávido a endilgarles alimentos corrompidos: la familia, sobándoles hasta la náusea con eso que llaman cariño, ya ves tú que nombre para ese vicioso gatuperio” (26). Then, heterosexists and their norms for insisting on virginity and productivity – terms that are associated, as he complains, with “el sentido del deber, ¡qué asco de palabra! y el de la productividad, ¡cuánto no habría que hablar de éste!” (26). Next, medicine for the fact that when “los doctores subutilizan con sus batiburrillos su afán es llevarnos a todos al abrevadero padre, y sobre todo interesado, de lo invisible” (25). And finally, religion which aligns itself with medicine to the extent that the doctors “van a reforzar aún más a la razón con la teología” (25).

His downfall comes when he tries to introduce his innovative ideas into the classroom, first, by getting rid of standard texts and introducing new and different books and authors: “Desde la primera clase prescindí del texto oficial [...], y cada día llevaba libros de diversos autores” (24).⁴ Then by encouraging each pupil to forget the contamination that surrounds him and to re-invent joyfully his attitude to his being and to his life. As he puts it: “Hay que ejercitarse cada mañana en inventar la vida, como si naciera con el día, igual; debemos limpiarnos la legaña que impida vernos, sin perder de vista a los restantes sentidos, y más que a ninguno el de la felicidad” (23). Leaving Hafta in no doubt as to what happens to the individual who stands in opposition to accredited norms and to the associated “technology of power” that functions in and through them, he

⁴ This move reflects the theme of the intellectual renovation prevailing in Spanish transitional narratives.

bemoans his present state:

Me han botado, Hafta, sí, sí, como lo oyes, acaban de botarme; me ha llamado a su despacho, de pie los dos, sin el menor miramiento, como a un objeto [...] y me ha espetado. [...] Siempre oyendo lo mismo. [...] Y lo malo es que van tan de legítimos desde lo oscuro de los tiempos que cuando surge un outsider que les hace la guerra desde su ninguna verdad, ya intuye [sic] de antemano que va a ser el chivo expiatorio de ellos para que todo continúe igual. (22)

That what the tutor has to say produces further formulative effects on Hafta is evidenced in the anxious, muted way in which he tries to distance himself, at least in the presence of the Director and his staff, from this friend and former colleague. Of equal note also, is the way in which the Director and the dismissed tutor produce two opposing points of view in relation to the same events. A dichotomous positionality that mirrors, to a degree, that of the heterosexual/homosexual binarism and the hierarchical and determining effect of the former on the latter. Or put another way, the manner in which the former relies on the latter to maintain its predominant position as the status quo.

3.3 Anagni's experiences at night (also known as Hafta through the day)

While the narrator refers to the protagonist in the versifying scenes that follow as Anagni, he also makes it clear (albeit later on) that the name Anagni is in fact a pseudonym that Hafta uses to conceal his identity at night (217, 219). As Martínez-Expósito pertinently points out in relation to Hafta's double life: "No sólo se usa un doble nombre José Hafta/Anagni y dos realidades paralelas (las amistades diurnas y las nocturnas jamás se entremezclan), [...] sino que además, el nocturno Anagni necesita disfrazarse" (*Los escribas furiosos*, 73). In scenes that act out the discursive constitution of the homosexual, and the pain and suffering that accrue to this denigrated social-sexual state, the narrator describes how Anagni (alias Hafta), prepares himself, both sartorially and psychologically, to "cruise" the streets at night. The almost palpable fear that the homosexual experiences during his nightly forays in search of men with similar sexual tastes, his efforts to disguise himself and change the way he looks, and the impossibility of either altering or overcoming these repetitively onerous and dangerous themes and scenes are tellingly and wittily portrayed:

¡oh desdichada desventura!
 salió Anagni procurando no ser notado: tal su terror atávico
 insuperable a lo de la comidilla de la vecindad, tal
 su pavor por lo de la educación perversa mil veces denostada,
 estando su casa en feroz desasosiego, antes, ahora, después.

A oscuras siempre siempre, siempre, e inseguro,
 por secretos callejones disfrazado: caoba el bisoñé,
 azules microlentillas, joyas premeditadamente permutadas,
 de gran señora los aires, y atuendo atrabiliario en general (15).

What needs to be noted in relation to these various scenes is the way in which they say as much, if not more, about the homophobic society which surrounds the homosexual (and which influences his perception of himself as sexually other and perverse) as they do about the homosexual himself. For instance, the performative effect of disciplinary practices and codes on the homosexual is clearly demonstrated by the narrator in these lines of verse⁵ when he has Anagni (alias Hafta) protect his identity and space by functioning sexually only in the dark “a oscuras siempre siempre siempre” (15), and by changing his name from José Hafta to Anagni (textually confirmed in later scenes as I have pointed out above). Equally, the narrator shows how Anagni disguises his appearance by wearing a toupée, blue contact lenses, and jewellery that give him the appearance and the aura of a theatrical *grande dame*: “Caoba el bisoñé, azules microlentillas, joyas premeditadamente permutadas, de gran señora los aires” (15). Significant also are the temporal cues “antes”, “ahora”, “después” that describe Anagni’s perpetual anxiety even in his home, and the repetitive “siempre siempre siempre” that give space and onerous time to his amorous activities in the dark, all of which bear witness to his alienated, frightened state.

Arguably some of the most telling examples in Álviz’s text of the ways in which hegemonic practices and codes produce determining effects on recalcitrant sexualities are mapped out in the narrator’s excursion into narrative verse. In demonstrating the discrepancy between the homosexual’s experiencing of love and *jouissance* and the heterosexual’s, the narrator begins by underlining how the homosexual Anagni chooses the dark rather than the light for his amorous trysts. He also chooses the dangers and

⁵ This is a deliberate and significant parody of the “Cánticos” by San Juan de la Cruz. This reflects the intertextual relationship between the texts of San Juan and Álviz. This family relationship is later found in *Las virtudes del pájaro solitario* by Juan Goytisolo.

discomforts of the streets rather than the comparative safety and comfort of house or home, and the unknown for a lover rather than the known. In one particular scene these fraught and hierarchically conceived dichotomies are tellingly played out, when Anagni and another male secrete themselves within a dark, secluded alleyway only to be disturbed and mocked by male and female revellers returning home. While the sight of two males locked in each other's arms "ambos una sola sombra, unida por el grosor del émbolo del otro" (27) evokes hysterical screams and homophobic taunts, the heterosexual males and females openly embrace and display their sexual satisfaction with each other with impunity before moving on into the welcoming environment of their home. As the narrator ironically and metaphorically recounts:

¿ese ruido, motos a la puerta de la casa
 donde joden?
 y a la puerta que se abre por respuesta
 y una luz enfática que entra envolviendo despedidas
 entre susurros y besos de dos broncos centauros
 a un par de leopardas, que entre risas dicen chao y se retiran
 a sus jaulas, pero antes
 ¡ya vienen por el pasillo! ¡no es posible!
 y las risas de ellas satisfechas se agudizan
 en histéricos silbidos cuando observan
 que fantasmas presurosos, más de mil, desharrapados,
 encima les caen desde las sombras del patio, ¿cómo?
 y ya chillan, subidas por las paredes: ¡dos
 hombres semidesnudos! levantando al vecindario,
 al mundo entero, ¡a ellos! y más gritos aún
 contra aquel par de venales que ya escapan,
 lacerados por el canto invariable: ¡maricón!
 ¡mariconazos! (27).

That these and other anti-homosexual issues and events produce determining effects on the individual's perception of his identity and space as homosexual and perverse is evidenced by what the narrator has to say, when he describes how Anagni flees in fear both from "al que lo sigue" and even more from "los yoes amordazados de su infancia/ que siempre cree muertos y que siempre/ en ocasiones así, en tropelía furibunda/ le muerden los calcañales,/ impidiéndole avanzar hacia el ensueño/ vislumbrada de la plena libertad" (28), and lacerated yet again "por el canto invariable: ¡maricón! ¡mariconazos!" (27).

Before engaging further with Álviz's text, a return to Foucault will help to explain the reason for the disparity between heterosexual and homosexual rituals of love and courtship – for example, openness and laughter on the one hand (heterosexual);

concealment and anxiety on the other (homosexual). In an interview conducted and translated by James O'Higgins, Foucault advances the theory that in western Christian culture, unlike the case in ancient Greece when courtship between men was more important than that between men and women, homosexuality was banished and therefore had to concentrate all its energy on the act of sex itself:

The experience of heterosexuality, at least since the middle ages, has always consisted of two panels; on the one hand, the panel of courtship in which the man seduces the woman; and, on the other, the panel of the sexual act itself. [...] All the work of intellectual and cultural refinement, all the aesthetic elaboration of the west, were aimed at courtship. This is the reason for the relative poverty of literary, cultural and aesthetic appreciation of the sexual act. In contrast, the modern homosexual experience has no relation at all to courtship. This was not the case in ancient Greece, however. For the Greeks, courtship between men was more important than between men and women. But in western Christian culture homosexuality was banished and therefore had to concentrate all its energy on the act of sex itself. Homosexuals were not allowed to elaborate a system of courtship because the cultural expression necessary for such an elaboration was denied them. The wink on the street, the split-second decision to get it on, the speed with which homosexual relations are consummated: all these are products of an interdiction. So when a homosexual culture and literature began to develop it was natural for it to focus on the most ardent and heated aspect of homosexual relations [...] What you have, then, is a situation where all the energy and imagination, which in the heterosexual relationship were channelled into courtship, now become devoted to intensifying the act of sex itself.⁶

While this explanation of the discrepancy between the heterosexual and homosexual rituals of love and sexual interaction has a useful relevance to the experiences of Hafta/Anagni as a man, other equally important issues need to be addressed in relation to these confrontational scenes. For instance, both the narrator and Hafta/Anagni underline the significance for the latter of the taunts of “maricón” that ring out through the darkened streets. Not only does this homophobic labelling disturb his present, existential state – he flees “dando tumbos por la calle” pursued by “el eco de ambos broncos violentos” (28) – but it possesses, also, the equally disturbing capacity to resurrect the past. As the word “maricón” relentlessly pursues him, Anagni simultaneously recalls haunting childhood scenes, in which, having been discovered in the attic, “su único paraíso” (28), playing with cut-out dolls, he was similarly labelled by his aunt. Thinking back to her “mirada horrorizada”, he remembers other terrifying scenes in which he was categorised as a “maricón”: on one occasion for wearing a

⁶ Michel Foucault and John O'Higgins, “Sexual Choice, Sexual Act: Foucault and Homosexuality” in *Michel Foucault Politics Philosophy Culture: interviews and other writings 1977-1984*, ed. by Lawrence D. Kritzman, (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 286-303 (pp. 296-97).

pinafore dress tied at the waist, and on another for having his cheek adorned with lace “embelesada por la urdumbre del encaje” (28).

That Anagni (alias Hafta) has internalised the implication for his identity and space as homosexual of these childhood memories, and that they continue to re-inscribe their performative effects, is clearly evidenced in the way in which the epithet “maricón”, produces an immediate reaction and recall. Not only does he flee in guilt and terror from what he terms the phantoms of his youth “los fantasmas infantiles” (29), but he also tries to hide his sexual sensibility and taste by fracturing his identity into multiple and interacting “I’s”. In scenes that recall the way in which the young narrator at the end of Mendicutti’s text decides to conceal his homosexual identity behind a variegated mask, Álviz’s Anagni similarly tries to protect himself from society and its homophobic taunts by functioning, as he desperately points out, through “el otro yo, y el otro yo, y el otro yo, y tantos yoes” (29) However, while Mendicutti’s young narrator feels relatively secure behind his mutant “I’s”, Álviz’s mature Anagni is haunted, even angered, by “los yoes amordazados” of his youth, and by wondering just what he has gained by trying so painfully, and so long to align himself with, as he puts it, bourgeois pacts, roles, order, norms:

¡Y el otro yo, y el otro yo, y el otro yo, y tantos yoes
deben olvidarse de su lúdica satisfacción, inexplicable e
irreprimible, y entrar, ¡como está mandado!, dentro de un c-a-u-c-e!
y ya son un suplicio, esos yoes
que ahora vengativos le succionan el cerebro
preguntándole qué fue que ganó
a cambio de tanta Norma, tanto Pacto, tanta Regla
entonces,
y qué ahora con el Orden, a quien se sometió (29).

3.4 The closeted Hafta with his “novia” Katy and his friends

By situating the closeted Hafta within a group of predominantly homophobic male and female friends, amongst whom is his “novia” Katy, and by having a homosexual liberation group introduce one of their revolutionary pamphlets into this sexually contentious scene, Álviz’s narrator sets the stage for the animated dialogic interaction that takes place between the various members of the group. Since Spain’s homosexual liberation groups reached the peak of active protest during the transition to democracy

(the time of Álviz's text), and since this particular revolutionary pamphlet calls for the same rights for the homosexual male to love openly and freely as those granted to the heterosexual, it will be useful to quote what it has to say in full:

Exigimos desde ahora mismo sacar a la calle nuestras apetencias: besar a los hombres que amamos, al igual que hacéis vosotros con vuestras mujeres. Si continuáis creyendo que eso es degeneración, allá vosotros, no esperéis que perdamos el tiempo demostrando lo contrario ¡la vida apremia! Hundámonos, pero todos, no únicamente los excluidos. (5)

What emerges in the plurivocal scenes that follow demonstrates not only the almost total anti-homosexual inclinations of the group as a whole but also the stereotyped notions of the male as homosexual on which they base their contentious observations. Significant here also is the negativising effect on the closeted Hafta of what they have to say. For instance, the general aversion towards the homosexual on the part of Hafta's male and female friends is clearly evidenced by their obvious unwillingness to mention the unmentionable word. Thus, the homosexual and homosexuality are referred to both variously, and disparagingly, and always through the optics of a homophobic lens: "este castigo", "los sarasas", "esos", "tal gentuza", "el descojone", "mediomujeres", "ese gremio", "las causas perdidas", "una cosa aparte" and "el peor de los males" (6, 7, 8, 9). Similarly, while one (Francisco) claims that the homosexual makes him feel sick, "me da náuseas" (6), and another (Carmen) that he makes her shudder, "dentera me da" (7), yet one more (Pepe) claims that he cannot stand either the homosexual voice, which he stereotypes as high, "chillaba, siempre chillaba" (13), or the way in which the homosexual moves his hips, equally stereotyped as "esos contoneos" (10). Later on, Francisco further underlines the disciplinary effect of society's normalising practices and codes, and the fear that they engender, by pointing out that he would not even dare to say hello to one of them, "alguno de ellos" (10), lest people begin to question the direction of his own sexual tastes, and moreover, that he is frequently afraid, lest he might unwittingly be classified as a homosexual, since they do not always present with feminine traits:

Además de los maricas de nalgueo y amaneramiento, hay muchos de los otros, esos que pueden pasar por un hombre normal, como cualquier de nosotros. [...] Esos pueden ser nuestros amables parientes, nuestros más solícitos vecinos, nuestros mejores amigos, y sin embargo no parecer del gremio en absoluto. Y, no obstante, lo son. (11)

These observations are significant, in that they debunk the general tendency on the part of both the heterosexual and the homosexual to view the latter as solely effeminate and effete. A tendency which Cortés, for example, views, at least on the part of the homosexual, as a “producto del autodesprecio que lleva a muchas locas a no considerarse lo suficiente hombres, de la creencia personal de que si te gustan los hombres debes de ser mujer” (*Identidad y diferencia*, 129). But which, as he goes on to point out, was superseded in the seventies by the notion that the homosexual should present himself as more “macho” than “los machos”. As he rhetorically affirms: “¿Cómo humillarles si no se les puede tachar de afeminados o mujercitos?” (159). From a similar point of view, Edmund White also notes that while in the past “we all thought we had to be a bit nelly (effeminate) in order to be truly gay. Today almost the opposite seems to be true. [...] The masculinization of gay life is now nearly universal”.⁷

Equally significant, in relation to these anti-homosexual scenes and themes is their effect on the closeted Hafta. While he initially responds to the liberation pamphlet from within his closeted and protected space, by ironically inquiring “¿quién ha sido el degeneradete que ha traído hasta nosotros esta perdición?” (6), later on, with his spirited defence of the homosexual and same-sex sensibility and taste, he comes close to revealing his own personal involvement in this social-sexual scene. Arguing from within what appears to be a Freudian context in relation to male and female sexuality and gender,⁸ Hafta begins by pointing out that males may display female traits and vice versa and that to think of either state as pure and uncontaminated by the other is to move into a utopic realm: “Pues perdona que te desanime, pero según los estudiosos tanto el macho puro como la hembra pura son utopías” (7). He then goes on to underline the fact that since society is steeped in ignorance about the homosexual and the homosexual’s existential state, ignorance is what it uses to attack them: “Pero la ignorancia que tenemos sobre su mundo, que es la única arma que empleamos para atacarlos es más nauseabunda si cabe” (6). Finally, he tells the anti-homosexual group that people are so ignorant and

⁷ Edmund White, *The Burning Library* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1994), p.76.

⁸ In his account of the differentiation between men and women Freud points out that “in human beings pure masculinity or femininity is not to be found either in a psychological or a biological sense. Every individual on the contrary displays a mixture of the character-traits belonging to his own and to the opposite sex; and he shows a combination of activity and passivity whether or not these last character-traits tally with his biological ones”. See Sigmund Freud, *On Sexuality* Vol. 7 (London: Penguin Books, 1997), p.142.

worry so much about “la opinión ajena” (9) that they are unable to develop their own valid point of view.

To substantiate the points that he raises, Hafta cites the case of his colleague and fellow tutor (reviewed above), who was dismissed for propagating his own personal philosophy on life, people and events, and who later became the object of homophobic taunts. Francisco, in the opening scene, for example, refers to the former tutor in covertly homophobic tones: “¿Es que acaso no lo era aquel amigo tuyo, que daba clases en tu mismo colegio, y al que echaron el año pasado de allí precisamente por eso?” (11). And he returns to the same theme later on: “¿No sabéis el motivo de por qué largaron a aquel famoso profesor del colegio de José el año pasado?” (11). In reply, Hafta underscores not only the danger of challenging entrenched social norms, but also the irrational and close association that is made between free-wheeling opinions and ideas, and a perverse sexual taste:

De modo y manera que a un individuo, completamente original y libre en su concepción de la vida y de todo, no solamente lo largan de allí por no dar sus clases como el orden exige, sino que se le calumnia con ese tópico, tan habitual entre nosotros como el peor de los males, la mariconería (12).

That the anti-homosexual themes and scenes propagated by his friends, and not refuted by his “novia”, haunt the homosexual Hafta, is evidenced later on, when he stands “hombro a hombro” with her against the balustrade of a garden pool. Here, his spiritual isolation and social-sexual torment are underlined by revealing first, that he is always in an angry mood when he meets his “novia” and that her “gracias” are of no avail (8); and second, that she so totally misreads the meaning behind his fevered hands and assuming that it springs from his desire for her (when in reality it reflects his suicidal state), ends up making love to him, rather than he to her. However, it is the incursion into the interiority of Hafta’s tortured mind that underlines the full extent of his psycho-sexual disarray. Gazing into the watery depths of the garden pool, he experiences a recurring nightmare in which he starts to sink into a watery grave. Although he tries to rescue himself by clutching the sides of a darkening hole, he sinks slowly into its murky depths with bleeding hands whilst gazing with dilated pupils at the parapet above. While the closeted Hafta’s death-promoting mood seems to have been caused both by the anti-homosexual gibes of his assembled friends and by his own less than enthusiastic sexual feelings for his “novia”, it is soon evident, when he rejoins his friends, that his anxious,

alienated, haunted state is a recurring phenomenon. As Francisco immediately exclaims: “Ya estaba *otra vez* fuera del mundo” (14; my emphasis).

3.5 Álviz’s narrator speaks directly to the reader

What needs to be noted before I go on to examine the events that lead to the second dismissal of a member of the college, this time a homosexual youth, is the way in which the narrator, as the teller of the tale, interrupts the text’s diegetic, if fragmented flow, in order to present his own point of view. In what may be termed either a critical appraisal of the contemporary heterosexual/homosexual scene or, in Foucaultian terminology, a “reverse discourse” in which the individual, here the narrator, answers back and challenges the status quo, the narrator critically reviews the overriding power vested in the institutions of the state, such as the family and religion, and the contribution that each has made, still makes, and, possibly, will go on making, to the disciplinary practices and codes that determine and define sexual identity and gender. Citing the Judaeo-Christian religion as the root cause of the formulation of identity as either heterosexual or homosexual, and of the dialectical supremacy of the former over the negated body of the latter, Álviz’s narrator sets out to demolish the credibility of the Church and its priests. In consonance with the ironic denigration of the Catholic Church, its priests, and on occasion its followers (already noted in the texts of both Mendicutti and Moix, respectively), the narrator underscores the suffering inflicted on the sexually perverse, and relates this, as did Foucault, to the aversion of the Church, the family and the State to sexually non-reproductive roles:

De ese trío infernal, en mi opinión la máxima culpable de nuestra marginación es la Ética Judeo-cristiana, para quien hemos sido carne de horca desde que apareció en el mundo. Llevados sus sabios teóricos y santos pontífices, esos delincuentes institucionalizados, de su avaro concepto de la Productividad, que por tanto no soporta la jodienda sin un fin práctico y procreativo, suprimieron de un borrón de la categoría de personas a quienes no estamos dispuestos a sacrificar lo agradable y placentero a lo útil y provechoso. (31)

In an extended verbal onslaught against a homophobic Church, its sacrament of marriage, and its promotion of the heterosexual male, the narrator attacks first, the Church and marriage for the way in which they sacrilise the sexual union between the

male and female. As he explains, the Church sacrilises the sexual union only if it lasts: “hasta que la muerte los separase”. And only then if “el coño de ellas era un vertedero” and “el utensilio de ellos evacuaba allí con la menor imaginación y la mayor urgencia” (31). Later, he goes on to attack the heterosexual male for his unquestioning and trite compliance with misogynistic, homophobic practices and codes. In his empirical approximation to this literary scene, Weeks also criticises the way in which traditional Christian concepts of sexual behaviour rely on certain fixed assumptions about human nature:

that it is unregenerate or corrupt, that the division of the sexes was preordained, that sexual activity is only justified by reproduction or love. These beliefs are laid down in a set of statements – biblical interpretations, commentaries, canon law, sermons. They are generalised through a language of certitude and morality, which divides the sinners from the saved, the moral from the immoral. These meanings are embodied in institutions which work to reinforce beliefs and behaviours: churches, the privileged position of parenthood [...] the existence of religious schools, the sacrament of baptism and marriage.⁹

What is particularly significant here is not only what the narrator has to say, but that in the saying he subtly moves from the position of the narrator of the text to that of a textual character, a character for whom it is a matter of life and death to clarify the underlying significance of various sexual/textual themes and scenes, and a character who could arguably be equated either to José Hafta, or to the dismissed tutor, or even to Álviz himself. Attacking standard gender norms that require the embodiment of feminine principles by the female and masculine principles by the male, *Calle Urano*'s enigmatic scribe describes how he himself confounds established norms, by felicitously combining within his own material space both masculine and feminine traits. As he puts it:

El motivo de mi voraz afán documentativo era doble: uno de vida o muerte: demostrarme a mí mismo, contra tanta represión como hube de padecer, que yo no era un bicho único y raro, sino que en el más fornido de los maromos tenía un reflejo, puesto que también tenía su lado femenino. (34)

Equally, he fulminates against what he terms society's benighted prejudices: “Principios Morales, Costumbre, Terror a la Opinión Ajena, etc., etc.”, all of which “habían logrado cegar al individuo para impedirle contemplarse en su totalidad” (34).

⁹ Jeffrey Weeks, *Sexuality* (London: Routledge, 2003), p.56.

In looking back to his experiences as a boy, and comparing them to what he feels and experiences now as a man, he sees and appreciates the larger scene. A scene that has much in common with what we have learned already of Hafta, as well as of the narrator/protagonist of Mendicutti's text, both of whom are shaped and in turn shape themselves in accordance with society's prescriptive norms. Thus, if as a boy he was terrified by the way in which the rich flow of his own personal feelings and desires was domesticated by disciplinary practices and codes, as a man his pain and sorrow at the prevailing homophobic scene extends to men in general:

Seré más explícito aún, y si me lo permitís, hablándoos de la importancia nefasta que han tenido estos conceptillos en mi vida concreta, tanto en mi adolescencia, como ahora ya en mitad de la vida. Por culpa de esas clarificaciones me horrorizaba de mi condición homosexual entonces y por lo mismo sigo horrorizándome ahora, pero entre ambos horrores hay una abismal diferencia: aquél brotaba del terror, éste de la lucidez; aquél del miedo; éste, de mi pena por el hombre en general. (33)

And finally, having tried to dismantle the formulaic rigidity of male and female gender codes first, by pointing out the triviality of "tantas convenciones instituidas", such as "las denominaciones 'macho', 'hembra', 'homosexual', etc., etc.", second, by making reference to his own free-wheeling gender-bending traits; and third, by claiming for sex its long lost "estado animal", he turns his critical attention to the equally fixed parameters of sexuality and desire. In passages that recall both Foucault's and Derrida's notions of a multiplication of bodies, feelings, gender and desire, he articulates a vision of a liberated sexuality, "un sexo en libertad", by calling for the destruction of "barreras y clasificaciones" and the installation of a "Sexo Pántico," and "libérrimo: ese que destroza cómputos a su paso, [...] ese que es una perpetua invitación a la fiesta, ese que no extraña a nadie, salvo para quien desee ponerse de espaldas a la vida una utopía" (34).

Whether or not this attempt to free sexuality and gender from essentialising, often homophobic practices and codes is realised in the person of the character José Hafta is discussed in the following two sections.

3.6 The removal of the homosexual youth. Hafta is questioned by his “novia” and offers tentative replies

In the context of the second sexual/textual scenario that takes place at Hafta’s school and which ends, as in the case of the innovative and putatively homosexual tutor, with the removal of the offending youth – encouraged by his peers, he has been occupying himself at night “saltando de cama en cama de los internos” (77) – Hafta, once again, plays a central, conciliatory and listening role: a role in which he has to grapple with both homosexual and anti-homosexual points of view, at the same time as he anxiously maintains his own masked positionality.

In the scenes that lead up to and follow the youth’s social-sexual demise, the pressures that are brought to bear upon the individual to conform to sex and gender norms, and the punishment that awaits those who fail to comply is tellingly portrayed, as is the formulative effect on the individual identity and space of the shibboleths of society, religion, and psychiatry.

Suprisingly, perhaps, the social imaging of the homosexual youth as effeminate and effete is evidenced initially by the closeted Hafta. Questioned by his “novia” in relation to the erring youth, he replies that the latter has all the characteristics of an “afeminado” type: “la voz suavecita”, “gestos amanerados”, “una forma muy peculiar de caminar y de sentarse”, as well as being “silencioso” and “retraído” (78). This hyperbolic rendering of the youth’s gender-bending traits and the collapsing of effeminacy in the male with homosexuality can be read, I suggest, as an attempt on the part of Hafta to deflect attention from his own fraught positionality and space or, equally, as an ironic miming of a social norm. What needs to be elucidated here is the tendency on the part of the narrators of both Álviz’s text and Mendicutti’s to collapse effeminacy in the male with homosexuality – an ironic gesture that seems to reinforce rather than diminish the homophobic imaging of the homosexual male. As I have already noted in my reading of *El palomo cojo*, the putatively homosexual narrator and main character is presented, and/or presents himself, through the optics of a gender-bending lens, in the sense that he enjoys listening to gossip, has the face and manners of a girl, wants occasionally to dress in female clothes, has an acute appreciation of colours, fashion, style and weeps in empathy with suffering. Since the socio-cultural

phenomenon of collapsing effeminacy with homosexuality in the male plays a not inconsiderable part in the dynamics of the selected texts, it will be useful to consider what various literary and cultural theorists have to say on this particular theme.

In his review of homosexual behaviour in eighteenth-century Western culture, Randolph Trumbach points out that although the notion of the homosexual as “effeminate” and “effete” usually referred to the male who took the passive role, since passivity was associated specifically with the female rather than the male, sodomites in Europe were “just as likely to be stigmatised as effeminate members of a dangerous sect, regardless of their role in the sexual act”.¹⁰ Furthermore, and beginning in the late nineteenth century, when it was no longer the act that was stigmatised but the state of mind (for example, when men were no longer named as sodomites but categorised as homosexuals), “they were still seen as effeminate and dangerous” (9). With reference to the homosexual in Spain, and in the second half of the twentieth century, Oscar Guasch suggests that the heterosexual perspective on sexual relations between two males is based on the assumption that one of the actors in the sexual scene assumes a feminine role and even identifies as such.¹¹ Moreover, the assumption on the part of the homosexual male of feminine traits means that a) he will be able to reduce “la presión que el entorno social ejerce sobre él” (53); and b) if he is not entirely accepted by society, then, at least, he will be tolerated since he could fulfil “tanto tareas masculinas como un cierto tipo de trabajos femeninos” (53). As with Trumbach, José Miguel G. Cortés refers back to an earlier time and suggests that it was in the latter part of the sixteenth century that sodomites began to be seen as effeminate individuals and that this scene is still “bastante generalizada hoy en día” (*Identidad y Diferencia*, 127). Arguing from a Foucaultian point of view, that “el cuerpo y la identidad de los homosexuales ha sido creado, difundido e institucionalizado por el mundo heterosexista como el de un ser afeminado y débil, un ser – no un hombre – amanerado, insaciable en la búsqueda de sexo y frustrado por no ser una verdadera mujer” (127), Cortés points out that the individual who takes up the effeminate and stereotyped role of the “loca” does so out of a profound sense of ideological and political confusion (129). As he sees it, if we consider the “importante clima represivo” of Spain in the sixties and the seventies, it is

¹⁰ Randolph Trumbach, “London’s Sodomites: Homosexual Behavior and Western Culture in the 18th Century” in *Journal of Social History*, 11/1 (1997), pp. 1-33 (p. 8).

¹¹ Oscar Guasch, *La sociedad rosa* (Barcelona: Anagrama, 1995).

easy to understand why the homosexual assumed effeminate traits, since he was trying to make himself acceptable to a surrounding social, cultural scene which would be more inclined to accept him in a feminine role since it saw in this “una visión folklórica y divertida” (129). However, as Cortés points out later, the homosexual of the eighties (the temporal location of Álviz’s text), is a product, rather, of his own sense of “autodesprecio” – a devaluation of the self that leads many “locas”/“mariconas” to consider themselves not fully men, in the sense that if they want to make love to a man then they themselves must be a woman “de la creencia personal de que si te gustan los hombres debes de ser mujer” (129). Similarly, (and in consonance with what Guasch has had to say), by presenting with effeminate traits, the homosexual male “pretende reducir la tensión que le espera en su entorno social, haciendo reír y satisfaciendo todas las expectativas” (129).

In his review of Álviz’s text, Martínez-Expósito discusses the “feminización” of Hafta as Anagni and suggests that while he may wear women’s clothes and jewels at night, this does not necessarily indicate that he is taking up a female role, rather, that “el homosexual reprimido se convierte en homosexual ostentoso pero no en mujer” (*Los escribas furiosos*, 73). This observation is confirmed by what the psychiatrist has to say to Hafta when he discusses the problems associated with the homosexual youth. Having pointed out that the latter’s unfortunate traits can justifiably be attributed to his mother, who, seemingly, dressed him in his childhood as a girl, “de niña”, he goes on to clarify the fact that not only he, himself, (the psychiatrist) but also José Hafta, in addition to numerous homosexuals who have come to him for help, display manly traits: “¡Pues cuántos no habrán pasado por aquí tan hombres en sus gestos y formas como usted o como yo!” (100).

3.7 The Church’s role in the youth’s dismissal

That the Catholic Church plays a dominant role in the critical reception of non-reproductive roles is revealed in what the school’s senior padre has to say concerning the homosexual youth. In descriptive scenes that underline the Church’s role in both delineating and policing sex and gender roles, Hafta explains to his “novia” how the senior padre, as representative of the Catholic Church, is intent on making the youth

conform to social-sexual norms: first, by taming his will and channelling him into “un comportamiento normal”; then, by making him mix socially rather than sexually as a man among other men “un hombre entre los hombres”; and finally, by trying to adapt him to what may be termed the average norm – or put another way, to what the Church considers to be the appropriate norm – and thus “adaptarlo al medio” (79). In effect, although the padre ultimately refuses to intervene in this particular case, on the grounds that “si tal enfermedad era de tipo espiritual, era de una espiritualidad distinta a la que estaba acostumbrado a tratar” (79), Hafta’s observations on the Church, and the padre’s unfeeling stance towards the youth, serve to underline Catholicism’s anti-homosexual stance.

What needs to be noted at this stage in the youth’s gradual removal from the college is the performative effect first, on his sense-of-being and space as marginal and perverse, then on his general interaction with his peers at school and finally on his academic prowess of the anti-homosexual scenes created by the Director of the college (society) and its senior priest (the Church). If before his sexual sensibility had been openly critiqued, he was “uno de los alumnos más brillantes, y además en todas las asignaturas” (79), now that his “rondas nocturnas” have been talked about throughout the college, his intellectual “rendimiento” is minimal, and he walks around as if stupified and stunned “ahora anda como aturdido” (79).

Equally noteworthy, is the fact that, in recounting these sexual/textual themes and scenes to his “novia” Katy, Hafta is himself operating from a vulnerable and as yet undetected homosexual identity and space: a closeted positionality which enables him to empathise with the homosexual youth – as he puts it: “Puedes imaginarte la situación de la criatura, no sólo por sentirse diferente, sino porque esa diferencia comenzó a conocerse en todo el Colegio desde que se airearon sus rondas nocturnas” (79) – at the same time as he silently absorbs the anti-homosexual discourse of the Director, his colleagues, and the Church.

In explaining to his “novia” the reasons why the Director did not immediately remove the offending pupil from the school, Hafta/Anagni highlights two opposing and contemporary points of view. On the one hand, the Director is fearful lest the reputation of the college suffers further on account of yet another libertarian and sexually motivated scene (the affair of the dismissed tutor, although ostensibly connected to his freewheeling points of view, also produced disturbing sexual/textual connotations, as was evidenced in

what Francisco had to say earlier on); and on the other, and which terrifies the Director even more, the possibility of a vociferous attack by the *Frente de Liberación Homosexual* which was functioning at the peak of its activities at this time in Spain, and which would be concerned, primarily, with what happened to the youth. This scene is significant in that it refers to the activities of Spain's homosexual liberation group and to the way in which the latter are able to override (if only temporarily) the machinations of the school's senior priest who is trying to get rid of the homosexual youth (80). It also demonstrates how Spain's gay and lesbian movement has the power to so terrify the Director that he is unable to come to a definitive decision in relation to the homosexual youth and gets rid of the latter (and the problem) by referring him to a psychiatrist. Contrary to what the parochial Director of the school has in mind, rather than treating the youth and same-sex interaction as indicative of a clinical disease, the psychiatrist functions from medicine's revised and liberatory point of view in relation to the homosexual and homosexuality.

3.8 The psychiatrist discusses the homosexual youth with the closeted Hafta

In highlighting medicine's revised approach to the homosexual and homosexuality, the psychiatrist takes up what may be termed a constructionist position. For instance, he begins by suggesting that the youth is not necessarily responsible for his nocturnal incursions into the beds of the other students since they themselves probably provoked these sexual encounters, encouraged by his gentle feminine aura:

El no es el culpable, ni directo ni indirecto, de sus incursiones a las camas de los otros colegiales, son éstos quienes, por sus edades y atraídos por una especie de blandura femenil en nuestro paciente, lo provocan a esos encuentros, que no es que no los desee, pero a los que voluntariamente no se atreve, atenazado como está entre inhibiciones y terrores. (98)

Then he makes it clear that neither he, nor contemporary psychiatry and medicine, are prepared, any longer, to attach a definitively clinical appellation to the individual on account of his sexual proclivities, nor will they be influenced by society or ideologically freighted words. As he explains:

Si le pedí que me contase algunos de sus sueños, fue porque de entrada intuí que hasta en ellos, lugar de relax para las tensiones diarias, estaban presentes las pesadillas del día, pero

no porque en algún momento esperase encontrar alguna clave que explicase su mal, y esta palabra, o la de enfermedad, o la de paciente, etc., etc., deberá usted entrecomillarla de ahora en adelante, cada vez que me la oiga (98).

Further on, he continues to condemn not only essentialising notions: “Hoy sabemos que las hormonas ni agotan el caso ni lo explican. Lo mismo que se han descartado los factores endocrinos, y por supuesto los de tipo hereditario” (99), but also Freudian psychology, for its unsubstantiated claims: “Ni la sicología freudiana, que durante tiempo nos pareció el sumum y que cada día es más el reducto último de los mistagogos ni las ciencias, [...] no nos sirven para explicar estos casos” (99). And finally he underlines the futility of trying to pin down that which is in reality probably unknowable and certainly unproved. Criticising the fault lines in society’s normalising sex and gender codes, and in propositions that recall Foucaultian and Derridean notions of sexuality and desire freed from parochial constraint, he points out that the word homosexuality may be nothing but a word which designates as little as do the words male or female, words which in no way exhaust the variability of sex:

Tal vez la sodomía no sea sino un mero problema de hábito. O una variante erótica más, que inicialmente nada tuvo que ver con el sexo. O tal vez el hombre no intervenga para nada, siendo cosa de la naturaleza que, para control de la especie, evitar la superpoblación por ejemplo, juega con nuestras afectividades para impedir la procreación, pero permite el cultivo del goce para que se olvide en nuestra memoria. [...] O quizá la homosexualidad no sea sino una palabra que designa tan escasamente como las de macho o hembra, *conceptos que para nada agotan la riqueza del sexo* (99-100: my emphasis).

Of particular significance are his closing words to *Hafta*, when he links the issue of homosexuality to society and to the latter’s practices and codes. In pointing out that society must change its own points of view in relation to those whom it marginalises and excludes, he goes on to reaffirm that the origin of and responsibility for the problematics, “los males”, that attend the homosexual, lies primarily in other people and in society as a whole: “La sociedad tendría que cambiar sus puntos de vista con respecto a esos marginados. Ahí estriba todo el mal” (104).

In many ways the notions that Álviz’s narrator has the psychiatrist hypothesise concerning the homosexual youth, approximate to the revised clinical approach to homosexuality that obtained in Spanish medicine and psychiatry during the transition to democracy and after. In his book *Redada de violetas*, which highlights the suffering and

injustice inflicted on homosexuals during Franco's dictatorship, and even after, Arturo Arnalte underlines the ways in which homosexuality was treated as a clinical condition not only in authoritarian Spain, but also in Europe and the West, and that this opinion prevailed at least until 1976, by which time the American Psychiatric Association had removed same-sex object choice from its list of clinical conditions.¹² However, as Arnalte goes on to observe, although this de-pathologising gesture was approved by medicine and psychiatry in the West in general, it was only later that it was taken up to any marked degree in Spain:

Hasta 1976 la Asociación Americana de Psiquiatría (A.P.A.) no la borró (la homosexualidad) de la lista de enfermedades mentales donde la había incluido en 1952. [...] La decisión tomada en Estados Unidos fue un hito en la historia del movimiento de liberación homosexual aunque en España no tuvo repercusiones a corto plazo. (99)¹³

This clinical re-evaluation of the homosexual and homosexuality is reflected in the observations of a noted Spanish writer and physician Alberto García Valdés, one time physician superintendent at the notorious prison at Carabanchel:

Lo que se debe pretender no es [...] eliminar la conducta homosexual [...] sino lograr que todos los individuos, sea cual sea su personal orientación sexual, puedan disfrutar de una sexualidad más sana, eliminando todos los tabúes y temores relacionados con ella, [...] aceptando las diferencias entre unos y otros seres humanos no sólo como inevitables, sino como necesarias para el progreso de la especie [...] Para que cada uno pueda desarrollar y elegir sus preferencias sexuales, se necesita una atmósfera de mayor libertad educativa de la que hay actualmente, porque la sociedad tiene que dejar de ser unidimensional también en el terreno de la sexualidad y aceptar la diversidad humana como algo bueno y deseable, a lo que no debe renunciar.¹⁴

This changing medical scenario is demonstrated in the comparison between the clinical approach to the homosexual offered in both Mendicutti's *El palomo cojo*, located at the height of Franco's dictatorship, and Álviz's *Calle Urano*, located in the early eighties. Whereas in Mendicutti's text when homosexuality was still treated as a clinical disease, the homosexual narrator is portrayed as suffering almost continuously from a

¹² Arturo Arnalte, *Redada de violetas: La represión de los homosexuales durante el franquismo* (Madrid: La Esfera de los Libros, 2003), p. 99.

¹³ Arnalte further states that in 1987 the psychologist José Santacreu was still treating homosexuals as though they needed clinical intervention: "Los choques eléctricos daban resultados positivos en la curación de la homosexualidad". Later he observes: "Más radical era la curación por lobotomía, una intervención quirúrgica para modificar el cerebro"; *Redada de violetas* pp. 100, 102.

¹⁴ Alberto García Valdés, *Historia y presente de la homosexualidad* (Madrid: Akal Editor, 1981), pp. 342, 349.

feverish malaise (a metaphor for the homosexual as sick), Álviz's text offers a revised and contemporary point of view. Located historically after Franco's death, and during Spain's *destape*, the medical metaphor is now used only to debunk the whole notion of the homosexual as clinically diseased.

What also needs to be noted in this part of Álviz's text are the ways in which it reaffirms the determining effect on the individual and his existential space as homosexual of entrenched sexual/textual practices and codes, at the same time as it demonstrates how psychiatry and medicine eventually reassess their personal contribution to this alienating scene. For instance, although Álviz's psychiatrist acknowledges that homosexuality has been de-pathologised in most areas in the West, he still concedes that it will take some time before this re-evaluation is accepted by society and the youth's "entorno" as a whole. By suggesting to the youth that he should relocate to a college where he is still unknown and that the real reason for the latter move should be concealed from his family and his friends, the psychiatrist is underlining two significant areas of social/sexual concern. Specifically, areas of concern that relate to entrenched anti-homosexual attitudes and the power of regulatory norms. This part of Álviz's text is also significant, in that by having the psychiatrist acknowledge that medicine and psychiatry cannot quickly change what society thinks and feels in relation to homosexuality, it reflects an empirical and social fact. As García Valdés points out:

El temor a confesar la homosexualidad está muy extendido todavía en España para evitar las burlas y el desprecio. Por el médico, aunque no pueda cambiar la sociedad, puede ayudar a sus pacientes para hacerlos más conformes consigo mismo, aceptando la forma de ser que ellos deseen verdaderamente. (342)

Arguably one of the most challenging remarks that the narrator (or Álviz) has the psychiatrist say (and one which clearly underscores psychiatry's revisionist stance) refers to the shame that the latter feels in relation to his, and psychiatry's, former clinical approach to the homosexual and same-sex object choice. As he puts it, he has only interested himself in this matter: "para amortiguar algo esa mezcla de frustración y mala conciencia que se nos crea, a mí desde luego, y supongo a mis colegas también" (104).

However, notwithstanding, psychiatry's de-pathologising move, what needs to be noted here are the formulative effects on the youth's sense-of-being and space both as marginal and perverse of the disciplinary reactions of the Director, society and the Church. As I have already noted, although previously he had been one of the brightest

pupils in the school, since his sexual sensibility has been openly critiqued and discussed among his peers the youth's studies had suffered accordingly. Similarly, while his emotional and sexual advances had been directed in the past at males, he now tries to dissemble his same-sex propensity and taste, by pretending that he can now relate satisfactorily to girls. Seeking out the sympathetic, but still closeted Hafta, the youth indicates that he is trying to conform to the heterosexual norm. Although he used not to like women, he now goes out with one: "Antes las mujeres no me gustaban y ahora salgo con una" (172).

That his assumption of a heterosexual identity is as contrived and false as that of the closeted Hafta, and that the surrounding social/sexual scene creates these tortuous positionalities and space is highlighted by what they both have to say. For example, while the youth tries to satisfy the standard norm by mixing with various girls, he still baulks at the idea of sexual contact: "Nos encontramos a gusto juntos, me cae muy bien y ... me da apuro... cuando la beso, cuando bailamos, pues... eso..." (173). Equally José Hafta is also almost overwhelmed by his own social/sexual problems.

Through the formalistic strategy of a telephone conversation between Hafta and his "novia", which privileges what Hafta has to say, we learn what he thinks and feels about society's approach to sexuality and sex. Still troubled by "el caso de ese chico", he points out that while the reaction of the Director and his staff to the homosexual youth is both unjust and cruel, this denigratory response is typical of society as a whole: "tan pan de cada día" (122). He also indicates that people in general, are still guided by their "prejuicios" and "clasificaciones" and especially so "a la hora de detectar anormalidades" (122). Finally, he affirms that if anti-homosexual tendencies and "injusticia" were to disappear "llegaríamos a sentir una amarga sensación de vacío" (122). As for himself, he is weary of all the talk on sex and sexuality: "Sexo, sexo, sexo de todas las maneras, de todos los colores. Qué hartura. Qué ganas de vivir en alguna parte donde la gente tuviera otra fijación, o no tuviera ninguna" (121).

Although the narrator only reports what Hafta says to Katy and only indirectly what she says to him, it is clear, from his replies, that there has been a television announcement about a politician. And furthermore that the general public are more interested in the man's sexuality than in either his moral stature or his standing as a public servant (124). The significance of this concentration on the politician's sexuality rather than on his ministerial ability, in addition to the fact that this sexual/textual script is

launched by means of television reaffirms what, in effect, he already both knows and fears. That anti-homosexual news and views are widely held and disseminated and that the demolition of the homosexual, and by analogy of both the homosexual youth and he himself, is by now almost inevitable: “Ya. No es mi día, pero también la realidad ha dado todo el pie del mundo para que no lo sea. Si en los altos gabinetes ocurre eso ¿cómo sorprenderse del frote de manos de la Dirección cuando se quitó el cadáver del chaval de encima?” (124).

Yet again the narrator underscores the continuous and determining effects on Hafta of anti-homosexual themes and scenes by having him reveal some, but not all, of his deepest fears. Troubled that he did not do more to defend the beleaguered youth, he justifies himself to Katy by pointing out that close association with a homosexual often results in being labelled homosexual oneself: “Pues por miedo a que aquellos tarados llegaran a pensar que yo era uno...” (122). It is noteworthy that even Hafta cannot bring himself to mention the unmentionable word. Equally, as he goes on to explain, at the moment of detecting abnormalities, whether they are true or false, people see “maricas” everywhere, as they did in the case of the dismissed tutor. “Como ha pasado lo del chico, ven maricas por todos lados, al igual que el curso pasado con lo de aquél de Filosofía que les dió también” (122-23). And furthermore not only did he feel alone in defending the beleaguered youth – as he puts it: “Yo solo contra todos fijate tú” (122) – but that ever since he has felt strange as though some force was talking to him and dragging him along: “Pero me encuentro tan extraño después de este enfrentamiento último... No parecía ni que hablase yo, sino una fuerza que me arrastraba” (125). The observations of Martínez-Expósito in his article “Desplazamiento y escenificación”, which I quote in full, will help to flesh out aspects of these tortuous phenomena:

La idea del contagio es sumamente curiosa: un heterosexual puede quedar estigmatizado por aproximarse a lo homosexual con demasiado interés: recae entonces sobre él la sospecha. También la sospecha nace (y con ella la espada de Dámocles del estigma) si el heterosexual se aparta ostentosamente de la biografía heterosexual (soltería prolongada, amistades exclusivamente masculinas, etc.). Pero es que además el mito popular, firmemente enraizado, de que la homosexualidad se puede contagiar, creo que responde a la otra poderosa metáfora de la homosexualidad como enfermedad. Es muy curioso notar que el contagio opera, según esta creencia, en un solo sentido, porque así se hace coherente con la idea de que el único camino posible es de la heterosexualidad a la homosexualidad, que es un camino sin retorno.¹⁵

¹⁵ Martínez Alfredo, “Desplazamiento semántico y escenificación: dos aspectos semióticos de la identidad sexual” *Reverso* 2. 2000 19-43 (p.33, note 12).

And, as if to assert even further the continuous and deleterious effect of homophobic practices on the closeted Hafta, Álviz's narrator has him end his conversation with his "novia" Katy, by explaining that he feels "extraño" after his encounter with the psychiatrist and the youth, as though he is a character in a tragedy who, like the hero, is subjected to an implacable fate – a fate that envelops him and ensures his inevitable destruction and demise: "Lo pienso ahora y me observo sorprendido, porque es como en las tragedias, donde el proceso implacable de la fatalidad del héroe lo envuelve de tal manera que su destrucción es inevitable" (125-26).

3.9 Hafta's final demolition and his exit from both society and the text

Although the issue of cross-generational sex is treated more explicitly in Álviz's text than, say, in Moix's *Julia* or Carmen Riera's "Te dejo, amor, en prenda el mar" which I review further on, it is not so much the love affair between Hafta, a college tutor, and the sixteen-year-old youth Miguel that concerns Álviz's narrator. It is rather the reaction of the Director and various other characters to the participants in same-sex interaction and the determining effect on the closeted Hafta, and the youth, of what the people who surround them say and do. Whereas any intimacy, sexual or otherwise, between the lesbian protagonists in Moix's text remains largely unremarked (although Riera will offer a more detailed and sensitive description), the affair between Álviz's Hafta and Miguel is carried out in the open country and reflects both the intensity of homosexual desire and its consummation.

Before discussing *Calle Urano's* final scenes it will be useful to give a brief account of the issues and events that precipitate Hafta's final demolition. In the passionate and tender love affair that follows between Hafta and a sixteen-year-old youth, there is no suggestion, on the part of the narrator, that Hafta corrupts a previously innocent, heterosexual male, or that he knew from the beginning that the latter was a pupil at the Director's school. Indeed, as the narrator is quick to clarify, the sexual advances that provoke the affair between Hafta and Miguel are initiated by the youth himself, rather than by the older man, and further, that prior to their meeting in the

darkened theatre hall, Miguel had been seeking homosexual encounters. As he himself points out: “La noche me estimula. [...] Es como si en la oscuridad pudiese aparecer más fácilmente lo que busco que a la luz del día [...] Si conociera los lugares de ligue de la ciudad a estas horas, no iría al teatro. La obra no me interesa, por eso camino despacio, dando vueltas, esperando encontrar lo que deseo” (210).

Seated next to one another in the theatre (187), it is the youth who indicates that he finds Hafta sexually attractive, first by brushing his body against that of the older man, then by drumming his feet almost imperceptibly in unison with the latter’s; and later, by following him out of the theatre into his waiting car. Still unaware that they are fellow members of the Director’s college (the youth fails to recognise Hafta since the latter is functioning, primarily, as Anagni and therefore in disguise, and the older man is equally ignorant of Miguel’s identity and age since, as he puts it: “Sois tan grandes las nuevas generaciones” [197]), they begin their love affair. In writing down his thoughts and love for Hafta in a diary which his mother surreptitiously reads each day, the youth sets the stage for the anti-homosexual scenes that follow.

What the Director of the college and Miguel’s mother say and do concerning the sexual interaction between Hafta and Miguel demonstrates not only the socio-cultural antipathy that still obtains in Spain at the time of Álviz’s text (1981) but also the determining effect of entrenched practices and codes on the individual’s perception of his identity and space as homosexual and perverse. For instance, the mother’s immediate reaction on discovering the identity of the man with whom her son is emotionally and sexually involved is significant, in that it demonstrates both her own personal homophobic point of view and that of her social milieu. Not only does she indicate that the discovery, *in flagrante* from a scripted point of view, of a homosexual affair is the peak experience for which she has been waiting all her life: “¡La primera vez que escribe un nombre con pelos y señales! ¡La oportunidad que he estado esperando toda mi vida! ¡y además un profesor!” (213), but that other women will also feel the same. In a course of action that approximates to Foucault’s notion that “The forms and the specific situations of the government of men by one another in a given society are multiple”, and that “they are superimposed [...] cross, impose their own limits, sometimes cancel one another out, sometimes reinforce one another” (“Subject & Power”, 224), Álviz’s narrator shows the mother calculating that the best way to demolish the career and social standing of José Hafta will be to start a rumour about his homosexuality among her friends and leave it to

local gossip and anti-homosexual notions to do the rest: “Ah, ya, ya sé, telefonar a mis amigos con hijos allí también y decirles muy calmosa, como con dudas, que hay rumor sobre, eso, ¡ya está! que corra luego la bola entre ellas, que la aumentarán amedrentadas y no sin razón, y ya se encargará alguna más pronto o más tarde de hacerse oír ante la Dirección sobre ese vicioso, ¡vicioso!” (213). Furthermore, in her extended monologue, she continues to promote both her own and society’s homophobic views, linking the homosexual and same-sex sensibility and taste to poison: “Ese trago amargo que lo envenena” (203); to flesh-corroding gangrene: “Esa cangrena que lo corroe” (203); to misery and death: “Ni mencionar puedo sin que me entren ansias de muerte, ni mencionarlo siquiera, aunque tanto tanto te haga sufrir a tí y a mí me vaya quitando la vida poco a poco” (203); and finally to a punishment from God: “Qué fatalidad, qué castigo de Dios Nuestro Señor” (203). Equally, she cannot bring herself to mention the unmentionable word, or to attach a homosexual epithet to her son: “Es uno de esos [...] de esos a los que él censura, y a los que ni sé qué nombre darles sin que se me estremezca todo el cuerpo” (203).

In trying to locate the origin of what she terms her son’s “rareza”, Miguel’s mother functions from a similar point of view to that held, for example, both by Eligio in Mendicutti’s text (the huntsman points out to the narrator’s father that his son is turning out strange because he cries, “saliendo rarito”), and by José Hafta’s aunt, (she calls him a “maricón” because he plays with cut-out dolls and dresses or is dressed in girl’s clothes). Thus, she now looks back suspiciously at the things he used to do and which at the time she viewed with pleasure rather than, as now, with horror. She recalls how he would spend hours looking at the flowers and flower pots on the balcony. How his eyes would fill with tears when he found an animal “con el cuello retorcido en la cocina” (204). And how he would comb her hair after she had washed it: “Viniera a peinármelo, a atusármelo con sus manitas, a tumbarse sobre la melena que había extendido por mis espaldas” (206).

That homophobic themes and scenes produce determining effects on Miguel, and that suffering accompanies his existential state, is already demonstrated by the tortured look in his eyes: “esos ojitos tan sufridos” (204). It is also demonstrated by the closeted silence that persistently attends everything that he says and does – as his mother puts it: “Con esa actitud suya de aquí estoy yo, o de no abrir boca, [...] pero él nada, en lugar de decirme esto y esto me pasa, nada” (203). And then further underlined by the way in

which he tries to conceal his same-sex sensibility and taste by putting posters in his bedroom of half-naked women as well as “macho” men. It is also demonstrated by the damp paper and smudged letters of the diary which he keeps and which testifies to his anguish and his tears. In fact, Miguel cannot understand why he should feel guilty of a love that gives him so much joy “¿por qué sentirme culpable de una cosa que me hace tan feliz?” (208).

What also needs to be noted, here, is the dichotomy between what the mother, as the representative of society and society’s norms, has to say about the sexual interaction between consenting males, and what Miguel and Hafta think and feel. While the mother bewails what she considers to be her son’s pitiable plight: “Pobre niño” (203); “¡Qué espanto de pesadilla, por Dios! ... verlo caer por esa sima tan sin fondo y abajo el agua negra esperándolo, y yo arriba descompuesta, impotente, con los pies apelmazados en la tierra ¡qué horrible!, estoy empapada de sudor” (204), Miguel speaks of his happiness with the older man, and José Hafta of his love and tender feelings for the youth: “Sus ojos [Hafta’s] se entubieron por un sentimiento, que tenía su origen en la pena, la ternura, la admiración y una tromba de otras mil vibraciones indescifrables, nunca anteriormente vividas. [...] Respiraban al unísono, en una comunión tan afectiva que los hizo olvidarse del mundo” (197, 198). That this literary depiction of mutual joy and oneness between consenting males is akin to social fact is underscored by what Alberto Mira has to say in his cultural history of homosexuality in twentieth-century Spain:

Cuando conseguimos rescatar del silencio sin mediaciones las voces de los propios homosexuales, el tenor de algunas de sus historias puede sorprendernos: las voces se alejan de las narrativas degeneracionistas, del horror, de la culpa y pueden darnos una idea relativamente normalizada de la situación. En efecto, los homosexuales hablaban con otros homosexuales sobre su vida y lo hacían en términos de goce.¹⁶

However, the overriding freight of essentialising practices and codes as they relate to sexuality and sex, and their dissemination as the hegemonic norm is reflected in what the mother has to say concerning her son’s sexual interaction with another older man: “¡Qué espanto de pesadillas, por Dios!” (204); in her abject fear of imparting this information to her husband, with whom she has previously shared all her news and views: “Matarme me dejaría antes de decirle ni un pío siquiera a mi marido, y mira que no tengo

¹⁶ Alberto Mira, *De Sodoma a Chueca : Una historia cultural de la homosexualidad en España en el siglo XX* (Barcelona: Egales, 2004), p. 60.

el menor secre-para él (sic), pero eso nunca, ¡bonito es!, capaz sería de remover roma con santiago, o de rajar de arriba a abajo a la criatura, ¡huy, quita, quita, ni hablar!” (204); in the equally homophobic views of the numerous protagonists who, primed by the anti-homosexual machinations of Miguel’s mother, phone the Director to inform him of José Hafta’s same-sex activities and tastes – as the Director makes abundantly clear to the now isolated and ruined Hafta: “Hace algún tiempo recibí una llamada anónima diciendo que era Vd. homosexual, y cortó. [...] A poco, no era una la llamada sino cuatro, y después seis, y finalmente un enjambre” (222); and finally, in the way in which the Director tries to conceal Hafta’s abrogation of the sexual norm from the surrounding social scene. First, by pretending that he is ill, or has left for family reasons, or “ha encontrado un trabajo mejor remunerado” somewhere else (222), and then, by telling him to leave the College and not return: “No vuelva más por este Centro. [...] Aquí no vuelva” (222).

What, then, is the effect on Hafta of these various homophobic themes and scenes? What happens to him when his closeted identity is breached? According to Álviz’s narrator, Hafta has so internalised the anti-homosexual points of view of the Director and the characters who surround him, that he has disappeared into the country, and refuses to let his friends initiate a reconsideration of his case. These moves are undertaken primarily because he thinks that it would only serve to increase his notoriety as a homosexual if he stayed. However, increasing his notoriety would be an impossibility according to the narrator since, as he puts it, everyone has been informed of Hafta’s homosexual tastes: “hasta las piedras” (234). Furthermore, Hafta has so internalised the shame and ignominy that attach to the individual who engages in cross-generational sex, that he feels he has lost the right either to be part of the surrounding social/cultural scene or to pursue his profession: “Está su íntimo convencimiento de que de ninguna de las maneras tiene derecho a ese trabajo” (234).

In her review of a short story by Luis Rafael Sánchez entitled “Jum”, Agnes I. Lugo-Ortiz refers to the closing scenes of this text in which an effeminate youth in a Puerto Rican village is hounded to his death and drowns to the accompanying shouts of “¡Que no vuelva! ¡Que no vuelva! ¡Que no vuelva!”¹⁷ Glossing Kristeva’s notion of the

¹⁷ Lugo-Ortiz Agnes I., “Community at Its Limits: Orality, Law, Silence, and the Homosexual Body” in *¿Entiendes?: Queer Readings, Hispanic Writings* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1995), pp. 116-36 (p. 130).

abject as that which “epitomises a crisis of meaning” that disturbs “identity, system, order” (127), Lugo-Ortiz goes on to point out that “Trinidad’s son (Jum) is not an external ‘other’ but, worse, the outsider inside that shakes the community’s inner demarcations. Therefore, he must be ejected in order to safeguard the communal fantasy of immanence” (127). These notions of the outsider and the abject can be applied equally, I suggest, to the homosexual protagonists of Álviz’s text, in general, and to José Hafta/Anagni in particular.

Thus, the socio-political and regulatory scripts that determined Hafta’s self-perception of his identity and space as homosexual and other, continue to determine his present abjected state. As his friend, Lola la Anónima, points out in a letter, Hafta/Anagni is now figuratively dead: “Hola, Anagni, Hafta, Abominable Hombre de las nieves, o como te llares, que con tanta mascarada, ni las íntimas sabemos a estas alturas dónde ubicarte. [...] ¡Anagni, Hafta, el Yeti, o como coños se llamara ha muerto!” (235, 236).

This sophisticated and highly crafted text underscores in many ways similar issues and events to those discussed in *El palomo cojo*. For example, both Mendicutti’s narrator and José Hafta/Anagni are influenced at an early age in the development of their respective identities and space as homosexual, by what is said and done to them. Both have their sensitive and gentle gender qualities and quantities called into question and then aligned with a homosexual tendency and taste. And both are labelled with the epithet “maricón” as well as being “subjected by and made subject to” discursive practices, knowledges and power. Or as Álviz’s narrator puts it in relation to a similar theme, to “otras fuerzas ciegas” such as: “Principios Morales, Costumbre, Terror a la Opinión Ajena, etc., etc.” (34). However, while both Mendicutti’s narrator and Moix’s Julia succeed, to a degree, in either side-tracking or challenging the status quo – the former by assuming a “mobile positionality” and space and by diminishing the credibility of medicine, religion and the State and the latter by splitting her identity into two, Julia/heterosexual and Julita/lesbian and other – no such oppositional move presents itself to Álviz’s José Hafta. Immersed in the wretchedness of his abjection he has become existentially dispossessed.

What finally needs to be noted is the openness with which this text introduces both homosexual relationships and sexual interaction into its thematic structuring, as well as scripts taken from the manifestos of the *Frente de liberación homosexual* (5, 57, 82,

96, 107, 218). Thus, while the homosexual may still be viewed through a homophobic lens by society in general, the rescinding of censorship and Spain's "destape" after Franco's death are clearly demonstrated by the publication of this sexually explicit text.¹⁸

¹⁸ Although the narrator makes a case for the morality of an older man sexually interacting with a consenting youth of sixteen (230-35), I have not included what he has to say in my dissertation since the topic is peripheral to the issues that I seek to raise. Since the narrator directly addresses his readers with the words "¿A vosotros qué os parece?" (235) in relation to this particular theme, I include Foucault's informative discussion with Guy Hocquenghem and Jean Danet on crossgenerational sex in my bibliography, to which the reader might wish to refer. See "Sexual Morality and the Law" in *Michel Foucault: Politics Philosophy Culture*, ed. Lawrence D. Kritzman, pp. 271-85.

Chapter Four

La tribada falsaria by Miguel Espinosa

Introduction

Miguel Espinosa was born in Caravaca de la Cruz in 1926 and died in Murcia in 1982. Married and with a family, he published only three works before his sudden and untimely death at the age of fifty-six. The first work, a history of the United States, *Las grandes etapas de la historia de Estados Unidos*, appeared in 1957 and was republished later as *Reflexiones sobre Estados Unidos*. These were followed by two narrative texts, *Escuela de mandarines* (1974), awarded the *Premio Ciudad de Barcelona*, and *La tribada falsaria* (1980). After his death his unpublished manuscripts were collated and subsequently published. These comprise *Asklepios, El último griego* (1982), *La tribada confusa* (1984), published later together with *La tribada falsaria* in 1987, and finally *La fea burguesía* (1990). Some of these works are the fruit of successive revisions, and about a dozen manuscripts still remain unedited. Although his early work was recognised by the academic world, it received scant attention from the reading public. After a brief time in Madrid at the beginning of the 1960s, he returned to Murcia where he worked in importation and exportation, an occupation that offered him sufficient time to continue with his writing. Although the reading public were at first perplexed by the formal structuring and theme of *La tribada falsaria*, after Espinosa's death this unusual text began to receive the critical attention and acclaim that it had always merited. The *Curso Monográfico* dedicated to Espinosa and his work, held at the University of Murcia in 2004, contributed in no small measure to reviving, as well as initiating, both academic and public interest in his various texts.

La tribada falsaria, as I have already noted in the introduction to this thesis, consists mainly of a series of epistles, penned by Juana to Daniel the man she loves. However, he is only interested in Damiana who has recently deserted him, not for another man, but for, Lucía, a woman. In her copious scripts, twenty-seven in all, the lovelorn Juana speaks repetitively about “el caso” of the lesbians, Damiana and Lucía, encouraging Daniel to overcome his anger and desire for vengeance against Damiana,

who had previously been his lover for several years. Equally, she urges him to re-direct his amorous attention back to her. To give additional weight to her condemnation of Damiana and the latter's lesbian affair, Juana includes the observations of a host of characters that reinforce both her and Daniel's disgust and loathing of lesbians and same-sex sensibility. However, before arriving at what Juana, Daniel and the other characters have to say concerning Damiana's lesbian affair, an unidentified narrator, who may or may not be associated with Espinosa, the author of the text, introduces the various characters who will later make their own epistolary contributions to what Juana has to say. Listing their names and occupations in alphabetic order, the narrator fills in briefly their relationship to, and interest in, either Damiana or Lucía, or their lesbian affair. This extensive list of characters, which resembles the *dramatis personae* that precede a play, is followed by an even longer list which charts the metaphoric pseudonyms that are attached to each lesbian lover in lieu of their own personal names. This list includes neologisms that the narrator, or Espinosa, have devised in order to signify either a lesbian subject or what the lesbian subject does. Thus, the epithets "garzona" and "homófila, for example, stand in for the lesbian subject, and "fricar" and "succionar" for lesbian love and sexual interaction.

After these somewhat bizarre opening pages, the narrator goes on to set the scene for the subject matter of the extensive epistolary scripts that will follow later. In a sequence of three short, preliminary chapters, entitled "Damiana", "Damiana y Lucía" and "Damiana, Lucía y Daniel", the narrator tells of the series of events that lead up to the epistolary accounts that make up the body of the narrative and its predominantly homophobic/anti-lesbian theme. In these opening three chapters, the reader learns of the eight-year affair between Damiana, a forty-year-old "boticaria", and Daniel, of her fleeting sexual relationships with other men, and of her meeting with and subsequent love affair with Lucía, a "modista". Daniel's violent reaction to the loss of Damiana and her subsequent lesbian affair results in him striking her and smashing up the home she and Lucía share. The following fourth chapter, with its overweening homophobic points of view, is devoted to the twenty-seven epistles that Juana sends to Daniel, and in which she includes what other characters have to say and write about Damiana and Lucía and about their sexual interaction.

Two further issues need to be noted before I outline the format through which I shall approach my analysis of this text. Since Rafael Moreno Durán, in his review of *La tribada falsaria*, raises issues similar to those that my own analysis pursues, and which reflect a constructionist point of view in relation to the subjectivity and space of Damiana and Lucía as lesbian and perverse, it will be useful to offer a citation from what he has to say:

El relato epistolar de Juana se alimenta de opiniones propias, dictadas por su resentimiento, en tanto amor desplazado, y opiniones ajenas, merced a las cuales consigue redondear la visión general de la novela. Sin embargo, lo más importante de *La tribada falsaria* es la ratificación de la idea de corte adánico de que *nominar es crear*. Lucía, por ejemplo, fue llamada antaño “lamecricas” y pronto se convirtió en una eficiente y “ostensiva bollera”.¹

The other issue that needs to be addressed before I begin an analysis of this text, concerns the content of the epistolary scripts proffered by Juana, which also quote what the other characters have to say. What is particularly noteworthy here is the way in which this narrative text obsessively and without respite revolves around one circulatory theme: the physical, moral and spiritual degeneracy of Damiana, her lover Lucía, and same-sex sensibility and taste. Since Juana tries to win back Daniel’s love by sending him homophobic/anti-lesbian letters that denigrate Damiana, and since she selectively includes the remarks of characters who concur with this particular point of view, the narrative’s teleological conclusion is, in effect, already underscored at the beginning of the text. That is that Damiana as a lesbian represents “Satanás” and “el Mal” and Daniel as a heterosexual “la Divinidad” and “el Bien”. Thus, since every character in this text speaks from a homophobic point of view and revisits, for the most, the self-same anti-lesbian scenes, any criticism of *La tribada falsaria* inevitably finds itself engaged in a not dissimilar circulatory move.

In his discussion of this work with Esther Benítez on Spanish television in 1981, Espinosa made some interesting observations that encourage the critic or the reader to add his/her own point of view in respect of the sexual/textual observations that define this work. Pointing out that *La tribada falsaria* is a palimpsest and, as such, “un escrito sobre el que se han superpuesto otros escritos”, he invites the critic to add his/her contribution to the circulatory arguments of this text:

¹ Rafael Moreno Durán, “La tribada falsaria” in *Quimera* Vol 6 Barcelona 1981, p. 241. (Emphasis in the original).

Primero, el autor, en treinta páginas, narra unos hechos, después viene un personaje, el personaje principal y esencial, Juana, y sobre esa narración, a su vez, narra; otros personajes menores vuelven a narrar, y así se va formando la textura del libro, constituida, no por la opinión del autor, omnisciente, que sería una opinión trivial y elemental, sino por la opinión de todos los personajes. Y al final, para que el mito se enriquezca y se engrandezca, hay comentaristas de la misma *Tribada falsaria*, y mi deseo total sería que surgieran más comentaristas e imitadores, de forma que yo llegara a ser un autor anónimo.²

Bearing in mind the above observations addressed to the literary critic and/or general reader of the text, I approach my examination of Miguel Espinosa's *La tribada falsaria* in three successive stages:

First, in section 4.1, I discuss the significance for the reader and the narrative as a whole of the list of *dramatis personae* with which the narrator opens up the text. I also elucidate the equal significance (not only for the reader and the narrative, but primarily for the lesbian characters themselves) of the metaphoric list of pseudonyms that are attached to them in lieu of personal names. I continue by underlining the way in which the selected pseudonyms serve to traduce the lesbian characters as socially, morally, aesthetically and sexually perverse.

In sections 4.2 and 4.3, I highlight the denigration of Damiana both before and after she begins her love affair with Lucía. The influence of discursive practices and codes as well as hate speech on the identity and space of both Damiana and Lucía as lesbian and perverse is underlined.

In sections 4.4, 4.5 and 4.6, I review the twenty-seven letters that Juana and the various characters send to Daniel denigrating Damiana as lesbian. Significant homophobic issues are now raised in connection with gender-bending traits and lesbianism, and while Juana continues to protest her undying love for Daniel, Damiana is reduced to the level of the animal and the insect.

In sections 4.7 and 4.8, I discuss how a decade later in the 1980s, Daniel returns to Juana, and a Murcian scribe likens Daniel to "el Bien" and Damiana to "el Mal". In an extraordinary ending to this text an unidentified narrator makes a remarkable conciliatory gesture towards Damiana and same-sex sensibility and taste, casting a somewhat different light on almost everything that has been said.

² Miguel Espinosa interviewed by Esther Benítez for Spanish television. See <http://www.um.es/acehum/E.Benitez.htm> (page 5 of 6).

And finally, in section 4.9 I show that doubts are cast on what Juana and the other characters have had to say.

4.1 The text's *dramatis personae* and the metaphoric listing of the homophobic pseudonyms that will be attached to the lesbian characters in lieu of their own personal names.

Arguably the most significant aspect of this unusual text is not only the listing of *dramatis personae* that are arranged alphabetically and that occupy the opening pages of the text (13-21), but also the list of pseudonyms that stand in for the lesbian characters, Damiana and Lucía, that follows. Briefly, then, and to cite a few examples, the list of characters includes the following: “Pérez Valenzuela, Juan: Amigo de Juana y de Daniel. Describió a Damiana y opinó sobre ella y sobre Daniel” (19), “López Martí, José: Estudioso de Damiana, de quien opinó repetidas veces, y amigo de Juana y de Daniel” (17), and “Montijano, Francisco: Amigo de Juana y de Daniel. Describió a Damiana” (18), among many others. Although at this stage in the text, the reader is still not aware of what this brief commentary on the many characters will later signify, it is already noticeable that the majority of the characters are speaking of either Damiana or Lucía, and that the latter two seem to be denied a proportionate vocal space. Also, even at this early stage, negativising notions of the character Damiana, for example, are artfully implied, by adding the questionable occupations of her female friends to the list. Thus, Silvia Carrasco, is listed as a “caromántica”, Feliciano Duero, as an “ensalmadora” and Rosario Nieto, as a “quiromántica”. In this sense then, what initially appears as an impartial listing of *dramatis personae* offers, in effect, crucial often negativising information to the attentive reader in surreptitious undertones. Amongst this extensive list, the names and occupations of the text's main characters are duly noted. The lesbian Damiana, is listed as a “boticaria”, “amante de Lucía” and “antigua amante de Daniel” (15); Lucía, her lover, is listed as a “modista” and “amante de Damiana” (17); Juana as the “enamorada de Daniel” (17); and Daniel as the “antiguo amante de Damiana” and “amado de Juana” (15).

While my abbreviated list of the *dramatis personae* offers the reader a glimpse of the type of characters they will meet within the body of the narrative that follows, the full extent of the often homophobic terms that are attached to the lesbian lovers is worth

noting before I begin the analysis of the narrative itself. In the abbreviated list that follows, the metaphoric pseudonyms that are given first, under Damiana's name then, under Lucia's bear testimony to the homophobic bias of Espinosa's text.

In order to offer a picture of how the various characters describe and denominate the two lesbian lovers, it will be useful to break down and reduce the several hundred metaphoric epithets and terms by which they are both known. Thus the list entitled "Nombres de Damiana, según aparece en este libro" (23) can arguably be divided into groups of pseudonyms that equate Damiana sometimes positively but more often negatively with nature, animals, and insects; with spiritual and moral vacuity; and/or with lesbian sexuality and taste (23-34). In brief, then, Damiana is known alternatively as "abejita", "amapola", "fruto de verano" and "mañana de abril". She is also known as "amarga hierba", "alimañita", "campo seco" and "huerto cerrado". While the list that likens her to nature stems mainly from Damiana's relations with her lover, Daniel, the list of pseudonyms that emanate from various other characters persistently equate her with a spiritual and moral void. Thus she is dubbed as an "angustiosa escasez", "ausencia de Dios", "desalmada" "esencia ausente", "hueca", "nada significativa", "náusea de lo trivial", "vacía" "voz hueca" and "vacía de Dios" (23-39). Various other metaphoric terms that are attached to her in the course of the narrative and which indicate her lesbian state are arranged as follows: "adorada de Lucía", "adepta de Lucía", "ansiacricas", "bollera", "desenfrenada", "entrenimiento con genitales", "contingencia que frica", "copulita con el mundo", "feraz en mentiras", "fricadora", and "huída de los niños" (23-39).

The list of pseudonyms that are attached to Lucía, the "modista" and Damiana's female love, are equally noteworthy on account of their unmitigated and virulent homophobic stance. Thus Lucía is nominated as an "abortón", "afán de vulva", "bollera", "cabello rapado", "brazo feo de Damiana", "dientes pajizos", "dios de Damiana", "garzona", "hombrecito", "horrenda", "mono", "mamas bajas", "mamas vacilantes", "ojos de vidrio", "ojos pisciformes", "repulsiva", "tortillera", and "vómito tribádico" (23-39).

Having outlined the substance and formation of the lists that comprise the opening pages of this text and with particular reference to the pejorative and anti-lesbian terms

with which both Damiana and Lucía are unremittingly addressed, I turn now to an analysis of the narrative itself.

4.2 The denigration of Damiana both before and after she begins her lesbian love affair.

In the opening lines of *La tribada falsaria*, the narrator immediately consolidates the negativising notions of the forty-year-old “boticaria” Damiana that have already been suggested by the list of pseudonyms that precede the actual narrative itself. Thus, although Damiana’s same-sex sensibility and taste is not revealed until later on in the text, the narrator begins by diminishing her credibility and standing as if to set the scene for the derogation of her identity and sexuality that follows. In this sense then, long before Damiana leaves Daniel to begin her lesbian affair, the narrator has already begun to critique the “boticaria” for her faulty social, moral, intellectual and spiritual qualities.

Thus, what could arguably be designated as a fixed design on the part of the text’s narrator to vilify the character of Damiana (already noted in the lists that precede the narrative as a whole) gathers momentum in the opening lines of the narrative. For example, Damiana’s spiritual standing, as a Spanish Catholic, is immediately thrown into disarray by having her pronounce to her assembled friends the words: “No creo en Dios” (41). As the narrator soon points out, this pronouncement on the part of Damiana is equivalent to saying: “La cuestión de la existencia divina no me interesa” (41). A little later, as if to underline the notion that the “boticaria” is not only godless but also a credulous fool, the narrator points out that Damiana is more interested in “telekinesia”, “hipnosis”, “psicoquinesis”, “desdoblamiento”, “facultades ocultas”, “ondas cerebrales”, “médiums” “saberes paranormales” than in religion or in God. (41). To further emphasise what would seem to be her feckless, credulous state of mind, the narrator now indicates that she prefers the insubstantial pronouncements of her closest friends, whose artless wittering occupies her time and mind, to the dictates of religion, which seemingly do not. As the narrator scathingly reports: “Dios calla, pero Silvia, Feliciano y Rosario [Damiana’s friends] hablan, y su decir llena el tiempo de la mujer” (42).

Having demolished the integrity and standing of Damiana's spirituality and intellect, the narrator goes on to deride her choice of friends and the intellectual substance of what they have to say. Recounting their mindless prattle, he quotes the "cartomántica" as always saying that her son takes a long time to dress; the "ensalmadora" that her son has difficulty getting up early in the morning; the "quiromántica" that she spends time covering chairs; the teacher of a school that he has had to expel three pupils; and the "burócrata" that he has bought a little dog with a collar (42). Further to this re-visiting of mindless chatter, the narrator also suggests that what Damiana has to say is equally inane. Seemingly the substance of what she says goes as follows: "¡cuánto me quiere Silvia!", "¡cuánto me quiere Feliciana!", "¡cuánto me quiere Rosario!", "¡cuánto me quieren Pepito y Emigdio!". And then: "¡cuánto quiero a Silvia, a Feliciana, a Rosario, a Pepito y a Emigdio!". Ultimately, and with the obvious aim of ironically obliterating any lingering notion that the reader might still retain of Damiana's worthwhile, cogent, existential self, the narrator delivers the final *coup de grace*. Speaking personally and with the obvious intention of belittling Damiana even further, he sarcastically opines: "He aquí una proposición demasiado compleja para Damiana y sus amigos; expresa, en efecto, algo del mundo, y no del simple entorno, por lo cual resulta excesivamente extensa para aquellos hablantes" (42) The complex proposition that is too difficult for the parochial comprehension of Damiana and her friends turns out to be, according to the narrator, the proposition that "Fulano parece una araña" (42).

I suggest, here, that this hyperbolic denigration of Damiana and her friends begins to lack credibility since it reflects an unrealistic posturing on the part of both the narrator and, as I go on to show, of one, José López Martí, a friend of both Juana and Daniel. For instance, even at this early stage in the narrative, and long before the narrator yields the telling of the tale to Juana and a host of other characters with their epistolary scripts, López Martí, Damiana's "implacable historiador", is allowed to intervene and speak intrusively and disparagingly of her. Recounting Damiana's arrangements for a holiday abroad, which she seems to have arranged with appropriate forethought and attention, López Martí is still intent on demolishing the credibility of her selfhood and her intellect as either rational or grounded. As he now unreasonably intervenes: "Esta predestinación vacacional de Damiana me acongoja; la contemplación de su ordenada vaciedad equivale

a la visión de la nada. La correntona no es una conciencia, sino un proyecto, un movimiento inexorable; para ella, ir, estar o venir son el mismo caso” (44).

Seemingly, and again according to the, by now, unquestionably prejudiced narrator, when Damiana goes to the coast on Saturdays in the winter, she follows exactly the same routine as when she goes on Sundays. Thus, she drives to the coast, lunches in a café, looks at the sea, drinks some refreshments, and then returns to town. However, with the customary ease with which the narrator habitually denigrates the “boticaria”, and of which the attentive reader must by now be well aware, this mundane form of pleasure, which mirrors what the average subject would most likely do, becomes another reason to mock the text's unwitting prey. Thus if Damiana is asked if she had a good day on one of these seemingly identical excursions to the sea, she is just as likely to answer that it was a bad day: “Hizo un mal día” (48), as to answer that it was a good one: “Hizo un hermoso día” (49). Contrary to the narrator's ironical reaction to this particular scene, I suggest that Damiana's alternating reactions to what appears to be a very similar scene is a typical and generalised reaction, depending on the person's prevailing mood. Thus, the narrator is viewing Damiana and her affairs from an unreasonable, prejudiced point of view. This becomes even more apparent when Damiana's lesbian activities are raised.

4.3 Damiana starts her love affair with Lucía and internalises the significance for her subjectivity and space of Daniel's homophobic terms

Although the narrator makes no suggestion that the forty-year-old “boticaria”, Damiana, has ever previously been engaged in a lesbian love affair, indeed, she has been Daniel's lover for several years, it is made clear that after meeting with the “modista”, Lucía, she is very soon in sexual thrall to this woman. While Daniel, who already knows Lucía, finds her one of those people who could be defined as “insumisión no razonada, protesta arbitraria, vocablo tosco, adhesión a cualquier novedad [...] en suma como adolescencia torpe y prolongada” (51), this opinion differs profoundly from the one that Damiana holds. Flushed and excited after meeting Lucía, and having discussed with her “la inclinación homófila”, Damiana finds the “modista” not opposed to “la fricación”

(one of Espinosa's many neologisms for female sexual interaction), and the two women agree to meet again.

The significance of the many scenes that follow between Daniel and Damiana, after he realises that she and the "modista" are engaged in sexual relations with each other, is to unleash on both the women the fury of his homophobic essentialising vision of what is proper in relation to gender, sexuality and sex, and what is not. Not only does the thwarted male spy on his former lover, lurking behind closed doors in order to listen in to what the women have to say (as did Mendicutti's narrator and main character, although for somewhat different reasons), but even more significant, he starts a deliberate homophobic naming process against both Lucía and Damiana. As the narrator pointedly explains: "Al punto reveló su oposición al nexo propuesto, y, decididamente, apodó tortillera a su turbada burbujita, iza, rabiza y zurrón nefandaria" (52). Stricken with fear, Damiana tries to defend herself by telling Daniel that another lesbian, Justina, says that, in effect, there is nothing actually wrong with "la experiencia fricadora". Since there are no real values in this world everything is pointless, stupid, worthless, "baladí" (57).

In a scene in which Justina, visits Damiana and Lucía in their home, and in which Damiana receives a phone call from the furious Daniel, (and which she relates simultaneously to both women), the reader is made aware, at the same time as are Damiana, Lucía and Justina, of the full extent of Daniel's hatred of female same-sex sensibility and taste. As he angrily points out and as Damiana anxiously relays:

Nos llama cellencas, daifas, lumias y grofas... Dice que carecemos de conflictos... Dice que no hay sistema ético capaz de enjuiciarnos, porque no somos espíritu... Dice que vivimos la náusea de lo trivial... Dice que si fuéramos cerdas, resultaríamos, al menos, criaturas divinas... (57).

However, the anti-lesbian substance of what Daniel has to say does not cease when he has successfully demolished what he terms the "tortillera" with his defamatory and prejudiced remarks. On the contrary, as in Moix's *Julia*, reviewed previously, where the eponymous and putatively lesbian heroine is likened by her brother to an "espantapájaros" for not attending sufficiently to her appearance, both Damiana and Lucía have their gender qualities and quantities critiqued. While Damiana is described as looking like a male and dressing in male attire, Lucía is criticised for dressing like a boy, drinking draughts of alcohol, having short-cut hair and a deep, hoarse voice (59). Even

worse, she has “ojos de cuarzo”, “las mamas grandes y bajas” and “los brazos arqueados” (58). As if to equate her personal tendencies with additional denigratory traits, she is considered to be the work of “un dios desaparecido”, a being apart from civilised society and its terms and like an “estampa de una raza remota”. Later, Daniel drags all lesbians down to the level of primordial creatures that go on living in the manner of “los insectos antediluvianos” (59).

Interestingly, and in contrast to the homosexual/lesbian characters reviewed in the selected texts, it is the heterosexual Daniel and not the lesbian Damiana, who becomes involved with medicine and its scientific terms. Somewhat similar to the young doctor in *El palomo cojo* who speaks in terms that no one understands, so too the doctor who treats the frantic and discarded Daniel talks of him suffering from an “isquemia subepicárdica postero-inferior” and recommends “despreocupación” as a cure (62). An especially absurd clinical pronouncement, since, as the very essence of his condition and complaint lies in his “preocupación”, it is the one thing that he cannot adequately change himself.

In the last scene of the introductory chapters, and before the narrator yields the telling of the tale to Juana, Daniel’s visit to and attack upon Damiana and her home are described. Having taunted Damiana by calling her “rodoná”, “gabasa”, “ansiacricas” “gallina de gallinas”, “tortillera”, and “bollera” (65), Daniel goes to her home and batters on the door until Lucía lets him in. Finding Damiana “incorporada en el lecho, tapada apenas por una camisa abierta”(72), and obviously paralysed with fear, since she neither tries to cover up her body or get up from the bed, Daniel launches into a physical attack. Repeatedly striking Damiana, who makes no attempt to defend herself, Daniel smashes everything that comes within his reach. As he continues his tirade, Lucía screams at him: “¡No le pegues, no le pegues!” (74). However, since the stricken face of Damiana expresses both joy and pain, Daniel concludes that she has submitted herself to his blows in order to compensate herself for her guilt as well as to show Lucía that she can endure and suffer for her and their mutual love. To his horror Daniel realises that all he has really achieved with his violent attack is to unite the two women even further than they were before. As he puts it: “Este sacrificio las unirá, sin duda, con ligazón de dolor; arrimadas y enlazadas están ya” (74).

4.4 Juana sends a series of twenty-seven letters to Daniel in which she includes the epistolary comments of various other characters on the lesbian lovers. Significant homophobic issues are now raised

In reviewing what is, in effect, a discursive confrontation between two very different characters, the heterosexual Juana and the lesbian Damiana, it will be useful to begin by considering what Juana has to say concerning Damiana, followed by the latter's contestatory remarks.

As is demonstrated both here, and in what the various characters have to say throughout the text, Damiana's spiritual and religious levels of cognisance are stringently critiqued. As Juana puts it, Damiana is like an empty space and godless void: "pura carestía, vacío de Dios" (80). Here, the latter's protestation that she does not believe in God: "No creo en Dios" (41) can be read in the same light as Julia's challenge to her grandmother and family in Moix's text, when she refuses to go to church. Similarly, and again reminiscent of Moix's Julia, the qualities and quantities of both Damiana's and Lucía's gender traits are called into question in that they are both described in masculine terms. Dressed in what is termed an almost identical disguise, they carry the same type of bags, wear the same type of shoes, have the same short-cropped hair, dyed in an identical shade, conceal their breasts by flattening them down, and wear clothes that make them look exactly like two youths: "en ropa toda de varoncitos" (76, 78).

With reference to both Espinosa's Damiana and Moix's Julia, their stand against religion and the church can be read as an ironic comment on and challenge to the latter's anti-homosexual/lesbian texts and teachings. These particular scenes ironically underline, yet again, the close association that a homophobic order makes between gender-bending traits and same-sex sensibility and taste, as well as of that order's tendency to collapse the former with the latter.

Further to the anti-lesbian views expressed above, Juana now downgrades the humanity of Damiana, and of "fricadoras" as a whole, to the level of the animal. Thus she likens the lesbian Damiana to a monkey that is only interested in its genitals and that contemplates them with a feeling of idolatry (80). Additional derogatory remarks made by Juana (who is fighting to regain the love of Daniel, a disinterested male, but nevertheless the man she loves) is that contemplating Damiana is like contemplating "la

nada” (70). Further, Damiana and “las fricadoras” as a whole, are deemed narcissistic creatures, adoring their own reflection which is, in fact, nothing but an empty vacant space: “el vacío” (77). Later, as if still trying to discredit Damiana even further, Juana closes her first epistle to Daniel with the following rhetorical remarks: “¿Qué infame atracción te condujo a esta lomita en la llanada y esta lucecita en la noche? Tienes que contármelo, tienes que contármelo” (81).

However, when Damiana intervenes and puts forward her own point of view, (which Juana accordingly reports), she imparts significant information concerning both herself and Lucía, her “marida” (the term “marida” is another of Espinosa’s neologisms). Offering valid reasons for a sexual sensibility that can felicitously interact with both the female and the male, Damiana bravely and forthrightly states that genital contact with either sex seems to her both beautiful and worthy. As she clearly puts it: “Los contactos venéreos con el contrario o el propio sexo me parecen hermosos y dignos” (79).

It is pertinent to note here that it is possible to detect in what Damiana has to say the glimmerings of what in Raymond Williams’s terminology could be viewed as an example of an emerging element converging upon and intermingling with the residual and the dominant. For example, the lesbian subject, Damiana, proclaims her same-sex sensibility and taste and the right to sexually interact in this particular way (an emerging element), in contrast to the other characters’ essentialising points of view on heterosexual functioning (dominant and residual elements). It is also possible to detect in what Lucía has to say Foucault’s notion of the determining effect on the subject’s self-determination as homosexual/lesbian of discursive practices and society’s overweening norms. For instance, what is said to Lucía, as a fifteen-year-old girl, and, particularly, what she is called, profoundly influence her perception of her identity and space as lesbian and perverse. As she herself points out, tired of having “las lenguas del mundo” nominate her “lamecricas”, she internalises this lesbian term and then begins to both live and “encarnarla” (79). Later, having repeated what Lucía has just said, Damiana makes another Foucaultian move when she rhetorically exclaims: “¿Ves como las lenguas obligan?. Muchas veces siento tentación de transformarme en lo que me llaman” (79; my emphasis).

Since the majority of the characters, whose opinions are quoted in the twenty-seven letters that Juana sends to Daniel, treat Damiana and lesbian sexuality as the sign of

“Satanás” and “el Mal”, and Daniel and heterosexuality as “la Divinidad” and “el Bien”, it is appropriate to list here the characters who are in agreement with Damiana’s innovative and emerging point of view. For example, in the first of the letters, Antonio Abellán, who, since he travels constantly “en aeroplano” and knows “cien restaurantes europeos” can reasonably be assumed to have some knowledge of people and the world, suggests that “la angustia ante el contacto entre iguales genitales es prejuicio judeo-cristiano” (79). This opinion echoes what Mendicutti’s narrator has to say, when he mocks both the Church and its priests, and what the narrator of *Álviz*’s text conveys when he has a school’s senior priest refuse to help a troubled, putatively homosexual boy. As this ineffectual man opines, it is outside his spiritual comprehension. Others who subscribe to Damiana’s point of view are Emigdio Covacho, “un burócrata”, and Pepito Cadenas, a teacher at a local school. While Emigdio treats her with the same “amabilidad” after her affair with Lucía as he did before, Pepito is equally supportive, caring for Damiana when she becomes ill after Daniel’s attack. Equally, she is still able to avail herself of the company and friendship of Silvia, Felicianita and Rosario, her female friends.

Later, as if to re-affirm the power of language to both impress and create, Damiana relates how she told her parents, who love “los vocablos ostensibles” (80), that the teacher Pepito Cadenas was actually an attorney, ironically adding: “¿No es brillante la palabra fiscal?” (80). Amongst various other observations that she makes to Juana, and which the latter passes on to Daniel, is her reiterated observation that she, Damiana, does not believe in God, since, if he really did exist, as she puts it: “¿cómo iba a permitir que murieran los niños?” (79). In effect, she aligns herself with what her friend, Antonio Abellán, has had to say about sex, sexuality and religious prejudice.

Having illuminated the determining role of homophobic ideology, discourse, and hate speech in the constitution of identity as both lesbian and other, the following section continues to examine the anti-lesbian tendencies of the various characters.

4.5 An overarching homophobic scene

Although, as Espinosa himself has already pointed out in relation to *La tribada falsaria*, in his interview with Esther Benítez, not only Juana speaks of “el caso” of Damiana and Lucía, but also “otras personas menores vuelven a narrar”.³ Thus, the overarching homophobic tone of what the various characters have to say suggests either that Juana has been assiduously selective in her choice of commentators or that the opinion of the surrounding social/cultural scene is profoundly homophobic. Whichever, or even if both are the case, it is soon made clear that the identities and space of both Damiana and Lucía will continue to be subjugated by, and made subject to, the determining effect of discursive practices and homophobic codes. Thus, while Juana continues to inveigle Daniel, when she is trying to regain his love, with words that attain the spiritual, and mellifluous lyricism of poetry, when she refers to Damiana she soon adopts a distinctly prosaic and virulently homophobic tone.

What needs to be noted here is that Juana not only speaks continuously of Damiana as the incarnation of “Satanás” and “el Mal”, but also seeks out characters who will also speak disparagingly of the lesbian “boticaria”, so that she can relay what they have said to Daniel. The range of characters who seem only too willing to denigrate Damiana and her sexual tastes are numerous, compared to the scarcity of those who are willing to defend either her or her sexuality. For instance, in one epistle to Daniel, Juana manages to introduce the negative opinions and homophobic slights which Severo Lancina and his wife, as well as José López Martí and Francisco Montijano use to describe Damiana and her sexual tastes. Ever willing to malign her lesbian rival, Juana selects a scene in which Severo and his wife visit Damiana who is ill in bed after being attacked by Daniel. Seemingly, when Severo, “como buen samaritano” (90), goes towards her to wish her well, Damiana seizes both his hands and murmurs: “Esta soy yo”. Then a little later she will plead: “Me aceptas Severo, me aceptas”. Whilst this revisiting of what happened between Severo and Damiana highlights the suffering and insecurity of the latter as both a lesbian and society’s abjected other – when she holds Severo’s hands

³ Miguel Espinosa, “Encuentros con las letras”: Entrevista realizada por Esther Benítez para tve, 1981. <http://www.um.es/acehum/E.Benítez> [accessed 12 July 2005] (page 5 of 6).

and “las regó con sus lágrimas” (92) – it also underscores the freight of homophobic feeling that surrounds her.

The vilification of the lesbian that this scene invokes begins when Juana argues that by pleading to be accepted as she is, that is, as a lesbian, Damiana offers further evidence of her abject state. As Juana boldly states: “He aquí lo abyecto” (92). Further on, Juana subscribes, perhaps unwittingly, to a constructionist point of view in relation to subjectivity and space, when she states that, “quien confiesa lo que es, *encontrándolo en lo que llaman*, y pide tolerancia, se revela abyecto” (92; my emphasis). Furthermore, for the anti-lesbian Juana such an attitude transgresses the limits of decorum and leaves the person who hands over “su yo” horribly “endosado” (92).

Next, José López Martí adds his equally homophobic observations to what Juana has had to say. For López Martí, by Damiana virtually saying, “I am what I am” (a lesbian) and “please accept me Severo”, she has, ironically, lost even “su majestad de apestada y su sacralidad de pustulosa, la última de sus dignidades” (92-93). As he scathingly goes on, one must have compassion on Damiana, the puss: “la podre” (93). Finally, he states that while Damiana still goes on defending theories that relate to her lesbian proclivities and tastes, the whole affair, and she herself, remain equally base and abject. In this way, then, both Juana and López Martí convey an overweening anti-lesbian point of view and one that conveys the feeling that such women as Damiana would do well to keep quiet about their sexual “afición” and tastes, and retreat into a closeted and silent space. Thus, as Juana points out to Daniel:

Encomendado a los asistentes el yo de tu florecilla, y lanzado en medio de la estancia, el mundo se trastornó, conmovido en los circunstancias. ¿Qué hacer con aquello? Severo quiso devolverlo a su dueña y enclaustrarlo en el lugar que no debió abandonar. Cogió, en efecto, las manos de la mujer, las juntó y empujó suave, afanoso de encerrar aquel espanto bajo la tapadera del cuerpo. (92)

Further to this silencing and closeting move, Severo pointedly opines: “Ciertos actos y afecciones son, por naturaleza, innombrables, y no precisamente por feos o prohibidos, *sino porque su ser es mudo y privado, singular y no proclamable*” (93; my emphasis).

Later, Juana repeats a story that Francisco Montijano told her. Seemingly, Montijano went into the type of restaurant where everyone goes to see and be seen and

where Damiana was having lunch with Lucía her lover. Or as Montijano put it: “su horrenda”. Among the crowd the two women, “las impropias”, stood out, marked and separated from the rest and as if affirming their “casta” (lesbianism) not only because they were wearing trousers, boots and shirts and trying to appear haughty, but also because they were so evidently ill at ease (94).

As is made clear to the reader, this friend of Juana and of Daniel not only spies on Damiana and repeats what he finds, but even goes one stage further. Noting a book that Damiana is reading, and which she has left unattended on a table, Francisco Montijano procures a copy and then hands it to Juana so that she can check what Damiana is reading and describe the contents of the book to Daniel. Selecting what is no doubt the most sexually charged and scurrilous section of the script, in which two lesbians say: “Nos deleitó este horrible lenguaje” (94), Juana passes this information on to Daniel in yet another letter.

Still functioning selectively, in that she recounts to Daniel only that which will bring down further calumny upon Damiana and her sexuality and sex, Juana re-visits the scene in which Daniel violently confronted Damiana and her lover, Lucía, in the home they shared. Here, Juana speaks of Damiana’s lewdness, “impudicia” (136), and of the way in which the latter’s shamelessness plunged Daniel into misery and grief. She also underlines Damiana’s complete dereliction of society’s codes, pointing out that she is an “ejemplo de ninguna norma” (136). Furthermore, as Juana sees it, Damiana remains drunk with the bestiality of her sexual display: “ejemplo en la bestialidad de la mostración” (136), and pervaded by the obscenity of her sexuality and sex: “la obscenidad de la cosa” (136).

Always ready to pass on to Daniel what his friends have to say, particularly when their scripts are redolent with homophobia against Damiana, Juana revisits the observations of Alfredo Montoya. For instance, so intense is Montoya’s homophobia and dislike of lesbians that he affects surprise to see them driving, wining, dining, sunbathing on the beach in the same way as do the heterosexual others. Indeed, after a chance meeting with Damiana and Lucía he describes how these “animánculos” blend in so well with their surrounding scene, that they acquire the same tone and colour of what is then in vogue. Everything that he says and feels about Damiana and Lucía seems to suggest that he sees them as beings who should live and love at a distance from society as a whole.

Thus, to his apparent amazement and disbelief, cars swarm along towards the coastal villages, and so too does “la máquina de las maridadas” (133). Bored women, semi-nude, stretch out in the sun with sun cream on their faces, and with their breasts uncovered. To his surprise, amongst these women it is possible to see Damiana and Lucía. Women in general wear a few inches of cloth to cover their vulva, and “lo porta Damiana, lo porta Lucía” (134). The crowd sit at tables eating ice-cream and “la pareja silenciosa y ritual, ocupa la suya” (134). The women, in general, await the arrival of sun visors and “Damiana y Lucía también esperan” (134). Montoya concludes this letter in which he seems disturbed to find Damiana and Lucía functioning and enjoying life like the rest with an additional and bizarre remark. He suggests that one day the events of this summer “de mil novecientos setenta y tantos, el verano de Damiana y Lucía” (134) will be but a fossilised word (“palabra fósil”) conjured up “por la crueldad inconsciente de una boca insospechada”. Adding, perhaps surprisingly, perhaps not: “¡Oh triángulo de tela en la vulva convexa de Damiana!” (134).

Whilst it can reasonably be argued that the “crueldad inconsciente” of which Montoya speaks is already functioning in what he himself and Juana have to say, additional characters and homophobic scripts are waiting in the wings to be added to this list. For example, as Juana is preparing to recount her dream, which casts the lesbians in the role of insects, José López Martí gets ready to opine on a similar theme.

Having been brought down to the level of “animáculos” by Alfredo Montoya, the lovers, “las encamotadas” (134), are now seen by Juana in a dream as terrifying insects. They are huge, thin, erect with four legs and two arms that move in the form of grappling irons that end in claws. They also have long necks, small heads and pointed snouts, and if one moves the other moves in unison. Moreover they remain indifferent to the fact that Juana is looking at them.

Significantly, in the sense of their mutually entomological frame of mind, José López Martí, like Juana, also visualises the two lesbians through the same distorted lens. In describing what he considers to be the effect of Damiana on Daniel, López Martí turns to Jean Henri Fabre’s fable of the “grillo” (cricket) and the “esfego” (insect). Through a metaphoric leap that likens Daniel to the “grillo”, Damiana to the “esfego”, and their doomed relationship to the sickening destruction of the former by the latter, López Martí relays Fabre’s gruesome tale.

The cricket/Daniel is frightened by the insect/Damiana and tries to escape. Despite all its efforts the insect catches the cricket, overcomes it, and turns it on its back. After this, the insect sticks its stiletto into various sections of the cricket's body. Evidently, crickets who are sacrificed in this way are not yet really dead as can be seen if one notes the continued suffering and shuddering of their bodies. What happens next is that the insect takes the transfixed cricket to its lair, plants an egg on it, and leaves the latter to eat fresh meat (the dying cricket) for fifteen days. As López Martí points out:

Este implacable proceder del esfego, esta su descarada y gozosa sumisión a la necesidad, es semejante al obrar de Damiana: ambos ocurren despiadados y revelan el mundo. El esfego no posee rostro, por no entañar lo particular, sino lo universal; tampoco lo posee Damiana cuando se patentiza ansiacricas. [...] La andanza entomológica es mecánica. [...] También la aventura tribádica es simple mecánica: fricción y succión; empero, al exponerla desde tu visión, la has transmutado en espanto; en tu agónico y reiterado relato, has dibujado el rostro de Damiana y has traído la impudicia a la Tierra. (137-38)

4.6 Juana continues to protest her undying love for Daniel; Damiana is once again reduced to the level of an insect.

Months later, Juana is still writing to Daniel in a lyrical and moving prose that reflects the depth and sincerity of her feelings, of her loneliness without him, and of his everlasting place in her heart and mind. However, at the same time as she is professing her undying love for Daniel, she is also simultaneously and feverishly noting down the disparaging remarks that various friends have made concerning Damiana, and lesbians.

The comparison between the tone, mood and vocabulary that Juana uses when she speaks directly to, and of Daniel, and the tone, mood and choice of words when she speaks of Damiana or repeats what others have to say is, as I have already noted, qualitatively and quantitatively different. For instance, in one letter when she is telling Daniel how much she loves him, Juana begins by calling her home her prison, and by saying that she only leaves it when he, Daniel, lets her get close to his soul: "He retornado a mi cárcel, que únicamente abandono cuando toleras que me asome a tu alma" (153). Then, she tells him that her mind remains free and belongs entirely to him: "mi ánimo permanece suelto y a tí entregado" (153); that her liberty consists in longing for him: "mi libertad consiste en anhelarte" (153); and that she has been born to be his witness: "He nacido para ser tu testigo" (153). Later, in another letter, and returning yet

again to the theme of her love, Juana appealingly, if figuratively, begs Daniel to open wide his doors and let her in, so that she can light up and warm the home that the lesbians, Damiana and Lucía, have made dark: “Damiana y Lucía han ensombrecido tu morada. Abre sus puertas y permítame entrar; yo la iluminaré y caldearé” (171-72).

Always ready and freshly anxious to include additional homophobic elements that will cast further calumny on Damiana, as a lesbian, Juana visits Francisco Montijano, another friend of Daniel and herself, and one who, like so many of the others, is only too ready to make scurrilous anti-lesbian remarks. Once again, the facility with which a member of the contemporary social/sexual scene critiques what Damiana says and does, even to the extent of making personal remarks about how her appearance reveals the depths of infamy to which the homosexual male and lesbian female plunge. In a move that critiques Damiana’s facial features and expressions as well as her spiritual state, this profoundly homophobic man begins his overtly prejudiced attack. Obviously feeling the need to revile both Damiana’s physical as well as spiritual qualities, Montijano begins by pointing out that Damiana’s face is full of spots and wrinkles, her mouth twisted into a scowl and her ugliness so extreme that it would be an exaggeration to say that she was a woman. Rather it would be more appropriate to say that she resembled an animal or insect (178). Additional remarks suggest that what Damiana has to say reflects the limited state of her intellect and mind. Furthermore, it would be better if she did not smile, since when she does it seems as if God has conceded a momentary amount of spirit to the head of a little rat. As if this vicious, verbal onslaught has not yet sufficiently conveyed the full extent of Montijano’s homophobic spite, he goes on to attack Damiana’s spiritual condition, saying that devils dwell within her and that wherever she goes they go too. So sure is Montejano of the righteousness of his anti-lesbian stance that he criticises Damiana for finding satisfaction in her lesbian role and even more for failing to acknowledge that her sexual disposition is a stain and frightful blemish on her sexuality, identity and space.

Thus, Montijano begins by bestialising Damiana; she is at various times either like an insect or a rat: “No podemos afirmar que vemos una mujer fea; sería conceder demasiado; vemos, más bien, un insecto. [...] Cuando sonrío, parece que Dios concediera unos instantes de espíritu a la cabeza de una ratita. ¡Mejor es que no sonrío” (178). Then he demonises her: “el desconcierto, pavor y consternación que refleja el semblante de tu

toronjita (Damiana), tiene su origen en el hecho de que los diablos están aposentándose en ella” (178). And finally, he reviles her even more for stating that in relation to her lesbian sensibility: “nada hay terrible”, and for the fact that, according to Juana, Daniel and all their friends, all things to do with both Damiana and Lucía “son terribles” (179).

What especially infuriates this profoundly homophobic man, is that Damiana insists that she will never leave Lucía: “No dejaré a Lucía” (179), and neither will Lucía leave her, and as far as Damiana is concerned, Lucía is a good and decent person: “Lucía no me abanonará, es buena” (179).

4.7 A decade later in the 1980s an anti-lesbian mood still prevails

What is interesting about the following scenes is not only that the homophobic mood of the various characters is still as virulent and ubiquitous in the early 1980s (191) as it was ten years earlier in the 1970s, but that the greater tolerance towards various sexual typologies that, to an extent, obtained in Spain since its transition to democracy remains almost totally unremarked. Where it would be reasonable to expect that there would be some easing of the anti-lesbian rhetoric that sustained the temporally earlier scenes no such revised or open-minded moves are observed. Rather, Damiana and Lucía remain social outcasts up to the text’s closing scenes.

Ten years later, in “mil novecientos ochenta y tantos” (191), the homophobic scripts of the heterosexual characters that reduced Damiana, as a lesbian, to the level of an animal, an insect, and a devil, are re-invoked and supplemented with additional homophobic zeal. Still writing letters to the man she loves, in which she continues to inveigle him to return to her, Juana continues to demolish the sexuality, identity and credibility of Damiana by feverishly including what other characters have to say about the “boticaria” and her lesbian affair. Always providing that the words reflect a homophobic point of view.

According to one, Alicia Stoep, another mutual friend of both Daniel and Juana, the latter pair ought to be informed of the sheer commonness of the two lesbian lovers. Repeating what “una cierta” Evangelina, Damiana’s neighbour, has observed, Alicia tells how Damiana was seen running through the street crying. Lucía followed her, embraced

her, received a blow for her efforts, and then, evidently, both the lovers returned to their home, “las dos entrelazadas” (193). However, this is not all that Alicia Stoep and Evangelina feel the urge to impart. Evidently on one occasion, when the two lesbians entered an elevator, the children who were already inside abandoned it immediately, in fear. Whilst Damiana whimpered in dismay, Lucía’s eyes evidently remained as cold as ice, “los ojos de Lucía eran hielos” (193).

What needs to be highlighted here, as in so many of the scenes in this text, is the gratuitous homophobia with which so many characters react to and delineate the two lesbian women. Here, for example, in addition to the anti-lesbian discourse already noted, Alicia takes the opportunity to make a totally irrelevant and offensively gratuitous remark that has absolutely nothing to do with lesbianism or personhood or self, but everything to do with homophobic hate (and which, if articulated by a man could reasonably be termed misogynistic). Once again, Lucía is described as having “las mamas descolgadas” (193).

Continuing on the same base and pernicious level, Alicia repeats what Evangelina has to say (and which Juana immediately passes on to Daniel) concerning the lesbians’ life at home. What is particularly scurrilous about the impertinently intrusive remarks that follow is that although they are intended as a critique of the domestic arrangements of the lesbian women, they, in reality, reproduce a homely, reasonable and convivial heterosexual scene. Thus the two lesbians are described as “las sóliticas criaturas” (193), who wash their dirty clothes together, who knock into each other in the kitchen when they are preparing food, who wash their dirty dishes by hand and who put the waste into the garbage can. They are also described as, discussing who shall do the washing up, who shall call the plumber and how they will manage to scrape some money together the following day.

Bringing the function of the body down to its basic alimentary level of ingesting and digesting food, what follows next can only be interpreted as overtly homophobic and offensive. Seemingly, Damiana and Lucía “eructan y afirman sentir rumorcillos en las tripas”; they also “esclafan ante el ingenio de televisión, las piernas estiradas” (193). The final judgement by the neighbour, Evangelina, on this maligned pair, is summed up in the following statement: “Todo cuanto en la persona hay de suciedad, de gruñido y de acotamiento, de tristes genitales como último recurso, de vaciedad e impericia de ser, se ofrece aquí por partida doble, pues ellas son dos” (193).

Perhaps the most insidious effort to discredit Damiana and same-sex sensibility occurs when her friend Antonio Abellán decides to revoke the remarks he made, earlier on, when he visited her after Daniel's attack. Now, a decade after the event, Abellán sees fit to refute the notion that he had ever travelled frequently "en aeroplano", eaten in numerous restaurants abroad, or that he had ever supported Damiana's sexual tastes and criticised the Judeo-Christian church. Even worse, he now declares that when he went into the room where Damiana lay sick, he immediately realised that "esta azucenita es tortillera" (202). Furthermore, he pronounces on the vulgarity of a record that Damiana and Lucía were playing at this time, saying that it was about women and their anxiety about the future. And finally, he rhetorically points out:

¿No te produce tristeza la vulgaridad del caso y la contingencia y mecanización de los elementos? Damiana y Lucía, que se sienten ligadas en una canción, son también personajes, doctrina, pensamiento y hado de canción fabricado y expendido en el comercio. ¿No es esto miseria? Sin embargo, ellas no anhelan ser más. (203)

4.8 Daniel returns to Juana, and a Murcian scribe likens Daniel to "el Bien" and Damiana to "el Mal". Later, the text's anti-lesbian point of view is challenged.

Having received the news that Daniel will at last be coming to see her, and that he will be arriving within the next few days, Juana pens her last epistles to him. In two of the three that still have time to reach him before he leaves, her exquisite prose tells of the intensity of her love for him. In the third, as if she cannot relinquish the homophobic theme, even at this most felicitous moment in her life, when Daniel has at last agreed to spend some time with her, she revisits, yet again, the denigration of the lesbian, Damiana, and her citations of what other homophobic scribes have said. In this sense then, and as I argue in the following scenes, heterosexual love is raised to the level of the spiritual and the sublime, whilst similar homosexual/lesbian feelings and emotions are degraded to the level of the godless, the animal, the insect and the perverse.

In speaking of her love for Daniel, Juana's amatory intent is clearly unshakeable and pure. As she so meaningfully proclaims:

Te llevaré a mi casa y te entraré en ella. Te serviré, te regalaré, te escucharé, te seguiré, si te levantas; y si te encierras, me echaré a tu puerta. [...] Enlázame con los brazos de tus brazos, tenme con los dedos de tus dedos, no me dejes huir, que no huyo. [...] Quémame con el vaho de tus susurros, deshazme. (213-14)

Although as Juana writes: “Falta un día para tu llegada, y sigo escribiéndote como siempre” this does not prevent her, indeed it seems to propel her towards criticising Damiana one last time. Writing of Damiana’s journey from Murcia to Madrid, and from Madrid to Paris, and then on to Bucharest, Juana recounts the information given to her by one Tomás Lucio, dubbed “el cantor de Damiana” (216). Thus she ends her final letter with information gleaned from the latter and which proceeds to mock Damiana for pronouncing Paris in the way that the French would do, for taking off her “bañador sostén, para recibir el sol”, when she was in the “Isla de Wight” (216), and for cooking a “tortilla de patatas para sorpresa de extranjeros” when she was in Bratislava (216).

As if all the overweening denigration and calumny that has been heaped upon Damiana and lesbian sensibility and taste in the preceding scripts has not been sufficient to sustain the homophobic point of view of the various characters, an anonymous scribe from “la Escuela de Murcia” is introduced. Taking up the theme of the heterosexual Daniel confronting the woman he once loved (and who now prefers sexual interaction with the female rather than the male), the anonymous scribe likens Daniel and his heterosexual friends to the work of God, and Damiana and anyone who supports her sexual activities and views to the Devil and “el Mal”.

In order to equate heterosexual interaction to the work of God and homosexual/lesbian to that of “Satanás” and “el Mal”, the anonymous scribe suggests both that “Dios y el Demonio están simbolizados en las pependencias humanas” (220), and that, in effect, Daniel/heterosexual and Damiana/lesbian represent a confrontation between “Dios y el Maligno” (221). Furthermore, as if to add additional weight to the righteousness not only of Daniel’s heterosexual sensibility and taste, but also to that of all his heterosexual friends, the scribe suggests the following:

Arroyado Daniel, el Arcángel San Miguel bajó a la Tierra, por así expresarlo, se personó ante el vencido y le musitó: “Déjame llevar este asunto”. No advino el Arcangel con su resplandor, sino en apariencia humana; pudo esconderse y hablar en José López Martí [...] o tal vez en alguien cuyo nombre ni siquiera han recogido los anales. Satanás, convocado por la comparecencia del otro, subió premioso y susurró a Damianita: “Apártate, que yo te reemplazaré”. (220-21)

In a concluding statement that unequivocally aligns the heterosexual Daniel with “el Bien” and the lesbian Damiana with “el Mal”, the scribe concludes:

Revelado Daniel por el Arcángel, y Damiana por Satanás, las causas y razones de los dos amantes quedaron en el olvido, y el debate cambió de sentido. Ni Satanás luchó por la tortillera ni el Arcángel por el humillado; cada uno, sin embargo, por su propia causa, aparecida antes de todos los siglos. Se trataba, sin duda, de un pleito antiguo. (222)

4.9 Doubts are cast on the veracity of what Juana has to say

Whilst the philosophical and moral thrust of this text and of the various characters who inhabit it is to defame Damiana and her sexual tastes, in the closing moment of the narrative the reader is presented with a somewhat different point of view. Thus, although the text’s final paragraph shifts suddenly to a first person point of view, without actually stating who that person is (and who may or may not be Montijano the narrator of the three sections that have gone before), this lack of nominal definition remains of secondary importance to what is actually being said. In these closing scenes, the unspecified narrator begins by casting doubts on what Juana, and through her, the other characters have had to say. Not only are Juana’s observations and her dreams deemed unreliable, but also much of the calumny that has been heaped upon Damiana, and lesbian sensibility and taste. As the narrator unexpectedly observes: “Citó Juana opiniones de personas de carne y hueso, y trasladó sus sentencias, que yo sospecho imaginadas por la singular criatura; por último, transcribió sueños que también sospecho imaginados” (240-41). Even more arresting, in the light of what has gone before, are the narrator’s closing words: “la aventura de Damiana, la boticaria, fue suceso cotidiano entre hembras, y, en este particular caso, realizado, incluso, con decoro infrecuente” (241).

What is to be made then of this second and somewhat startling volte-face? The first, offered earlier on, by Damiana’s purported friend, Antonio Abellán, recasts in a different light only what he himself had originally said in support of Damiana’s sexual tastes and religious views. This second shift in point of view has, in contrast, a profound and overarching effect on the narrative and its philosophy as a whole. Casting doubt on

the veracity of everything that Juana said or reported throws not only her own integrity into disarray, but also the anti-lesbian slant of the text as a whole. Although, no doubt, several explanations could be given for this somewhat puzzling sexual/textual change of view, I offer two possible solutions.

On one level, the text's belated recognition of the commonality of female sexual interaction and of the decorousness with which Damiana actually conducted her affair, as well as the confused report on the veracity of what Juana and the others had to say, can be interpreted, I suggest, as a reflection of the revised approach to sexuality, identity and desire that obtained in Spain as it moved towards and then achieved democracy. On another level, which reflects a Williamsonian scene, it can also be interpreted as a measure of the fear, confusion and uncertainty that attached to both homosexual and heterosexual elements of society as the former emerged, intermingled and impressed its revolutionary points of view upon the latter residual and dominant elements in the last decades of the twentieth century.

One final point needs to be made here before I move on to my reading of the last two texts. Although doubt is cast on much of what Juana has to say in *La tribada falsaria*, and although the text ends on an unexpected and almost pro-lesbian note, two significant factors remain difficult to dislodge. One is the overwhelming anti-lesbian tone and mood of the greater part of this text and the other, the acknowledgement by both Lucía and Damiana of the part played by discourse in the constitution of their sense-of-being and self as lesbian. An issue of such significance that it warrants repetition. As Damiana herself rhetorically points out: "Lucía confesó que, apenas cumplidos los quince años, las lenguas del mundo dieron en apodarla Lamecricas; cansada de oír esta atribución, decidió encarnarla. ¿Ves como las lenguas obligan? Muchas veces siento tentación de transformarme lo que me llaman" (79).

In the fifth and final chapter, I examine two short stories that have the advantage of including many of the issues already raised in the preceding chapters as well as the additional merit of describing heterosexual characters with innovative and untrammelled points of view.

Chapter Five

“Te dejo, amor, en prenda el mar” by Carme Riera and “El milagro” by Eduardo Mendicutti

“And sterile behaviour carried the taint of abnormality; if it insisted on making itself too visible, it would be designated accordingly and would have to pay the penalty”. (Foucault, *History of Sexuality Vol. 1*, pp. 3-4)

“One cannot impute to me the idea that power is a system of domination which controls everything and which leaves no room for freedom”.¹

General Introduction

I will conclude this review of the representation of the homosexual as a social and discursive construct in selected texts of Spanish fiction 1970-2000 with an exploration of two short stories, Carme Riera’s “Te dejo, amor, en prenda el mar”, and Eduardo Mendicutti’s “El milagro”. As I have already noted in the introduction to my thesis, I have chosen to discuss these particular texts because they offer an interesting overlap with many of the issues and events reviewed already in the preceding chapters. They also introduce, albeit fleetingly, a more liberal and less circumscribed approach to same-sex sensibility and taste. In their overlap with the previous texts, they demonstrate the determining effect of homophobic practices and codes on the self-determination as lesbian/homosexual of the main character in each text, as well as highlighting the silence, fear, and alienation that accrue to this particular expression of desire. In their more open and less circumscribed approach to sexuality, they underline the ways in which not only the homosexual or lesbian character in each text, but also a significant heterosexual, answers back and challenges the hegemonic practices and codes that attach to gender, bodies, and desire. In different ways then, and as I hope to show, these two brief texts provide scenarios which, although not fully approximating to Foucault's notion of "the promised freedom" and "the coming of a different law" in relation to "bodies, knowledges

¹ See Raúl Fornet-Betancourt, Helmut Becker, and Alfredo Gómez-Muller, "The Ethics of Care for the Self as a Practice of Freedom" [Interview with Michel Foucault on January 20, 1984], in *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 12 2/3 (1987), 112-31 (p. 124).

and desire" (97), still nevertheless promote a more liberal and liberating scene. One in which same-sex libidinal object choice is not necessarily, nor always, viewed as the overriding principle of a character's identity and space; nor necessarily, nor always, treated as a locus for homophobic taunts. On the contrary, it is also viewed, albeit only on occasion, as just one variable among other variables that go to make up a subject's sense-of being, identity, sexual sensibility and space.

Two further aspects need to be noted before I begin my readings of these texts. First, although Riera's "Te dejo, amor, en prenda el mar" and Mendicutti's "El milagro" may both be brief in textual time, their story time covers equally large tracts of the existential praxis of the main character in each text – childhood, adolescence, and maturity – as that covered for the male or female characters in the texts previously reviewed. And second, while Riera's text was published in 1975, it revisits the narrator's past, her time at school in 1965 (when she was fifteen years old) and her early adult life and eve of marriage some ten years later. Similarly, Mendicutti's text, although published in the year 2000, revisits the childhood years of Ramón Salazar, when he was five-years-old in 1939. It continues up to and includes his coming-out as a homosexual nearly thirty years later. It is significant that the maturity of both these characters encompasses the student *événements* in Paris in May 1968, and as far as Riera's narrator is concerned, the revolt of the homosexuals at Stonewall in 1969.

Carme Riera's "Te dejo, amor, en prenda el mar".

Introduction

Carme Riera was born in 1946 in Mallorca where she spent both her childhood and adolescence before moving to Barcelona in 1965 to complete her education and pursue a literary career. As Luisa Cotoner has pointed out in her translation and commentary on, Riera's collection of short stories entitled *Te dejo el mar*, in which "Te dejo, amor, en prenda el mar" appears: "Durante su infancia y su adolescencia en la isla se fueron conformando los espacios míticos, que más tarde serían la base sobre la que cimentaría gran parte de su quehacer literario" (13); "Allí también aprendió sobre todo a contemplar el mar, azul, luminoso, extendido hasta el horizonte, desde el tajo

impresionante de trescientos metros de acantilado” (14). The beginning of Riera’s literary career coincided with the birth in 1972 of her son, Ferrán; in the following year she received the “Ramón Llull” award for her story “¿Que hi és n’Angela?”. Since then, as Cotoner observes: “[Riera] no ha dejado de escribir, al principio, con su hijo sentado en la falda y haciendo garabatos en el mismo papel” (17). In 1981, her first novel *Una primavera per a Domenico Guarini* received the “Prudencia Bertrana” prize – one of the most prestigious in Catalonia, and the first time that it had been awarded to a woman. Among her many publications, which include both fiction and non-fiction, her short story “Te deix, amor, la mar com a penyora” has received, arguably, the most critical attention and acclaim.² Appearing first in 1975, and in a collection of short stories under the same title, it was later adapted into Spanish by Riera, herself, and published in *Palabra de mujer* (1980).³ Finally, in 1991, it appeared in *Te deixo el mar*, a translation into Spanish by Luisa Cotoner, of the original 1975 Catalan version *Te deix, amor, la mar com a penyora*. As Brad Epps usefully points out: “There are, as a result, three authorized versions of this text; one in Catalan, (or more precisely still, Mallorquín), and two in Spanish, one translated and adapted by Riera, and one (translated by Cotoner) approved by her” (“Virtual sexuality”, 333).

I base my reading of “Te deixo, amor, en prenda el mar” on Luisa Cotoner’s 1991 translation into Spanish of Riera’s original text in Catalan.

“Te deixo, amor, en prenda el mar” tells the story of a young girl’s emotional, sexual and spiritual involvement with an older woman, her tutor, from the first moments of her adolescent libidinal awakening to the time when, eight years later, and having married, she is awaiting the birth of her first child. Fearing that she will die in childbirth, the unnamed narrator and main character writes a letter to her former love, in which she recounts the details of their love affair, and its continuing impact on both her body and her mind. Unsure whether the letter will ever reach its destination or, even if it does, whether it will be fully understood, the (putatively) dying woman asks her husband to deliver it, if she does not survive the birth: “No sé si las circunstancias le harán conocer este escrito, ni si lo entenderás en el caso de que Toni te lo mande tal y como yo se lo he pedido” (68).

² Carme Riera, *Te deix, amor, la mar com a penyora* (Barcelona: Editorial Laia, 1975).

³ Carme Riera, *Palabra de mujer* (Barcelona: Editorial Laia, 1980).

Charting the dynamics of the passionate affair that she experienced with the older woman, the mature narrator recalls the determining effect on her self determination as lesbian and other of the furious reaction of both her father and society as a whole to her same-sex sensibility and taste. In a series of interacting and sequential scenes, she recalls their passionate love affair, the joyous times they spent together, and the fracturing and dispersal of this mutual bliss. Considered as an example of sexual depravity by society, her family and her peers, the narrator is separated from the woman she loves. Over the next eight years, the two women keep in contact by writing letters to each other.

In this revelatory account of their time together, and their time apart, the narrator makes it clear that up to and including her marriage to Toni, a college friend, she still loves and cherishes the older woman and the memories of their sensual, tactile, spiritual love. What is so innovative and non-parochial about what the narrator has to tell, is the way in which her husband reacts to her previous relationship with another woman. In contrast to her father, and to the older generation, the husband, as representative of a more youthful and contemporary cast of mind, demonstrates a more liberal and open-minded approach to both his wife and her former love and to her free-wheeling sex and gender tastes. What I hope to show here, is the way in which the husband's non-censorious approach to same-sex sensibility, sexuality and desire functions in a Foucaultian sense as a "reverse discourse", in that it challenges society's normalising practices and codes and their "grips of power". It also acknowledges, again in a Foucaultian sense, the "claims of bodies, pleasures and knowledges in their multiplicity and their possibility of resistance" (*History of Sexuality Vol. 1*, 157).

In my examination of Carme Riera's "Te dejo, amor, en prenda el mar" (hereafter "Te dejo amor") I approach the text from three interacting points of view.

First, I explore the influence on the narrator, as an adolescent girl at school, of her emotional and sexual involvement with her tutor. This older woman not only returns the young girl's passionate and sensual expressions of desire, but also gives shape and meaning to the latter's burgeoning sexuality and lyrical appreciation of nature, art, scents, colours, flowers and the sea. Crucial to this stage in the narrator's social-sexual development are the secret meetings that the lovers share and the joyous, tactile nature of their mutual interaction with each other.

Next, I go on to chart the critical reaction to these lesbian scenes of the narrator’s peers at school, of the society that surrounds her, and, especially, of her homophobic father. Having removed her from her school and her immediate environment, the narrator’s father allows her to return only when he considers (erroneously as it turns out) that she has outgrown her perverse and inappropriate sexual tastes.

Finally, I underline the ongoing and determining effect on the narrator’s identity and space as lesbian and other of her early adolescent experiences of love, eroticism and desire, together with the accompanying reactions of her homophobic milieu to same-sex libidinal object choice. However, crucial to an understanding of the narrative as a whole is her husband's ratifying, non-homophobic approach to what may be termed his wife's free-wheeling Eros and desire.

5.1 The adolescent narrator and her female tutor; a Sapphic scene

By recalling her adolescent rites-of-passage in a letter to her former love, and when she, herself, is perilously close to the birth of her first child, the unnamed narrator underlines the ongoing emotional and spiritual significance of her adolescent love. As with Moix’s *Julia*, this text abounds with Sapphic elements, from its initial setting in a *gynaecium* to the sequential scenes dictated, partly, by the scholastic term; and from its structuring of a young girl’s erotic interaction with her female tutor, to the inadequate and insubstantial images of the maternal. In contrast, however, to both *Julia* and *El palomo cojo*, for example, which make oblique and tentative references to their characters' same-sex sensibility and taste, “Te dejo, amor” openly and palpably describes the tactile and erotic interaction that takes place between the narrator and an older woman.

Relevant to this aspect of the narrator's re-visiting of her sexual and emotional past is the way in which she describes her adolescent passion for her former love in terms redolent of scents, colours, flowers, incense, nature and the sea. Almost rapturously she recalls the significance for her developing sensibility and self of the spiritual and emotional experiences which she and her tutor shared:

Algunas tardes salíamos al campo. El agua se desbordaba en las acequias y los almendros comenzaban a despuntar flores de nieve entre sus ramas. Contigo descubri dos pueblos

abandonados [...]. No había carretera para llegar hasta allí, apenas unos difíciles caminos de cabra que se perdían monte arriba, entre pequeños bosques de encinas y pinos, jarales y matas de romero. (55-6)

Equally enthralling for the maturing girl are the architectural scenes and settings to which the older woman introduces her and which she still remembers eight years further on: “Y todavía hoy, a ocho años de distancia, soy capaz de entusiasmarme recorriendo desde aquí, con los ojos cerrados, el barrio marinero del Carmen, el *Puig de Sant Pere*, lleno de cuevas, escaleras y fuentecitas, que huele a pescado” (55). Walking through “las antiguas calles empedradas, de fachadas señoriales, camino de la Catedral” she enters “la Puerta del Mar” and breathes in “el fuerte olor a incienso” (55).

These naturalistic scenes and architectural settings make up one aspect, only, of the narrator’s lyrical recall. Of greater import still are the memories of the sensual and tactile interaction between her tutor and herself. For instance, she remembers the first glance that they exchanged, and the way in which she trembled “de pies a cabeza” when she felt the touch of her tutor’s hands upon her hair (55). Underlining the almost immediate tactile physicality of their relationship, the narrator recalls how she admired the shape of her tutor’s hands: “¡Son tan bonitas aún! Los dedos finos, la piel blanquísima, las uñas cuidadas” (55). A little later, she will tell the older woman that she felt happy when “tomabas mi mano en la tuya y paseábamos por la ciudad, como dos enamorados” (55). And even happier when, as she puts it: “de vez en cuando, mi cabeza se apoyaba en ti y me besabas como nadie ha vuelto a hacerlo jamás” (56). Even at this still unconsummated stage in this female-to-female, pupil-to-tutor sensual and spiritual relationship, the determining effect of both the older woman and the social milieu on the narrator’s perception of herself as either acceptable and loved, or reviled and other, is already taking place. Although she acknowledges the tutor’s determining effect on her developing sensibility and self – “pero me gusta saber que llegué a ti en el momento más crítico de mi adolescencia, cuando empezaba a ser mujer, y que tu influencia, para que acabara siéndolo, fue decisiva” (54) – she also underlines the accompanying, and infelicitous, effects of society’s essentialising codes.

It can be argued that society’s homophobic stance towards the homosexual and the silencing of the homosexual voice (demonstrated in each text in this thesis), is underscored already by the narrator in that she deletes both her own name and that of her

female lover from the text. (As with Mendicutti's narrator the older woman's name is revealed at the very end.) Equally, and even at this early stage in the narrator's rites-of-passage towards a lesbian subjectivity and space, she already perceives the problematics that accrue to same sex sensibility and, by a process of analogy, the equally fraught relationship between love and death: Eros and Thanatos. As she wistfully points out:

Iba descubriendo el mundo al mismo tiempo que el amor iba descubriéndome a mí para hacerme suya. No fue en los libros ni en las películas donde aprendí a vivir la historia de nuestra historia. Aprendía a vivir, aprendía a morir poco a poco – aunque entonces no lo supiera – cuando, abrazada a ti, me negaba a que el tiempo se me escapase. (56)

The same dichotomy is maintained when she experiences the world from within her lover's arms as both beautiful and sad: “El mundo desde sus brazos era hermoso y triste” (56). And when, much later, instead of awaiting confidently the birth of her first child, she links together her fear of death in childbirth with her love for the older woman, and decides to name the unborn child, María, after her:

Tengo miedo, me da miedo. Me siento demasiado débil y las fuerzas me fallan. Creo que posiblemente no conoceré a la niña – porque será una niña, estoy segura – y no podré decidir su nombre, si no lo hago ahora. Quiero que le pongan el tuyo, María, y quiero también que echen mi cuerpo al mar, que no lo entierren. (68)

While these opposing sentient feelings between life and death, love and grief, can arguably be read in the light of Freudian theory, which holds that the life and death instincts are opposed to one another and that the latter represents “the fundamental tendency of every living being to return to the inorganic state”,⁴ they can also, and just as validly, be interpreted from a somewhat different point of view. This is a point of view which reads these disparate metaphors and signs as markers for the existential experiencing of same-sex sensibility and taste together with the joy and suffering that accrue to this social/sexual state. In this sense then, and as I hope to show, the sensual, joyous, spiritual relationship between the narrator and the older woman, and in which the former is discovering the world, at the same time as love is discovering her, and making her its own (56), is soon re-ordered as the subject, and the object, of homophobic taunts. As the narrator painfully, but tellingly recalls:

⁴ See Jean Laplanche and J.B.Pontalis, *The Language of Psycho-analysis* (London: Hogarth Press, 1973), pp. 97-103.

Nuestras relaciones duraron ocho meses y seis días exactamente. Se rompieron por culpa del escándalo público y de tu miedo a enfrentarte con una situación que te exigía una doble responsabilidad. No tuviste fuerzas suficientes ni suficiente confianza en mí. (56)

5.2 The narrator is sent away

In demonstrating society’s reaction to lesbian sensibility and taste, the narrator recalls the details of the barely muted criticism and scorn that greet them when their relationship becomes the subject of social gossip and concern. While the older woman is threatened in the name “de la moral y de las buenas costumbres” (57), receiving threatening, unsigned messages, naming her a pervert and corrupter of the young – as the narrator tellingly recalls: “Te amenazaron [...], te tacharon de conducta corrompida, de perversión de menores, recibiste anónimos llenos de morbosos insultos” (57) – the narrator herself is also treated as marginal and other, when she tries to join her so-called friends at school. Subjected to the smirks, whispers, and muted hostility of her peers: “Yo tuve que soportar sonrisitas y comentarios a media voz. Más de una vez mis compañeras cambiaron de conversación al notar que me acercaba” (57), a scene that Moix’s Julia had to endure, it is her father who articulates the essentialising opinions of society as a whole. As she still recalls: “Nadie, a excepción de mi padre, se atrevió a hablarme cara a cara enfrentándome con la realidad” (57). Although eight years have passed since these infelicitous events, she remembers the “rictus crispado” on her father’s face, and the way in which he angrily condemned her relationship with the older woman, and threatened to send her away from school and home: “Este es el camino de la depravación. Te mandaré a Barcelona, si esto dura un día más” (57).

Brad Epps’s comments on the significance of the paternal in relation to these particular scenes flesh out, even further, the freight of public and political disapproval that continues to assail the narrator of this text. As he cogently observes: “The grimace of the face and the bitterness of the voice are here the troubling features of the father. They are also, by extension, the features of reality itself: repetitive, intrusive, interdictive. The father is, in effect, the bold guarantor of an ever present principle of reality, by which pleasure is civilized, moralized, and checked” (“Virtual Sexuality”, 332).

Many of the Sapphic scenes in the narrator's text approximate to similar scenes in Moix's *Julia* – the fracturing and reconnecting of a same-sex relationship against the background of the scholastic term; the whispered comments and derision of both her family and her peers at school; the homophobic interjection of a dominant parental figure who tries to abort the potential lesbian love affair, but who is not necessarily successful. However, it also differs in that it offers a passionate same-sex, tactile and erotic scene.

In describing their mutual and rapturous *jouissance* in the “litera” of a boat at sea, the narrator, whose eroticism melds ever with nature's mellifluous and buoyant scenes, recalls the images of sea-foam, seagulls, and sporting dolphins' fins against the full moon-like shape of the cabin's “ojo de buey” (58). In the erotic scenes that follow, the two lovers move on to a place outside existential time and space into “el reino de lo absoluto, de lo inefable” (58). In this blissful and intoxicating state, the narrator recognises yet again the call of both love and death: “Allí, en el refugio seguro, en la rendija más íntima, empezaba la aventura, no la de los sentidos, sino la de los espíritus, que me llevaría a conocer hasta el último latido de tu ser, abocada, ya para siempre, al misterio del amor y de la muerte” (59).

What needs to be noted in relation to this particular love affair is the performative effect on the narrator's perception of herself as lesbian and other of the normalising practices and codes of the society that surrounds her, and which produces its own definitive and defining view of this expression of desire. Whilst the tutor is almost totally subjugated by and made subject to society's essentialising norms (as well, of course, bound by her responsibility towards her adolescent charge), the narrator achieves a modicum of freedom by “answering back” and challenging the status quo. For example, she underlines the ways in which society through its discourse, knowledges and power influence the older woman's perception of her own identity and space as marginalised, perverse and other, on account of her erotic interaction with the narrator, both as a female, and as an adolescent girl. Held within the rigours of a socio-political and procreative frame, in which, as Foucault perceptively observes: “Nothing that was not ordered in terms of generation or transfigured by it could expect sanction or protection. [...] Not only did it not exist, it had no right to exist and will be made to disappear upon its least manifestation – whether in acts or in words” (*History of Sexuality, Vol. 1, 4*), the tutor severs their relationship. In statements that underline her submission to society and

to society's hegemonic, heterosexist codes, she clarifies the reasons why they both must part: “Esto no puede continuar. Tenemos que poner punto final a nuestras relaciones, porque no tienen ningún sentido” (58). And later: “Ha pasado el tiempo y ahora está todo mucho más claro. Nuestras relaciones no tienen sentido, no deben continuar. No quiero ni hacerme ni hacerte daño. ¿Qué íbamos a hacer con este amor que no conduce a ninguna parte, que no tiene finalidad ninguna?” (62).

Crucial to these specific scenes, and to the knowledges and power that inform and sustain their articulation, are the ways in which the narrator challenges and re-works their totalising, essentialising themes. It is clear that even as an adolescent girl, she has a very different points of view concerning her sexual and spiritual interaction with another woman to that held, say, by her father, and the society that surrounds her. It is a point of view that underlines both the spirituality and inner strength of her existential and emotional state at the time of this passionate affair. And it also demonstrates that she was never in agreement either with what the older woman said or the latter's inner doubts because she always knew, as she put it: “con seguridad absoluta, que la única finalidad de nuestro amor era sencillamente el amor” (62).

However, this is not all that the narrator has to say on this passionate affair. Rather, she continues questioning society's normalising practices and codes in relation to sexuality and desire, but within the context, now, of either her student days or married state and pregnancy.

5.3 Countering the “grips of power” with the claims of bodies, pleasures, and desire: a Foucaultian move.

In various ways, then, the narrator's response to being parted from the woman she loves mirrors that of Moix's Julia, when, for example, the latter is forced to leave the enriching presence of don Julio and his country home, and, later, when she is equally prevented from enjoying the companionship of her female tutors. Like Julia who experienced only boredom both at home and school “yendo de clase en clase” (*Julia*, 188), the narrator feels a similar sense of ennui when she is sent away to Barcelona. As she tellingly recalls: “La actividad del ocio – bañarme, tomar el sol, el aperitivo, comer,

dar una vuelta, ir al cine o a bailar – me aburría” (59). Similarly, and again like Julia, who felt as if “la casa se le caía encima” (*Julia*, 128), the narrator also experiences a sense of claustrophobia and fear in relation to the convent walls: “Me sentía como prisionera. Las murallas – porque son murallas y no tapias – de los conventos de Santa Magdalena, las Teresas, las Capuchinas se me venían encima. De un momento a otro el viento las echará abajo igual que a las hojas” (62). This particular aspect of the narrator’s epistle of recall can be interpreted, fruitfully, as an authorial ploy in which the Catholic Church, and its homophobic creed, is ironically discredited. Rather than viewing its affiliated sects as welcoming and healing shrines, the narrator feels disturbed and threatened by them. An anti-religious scene that recalls the debunking of the church in the texts previously reviewed. Similarly, and in an earlier scene, she ironically underlines the surreptitious presence of Spain’s totalitarian and patriarchal state (a state which criminalises and/or medicalises same-sex libidinal object choice) by highlighting the announcement that greets the pupils at the beginning of each scholastic term. As she ironically observes: “Cuando acabó todo el tinglado – la voz empalagosa del director declaró ‘en nombre del Jefe del Estado’ inaugurado el curso 64-65” (61).

While there are undoubted points in common between Julia and the narrator of this text, the discrepancies between the two tend to outweigh their similarities. For instance, while Julia feels only boredom when the student Carlos discusses his programme for social and political reform (*Julia*, 90), and tries to kill herself rather than challenge society’s normalising practices and codes (200), the narrator of “Te dejo, amor en prenda el mar” interrogates and defies the prevailing socio-political and cultural scene. Even though she feels a similar, if not even greater intensity of sexual bonding with her former tutor, to that felt, say, by Moix’s heroine for either Eva or Mabel, this does not prevent her from recognising the imperative to engage cognitively and emotionally with other people, other things. Describing the demonstration in which she takes an active part and in which Miguel, a friend and fellow student, is arrested, she explains how she stayed awake all night so that she might share with him, albeit figuratively, the rigours of his prison cell. Lyrically she melds together her compassionate feelings for her fellow student with the emotions that she experiences when she listens to music, or recalls her former tutor and the love they shared. As she hauntingly explains:

Quería compartir desde lejos aquellas horas vacías de Miguel en la cárcel. Ofrecerle, aunque él no lo supiera, mi sueño y la fragancia tristísima de una ternura que se mezclaba con la música y con tu recuerdo. "Sinestesia", ése es el nombre que recibe en los manuales de retórica literaria: la ternura era música, música, mis sentimientos y, como siempre, tu recuerdo lo impregnaba todo. (65-66)

What needs to be noted here, in the sense that it has a direct bearing on what happens later on, and particularly in relation to the narrator and the open-minded type of man she marries, is her ability to make an informed and challenging stand against Spain's totalitarian and patriarchal state. Equally noteworthy is the way in which she continues to experience tenderness, love, music, nature and the sea only in terms of her former tutor and their mutual love.

Although the two women write letters to each other over the following years, they do not meet again until the narrator, and the man she plans to marry, visit her former tutor. In what could arguably be interpreted as the epiphanic climax of the text, the narrator explains to the older woman (and the reader) that she has not only told her husband the details of their passionate love affair: “Toni conocía nuestra historia de pe a pa, porque yo se la había contado sin omitir detalle” (68), but also that he considers their relationship to be both beautiful and morbid “una historia enfermiza y bella” (68). Furthermore, although he finds something in the older woman's face that is “raro, inquietante, oscuramente peligroso”, he also likes her and finds her “inteligente” and “amable” (68). What makes this potential marital “alliance” (to quote a Foucauldian term) so challenging and revolutionary is that not only the lesbian partner in this relationship, but also the heterosexual male, fly in the face of those patriarchal practices and codes that banish same-sex pleasures and say “no” to unproductive sexuality and sex. What both these members of a younger generation tellingly display (that is the narrator and her husband) is a more open and less circumscribed approach towards same-sex sexuality than that displayed, for example, by the narrator's peers, family and society as a whole. Although Andrés in Moix's *Julia* seems to view same-sex object choice as a viable sexual alternative to heterosexuality (at least he says nothing that conveys an oppositional approach and even facilitates Julia's meetings with her tutor), the characters in the texts previously reviewed – even the bohemian actress in *El palomo cojo* – subscribe to the heterosexist norm. What the narrator seems to be articulating here is a point of view that approximates to Foucault's positionality in relation to bodies and

desire. As he insightfully points out: “It is the agency of sex that we must break away from, if we aim – through a tactical reversal of the various mechanisms of sexuality – to counter the grips of power with the claims of bodies, pleasures, and knowledges, in their multiplicity and their possibility of resistance” (*History of Sexuality Vol. 1*, 157).

In the second part of this chapter I shall interrogate the ways in which Mendicutti’s short story “El milagro” reflects a not dissimilar point of view to those displayed in “Te deajo, amor, en prenda el mar” in that it underlines the influence of social and discursive practices and codes on the main character’s perception of his identity and space as homosexual. It also, as in the latter short story, has the advantage of advancing the possibility of a more liberal and open-minded approach to same-sex sensibility and sex.

Eduardo Mendicutti’s “El milagro”.

Introduction

Recounted by an omniscient narrator, and from the point of view of the protagonist of the text, Mendicutti’s “El milagro” tells of the rites-of-passage towards a homosexual subjectivity and space of its main protagonist, Ramón Salazar, from his childhood in his father’s home, through his adolescent years at school, and onwards to a fraught and tortuous maturity. Beginning with the determining effect on his developing sense-of-being and self, as a five-year-old, of his father’s violent reaction to his son’s gender-bending traits, the text goes on to chart the continuing effect on Ramón the youth, and then Ramón the man, of society’s essentialising practices and codes. As with Riera’s “Te deajo amor”, the significance of “El milagro” lies not only in the way in which it demonstrates the influence of hegemonic practices and codes on the main character’s perception of his social-sexual subjectivity and space as homosexual, but also in the way in which it offers both the reader, and, more importantly, Ramón the man, the possibility of experiencing a more open and less inhibited approach to gender, sexuality and desire.

In my discussion of Mendicutti’s text, I shall begin by underlining the determining effect on Ramón, the boy, of his father’s violent reaction to his gender-bending traits. Significant, here, are the essentialist assumptions that underlie the father’s

belligerent response to what he perceives as effeminacy in the male, and the way in which, as with la Mary and Eligio in *El palomo cojo*, for example, he interprets gender non-conformity as a homosexual trait. Equally significant is the silence that accompanies both the father’s homophobic stance, and Ramón’s ongoing and traumatised response. Although I discuss this scene in detail further on, what needs to be noted here is a) the way in which the author has the father’s violent act stand in for discursive practices and codes; and b) the way in which this particular approach to gender non-conformity and sex approximates to Foucault’s observations on power and violence. As the latter insightfully points out: “A relationship of violence acts upon a body or upon things: it forces, it bends, it breaks on the wheel, it destroys, or it closes the door on all possibilities.”⁵

Then I go on to chart the performative effect on Ramón, as an adolescent, of his peers at school, as well as of the literature they study. In this section of Mendicutti’s text, the influence of Antonio Machado’s love letters to Leonor, as well as various others, plays a significant role in introducing the maturing boy to scripted texts which bring to life the spiritual and physical interaction between the sexes. Relevant also to Ramón’s adolescent years are the fear and silence that accompany his existential state.

Finally, I underline the beneficial and emancipatory effect on Ramón, the man, of his young niece’s liberal and liberating points of view in relation to sexuality and desire. In this penultimate scene, Mendicutti demonstrates the way in which the young Yolanda breaks open Ramón’s closeted, silent, lonely world, by joyously embracing him when he declares that his sexual tastes coincide with those of her favourite star Nacho Duato, a noted “bailarín” (and homosexual). In interrogating the salutary effect on Ramón the man of Yolanda’s uninhibited approach to same-sex sensibility and taste, I shall refer to various characters and events in the texts previously reviewed (the husband’s sympathetic stance in Riera’s “Te dejo amor”, and the student Andrés’s sympathetic interaction with the heroine of Moix’s text), as well as to Foucault’s observations on “reverse discourse,” (101), and on “the claims of bodies”, “pleasure”, “knowledges”, and “desire” (*History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*, 157, 159). As I have already pointed out, Foucault saw power relations as exercised from “innumerable points” (94) and as immanent in knowledges and discourse; he also saw “focuses of resistance, spread over time and space”, as equally

⁵ See “The Subject and Power” in Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 220.

immanent and possible (96). As he insightfully observes: “Just as the network of power relations ends by forming a dense web that passes through apparatuses and institutions, without being exactly localised in them, so too the swarm of points of resistance traverses social stratifications and individual unities” (*History of Sexuality, Vol. 1,96*).

5.4 Silenced by his father’s blow. Ramón as a five-year-old

Crucial to Ramón’s early life, as well as to the years that follow, is his father’s violent reaction to his son’s gender-bending traits. As “las Navidades” are approaching, Ramón tells his father that he would like a big doll from “los Reyes”, dressed in blue, and with “un costero completo” like that worn by Laurita Ríos, the neighbour’s little girl (91). The father’s immediate reaction to this particular request is to give his son a “bofetón” that not only knocks him to the ground, but which also silences him for almost thirty years:

El silencio de Ramón Salazar duraba ya veintinueve años diez meses y cuatro días, desde que su padre, en las Navidades de 1939, le dio un bofetón que lo tiró al suelo, cuando el niño le dijo que quería que los Reyes le trajeran una muñeca grande vestida de azul, con su camiseta y su canesú, y un costurero completo como el de Laurita Ríos, la hija pequeña de los vecinos del segundo. (91)

In underlining the significance of this preliminary scene, both for its determining effect on the hero’s rights-of-passage towards a subjectivity and space as homosexual, as well as for its relevance to the narrative as a whole, it will be useful to begin by placing it within a Foucaultian frame. For instance, since Foucault makes it clear that “the bringing into play of power relations does not exclude the use of violence anymore than it does the obtaining of consent”, and that “the exercise of power can never do without one or the other, often both at the same time” (“The Subject and Power”, 220), it is, perhaps, not so surprising that Mendicutti has the father’s vicious blow stand in for the discursive practices and codes that more often carry a text’s homophobic freight. What also needs to be noted in relation to this particular scene are the covert references that it makes to the silence that surrounds the homosexual and the silencing of the homosexual voice, as well as to the sexual problematics that accrue to gender-bending traits. For instance,

Mendicutti makes it clear that the narrator is not only rendered mute at the moment that his father strikes him, but that he will go on being figuratively mute, “para siempre” (92). Similarly, Ramón’s disappointment at not receiving a doll dressed in clothes similar to those worn by Laurita Ríos for “las Navidades” will continue to puzzle and distress him for some time to come. From his point of view as a five-year-old, and indeed, for a few years more, he is unable to understand why he can not ask for both a football and a doll “sin que nadie perdiera los estribos” (92). What Mendicutti seems to be critiquing in these initial scenes is a) the heterosexist de-privileging of gender-bending traits; b) the association that is made between effeminacy in the male and homosexuality; and c) the fear and silence that accrue to those categorised as homosexual as well as the homosexual phenomenon as a whole.

In a few, brief, telling scenes, Mendicutti shows how Ramón, the boy, goes on wondering why his father knocked him to the ground, at the same time as he remains silent about what he thinks and what he feels until a few years later. Aware now of his burgeoning sexual sensibility and taste, he falls in love with another boy: “El chico más guapo del Instituto Antonio Nebrija” (91). Having been told to read the love letters written by the poet Antonio Machado to his beloved Leonor, Ramón realises that the emotions expressed in these letters mirror exactly his own feelings for Javier Montero, a fellow student in his class. What particularly impresses itself upon the now adolescent boy is that these, and other love letters, that his tutor tell the class to read, are written either by a man to a woman, or by a woman to a man. They are never written to a person of the same sex as the writer.

That both the written word, and the father’s physical attack produce determining effects not only on Ramón’s perception of his identity as homosexual, and perverse, but also on his spiritual and emotional state, is underscored by Mendicutti in the following scenes. For instance, although Ramón wants desperately to place a love letter in Javier Montero’s desk, similar to the love letters he has had to read in class, he realises, given the homophobic bias of the society that surrounds him, that this would be a socially and sexually disastrous move. Similarly, the tortuous feelings occasioned by his spiritual and physical desire for another male, and the impossibility of their consummation enable him to see and feel the negativity that accrues to this existential state. Furthermore, like the main characters in *Julia* and *El palomo cojo*, for example, who speak frequently of their

suffering, alienation and pain, Ramón descends ever deeper into a sick and silent state in which he experiences an “imperioso dolor hundido en su garganta”. Even worse, he feels a hand that “lo estrangulaba por dentro”, and “una infección de la voz que se extendía por todo su cuerpo hasta dejarle paralizado, vacío, aislado, solo” (93). Ramón never leaves the letter in Javier Montero’s desk: “Nunca dejó la carta en el pupitre de Javier Montero” (93).

What is particularly interesting about the performative effect on the narrator of Machado's letters to Leonor is the way in which what the poet has to say profoundly influences the maturing youth. Indeed, it enables him (in the same way as the message in the *billet doux* enables the narrator of Mendicutti's text) to both recognise and give shape and meaning to his burgeoning feelings for another male.

As an addendum to this section on Ramón the boy, and the adolescent, and in order to reaffirm the influence of the written word on his developing sensibility and self (as well as relating it to a wider socio-cultural sphere), I refer to Oscar Wilde’s remarks in his essay on “The Critic as Artist”.⁶ As Wilde has the character Gilbert point out:

The Creeds are believed, not because they are rational, but because they are repeated. Yes; Form is everything. It is the secret of life. Find expression for a sorrow and you intensify its ecstasy. Do you wish to love? Use Love’s Litany, and the words will create the yearning from which the world fancies that they spring. (893)

5.5 Ramón the man

What emerges from the trajectory of events that make up Ramón’s early life and adolescence is their determining effect on Ramón the man. Likening him, figuratively, to a building that is collapsing due to a structural defect, and which is later replaced by another which passes as the original, without anyone noticing that the first one fell, the omniscient narrator underlines the way in which his hero sees his whole life and existential state in terms of failings, faults, silences, and obliquity: “Su vida desapareció aplastada por el silencio. Ahora piensa en ella como en uno de esos edificios que se

⁶ See “The Artist as Critic”, *The Works of Oscar Wilde* (London: Spring Books, 1965), pp. 857-98 (p. 893).

hunden por un defecto grave de construcción y es sustituido por otro exacto que, después de cierto tiempo, llega a pasar por el original. Nadie recuerda la catástrofe” (94). Similarly, he is described as “un autómeta sin pasado y sin proyectos”; as “una acumulación de dobles inventados por él mismo”; and as “la copia anodina de la de un hombre rigurosamente callado” (94).

It is noteworthy that Ramón goes on functioning behind a false identity and mask, rather in the same way that Julia/Julita, in Moix’s text, hides, figuratively, behind a dual identity (*Julia*, 217); the narrator in *El palomo cojo* divides his selfhood and his space into “dos o tres” (239) and Álviz’s Hafta is also known as Anagni. For instance, although Ramón manages to do “todo lo que hacían los hombres de cada una sus edades”, he does this through a stand-in double, whom he likens to an empty space or hole. Both this “doble sucesivo y hueco” and Ramón, the man, are taciturn, prefer sedentary occupations, read, listen to music, and take walks “por los lugares solitarios y melancólicos” (94). Moreover, as the word “hueco” signifies, Ramón’s identity is equivalent to an empty void. In this way then, and by applying himself diligently to work and academic studies, Ramón manages to defuse his father’s suspicions in relation to his sexual sensibility, make his mother proud of his prowess in the outside world, and distract her from the fact that he has never had a “novia” nor generated the “nietos” that she still awaits (94).

Although these familial scenes are sparingly mapped out, they still manage to convey the father’s homophobic frame of mind, and the mother’s equally pervasive conformity to heterosexist reproductive codes. In this sense then, this particular facet of Mendicutti’s text can be said to stand in for the sexual/textual problematics that subtend Ramón’s existential state, as well as the determining effect on his subjectivity and space as homosexual of the social and discursive practices and codes of the people who surround him and define him.

That Ramón’s silent, alienated state of subjugation acts as a frame of reference for his maturity as a whole is demonstrated in the scenes that follow, scenes in which Mendicutti has the narrator intrude even further into his hero’s thoughts and space. For instance, in the same way that Ramón restrains himself from making any sexual/textual advances to another male, during either his time at school, or in his later social/cultural life, he also, and similarly, constrains himself in relation to everyday events. As the narrator tellingly fills in: “[Ramón] Exhibió una ortopédica indiferencia junto a los

mocetones provocativos que se duchaban con él y dormían desnudos [...]” (95). And later: “había tratado con displicencia la hermosura abrumadora de algunos soldados y de algunos compañeros de trabajo, de chicos distraídos que se cruzaban con él en la calle” (96). Functioning always through a masked *persona* he makes “comentarios rutinarios” (96) about such mundane matters as the quality of radio programmes, films, and books, even remaining non-committal when confronted with ETA’s latest belligerent attack.

This restrained and muted form of social and discursive interaction with other people, other things, is figuratively re-enacted in the way in which he covertly and anonymously interacts sexually with other men. Thus, he is depicted as achieving a sort of *jouissance* by kissing and embracing “carne anónima” in the darkness and the silence of a cinema, “donde nadie pudo nunca reconocerle “ (96), and where he offers and accepts “besos no identificados, deseos desencajados y mudos” (96). Equally, he seeks sexual satisfaction in the lavatories of the station at Atocha, or in “algunos de los grandes almacenes del centro”, or in “el primero o el último vagón de la Línea 1 del Metro”. This depends, as Mendicutti has the narrator ironically observe, on which way the train is going: “la dirección del trayecto” (97).⁷

What Mendicutti particularly underlines, in these solitary and inappropriately located scenes (which recall Anagni's disturbed encounter in the dark in Álviz's text), is the way in which Ramón “se entregaba a una emoción callada, a un placer silente y nervioso, a una compañía sin voz y sin memoria” (96). On returning home, he still has nobody of his own “con quien hablar”, and still trembles “de dolor y de soledad” (97).

Before exploring the events that lead up to, what Mendicutti terms “el milagro”, I want to highlight one further aspect of Ramón’s mature, adult state. In comparison with the characters discussed in the preceding texts, who, (with the exception of Riera's unnamed narrator) are not necessarily noted for their benevolent or fulsome traits, and tending rather to be absorbed in their own personal problems and desires), Ramón does at least concern himself with other people, other things. For instance, while the unnamed

⁷ It is interesting to note, here, that while the homosexual male (Ramón) is depicted as having multiple and anonymous same-sex libidinal encounters, and in impersonal and inexpedient locations such as lavatories, stations, stores, cinemas and trains, the lesbian female (Moix's Julia, and Riera's unnamed narrator and main character) are described as having only one or two same-sex encounters and/or relationships, and then only in the privacy of a room, or in the cabin of a boat at sea. In discussing the reasons for the stereotypical configuration of the homosexual male, as promiscuous and anonymous, and the lesbian female as considerably less so, if at all, Foucault makes several useful observations. I have already noted these in my reading of Álviz's *Calle Urano*.

narrator in *El palomo cojo*, both as a boy, and as a man, speaks only of his own affairs, or criticises the church, and medicine, and the state (all of which impinge upon his personal sexual identity and space); and while Moix’s Julia seems to think of no one but herself, even expressing boredom with Carlos’s emancipatory schemes, Ramón supports his widowed mother, his sister, and his sister’s children. Relevant to Ramón’s philanthropic approach towards his family, and his family’s needs, is the way in which he carries out his obligation “de hijo soltero y decente” by looking after his mother and becoming “el padrino de la hija mayor de su hermana”, as well as of “los otros dos hijos” that his sister had to a handsome “balarate” – who left her and the children for another woman (95).

Although I shall have more to say on the theme of altruism and the homosexual/lesbian in the conclusion to my thesis as a whole, for the moment, I want to highlight the way in which Ramón makes sure that “todos los meses [...] a su hermana y a sus sobrinos no les falta de nada” (95).

5.6 "El milagro". An emerging element breaks through the residual and the dominant

As well as the various insights that this short story offers in relation to the determining effect on the main character of society’s hegemonic practices and codes, it also offers the possibility of answering back and challenging, if only at a local level, what Foucault terms the “technology of power”. Whilst the terms of Ramón’s confrontation with the status quo may be similar in principle to that of the unnamed narrator of *El palomo cojo*, Mendicutti’s more extended text, the specificity of his resistance is somewhat different. In examining the way in which Ramón and particularly his niece Yolanda become, in Foucaultian terms, “a hindrance, a stumbling block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy” (*History of Sexuality Vol.1*, 101), it is necessary to go back, once again, to his immediate environment, and to his relationship with his family, his sister and his niece.

The first time that Yolanda’s libertarian point of view becomes apparent to Ramón is when she speaks “sin ningún apuro” and “con la incontinente franqueza de los jóvenes de hoy” of her veneration for Nacho Duato, the famous “bailarín” (95). Although the dancer walks in an unnatural way, she refuses to view this physical peculiarity as

immanent either to the man’s gender, sexuality or existential self, preferring rather to relate it to his occupation as a dancer: “Ni Nacho Duato ni ningún otro bailarín anda de forma natural [...] eso es por el ballet, que conste [...]” (96); and let no one try to insinuate “que fuera por otra cosa” (96). Furthermore, as she has already pointed out: “Se moría por los huesos y por todo lo demás de Nacho Duato” (95). What needs to be noted here, as in Riera’s text, and possibly Moix’s too, is the very different generational approach to gender, sexuality and desire. For instance, while Ramón’s father collapses his son’s gender-bending traits with an anticipated homosexuality, his niece, Yolanda refuses to promote this homophobic point of view. Similarly, having already challenged aspects of society’s essentialising practices and codes, she now goes on to oppose the closeting of the homosexual and the silencing of the homosexual voice.

In a scene that underlines the information that can be conveyed in a reciprocated gaze, as well as the dissemination of information by technology, Mendicutti begins by having the television “presentadora” announce that Nacho Duato “ha salido del armario” and told everyone that he is gay.⁸ Then he shows Ramón and Yolanda looking into each other’s eyes, (an additional weight is attached to this particular scene by pointing out that “depués de treinta años Ramón supo lo que es hablar con los ojos”). And finally finishes, by having Ramón openly declare that he is homosexual too: “Yo también” (98). While Ramón’s sister and her two sons remain “patidifusos” (98) at this revelatory scene, Yolanda registers her approval by running joyously across the room “desbordante de felicidad” (98) and holding Ramón close in her arms. As Mendicutti has the narrator confidently predict: “Los dos supieron que con un buen plan de rehabilitación, de aquel largo, crónico, degenerativo silencio a lo mejor pronto no quedaba ni rastro” (98).

Since Mendicutti has entitled this short story “El milagro”, and since the latter scene arguably represents the epiphanic moment in the text, it will be useful to develop further the various points it raises. For instance, by having Ramón compare his feelings to the beneficent and healing powers offered by holy shrines when he hears that Nacho Duato has openly declared that he is gay and that his niece approves of the dancer’s sexual tastes, Mendicutti underlines his hero’s joyous and liberated state. Letting the reader into Ramón’s exhilarated, liberated mind, the narrator tellingly points out:

Ramón Salazar lo comprendió de golpe y se sintió de repente en la piscina del santuario de Lourdes, en la explanada del santuario de Fátima, en la basílica de Guadalupe, y se dejó llevar por una fuerza prodigiosa que le arrancaba por las buenas del silencio. (98)

Equally, by having Ramón openly declare his own sensual sexual taste, Mendicutti further underlines his hero's first steps towards freeing himself from society's crippling prescriptive codes.

In the introduction to this chapter as a whole, I pointed out that both Riera's text and Mendicutti's offer a glimpse of a more liberal and liberating approach to same-sex sensibility and taste. While the husband's accommodating views on his wife's sexual interaction with another woman, in Riera's text, subscribe to this emancipatory point of view, Yolanda's free-wheeling sexual notions in “El milagro” also endorse a similar theme. In two lines that seem almost detached from the narrative as a whole, and in which Mendicutti displays, as in *El palomo cojo*, his authorial propensity for irony and textually layered prose, or to paraphrase Kathy Ferguson on irony: “Recruits humor to politically important ends” (*The Man Question*, 31), he shows how Yolanda goes on challenging the anti-homosexual Church, and knowledges, and power. As the omniscient narrator observes: “Yolanda, la ahijada de Ramón Salazar, ha abierto un libro de firmas para mandarlo al Vaticano, con la petición de que se canonicen en vida a Nacho Duato” (98). None of Mendicutti's readers can be in any doubt as to the type of reception that this request would receive.

Although brief in textual time, these two short stories offer a comprehensive picture of the power of discourse and the dominant status quo to both define and constitute that which is ideologically appropriate in relation to sexuality, identity and desire, and that which is not. In this sense then, these short texts also introduce into this homophobic scene the points of view of heterosexual characters that challenge society's essentialising norms as they relate to sexuality, identity and desire. Thus, the open-minded husband of the narrator of “Te dejo, amor” is able to listen to his wife discuss the details of her past love affair with a female tutor “de pa a pa” without reading her lesbian (bisexual?) tendencies as the defining principles of her identity and space. Similarly, Ramón's feisty niece in “El milagro” views her uncle's homosexuality not as a marker of

⁸Mendicutti uses artistic licence here since Nacho Duato actually came out in September 1999 in the Spanish magazine “Zero”. See <http://www.famousandgay.com/d.html>.

his subjectivity and space, but rather as an interesting facet of his identity as a whole and one which links him to her idol.

These two scenes can, of course, be read either in the light of Foucault's observations on "reverse discourse" or Williams's on emerging elements arising, intermingling with and then challenging the dominant and the residual.

In the conclusion to this dissertation, I shall draw together the various strands of the selected texts as they relate to my propositions set out in the Introduction.

Conclusion

This thesis has explored the representation of the homosexual and the lesbian as social and discursive constructs in works by Eduardo Mendicutti, Ana María Moix, Jesús Álviz, Miguel Espinosa and Carme Riera. The reason for grouping these authors and certain of their texts together is that the latter serve to demonstrate a constructionist approach to homosexual and lesbian identities. Since critical reviews tend to concentrate on texts that deal with the homosexual male rather than the lesbian female, I have tried to correct this deficiency by maintaining a balance in the selected texts between the representations of each sex.

Michel Foucault's theoretical observations on the determining effect of discourse, knowledges and power on the constitution of sexual identities have contributed considerably to the elucidation of the selected texts. J. L. Austin's and Mari Matsuda's account of the equally determining effect on identities of speech acts and hate speech, respectively, as well as Althusser's theory of interpellation have offered additional theoretical support. Similarly, Raymond Williams's account of the residual, dominant and emerging elements that shape both the social and the cultural has proved equally applicable and useful.

Several areas of questioning were raised as basic to this thesis in the introduction: the representation of the homosexual/lesbian as a social construct; the influence of religion, medicine and the State on identity formation in that they formulated that which was sexually normal (heterosexual) and that which was not (homosexual/lesbian); the possibility of answering back and challenging the status quo and its essentialising norms; the ways in which literary texts and social structures and events influence each other in an interactive *pas-de-deux*; and both finally and crucially, the notion that sexual sensibility and taste has been raised to *the* defining principle of individual subjectivity and space. While these issues overlap considerably in the selected texts, the work of each author has made its own unique and individual contribution to this dissertation as a whole.

In the first chapter, Mendicutti's *El palomo cojo* sets the scene for many of the social/sexual issues that arise in the texts that follow, retrospectively detailing the rites-of-passage of the main character towards a homosexual subjectivity and space. The elliptical treatment of the narrator's personal names and medical condition as a ten-year-

old boy in the past signal the closeted existential state of this putative homosexual and the silencing of the homosexual voice. At the same time they underscore the clinical evaluation of the homosexual as physically/psychologically diseased. Other issues raised and defined deal with the suffering that accompanies this denigrated state and the way in which gender non-conformity *per se* is collapsed with homosexuality. Although the narrator, from his mature point of view at the time of writing, has an opportunity to answer back and ironically criticise the status quo, there is no suggestion that the society's overweening essentialising norms have actually been derailed. What is particularly pertinent to this witty text is its detailed elaboration of the way in which the narrator demonstrates the implications of the labelling process for his identity and space as homosexual. The implication being that if a person is repeatedly labelled as a "maricón", as is the narrator of this text, then that person may very well eventually assume a homosexual role. Crucial evidence of the way in which the homosexual protects himself and his constituted homosexual "I" from society's homophobic gaze is demonstrated when the narrator moves almost immediately into a mobile "positionalisation" and masked roles.

Although published in 1991, Mendicutti's text traces what happens to its ten-year-old narrator at the height of the Francoist regime. As such, there is little opportunity for answering back and challenging the status quo or for emerging elements to either surface or survive. That the text's narrator is able to ironically diminish the credibility of religion, medicine, society and the State is due to the fact that he actually transcribes the text *after* rather than *before* Franco's death and during political democracy.

Moix's tale of female same-sex sensibility is similar to Mendicutti's in that it relates the sexual/textual rites-of-passage of a young and inexperienced character (here a female rather than a male), who is subjectivated by and made subject to society's normalising sexual codes. Set both before and at the time of what appears to be a general uprising of the students, in accord with the events in Paris in 1968, it offers the reader the first glimpse of what could be termed an evolving futuristic scene. This is reflected in the unprejudiced response of a male student to the daily meetings between Julia and her tutor Eva, both occupying putatively lesbian roles. Here, in the male student's liberal response to same-sex sensibility and taste an emerging element can be seen producing cracks in the dominant and residual, a dominant and residual that bring the female lesbian student to the brink of suicide. Sapphic elements are introduced into this text by placing certain

scenes within the setting of a *gynaeceum*, as well as giving the lesbian Julia an inadequate, often absent mother.

Álviz's *Calle Urano*, arguably the most sophisticated of the selected texts, has the advantage of covering all the issues raised in Mendicutti's text as well as offering an additional dimension. Published in 1981 and set in the late 1970s, it reflects the changing political and social/sexual conditions during Spain's "destape". Examples of this liberating move include the de-pathologisation of the homosexual on the part of medicine and psychiatry and the liberating notions on sexuality, identity and desire promulgated after Stonewall by Spain's *Frente de liberación homosexual* (amongst a multitude of others in the West). The text's cross-generational sexual scenes between a consenting sixteen-year-old youth and a mature older man invoke the same moral questioning as does the lesbian affair between the female narrator of Moix's text as a consenting fifteen-year-old girl and her female tutor. Although I point these issues out, any discussion of their ethical dimension lies outside the parameters of this dissertation. As in the previous texts, and especially Mendicutti's, a narrator or main character revisits crucial childhood scenes where the determining effect of homophobic discursive practices and codes on the self-determination of the subject as homosexual/lesbian are demonstrably displayed. Mendicutti's narrator as well as Álviz's José Hafta/Anagni reveal the performative effect on their sense-of-being and space as homosexual and perverse of being repeatedly labelled in their childhood as a "maricón".

As with the previous texts by Mendicutti and Moix, Álviz's *Calle Urano* reflects the mutually reciprocal interaction between empirical social/sexual facts and their representation in literature. Williams's notions of emergent elements arising, intermingling and challenging the dominant and the residual are also underscored in what the *Frente de liberación homosexual* has to say (emerging element) and the diatribes of Miguel's mother (residual and dominant elements).

Espinosa's *La tribada falsaria* is noteworthy primarily for the overweening points of view of the various characters and the way in which the female lovers indict the homophobic hate speech to which they were subjected in their youth ("lamecricas" being one term cited), for their subsequent adoption of lesbian roles. The belated attempt, in the closing scene, to introduce a more conciliatory tone in relation to female same-sex sensibility and taste can be viewed as a nod in the direction of the opening up of literature

and existential life to more liberal and liberating social/sexual views during Spain's "destape".

Riera's "Te dejo, amor, en prenda el mar", published in 1975, revisits scenes that took place between approximately 1964 and 1972 and Mendicutti's "El milagro", published in 2000, revisits scenes, between, again approximately, 1939 and 1969. Both the lesbian narrator and her older female lover in Riera's text and the homosexual Ramón in Mendicutti's experience the same determining effects of discourse and society's normalising codes on their self-determination as lesbian and homosexual respectively. Equally, these characters are all defined as experiencing the silence and the suffering that beset those categorised as sexually perverse in the texts previously reviewed. What is different about these two short stories and the characters that inhabit them, is that among the latter emerge a heterosexual male and female who hold liberal and non-homophobic points of view – views that they are prepared to act upon. In this respect they represent those elements of society that were emerging post-Paris 1968 and post-Stonewall 1969, and which would evolve eventually into the liberating elements of the post-Franco cultural and political boom.

In offering a précis of the main points that arise in the selected texts the following issues consistently re-occur: the determining effect of discursive practices, hate speech and interpellation on the self-determination of individual subjects as either homosexual or lesbian; the tendency on the part of the normalising status quo to collapse gender-bending traits with homosexuality/lesbianism; and the suffering, alienation and fear that accompany these denigrated states. Equally noteworthy are the silencing and the closeting that surround the homosexual/lesbian identity and voice, the masking and the "mobile positionalisation" of homosexual and lesbian roles; and the overarching part played by religion, medicine, society and the State in these sexual/textual phenomena. Finally, and from a totally different point of view, what also needs to be underscored are the moves made to derail the above homophobic practices and codes in the last three decades of the twentieth century, when as Williams has pointed out emerging elements arise, intermingle with, and challenge the status quo (the residual and the dominant).

Since very little has been written about the selected texts, I have been presented with the interesting and challenging task of operating from a virtual *tabula rasa* as far as criticism of the various issues that they raise is concerned. Primarily, as I have already pointed out, I have tried to show how they represent the social and discursive constitution

of the homosexual and the lesbian and the pain, suffering, alienation and despair that accrue to these discursively effected roles. I have also tried to underline the way in which homosexual/lesbian sensibility and taste is raised to the defining principle of subjectivity and self. Other issues have also presented as significant. For example, pertinent to all the homosexual and lesbian characters that inhabit the selected texts is the tendency to look back and revisit childhood and adolescent scenes that impinge upon their sexuality, gender, identity and desire. Equally pertinent is the obsessive way in which they dwell upon their own personal feelings and experience as though their own closeted and alienated space had become the totality of their world. Rarely do these sexually denigrated characters engage in social issues outside of their own personal and problematic space. Indeed, only the unnamed narrator of Riera's text manages to forget the problematics that attend her lesbian sexuality and join a fellow student in a political revolt, afterwards staying awake all night so that she could empathise with his suffering in a prison cell. However, this turning inwards and relating primarily to what happens to the self is not necessarily confined to texts that belong to the sexual and erotic genre. As Ruth Christie *et al* have pointed out in *The Scripted Self* in relation to post-Franco, post-transition narrative texts:

The prevailing tendency of the new novel is seen as one of internalisation, of a looking inward and a turning away from the preoccupation with external social or political themes. [...] Novels are now seen in terms of subjectivity (or even egocentricity) in opposition to the apparent objectivity of the tradition of the "novela social". (5)

Of course, as far as the texts selected for this dissertation are concerned their representation of issues relating to the homosexual and the lesbian reflect, on one level, the tendency to look inwards of which Christie speaks. And, on another level, the freedom for the writer to engage with what had previously been monitored and censored if not forbidden artistic territory. Bearing these factors and remarks in mind some final observations need to be made concerning what the selected writers had to say in relation to the changing social/sexual scene in the last decades of the twentieth century and what other social, cultural and literary critics have empirically observed. Alberto Mira points out that the myths of the homosexual would remain throughout the whole of the twentieth century as a theme for doctors, criminologists and Catholic moralists: "Nótese cómo, por ejemplo, aun a mediados de los noventa, los debates televisivos sobre la homosexualidad

incluían a un psiquiatra o un sacerdote como voces de autoridad sobre el tema" (*Sodoma a Chueca*, 57-8). And as he continues later on: "Aunque la homosexualidad ya no produce, en general, (y al menos en el momento de escribir estas líneas), la repugnancia que producía antes, la idea que se transmite es que es 'mejor' ser heterosexual, por lo que pueda pasar " (614).

And yet, leaping ahead outside the parameters of this dissertation and the twentieth century and into the twenty-first awaits a very different scene to which the authors of the selected texts, the homosexual and lesbian characters described therein as well as the non-parochial Andrés in *Julia*, the open-minded husband in "Te dejo, amor" and the equally liberal niece in "El milagro" contributed.

Under the heading "Spanish MPs legalise gay marriage" a British national daily notes:

The Spanish parliament voted yesterday to legalise gay marriage despite protests by Roman Catholic clergy and conservative groups. Spain is now one of only four countries in the world that grant gay couples the same status as heterosexuals, and is the only traditionally catholic country to do so. It joins the Netherlands, Belgium and Canada, which approved gay marriages on Wednesday.¹

As the Spanish Prime Minister, José Luis Zapatero asserts: "Today Spain is a more decent country, because a decent society is one that does not humiliate its members. [...] This law will not engender evil, it will save human suffering" (*Guardian*, 13).

¹ Dale Fuchs, "Spanish MPs Legalise Gay Marriage", *Guardian*, 30 June 2005, p. 13.

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