



University of  
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## Con-Scripting the Masses: False Documents and Historical Revisionism in the Americas

Item Type	dissertation
Authors	Weiser, Frans
DOI	<a href="https://doi.org/10.7275/1929877">10.7275/1929877</a>
Download date	2025-04-25 18:36:07
Link to Item	<a href="https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14394/38783">https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14394/38783</a>

CON-SCRIPTING THE MASSES:  
FALSE DOCUMENTS AND HISTORICAL REVISIONISM  
IN THE AMERICAS

A Dissertation Presented

by

FRANS-STEPHEN WEISER

Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment  
Of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

February 2011

Program of Comparative Literature

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## DEDICATION

To Stephen, who taught me the value of finishing, and to Hermine, who taught me the value of time.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my advisors in Comparative Literature, Professors David Lenson and Bill Moebius, for their guidance along the path that led to the creation of this project. Their combination of support and practical vision has been vital to its completion. I also thank Professor Daphne Patai for her revisions and constructive criticisms, and Professor Luis Marentes for his advice regarding the comparative context that undergirds the entire project.

ABSTRACT

CONSCRIPTING THE MASSES:  
FALSE DOCUMENTS AND HISTORICAL REVISIONISM  
IN THE AMERICAS

FEBRUARY 2011

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Dominick LaCapra argues that historians continue to interpret legal documents in a hierarchical fashion that marginalizes intellectual history, as fiction is perceived to be less important. This dissertation analyzes contemporary literary texts in the Americas that exploit such a narrow reading of documents in order to interrogate the way official history is constructed by introducing false forms of documents into their narratives. This type of literary text, or what I label “con-script,” is not only historical fiction, but also historicized fiction that problematizes its own historical construction.

Many critics propose that the new historical novel revises historical interpretation, but there exists a gap between theory and textual practice. Adapted from E.L. Doctorow’s notion of “false documents,” the con-script acts as an alternative that purposefully confuses fiction and nonfiction, providing tools to critically examine the authority maintained by official narratives. By revealing the fictive nature of these constructions, the con-script alerts readers to the manipulation of documents to maintain political authority and to misrepresent or silence marginalized groups.

The recent revision of American Studies to include a hemispheric or Inter-American scope provides a context for applying such political claims within a transcultural framework. I compare texts from English, Spanish, and Portuguese America in order to identify shared strategies. After a survey of the historical novel's development across the Americas and a critical theory overview, I analyze three types of con-script.

"The Art of Con-Fessing" juxtaposes texts from the three languages via Jay Cantor's *The Death of Che Guevara*, Augusto Roa Basto's *Yo el Supremo*, and Silviano Santiago's *Em Liberdade*. These false documents present themselves as apocryphal diaries written by revolutionary leaders or activists. The authors demythologize untouchable public figures through the gaps in their "own" personal writing. "Mediations of Media" features Ivan Ângelo's *A Festa*, Tomás Eloy Martínez's *La novela de Perón*, and Ishmael Reed's *Mumbo Jumbo*. These journalists interrogate the role of media and political corruption within the construction of national identity; the false documents appear as newspaper clippings, magazine articles and media images. Finally, the subjective process of archiving is examined in "Con-Centering the Archive" via Aguinaldo Silva's *No País das Sombras*, Francisco Simón's *El informe Mancini*, and Susan Daitch's *L.C.*

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## PART I

### INTRODUCTION AND PRE-SCRIPTION

## CHAPTER 1

### DEFINING THE CON-SCRIPT IN HISTORICIZED FICTION

By the sixteenth century fiction, whether in poetry or prose, was unequivocally called lying...The poetic mode, since it was expressly designed for this pleasant lying, at least deceived no one. Prose, however, the vehicle for legal documents, for sermons, for history, was considered to have been abused by those who made it carry the falsehood of fiction. The dangers contained in fictional prose were greater. How was the reader of prose to know when the historian, or story-teller, was telling a truth or a lie? A reader is more easily misled when the safeguards of convention have been removed.  
—Bruce W. Wardropper, “*Don Quixote*: Story or History?”

It was the French Revolution, the revolutionary wars and the rise and fall of Napoleon, which for the first time made history a *mass experience*...the French Republic was compelled to create mass armies. The qualitative difference between mercenary and mass armies is precisely a question of their relations with the mass of the population. If in place of the recruitment or pressing into professional service of small contingents of the declassed, a mass army is to be created, then the content and purpose of the war must be made clear to the masses by means of propaganda.  
—Georg Lukács, *The Historical Novel*

#### **The Con-Script within Con-Text**

In the second epigraph above, penned in 1937, Marxist critic Georg Lukács theorizes the social conditions necessary for the birth of the historical novel: a shared historicized consciousness existing on a scale that transcends class divisions. This social event comes at a price, however, for the individual is subsumed by the experience of the many. Concomitant with the birth of historical awareness, a consequential physical practice developed. By using the phrase “pressing into professional service” in relation to the French Revolution, Lukács refers to the inception of modern military conscription, whereby individuals compulsorily serve duty under the governing state authority. Lukács suggests that propaganda must be used to educate citizens for the motivating purposes of

war, but propaganda inherently represents the selected truths and discursive claims of its advocates, and therefore can equally contract and control as much as seek to controvert those proposed truths. The original incarnation of historical fiction, whose mythmaking facilitated the production and self-fashioning of nationhood, fulfilled the role of just such a form of propaganda. (Lukács admits in an introduction written twenty-five years after the original monograph that his own propagandistic prophesying regarding the liberation movements in twentieth century Europe failed to pan out.) In recent decades, however, critics have initiated the claim that much of the fiction that explores the past seeks to interrogate such a totalizing perspective.

*Con-Scripting the Masses: The Falsification of Documents as Strategic Subversion of Authority* has grown out of a developing awareness regarding some of the contradictory impulses inherent in the implementation of contemporary theories of historical fiction. There exists a general critical consensus (and I will survey some key proponents and touchstones of this debate in Chapter Three) that an increasing number of contemporary texts are diverging from traditional empirical models to present history in Europe—and increasingly theorized in the Americas—in completely new forms, ranging from the parodic and the trivial to the solemn and the profound. These texts, even some of the more frivolous examples, have been supported as revisioning how we (a poetic license with the “royal we” appears to be enacted with some amount of frequency) understand history. Yet, how do these texts ultimately accomplish such a goal? Does a magical realist historical interpretation literally change reading patterns and revise popular understanding, or simply take issue with the literal record in a creative fashion? Do alternatives to totalizing narratives amount to resistance, and if so, when and against

whom? I began to reread works upon which these revisionary powers had been conferred, asking myself how such theoretical claims for didactic capacity could actually be enacted in practice. In the process, it became apparent that a certain strain or subset of the texts—many of them not the canonical Boom texts from Spanish America or the literature of exhaustion in English America—appears to be literally rewriting the historical record. These texts accomplish this rewriting precisely by incorporating the record and its documentary referents, or appearing to do so, into their own narratives.

This study focuses upon literary texts which seek to expose how documents have been fabricated or misused by the state in English America, Spanish America, and Portuguese America. Several of the texts analyzed are written in post-dictatorship contexts in the Southern Cone, while others are produced during the Civil Rights movement in the United States, although there is no single form of government that is targeted. As Timothy Parrish dramatically suggests, those individuals “who are unaware of the dangers of making fiction equivalent to history are themselves most subject to the most dangerous kinds of lies: those that are passed off as truth by a government whose power largely rests in its ability to employ postmodernist narrative strategies to disenfranchise audiences who naively continue to believe that realism is a viable alternative” (24). Although I will return shortly to the issue of postmodernity that Parrish evokes, it is to the political concerns he identifies that the authors of con-scripts in the Americas address themselves.

By creating fictional documents under the guise of presenting official material, these literary texts provoke several questions: how are “official” documents used to maintain power over groups of people and how can the exposure of such practices act to

better educate individuals for their future engagement with information presented as absolute or official? How do readers interpret information that is disseminated by a perceived source of authority? Can readers learn to consciously question material provided by governments, different forms of media, or historical archives rather than unconsciously accept such forms of discourse as authoritative? Through an ultimately transparent manipulation of text and reader, con-scripts provide didactic opportunities to bridge theoretical claims with tangible strategies of reading.

The importance of the news, print journalism, and television as tools via which governments create national identity while influencing popular beliefs has been popularized by media scholar James Carey, who views media as a means of educating, but also as a form of controlling people through the misrepresentation of information. Surprisingly, one of the most effective ways the above questions—which ask how historical understanding is communicated—can be answered is via a genre that has traditionally commanded less authority than historiography or official depositions: literature. The nine contemporary literary texts I analyze in this study effectively question the objectivity of historiographic representations of the past across cultural borders. The ability to show how false documents, under the guise of what I am labeling con-scripts, are created allows the authors to question blind adherence to official documentation and communication.

The notion of con-script carries with it metaphorical implications, namely the political nature of and a government's role in such a compulsory practice. Though the encounter between reader and text may be violent in literary terms, I do not intend to suggest that these fictional texts are complicit in acts of physical control. In fact, the use

of false documents engages in a type of resistance towards control, as it creates the pretense of authority precisely in order to undermine and yield that power. Through con-scription, the goal of these authors is to avoid “conscripting” the reader into the service of those who have in some cases passed off falsified documents as official, but this is not merely a convenient play on words. On a microcosmic level, a re-visitation of the word “conscript” in order to suggest a distinctive reading is indicative of the very practice that con-scripts utilize to revisit particular moments of the agreed-upon historical record and suggest an alternative reading from the present. As Argentine journalist and novelist Tomás Eloy Martínez explains, authors can combine history and fiction to “correct the future” (1999, 1). In the process of educating readers about various cultures’ histories, the authors I analyze want readers to apply this same critical approach to their own personal and national situations. Like Martínez, who was exiled for his political commentary, several of these authors have witnessed the misuse or suppression of historical events from public knowledge. They include Ivan Ângelo, a Brazilian journalist censored during the dictatorship; Augusto Roa Bastos, a Paraguayan author exiled during the Stroessner dictatorship; and Ishmael Reed, a controversial African-American writer and political activist.

I locate the roots of con-scription in a reading of E.L. Doctorow’s notion of “False Documents,” by which the American writer denotes novels that purport to be nonfiction through claims by the author that she or he is an editor who has only discovered or collected the texts in question. Doctorow believes that literature exists within a privileged position to make claims about official or regime language, since “alone among the arts, literature confuses fact and fiction” (18). An understanding of con-scripts is also shaped

by contemporary theory that champions a break with how history is represented in contemporary fiction. A variety of adjectives has been used in the attempt to characterize this general trend visible over the last four decades in Europe, Africa, and the Americas. While I am indebted to such examples of critical theory for providing the framework from which to reevaluate and contest accepted models of literature and history, I take issue with their practical application. I believe that though con-scripts represent a very specific manifestation of this self-conscious mode of writing, they do not constitute a genre or subgenre necessarily within historical fiction or debates regarding postmodernism, rather an important trend. In *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox* (1980), Linda Hutcheon suggests that self-reflexive texts force a reader to face the responsibility for the text he or she is reading by drawing attention to the reader's active status as a "function implicit in the text" (139). While I feel that it may be presumptuous to claim that a text can teach through its form alone, it certainly can provide the tools of defamiliarization to learn by drawing attention to conditioned approaches and unconscious patterns. Hutcheon distinguishes between overt forms of self-consciousness, which integrate the reader into the text, and covert forms of self-aware narratives, which achieve their effect through "disruption and discontinuity, by disturbing habits of the actual act of reading" (139). It is to the latter approach that the functionality of a majority of con-scripts may be more closely associated, since they involve readers in the illusion of historical reliability in order to actively disavow this illusion. As opposed to overt narrational interruption, covert awareness is a practice evident in both modernist and postmodernist texts; thus, I would suggest that a classification of con-scripts in relation to a particular literary movement is to

misrepresent these texts, or at least to miss their point, which is to avoid singular or totalizing categorizations.

If Hutcheon claims that metafiction can remind the reader of a book's identity as artifice to force an awareness of his/her role in creating that very fictional microcosm, con-scripts are concerned with exposing the artifice of the official texts incorporated into the greater narrative's fabric, while simultaneously suggesting that the historical image that governs these embedded records is not only an artifice, and open to debate, but that it also constitutes a conscious misrepresentation that has ideologically manipulated individuals who have accepted it as fact. While it would be hyperbolic to claim such a process as that which Althusser has defined as an ideological state apparatus, the official historical record certainly constitutes one of the means through which the ideological apparatus disseminates its agenda. In this regard, con-scription is more extreme than the archival fictions and their legalistic discourse that González Echevarría suggests signal a return to historical documents (1993, 184). While such texts may mention literal or figurative archives within their narratives or act themselves as "repositories of knowledge," this does not mean that the manuscripts that serve as their origins are directly represented, for directly representing the contents of the supposed archive acts to mediate even the author's function as archivist, an important additional step. In this regard, the con-script is not a unique phenomenon to the Latin American tradition, although, given the particularly large output of historical fiction (Menton 14), it has a fecund space in which to work.

My juxtaposition of works in three languages—English, Spanish, and Portuguese—from the Americas represents a new type of comparison, one that has been

explored in limited fashion up to this point; the subject of contemporary historical novels has been even less analyzed in this cross-cultural context. The Inter-American approach is designed to highlight similarities across national boundaries rather than support a reductive North-South divide. According to Earl Fitz, a Latin Americanist who has done much to promote Brazilian studies in recent decades within a field that has largely focused upon Spanish language narratives, Inter-American studies represents an “extraordinarily complex new field, one in which very few, if any, of us have formal training” (77). While the phenomenon of the so-called new historical novel has been more closely examined in a Eurocentric context of England, Portugal, and Spain, its New World equivalents have received relatively little attention. Fitz points to the continued under-representation of critical attention regarding Latin American literature on a global level, but within this paucity locates Brazilian literature as particularly under-analyzed even within Latin American Studies. That said, while he stresses the importance of difference that exists between nations and regions of Latin America (in a gesture separate from that of Homi Bhabha’s location of cultural resistance), I will stress thematic similarity within this study, replacing questions of geography with questions of form and intention. Fitz’s championing of distinct literary histories has much to do with his agenda for carving out a space for Brazilian comparatists, yet this is burden is also a consequence of recognizing, and thus maintaining, an opposition between Spanish and Portuguese literary production, rather than working to erase this division.

I am indebted to a number of Inter-American studies completed within the last decade, such as Zamora’s *The Usable Past*, Juan-Navarro’s *Archival Reflections*, and González Echevarría’s *Myth and Archive*, as well as Nina M. Scott’s 1980 article “Inter-

American Literature: An Antidote to the Arrogance of Culture,” notable as one of the first attempts to call attention to the lack of critical work in the field. These studies, nevertheless, have focused upon two languages at the expense of a third, either engaging with English American and Spanish American texts or Spanish and Portuguese comparisons. In the spirit of Henri Lefebvre, who values conceptual relations in triadic form, noting that “[r]elations with [only] two elements boil down to oppositions, contrasts or antagonisms” (73-4), all three languages of production will be provided equal space in the following analyses.

My motivation for evaluating texts across linguistic borders in the Americas is distinct from those professed by Zamora and Scott. While Scott seeks out similar historical events in Spanish and English America relating to colonization and the struggle for independence, as well as parallel thematic developments in the literatures, Zamora purposefully corrupts Harold Bloom’s phraseology to analyze the underlying condition of an “anxiety of origins” which she believes underlies the American (i.e., Hispanophone and Anglophone) imagination of history (1997, 5). Though I agree with Zamora that the “relative scarcity” of Inter-American comparative studies creates difficulty in establishing bases for comparison, I take issue with her assertion that the political and social purposes of American literary production are not in some form parallel. Yet mine is a claim about contemporary literary production; I am not interested in suggesting a point of origin or a path of return via con-scription. Instead, I present these texts as constitutive of, and also contained by, a larger process of representation and didacticism that is continually evolving and shifting in form—quite literally. As the Argentine subject matter of United States author Jay Cantor’s *The Death of Che Guevara* explores in the

first example of con-scription demonstrates, the con-script is not merely a postcolonial project with an agenda to reclaim the past of a particular region or country, but it is interested in commenting upon political conditions in the Americas as a whole.

In order to accommodate an inclusive theoretical approach, the con-script will be subdivided into particular instances of the inclusion of false documents, under the aegis of which individual texts will be grouped. Specifically, these divisions include texts which purport to be written diaries of historical leaders, texts which adopt the techniques and forms of print media, and texts which incorporate alleged archival research. I do not claim these subdivisions as typologies, nor would I suggest that they represent an exhaustive account of the manner in which the con-script manifests itself. Rather, this study represents the first step toward analyzing didactic historical fiction outside a context purely of its classification, additionally focusing upon its shared methodology in terms of deconstructing the notion of authoritative historical documentation.

Even as this study professes to explore a plurality of regions and literary traditions, by virtue of the insistence upon an integrated form and a political agenda, I fully recognize there is no little irony that the denomination of con-scription excludes many canonical works of historical fiction, old and new, which may take issue with the historical record through other, equally viable means (Jorge Luis Borges, a keystone for almost any study to deal with self-reflexive texts in twentieth century Latin America, is absent because of his relatively minor interest in political expression, despite his use of apocryphal footnotes and appropriation of scientific models). At the same time, identifying a mode of writing such as the con-script is not meant to generate definitions of historical fiction, rather to highlight internal trends. Following antecedent definitions

of British and American historical fiction, Seymour Menton uses the qualification of historical distance to disqualify texts from contention as historical novels. By examining concerns shared across fictional and nonfictional traditions, I have attempted not to exclude texts based upon arbitrary judgments of historical distance from the author's lived experience, while remaining aware that my definitions of what constitutes the actively political prove less are subjective and subject to contestation.

It is more productive to speak of con-scripts as historicized fiction, rather than historical fiction. While many of the texts analyzed in this study focus upon events in the twentieth century, or utilize past events to refer to the contemporary moment, what ultimately unifies texts of con-scription is the evaluation of historical practices as political actions via the appropriations of the conventions of professional and official writing. Thus, to reiterate earlier theoretical distinctions, no doubt elements and strategies of the postmodern and the postcolonial can be "discovered" within these works, but it is a concern with (historical) discourses of power that provides a medium for cross-cultural dialogue.

### **History and Literature: Rhetoric(s) of Documentation**

Without prior warning or subsequent contextualization, Joy Kogawa ends her fictionalized account of Japanese-Canadian internment during World War II in *Obasan* (1981) by reproducing an excerpt from a nonfictional document, the 1946 memorandum sent by the Cooperative Committee on Japanese Canadians to the House and the Senate. The document, which compares the Canadian Government to a Nazi regime, attests to the

fact that the social and racial issues represented in the novel had at the time of publication yet to be either addressed or redressed by the Canadian State at the time of the book's publication. By appearing as an unmarked postscript of sorts, the signed memorandum serves doubly as the final voice within the text as well as an authoritative source that ultimately lends credence to the rhetorical case Kogawa makes for this silenced, and as a consequence, largely forgotten, moment in twentieth century.

Yet the appearance of documents need not corroborate the claim to accurately represent the past. The documented diaries of Christopher Columbus serve as a source for taking issue with the authority of the historical record; the mythical status accorded the "first narrator" of the New World is revisited in several works from both North and South America, such as Alejo Carpentier's *El arpa y la sombra* (1974), Stephen Marlowe's *The Memoirs of Christopher Columbus*, (1987), and Augusto Roa Bastos' *Vigilia del Almirante* (1992), the last example conspicuously published to coincide with the Quincentennial celebration of Columbus' first arrival. Instead of appealing to documentary sources to validate their projects, the three authors incorporate actual segments of the historical figure's diary into their narratives in order to subvert Columbus' mythological status within the historical record. In a distinct move from Kogawa's usage, here the historical document is presented in order to be contested, so that its narrative and subjective status may be highlighted, suggesting a shifting understanding of the role of the document, both in terms of its use within historiography as well as within fiction, as questions of reverence give way to questions of representation—whose story is history, or rather, accepted history, and by what discursive processes are events canonized within the agreed-upon depiction of the past?

Indeed, for Nicholas Branch, Don DeLillo's fictional archivist writing the history of Kennedy's assassination in *Libra* (1988), documents have become a prison-house, a never ending flow of paper, film footage, histories, and even the irrelevant dental records of Jack Ruby or samples of Oswald's pubic hair, such that his career in paper ironically weighs heavily upon him. In a literary form of Zeno's paradox, Branch must analyze all available documents before he can write the authoritative history, yet he will never be able to sift through all the material, as new documents are constantly being brought in. His task cannot reach its conclusion, since once a file has been opened, "it's just a matter of time until the material comes pouring in: notes, lists, photos, rumors. Every bit and piece and whisper in the world that doesn't have a life until someone comes along to collect it" (143). What is notable here is that the process of archiving and collecting information, one that DeLillo as an author has also undergone, becomes thematized in the work. This overt thematization, as well as supposed excerpts of Oswald's personal writing, make *Libra* a form of con-script. The government historian, unable to piece together the "truth" after twenty five years, exists in a very similar position to DeLillo, although it would be a mistake to read the character as a persona of DeLillo himself.

The attitude that DeLillo's characters display is representative of a relative "democratization" in recent years of what is considered to constitute a document. Fernando Aínsa claims that "[e]l documento ya no es únicamente el texto escrito. Son considerados documentos los iconos, gráficos, graffitis, publicidad y todo tipo de soportes visuales" (2003, 60-1), virtually everything that has been produced by humans in relation to a particular moment. This in turn reflects changing attitudes about what constitutes an archive, which in a digital age is no longer a closed museum space of texts.

Yet, in addition to spatial redefinition, the archive may also constitute nontraditional or unofficial forms of collections. While a changing attitude may be extant in critical studies, or perhaps as a consequence of this new awareness, Dominick LaCapra has professed concern that historians continue to privilege the documentary model of historiography, which would exclude the more freely connotative associations that Aínsa names. Instead, according to LaCapra, historians define and value documents in a very narrow sense, adhering to

an explicit or implicit hierarchy among sources whereby a preferential position is accorded to seemingly direct informational documents such as bureaucratic reports, wills, registers, diaries, eye-witness accounts, and so forth. If other texts are treated at all they are reduced to elements that are either redundant or merely supplementary (and, if not checked against “hard” data, purely suggestive), with respect to privileged “informational” documents. The narrowly documentary use of sources helps to account for the marginalization of intellectual history in the discipline and for its adaptation to a conception of research that ill suits it, since its “artifacts” pose the most blatant resistance to narrowly documentary readings. (1985, 18)

The claim that historiographic texts are in fact “literary artifacts” is precisely what Hayden White has attempted to introduce to the field via conceptions of what he first labeled metahistory. What both LaCapra’s and White’s claims share in common is a prescription for the importance of professional awareness of contemporary historiography’s textual and subjective nature, since in narrativizing the past in an attempt to give meaning to past events, historians must inevitably impose their own interpretations, and thus concoct stories, despite overtures to objectivity. On the literary side of the divide, what writers such as DeLillo, Carpentier, and Roa Bastos share in common is a prescribed awareness that historical documents are textual. In order to accomplish this, known documents themselves appear within the authors’ fictions. In

fact, as a sign of this greater awareness of the textuality of the historical record, fiction has become noticeably more metatextual itself, as the process or practice of writing texts manifests itself more and more frequently as the subject of the author's own text. In other words, the texts become an archive of the archive.

The unequal weight with which historiography and fiction are regarded is perhaps most evident in the approach both fields take towards their contested relationship. Literary critics have expended considerable energy to prove the validity of fiction in relation to history, whereas historians have rarely felt the obligation to profess the importance of history in comparison to literature, precisely because its own status as nonfiction has accorded it a certain prestige in cultural terms. Literary critics have attempted a reclamation within recent decades, suggesting that the very critique used to downplay the importance of historical fiction, namely its lack of objectivity in comparison to the rigor of scientific historicism, in fact allows fiction to claim a superior position precisely because of its overt subjectivity, which removes it from the problematic conventions and assumptions of objectivity and form which dominate historical writing. A number of theories of historical fiction have been explored in both Anglophone and Hispanophone criticism, although the war still seems to be largely one-sided, and a separate question—how exactly this new literary awareness successfully combats these assumptions on a popular level removed from academia, moving from theory to epistemological practice—is difficult to ascertain. Ultimately, if literature rhetorically seeks to differentiate itself, while simultaneously still attempting to hold itself up to the same standards of authority that historiography maintains, it inhabits a paradoxical position that compromises the very privileged identity it seeks to valorize.

LaCapra notes that if “the novel is read at all in history, it is typically because it may be employed as a source telling us something factual about the past. Its value is in its referential functions...its representation of social life, its characters, its themes, and so forth. In a word, the novel is pertinent to historical research to the extent that it may be converted into useful knowledge or information” (125). Noé Jitrik gives the name “encyclopedist historical novel” to such texts that display a documentary nature that allows them later to become utilized as “authentic” records, more so for the scientific value of their direct observations than for any developed historical discourse, per se (2005, 80). The problem with historians reading literature in the narrow sense that they would a document, although to the opposite extreme, according to LaCapra, is that “[l]iterature becomes redundant when it tells us what can be gleaned from other documentary sources” (126), for literature is paradoxically most superfluous when its suggestive or dramatic capacity for imagination is bracketed in favor of its literal interpretation or representation of known documents. Though inclusion of period-contemporary literature may inform the New Historicist approach, it does not mean that literature is literally taken as an equivalent of the historical record in official settings. The case of Kogawa’s *Obasan* being read and presented as a document within the Canadian Senate’s hearings for redress concerning the treatment of Japanese-Canadians is very much an exception, rather than a standard.

Foucault notes this tendency two decades earlier in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* when he claims that “in our time, history is that which transforms *documents* into *monuments*” (7; emphasis in original), drawing a line between historiography’s appeal to stable structures and the discontinuity favored by those who study the history of

ideas—i.e., philosophy, literature—a history of ideas that “evades” the method of historians. Thus, LaCapra’s challenges against a lack of awareness by historians of their own rhetoric, as well as their narrow insistence upon documentary sources as the only valid sources of study, represent a recurrent concern within historical writing.

Yet, this problem of textual authority has developed into a strategic approach in recent or “new” historical fiction, which uses the authority of perceived document sources to take issue with the historical record, using documents as a form of rhetoric. While in historiography the practice of providing for the reader the documentation consulted may be customary or expected, in literature the inclusion of documents constitutes a form of interdisciplinary intertextuality, a mode of defamiliarization. In the hands of fiction writers, a transference occurs when the document is taken out of a historical context and presented as reworkable con-text. Such a device allows Carpentier, Marlowe, and Roa Bastos to rewrite both Columbus’ words and Columbus himself, for example. These texts no longer follow the traditional model of historical fiction that seeks to explain the processes that lead to conclusions in already known events, but instead seek to explain the process by which we accord value to certain types of historical writing. Rather than attempt to recreate physical events according to a positivist model, these authors see historical writing and the historical texts themselves as events. In this fashion, the above authors enact what Steven Connor refers to generally as “a distinction between *historical* and *historicized* fiction, between fiction about history and fiction about its own historically relative construction of history” (143).

What provides this effect in the case of inserted examples from the official record? The answer is not surprising: the same processes that historians engage in.

Documents in the narrow sense of the word—bureaucratic reports, diaries, wills, memoirs, etc.—are accorded more authority by readers who associate them with fact, as opposed to the idea of invention associated with fiction. In the case of Columbus’ diaries’ manipulation into historicized fiction, this sleight of hand is possible because we do read documents in a narrow sense, attributing to them the authority of the official record, a history which is not often considered as open to debate. Capitalizing upon the importance we place upon understood documents, authors have begun to confuse readers’ perceptions by juxtaposing official documents with the creation of false or fictional documents that present themselves as “real.” Via the process of exposing the illusion, the authors force a questioning of what separates the two types of “history.” As the compiler in Roa Bastos’ *Vigilia del Almirante* concludes of failed attempts to locate the truth in Columbus’ writings, “Tal es la diferencia que existe entre las historias documentadas y las historias fingidas que no se apoyan en otros documentos que no sean los símbolos. Las dos son géneros de ficción mixta; solo difieren en los principios y en los métodos” (78). Such a generated confusion is perhaps all the more appropriate in this instance given that the originals of Columbus’ diaries no longer exist; the accepted version that historians have to work with is in fact a copy made, and edited, by Father Bartolomé de las Casas, calling into question any notion of an original document.

An important side note is necessary here in the context of Roa Bastos’ comment, which is certainly aware of its own embedded rhetoric in addition to the obvious rhetoric it professes. Such a confusion of fiction and history, or rather an assertion of the similarities of their craft, has been viewed by critics of the last several decades as indicative of a new attitude. The New Historical Novel has been distinguished from

traditional and classic forms of the genre through its insistence upon intertextuality of previous literature and official history, but also for its insistence upon the discontinuities of history rather than a single, knowable metanarrative. New Historical Novels highlight the impossibility of narrating a “true” form of events, a blurring of history and fiction to suggest that all forms of history are subjective linguistic constructions. While recent British historical fiction has been well-documented, few studies of the New Historical Novel in South America and even fewer in North America exist. Seymour Menton has made claims regarding a type of New Historical Novel that is particular to Latin America, but his definition is ultimately distinct more in terms of its formalism, which excludes many other forms of New Historical Novel from analysis via its narrow understanding of historical distance.

Critical interpretations of new historical fiction bring up two important concerns. The first has to do with the disconnect between debate and practice. Scholars continue to claim the transformative powers of such novels upon readers, as the discovery of the fictional dimension of official texts, ostensibly perceived to be objective, is hailed as a liberating act. That said, most critical approaches to this new form of historical fiction do not explain how such a new state of mind is reached, nor do they take into account the role of fiction within their arguments. Much of the explored intertextuality in fact exists purely between literary sources. While this process highlights the interconnectedness of the written word, the act of borrowing and impossibility of originality that Borges championed in his short stories, it does not necessarily propose an alternative approach to interpreting official texts—again, this is because literature does not carry official historical weight in the same way that recognized works of history do. The chorus is

unified in its assertion that historical texts are not transparent or objective, yet what do we do with this knowledge? How can texts communicate this next step? Within this greater rubric of new historical fiction, however, there is a particular type of novel that utilizes official documents, or fictions impersonating official documents—defined in the narrow sense that LaCapra notes as carrying the most critical weight—in order to include the reader in the process of deconstruction: the con-script.

Robert Parrish touches upon this second concern—that of inclusion—when he characterizes the relationship between popular and critical reactions towards postmodern history and fiction:

Certainly, for most Americans, history is not what academics write for other academics. If history is to be found in books, it will be sought in books that are far removed from the kinds of intellectual debates I have been rehearsing but that are perhaps not far from having the kind of appeal that Sir Walter Scott held for nineteenth-century readers. Popular works of American history such as Walter Isaacson's *Benjamin Franklin* (2003), Joseph Elli's *Founding Brothers* (2000), or David McCullough's *John Adams* (2001) are read by hundreds of thousands of Americans, and their message is reinforced on television networks such as C-Span and the History Channel. Such works appear blissfully unaware that the authenticity of narrative history has been challenged from any postmodern theoretical perspective. (15)

This characterization is instructive, although not necessarily for the reasons that Parrish intends. Parrish offers this description as an indictment of the historians who have created bestselling pop-narratives, as well as of the audience that has been conditioned to unproblematically accept these grand narratives, but perhaps his evaluation says more about the insular nature of critical concerns and the general inability of academics to effectively reach larger audiences, thus critical distinctions of new versus classic historical fiction do not seem to exercise incredible influence over a writing industry

geared towards producing popular texts. Fiction can communicate to larger audiences than criticism, but not all texts labeled postmodern are successful at reaching that audience, nor communicating the supposed subversive revisionism that critics would impart upon them. Parrish's interests lie within championing postmodern fiction as a means of countering the current practice of history. As I noted earlier, the attribute of self-reflexivity that con-scripts demonstrate is not a uniquely postmodern development; overt self-awareness also exists within modernist literature, and, according to Bernd Engler, has been present to various degrees in American fiction since the end of the seventeenth century (27). Indeed, although postmodernist texts seek to react to the realism of early modernist texts, it should be kept in mind that before realism became accepted as literary convention, these modernist texts were themselves a reaction to and critique of romanticism. What is at stake here in both modernism and postmodernism then is a reaction to convention, and it is within this particular frame that the con-script is located. Scholars who suggest that postmodernism poses a damning attack upon historiography often fail to distinguish that postmodernism and postmodern fiction are not one and the same. Ironically, while postmodern art attempts to privilege the common, to erase borders of high and low, and to de-center controlling hegemonies in favor of those individuals or ideas at the margin, postmodern criticism continues to largely focus upon the work of central figures: Lyotard, Jameson, Foucault, etc. Con-scripts, especially those by Susan Daitch, Aguinaldo Silva, and Francisco Simón, represent both elements of postmodern and modern writing strategies, but more importantly, as popular texts that inscribe a form of theorizing into their own narratives, they can both be didactic and reach larger audiences. In doing so, these con-scripts exploit the confusion of removing

the “safeguards of convention” that has its origins in the sixteenth century—which is to say, well before the advent of either modernism or postmodernism—as Bruce

Wardropper explains:

By the sixteenth century fiction, whether in poetry or prose, was unequivocally called lying... The poetic mode, since it was expressly designed for this pleasant lying, at least deceived no one. Prose, however, the vehicle for legal documents, for sermons, for history, was considered to have been abused by those who made it carry the falsehood of fiction. The dangers contained in fictional prose were greater. How was the reader of prose to know when the historian, or story-teller, was telling a truth or a lie? A reader is more easily misled when the safeguards of convention have been removed. (83)

### **Doctorow’s Primacy of False Documents**

In his article “False Documents,” U.S. author E.L. Doctorow lauds the ability of fiction to interact with the reader in a fashion that discourses of reality cannot, since in the former “instructive emotion is generated in the reader from the illusion of suffering an experience not his own” (16). Associating the emotional connections that literature offers with the ability to offer a vision of human freedom is not particularly novel; how Doctorow envisions this process being fashioned certainly is. He distinguishes between two forms of power in language: the power of the regime and the power of freedom. The first type of language, pertaining to and emanating from the regime, bears a striking similarity to “discourse” in the sense that Foucault has introduced. Doctorow maintains that in

a society language is conceived primarily as the means by which facts are communicated. Language is seen as a property of facts themselves—their persuasive property. We are taught that the facts are to be distinguished from feeling and that feeling is what we are permitted for our rest and

relaxation when the facts get us down. This is the bias of scientific method and empiricism by which the world reveals itself and gives itself over to our control insofar as we recognize the primacy of fact-reality.” (17)

The power of the regime is tied to traditional realism, Doctorow suggests, and he suggests that fiction is seen as an inferior mode of writing, because fiction is associated with invention, falsity, and lies, rather than creativity and freedom. In a Marxist gesture, Doctorow explains that any entity that governs or controls acts out of self-interest, for it must seek to maintain that power; thus discourses associated with the state—those of politicians, journalists, historians—employ the authority of fact within their writing, despite “fact” being a human construct. The power of freedom in language is also a human construct, but one that is transparent in its mediation. Doctorow maintains that he is “justified in giving a political character to the nonfictive and fictive uses of language because there is conflict between them” (17).

Turning to an indirect explication of the role of the power of freedom within writing, Doctorow looks at two foundational fictions,<sup>1</sup> Cervantes’ *Don Quixote* (1605) and Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), which he sees as primary examples of “false documents,” a phrase he attributes to poet Kenneth Rexroth. In both novels, not coincidentally the first examples from their respective Spanish and English traditions, the author claims to have only discovered or edited the manuscripts—in other words, they are literary executors disassociated from the work. Readers need not necessarily be fooled by the device for it to be effective, Doctorow points out. The act of confusing fact and fiction is important in and of itself, for

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<sup>1</sup> In the English American tradition, Henry Adams’ *The Education of Henry Adams* could also serve as an example, although Doctorow does not reference additional texts.

the most important trials in our history, those which reverberate in our lives and have most meaning for our future, are those in which the judgment is called into question: Scopes, Sacco and Vanzetti, and the Rosenbergs. Facts are buried, exhumed, deposed, contradicted, recanted. There is a decision by the jury and, when the historical and prejudicial context of the decision is examined, a subsequent judgment by history. (23)

He refers to facts as merely images of history, and his notion that facts can only exist after meaning has been conferred upon them, borrowed from Nietzsche, parallels Hayden White's claims in "The Historical Text as Literary Artifact" that historians must employ the techniques of literature in order to give plots which structure historical narratives, albeit in slightly more dramatic terms: "As clowns in the circus imitate the aerialists and tightrope walkers, first for laughs and then so that it can be seen that they do it better, we have it in us to compose false documents more valid, more real, more truthful than the "true" documents of the politicians or the journalists or the psychologists" (26). This freedom arises from the fiction writer's putative independence from institutions of power. It is from this understanding of false documents that my concept of con-scripts is delineated, though it proceeds in a somewhat different direction. As Doctorow admits, "[E]very fiction is a false document in that compositions of words are not life. But I speak specifically of the novelist's act of creative disavowal by which the text he offers takes on some additional authority because he did not write it, or latterly because he claims it was impossible to do" (20). Within recent fiction, however, certain texts have presented themselves as false documents or texts harboring false documents, not to create additional authority, but precisely to break models of authority set forth by regimes of power, including their own. Doctorow is frequently associated with postmodernism; his work has been claimed for the same reasons by proponents of new historical fiction or

historiographic metafiction, even if the particular labels change depending upon the critic. Nevertheless, definitions of the con-script are not primarily concerned with distinctions between modernism and postmodernism. While the use of con-scripts represents a marked shift in awareness within historical fiction, as a practice it does not coincide perfectly with proposed rubrics of the new historical novel, despite certain areas of overlap. Before attempting to distinguish between the two writing modes, therefore, it is important to establish differences between classical conceptions and practices of historical fiction and contemporary developments.

### **Project Inscription**

Bearing in mind LaCapra's concerns regarding narrow interpretations of documents, I point out that there exist varying degrees of false documents within con-scripts. I prescribe an approach to the different types of embedded texts that allows for a free definition of the document, without allowing the false document to become an ambiguous metaphor whose authority is purely conceptual, rather than establishing its physical presence. How to categorize the insertion of false documents represents its own challenge. While some texts may include portions of official records or newspaper accounts, other texts may present themselves as entire documents, as in the case of apocryphal journals. Epistolary novels and diary fiction, types of writing that in some cases predate the novel, also present themselves as found documents, but there is an important distinction. On the one hand, it is important to historicize con-cription as a process that is not new, or certainly has had a history of literary antecedents. Just as metafiction is not a recent phenomenon, but has become more prominent in popular

culture in recent years, so too has the method and the style of texts which purport to present “real” documents shifted in contemporary writing. On the other hand, while many texts invent authors of the supposed diaries, non-historical figures in the formulation of Lukács—Puerto Rican author Ana Lída Vega’s “El buál de Miss Florence” from *Falsas crónicas del sur* (1992) provides a telling example”—an important element of con-scripts is the self-reference to known historical agents and officially recognized documentation. Thus, the apocryphal journals whose comparison constitutes Part One of the text all are supposedly written by recognized revolutionaries/dissidents or dictators, and more importantly, claim to be continuations of personal writings and memoirs these individuals are known to have written, hence they are examples of “con-fessing.” A second type of con-script, a “mediation of media,” is characterized by the insertion of fragments of media documents into the narrative. And a third form we may refer to as works aimed at “con-founding” notions of historical primacy wherein texts purportedly taken directly from historical archives serve as intertexts. The distinctions are not exclusive, but rather symbiotic; in fact, despite the apparently distinct approaches of the authors, significant overlap between the texts in the three categories becomes evident.

Within Part One, “Historical Context of Inter-American Historical Fiction” provides a brief overview and survey of the historical novel’s separate development in English America, Spanish America, and Portuguese America. The next chapter, “A Didactic Genre?: Critical Theory Overview and the Power of the Past,” transitions to a survey and critique of contemporary theory about the intersection of historiography and literature, most notably metahistory, the understanding of memory, historiographic metafiction, New Historicism, and interpretations of the role of the archive. I will suggest

how the use of false documents both dialogues with and departs from the respective theories, and how this can in turn shift interpretations of the power of fiction, both in terms of its informative capacity as well as its ability to create ruptures in a past that is seen as set in stone and which forms the bedrock of contemporary politics.

In the subsequent sections, the three above-mentioned types of con-script mentioned above are explored. Part Two, “The Art of Con-Fessing: Demythologizing the Revolutionary Icon,” begins the comparative approach of juxtaposing texts from North America, Spanish America, and Portuguese America that will continue in the following sections with Jay Cantor’s *The Death of Che Guevara* (1983), Augusto Roa Basto’s *Yo el Supremo* (1974), and Silviano Santiago’s *Em Liberdade* (1982). Here the false documents are the works themselves, apocryphal diaries supposedly written by revolutionary leaders and writers. The authors attempt to demythologize figures that have become untouchable in the eyes of the public by questioning the historical figures’ roles in political change through the gaps in their “own” personal writing.

Part Three, “Mediations of Media,” features texts which question the role of print and visual journalism within the construction of national identity during times of political corruption; the false documents appear in the form of newspaper clippings, magazine articles and media images. All three texts are written by ex-journalists who faced censorship and even death threats (in the case of Martínez) from the governments they criticize. Ivan Ângelo in *A Festa* (1976) and Tomás Eloy Martínez in *La novela de Perón* (1985) both explore the effects of state censorship of journalism upon the various strata of society. Ishmael Reed’s *Mumbo Jumbo* (1972) also explores the relationship between the government, media and conceptions of race. Reed uses quotations, newspaper

clippings, as well as anachronistic visual images. Although supposedly chronicling racism in the 1920s, these insertions ultimately act as a commentary upon the civil rights movement of the 1960s.

Part Four, “Con-Founding the Archive: Rewriting Authority” deals with the powers that store and control information as themselves constitutive of a will to power in Aguinaldo Silva’s *No Pais das Sombras* (1979), Francisco Simón’s *El informe Mancini* (1984), and Susan Daitch’s *L.C.* (1986) In this form of con-scription, not only falsified or invented archival material acts to create the illusion of scholarly production, of which the process of gathering is complicated and interrogated, but also the practice of archival research is interrogated. The texts paradoxically utilize the authority of the archive to rewrite official versions of history, which they accomplish through focusing upon the act of writing. The three texts studied features archival material being explicitly rewritten and reshaped to fit political (and personal) purposes.

The above list of authors points to an important concern that should be addressed, namely imbalance of representation of female authors. As Diana Wallace has pointed out in *The Woman’s Historical Novel*, the role of female writers in the development of the historical novel has been largely overlooked since its inception, and despite critics’ neglect of this area, historical fiction has been one of the most important genres for women writers and readers in the twentieth century (3). My own study has attempted to avoid gender-bias, employing formalistic criteria. While studies of both classical and new historical fiction have tended towards a phallogentric focus, perhaps as a result of a traditionally male-dominated publishing world, there have been numerous recognized female authors of new historical fiction in Latin America with the last two decades, such

as Mexico's Carmen Boullosa or Brazil's Ana Miranda. In European contexts, examples of con-scription written by women authors are numerous. The journalistic forms, newspaper clippings, and intersections embedded fiction of Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* (1962), often associated with the start of second-wave feminism, form a telling example (the book's influence upon Daitch's *L.C.* is visible from the latter's intertextual allusions). In Portugal, Lúcia Jorge has become one of the nation's most important authors through her historical fiction, with texts like *A Costa dos Murmúrios* (1984) displaying elements of con-scription. As an informative survey of western European female historical fiction, Biruté Ciplijauskaitė's "Nuevas perspectivas sobre la Historia" in *La novela femenina contemporánea (1970-1985)* stands as an important critical work.

I have been forced to make difficult choices, for many important works utilize recognized documents, but do not necessarily insert con-scripts. American author Joan Didion's politically themed *Democracy* (1984), for example, displays meta-awareness of journalistic processes, although Didion notes in her narrative that the work is a novel rather than a historical document. The same goes for Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead* (1991), which does not attempt to present the eponymous almanac or its fragments that appear in the text as official documents, although the novel raises very interesting questions about the process of archiving. In Canada, Joy Kogawa in *Obasan* and Maxine Hong Kingston in *China Men* both employ actual documents within their texts, while in Mexico and Chile Elena Poniatowska and Diamela Eltit incorporate documents and oral testimonies directly into their work. Nevertheless, these documents are intended to be representative of their historical moments (and in the case of oral testimonies, highlight the voices of those unrecognized by official history), rather than

subvert the role or call into question the transparency of documentation. While such a practice valorizes the power of official texts, of these examples it is Susan Daitch's *L.C.* in particular that exposes the potential dangers of ascribing authority to archival materials—whether within feminist or male dominated contexts—a danger that is neither fictitious nor false.

I began this introduction by referring to the con-script in relation to the act of military conscription and the notion of conning or falsifying, yet I want to point out the potential value of an additional aspect of the word “script” when considered in conjunction with the nine literary texts analyzed in this dissertation. In their presentation of documents, fragmented or whole, these novels do not simply reproduce or parody the style of official texts, but they also necessarily refer to their process of written construction. In many cases, they attempt to represent this process either by showing the effects of editing upon an “original” or by juxtaposing distinct versions of manipulated information to highlight difference. It is the coexistence of self-reflexivity and thematization of that textual self-reflexivity that characterizes the scripting nature of the con-script.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF INTER-AMERICAN HISTORICAL FICTION

Philip Swanson points out that the appellation “new” has often been applied to categorize Latin American writing, although he highlights the problematic aspects of such a practice, since such categorizations are based on assumptions regarding the so-called Boom, the sudden explosion of Latin American literature within the international consciousness starting in the 1960s and 1970s. How can the “new” be distinguished from the “old,” or, perhaps even more importantly, how to define the “old”? Swanson’s explication bears importance for texts outside of Latin America as well: “to some extent, what is new about the ‘new’ novel is not its content. This would seem to suggest that the ‘newness’ of modern Latin American fiction is largely a matter of form. Yet formal experimentation is usually justified on the grounds of the ‘newness’ of content” (5). Indeed, formal experimentation in the latter half of the twentieth century is not unique to Latin American letters. Even more than content, form is important to texts that engage in con-scription, for it is its appropriation of existing nonfiction genres and tropes that allows its impact to be felt. Seymour Menton, in his definition of Latin America’s New Historical Novel, does not focus upon formal elements in identifying characteristics of the subgenre. Several of the characteristics that he identifies are not particularly “new,” but their foregrounding by both authors and critics certainly is, among these the move

away from traditional realism and the turn to intertextuality, metafiction, and the carnivalesque. These terms represent several shifts in emphasis in critical theory coterminous with the rise of the new historical novel, and they provide important points of reference for any text seeking to distinguish itself from categorizations of newness as well.

Before shifting to an exploration of contemporary theorizations regarding historiography and literature, it will be useful to trace briefly the development of the historical novel, from its origins in Europe to its renovation in the Americas. Such an overview will contextualize the application and validity of general conceptual frameworks upon individual texts and traditions, both from critics as well as from writers themselves, for the appellation “new” in relation to Latin American narrative owes as much to Carlos Fuentes’ manifesto, *La nueva novela hispanoamericana* (1972), as it does to any retroactive critical intervention.

### **The Classic and New Historical Novel in Europe**

A distinction within the Anglophone tradition between the novel and the romance has characterized the designated level of authority assigned to historical fiction. In other words, while the primary goal of the historical romance is seen as entertainment by virtue of freeing the reader from inhibitions and preoccupations through stock situations and stereotyped characters (Hughes 2), the didactic dimension of historical writing as the historical novel has long been claimed by critics as a dominant value in the genre. Referring to the fact that Mussolini forbade women to read history at university-level,

Diana Wallace suggests that “a knowledge of history... has the potential to be dangerously subversive” (2005, 2). This is true from the inception of the historical novel, often credited to Sir Walter Scott in his 1814 work *Waverley* (although multiple scholars have suggested that lesser known male and female authors alike deserve the honor). However, while Scott suggested that there were lessons to be learned from the past, his successors “tended to be more explicit than Scott as to what those messages from the past might be” (Orel 29). Much of this message was communicated through an insistence upon a mimetic representation of the past, an attempt to reach the “truth” of general events via characterizations of specific events and individuals.

Despite its unabashedly Eurocentric impulses, Georg Lukács’ *The Historical Novel* (first published in 1937) is seen as a touchstone of criticism upon the eponymous genre of writing. Applying a Marxist reading, Lukács suggests that prior to the nineteenth century, texts used history as a form of superficial costumery; there was no attempt to visualize the specific qualities of their age historically. It was the French Revolution, in conjunction with the fall of Napoleon, “which for the first time made history a *mass experience*, and moreover on a European scale” (23, italics in original), providing the historical awareness necessary for historical fiction to flourish. Lukács therefore connects ideology with the historical novel from its inception, a beginning he traces to Sir Walter Scott’s *Waverley* (1814), which combines the realist social novel with a project of nation-building. If Scott’s Italian contemporary Alessandro Manzoni was already proclaiming the historical novel’s days numbered in 1850, its survival may well be a consequence of such inherently ideological processes, as parallel developments in the Americas would suggest.

Yet, in addition to claiming a social and sociological reading of the historical novel in Europe, Lukács prescribed issues of narrative formation of the classical historical novel as well. Rather than involving what Hegel characterized as the “world-historical individual,” recognized or central historical agents, Lukács suggests that classical historical fiction is peopled with minor historical characters or even fictionalized individuals, so that the focus may remain upon the collective social description. In both cases, Lukács is interested in the rhetorical effects of the novel’s discourse— although he does not use such specific terminology—upon the reader as a form of creating historical consciousness. While strictures regarding form have largely disappeared as historical fiction has developed, it would seem that its function has remained largely intact, even as the ideology disseminated has vacillated between nationalism and individualism.

This notion of the didactic value of historical fiction has undergone a shift in recent decades in response to what has been termed the “new” or “other” historical novel (Aínsa, 1991; Ciplijauskaitė, 1988; Menton, 1993; Scanlan, 1990). The birth of this “new” historical novel in the latter half of the twentieth century should not be confused with the revival of the genre at the end of the nineteenth century after several decades of waning popularity, a phenomenon which has also been labeled the “new historical novel” (Orel 1). This latter notion of new refers to a renewal of interest, rather than any particularly new development within the genre, whereas the new historical novel of the last three decades is so-called for its radical departure from traditional realist narratives via a foregrounding of structural and linguistic experimentation (Menton 14).

While critics still claim a didactic “space” for this fiction, the standards have changed. Instead of attempting to mimetically represent visions of the past in terms of

creating a “true” version, texts have begun to look to disrupt such a metanarrative approach, instead self-reflexively focusing on the problems (and some would say, impossibility) of such a representation. While the historical novel in the 1800s is associated with nationalism, these recent novels have fragmented any collective approach, often calling officially sanctioned or national narratives into question. Though issues of representation became far more salient in the academic world with the rise of notions of metahistory or postmodern challenges of history after the 1960s, the phenomenon bears certain similarities to that of metafiction, which has also been associated with a postmodern turn. While suddenly exploding in number, neither phenomenon is unique to the contemporary age. As Scanlan points out, quoting Hans Vilmar Geppert’s critical study of the genre, “there was always an ‘other historical novel’: skeptical, ironic, and ‘discontinuous,’ seeking to exploit rather than cover up the boundaries between history and fiction (3). To that end, Scanlan sees William Makepeace Thackeray’s *Vanity Fair* (1847) as the paradigmatic text of otherness, which appeared in the generation following Sir Walter Scott’s, but she believes that contemporary British fiction represents a rebirth of the “skeptical and critical historical novel” that Thackeray created (6).

One thing that all critics seem to agree upon in terms of this development is that it “emphasizes the difficulties of knowing the truth about the past” (12). But again, this is not necessarily a new evolution. The blurred lines of this relationship go back to the origins of metafiction: Cervantes’ *Don Quixote*, “a story masquerading as history, with a work claiming to be historically true within its external framework of fiction” (Wardropper 80). For Wardropper, it is not that novels are historical, but that the novel

itself has its roots in historiography, and it from this locus that subsequent confusion of genres has proceeded. Indeed, while some have claimed that all novels are historical, in that they represent their specific historical moment, the new historical novel tends to problematize a reading of its narrative as any kind of authoritative text, consciously undermining its own production. In fact, it questions whether the past is in any sense knowable from an objective standpoint.

Illustrative of this shift in interpretation is Avrom Fleishman's seminal study, *The English Historical Novel* (1971), which is itself a historical marker. Although having been written only a few years before Hayden White began questioning the nature of historiography in *Metahistory* (1973), read side by side the two studies' differing concerns are indicative of the shock that White's work constituted. In his introduction, Fleishman points to controversial issues that were present regarding a recent Pulitzer Prize-winning work of fiction—historical fiction, to be exact. The nature of the outrage highlights the continued critical insistence upon mimetic representation, as well as the resistance against artistic license with documented or official history, thus the nature of the controversy is worth quoting in detail:

Readers of best-seller fiction and the literary reviews have recently found themselves exposed to a controversy which few of them could have expected to command their attention. It was the treatment of a sensitive racial theme that brought the issue of the historical novel to life again. Did William Styron slander the Negro race when he portrayed Nat Turner as a fallible human being, or is the novelist entitled to his psychological speculations on a historical figure? The "ten black writers" and others who denounced Styron expressed the assumptions of most readers of historical novels—whatever their brand of parochialism. Even if the reader uses fiction for escapist fantasy, he expects historical novels to be "true-to-life," i.e., accurate in the light of historical evidence. When Styron defended himself on the grounds that he

had created an imaginative reconstruction of a scantily known phenomenon, he, too, adhered to the assumption that the historical novelist should follow the facts as far as they are known—or the professional historian may censure him when he departs from them. But more, Styron made an implicit claim to be able to discover and express truths that the historian cannot reach: insights into the historical actor, Nat Turner, and into the psychology of the slave, upon which the historian's limited data make it dangerous to generalize. While Styron seems to apologize that a "novel is only a novel," he does not diminish his claim to truth (for a novel can tell truths and untruths, as his critics insist), but instead makes a grand claim for credence. A novel can tell a truth otherwise hidden: fiction is a way of knowing. It is the seeming arrogance of this claim that may evoke greatest hostility among his readers, and I propose to give some reason why it is a legitimate claim. (x)

Although Fleishman builds his analysis of the English historical novel upon *The Confessions of Nat Turner*, Styron is, of course, an American writer, thus his inclusion testifies to the parallel development within multiple national traditions, even if it is not acknowledged. But this does not mean that Fleishman's characterizations were accepted widely at the time, as Joseph Turner makes clear, calling into question any definition that seeks to disentangle history and fiction in order to define the genre, a "circular" practice, since formal properties are not its distinguishing characteristics (335).

Turner breaks down the historical novel into three styles: those that invent a past, those that document the past, and those that disguise a documented past. His assertion that the third kind can complicate how historical interpretation is interpreted could suggest it as a potentially covert form of or precursor to con-*script*ion. Yet, in order to deal with recent fiction that does not fit into these standards, Turner propounds a fourth category, that of the comic historical novel, which does not distract from the author's artifice. In other words, texts like Barth's *The Sotweed Factor* highlight their fictional

status, often trafficking in the absurd.<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, the tropological nature of these distinctions would subconsciously seem to echo White's claims regarding narrative form within historiography. Despite his fascinating and insightful commentary regarding a new typology of historical fiction and the pitfalls of Fleishman's and Styron's own reactions, Turner concludes his evaluation of Styron's controversial novel in a rather problematic fashion. He ends up repeating the very formulaic and formalistic ideas of those individuals he criticizes, for "the Historical novelist should exercise imagination to the fullest, but the more shrouded in mystery one's subject is, the greater the responsibility to create a formal responsibility for the necessary expense of imagination" (352).

Under a variety of umbrella terms—new historical fiction, historiographic metafiction, archival fiction, hybrid histories, and more—contemporary historical fiction has fought to demolish this arbitrary adherence to mimesis, not only privileging non-realist representation, but also questioning how the standard of textual mimesis can be accurately measured. Whereas classical historical fiction as defined by Georg Lukács has a responsibility to represent the facts as they "were," newer historical fiction comments on the past without giving up its status as fiction, as Linda Hutcheon would have it. However, how do we characterize this shift, this difference? New historical fiction is claimed to change our perceptions, but exactly how this service is rendered is often left rather ambiguous.

Novelty in itself does not redirect public opinion. Intertextuality in and of itself does not promote any greater awareness. There is, however, a particular type of intertextuality that does provide more concrete entry into a productive reading. Since

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<sup>2</sup> This distinction of comic is important for my study, as it not only suggests that such texts do not interrogate the confusion of authority, but also the comic element removes Barth's novel from a political arena to a game with more literary consequences.

about roughly the beginning of what Menton delineates as the beginning of the new historical novel in Latin America, certain texts have begun employing the intertextual use of documentation, both official and imposture, to expose the arbitrary manner in which authority is constructed through writing. Linda Hutcheon, among others, has made the case that fiction and history are no different as textual constructs, but the greater importance readers and citizens place upon what is perceived to be official documentation is undeniable. Intertextual rewritings of other texts may make comments about the impossibility of originality in fiction, but it does not necessarily overturn the basis of fiction writing, as fiction is perceived to be just that, a fiction, a work of art. By creating an intertext out of a document, however, authors can subvert the role of those documents in a concrete style that allows the reader to participate in the process, to see the results.

### **The Underdogs of Literary History: The Case for Inter-American Study**

As Scanlan points out, in addition to Fleishman's seminal study, several recent studies on British Historical Fiction (including her own) attest to the interest in the changing historical consciousness evinced by novelists in England. However, despite this well-documented shift towards the European "postmodern," until the last decade, little comparable scholarship existed in relation to texts from the Americas, either North or South. One exception to this trend is Seymour Menton's *Latin America's New Historical Novel* (1992). Menton has made claims that Latin America represents a very particular and important example, for nowhere else in the world has the New Historical Novel

developed into the primary mode of publication, moving beyond associations of the Boom-generation and magical realism to create a separate emphasis.

In “Normative Programs and Artistic Liberties: Inter-American Case Studies in Historical Fiction and the Campaigns for Cultural Dissociation,” Buchenau et al. claim that more than any other form of literary production in the Americas, historical novels of the nineteenth century “headed toward imaginative innovations” (195) in terms of constructing identity that helped to separate American literature from its European counterpart and thus created alternatives. Whereas European writing processes tended to center on emancipation, processes in America tended towards “disassociation” (195-6) in the promotion of cultural independence. Despite this commonly shared interest, Spanish American productions “were less prescriptive and more concerned with issues of cultural modernization or economic progress” (196). This was partly due to the fact that English America had a more established cultural campaign that still looked to European models, while the nascence of Spanish American production freed it from such constraints. Nonetheless, the set expectations in English America also led to innovation in the literature via alternatives introduced to the classic model of Sir Walter Scott’s work. Providing an example from each tradition, Sedgwick’s *Hope Leslie* and Varela’s *Jicoténcal* (the identity of this first Spanish language historical novel is still contested), the article demonstrates that from its inception in the new world, the historical novel took issues with the historical record by overtly contradicting both European models and historiographic sources (198). Ultimately, both traditions were interested in reevaluating colonial history and revaluing pre-colonial culture.

Noé Jitrik contends that the historical novel in Latin America was, like the European mode of writing, similarly borne out of romanticism, which developed virtually simultaneously on both sides of the Atlantic. However, he stresses that the American version was never merely a “crude copy” (2005, 83), but instead demonstrated essential differences from the beginning in its search for national identity, rather than social or class identity as was common in Europe. Indeed, according to Jitrik, given its relative youth, Latin America did not yet have a developed sense of what constituted its own history. For him, documentation is fundamental in order to distinguish a historical novel from speculative fiction, whether it be for moral, epistemological, mythical, or political reasons (88). The use of documents as sources, however, says nothing about their use of or inclusion within the actual historical fiction. The limits of inclusion become an issue, however, as Jitrik suggests that the historical novel may be more easily defined in negative terms, by identifying and excluding what does *not* constitute historical fiction (87).

Ultimately, Jitrik, who sees the critical polemic surrounding classification of Roa Bastos’ *Yo el Supremo* as paradigmatic of the attempt to delimit what constitutes a historical novel, does not distinguish between a classic and a new form of historical novel in Latin America. Instead, he suggests that “the emergence of new ways of reading has influenced the evolution of the historical novel from its initial realist orthodoxy...push[ing] down to second place not only the strategy of the historical novel, but also its functionality. The importance of the role of the reader is echoed by José de Piérola, yet while he believes each reader brings his or her own level of historical consciousness which ultimately adds the historical dimension to the work of fiction, he

does support the notion that a newer sub-form of writing within historical fiction in Latin America has developed within the last several decades. How to define such an appellation as “new,” when the historical novel itself remains problematic to satisfactorily classify, becomes an understandable concern.

### **The New Historical Novel in Spanish-America**

Mario Vargas Llosa has made the case that the first historical novelist was in fact the chronicler El Inca Garcilaso (2001, 29). Born of a Spanish father and an indigenous mother, Inca wrote his famous histories of the Spanish conquest of the Incas at the beginning of the seventeenth century, though according to Vargas Llosa, his embellished accounts represent a fictionalized history. This view of fiction as a compromising element in the face of “true” history has characterized critical and popular response even in more traditional proposed timelines of the genre, which place its birth over two hundred years later.

The historical novel developed in unison with a nascent novelistic tradition in several Spanish American countries: Mexico, Columbia, and Cuba, beginning with the first appearance of the genre in 1826, the anonymously published *Jicoténcal*. Just as the themes and content of European historical novels were determined by the coterminous prominence of romanticism, so too did romanticism shape the formulation of historical fiction in Spanish America, most notably through its contribution to the project of national identity via a vilification of the Spanish conquest. Yet, as Jean Franco suggests, even from its inception, the historical novel operated outside traditional boundaries, as it

provided the opportunity to explore previously taboo subjects such as positive portrayals of indigenous or non-Catholic groups (63). The modernist period in the final decades of the nineteenth century saw a shift away from national conscience-raising towards a critique of naturalism and bourgeois materialism, although romantic ideals gave way to a strict aesthetics of mimesis and historical recreation, a form of realism that continued to flourish throughout the *criollismo* that dominated the first half of the twentieth century (Menton 19).

Menton locates the first example of the new historical novel in Alejo Carpentier's *El reino de este mundo* (1949). Carpentier's conscious distortion of historical record signals a new conception of the novel's obligation, or lack thereof, to so-called scientific models of verisimilitude. Menton doesn't believe this mode of writing would become a fully formed trend until thirty years later, but it is also Carpentier who ushers in this later era in 1979 with *El arpa y la sombra*, a novel that subverts its initially realist structure to present an ailing, confessional Columbus who repents the lies of both his life and his representation of it via his diaries. Menton attributes the explosion of the new historical novel to a number of general factors, from an awareness of the Quincentennial of the discovery of America (which accounts for the great number of texts to portray Columbus as well as revision the Spanish colonial project), as well as economic crises (which provoke a reexamination of the conditions that precipitated the present situation), an awareness of human rights abuses by various military dictatorships, as well as intellectual developments, such as the rediscovery and reevaluation of colonial literature (31).

As opposed to Menton's referral to Carpentier's oeuvre as a point of departure, Juan José Barrientos instead accords the honor of the first Latin American new historical

novel to a different Cuban author, Reinaldo Arenas in *El mundo alucinante* (1969), which takes issue with Carpentier's programmatic manner of treating history at the time, purposefully eschewing erudition and fastidious documentation in favor of anachronism and myth. Arenas' novel ostensibly represents the memoirs of Fray Servando Teresa de Mier, the polemical priest who challenged Spain's religious justifications for colonization and was consequently exiled, during which time he did in fact compose memoirs of his European experience in which he reverses the discursive binary of civilization and savagery to represent Europeans as barbarians. But unlike Carpentier, Arenas' rupture in the genre forms a conclusion to a long process of what Barrientos labels "purification." It is in Arenas' novel that the narration first shifts to the perspective of a famous historical figure.

Barrientos does not see the renewal of the Latin American historical novel as adhering to qualities that are exclusively Latin American (17). He distinguishes recent historical novels from their predecessors via a shift in focus, as many new novels feature first person perspectives or innovative narrations by historical figures—instead of appearing in front of the camera, historical figures are located behind it (14), serving as witnesses to the historical moment. The movement towards private history contrasts with Lukács' prescription for collectivity. Taking the Hungarian critic to task for the oversight of such revolutionary texts, Barrientos points out that Robert Graves' *I, Claudius* (1934) begins this new trend, though it is absent from Lukács study. Thus, unlike Menton, Barrientos does see the Latin American historical novel as having been influenced by European models in its various stages of "purification" (20).

Fernando Aínsa was in fact the first scholar to utilize the phrase “new historical novel,” in his 1991 “La nueva novela histórica latinoamericana,” which contrasts with classical narratives via its “deliberado revisionismo [por el cual] relee y reescribe esa historia oficial, desde el diario de Colón, crónicas y relaciones, hasta textos contemporáneos como los de la revolución Mexicana...los héroes inmortalizados en mármol o bronce, descienden de sus pedestales para recobrar su pérdida condición humana” (2003, 11). He proposes four models of narrative history: those that fit the classic definition, those that serve as anti-chronicles, those that project the past into the present, and those that reconstruct a historical moment-as-axis (12).

While Aínsa refers to a general trend and Barrientos’ definition hinges on a perspectival shift, Seymour Menton has perhaps developed the most comprehensive attempt at a typology in *Latin America’s New Historical Novel*, identifying six characteristics of distinction:

1. The movement away from traditional romantic mimesis to a representation of the impossibility of attaining truth in reality or history
2. The conscious distortion of the historical record through omission or exaggeration
3. The use of famous historical characters, in contrast to Lukács’ classic prescription
4. The foregrounding of metafiction
5. The foregrounding of intertextuality
6. The inclusion of concepts the dialogic and the carnivalesque (25)

It should be pointed out that while Menton believes the phenomenon of the new historical novel is a particularly Latin American development, his characteristics are meant to identify a generalized new historical novel, equally applicable to North America and

Europe (as well as Asia and Africa, one would presume). It is also possible to see where Menton's methodology would overlap with already extant models such as New Historicism or historiographic metafiction.

Nonetheless, José de Piérola has raised concerns regarding such appellations as “new” when the notion of historical fiction remains unsatisfactorily theorized at the end of the twentieth century. He feels that all three of the above critics—Aínsa, Barrientos, and Menton—are “limited by the failure to define the historical novel in a way that does not exclude novels that unquestionably belong to the group, [for if] we do not understand what the historical novel is, it is difficult to make a case for its impact on, or relationship with, reality” (154). In his desire to define the historical novel in a holistic sense, unconcerned with distinctions between classical and new models, Piérola sounds similar to Jitrik, and he likewise places the burden on the reader, rather than the writer. While his notion of historical truth and the requirement that a reader have “historical competence” of the agreed-upon historical record (a clever way of avoiding descriptions such as “true” or “official”) is idealistically utopic, his claim that historical fiction is not a genre or group of texts that share similar traits, but rather a mode of writing that can adopt and adapt a number of literary conventions, bears merit for its rejection of formalistic constraints as a means of categorizing an entire socio-historical project. He instead makes overtures towards compartmentalization by classification in terms of the political moment of production. Despite his romantic definition, Piérola ironically looks to what he terms the “post-Utopian historical novel,” or historical fiction in Latin America written after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 (a date which curiously picks up where Menton's monograph, published in 1992 on the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Columbus' arrival in the New

World, leaves off), and which utilizes “postmodern” techniques such that the novels are “written in the form of journals, memoirs, faux history books, or even as chronicles of historical investigations” (158). With this description, Piérola offers a closer approximation of the style of con-scription, yet he still does not offer up a theory that accounts for functionality or effect of these intertextual structures.

### **The New Historical Novel in Portuguese America**

Difficulties characterizing precisely what separates classical from new narratives afflicts the Brazilian critical tradition as well. The acknowledged father of the historical novel in Brazil was José de Alencar, who published the foundational texts *O Guarani* (1857) and *Iracema* (1865), although there is debate regarding which of his works first falls into the technical category of *historical* fiction. While Brazil’s tradition began several decades after that of its Spanish-speaking neighbors, the conditions of romanticism and post-independence nation-building were similar, as history and literature were conjoined to embellish the past and create an image of unity (Sinder 255), and Alencar’s work has been seen as effectively documenting the national character (Ribeiro de Mello 127) of its moment of production. In order to counteract the trauma of colonization, writers sought to immortalize heroes from the past or reconstruct national history, including texts that confused the genres of scientific/sociology and fiction—“war” chronicles such as Euclides da Cunha’s *Os Sertões* (1901) and Visconde de Taunay’s *A Retirada da Laguna* (1871).

In contrast, Brazilian modernism of the twentieth century sought to break with the past, but, as Vera Follain de Figueiredo maintains, the revision of the past with the intent

of cultural decolonization did not take hold as strongly as it did with the historical novels of resistance in later periods. As a national epic, Erico Verissimo's *O Tempo e o Vento* (1951) is hailed as a traditional masterpiece, yet the surrealism and allegory of his *Incidente em Antares* (1963) and Antônio Callado's *Quarup* (1967) more importantly signaled a shift in narrative and form.

According to Valter Sinder, who provides two foundational examples, the formation of the new historical novel in Brazil is influenced by the military dictatorship, whose policy of censorship gave rise to a form of allegory-documentary novel in the 1960s. This in turn developed into the "polyphonic" novel during the opening at the end of the 1970s and subsequent re-transition to democracy in 1985. Sinder locates Silviano Santiago's *Em Liberdade* (1981) at the heart of this change, not only for its timely publication on the eve of political transition, but also its mixture of allegorical criticism against the dictatorship with a questioning of literary and scientific models (258). While valorizing the elements of Santiago's plurality in relation to historiographic metafiction, Sinder also sees Ana Miranda's *Boca do Inferno* (1989) as equally paradigmatic of the literary crisis. He believes Miranda's recreation of seventeenth century Brazilian politics acted as commentary upon the then-current political situation, although he does not analyze the novel's largely conventional narration and mode of realism, which do not suggest a self-reflexivity approaching Santiago's in any degree.

Figueiredo instead characterizes three types of historical fiction: classical, novels of resistance, and the parody, the last of which overtly portrays the past with the disdain of the present, often resulting in mockery and burlesque. Farces such as Márcio Souza's *Galvez, Imperador do Acre* (1976) and José Roberto Torero's *O Chalaça* (1994) are

indicative of the extremes of this group, although Figueiredo also pulls in Miranda's *Boca do Inferno* for its criticism of past social customs, an honor that is also curiously extended to Rubem Fonseca's *Agosto* (1990) as demonstrating characteristics distinct from the novel of resistance, thus constituting a "new" form of historical novel. Even more salient are "postmodern" works of resistance by J.J. Veiga, *A casca de serpente* (1989) (which literally rewrites the outcome of da Cunha's *Os Sertões*), and João Ubaldo Ribeiro, *Viva o povo brasileiro* (1984), both experimental authors whose works have been claimed by Menton as new historical novels.

Luiz Fernando Valente has made the case that Ribeiro is the primary vehicle of the "new" historical novel in Brazil, although he does not seem to identify himself with any of the models proposed by Aínsa, Barrientos, or Menton, despite a similar focus as the latter's upon carnivalization and dialogism. Instead, he argues for a new typology by identifying characteristics in Ribeiro's *Viva o povo brasileiro* that borrows from Hutcheon's proposed historiographic metafiction. The novel shuns "the linearity preferred by historians and realist novelists" (44) and although Valente goes on to note that the mixture of imagined situations with historical events follows a classical model, he suggests that Ribeiro structures the novel in this fashion in order to parody conventions, to ironically exchange a notion of factual truth for one of stories, as the novel's epigraph suggests. Even more importantly, Ribeiro privileges fiction over history as a means of approaching that "truth," stressing the vernacular and giving voice to false heroes and protagonists alike in the attempt to counter traditional tropes and to deconstruct national ideologies. Valente concludes that there has been a general attempt by contemporary writers to

distance themselves from anything “official”... the return to the historical novel can be viewed as a response to the social and historical conditions of the 1970s and 1980s. Faced with the realization that the optimistic definition of Brazil based on harmony and unification, as formed in the nineteenth century and manipulated by military rulers from 1964 to 1985, conflicts with the reality of a society that is fragmented politically and socially, Brazilian writers have turned to the past in search of explanations for the divisions they perceive in the present. (54)

Valente argues that this self-conscious discrediting of collective myths and ideologies produces a heightened self-awareness in the reading public, inviting a rethinking of contemporary political and social conditions which empowers fiction, demonstrating that it equally shares with history the task of “reconstructing” the past.

### **The New Historical Novel in English America**

While the new mode of writing historical fiction was in its inception in Latin America and Brazil, the coterminous and persistent concern of literary critics to the north was that the importance of the historical novel was severely undervalued and understudied, even dismissed, perhaps in part due to the number of popular historical romances that had come to signify the genre as a low, mixed form composed of watered-down historical stereotypes (Coyle 70-1; Henderson 3; Leisy 3). In other words, it enjoyed currency with the reading public rather than in critical circles, the division of perceived high versus low art almost as contested as that between how fictional or how “historical” historical fiction was permitted to be without compromising its status as either genre. In fact, definitions and classifications of historical fiction in terms of its

verisimilitude continued to prevail during this time period. Ernest Leisy's seminal *The American Historical Novel* (1950) provides a detailed list and summary of historical fiction starting from Fenimore Cooper's Walter Scott-inspired romances in the first half of the nineteenth century through the first decades of the twentieth, attempting a vague definition of the genre reminiscent of Fleisher's own of the English counterpart, where "more specifically, historical fiction is concerned with historical truth, whatever that is" (4); Leisy opts to answer few of the questions of controversy he notes. Where his list leaves off, A.T. Dickinson Jr.'s picks up in his compendium of over 2400 titles published through 1970, *American Historical Fiction* (1971), though what criteria are used to distinguish what constitutes the historical are never revealed.

Eighteenth-century writers in the United States "felt that the nation had no history, so sense of the past comparable to that of European nations" (Henderson 3), but this problem provided impetus for the creation and institutionalization of vibrant national myths (the Wild West, superior democratic ideals) whose narration as part of the nation's historical fabric by writers created a "usable past" (Henderson 9). Lois Zamora suggests that this is a learned action, based on European models of historical consciousness, for the New World was for many years represented as the land of the future. Engler, however, suggests that an attitude of critical inquiry was already taking hold as writers actively took issue with accepted historiography, because the

rise of historical fiction in the late-eighteenth century America bears witness to the society's increasing interest in the manifold alternative stories one might find hidden behind the seemingly monolithic and so far unquestioned "story" of America's past; it also gives testimony to both a loss of the public's belief in the validity of historical accounts and a growing awareness of the narrative constructedness and ideological partiality of all historical texts. (13)

The work of authors such as Charles Brockden Brown, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and later Mark Twain, according to Engler, prove that “historical self-reflexivity is not at all a product of twentieth century skepticism or relativism” (27) but rather a product of “re-negotiations” of the discursive frontiers between history and literature that had been launched at the end of the seventeenth century in English America. Engler is not convincing in demonstrating that attitudes towards a pluralism that challenged the “interpretive hegemony of historical discourse” (25) represented a general trend rather than a tiny minority interest, but his contentions make clear that if the tension between history and fiction is not new, it nonetheless remains an unresolved issue, one that continues to provoke debate.

According to Harry B. Henderson, after the development of historical fiction stalled with Stephen Crane’s work, World War I created a stark divide between the troubled present and the prosperous past that led to a resurgence of the “historical imagination” in American literature (248). Henderson suggests that writers such as Edith Wharton, Theodore Dreiser, Hart Crane, and William Faulkner helped to alter the form of historical literary imagination, although he does not particularly address the formal aspects of their writing. Henderson does, however, note the manner in which major characters are ironically rendered banal by John Dos Passos, whose *USA Trilogy* (1938) with its unprecedented blend of fragmented biographies and newspaper headlines, I would suggest serves as a precursor for the insertion of fictional documents that characterize contemporary con-scripts. It is Faulkner, however, who Henderson sees as the lynchpin of change in the formulation of the historical novel before World War II (although Menton does not mention Faulkner in his analysis), for Faulkner’s

experimental approach in *Absalom! Absalom!* to fragmented narrative, conflicting voices that create a sense of developing magical realism, and nonlinear time would also represent a significant move towards the characteristics he attributes to the shifted genre.

It is ultimately in the decades immediately following World War II, a time characterized by the literary divide between “liberal conscience” and “apocalyptic parody” (Henderson 270), however, that the historical novel both radically shifts and becomes critically salient, with the historical fiction of Robert Warren Penn, Bernard Malamud, William Styron, and Norman Mailer receiving Pulitzer Prizes. Styron’s controversial *The Confessions of Nat Turner*, a fictional, eponymous journal narrative based on the revolt leader’s documented confession, represents one of the earliest examples of a con-script, a work presenting itself in part as an extant official document. Indeed, Mailer’s *Armies of the Night: History as a Novel, the Novel as History* seeks to move from a status as simultaneously fiction and nonfiction to one as document, its subtitle playing with the very distinction that has for so long problematized attempts to define the historical novel. Furthermore, Mailer’s insistence upon the present moment as history confuses definitions of the historical dimension altogether, promoting a change in the understanding of the past, or what constitutes the past.

It is in John Barth’s *The Sotweed Factor* (1960) and Thomas Pynchon’s *V* (1963) that Henderson first locates “uncertainty about the meaning of the past” (277) taken to an extreme in order to imitate the confusing shifts of history itself. Indeed, Seymour Menton claims Barth’s novel as the most important new historical novel within the United States, though heavily influenced by Borges and the Latin American tradition (34). Concocting a parody of the classical historical novel and captivity narratives, Barth inserts fragments

from Captain John Smith's apocryphal journal detailing his relationship with Pocahontas. I have not included it in my study here largely because the work falls under the distinction of the comic historical novel, as Barth's literary games ultimately move away from a political dimension evident in con-scripts. The same holds true for Pynchon's most recent and critically-acclaimed historical novel, *Mason and Dixon* (1997), which, despite incorporating supposed work of an invented contemporaneous poet laureate as well as fragments of religious sermons penned by the narrator, allows the parodic and absurdist elements to minimize the political impact, displacing the importance of the line the astronomers attempt to construct.

While the radical shift in narrative style and intention has been noted within the United States, a specific model or mode of writing has been much less theorized within the North American context, although Linda Hutcheon's study of historiographic metafiction in *The Canadian Postmodern* (1988) is one exception. Ishmael Reed's *Mumbo Jumbo* (1972), claimed by Hutcheon as a form of historiographic metafiction, is also identified by Menton as a new historical novel. Beyond this, Menton recognizes few other examples, aside from Stephen Marlowe's 1987 *The Memoirs of Christopher Columbus*. While the appellation "new" has received relatively little usage in conjunction with North American historical fiction, contemporary critical works such as *Novel History: Historians and Novelist Confront America's Past (and Each Other)* (2001) highlight the continued artistic and critical acknowledgment of this discursive shift via the work of Don DeLillo in *Libra* (1988), for example, despite the absence of the important work of innovators such as Toni Morrison in *Beloved* (1988) or D.M. Thomas in *The White Hotel* (1981), texts that don't appear to fit comfortably in either Menton's or

Hutcheon's proposed rubrics. Timothy Parrish looks at "American" fiction in relation to postmodern history to suggest that what links the work of contemporary "novelist-historians" (I avoid his characterization of postmodern) such as Cormac McCarthy, Toni Morrison, Joan Didion, Thomas Pynchon, and Don DeLillo, is the "focus not on U.S. imperialism abroad but on U.S. imperialism at home" (3) to reject mainstream history as it is taught in schools and in the media, making questions of narrative authority central to their cause.

David Cowart suggests that since the creation of the atomic bomb, writers have begun to produce in the age of anxiety (the phrase bears no relation to the anxiety of origins that Zamora theorizes for Spanish and English American texts), "an age that could construe history as part of its stability or as the standard against which to measure some new instability" (29). While he admits immediately thereafter that perhaps every age "perceives its own anxiety as somehow definitive," his comment suggests that the contemporary novel regarding history has returned to the very roots in political unrest and uncertainty that Lukács believed to be the necessary catalysts of the historical novel's birth in the first place. Such a recurrence of questions of identity in such distinct temporal periods suggests that critical attention would be better served by not obsessing over what is historical or fictional, or what is new and old, but rather how these contemporary and historical concerns are effectively communicated to an equally anxious audience. The use of con-scripts represents a concrete embodiment of the desire to bridge new theory with practice that does in fact level the field between historiography and fiction.

## CHAPTER 3

### A DIDACTIC GENRE?: CRITICAL THEORY OVERVIEW AND THE POWER OF THE PAST

#### **Metahistory and Literary Artifacts**

Virtually all surveys of contemporary historical fiction find some manner of referring to the influence of historian Hayden White upon both historical and literary fields. This is largely because from the beginning of his self-critical enterprise, White has professed the primacy of textuality. In his early work, White is most concerned with epistemological concerns, suggesting that there can be no proper history that is not at the same time a philosophy of history itself. Thus, White's first goal in theorizing an auto-awareness within the discipline was to stress the aspect of reconstruction in historical consciousness, challenging claims to scientism. The title of his first, and still most referenced work, *Metahistory* (1973), invites comparison with the concomitant explosion of metafiction and metalanguage in literature, and it also borrows its terminology from literary criticism. White's main thrust is that the means that shape the relations between events have been imposed upon the past by the historical investigator in the very act of describing the object of study. Thus, he suggests that histories gain their explanatory effect by virtue of making stories out of mere lists of events. This constitutes the act of emplotment, which he defines as "the encodation of the facts contained in the chronicle

as components of the specific kinds of plot structures, in precisely the way that [Northrop] Frye has suggested is the case with “fictions” in general” (1978, 83).

His focus upon reconstruction takes an even more radical shift in his second collection of essays once he identifies narrative, rather than philosophy, as the primary question with which metahistorical practice concerns itself. This is perhaps most evident in “The Historical Text as Literary Artifact,” and the directly titled “The Question of Narrative in Contemporary Historical Theory.” Following Frye and Collingwood, White suggests that we “understand” a historical narration once we are able to identify its trope—comedy, tragedy, dramatic, romantic, ironic—yet he argues that no historical event is inherently meaningful. In other words, “How a given historical situation is to be configured depends on the historian’s subtlety in matching up a specific plot structure with the set of historical events that he wishes to endow with a meaning of a particular kind. This is essentially a literary, that is to say fiction making, operation” (85). White stresses that this process amounts to relativism, though he is not interested in providing solutions; he has been criticized for not developing a criteria that helps distinguish how to move beyond the infinite possibilities of re-description.

For White, an equation between the narrative practices of history and literature does not amount to a demotion of historical practice, merely a recognition that it is not a science. It should be noted that his work is a prescription for historical discipline, yet he has had ramifications in literary theory for two particular reasons. The first is indirect, namely that through his interdisciplinary approach he has acted to empower, perhaps unwittingly, the self-image of literature, which has felt slighted by historiography. While the two modes of writing once belonged to the same branch, the claim to scientific truth

has allowed history to carry more currency in issues of authority within cultural discussions. Second, White has directly acted to deconstruct the history/fiction binary, with history leading the hierarchical relation, away from a bifurcation of real/imagined. As White points out, the two entities are interdependent, gaining their meaning from the existence of the other. Not only are we dependent upon the techniques of figurative language for both our characterization of the objects of narrative and strategies by which to constitute narrative accounts, but we can only know the actual by comparing it to the imaginable. Such an awareness of the non-transparent politics of historiography is not an admittance to literary propaganda; instead, it protects against becoming the tool of ideology by accepting normative models. “How can one condemn narrative on grounds of its “novelizing” effects?” White rhetorically asks, only to provide an equally rhetorical possibility, namely that “it is not the ‘dramatic’ nature of novels that is at issue but a distaste for a genre of literature that puts human agents rather impersonal processes at the center of interest” (1984, 10).

This acceptance manifests itself in the amount of influence White has exerted—a majority of it outside the discipline of history. Richard Vann’s statistical analysis has shown that since White’s narrative turn after *Metahistory*, less than fifteen percent of comments upon his work in scholarly sources have come from historians, the majority having been offered by literary critics (148). As Vann points out, White’s essays are designed as much to provoke readers as they are to inform, but it seems that the literary field has felt that it has more to gain from his theorizations than has the historical discipline. Perhaps this marked division also has to do with White’s textual encroachment upon the theorists that literary scholars have adopted in recent decades—as opposed to

the nineteenth century giants of historical narrative he treats in his earlier work—from Jameson and Foucault back to Levi-Strauss, borrowing a phrase from the latter to suggest that the “problem may be not how to get into history, but how to get out it” (1982, 13).

Both sympathetic and critical, LaCapra has pointed out some problematic assumptions in White’s approach to metahistory in a review of his second collection. First, White writes of metahistory’s fundamental place is if it were a given, without applying the same manner of questioning of its processes that he demands of history “proper.” Second, irony maintains a problematically double role: on the one hand as a trope of understanding, and on the other hand as a means of overturning the limitations upon understanding that tropes invariably place (1978, 1040). This paradoxical role of irony may well act as a precursor to the postmodern irony (along with intertextuality) around which Linda Hutcheon would build historiographic metafiction over a decade later.

### **Intertextuality**

Critics agree that the neologism “intertextuality” was coined by Julia Kristeva in a 1966 article “The Closed Text,” where she describes text as productivity, “a permutation of texts, an intertextuality; in the space of a text, many utterances taken from other texts intersect with one another and neutralize one another” (Qtd. in Orr 52). As Mary Orr points out, however, in part because Kristeva’s texts were not translated into English until 1980, her work itself has been passed over, even discredited, in favor of analyses by male French critics such as Barthes, Riffaterre, and Genette (21), who moved intertextuality out of its initial linguistic/semiotic context into a structuralist paradigm. The large

number of distinct treatments points to the difficulties in defining intertextuality, for despite its generalized use within critical work, the term is notoriously slippery and has been used to support varying ideologies depending upon the proponent. In a very general sense, reading “plunges us into a network of textual relations. To interpret a text, to discover its meaning, or meanings, is to trace those relations. Reading thus becomes a process of moving between texts. Meaning becomes something which exists between a text and all the other texts to which it refers and relates...the text becomes the intertext” (Allen 1). And what is the value of such a shift in the location of meaning? As Thais Morgan explains, the focus upon intertextuality was initially supported as an answer to many of the shortcomings of then-current critical practices, primarily those of New Criticism that failed to take into account the cultural and socio-historical influences upon production. Thus, in the process of “shifting our attention from the triangle of author/work/tradition to that of text/discourse/culture, intertextuality replaces the evolutionary model of literary history with a structural or synchronic model of literature as sign system” (239). This frees the text from the confines of deterministic approaches that valorize psychological or sociological elements within the work to instead focus outwards to highlight the importance of relations, both literary and cultural. Of course, as Morgan points out, despite providing the illusion of objectivity, intertextuality is no less valuative than the systems of thought it originally sought to displace.

By noting such pitfalls, Morgan follows Kristeva’s lead in focusing upon the potential for productivity of intertextuality in a social context. Rather than a concrete set of relations, intertextuality is a space in which texts can be manipulated. In “The Space of Intertextuality,” Morgan chooses the metaphor of space over time when tracing a history

of the term, since the practice of intertextuality has not only been extant for as long as has been the practice of story-telling, but also many touted definitions spiral and overlap with each other. Thus, for example, Morgan sees several conceptual precursors to Kristeva's terminology, from Lévi-Strauss' use of "bricolage" to refute the supposed inferiority of oral cultures, to Derrida's "différance" as a deconstruction of former critics' semiotic analysis. Harold Bloom's concept of the "anxieties of influence" is a form of positive intertextuality, where a text borrows structure or theme from a previous source, whereas "inspiration" represents negative intertextuality, for the author transforms those borrowed features to suit a new purpose. Morgan also believes that Bakhtin introduced the concept, though not the term of intertextuality with his notions of polyphony, dialogism, and the carnivalesque, the latter being "nothing less than a theory of intertextuality, or the systematic connection that can be analyzed among literary and nonliterary discourses" (249). Such approaches tend to see every text as multiply encoded, such that a potentially infinite set of relations is evoked.

The subsequent work of Riffaterre and Genette, in applying a structuralist bent to earlier criticism, has attempted to move away from the undecidability of infinite interpretations championed by deconstruction and historicism to suggest instead that the structure of a text imposes constraints upon its own intertexts. In other words, the relations exist within a fixed system and therefore each text maintains a specific significance. In turn, Genette sees literature as a whole as transtextual, a construct made out of pieces of other text—literariness itself, as Genette explains—with intertextuality existing as only one of five compository categories (in conjunction with paratextuality, metatextuality, hypertextuality, and the architext) within its practice.

Genette first attempts to limit the all-encompassing nature that intertextuality has been allotted so that it returns to its initial association: simply denoting the presence of one text inside another text or many texts, although judgments on the usage of the intertext may range from allusion to plagiarism (Genette 2). Architextuality refers to all of the discourses and literary genres from which a single text evolves. The paratext constitutes the titles, subtitles, intertitles, epigraphs, footnotes, and dust jackets, etc., of a work—secondary “signals” as Genette sees them. Metatextuality represents the fourth type of textual transcendence, but can be most easily defined as commentary, a critical relationship where one text evokes the other without necessarily naming the object of its allusion. Finally, hypertextuality refers to texts which do not comment upon their predecessors, but rather are dependent upon them, having been grafted to the original model. Although Genette does not make this explicit, parodies and satires fulfill such a relationship.

I take the time to note each of Genette’s types of “textual transcendence” because this terminology will appear frequently; it is from within this five-tier framework that the texts in this study will be analyzed in terms of intertextuality—not as a complex set of cultural codes and signs, but as a literary practice. Additionally, its limitations will be duly noted. As Morgan concludes, “[D]espite its formal apparatus of linguistic models and terminology, intertextuality is finally a conservative theory and practice...[that] takes place within a circumscribed field of literature that overlaps significantly with the canon or tradition proposed by early modern critics” (272). Con-scripts are heavily indebted to the forms they employ for their intertexts, yet often they attempt to breach the limits of

literature by feigning nonliterary discourse, either as a source or as an intercalated presence that shifts the nature of the authority of the text.

### **Historiographic Metafiction**

The term “historiographic metafiction” has also begun to be used somewhat indiscriminately,<sup>3</sup> although nowhere near the level that the concepts of intertextuality so central to this mode of literature are. The first problem in characterizing such a concept is determining how to attach it to a performative category. Neither a genre of writing nor a literary movement, historiographic metafiction is less a schematic than it is a problematic, according to its primary theoretician. Linda Hutcheon coined the phrase in response to Frederic Jameson’s assertion that postmodernism is ahistorical in nature or that it denies the existence of the past through an approach steeped in relativism. According to Hutcheon, this is to miss the point, as historiographic metafiction does not seek to deny that historical events have taken place; the “past really did exist, but we can only “know” that past today through its texts, and therein lies its connection to the literary...the loss of the illusion of transparency in historical writing is a step toward intellectual self-awareness that is matched by metafiction’s challenge to the presumed transparency of the language of realist texts” (1989a, 10).

Hutcheon claims historiographic metafiction as the central tenet of postmodernism, reflective of the most distinctive aspect of postmodernism: “its

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<sup>3</sup> See Cynthia M. Tompkins’ 1992 “Historiographic Metafiction or the Rewriting of History in *Son Vacas, Somos Puercos*,” where the problematic is simply glossed in a sentence as inscribing and subverting an original text, with no context or discussion of the practice. A similar situation also develops in Heilmann and Llewellyn’s 2007 *Metafiction and Metahistory in Contemporary Women’s Writing*, where neither of the title’s key terms is defined!

commitment to doubleness, or duplicity” (1989b, 1), as it simultaneously highlights and subverts through its self-conscious and self-contradictory fashioning. It is not surprising in the context of historical fiction then, with history and fiction as terms referred to as antagonistic, that this duplicitous edge might not also be exposible and exploitable. Both history and fiction are linguistic constructs, but whereas historical fiction has traditionally sought to faithfully reflect accepted history, historiographic metafiction maintains its autonomy as fiction, even celebrating its status as such, in order to deconstruct the ideological implications of writing about history as an agent outside the discourse of historiography, and therefore not subject to its formalistic and conventional limitations.

Thus in this contemporary practice, it is no longer the fiction as product that becomes the object of attention, but rather the processes of representation that both create and are at work within the text, and these processes are discursive and politicized. In addition, this discourse is produced by language which constructs reality, rather than simply reflects it. Historiographic metafiction is “ideological” fiction in Hutcheon’s estimation, for to “write either history or historical fiction is equally to raise the question of power and control: it is the story of the victors that usually gets told... The creator or discernor of that formula coherence is in a position of power too—power over facts, clearly, but also power over readers” (1988a, 72).

In seeking to reveal “whose truth gets told” (1989b 91), rather than what truth—the politics of representation—the two most salient components of postmodern practice are employed: intertextuality and parody. Both stress plurality, by moving away from previous definitions of texts or documents as auto-referential, closed structures. Here, intertextuality with previous fiction is not only a conceptual tool, but also a performative

act that highlights the lack of originality and ownership over texts, assisting in making readers conscious of how metanarratives create the sense of all-encompassing truth. Indeed, intertextuality stresses the reader-text relationship over that of author-text, as it “situates the locus of textual meaning within the history of discourse itself” (1988a, 7). Similarly, parody does not devalue the object of its gaze, but instead enacts its duplicitous nature to reinforce textual dependence: “To parody is not to destroy the past; in fact, to parody is both to enshrine the past and to question it” (6). Thus, historiographic metafiction is paradoxically embedded within the very texts and attitudes it highlights.

The importance of Hutcheon’s work in defense of the poetics and politics of postmodernism should not be underrated. Nonetheless, she has been taken to task for her stress upon the deconstructive powers of its practice. Far from inviting heterogeneity or multiplicity, by writing as if binaries themselves were exclusive rather than part of the same framework of social relations, she ends up privileging certain valuative hierarchies, revealing a working definition of irony that is more formalistic than political (Brydon and Keefer 42). Similarly, In *Postmodernity in Latin America*, Santiago Colas criticizes Linda Hutcheon for not historicizing her notion of historiographic metafiction. Her universal application of the phenomenon of self-aware texts that make a claim to history while flaunting their status as fiction, as Colas’ points out, fails to take into consideration the socio-cultural processes that shape the production of the individual texts themselves within their cultural and political traditions, viewing European and Latin American production under the same rubric. This failure effectively “bans” any potential discussion of concrete political consequences (2-3). If criticism does not indicate the specific processes—political environments, cultural and social constraints—that shape the

production of the texts themselves (as opposed to the texts' commentary upon production processes), the consequences of these texts are severely limited, as is the criticism surrounding them. It is true that Hutcheon draws from a variety of traditions at the expense of depth of analysis. From Latin America, only the "domesticated" forms of García Márquez and Roa Bastos are glossed, while no Brazilian authors make the list. Far more salient are North American and English authors. Isernhagen points out that Hutcheon, like Jameson for that matter, must fall back upon orthodox methods of trying to explain her supposedly new stance (77), perhaps paralleling the very paradoxical relation postmodernism maintains with its parodies of modernist texts.

The most inclusive Amero-centric application (which is to say, inclusive of Spanish language texts, but not Portuguese language) of historiographic metafiction may well come in Santiago Juan-Navarro's *Archival Reflections*, whose Inter-American approach contrasts Hutcheon's view of historiography and fiction as always already contradictory tendencies with one that stresses its dialectical and the unificatory properties. Through providing "alternatives" to historiography, albeit eclectic ones (258), American historiographic metafiction is seen as creating a pedagogical political culture. Nonetheless, Juan-Navarro's final conclusion that such texts "clearly attempt to return the literary work of art to the sociohistorical framework that determined its production and without which its full understanding will always remain elusive and incomplete" (282), is built on the assumption that there is a complete understanding in either fiction or history to be found, a totalizing notion that metafiction rejects in the first place (!), suggesting that it is not only the postmodern that is paradoxical, but also attempts to put it into practice.

## **The Return of the Archive**

Without the proper contextualization, González Echevarría's claim regarding Latin American fiction could easily be seen as a direct challenge to proponents of metafiction: "[i]t is a commonplace, almost an uncritical fetish, to say that the novel always includes the story of how it is written, that it is a self-reflexive genre. The question is why and how it is so at specific moments" (1990, 28). Yet the Cuban critic here is not interested in Latin American history so much as he is the history of Latin American narrative, which he points out may be either novelistic or historical. The current mode of Latin American narrative, he argues, is constituted by "archival fictions," which he contrasts from three earlier narrative modes of that have characterized distinct historical eras:

1. Legalistic discourse throughout the colonial period that corresponds to the creation of power
2. Scientific discourse during the nineteenth century that represents the second discovery of the New World
3. Anthropological discourse between WWI and WWII that accompanies the rise of the telluric novel
4. The Archive, which, since the 1950s, theorizes its own origins

The texts of this last category perform as archives precisely because they incorporate the three anterior modes, thus they act as repositories of knowledge. The archive in this case has been adopted from Foucault's concept in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, thus it is perhaps no surprise that González Echevarría emphasizes power relations associated with the guarding of knowledge. However, González Echevarría is careful to distance himself

from Bakhtin, who conceives of the official as alien to society (while for Foucault the official is tied to the act of control and punishment from its inception), by explaining the strong presence of legal discourse in New World colonial texts. González Echevarría believes that archival fictions are atavistic, since they return to the origins of legal discourse. The discovery and conquest of the Americas serve as incessant points of return for Latin American fiction, precisely because its break in western history serves as a new origin, and Latin American narratives have been characterized by a tendency to hardwire this search into their own narratives. In contrast to Europe, for example, in Latin America the novel was born and evolved simultaneously with historiography. This is the “how and why,” referred to in González Echevarría’s above declaration, which explains this type of fiction’s self-reflexivity.

Because of this tendency to return to origins, literature of the archive almost exclusively takes the form of historical fiction (1990, 144), although it need not be a historical portrayal of colonial issues. In fact, not only are such fictions predominantly historical, but they also “consist of a complex intertextual web that incorporates the chronicles of the discovery and conquest of America, other fictions, historical documents, and characters, songs, poetry, scientific reports, literary figures, and myths” (1993, 189). González Echevarría traces the origins of archival fiction to the first text to incorporate outside texts and comment upon its own creation, Alejo Carpentier’s *Los pasos perdidos* (1953), whose narrator scribbles constantly in a notebook that may serve as the notes for the text we are reading. In addition, it demonstrates the three characteristics of archival fiction (1990, 22):

1. The presence not only of history but of previous mediating elements through which it was narrated, be it the documents of colonial times or the scientific ones of the nineteenth century
2. The existence of an inner historian who reads the texts, interprets and writes them
3. The presence of an unfinished manuscript that the inner historian is trying to complete

If Carpentier's text serves as a beginning, then García Márquez's *Cien años de soledad* (1967) serves as the archetypal archival fiction, for it makes overt the place of the archive within the text. These two texts recur often in the ensuing analysis of the archive.

In fact, González Echevarría goes so far as to suggest that the main reason history appeals to novelists is that historical texts are not literary, thus they may provide a way of defining "truth." In chronicling the pattern of the narrative, he notes that the "most persistent characteristic of books that have been called novels in the modern era is that they always pretend not to be literature" (7). Thus, archival fictions are generated by the turn or "return" to historical documents, because lacking a "fixed form of its own, the novel often assumes the shape of a given kind of document endowed with truth-bearing power by society at specific moments in time. The novel, or what is called the novel at various points in history, imitates such documents to reveal their conventionality through this counterfeit of legitimacy the novel makes its contradictory veiled claim to literariness" (1993, 185).

Despite the reference to concrete historical referents, theorizing the Archive in Latin American narratives remains a highly conceptual practice. For González Echevarría, it may represent and be represented by a host of (founding) tropes: the image of the end of time, death, discontinuity, disorder, the simulacrum of the source of power

and writing. Ultimately, however, one thing archival fictions cannot represent is completeness, for in their return to the beginning, they demonstrate the inherent empty space at the core of the archive. If truth be told, it may be the versatility of González Echevarría's many manifestations that also serve as vulnerability. The Archive is not only literary; it also corresponds to its institutional counterpart, for "archives keep the secrets of the state [while] novels keep the secrets of culture, and the secret of those secrets" (188). Despite this politicization, in conjunction with the power of legalistic discourse, the core examples, such as *Los pasos perdidos* and *Cien años de soledad*, are not overtly political or historical, and neither necessarily makes claims on official representations of history. The weak conclusion that what we learn about Latin American history from Márquez is that "while its writing may be mired in myth, it cannot be turned into myth, that its newness makes it impervious to timelessness" (29) could be equally true for North American historical fiction written in recent years. The Archive and the modern novel may hoard knowledge as secret, but that exclusion does not have the same consequences for the reader, who faces few punitive consequences for not adhering to literary codes!

González Echevarría makes the provocative claim that the novel in Latin America, more so than anywhere else, dons a disguise to present itself as other. Like Doctorow, he too finds this duplicity in the foundations of literature in *Don Quixote*, although he does not address outside traditions. I wish to take issue with this idealized characterization on two counts. First, the disguise or usurpation of legal conventions that González Echevarría propounds may in fact constitute merely the mention of such topics in his study. For example, in *Cien años de soledad* and *Crónica de una muerte*

*anunciada*, García Márquez's narrators may state that they have consulted historical chronicles, but in neither case do the narratives attempt to reproduce those conventions. In fact, Márquez's brand of magical realism is known, if anything, to confuse discourses of mimetic reality, thus we need to be careful to distinguish between the mere discussion of and the illusory appearance of document, a more involved process.

Second, while González Echevarría couches this in terms of Latin America, what he really analyzes is texts in Spanish, largely ignoring Portuguese texts from Brazil. Only two of the most canonical works are mentioned—Cunha's *Os Sertões* and Guimarães Rosa's *O Grande Sertão*, the former as a distortion of Sarmiento's *Facundo*, and the latter as an example of anthropological discourse.<sup>4</sup> Not only is this imbalance in attention in terms of the development of the modern novel noteworthy, but the Brazilian tradition causes certain problems for the theory. How does the self-awareness of Brazilian anthropophagy tie in with Spanish telluric texts, or does it predate the self-awareness of Boom texts? Does the domination of anthropological discourse occur simultaneously in Brazil with the rest of Latin America? González Echevarría notes that the authority of this discourse is voided with the appearance of archival fictions in the 1950s, yet I would suggest that this is not the case in Brazil. During the 1970s under the military dictatorship, as Silviano Santiago points out, the documentary-allegorical text represented the primary method of criticizing the regime while managing to escape censorship (1982, 52-3). Does the documentary-style fiction of Elena Poniatowski in 1970s Mexico also problematize such a model? In other words, does the archive run the risk of making

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<sup>4</sup> David William Foster suggests that Spanish fiction was much more often translated into Portuguese than vice versa, but that Guimarães Rosa is one of the few exceptions to gain currency in neighboring countries. See "Spanish, American and Brazilian Literature: A History of Disconsonance." *Hispania* 75:4 (October 1992), 970.

generalizations too broad to apply to all regional or socio-cultural traditions?

Furthermore, do contemporary examples of Brazilian archival fictions exist, augmented by works such as Ângelo's *A Festa* (1976), Ribeiro's *Viva o Povo Brasileiro* (1984), or finally, Aguinaldo Silva's *No país das sombras* (1979), which concerns itself specifically with rewriting the Portuguese colonial archive?

It should be pointed out that the list of authors I have included in this study suffers an equal impoverishment in relation to representations of female and feminist writers as does González Echevarría's. The notion of con-scription also runs the risk of ascribing universal characteristics onto texts created in differing social moments, though by not making claims about origins or points of termination, con-scription seeks to "document" the phenomenon, rather than classify it. If the Archive represents an exclusionary power that encrypts knowledge, then the opposite is true for con-scripts, where documents have not been absorbed at all into the creation of the text; their appearance sets them apart. Instead of being hidden or controlled by a character within the text, these sources have been held up so that the reader is no longer at the mercy of a diegetic archivist. The process is one of revelation, not revolution, yet the two subjects may go hand in hand.

### **New Historicism**

Stephen Greenblatt, one of the chief founders of New Historicism, suggests that the practice's "methodological self-consciousness distinguishes it from a traditional historicism based on the faith in a truth of interpretation (1989, 12), a claim that would resonate with earlier calls to action by Hayden White. Unlike historiographic metafiction

or archival fictions, however, New Historicism, under the guise of rethinking literary history, ultimately presents itself as an alternative to historiography as a discipline, rather than literary studies, reveling in its disregard for formal critical boundaries and its appropriation of other disciplines ranging from anthropology to economics. This heterogeneous approach allows for a space of conflicting assertions and contradictory impulses, as proponents duly assert. As such, this practice is neither a movement nor a doctrine, but rather a “set of themes, preoccupations, and attitudes” (Veeseer xiii).

This fragmentary approach parallels the fragmented growth of its group of practitioners, with Greenblatt coining the phrase “New Historicism” retrospectively, and admitting that he would prefer to think of it as a poetics of culture, since he believes that what sparring theories like Marxism and poststructuralism ultimately seek to analyze in the “oscillation” between totalization and difference, is “built into the poetics of everyday behavior in America” (8). Seen in these terms, the practice is less interested in seeing works as markers of change than it is in using historical works, both studied and previously ignored. Catherine Gallagher and Greenblatt contend that New Historicism can afford to make such comparative leaps because it views all of the traces of an era as a single cultural formation, or put in other words, culture is seen as a text, along with its informing components, are interpreted as a text which “vastly expands the range of objects available to be read and interpreted” (9). Indeed, in order to describe a culture “in action,” New Historicists, according to Veeseer, “seize upon an event or anecdote...and re-read it in such a way as to reveal through the analysis of tiny particulars the behavioral codes, logics, and motive forces controlling a whole society” (xi). Thus, if all is text, literary and nonliterary become equally valued—a shopping list or a fragment from a

hidden journal alike are traces of cultural production—in contrast to a theory of con-  
scription which maintains that irrespective of the validity of texts’ cultural currency, their  
dispositions as either official or unofficial do affect contemporary interpretation. In other  
words, when Greenblatt recommends that “[w]e need to develop terms to describe the  
ways in which material—here official documents, private papers, newspaper clippings,  
and so forth—is transferred from one discursive sphere to another and becomes aesthetic  
property” (11), it seems that he maintains a double standard, recognizing the official as  
literary, as opposed to nonliterary. Perhaps we need to further develop terms to describe  
this difference as well.

Despite the claim to all-inclusiveness in terms of the historical gaze, a burgeoning  
New Historicism in the early 1980s initially focused exclusively upon Renaissance  
Studies as a method of rereading texts previously seen as nonliterary (and therefore  
without value) as well as critical studies that read singular texts as symptomatic of an  
entire historical moment. Veenser claims, however, that this historical poetics has  
expanded its range to include such distant geographical regions as Latin America (xiii).  
An emphasis upon the “circulation” of currency and power—here regarding knowledge  
rather than money—suggests a basis in Marxism, although both Veenser and Greenblatt  
affirm that New Historicism breaks with as much as it continues in the vein of Marxist  
ideology. What’s more, Veenser identifies several key assumptions that suggest shared  
ground with multiple concurrent theoretical projects, namely:

1. that every expressive act is embedded in a network of material practices
2. that every act of unmasking, critique, and opposition uses the tools condemns and  
risks falling prey to the practice it exposes;
3. that literary and non-literary “texts” circulate inseparably;

4. that no discourse, imaginative or archival, gives access to unchanging truths nor expresses inalterable human nature. (xi)

The first unofficial axiom lends itself to a reading of intertextuality in terms of production, rather than influence. Skipping the second assumption for a moment, the third one informs any approach to historiographic metafiction, which similarly argues for the inseparable relationship between history and literature. And the fourth attacks utopic notions of a single truth, delegitimizing the power that either official sources of history/historiography as well as literary texts might wish to exert over a reader or readers. Despite the idyllic nature of such an assertion, one that con-scription does not believe to present itself in everyday practice, this leveling is an important first step towards combating misappropriated authority based on false documents.

Despite New Historicists' tendency to champion their own theoretical contradictions, preemptively exposing their faults seemingly to befuddle critics, however, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese maintains that New Historicism has fallen victim to its own assumption, engaging in practices it criticizes (or rather, failing to engage in alternatives). She is eager to impart that New Historicism has attempted to restore context "without exploring the boundaries between text and context" (222) a consequence of not addressing the debates that exist within historicism and history (social versus elitist, for example). As a consequence,

The emphasis on newness bespeaks the central paradox that informs the new historicism as a project: Notwithstanding some notable exceptions, it is not very historical. It is especially not self-critically or self-reflexively historical for part of the project of any contemporary historicism must inescapably be a fresh consideration of history herself—that is, a hard looked at the history of modern historicism and its conflicted relations with other critical strategies. (214)

Fox-Genovese concludes that devotees of New Historicism neglect to address the nature of the historicism—their own—with which they seek to displace the old model.

Frank Lentricchia expands this angle (distinct lack of self-awareness) to conclude that he sees little difference between old and new historicism, and this stems largely from the influence exercised by Foucault on the latter's treatment of power. This "uncritical acceptance" of Foucault, as Lentricchia puts it, undermines New Historicist claims that they undo the determinism of prior models, in fact instituting a profounder form of determinism. Greenblatt's notion that the circulation of power forms the basis of all social and textual relations is based on Foucault's explanation of power as a discipline, yet this power is indefinable, as Lentricchia notes. The problem of attributing such power to an all-encompassing agency, a specter of power, under the guise of making political claims, is that it ironically forces them "to get out of politics" (237) as a concrete practice. And Greenblatt gets tangled in his own web of self-awareness on an additional count regarding his implication that "objectivity, determinacy, and completeness in historical interpretation are values reluctantly being bid elegiac farewell—yet oddly, this apology shifts into subtle claim to virtue" (238). Maintaining that there is no such thing as a unified narrative or authoritative form of the past, New Historicists must ultimately claim that their research does offer some form of acceptable authority.

If anything, its embrace of impurity makes New Historicism virtually impossible to dissect, as well as limiting attempts to create a method of comparison. While spilling over into numerous other disciplines (borrowing from them, rather than being borrowed from), the potential pitfalls in New Historicism illustrate the incentive for not presenting a theory of con-scription as a form of literary history, nor as a form of history at all, for

that matter. In terms of praxis, con-scripture does not seek to privilege technique over substance (despite the importance of certain recurring forms), nor does it rely upon a general conception of the web of power relations that preempts its texts from working within a political framework. These texts may make claims about the exercise of power within national contexts, but the conceptual nature of these claims is always subjugated to the disruption of authority that the text holds over the reader. In positioning itself within the category of a “new” practice in terms of its increased appearance in or as contemporary literature, it too runs the risk the reenacting the very tendencies critiqued in other theoretical projects—it is important to recognize that the formal process itself may not be new, but the great frequency of its appearance and its disruptive intent are. Self-reflexivity will not absolve con-scripture from these problematic fissures, nor will taking refuge in the relation between reader and text or con-text. Con-scripts may co-exist with archival fictions, blurring(s) between history and fiction, and even literary history to a limited extent. Yet in addition to conceptual structures, they offer concrete ones to bridge the gap between theoretical claims and reading practice.

## PART II

### THE ART OF CON-FESSING: DEMYTHOLOGIZING THE REVOLUTIONARY ICON

## CHAPTER 4

### INTRODUCTION

#### **In-Between Fessing Up and Con-Fessing**

In *Book of Daniel* (1971), E.L. Doctorow provided a creative example of his marriage of the literary and the political concept of “False Documents,” long before he published his article of the same name. A fictionalized account of the Rosenberg (here renamed Isaacson) espionage trial up through the political unrest generated by the New Left during the war protests of the late 1960s, the novel is ostensibly narrated/written by the Daniel Isaacson, such that the book the reader holds in his or her hand becomes Daniel’s doctoral dissertation, the book of Daniel. While some of the sources for Cold War history are provided, in other instances Doctorow creates false documents, such as his own renditions of the Isaacsons’ prison letters. T.V. Reed notes that the “text employs virtually every narrative form a student of literature can bring into play: drama, letters, travelogue, empirical historiography, advertising copy, poetic confession, biblical exegesis, diary, documentary, political tract, journalistic report, notes to the reader, notes to the author to rewrite previous passages, and even elements of the dissertation form itself” (291).

Moving between first and third person narration of his own and his family’s past, Daniel’s writing is ultimately neither biography nor autobiography, yet it is an example of con-scription, albeit a distanced form. While allusions to and parallels between

Daniel's book and that of the biblical Book of Daniel are explicitly referenced in the text—epigraphs, both Daniels have family members sentenced to death in “fiery furnaces” by authorities, the novel ends with a version of the same passage that its ancient namesake does, etc.—none of the biblical passages is intended as falsified documents that call into question archived sources. Daniel's and his sister's experience of politics is not meant to stand in for the actual historical family (who had two sons, not a son and daughter). Doctorow has explained that he is not interested in writing about the history of the Rosenbergs, but rather about the idea of the Rosenbergs. Robert Detweiler explains Doctorow's (and that of other “postmodern” authors such as D.M. Thomas and Don DeLillo) process in terms of a shift from writing about an historical subject to writing about an author's invented “projection” of the individual. For Detweiler,

the strategy of turning a historical subject into a fictive one is to create a symbol, to make the figure stand for something other than what she or he was, yet without forgetting that figure's historical identity (which would be impossible anyhow). The tension created between the historical figure and its symbolic status as fiction generates an irony—a distance between what the figure was and what the author imagines for him—that makes us recognize, paradoxically, the historical figure's humanity. (68)

What such an explanation does not account for is the awareness of fictionalization on the part of the author as third party. Doctorow's novel runs the fence between fictionalized autobiography and biography, although his distance from the “actual” historical sons of the Rosenbergs (who would publish an autobiography in 1977) highlights the fictionality of such a project. Doctorow does not appropriate the voice of the Rosenbergs. Although in the course of constructing his dissertation (which is itself a pastiche of genres), Daniel is creating a window into his personal politics, his text is not as radical as those that utilize the mode of con-fessing to directly engage with the historical record. Such texts

feature historical subjects who, through apocryphal written first-person narratives, falsely fess up, or rather, con-fess to issues, insecurities, or crimes that take on a new meaning given the revelatory nature of supposed personal writing.

The art of con-fessing in Jay Cantor's *The Death of Che Guevara*, Silviano Santiago's *Em Liberdade*, and Augusto Roa Bastos' *Yo el Supremo*, brings with it an added dimension when compared to Doctorow's con-script. The three apocryphal examples of personal writing attributed to actual historical reactionaries and dictators—Ernesto Guevara, Graciliano Ramos, and José Gaspar Rodríguez de Francia—present themselves as documents, personal and apocryphal testimonials that build upon the fact that each individual did in fact maintain a diary. Like Doctorow, these authors are interested in pointing to the political individuals' humanity, but in a much more radical move they seek to demythify these authoritarian figures via their own self-representations. By presenting their texts as false documents that purport to be the work of these authoritative figures from both sides of the ideological divide between conservative and liberal politics, the authors collapse the distance or “space” between themselves and the historical moment that fiction creates, instead focusing upon exposing the fictions that the supposed diary writers introduce into their personal texts. In the process, they reverse the very results that Detweiler mentions above. Rather than turn the historical subject into a symbol, they remove the historical subject's status as symbol, as untouchable historical property, be it by popular culture or official historical standards. The historical subjects are not just any individuals, but instead writers and politicians who have wielded authority over popular opinion. By concretizing the historical subjects' words, providing the illusion that they deconstruct themselves through their own personal

writing, the confusion between fiction and nonfiction is more effectively blurred than an explicitly fictional rewriting of past events.

The confusion these texts create is well-illustrated by the immediate critical reaction(s) to Cantor's *The Death of Che Guevara* after its publication. While one reviewer in his first sentence labels the novel "current biographical fiction" (Davenport 329), another reviewer begins his text in contradiction, noting, "The first things to understand is that it is not a biography of Che Guevara...he [Cantor] writes neither a fictionalized history nor romanticized legend" (Flower 314). That these apocryphal autobiographical texts can operate as texts that confuse biography and historiography without romanticizing is a testament to documentary power, or perhaps the power attributed to the document, of con-fessing.

### **Diary Fiction and the Fictional Diary**

Cantor's, Santiago's, and Roa Bastos' novels are not merely what has been called the "diary novel," after Gerald Prince's seminal 1975 article of the same name, however. Prince notes that the diary novel shares with the epistolary novel its fragmentary narration (by necessity), yet even at this early stage identifies epistemological concerns that such a form raises: "the origin of the diary, the circumstances of its publication, its physical shape, its dialectical relationship with its narrator" (480). As a genre that encourages self-reflection and awareness of the writing process, diary fiction has nearly as long a literary history as does the novel itself. Thus, H. Porter Abbott maintains, the ironic tension within diary fiction is that the illusion of a personal or confessional mode is

maintained while the public is granted access to the inner workings of the writer, yet one of the complications of a document that “claims to be real” is the reason “invoked to account for the diary’s publication,” the convention being the reference to an editor’s note (19-20).

In this regard, Porter echoes what E.L. Doctorow had earlier termed “false documents” in reference to the devices used by Cervantes in *Don Quixote* and Defoe in *Robinson Crusoe*, whereby the author claims distance from his work, having supposedly merely discovered the object on display. Yet, instead of attempting to make real a fictive character’s writing, practitioners of con-fessing reverse the terms, enacting a particularly political strategy by making fictional the writing of a recognized historical agent. In this regard, the authors create false documents, not in the fictional sense that Doctorow employs the phrase, but as historical texts which masquerade as factual or documented sources. This multi-layered tactic is certainly not the first of its kind; Andrew Hassam has claimed such prescriptive space for Doris Lessing’s *The Golden Notebook* or Malcolm Lowry’s “Through the Panama,” such that this “introversion is matched by the technique of framing texts within texts, a technique that not only exceeds the very possibilities of the diary itself but questions the fundamental distinction between fact and fiction” (3). Lessing’s complex novel, which has been claimed as a landmark feminist text of the twentieth century, moves between two narrative levels. The first is a traditionally narrated, realist representation of an author and her social relationships, which frames the second: the author’s collection of notebooks, which consist of self-criticism, partially developed novelistic projects, newspaper clippings, and a critique of the English political Left, until in the fifth notebook, the golden notebook, a new novel project is introduced

that combines notebooks with fiction, and the reader realizes that *The Golden Notebook* is that project. While the protagonist has ostensibly created the divisions within the text, the editor who has collected and at times commented upon the notebooks remains unidentified, bringing up issues that extend beyond Prince's concerns. No longer is the relationship simply about the writer's relationship to the text, but also the archivist's role and motivations in relation to the work. Texts that practice confessing exploit these problems of narrative illusion to subvert the authority of the historical and political subjects they represent. Despite its foregrounding of politics and morality, Hassan ultimately sees writing in Lessing's novel as intransitive, divorced from social action. Cantor, Santiago, and Roa Bastos, however, transcend such political "impotence" by historicizing their texts via recognized historical events that encourage the reading of the entries in a realist mode even as they simultaneously seek to undermine that very approach. They subtly, yet self-consciously shift the focus of the work away from the diarist's role to that of the archivist's election of strategies for re-presenting confessor, as historical, written, and mythologized subject.

Whether seeking the label "modern" or "postmodern," many critical studies of diary fiction (Abbott 1985; Hassan 1993; Martens 1985) focus exclusively upon European texts in English, French and German. The three authors analyzed in this section, however, are not alone in creating texts which use the diary device to move between the discourses of reality and fiction to problematize the representation of historical subjects outside the European tradition. Peruvian author José María Arguedas, best known for *Los ríos profundos* (1958), anticipates his own suicide in his posthumously published *Zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo* (1971), which moves

between the personal space of actual diary entries contemplating death to a narration of social relations in very public spaces (public markets, bars, cemeteries). More recently, In *La lejanía del tesoro* (1992), Mexican historian Paco Ignacio Taibo has revisited Maximilian's rule in Mexico through the supposedly lost diaries of journalist and writer Guillermo Prieto. Neither text, however, problematizes the role of the archivist, and his/her space within the text, in the fashion that Cantor, Santiago, and Roa Bastos successfully do.

### **Fictional Spaces of Resistance**

In "Comparative Literature in an Age of 'Globalization,'" Lois Parkinson Zamora traces the trajectory of racial and cultural difference as addressed by literature to the *indigenismo* at the beginning of the twentieth century, a movement whose quest for inclusiveness was led by the above-mentioned author, Arguedas. Zamora maintains that the "revision of spatial categories is fundamental to virtually all discussions of globalization, whether space is engaged metaphorically as shrinkage or mobility or distance, or discussed literally in terms of decentralization, deterritorialization, redrawing boundaries, or any number of other ways of signifying current global alignments" (199). While Jay Cantor and Silviano Santiago do support a project of reorganizing space, they see the particular "form" of space as a primarily political field, one which exists between extremes, in the gray areas of intellectual responsibility. This has less to do with overarching concerns of deterritorialization, decentralization, or reactions against cultural homogenization than with the desire to reestablish identity within literary practice, although their texts certainly engage with the two former practices in the process. Rather

than focus on shifting borders or exterior transitions, both authors utilize the metaphor of a “space between” in order to rethink the political powers of literature, the same ones Doctorow explores in “False Documents.”

In *The Space Between: Literature and Politics* (1981), Cantor confesses that he originally conceived of political literature as an instrument of struggle, a mode that was “self-reflexive, concerned with how we order reality, make our world, deceive ourselves or are deceived, [something] that could serve a useful demythifying function, one that was---according to this sense of things—potentially revolutionary” (3). However, he discovered that such a desire constituted a way of reading theory onto literature, prescribing a Marxist ideology or conclusion that preceded the actual reading of the text, an approach he counsels against, for it does not allow art to change the audience’s ideas, only reify already existing beliefs. He also presents and critiques a second interpretation of the relationship between art and ideology, in which art is viewed as autonomous, having broken with reality. Again a problem arises, in that art is “mute” in and of itself, and thus dependent upon the critic for the mediation of its image (133), the “ways it can enter history, however, partially” (10). Instead, he proposes a third approach, one that exists between the two previous options and literally in the blurring between ideologies. This blurring stems from his reading of Norman O. Brown, where “there is a confusion of realms, a confusion of art and politics. They are the same activity: art is constitutive of the world at every point” (11). Thus, instead of writing politically, Cantor’s conception of politics is altered. Art becomes precisely what is not already known, and it is this creation of value which leads to revolution.

Cantor doesn't deny that art or literature can then have the very effects of demythification that he initially sought to transpose onto the text. Yet he sees revolution as a "symptom" of history, something that is merely rhetoric in the discourse of Marxism. What comes next, he asks. Most often, that possibility has not been addressed, yet this moment of upheaval is "a rare moment in the life of a nation. It presents its writers with great possibilities: to have their words matter" (20). It is such an awareness that he seeks to imbue in the voice of Ernesto Guevara in his first novel, *The Death of Che Guevara* (1983). Unlike Doctorow's notion of the language of freedom in *Book of Daniel*, language is not creation, but rather destruction in the revolutionary movement, according to Cantor, since "the symbol becomes not a presence but an absence" (42). This absence is promised by his novel's title alone, before Guevara's textual persona can ever present his diary writing or philosophical reflections.

Yet Cantor is not uncritical of physical violence, as opposed to violence within art. Using the United States' strategies in the Vietnam War as an analogy with terrorism rather than genocide, he distinguishes between terrorism and proletarian violence. While the proletariat wishes to do away with the entire bourgeois class, the "terrorist does not want to do away with his audience; he wants some left to see, to control" (76). If such an attitude is read in conjunction with the image that Cantor's Guevara portrays in his apocryphal diaries, then the Argentine revolutionary must be seen also as a terrorist, for his supposedly personal writing presupposes the existence of an audience; this continued opportunity to (re)invent himself, to control and deceive the reader, is what defers his death. Writing of this between-space prior to the publication of his first novel, Cantor

does not explicitly invite such a connection. He does, however, provide a clue in his lone mention of Guevara in the monograph:

The terrorist speaks of acting for the masses. The power within the terrorist (for “the masses” are one’s power projected) is made by the terrorist absolutely external to himself, made into an idol, a god. (The revolutionary, Che Guevara wrote, in “Man and Socialism in Cuba,” must make the masses his most hallowed image. It must substitute for all the life he denies himself.) (141)

Cantor claims that theory is essentially conservative; by virtue of its prescriptive impulse upon all art and activity of the masses, it tries to “stop art, stop history” (141). His pre-existing concern with the commodification of literary production contextualizes the birth of *The Death of the Che Guevara*. As a text, it eschews prescription, preferring to confuse the realms of art and politics, operating in the space between biography and autobiography, fact and fiction, and the roles of revolutionary and terrorist. While the text ultimately acts as political literature that demythifies the icon, the multiple layers of diary entries and interruptions do not suggest a singular reading. In an article that primarily contests Cantor’s representation, David William Foster does at least allow that the literary collage is “complex because Cantor depicts multiple forces at work in Guevara’s behavior, and ambiguous because the novel is careful never to provide categorical interpretations” (81). The ultimate absence of the symbol allows the audience to break out of the terrorism enacted by the supposed author.

Silviano Santiago envisions a different form of terrorism in his article “O Entre-Lugar do discurso Latino-americano” (Latin-American Discourse: The Space In-Between). While Cantor reflects on the violence that has returned to the Americas, Santiago foregrounds the basic colonialist, binary relationship of inequality, the notion of

indigenous as barbaric and civilizer as noble, that has defined Latin American politics since the conquest. By virtue of being a victim of colonial and now neocolonial exploitation, however, Latin America has a particular reactionary strategy available; it “establishes its place on the map of Western civilization by actively and destructively diverting the European norm and resignifying pre-established and immutable elements that were exported to the New World by Europeans” (30). The “entre-lugar” that Santiago hints at is a geography of “assimilation and aggressiveness, of learning and reaction, of false obedience” (30). Passivity or silence is absence, a form of complicity, thus contemporary writing takes on a political bent by virtue of the socio-historical roles that have been inculcated and maintained by cultural imperialism. Certainly literature and politics emerge in the same moment, as Cantor argues regarding their relationship in North America and Europe, yet in this geographical space, outside factors have already determined the interdependence of art and ideology. There is not simple creation, as Cantor would have it, but distortion of already existing factors. To mark presence is to mark difference, or, as Santiago puts it, “To speak, to write, means to speak against, to write against” (31).

At first glance, Santiago would seem to be suggesting a continued form of the anthropophagy famously set forth in modernist Oswald de Andrade’s manifesto, “Tupi or Not Tupi,” whose title alone sums the corruption and digestion of an European model. However, Santiago wishes to go further to analyze the results of such reactive repossession to determine what the role contemporary intellectuals, artist and critic alike, should be in this process of substantiating difference, while they consciously maintain a secondary position in relation to production from what he sees as continued centers of

colonialism. Anthropophagy in and of itself reduces “creative production to the parasitic condition of a work feeding off another without ever providing anything in return” (31). The work is curiously still dependent upon the original work for its precarious existence (in the same way that Cantor worries about art’s dependency upon being mediated by critical theory). For Santiago, the role of the critic is to lessen the distance between mortal and that “immortal star.” In other words, the intellectual inhabits the space in-between production, both international and national, and the local individual. Santiago, somewhat paradoxically, uses European critics as models in Barthes and Foucault to illustrate the vehicle for his intention to move away from European models, before turning to Borges’ “Pierre Menard, Author of the Quijote,” to illustrate the parodic imitation, the copy that completely assimilates its original model and is no longer secondary or subservient to it. Santiago ultimately concludes the essay with a definition of the resistance he has been characterizing as between established models, for “[s]omewhere between sacrifice and playfulness, prison and transgression, submission to the code and aggression, obedience and rebellion, assimilation and expression—there, in this apparently empty space, its temple and its clandestinity, is where the anthropophagous ritual of Latin American discourse is constructed” (2001, 38).

Santiago does not uncritically reserve this disruptive glance for cultural imperialism exercised by foreign interests, however. In *Em Liberdade* (1981), he too incorporates and assimilates an original model: the voice and diaries of Graciliano Ramos, Brazilian writer and journalist imprisoned by Getúlio Vargas in the 1930s for his supposed support of communism. The text purports to be Ramos’ diary entries upon leaving prison in 1937 (the prison diaries themselves were lost, and Ramos would only

reconstruct the experience a decade later in Ramos' real and posthumously published diaries which denounce the dictatorship, *As Memórias do Cárcere* (1953). Santiago is indebted to Cervantes (or is it Borges' Menard?) for the "false document" device that precedes the work and locates the author as merely an editor. Although a similar device is employed by authors who make Luis Fernando Valente's list about New Brazilian Historical Novels,<sup>5</sup> such as Márcio Souza (*Imperador do Acre*, 1976) and João Ubaldo Ribeiro (*A Casa dos Budas Ditosos*, 1999), Santiago's employment of paraliterary editorial notes in the spirit of Roa Bastos takes the pretense of authority to a much higher level, for by evoking an historical figure, the space between discourses of fact and fiction, between model and creation, becomes more politically charged. Ironically for such a prescription, David Jackson believes Santiago's novel functions as a "portrait of the postmodern writer as an escape artist" (202). Drawing from the work of Frederic Jameson, Jackson claims the author's approach to false memoirs becomes caught in a prison-house of language.

The type of intellectual spaces of contestation that open new modes of reaction (in the manner that Cantor and Santiago prescribe) differs from the closed space(s) that Teresa Mendez-Faith identifies in Roa Bastos' two most discussed novels, *Hijo de Hombre* and *Yo el Supremo*. The closed space identified in these novels shares more in common with Jackson's pronouncements on the prisonlike nature of language. The diegetic spaces within Bastos' work, both physical and metaphorical, that suffocate and oppress, are termed "espacios-cárceles," or prison-spaces. Mendez-Faith notes that in both texts, these prison-spaces

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<sup>5</sup> See "Fiction as History: The Case of Joao Ubaldo Ribeiro."

estructuran el material narrativa, pero a su vez constituyen una necesidad técnica en la novelística robastiana, en cuanto canalizan hacia el lector una serie de motivos temáticos recurrentes en su obra: las relaciones con la dictadura y sus derivados (opresión, persecución, torturas, control totalitario...). De manera literal o metafórica, los escenarios tienden aquí a ser “espacios-cárceles.” (9)

For Mendez-Faith, spatial constraints double as markers of content as well as structure the representations of dictatorial oppression for Roa Bastos. It could be argued that this space opens up into one of exile, geographical distance, in Roa Bastos's third novel, *El Fiscal*, written several years after Mendez-Faith's article. Indeed, the fact that the narrator of Roa Bastos' final novel, *Contravida*, is the lone survivor from a prison massacre which was detailed in the author's first collection of short stories, both confirms the notion of a literary and extra-literary prison-space of writing as it points to the cyclical movement which informs Roa Bastos' works, especially that of *Yo el Supremo*. For while each of these texts references physical penitentiaries, it is ultimately Francia's isolation, his own from the people as well as that which he has imposed upon Paraguay itself, that develops into a claustrophobic space from which there is no exit. In *Yo el supremo*, Francia's personal diaries and criticisms are attempts to break out of this space, but as the relation of this collection of documents depends upon the mediation of an intermediary archivist, Francia is ultimately unsuccessful. What results is a text that rests between biography and autobiography, but whose physical destruction is built into the novel, paralleling Francia's own self-destruction as a consequence of having revealed too much of his “prison” self.

## CHAPTER 5

### WRITING CHE WRITING: GUEVARA'S APOCRYPHAL DIARIES DECONSTRUCT THE REVOLUTIONARY MYTH

El personaje que escribió estas notas murió al pisar de nuevo la tierra Argentina, el que las ordena y pule, “yo,” no soy yo; por lo menos no soy el mismo yo interior [The person who wrote these notes passed away the moment his feet touched Argentine soil. The person who reorganizes and polishes them, me, is no longer, at least I’m not the person I once was].  
—Ernesto Guevara, *Diarios de motocicleta*

In his posthumously published *Diarios de motocicleta*, Ernesto Guevara begins with a direct appeal to the reader of its pages, a short chapter he labels “Entendámonos” (translated in various editions as “So We Understand Each Other” or “Let’s Get Things Straight”) from which the above epigraph has been culled. Guevara immediately highlights his epiphany as a result of the journey across the South American continent: “el que las ordena y pule, ‘yo,’ no so yo; por lo menos no soy el mismo yo interior” (52). Ironically, Guevara is not the only person reorganizing and writing the notes, which were taken from his personal archive in Cuba and edited by his second wife, Aleida Guevara. She notes in a 1995 preface to the Verso edition that his “experiences were *later rewritten* by Ernesto himself as a narrative” (emphasis added), a fact that raises questions as to the application of the term “diary,” as well as drawing attention to the multiple levels of editors and writing involved in this supposedly private confession. More importantly, the chapter highlights Guevara’s awareness of his audience from the outset, changing the nature of his diary-writing from one of private dimensions to one designed

for public consumption. This narrative is not meant for our eyes only. It also leads Guevara into an awareness of his control over how his reflections are portrayed, which he caps with a statement of authority regarding the personal history and *image* he presents: “Si presento un nocturno créanlo o reinventen, poco importa, que si no conocen personalmente el paisaje fotografiado por mis notas, difícilmente conocerán otra verdad que la que les cuento aquí. Los dejo ahora conmigo mismo; el que fui...” (52)<sup>6</sup> Guevara appears to utilize his diary notes as an opportunity to distinguish between multiple selves, in this private forum-turned-public. He ends his “notes” by articulating his awareness that not only he himself, but also humanity is divided into halves; he refers to his body as a “sacred space” for the people’s battle (208), a very different corporeal space from the one of intellectual resistance “in-between” that Silviano Santiago encourages. The propagandistic rhetoric on which Guevara closes, and from which he emerges as much an icon of the proletariat as ever, effectively erases the earlier moments of intimate humanization the text provides as a hook, something the author is quite conscious about. Whether an issue of performance or not, however, little of Guevara’s awareness of multiple or shifting identities would seem to have translated into Walter Salles’ 2004 filmic adaptation of *The Motorcycle Diaries*. Instead, the rather reductive images of a lovable rogue and a romanticized idealist dominate the screen narrative.

The charge that Guevara’s image is persistently misrepresented as a two-dimensionally charismatic icon in popular culture interpretations is a common one. The first of Steven Soderbergh’s two films featuring Ernesto “Che” Guevara to be released in

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<sup>6</sup> “What this means is that if I present you with an image and say, for instance, that it was taken at night, you can either believe me, or not; it matters little to me, since if you don’t happen to know the scene I’ve “photographed” in my notes, it will be hard for you to find an alternative to the truth I’m about to tell. But I’ll leave you now, with myself, the man I used to be...(translation by Alexandra Keeble in the 2003 Ocean Press edition).

2009, *The Argentine*, has been criticized for its perpetuation of the Guevara-as-eternal-revolutionary-myth, yet the primary narrative emphasis is certainly not upon displaying the armed resistance with which the guerilla strategist was associated. The film makes use of a specific device in order to represent the events of the Cuban Revolution. Within the black and white scenes detailing Guevara on his 1964 visit to the United States in order to address the United Nations, he is interviewed, and his translated responses provide the vehicle for the audience's access to the past events of the revolution in full color flashbacks. Near the film's end, the journalist interviewing Guevara playfully asks, "What is it like to be a symbol?" to which Guevara evasively and disingenuously responds, "A symbol of what?" before adding a rhetorical explication that shifts the focus from the individual to the collective: "We were very aware that we represented the hopes of an unredeemed America and all eyes, those of the oppressors and those of the oppressed, were fixed on us."

This politically crafted answer is quite consciously given with the awareness of who his audience will be. As viewers of the visual medium, we have no problem moving between to the two temporal periods and accepting the portrayal of events—which is "based on" Guevara's very own *Reminiscences of the Cuban Revolution*, written over a span of several years, and first collected after his death in 1967—as somehow outside his own experience, an objective rendering that transcends the rhetorical, revolutionary discourse he provides in his diegetic interview. But what happens when the notion of audience is somehow deferred, and the private becomes the primary focus, as with Guevara's well-publicized diaries, written during the disastrous Bolivian campaign which culminated in his death? How do we reengage with historical individuals or periods

which have been mythologized and rendered untouchable within public consciousness by the media and cinematic representation?

In *Ernesto Guevara, también conocido como el Che*, Mexican historian Paco Ignacio Taibo II has sought to address this problematic form of popular consumption by incorporating Guevara's diary into this behemoth biography such that there are two dialoguing narrators, Taibo in normal print, and Guevara, distinguished only by bold letters. The text attributed to Guevara has been culled from his diaries and letters, although Taibo does not immediately reveal particular sources for the individual quotations in order to refrain from interrupting the narrative (this is accomplished in an extended section of notes before the bibliography). As Taibo explains of Guevara, "Che además es un fantasma que, muy a pesar de su humor cáustico y su reiterada timidez, ha quedado preso en la parafernalia de la imagen y de la maquinarias inocentes o dolosas, que se dedican a vaciar de contenido todo aquello que se cruza a su paso, para volverlo camisetas, *souvenir*, taza de café, póster o fotografía, destinadas al consumo. Y esa es la condena de los que provocan la nostalgia: estar atrapados en los arcones del consumo o en los reductos de la inocencia" (11).<sup>7</sup> Taibo traces the history of the initial publication of Guevara's captured diaries, explaining that Cuba's race to present the diaries was in reaction to fears that the CIA was attempting to "edit" the diaries and publish them in falsified form (719). Similarly, Taibo hopes to liberate Guevara from such misappropriation, as either T-shirt icon or misrepresented enemy of the state.

Nonetheless, despite Taibo's awareness as to the "slippery" nature of the diaries, he

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<sup>7</sup> His ghost has been trapped in imagery, innocent or harmful machinery that tries to empty all contents from everything that comes its way, turning it into commercial goods—T-shirts, souvenirs, coffee mugs, posters, photographs. This is the fate of those who inspire nostalgia: to be trapped in the coffers of consumerism or in the shelter of innocence" (xii). The translation omits certain phrases from the original in the 36<sup>th</sup> edition.

includes Guevara's part in the text's narration with absolute reverence. Guevara's words serve as unquestioned authority.

As such examples demonstrate, extreme portrayals of Guevara, either regarding or via his diaries, are not limited to the cinematic realm of adaptations. On the opposite end of the spectrum from Taibo, Humberto Fontava utilizes the diaries to ridicule their author in *Exposing the Real Che Guevara and the Useful Idiots who Idolize Him*. In neither instance of biography is the nature of Guevara's writing analyzed, however. Both these "literary" appropriations come prepackaged with an ideological agenda; the diary is merely a vehicle, a tool for supporting the authors' preformed intentions, rather than a medium for altering their readers' perceptions.

Two separate authors have engaged in utilizing Guevara's own words to create examples of con-scripts, in this case the autobiographical mode of con-fessing. Abel Posse in *Los cuadernos de Praga* and Jay Cantor in *The Death of Che Guevara*, are able to demonstrate an effective strategy for deconstructing the immortal myth of Guevara by literally rewriting it from within. The method they adopt results in an apocryphal expansion upon Guevara's diaries and journals of self-criticism (the diaries exist, but not in the forms or the detail which the authors provide), such that the audience witnesses Che writing Che, or perhaps more specifically, the writing of Che writing.

### **Revolution Number Nein: Guevara Con-Fessing**

Far from constructing the work as an interview via the device that the Soderbergh film does, for example, Cantor mocks the instance of an interview during the Bolivian

campaign, where both Guevara and the journalist already know what the other will say; they simply regurgitate prefabricated discourse. In fact, Cantor's archivist of Guevara's diaries (named Walter) ends up inserting his own questions into the interview, questions regarding Guevara's apparent suicide wish on the final day of the campaign, and thus questions that the journalist could not possibly have asked (379). As Walter, also Guevara's companion in detention at the Isle of Pines, writes to Guevara in 1965 while they discuss his memoirs, "You don't get the point. Not an interview. I meant a story. Tell a story about those things, about you" (93). And in place of ideological rhetoric, or a vetted history, for that matter, a story is exactly what Guevara provides.

For indeed, the book is double-coded, slipping between multiple discourses—autobiography, biography, historiography, drama, and film—in order to subvert the pretense of authority that the author maintains over his writing, be it Guevara's, Walter's, or Cantor's own. While heavily based on research of the published *Bolivian Diaries*, Cantor's novel manipulates the reader through its vacillation between fact and fiction. It features excerpts from documented speeches as well as fragments taken directly from Guevara's *Bolivian Diaries*, yet these are interspersed indiscriminately between fictions masquerading as documentable diary entries. The first part of the novel intersperses entries of Guevara's various journals and letters with a dialogue between himself and Walter (or Ponco, as he is sometimes known), his soon-to-be archivist, on the nature of what it means to write. The second half of the work finds Walter, one of the few survivors of the Bolivian campaign, usurping the role of self-criticism in 1968 as he creates a collage of journal entries from a variety of guerilla voices, displacing both Guevara and himself in the process.

Posse's and Cantor's novels are not merely examples of "diary fiction," for the instances of personal writing are framed by additional material that calls into question the narrator's own voice by highlighting the fact that it is being mediated. The authors subtly, yet self-consciously, shift the focus of the work away from the diarist's role to that of the archivist's election of strategies for re-presenting Guevara. By calling attention to such practices, the authors deconstruct the device employed to foreground the act of writing, although Cantor is ultimately more successful in his practice. Posse's *Los cuadernos de Praga* trace Guevara during his six month stay in Prague in 1966, a part of Guevara's mythic life that had been maintained as a secret until the 1990s when it was declassified. The existence of his notebooks from Prague is an urban myth itself, though Posse claims within the his novel to have been shown photocopies of transcribed pages from Guevara's journals by ex-KGB agents while in the Czech Republic, one of the perks of his position as a diplomat. He makes clear in the unmarked and unsigned preface to the novel, which is presented as a true account of his research process (although there is no documentation to prevent the possibility that this is a false document in the spirit of Daniel Defoe or Orhan Pamuk), that "las biografías confirman al Guevara de las ideologías. Sólo la novela podía liberarlo de su imagen de profeta de la liberación."<sup>8</sup> Posse's apparently subtle respect for the movement between biographical fact and invented fiction represents a distinct departure from the iconoclastic nature of his earlier farces of Spanish colonialism in Latin America, *Los perros del paraíso*, *Daimon*, and *El largo atardecer del caminante*, yet mimetic illusion is perhaps more successful at deconstructing Guevara's media image than the trilogy is, because the discourse of

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<sup>8</sup> Translations of Posse's text are my own unless otherwise indicated: "The biographies confirm the ideological Guevara. Only the novel could liberate him from his image as the prophet of liberation.

realism parallels that of the historical record, whereas magic realism is claimed by fiction alone and does not directly challenge the official record. This de-mythification occurs through access provided to Guevara's supposed notebooks for the reader, but also through the novel's fragmentation, as Posse incorporates his own interviews into the work, such that Guevara becomes a fragmented subject himself—as an uncontrollable child, or the failed revolutionary in Africa, or the narcissistic lover, depending upon whom Posse questions. Posse is careful to note his presence in constructing Guevara as outside biographical schematics, including in the midst of his contemporary discussions with biographers and state agents, his own philosophical annotations: “El escritor es quien da la voz a los otros, ¿no? Lo que no se escribe deja de existir... Ahora es el tiempo del silencio y de la mentira” (201).<sup>9</sup>

At the same time, Posse himself reveals a developing obsession with his subject, perhaps echoing the process that fellow Argentine writer Tomás Eloy Martínez reveals in works like *La novela de Perón* or *Santa Evita*. Yet the multiplicity of personal levels that Posse unveils is ultimately supplanted by Guevara's own multiplicity, or duplicity, as it were. As an internationally hunted dissident, the Argentine guerilla must maintain a disguise at all times in Prague, and his passport reveals him to be Mr. Vázquez-Rojas, a trader supposedly from Spain. However, not only is Guevara forced to perform and make convincing this assumed identity that represents the bourgeois values counter to everything Guevara himself believes, but his identification with this opposing personality is traceable through his journal entries. He begins to write from a capitalist perspective and has interior dialogues, as Vázquez-Rojas takes on the proportions of a heteronym á la

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<sup>9</sup> A writer is the one who gives voice to others, right? What is not written ceases to exist... Now is the time of silence and lies.

Fernando Pessoa. What emerges is a conflicted individual who is forced to see the practice of his socialist dream in a paranoid Eastern Europe in which the New Man and Woman are not perpetuating a perpetual revolution, but rather struggling to get out. As a student whom he eventually seduces responds to his rhetoric about capitalism, “si usted conociese el socialismo desde adentro no hablaría así...Ésta es una sociedad hipócritamente cruel” (76).<sup>10</sup> As he begins to be incorporated into the identity of Vázquez-Rojas, Guevara frequents cafes with the literary elite and is introduced to the work of Kafka; he follows the writer’s steps in meanderings about the city. He engages in discussions of *The Metamorphosis*, an ironic mode of referencing his own transformation. Ultimately, he adopts the same strategy that the Czech writer did with Max Brod; when he fears that he will die, Guevara requests that his diaries be destroyed and never revealed to the public. Via Posse’s writing, of course, it’s already too late. Thus, despite the novel’s title, Guevara’s notebooks and philosophical annotations are only one component in the textual reinvention of the myth, in this little-known moment in his life when he decided upon initiating the Bolivian campaign. A one-time secret agent Posse interviews suggests that “Guevara estaba ya muerto cuando tomó el tren en Praga, después de esos meses de soledad, para iniciar la campaña de Bolivia, que era en realidad, para él, el comienzo de la batalla por la Argentina” (83).<sup>11</sup>

Just as Guevara’s contemporary voice becomes diluted by the interviews that present different perspectives and moments of him, so too does Posse’s pseudo-objective voice become displaced in the process of presenting these interviews. At least on a diegetic level, Posse certainly does not claim authority over the text or the persona of

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<sup>10</sup> If you knew socialism from the inside you wouldn’t talk like that...Ours is a society hypocritically cruel.

<sup>11</sup> Guevara was already dead when he took the train in Prague, after those months of solitude, in order to start the Bolivian campaign, that was in reality, for him, the start of the battle for Argentina.

Guevara. While Posse moves between the roles of inventor and compiler, he rarely intervenes directly in the text in the fashion that Roa Bastos' compiler in *Yo, el Supremo* does (unless it is to initially inform the reader of the heteronyms or "fictional beings" (16) from whose perspective Guevara often writes), and his prefatory author's note seems less interested in continuing the illusion of scholarly authority than Roa Bastos' final compiler's note. Instead, Posse allows other scholarly voices to compete with his own via the inclusion of interviews with a childhood friend who describes Guevara's own mother's obsession with death, an ex-comrade from the failed Congo expedition who suggests that Guevara was foolishly attempting to reenact Cervantes' Quixote. In addition, Posse includes the words of documented biographers, such as leading authority Jon Lee Anderson, as well as Cuban guerilla Harry "Pombo" Villegas, who survived Bolivian campaign, wrote about the experience of Guevara, and may serve as the model for Cantor's "Ponco." Posse's strategy is effective in its imitation of a documentary style, yet Cantor's displacement of Guevara is more complex and comprehensive, as it delves more fully into the role that death played in the leader's life. In the process, Cantor moves between a number of genres, playing not only with the ideas of documentary writing and personal narratives, but also those of Hollywood filmic dramatization. Unlike Posse, Cantor questions the authority and representational value of both written texts, which is to say Guevara's diaries as well as his own interpretation. This critique hinges upon the introduction of Ponco as a compiler who more closely resembles Roa Bastos' Patiño by internalizing the words of his commander to such a degree that he begins to imitate them. In this fashion, Ponco's preoccupation with Guevara's death allows the reader to more fully grasp Che's own attempts to immortalize himself through the written word.

## Death and the Image

Posse's secret agent's true identity is (conveniently) never revealed, yet his intimation that Guevara not only expected, but invited his end in Bolivia, becomes something of a refrain among the other individuals interviewed. Indeed, if there is anything that trumps Guevara's awareness of the acts of writing and self-construction in the two novels, it is an awareness of death. Cantor's novel bears a similar title to his later article on films that blur the boundaries of documentary and fiction in their portrayal of the Holocaust, "The Death of the Image," suggesting a preoccupation with how death is both represented and perceived that continues from some of the overtly cinematic scenes in his first novel. His prescriptive approach to the image reads as a virtual explication of *The Death of Che Guevara*: "Death is the absent guest in most of the images we use to divert ourselves—not death as subject or as spectacle but felt death, our transience, our violence, and our will to end our lives... And viewers need not quite acknowledge that they, too, imagine the world in the image, and so participate in what it represents" (24). This saturation in turn builds up to the point that "the continual consumption of such images-become-snapshots in the T.V. news, newspaper photos, magazine photo-essays, films, and videos makes us feel immortal... like gods, not quite capable of imagining our death" (23). Yet both Guevara and Walter can. *The Death of Che Guevara*, like the Holocaust films Cantor describes, vacillates between strategies of fact and fiction, and in fact, in a metafictional nod, the text "self-consciously and systematically draws attention

to its status as an artifact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality” (Waugh 2).

The novel’s title suggests biography, though within the narrative it appears as a newspaper headline after the Guevara’s murder, as well as an intratextual one-act play which Walter writes in homage—thus the division between media and fiction is maintained. Walter takes over Guevara’s role in the latter half of the text, such that his own self-criticisms form one narrative thread in 1968, while the juxtaposition of Guevara’s journal entries with those from Guevara’s group (including Walter’s) form the opposing and dialectical strand from one year previous. Walter envisions one of the scenes of the federal troops’ ambush of a guerilla group as if it were a film that continually flashes “The End” in its attempt to defer or ignore the images of carnage that are to come, but ultimately the shooting (both filmic and literal) must continue until the horror is complete. Walter realizes his overarching project develops in parallel fashion, as he continues to interrupt his own narrative in order to defer the death of Che. Indeed the apparent continuity of the read diary is itself an illusion, as Guevara notes that “the space between the sentences. Have you ever seen a strip of motion-picture stock? In between the frames there is a thick white line. On the screen the motion looks continuous...[b]ut there is really that line. A discontinuous dialectic that looks smooth” (93).

Posse too understands Guevara via the guerilla’s envisioning of his own death. According to Posse, his novel “está basada en ese momento decisivo [en Praga] en que su vida y su muerte confluyen” (Iacoviello 3).<sup>12</sup> While there can be no definitive word on his singular identity, “la verdadera vida de Guevara es un largo diálogo con su propia muerte,

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<sup>12</sup> It [the book] is based on the decisive moment [in Prague] when his life and death converge.

que comenzó a los tres años con su asma” (2).<sup>13</sup> In his ever-evolving project to turn what he terms colonial intellectualism on its head, Posse maintains that his work is not a glorification of Guevara’s political thought, for “lo único que nos puede salvar ante esta decadencia es la creatividad” (6).<sup>14</sup> To this end, he locates the writer of fiction in a privileged position over that of biographer or historiographer, claiming that his work belongs to the discourse of fiction rather than that of tacit reality or mimesis. The Argentine has Guevara conclude in his philosophical annotations, “Uno termina siendo su máscara. Y la máscara que elegí huele a muerte. La máscara, lo siento, empieza a hacer su propio camino y...yo no soy ni Vázquez Rojas ni el conocido Guevara” (91).<sup>15</sup>

### **Diarist, Archivist: Who’s on First, Who’s on Last?**

While this confusion of identity is provocative, Cantor ultimately dismisses Guevara’s monolithic nature in a deeper-reaching fashion, as the tapestry of intertexts and intratexts within the narrative becomes much more tightly woven. He accomplishes this through a foregrounding of the act of writing under the contrived mediation of an additional narrator. While Posse toes the line between invention and interview, he presents his discussions and research alongside the philosophical notebook entries attributed to Guevara as documents without questioning whether they might be fictive on any level, as fictive as Posse’s own collage is. While he may laud it, Posse does not ever question the authority of novelistic discourse to tell the truth, a charge Welch D. Everman

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<sup>13</sup> Guevara’s real life is a long dialogue with his own death, which began with his asthma when he was three years old.

<sup>14</sup> The only thing that can save us from this decadence is creativity.

<sup>15</sup> One ends up being one’s mask. And the mask that I chose smells of death. The mask, I regret, is beginning to create its own path and...I am neither Vázquez Rojas nor the one known as Guevara.

brings against Norman Mailer's *The Executioner's Song* in comparison to Cantor's Guevara in his critical piece "The Novel as Document." Mailer's text relies upon the inclusion of collections of authentic documents in order to promote its own veracity. According to Everman, Cantor similarly "incorporates documents, documents he did not write, into the text of the novel, though he does not distinguish between these 'outside' writings and his own" (19-20), a situation comparable to Taibo's biographical treatment. However, Guevara realizes his existence as a textual being, such that "Cantor's false document is somehow truer than Mailer's because, while both writers invent, imagine, even lie, Cantor acknowledges that he is lying, and a liar who, in the process of lying, admits that he is lying is at some level telling the truth" (23). It is doubtful that either Cantor or Posse would conceive of their narrator(s) or themselves as lying, but Cantor certainly opens up the greater possibility for rewriting the textual Guevara, precisely because he does question the authority of the writer and his text.

Guevara controls the first half the novel, juxtaposing coterminous journal entries, in which he discusses his work with Walter, with past memories, journals, and letter fragments, a majority of these being false documents (some entries are quoted directly from the published diaries). He presents his memoirs to Walter, worried that as Walter reads them he is "creating a version of me," as opposed to adhering to Guevara's own created self-perception (86). Guevara realizes the impending end: "To write one's life is to be already dead" (93). Yet Walter points out several inconsistencies, namely that Guevara writes as if he were an only child, completely erasing any reference to his siblings, and he also relates his father's own death (despite the fact that he was still alive for several years), in a fashion reminiscent of international reports falsely prophesying

Guevara's own death. Walter is more concerned with the ethics of Guevara's literary self than he is with Guevara's public revolutionary persona. He suggests that Guevara's family has been "murdered" by such erasure (150). Guevara's responds, "I felt naughty and clever at once; a gay deceiver; my victims (who were they? My readers? My brothers and sisters?) should thank me for a good time...I needed the confidence that some force (another presence? History?) guided my hand, kept me from just lying, would make a false world, false word I mean, shake apart" (149-152).

Yet in the second half of the novel, having learned to mimic Guevara's own style of writing, Walter adopts the very same practices. At first overtly questioning himself and alerting the reader to his desire to rewrite Guevara's diary and demise to suit his own literary fantasies, within time he does begin to invade the text. While several sections in italics clearly represent Walter's own writing, the fact that he can mimic his teacher's style would suggest that the reader can no longer be sure what writing is truly Guevara's or not. In other words, under the guise of reliable narration, by adding unreliable elements to Guevara's already unreliable narrativization of his past, Walter's involvement throws any base in veracity of the entire historical collage into question. From an unidentified letter, perhaps from his mother, or perhaps his own invention, Guevara has earlier summed up the situation with a characterization that "perhaps you had more of a taste for literature actually than politics" (173), a conclusion doubled by Posse's linkage between Vázquez-Rojas and Kafka.

The overt fictionalization of Guevara's diaries builds upon the already liminal space that the actual documents inhabit. According to Mary-Alice Waters, when microfilm of the captured documents was smuggled from Bolivia to Cuba, where copies

were distributed free of charge, Bolivian President Barrientos suggested the Cuban product was “a fictitious diary, falsified and conveniently presented...the whole thing is part of a scheme by the Castro hierarchy” (38), a charge to which Taibo was earlier shown to respond in his biography. However, the strategic questioning of the historical record via the tactics of *fiction* lends itself to a reading as a paradigm of what Seymour Menton would describe as the New Latin American Historical Novel, while Linda Hutcheon would locate these texts under the rubric of what she has termed “historiographic metafiction,” which constitutes fiction that makes discursive claims about the nature of history writing as narrativization rather than representation. Hutcheon maintains that this schematic disabuses notions espoused by critics such as Frederic Jameson that postmodernism is ahistorical in nature or that it denies the existence of the past through an approach steeped in relativism. According to Hutcheon, this is to miss the point, as historiographic metafiction does not seek to deny that historical events have taken place: the “past really did exist, but we can only “know” that past today through its texts, and therein lies its connection to the literary...the loss of the illusion of transparency in historical writing is a step toward intellectual self-awareness that is matched by metafiction’s challenge to the presumed transparency of the language of realist texts” (1989a, 10). These texts Hutcheon considers to be traces—scripted ones. She argues that the very existence of metafiction automatically evokes a sense of history via the intertexts it seeks to parody or rewrite. Indeed, parody and irony form the loci of the metafictional “ideology.” It should be pointed out that parody does not equate, as some would suggest, with triviality, for “to parody is not to destroy the past; in fact, to parody is both to enshrine the past and to question it” (6), which can in fact restore

history and memory. Thus, texts that engage in historiographic metafiction make comments upon the past without attempting to hide their own fictive status, creating a counter discourse, and this counter-memory intervenes in history rather than chronicles it (Marshall 150).

Nevertheless, while such critical stances may find their origins in Hayden White's metahistorical assertions regarding the literary nature of history, they do not enact a reversal of such an approach, instead seeing the historical completely from within the frame of fiction, rather than a merging of the two discourses. Historiographic metafiction champions the autonomy of fictional texts within their historical representations, as well as creative disregard for historical record. While Posse's text may not ultimately aspire to the same level of complexity that Cantor's does, both wish to present themselves as documents, and as such obey the apparent structures and strictures of traditional realist fiction in order to undermine blind acceptance of historiography, be it autobiography or biography, as traditional realist nonfiction.

As Cantor's Guevara notes regarding his identity, "I'm called Che now. The perfect name: an empty sound that might mean anything" (286). In this regard Guevara's name and resulting mystique echo the amorphous nature of the political rise of Juan Peron, another Argentine myth. In a review of Martinez's *La novela de Perón* entitled "Don't Cry for Him," Cantor remarks that "Peron's will for power gained control by being seemingly obedient to whomever he was speaking with." It is the confessing of the self with death not in mind, but already present, that ultimately deconstructs the eternal nature of the Guevara myth. Just as Che writes Che, he also writes himself out, exposing the limits and borders of identity, nostalgia, and historical subject.

## CHAPTER 6

### TAKING (BACK) LIBERTIES: THE CASE OF SANTIAGO'S *EM LIBERDADE*

A writer's activity as an artist cannot be separated from its political influence, nor can the influence of politics on a citizen be separated from his or her artistic activity. The whole is completed in such a way that it appears incomplete, though only in appearance. In dramatizing the serious problems of Brazilian society in its global context and the impasses that Brazil has faced as a nation, literature seeks, in an evident paradox, to speak in particular to the responsible Brazilian citizen.

—Silviano Santiago, "An Amphibious Literature," 293

#### **Tradition Betrayed (Tradição Atraiçoada)**

If the practice of Brazilian literature is a paradoxical one, as Silviano Santiago suggests in the epigraph above, then so too is his own literature, for it attempts to figuratively represent socioeconomic disparity while simultaneously maintaining a focus upon bourgeois class interests by portraying their faults as instigators of such inequality. Such an approach inevitably blends art and politics, but also voices of the privileged and underprivileged, Santiago argues, yet he curiously further complicates his own critical prescription by delving into the grey area shared by multiple discourses of writing in his own faction. His characterization of Brazilian literature as "amphibian" or hybrid, as leading a double life, it should be noted, is not a reflection of the reactionary politics he claims for the Latin American intellectuals and the "space-between". This hybridity is a condition, rather than an obligation (as is the latter), in many ways mirroring the prescriptive concerns for political literature that Cantor admits in *The Literature In-Between*. For Santiago, art and politics are codependent in Brazilian letters: "such contamination

precedes literary *form*, by means of which the text's lucidity asserts itself as double: an amphibian literary form demands the lucidity of the writer as well as that of the reader, both permeated by their precarious status as citizens in a nation dominated by injustice" (2005, 295). And, Santiago may well have added, it is the duty of the writer to create such lucidity in the reader by virtue of exploring particular forms which allow such injustice to be coterminously explored, an experiment in hybridity he engages in *Em Liberdade* (1982), which not only moves between historical fiction and historiographic commentary, but also attempts to exploit the form of confessional writing, not with the intent of confusing the reader, but creating greater lucidity.

Both David Jackson and Wander Melo Miranda, in their critical work on Silviano Santiago's *Em Liberdade*, foreground their analyses by noting and tracing the strong tradition of memoir writing within Brazilian letters. Jackson focuses upon the realm of fiction, naming in a footnote texts that are foundational to different moments and movements in Brazilian literature, from Machado de Assis' *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas* and Oswald de Andrade's *Memórias sentimentais de João Miramar* to contemporary works by Sérgio Sant'Anna. Melo Miranda, by contrast, initially focuses upon the impact of contemporary, political nonfiction memoirs, a trend that gained momentum with the publication of Fernando Gabeira's *O que é Isso, Companheiro?* (1979).

In the space between the poles of "factual" memoir and overtly fictional memoir reside several contemporary, politicized texts that employ the strategies of both types of discourse, utilizing the form of personal memoir writing to dramatize social and collective issues, but create an illusory historical dimension. Antônio Callado's *Reflexos*

*do baile* (1976), consists of a pastiche of diary and epistolary fragments that represent the voices of diplomats, revolutionaries, and the police during the dictatorship, creating an intertext with history by indirectly referencing the very diplomatic kidnapping for which Gabeira was responsible, such that the novel creates “um espaço amplo de problematização dos limites entre o fato e a ficção, entre o texto literário, a História e o jornalismo” (Kaimoti 146). Esdras do Nascimento’s *Engenharia do Casamento* (1968) is presented as if it were a diary, yet the entries are inspired by newspaper headlines more so than personal revelations, allowing the narrator to muse on the Vietnam War or insert supposed articles written about the potential for a Soviet-Chinese military conflict, suggesting political connotations without directly mentioning the military regime in Brazil. Published the same year as Santiago’s text, Darcy Ribeiro’s *Migo* (1982) features the outrageous first-person confessions of Ageu Rigueira, a professor whose life shares many similarities with Ribeiro’s own life, yet this is not autobiography, but rather a game (the text takes the illusion to the extreme: while it attempts to confound biographical critiques by providing red herrings as Nabokov was wont to do, it even features a supposed author’s note from Rigueira which prescribes multiple reading orders for the text’s chapters in a manner reminiscent of Cortázar in *Rayuela*) And the blending of fact and fiction is completely circumnavigated in Márcio Souza’s *Galvez, Imperador do Acre*, which acts as a false document by Doctorow’s standards, for Souza claims to have merely discovered the diaries in a French antique store. That said, the memoirs’ thoroughly farcical treatment of the history of Brazil’s frontier positions them more within genre classifications of historical comedy, as the preposterous narrative is intended to mock the memoir and adventure genres.

While certainly existing in this same space in-between political fiction, memoir, and journalism, Silviano Santiago's false document *Em Liberdade* distinguishes itself for its impersonation of the work of an actual historical figure, Graciliano Ramos, whose writing has been compared to that of Machado de Assis, but whose name additionally carries with it political intimations, for the Brazilian writer and journalist was imprisoned under the Getúlio Vargas regime in the 1930s for his supposed political allegiances (the implication being his support of communism, although he did not officially join the party until 1945, nearly a decade after his release). Ironically, Ramos' mistreatment led to an increased interest in his work on the part of the intellectual community. Held as a political prisoner, Ramos was never formally charged, nor informed for the reasons of his sudden release after nearly one year of incarceration, but he became a visible symbol claimed by the political left in the process.

Santiago's "forgery," like Cantor's, functions in great part because Ramos did maintain personal diaries during his imprisonment (and like Guevara's personal writing, Ramos' diaries have also been adopted for film). Santiago's counterfeit diary ostensibly acts as a prequel to Ramos' real and posthumously published "diaries," *Memórias do Cárcere* (1953), which denounces the Vargas dictatorship, or so-called New State. While this final work certainly forms an important addition to the Brazilian literary memorialist tradition, Ramos reconstructed his experience a decade after being freed, highlighting in the text the fact that he was not working off of the diaries he had kept during his incarceration, and this murky space between fact and fiction is only further complicated by the fact that many of Ramos' works of fiction are written as memoirs with a narrator who bears a resemblance to Ramos himself. It is on top of the already existing layers of

complex writing within Ramos' work that Santiago transposes an additional type of document, thus enacting a "differentiated repetition" of a similar literary project, as Melo Miranda terms the relationship (94), such that while Ramos writes autobiographical fiction, Santiago creates a fictional autobiography.

### **Confusing Documents: The Impossibility of Originality**

In "Memórias do Cárcere: Between History and Imagination," Joanna Courteau sets forth Graciliano Ramos' posthumously published final work as a text that defies classification as either history or fiction. She acknowledges a series of Brazilian studies that have similarly questioned the difference between author and character in Ramos' writing, and she concludes that "the similarity between the first person narrator of *Memórias* and the first person narrator of Graciliano's fictional narratives, such as *São Bernardo* and *Angústia*, leads to the inevitable question of what is the difference between a fictional and a historical subject, or is there a difference at all?" (46) *Memórias do Cárcere* does invite such questioning. It is not a diary, but rather a reconstruction between 1946 and 1952 of Ramos' incarceration that had occurred ten years earlier. In fact, Ramos addresses the first section of the text directly to the reader. In other words, his text is concocted with its audience in mind; it is not a personal document, but a memoir, precisely what it purports to be (while *Em Liberdade* is not). For these reasons Hermenegildo Bastos sees the text as a form of testimonial, explaining that

Testemunho, no caso, difere de documento, porque é construído na perspectiva do sujeito-autor...Em Graciliano, a literatura é sempre testemunhal. Não a literatura nem o testemunho, mas o testemunho feito literatura. Problematizando a ficção e a ficcionalidade, as *Mc* querem ser

lidas como uma obra que merece o nome de literatura porque é o testemunho sobre a realidade histórica nordestina-brasileira-universal. (20)

In other words, while the testimonial may be documentary, it is not a document. Courteau would seem to agree with Bastos' interpretation, for she compares the role of condemnation of the prison and social systems that Ramos takes on to that of the combined roles that Elisabeth Burgos-Debray and Rigoberta Menchú evince in Menchú's touchstone testimonial text, *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú, y así me nació la conciencia*. Such a comparison elides the issues of narrative authority that arise in the case of testimonial writing when editors mediate the words of the ostensible narrator, but Courteau does not return to address this aspect.

Santiago, of course, by adopting the form of Ramos' diary and voice for his novel, blurs the boundary even further by presenting *Em Liberdade* as a document, rather than a public testimonial, as is explained by the "editor" in the preface. At the same time, just as Ramos-as-narrator-subject in his own writing, both autobiographical and fictional, is aware that his personal writing will have an audience, and in fact are written precisely for an audience, so too does Santiago's Ramos explode the illusion of diary-writing being designed for only the purported author's eyes. The recently liberated Ramos in *Em Liberdade* constantly reminds himself, and his audience in the process, that his words could be published at some point and are thus written with the ideal reader in mind. Indeed, the Ramos of *MC* writes in his introduction that he expects this publication to be posthumous, before noting his advantages over scholars and journalists for not writing under the constraints of form and time as they do (14), an issue Santiago's Ramos explores in even greater detail.

Santiago's narrator's self-awareness mirrors the strategy used by Ramos in his well-known fiction such as *Angústia* (1936), the book Ramos had just sent to the editor for publication when he was arrested, and his previous book *São Bernardo*, both of which feature a first person narrator who foregrounds the act of writing or narrating his own story, but in the process points out the liberties with truth which such a position allows. Given Ramos' own confusion of fact and fiction within his own writing, Courteau believes that Santiago's attempt at "dissolving the boundaries between the real and the fictitious subject focuses the reader's attention on the performative social function of the subject's discourse and on the disjunction that exists between the personal and the historical" (48). She quotes from David Jackson's argument that *Em Liberdade* constitutes a prison-house of memoirs, claiming that Santiago creates a "meta-discourse on the autobiographical genre" (48). If we examine the quotation Courteau uses, however, it might be fairer to say that Jackson believes that Santiago becomes trapped in his own game:

Assuming a postmodern stance, Santiago's work exploits illusions of equivalence and verisimilitude among several carefully constructed yet "artificial" conceptual or semantic areas, thereby confusing testimony with invention, matrix with sequel, authenticity with illegitimacy, host with parasite, convention with counterfeit, and narration with simulation. *Em Liberdade* affirms the ambiguity and even reversibility of these categories by reproducing Graciliano Ramos' voice in a narrative that purports to be a recuperation of the master's yet unrevealed memoirs of Brazilian life in the late 1930s while maneuvering within a prison-house of restrictive forms and frames that challenge the writer to act through disguise and duplicity in the role of artist and performer, an absent eminence behind the text. Santiago's counterfeit or false memoirs of Graciliano Ramos free the pseudo-narrator from a literal prison-house only to lead him, along with his postmodern readers, into other prison-houses of language and genre—respectively, Graciliano's characteristic style and the nature of the historical memoir. Working within the limitations of those linguistic and generic models, Santiago's diary amounts to a portrait of the postmodern writer as escape artist. (202)

Jackson briefly refers to this approach as “de-writing,” in terms of the cannibalization of Ramos’ work that occurs. Ironically, however, Jackson’s playful prison-house metaphor also traps him into reading Santiago through a very specific lens of postmodernism.

Jackson develops his above reference to Santiago’s parasitism and anthropophagy, noting that Santiago’s Ramos conceives of his reader and the public in general as a parasite or voyeur at the same time that he asserts that the reader will serve as his own food, a relationship that “questions boundaries and limits, suggesting their interpenetration” (212). The notion that the parasite invents something new would parallel Santiago’s own assertion that the responsible space in-between for literary products should not simply cannibalize, but also alter the original model. Nonetheless, Santiago is not de-writing Graciliano Ramos, he is demythologizing the written Graciliano Ramos, the historical (and more importantly) literary subject.

Despite their very informative readings of Ramos’ and Santiago’s use of language, Courteau and Jackson ultimately ignore two important dimensions of both authors’ work: historicization and politicization. Wander Melo Miranda does not overtly contest Jackson, but his comparative monograph *Corpos Escritos* highlights that both *Memórias do Cárcere* and *Em Liberdade* have a historically specific cultural moment of production. Both develop out of the context of authoritarian regimes: Ramos under Getúlio Vargas in the 1930s, and Santiago under the military dictatorship of the 1960s (14). Melo Miranda also traces the authors’ previous work, concluding that *Em Liberdade* does not mark a lone instance of Santiago appropriating Ramos, for the two authors share similar questions of the viability of fiction, its political import, and the role of the subject,

throughout their careers. In other words, their relationship needs to be looked at temporally, as well as linguistically. In fact, the problematicized role of the narrator has continued to be a recurring concern in Santiago's later fiction, such as *Stella Manhattan* and the pseudo-confession *O Falso Mentiroso: Memórias*.

While Miranda likens Santiago's text to Pierre Menard's re-authored version of *Don Quixote* in the Borges story of the same name, he adds an additional dimension to the analysis. Santiago does not only experiment with using Ramos as a vehicle, but he also further develops Ramos' own intellectual preoccupations, which in fact overlap with Santiago's own. As a consequence, Miranda notes that there is as much of Santiago's presence in the supposed narrator of *Em Liberdade* as there is of Ramos':

Pode-se afirmar, pois, que a fuga empreendida por *Em Liberdade* da prisão de uma forma ou fórmula se dá mediante a (des)articulação plural de formas como a biografia, a crítica literária, a ficção e mesmo a autobiografia. O livro superpõe dados biográficos de Graciliano Ramos e traços autobiográficos de Silviano, na medida em que a prática intelectual de ambos está sujeita a contradições semelhantes, pois tem lugar numa sociedade que, apesar das transformações históricas ocorridas, mantém ainda características autoritárias e conservadoras. Entretanto, essa linha comum, que permite que a experiência de um indivíduo seja vista através da experiência de outro e que ambas se esclareçam mutuamente, não significa a abolição da diferença. É no espaço lúdico da semelhança e da diferença que se colocam *Memórias do Cárcere* e *Em Liberdade*. Nada melhor para dar conta da relação das duas obras do que abordá-las a partir de uma perspectiva específica de tradução. (90)

I would maintain that this form of intralinguistic translation serves to foreground the political aspects of Santiago's project, one that does not inhabit ludic space, so much as the space-between genres (biography, autobiography, testimony, criticism) as well as historical moments. Yet, noting such spatial connections in the work alone does not take the relationship to any type of formal conclusion. If Santiago's play is purely linguistic,

what is to distinguish it from a work like Ricardo Piglia's "Homenaje a Roberto Arlt," which, in purporting to have discovered a lost story by Arlt, but that is in fact Piglia's own invention, raises important questions about originality and plagiarism in a literary context? Santiago is not so much concerned with plagiarism as he is with the political ends to which writing is put. But we must go an additional step to address what the political implications for engaging with Santiago's perversion of Ramos are. Ultimately, *Em Liberdade* is less about either author's historical moment than it is a commentary upon writing of and about the historical moment and subject, a championing of the capacity of fiction to address issues that regime writing cannot.

Indeed, Santiago's Ramos makes no claims for originality. Instead, he perceives identity as a series of masks, which is reflected within his discussions of then-contemporary politics and culture. He deconstructs the Carnival celebration, dissecting his experience of it to analyze what role it performs within political and social networks. He notes that carnival makes death into a spectacle: "É sempre uma questão de representação: a máscara da alegria (o carnaval), a máscara da tristeza (o enterro). Excetuada a diferença de tom, em ambos os espetáculos tudo é fantasia" (146-7). Santiago's Ramos is not an impersonation, but rather a mask, one which the reader is invited to remove, a spectacle from which to free him or herself. Ironically, given the form of the diary and the illusion of the discourse of reality, Ramos himself chooses fiction in a final attempt to liberate himself. Returning from a trip to Sao Paulo where his friend, author Jose Lins, has been heaped with praise for work that Ramos ultimately finds second-rate, bourgeoisie, and removed from political urgency, the narrator realizes

the experience has allowed him to see the various aspects of which his sense of self is composed:

Um jornalista que não trabalha em redação de jornal.  
Um romancista que não sai da primeira edição.  
Um político abortado na cadeia.  
Um pai de família solteiro, morando em pensão;  
Um trabalhador sem emprego. (199)

It is at this moment when intradiegetic fiction begins to invade the diary, which has so far attempted to be faithful to the narrator's "reality" at the expense of fiction, rather than vice versa. Yet the fiction that is inserted is no innocent fiction. Just as Ramos inserts as the first page of a "new" block of paper a propaganda pamphlet for Vargas' reelection (161), composed of a series of party member names that have had letters blackened to spell out Vargas' own, the piece of historical fiction which Ramos creates within the diary is also part of a series of fragments which, taken together, constitute Santiago's own political commentary.

NO MEIO A VIRTUDE

JURACY MAGALHÃES  
MACEDO SOARES  
ANTONIO CARLOS  
FLORES DA CUNHA  
ARMANDO SALLES  
BENEDICTO VALLADARES  
OSWALDO ARANHA

### **Liberating Editions/Additions**

Melo Miranda and Jackson offer very nuanced readings of Santiago's subject position in relation to Ramos, yet we can further extend the bases they provide to ask

additional questions: does Santiago's intention extend beyond formal and linguistic experimentation? What is Santiago's ultimate accomplishment with the text? Why present the diaries as false documents or memoirs of a known historical writer as opposed to choosing another literary personality (or fictional character as Santiago does in *O Falso Mentiroso*)?

Miranda notes that Ramos and Santiago both deconstruct different aspects of the first person narrator in their careers as novelists. By subdividing or devouring the identity of the "I," Santiago is attempting to demythologize a figure, not only Ramos, but the literary martyr or writer who serves as a convenient icon for the intellectual public. For this reason, in addition to noting his body's pain, Ramos is as conscious of death as is Cantor's Guevara, although he does not long for this moment: "por duas vezes, pelo menos, estive perto demais da morte para que possa tratá-la, hoje, como amiga. A experiência do retorno à vida serve para desmistificar os seus atrativos e a sua graça... Aproximando-se do doente, a morte vai substituindo em metamorfoses sucessivas, os aspectos terríveis por outros que a tornam cada vez mais atraente" (65). The binary representations of Carnival also heighten the illusion of death-as-seduction, and it is the existence at extremes that Ramos criticizes consistently within the diary.

And it is not only the idea of death that seduces, but also that of authority, both of the government and of the individual; Santiago exploits narrative authority in order to call attention to its practice. In one sense, he does present *Em Liberdade* as a false document in the mode that Doctorow defines. The actual diary is preceded by an editor's note as well as a note regarding the particular edition, imitating actual archival or scholarly work. As Santiago explains (under the guise of his role as editor), Ramos wrote

the diaries in the first two months of 1936, immediately upon gaining his freedom from prison, yet while still imprisoned in his house as he attempted to readjust to society. Left without a literary project, he turned to the diary as means to liberate himself from his mental shackles. Indeed, the diary often laments his inability to develop a fictional project worthy of pursuing, although by its conclusion, it includes more of Ramos' fiction in its pages than his daily reflections. Similar to Posse's Guevara, Santiago's Ramos is directly linked to Franz Kafka when he delivers the diary to a friend in 1946 and asks for its publication in twenty five years after his death, but in 1952 has a change of heart and requests that the individual (who remains anonymous in order to protect his reputation) destroy them. Fortunately, this individual takes a page from Max Brod and rejects his task, informing Santiago of this crisis in judgment. Instead, after his death, the friend's wife sends the manuscript to Santiago, who has since faithfully completed the stipulated twenty five year wait in order to publish the text. Tellingly, Santiago claims that he met the friend while editing an unpublished work of criticism on Andre Gide's *The Counterfeiters*, providing a playful clue to Santiago's relation to the current work, itself a counterfeit of a supposedly original, unpublished work.

Santiago maintains the illusion of an editorial presence with footnotes and editor's notes throughout the diaries to explain paraliterary details, Ramos' own handwritten additions in the margins, or issues with placing entries that bear no dates. Perhaps of more importance, however, is the note about the current edition in which Santiago's follows in the spirit of Cervantes' Quixote (as opposed to Menard's, as Melo Miranda would have it), where he reflects upon several hypotheses regarding the found document. First, he notes how rarely direct references to prison-life are made in the text, thus it was

not Ramos' intention to cover this period of his life, despite popular demand for him to do so: "*Em Liberdade*, portanto, não tem a pretensão de ser uma primeira versão das memórias. Como diz em determinado momento, as anotações cotidianas tinham como matéria-prima a 'decepção do leitor,' do leitor que insistia com que apenas narrasse os dias terríveis na prisão" (16).

The reference to depiction of the reader can certainly be read on multiple levels, and such a trap is suggested by the subsequent hypothesis the editor sets forward, namely that the diary constitutes the missing final chapter of Ramos' *Memórias do Cárcere*. His own family did not know of the diaries' existence, thus they perceived that he was hesitating to complete the final portion of the book. Santiago relates Ramos' answer as "Não há problemas. É tarefa de uma semana," (16) before noting that Ramos' explanation of the missing material is a virtual summary of *Em Liberdade*. Santiago is taking his cue and quoting directly from Ramos' *MC*, which ends with its own editor's note (from Ramos' son) to explain the book's unfinished state. There Ramos claims the final chapter will deal with "[s]ensações da liberdade. A saída, uns restos de prisão a acompanhá-lo em ruas quase estranhas... Havia perguntas que se repetiam e esperava as repostas com impaciência, olhando a valise. A mulher traria dinheiro bastante para o táxi? Aonde iriam? Como poderia viver?" (648) This final chapter as "fim literário," as Ramos' son describes it, is exactly the material with which Santiago's Ramos concerns himself in the opening entries, in addition to grappling with the level of the literary in his own writing. In *MC*'s first section, a direct appeal to the reader, the narrator confesses that the thought of creating masks for the real people of the story, of making the book into a type of novel, repulses him (11). This same obsession works its way repeatedly

into *Em Liberdade*, which seeks freedom not from its “original literary model,” but from the model of the literary writer.

### **Historical Fiction within Historical Fiction**

In the above fashion, Santiago does in fact end up creating a meta-discourse, not in the sense that Jackson develops the term, but one of metahistorical proportions. Ramos repeatedly laments throughout the diary that he has no other literary project to direct himself to. After a dream, however, he becomes enthralled with the history of the Minas Conspiracy of 1789, an unsuccessful independence movement under Portuguese colonial rule most closely associated with the martyred leader, Tiradentes. Yet, Ramos becomes transfixed with a different member of the rebellion: appropriately the poet Cláudio Manuel da Costa, who himself wrote a mini-autobiography of his experiences in the conspiracy (Jackson refers to the resulting layers within the fictional memoirs as an alter-biography), creating a series of mirrors between Costa, Ramos, and Santiago that reflect each other on various narrative levels. Ramos finds something suspicious about Costa’s supposed suicide after betraying other members of the group with a confession, and he takes it upon himself to write his own version, a fictional one. He claims to have discovered a historian’s account in which one of the doctors present for the autopsy argued that the cause of death was not suicide but murder by strangulation. In addition he inserts quotations from a variety of supposedly historical studies, although since he does not reveal his sources, it is difficult to know if these references are legitimate or themselves false documents. He then proceeds to distance his position from that of the

historian precisely because of his writing freedom: “Quem me diz que a minha imaginação está errada... Sei que historiadores eruditos podem desmentir-me. Podem até provocar a incoerência do meu raciocínio...[mas] o vivo fala do trampolim da imaginação” (217-8).

Ramos champions the power of fiction and the imagination as not having to pretend to be faithful to documents. Instead, he rewrites events to show the creation of a false document, as Cláudio’s supposed sympathizers pay the court scribe to alter Cláudio’s confession. The end result is that all direct allusions to specific individuals “são suprimidas. Conserva-se a assinatura de Cláudio na última folha. O documento será sempre autêntico e infame” (231). Although Ramos verbally downplays his project as simply a piece of historical fiction (207), a story that may generate a novel, by allowing it to usurp the diary’s place as organizing structure, he not only comments upon the nature in which history is constructed, but he also writes a piece of fiction about a false document he perceives to be fiction. In Ramos’ intratextual version, Cláudio’s confession is false, but misrepresents history in favor of dominant powers by occluding the truth. Santiago’s version of Ramos’ confession is also false, yet this is not merely differentiated repetition. Santiago doesn’t misrepresent Ramos—and here it is important to highlight the difference between public interpretation of fiction and nonfiction, historiography, or journalism—but rather invites both his writing persona and Ramos’ to be deconstructed through the imminent perception of their falseness.

Of course, Santiago has other discursive interests in addition to metahistorical awareness, namely addressing the question of identity—once again, identity as a mask. On the penultimate page of the diary, Ramos makes his relationship to his characters

explicit: “Cláudio será Graciliano. Graciliano redige, mas quem escreve é Cláudio... Deixo com que elas se espichem, se robusteçam, exercitando-se por algumas páginas mais” (234). Once more, Santiago invites this information to be interpreted on multiple levels. Not only is Ramos overtly explaining the parallels between his situation and Cláudio’s, in that everyone is waiting for his own confessions, his prison memoirs, but Santiago is also covertly explaining his own relationship to Ramos, his writing process in *Em Liberdade*.

Were Melo Mirando to note this disclosure it would bolster his claim that *Em Liberdade* is partly autobiographical, although he does not pursue this avenue. Writing is both liberating and confining to the writer and the narrating subject. Ultimately, however, Santiago is not constructing his own narrative identity as much as he is redefining, attempting to put into perspective, Ramos’ narrative identity, a writing identity that has been constructed for him via his association with political writing. Yet while the narrator seeks liberty through writing, it is a specific freedom—from the past, both personally experienced and collectively written—rather than only a linguistic construct or a game. When Cláudio is dispossessed of his own text, which is then falsified and misappropriated, he is figuratively murdered, irrespective of the actual course of historical events.

The historical fiction echoes Ramos’ earlier description for his planned children’s book, about prison and freedom, conformity and diversity (136), which in turn echoes Santiago’s diary-novel, as the latter explores the same issues, although under the guise of historical nonfiction. Ramos explains that his text opts for allegory (of which there is plenty in the greater narrative of *Em Liberdade* as well), yet “[a] história ‘funciona’ sem

que o leitor reconheça as alusões” (136). Readers don’t need to recognize all of the allusions in *Em Liberdade* for it to “function” either—an echo of Doctorow’s disclaimer regarding the power of “false documents”—for the direct political references suggest the direction in which “Ramos” wants to be read.

### **Splitting into Fictions and Factions**

Ramos’ concerns about death stem from the figurative means to which it could be applied by political friends and foes alike. Because he suffered, he muses, his friends believe he must be good, or at least valuable. They attempt to persuade him to move beyond oral narratives and write down his experiences to create the “documento definitivo contra a caça aos comunistas no Brasil...o retrato fiel à intolerância política dos poderosos” (61-2), and therefore constitute the definitive work of national literature in a tradition that has up until now remained distant from social and political engagement. His fear of being turned into a martyr, however, allows him to overcome the seductions of pain and glory, of a carnivalesque death. Again, we find the seed of this defiance in the work of Cláudio, who attempted to avoid the two extremes, “a chamada gloriosa (martírio) e a chamada vil (traição)” (210). This is because martyrdom is as much an empty symbol for Ramos as is carnival’s representation of death; there is no possible space in-between these binary oppositions in their political embodiments. Martyrdom as deification is nothing more than a symbol, an empty sign of destruction; it is a way of reasserting his imprisonment. His supporters “dizem que lutaram pela minha liberdade (e eu lhes agradeço de todo coração), mas não querem deixar-me gozá-la” (59). Through

their pressure, they don't allow him to construct his life in freedom, and thus they reproduce the system of military and social repression, a "trap" as he describes it (63), but one that is different from the trap of falling from nonfiction into fiction which the narrator repeats so frequently the reader can't help but question Santiago's/Ramos' need to reaffirm this commitment.

Despite acting as valuative poles, the aesthetic extremes of death and glory don't interact dialogically to synthesize concrete, new relationships. And for Ramos, interaction between elements is the key, both in literature and in the political arena. In *Em Liberdade*, the illusions of nonfiction and fiction create a dialogic tension. Before the text is besieged by the fictional rendering of fellow writer Costa's death, Ramos is adamant that he leave behind his usual device of fiction. The challenge is "abandonar a ficção e adentrar-me pelo diário íntimo, deixando que o livro não seja construído pelo argumento ou pela psicologia dos personagens, mas pelos próprios caminhos imprevisíveis de uma vida vivida...Na ficção, o livro é organizado pelo romancista. No diário, toda e qualquer organização pod ser delegada ao leitor" (28). In the same fashion, Santiago is not impersonating Ramos, he is creating a dialogue with him. Here Santiago as Ramos conceives of writer and reader as creating a product together, a relationship that is sorely lacking in Brazilian politics under the new state.

He describes "History" as a long and fastidious monologue, and asks, "Por que não há a possibilidade de diálogo? Talvez tudo concentre-se num pequeno fato que alcanço agora: o lugar do poder é por demais indefinido e descaracterizado para que qualquer grupo que o ocupe esteja a salvo de crítica" (35). In this regard, writing and politics do reflect each other. The writer himself can act in such a domineering role,

hovering above his text. Santiago is not judging Ramos, but rather calling attention to his own practice in *Em Liberdade*. Just as he criticizes journalists for not knowing why they write (the monetary ends simply justify the means), he also attacks those who read these same newspapers and expects to be guided rather than challenged, for “[e]ste leitor tem uma visão fascista da literatura. Fascismo não é apenas governo autoritário e forte, de preferência militar, que deixa com que se reproduzam, sem contestação, as forças econômicas da classe dominante. Fascismo existe todas as vezes em que o ser humano se sente cúmplice e súdito de normas” (116-1). This reflection upon the role and effects of journalism within the Brazilian community echoes Santiago’s concern in “An Amphibious Literature” that foreign interests in documentary literature—which is closer to journalistic writing than to literature (295), and thus foreground brutality rather than sentiment—trump the ability of his understanding of hybrid literature to address Brazilian social concerns on an international level, since journalistic writing allows the reader to remain a distant spectator.

Thus, it is not only the government’s power to censor the media that makes Ramos laugh when he reads newspaper articles (81), but also the types of unquestioning writers and readers that are produced in the process. On more than one occasion Ramos berates himself for not “liberating” himself from the preconceptions of literature in his self-descriptions, either erasing details or creating a labyrinth of sentences to hide the simplicity of the experience (his embarrassment at gaining an erection from following a young girl on the street, for example). Yet by the end of his diary, Ramos has realized that fiction must be his vehicle for the history of the Minas Rebellion, not the discourse of historiography or journalism (208)—he eschews false objectivity, one that he once

pretended to maintain towards himself. Fiction is liberating, not the language of reality in which his diary has trafficked.

*Em Liberdade* is thus not a prison house of language, but of discourse—one from which Ramos successfully liberates himself. The text makes claims not to impersonate or differentiate as it repeats Ramos' project, but to force the reader to be involved in the process of making different the literary subject. While Ramos is unmasked as Santiago, nonfiction is also unmasked as fiction, from Ramos' annotations to the official historical narrative regarding Cláudio's confession. Santiago makes this need for dialogue with the reader explicit by not only subverting Ramos's literary identity within the text, but by juxtaposing this attempt at failed liberty with that of Ramos' lived life, the same one about which he continues to champion. Given Ramos' inherent verbosity, his final entry is ironic in its brevity. The success of his historical fiction project is short-lived, for real life intrudes upon this literary space. His wife Heloisa has returned to Rio with their two small children, whom he has not seen in over a year. His laconic phrases do not betray happiness, but rather a sense of imprisonment, as the routine of daily life conquers his life on paper: “Não sei como vamos todos caber no exíguo quarto da pensão” (235). The pension, rather than his paper, has become his new holding cell. Santiago humanizes the icon Ramos, removing him from the role of political subject. Ironically, by “stealing” Ramos' voice, he provides him with the opportunity for self-empowerment, a personal voice that foregrounds the personal over the political.

## CHAPTER 7

### WHOLLY SCRIPTURE: AUGUSTO ROA BASTOS AND THE PROFANITY OF CON-FESSING

Al principio no escribía; únicamente dictaba. Después olvidaba lo que había dictado. Ahora debo dictar/escribir; anotar en alguna parte. Es el único modo que tengo de comprobar que existo aun. Aunque estar enterrado en las letras ¿no es acaso la más completa manera de morir? ¿No? ¿Sí? [In the beginning I did not write; I only dictated. Then I forgot what I had dictated. Now I must dictate/write; note it down somewhere. That is the only way I have of proving that I still exist. But isn't being buried in writing perhaps the most complete way of dying? No? Yes?]

—Augusto Roa Bastos, *Yo el Supremo*, 53

#### **The Dictator Novel in Construction**

On more than one occasion, Andrés Rivera has chosen to revisit nineteenth century Argentine history through the supposed personal writing of its political figures. *La revolución es un sueño eterno* (1993) chronicles the final days of the “voice” of the revolution for national independence—the now disgraced Juan José Castelli—through his apocryphal personal notebooks in 1812. The novella *El Farmer* (1996) takes a more complicated approach to the exiled and ailing dictator Juan Manuel de Rosas in 1871, slipping between oral and textual narration that highlights his struggle to accept political impotence, as he is reduced to a letter-writer who never receives response and is ignored in his expatriate country. Additionally, Rosas views his own writing in relation to his greatest detractor, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, exiled author of the most famous contemporary denouncement of Rosas’ dictatorship, *Facundo* (1845), and viewed today

as perhaps the seminal text in Latin American literature. Rosas appreciates Sarmiento as a worthy opponent, going so far as to include fragments from *Facundo* in his own first-person narrative. Ironically, however, Rosas does not view him as a political agonist. Instead, he imagines a comradeship based upon their shared manipulation of the written word, suggesting that “Sarmiento y yo somos los dos mejores novelistas modernos de este tiempo. Él y yo somos dueños de los mismos silencios” (23). The only difference between them: “El señor Sarmiento publica. Yo no” (23).

It is important to note that Rosas calls Sarmiento a novelist, rather than an essayist or a historian, in effect labeling his political work of *Facundo* as fiction rather than historiography. Despite the proliferation of letters and names in the novel, however, there is little evidence to suggest that Rosas has written any novels, unless it be the one with which the reader currently engages, a covertly metafictional twist that Rivera leaves in the background. As Rosas ultimately presents himself as a defeated individual through his private notations, a sense of justice is established. His writing highlights his lack of human connection, his now perpetual isolation. His fear is that he and his deeds will be forgotten, and it appears that in both England and Argentina this will be the case; only his name will become immortalized, ironically, because of Sarmiento. This insecurity is not apparent in public decrees, but Rivera is able to communicate it through the device of the memoir. What Roberto González Echevarría has argued about the Rosas indirectly represented within *Facundo* is equally true of the Rosas in *El farmer*: “Facundo and Rosas need Sarmiento—as the master needs the slave in Hegel’s dialectic—in order to record their predestined, ritualistic immolation: the author dies, the dictator is killed, the secretary remains to tell the true story” (1980, 210).

Rivera's *Rosas* is subtle in his criticism of the work that defamed him—it was originally considered libel—in the process of defaming the caudillo Facundo who preceded him, but this invented link in terms of their fiction-making capacities links both as forms of historical novels. Sarmiento's *Facundo*, a precursor to Brazilian essayist Da Cunha's *Os Sertões* half a century later, also defies easy categorization. In part a biography of Juan Quiroga Facundo's violent rise to regional power in Argentina, the text also locates the motivations for such behavior in determinist sociological sketch of gauchos who lived on the grasslands, far from the influence of European civilization. Despite the text's foundational importance in Latin American letters, it has been duly criticized for the stark binary between civilization and barbarism that guides its flawed scientism. Rivera is not the first to associate the essay with fiction, however. González Echevarría suggests that with its publication, the "modern dictator-novel is born" (207). William Katra argues that rather than viewing *Facundo* as a socio-scientific essay, it should instead be read as the paradigmatic historical novel in Latin America (39). This is not only because Sarmiento takes liberties and fictionalizes the historical material of Facundo's life, but also because it exhibits an "ontogenetic" function by creating history, as its successful dissemination completely overshadowed the lived experience of the country and its people who respected Facundo. Instead, Sarmiento's work exemplifies the criteria set forth by Lukács, according to Katra, for both express political agendas and depict social missions for literature, while as authors they harbor ethnocentric and Eurocentric values. Katra concludes that Sarmiento never intended to represent history realistically, and in this regard, I would suggest that we may see antecedent elements of new historical fiction and its unabashed reveling in creative distortion.

## **Roa Bastos and the Evolution of Con-Fessing**

In its illusion of presenting personal documents of an aging dictator, *El farmer* is a form of con-scription, yet it probably does not go far enough. Rivera's Rosas is laconic in his descriptions, perhaps seeking the opposite expression of the decadent language that the author of the paradigmatic historical novel in Latin America. He hopes to present an image of himself as a person of temperament and simple dedication. In his personal communication, he comments upon the mistaken image created of him and incorporates fragments of the essay as mini-documents, but he does little to speak towards the ontogenetic function of the work that immortalized him as a villain. If Sarmiento utilizes the biography of one dictator to criticize a more contemporary tyrant and Rivera employs the personal writing of nineteenth century political figures to subvert their own images, there does exist a text that synthesizes Rivera's and Sarmiento's techniques into a single historical representation with the intention of literally re-writing it(self): Augusto Roa Bastos' dictator-novel *Yo el Supremo* (1974). In the apocryphal personal notebooks belonging to Dr. Francia embedded within the novel, this re-writing is literal (and literary), for history is demonstrated to be a literary creation as the opposing versions are both contained and corrected in the pages we read. What is at stake is not only history written in the textual present, but also that constructed in the past; both of these forms of writing are subverted, showing that the power of history is wholly scripture, rather than Holy Scripture.

The master and slave of Hegel's dialectic are directly represented in the text, via the dictator and scribe who supposedly construct it. Roa Bastos, under the guise of a "compiler," has in effect created a mock critical edition of Paraguay's eclectic first dictator, José Gaspar Rodríguez de Francia who ruled the newly independent country under the title of Supreme and then later Perpetual Dictator for much of the his twenty six year reign that ended with his death in 1840. The novel represents the strange contradictions in Dr. Francia's rule—his absolute domination of power and his tactics of terror, mixed with his eschewal of wealth and publicity, his "abolition" of the upper classes, his provision of rights for the poor and the indigenous, and his genuine attempts to improve the financial situation of his country. Ostensibly made up of fragments from the late dictator's papers that have been saved from his own attempt at arson, the various texts within the novel represent several layers of writing (and speaking). Some of the "notebooks" represent the dictator's own personal writing, while others are the work of his personal secretary who transcribes the monologues that the Supreme dictates. Other fragments involve the Supreme's personal rendition of Paraguayan history, which are blatantly contradicted by the paraliterary footnotes, and at rare moments an unknown, critical hand has sneaked into the notebooks to directly attack the dictator's policies and actions. In fact, Roa Bastos employs a common metafictional technique, such that the narratives are *dependent* upon the reader reading the written texts that exist intradiegetically within the frame texts for their existence.

Here, the dictator quite literally dictates, but is dependent upon that diction for his precarious textual existence. The role of writing thus plays an important role in the hybrid text, above and beyond the defeated role that letter writing and personal memoirs take on

in *El Farmer*. Like Rivera's first-person representation of Rosas, Francia's narration also slips between textual and oral expression, with the shifts often difficult to locate. In fact, many times the only clue that the words are not being spoken is the compiler's parenthetical annotation that the rest of the paper or folio is burned or missing. Even The Supreme becomes lost in the distinction, sometimes confusing textuality and reality. At one point, he asks if a woman who had come to submit a complaint has left the building, to which his scribe replies, "Excelencia, ella no ha estado aquí. Su Merced ha prohibido toda audiencia. He estado leyendo la solicitud de la viuda nomás" (189).<sup>16</sup> The scribe is berated for not understanding what is real and what isn't.

Also similar to Rivera's Rosas, Roa Bastos' Supreme creates a dialogue with Sarmiento, despite the fact that the latter would not have written his work until after Francia's death. If Sarmiento creates a paradigm of Lukács' social role of the historical novel, so too does Roa Bastos' Francia exemplify Lukács' theorization, for he self-consciously forces historical consciousness upon his people in honor of his mentor Napoleon. Just as France deals with its revolution and resulting wave of mass conscription, so too does Francia coterminously implement a plan of conscription upon post-revolution across the Atlantic. And both share the tactic of presenting the life of a ruling predecessor in order to condemn a current authoritarian. In *Yo el Supremo*, time is not linear, but rather circular, and, in some cases, blatantly ignored through purposeful anachronisms that refer to future events. Indeed, several critics have noticed that Roa Bastos' political gaze is not limited to Dr. Francia, but also acts as an attack upon Paraguay's dictator at the time of the novel's publication, Alfredo Stroessner. In this

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<sup>16</sup> "She hasn't been here, Excellency. Your Mercy refused to grant anyone an audience. I've merely been reading the widow's petition" (174).

regard, Roa Bastos goes further than Sarmiento did in *Facundo* by creating links between separate “dynasties” of dictatorship. John T. Deiner maintains that in the novel

[a]ll political actors are evaluated in terms of their potential roles as centers of opposition, and thus are legitimately subject to constant monitoring and purges by The Supreme. There is always the threat of traitorous actions, and all sides are suspect. The near paranoia of The Supreme and his unrelenting search for enemies to eliminate is a recurrent theme in the novel. There are obvious parallels to Stroessner’s regime’s constant search for suspected enemies, and imprisonment and torture of those suspected, and the fact that so many of Stroessner’s subjects had to flee into exile in order to survive. The parallels to other countries and other dictatorships throughout Latin American history are all too obvious, and provide another example of why *Yo el Supremo* is a book that resonates with the reader interested in Latin America as a whole. (109)

Indeed, the text has been “well-documented” by literary critics for a number of reasons. Seymour Menton views it as one of the three texts to initiate the phenomenon of the new historical novel. Linda Hutcheon overtly lays claim to the work as an example of historiographic metafiction, this “sub-genre of a sub-genre,” by concluding that “what historiographic metafiction like...*I the Supreme* ask, as we have seen, is whether the historian discovers or invents the totalizing narrative form or model used. Of course, both discovery and invention would involve some recourse to artifice and imagination” (1989b, 64).

Although Roa Bastos claims that he did not pursue the writing of *Yo el Supremo* as “hybrid product” (Osorio 30), either as an historical novel or a novelized biography, his work becomes more a mediation upon what Hutcheon identifies above, the line between invention and representation, one that is purposefully crossed. Yet unlike Sarmiento’s *Facundo*, whose ideological and rhetorical thrust is to discredit the object of its study, the reader here is invited to question the nature and politics of the

historiography being practiced. Francia is revealed to be a complex individual, neither a myth to be condemned nor lauded—nor martyred, despite his death by flames—for his own words preempt the image that has been created of him. If Rosas needs Sarmiento, Francia does not need Roa Bastos, or at least that is the Paraguayan author's intention.

Roa Bastos plays with this formula in *Vigilia del almirante* (1992), which shifts its playful attention to the first person narration and personal writing of Christopher Columbus. Actual segments from Columbus' journey log and diary are interspersed with invented philosophical descriptions. In this later reworking of a mythical figure, Roa Bastos directly introduces the material's compiler as a character who speaks of the process of researching, yet in *Yo, el Supremo*, the compiler remains largely a mysterious force, one who appears literally at the margins, perhaps even more powerful since he exercises power over the man who presumed to exercise power over all his subjects. In fact, the compiler holds the key to the work's nature as con-script, acting to present the work as a false document, though not in the manner that Doctorow may have imagined. Unlike contemporary dictator-novels, Roa Bastos not only targets a specific individual, rather than a composite figure, but he also incorporates the construction of the novel into its creation. In this case, The Supreme creates his own undoing.

### **Diegetic False Documents**

Roa Bastos' text does not develop a traditional narrative structure as it jumps between fragments fragmented voices. A note allegedly written by the archivist who has collected and ordered the various historical documents and private writings admits that

the existence of such notes suggests that “la historia que en ella debió ser narrada no ha sido narrada” (467),<sup>17</sup> and this is not too exaggerated a claim, for linearity and narrative totality have been deserted in favor of juxtaposed fragments that often provide contradictory versions of the same events. Instead, the text may be better conceived of as revolving around the introduction of false documents, which exist to varying degrees, but whose location within the text provide landmarks from which to analyze the relation between the history and counter-histories that circulate in “circular” fashion.

The novel opens with the insertion of a handwritten pasquinade that has been removed from public view where it had been nailed to Asuncion’s cathedral door. The document facetiously claims to be the last testament of Francia in which he requests that he be decapitated upon the occasion of his death, his head be paraded in public, and that all his “servidores civiles y militares sufrirán pena de horca. Sus cadáveres serán enterrados en potreros de extramuros sin cruz ni marca que memore sus nombres” (7).<sup>18</sup> The Supreme initially believes it to be an act of defamation from an Argentine newspaper, but upon closer inspection, he discovers that someone has not only usurped his own voice and writing style, but s/he has also imitated his handwriting perfectly on his own paper. Enraged, Francia embarks, or rather has his faithful aide and secretary Patiño embark, upon an obsessive manhunt to find the culprit. Sounding like the first Latin American New Historicist, and demonstrating the complicated word-play that characterizes his speech throughout, he demands of Patiño,

Vas a ponerte a rastrear la letra del pasquín en todos los expedientes.  
Legajos de acuerdos, desacuerdos, contraacuerdos. Comunicaciones  
internacionales. Tratados. Notas reversales. Letras

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<sup>17</sup> “The story that should have been told in them has not been told” (435)

<sup>18</sup> “Civil servants are to be hanged. Their corpses are to be buried in pastures outside the walls with neither cross nor mark to commemorate their names” (3).

remisorias...Correspondencia integra de los funcionarios, del más bajo al más alto rango. Cifrados de espías, vicheadores, agentes de los distintos servicios de inteligencia. Todo. El más mísero pedazo de papel escrito. (28)<sup>19</sup>

Although this plot element becomes lost in the midst of the contradictory viewpoints and shifts in time, the search recurs as a theme to ultimately tie the fragmentary nature of the novel together. All of these remarks are carefully copied down by Patiño, and thus the reader must assume that these words are on a basic level Patiño's own, providing another level of distance between the text and Francia's own statements. Francia berates Patiño throughout the narrative for his supposed clumsiness, suggesting that nothing will lessen this gap, "aunque revientes. Mientras yo dicto tú escribes. Mientras yo leo lo que te dicto para luego leer otra vez lo que escribes. Desaparecemos los dos finalmente en lo leído/escrito" (19).<sup>20</sup> It would seem, however, that Patiño is far from inept. As the novel nears its end, Francia concludes that it has been Patiño who had access to his royal paper, imitated his style, and created the false supreme decree which starts the novel (in an ironic moment, Patiño must dictate his own execution sentence). That said, Francia has facetiously suggested that he himself could be the culprit, a claim that ironically gains currency as the reader achieves access to his personal writings.

If this is the case, the pasquinade represents an inauspicious start for Francia's characters, for the dictator depends upon the written word for a variety of other documents, decrees, dispatches, and warrants which he seeks to circulate and which are

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<sup>19</sup> "You are to start tracking down the handwriting of the pasquinade in all files. The dossiers of agreements, disagreements, counteragreements. International communications. Treaties. Remissory notes. Demissory letters...complete correspondence of all functionaries, from the lowest rank to the highest. Messages in code from spies, informers, agents of the various intelligence branches. Invoices of arms smugglers. Everything. The least little scrap of paper with writing on it" (23).

<sup>20</sup> "Even if you kick the bucket. As I dictate to you, you write. Whereas I read what I dictate to you so as later to reread what you write. In the end the two of us disappear in what is read/written" (14).

also interpolated within the text. Sections within the novel are distinguished as parts of a “Perpetual Circular,” the Supreme’s own version of Paraguayan history, its independence, and his own central role in its successful bid for autonomy. The Circular is, in short, an advertisement for Francia’s rule and is intended for mass distribution as a form of propaganda. In writing them, Patiño preserves the dialogue that exists between Francia and himself, suggesting that what is presented to the reader is not a final draft (as opposed to the initial military draft Francia implements),<sup>21</sup> although at one point he verbally promises that the first half of the circular has been sent out to all military. The topics of the circular range from the English invasions in 1806 to the establishment of a military junta in 1811, the corrupt intentions of visits by Argentine and Brazilian envoys, and the house arrest of European spies who present themselves as scientific explorers.

Though he dictates the circulars from a sense of righteousness, Francia is not above manipulating the narration of events in the best interests of the country: “Esos documentos, aun los más insignificantes a tu desjuicio, tienen su importancia... Sólo Yo sé las veces que para tapar sus necesidades tuve que añadir un trozo de pellejo de zorro cuando no bastó la piel del león parado en el escudo de la República” (29).<sup>22</sup> This practice is perceived as necessary to correct the already extant misrepresentations of the country’s history, in particular a text written by Spanish Missionary Pedro Lozano, whose work he regards as mere imagination. If the novel exists as one of the first examples of new historical fiction, it also contains one of the first critiques of this development and its

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<sup>21</sup> This relationship between “master” and secretary “slave,” as well as its subversion, is echoed in Martínez’s *La novela de Perón*, as López Rega, initially commissioned to write Perón’s memoirs as he dictates them in order to refute the official record, ends up inventing and distorting information as much as Perón himself does.

<sup>22</sup> “Those documents, even the ones that in your misjudgment are completely insignificant, have their importance... only I know how many times it was necessary to add a bit of fox fur when the lion’s skin rampant on the shield of the Republic wasn’t enough to cover its ass” (24).

foregrounding of historiographic metafiction as well. Speaking of Lozano, Francia rages that “[h]istoriadores y novelistas encuadernarán sus embustes y los venderán a muy buen precio. A ellos no les interesa contar los hechos sino contar que los cuentan” (38).<sup>23</sup>

In addition, Francia creates an educational system designed to produce individuals sympathetic to his ideas. He requests a list from the public schools in which students must state their understanding of their ruler. The results, read by Patiño, range from humorous (associations with God) to the revolutionary (calling for popular elections). The dissemination of the Circular is designed to counteract the practices of enemies of the state who, in the opinion of Francia, have launched misinformation campaigns. Among other documents incorporates a facsimile of a handwritten order from Argentina authorizing the invasion of Paraguay in order to justify Francia’s paranoid claims, thus it acts as microcosmic representation of Roa Bastos’ work as a whole, which incorporates many archival documents before superimposing invented assertions upon them.

Nonetheless, it is important to recall that while Francia’s words form the ostensible source for all forms of expression within the narrative, these words of control are at all times being controlled in their present representation. In the case of the perpetual circular and simple supreme monologue, it is Patiño who not only copies (miscopies, if we are to believe the ever-critical Francia), but also simultaneously separates and edits the material, for he decides as Francia speaks where the words should be placed: in the Perpetual Circular or the Spiral Notebook. When Francia asks him how he distinguishes between Francia as Dictator and Francia as Supreme Man in order to have the authority to make such distinctions, Patiño responds that Francia’s upward or

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<sup>23</sup> “Historians and novelists will have their lies bound in leather and sell them at a handsome price. What interests them is not recounting the facts, but recounting that they are recounting them” (32).

downward tone of voice directs his own pen to the proper destination (319). While Patiño is not the only individual to envision a binary-personality within the dictator, as we will soon see, his editing is also not the least affecting, for Francia's writing is controlled by another hand as well.

### **The Role of the Compiler**

If a diegetic false document at the book's inception provides the basis for the narrative events that follow, then perhaps the false document that graces the final page of the narrative provides the key to the structure and layers of falsification: the so-called final compiler's note, which, despite its length, is worthwhile to include in its entirety so that the contradictory nature of its sections may be better viewed:

Esta compilación ha sido entresacada—más honrado sería decir sonsacada—de unos veinte mil legajos, éditos, e inéditos; de otros tantos volúmenes, folletos, periódicos, correspondencias y toda suerte de testimonios ocultados, consultados, espigados, espiaados, en bibliotecas y archivos privados y oficiales. Hay que agregar a esto las versiones recogidas en las fuentes de la tradición oral, y unas quince mil horas de entrevistas grabadas en magnetófono, agravadas de imprecisiones y confusiones, a supuestos descendientes de supuestos funcionarios; a supuestos parientes y contraparentes de El Supremo, que se jactó siempre de no tener ninguno; a epígonos, panegiristas y detractores no menos supuestos y nebulosos.

Y habrá advertido el lector que, al revés de los textos usuales, éste ha sido leído primero y escrito después. En lugar de decir y escribir cosa nueva, no ha hecho más que copiar fielmente lo ya dicho y compuesto por otros. No hay pues en la compilación una sola página, una sola frase, una sola palabra, desde el título hasta esta nota final, que no haya sido escrita de esa manera. “Toda historia no contemporánea es sospechosa,” le gustaba decir a El Supremo. “No es preciso saber cómo han nacido para ver que tales fabulosas historias no son del tiempo en que se escribieron. Harta diferencia hay entre un libro que hace un particular y lanza al pueblo, y un libro que hace un pueblo. No se puede dudar entonces que este libro es tan antiguo como el pueblo que lo dictó.”

Así, imitando una vez más al Dictador (los dictadores cumplen precisamente esta función: el a-copiador declara, con palabras de un autor contemporáneo, que la historia encerrada en esto Apuntes se reduce al hecho de que la historia que en ella debió ser narrada no ha sido narrada. En consecuencia, los personajes y hechos que figuran en ellos han ganado, por fatalidad del lenguaje escrito, el derecho a una existencia ficticia y autónoma al servicio del no menos ficticio y autónomo lector. (467)<sup>24</sup>

There is some confusion as to whether the note performs on an extratextual/paraliterary level or a diegetic level, such that the note is a part of the text. In other words, how much do the compiler and Roa Bastos overlap? Is the compiler a character or simply a persona? Some critics have interpreted this note in more literal fashion, as an explanatory gesture from Roa Bastos to the reader regarding the process of research in which he engaged, while others have seen the note as a function of the compiler persona of the text. One thing is for certain: in this last direct address to the reader, the compiler claims the very role that Patiño has performed in the framing narrative text. This is an ironic assertion if

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<sup>24</sup> This compilation has been culled—it would be more honest to say coaxed—from some twenty thousand dossiers, published and unpublished; from an equal number of other volumes, pamphlets, periodicals, correspondences and all manner of testimony—gleaned, garnered, resurrected, inspected—in public and private libraries and archives. To this must be added the versions collected from the sources of oral tradition, and some fifteen thousand hours of interviews, recorded on tape, filled with inexactitudes and confusions, with supposed descendants of supposed functionaries; with supposed kith and kin, close or distant, of The Supreme, who always boasted of not having any; with epigoni, panegyrist, and detractors no less self-proclaimed and nebulous.

The reader will already have noted that, unlike ordinary texts, this one was read first and written later. Instead of saying and writing something new, it merely faithfully copies what has already been said and composed by others. Thus in this compilation there is not a single page, a single sentence, a single word, from the title to this final note, that has not been written this way. “All history that is not contemporary is suspect,” El Supremo was fond of saying. “It is not necessary to know how they were born to see that such fabulous stories are not of the time in which they were written. There is a vast difference between a book made by an individual and put before the people, and a book made by a people. There can be no doubt, then, that this book is as old as the people that dictated it.”

Hence, imitating the Dictator once again (dictators fulfill precisely this function: replacing writers, historians, artists, thinkers, etc.), the re-scriptor declares, in the words of a contemporary author, that the history contained in this Notes is reduced to the fact that the story that should have been told in them has not been told. As a consequence, the characters and facts that figure in them have earned, through the fatality of the written language, the right to a fictitious and autonomous existence in the service of the no less fictitious and autonomous reader.

it is to be viewed as a conclusion. If Patiño has been unfaithful in his copying duty, then it would be foolish to extend the compiler who “faithfully copies what has already been said” any more trust, and the compiler claims nothing less than that the text is composed exclusively of documents which have simply been edited and juxtaposed. The allegation that the text which the reader holds was “read” first, and then written, as if to say that everything contained within these pages has been excerpted from known documents, would remove the compiler, as well as Roa Bastos, from any role as a generator of information, either fictional or factual. If the text is fictional, this distancing from the text, despite not coming as a foreword, would place *Yo el Supremo* in the realm of False Document as Doctorow defines it. Indeed, the compiler’s acute self-awareness regarding the “fictitious and autonomous existence” that the characters have earned regarding the “no less fictitious and autonomous reader,” sounds more like a Borgesian philosophical quandary than a conclusion to a work of historiography. Thus, whether this final note acts to legitimate the previous notes that have been introduced at numerous earlier points to explain or complicate documents or whether it is designed to call into question the compiler’s own authority within the text becomes a point of contention. The Supreme himself has earlier suggested just such a correspondence between Patiño as secretary and as a compiler, a tongue in cheek reference to the compiler’s own role regarding the entire work: “Del poder Absoluto no pueden hacerse historias. Si se pudiera, El Supremo estaría demás: En la literatura o en la realidad. ¿Quién escribiría esos libros? Gente ignorante como tú... Imbéciles compiladores de escritos no menos imbéciles... ¿Eh eh, compilador de embustes y falsificaciones? Recogedor de humo, tú que en el fondo odias al Amo” (35).<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> “It’s not possible to make stories of Absolute Power. If it were, The Supreme would be detrop: in

It is accurate to claim that real documents inform and are presented within the text, from newspaper clippings in the nationally produced *Diario de sucesos memorables* to personal letters between political rivals and forewords to then-contemporary critiques of the Paraguayan dictator; however, to maintain that all sources have been encountered in the archives requires that a particularly good deal of disbelief be suspended. While theoretically the “profuse” documentation exhibited in the notes should attest to academic rigor, the overzealousness of detail is taken to a suspicious extreme. This leads Adriana Bergero to distinguish between the documentable and “el espacio ficcional, [donde] los nombres históricos aparecen alterados o conviviendo con otros de dudosa verificación...la confiabilidad de los mismos se diluye ante la imposibilidad de su verificación: quién existió de veras, quién es invención apócrifa” (30-31). Furthermore, the compiler’s act of “mezclando obras y autores existentes con inexistentes, citas autenticas con apócrifas, atribuyendo textos a desconocidos” (34), amounts to what Bergero calls a victimization of the reader.

To this end, the biography of Francia written by renowned Paraguayan historian Julio César is directly excerpted in the form of several footnotes. Yet at other moments, the compiler strangely adds distance to that secondary source, saying what César says rather than presenting it. In addition, several epistolary exchanges between Francia’s political adversaries are presented for viewing, some suggesting a bastard heritage, others referencing with disgust his known rat nursery. Yet, in the compiler’s notes that accompany these letters, the mocking names Francia used for these individuals are used

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literature or in reality. Who would write such books? Ignorant people like you...Idiotic compilers of writings no less idiotic...isn’t that so, compiler of fictions and falsifications? You smoke-collector who, deep down, hate the Master.” (29)

instead of their official names, thus any pretense of objectivity is compromised, as if the compiler joins in on the parodying. This becomes even more apparent when one of the letters quotes a rumor that Francia hides away in order to write a novel imitating the Quixote (75), which once again is reminiscent of an homage to Borges' short story "Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote."

In fact, as the text progresses, the compiler seems to quite literally forget his place. Once confining his comments to footnotes separated from the text, at other moments his words invade without the narrative without paraliterary differentiation. And indeed, he ends up displacing Francia's central role by the end of the text. Not only does he correct certain mistakes or demonstrate superior knowledge of history, but he also provides the final voice in the work once the folios being compiled become too burned from the fire to reproduce for the reader. There is the problematic final note, but the compiler has also included another academic gimmick that precedes it: an appendix regarding the fate of the remains of Francia. The appendix samples the responses of contemporary historians invited in 1961 to debate the state and whereabouts of Francia's ashes. The presentation of excerpts seems professional enough, but it turns out that it is a farce of academics and their scholarship, as the gathering never occurred.

Whether playing to history or collapsing the distance between historical figure and literary project, the texts force a negotiation in relation to which agency maintains ultimate authority. Ángel Rama's important observation that in *Yo el Supremo* "pasado y presente conviven estrechamente en la novela por muchas razones: el autor está dentro de ella, no como personaje o escondido tras un alter ego sino en tanto autor, haciendo un juego a la vista que explícitamente quiere romper el ilusionismo de la reconstrucción

histórica,” (*Los dictadores latinoamericanos* 25) forgets to take into account that this game is dependent upon the premise that the protagonist does not see himself as a passive participant in the process of history. He governs his historical narrative as he governs the masses. As per usual, Francia is self-aware of this act. Dates are sacred to professional historians, he quips, especially when they are wrong. In order to save time and ink, he disregards archival work: “Yo no escribo la historia. La hago. Puedo rehacerla según mi voluntad, ajustando, reforzando, enriqueciendo su sentido y verdad” (210-11).<sup>26</sup> Nonetheless, he does not have the final word, as it were. This is not only because his supremacy is displaced by the scholarly role of the compiler’s, but also because his own writing becomes subject to editing and distortion.

### **In His Owned Words: The Private Notebooks**

Vital for the understanding Francia’s own sense of counter-history, in terms of a reaction against officially sanctioned history, are the personal notebooks he is alleged to have written by the compiler—and González Echevarría maintains that much of the writing attributed to Francia is real—though their factual existence is more precarious to ascertain than the satirical debate on the Supreme’s remains. Like the textual Che Guevara of Cantor and the Ramos of Santiago, Francia is pursued by a fear of and a fascination with death. In these fragments, the persona of his public figure is displaced by a voice that is equally candid, but capable of admitting insecurity or weakness: “Al principio no escribía; únicamente dictaba. Después olvidaba lo que había dictado. Ahora

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<sup>26</sup> “I don’t write history. I make it. I can remake it as I please, adjusting, stressing, enriching its meaning and truth” (194).

debo dictar/escribir; anotarlo en alguna parte. Es el único modo que tengo de comprobar que existo aun. Aunque estar enterrado en las letras ¿no es acaso la más completa manera de morir? ¿No? ¿Sí? ...Demacrada voluntad de la chochez” (53).<sup>27</sup> Nonetheless, he remains on the offensive, simultaneously writing to an undisclosed audience while denying the existence of that audience, for “lo único que estoy seguro es que estos Apuntes no tienen destinatario. Nada de historias fingidas para diversión de lectores que se lanzan sobre ellas como mangas de acridios. Ni Confesiones (como la del compadre Juan Jacobo)...ni Memorias Intimas (como las ramerias ilustres o los letrados sodomitas). Esto es un Balance de Cuentas” (53).<sup>28</sup> Thus, Francia claims to eschew the academic nature of scholars even as he reproduces their very discourse. And he distrusts the form that his balancing is forced to take—the written word—yet his fear of having no record, of losing control over the past, creates necessity. While this may be a balancing of accounts, what they demonstrate is a complete mental imbalance.

Not coincidentally, the first interpolation of Francia’s personal writing is accompanied by the first compiler’s note explaining—in detailed fashion—the nature of the notebooks as

de comercio de tamaño descomunal, de los que usó El Supremo desde el comienzo de su gobierno para asentar de puno y letra, hasta el último real, las cuentas de tesorería. En los archivos se encontraron más de un centenar de estos Libros Mayores de mil folios cada uno. En el último de ellos, apenas empezado a usar en los asientos de cuentas reales, aparecieron otros irreales y crípticos. Sólo, mucho después se descubrió que, hacia el final de su vida, El Supremo había asentado en estos folios, inconexamente, incoherentemente, hechos, ideas, reflexiones, menudas y

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<sup>27</sup> “In the beginning I did not write; I only dictated. Then I forgot what I had dictated. Now I must dictate/write; note it down somewhere. That is the only way I have of proving that I still exist. But isn’t being buried in writing perhaps the most complete way of dying? No? Yes? ...Feeble will of senility” (45).

<sup>28</sup> “Only thing I’m certain of is that these Notes are addressed to no one. None of your made-up stories for the diversion of readers who pounce upon them like swarms of acridians. Nor confessions (like compadre Jean-Jacques’), nor Intimate Memoirs (like those illustrious whores or scholarly sodomites). This is a Balancing of Accounts” (45-6).

casi maniáticas observaciones sobre los mas distintos temas y asuntos; los que a su juicio eran positivos en la columna del Haber; los negativos, en la columna del Debe. De este modo, palabras, frases, párrafos, fragmentos, se desdoblan, continúan, se repiten o invierten en ambas columnas en procura de un imaginario balance. Recuerdan en cierta forma las notaciones de una partitura polifónica. Sabido es que El Supremo era buen músico...El incendio originado en sus habitaciones, unos días antes de su muerte, destruyo en gran parte el Libro de Comercio, junto con otros legajos y papeles que él acostumbraba guardar en las arcas bajo siete llaves. (22-3)<sup>29</sup>

Yet, perhaps seven locks are not enough. Francia is not in complete control of his private notebooks, for an unknown dissident invades in the margins to critique his politics and his own sense of self-importance. Given that Patiño appears as a suspect by the end of the narrative with his capacity to imitate Francia's writing and voice, as well as his access to the treasury, it would not be unwarranted to attribute the marks to him, yet some critics argue that this unknown hand represents Francia's own repressed conscience. Such an interpretation gains credence from the schizophrenic tendency that the dictator identifies within himself when writing in his own notebook, distinguishing himself from the persona of The Supreme upon numerous occasions. In a certain sense, this binary divide between dictator-persona and individual man recalls Borges' "Borges y yo," in which the author distinguishes between Borges the person and Borges the artist as distinct beings.

Francia echoes such a distinction in one of the first instances of the doubling: "YO no he

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<sup>29</sup> "An outsized ledger, of the sort that from the beginning of his government ES used to keep track of the treasury accounts, down to the last real. More than a hundred of those Great Books, each with a thousand folios, have been found in the archives. In the last of them, in which the real accounts are scarcely begun, there appear other unreal and cryptic ones. Only long afterward was it discovered that that toward the end of his life El Supremo had set forth in these folios, in a disjointed, in coherent fashion, events, ideas, reflections, minutely detailed and well-nigh maniacal observations on any number of entirely different subjects and themes: those which in his pinion were positive in the Credit column; negative, in the Debit column. In this way words, sentences, paragraphs, fragments are divided, continued, repeated, or inverted in the two columns, in an effort to strike an imaginary balance. They are somewhat reminiscent of the notations of a polyphonic score. It is well know that El Supremo was a good musician...the fire that broke out in his apartments a few days before his death destroyed the Account Book in large part, along with other files and papers that it was his habit to keep in his coffers under septuple lock and key" (17).

hablado. Oigo que EL dice: Trae al Doctor una limonada bien fresca” (103).<sup>30</sup> On the one hand, Francia intends this doubling to separate himself from family; he has had no offspring, for he wishes that his dynasty begin and end in I-HE alone (135). On the other hand, this personal bifurcation relates to social communication. Francia’s “HE” communicates orally, while his “I” does not communicate to the outside world at all. The “I” is mortal, but the legacy of “HE” is immortal for “HE” has no person, no autobiography to write or be un-written, as it were.

Thus, it is equally probable that the unknown hand that writes in his personal notes is his own, especially given the penchant for wordplay that continues. In other words, a sort of auto-dialogue begins. The attacking voice chastises Francia for hiding his much-diminished person behind the term “The Supreme” (111-12). He even turns Francia’s preferred metaphors on their heads. Given the dictator’s fear of death, which he sees as bringing the death of the nation as a consequence, references to eggs and birth in connection with national autonomy become a sort of refrain at various points in the text. Yet the critical voice suggests, in response to Francia’s claim to have taken the egg of Revolution with him so that it could hatch at the appropriate moment, that

Quisiste imitar en esto a Descartes, que odiaba los huevos frescos... Quisiste hacer lo mismo sin ser Descartes. No ibas a desayunarte la Revolución todas las mañanas con el mate. Convertiste este país en un huevo lustral y expiatorio que empollara quién sabe cuándo, quién sabe cómo, quién sabe qué. Embrión de lo que hubiera podido ser el país más próspero del mundo. El gallo más pintado de toda la leyenda humana. (106)<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> “I have not spoken. HE says: Bring the Doctor a nice cold lemonade” (92).

<sup>31</sup> “You were trying to imitate Descartes, who detested fresh eggs... You wanted to do the same thing without being Descartes. You were not going to eat the Revolution every morning for breakfast with your maté. You turned this country into a lustral, expiatory egg that will hatch heaven only knows when, heaven only knows how, heaven only knows what. Embryo of what might have been the most prosperous country in the world. The best cock in all human legend” (95).

Francia's totalitarian regime seems far less totalizing from this fragmented position. Not only are his words dictated and controlled by both Patiño and the textual compiler, as well as the physical effects of the fire in his archival library, but he himself fragments his own thoughts and being. He subverts and undercuts his own authority, such that no single individual on any of the multiple levels of the text, Roa Bastos included, is able to claim some absolute form of power over the novel, the past, or the means of representing that past. This is not a work about truth or myth, but rather the myth of truth.

Roa Bastos has himself stated that his literary plan was to create a “counterhistory, a transgressive and subversive replica of official historiography. As I compiled the novel I felt with ever increasing force that I should use this rebellion against the history of the historians as the text's operating system” (Qtd. In Wedlt-Basson, 112). Now, simply juxtaposing two contradictory versions of history would have the intended effect of decentering a single, authoritative version for the reader, but Roa Bastos goes beyond this in his text to further problematize the reading process by undermining the position of the secondarily written works as well. For example, in a footnote the compiler cleverly attributes an explanation for the delay of two works about the dictatorship (both published in England by the Robertson brothers, scientific travelers who were forced to leave) to personal letters, without citing a source. In it, the original copy of their publication was stolen, yet Robertson admits, “No volvimos al Paraguay, desde luego. Más fácil era rehacer las *Cartas*, que obtuvieron el más lisonjero de los éxitos” (327).<sup>32</sup> In other words, the Letters had to be reinvented (an attempt at “faithfully recopying”?). There is no such thing as an original document in the novel's pages. Again, *Yo el*

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<sup>32</sup> “We did not return to Paraguay, naturally. It was easier to rewrite the *Letters*, which enjoyed a most flattering success” (303).

*Supremo* is able to theorize the processes of fiction and historiography not only because it includes the false personal documents of a known historical personage, but also because it raises the issues of how these supposed documents have been located, collected, edited, and for what ideological purposes have then been presented in the apparent order, or disorder, in which they appear. Rather than compiling, the compiler has simply piled fiction upon fact and vice versa.

## PART III

### MEDIATIONS OF MEDIA

## CHAPTER 8

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Journalism, History, and Fiction: The Narrative Relation**

This section continues the Inter-American approach of linking practices of conscription found in fictional texts from Brazil, Spanish America, and North America. Leaving behind the apocryphal revolutionary diaries that acted as single, extended false documents in Chapter Three, I now turn to the inclusion of false documentary fragments designed to problematize journalistic representation in the work of Tomás Eloy Martínez, Ivan Ângelo, and Ishmael Reed. These authors make ironic use of false documents: they fabricate texts and covertly insert these fictions alongside verifiable texts in order to point to the practice of fabricating texts in print media, exposing this practice and creating strategies for deconstructing official discourses. Whereas Section Two demonstrates how authors demythologize political and revolutionary icons through examples of conscription as personal annotation and writing, this chapter asks how these myth-like structures are constructed in the first place. Much of the creation of this mythical image has to do with the interplay of media representation and state discourses relating to historical events, yet these approaches are by no means binaries. Although Michael Schudson insists that “[h]istorians in history departments are not routinely connected to the world they write about in nearly so intimate a manner” (83) as are journalists with the present world they write about, when viewed as literary forms, historiography and journalism actually share many of the same writing strategies.

In 1974, one year after Hayden White published his seminal work *Metahistory*, James Carey wrote the first article in the inaugural issue of *Journalism History*, entitled “The Problem of Journalism History.” Aside from both thinkers’ preference for publishing articles rather than monographs, several similarities between the authors’ approaches are apparent. Without evoking terms such as “meta-journalism” or “meta-reporting,” Carey, through his call for a cultural history of journalism, effectively raises the same questions of disciplinary self-awareness for print media that White does with his notions of metahistory and later historiography as a literary artifact. “Journalism is essentially a state of consciousness,” Carey argues, but the “failure to develop the cultural history of journalism has led us to exclude from our literature any serious attention to what I believe is the central history story we have to tell, namely, the history of reporting” (90).

The need for a critical assessment from an outside perspective is not the only parallel development between historical and journalistic writing modes during the time period in which Carey and White began publishing. Just as White argues for historiography’s dependence upon the tropes of literature for its narrativization, so too has Carey made the link between journalism and literature when he claims that “all writing, even scientific writing, is a form of storytelling aimed at imposing coherence on an otherwise chaotic flow of events... Journalism, then, is a fiction in the sense that all stories are fictions. They are made by journalists out of the conventions, procedures, ethos, and devices of their craft” (1997, 155).

Critics such as Barbara Zelizer, Norman Zims, and Michael Cornfield have used Carey’s claim as a point of departure, expanding upon the perceived connection between

journalism and literature to suggest how both are similarly narrativized. Cornfield argues that “great news stories seem to mark peaks in the powers of the press, who gather and arrange the news, and in the power of the media, especially television, through which the news is conveyed” (180), and in doing so, he suggests for the journalist the same roles which White assigns the historian: storyteller and narrativizer. The appearance of the word “story” within “history” has been pointed out as a manner to suggest a similarity between fiction and history, and a similar ambiguity exists within print journalism.

Cornfield attempts to delineate the issue and situate his own concerns by explaining that

[j]ournalists often use the word *story* interchangeably with the *news* itself... In this essay, *the story* refers to the entertaining and sequential context in which *the news* may appear to audiences. For example, the election of a president is news; the making of the president is the story that election news concludes. (182, emphasis in original)

Cornfield believes that the most effective newspaper stories depend upon traditional narrative structures, pointing out that while (e)valuations are a matter of taste, “popular conceptions of good stories are cultural phenomena that have recurring features. Literary critics have developed a vocabulary for the identification of story genres, and they have signaled certain genres as traditionally popular within a particular culture” (182-3). It is via literary delineations such as genre, plot, character, and point of view that Cornfield dissects the series of Watergate scandal reports that broke the news to the United States public. Cornfield suggests that an important element in the initial report’s success stems from its status as a “real-life” example of hardboiled detective fiction, an important literary genre that originated in the United States.

Despite the specific example Cornfield provides, the relationship between journalism and fiction is not unique to American periodicals. The case for the

interdependence of journalism and literature has been observed within a Latin American context as well. Aníbel González points out that journalism and literature both developed as marginal genres in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but perceives even more parallels in terms of the forms these writing modes currently adopt. González locates four shared features, noting that both genres are linked to the rise of the bourgeoisie, both discourses unproblematically adopt and cannibalize a range of other genres (letters, dialogues, dialogues), both share the “problematics of empiricism,” and both make rhetorical claims about historical and fictive discourse in order to write a history of the present (9).

Argentine journalist and novelist Tomás Eloy Martínez also points to the importance of narrativizing, both in a North and South American context. Noting in “Periodismo y narración” how newspaper editors think in terms of “seducing” their readers into buying copies despite the variety of other visual and aural forms of media which provide the same stories, he declares that “el periodismo ha resuelto el problema a través de la narración, pero a los editores les cuesta aceptar que ésa es la respuesta a lo que están buscando desde hace tanto tiempo” (2006, 233)<sup>33</sup>. He believes the most effective manner newspapers have adopted for maintaining readers’ interests and subscriptions is by using overtly traditional narrative forms that relate public-interest stories through a single individual’s experience, imbuing the reader with the sense that she or he could be that individual. Martínez showcases his awareness of Hayden White in this same essay by quoting from “The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of

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<sup>33</sup> Journalism has solved this [problem] through the use of narration, but it is difficult for editors to accept that this is the answer which they’ve sought for so long (my translation). In order to maximize space, translations for quotations in languages other than English will be provided as footnotes. When published translations already exist, I make use of them. In the event that no official translation exists, the English versions provided here represent my own.

Reality.” He concludes (from White’s claim that “to narrate” and “to know” have the same etymological roots) that journalism was born to tell stories, and this originary impulse is paradoxically the reason for journalism’s very existence as well as its reason for having lost its way since that beginning (238). This loss of direction is similar to the crisis facing historical writing, which he also credits in part to the work of Hayden White. Martínez points to the changing attitudes towards historical fiction in recent decades, attitudes which began changing before his own shift into fiction:

Ahora: y éste es un ahora que podría haber empezado hace veinte años—denunciar las imposturas del poder no es ya el punto de mira de la ficciones sobre la historia. Bajo los puentes han pasado las aguas de los filósofos Michel Foucault y Jacques Derrida, los conceptos de narratividad y representación de Hayden White...pero, sobre todo han pasado (o, mas bien, han sucedido, *nos* han sucedido) el fracaso de los Sandanistas en Nicaragua, la demolición del muro de Berlín, el estallido en fragmentos de la Unión Soviética...Nadie cree ahora que el poder es un bastión homogéneo; nadie puede tampoco redescubrir que el poder construye su verdad valiéndose, como observo Foucault, de una red de producciones, discriminaciones, censuras y prohibiciones. Lo que ha sobrevivido es el vacío: un vacío que comienza a ser llenado no ya por una versión que se opone oficial, sino por muchas versiones o, más bien, por una versión que va cambiando de color según quién mira. (1999, 8).

Yet in analyzing the formation of well-known Latin America writers who began their careers as newspaper columnists and the Euro-American critics who have forever changed the practice of writing history, Martínez seeks to find a particular niche for Spanish-American thinkers by articulating an even more immediate connection between journalism and literature: “No es por azar que, en América Latina, todos, absolutamente todos los grandes escritores fueron alguna vez periodistas: Borges, García Márquez,

Fuentes, Onetti, Vargas Llosa, Asturias, Neruda, Paz, Cortázar, todos” (239)<sup>34</sup>. He humbly omits himself from the group, despite his long list of journalistic and literary accomplishments. He also omits an entire group of writers from Brazil, suggesting the under-representation of Brazilian literature even with Latin American studies. The lack of examples provided from Brazil is notable, as the country’s foundational fiction writers have been equally involved in journalism. A parallel tradition is evident, from writers at the turn of the century such as Euclides da Cunha and Machado de Assis to writers contemporary to the “boom” authors Martínez mentions, such as Carlos Drummond de Andrade, Nelson Rodrigues, and Ivan Ângelo. A parallel tradition is also visible within a North American context. In *From Fact to Fiction*, Shelly Fisher Fishkin has traced similar overlaps between important North American journalists-cum-authors who write in the realist mode such as Theodore Dreiser, Mark Twain, and Stephen Crane, as well as Ernest Hemingway and John Dos Passos (Dos Passos’ nearly obsessive covering of the Saco and Vanzetti case finds its way into his *USA* trilogy in a similar fashion to how Martínez’s obsession with understanding Juan Perón informs *La novela de Perón*).

Yet, if such a symbiotic relationship between journalism and literature exists across North and South America, one that may be characterized in similar terms to the interaction between history and literature, the unequal nature of audience reception regarding the modes of writing needs to be explored. Like historiography, journalism commands more authority in the reader’s eye than does fiction because of its claims of objectivity, despite the fact that James Carey believes these claims of objectivity have been increasingly compromised since the 1970s. Nonetheless, as Linda Hutcheon has

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<sup>34</sup> It’s not by chance in Latin America that all, absolutely all of the great writers were at one time journalists: Borges, García Márquez, Fuentes, Onetti, Vargas Llosa, Asturias, Neruda, Paz, Cortázar, all of them.

explained, “[h]istory’s referents are presumed to be real; fiction’s are not” (1995, 86). The same holds true of journalism, whose referents are even more “real” and immediate than those of history, regardless of the form stories about these referents ultimately take. It is through an acceptance of the news’ real referents and subsequent location of newspapers within archives that newspaper articles become documents. But this does not mean they should be seen as static texts that cannot change or be changed over time, whether due to state abuse or general sociopolitical shifts. As James Carey succinctly states, “Not only are new documents needed but old documents must be reread against a new background” (1997b, 98).

Perhaps African American writer and activist Ishmael Reed makes the bluntest connection when he writes that “American journalists are often as obtuse as the historians” (2000, xx). Reed highlights the problem of false documents within journalism with the infamous Janet Cooke scandal of 1980; he believes that if this Pulitzer Prize scandal is not paradigmatic, then it is by no means an isolated case (2008, 167). Cooke was awarded a Pulitzer Prize for her story about an 8-year old heroin user, Jimmy, in a Washington D.C. black ghetto. The story was accompanied by a haunting illustration of the supposed subject of the article, which appeared to corroborate the story’s authenticity before it was discovered that the entire text was a fabrication. David Eason explains the consequences of what was neither the first nor the last fake journalism story, but certainly one of the most widely publicized:

One a fictional being, the other an actual person, [Jimmy and Janet Cooke] shared a condition of otherness that for a short time made a profession real to itself. In one sense, the symbolic drama that surrounded them tells little about the authority to separate fact and fiction in news... No one defended the use of composite characters and fictionalized dialogue in reporting. Cooke crossed the boundary between fact and fiction, not only by creating

a fake story but also by changing her own biography to create a false identity [as an insider]. The violation was taken to be so extreme that it did not inspire much reflection on the boundary where what we call facts and fictions grows hazy. (206)

As much as the Watergate scandal reports helped to valorize the role of investigative journalism in both other journalists' and the public's opinion, Cooke's scandal served as a severe blow to credibility, as it erupted within journalism itself; to report on the scandal was to turn a critical eye inward, rather than criticizing the politics of a third party.

By creating fictional documents disguised as official material, the literary texts created by Martínez, Angelo, and Reed turn a critical eye inward, provoking several questions: how are "official" documents used to maintain power over groups of people and how can the exposure of such practices act to better educate individuals for their future engagement with information presented as absolute or official? How can readers learn to consciously question material provided by governments, different forms of media, or historical archives rather than unconsciously accept such forms of discourse as authoritative? A comparison of the three writers reveals how they promote similar strategies for answering the above questions, which are concerned with how historical understanding is communicated as well as represented. With these concerns, the texts echo James Carey's belief that one use of history is to broaden the study of journalism, but one of the most "important tasks of historical writing is to give or restore voice to people who for whatever reason have been without a voice in the community. In some sense history has silenced them" (1997b, 101).

## **Con-Scripts as Mediating the Media: An Introduction**

Unlike Janet Cooke's story "Jimmy's World," which attempted to pass off fiction as fact, the texts in this chapter question the boundary between fact and fiction in order to expose the role of print and visual journalism within the construction of national identity during times of political corruption. How can readers react to distinguish between fact and fiction? How do they react to documents that, despite having real referents, are false? Under the pretense of providing authoritative media transcriptions, all three authors—Tomás Eloy Martínez, Ivan Ângelo, and Ishmael Reed—insert con-scripts into their texts in order to demonstrate how this falsification occurs. Each author initially made his living as a journalist. As insiders to the trade, familiar with how stories are created and prepared for audiences, the authors are hyper-sensitive to the manner in which stories are ultimately (mis)represented to mass audiences. The authors do not suggest that all print media is patently false, nor do they condemn the practice of journalism by any means, as they recognize its importance as a vehicle for giving voice to silenced issues. Instead, they wish to point to a lack of transparency within the press of their respective countries which is propagated by groups in positions of authority. In the process of fighting for transparency and truth, each of them has experienced censorship of both his fiction and nonfiction work.

In this chapter the understanding of a document has shifted from the archival nature of the false diaries in the previous three chapters. Here, pictures, newspaper clippings, excerpts from memoirs, and excerpts from corporate magazines act as intertexts that can furnish evidence or information about the past. The boundaries of what constitutes a document are being modified with the increased virtual opportunities

offered by the internet, a form of media explored more by Reed than by Martínez and Ângelo. Reed's use of blogs as documents in *Mixing It Up* raises interesting issues about the changing nature of boundaries of documentation, yet it also empowers individual voices outside of corporate media.

Martínez's *La novela de Perón* is the first work to be discussed regarding the mediation of the media in new historical novels examined in this chapter. Despite his formation as a journalist, or perhaps owing to it, Martínez is no stranger to the historical novel. *Santa Evita* (1995), which follows the bizarre "life" of Eva Perón's body after her death, from embalming to false copies to international attempts by the military regime to hide her remains, has been translated into more than thirty-five languages, which confirms its far-reaching status as popular fiction. In it, Martínez engages with his characteristic blending of fact and fiction, involving the narratorial persona, who claims to be Martínez, in the complex of obsessions.

A year later he published *Las memorias del general* (1996), a transcribed collection of the recorded interviews Martínez had conducted with Perón during the deposed leader's exile in Spain, portions of which were published in Argentine newspapers prior to Perón's return to power in 1973. In the course of later verifying the general's story, Martínez discovered discrepancies which he corrected and sent to the general—the documents he unearthed, along with the edited versions he suggested, were not permitted to be published. While *Santa Evita* highlights the role of fiction and myth in the events surrounding Eva Perón's body, in *Las memorias del general*, Martínez is explicit that "cada uno de los datos de este libro tiene un documento, una carta, una cinta

grabada que avala su veracidad” (15)<sup>35</sup>. It is a text comprised only of documents, both the memoirs of Perón (which had been falsified) as well as the documents and interviews which Martínez discovered in his research. Their juxtaposition undermines Perón’s original wishes, but Martínez believes the truth can be found in the space between the conflicting viewpoints. This is important, he continues, for during the uncertain years during which the memoirs were written, “la ilusión de verdad era todo lo que los argentinos podíamos llevar de un lado a otro y tal vez lo único de lo que no fuimos despojados” (15)<sup>36</sup>. Martínez is careful to characterize the apparent truth of the general’s story as an illusion. This illusion of truth is exactly what Martínez seeks to undermine in his writing.

If *Santa Evita* highlights the writer’s role and *Las memorias del general* acts as a nonfiction collection of documents, then *La novela de Perón* inhabits a political in-between space, to borrow Silviano Santiago’s and Jay Cantor’s prescriptions from Chapter Three. *La novela de Perón* incorporates opposing forces of journalism in its portrayal of Juan Perón’s return from exile to power in Argentina in 1973. The rewriting of Perón’s memoirs by his secretary José López Rega is demonstrated by the inclusion within the narrative of before- and after-editing excerpts of the memoirs (with the intent of creating a mythological Perón). These are quite literally falsified memories and documents, and dozens of fragments have been introduced from Martínez’s actual interviews with Perón, the very ones that appear in *Las memorias del general*.

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<sup>35</sup> Every piece of information in this book has a document, a letter, a recorded cassette tape to attest to its authenticity (my translation).

<sup>36</sup> The illusion of truth was the only thing we Argentines could take from one side to the other, and was perhaps the one thing of which we were not stripped (my translation).

The fragmented memoir is contrasted, however, with the introduction of magazine articles from interviews of family and previous associates (some of these are also included in *Las memorias del general*) which contradict the polished memoirs and deflate the very image that Rega seeks to create. These interviews represent work that Martínez engaged in himself, yet he fictionalizes the process in the novel. Here, Martínez himself mediates journalism, demonstrating how it can be used positively to counter false constructions from authority which are fed via media channels to unsuspecting citizens.

Ivan Ângelo's *A Festa* (1976), the second text examined here, presents the mediation of the media in less optimistic terms. The novel explores the effects of state censorship of journalism upon the various strata of society, from the impoverished refugees forced back into the drought in Northeastern Brazil from which they first fled to the bourgeoisie who attempt to ignore the dictatorship. Ângelo mixes false newspaper articles with actual scholarship to create the guise of historical journalism, only to later expose the silences and censorship his work propagates, just as the government propagates them. Ângelo ironically was forced to suspend work upon *A Festa*, first begun in 1963, because of censorship. He would not revisit the text for a decade.

After starting a literary review in 1956, Ângelo embarked upon a fifty-year career as a newspaper columnist and editor in Belo Horizonte and Sao Paulo. His "crônicas," written for various newspapers and magazines, often deal with his personal fascination with the technological shift in media. In his short chronicle "Getúlio," he describes how dictator Getúlio Vargas became a real presence in his home as a voice on the radio, initially inciting the workers of Brazil to unite. He notes the power of music to communicate political meaning to the listeners. Although Vargas was only a radio voice

for Ângelo, the news of the dictator's suicide deeply affected the journalist. Despite the fact that “[a]gora há televisão, [e] o impacto é maior... Naquela manhã de agosto a notícia no rádio fez dele uma perda pessoal” (2007)<sup>37</sup>. Carlos Eduardo Lins da Silva maintains that the Vargas era in Brazil saw the birth of the cultural industry where newspapers “began to represent cautiously the interests and points of view of the emerging urban middle classes... [despite] the harsh censorship system similar in the history of the country only to that imposed by the military regime from 1968 to 1975 (178). In spite of this censorship and the rampant corruption within media sources, many critics believe Vargas’ political fall and ensuing suicide were precipitated by Carlos Lacerda, a journalist politician who used his newspaper and the radio to successfully expose and smear Vargas’ image. Ângelo’s *A Festa* picks up this thread of activism to analyze the consequences of a reporter mysteriously murdered during his quest for the truth behind the state’s brutal reaction to the refugees. It is no accident that *A Festa* was published in 1976, just one year after Brazilian journalist Vladimir Herzog was tortured to death by political police in what was officially labeled a suicide until other reporters exposed the government cover-up. Sadly, this exposé demonstrated the continued need for civil and media vigilance in the face of government duplicity, as is shown in the collection organized about Brazilian journalists who were able to make a difference during heavy censorship, *Dez Reportagens Que Abalaram a Ditadura*.

The third text to be analyzed is Ishmael Reed’s *Mumbo Jumbo* (1972). Reed dropped out of college in 1960 and began working, in his own words, at a militant newspaper for an editor who had escaped a lynch mob forty years earlier, and had been

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<sup>37</sup> Now there’s television, and the impact [is] greater... On that morning in August the news on the radio [of his death] made him a personal loss (my translation).

committed to causes of civil rights ever since. Much of Reed's career outside fiction has since been devoted to publishing op-ed pieces, or experiencing the silence that results when he attempts to publicize issues that run counter to the ideology of what he labels the "media bullies." Reed understands that enforced silence can be equally powerful as active misrepresentation. He describes one of many clashes he has provoked with corporate newspapers:

Recently, a journalist dismissed the wish of some African Americans to change the name of their school from Nathan B. Forrest as an exercise in political correctness, the phrase that's routinely used nowadays to dismiss any challenge to status quo readings of history. This Associated Press story, which was printed in the New York Times, defended Forrest as a smart guerilla warrior. Nowhere in the story was there a mention of the fact that soldiers under General Forrest's command massacred more than 300 black men, women and children, at Fort Pillow, Tennessee, even though they'd surrendered. After the war, Forrest became the first Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan! I wrote the *Times* to set the record straight. The letter was not published. (2000, xx-xxi).

Reed refers to his literary approach as "writin' is fightin,'" and he relishes his role as a critic vilified by the media, as it feeds him new material for his attacks upon censorship and misrepresentation. It was Reed's series of encounter with Malcolm X in the early 1960s, however, that cemented the problematic relationship between representation and history for his subsequent literary projects. Malcolm pointed out that Black history in America was not distorted, but rather "cotton-patch" history, and his

comment took me [Reed] back to the history I'd learned in school. The illustrations in our text books of Africans having a grand time, playing the banjo and dancing. Slavery was seen as one big party...[he] introduced me to slave narratives and other materials that acquainted me with a history of the United States that I hadn't known and enabled me to see that much of the education I'd received was, as Malcolm X said, 'cotton patch' history. (xx)

Reed has continued to focus upon the media's use of images in its continued denigration of African Americans. He notes how often news stories make claims about violence in racially diverse neighborhoods, yet the accompanying images only portray black Americans, subtly acting to create and perpetuate false stereotypes. For example, when the CNN television network aired a story quoted by the *Wall Street Journal* which revealed that white individuals commit a greater percentage of violent crimes than do black individuals, the images on television portrayed only African Americans ("Airing Dirty Laundry," 190). This racist misrepresentation forms the "chief impediment to black progress" in Reed's opinion, as individuals are able to succeed in using "the media to 'outpropagandize' the group whom they perceive as the enemy. Lacking access to the media, those whom they target have little recourse to combat this propaganda" (181). He points out that the constant negative reinforcement through images creates a self-fulfilling prophecy within minority groups who begin to view themselves in such a denigrated light, according to a 1989 *New York Times* interview with health professionals (201).

Reed has written extensively about media representation of African Americans in two collections, *Airing out the Laundry* and *Mixing It Up: Taking on the Media Bullies*, and has published several experimental historical novels, including a portrayal of the Underground Railroad in *Flight to Canada*. However, it is in his genre-defying work *Mumbo Jumbo* that he is most successfully able to fuse his concerns about African American history, media representation, and the power of the image into a cohesive work. Reed uses journal quotations and newspaper clippings, as well as anachronistic visual images throughout the text. Although supposedly chronicling racism in the 1920s,

these insertions ultimately act as a commentary upon the civil rights movement of the 1960s. In this case, the print and visual images are used in a flagrantly unofficial manner to highlight their subjective status, a technique that differs markedly from the apparent realism of Martínez's work or the authorial self-awareness of Ângelo's novel. Reed's ultimate goal is similar to that of Ângelo and Martínez, however; in each of the three analyzed texts, any trust the reader the reader may place in the official documents is compromised, yet this results from the reader's role in watching the contrivance and subsequent deconstruction of the print sources mentioned. By actually demonstrating how the falsification or censorship appears, the authors create strategies for contemporary readers to apply to the media representations that they encounter on a daily basis.

## CHAPTER 9

### MARTÍNEZ AND THE MEDIA: HYBRID MEMOIRS AND COUNTER-MEMORIES

Lo que llamamos literatura Argentina (en el siglo XIX) se compone de memorias, como la del general José María Paz, autobiografías como las de Sarmiento, o diarios como los de Lucio V. Mansilla, por dar ejemplos contundentes. Algunas de las mejores ficciones argentinas del último medio siglo, desde las de Borges a las de Manuel Puig, pueden ser leídas como una respuesta a los silencios y censuras de la historiografía, o si se quiere, como una reescritura de la historia.

—Tomás Eloy Martínez, “Mito, historia, y ficción en América Latina”

#### Hybrid Writing

In his landmark monograph *Culturas híbridas*, Néstor García Canclini argues that “[l]a hibridez tiene un largo trayecto en las culturas latinoamericanas. Recordamos antes las formas sincréticas creadas por las matrices españolas y portuguesas con figuración indígena” (305).<sup>38</sup> That these engrafted syncretic models continued to reappear in various forms throughout national independence movements, cultural modernism(s), and into the more volatile cross-pollination of contemporary border culture, creating an organic fragmentation inherent within cultural practices, suggests that to attempt to isolate a culture as singular is to hold onto rigid notions of collection, a virtual impossibility in a postmodern world of porous cultural borders. Writing literatures of hybridity within the national and transnational experience of culture within this temporal framework is

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<sup>38</sup> “Hybridity has a long trajectory in Latin American cultures. We remember formerly syncretic forms created by Spanish and Portuguese matrices mixing with indigenous representation” (241-2). Translations taken from 1995 English edition translated by Christopher L Chiappari and Silvia L. López.

perhaps not so far removed from that of media alone, if we take into account Aníbal González's observations regarding the cannibalistic nature of both discourses of fiction and journalism, their adaptation and subjection of other discourses within their own produced narratives, since their inceptions.

García Canclini's model (couched within a discussion of the shift from modern to the postmodern) is specific to Latin America, but his inclusive treatment of the United States frontier suggests that the model may be extrapolated from to include areas that cross cultural and national borders, or even ideological borders between class and education. Indeed, the very nature of criticism has changed, according to García Canclini, for while public libraries continue to exist, "cualquier intelectual o estudiante trabaja mucho más en su biblioteca privada, donde los libros se mezclan con revistas, recortes de periódicos, informaciones, fragmentarias que moverá a cada rato de un estante a otro" (282).<sup>39</sup> I would suggest that the reader too, as a consequence, traffics in such fragments of received mixed media. In other words, a loss of order prevails in both production and reception of information, which is a positive shift away from outdated models that previously imposed a hierarchy of value upon processes of intellectual production. It is out of a general critical "disorder," according to Tomás Eloy Martínez, that Uruguayan Ángel Rama designated the appellation "critical generation" upon his contemporaries, focusing upon the social value of the critic's role. Rama, who reveals that film, opera, and the plastic arts were equally "daily events" in "Placer de la crítica" (xxvi), insisted upon the importance of tracing processes rather than focusing on specific events to define cultural identity.

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<sup>39</sup> "Any intellectual or student works much more in his or her private library, where books are mixed with journals, newspaper clippings, fragmentary bits of information that will be moved often" (223).

The same holds true for García Canclini, who maintains that the media holds the keys to both the processes of fragmentation of current and historical memory and the conservative nature of collections of symbolic goods, suggesting in the latter's place a process of reversal he terms decollection, for "[l]os medios se convierten hasta cierto punto en los grandes mediadores y mediatizadores, y por tanto en sustitutos de otras interacciones colectivas" (269).<sup>40</sup> The problem with collection—its historical dimension implied in Canclini's text—is that typically its classification systems have given rise to exclusions, to manners of distinguishing the cultured from the popular. Decollecting, by contrast, refers to a "decomposition" of rigid collections, a break in the stratification of cultured, popular, and mass values.

Through much of the twentieth century, the notion of cultural collection was imposed upon Latin America by anthropological models, many of them Amero-European in origin, argues Ricardo Gutiérrez Mouat in "The Modern Novel, The Media and Mass Culture," but underneath such claims lies the contention that these models were in part maintained by distinctions between the cultured and the popular. Mouat builds his case upon both García Canclini's history of modernity in Latin America as well as González Echevarría's notion of the archive, noting,

Mass culture is not as much denied in this process as displaced on behalf of archaic, rural, or folk culture that for many literary intellectuals (Asturias, Carpentier, Rulfo, Roa Bastos, García Márquez, Arguedas) held the key to the identity of Latin America. Some might argue that the modern Latin American novel could not interpret cultural identity and history except through the anthropological grid because there was no mass culture to speak of in Latin American societies until the 1950s. (74)

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<sup>40</sup> "Up to a point, the media became the great mediators and mediatizers, and therefore substitutes for other collective interactions" (211).

In contemporary culture, by contrast, Mouat suggests that the proliferation of the languages of mass and media culture in the postmodern Latin American novel has become commonplace. Key to this shift is what Umberto Eco has described as the indistinguishable differences between the repetition of the media and the repetition of high culture art. Symptomatic of this shift is the contemporary ubiquity in both modes of intertextuality, notable for my purposes in this chapter, which was once property only of experimental literature, but is now common in popular film and television (75). Mouat argues for the case of double-coded or integrated novels, where a traditional narrative mixes with nonlinear novelty, or linguistic experimentation is interpolated with movie or magazine language. He points out that this blending of high and low culture is not territory unique to postmodern texts, but that also modernist novels, such as Vargas Llosa's *La casa verde*, form a matrix of separate literary discourses, an amalgam of popular and cultured. As a paradigmatic example of "apocalyptic implications" of such double coding, Mouat offers the 1973 *Libro de Manuel* (*A Manual for Manuel*), Julio Cortázar's political novel which is coded for both intellectual and broader audiences. This distinction is reflected in the narrative itself, Mouat argues, for it is addressed to multiple readers—the literary elite—as well as the eponymous Manuel, the baby son of the revolutionary group's father portrayed in the text, and young Manuel represents a newly educated reading public "that demands realism in fiction" (84). A third feature of the text's multiple-coding is its composite nature; not only is it made up of a variety of narratorial devices, but the manual for Manuel is constructed out of reproductions of newspaper clippings on the text.

Despite the political agenda and the inclusion of media documents, however, *Libro de Manuel* does not constitute a con-script. Lacking from Cortázar's narrative is an historical dimension or problematization. Mouat's understanding of multiple-coding is provocative, yet while the other examples he provides—Fuentes' *Cristóbal Nonato*, Saer's *Lo imborrable*—are intertextual in their mixture of popular and cultural modes, not only don't they attempt to problematize notions of historiography (the Christopher Columbus who narrates from pre-birth in Fuentes' *Nonato* bears more in common with Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* than with the historical figure and writer), but they focus primarily upon fiction as intertext. Cortázar moves in a different direction when he, or rather an authorial persona, prefaces the novel with a brief pretext, thus the first words that greet the reader highlight the blurred context:

Por razones obvias habré sido el primero en descubrir que este libro no solamente no parece lo que quiere ser sino que con frecuencia parece lo que no quiere, y así los propugnadores de la realidad en la literatura lo van a encontrar más bien fantástica mientras que los encaramados en la literatura de ficción deploran su deliberado contubernio con la historia de nuestros días. (7)<sup>41</sup>

The narrator terms this condition as a form of “heterogeneity,” but in García Canclini's terms, this interchange between cultures of the masses, the popular, and the elite is indicative of hybridity. Examples of the occurrences of the everyday real come not only in the form of newspaper articles, but also copywritten excerpts from a press conference on human rights featuring interviews of soldiers from the Vietnam War, tables provided by the Secretary of Defense documenting the number of military personnel in Latin

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<sup>41</sup> “For obvious reasons I am probably not the first one to discover that this book not only doesn't seem to be what it wants to be, but that frequently it also seems to be what it doesn't want to be, and so proponents of reality in literature are going to find rather fantastically while those under the influence of fiction will doubtless deplore its deliberate cohabitation with the history of our own times” (3).

America by country. The political overtones of *Libro de Manuel* are not subtle, but the use of these documents, which will form the visible element of the manual (although not creating a manual in the explicit sense that Ivan Ângelo will be shown to do in the subsequent chapter), is ultimately not problematized; they are markers of the present, from international conflicts to the banalities of the everyday, articles which Cortázar plucked from the newspaper and incorporated as he wrote the text.

If we are to approach the notion of false documents in terms of Mouat's multiple coding, then con-scripts that utilize false media documents are texts which are triple-coded or quadruple-coded. Texts which self-consciously double-code discourses of fiction and journalism require an additional mode of expression in this sense, a view to the past, and within this critical revisioning, a mistrust of how that past has been represented that in turns instills mistrust is vital, even at the expense of compromising the text's own authority in the process. Magdalena Perkowska indicates a specific shift from conventional notions of classical Latin American historical novels, which already represented a hybrid mixture of history and fiction. She maintains that the emergent new forms of new Latin American historical novel in the 1990s are "historias híbridas," or hybrid histories/stories that overlap with historical writing. This novel approach does not cancel or fragment history so much as "redefine" its spaces to "imagine other possibilities, other histories and discourses" (42, my translation).

Perkowska attempts to marry social conditions resulting from recent histories of dictatorship and various levels of success with redemocratization. Her, at times forced, cause and effect link between Latin American politics and literature during the latter half of the twentieth century, namely the reaction to various regime's official truths that

results in the union of literature and the ideology of resistance, would seem to find its origins in Santiago Colás' rendering of postmodernity in Latin America. As Perkowska notes, Colás' proposed paradigm demands that critical models be culturally, politically, and socially specific to individual Latin American nations, rather than applying a general condition to the Spanish speaking new world (103). (It should be pointed out that despite concerns for a comprehensive Latin American representation, Colás does not mention Brazil in his study.) Colás makes an important demand that critical works resist previous models to theorize postmodernity from within Latin America with special attention to specific and contemporary cultural processes, yet, based on the examples of literary texts which he provides, it would seem that he additionally necessitates that these texts overtly reference those political and economic situations as well, and thus runs the risk of condoning counter-propaganda.

Colás acknowledges the influence of Linda Hutcheon's historiographic metafiction, noting the numerous Latin American texts she references, in fact claiming that postwar Latin America is one of the primary sources for this social reconstruction via literature. At the same time, he criticizes what he calls Hutcheon's partial readings, which involve the "exclusion of the social and political conditions out of which they emerged," and as a consequence, "Hutcheon bans any discussion of the concrete political consequences or affiliations of postmodern culture" (2-3). In the face of her model's "unconscious" will to universalize, Colás proposes a model of the postmodern that takes into consideration the pressures exerted on culture by historical and social forces. Although expounding the value of Frederic Jameson's stricture that postmodern must always be contextualized through the historicizing process, Colás ultimately takes issue

with Jameson's centralization of utopia, which he believes is similarly unable account for the specific social context of the Third World. Hutcheon claims that she is writing against Jameson's model, yet something that neither she nor Colás take into account is the distinction between contextualizing the present in terms of the past, as Jameson urges, and *writing* fiction about the past by drawing attention to its reconstruction from present modes of thought, as Hutcheon ultimately claims for historiographic metafiction. Despite the potential incompatibility of their respective formal emphases within the postmodern, Colás views their work as equally Amero-Eurocentric models that, when imposed upon Latin America, are exposed as reductivist. He instead proposes a model that focuses upon the reaction to dictatorship(s) within Latin America, and in Argentina in particular. To this end, he proposes two works as paradigmatic of his need for historicization: Ricardo Piglia's *Respiración artificial* and Martínez's *La novela de Perón*. Both undermine attempts by the military dictatorship to present itself as the only source of all futures (a totalizing form of authority, elements of which Colás might also see in Jameson and Hutcheon's poetics), not by denying the military version to promote their own approaches, but rather because they "work on the material of other historical moments showing them to be, not the seamless products of the famous presupposed by the military's historical discourse, but rather shaped by the multiple repressed and forgotten—the subaltern—histories of the everyday" (126-7). He points out that Piglia's novel is informed by a pastiche of literary genres, from epistolary techniques to the insertion of diary fragments and literature sent from the future, although Colás prefers the term "cita" over that of "intertext." Certainly, the novel could be seen to be double-coded for its reading audience; while no specific references to Argentina's "Dirty War" appear,

the text has generally been read as a comment upon the atmosphere of oppression and the “disappeared” victims of the regime. Although Colás believes Piglia’s novel “provides a model for historical thought” (143), the types of documents that appear in the novel are not designed to create tension between levels of everyday reality and the historical record. In fact, some intertexts supposedly come from the future, purposefully directing the novel’s language of literary criticism away from a discourse of reality.

Martínez’s *La novela de Perón*, however, does blur this boundary, placing special emphasis upon the media’s attempts to overcome the fragmentation, in the sense that García Canclini uses the term, of both cultural and historical processes. Thus, while Colás reads critical scenes in Martínez’s novel through a Marxist lens—such as the novel’s final scene where Perón appears on television—Martínez may be said to be more interested in the means of “reproduction” than the means of production. Colás inadvertently supports such a reading when he points out that the book is not about Perón as much as it is about the image that Perón left behind: “Martínez does not merely ‘redo Perón.’ Or rather, by doing so, he also redoes historical representation in general...[He] expresses the problem of historical representation Argentina and cinema’s depthless screen becomes the figure for the unreality of history under such conditions as were lived in the region in the seventies and eighties” (156). Though the novel is a veritable archive of “documented” documents, through their fragmentation Martínez is in fact “decollecting” these distinctions between fiction and document, literature and journalism.

If Argentine Manuel Puig in *Boquitas pintadas* is, as Edmundo Paz-Soldán and Debra Castillo claim in “Beyond the Lettered City,” the “paradigmatic chronicler of literature’s love affair with mass media and pop culture” (9), then Martínez, who

references radio and tango with equal frequency in *La novela de Perón*, is a more than a worthy successor, the chronicler who most predominantly marries that hybridizing literary-media process with political criticism.<sup>42</sup> Colás would not approve of the notion of con-script as a device that is not culturally specific, and yet, what is at stake here is not distinctions between modern and postmodern, as con-scription, like double-coding, transcends such boundaries, although as a practice it may certainly be applied to literatures of resistance. Despite creating a novel that challenges issues particular to Argentina, Martínez's approach utilizes a process of false documentation that is not dependent upon either Amero-European or Latin American models.

### **“General” Confusion: The Case of Perón**

Mark Szuchman notes that historical representation itself has a colorful history in Argentina. In the nineteenth century Bartólomé Mitre, a journalist-turned-political leader-and-historian, was one of the most well-known writers to manipulate history when, in his biography of liberator José de San Martín, he presented a sympathetic and idyllicized image of the soldier and had the historical records purged of references to Martín's strong offensive behavior. Szuchman claims that the

depiction of past times in Argentina reflects a pattern of historical representation consistent with experiences of peoples throughout the world. Every nation constructs its past in accordance with the needs of

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<sup>42</sup> Paz-Soldán and Castillo offer Puig's 1969 *Boquitas Pintadas* (Heartbreak Tango) as a text that uses the technology of the media in dialogue with radio, television, and film, to narrate the lives of individuals in a rural Argentine town circa 1940. The text itself is conceived as a folletín, or serial, and its "episodes" not only feature excerpts from radio programs and popular tango songs, but also a variety of "documents": epistolary exchanges, police depositions and statements of investigation regarding a murder. The novel, however, is not constructed with a political agenda. While historical in nature, it neither attempts to challenge perceptions of that historical period nor con-script its audience into active deconstruction of its artifice of device.

both the popular sectors and the governing elites. The ease with which we can find multiple versions of the biographies of national heroes and endless material representations of a nation's most dramatic historical experiences speaks to the need of all peoples to construct their past in the most widely understandable ways. (175)

However, it may be a little ambitious to speak of the “ease” with which readers can find multiple and varied representations of historical figures and moments, especially in a twentieth century context, a gap that Tomás Eloy Martínez attempts to fill with his work on Juan Perón. Regarding the paucity of works that deal with the infamous politician, María José Punte points out as late as 2004 that *La novela de Perón* “hasta el presente, existe [como el] único texto en donde el viejo caudillo campea con un rol central y absoluta. ¿Por qué no ha habido otros intentos más exhaustivos de abordar a este personaje?” (224).<sup>43</sup> What Martínez seeks to avoid with his writing is the fate in the novel that befalls the investigative journalist, whose written exposé on Perón ultimately fails to make a difference in popular perception. His magazine articles are read by many and then ignored by all, as the nation in 1973 is depicted as being far more captivated by Perón's image on television than any truth about his abuses of power and history. As the journalist laments, “Mi destino está sellado... Veo la historia por el ojo de la cerradura. La única realidad que conozco es la que aparece por la televisión” (413).<sup>44</sup>

In *La novela de Perón*, Martínez highlights the act of writing as a means to “script over” existing cultural perception, but these new or superimposed texts are not articulated with the goal of merely revealing a textual palimpsest; these texts are exposed so that

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<sup>43</sup> Up until now, it exists as the only text in which the old leader abounds with a central and absolute role. Why haven't there been other more in depth attempts to deal with this character? (My translation)

<sup>44</sup> All English renderings of the novel are taken from Asa Satz's 1988, translation, *The Perón Novel*: “My fate is sealed...I see history through a keyhole. The only reality I know is what appears on television” (350).

they may be actively compared by the reader. On the one hand, Perón's memoir, the very one Martínez had transcribed in 1970 and which is presented in fragmented form (with the intention of ultimately overcoming that fragmentation) throughout the novel, effectively writes out and erases individuals from whom the general wishes to distance himself. At the same time, Martínez intends the novel to subject Perón's memoirs to the same process. Like Ângelo and Reed in the following chapters, however, Martínez references several different types of media as influencing the recreation of the historical moment.

Several chapters of *La novela de Perón* are themed so that they deal with a particular type of media. Chapter Three reveals the stories and interviews of Perón's childhood witnesses through references to photography. Chapters Four, Six, Nine, Eleven, Thirteen, and Seventeen are dominated by actual excerpts from Perón's memoirs, while Chapters Five, Eight, Ten, Twelve, Fifteen, and Eighteen feature the magazine articles from the witnesses whose counter-memories contradict the officially sanctioned memoirs. Chapter Seven exclusively includes excerpts of letters from various individuals vying for Perón's attention. Chapter Eight uses radio communication as a central theme, while Chapter Nine provides transcribed excerpts from the cassette tape recordings of Martínez's interview with Perón. With so many different forms of media serving as loci within the novel, a very complex relationship between narrative and media dissemination develops, one that does not seek to create counter-propaganda, neither vilifying nor lionizing the media, instead analyzing how media information is employed and consequently interpreted.

In Chapter Three, Martínez presents a dialogue in which a *Horizonte* magazine editor coerces his columnist, the very journalist who finds himself seeing history through a keyhole at the novel's conclusion, into researching General Perón's past. While Martínez actually did participate in this research to check the validity of General Perón's transcribed interviews and memoirs, the author has distanced himself from the events within the novel by presenting the reporter as a man named Zamora. In a metafictional nod, Martínez does appear in the text, a character narrated in third person, but his presence is carefully relegated to one of peripheral reference (except in Chapter 14, where Martínez serves briefly as a first person narrator chiefly to question even the authority of journalism, which will be returned to shortly). The editor places great emphasis upon learning about the real Perón, as opposed to the "official" Perón, who is treated as if he arrived in politics firmly formed with no past baggage, or no baggage at all, for that matter:

El Perón oficial ya estará vaciado. Hay que buscar al otro. Cuente los primeros años del personaje, Zamora: nadie lo ha hecho en serio. Abundan las alabanzas, las mitologías, los rejuntos de documentos, pero la verdad no aparece por ninguna parte. ¿Quién era el General, Zamora? Descíbrele de una buena vez: rescate las palabras que él nunca se atrevió a decir, describa los impulsos que seguramente reprimió, lea entre líneas... La verdad es lo que se oculta ¿no? Busque los testigos de la infancia y de la juventud: algunos seguirán vivos, me imagino. Eso es: ¡por ahí empiece! El Perón que conocen los argentinos parece que hubiera nacido en 1945, cuando tenía 50 años: ¿no es absurdo? Un hombre tiene tiempo de ser muchas cosas antes de los 50. (45)<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> "The official Perón is pumped dry. Another one has got to be found. Tell about the character's early years, Zamora. Nobody's really done it. Sure, there's been no end of glorifications, myths, collected papers, but the truth, never. Who was the General? Decipher him once and for all, Zamora. Reconstruct the words he never dared say. Describe the impulses he must have repressed. Read between the lines... The truth is what was hidden, right? Look up the witnesses from his youth. Some of them are still alive, I'm sure. That's the ticket! That's where you begin. The Perón the Argentines know was born in 1945 at age fifty. Preposterous, right? A man has time to be lots of things before he's fifty" (31).

The orders are simple and direct, yet this passage acts on multiple levels: one diegetically within the text to explain how the special edition magazine which demythologizes Perón is conceived, and the other metadiegetically to explain Martínez's goal in writing the novel about Perón. Martínez seeks to answer the very questions Zamora's editor asks: who exactly was the General? How was the "he" the world knew constructed? The editor refers to creating an "exhibition" of history, not in the sense of a museum providing information, but rather in the sense of history as a spectacle, for not only history's narration but also its ontological state is a performance in the terms that the editor, as well as Perón and López Rega conceive. Tellingly, although one group seeks to report the "truth" while the other seeks to obfuscate it or create an updated version, both conceive of historical knowledge as a malleable substance; both groups seek to utilize it for their own purposes.

The narrative frame of the novel is deceptively simple: Perón returns to Argentina, reflecting upon his exile in Spain, while various self-interest groups struggle to prepare for his deferred arrival, including political allies and opponents, as well as the media interests that wish to capitalize upon the nation's fascination with this historical moment. Despite the relatively uncomplicated nature of events, plot linearity is eschewed; the multiple and fragmented viewpoints of parties representing vastly different ideologies and temporal sequences complicates attempts to parse the work in any holistic form. The novel begins with Perón's departure by plane from Madrid, where he has spent many of the previous eighteen years in exile completely ignored by Spanish dictator Francisco Franco. While Spain, in the northern hemisphere, is enjoying the longest day of the year, Perón's party is literally and figuratively flying against time to Argentina,

which, in the southern hemisphere, is experiencing the shortest day of the year. The plane itself bears the name of Betelgeuse, the giant star that makes up part of the constellation of Orion. Tellingly, General Franco, who mentally labels Perón a “ruin” after looking at how rapidly he has aged in exile, refers to Betelgeuse as “la estrella moribunda” (18)<sup>46</sup>, a giant already in the process of dying.

The message Martínez creates with these temporal and spatial allusions is not subtle. Although he is to be welcomed back to Argentina as a hero and a president, the Perón that Martínez presents is old and feeble, a dying giant returning with only short days ahead. Indeed, when it is discovered that a mob has broken loose at Ezeiza Airport where they are scheduled to land, Perón’s executive decision to proceed with the initial plan, since “[e]l pueblo ha viajado días enteros para ver al General de cerca. Cómo lo vamos a desilusionar?” (25)<sup>47</sup> is ultimately overridden by his secretary, demonstrating once and for all that Perón is no longer an authority figure, despite what Peronist supporters would like to believe. As his secretary “Daniel” López Rega intervenes with the pilots, he makes the relationship between himself and Perón clear: “Haga lo que ordeno, comandante... O es que no sabe todavía quién manda aquí?” (26)<sup>48</sup>

López’s power is also obvious in the construction of Perón’s memoirs in scenes which flashback to the months preceding the general’s return. In an internal aside, Perón berates himself for not having realized the ideological potential of writing his memoirs earlier in his career, since only at that moment,

tal vez demasiado tarde, advierte que esas Memorias eran la cruz que le faltaba a la iglesia Peronista. Más que los tabernáculos de sus clases magistrales sobre conducción política o que la recopilaciones de discursos,

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<sup>46</sup> “The dying star” (8).

<sup>47</sup> “People have been traveling for days to see the General in person. How can we disappoint them?” (15)

<sup>48</sup> “Do as I tell you, Captain... Or don’t you know yet who gives the orders here?” (16)

las Memorias le servirán para que adoctrine al vulgo con ejemplo... Adoctrinar, instruir, la idea lo obsesiona. Las masas deben impregnarse de sus virtudes, reconocerse en el pasado de Perón. (58)<sup>49</sup>

There are a number of problematic factors regarding the production of the memoirs, however. The first is that while Perón is dictating his memories to López Rega (a relationship of dictation and dictatorship that echoes Roa Bastos' *Yo el Supremo* from Chapter 4), it is Rega who is literally rewriting the general and his memories, constructing a mythical leader who is fit to rule (again). Perón is aware that his secretary is taking liberties, yet at the same time condones and defers to López Rega's wishes. The general corrects himself while speaking of editing the manuscript, because rather than actually correct the work, he is attempting to find any trace of himself in his supposed biography after the fact, or "mejor dicho, va colocandose a sí mismo en las Memorias que le ha escrito López" (58).<sup>50</sup>

Martínez reproduces the process of construction for the reader by providing fragments of the memoir ghostwritten by López that span Perón's childhood through his ascendancy to power. In some instances the general questions their veracity after López's doctoring, and in a few cases he actively edits the proofs. Thus, Martínez carefully structures the narrative of Perón's return around the act of "writing Perón writing," as it were. And Perón himself recognizes the developing level of fiction in his autobiography, but he rationalizes the process with questions regarding the restrictions truth places upon his past. The presence of literary production is never divorced from that of historical (re)production. Martínez has placed political and fictional modes of writing on an equal

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<sup>49</sup> "Perhaps too late, that the Memoirs were the cross that was missing from the Peronist church. More than the tabernacles of his master classes in political leadership, or the collections of his speeches, the Memoirs would serve to indoctrinate the masses with his example... Indoctrinate, instruct... the idea obsesses him. The masses must become impregnated with his virtues, see themselves in Perón's past" (41).

<sup>50</sup> "Rather, he has been introducing himself into the Memoirs López has written for him" (41).

level when he claims in a speech that “tanto Perón como Borges compartían la idea de que los documentos se pueden manipular en la Argentina con una cierta impunidad” (“Mito, historia” 6)<sup>51</sup>, which is exactly what *La novela de Perón* illustrates in its own manipulation of official discourse that supposedly represents historical fact.

### Parameters and Paratexts

Martínez’s fascination with this hazy area where fact and fiction collide is evident before the reader is even able to enter the narrative of the novel. This awareness is two-fold, in effect explaining Martínez’s methodology of con-scription. First, Martínez alerts the reader to his attentions with the initial words of the text, or rather the paratext: the novel’s title, *La novela de Perón*, which operates on several immediate levels. The title itself is multifaceted; rather than play to history, the use of “novela” relates the work to fiction, but at the same time, the historical weight (and thus, “reality”) of Perón’s name offsets this literary connotation. The author himself has confessed that “la palabra ‘novela’ dice ‘no lea esto como historia,’ pero la palabra “Perón” opine ‘hay aquí un personaje histórico” (Qtd. in Calíbrese, 351-60).<sup>52</sup> On another level, the ambiguous preposition “de” could equally suggest that the novel is about Perón or that it is written by Perón (Colomina Garrigós, 253), once again playing with notions of fiction versus nonfiction. Is Martínez’s title ironically referring to Perón’s memoirs as a novel to highlight their fictive status, another embedded layer within the reference? It turns out

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<sup>51</sup> Borges as much as Perón shared the idea that it is possible to manipulate documents in Argentina with a certain impunity (my translation).

<sup>52</sup> The word “novel” says “don’t read this as history,” but the word “Perón” suggests that a historical character is involved (my translation).

that the title foreshadows the appropriateness of either interpretation, for the narrative revolves around texts written either by or about the political leader. Whether playing to history or collapsing the distance between historical figure and literary project, the narrative forces a negotiation upon the reader in relation to which agency maintains ultimate authority; via the ambiguous title, that action begins before opening the book.

Second, Martínez also confuses understandings of authority with his choice of epigraphs for the novel. The first epigraph is taken from fellow journalist-cum-fiction-writer Ernest Hemingway, who in his preface to *A Moveable Feast* dares the reader to view the book as fiction, yet stresses fiction's ability to erode events once narrated as facts: "If the reader prefers, this book may be regarded as fiction. But there is always the chance that such a book of fiction will throw some light on what has been written as fact." Martínez invites the reader to approach *La novela de Perón* under similar terms, yet he qualifies this with the choice of a second epigraph, taken from a letter written by Perón to Martínez in 1970. Perón writes in what at first seems to be a tongue-in-cheek manner, "Los argentinos, como usted sabe, nos caracterizamos por creer que tenemos siempre la verdad. A esta casa vienen muchos argentinos queriéndome vender una verdad distinta como si fuese la única. ¿Y yo, qué quiere que haga? ¡Les creo a todos!"<sup>53</sup> This rhetorical fragment showcases Perón's control of language, suggesting that distorting words to protect the sanctity of his innocence is well within his capacity. It is also curious to note the spin he puts on individuals "selling" him the truth. The rhetorical aspect of the fragment expands upon Hemingway's comment, suggesting that fiction and fact are different versions of truth or truths. In the process, Martínez implicitly asks his own

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<sup>53</sup> "As you know, we Argentines are noted for believing that we always have the sole truth. Many Argentines come to this house trying to sell me on a different truth as if there were no other. What can I do? I believe them all."

rhetorical question: should we as readers believe in a single truth? Can we in good faith subscribe to all of the truths that are sold to us? As the narrative develops, Martínez bleakly suggests that the answer to each question is negative.

Negative too is the way these truths are revealed. The economic function Perón highlights above in his letter to Martínez reappears within the novel in numerous forms, as memory and counter-memory. On assignment, Martínez's persona-reporter Zamora wonders if one of Perón's insiders isn't giving him "too much" history; Zamora's only concern is how much the information will cost, for if it is the "truth," there isn't enough money to be paid for it. The one-time Perón supporter, Noon Antezuma, who reveals he has murdered a military general who deposed Perón in 1955, answers by providing a truth that has been hidden by official documentation in the form of a top-secret government folder:

Mostró el título: "Informe al general Perón sobre la Operación Pindapoy/ Comando Juan José Valle" . . . Es una historia de justicia—dijo—Debería interesarte . . . No hay precio. De eso se trata. Estoy aquí para evitar que la historia se vuelva mercancía" (229).<sup>54</sup>

Zamora is "condemned to silence," however, for he cannot write about the incident without losing his own life (Martínez can write about it years later, though). As if alluding to biblical accounts of the Last Supper, Antezuma recounts that there were thirteen men who kidnapped the general, although in the documents Perón received, there were only twelve men listed—Antezuma's own name has been omitted. In similar fashion to how Martínez frequently presents Perón's version of his memoir and then López Rega's altered version side-by-side, Antezuma proceeds to read the version written

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<sup>54</sup> "He showed the title: 'Report to General Perón on Operation Pindapoy/ Juan José Valle Group . . . It's a story of justice,' he said. 'It should interest you . . . No price. That's the point. I'm here to keep the story from becoming a piece of merchandise'" (191).

by the father of investigative journalism in Argentina, Rudolfo Walsh, in his book-length report *Operación Masacre* (1957), and juxtapose it against the official, falsified version, the holes in which the General saw through, but ultimately accepted as satisfactory (Walsh was murdered by a military group in 1977 after publishing an open letter in which he attacked the military junta).

Antezuma now seeks to murder Perón upon his return to Buenos Aires, for he believes him to be a powerless puppet whose inability to govern will allow conservative military interests to continue controlling the country, from a less visible, hence less assailable, position. His words, as a consequence, appeal to the opposite interests that Perón's do, as the informer Antezuma has vested interests in showing how historical discourse has been controlled. Perón, on the other hand, simply cares who controls the past, and how this control is maintained, which for him is an issue of economics and textual invention. Thus, the unidentified narrator points to Perón's insecurities regarding that power by mentioning that the general "ha sufrido pensando que la historia contará a su manera lo que él calló. Que vendrán otros a inventarle una vida. Ha temido que la historia mienta cuando hable de Perón, o que descubra: la vida de Perón le ha mentado a la historia. Tantas veces lo ha dicho: un hombre solo es lo que recuerda. Debiera decir, más bien: un hombre sólo es lo que de él se recuerda" (122).<sup>55</sup>

The play on words via the reversal of subject and object is characteristic of Martínez's reaction to the narration of history that Perón reveals—twisting words is as much his business as it is the general's. His novel seeks to alter how Perón the man (not demi-god) is remembered, rather than what Perón chose to remember about himself. To

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<sup>55</sup> "He has been afraid that history lies about what it says of Perón, or that it will find out that Perón's life has lied to history. He has said so many times that a man is not more than what he remembers. He should say, rather, that a man is not more than what is remembered of him" (98).

this end, Perón is humanized via several unofficial comments bluntly made to a private audience that characterize the side of the icon not visible to the world, reducing information to the very monetary object Zamora's informer criticizes. Perón characteristically distances himself via a guise of modesty, before delivering a metaphor that is both sexual and money-driven:

Usted bien sabe que yo no digo malas palabras, pero para la historia no hay sino una. La historia es una puta, López. Siempre se va con el que paga mejor. Y cuantas más leyendas le añadan a mí vida, tanto más rico soy y con más armas cuento para defenderme. Déjelo todo tal como está. No es una estatua lo que busco sino algo más grande. Gobernar a la historia. Cogerla por el culo. (218)<sup>56</sup>

The comparison of the creation of history to the profession of prostitution is effective in portraying historical writing as a commodity or product, a practice that is ultimately about the uneven development of power relations.

The notion of supply and demand, even as applied to information, is predicated upon an audience willing to accept the other party's goods. Perón stated bluntly in 1951, in a speech that Martínez excerpts, that "[I]as masas no piensan, las masas sienten y tienen reacciones más o menos intuitivas y organizadas. ¿Pero, quién produce esas reacciones? El conductor. Las masas equivalen a los músculos'... Estaba claro: su pasado haría que la virtud brotara naturalmente de las generaciones futuras" (58).<sup>57</sup> Perón's personal history is indeed for sale, both to López and to the Argentine populace, though

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<sup>56</sup> "You know very well that I'm not given to using strong language, but there's only one word for history... History is a whore, López. She always goes with the one who pays the most. And the more legends attached to my name, the richer I am and the more weapons I have to defend myself with. Leave everything the way it is. I'm not after a statue, but something bigger. To rule history. To fuck her in the ass" (182).

<sup>57</sup> "The masses do not think, the masses feel and react more or less intuitively and systematically. But who originates such reactions? The leader. The masses correspond to the muscles... It was clear that his past would cause virtue to flow naturally from future generations" (41-2).

for distinct reasons, as Perón believes he can control Argentina's "muscles" through the successful use of ideology.

### **Editing for Content**

The practice of rewriting is not solely a one-way affair, however, but rather one also characterized by supply and demand. Perón does attempt at times to regain control of his memoirs, and his active editing takes two particular forms. The first is in fragments which Perón has written in his own style and wishes had been utilized in the final version. Immediately after presenting Perón's fantasized versions, López's own rendering appears, demonstrating a complete disregard for the general's writing style.

A second manner in which Martínez inserts Perón's edited versions of the memoirs is by cleverly displaying the general's attempts to trim down López's melodramatic choice of terms in his attempts to establish Perón's "illustrious" family background. The words in brackets represent Perón's deletions in the fragment inserted and set apart in the narrative, as the section appears in the text:

De los siete hijos que los Perón Hughes dieron a su nueva patria, quien más se destacó fue Tomás Liberato, el mayor, nacido el 17 de agosto de 1839. La vida de ese [ilustre] antepasado está llena de honores. Fue senador nacional, mitrista, por la provincia de Buenos Aires; presidente del Consejo Nacional de Higiene, lo cual equivalía a ministro, y [heroico] prácticamente mayor del Ejército en la guerra del Paraguay. Desempeñó varias misiones en el extranjero, especialmente en Francia, donde vivió algún tiempo. [Vertió su sangre] Participó también en la batalla de Pavón. En 1867, poco antes de rendir el examen final para recibirse de médico, se casó con [una dama distinguidísima, doña] Dominga Dutey. Esa abuela mía era uruguaya, de Paysandú, hija de [nobles] vascos franceses provenientes de Bayona. (61)<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> "Of the seven children the Perón Hughes gave their adopted country, most outstanding was the eldest son, Tomás Liberato, born on August 17, 1839. The life of this [distinguished] ancestor is replete with

This edited excerpt is contrasted shortly thereafter with the version presented in López's final draft, which in effect erases the voice of Perón, as well as the changes he has enacted upon the text, as it begins: "Los apellidos de mis abuelos maternos eran Toledo y Sosa. Hasta donde llega mi conocimiento, todos los antepasados de esa rama fueron argentinos..." (63)<sup>59</sup> the narrator is silent on this whole issue, opting to allow the unmasked practice to speak for itself. Perón's admission about his family's immigrant roots has not merely been downplayed; it has been erased and replaced with a falsehood, in which only the origins of his mother's side of the family is mentioned. Via the inclusion of this altered document, Martínez makes clear the delineation between Perón's "mis-remembering" and the active misrepresentation on the part of López which the general condones.

Yet while Perón may be an accomplice, he is not the mastermind; he is the dictator dictated to. This realization stems not so much from Martínez's desire to portray the general in a more sympathetic light as it does from Martínez's depiction of the general as too weak an individual to be responsible for himself, let alone an entire country. Perón may claim that "[s]i existen otras verdades, ya no interesan. La Historia se quedará con la verdad que yo estoy contando" (62),<sup>60</sup> but it is López Rega who reveals himself to be the ultimate rhetorician with his leading questions that play to the general's

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honors. He was a follower of General Bartolomé Mitre and a national senator for the province of Buenos Aires; Chairman of the National Health Council, which was the equivalent of a ministry; and a major in the army who saw [heroic] active service during the war with Paraguay. He carried out various missions abroad, particularly in France, where he lived for some time. He also [spilled his blood] took part in the Battle of Pavón. In 1867, shortly before taking the final examinations for his medical degree, he married [a lady of high position, Doña] Dominga Dutey. That grandmother of mine was Uruguayan, from Paysandú, the daughter of [noble] French Basques of Bayonne" (43-4).

<sup>59</sup> "Toledo and Sosa were the family names of my maternal grandparents. As far as my information goes, all my ancestors on that side were Argentines..." (45-6)

<sup>60</sup> "If there are other truths, it doesn't matter anymore. What I am telling is what will go down in History as the truth" (45).

ego, simultaneously developing a solipsistic argument to reduce the issue to one of good and evil. In many ways, as López draws information from the general, he usurps the position of interviewer or journalist in order to create the opposite of the “truth” which Martínez seeks: “Olvidese de los detalles incómodos. Suprimalos... Todos los hombres tienen derecho a decidir su futuro. ¿Por qué usted no va a tener el privilegio de elegir su pasado? Sea su propio evangelista, General. Separe el bien del mal” (62).<sup>61</sup> Perón is no match for López’s mental seductions. The general begins to believe that his secretary “ha interpretado la historia verdadera: la que debió suceder, la que sin duda prevalecerá” (67).<sup>62</sup> Rather than the Argentine people, it is Perón who has been indoctrinated. He no longer has the tools to combat López. Instead, he is left in confusion as he reads this fictional work which begins to take the shape of official history, thinking to himself how many times “ha rondado en su cabeza la frase que sigue. Pero, ¿alcanzó a decirla? ¿Es de veras suya la frase o bien el secretario, leyéndole el pensamiento, la ha dejado posar sobre la página?” (71)<sup>63</sup> Martínez strategically allows the reader to reach individual conclusions, yet an implicit judgment is evident. If Perón’s words are no longer his own property, to whom does his past belong?

The irony is that Perón’s words never did belong to him. Just as the novel’s epigraphs set the tone for the confusion of discourses to follow, so too do the epigraphs for Chapter Nine reveal an internal confusion. A sample of German World War I strategist Alfred von Schlieffen’s political writing is juxtaposed alongside a fragment

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<sup>61</sup> “Forget any uncomfortable details. Leave them out. Blow them out of these official Memoirs so that not even a speck of dust is left. Every man has a right to decide his future. Why shouldn’t you have the privilege of choosing your past?” (45)

<sup>62</sup> “[H]as presented the true story, the one that must have taken place, and the one that will undoubtedly prevail” (50).

<sup>63</sup> “The thought has gone round and round in his head quite frequently. But, was it something he had said? Is it really his phrase or his secretary’s, who, reading his mind, has let it light on the page?” (53)

from Perón's *Conducción Política*, the book on military conduct that cemented his status as a rising authority. Perón is revealed to have paraphrased, to state the matter generously, the German author's words. His entire political thought comes from a plagiarism that he has repeated so often that he now believes the words are his own. Perón has no fixed identity. Instead, he is a chameleon, conforming to whatever situation presents itself. In fact, it is his emptiness that allows him to successfully tell others exactly what they want to hear, to give the appearance of reflecting their desires. Thus, when López Rega begins including himself in the general's memoirs, narrating as if he were present, despite the fact that he was not even alive during the general's adolescence (49, 104), the secretary is not stealing Perón's identity, for there is no single identity to be found. In other words, López Rega's is just another in a series of plagiarisms and false documents in the life of Perón. Yet, Martínez accomplishes an interrogation of the narrated past on a distinct level. Contrasted against this invented identity is a narrative based on the testimony of individuals once close to the general, providing a very different image to the one in the memoirs: the "contramemorias."

### **Over the Counter-Memories**

Perón's memoirs are not the only created documents to be inserted in fragmented form into the novel. The "contramemorias," written by Zamora at the behest of his magazine's editor, are a narrative in which Zamora has woven together the testimony of several witnesses (the reproduced sections are based upon actual testimony, which Martínez acknowledges at the end of the novel), some of whom are the very individuals

Perón decides to expunge from his memoirs to avoid any compromising connection. Translated as “counter-memoirs” by Asa Satz, the magazine edition is officially titled “La vida entera de Perón/ El Hombre/ El Líder/ Documentos y relatos de 100 testigos.”<sup>64</sup> I refer to the articles, which are published on the same day as Perón’s return, as “counter-memories,” for they are oral rather than written accounts culled from interviews which Zamora has put into print after the fact. However, it is important to distinguish this binary phraseology from that which translator Donald Bouchard attributes to Foucault’s understanding of literature as developing an opposing relationship to language through its subjection of language, which transforms it into a counter-memory (Foucault 1977, 8). The role of language in the subjection of Perón to scrutiny is important, but in this sense the counter-memories also run counter to each other as well. Martínez is not attempting to simply reverse the privileging order of the official/unofficial binary regarding history, but instead point to the multiplicity of narrative elements that constitute the imparting of history, for

la novela [de Perón] pone en práctica esta problematización de la sensibilidad del referente histórico no solo a través del cuestionamiento de la veracidad histórica de la versión oficial sino también de otras versiones que forman parte de la ‘Contramemorias’...un narrador omnisciente en tercera persona critica otro artículo de Zamora por su estilo “cenagoso,” su prosa “intrincada,” y por filtrar “reflexiones autobiográficas” en su discurso. (Colomina Garrigós 255)<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> “Perón: His Entire Life/ Documents and Photos of 100 Witnesses.”

<sup>65</sup>The novel puts this problematization of the sensibilities of the historical referent into practice not only through the questioning of the historical veracity of the official version but also of the other versions that form part of the “Counter-memories”...an omniscient narrator in the third person criticizes a different article by Zamora for its heavy style, its intricate prose, and for allowing autobiographical reflections to leak into its discourse (my translation).

This final aspect of the critique, the appearance of autobiography within the supposedly objective work, is precisely what Martínez engages with, and he is well aware of this parallel. Ironically, the “contramemorias” represented by the witnesses Zamora interviews are not a cohesive indictment of Perón’s particular version, as they by no means agree or overlap completely with one another. Just as Perón and López Rega’s dialogues alert the reader to the creation of a fictionalized history, the various interviews “son reversos porque uno le contesta al otro, corrigiendo el texto periodístico los hechos que Perón escribió a su manera. Las voces de los testigos se suman para dar a entender que existen muchas versiones, no coincidentes” (Punte, “Perón: Personaje de Novela” 230-31). Embedded within these embedded documents created by Zamora are newspaper clippings detailing Perón’s graduation from school, saved by one of the witnesses, thus in a familiar gesture, a verifiable document exists within a constructed narrative.

The device that Martínez utilizes to introduce the counter-memories to the reader is to mirror characters’ own reading of the magazine, both those who have provided information and those who are named. The remembrances follow particular chapters which have related (mis)information from Perón’s memoirs, indirectly refuting claims of his birth (he was illegitimate) and his success at military school (he nearly left after suffering abuse). They reinforce the contradictions that Perón has already introduced into his sections of the book. And Zamora utilizes additional documents to create layers of counter-memories. For example, he interviews the deceased Chilean attaché’s wife in the hopes of convincing her to provide her diary of their betrayal by Perón over a scandal involving stolen government documents. A similar pattern emerges to the previous juxtapositions of historical versions. Zamora provides the wife with the published

versions historical scholars have provided of her husband's disgrace—which she labels vicious fiction—yet when she acquiesces, he reads her diary and discovers how Perón manipulated both individuals into taking the political fall for him and then refused any connection to them when they needed his support upon his return to Argentina.

Ironically, Zamora's attention to these written documents is drawn away by the spectacle of the television, a foreshadowing of the nation's similar reaction and his imminent realization of powerlessness. His attempts to uncover the "real" Perón prove unattainable, a representation of how Martínez himself discovered, according to the novel's acknowledgements, that "narrar a Perón es un oficio inagotable, y que nadie podrá escribir el libro definitivo."<sup>66</sup>

### **The Role of the Reporter**

When the planned bulletins for Madrid's newspapers regarding the state of Perón's health are presented to López Rega, the secretary is no longer a scribe; he simply orders that they be rewritten (370). The media is a nuisance, but one that can be dealt with, and the only party privy to the deception is the reader. Pulling out a cassette tape, the words of which are transcribed for the reader, López Rega asks Perón whether he remembers Tomás Eloy Martínez, the writer from *Panorama* magazine, because Martínez, according to López Rega, threatened to publish incriminating photos of Perón's involvement with the 1930 military coup (which Perón had denied having any prior knowledge of). Yet that threat is neutralized, so that "Martínez no es problema. Le damos un buen susto y se acabó. Los documentos se borran, se destruyen. Eso no me preocupa.

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<sup>66</sup> "To narrate Perón is an endless task, and that nobody can write the definitive book."

Lo que quiero es que elija una sola versión para los hechos” (218).<sup>67</sup> Martínez wishes to provoke precisely the opposite reaction in the reader, urging that no single version of events ever be chosen. Precisely because documents can be destroyed, Martínez has included actual and created documents into his narrative.

At the same time, Martínez is careful not to present media as a faultless revolutionary tool, an underpinning of the textual revolution against dictated history. He avoids counter-propagandizing. He allows that personal motives play into the very narratives which are neither objectively conceived or written (as the earlier criticism Zamora’s personal presence within his writing reveals). That Noon Antezuma, self-admitted murderer-turned-informer to Zamora, is revealed to have once run a leftist magazine is not a haphazard detail. Antezuma is fanatical in his will to depose the general. But he is not the only fanatic. Martínez self-consciously introduces a character named Tomás Eloy Martínez who also confesses his own obsession with the general, and the title of the chapter, “Primera Persona,” would almost suggest that the author is interrupting the narrative to address the reader in the first person. The chapter is ostensibly spoken to Zamora, but the leap to a more general audience, given the confessional nature of the extended aside, is encouraged. In the process, the narrator shatters the illusion of distance from the text, or from Perón for that matter: “He contado muchas veces esta historia pero nunca en primera persona, Zamora. No sé qué oscuro instinto defensiva me ha hecho tomar distancia de mí, hablar de mí como si fuera otro. Ya es tiempo de mostrarme tal como soy, de sacar mis flaquezas a la intemperie” (305).<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> “Martínez isn’t the problem. We threw a good scare into him and that was that. Documents can be erased, destroyed. That doesn’t worry me. What I want if for you to choose one version of the story” (182).

<sup>68</sup> “I’ve told this story many times, Zamora, but never before in the first person. I have no idea what obscure instinct of self preservation prompts me to step back from myself now to talk about myself as

(This leitmotif of narratorial confession of obsession with the novel's subject is repeated in Martínez's most recognized work, *Santa Evita*.) In a brief departure from the aside signified by parentheses markers, the third person narrator reclaims authority by identifying the owner of the voice, revealing that Zamora is listening to Tomas Eloy Martínez, whom his editor has sent Zamora to visit. Appropriately, Martínez's own interruption is interrupted.

Martínez's voice continues, in what develops into a tirade against the profession of journalism and his own involvement with it as tantamount to being complicit with the ruling powers:

Voy a seguir contándole todo en primera persona porque ya es hora de que las mascararas bajen la guardia, Zamora. El periodismo es una profesión maldita. Se vive a través de, se siente con, se escribe para. Como los actores: representando ayer a un guapo del 1900 y anteayer a Perón. Punto y aparte. Por una vez voy a ser el personaje principal de mi vida. No sé cómo. Quiero contar lo no escrito, limpiarme de lo no contado, desarmarme de la historia para poder armarme al fin con la verdad. (306)<sup>69</sup>

The character Martínez recounts how the writer Martínez first came into contact with Perón on assignment, the relationship which his *Las memorias del general* explores in greater detail. Perón attempts to cut down the image of a different political myth, the Argentine revolutionary Ernesto Che Guevara, by suggesting he was a military deserter who had fled the country to avoid punishment. In Martínez's obsessive quest for what he terms the "truth," his disillusionment at discovering all of the general's semblances and identities via their series of interviews does not prevent him from playing right into

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though I were somebody else. The time has come for me to show my true colors, to bring my weaknesses out to the open" (256).

<sup>69</sup> "I will continue telling it all to you in the first person, Zamora, because the time has come for unmasking. The profession of journalism is fiendish. It's a living-through, a feeling-with, a writing-for. Like actors. Today you're being a turn-of-the-century tough and tomorrow you're Perón. Period, new paragraph. For once, I'm going to be the main character in my own life. I don't know just how. I want to tell the unwritten, purge myself of the untold, disarm myself of stories so that I can arm myself, finally, with the truth" (258).

Perón's hands, for when the deposed president wished to create a pretense for general elections in Argentina to be called, "Yo estaba a mano y me usó como altoparlante. Pero no podía violar las leyes españolas de asilo. Entonces me desmintió sin asco. Sabía que por arrogancia profesional yo sacaría las cintas a relucir. Que sus declaraciones acabarían leyéndose en la Argentina como él quería" (308).<sup>70</sup> In other words, Perón realized that Martínez's writing could do damage to his image, so he used the interviews for leverage, for free press, as it were. By strategically disavowing his interview with Martínez, he knew that Martínez would release the tapes of their interviews, which would not only promote the general's message far more effectively than their written book form, but do so in a manner with immediate results in order to hasten calls for the general's return.

Yet, as if begging the reader to question his own writing, Martínez also forces the identification of this narrative voice with Perón in a physical sense, stating that because of his mounting stress, "Me brotaron unas manchas rojas en la espalda, como a Perón" (309).<sup>71</sup> The general informs Martínez that his first name is the same as his grandfather's, thus he too should have been given the name. It is clear from the nature of the monologue that Martínez knows he is inventing connections, yet they haunt him nonetheless. In effect, Martínez lays bare his motivations for writing the novel as exorcising a demon: his sense of guilt for having aided in Perón's return to power, albeit unwittingly in his capacity as journalist, and the violence that ensued as a consequence.

The novel plays with this narrative "aberration" of authorial transparency by transitioning into the next chapter with a sentence in the first person, yet this sentence is

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<sup>70</sup> "I happened to be at hand so he used me as a loudspeaker. However, he couldn't break Spanish law on asylum. So, with no qualms, he repudiated me. He knew that professional pride would compel me to produce the tapes at once. His declarations would be read in Argentina" (259).

<sup>71</sup> "My back broke out in red welts, just like Perón's does" (260).

revealed to be Zamora's inner monologue (cementing a connection between his character as a distancing device and Martínez), not the first person of the previous chapter, and the text immediately shifts back into limited third person. Stuck in traffic, Zamora reads the documents that Martínez has provided him: maps, Perón's diary entries from 1971, and the depositions of a general who lived with Perón in Europe during World War II. Once again, portions of each of these documents are shown to the reader in succession.

The general's deposition is narrated in the first person, documenting his friendship and eventual falling out with Perón. While the narrative is informative, it is ultimately another first person account, and if anything, the reader has become wary of taking any personal statement at face value, whether it be the general's or even Martínez's novel, for that matter. Both are narratives, rhetorically constructed to convince their audience of their authority. The main difference is that Martínez's text aims to maintain that authority by exposing his involvement in its creation, by pointing to the role that media plays in the dissemination of power, sometimes unwittingly. But never does he champion the discourse of journalism over the Doctorow's language of the regime. For even the counter-testimony of the seven witnesses (which the novel's acknowledgments reveal to come from actual documents) are woven together by Zamora into a single narrative, which is to say, they are prepared, edited by a hand that is not their own. The role of the reporter is thus not as far removed from that of López Rega's as we would initially wish to believe, especially if that role can be complicit with promoting the power it seeks to undermine. Yet the investigative role of the reporter is simultaneously the same one Martínez suggests for the reader: that of self-responsibility, though even this awareness does not preclude the possibility of failure, either reading or writing.

The most conclusive statement about the power of journalism comes from the reaction to the counter-memoirs that the magazine *Horizonte* publishes, for the publication reaches a very selective audience within the Argentine population. And even those who do read them, such as the fanatical Noon Antezuma and his followers, remain unmoved by the testimony, for “se encogen de hombros al detenerse en la foto de un document inexplicable, desoyen las voces de los testigos que van corroyendo el mito de Perón. Y cuando salen, allí queda la revista expirando en las tinieblas” (89).<sup>72</sup> The counter-memories dialogue among one another, but it would appear that they fail to create a dialogue with the Argentine population.

### **Hybrid Contexts: Multiple Audiences, Multiple Media**

Perón frequently refers to Eva as if to justify his actions to himself. His relationship of nostalgia and bitterness is complicated; on the one hand, he wishes to take credit for her rise to fame that outshone his own, and yet on the other hand her words serve as signifiers that complete his own empty referents/reference. “[H]ay que poner las montañas donde uno quiere[,] porque donde la ponés, allí se quedan. Así es la historia” (62),<sup>73</sup> Perón recalls her saying. History is a portrait that is painted, whose end result is what ultimately maintains currency. Nobody concerns himself today, Perón fatuously reasons, with whether Mona Lisa’s actual smile bore any similarity to the created one that made her famous. The image lasting in the public’s perception trumps any concerns of

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<sup>72</sup> “They shrug their shoulders when they see a document reproduced that they cannot explain, ignore the voices of the witnesses. And the magazine remains there when they leave, expiring in the shadows” (67).

<sup>73</sup> “One has to put the mountains where one wants them, Juan. Because where you put them is where they remain. That’s history” (45)

mimesis, in other words. His continued jealousy of Eva's immortal image, however, suggests that his is a losing game, both in terms of personal gratification and in terms of the mortality of his legacy. Perón complains at one point that "el destino es injusto...Eva estuvo apenas siete días en Madrid y la cubrieron de honores. Yo me quedé a vivir 13 años y sólo he podido dejar la huella de mi hombre en una calle" (343).<sup>74</sup>

Martínez points to the danger of this type of thinking, but he does so on various levels. His project is a rhetorical one, certainly designed to show his reading audience how Perón's words were altered by himself and others, and the potential power of printed media to represent counter-memories. Yet, in order to accomplish this, he creates an interdiegetic audience: the Argentine masses, the underrepresented and marginalized economic classes. This group is only referred to as the novel climaxes, as all narrative strands interweave with the awaited messianic return of Perón. His arrival, promised from the first chapter, is ultimately deferred until the end of the novel, and it is a multifaceted failure. Not only does the violence that erupts cost many lives, but Zamora's counter-memories are lost within the confusion; the only reading audience ultimately interested in these personal narratives is the group of witnesses itself, and they are unceremoniously dumped by López's supporters in an abandoned field as night falls, left in the dark in the same fashion that that memoirs are by Noon's "terrorist" group.

The ultimate failure, Perón's own before this internal audience, is not related via print journalism or fabricated memoirs. Instead, it comes in an acknowledged nod to a further reaching form of media technology: the television image. Even illiterate citizens in the shanty towns of Buenos Aires who will never read Zamora's created narrative can

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<sup>74</sup> "Fate is unfair...Eva spent only a week in Madrid and was showered with honors. I stayed thirteen years and all I have to show for it is a street they named after me" (286).

simultaneously identify with Perón's presence on televisions (representing the disappearance of urban space to which García Canclini refers). The failure of Zamora's campaign is highlighted by his own inability to reach the airport. Stuck in traffic, he exits his taxi to begin walking towards the city, yet as he passes through working class neighborhoods, he discovers groups of people surrounding television sets. Ironically, he experiences the general's return as indirectly as do these individuals.

Despite what the reader may have learned from the memoirs and counter-memories, the general appears as mythical a figure as ever in front of the camera. Yet in the face of this façade, as it were, “[a]lgo en la imagen, sin embargo, estaba fuera del orden natural, como si lloviese para arriba. Los campesinos y los caballos se pusieron nerviosos...Uno de los hombres se dio cuenta que los labios de López se adelantaban al discurso” (415).<sup>75</sup> A “general” dismay falls over the group. The knowledge that López Rega controls Perón, of course, comes as no surprise to the reader, who learned of the reversed asymmetry of this relationship in the first chapter, thus Martínez's goal is not to create reader epiphany. It is instead to dramatize the interdiegetic audience's reaction to the manipulation of the general's image that is ironically revealed by his image itself. While the group of workers console themselves by repeating that the man on television can't be Perón, Zamora appropriately has the final word, twisting the general's own oft-repeated words into a negative form: “Ya nunca más seremos como éramos” (416).<sup>76</sup> The intention is to graft this same reaction onto the reader's awareness, so that the audience will not be as it was before having read the novel, before having read Perón. Perón may

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<sup>75</sup> “there was something about the image that went against nature, like seeing rain pouring upward. The peasants and the horses became nervous...one of the men looking on realized that López's lips were forming the words before the General said them” (352).

<sup>76</sup> “We will never be as we were” (352).

believe multiple truths exist, but that does not mean these truths are interchangeable. This same group of television watchers will fight to be a part of the general's funeral procession, suggesting that not even the "truth" of this image can mar the general's myth, no matter how fragmented. But this group does not have the advantage of witnessing the decollection process that the reader does. If Martínez wants the reader to identify with this internal audience, differentiation is also part of the agenda. Knowing how this decollection occurs is as important as the process itself. What is left after Perón the man is decollected, deconstructed, and debriefed? The crowd cries that his López-influenced image cannot be him, but as Jay Cantor, author of *The Death of Che Guevara*, concludes in a *New York Times* book review ("Don't Cry for Him"), Martínez demonstrates that "no man ever was" (1988).

## CHAPTER 10

### REBELLION IN THE HEADLINES: CUNHA, ÂNGELO, AND THE CAMPAIGN OF INTERTEXTUALITY

#### **Comparison at the End of the World**

Much has been made of Mario Vargas Llosa's fictional rendering of Euclides da Cunha's *Os Sertões* (1902) ("History as the Novel" is a concept that will be explored in greater detail in the following chapter) in his 1981 novel *La guerra del fin del mundo*, the former being a foundational text in Brazilian literature, the text that Luiz Costa Lima claims was the first to give rise to Brazilian national identity in *O Controle do imaginário*. Vargas Llosa's enshrinement of Cunha's work has been compared to Joyce's reformulation of *The Odyssey* by Renata Mautner Wasserman (461). In her article tracing Mario Vargas Llosa's various strategies of fictional appropriation and adaptation, Wasserman claims the "egalitarian intertextuality" which results in *La guerra* being an Inter-American project that affirms "kinship among American nations based on the recognition of shared problems that, more than economic, are social and cultural, ontological and epistemological" (469). Referring to Julia Kristeva's coinage of the term "intertextuality," Wasserman distinguishes between conscious forms—parody, imitation, or improvement—and unconscious forms which consist of the context in which the text is crafted unaware by the author. Her suggestion that unconscious intertextuality is a condition for the production of any text echoes Patricia Waugh's claim that all fiction is ultimately metafictional (a condition often dependent upon intertextuality), even those

which do not reflect an implicit self-awareness, for they are still dependent upon the tensions between construction and destruction of illusion (14).

As the dedication to Cunha in *La guerra del fin del mundo* demonstrates, Vargas Llosa's conscious and transparent intertextual usage of Cunha's narrative as a model contrasts sharply with Robert Cunninghame Graham's attempt to hide his plagiarism of Cunha's text when he published *A Brazilian Mystic, Being the life and Miracles of Antônio Conselheiro* in 1920. In effect, Graham lifts entire sections of Cunha's text, ultimately creating a document that is "false" despite using what has come to be revered as a "real" historical document. In fact, in similar fashion to Cervantes's incorporation of the Avellanada's unauthorized sequel to *Don Quixote* into Cervantes' official second tome, Vargas Llosa builds into *La guerra* references to Cunninghame.<sup>77</sup> Leopoldo Bernucci points out, however, that while Cunha's *Os Sertões* was the primary influence in Vargas Llosa's novel, the Peruvian author also consulted a variety of other texts, such that "la reconstrucción novelesca de los episodios de Canudos se funda en la utilización de materiales preponderantemente históricos, periodísticos, y documentales que, curiosamente, al ser ficcionalizados no llegan a amenazar la totalidad imaginaria de la obra" (12).

Nonetheless, despite these archival research methods, Vargas Llosa does not overtly introduce these documents or any fictionalized form of them into *La guerra*. Cunha is adapted into the figure of a myopic journalist who loses his glasses during the climax of the battle(s) for which he has been sent to write and is therefore unable to witness the ensuing destruction of Canudos, though this plot development does not

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<sup>77</sup> Sandra Erickson has explored this resulting form of hypertextuality in "Cunninghame Graham's Plagiarism of da Cunha's *Os sertões* and Its Role in Vargas Llosa's *La guerra del fin del mundo*."

appear to be an attack on the profession of journalism or a deconstruction of its methods so much as it is an ironic comment upon the role of witnessing, the limits of perception. In his virtual blindness, the journalist is finally able to discover love and acceptance, leitmotifs which structure the novel's progression. Vargas Llosa does include a few additional tongue in cheek references to the ability of the media to affect public opinion, but these are exceptions rather than a norm. Part II, the shortest section of the novel, is given over almost completely to the journalist's narration of an article he has written for the *Jornal de Notícias* at the behest of his editor, the scheming head of the Progressivist Republican Party in the state of Bahia. Riddled with false allegations against the federal government designed to convince readers of an international conspiracy to provide arms for the Canudos rebels, the propagandistic work is a document full of fiction. After reading the article in full to the editor (a convenient device for presenting the "document" for the reader's perusal), the naïve journalist, who is not privy to the plot, comments that "[c]ierta o falsa, es una historia extraordinaria" (139),<sup>78</sup> unaware of the irony of his words. Having returned from the Canudos affair towards the end of the novel, the journalist, now a cynical survivor who nonetheless holds onto the ideals of his profession, describes his replacement on the front lines as the "hombre ideal para dar una version desapasionada y objective de lo que ocurría allá" (394)<sup>79</sup> for his lack of imagination. It is based upon the evidence of the impassive replacement's discovery of a supposedly incriminating letter that the journalist accuses the one time owner of Canudos of political involvement with the insurgents. The accused man is not threatened, but instead

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<sup>78</sup> "Whether true or false, it's an extraordinary story" (136). Translations taken from Helen R. Lane's 1984 translation, *The War of the End of the World*.

<sup>79</sup> "Ideal man to provide an impassive, objective version of what happened up there" (416).

expresses disbelief: “Era de veras tan ingenuo para creer que lo que se escribe en los periódicos es cierto...Siendo periodista?” (395)<sup>80</sup>

Such ironic asides aside, the novel is not designed to deconstruct notions of narrativization via the discourse of journalism, nor is does it “strip[] writing of its privileged status” (Wasserman 462), whether it be fiction or nonfiction writing, through its conversion of reportage into fiction. Not only is writing is central to the text—Conselheiro’s scribe copies down the mystic’s every word to create an addition to the Bible, and an idealist from Scotland sends letters (two of which are inserted into the narrative) to a revolutionary press in France—nor is the creation of the novel’s totalizing own master narrative ever questioned by Vargas Llosa or any of his characters. *La guerra* is instead an exploration of how the ideals of individuals on both sides of the war—Conselheiro and his followers as well as the series of military officers who placed national concerns above their own sanity, equally madmen—could divide a country and a people so completely. Although Vargas Llosa’s work has been included in several critical studies as an example of a new historical novel for its disregard for linear temporality and its multiple voices and modes of narration, in terms of its treatment of its unproblematized treatment of historical discourse, it is ultimately a conventional historical novel. While the work, as Wasserman argues, “revalidates the problem of the land, people, origin addressed by Cunha as central to the discussion of the development of modern society in Latin America” (462), it has little to no pretensions to commentary upon contemporary issues or the construction of history, be they under a modern or postmodern aegis.

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<sup>80</sup> “Were you really so naïve as to believe everything you read in the papers... You, a journalist?” (416)?

### **The Missing Celebration of Intertextuality: *A Festa***

Despite the attention Vargas Llosa has received for his historical novel, little has been studied regarding connections to Canudos that Brazilian author Ivan Ângelo's *A Festa*, a work that does develop an internal discussion of the construction of history and fiction, in the vein of Cunha's own metahistorical commentary, as it attempts to discuss the construction of history via the intertextuality it creates with *Os Sertões*. Perhaps Ângelo's text has been viewed less in conjunction with *Os Sertões* since the adaptive rewriting does not cross linguistic barriers in the way that Vargas Llosa's does, or perhaps it is because the conscientious intertextuality is not as obvious in Ângelo's narrative in terms of fictionalizing a known account. That said, nothing in the novel is directly bared for the reader, as it is precisely an exercise in forcing the reader's active response and involvement in order to make connections between the apparently disparate sections of the work that defines its subversive nature. Rather than rewrite Cunha's text, Ângelo does something more radical. In the spirit of anthropophagy propounded by Brazilian modernists, and its resurgence in *Cinema novo* film techniques, *A Festa* cannibalizes *Os Sertões*. It internalizes the text in order to appropriate certain aspects and create a distinct, original work, yet this aspect is not discussed in conjunction with the work.

This is not to suggest that *A Festa* has been ignored. Its publication delayed by ten years because of censorship, the novel actually sold better than his second novel, *A Casa de Vidro*, which, despite receiving positive reviews, "não está à venda em lugar nenhum. Azar, né?" as Ângelo laments in an interview (Almeida 4). Indeed, as Janete Gaspar Machado's oft-quoted claim regarding Brazilian literary production makes clear, "A

*Festa* has been one of the most important novels...of the 1970s” (Qtd. In Diantonio 18). Critics, however, have tended to view the text through a narrow lens of political production, both in terms of the novel’s commentary on State censorship as well as the actual censorship of Ângelo’s first incantation of the novel in the 1960s. Renato Franco describes Ângelo’s work as “o romance paradigmático da década” (25), focusing specifically on the national, social and political conditions that gave rise to censorship within Brazil of the 1960s, but unexpectedly looks to European theorists—Walter Benjamin, Bertolt Brecht, and André Gide—for critical grounding in her discussion of, among other aspects, the novel’s cinematographic bent. Franco identifies several contemporary Brazilian authors, such as Esdras do Nascimento and Antônio Callado, who incorporate aspects of media and print journalism into their narratives, but this element is curiously downplayed when *A Festa* becomes the object of criticism.

There are a few notable exceptions. In his study of three censored Brazilian texts during the 1970s, “Escribir bajo los ojos de la censura,” Emir Rodríguez Monegal points out, “De la misma manera que el Ejercito reprimiera a fines de siglo la rebelión de Canudos, en el serrato de Bahia (véase la obra maestra de Euclides da Cunha, 1902), ahora se busca suprimir y aterrorizar a unos desamparados retirantes...La fecha es el 30 de marzo de 1970 pero (como lo prueba el paralelo con Da Cunha, que Ângelo explicita) las cosas no han cambiado tanto en el Brasil” (40).<sup>81</sup> Monegal doesn’t mention how Ângelo makes these connections explicit, nor does he link the figures within the fictional rebellion to a frightening reenactment of Canudos, led by a Conselheiro-like figure. Yet

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<sup>81</sup> In the same way that the army would suppress the Canudos rebellion at the end of the century, in the backlands of Bahia (see Euclides da Cunha’s masterpiece, 1902), now they seek to suppress and terrorize some defenseless refugees...the date is March 30, 1970, but (as the parallel with Da Cunha that Ângelo states explicitly), things haven’t changed all that much in Brazil” (my translation).

this correlation that Monegal notes, however briefly, is important, because it is not often articulated. Robert Diantonio attempts a religious reading of the text, suggesting that in “his use of mythological prefigurations, Ângelo characterizes a modern day Moses figure, Marcionilio de Mattos, as both victim-hero and activist-hero, always in very human terms” (19). There certainly is a messianic quality to the individual who leads the refugees from the Belo Horizonte train station, yet so too does Cunha’s narration of Antônio Conselheiro present him as messianic. A mythical reading also does not account for Ângelo’s explicit foregrounding of the harsh, drought-convulsed conditions of the northeast at the start of his text, which suggests a much more telluric, physical marriage with poor social conditions. Diantonio ultimately ignores the historical contextualization that is central to Ângelo’s text, instead focusing completely upon the fictional rebellion. While he is certainly correct in characterizing the novel as a “prophetic and universal warning,” it seems that his conclusion that *A Festa* “is a work of fiction that, while not indifferent to historical perspectives, maintains a consistent and original aesthetic posture” (22) does not do justice to Ângelo’s overarching project, which is ultimately precisely about melding historiographic, sociological, scientific, and literary discourses, in the trans-discursive spirit of *Os Sertões*. It is precisely the superficial limitations of the aesthetic, whether mimetic in terms of imitation or as the discourse of reality such as journalism or historiography, that Ângelo seeks to challenge.

One of the narrative strengths of *A Festa* is its blurring of discursive boundaries between fiction and nonfiction, a blurring reminiscent of that employed by Cunha in *Os Sertões*. As Diantonio explains of the former,

Ivan Ângelo worked as a reporter and managing editor for the *Jornal da tarde*, a major Sao Paulo newspaper, before turning to literature. His novel

combines the art of the fiction writer with the investigative skills of the journalist. It explores the consequences of a specific historical event—a tragic and avoidable riot—that is viewed from the dual perspective of the journalist’s need to clarify facts and the novelist’s ability to evoke emotional responses. (18)

Certainly both Cunha and Ângelo were journalists who explicitly wished to problematize the medium, yet rather than attempting to appeal to biographical similarities in order to catalogue the intertextuality inherent in the latter’s novel, a brief overview of both their works will assist in the creation of a basis for further analysis. Ângelo’s *A Festa*, a collage of newspaper excerpts, historiography, criticism, and fiction, allows the text to challenge simply classifications of literary discourse. In this sense, it is in fact much truer to the spirit of Cunha’s *Os Sertões* than is Vargas Llosa’s appropriation simply via discourses of fiction. While *Os Sertões* is ostensibly a narration of the Canudos rebellion in the backlands of Brazil at the end of the nineteenth century, it is also much more, as it simultaneously exhibits aspects of historiography, sociology, geology, biological determinism, and pseudo-scientific overtures in the first two portions of the work, “A Terra” and “O Homem.” In this preliminary section that precedes his analysis of the federal troops’ suppression of the rebellion, Cunha forefronts both the geography of the country and its inhabitants as protagonists of his drama, for the land is indeed a “stage.” He inextricably links these two axes of his text, such that the “martyrdom of man is here reflective of a greater torture, more widespread, one embracing the general Economy of Life. It arises from the age-old martyrdom of Earth” (49). Cunha, initially sent to cover the military expedition as a journalist, via a complicated process of fascination and repulsion, through a complex and ultimately racist logic that focuses on the “backward” nature of the backlander as a consequence of his

environment, eventually shifts allegiances to support the Canudos refugees, led by the occultist Antônio Conselheiro.

Cunha arrived during the last of several expeditions intent upon subduing the rebellion, yet in *Os Sertões* he attempts to reconstruct the previous federal advances that were repulsed by the backland rebels. In order to facilitate this, Cunha employs a strategy of inserting a variety of documents, newspaper references, diaries, official correspondence, and military accounts from ranking soldiers in order to lend credence to his portrayal. Cunha is quite explicit at the beginning of the second part of the text, “The Rebellion,” that “[i]n the account which we give here, we shall confine ourselves strictly to the official documents” (179),<sup>82</sup> and he immediately launches into a message from the governor of the state of Bahia. At the same time, Cunha’s awareness as to the malleability of media sources is quite evident, developing into undisguised cynicism. After pointing out that the governor contradicts his claims of control by having, “in a document of record,” initially claimed to not require federal military intervention before suddenly claiming a threat to state sovereignty and justifying the very movement of troops he had wished to avoid (197), Cunha proceeds to create an image of the hysteric atmosphere surrounding the events by inserting excerpts from a series of newspapers such as *O País* and *Estado de São Paulo*. These documents are prefaced with a rhetorical question which he brushes aside: “The Republic was in danger’ the Republic must be saved: this was the one cry that arose above the general delirium. Are we perhaps exaggerating? One has but to glance through any newspapers of those days, and he will

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<sup>82</sup> This is a rather loose translation of the original Portuguese in the 1983 Ediouro edition, which is much less rhetorical: “Historiemos, adstritos a documentos oficiais” (143).

come upon such dogmatic opinions” (277-78).<sup>83</sup> This growing narratorial mistrust provides the basis for comments upon the methods of historiography and documentation themselves, as “[h]istory is not to be taken in by the blustering of the vanquished. The ‘victorious army,’ as the official reports glowingly put it—reports designed to cover up the failure with which our troops had met” (330-1),<sup>84</sup> while the “over-excited minds” (384)<sup>85</sup> of the government imagined a conspiracy in which Argentina was supplying the rebels with resources. What begins in *Os Sertões* as an apparently objective study with appeals to science and history, develops into a personalized portrait of an unjustified attack upon the Canudos settlers and refugees. Cunha attempts to unravel the mystery as to how a starving group of residents and refugees with rudimentary weapons could have held off the federal armies, vastly superior in size and technology, for such an extended period of time. It is this very same asymmetrical relationship, narrated in equally mysterious, fragmented terms, which serves as the impetus for Ângelo’s sociological portrait of a middle class that is not engaged with any political conscience, whether as a symptom of insular self-interest or fear of reprisal of the current state regime.

### ***A Festa as Con-Script***

As pointed out above, Wasserman claims that Vargas Llosa revalidates the problem of land and people that Cunha originally did, suggesting a more global awareness on the part of Vargas Llosa, yet Ângelo adopts this method in a much more

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<sup>83</sup> “A República estava em perigo; era preciso salvar a República. Era este o grito dominante sobre o abalo geral. Exageramos? Deletreemos, ao acaso, qualquer jornal daqueles dias” (213).

<sup>84</sup> “Não ilidiu a história a fanfarrar do vencido. O exército vitorioso, segundo ao brilhante eufemismo das partes oficiais armadas a velarem aquele insucesso” (249).

<sup>85</sup> “Imaginações superexcitadas” (285).

explicit manner than Vargas Llosa can in his novel, largely because he plays with the boundaries between the language of the regime and the language of freedom as Doctorow distinguishes between the two in “False Documents” (17). In fact, certain claims by Wasserman’s characterizing of Vargas Llosa’s intertextual success (as opposed to excess) would seem to be equally applicable to Ângelo if not more appropriate, for by “turning reportage into fiction and making the journalist into one character among many, buffeted by physical and historical forces beyond the power of writing” (462) Ângelo does go beyond Vargas Llosa to in fact strip writing of its privilege. In addition to introducing a journalist character into the narrative who becomes embroiled in the rebellion that begins the novel, the author also moves a step beyond Cunha by frequently transgressing the illusion of objective distance via interruptions of his own work to comment upon the limits of fiction, something to which I will return shortly.

In a scene where the protagonist-journalist of the novel is believed to be missing, his newspaper sends in a replacement, Euclides, but Ângelo is operating on much deeper levels of interdependence than mere allusion, in that the process of cannibalizing Cunha (along with Glauber Rocha’s 1964 film, *Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol*) internalizes it in the process. This is evident in the first section of the book, “Documentário,” which establishes an immediate intertextuality with *Os Sertões* in four distinct manners. First, in the same fashion that Cunha does, Ângelo utilizes documents and historiography with a critical eye. Additionally, similar to Cunha, what begins as in self-awareness of the narrativizing of history develops into a meditation upon historiography rather than an attempt to create history, despite the fact that historical forces are what frame Ângelo’s once-censored work. Regarding the second sign of intertextuality, while Cunha features

more scientifically speculative sections at the start of *Os Sertões*, Ângelo makes use of his own pretext via “Documentário.” Indeed, the appearance of a pretext manifests itself in a double sense. In the first sense, both works feature an independent text at the beginning of the novel that precedes and frames the subsequent narrative material. In the second sense, this separate narrative also acts literally as the pretext and catalyst for those central parts of the narrative that follow. For both Cunha and Ângelo, the socio-economic hardships of backlanders is a direct result of their harsh environment. *A Festa* does not evince what could be termed a traditional “core” narrative, for it is what is not stated that dominates the network of contradictions and narrative intrusions which propel and undermine the two novel’s progression. Ângelo’s pretext features a collage of actual print journalism and fictions masquerading as media documentation in such a way so as to attempt to question fiction and historical documentation altogether, thus he attempts to subvert the apparent authority upon which this documentation rests, going beyond the concerns of Cunha. In fact, the pretext Ângelo creates defines the conclusions reached in relation to the distortion of historical documentation and official memory; it accomplishes this by consciously probing the limits of fiction. *A Festa*, however, is successful in problematizing the creation of history, and this is because it fictionalizes historiography, rather than historicizes fiction.

The third manner though which Ângelo demonstrates his intertextuality with *Os Sertões* is via the specific setting of inequality within the northeast he creates. The opening page feature an excerpt from newspaper article about a man who leads refugees away from a burning train and the soldiers who were to forcibly return them to the northeast. An unknown editor provides the explanation that this a “trecho da reportagem

que o diário “A Tarde” suprimiu da cobertura dos acontecimentos da praça da Estação, na sua edição do dia 31 de março de 1970, atendendo solicitação da Polícia Federal, que alegou motivos de segurança nacional” (16).<sup>86</sup> It is no accident that this traumatic event occurs on the sixth anniversary of the military coup which gave rise to the subsequent dictatorship. Nor is it an accident that the refugees come from the backlands, and are momentarily led to freedom en masse from the federal police by a mysterious figure in much the same way that Antônio Conselheiro leads the refugees of Canudos against pro-republic troops. The irony is that instead of being attacked in their own environment, here the refugees have descended upon the city, the symbol of civilization and the state.

The reference to the suppression of the newspaper article echoes Cunha’s own criticisms of the false information the military and newspapers published in order to misrepresent the failure of the military. Indeed, the appearance of a journalist who is sent to cover the event, but ends up sympathizing with the refugees and assisting their escape, gives further credence to suspicions regarding the number of similarities with Cunha’s work, too numerous to be coincidental, and it holds the key to the active role which Ângelo wills upon journalists—that of involvement rather than simple observation, voyeurism. Were there any lingering doubt as to Ângelo’s model, however, what follows the initial newspaper article excerpt dispenses any further doubts as to the connection he wishes to create: a series of excerpts from nonfiction sources which chronicle Antônio Conselheiro (one fragment is taken directly from *Os Sertões*), the drought conditions in the northeast of Brazil, labor conditions and the state of the land. The media reports of Mattos’ testimony are also framed by snippets of historiographic works, several of which

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<sup>86</sup> “Excerpt of a story suppressed by A Tarde from its coverage of events at Plaza Station, in the March 31, 1970 edition of the paper, at the request of the federal officials, who alleged reasons of national security” (12).

are contemporary to Cunha's time and that narrate the hardships of the multiple droughts that led up to the end of the nineteenth century. Some of these newspapers, such as *Estado de São Paulo*, are ones referenced in Cunha's text—a different level of intertextuality, one that does not belong uniquely to a discourse of fiction.

In this fashion, these excerpts act as a fourth form of intertextuality, as Ângelo also links his work to “a terra” and “o homem”, albeit in less transparent terms; the events that shake the city of Belo Horizonte are also a product of the physical environment, yet the treatment of the refugees is a product of governmental panopticism. The fragments of these historiographic texts, which span two centuries of drought and misery, create the context out of which the events unfold. Like Vargas Llosa, Ângelo is referencing a larger spectrum than merely Cunha's text. Mattos reveals in a deposition that he had ridden with the legendary Lampião, a documented outlaw who preyed upon the citizens of the northeast. The use of “documentário” as the title of the opening section suggests a cinematic scope, and indeed, a rapid shift in scenes informs the entire novel. At the same time, contemporaneous with Ângelo's writing was the development of Brazilian Cinema Novo, which famously focused its brand of neorealism particularly upon the dusty backlands and deserts of the northeast. Ângelo also directly references the movement's most well-known representative and his most cited film, Glauber Rocha and his *Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol*, in the final section of the work, albeit in derisive terms. Yet within “Documentário,” an implicit link is also established with Glauber Rocha, as it too alludes to Canudos in its portrayal of drought, mysticism, and government intervention in the Brazilian backlands. In a filmic nod, the textual fragments are juxtaposed in a literary “montage,” replete with references to a flashback. Yet via this

collage of references, Ângelo's strategic approach is not to entertain but to initially make use of the documentary to later problematize institutionalized claims of truth and veracity of representation.

Thus, smuggled into the midst of these historiographic citations, the apocryphal newspaper articles which document the detainment and subsequent murder by police of the “subversive” leader of the train break appear equally authoritative. Mattos' birth certificate is provided. A leaflet from the Peasant League calling for Mattos' freedom from incarceration ten years earlier after leading an insurrection against the sugar refineries is included in the collage, along with testimony from Mattos taken during interrogation by the police, which is juxtaposed with recorded testimony by the outlaw Lampião; these interviews demonstrate no premeditation on the part of Mattos or connection to any individuals in the city, despite his description as a “hired gunman” by one of the fictitious newspaper articles shortly thereafter. The newspaper articles from *Estado de São Paulo*, referencing the drought victims and waves of refugees, do appear to be actual publications. The news of Mattos' death is not front page material. The column is reported to have been placed at the bottom of pages well into the newspaper, almost as if it were an attempt to provide yet occlude the knowledge of the information.

During this catalogue of Mattos' imprisonment, a link between past and present is established. The image of the land shifts to the contemporary situation of towns affected by drought one hundred years later, with then-contemporary inhabitants living in similarly precarious situations of starvation—this is shown through a series of lists of towns asking for government aid and a newspaper report detailing a rebellion of sugar refinery workers involved with the Peasant Leagues. Meanwhile, fictional articles follow

the rebellion leader, Mattos, after he is tortured and imprisoned, is eventually killed during an attempt to escape, though the fragmenting of the column leaves open the possibility that Mattos was in fact murdered by the secret police and his death was simply covered up.

Once the centrality of the land has been established, the novel cinematically cuts abruptly between sections, through which a series of characters are introduced via different narrational tactics. It is at this point that the text simultaneously develops into a meditation—a close up—on “O Homem,” yet instead of the bucolic backlander, Ângelo takes the urban man and woman as his models. Ângelo does not rely upon any biological determinism in the fashion that Cunha does; instead the incommensurate strata and classes of society and their interactions become studies in themselves.

### **Double Encoding: Narrative Cuts in *A Festa***

In addition to the clash between state agents and the impoverished refugees at the train station, *A Festa* ultimately revolves around a second locus, the eponymous celebration, which is itself curiously never narrated, yet in its absence its presence is all the more explicit. In the sections between the opening documentary segment and the sections “before” and “after” the celebration, what at first appear to be unrelated narrative portraits eventually begin to provide intersections which allow the reader to piece together the various relationships between all individuals involved in the celebration, which on a literal level consists of the birthday party of a high society homosexual, though his fiancée is unaware of his true sexual orientation. The birthday celebration

takes place on the same day as the refugee's insurrection, and the involvement by several individuals in both events eventually intertwines the disparate narratives. On a second level, "festa" is a subversively ironic appellation, as there is little to celebrate within the text: certainly not the repression of the refugees or the atmosphere of fear that the dictatorship imposes upon all classes of society, but neither is the book itself anything to celebrate, as frequent and frustrated authorial interjections make clear.

This sets the stage for the importance of writing that develops during the subsequent vignettes and short sections, some of them nearly as abbreviated as the newspaper columns in "Documentário." In a similar shift to Cunha's, it is in the remaining portion of the novel prior to the immediate core of events (or Belo Horizonte "campaign") that Ângelo provides his study of "o homem." However, the stage is no longer the backlands, but rather the frontlines and headlines of the urban experience: juxtapositions of glamour and poverty, the powerful and the powerless. Within this close up, socio-historic contextualizing is at work, for each of the vignettes treats a separate decade within the twentieth century, moving from the 1930s up through the 1960s.

The second episode in the novel (as the author in the index playfully decides to describe the textual divisions in his work) consists of two narrative strands by a husband Candinho and his wife Juliana as they approach their thirtieth wedding anniversary. The husband's first person stream of consciousness confession reveals a deep dissatisfaction with his wife despite, or perhaps because of, the unrealized memory of their adolescent promise that they would die together. The cynicism in his narrative is tempered by the narrative strand attributed to his wife, which is communicated primarily in the third person, moving between her experience of the marriage and her adulterous affairs with

younger men. Within the conversations with a young student named Carlos, which are distinguishable from the rest of the narrative because these sections are written in bold characters, it becomes apparent that her husband has become senile and deranged; Juliana seeks out sexual gratification in order to maintain her sanity, not out of spite. That her lover Carlos is a student who will be imprisoned for his involvement with the train station rebellion is never explicitly stated, but the reader eventually locates Carlos within the mosaic of images and events with the help of the book's index. Juliana's husband Candinho has attempted to live out their promise numerous times by conceiving of murder-suicide plots. On the eve of their anniversary (a minor celebration in the narrative fabric), he seems to have returned to his old self—at least this is what she wants to believe. Nonetheless, as they bite into the cake he has purchased, Juliana is aware that has been poisoned, but she proceeds, a sad testament to her love. Sylvia Avanosian believes this to be a rewriting of the romance novel, a deconstruction of traditional domestic values (47), and she believes that the deconstruction of images is the leitmotif that runs throughout the subsequent sections, some of which allude to metafictional devices of internal narrative play that Jorge Luis Borges or Roland Barthes would employ. Franco, however, understands the couple's relationship to reference a younger Brazil in the 1930s during its age of innocence (175).

The following episode is just such an example of intellectual games. Entitled "Andréa," it is accompanied by the information that the collection of pages is a "Biografia encontrada pelo autor entre os papéis de uma personagem do livro, que não sabe ainda se identificará mais adiante."<sup>87</sup> Franco wishes to read this episode as a diary

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<sup>87</sup> "Biography: discovered by the author among papers belonging to one of the characters in the book, who should perhaps be identified at some point later on."

compiled by the reporter Samuel Fereszin (179), but this cannot be possible, for references to him and his own diary demonstrate that the text was written by someone who was not immediately familiar with Andréa or Fereszin. In other words, the section is presented as a “false document” in the sense that Doctorow first used the phrase. The seemingly paratextual information is not actually outside the text, but rather very much a part of the work, and it raises several questions which it refuses to answer, frustrating the reader’s attempts to locate its position in relation to the episodes which have preceded it: who is the author? Is s/he the same individual who has compiled the other sections? Why make an overture to the realism of a biography but undermine this very gesture by explaining the discourse of biography in terms of “characters” within the book, ultimately highlighting the fictional status of *A Festa* in the same movement? While not providing immediate answers, the information does place the reader on the alert.

So too do the motives that inform Andréa’s motivation to become a journalist, for while “[a] posição de cronista social deu-lhe ascendência sobre o círculo que a julgava. Inocente, não se aproveitou disso” (57).<sup>88</sup> Her brand of journalism not socially engaged, but rather concerned with marriage engagements. This episode makes use of several ironic analogies. Andréa’s trial, the biographer notes, began in 1953, referring to her appraisal by society as her good looks help her reach the pinnacle of fashionable society, and where testimony comes in the form of whispers behind her back (63). It is after the refugee rebellion, however, that her true trial begins, when the police informally interrogate her for supposed connections with the instigators and those who watched her climb up the social ladder now gleefully denounce her. However, during 1970, Andréa is

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<sup>88</sup> “The position as social columnist gave her ascendancy over the very circle that once judged her—[rather] innocently, she failed to take advantage” (55).

said to have reread all her old clippings from newspapers and photographs, “Um velho general considerando sua medalhas: testemunho de que tudo foi verdade” (63).<sup>89</sup> This metaphor (rendered a simile in the English translation) is by no means innocent, and without articulating direct relations, an undeniable relationship of mutual power between ideology and physical state control is invoked. Not only does Ângelo link up Andréa’s practice of journalism with powers that enact physical control, but he also satirizes the patriarchal dominance of the military by comparing the vanity of military leaders to high society gossip columnists.

The title of the following episode, “Corrupção” (Corruption), does not refer directly to issues of political corruption, despite references to Getúlio Vargas’ regime, its practice of a homegrown Estado Novo policy, and the leader’s fall from power in the five year span, all in the 1941-1946 time frame that is covered. Instead, the episode describes the corruption of a small youth as a consequence of the dysfunctional relationship between his parents. The youth is named Robertinho, although it is only from cryptic references in future episodes that it is possible to glean that he is Roberto, Andréa’s future fiancé, and the individual throwing his own birthday celebration in 1970. The voices of the three protagonists, Robertinho, his mother, and his father, narrate their experiences in cycles, as each voice is represented once per year. Roberto’s sections initially consist of cries and nonsense syllables until he is able to learn to create his own words. His mother views Roberto as barrier between herself and her husband, and grows embittered as she is pushed out of the triangular relationship. The father becomes focused only upon his son and politics, yet the mother’s reference to the intimacy or “amor” (77) between the two males and the notion that they’ve “corrupted” each other suggests that more than familial

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<sup>89</sup> “Like an old army general reminiscing over his medals—the proof that all had taken place” (62).

love is being practiced. This is concretized when Roberto at age five reverses the typical views of Oedipal urges, and after a sexual fight between his parents culminates in his mother's decision to leave the family, he dreams that he will sleep in his mother's place (78). In a metonymic representation of the accusatory stance of the entire novel, the intimations of sexual abuse are hinted at but never concretely supplied, leaving the reader to extrapolate from the uneven information presented. Rather than receiving a clear picture of the individual characters, only the social ties that bind the characters are highlighted.

The following section is likewise a study of the social relations of "modern man" from within his own sanctuary—both physical and class-oriented—and the image is similarly far from flattering. "O Refúgio" follows the inner thoughts and insecurities of Jorge Fernandes, a successful lawyer and celebrated society bachelor, as he prepares for Roberto's birthday party, worrying about pimples in front of the mirror and wondering which woman he will publicly conquer and take home. Tellingly, Fernandes was once a budding author until a "diploma de bacharel de Direito corrigiu completamente esse desvio" (79).<sup>90</sup> Not only has Fernandes strayed from writing, but he has also lost all concern for those around him; they are merely hurdles over which to be leaped. As he scans the newspaper, the crime report and the articles on the Vietnam War take on as little importance to him as does the gossip column, a reaction communicated by his constant scratching of his nether regions. When he reads about the droughts in the Northeast, his reaction reveals his greater interests in sports: "50 mil retirantes? Ah, isso é

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<sup>90</sup> "The defect was wholly corrected by a law degree" (77).

exagero de jornal. Meio Macaranã” (84).<sup>91</sup> His self-centeredness is finally articulated in exterior monologue when he receives a phone call asking him to represent Carlos the student, who has been imprisoned for attempting to assist the refugees as a government employee. Although the identity of the caller is not revealed, a version of the telephone conversation in a subsequent section from the perspective of the reporter Samuel Fereszin confirms his role as interlocutor. Fernandes dismisses the reporter’s invitation in the same way he dismisses the reality of the drought in the northeast in the newspaper. The title of the section becomes apparent only as he grows anxious over leaving his apartment, his “refuge” (92) from which he can ignore the troubles of the working class, although the pain of the real world is quickly replaced by the anticipation of the celebration as he exits.

The final two episodes from the first section of the book are the shortest, but no less socially illustrative. Each creates a dialectical relationship between a privileged member of Brazilian society, whether due to class or occupation, and a marginalized individual. In neither case is judgment passed by the omniscient narrator, but an indictment of the supporter of ruling hegemony is discernible, for in each case he undermines himself through his self-serving politics. The class struggle of “Luta de Classes” alternates sentences with descriptions of two men, one a struggling working class individual, Ataíde, who is very much in love with his wife, and the other a disgruntled middle class family man, Fernando. The descriptions intertwine when the two meet in a bar after a typical day of uninspired work and become involved in a scuffle over a spilled drink. Despite the appearance of objectivity, Ataíde’s character receives a

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<sup>91</sup> “Fifty thousand refugees? Agh, damn papers are always exaggerating. That’s half of the Maracana Stadium, for Christ’s sake” (81).

privileged nod of empathy. While Fernando is simply drinking to escape his daily routine, the other is buying a gift for his wife; no resolution to the altercation is provided.

Instead, “Preocupações, 1968” is presented in the form of two depositions, one by a mother worried about her son’s literary and political ambitions (we glean that she is Carlos’ mother) and the other a police commissioner from the DOPS (Delegacia de Ordem Política e Social), a secret police organization first developed under Getúlio Vargas’ regime, but most famous for its role in the torture of individuals during the military dictatorship in the 1960s and 1970s. References in the cross-index provide the commissioner with a name, Humberto Levita, and link him to the investigation and incarceration of the migrant leader Mattos, although this link is not evident in the actual deposition. Just as the two social classes are diametrically opposed in “Class Struggle,” here the two forms of preoccupation are also developed as binaries: Carlos’ mother is worried about her son, and this anxiety betrays concern for an entire generation. Carlos mimetically represents Brazilian youth, allowing the episode to be read on one level as a specific fear that radiates outward. The commissioner, on the other hand, professes to represent the interests of the Brazilian people, yet this supposed social practice betrays a deeper concern for his own personal politics, thus the episode he narrates moves towards the personal, in exactly the opposite direction from the mother’s engagement.

The mother associates Carlos’ ailment (he would be arrested two years later) with his insistence upon writing, stating, “Poesia é bom para ler, mas escrever—já tem tanta” (104).<sup>92</sup> The unidentified commissioner articulates the same concerns regarding contemporary Brazilians that the military did at the turn of the century at Canudos.

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<sup>92</sup> “There’s nothing wrong with reading poetry but why do you want to *write* it?” 103, emphasis in original).

Referring to the growing popularity of black arts and African religion even in the cities of Rio and Salvador, Levita concludes, “O Raciocínio é novamente ameaçado pelo Milagre...[Mas] o povo não pode ser abandonado nesse momento a sua própria perda. Muita coisa feita para tirá-lo daquele mundo mágico em que vivia. Seus governantes não são mais escolhidos pela beleza, pelo carisma” (107).<sup>93</sup> Towards that end, the commissioner proudly claims to have banned the immigration of gypsies and created state controls for films that deal with the supernatural (it would seem that short documentaries are still permissible). Though he may be accused of being despotic, he admits, he is not guilty of being biased or unjust: all fanatical groups are treated equally, which is to say, equally censored (even magicians are now required to explain their tricks if requested by the public). Levita is earnest as he draws from Machiavelli’s *The Prince*, though he twists the classic political work to suit his own logic, referring to himself as a wise prince who must protect his people, irrespective of the means of accomplishing that good. His list of doomsday prophecies if his prescribed methodology is not followed includes the increase of violent crimes, as well as “nas artes os mimetistas transporão esses atos desordenados procurando dar-lhes um sistema, revivendo assim as mortas ideologias. Os jornais se aproveitarão da fraqueza para exigir a volta da velha democracia do Direito e para revolver a lama já seca da corrupção. Em breve surgiriam líderes—e o caos” (109).<sup>94</sup> As a proper prince, a representative of the authority entrusted with power to defend the common man, he cannot forsake his duty. While others in power may

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<sup>93</sup> “Reason, once again, is threatened by the Miraculous...[but] at a time like this, the people must not be abandoned to their own self-indulgence, after so much effort has been made to lift them from the superstitious world in which they once floundered. At least their leaders are no longer chosen on the basis of their personal magnetism” (107).

<sup>94</sup> “In the arts, servile mimics will juggle about a number of such disorders, trying to lend them a system and thereby revive some dead ideology. Newspapers will take advantage of prevailing weakness to demand a return to that older democracy of rights, while performing lurid autopsies on long-extinct corruptions. Then leaders will arise—and with them chaos” (109-110).

derive pleasure from “detective novels,” he refers to himself as an intellectual. It is doubtful he can claim to be an organic intellectual both representing and simultaneously being a member of the people in the sense that Antonio Gramsci, who wrote extensively on Machiavelli’s *The Prince* in his own *Prison Notebooks*, developed, for in order to fulfill his princely duties, the commissioner reveals that he must suspend individual rights so that alleged immunities and formal complaints do not interfere with his agents’ war against disorder. But as Ângelo points out through this character, the act of writing is not only revealing of hidden corruption, it can also help gloss over and thus perpetrate that very instance of corruption. The commissioner has written a “monograph” upon the backwardness of the sciences as a consequence of Christian idealism (Cunha’s *Os Sertões* chronicles the resulting “backwardness” of backlanders via a “scientific” genealogy of origins and race). Aware of both the powers of popular media and critical writing, the commissioner controls both representations of imagination and reality; this patriarchal mistrust in the average citizen speaks volumes for the culture of informers that has been created, which merely perpetuates the cycle.

Ironically, the commissioner, despite his overtures to rationality over religion, creates for himself a messianic role—the same one that both Conselheiro and Mattos fulfill to their respective groups. If “Documentário” creates intertextual echoes of Cunha’s opening section in *Os Sertões* detailing the geography of the backlands with its own reflections upon drought and urban space, then the following episodes certainly continue to follow Cunha’s model by describing the species of urban man, yet Ângelo’s description of a spiritual or moral drought within society is an ironic update, a rewriting of Cunha’s text, for his narration of the Belo Horizonte campaign is unable to be written.

Readers receive information leading up to the celebration and information following it, but the actual event is missing, witnessed but not recorded. As the supposed author of the work, himself facing a type of interview later in the text, admits, as a triptych, the novel is missing its central panel, the precursor to the representation of hell that “Depois da Festa” is (188). At the same time, *A Festa* does not claim authority for itself as it rewrites Cunha’s narrative as an application of current social conditions, as in the following sections of the work the novel invites its own re-scripture via the author’s repeated interruptions which reveal the very structure and seams of the work.

### **Prior to Witnessing the Celebration**

The final two sections of the book provide the clues for discovering how the overarching puzzle fits together, all the while maintaining a focus upon the power and the illusion of veracity within the narratives’ scripting of events (or lack thereof). In “Antes da Festa,” an interdiegetic author is introduced into the text, and though this individual and his writing process appear to share many parallels with that of Ângelo in writing *A Festa*, is important not to conflate the narrative levels. Through a series of author’s notes and his self-location as a listing within the book’s index of characters in the final section (along with God, the Brazilian military, and other forms of authority relegated to the status of characters), Ângelo thus creates a manual that instructs how the book is to be read in a far more direct sense than Cortázar does in *Libro de Manuel*. Framed by the notes, or perhaps framing them, are several narrative snippets that are defined by their time and location; the ultimate effect rests between a filmic device and a police report

documenting specific locales. The two principle locations are the office of the newspaper *Correio de Minas Gerais*, where Fereszin and Andréa work, and the New Moon Bar, where the interdiegetic author discusses his project with a supporter and a critic, each of the interlocutors identifiable purely via references in the index. These scenes, cinematographic in both their reliance upon dialogue and the panning back and forth between locations, move the plot forward in a form of parallel montage. Fereszin is given the task of covering the arrest of a student named Carlos who was found organizing individuals near the scene of the refugees and has now disappeared with the police (perhaps his greatest crime is have claimed the authority of the government for himself and thus has jurisdiction). Carlos' employer will also be attending Roberto's celebration that evening, yet a phone call to request assistance for Carlos is as close as Fereszin will come to this echelon of society.

The author's notes represent a mixture of self-criticism and a narration of failed projects, such as the notes to self regarding a proposed play, a play that serves as an allegorical expression of *A Festa's* relation to media:

Teatro.

Um homem sozinho. Gravadores, vozes, slides, cinema, discos, jornais, televisão. Ele contracena com os meios de comunicação. É ele quem constrói prédios, joga na bolsa, passa fome na rua, protesta contra isso-que-está-aí, apóia isso-que-está-aí, denuncia os amigos, faz arte, detesta arte, governa, é um simples funcionário de cartório, ama escondido estrelas de cinema e de televisão...Obrigado a optar a todo instante, a partir dos dados dos meios de comunicação, mas as informações não são nada seguras, são ate contraditórias. (118)<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> "A play. A man all by himself. Tape recorders, voices, slides, projections, recordings, newspapers, TV monitors. He plays opposite all the means of communication. It's he who builds skyscrapers, has a seat on the stock exchange, starves in the streets, protests what's-happening-over-here, applauds what's-going-on-over-there, denounces friends to the authorities, creates art, hates art...Obliged to make choices every moment, based upon facts provided by the various means of communication, but the information is never totally reliable, at times even contradictory" (118).

This description recalls the contradictory relationship between information and reader that Ângelo builds in *A Festa*, where the various modes and means of media are explored to communicate the fragmented events, yet nothing ever matches up perfectly, thus the text that casts authority into doubt is careful to cast its own authority into doubt as well. This reliance upon additional forms of media becomes evident through another fictional project: a 1931 silent film that eerily predicts the assassination of John F. Kennedy in 1963 with such precision in detail that the United States government attempts to track down anyone involved in the making of the work (without success). Whether Ângelo is suggesting a reversal of mimesis, namely that life follows art, or simply hinting at political paranoia outside the Brazilian context, is not immediately obvious.

The second author's note concretizes the relation between the separate narrative levels, as it explains that "Todos os contos devem ter uma data, explícita ou implícita. O ano da festa é 1970" (116).<sup>96</sup> Shortly thereafter, the process through which Roberto's dysfunctional childhood was created is shown to be an adaption of nonfiction texts on childhood by contemporary psychologists (122-3). The notes continue on two levels in a playful fashion, as they not only reference the making of *A Festa*, but they also reference themselves, as well as expose the importance of journalism to the text's interpretation via their centralization of Fereszin's role:

Anotação do escritor:

Incluir em Antes da Festa várias "anotações do escritor" (inclusive esta). São projetos, frases, idéias para contos, preocupações literárias, continhos relâmpagos, inquietações. Assim, o escritor seria, junto com Samuel, personagem principal da história que está escrevendo. Personagem involuntário, porque é "outro autor"—ele mesmo, ou o homem que ele viria a ser, convivendo artificialmente no tempo e no espaço com o

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<sup>96</sup> "Each one of the stories should have a date, either explicit or implied. The date of the party is 1970" (116).

homem que tinha sido—é “outro autor” quem junta os pedaços, desconexos de suas anotações. (128)<sup>97</sup>

The author’s notes not only explain how the text is to be read, but they also explain why *A Festa* was written. Accused of attempting to explain the Brazilian condition, the author explains that there are “[t]anta gente se policiando, com medo de dizer as coisas. Tanta gente parando de escrever e que não tem nada a dizer começa a dizer” (134).<sup>98</sup> This is followed by a note in which the author directly references Glauber Rocha’s film as he critically wonders if he’s trapped: “estou entre deus e o diabo na terra do sol, entre escrever para exercer minha liberdade individual e escrever para exprimir minha parte da angústia coletiva; imagino histórias que tenho vergonha de escrever porque são circunstanciais” (135),<sup>99</sup> all within a moment when every produced piece of literature is, like the desert of the northeast, sterile and will be lost in the fleeting moment of history, according to the author. This self-pedantry leads into a tirade where he mocks the filmic and literary representations of Latin American and Euro-American intellectuals as not capturing the relation to human experience of the moment, from the magical realism of Gabriel García Márquez and the intellectual games of Jorge Luis Borges and Alain Robbe-Grillet to the stylized horror of Alfred Hitchcock or the ineffectual allegories of Glauber Rocha. The author recognizes his own lack of involvement,

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<sup>97</sup> “Author’s note: Include in “Before the Celebration” various “author’s notes” (*including this one*). Projects, phrases, ideas for stories, literary problems, quick sketches, preoccupations. In that way, the author would become, together with Samuel, the other main protagonist of the story he’s writing. An involuntary protagonist, because he’s the “other author”—he himself, or the man he would come to be, artificially coexisting in time and space with the man he had been—he’s that “other author” who joins together the disconnected fragments of his annotations” (127, my emphasis).

<sup>98</sup> “So many people watching their step, afraid to say certain things. So many people just giving up, refusing to write, and now the ones with nothing to say are having their day” (133).

<sup>99</sup> “I’m caught between deus e diabo na terra do sol, between writing to exercise my own individual freedom and writing to express my relation to the collective anguish; I imagine stories which I’m ashamed to write because they’re so alienated, and I’m equally afraid to write committed stories (134-5).

admitting he is a coward and highlighting the failure of his work before making the most direct comment upon censorship, both State and self-imposed, in the entire novel:

Um desperdício deixar passar este momento sem tentar captar o sentido dele, ao menos um esboço que mostre a alguém: era assim, naquele tempo. Era assim que as pessoas se destruía, que as consciências aceitavam, que os homens se diluíam entre o medo e o dever, que os escritores procuravam esquecer ou não conseguiriam escrever nada...Algumas das minhas histórias podem esperar uma década para serem escritas” (147).<sup>100</sup>

This rhetorical question is in fact a reference to the censorship that Ângelo faced in writing the novel. He first began the work ten years earlier, but was forced to halt when his home was ransacked and the manuscript stolen. The author, despite his attempts to represent injustice and his borrowed wisdom which states that literary life only creates accomplices, is also an accomplice to the act of silencing. His motives are suddenly opened to the accusation of posturing, for it is subtly revealed that he too will attend the eponymous celebration along with the very types of intellectuals he lambastes (124). En route, he witnesses Fereszin interviewing Mattos in the center of the city, but aside from ironically interjecting for the reader into Mattos’ impassioned speech, no action is narrated or implied.

The fragmentary nature of the author’s notes is ultimately a reflection upon the effects of censorship of both thinking and writing. It also explains the fragmentary nature of the structure of the novel, as well as the abruptly cinematographic shifts between scenes. Yet, if the interdiegetic author can only attempt brief outlines of writing, the other protagonist of, Fereszin, does transcend this barrier to engagement. Disappointed by his newspaper’s acceptance of government regulations, he responds to questions of whether

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<sup>100</sup> What a waste to let this moment go by without trying to capture the sense of it, if only in outline, to be able to show someone: this is how it was, back then. This is how people destroyed themselves, how consciences slept, how people tiptoed between fear and responsibility, how writers tried to ignore things or never managed to write things...So what if some of my stories wait ten years to be written”? (147)

he has the whole story by acknowledging having received the police “version” of the report, yet he wishes to get the story from the northeasterners’ perspective (138). In this engagement, he is the ultimate protagonist in the novel—he represents Carlos’ mother or an Ataíde figure, while the interdiegetic author is trapped in his middle class politics, his intellectual writing links him with the practice of DOPS Commissioner Levita—yet Fereszin’s personal agenda in writing about contemporary issues is, like the author’s, nonetheless deconstructed and subverted.

### **An Index of Inconclusive Conclusions**

Rather than professing to a political revelation, the novel’s reveling in its multiple levels serves as a point of critical departure. The multiple layers of fiction and nonfiction built into the text are highlighted by virtue of mise-en-abyme developments within the final section of the novel, a self-proclaimed “cross-index of characters, in the order of appearance or reference, with additional information,” conveniently entitled “Depois da Festa.” This title-page declaration of “information” regarding the survivors of the events on March 30<sup>th</sup> is accompanied by a series of adjectives which invite the reader to sift through and evaluate their contradictory nature in describing the information:

“Necessárias? Surpreendentes? Valiosas? Complementares? Desnecessárias? Inúteis?”<sup>101</sup>

Here Ângelo has married the notion of an index of characters with an index as critical resource in a nonfiction work. The act of questioning its value not only destroys the illusion of authority on the part of the compiler, but it also invites the reader to reflect upon the device being employed. This discursive tactic locates the device somewhere

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<sup>101</sup> “Necessary? Surprising? Useful? Corroborative? Unnecessary? Useless?”

between fiction and nonfiction. And the “index” wastes no time in drawing attention to other moments where this same ambiguity is employed. The documents inserted into this final section are oral in nature, coming in the form of depositions taken from suspects, yet despite a continued awareness of mediating role of journalism, there is no pretense towards mimicking print documents.

The first entry concerns Marcionilio Mattos, the Conselheiro-like character who is initially featured in the “Documentário.” As previously noted, the inserted newspaper articles and birth certificate are fictional, though the excerpts from historical monographs that surround these fictions are not. However, here the unidentified narrator/compiler of the index spins a different approach. As the account notes, “Sabe-se, sobre ele, pouca coisa além do que consta dos seus depoimentos. As declarações de um certo retirante Viriato, identificando Marcionílio com o Demônio, não foram levadas em consideração pela polícia, apesar de transmitirem um fabuloso esboço do preso” (151).<sup>102</sup> The mysticism of the refugee, who attributes the flames in the train to the appearance of the dark angel, is too direct to not create another mosaic piece in the intertextual relation to Cunha’s work, where the refugees under Conselheiro’s guidance identify the Republic with the Anti-Christ. In yet another ironic allusion, the narrator transfers the responsibility of fiction from that of the author of *A Festa* to the willful misrepresentation on the part of the government. Indeed, in this aspect, the inserted documents are fictional on both counts. While the account mentions that Mattos was initially a hero for being front page news material, he was eventually forgotten until his dramatic death. However, his murder for reasons of attempting to escape or involvement in a plot to assassinate the

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<sup>102</sup> “Very little is known about him, beyond the material in his depositions. The declarations of a certain...refugee from the drought, to the effect that de Mattos was the devil, were not taken seriously by the police, despite their release of an otherwise *fictional account* of the prisoner” (151, emphasis added).

president of the republic are not corroborated by interviews with prisoners who shared his cell for his sixty-eight day stay in captivity. In their assertion of a threat to the republic, the trumped up charges of conspiracy by the government again echo those very charges that Cunha dismisses in *Os Sertões*.

Other revelations are forthcoming, not only about the character's fates, but also about the impossibility of distinguishing between discourses of fact and fiction within the public sphere. Samuel Fereszin, the reporter whom the author presents as a character with agency in the face of the author's own inaction, is fingered by Mattos and other refugees as having masterminded the arson on the train and subsequent invasion of the city. Here, Fereszin has transformed from passive observer of events to active participant in much the same way the reader is forced to actively participate in the novel's narration. Samuel is no longer a voyeur, but instead becomes engaged to the point of overtaking the role the Conselheiro-figure to lead the people. In this act, he transcends the limits of moral and political engagement that Ângelo's author (or any of the other middle-class urbanites) is incapable of following. This does not result with glory, however, but instead understatement. Samuel's murder by the police while returning to the scene of the fire to lead additional refugee groups is related in muted terms. The last line of the entry, thus no explanatory commentary is offered upon this occurrence. Once again, there is no way to corroborate this version. The same question implicit in each piece of information is explicit: is this how events actually occurred? Can readers trust any produced information that does not come from their own witnessing?

At the same time, Fereszin does not become a martyr; his writing uncomfortably blurs the line between fact and fiction, leading to great confusion. Police searching his

home discover notebooks which reveal intimate sexual knowledge of his coworker at the newspaper, Andréa, who denies having any interaction with him. As a consequence of these notebooks, Andréa is revealed in a later entry to be subjected to a brutal and demeaning examination by the police in whom her denial of the narrative's veracity leads to crudely sexual and abusive responses from her interrogators. They force her to both read from the pornographic text and admit to the sexual acts described. Not only is Andréa publicly humiliated, but what little that is left of the iconic status of Fereszin, a referent who has been read differently by various political ideologies, is destroyed: "havido, em 71, como um subversivo de ocasião (pela polícia), um anormal sexual (pelas mães de filhas possíveis) e um herói incômodo (pelos jovens intelectuais que o conheceram e o tratavam com condescendência)" (215).<sup>103</sup>

The mystery surrounding Samuel's apparently perverse diary remains unsolved for an entire year after his death. It is only when Roberto, the individual for whom the party was thrown, is interviewed that the apparent reality of the diary is shaken. Roberto reveals in the interview, "Era um romance. Li uns pedaços, até bonitos. O Samuel pretendia estender a experiência do cinema-verdade e a experiência do Truman Capote com *À Sanguie Frio*. Seria um romance-verdade...uma reportagem sobre uma pessoa com as minúcias de um Michel Butor, usando mesmo algumas técnicas do regard"(215).<sup>104</sup> In his reporting role, however, Fereszin becomes too involved with his subject; he transforms into a voyeur of Andréa, an echo of Martínez's journalistic concern when he

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<sup>103</sup> "...taken in '71 as a one-time subversive (by the police); as a sexual pervert (by mothers of susceptible daughters); and as a troublesome hero, an accusation, a symbol—[his was] a lesson lost which left them silent for many years, humiliated (by all the young intellectuals who had once know him and treated him, in those days, with condescension)" (218).

<sup>104</sup> "It was a novel. I read a few sections and they were good. Samuel was trying to extend the methodology of cinema verité and the experience of Truman Capote with *In Cold Blood*. It was to have been a documentary novel...a blend of straight reportage with the specificity of Michel Butor" (218).

interrupts his own narrative in *La novela de Perón*. Ângelo is well aware of American author Capote's seminal work of New Journalism released in the decade since Ângelo had begun his first attempt at writing *A Festa*, and Capote will be returned to in the following chapter. Roberto's description of Fereszin's fiction, mistaken for nonfiction, however, plays with the very manipulations structuring *A Festa*, a connection highlighted by the parallel use of interdiegetic authors that both texts employ, for as Roberto reports, "dentro desse esquema é que entra o Haroldo do Correio de Minas, também um senhor personagem. A parte que a polícia pegou do trabalho de Samuel é a depoimento de Haroldo, na primeira pessoa. Acho que daí que surgiu a confusão" (216).<sup>105</sup> Not only does this confusion of the use of first person, especially in relation to journalism, prefigure Martinez's use in *La novela de Perón*, but also there is another level to the "lie" at work. Roberto states that he helped supply information about intimacies with his fiancée to Fereszin, characteristically highlighting the boundary between fact and fiction: "Fiz uma biografia dela para ele que daria um conto maravilhoso" (215).<sup>106</sup> The reference to the mysterious biography he wrote for Fereszin would seem to identify the biography about Andréa from the first section of the novel as Roberto's own work, especially since the information accompanying the biography cryptically suggested that the identity of the writer should at some point be revealed. However, a perusal of the biography of Andréa presented to the reader demonstrates that it cannot be the work of Roberto, as the work makes reference to the supposedly obscene journal kept by Fereszin, thus it was written after both Fereszin's death and Roberto's festivity, although perhaps before his interview

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<sup>105</sup> "The part of the novel that the police got hold of is the part related by Haroldo Protagonist [a diegetic character who works for the same Belo Horizonte newspaper that Fereszin does and has had sexual relations with Andréa] to Samuel the Author, in the first person...if it was a lie, it was Haroldo's because Samuel refused to invent anything" (219).

<sup>106</sup> "I did a biography of her for him that would have made a marvelous story" (218).

shed light upon the document rather than before. Is Roberto not telling the entire truth then, or is Ângelo again sabotaging attempts to locate a fixed form of authority in any of the narrative by confusing the efforts of the editor who has collected the collage of supposed documents?

A third reflection of the blurring between fiction and nonfiction is couched in a direct commentary upon the creation of *A Festa*. In one of the index entries labeled “Author,” the interdiegetic author is interviewed by another individual about his work. The interlocutor offers specific advice for the novel the author is writing, which maintains too many similarities to *A Festa* to be ignored: “O Documentário eu acho que não deveria ser o primeiro episódio. O leitor pensara que é um livro só político, e não é” (192).<sup>107</sup> The author, having suggested that plot and stories have no importance to the work, both contradicts his distinction between the ambiguous term “episodes” and “stories,” which has the connotation of fiction, ironically characterizes the novel’s axis in his response: “Exatamente onde eu não queria mexer é na primeira história—perdão, estava pensando em inglês—no primeiro episódio. É importante isso na estrutura do livro. Eu abro com os documentos e vou até a fabula, no fim, quando a personagem se funde com o diabo” (193).<sup>108</sup> The devil is, of course, Mattos, as asserted in a captured refugee’s deposition, but it is also indirectly the Republic, as Cunha’s and Glauber Rocha’s messianic figures remind their followers. And, once again, it is Mattos who in a truly subversive gesture, reverses the nature of events that Cunha narrated seventy-five

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<sup>107</sup> “The ‘Short Documentary’ I don’t think should be the first episode. The reader will think it’s just a book about politics, which it isn’t” (194).

<sup>108</sup> “[W]hat I didn’t want to touch was that first story—sorry, it just slipped out—first episode. It’s important to the work’s development to start with “A Short Documentary,” important for any reader who has lived out our history. I open with documents, develop through reality, and close with a fable, when one of the protagonists becomes fused with the devil” (195).

years earlier to place the refugees on the offensive. It is the backlanders who head south to invade civilization. Unfortunately, like their Canudos counterparts, they eventually succumb to state suppression.

The index is laden with many other ironies. The student Carlos, targeted in the investigation for his previous involvement with student movements and intent to assist the migrants, is blacklisted and must leave the city for the northeast in order to search for a job, despite the fact that the northeasters had come south in search of jobs in the first place. Yet the ultimate irony is that of the textual author's denial of the potential of his own work. It is the very destruction—as opposed to mere deconstruction—of the text that is necessary for the work to be successful.

The interdiegetic “author,” who would once again appear to be very closely based upon the actual author of *A Festa*, ironically interrupts his own text to make this absence all the more salient: “Eu cheguei à conclusão de que o livro existe sem a parte do meio, mas isso não me impede de enxergar a fissura. É claro que não vou deixar o leitor perceber isso” (188).<sup>109</sup> This admission, of course, explicitly cues the reader into the gap or failure, for indeed, the book we read is a failure. According to its internal author, whose listing within the index also confirms his status as a character, “Este livro... é o resultado de um fracasso. É o que consegui fazer de um projeto pretensioso que tracei em linhas gerais há uns dez anos ou mais” (187).<sup>110</sup> Later in the index entry, the author very subtly admits that the opening documentary pieces are fiction when comparing it to a book he quotes in the documentary: “Li o livro do Rui, vi que não tinha nada que ver, e

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<sup>109</sup> “I concluded, though, that the book exists without the middle section, but it doesn't prevent me from perceiving the gap in it. Of course, I'm not going to let the reader notice” (190).

<sup>110</sup> “This book... is the result of a failure. It's what I've managed to salvage from a pretentious project I'd broadly outlined some ten or more years ago” (189).

continuei. Acho até interessante a coincidência dos nordestinos. Fica parecendo que aconteceu de verdade. Quanto ao resto, direções divergentes, extensões, intenções, concepções” (194).<sup>111</sup> Given how tightly the work has been planned, it seems highly unlikely that the cited text has no connection to the author’s own narrative, adding another layer of mistrust. The reader is in the position of taking the reader’s comments at face value precisely because of their confessional nature. But are they too subject to inaccuracies, self-censorship? At the same time, this apparent transparency is also a trap, as it invites the reader to take these comments by a character at face value, to read *A Festa* into them, something we should be wary of doing. Ironically, by making the novel’s failure such a vocalized focal point, the author points to the imposed conditions that created this failure, thus assuring some form of success, a warning that cannot be erased.

### **The Authority to Question Authority**

Rather than utilize the reader as a foil, here Ângelo uses the author-function to create an “auto-dialogue.” In metafictional fashion, one of the author notes suggests that the author should insert author’s notes into the text so that the author becomes a second protagonist, and this is exactly what the “author” has done. These critical interjections serve to question the role of fiction as well. “Isso está me cheirando a literatice” (132),<sup>112</sup> he quips—the implication being that the manner in which the text is narrativized has

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<sup>111</sup> “So I read Rui’s book, saw it had nothing to do with mine, and continued. I even think it’s interesting, the coincidence of the Northeasterners. It makes it seem like what happens is actually true. As for the rest, the intentions, directions, extensions, conceptions...” (196)

<sup>112</sup> “This is beginning to stink of literature” (132).

drifted away from hard facts into poetic description. But lest these interjections not be overt enough, the author comes clean in less technical terms: “Escrever o quê nesta terra de merda? Tudo que eu começo a escrever me parece um erro, como se estivesse fugindo do assunto. Que assunto? Merda! E quem disse que isso é responsabilidade minha? Por que não escrever um romance policial?” (115)<sup>113</sup> This is precisely the kind of work that Commissioner Levita scoffed at his colleagues for reading in his earlier deposition.

And yet, this error or joke of a work, a confusion of document (private and national) and story, is able to articulate claims regarding authority and the narration of history. Eventually the author deconstructs his own interruptions to note that the text shouldn't require his presence (but, of course, it paradoxically does). In a text about the asymmetrical exercise of authority, everyone is suspect, including the narrator/author persona. In this regard, Ângelo's text goes to an extreme that Cunha's cannot. We are left at the end of *Os Sertões* understanding that no form of writing can authoritatively represent the past, yet Cunha's narrative voice, in the sense of Mary Louise Pratt's “monarch-of-all-I-survey” developed in *Imperial Eyes*, retains ultimate leverage as arbiter of this past, as authority, while in *A Festa* even central characters who narrate sections, and in whom we trust, are revealed to have personal agendas, to relate events in a less than objective light.

Ultimately, as a journalist, Samuel Fereszin's writing, both professional and private, is cast under suspicion. Was he writing fiction that appeared to be nonfiction or documentary, or was he textually acting out his own fantasy? In a text that stresses its own gaps and contradictions, the questions direct themselves against the text: how does

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<sup>113</sup> What am I supposed to write about in this shithole of a country? Anything I write seems like a joke, as if I were totally avoiding the subject. What subject? Shit, that's all. And anyway, whoever said it was my responsibility? Why not write detective stories? (115)

Fereszin compare to the interdiegetic author, or Ângelo himself, for that matter? In some ways, Ângelo sets the role of journalism under similar conditions. What allows Fereszin to realize a connection with actual people is ultimately engagement, not writing or observation. While Fereszin loses his life in the process, it is clear that Ângelo supports this complete involvement, as the value of this act cannot be lost in textual censorship, even if it can be misrepresented. It is not an engagement that Cunha can undertake in *Os Sertões*, until after the fact as Cunha reflects upon the military campaign, yet of all the characters in *A Festa*, even the author admits to his failings in terms of creating a text to document the uncertainties of the era. In this regard Ângelo, not only uses Cunha's *Os Sertões* as an intertext, but he also creates a contemporary response with a suggestion about the limits of representation in a time when modes of media are under surveillance. In such an environment, history is not constructed, it is perpetually altered.

In order to represent this, Ângelo takes recourse in various forms of con-scription. Just as "Documentário" begins with a false newspaper article on Mattos, so too does the entire work end with this device. Once again, it is a rendering of Mattos' death distributed by the federal police to the newspaper agencies, a narration of how the "subversive" was killed in a shootout during his attempted escape. The explanatory press material, however, points out the subjective use of language within the release—the first direct commentary. Only a few newspapers alter the prepared statement, qualifying the document by attributing it to the police, or in the case of Fereszin's newspaper, changing, "no final, a expressão 'o subversivo' pelo nome Marcionílio" (219).<sup>114</sup> These changes are ultimately facile and complicit, though, for the nature of the death remains entirely unchanged. The violence is communicable. A short note on Roberto's following birthday

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<sup>114</sup> "In the last line the expression 'the subversive' to the name of de Mattos" (223).

party, which is invaded and disrupted by a violent gang of youths, suggests that with their departure and an end to the victimization, there also comes a realization that it “foi a última festa” (220),<sup>115</sup> the final line in the text. Indeed, for Ângelo, the celebration of the book is not that of the party missing from the novel’s structure, it is precisely the fact that it is missing. A cynical reference to silence and control, the celebration comes at the Brazilian citizen’s own expense, but, if we are convinced by the cyclical nature of Ângelo’s study of land and man, this won’t be the last celebration after all.

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<sup>115</sup> Colchie curiously translates the final line as “an end to the celebration” (223), which not only lacks the value of pronouncement in the original, but also seems less conclusive, since it is not placed on a separate line, but included in the paragraph above it.

## CHAPTER 11

### AGAINST NEW JOURNALISM: *MUMBO-JUMBO* AND “NOVEL” HISTORY

*Mumbo Jumbo* is both a book about texts and a book of texts, a composite narrative composed of subtexts, pretexts, posttexts, and narratives-within-narratives. It is both the definition of Afro-American culture and its deflation. “The Big Lie concerning Afro-American culture,” *Mumbo Jumbo*’s dust jacket states, “is that it lacks a tradition.” The “Big Truth” of the novel, on the other hand, is that this very tradition is as rife with hardened convention and presupposition as is the rest of the western tradition.

--Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Signifying Monkey*, 220

#### **Mixed Reactions as Mumbo-Jumbo**

In contrast to Tomas Eloy Martinez and Ivan Angelo, Reed abandons realist discourse, adopting a language of excess and hyperbole. He too inserts documents into his novel, some fictional and some verifiable, although in many cases the invented texts, which are primarily related to print journalism and radio, are overtly fictitious by virtue of hyperbolic language that is inappropriate for maintaining claims to objectivity. Despite this distinct strategy, which would initially appear to run counter to the intentions of Martinez and Angelo, Reed wishes to interrogate historical understanding in a similar sense. Thus, in *Mumbo Jumbo* (1972) the inserted documents ultimately do question the role that both popular and elite cultures play in shaping group opinions. The novel, even more so than any other of his many works which concern themselves with issues of African-America representation, marries the media out of which historical understanding is solidified with a specific program for wrenching established history out of its authoritative role. In this regard, Reed’s novel initially bears more formal resemblance to

Coover's *The Public Burning*,<sup>116</sup> as both tread the line between the absurd and the serious in their mixing of realist and anti-realist discourse.

Despite the novel's parody of hardboiled detective fiction, there exists anything but an attempt to create a realistic image of an urban environment or of the underside of society. The novel rests on the axis of an outbreak of jazz music and dancing with its roots in ragtime, "Jes' Grew," that sweeps the nation from its origin in New Orleans and heads for New York in 1920, for this is where its written text or score is being hidden, and, unbeknownst to all, translated from its ancient hieroglyphic form by a hardliner, black Muslim magazine editor. Two parties ultimately seek Jes Grew's text; one to preserve it and the other to destroy it. The novel's protagonist, detective Pa Pa La Bas, a "voodoo" houngan who represents African spiritual sensibilities, attempts to track down Hinckle Von Vampton the leader of a secret society that represents Christian values and white domination of the last millennium, and who, along with those individuals representing government authority see the pandemic as a threat to "civilization." The action in a Harlem on the verge of renaissance jumps around to include the experiences of several voices, although it is interrupted by a long recounting of Egyptian myth and Judeo-Christian attempts to syncretize this non-empirical practice up to the present. At the same time, the text also acts as commentary upon the Civil Rights movement contemporary to Reed's publication of the novel, thus the text transposes itself over three distinct temporal periods.

Owing in large part to the foregrounding of polyvalent stance towards textuality and intertextuality that Henry Louis Gates Jr. identifies in the above epigraph within his

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<sup>116</sup> Between "autobiographical" sections from Vice-President Nixon regarding the Rosenberg treason trial, Coover also inserts mock headlines from magazines such as *Life* and *Time*, yet goes an additional step to make these forms of media into actual characters, though his conclusion devolves into pure comedy.

frequently referenced monograph, *The Signifying Monkey*—a critical study that Gates sees as forming a symbiotic relationship with *Mumbo Jumbo*—many critical studies seek to locate Ishmael Reed’s third novel within a postmodern framework (see Gates; Ebbesen; Mikics). In addition, the novel’s historical setting and formal narrational structures usurped from other modes of media make it an attractive addition to the subgenre of historiographic metafiction in the work of Linda Hutcheon and W. Lawrence Hogue, namely in conjunction with how Reed demonstrates that the traditional novel, which represents itself as a closed system in the sense of categorical reality, is not innocent, but rather a construct shaped by the dominant cultural hegemonies (critics consistently and problematically refer to Reed’s disavowal of the values championed by “Western” society without defining this categorization or addressing the essentializing tendency of such an umbrella-term). David Price is perhaps unique in his council against precisely such a postmodern reading, yet this has to do with his conviction that postmodern history is a contradiction in terms (182). Reed does intend to prevent absolute authority, but this does not equate with “an endorsement of absolute relativism,” as Jeffrey Ebbesen points out, suggesting the point is that constructions of both cultural identity and history entail the exercise of ideology (19). Finally, Roxanne Harde has suggested a potential bridge between factions viewing *Mumbo-Jumbo* as a tightly controlled allegory that draws its arsenal from both modernist and postmodernist sources (362).

Instead of entering debates denoting boundaries between modernisms and postmodernisms, however, I am far more concerned with an issue that transcends such modal shifts: understanding *Mumbo-Jumbo* as a text that, anticipating García Canclini,

seeks to decollect the cultural values and symbolic goods that have been used to construct historical understandings. As Gates points out in the epigraph above, the book acts both to define and deflate the cultural traditions about which it concerns itself—deflating itself in the process. Its numerous levels of texts, some overtly fictitious, while others aspire to a more representational status, suggests that supposed historical fact consists of fictions which have been reproduced successfully to the point of taking on the authority of historical veracity within popular consciousness.

### **The Indeterminacy of the Historical in Reed's Fiction**

The interrogation of historical writing is not unique within Reed's oeuvre. His subsequent novel, *Flight to Canada*, a neo-slave narrative that rewrites the slave relationship and historical record of the 1860s makes this relationship, its guiding principle in the narrative's development, and the case for equal value association with fiction and nonfiction, clear from its inception. While the text makes use of epigraphs attributed to historically verifiable newspaper sources, such as the *Charleston Mercury* of 1865, it is not subtle in its reversal of hierarchical relationship conceived between historical documents and coterminous fictional texts, almost in an echo of the New Historicist approach:

History sure is complicated, or can you...cash your way out of history? Why isn't Edgar Allen Poe recognized as the principle biographer of that strange war? Fiction, say? Where does fact being and fiction leave off? Why does the perfectly rational, in its own time, often sound like mumbo-jumbo...Poe got it all down. Poe says more in a few stories than all of the volumes by historians. Volumes about that war. The Civil War (10).

Within the quotation, Reed references his previous novel, *Mumbo Jumbo*, in which he provides a definition for his title distinct from the typical glosses of “gibberish” or nonsensical speech in which he uses the term here, instead characterizing it as a “magician who makes the troubled spirits of the ancestors go away” (7), a version attributed to the *American Heritage Dictionary*. Using the birth of Charlie Parker to then refer back to colonial relations between the United States and Britain, the book takes as its ostensible setting “1920-1930. That 1 decade which doesn’t seem so much a part of American history as the hidden After-Hours of America struggling to jam. To get through” (16). In the same fashion that Reed inverts Civil War history with anachronistic references and creative liberties within the slave-master relations in his subsequent work, he also “captures” the opening of the twentieth century and liberates it in *Mumbo-Jumbo*. Instead of utilizing the slave narrative as intertext, here he appropriates, among other elements, the musical language of jazz whose structures inform the novel’s formal style.<sup>117</sup>

Both of Reed’s novels mentioned are historical in scope, although Theodore Mason has argued that Reed’s disavowal of realist discourse, his “imperative to performance” and his emphasis upon the fantastic, “make it problematic to place his work within the context of historical fiction...[for] the more heavily presentational a work, the more likely it will subordinate propositional concerns such as historical faithfulness or accuracy” (98). Instead, according to Mason, the element of surrealism in Reed’s parodic

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<sup>117</sup> David Price argues for a musical reading of the novel, maintaining that its jazz aesthetic corresponds to vertical/horizontal and melodic/harmonic axes, with the genres being parodies as the horizontal axis (194). The multiple voices, including the intertextual citations of real and false documents are harmonic elements on the vertical axis. This makes for a fascinating analysis, although the attempt to see the work as an improvisation akin to that of jazz is perhaps a bit ambitious and, at times, forced. What such an aperture to critical interpreting points to is the novel’s many faces, some of which are less developed, but still act as invitations to rethink the traditional novel.

pastiches force them to be read without comparison to contemporary realist or other texts and therefore elides a historical motive. Thus, Reed's work can more be aptly conceived as a place (and space) for the interweaving of history, a "rehistorification" precisely with the intention of taking liberties with our current understanding of historical writing. At the same time, Mason disagrees with Gate's celebration of indeterminacy within the work, instead concluding that the text collapses under the weight of its own indeterminacy, not illuminating history through the introduction of myth, but rather replacing history with myth altogether. This results in a "political impotence" (103), one which a more bound *Flight to Canada* is not subject.

Similarly, Richard Hardack has criticized Reed for not holding himself accountable to the same standards for which he attacks subjects within the novel. Hardack argues that Reed undermines his text by denying the relevance of Judeo-Christian and specifically white cultural values, yet uses these very same standards to validate black artists, a contradiction in terms. "Given its frontal attack on Western art," he wonders, "should *Mumbo Jumbo* itself be dismissed as a kind of art detention [Reed's ironic terms for the practice of displaying artifacts in museums]? If for Reed all art is propaganda, *Mumbo Jumbo* is only the propaganda of the disenfranchised" (274). He astutely points out the problematic nature of Reed's inconsistencies within the book, perhaps as numerous as the levels of texts and intertexts, yet he chastises Reed for carping about "Western" artists having stolen from African sources while Reed "does not allude to any of his white sources except to point out their appropriations" (282). Hardack's erring assumption is that Reed seeks to create an equality between African and Judeo-Christian traditions. For better or for worse, Reed may have his characters feeding

“loas” (spirits within the Haitian voodoo of the book), but this does not mean he is interested in feeding a dialectic relationship between mono- and pantheistic perceptions. His goal is to steal back what has been stolen.

As the epigraph to this chapter from Henry Louis Gates points out, “The ‘Big Truth’ of the novel...is that this very tradition is as rife with hardened convention and presupposition as is the rest of the western tradition” (220). The novel’s success comes at the expense of its own failure. While Hardack recognizes that the text wishes to deny authority, he doesn’t grant it the agency of self-consciously deflating its own authoritative status. On the one hand, the “Jes’ Grew” (anti)epidemic borne out of ragtime approaches New York because it “is seeking its words. Its text. For what good is a liturgy without a text” (Reed 6)? That search, as well as the reader’s, is frustrated, for at the (anti)climax of the novel it is revealed that the text has been destroyed. Now, this absence could be read as commentary about the impossibility of creating the text of History, or rather the disavowal that a text may control an entire generation or population, but this emptiness may just as easily reference Reed’s own novel. When the novel’s detective protagonist explains how he solved the mystery in a clichéd final scene with villains and witnesses present in a single room, his narrative is met with disbelief: “Why, who would believe such nonsense; it’s the silliest, most fatuous thing I ever heard” (192), although it is no more outlandish than many other aspects of the plot, suggesting that Reed is laughing at himself. Despite attempting to expand the denigratory definition of “mumbo-jumbo,” by titling his novel as such, Reed purposefully invites both positive and negative associations. At the same time, the burning of the sought-after Jes’ Grew text is perpetrated by its translator, a Black Muslim who opposed the white paradigm that the

antagonists represented, but who thought the text was too dangerous to reveal. Yet despite their similar political enemies, his actions do not go without critique by detective Pa Pa La Bas, who notes that it was “[c]ensorship until the very last. He took it upon himself to decide what writing would be viewed by Black people, the people he claimed he loved. I can’t understand” (203). While La Bas does not approve of censorship of any form, such comments raise the greater issue of what constitutes the authority to influence what can and cannot be read. Reed does not claim this authority for himself or his text.

Hardack and Mason both read Reed as attempting to destruct, rather than deconstruct, “white-western” practices responsible for relegating presumed “uncivilized” beliefs, because they are not formally empirical or explainable within the systematically controlling terms of science, to a marginalized position. Reed, however, is not seeking to destroy, but rather to displace this displacement. A telling scene reveals this nuance, as the *Mu'tafikah* group of art thieves (so named by Reed for a similarly “bohemian” group within the Koran) enters a museum, defamiliarized by its label as an art detention center, with the intention of liberating the “stolen” artifacts and returning them to their rightful countries of origin. When the leader of the group is about to slash a painting associated with one of the warring ideological sects, he is reprimanded by his colleague: “Remember the vow...we are just going to return the things, not pick up their habits of razing peoples’ art. It isn’t Goya nor is it the painting’s fault that it’s used by Atonists as a worship” (110). In other words, the group is bent upon dismantling dominant forms of control via a process of decollection that has artificially linked them, not the destruction of the entire model.

This decollection involves stealing back from sources in the same way that Reed attempts to do without revealing many of his own sources, despite the list of images behind the title page and the “Partial Bibliography” at the end of the novel. Yet his use of anachronistic photographs is anything but indeterministic. However mythological history is portrayed within the text, these images create concrete links to the present, historicizing links that have been appropriated by Reed to remove *Mumbo Jumbo* from its singularly historicized setting. In fact, this appropriation by Reed encourages the reader to view the novel in similar terms—not to rewrite its multiple texts, but to appropriate it in order to create the “future text” that the next generation must construct (204), which I will return to shortly.

One problem stemming from the celebrated indeterminacy of the text is certain critics’ decision to take advantage of the pastiche quality to forcibly graft prescriptively politicized readings that can portray the work as an attack upon all institutionalized thought. David Price, for example, explains Reed’s eclectic shifting of “C” to “K” in his spelling of congress in political terms:

the simple use of the letter *K* when spelling “Kongress” signifies an institution that acts like King Kong and thus indicates who the real beast in the world is. In addition, the use of the Germanic *K* spelling, often invoked when critics speak of Amerika, also indicates a type of militaristic, perhaps quasifascist orientation to the institution as a whole. (206-7)

What such an analysis fails to take into account is Reed’s re-scripting of additional words such “Kathedral,” as in the cathedral that protagonist Pa Pa La Bas heads. As La Bas is ostensibly the novel’s protagonist who represents non-empirical thought that he teaches to others through the cathedral, it would seem to exist as an institution outside the realm

of monolithic white culture, something which the reader is tacitly supposed to support. In order to be consistent, the “k” spelling should be read as iconoclastic in this case as well, yet this would undermine the novel’s celebration of that which cannot be explained by reason alone. Reed also replaces the spelling of numbers with their mathematical digits, which acts to defamiliarize the text. How much of this is Reed simply making the reader aware of language? For, as an inserted graph late in the text, showing the number of tons of bombs dropped during three wars involving the United States demonstrates, Reed is certainly aware how the media represents, and hence constructs, its own narratives via the careful application of language and numbers.

### **A Literary Reaction to (New) Journalism**

Despite differences with Martinez and Angelo, Reed is reacting to media control; he does not exercise a disavowal of media practices, but rather the ends to which they are misappropriated. He has adopted and parodied various genre models in earlier works: the confessional narrative in *The Free-Lance Pall Bearers* (1967), the western in *Yellow Back Radio Broke Down* (1969), and Hollywood film in *The Terrible Twos* (1982).

Ishmael Reed wrote his two novels most closely associable with historical fiction, *Mumbo Jumbo* (1972) and *A Flight to Canada* (1976) during the height of the experimental New Journalism approach first programmed by Tom Wolfe, when perceived journalistic practices were en vogue with literary production.

The claim to mimetic representation of New Journalism would at first appear to lend itself to the return to mimetic representation which con-scripts often employ in order

to later expose falsehoods. Reed's relation to journalism, however, is quite removed from that of the New Journalists. Far from emulating the approach of the media or attempting to reproduce its effects within fiction, Reed satirizes its practice and bemoans its misrepresentations of minorities of that past and present in both his fiction and his nonfiction essays. Reed's *Mumbo Jumbo*, as a means to mediate the media, represents an unusual departure from the two previous examples of con-scription seen in Angelo and Martinez. While these texts court a mimetic approach in order to better deconstruct the illusion of veracity within their works, Reed's historical novel makes no claim to narrating "real" events or reporting in a journalistic sense.

His practice distinguishes itself from the use of documentation that several contemporary authors were exploring in the same moment in the nonfiction novel. As Wolfe explains it, New Journalism was not a movement, but a development towards narrative style of literary technique within journalism, yet ended up shaking the foundations of the literary establishment (25). He treats the contemporaneous usurpation of journalistic tendencies by fiction writers as simultaneously independent and also corollary to those concerns, although there was disagreement as to what this new hybrid form of writing constituted. While authors aspiring in some form to New Journalism argued over approaches to the nonfiction novel, Reed would seem to have highlighted the fictional components of his work. His historical preoccupation also reached back beyond the scope of many of the paradigmatic nonfiction novels published at this time, which tend to focus upon more contemporary events to their writing in attempts at reportage. Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* (1965), for example, is narrated in a traditionally mimetic approach; the text moves between the viewpoints of several different individuals

, yet is always communicated from a distanced third person narrator who attempts to break down the overarching narrative to create smaller journalistic stories that form a whole through their interlocking patchwork. Capote is certainly hyper-aware of media documents, since he himself made use of interviews, newspaper articles, and depositions in order to reconstruct the narrative of the 1959 murder of the Clutter family in Holcomb, Kansas. Capote introduces some of these documents into the texts. Most of these reproduced documents relate specifically to the perpetrators Perry and Hickock, such as their letters to family members, personal notebooks, diaries in prison, psychiatric autobiographical statements, or the document Perry's father had written in order to help Perry previously attain parole, yet Capote does also quote from local newspapers such as the Garden City *Telegram*, ironically to comment upon the nature of media coverage the case received from newspapers:

Some may think the eyes of the entire nation are on Garden City during this sensational murder trial. But they are not. Even a hundred miles west of here in Colorado few persons are even acquainted with the case—other than just remembering some members of a family were slain. This is a sad commentary on the state of crime in our nation. Since the our members of the Clutter family were killed last fall, several other such multiple murders have occurred in various parts of the country...As a result, this crime and trial are just one of many such cases people have read about and forgotten" (271-2).

Nonfiction novel or fictional adaptation of true events, Capote's quasi-journalistic approach is dependent upon an accurate (or at the least the appearance thereof) portrayal of events and documents. Thus, there is no attempt to problematize their usage or falsify the documents, as this would compromise the reportage element of the text. The goal is primarily to prevent these texts/stories from being forgotten again

The same is true of other examples of New Journalism; even the metafictional self-awareness of Norman Mailer's 1968 nonfiction novel, *Armies of the Night* (also apparent in his epic *The Executioner's Song*, which won the 1980 Pulitzer Prize), which while questioning the role of the media, does not attempt to subvert its practice via the exposure of falsehood or misuse. The text does warrant a quick examination, however, for Mailer shares with Reed specific concerns as to the power and discourse of the novel as compared to those discourses employed by media, and his insistence upon veracity serves as a counterpoint to the antirealist language Reed employs. Mailer's text is overtly autobiographical, yet he narrates from a third person narrator that is reminiscent of Capote's approach, save for the ironic intrusions upon the text and comically cruel descriptions of both himself and his fellow dissidents (revealing the implied distance to be merely a device). Mailer's novel bears a striking subtitle, "History as a Novel, the Novel as History," which attests to Mailer's interest in confusing the boundaries of fiction and nonfiction.

Despite his appeal to "history," Mailer's journalistic approach turns away from historic depth in order to focus upon contemporary events (in this case, the 1967 March on the Pentagon) as well as the way those contemporary events are presented to the public. In effect, he is writing against previous print representations of events, because the "mass media which surrounded the March on the Pentagon created a forest of inaccuracy which would blind the efforts of an historian; our novel has provided us with the possibility, no, even the instrument to view our facts and conceivably study them in that field of light a labor of lens-grinding has produced" (243-44). Mailer thus champions the ability of the novel to correctly capture an experience which would be mistakenly

interpreted by historians relying upon the supposed facts presented by newspapers and television. At the same time, he relies upon this very standard, perhaps in a similar fashion to Reed's contradictory critique yet continued reliance upon Judeo-Christian cultural standards for his iconoclasm.

Mailer's novel is literally framed by documents on multiple levels, as not only do documents bookend the entire narrative, but they also serve as beginnings and endings within the two parts or books that constitute the novel. The overt questioning of media representation is clear well before Mailer's final usage of a document in the second book from the *Washington Star*, which is followed by the conclusion that "[f]or once, a newspaper account seems to agree with eyewitness reports" (310). Newspaper documents also generate the impetus for the novel. The first book commences with a scathing article from *Time Magazine* about Mailer's drunken antics onstage at a benefit followed not by self-defensive claims, but rather the narrator's invitation: "Now we may leave *Time* in order to find out what happened" (12), the implication being what "really happened." What follows is the relation of the evening mentioned in the *Time* article followed by the events that led up to the March upon the pentagon and Mailer's brief incarceration for his symbolic protest of the Vietnam War, This culminates in a lesson for Mailer provided by the media, for he ends the first of two books by reproducing a newspaper excerpt from the *Washington Post*. The article undercuts Mailer's impassioned fundamentalist claim upon his release that America is burning the body of Christ in Vietnam by following his quote with a devastatingly simply observation regarding his false rhetoric: "Mailer is a Jew" (239). Mailer's narrator dryly remarks upon reading the article, "It was obvious the

good novelist Norman Mailer had much to learn about newspapers, reporters, and salience” (239).

As Mailer begins Book Two, the focus shifts from an individualized portrayal of Mailer as protagonist to the larger political picture via the experience of the thousands of other protesters who made up an army of the night descending upon the Pentagon.

Mailer’s intrusion into the narrative is not subtle, and it is worth quoting at length from the key section that illustrates his concern with the distinction between document and fiction, and his attempt at subverting a concrete distinction:

It is on this particular confrontation that the conceit one is writing a history must be relinquished. Doubtless it has been hardly possible to ignore that this work resides in two enclaves, the first entitled History. As a Novel, the second here before us called The Novel as History. No one familiar with husking the ambiguities of English will be much mystified by the titles. It is obvious the first book is a history in the guise or dress or manifest of a novel, and the second is a real or true novel—no less!—presented in the style of a history. (Of course, everyone including the author will continue to speak of the first book as a novel and the second as a history—practical usage finds flavor in such comfortable opposites.) However, the first book can be, in the formal sense, nothing but a personal history which while written as a novel was to the best of the author’s memory scrupulous to facts, and therefore a document; whereas the second, while dutiful to all newspaper accounts, eyewitness reports, and historic inductions available, while even obedient to a general style of historical writing, at least up to this point, while even pretending to be a history (on the basis of its introduction) is finally now to be disclosed as some sort of condensation of a collective novel—which is to admit that an explanation of the mystery of the events at the Pentagon cannot be developed by the methods of history—only by instincts of the novelist. The reasons are several, but reduce to one. Forget that the journalistic information available from both sides is so incoherent, inaccurate, contradictory, malicious, even based on error that no accurate history is conceivable. More than one historian has found a way though chains of false fact. No, the difficulty is that the history is interior—no documents can give sufficient intimation: the novel must replace history at precisely that point where experience is sufficiently emotional, spiritual, psychical, moral, existential, or supernatural to expose the fact that the historian in pursuing the experience would be obliged to qui the clearly demarcated limits of historic inquiry. So these limits are now relinquished. The

collective novel which follows, while still written in the cloak of an historical style, and, therefore, continuously attempting to be scrupulous to the welter of a hundred confusing and opposed facts, will now unashamedly enter that world of strange lights and intuitive speculation which is the novel (281).

Ironically, the “novel” that follows is far more formal in its depiction of events than was Book One, the supposed “History as Novel.” Via the confusion he generates, Mailer in effect maintains the primacy of the novel over historiography. Since no accurate history is possible to distinguish, both fiction writing and historiography rely upon a reconstruction of events that involves invention, yet the novel has the capacity to move into emotional and moral issues that historical writing, according to Mailer, cannot. Despite these concerns as to the ability to accurately construct fact, which his playful language exhibits, Mailer privileges his own version as closer to the “truth.” He also fails to make a case for the inclusion of history within his novel, for it is ultimately current events that occupy Mailer. What he wishes to do is make history—not construct it, but be inscribed within it.

### ***Mumbo-Jumbo: The Novel not as History, History Not as the Novel***

It is important to note that, despite Mailer’s repeated overtures to history, he is not actually addressing issues of history or historical writing in his “quasi-journalist” representation of contemporary events. His focus is upon then-contemporary politics. There is little to any historical dimension to the text, unless it is of his own personal past. Reed certainly shares Mailer’s concerns regarding contemporary representations of the “margins” of society, yet his subversion of the primacy of historiographic discourse and

media discourses is enacted on behalf of a collective concern. Rather than valorize personal experience as a vehicle to salvation, a rather egotistical gesture on Mailer's part, Reed uses the device of historical fiction to comment upon the politics of contemporary society. However, instead of attempting to appeal to the discourse of reality in the modernist sense of the word, he applies an anti-realistic language that purposefully transgresses the rules of docufiction, as Sven Birkerts sardonically terms the products of the "oxymoron" of nonfiction novel (131-5). If this template were not already functioning outside the boundaries of traditional textual practice, Reed utilizes fragments of documents, some verifiable, some contrived, in order to create an effect similar to that of Martinez's and Angelo's texts, for as Jeffrey Ebbesen notes, "Reed's introduction of intertexts through pictures, concert announcements, news clippings, bits from history books, hand written letters, and radio announcements not only renders traditional narrative mimesis—which is to say "realism"—problematic, but also forces readers to participate in the jazz dance of writing, or authorship" (62, italics in original). Ebbesen refers here to the template of jazz, a musical double-coding that not only serves as the novel's plot nexus, but also informs its structure. While Angelo and Eloy Martínez actively question their own authoritative statuses in relation to their "hybridized" products, Reed more generally denies the monolithic nature of authorship, biblical, cultural, or media-related. Ebbesen does not employ the terminology of hybridity to refer to Reed, instead preferring to see an abstractly "syncretic" writing style with its roots in African and Voodoo religious tradition, as it maintains "the ability to integrate or absorb signs and practices from other sources" (41). Such a description is equally effective in evaluating Reed's appropriation of various forms of media (from newspaper to cinema)

which, like the documents that frame Mailer's *Army of the Night*, frame the narration of *Mumbo-Jumbo* with the express intent of calling attention to their textual existence.

Mailer's text is a performance focused on himself that encourages readers to witness events through him, while *Mumbo-Jumbo* presents itself as a performance to be viewed from the outside, as if on a screen. If documents literally frame Mailer's text, then it is cinematic overtures which frame Reed's novel. Both Gates and Mikics have highlighted the novel's filmic qualities. Not only does the first chapter appear without warning before the credits, the official title page, in filmic fashion, but it also ends on a director's note, such that the novel's final words break any illusion of the text as a contained subject that might remain: "*Locomotive rear moving toward neoned Manhattan skyline. Skyscrapers gleam like magic trees. Freeze frame*" (218; italics in original). Nonetheless, if Reed identifies with certain aspects of popular culture and media via their inclusion and shaping of the novel's structure, this does not signify that his inclusion is that of a media-phile, for it is ultimately the use, as a means to an end, of information disseminated by sources of authority that concerns the narrative's development.

### **Media Representation as Negative Signifier**

David Price points out that Reed's use of "discursive addenda," the variety of inserted graphs, documents, photographs, and newspaper headlines, finds its roots in the work of Jon Dos Passos (202), presumably in his *USA Trilogy* finished in 1936. Of course, of the four narrative modes that Dos Passos employs—traditional fiction, the

stream of consciousness “Camera Eye,” biographies of historical figures, and newsreels—it is only the last mode that is characterized by the eclectic insertion of actual Chicago and New York headlines, and these are designed to present a shifting portrait of the world. Reed wishes to create a portrait of the atmosphere by highlighting the fictionality of his inserted texts. Outrageously offensive and subjective lines such as “MUSCLEWHITE BAGS COON” are meant to force the reader to see this as the message being transmitted between the written lines by an agency (both the physical institution and the subject’s power) controlled by a dominant group that seeks to exclude other viewpoints. The veil of political correctness is lifted to expose the party ideology underneath.

In this form, print media is represented as a complex, but ultimately problematic force. *The New York Sun* is described as ascribing to the order “which demands that it devote so many column inches per month to the glorification of Western Culture” (57), such that even back matter cultural articles on African painting are derogated, while European news is supported. A headline inserted earlier into the text without explanation, “VooDoo General Surrounds Marines as Port-au-Prince” (22), is suddenly contextualized several pages later. The text refers to the ongoing American military occupation of Haiti, yet its suggestion that the enemy might be prevailing against the American army is not well-received. The “mistake” is revealed to not have been an error on the part of Hinckle Von Vampton, the company’s headline writer and also a secret member of the Knights Templar, who is utilizing the newspaper as a means of communication. When an argument with the managing editor threatens to turn violent, Vampton is fired on the spot. However, the newspaper has already been printed and thousands of editions sold, thus the

covert military operation has been indelibly exposed (63). None of the actual facts ever are. When La Bas and company run into one of the Haiti resistance leaders and learn of the oppressive military, immediately pick up on this absence: “Strange, there was nothing about this in the press?” (135). But, given whose interests are represented by the mainstream papers, as Reed implies, this censorship is not so strange at all. The headline’s cryptic reference to American, and by association, Western imperialism, is not immediately revealed, although Haiti’s resistance is shortly thereafter characterized as a “world-wide symbol for religious and aesthetic freedom” (64). The accompanying photo on page 65 shows a group of marching black protesters, in an obviously contemporary shot, thus the reader is encouraged to read Haiti’s resistance of the United States onto the black resistance within the United State. The unannounced insertion of photographs anticipates the new historical fiction of W.G. Sebald, for this image’s presence and relation to the text are never signaled, yet the association is performed automatically by its witness.

To further shift the political message, the boys hawking the newspaper on the street mispronounce Port-au-Prince as “Poor Prince” (this is certainly no Machiavelli), adding an ironic layer of meaning to the general lack of knowledge regarding Haiti, but this is in turn twisted to provide an additional allusion, for Vampton is actually using the headline to signal a message to a separate society, a telegraph that only this particular group would be able to decode. The group responds by locating him, and the two unite forces to destroy the text of Jes’ Grew, which is currently inaccessible, for its fourteen segments are being circulated among a chain of unsuspecting individuals.

In order to secure support, Vampton begins a magazine, ironically labeled as the Benign Monster, which under the guise of being written by and for a black audience, will pander to white audiences and ideologically convince its readers against the Jes' Grew phenomenon. To that end, the magazine's first headline reads, "NEGRO VIEWPOINT WANTED (76).<sup>118</sup> Far from being benign, the journal takes poetic license with its subjects, which it ridicules. When Vampton meets Abdul, the translator of the Jes' Grew text, the poet is less than pleased, asking, "Hey man, what was the idea of you putting my picture there last week without my permission[?] Those weren't my views and you know it. And I didn't like the lewd photos that accompanied the article" (94). Vampton apparently hasn't initiated a comments and corrections section of the magazine, for rather than acknowledging the criticism, he murders Abdul and searches unsuccessfully for the text. Ironically, Abdul has received a rejection letter from a potential publisher of the Egyptian Book of Tot, which is rejected for not exemplifying the expected characteristic of blackness (98)! Unsurprisingly, the murder is misrepresented by the New York Sun, Vampton's old employer:

HATE MONGER MEETS WELL-DESERVED END  
HINT WAR BETWEEN BLACK FACTIONS  
NO SUSPECTS IN MURDER OF CULTIST (99)

Reed doesn't represent the willful subjectivity of the newspaper as a contemporary phenomenon. In fact, La Bas' re-rendering of Egyptian mythology features Osiris' power hungry sibling Set embarking upon the first smear-campaign where "legislators went through the old texts and started rewriting things and doctoring them to make Set look

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<sup>118</sup> Parodying the notion of mimicry where the colonized individual acts more like the colonizer than the colonizer himself, Vampton specifies that the black individual must be well-versed in Marx, such that he can worship the idol of European thought.

good and Osiris look bad” (174), in the hopes of countering the former’s religion that was spreading like a plague. In an academic lecture circa 1970, an aging La Bas revisits the issue to make the correlation between ancient history and modern media explicit: “Early tabloid editors as they were, they doctored the ancient texts at Heliopolis...in this early center of Yellow Journalism where they made their heroes look radiant, glowing; umbraging the heroes of others in this City Room of Hypocrisy” (212-3). This hypocrisy is paradigmatically enacted in the articles dedicated to the murder of the Mu’tafikah art thieves, which portrays the white supremacist perpetrator as a “war hero” and “fearless curator” (123). In similar fashion, this practice revels in its own overstatement, abandoning the language of journalistic discourse. It is telling that no neutral or supportive example of the use of print media is provided within the novel, although other, more benign sources are referenced, such as the author himself.

The sections of yellow journalism are offset by another device that echoes Dos Passos: Situation Reports, which often come directly from “I.R.” Written in all-capitals, the news-flash nature of their language mimics that of a radio bulletin, but like the newspaper headlines, make no effort to conceal their fictive nature. However, they treat their subjects, the spread of black culture, in a far more objective fashion, creating a sensation of a somewhat sympathetic, even if tongue-in-cheek, treatment: “800 CASES REPORTED SINCE LAST NIGHT WHICH WERE IMMEDIATELY ISOLATED IN HASTILY BUILT Y.M.C.A. BARRACKS...” (32) . Even a certain amount of straight-faced humor finds its way into the reports. Abdul’s murderer is the only individual to escape La Bas, yet the final report mocks the novel’s insistence upon conspiracy theories political ambiguity within language, as reveals that “AFTER A WEEK OF

RECREATION IN EUROPE, BIFF MUSCLEWHITE, CURATOR OF THE CENTER OF ART DETENTION, SAILS FOR HOME ON THE INVINCIBLE SHIP THE TITANIC: HE IS DISMISSING RUMORS THAT HE WILL SEEK THE GOVERNORSHIP” (205).

In this polyvocal fashion, media is shown to have multiple sides, to form an uneven dialectic. Importantly, Reed doesn't create a binary relationship. One form of reporting may be portrayed in inherently evil, but the other fashion is not glorified as a revolutionary solution. In fact, Reed suggests that the answer may not lie in supposed nonfiction texts at all, providing a characteristic example of the forced marriage of distinct discursive styles: “someone once said that beneath or behind all political and cultural warfare lies a struggle between secret societies. Another author suggested that the Nursery Rhyme and the book of Science Fiction might be more revolutionary than any number of tracts, pamphlets, manifestoes of the political realm” (18). Despite this endorsement of fiction, biographical and historiographic sources do play an important role in the novel's structure.

### **Mixed Messages: Inserted and Deserted Historical Texts**

Yet, if such obvious media intratexts occur only within the interdiegetic space of the narrative, Reed employs plenty of intertexts from documented outside sources. A list of acknowledgments after the title page identifies the sources of the multiple photographs and drawings that Reed inserts, an equal showing culled from United Press International, music publicity and army photographs, and historical texts. In addition, Reed inserts

fragments from sources as diverse as Freud and Jung's writings on religion, translator David St. Clair's monograph on African spiritualism in Brazil, popular dancing guides from the early 1900s, and Mark Sullivan's historiographic study of the United States. Many of these texts have no direct relation to the geographical or socio-political setting which *Mumbo-Jumbo* evokes, yet Reed juxtaposes these apparently unrelated pronouncements so that a web of overlapping sociological commentary begins to develop from sources to the dominant hegemony of the time.

Henry Louis Gates makes the case for reading *Mumbo-Jumbo* as a textbook, "complete with illustrations, footnotes, and a bibliography" (223) that act as a documentary scheme to parody black realism and naturalism. He lists off a litany of inserted intertexts to support his case:

dictionary definitions, epigraphs, epigrams, anagrams, photoduplicated typed from other texts, newspaper clippings and headlines, signs (such as those that hang on doors), invitations to parties, telegrams, "Situation Reports" (which come from "the 8-tubed Radio," 32), yin-yang symbols, quotations from other texts, poems, cartoons, drawings of mythic beasts, handbills, photographs, dust-jackets copy, charts and graphs, playing cards, a representation of a Greek vase, and a four-page handwritten letter, among still other items. (223)

Despite this exhaustive list, the role of most of these items in the text is never touched, a superficially common approach to Reed's collage. It is ironic that as much has been made of Reed's use of discursive paratext—the entangling web of intertextuality is frequently celebrated—the concrete aspect of this practice does not appear to be taken all too seriously. While significant scholarship has been devoted to tracing Pa Pa La Bas' decidedly inventive thirty page monologue that amounts to a melding of Egyptian origin myths and Judeo-Christian biblical scenes, most studies seem content to note the

presence of the paratext and claim its role in challenging models of scholarship, without actually researching the biographical and historical text that Reed samples. David Price notes that there exists a fragment from “what is apparently a fictitious book” by David St. Clair (208). The book, *Drum and Candle*, which follows the development of African religious practices within Brazil, is by the famed translator of slum-dweller Carolina Maria de Jesus’ *Quarto de Despejo*, the first black female diary to receive popular and critical success in Brazil. While not listed in the partial bibliography, St. Clair’s study is very much a real and available text. This is a surprising error on the part of Price, for, in fact, most of the texts that do not seem immediately related to the various media threads of the novel are culled from documentable sources.

Ebbesen explains how anthropological and religious texts are woven into the novel’s narrative on the birth of western civilization (29), though it would seem that their status as borrowed texts is just as often not cited as it is noted, something I would submit as important for an understanding Reed’s habit of “stealing” and discriminating between sources. For example, the verbal critique of Jesus’ life accomplished by the last non-Christian Roman Emperor, Julian, is credited to his works and listed in the bibliography. However, the 1890 social anthropological work of Sir James Frazer is quoted for its Victorian rigidity, yet the source of the quote, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Comparative Religion*, is neither revealed nor listed in the partial bibliography. In a similar gesture to attributing a comprehensive knowledge of Marx to the black individual who will be Vampton’s media pawn, Reed also mocks Freud and Jung through a warping of their statements in a number of texts, although once again, the texts listed in the bibliography do not necessarily correspond to those cited in the novel. Ebbesen notes

how the phrase, “a black tide of mud,” attributed to Freud by Jung in reference to his sexual theory as resistance, is transformed to have racial implications within “civilization” in the way that the phrase is rendered in the *Mumbo-Jumbo* (“Politicizing Authority” 31), thus Reed has no qualms about appropriating European philosophy and psychology for his own purposes.

I would submit that the most challenging aspect for examining Reed’s “sourcery,” as Hardack refers to his “indiscriminate” borrowing, is that Reed doesn’t distinguish between the sociological discourse and less formal, oral histories that he inserts into the novel. Like the relationship of the photographs to the print, the quotations work by association enacted on the part of the reader, rather than by an explicit textual linkage. A quotation from *Hard Times* about the stock market crash is both anachronistic and unexpected, since the disaster does not occur until a decade after the events narrated in *Mumbo-Jumbo*. This work by Terkel is not listed in the bibliography, although Reed takes parenthetical credit for italicizing certain part of the quote for emphasis. But such a citation does not reveal that *Hard Times* is in fact an oral history of the Great Depression, rather than a work of historiography. As Terkel points out in his preface, “A Personal Memoir and Parenthetical Comment,” “This is a memory book, rather than one of hard fact and precise statistic...In [interviewees’] remembering are their truths” (3). The approach of uniting a series of disparate voices to informally reflect upon an era recalls Reed’s own, which is not concerned with relating events as they happened, but gleaning truth by re-membering events in a new, fictional form.

This confusion of “sourcery” includes works that do present themselves as historiography, such as Mark Sullivan’s *Our Times, Volume VI: The Twenties*. Not

distinguishing between types of historical works provides Reed with a certain amount of freedom in his internalization of their texts. In the contemporary 1970s spirit of secret societies, Reed reads President Harding's death as poisoning, referring to a conspiracy theory in the 1930s. Referring to political aide Jess Smith, Reed writes that the man "commits suicide" (147) and attributes the quote to Sullivan's historical narrative. This is, however, not a direct quote, but a use of scare quotes to suggest political murder, as Sullivan never uses these words.<sup>119</sup> Reed, of course, doesn't inform the reader that this is his own rendering, allowing the confusion to develop. The goal here is to question the official record during this time, although Reed is certainly not the first to question the veracity of this version of events.

Nonetheless, while his textual-support methodology may parody academic conventions, as Gates and Beth McCoy maintain, Reed is unable to present the novel as a textbook, for his nonselective mixture of approaches cannot be designed to create the illusion of veracity necessary to mimic academic writing or textbook materials. Reed's adoption of actual texts is as misleading to the reader as the newspaper headlines are as representations of the novel's diegetic events, for he does not distinguish between which historical texts and ideas have been contradicted or discredited since their writing (such as Harding's death as murder, or J.A. Rogers' pamphlet "The Five Negro Presidents"). If this is done unselfconsciously, then Reed sabotages his own project by hypocritically writing by the standards he decries (a version of Hardack's criticism regarding Reed's unrevealed sources). Nevertheless, if Reed does this purposefully, hiding his sources

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<sup>119</sup> Instead, as the incident occurred in Attorney General Daugherty's apartment, Daugherty's discovery, much like La Bas' discovery of Abdul's murdered body, stands in for any judgment: "Looking into the other bedroom, he saw Jess Smith slumped on the floor his head in an iron waste basket and a revolver in his right hand" (Sullivan 236).

precisely so that they will be checked for verification, and the liberties with historical fact and process be duly noted, then he invites subjection of himself to the same scrutiny to which he subjects his characters. In other words, he steals sources, not to return them to their original owners, but precisely so that he may be caught, equally problematizing his role as author and authority. Such a stance is a true disavowal of monotheism, one that extends beyond the issues of religion and culture within the book. In this sense, Harde makes an important point, namely,

That all texts are untrustworthy is a necessary condition of postmodern fiction; that all texts present their material to some degree as facts deserving attention is the contradiction that redeems this skepticism from tedious nihilism. Overall, Reed's attention to fact and the trappings of realism devalues the book as a novel; yet his attention to salting his fact with fiction devalues the book as sociology or history. (369)

It is the final mode of media insertion that suggests that Reed does not intend the book to be read in historical or sociological terms, for his use of images is predicated upon a contemporary reading.

### **A Once and Future Text: Photography as Historicizing Link**

From the opening pages, the text celebrates the anachronistic nature of photographs inserted into the narrative. While the text may refer to turn of the century issues, the photographs that remain unaccounted for by the narrative, are clearly images taken near to the publication of Reed's book. Not only is the association made spatially, rather than directly by references within the novel, in other words, but these images of contemporary dancing and protest must be decoded, such that they relate temporally to

the text as well. But why resort to such a practice? There are no absolutes with *Mumbo-Jumbo*; not all of the images are anachronistic by any means, but enough are to call attention to themselves.

The novel's protagonist's experience stands in for the reader's own. La Bas' daughter lectures her father, asking, "How are young people to know these things unless you older 1s tell us what you've been through... Each generation is condemned to repeating the errors made by the former. It's a cycle" (206). Le Bas speaks of representations of the Wild West in his lecture, noting how white individuals "figured in the center of photos and drawings while Blacks were centrifugally distant. The center was usually violent" (210). The comments are accompanied by drawings which would appear to corroborate La Bas, though he does not acknowledge their existence. By inserting contemporary photographs of African-American movement(s), Reed is able to overcome this marginal position, at least in terms of representation.

The notion of cyclical adversity, rather than diversity, calls to mind the unfortunate cycles of drought and government suppression in Ângelo's *A Festa*. And Reed provides reasons for seeking answers to the present in the past. In the novel's prologue, La Bas gives a lecture on a university campus, well aware that he is allowed to continue speaking as a matter of tradition rather than support:

"People in the 60s said they couldn't follow him. (In Santa Cruz the students walked out.) What's your point? they asked in Seattle whose central point, the Space Needle, is invisible from time to time. What are you driving at? they would say in Detroit in the 1950s. In the 40s he haunted the stacks of a ghost library. In the 30s he sought to recover his losses like everybody else. In the 20s they knew. And the 20s were back again" (218)

For Reed, it is important to revisit this moment of change in order to historicize his contemporary moments of change via the Civil Rights movement. Thus a 1971 graph documenting the number of bombs dropped by the United States in WWII, the Korean War, and the Indochina War(163), represents a less than subtle link to the United States' covert operations within Haiti, as well as the metaphorical relation to the text which surrounds the graph: Osiris' policies of freedom destroyed by his brother's will to control and categorize. Additionally, a picture of four white males in a 1970s rock group is juxtaposed over a military photo of four white gangsters that appears to date from the novel's setting (184).

Is Reed suggesting that modes of control have changed, but the ideology behind that control has not? Or is he suggesting that the reader makes such an association because spatial and ideological relationships between historical periods are inevitable, cyclical, repetitious? Despite all the media devices inserted into the novel, the photographs are perhaps the most journalistic in nature, as they capture the immediacy of the contemporary moment that Capote and Mailer seek in their nonfiction novel writing. The language of these photographs is not open to parody, though Reed does not attempt to undertake such a task. The loss of a core style in the novel's literary pastiche is not a sign of pure indeterminacy, a critical failure of "political impotence," but rather literary and media decollection pushed to the extreme. However, as an experiment, Reed's *Mumbo-Jumbo* is akin to Angelo's *A Festa*, as "visible" failure, photograph or otherwise, is nonetheless a form of textual success.

## PART IV

### CON-FOUNDING THE ARCHIVE: THE REWRITING OF AUTHORITY

## CHAPTER 12

### INTRODUCTION

I will say this in further apology for my work: that, if it has taken an unwarrantable liberty with our early provincial history, it has at least turned attention to that history and provoked research. It is only since this work appeared that the forgotten archives of the province have been rummaged, and the facts and personages of the olden time rescued from the dust of oblivion, and elevated into whatever importance they may virtually possess.

—Washington Irving, *A History of New York, from the Beginning of the World to the End of the Dutch Dynasty*

When Washington Irving penned the above introduction in 1848, forty years after the initial publication of his Knickerbocker's *History of New York*, he could never have imagined that the importance that archives “virtually” possessed would one day also become a form of virtual storage via the internet. He refers here to concrete archives which had been largely forgotten. In fact, more than a literary hoax that “turned attention” to ignored history, his parodic fiction *History of New York* represents one the earliest forms of con-script in the United States. Not only does an editor claim it to be a found document, published to pay debts, but the text also starts by presenting sample notices from newspapers regarding the disappearance of the supposed author, Diedrich Knickerbocker, which Irving had actually placed and circulated in newspapers prior to the publication of the text in order to lend credibility to his hoax. The text contains an elaborate number of levels, making it a clear example of what Doctorow describes in “False Documents.” Despite the ironic nature of his work, Irving does believe that there

is a true history to be told. That this history can be found in the oblivion of the archive, and there is nothing virtual or conceptual about this practice.

When Foucault defines the systems of statements he terms the “archive” in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969), he is clear in distinguishing the conceptual nature of his definition from the material connotations most typically associated with archives: “By this term I do not mean the sum of all the texts that a culture has kept upon its person as documents attesting to its own past, or as evidence of a continuing identity; nor do I mean the institutions, which, in a given society, make it possible to record and preserve those discourses that one wishes to remember and keep in circulation” (129). Although González Echevarría shares with Foucault the assumption that the archive can never be known in its totality, it is inevitable that he departs from the French philosopher in his characterization of the archive within archival fictions in Latin America, for he does not conceive of novels as enunciative statements in the fashion that Foucault does, per se. (If Foucault’s archive is a conceptual shadow of the physical archive, then González Echevarría’s archive is a conceptual shadow of Foucault’s conceptual shadow.) Instead, he believes that the appearance of a self-theorizing archive in fiction constitutes a performative act, a particular state or awareness as the narrative seeks its origins. It is not that the archive is inherent in historical fiction, he argues, but instead that it utilizes historical narratives in its quest; archival fictions revisit and repackage the dominant forms of discourse in Latin American literature since the Spanish conquest (legal, scientific, anthropological, etc.). And despite the attempt to historicize archival fiction within particular cultural moments, the extent of its conceptual nature (outside a fixed historical space or time) allows for a broader literary interpretation outside the field of

historiography that parallels changing attitudes towards the physical archive from within the discipline.

Marylyn Booth, for example, credits her reading of a turn of the century historical novel to an awareness of González Echevarría's own mapping of the Latin American novel's development and reaction to colonialism (293). She treats the case of Zaynab Fawwaz, who, after writing a biographical dictionary, an "alternative" archive, of famous Arab women in 1893 for public inclusion in the Chicago World Exposition, remained excluded from the writing of authoritative history by virtue of the gender-stratifications in place. In a separate attempt to break the gender barrier, she wrote a historical novel, *Good Consequences* (1899). Fawwaz's empowering text was meant to be the story that had not been archived, argues Booth, to counteract the malicious representation of women in daily newspapers, which greatly shaped gender politics and public order. Regarding what she calls the "productive simultaneity" of novel production and a growing dependence upon print news as shaping still-forming definitions of female subjectivity, Booth wants to know what both modes of writing told people about how to read. Here, she is not interested in origins so much as the processes at work between inception and current usage, or, as she puts it, she wants to "suggest that the historical novel can act similarly as a ghost-archive, a record of alternative possibilities and alternative visions that also, through divergent narrative, highlights and shows as arbitrary the boundaries of the official record" (277). Her position here is parallel to that of Fawwaz in her novel, since Booth claims all of this from a position not recognized by those who do have access to the archive.

Booth's argument is constitutive of contemporary critical conceptions of the archive as an agent that no longer need hold onto the illusion of containing nonfiction. If what she discovers in *Fawwaz* is an archival fiction, then her association of the novel with an archive constitutes an example of what Antoinette Burton labels archive stories, or "narratives about how archives are created, drawn upon, and experienced by those who use them to write history" (6). The archive—even the virtual archive of the internet—is defined by its physical control of information, its "material presence which structures access, imposes its own meanings on the evidence contained therein, and watches over users both literally and figuratively" (9). In other words, Burton approaches it as a panopticon, likening users to a type of figurative thief. Indeed, the characterization of power certainly is at the center of this revisionist impulse, such that many of the same concerns that characterize historiography and fiction also are reflected in theorization of any archive that would contain documents which aspire to truth-giving knowledge.

Burton maintains that

archives do not simply arrive or emerge full formed; nor are they innocent of struggles for power in either their creation or their interpretive applications. Though their own origins are often occluded and the exclusions on which they are premised often dimly understood, all archives come into being in and as history as a result of specific political, cultural, and socioeconomic pressures—pressures which leave traces and which render archives themselves artifacts of history. (6)

Just as historical texts are literary artifacts composed through literary strategies, so too are archives composed of the historical texts-as-artifacts. Yet, if historical novels can be viewed as alternate archives to access the popular imagination and compete with media images, then the exclusive power of controlled access is itself "limited" as a consequence. And the notion that a novel can act as in the capacity of an archive that

counters official designations of gender, race, and social class—whether colonial, as in the case of Fawwaz, or contemporary, in the function that González Echevarría claims—is not so farfetched. Burton points out that archives are traces of the past that may be either purposefully or accidentally collected as a form of evidence, and that they have never been limited to “official spaces or state repositories,” citing oral histories and the Rosetta Stone as prominent examples. Archives are a reflection of the narratives they contain, themselves encoded with secrets. Perhaps the young protagonist of Doctorow’s *Ragtime* serves as an analogy. Not only is he the naïve voice that unifies the text, but, as a collector of discarded objects that others find useless, he becomes the historian who discovers connections through the collection he has built.

Despite the greater attention archival theory has received recently, once again this attitude towards the democratization of archives is not a product of the last few decades. In 1940 Walter Benjamin had already articulated similar concerns in “On the Concept of History,” when he characterized the importance of historical materialism to combat accounts of the past dominated by hegemonic practices. He rhetorically asks with whom adherents of historicism empathize, and answers categorically:

The answer is inevitable: with the victor. And all rulers are the heirs of those who conquered before them. Hence, empathy with the victor invariably benefits the rulers. Historical materialists know what that means. Whoever has emerged victorious participates to this day in the triumphal procession in which the present rulers step over those who are lying prostrate. According to traditional practice, the spoils are carried along in the procession. They are called cultural treasures, and a historical materialist views them with cautious detachment. For without exception the cultural treasures he surveys have an origin which he cannot contemplate without horror. They owe their existence not only to the efforts of the great minds and talents who have created them, but also to the anonymous toil of their contemporaries. *There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism.* And just as such a document is not free of barbarism, barbarism taints also the manner in which it was transmitted from one owner to another. A historical materialist therefore dissociates himself from it as

far as possible. He regards it as his task to brush history against the grain. (290-1, my emphasis)

As if refuting Sarmiento's binarization of civilization and barbarism, Benjamin suggests that the two discourses are interdependent. He is general enough about his characterization of cultural treasures to suggest that more than physical texts, documents in this case signify cultural practices and attitudes as well.

### **The Role of the Con-Script in Con-Founding Archives**

The previous sections of this study have analyzed different resulting forms of the insertion of documents, but this act brings up questions of who is ultimately enacting and controlling this process and its, to use Benjamin's term, transmission. If we raise questions as to what constitutes an archive, then we must also address the issue of who or what constitutes an archivist. If the archive, in both Foucault's and González Echevarría's formations, can never be complete, what role does the archivist, let alone the fictional archivist, play in this process? Previously analyzed texts such as Cantor's *The Death of Che Guevara* and Roa Bastos' *Yo el Supremo* also raise these concerns, preferring to problematize the role rather than to offer final solutions. Even Doctorow's *Book of Daniel* walks a fine line between subject and object, thematizing a narrator who constructs his dissertation in the Columbia University library, mixing historical sources with revisitations of his memories as if he were his own biographer in discontinuous, nonlinear sections. Doctorow's fictional novel purporting to be a document is of course a separate issue from a novel taking on the status of a document in popular culture. Joy Kogawa's bestselling *Obasan* was transformed into a document when the Canadian

government used it as a reference in its 1988 decision to recognize its responsibility for the treatment of Japanese-Canadians during World War II.

To only analyze these novels in terms of their potential historical value would be to fall into the same ruts that Lentricchia has suggested govern contemporary historian's approach to the past. And I would suggest that despite the conceptual nature of the archive that González Echevarría proposes, he does not address the fact that he too maintains a very specific idea of what constitutes a document. He avoids a turn towards cultural studies, still privileging works that have attained canonical status. The goal of the con-script, by contrast, is to play upon the tendency to view the document as something specifically valuable for its perceived function. In this regard, Booth's earlier distinction between origins and processes serves as an instructive form of characterization. If archival fictions theorize the return to origins, then con-scripts that con-found or con-center the archive theorize the processes that have led to the creation of a valued corpus of texts which are privileged as representations of the past.

To "confound" suggests several possibilities depending upon the context: on the one hand, the term can refer to the failure to distinguish between two entities, on the other it can refer to the act of causing such confusion, of frustrating attempts. Con-scripts that con-found the archive, therefore, at first appear to establish and then valorize the central role of the archive before deconstructing the processes that have stabilized its presence. In other words, these types of con-script reveal the objective, overarching power of the archive itself to be a false construct via writing the process of its written texts' collection.

In Susan Daitch's *L.C.*, Aguinaldo Silva's *No País das Sombras*, and Francisco Simón's *El informe Mancini*, this process becomes the central axis upon which history is

re-visioned, and as a consequence, textually revised. The authors do not question whether such historical texts merit being used as official sources, but rather question how they are used and to what ends, thematizing the process of their transmission that leads to their canonization. In fact, in line with archive stories (those referred to by Burton), rather than focusing only on the documents themselves, these forms of con-script analyze the process that allows these works to become part of the archive, acknowledging that this is never an objective or ideologically-free process. Daitch, Simón, and Silva use this tactic to make political associations with their contemporary moments of production, linking historical contexts to compare the levels of text with levels of social and political repression.

With this in mind, it might be more apt to state that rather than an archeology of knowledge, a con-script that focuses upon the archive can represent an anthropology of knowledge. A few other examples may make this distinction clear. In the dissertation introduction, I referred to DeLillo's *Libra*, published the same year that Hutcheon first published on historiographic metafiction. While one of its narrative strands follows Oswald as a non-agent who simply acts out a plot already "scripted" for him, another thread follows Nicholas Branch, a historian attempting to write the definitive work on the Kennedy Assassination. Buried under the mountain of documents he has accumulated, Branch represents traditional historiography, and his efforts are ultimately "confounded" by his belief that history is found rather than constructed. His idyllic notion of a complete truth is impossible to realize.

González Echevarría has suggested that Fernando del Paso's *Noticias del imperio* (1987) may represent the final Latin American archival fiction. To illustrate differences between the two denotations, I will briefly compare the work with Mexican historian

Paco Ignacio Taibo's *La lejanía del tesoro* (1992), a con-script that also revisits the French invasion of Mexico in the 1860s. I should be clear that I do not intend con-  
scription as an evaluative term in this case. Del Paso's encyclopedic work is recognized  
as one of the most important contemporary additions to Mexican letters, while Taibo,  
who is known most for his popular hardboiled fiction, is much less ambitious in the scope  
of his narrative. What is important here, however, is how the authors address the time  
periods of their narratives. Del Paso alternates between chapters narrated in 1927 by  
Maximilian's insane wife Carlota as she looks back over her Transatlantic experiences,  
with a second narrative strand that moves chronologically forward to her ramblings, from  
the "intervention" in the 1860s through the beginning of the twentieth century. Del Paso  
incorporates innumerable letters, documents, and footnotes in this parodic representation.  
He even has a character criticize Lukács' notion of classical historical fiction. The novel  
certainly does thematize the search for origins, but the process of this scholarship is not  
addressed by the narrative or by Carlota's raving memories.

Taibo's *La lejanía* supposedly represents the third volume of Mexican poet  
Guillermo Prieto's memoirs, "lost documents" that detail the writing culture's response to  
the French invasion, as well as the republican attempts to reclaim the country (this  
volume of memoirs was never actually written, although Taibo inserts much of Prieto's  
actual writing into the narrative). Prieto opens his writing self-consciously, by suggesting  
the blurred boundaries between fiction and history as documents:

Es particularidad de la literatura, y de toda ella la novela, el crear estos espacios perfectos en que los personajes mueren con sentidos dramáticos... Es la Historia, en cambio, una novela de la verdad, hecha con materiales de bordes vagos y deshilachados, despenadero de ilusiones, gran tela repleta de remiendos, impreciso trazado de carreteras. Y sin embargo también es afortunadamente la historia, literatura del fulgor inexacto" (15)

Prieto concludes by directly addressing his reader, “Léanse pues esta notas de viajero en rebelión, escritas entonces y ahora como una novela de la historia o como una historia de la novela misma” (15-16). The self-theorizing of Prieto’s manuscripts highlights the role of writing in historical representation, but these excerpts are interspersed with oral interviews in which individuals report contradictory versions of the treasure that President Juárez took with him into the desert when avoiding capture. Indeed, as the novel’s title suggests, the treasure does remain remote throughout, despite the number of individuals who seek it for personal gain, referring to apocryphal documents supposedly discovered in the papers of the national archive. It turns out that the treasure is in fact not money but rather the national archive itself, for Juárez does not wish these invaluable documents to fall into the enemy’s hands. His choice of words is revealing: “quiero encomendarle una misión esencial para el futuro de México: la custodia de esas tres carretas donde viajan los documentos del archivo de la nación, estos tesoros inestimable que recogen nuestra historia pasada y reciente” (136). Juárez states outright that the access to the past directly influences the national future. What texts that con-found the archive such as Daitch’s, Silva’s, and Simón’s share is the revisionist ideal that revisiting the past and uncovering its misuse is vital for affecting future change.

Lest Taibo’s grand archive be placed on too high a pedestal, Juárez informs another actual historical personage, the essayist, historian, and soldier Vicente Riva Palacio, that in order to immortalize the archive’s importance, he must use its materials to write novels for popular consumption. This task is analogous to the one that Taibo has undertaken, using archival materials to fictionalize past events. Again, the author does

not concern himself with the origins of the French invasion, only how it is (textually) represented, both in contemporary and historical forms. Unlike archival fictions, neither Taibo's text nor those of the three authors studied in the following chapters glory in their status as fiction. Instead, as texts that take on the form of critical nonfiction, they confound the nature of the archive through a demonstration that the completeness or authoritativeness of any archive *is* a fiction.

## CHAPTER 13

### GOING DAITCH: SPLITTING LITERARY HEIRS

The gap in respect to present events delimits the space where historiography is manufactured, around the prince and near the public. It plays between what one does and what pleases the other, yet it can be identified with neither one nor the other. Thus the past is the fiction of the present.

—Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History* (10)

Entries read like studies in frustrated vindictiveness. To engage in self-portraiture is to court foolishness. I didn't mean to write this way. I'm fulfilling Mademoiselle Pitou's prediction, becoming a woman who mourns for the present. It's a temptation because this journal is a bound, mute book which nods in collusion and doesn't argue.

—Susan Daitch, *L.C.* (33)

My impulse to use history has something to do with storytelling itself, the need to create comparisons. History as a kind of ready-made that can be reinterpreted or misinterpreted, and translated... I tried to set up a relation between the historical sections and the parts in the present, and to chart the process of how meanings become attached to historical objects, people, events, as well as how those meanings change

—Susan Daitch, Interview with McCaffery (80)

In his discussion of the unavoidable metaphorical basis of all historical narratives based upon the philosophy of Giambattista Vico, David Price acknowledges that Hayden White has raised similar issues regarding narrativization in the field of history. However, Price continues, “White has never produced a historical narrative as such; his contributions have been strictly theoretical, very often in the form of metanarrative” (88). Arguing for the power of fiction in expressing the historical, Price puts forth a narrative that thematizes the contestation of historical interpretation: Susan Daitch's *L.C.* (1987). In a matter of speaking, according to Price, *L.C.* is the critically aware novel that White would have written. I believe we can go even further to suggest that this text also

thematizes the dawning of historical consciousness that Lukács theorized as the precursor to the historical novel, as the text consists largely of the representation and misrepresentation of a diary written by the eponymous Lucienne Crozier (L.C.) during the French Revolution of 1848.

As several scholars in addition to Price have noted (Hutcheon, Nünning), *L.C.* is staunchly feminist in its representation of patriarchal attitudes in the past, and their continued appearance in the contemporary present despite a supposed “liberation” of personal politics. In this regard, Daitch’s work joins a growing body of contemporary historical fiction written by women writers. Importantly, this body of writers’ “various agendas resist neat categorization,” as Ann Heilmann and Mark Llewellyn note in their concluding article for a special edition of *Women: A Cultural Review*, “Hystorical Fictions: Women (Re)Writing and (Re)Reading History,” even though Daitch does not figure in the list of predominantly British authors examined. Despite the resistance to classification that this booming contemporary genre exhibits, the critics who contribute to the special issue seem to want to interpret women’s new historical fiction in a very specific, almost narrow sense of re-writing, as “always already” reactionary via its focus upon the silencing of female bodies and voices. Yet it is perhaps Daitch’s introduction of critical parameters into the narrative representation of history that sets her work apart from traditional historical fiction, either written by men or women. In this regard, *L.C.* offers a form of self-theorizing, the same type that González Echevarría reserves for “archival” Latin American fictions, though Daitch is not concerned with either myth or the four discourses that the Cuban critic maintains constitute the history of writing in Latin America. Nonetheless, Daitch’s novel philosophizes about its own construction and

unraveling, about its process of archiving and production, literally re-visioning itself—rather than simply revising the past events it narrates.

Indeed, the notion of revision has received particular attention in relation to historical fiction by female authors. Heilmann and Llewellyn reflect upon Adrienne Rich's feminist "revision" of the word revision as "re-vision," the idea of seeing the past with fresh eyes. The two British literary critics suggest that this focus emphasizes "the immediacy of the historical to the contemporary, of the need for women to redress (rather than merely 'address' in Steven Connor's terms [in *The English Novel in History 1950-1995*]) the past—a female past either outside of or silent within the male tradition—in order to substantiate their present and look to the future" (142). Heilmann and Llewellyn believe that much contemporary literary production by women is demonstrative of the intense self-consciousness and parody that Linda Hutcheon identifies as central to postmodernism, though they avoid referring specifically to historiographic metafiction. Despite the playful nature inherent in such re-visioning, they are adamant that

historical fiction has a strong political resonance especially for women and ethnic writers: the imperatives behind female and ethnic (re)writings of history are inescapably different from those of white men. If one of the driving forces in the writing of historical fiction is to give a voice to the silenced Other, then for a woman or ethnic author to write into being the unaddressed past and its muted subalterns, or to rewrite an established male-authored work, presents a challenge for both author and reader. (142)

Daitch, however, is not interested in rewriting or parodying a male-authored work, but rather looking at how female-authored work is produced and interpreted by other women. As one version of Lucienne's diary relates her frustration with lack of opportunities in Northern Africa, "The male/female, Frenchification/Arabization dichotomies may be

interesting to some academic, but to me they're riddled with contradictions which hold no fascination" (273). The novel echoes these sentiments through its very structure.

In addition to its myriad of narrative levels, *L.C.* is fascinating because it avoids attempts at being pigeonholed into expectations of what contemporary female historical fiction "should constitute." For all the critical talk of newness, Diana Wallace has convincingly argued that the 1930s is the decade that the gendered association of historical fiction as a primarily male genre was first displaced (2003, 77). She points out that Lukács' 1937 definition of the classical historical novel fails to address questions of gender, while he champions Sir Walter Scott as having "rescued the novel from feminization and sentimentality" (78). She believes this change in production represents reactions to, among other political and social shifts, the First World War, the first generation of university-trained women novelists, and laws that finally placed women on equal par with men as citizens. It is important to note that Wallace is, like Heilmann and Llewellyn, primarily concerned with British authors, yet the several literary texts written between the wars she analyzes demonstrate several of the same revisionary tendencies that the latter scholars identify as "new" in more contemporary works. Wallace has expanded her analysis in *The Woman's Historical Novel: British Women Writers, 1900-2000*, in which she points out the tautological nature of the refusal to recognize the role of women in the origins of historical fiction on the grounds that these early works (some of which preceded Scott's) did not represent great public events, since women were of course typically excluded from participation in great public events (9). She also suggests a general evolutionary frame of twentieth century historical fiction, conferring postmodernism as a form of expression most utilized in the 1980s, while the 1990s was

dominated by a sense of the “end of history.” Daitch plays with this notion, as Crozier is forced to remain a largely passive spectator during the revolution despite her attempts to become involved, though she nonetheless becomes an indirect casualty of its effects. Leslie Camhi maintains that *L.C.* is representative of the negative political revolutions rarely strike at the heart of tyrannies of gender, and their momentary disordering of property relations may be expiated by a more rigid reinforcement of bodily regimes” (97).

Written about contemporary historical fiction, Price’s analysis is perhaps also representative of the confusion of past and present forms of novel when talking about the relationship of the past to the present. Price argues that *L.C.* represents a poietic novel, which he defines as one that allows readers to “experience how imagined actors in the past projected their futures by engaging in certain acts. By the same token, poietic histories are written so as to affect our future, the future of the reading audience” (4). This definition would at first seem to take in quite a range of literature, including traditional historical fiction, but Price tempers this claim with the caveat that history itself is a form or poiesis, or the “act of making in language” (8). In this regard, Daitch’s text revels in its own act of making in language, for its structure ultimately ends up being more vital to history than its characters, whether world-historical figures or invented, marginal individuals.

My intention is not to compare the arc of European and North American production. Daitch’s novel, while published in the 1980s, is not merely a postmodern text in the sense that Wallace and others characterize, nor does it signal the end of history. In fact, what is at stake is the beginnings of history, and its acute self-awareness is

communicated through a very traditional, modernist/realist form. While many of the texts that Llewellyn and Heilmann describe as revising through their focus upon the Victorian era, Daitch's novel follows events in France during a contemporary moment to Victorian Britain, yet the focus is not on rewriting those events, but rather upon analyzing how those events have been (and continue to be) rewritten in successive generations of critics, highlighting both the critic's personal involvement in ideological interpretations and the narrativization that Hayden White claims historical narratives cannot avoid. In the process, Daitch juxtaposes the nontransparent attributes of memory and interpretation, demonstrating that all acts of memory are acts of interpretation and vice versa—inescapably flawed ones.

James Mandrell claims that the dominant narrative mode in traditional historical fiction has been memory, yet suggests that recent women's historical fiction shifts the emphasis from memory to prophecy, which intimates the importance of the past for the future, paralleling Price in this regard. Mandrell draws upon Maurice Blanchot's understanding of the prophetic word, believing that the "historical implications of prophecy are enormous, since the prophet is linked to history at a specific moment of crisis" (230). Mandrell's analysis is distinct and informative on a number of levels. First, it provides a concrete goal for revisionary strategies. His prescriptive reading suggests that the place of revision in historically-oriented fiction is the "conjunction of past and future" (244), as the lived present cannot be revised. Second, his study's Transatlantic focus explores production outside the traditional centers of production and study of Northern Europe via the work of Chile's Isabel Allende, Italy's Elsa Morante, and Mexico's Elena Garro. Nonetheless, his phraseology would appear to suggest a similar

function in all three texts, once again condemning women's historical fiction to a singular course of expression:

The binary opposition between history and invention in Manzoni [who predicted the end of historical fiction in 1850] appears to be a convention of patriarchal culture, comparable to distinctions common throughout Western cultural tradition, between masculine and feminine, aggression and passivity, rationality and irrationality, representation and creativity, memory and prophecy. However... these traditional binary oppositions are called into question, since the fundamental difference between the traditional historical novel and its modern feminine offspring has precisely to do with an examination of the assumptions of history and historical discourse. (230)

As several of my previous chapters have shown, these assumptions have been equally questioned by contemporary male authors; what Mandrell means to suggest is that female writers have examined assumptions from a very different perspective, and with very different values at stake. For Mandrell, women authors accomplish their triumphant presentation of an alternative history through the narrative voice of their texts. The three authors he analyzes all rely upon a certain surreal element in their narratives, which, although not amounting to the spiritualism that Heilmann and Llewellyn identify in several British and North American authors, highlights the fictional aspect of each work, even if the act of writing is thematized in the work (as in the case of Allende's *La casa de los espíritus*). Daitch's *L.C.* is similarly prophetic, but is not simply reactionary towards traditional binaries. The process of writing is not only thematized, but rather it becomes the central narrative device. Daitch's false document of a novel presents itself as a found artifact, a nonfictional scholarly work that, like Mandrell's analysis, traces Transatlantic literary production, and whose cracks begin to appear and undermine the authoritative status of several distinct narrative levels as the reader progresses. Similar to

the group of new female scholars that Wallace identifies in the 1930s, Daitch's characters exist at moments of change, revolution, and social revision, thus Daitch shares the notion of a crisis point, but in her work this crisis does not require a mere rewriting. Instead, the crisis is the fact that this rewriting is continually taking place, both by male and female historians. Crisis is potentially productive. The novel thus represents, as Angsar Nünning puts it, "a new type of revisionist historical novel, illuminating how the content and form of that novel self-consciously explore the epistemological and ideological problems of historiography from a feminist point of view" (281). To Nünning's constructivist characterization (i.e., one that emphasizes the role of the human observer) regarding historical narratives, I would add the genre of personal writing, which both overlaps and maintains its own autonomy from historiography, and to which I will return shortly.

### **The Illusion of Authority**

Ostensibly, *L.C.* consists of the recovered 1847-48 diary of Lucienne Crozier, which is immediately preceded by two translator's forewords written by Dr. Willa Rehnfeld in 1968, one a biographical and contextual introduction, and the other an apology for the work by reference to the revolution being shown on television around the world. The diary is punctuated by footnotes belonging to both the translator and to an unknown hand that points out Rehnfeld's anachronisms and factual errors, but it is only halfway through the novel in a 1982 epilogue to the diary that the identity of this other individual, Jane Amme, a second archivist, becomes clear. Amme explains Dr. Rehnfeld's relation to the diary, before presenting and critiquing the final extant section

of the translated diary. Amme then explains how she came in contact with the diary as Rehnfeld's executrix and suggests an alternative translation in which she corrects and "revises" Rehnfeld's mistakes. Ironically, based on Amme's criticisms, the reader discovers her seemingly self-aware voice to be just as self-involved in creating, rather than representing, the history she translates. In other words, the competing readings end up becoming competing rewritings such that three personal "documents" form a triptych of sorts between Crozier's, Rehnfeld's, and Amme's texts, though it should be noted that the reader never gains access to Crozier's original words. More important to the novel is how and why this three-part process occurs, as Crozier is mediated and appropriated not by male voices, but rather by female voices. In this sense, Daitch plays with the feminist notion of writing the body, for the two translators quite literally (and liberally) write their own experiences and themselves into Crozier's journals, perhaps writing the body so adamantly that all texts and interpretations are consequently called into question.

Daitch has developed the themes of doubling, plagiarism, art influencing reality, and erasure into trademarks in her collection of short stories *Storytown* (1996) and her less well-received second novel *The Colorist* (1990), but *L.C.* is effective in great part due to the successful fusion of these issues into a single text that philosophizes the impossibility of an original. This echo of Borges' own claims regarding the inherent recycling of language has led William Anthony Nericcio to compare *L.C.* to the Argentine author's "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius," in that both problematize the status of the narrator while hinging upon the appearance, disappearance, and translation of forgotten texts, to the extent that Daitch's novel is for readers who are "zealous, perhaps even a bit pathological, about the archive" (103).

If the seemingly anonymous initials of Daitch's novel are evocative of the ambiguity inherent in the novel, Nericcio leaves little to chance in titling his essay "Rend(er)ing *L.C.*: Susan Daitch Meets Borges and Borges, Delacroix, Marx, Derrida, Daumier, and Other Textualized Bodies." Yet, while Nericcio overtly draws upon Derrida to discuss deconstruction of formal conventions of writing, Nünning suggests that the textual assertions of deconstruction cannot account for the way individuals continue to think and act in uncertainty today (284). He suggests that Daitch's work is emblematic of constructivist literature (which he links to historiographic metafiction, although the distinction between the two descriptions is not always clear) because it challenges positivist historiography and "suggests that there is not one truth about the past, only a series of versions which are dependent on and constructed by the observer rather than retrieved from the past" (296).

Despite different philosophical backgrounds and terminology, Nünning's constructivism, Price's poesis, and Mandrell's notion of prophesying focus upon the role of individuals' experiencing of the past and the importance of fiction about the past that also addresses a collective future dimension. In fact, their conclusions echo one another in their insistence that the gap between the past and the discourse used to represent that past is highly problematic to bridge, if at all possible to accomplish. Different terminology aside, Daitch's work has provoked strong reactions from those who believe it is written with a corrective eye to the future. What I wish to do in the following analysis is to use Price's, Nünning's, and Mandrell's above-mentioned analyses as points of departure in order to analyze what makes Daitch's epistemological criticism effective, for more than the novel's fictional status, its appropriation of nonfiction is what allows it

to have effect, something which the critics do not discuss. If we are to discuss the notion of novels planning for the future, then we must also discuss what this means as a next step for historical fiction, new or traditional, female or male.

### **The Illusion of Author and Authority**

The above critics note the problematic nature of individual interpretation, but what makes Daitch's strategy so effective is that she presents the text as a false document that follows the proper conventions of critical scholarship. In other words, the illusion of nonfiction discourse is tantamount to the weight the reader is willing to place upon the presentations. In some ways, the act of doubting is precisely what makes each female narrator appear so reliable, yet it turns out that each writer's self-awareness is not enough to sustain her critical endeavor. Dr. Rehnfeld is careful to contextualize Crozier's journal from the beginning in her introduction. She acknowledges that as

a footnote to this discussion on women I would like to add that we have no idea what Lucienne Crozier looked like...For every reader there will be a different mental picture of Lucienne Crozier. It is unusual in a text written by and often about women that there are so few physical descriptions...For such a personal work never meant to be read by anyone other than the writer, she felt it necessary to describe only what struck her as unusual, rather than that with which she was familiar. The decisions behind *conscious omissions on the part of the author are a continuous yet invisible chapter*. (4, my emphasis)

Rehnfeld even goes so far as to offer a note of caution to the reader, advising that "[d]iaries (especially translated ones) should be read with an element of mistrust...the final picture, in spite of the best intentions, in spite of private oaths of objectivity, tends to be distorted" (5) As a critic, Rehnfeld sounds very similar to Vargas Llosa's diegetic

author in *Historia de Mayta* (1984), who includes interviews of acquaintances of a revolutionary leader in which he tells the individuals that he is making up a fiction. Yet despite this warning, when the author reveals in the final chapter that these previous chapters have themselves been fictions, the reader is shocked because, having been included in the author's apparent earnest conversation, s/he never imagines that s/he will be also intended to be a victim of the literary game.

The same holds true in the case of Rehnfeld's apparently scholarly assertions. Nünning has noted that the novel focuses upon women's history, politics, and gender in nineteenth-century Europe, by emphasizing women's rights movement, marginalization of women's involvement in business, patriarchal laws, and the number of women dying during while in labor (286). Yet Rehnfeld's introduction has already conditioned the reader to be looking for such issues, as it is she who makes the case for a feminist project by highlighting the marginalized role of women in national media. She contextualizes the journals in literary historical terms, comparing them to the work of Henry James and suggesting that it was no accident Crozier wrote in the same year Marx published the *Communist Manifesto* and Emily Bronte her *Wuthering Heights*. Equally convincing is the historian's guise she takes on while she lectures the reader regarding the oppressive measures taken under King Louis-Philippe towards women, the role of prostitution as one of few alternatives to make money, the prohibition of secondary education, the nature of arranged marriages, and women's denial of citizenship and legal rights (2-3). Referring to real historical personages, Rehnfeld notes that even the supposed "14 Julliet" radicals attempting to liberate the country were misogynistic, an observation that becomes important for later interpretations of the journal. Even French newspapers, via satirical

political cartoons which Rehnfeld analyzes in detail, and the theater attempted to misrepresent French feminists, because through their rejection of domesticity and conventional sexuality they represented a risk to “skew society’s established lines of gender straight to hell” (3). Rehnfeld also identifies the famous painter Eugène Delacroix who Lucienne names as a lover in her journal, referencing Delacroix’s own very well documented diaries. Before finishing the introduction with what seem to be typical acknowledgments (until their details of their archival are revealed by Amme later in the text), Rehnfeld counsels the reader once again that the “voice of the translator, therefore, is destined to appear in the literal and metaphorical margins of the text” (8). Far from appearing to protest too much, her words mimic the obsessively self-conscious nature of scholarly critical discourse. In other words, her words read as authoritative, and her presentation of her translation as a feminist project sets the tone for the forthcoming journal entries—in more ways than one, it soon becomes evident.

### **In Her Own Words (Or Not)**

Crozier herself is amazingly self aware in her diary, and perhaps surprisingly so, if, as Rehnfeld has suggested, the pages were never destined for another pair of eyes. Rehnfeld’s assertion is in fact contradicted by the first journal entry almost immediately, perhaps an early warning signal, one that is easy to gloss over. Later entries, however, begin to cast suspicion upon what the reader encounters, though whether Crozier or Rehnfeld is responsible does not necessarily yet enter into the reader’s reaction:

As far as diary writing and inconsistent memory goes, it’s not enough to list a day’s actions: packing, boarding, driving, travelling. A life doesn’t

begin on page 1...History, background information, pattern of cause and effect leading up to the very present moment, a cold afternoon, four days after New Year's. Why do I write it all down? To put a present to use? I began with the intention of strictest privacy, thinking I would die of embarrassment if anyone besides myself opened this book, but the act of committing my life to paper belies a secret wish for someone other than myself to crack the binding, for there to be other witnesses. (17)

Collective memory is an unstable element, and to rely on it is to rely on something whose longevity is questionable. I could be accused of writing fiction. It will be said that she wrote what she claimed was true but the history books fail to provide corroboration. (138)

This is a story which isn't about storytelling, has no characters, no unfolding over time. Time is a context, a date scribbled on a page so as to endow the discourse on social theory a specific point in time and, therefore, a specific point of view. That date says, 'This is when I'm writing,' not necessarily 'This is when it happened'...at this juncture in the memoir, truth will yield to the more forceful stuff of embellishment and recast history. (148)

The critical distinction between history and fiction is one that the diarist plays with herself. Crozier's writing persona is particularly mature and observant for this being her first time leaving home, en route to Paris and in search of a marriage that will provide her family economic stability. At this point in 1847, she views her brother's politically defiant pranks as unseemly exhibitionism, but a gradual political awakening seems to follow her sexual awakening, as her journals chronicle a growing Madame Bovaresque disappointment with her doting husband and her eventual affairs as she begins to inhabit artists' circles in her husband's absence.

Yet art plays several roles in the text. It is through the robbery of a viscount's painting and its ransom request not being money, but rather the release of imprisoned anarchists, that Crozier begins to realize the other levels of society that surround her in Paris (31). It is also through her affair with Delacroix, who believes in "drawings as

recordings, documents of human and animal motion, a way of producing and fixing graphic memory” (45), that she learns about the art of taking on identities. She poses in Orientalist costumes for Delacroix, realizing that the artist himself can only function when taking on an imagined identity and costume, a discovery about the fluidity of identity that will affect her own disguises when she later flees France. In a pasted (perhaps unsent) letter to her best friend, the individual who will eventually preserve her diary, Crozier reveals that Delacroix’s supposedly apolitical art represents the past, “ancient Romans, Greeks, Bible heroes, but I wonder if all these don’t represent, or aren’t some kind of metaphor for 1847, despite Eugène’s ranting to the contrary” (58). As the reader soon learns, this dramatically ironic pronouncement is an equally apt metaphor for Daitch’s novel, or rather Rehnfeld’s translation of Crozier’s journals.

Crozier’s involvement with a revolutionary who writes and publishes inflammatory pamphlets proves to be pivotal. In testimonial fashion, Crozier begins to interview individuals on the street from all strata of society about their personal definitions of what “the opposition” to King Louis’ regime means to them. She then presents these answers in her diary entry, and her language shifts to become politically aware: “Under French law a woman who commits adultery is a felon, but when the July Monarchy ends we shall all take new names and no one will be responsible for a dimly remembered authority’s idea of crime” (104). Ironically, however, when Crozier attends the meetings of a revolutionary group headed by the misogynist philosopher Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, she discovers that the revolution has no room for women. In the wake of the civil unrest and scenes of described violence, she is forced to flee the country with the now-wanted Jean, and this handcuffing of destinies ironically destroys their passion.

Appropriately, to gain passage to North Africa (a reflection of Delacroix's Orientalist painting for which Lucienne posed), the couple must smuggle documents. Yet, just as intrigue begins to develop, the diaries suddenly end and a letter dated 1872 from Lucienne's friend appears, in which the friend entrusts Crozier's diary to her son, a form of explaining one part of the process of the diaries' surprising preservation.

### **Revisions Revised**

It is here that the notion of the archive in all its guises becomes heavily problematized, questioning their formation in both institutional and private settings, and this added layer of awareness, this con-centering of the archive, goes beyond what González Echevarría imagines for archival fictions. In a section entitled "Epilogue" that immediately follows the diary, Jane Amme takes over the reins and presents a problem regarding originality and faithfulness in literary history, referring to Anne Frank and Virginia Woolf, and suggesting that Dr. Rehnfeld's "language has become L. Crozier's, her framing intrudes into the picture, [thus] her involvement with the papers has become part of what the diary is" (163). Indeed, Rehnfeld's translation is motivated by the sense of urgency regarding the world around her in 1968. The translation underlines all forms of female marginalization, as Rehnfeld had become obsessed with finding reasons for what leads young women of normal, middle-class standing to become bomb throwers, and this search through the past for specific documentation has led her to create answers within the translated version. Amme transitions into an observation that almost directly echoes what Rehnfeld had cautioned the reader regarding translation in her introduction.

She explains, “I began to consider what the translator skipped, blanched at and erased, or forgot to include altogether...suddenly the gap stood out and became the whole text” (164), for Amme realizes that Rehnfeld’s prejudices have entered into the text, her neutrality as translator completely affected.

Amme writes that she was hired to execute Rehnfeld’s will before her death in 1982, in which all her private papers were to be sent to a university in Amherst, Massachusetts. Amme complies honestly, except for this translation and introduction that were never published, which she has kept for her own purposes: “stolen, as certainly as the original was, I took its copy, carrying on the tradition” (164). This admission provides the excuse to explain the dubious means through which Rehnfeld came across the diaries in the first place in France, from a family that made its living trafficking in smuggled paintings that never reached their destination, but the fooled buyers could not prosecute for their own illegal involvement. After visiting the family’s personal “archive” and noting they have the Delacroix painting in which Crozier appears, she returns to the United States with the journal, duping the dupers with the help of a certain shady businessman and executive director of an arms company, Luc Ferrier. Recognizing it has value, Ferrier requests the diary back after two days, and is blown up along with the document in an explosion in his home shortly thereafter; the culprits are not caught. Most of Rehnfeld’s translation is thus necessarily rushed, but her manner of encoding and archiving her research certainly is not. And, it turns out, Rehnfeld secretly held on to a tiny portion of the original, the final few entries that detail Crozier’s time in North Africa, and which Amme has discovered separately stored from the text Rehnfeld had prepared and which the reader has read up to this point. A textual palimpsest, Rehnfeld has

literally written over the original with her translation, providing a basis for immediate evaluation in this hidden manuscript.

Amme compares Rehnfeld's personal archives to a "kind of giant diary sealed in steel" (171), a bizarre system that expanded like an accordion to absorb future translations that no doubt also represented Rehnfeld's creative understanding of the original. Amme discovers the code to Rehnfeld's bizarre cataloguing system and extracts the diary, but to her it represents something very different. She accuses Rehnfeld of having used the diary as a medium through which to access Delacroix: "It never occurred to either Luc Ferrier or Willa that what was valuable about the Lucienne Crozier diary was the woman who wrote it, not the fact that it documented her affair with a man whose paintings were worth enough to contribute to a corporate business venture 120 years later" (185-6). Through the process of organizing Rehnfeld's papers and questioning the nature of the archive, Amme is able to pick apart Rehnfeld's textual existence in the same fashion that Rehnfeld has done to Crozier. She justifies her archival robbery after learning of Rehnfeld's numerous untaken opportunities to truly become socially and politically engaged, to write letters demanding release of political prisoners from Argentina's Dirty War. Instead, the deceased never moved beyond textual engagement. Her revisions never left paper; Amme seems to insist on bridging the gap between words and actions and that her crime provides the opportunity to rectify the silences of women writers, both imposed and voluntary.

### **A Tale of Two Translations**

Having complicated the reader's understanding of the original text, Amme now presents Rehnfeld's translation of Crozier's final months of journal writing, before providing her own translation of the same passages, using the original she steals from Rehnfeld's collection. Amme has suggested that Rehnfeld's understanding of French was rudimentary, but since we are never shown Crozier's original, we cannot verify this claim. While both comment upon the control of women in Muslim culture, the differences between the two versions are astonishing. From different diary dates (the willful omissions on the part of the translator to which Rehnfeld referred in her introduction?) to radically different interpretations of interactions with locals and expatriates, the two versions suggest two entirely different Luciennes. Rehnfeld's diarist provides discursive lectures on social relations that resonate more with contemporary perspectives, waxing that the "frugal economy of movement and limited discourse between men and woman of different cultures, or of the same origins, means a woman alone is an occasion for danger" (197). Amme, on the other hand, does not limit the use of disguises to a paranoid Jean, but also has Crozier attempting to pass as a man and join the revolutionary cause against French colonialism.

Perhaps the most surprising deviation is each translator's understanding, tellingly, of Crozier's representation of her body. Rehnfeld presents Crozier as having contracted tuberculosis, and her final entries document her gradual debilitation until she is no longer able to write and sends her diary back to French for posterity. Amme's Lucienne, on the other hand, laments that "I'm the same woman who went to 14 Julliet meetings and fought on the barricades in February but [here] I'm treated like a chronic invalid" (269). As David Price points out, Jane Amme reads the diary in figurative rather than literal

terms, where quarantine doesn't refer to outbreaks of disease, but rather to a woman who "is a victim of the repressive society of North Africa" where the illness metaphor serves to "describe her personal condition and the chronic ailment of her culture—that is, the inequality between the sexes" (97). Price suggests that this reading is confirmed by a particular entry's reference in November to the metaphor; however, two issues problematize such a reading. First, Rehnfeld's version does not reference any entries in November. On October 30, 1848, Crozier writes a letter to her friend which reveals her intention to mail the diary before her death. This could be another willful omission on the part of Rehnfeld, which Amme's authoritative stance would certainly suggest, with her critique of Rehnfeld's anachronistic reference to dynamite (which wasn't invented until 1886), but her own version is complicated by her own personal involvement in the text, something Price notes earlier but strangely ignores when claiming authority for Amme's text.

Certainly, Amme plays the same credibility game that Rehnfeld did, pointing out her own errors, stating that the reader should be aware of her biases as a translator, while taking responsibility for stretching willing belief that there even exists a notebook of diaries (220). She even adopts some of the same language, claiming her epilogue is not a memoir itself, but rather a "Book II, a running commentary in the *margins* of the diary" (220, my emphasis). Yet she also claims that she shares something intimate with Crozier that Rehnfeld does not, in the sense that Amme's story continues where Lucienne's leaves off, with Rehnfeld acting merely as "connective tissue between us" (221). She has earlier revealed that she is writing under a pseudonym, though only her memoir-epilogue will make this clear: "Amme is Emma spelled backwards, for my grandmother, for

Goldman and for Bovary. *L'âme* is the French word for soul and there's a pun on aim" (171).

In between the translations, she reveals her involvement with student radicalism in at the University of California at Berkeley in 1968, a moment when the United States entered its own moment of crisis. The parallels with the failed French Revolution of 1848 are made explicit, as Amme and her female friends are prevented by their male companions in student groups from taking active roles in planned acts of insurgency. Their male counterparts seem more interested in using their status as fringe leaders to sleep with women. She is critical of the culture in which observers refuse to become involved, referring to photographers continuing to snap photographs while someone is brutally clubbed instead of helping the individual, and this would seem to provide a rationale for her disappointment in Rehnfeld's mere literary activism. In fact, her disappointment in the artist's engagement resembles Rehnfeld's Crozier's eventual disillusionment with Delacroix.

Yet a subplot in the mounting violence is the appearance of a serial murderer-rapist who also attacks Jane. She narrowly escapes death by spraying him in the face with her painting art cans (a far more practical application of her studies than Rehnfeld's art criticism). The police refuse to believe that her case is related to the others, so when she discovers from a newspaper photograph that her rapist is none other than Luc Ferrier, Rehnfeld's contact for the diary, she takes matters into her own hands and murders him by bombing his home, though the media imagines it has been an act of terrorism due to his involvement with arms manufacturing. Headlines from the archive of newspaper clippings she has maintained from this period are inserted into her narrative, though her

own personal production has been limited. As she points out, “part of the nature of being a fugitive curtails documentation. I wrote on little bits of paper, kept them for a week, then threw them away...A memoir, like turning the projector to rewind, seeing and hearing the film all over again, that’s one remedy. I altered names, dates, places, so if the book were found, no one, including myself, would be incriminated” (257).

This casually stated detail raised an important question: is the referred to memoir what is presented here as an epilogue? Has she changed all the names and dates in what she presents here? What would have changed for Amme to feel more comfortable about her situation on the run from the police? What, then, would stop Crozier from having similarly embellished upon her own experiences in her “original” work? Amme ends her self-description with a declaration set apart from the paragraph above it: “In my translation I’ve tried to be true to the original” (262). Yet in what sense? Faithful to the words, or faithful to the ideas presented? It is very possible that the series of archived interpretations that follow Crozier’s writing are incapable of finding a truth precisely because the initial representations were not “true” in the sense that the critics are looking for. Such concerns force all forms of critical intervention in the novel to be re-situated. Given her crime, Amme’s footnote invasion of Crozier’s translation to link street “fighters” to what we would call terrorists in contemporary society becomes contextualized.

Believing herself to be under watch by the FBI in connection with the crime, she takes on a new name and goes underground, where she continues to fear that she is being pursued by FBI agents going through her own informal archives: her trash. Rehnfeld never knew any of this history when hiring her, of course. Yet, now that the reader does,

it becomes clear that Amme is no less guilty of transposing herself onto Crozier than has been Rehnfeld. Jane's Lucienne is a paranoid traveler who worries that informants are reporting on Jean's and her whereabouts, and who frequently takes on disguises to avoid the authorities. She notes that rape carries severe punishment, but that since she is so infrequently ever allowed out or alone, this possibility is even less likely (269). She speculates on Jean's sexual involvement with boys as if echoing Andre Gide's *The Immoralist*. An acquaintance from Paris who plays a periphery role in Rehnfeld's version here transforms into a friend and fellow-conspirator against the French and their unjust system of colonial imperialism over the Algerian population, and sounds suspiciously similar to the relationship Amme shared with female friends in Berkeley who were also forced to hide their identities after assisting in the bomb blast. It would be tempting to read the murder of Luc Ferrier as a transgression of patriarchal laws, laws which here benefitted men in the same way they did in Crozier's time, but there is no final denouement brought about by the actions. Rather than citing reasons of imminent death for sending her journal, this Lucienne worries that she will be arrested, though the contradictions are also present in the different date of the letter. The journal is sent to avoid incriminating others, an echo of Amme's own memoir of changed dates and names. Crozier mistakes the sounds of a neighbor pounding passages from the Quran into her wall for the police knocking on her door. She has condemned herself to an endless repetition of not knowing, and this is somehow an appropriate way to end a narrative that has perpetually kept its audience in a state of not-knowing. Like Amme and her murder of Ferrier, each triumph only brings a new set of problems to be resolved. Unfortunately,

some of these problems cannot be resolved, and the suspicion cast over each version of history in this novel is one of them.

### **Works Sighted**

The novel ends by returning briefly to a monologue by Jane, where she too worries that a disappeared female neighbor has been taken by the police in connection with a murder she's read about in the newspaper. She imagines a nearly infinite archive, since "newspapers were all around me, hundred, thousands of stories. There was evidence everywhere I looked; it was just a question of putting all the pieces together" (282). She suggests that Rehnfeld's illegitimate means of supplying her own archive robbed another individual's archive of the chance of legitimate marketplace value. Yet it is not this type of profit to which Mandrell refers to when he suggests that contemporary women's historical novels are more prophetic than memory-oriented. Crozier writes in her first entries (or would appear to have written) that she becomes a woman who mourns for the present (33), but Mandrell maintains that the actual present cannot be revised, only the metaphorical point where past and future interact. With the hopes of changing the future, both of Crozier's translators attempt to interpret the past via the present that surrounds them, but end up changing how that past is understood.

Price suggests that through "juxtaposition of two perspectives on history within the boundaries of a novel and through her emphasis on the importance of philological attentiveness, Daitch creates an interpretation of history that simultaneously shows us how historical reality results from contradictory discursive production processes" (116). I

think even more important to this discussion is that personal narratives are also called into question. While these translations-cum-memoirs document socio-historical attitudes, we should not confuse the translations with history. This is of course what Daitch initially invites the reader to do, but the text is structured so that such an approach must be revised in the process of reading. Her novel is a fictional archive in miniature, constituting a historical accumulation of texts and research that suggests not that the translations are invalid, but that the act of archival is inherently subjective. *L.C.* is indeed a novel in the spirit of Hayden White as Price suggests, yet this is because it demonstrates that the act of collecting history (documents, artifacts), just as much as the writing of historical narratives, is itself a form of narrativization.

But Daitch indirectly suggests a future course of action. She certainly comments upon the repeated or continued attitudes maintained by men towards women, ironically by groups that consider themselves most apt to change problematic laws or social attitudes. By undermining the authority of a scholarly parody of conventions, she brings to attention the type of language via which those laws or attitudes are officially communicated. The change for the future must come in how critically the reader analyzes material presented, regardless of the apparent authority of the source.

The point here is not that either historiography or fiction represents a more privileged position from which to comment upon the past to educate present readers, but that acts of history are forms of fiction, whether intentional or not. Vargas Llosa's *Historia de Mayta*, which similarly manipulates its readers, though always from a perspective of fictional discourse rather than nonfictional discourse, is less successful in this project, not because it marginalizes the role of women (and they are most certainly

peripheral to the world of men represented), but because in the process of confusing history and fiction, he maintains the dichotomy that fiction is inherently invention and falsification, while capitalized History remains in the realm of discernible truth. Daitch, on the other hand, demonstrates that the issue is open to revision. Lucienne Crozier's initials grace the cover of Daitch's novel just as these same initials supposedly grace the cover of Crozier's fictional journal, but the reevaluation of representation, whether present or past, is presented as only an "initial" step.

Daitch has said in an interview that she's "not interested in writing a straightforward fictional narrative about historical and political events because it creates a false conversion. To simply recreate history, you court the world of historical fiction, tipping the scale towards romance even. Foucault writes about using history paradigmatically to understand the present in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of Prisons*" (McCaffery 72). Power and discourse certainly are central to the development of the novel. Yet, this same exercise of power informs the process of reading and revising from the present through archival sources. In this regard Daitch's work is more than revisionary historical fiction that defies gender categorizations. It is a new paradigm for using the creation of historical narrative to understand present narratives, regardless of genre.

## CHAPTER 14

### IN THE SHADOW OF GIANTS: SILVA'S SELF-REFLEXIVE ROMANCE-REPORTAGEM

If Latin American writing is characterized by an awareness of history and ideology in ways that recall the seminal ideas of Michel Foucault, homosexuality cannot be viewed as simply the psychological complex of specific individuals, but rather as an intrasubjective matter that has ultimately to do with the controlling social dynamic and how it defines the individual's participation in it. If this is true, the examination of homosexual topics, like other topics that have the advantage of underscoring differences and pointing out controversies with high ideological stakes, can be an integral part of a study of how Latin American fiction deals with questions of historical dynamics.  
—David William Foster, "The Search for the Text"

#### **Novel Reporting**

Aguinaldo Silva's *No País das Sombras* (1979) is not a historical novel. It certainly is a historicized novel in the sense that Steven Connors has defined the expression. Set in the present, the novel "analyzes" the analysis of history and its writing through the use of historical material, some archived in public institutions and some private, to note the continuance of past cultural prejudices and military practices in contemporary Brazil. Because it raises issues of historical reliability, translation, and what constitutes an archive, Silva's novel documents several of the same concerns that Daitch's *L.C.* does regarding individual responses to government in the 1960s, though his novel was written in very different circumstances and concerns a different type of transformation. If Daitch concerns herself with the influence of politics upon gender revolutions, Silva is more preoccupied with looking at shifts in sexual politics.

Yet, because Silva (who in addition to writing novels and soap opera scripts for television, was also a police reporter, and perhaps not surprisingly also shares common writing practices with Eloy Martínez and Ivan Ângelo), is responding to specific cultural moments under the Brazilian dictatorship, his approach takes on a separate dimension. In effect, he plays with the strategies used by many Brazilian journalists who turned to novelized forms through what has been termed the “romance-reportagem” (loosely translated as a “nonfiction novel,” despite its literal rendition being “novel-journalistic reporting”) to report on current issues, yet strategically pass political censorship. As Amelia Simpson explains,

romance[s]-reportagens formed part of a culture of resistance. Authors took advantage of censor’s relative lack of attention to books, these being a less public and thus less threatening form of expression than, for example, theater, newspapers, or popular music. The romances-reportagens typically began as investigative assignments for newspapers or news magazines. Authors/journalists would then develop their stories further, by using fictional elements to varying degrees, by expanding true stories into book form where topics such as the connections between death squads and police force might be raised with less fear of censorship. (1)

The specific forms of narration marked what would become a general tendency in the literature of the decade (Cosson 67). Authors were interested in marking the present as a historical moment, rather than necessarily the culmination of a continuous historical trajectory. If the notion of this journalistic practice emphasizes the immediacy of documenting contemporary events, however, then Silva’s historical focus upon colonial Brazil may seem paradoxical. Yet his novel is not itself an example of romance-reportagem, despite commenting upon contemporary issues; rather, it thematizes the process of writing a romance-reportagem, along with the accumulation of materials/knowledge for said writing. Silva’s diegetic author is a news magazine

journalist who, in a virtual representation of Simpson's above definition, embarks upon a process of research that links his historical subject with current events in 1968 after receiving an assignment.

In many ways, *No País das Sombras* exemplifies the culmination of an approach that Silva had been developing in successive previous works. His most recently published previous fiction, *A República dos Assassinos* (1976), collects fragments of memoirs, depositions, newspaper columns, and personal writing of various individuals who become involved in the web of a corrupt head of a Brazilian death squad who is eventually prosecuted for his murder of several criminals, yet is ultimately absolved and returns to active police duty. In this case the documents serve more as an excuse for the narrative, as they are mixed with third-person narration, than as texts that confuse fictional and nonfictional discourse. Yet, Silva foregrounds the role of the media in contributing to the process, both of prosecution, and of romanticization of the criminal. One reporter realizes in all the interviews he has conducted that the witness' testimony has been veiled and unhelpful, most likely composed of lies (130-31). He sees the policeman as paradoxically both culpable and victimized by the relations between police and criminals in this "republic of murderers." This reporter suggests that it is not the policeman, but the society composed of those individuals who supported and benefited him (from his mistresses to his associates to the reporters who sold stories from his exploits to the prosecutor who makes a case out of him). Yet, part of the policeman's fame is due to separate reporter in the text, who shares Silva's first name, and who writes a column that also shares attributes with romance-reportagem, as if fictionalizes real events in order to present them to a wide audience. The problem here is that the reporter colludes with the

policeman by glamorizing his crimes as a social vigilante, to the point that, when discovered, his columns are used as evidence in the subsequent trial, and the once-honest journalist is shunned by the journalism community and greater society. In other words, Silva already demonstrates a certain self-awareness of the fine textual line between narrative and journalism, and he understands the power of both modes of writing as capable of sensationalism.

Assis Brasil linked Silva's name with romance-reportagem regarding this novel, drawing a strong line between aesthetics and politics, and showing a strong preference for the former. Brasil complains that "alguns escritores, temendo talvez o seu comprometimento, falam num produto híbrido chamado romance-reportagem onde se poderia justificar qualquer inaptidão para tratar, artisticamente...um assunto bruto de jornal" (1977, 3). Assis believes this new writing modality represents a serious problem for contemporary Brazilian literature, but suggests that the genre has been saved in several cases only by the quality of writing. He applauds Silva's novel because its various threads highlight the artistic side of the nonfiction novel, despite their use of elements of nonfiction writing. In other words, Brasil values the aesthetic of the work, but largely ignores the sociological implications of its portrayal of legitimized police violence in Brazilian society.

It is precisely this sociological aspect that leads Amelia Simpson to condemn Silva's subsequent work, *O Crime Antes da Festa: A história de Angel Diniz e seus amigos* (1977, no relation to Ângelo's *A Festa*), as "tabloid journalism" that instead of challenging the social order or denouncing the "impunity of the wealthy," simply exploits "the public's appetite for sex, violence, and glimpses into the bedrooms of the

rich and famous” (7). Silva’s portrayal of the murder of a beauty queen socialite does not legitimize violence, yet the victim is shown in a light that suggests she merited her untimely end, a representation that enraged feminists for its failure to recognize the problems of violence against women inherent within the culture (7). This critique would suggest none of Silva’s self awareness exercised in his earlier *A República dos Assassinos*, yet his following novel, *No País das Sombras*, would seem to internalize such issues, combining elements from both *A República* and *Antes da Festa* to analyze the process (as opposed to merely the effects) of romance-reportagem, which was reaching its high point towards the end of the decade, just as he was publishing all three works.

### **Not So Novel Origins of Romance-Reportagem?**

The twentieth-century origins of this hybrid genre have been debated. The text most often referenced as emblematic of romance-reportagem is Jose Louzeiro’s *Lúcio Flávio, o passageiro da agonia* (1975), which has similarly to *Antes da Festa* been criticized for its romanticization of its eponymous criminal in the process of denouncing the social conditions which created his existence and the police death squads that supported his lifestyle.<sup>120</sup> Critics such as Medeiros and Cosson trace the form of production to the North American tradition of nonfiction novel developed in the 1950s and 1960s, frequently citing Truman Capote’s *In Cold Blood* or Norman Mailer’s *Armies*

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<sup>120</sup> Lúcio Flávio was developed into a film that similarly played with the lines of documentary filmmaking. As Randal Johnson points out in his discussion of filmic adaptations of Louzeiro’s work, the transformations in film and literature cannot be divorced from the socio-cultural moment, as Brazilian Cinema Novo demonstrated a parallel development to that of romance-reportagem in this same time period (36-7).

*of the Night* (both of which I briefly discussed in Chapter 9). However, Rildo Cosson argues that the Brazilian writers were not simply imitating a preexisting model. First he notes the often overlooked difference between the nonfiction novel and New Journalism, the former being a mode of literature that utilizes elements of journalistic reporting, and the latter being a journalistic practice that rejects the expected objectivity of reportage to develop a more narrative writing style (72). Cosson points out that Brazilian journalism had mixed literature and politics until the beginning of the twentieth century, and that the move away from this style already demonstrated the influence of a capitalist North American practice. The return to this earlier practice must be seen in conjunction with the concomitant rise of testimonial literature in Latin America: “es justamente en ese deseo de testimoniar su tiempo, rescribiendo la historia y denunciando las injusticias sociales, que la novela testimonial se hermana con el romance-reportagem... [Con respeto] a la imposición de un patrón cultural sobre los hechos narrados por el camino del realismo y la denuncia social” (75).

Cosson’s emphasis is upon noting the specific conditions under which Brazilian writers operated during the Dictatorship, particularly in the decade of the 1970s after the military regime passed the Institutional Act Number Five in December of 1968, which paved the way for absolute control over artistic production and political involvement. And, of course, it is no accident that autumn 1968 is exactly where Silva directs the reader’s attention, as the journalist-narrator attempts to write a text that he comes to realize will never be published or supported by the government. This not due to its political content, but rather its sexual commentary on the historical roots of the country, as it follows a reconstruction of the past through a series of documents that reveals an

official cover-up in the early seventeenth century. This mysterious execution of two gay soldiers begins to take on more meaning for both the journalist and the reader, for it represents, as David William Foster phrases it, “a homosexual crime as metonymic of a founding act of social repression and the typological echoes that exist between contemporary political experience and successive historical events” (1988b, 332). Indeed, Silva’s narrator also dramatizes the relationship of the individual to (or against) society, as he too succumbs to police repression.

The theme of construction(s) of gay identity is not new in Brazilian fiction. David William Foster traces its literary origins to Machado de Assis’ contemporary, Adolfo Caminha, who in 1895 published *Bom-Crioulo*, a “founding literary text” of its time (1988a, 13). Foster maintains that it is not only “the first explicit gay novel in Brazilian (and Latin American) literature, but that it may be alleged to be one of the first such works in modern Western literature” (14). In fact, he notes that a 1983 collection of Latin American gay literature is comprised so greatly of Brazilian texts that it is catalogued as Brazilian literature (1991, 55). He suggests two distinct modalities for the expanding genre of gay writing: marginal pulp novels, and “serious fiction” that employs “reconhecidas estratégias de escritura pós-modernista— em especial a intersecção do historiográfico não fictício com o simbólico ficcional” (56). If Amelia Simpson has referred to Silva’s earlier work, *Antes da Festa*, as tabloid journalism (pulp, in other words), Foster identifies *No País das Sombras* as an example of serious fiction, as its intricate portrayal of homosexuality combines post-modern awareness that moves between fact and fiction. Indeed, we could even go so far as to say that Silva responds to criticism regarding romanticization with the criminal, for his journalist attempts to present

the two executed soldier as victims throughout the novel, though as successive layers of corruption are exposed, the reader (through the narrator) comes to understand that nobody involved in the affair is innocent. While not as overt as the recriminations in *A República* against all individuals of society who willingly represent part of the “system,” Silva’s message here is equally strong.

Foster believes Silva follows the model of writers such as Carlos Fuentes, Haroldo Maranhão, Martha Mercader, or Ricardo Piglia, but this is somewhat misleading. While Piglia’s *Respiración artificial* (1980) comments upon the persecution of political dissidence under the Argentine dictatorship and the other authors examples of provide (new) historical fiction, none of them is interested in thematizing the process by which that history is inscribed into the official record. In this aspect, Silva’s text demonstrates an entirely separate form of critical awareness regarding textual construction.

### **Standing in the Shadows**

Silva leaves little doubt as to the self-awareness of the text in his note to the reader, which plays with the conventions of fictional texts in which legal clauses distance the author’s work from “actual events.” At the same time, he refers to the practice in romance-reportagem of changing the names of real individuals (though their true-life referents are easy to identify):

As personagens, baseadas embora em pessoas reais, surgem aqui como seres de ficção. Os nomes próprios mencionados ao longo do livro devem ser considerados pseudônimos. A ação é, por vezes, roubada da realidade, mas acaba por ter uma solução imaginária. Qualquer semelhança entre a literatura e a história é acidental. Tudo isso quer dizer, mais

objetivamente, que nada aqui é original—nem mesmo essa nota, que é apenas fruto de leituras passadas.

In similar to fashion to how Lidia Jorge would structure *A costa dos murmúrios* in 1984, Silva's novel opens with an apparently autonomous work that sets the stage for the rest of the narrative, in this case "A Chegada." The narrative fragment is dated from 1588, thus the reader can infer that it acts as one of the "supposedly historical documents" mentioned on the title page of Part One. Initially, the level of irony associated with this description is not immediately clear, but it rapidly becomes so. "A Chegada" is in fact an account from a Portuguese ship arriving on the coast of Brazil after nearly forty days (and forty nights, inevitably) without seeing land. Unfortunately, upon arriving, the final night does not give way to day. The shipmates are consumed by terror when an eclipse leaves them in extended darkness. Hence, they term this new land "o país das sombras," the land of shadows, though this appellation will take on metaphorical dimensions in the contemporary Brazil from which Silva's diegetic reporter writes, for as he will conclude at his narrative's terminus, "[A] única função do passado era explicar o presente e ajudar a modificá-lo" (96).

### **History through the Present**

It is important to differentiate the process of archival research that Silva dramatizes from concomitant literary projects that shared similar goals of presenting the archive as commenting upon the present and critiquing Brazil's oppressive regime through historicized writing. In the same year that Silva published *No País*, fellow

journalist Ivan Ângelo also published *A Casa de Vidro*, a series of five novellas detailing contemporary social issues such as class violence and absolute government control as perpetually repetitive acts in Brazil's history. While each narrative is preceded by an epigraph, taken from an ostensibly historical text from the colonial period written in antiquated Portuguese, that describes an issue which reappears in the contemporary representation, the novellas don't initially appear to be interrelated. However, in the final section, when the first-person narrator discovers an eighteenth century document and edits it for the reader to see, it suddenly becomes clear that the epigraph excerpts have been culled from this letter (which allegedly has been subsequently reprinted as a newspaper article). Though presented as a found artifact, this lost document is in fact an invention on Ângelo's part. Relying upon convention, the reader has assumed that the epigraphs represented a nonfictional document that had been archived and researched. The author uses this assumption regarding the archive's power and veracity to connect the past to the present, though he does not actually write about historical events. Silva, on the other hand, while sharing similar concerns, investigates the process through which historical documents gain the importance which readers associate with them.

Immediately following the supposed historical document detailing a crew's arrival in Brazil, then, the reader find Silva's unidentified diegetic journalist reading the same text just presented and writing from inside the national library, where he is attempting to research a man who arrived in what is today known as the northeastern town of Olinda on the boat that "A Chegada" references (Belaguarda). The journalist has traced Antônio Bentes de Oliveira's involvement in a particular military scandal in 1604 that slowly takes shape in the novel. The first clue of the extensive role that the library

archives are to play in the narrative is perhaps Silva's most overstated (and overtly fictional) intertextual allusion: the blind librarian who assists the narrator in his project by exploring endless corridors in search of forgotten texts is named Luis Borges. In a metafictional gesture, the narrator explains his project, and it becomes evident that we might already be caught inside its labyrinth: "Com um breve resumo do que acontecera em 1604, a história de como chegara ao manuscrito que Antônio Bentes de Oliveira deixara ao morrer, e uma transcrição comentada de alguns trechos desse manuscrito, eu teria, pronto para ser submetido ao Instituto Nacional do Livro (que certamente patrocinaria a edição), o capítulo inicial do meu livro" (17). "A Chegada" has served as the introduction, and a summary of Oliveira's journal's preservation over time is soon to follow, suggesting initially that the text he refers to is in fact the one the reader currently witnesses. Yet, also importantly, with the above commentary the journalist reveals his personal involvement in the research as being selfish. He sees the book as a way to get out of his current job and finance his writing career.

After providing this information, the narrative moves to a literary history of Oliveira's journal, tracing its loss and accidental discovery in the twentieth century by the wife of an American diplomat. In 1962, the journalist, a then-visiting scholar in the United States, visits a "Brazilian Carnival" themed party at their house and manages to reverse the order of things by leaving with the narrative first written on Brazilian soil. Like Daitch's Rehnfeld, the narrator takes the document under dubious circumstances, but justifies the action in terms similar to Jane Amme's own, as he wishes to put the text to social use, rather than allow it to serve as a mantle or museum piece, an artifact stolen from Brazil by foreign powers. The journalist then provides excerpts from the

confessional journal and comments upon them, highlighting his role in the process by expunging segments that are not pertinent to his case. At the same time, the journalist is always careful to cast doubt upon his various materials. On more than one occasion, he suggests that Oliveira's document is not an objective account, but rather that the "relato cai num intimismo literariamente bastante falho" (19-20) or that it demonstrates "virtuais qualidades literárias" (22).

Oliveira physically describes on first sight a recently disembarked soldier who is to become his partner in "crime." He also describes his first unexpected sexual encounter with this Pedro Ramalho de Sá, fully recognizing that "não sei o que o futuro nos reserva" (21). The narrator intrudes to note the incompleteness of the document, whose narrative temporarily ends here, theorizing that the rest of the section may have been destroyed. In an extended footnote, the author provides a part of the journal earlier excised, a section on military encounters with the Spanish that describes the men's witness of another soldier's death in the jungle. The head of the military garrison, the general-provedor, reacts to the death with more than professional courtesy, and they speculate what could have produced such lament from a married and fervently Catholic man.

It is at this point that the journalist steps out from his research to contextualize the project through references to current politics in 1968. He realizes that "a possibilidade de compor um estudo histórico, a única coisa que me movera inicialmente me parecia, então, cad vez mais distante" (30). While he had hoped to apply to the National Institution of Books for research funding, he recognizes the danger of including a text that suggests intimate relations between the general and his fallen soldier, for "que conselheiro do INL,

por mais liberal que fosse, poderia aceitar essa minha insistência, em torno do assunto sem considerá-la—ai de mim!—uma autêntica provocação?” (30). While Silva may be interested in serious fiction, his ultimate goal seems to be that the reader understand his message; his metaphors are anything but subtle. It is of course Borges the librarian who vocalizes what has been intimated, despite the journalist’s objections, namely that “[P]arece que você vai acabar fazendo uma analogia com o que se passa atualmente” (31). The narrator claims that he was unaware of this intent, as he’d always thought that History was important in and of itself, and that attempting to corral it to fit researchers’ interests represented dishonesty. Silva’s strategic position from fiction rather than historiography, however, allows him to present character viewpoints from this perspective while going ahead and making historical moments serve his own ends.

Silva ultimately presents the journalist as an individual shaped by the events around him, a virtual male Dr. Rehnfeld who wishes to hide in his writing, but who is forced to come into contact with the world. His female friend Teresa, a political activist who is forced to leave Brazil to go into exile in 1968, criticizes him on this point. She lectures him on the reality all around him, for “[a]s coisas estão no ar, porque a nossa geração está sendo esmagada, enquanto você só se preocupa com o que os seus dois soldados andavam fazendo em 1604” (32). The narrator expresses a sense of guilt for not feeling the need to be politically engaged. He will stay in Brazil, not because he professes to be a “herói ou o mártir” in the sense of Santiago’s Graciliano Ramos in *Em Liberdade*, but because he has lived outside the country and hasn’t had to become involved in recent events. As he watches her board the airplane, the journalist realizes that Teresa has used him to allay suspicion for her departure for precisely this lack of political involvement, as

his presence provides a smoke screen of a normal trip from which she plans to return. Despite her critique of the journalist's solely textual interests, before departing Teresa provides him with a gift she has discovered: a seventeenth century diary written by a bourgeois foreign courtesan, Tália, a woman who knew the two male lovers. Her parting words are that he will participate in the cause in his own way. His meeting with Teresa proves pivotal to his writing and his lived reality, as not only does he, almost out of a sense of obligation, begin to make connections between the past and the present in his research, but he also notices that he is now under surveillance by a policeman.

The journalist recognizes that the diary is vital to the continuation of the project he has felt stagnant on for so long, but problem with its entries is that they have been written in an absurdly archaic Latin. The narrator therefore must enlist the assistance of a fellow reporter, Nilson Lage (who is in fact an actual Brazilian journalist and university scholar), in translating the text, though the diary becomes problematized on three levels which parallel the complications raised by Daitch's *L.C.*, despite inclusion of several fragments in the novel. First, the journalist's interpretation is entirely dependent upon what Lage has translated, an issue he does not question in the text. Second, the journalist is mediating the journal, choosing which sections are relevant to his interests, and not presenting an entire picture; the reader has no way to gauge what biases inform his selection. Third, the journalist also questions her reliability as a narrator, an act which legitimizes his own authority over the text: "É preciso que eu seja sincero com o leitor. Alguns dados, já nas primeiras páginas da tradução feita por Nilson, me indicaram que Tália não era inteiramente digna de crédito" (38). What he doesn't appear to take into account is that her fantastic descriptions of nature echo the wonder and inability to

verbalize the unknown that many travelers reported in their writings. What does become apparent is that Tália has witnessed Pedro's arrival in Olinda, along with the military general's immediate interest, which "horrifies" the women watching, including his wife.

Before continuing with Tália's diary, the journalist imagines in detail what the first conversation between the new soldier and the general must have been, but is careful to admit that there is no documentation of such an encounter on de Sá's immediate disembarking (46), but he is writing this with more knowledge than he had at the moment of receiving the diary. Tália reveals through a visit by Father Barruel, the church representative, that she is being held accountable for corrupting the two soldiers who have been executed, because it was she who provided them a space in her house for amorous encounters, acts that went against "nature." Tália's response that nature is nature in constant expansion, rather than controlled by God, helps fuel a conversation that dramatizes the two vastly different understandings of homosexuality of the time. She uses his own religious language to deconstruct his argument after questioning whether "lhe ocorreu que o sistema de vida inventado por nós na Europa não tenha aqui a menor utilidade?" (50).

In parallel fashion to Tália's experience, the journalist also begins to note the presence of authorities. The National Library is no longer the safe haven of books that he had come to know, as he hears a man being dragged away by police and watches through the window as the patrol car drives away. Writing is no longer simply writing for him, a shift in attitude that is apparent from his dismay that passersby on the street pretend out of fear to see nothing of the arrest. Yet he returns to the two documents procured by Borges, as with each new piece of material, the details of the relationship between

Oliveira, de Sá, and the general come into greater focus. The first is a photocopy of the military chief's general report, written to the Royal Court in Portugal, demanding more men for reinforcements against the natives. His discourse is self-authorizing, and he suggests that only one class of people is capable of deciding the good of all others. The inclusion of the document represents a manner of speaking to the current military regime's similar attitude. But it is the statement of condemnation that finally provides the reason for the two soldiers' execution. They are accused of having murdered the general in order to subvert the crown, confessing (under torture) that their "ideias consistiam na criação de um Estado separatista no qual seriam devidamente liquidados todos aqueles que se mostrassem fiéis à Coroa" (71). Based on the other testimonies we have read, such confessions seem absolutely false, which suggests that the men have been executed for their sexual orientation. This becomes important because, as Silva's narrator has noted, these events serve as examples of the founding moments of Brazil as a nation.

Constant shifting between nonfictional and fictional referents, past and present, characterize the narrative's continual spiraling towards its climax. It would seem that Silva is attempting to equally apply historical and fictional attributes to every form of writing his narrator encounters. The journalist both reads and invents dialogues relating to Tália's descriptions. He also encounters various forms of media, learning in newspapers about the imprisonment of actual historical personages (Elinor Brito, for example), while hearing on the radio about fictional scholars who represent his old mentality of valuing texts without understanding specific socio-cultural moments of production. This transformation is also the narrator's downfall.

## **Making the Wright Call**

The relation of past to present, or better stated, control over the past and control over the present, is invoked through Silva's strategy of parallelism: for every historical discovery the narrator makes, a contemporary echo appears to follow. Just as the soldiers experienced an eclipse upon their arrival to Brazil, now the narrator experiences a blackout of power that leaves him in the darkness, both literal and figurative. Forced to listen instead to the radio, he hears an interview with a North American Brazilianist, Benjamin Wright, who represents the colonialist "might is right" attitude. In the reproduced interview, his poor understanding of Portuguese is satirized, calling into question his ability to be a scholar of Brazilian history, but his project as an outside anthropologist cataloguing the country bears many similarities with the narrator's own intentions. Wright has come to Olinda to search local archives for a seventeenth century Jesuit priest's testimonial, entitled *Memórias do País Novo*. The author is, of course, none other than the individual who had condemned Tália and the two soldiers. Just as the general's report implies contemporary military attitudes, so too does the Brazilianist's visit criticize contemporary foreign policy. As a representative from abroad, every door is opened for Wright, and national relics are exported. The narrator realizes that were he to attempt the same visit, he would be met with indifference or hostility. A positive and hospitable international image is designed to act as a smoke screen for the real situation of Brazil, just as the false trial for treason masks the real reason the Portuguese soldiers were executed.

Using his journalistic credentials, the narrator successfully arranges an interview with the scholar, because “[eu] sabia o quanto os pesquisadores gostam de falar sobre o seu trabalho” (75). However, upon arriving, Wright is unwilling to cooperate or share his materials, which he now claims absolute ownership over, which provokes a particular form of rage in the narrator, perhaps his first true engagement with the issues of violence he has spoken about so far:

Havia as taras e os pecados de 1604 por trás de mim, havia o sangue de todos os degredados, havia a sífilis e a gonorréia e a fome e o desejo eternamente frustrado, e era isso que me colocava, agora, diante daquele norte-americano cuja ascendência de fanáticos e ladrões o levava àquela extrema paranóia de se considerar...o guardião do mundo. E pelo menos dessa vez eu não podia deixar que ele me privasse até mesmo da minha miséria. (77)

In a fit of rage, the journalist attacks the scholar (appropriately with a statue/relic produced nearby Olinda), robbing the cultural robber of his prize and destroying all his original copies of written work. His actions appear to be applauded by Borges the following day, who relates the media reports that Wright fell over and hurt himself, but is in stable condition. Borges mentions nothing directly, but his characterization of Wright as someone who “vive roubando nossos documentos históricos” (86), provides enough information to infer that he knows more than he suggests about the event.

The stolen text yields the final missing pieces of his investigative journalism, as the priest’s memoirs catalogues the general rules and types of torture used to extract confessions from the accused, another shadowed reference the DOP’s practices). This is linked to da Sá’s interrogation, which Father Barruel has included in his own memoirs to atone for his own sense of guilt, in which it is seen that the soldier confessed to any and all crimes while subjected to rigorous torture. Recognizing the authorities’ purposeful

misrepresentation of the past, the narrator decided not to submit his text to the National Institute, as he does not wish the current government to finance its publication, because he recognizes this as a form of complicity.

### **The Role of Historical Revisionism**

The final section of the novel bears the description “Onde afinal se faz a luz,” once again referencing the book’s title. The light that is revealed, however, ironically only serves to expose the shadows of the country. The excerpts from the priest’s journals serve to “desmascarar a versão oficial de que a morte do general-provedor foi o fruto de um atentado e o sinal para que fosse acionado o mecanismo da conspiração” (88). At the same time, the journalist’s historical subjects are not entirely innocent of the 1606 crime, despite his intention throughout his writing to romanticize them as such martyrs. Two days before his death, the general, the priest witnessed the general inform the two men that he would separate them indefinitely, no doubt owing to his own interest in da Sá. The two men therefore murder the general before he can enact his promise. Perhaps even more damning, however, is the suggestion of collaboration between church and state in the silencing of historical fact. If the narrator has become politically motivated partially out of a sense of guilt instilled by Teresa, then the priest has written his memoirs it would seem as a form of self-confession to expunge his guilt in the trial of the two men. A representative from the Portuguese court is sent to investigate the supposed conspiracy. Referring to the lack of proof against the two soldiers, the representative responds that “se a Igreja nos desse a honra de sua solidariedade e a força do seu sigilo, nós poderíamos

forjá-las” (92). He makes it clear that the church will lose royal support if it does comply with the request to corroborate with the story. In a manner that Eloy Martínez more fully develops in *La novela de Perón*, Silva then has the priest juxtapose the priest’s false testimony—a true “false document”—against de Sá’s real confession regarding his motives for murder out of love for Oliveira. The priest suggests that the inclusion of de Sá’s words in his own memoir is “para uma comparação também futura,” (94), revealing that the novel is not merely about the past’s influence upon the present, but also the possibility for future change in the present. Silva has been overstated in many of his allusions to present society, but in relation to this prophetic or revisionist attitude, he hides this notion by ending the novel with a return to a focus upon the present. As the narrator leaves the books of the library behind, a group of protestors is being pursued by government troops. Stopped in the melee with the incriminating documents on his person, the narrator attempts to return to the library, a place of sanctity and safety. He decides that “à sua maneira tortuosa o brasilianista Benjamin C. Wright tinha razão—a única função do passado era explicar o presente e modificá-lo” (96). Ironically, the journalist’s own attempts in this regard end up as failed.

### **The Archive Lost**

Despite the use of private writings and historical documents that are gradually accumulated into the narrator’s own personal archive, it is the journalist’s own reflections that terminate the series of writings. Throughout the narrative, excerpts from a letter to a friend have been interspersed among the historical documents and narratorial

commentary. In many cases, the letter references the events from 1604, either repeating or adding to the information that the reader has already been present. Lacking, however, is any clue as to the identity of the author. The only clues have been a reference to companions' need for cigarettes to be sent and a fascination with da Sá's physical aspect that would seem to match the general's own. Although unsigned, the final excerpt that serves as the last word in the novel, taken in conjunction with the context of the text immediately preceding it, suggests that it is the journalist himself. It provides one last opportunity to conflate fictional conventions with potential reality. As if he were an author signing his work with the date of writing and the location, he reveals the latter to be Ilha das Flores, the prison located in the bay of Rio de Janeiro.

The excerpt also presents a final opportunity to intertwine the actions of the past and the present. The letter snippet explains how the general's wife kept hidden the general's book of reports, which referenced his infatuation with da Sá, yet after her death the house was "mysteriously" burned down by unidentified individuals. He concludes, "E então, o silêncio se fez, e a noite cobriu os vestígios finais dessa compreensível tragédia" (97). So to, it would seem that the narrator has been silenced. His desire to affect the present and "revise" the future has merely led him into conflict with the authorities that control the present. It would suggest that, contrary to Wright's assertion, the truth is not that history's value is to modify the present, but rather that we can't escape involvement with the present, and in the case of Brazil, there is no way to isolate oneself from the politics of the moment. The journalist's romance-reportagem ends in failure, yet its failure, of course, allows the novel to successfully evoke emotional response. We cannot lose sight of the fact that the archive, though intended to be put to socially didactic ends,

has been accumulated through deceit and violence, the same issues its articulation attempts to identify and critique in the Brazilian government. Thus, although the light finally shines on events in the text, that knowledge merely compromises the journalist. At the same time, it implicates the reader, who, via the journalist's overt thematization of the act writing politically, becomes aware of the processes of literary and literal control in legitimating oppression for the sake of social order.

## CHAPTER 15

### TOO CLOSE FOR COMFORT: SIMÓN RIVAS' REVISIONS TO CHILE'S NATIONAL REPORT

Una de las consecuencias que produjo el golpe de Estado de 1973 [en Chile] en el desarrollo del género fue la búsqueda de un nuevo concepto de novela que permitiera dar cuenta de la desconocida y diferente realidad que se comenzó a vivir en el país a partir de ese año... Se produjo así una significativa aproximación entre el discurso de la novela y el discurso testimonial. [One of the consequences in the development of the genre produced by the 1973 coup d'état was the search for a new concept of the novel that would facilitate representation of the unknown and different reality that the country began to live starting in that year... In this fashion an approximation between the novel and testimonial discourse was produced.]

—José Promis, *La novela chilena del último siglo*, 228

Quizás el problema radique en que la ficción histórica en Chile no ha sido vista como una manifestación sistemática y significativa de la narrativa reciente, sino como una tendencia que transita entre la denuncia y el best seller. [Perhaps the problem lies in that historical fiction in Chile has not been seen as a systematic and significant demonstration of contemporary narrative, but rather as a tendency that alternates between critical report and best seller.]

—Antonia Viu, *Imaginar el pasado, decir el presente*, 106

In *Latin America's New Historical Novel* (1992), Seymour Menton maintains that new historical novels form the dominant mode of writing produced in Latin America since 1979. The exception to this trend, he argues, occurs in Chile, where Menton notes only one example of new historical fiction, Francisco Simón's *Martes Tristes* (1985). Menton hypothesizes various rationales, pointing out that Chilean authors have traditionally preferred realism (26), while new historical fiction rejects the possibility of mimetic representation and in fact revels in active distortion of traditional interpretations, though this small statistic also has to do with Menton's exacting requirement that the central events of a novel take place prior to the birth of the author in order to be

considered historical. In Chile, by contrast, he recognizes writers' preoccupation with "the immediate past," namely the 9/11 military coup against President Allende in 1973 and the Pinochet dictatorship, which ended in 1989. Jose Promis' analysis of Chilean fiction, however, would suggest that more than a preoccupation, the coup was an issue with which all writers were forced to come to terms with even as they attempted to create, not only because the events shaped the country's political climate, but also because their aftermath affected the work artists could produce:

La supresión de la democracia chilena en septiembre de 1973 originó, entre muchas otras consecuencias dolorosas, una fractura profunda de la cultura nacional. La novela fue una de sus manifestaciones más particularmente afectada debido a un complejo conjunto de razones difícilmente aislables unas de las otras. En primer lugar, el antagonismo que se estableció entre la naturaleza del discurso oficial del régimen político imperante y la función de crítica social frecuentemente asumida por el discurso novelesco—oposición que despertaba el recelo de la autoridades encargadas de cautelar las expresiones culturales—así como también a determinadas circunstancias históricas, de la cuales las dos más importantes fueron la censura de la libertad de expresión y la diáspora intelectual que se produjo después del golpe militar. (215)<sup>121</sup>

Yet, if Menton sees Simón's novel as the only instance of new historical fiction in Chile through 1992, Antonia Viu, while admitting that the new historical novel developed a decade later in Chile than it did in other parts of Latin America, suggests that *Martes Tristes* is only the first in a resurgence of experimental Chilean historical fiction that has continued into the twenty-first century. In *Imaginar el pasado, decir el presente: La novela histórica chilena 1985-2003*, she points out that current models of new historical

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<sup>121</sup> The suppression of Chilean democracy in September 1973 created, among many other painful consequences, a profound rupture in the national culture. The novel was one of the most specifically affected aspects of the culture due to a complex collection of reasons that are difficult to separate from one another. In the first place, the antagonism that was established between the nature of the governing political regime's official discourse and the function of social criticism frequently assumed by novelistic discourse – an opposition that incited the suspicions of the authorities in charge of preventing cultural forms of expression – as well as certain historical circumstances, among which the two most important were the censorship of freedom of expression and the intellectual diaspora that was a consequence of the coup d'état (all translations in this chapter are my own).

novels analyze this genre as a continental phenomenon, rather than a local one. This is not to say that she believes that the authors she studies—Jorge Guzmán, Jorge Edwards, Marta Blanco, y Antonio Gil—do not share many themes in common with other Latin American authors. Nonetheless, she finds Noé Jitrik’s work on historical fiction more informative than Menton’s distinction between classical and new historical fiction, for the Argentine critic describes the historical novel as itself a form of discourse, especially in relation to texts written in the second half of the twentieth century, while he at the same time “refiere a la actitud respecto a *la lengua de los documentos* o de la época novelizada (80, my emphasis).<sup>122</sup> Because of this awareness, Jitrik also highlights the importance of identifying the social project in which the political ideology that pervades any writing is based (80). Viu expands her gaze to survey six novelistic paradigms in the recent historical fiction of Latin America suggested by various critics, of which new historical novels serve as only one development: the new chronicles of the Indies, the new historical novel, the neobarroque novel, archival fiction, historiographic metafiction, and the postmodern historical novel. She relegates works such as Garcia Marquez’s *Cien Años de Soledad* (1967) to the final category, which is important because Francisco Simón’s *Martes Tristes*, as the first example of new historical novel in Chile, shares notable similarities with the Columbian work written nearly twenty years earlier.

If Viu chides the three most prominent theorizers of the new historical novel in Latin America—Menton, Aínsa, and Barrientos—for uncritically assimilating and confusing the six categories outlined above under the grand banner of new historical fiction and accepting a North American postmodernism as a guiding phenomenon, then she finds greater promise in José Promis’ monograph (published the same year that

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<sup>122</sup> Refers to the attitude regarding the language of the documents of or the time period novelized.

Menton's Spanish-translated study of new historical fiction was), *La novela chilena del último siglo* (1993). Although several individuals mention Francisco Simón's work as an important development of Chilean fiction in the 1980s, Promis is one of the few to attempt any kind of detailed analysis of the author's various works, even if Viu worries that his focus upon politics and police practices limits his scope.

As Promis points out, *Martes Tristes'* title's reference to sad Tuesdays alludes to the Tuesday, September 11, military coup in 1973, which coincided with the day of Mars, the Roman god of war. Two narrative threads in separate time periods alternate throughout the book and eventually merge into a single history of a community whose development is based on salt extraction. The name of the city, Ricaventura, is not accidental. Both Promis and Viu note that Simón presents a section of Chilean poet Pablo Neruda's "Canto General" as an epigraph, in which the fictional city of Ricaventura is named, and in the novel its mythical founding is contrasted with the militarily engineered downfall of its founder, Ramón García, whose populist policies bear similarities to Salvador Allende's own social programs. In other words, as Promis explains, "el destino de Ricaventura es transformado así en prefiguración de lo que será la historia chilena contemporánea. El pueblo es un microcosmos de Chile. Los conflictos que se viven en su interior anuncian a las fuerzas sociales que se desencadenarán durante el gobierno de la Unidad Popular" (258).<sup>123</sup> At the same time, the novel does not attempt to mimetically present these events or the gradual overlapping of the two narratives in different historical moments; elements of magic realism, those which appear to have prompted critics to categorize the text as new historical novel, are overtly present. In fact, Promis

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<sup>123</sup> In this manner Ricaventura's destiny is transformed into an anticipation of what will become contemporary Chilean history. The town is a microcosm of Chile. The conflicts lived within its boundaries forecast the social forces that were triggered during the government of the People's Unity Party.

links the novel with literary history as much as political history, noting that the apocryphal city bears much of García Márquez's influence, since "el destino de Ricaventura reproduce el de Macondo en *Cien años de soledad*, desde sus orígenes hasta su trágica desaparición de la historia de los hombres" (257).<sup>124</sup> Garcia Marquez's work has not been linked with new historical fiction by Menton, but Gonzalez Echevarría has certainly claimed it as the most important text of one of the other six developments in historical fiction that Viu details: archival fictions.

Simón's other early work (*Martes Tristes* was apparently the second novel he wrote, though it is typically listed as being published in 1985, making it the third) does not fit so easily into such a category, however, as it attempts to con-found the archive rather than replicate the archive's process, and here Promis' distinctive approach to national literature may be instructive. Instead of looking at Chilean novels in terms of their stylistic representation of the past, Promis identifies specific themes that tend to define different periods during the last one hundred years (though not ones of solitude!) of Chilean letters. He ascribes two periods to the second half of the twentieth century: novels of skepticism and those of demystification. Given the reoccurring themes of dictatorship and military organizations that appear in Simón's work, it is not surprising that Promis suggests that the author's writing falls into the latter category, which occurs in large part as a reaction to the 1973 coup. Like Menton's new historical novel, novels of demystification utilize strategies of intertextuality and polyphony, but the type of novel that Promis details radically departs from Gonzalez Echevarría's description of archival fiction, perhaps unintentionally, as Promis does not directly reference the recently

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<sup>124</sup> Ricaventura's destiny reproduces that of Macondo in *Cien años de soledad*, from its origins to its tragic disappearance of the history from its people.

published *Myth and Archive* (1991). Rather than incorporate previous modes of legal, anthropological, scientific, and novelistic discourses in a search for its origins, in demystificatory novels “se trata de un modo de interpretación literaria que persigue subvertir, cuando no negar radicalmente, el sistema de categorías estéticas y los modos y contenidos de representación inaugurados por los programas narrativas anteriores” (197).<sup>125</sup> Promis also notes a particular preoccupation with the act of writing in Chilean novels written between 1973-1990<sup>126</sup>:

Para los narradores de la Novela de la Desacralización narrar ha dejado de ser el acto enunciativo que tradicionalmente podía desarrollarse incluso sin manifestar conciencia explícita de sí mismo. Es, por el contrario, un proceso de escribir que asume en su discurso todas las dificultades que implica transformar una enunciación imaginariamente fonocéntrica en una grafía organizada. (202)<sup>127</sup>

Bearing in mind such a description, *Martes Tristes* does not foreground the act of writing history or the act of problematizing the official and unofficial forms of its dissemination in the way that Simón’s two previously published novels, *El informe Mancini* (1982) and *Los mapas secretos de América Latina* (1984), do. Both are conscripts that have gone largely overlooked in Simón’s production, though they form important stages in his attempts to reconcile historiography and fiction. Far from highlight magical realism or return to prior historical eras, they take on the form of

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<sup>125</sup> It has to do with a method of literary interpretation that seeks to subvert, when not completely deny, the system of aesthetic categories and the means and the contents of representation initiated by earlier narrative programs.

<sup>126</sup> Rodrigo Cánovas states that the narrator becomes a chronicler in novels of demystification whose duty it is to revive collective memory (38). Building upon Promis’ model, Cánovas has suggested a sixth category to describe novels written post-dictatorship as Novels of Orphanage to describe this generation of writers’ literal and metaphorical disconnect with the past. No doubt Simón’s virtual lack of production in the 1990s contributes to the fact that Cánovas only mentions *Martes Tristes* in passing and does not associate Simón with this new type of writer or novel.

<sup>127</sup> For narrators in novels of demystification, narrating has ceased to be an enunciative act that could traditionally develop even without making its self-awareness explicit. It is, rather, a process of writing whose discourse assumes all the difficulties implied in transforming a phonocentric, imaginary enunciation into organized writing.

government documents to discuss the very recent history of the events of 1960s, the military coup, and the ongoing dictatorship, thematizing the danger of researching and writing under such conditions. In this regard they question directly official history through disclosure of censored research, but they also offer revisionist accounts by suggesting alternative solutions to the then-contemporary dictatorship. Promis binarizes literary production during the military regime as either accommodating or contestatory, yet Simón's approach is unique in its form of contestation through its specific self-historicization, focusing precisely upon the immediate past that Menton would see as compromising the status of his work as historical fiction, but Simón metahistorically uses these events to comment upon the formation of that historical record.

### **Exhibit A: Map of Territory**

Up until now, I have been referring to Francisco Simón, though this last name represents a pseudonym that the author used to protect himself, given the politically racy nature of his novels, during the heaviest period of censorship in the first years of the 1980s. For later publications when his work was allowed to freely circulate in Chile, his real name, Rivas, has been attached after the pseudonym. Simón is in fact a surgeon who only began to write after he was removed from his hospital post in Santiago under the new regime in 1976. *El informe Mancini*, his first novel, won prestigious awards in Mexico and Columbia, but was not allowed to openly circulate in Chile. It did so clandestinely in the form of shared photocopies, until 1986 when censorship laws had lightened and a Chilean edition was issued. Michael Lazzara notes that Simón was in fact

the only author to publish a novel during the dictatorship's severest restrictions on the printed word (210). Despite the thaw in practices of censorship, Simón's political activism landed him in jail in 1986, though after the fall of Pinochet's regime he was appointed Ambassador to Canada under the new government. He has stated that the only reason he truly began to write was in response to the 1973 coup against Allende's Popular Unity government (Lazzara 226).

If Simón's novels act as "enunciaciones imaginarias de un testimonio histórico" (Promis 228)<sup>128</sup>, they do so through the strategy of fiction writing, one that is distinct from his contemporaries. Ariel Dorfman has provided a magical realist fictional testimonial, *La última canción de Manuel Sendero* (1982), while Diamela Eltit's *El padre mío* (1989) reveals itself in its introduction to be the transcription of three separate interviews with a homeless man, whose insane ramblings ultimately become representative of repression in Chilean society. Yet it is Simón who specifically attempts to locate the line between fiction as invention and as literary production in the representation of the past.

He makes this immediately clear in *Las mapas secretos de América Latina*. First, he links the current states of repression across Latin America, as his epigraph utilizes a quote from Uruguayan journalist Eduardo Galeano's *Las venas abiertas de América Latina* (1971) that comments about the concurrent Argentine and Uruguayan dictatorships, ending with the wish that in the future he be told this time period never existed. Mildred Rivera Martínez has pointed out that Simón's novel's title directly echoes Galeano's work (26). On the following page, by "mode of explanation" Simón asserts that "cuando realmente se escriba una historia de la represión esas

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<sup>128</sup> Imaginary enunciations of a historical testimonial

responsabilidades serán develadas con toda la crudeza que merecen. Por lo pronto debemos contentarnos con lo que parece ficción sin serlo. Porque también tiene valor testimonial.”<sup>129</sup>

Similar to *Martes Tristes*, the novel develops two separate narrative threads. The first is present-day Chile under the military regime, where an editor receives a series of excerpts of an apocryphal study, *The Biographical Dictionary of Repression*, that are inserted into the novel as the narrator reads them and details the formation of a secret organization named MAPA. Each dictionary entry is presented as computer print-out (perhaps the type of Apple technology available at the time of writing dates the novel as much as the events it references), the epitome of objectivity with footnoted dates, citations of sources and computer abbreviations. Indeed, the computer becomes a hidden archive, as MAPA’s encoded files are hacked by the author of the dictionary, thus the archive becomes used against itself. In this regard, Simón juxtaposes what at first seem to be completely separate fictional and seemingly nonfictional narrative threads.

The novel’s title would initially suggest a preoccupation with political maps, yet the title gains an ambiguous second meaning during a reading of the narrative. Although the notion of a map as blueprint and military tool plays a prominent role in the novel, the organization’s name is in fact a contraction of the words “manifestación paralela,” such that the “mapas secretos” of the novel’s title reference the histories of organizations across Latin America that go untold and thus cannot even begin to be dealt with, for it seems that Simón believes that history is what provides everyday people the knowledge to react. This intent towards a general characterization of a metropolis that could exist

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<sup>129</sup> When a history of repression is truly written, these responsibilities will be revealed with all the crudity that they deserve. For now we must content ourselves with what appears to be fiction even though it is not. Because it too has testimonial value.

anywhere in Latin America is strengthened by the novel's setting, which is easily interpreted to be Santiago, though the city is never named, and the events that take place, such as the attack upon the government palace that ends the narrative, do not occur in any official history. What guides the movement's development is the search for "power behind power," a phrase directly stated in the novel, as well as one that is used to refer to several of Simón's earlier novels.

The organization's original formation by disillusioned members of the military was designed to overthrow the general, but their own ideology is supposedly based upon the successivist policies of Mariano Melgarejo, the nineteenth century Bolivian dictator contemporary to Paraguay's Francia, who entered "office" by murdering the presiding president, and whose time in power is marked by general inadequacy. In other words, MAPA wish to replace a violent doctrine with an equally violent doctrine.

In an anticipation of over a decade of Roberto Bolaño's repressive Nazi poet and military collaborator in *La literatura nazi en America* (1996) and *Estrella distante* (1996), Simón's invented organization is headed by a fanatical poet, making Simón's link between all levels of cultural production and repression overt, as the narrator, who remains unable to publish the dictionary and is pursued by the organization, realizes that MAPA does not ultimately provide an alternative to the corrupt power already dominating the country.

The book was published just one year after censorship restrictions were lifted in 1983. It would never have been published under the previous circumstances, Riveras Martínez suggests. She concludes that the novel's ultimate success, however, is not its politics, but its own publication. If within the novel the publication of the Biographical

Dictionary of Repression is designed to inform the public of the repressive practices of the State, Simón's novel accomplishes the same purpose with its own actual publication, as "el texto da evidencia de la existencia de la represión, la tortura, y los limitaciones del hombre bajo las elaboraciones del poder" (32),<sup>130</sup> in what I would suggest is a metafictional development stemming from the text's overt consciousness of the act of writing. For Simón, access to official and unofficial documents is shown to be of paramount importance, not only for the military, but for the individual caught up within the dictatorship, a theme even more evident in his first novel where more than one member of the military is assassinated in order to keep the knowledge of compromising documents secret.

### **Exhibit B: Report on the State of the Union**

If *Los Mapas Secretos de Latina America* is about the danger in reading a text that is prepared to counter official omissions and misrepresentations, then Simón's first novel, *El informe Mancini*, is about the danger of researching and preparing that text. This novel incorporates several preoccupations into its narrative that inform other texts mentioned in this dissertation. Like Posse's *Los Cuadernos de Praga* or Vargas Llosa's *Historia de Mayta*, it includes the process of interviewing individuals involved in revolutionary activities. Similarities are also evident with Silva's *No pais das sombras*—and not only because of the environments of censorship under which both novels were produced—which thematizes the research of a journalist, for it appears that *El informe Mancini* too

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<sup>130</sup> The text provides evidence of the existence of repression, torture, and the limitations placed on people under the machinations of power.

is mediated by an investigative reporter who relates documents discovered in the process. Perhaps this is not surprising; Viu has referred to the surreal *Martes Tristes* as a militarized type of journalism, whereas this novel parodies many journalistic stylistic devices.

The exact identity of the narrator is not revealed, and is in fact only alluded to only once, near the beginning of the narrative: “Hace algunos meses, buscando en ese Centro [para la Información de la Guerra Civil] algún material anecdótico para nuestra revista ‘Buena Memoria,’ nos encontramos con esos Cuadernos” (13).<sup>131</sup> The referenced notebooks, rather inventively catalogued as Notebooks of the Civil War, contain the so-called Mancini Report that gives the novel its name. Importantly, the novel is not merely made up of the apocryphal and eponymous report, but also mediated with outside information, which the reader must presume to be supplied by the reporter. In fact, Simón has made sure that the reader understands that much of the text is mediated throughout, not only by signaling the twenty-five fragments that make up the bulk of the narrative as “approximations” or “notes,” but also by having this distant narratorial voice reappear ever so briefly to assert its presence by way of an apology, such that “[e]stas aproximaciones no pretenden ser más que eso. Simples aproximaciones al Informe Mancini, documento denuncia del militarismo internacional. Pero esto no significa que no deban destacarse algunos hechos, cuya explicación coherente deberá hacerse, necesariamente, en otra oportunidad” (57).<sup>132</sup> The reader is meant to question this

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<sup>131</sup> Some months ago, searching for anecdotal material in this very Center for Information about the Civil War, for our magazine *Good Memory*, we discovered these Notebooks.

<sup>132</sup> These considerations don’t intend to be anything more than precisely that. Simple considerations of the Mancini Report, a document that denounces international militarism. But that does not mean that they cannot highlight certain facts, whose coherent clarification should be carried out, necessarily, on another occasion.

narrative level as much as s/he is the use of personal documents that become some of the only extant texts to document a period of military repression. Simón has explained that “[l]a verdad es que siempre he pensado que los que gobiernan formalmente no son muchas veces los que detentan el poder real. Y eso se ve no sólo en la política (no sólo en el gobierno o en el mando de un Estado), sino en cualquier organización: organizaciones gremiales, sindicales, incluso las organizaciones artístico-culturales” (214).<sup>133</sup>

To this end, the unnamed narrator admits that the report is not the work of a “professional” (15) and carefully details that the report found hidden in the interior stitching of the clothes on Jose Mancini’s cadaver is identical to the Mancini report includes in the Civil War Notebooks. In other words,

[e]s evidente que uno es la copia del otro, pero lo que no averiguaremos es cómo llegó una de ellas a formar parte de los Cuadernos. Al margen de esto, en los Cuadernos hay mucho material anecdótico si no novelesco (pronto tendremos ocasión de comprobarlo) y se descubre en el autor a un aficionado del más puro maniqueísmo. (14)<sup>134</sup>

The desultory manner in which the notebooks are referred to as “novelistic” suggests the different levels of reception of fiction and nonfiction, but this sets the stage for Simón’s attempts to confuse the perception of such difference.

How exactly the narrator’s promised comparison of documents fits into the non-chronological narrative only becomes apparent as the novel ends. Echoing the abrupt end of the recorded Mancini report a few pages earlier, the novel’s end also occurs rather

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<sup>133</sup> The truth is that I have always thought that those who formally govern are often not those who hold the real power. And you can see this not only in politics (i.e., not only in the government or in the State’s control), but also in any organization: professional organizations, labor unions, even artistic-cultural organizations.

<sup>134</sup> It is evident that one is the copy of the other, but what we have not been able to determine is how the Report came to be a part of the Notebooks. Apart from this, there is a lot of anecdotal, if not novelistic, material in the Notebooks (we will shortly have the chance to prove this), and one can note in the author a fondness for pure Manichaeism.

abruptly in another reference to Mancini's death and the rebel promise for destruction of the government's secret plans to create military bases on the borders with neighboring countries of Ecuador and Bolivia. Rather than narrating the resolution of the Civil War that has only been briefly mentioned, the text closes with a line, no explanation for the shift provided, that once again signals the presence of an intermediary writer, whose interests are as journalistic as they are historical: "El resto de la historia está en los 'Cuadernos' y en las 'Lecciones,' ambos de próxima publicación" (243).<sup>135</sup> As readers, we cannot forget the fact that we do not have access to much of the written portion of the report.

This brings up an important element in the novel's self-awareness. Unlike Aguinaldo Silva's novel, which also questions the subjective involvement of the writing agent, the emphasis here is not upon the reporter's own research process, but rather upon the transcriptions of recorded interview that Mancini has attached to the report, and to which the reader can become witness. In fact, the alternative history that the novel relates, one in which Chile becomes divided by a Civil War between supporters of the general's regime and resistance fighters into two separate countries, could easily be told in less than half of the book's length. Mancini is revealed to have been murdered by state police in the first approximation, diminishing any narrative tension in the investigative work of the protagonist. The narrative's true emphasis is upon the footnotes, which function to create a second, parallel narrative. This dual-narrative, one that takes place in the present and one in the past, becomes, as I have mentioned earlier, a stylistic trope in Simón's subsequent novels.

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<sup>135</sup> The rest of the history/story is in the Notebooks and the Lessons, both to be published shortly.

It is within the extensive footnotes and testimonials by supposed individual participants, from doctors to lawyers and soldiers, that the historical references to actual events can be found, for the invented civil war and eventual defeat of the general take the notion of revisionist history discussed in earlier chapter of this dissertation to an extreme. Although Promis, speaking of the novel, maintains that “[o]frece al lector una historia ‘hipotética’ que funcione como alternativa a la historia que ese mismo lector ha vivido todos los días en la calle durante casi dos décadas de gobierno militar, es una expresión de pesimismo” (241)<sup>136</sup>, Simón has explained in an interview that the novel offers hope via its end to the dictatorship, for the promise of hope was a means of survival for himself during difficult times (Lazarra 228).

Initially, optimism would not appear to play and kind of role in the text. The narrator creates authority by critiquing the notebooks for missing the opportunity to ask fundamental questions, instead only focusing upon analyzing historical episodes, but defends the work as one intended not the “make history,” but rather to create specific images (14). Since neither the report nor the notebooks are dated, it becomes virtually impossible to tell which preceded which, though it is stated that the notebooks are the key to understanding the report. But this is not the case with a newspaper article that is inserted as one of the approximations, one which definitely precedes Mancini’s report and one that holds the key for the reader’s understanding of the entire novel.

### **The Role of Media in Simón’s Chile**

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<sup>136</sup> To offer the reader a hypothetical history that functions as an alternative to the history that this same reader lived daily on the street through nearly two decades of military rule is an expression of pessimism.

The nineteenth approximation is entitled “La caída de los buitres” (The Fall of the Vultures), and is attributed to an apocryphal newspaper, *El Ferrocarril*, in the very real city of Antofagasta, a central locale of resistance against the regime. The anonymous fictional article is presented in its entirety, and if *Las mapas* ends up acting out the role that the Biographical Dictionary of Repression is diegetically designed to enact, then this article presents the diegetic version of what Simón intends *El informe Mancini* to reveal. Its tone is uncompromising:

Buscar los orígenes y las causas de esta plaga es una tarea agobiadora que debe ser emprendida por hombres de responsabilidad...que se atrevan a ganarse la enemistad y a escuchar las amenazas de los que viven creyendo en la perfección de los héroes y en la incuestionabilidad de sus gestiones.

Es la terrible y temible desmitificación. (167)<sup>137</sup>

This fictional article is the only point in the novel where Pinochet is actually named and his actions detailed, and this occurs in conjunction with linkages to contemporary tyrants Stroessner, Batista and Somoza. Prior to this point in the text, the Chilean dictator’s function as “general” alone has been used to identify his character. The article also references Pedro Joaquin Chamorro, the Nicaraguan journalist and editor of a newspaper that openly opposed Somoza, and who was assassinated in 1978. In other words, this false document within a false document rests on concrete historical referents, but its goal is to discuss the very writing of history, especially in its accepted academic form. It is worth quoting a longer segment of the article that forms the nucleus of its call to action to highlight its repudiation of official historiography:

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<sup>137</sup> To search for the origins and causes of this plague is an exhausting task that should be undertaken only by responsible people...who dare to win only enmity and hear the threats of those who live believing in the perfection of heroes and the infallibility of their efforts. It is the terrible and fearful act of demystification.

Hubo un historiador que aseguraba tener antenitas que le permitían intuir el flujo de la historia. Su historiar es un flujo, es cierto, asolado por los hechos comunes, contaminado por el plagio, espeso con el compromiso con quienes nunca han querido que se haga historia. Era la historia oficial, llena de héroes inmortales y perfectos, la historia elogiada, premiada, la que llega a las academias, la editada en rústica y en seda.

Si se quiere, no obstante, reconstruir la historia de los buitres, su ascenso al poder, su permanencia y su caída, es obligatorio caer en desmitificaciones... Para poder continuar hay que haber perdido el miedo. El miedo a ser llamado antipatriota, el miedo a ser catalogado de resentido, el miedo a ser considerado un francotirador. (168-69)<sup>138</sup>

The anonymous authors in effect claims that this type of history is a fiction, and Simón believes that fiction can help access a more complete history. The novel is just such a rejection of official historiography. There are no martyrs and no completely evil accomplices to atrocities. In fact, there are no final truths, and the reader is left with the sensation that Mancini Report has not been properly evaluated within the context of the fictional Chilean political scene Simón creates.

The raw vitriol of the article appears in marked contrast to other examples of media in the novel, which if anything demonstrate the same misuse against which Eloy Martínez and Ângelo write their respective con-scripts. On several occasions, Simón references two real newspapers, *El Mercurio* and *El Cronista*, though presenting them as the only two papers allowed to circulate in the territories loyal to the general, and thus limiting their information to that deemed appropriate by the authorities (70). Footnotes

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<sup>138</sup> There was a historian who had small antennas that allowed him to intuit the flow of History. His narration of history is, of course, a flow devastated by common acts, contaminated by plagiarism, thick with the commitment for those who were never wanted to make history. It was the official history, full of perfect and immortal heroes, the romanticized history, prizewinning, that which reached the academies, that which was published in rags and in silk. If you prefer, however, to reconstruct the history of the vultures, their ascension to power, their stay and their fall, it is necessary to resort to demystifications. In order to continue, you have to have lost all fear. The fear of being called antipatriotic, the fear of being catalogued as resentful, the fear of being considered a sniper.

detail how *El Mercurio* has taken an authentic photo of two anti-regime leaders entering a building accompanied by soldiers for protection, yet the caption and article provided attempt to lead readers to believe that the men, referred to as Marxist leaders, have been captured (160-1). When the general in a paranoid state shoots a boy scout, both newspapers are complicit in the cover-up, as is again revealed by excerpts from the Mancini Report:

Lo que la prensa oficialista informó sobre el suceso desvirtúa desvergonzadamente la verdad...El Cronista habló de bandas de delincuentes marxistas y homosexuales drogadictos que habrían atacado al general durante un paseo de meditación y solaz... (sic) el Mercurio, más discreto en sus mentiras, afirmó que la identidad de los agresores no había sido aún descubierta, pero que el general, en un acto individual se había limitado a defender su vida con valor y entereza. (133)<sup>139</sup>

As can be seen from the above quote and its editing marks, the illusion of an academic discourse is maintained in the historical commentary presented, and the inclusion of such commentary as footnotes only furthers the scholastic façade of the narrative. Yet, the way in which Mancini is at times discussed in the third person would suggest that this is again the work of an additional layer of writing, such as the supposed existence of Mancini's tape recorder in the Center for Information on the Civil War (82).

The footnotes present themselves authoritatively as objective additional information, a device that Simón employs to distinct ends. The general's rhetorical discourse is provided when Chile divides into two zones of government (60), along with a variety of radio broadcast excerpts and television commentary. The arms and weaponry

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<sup>139</sup> What the pro-government press reported about the events shamelessly distorted the truth...El Cronista spoke of bands of Marxist criminals and drug-addict homosexuals who had attacked the general during a meditative stroll of solace...[sic] el Mercurio, more discrete in its lies, asserted that the identity of the attackers had not yet been discovered, but that the general, in an isolated event had limited himself to defending his life with valor and integrity.

capacity for both sides is broken down into a list of items (73-4). The historical origins of regime's covert operation Cubresuelo are explained by an recorded informer along with its plans for implementing a military regime in each Latin American country (82-90). The five legal political parties in the country are categorized and explained (157-8). Simón even finds a way to ironically reference himself, as one footnote explains that Francisco Simón the neurosurgeon had been expelled from the country for denouncing gross abnormalities in the management of medical funds (144), even if this seems to be taking quite a liberty with the past.

Despite the manner in which the footnotes function, they also call attention to themselves, as the inherent limitations of Mancini's own investigation become apparent via the excerpts of interviews and testimonies by physicians and military. From survivors of attempted assassinations by the government to unreliable or frightened witnesses, Mancini's interviews are far more present than he ever is in the text, even if they reveal that his goal of discovering the complete truth about the government's secret military organization of Cubresuelo is impossible. In fact, Mancini only becomes present when he records himself in the process of interviewing others, yet even the inclusion of his personal reactions occurs after the actual fact of the interview, highlighting his absence.

One interviewee refuses to be recorded, thus Mancini is forced to write down his own version of events, undermining the supposed incontrovertible evidence that the other recorded documents would maintain. Far more damning for Mancini, however, is the reluctance of the committee that partially funded his research to hear his results. The final approximation relates that nobody listens to Mancini, not even the rebel leaders for whom he believes the information would be the most valuable. This can be verified by a reading

of the Civil War Notebooks. In other words, the text is meant to inform actions, but it is brute force that is ultimately used to resolve the continuing war.

### **Approximations towards a Conclusion**

Ironically, the number of parallels that exist between diegetic events in Simón's novels and their roles in actual culture and politics does not end with Simón's intended metafiction. If the Mancini Report, an auditory archive of information on an otherwise undocumented moment of military repression, is ultimately ignored such that its documentary value goes unfulfilled, then *El informe Mancini* seems to have suffered a similar fate. Reviewing Simón's novel for its 2003 re-edition, Carlos Labbé points out that it received virtually no coverage from literary and cultural scholars or media. Given the explosion of writing in the 1990s that hinged on successfully marketable fictions, he believes that this is a leftover of the Pinochet censorship, a distaste for political novels of the 1980s, even if the novel's fragmented style and intertextuality presage the approaches of these later works.

Nonetheless, Labbé argues, Simón's first novel provides an "eternal second" of repudiation against the military regime. Without saying so, he sees it as a kind of document of its moment. Interestingly, he characterizes its success as a political document by referring to the characteristics of what I have been calling a con-script, such that "la novela logra por un momento traspasar los límites de la ficción y amenazar la estructura política que reproduce" (n.p.).<sup>140</sup> He continues to explain:

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<sup>140</sup> The novel managed for one moment to surpass the limits of fiction and threaten the political structure that reproduces.

Nadie puede sorprenderse de que un régimen militar tome al pie de la letra una novela, de que en la cabeza del funcionario de turno se produzca la confusión epistemológica cuando lee cierto libro que se autodenomina un informe, que utiliza adecuadamente el registro burocrático, cuando reproduce grabaciones a pie de página con verosimilitud, hace correctas cronologías y menciona como el problema principal un proyecto llamado Cubresuelo, tan parecido a aquel Plan Cóndor que involucraba a los generales de varios países latinoamericanos. La censura es el mayor premio artístico al que una novela política puede aspirar (n.p.).<sup>141</sup>

Censorship is perhaps also an important way of attaching more importance to a written text, making its message more valuable and subversive because of a government's admission of fear towards its reception. Ironically, *El informe Mancini* catalogues the failure of a potentially dangerous text to precipitate change.

On second reading, perhaps the novel is not as optimistic as Simón has suggested in interviews. On the one hand, it critiques the typical sources and forms of history, suggesting that new methods and attitudes need to be developed before “real” history can be pursued. On the other, it dramatizes the creation of a corrective archive that could act as an answer to this call, but ultimately falls short when its reception is compromised by the same issues of fear and political interest. The archive is confounded, but so too are the reader's expectations. Certainly, *El informe* is just as successful as *Los mapas* simply by offering images of how military repression is carried out. At the same time, its style is not quite “new,” nor is it one hundred percent “history” or “fiction.” As an overly self-aware

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<sup>141</sup> Nobody should be surprised that a military regime would take seriously the words of a novel, which produces an epistemological confusion in the head of the functionary on duty when he reads a certain book that calls itself a report or that convincingly uses a bureaucratic register, when it reproduces recordings with verisimilitude at the foot of the page, shows correct chronologies and mentions as its central problem a project called Cubresuelo, which appears so similar to the Plan Cóndor that involved the generals of various Latin American countries. Censorship is the highest artistic award to which a political novel can aspire.

text that chronicles an alternative history that becomes a revisionist present, the ultimate demystification, to use Promis' categorization, may be its own.

## CHAPTER 16

### CONCLUSION AND POST-SCRIPT

Mario Vargas Llosa's *Historia de Mayta* bears a paradoxical relationship with the notion of con-script. On the one hand, it details the supposed interview process of an unnamed novel writer as he visits individuals who were in some capacity involved with the eponymous Mayta, one of the men involved in the first socialist revolution attempt in Latin America. There is a caveat, as the author announces to these individuals that he is not writing a factual report, but rather a novel that will specifically not follow the facts, but instead "lie with knowledge." Nonetheless, it comes as a surprise that the reader has been a victim of this game when the author reveals these sessions, along with the information he has provided regarding Mayta's past, to have been largely fabricated in the final section of the narrative, the culminating interview with Mayta himself. Paradoxically, the reader must now accept the author's word here regarding his previous fictionalization, despite the fact that there is no ground for trust any longer established. Ultimately, it is Vargas Llosa's goal to point out that fiction is not the same as nonfiction, but he is not interested in confusing them so much as cementing the divide. The question of whether fiction equates to "lying" has preoccupied him throughout his career, yet here he does not suggest that fiction can exist on the same level as history—quite the opposite,

in fact. The novel's conclusion would almost suggest a limitation upon the powers of fiction.

Con-scripts share Vargas Llosa's novel's focus upon the process of writing, but their authors do believe that fiction plays an important role in the construction of history. The authors united in this dissertation utilize a narrative strategy that relies upon the reader's interpretation of nonfiction, especially official nonfiction, as something sacred or infallible. By reproducing the forms and conventions of such texts, they directly suggest a relationship between fiction and nonfiction in terms of representing past events that can only be accessed textually by present-day readers. In each case, the authors also realize the lack of transparency in the false documents they present, but ultimately it is not the fiction writer's craft that they are attempting to question, rather the unacknowledged creation of fiction by official sources as a method of misrepresenting information and controlling public access to local, national, and international information.

The dystopic Lima of 1984 that Vargas Llosa presents in *Historia de Mayta* is in some ways Orwellian, although the State does not have the technology to control its population through means other than traditional military violence. This Lima is certainly an invention or a paranoid projection into the future, yet many of its concerns have easily visible roots in contemporary society. Vargas Llosa's reaction upon discovering contradictions in the versions of the past supplied by various individuals suggests these false rumors are the consequence of specific politically-motivated processes, and this concern does not seem so far removed from the "truth": "la información, en el país, ha dejado de ser algo objetivo y se ha vuelto fantasía, tanto en los diarios, la radio y la television como en la boca de la personas. 'Informar' es ahora, entre nosotros, interpretar

la realidad de acuerdo a los deseos, temores o conveniencias, algo que aspira a sustituir un desconocimiento sobre lo que pasa” (274). These contradictory versions of the past and the present have not disappeared in the twenty five years since Vargas Llosa penned this ironic description of what it means to inform each other and oneself under such conditions where information itself has ceased to be a trustworthy source.

In December 2009, the BBC reported on the suspension of a top Peruvian police investigator after he had reported to media that he had arrested several suspects who were murdering victims and selling their body fat for large quantities of money (Collyns, Dec. 2). While the article notes that anthropologists believe the invented story plays upon old Peruvian myths, it also provides the viewpoint of those who see the issue in a more politically motivated light, and these “observers say this story was just one of many embellished or invented news stories used as a smokescreen which are intended to distract the general public from the real issues facing Peru.”

Of course, such suggestions of fabricated stories are not limited to a single country or region within South or North America, and in several cases these inventions deal directly with false documents. Perhaps the most salient example of recent years centers on the United States’ motivation for invading Iraq in search of weapons of mass destruction. In his 2003 article for the *New York Times*, “What I Didn’t Find in Africa,” former ambassador Joseph Wilson concludes that the British documents upon which the United States government based its claim that Niger had sold uranium to Iraq were falsified. He would later maintain that the exposure of his wife Valery Plame’s role as a CIA operative was a form of governmental retribution for this 2003 publication, in which Wilson dismisses President Bush’s claim that questioning the veracity of state

intelligence is simply “revisionist history.” The Valery Plame scandal highlights the currency today of the continued misuse of public documents to sway public opinion, where fictions are passed off as fact.

This incident, involving multiple countries and regions of the world, exposes such manipulations as means to achieve political goals on an international level. It also provides a manner for approaching what Susan Stanford Friedman propounds for revision of American Studies with a turn towards the worldly in her essay “Unthinking Manifest Destiny: Muslim Modernities on Three Continents.” Friedman maintains that the boundaries of disciplines like American Studies can no longer be conceived of in terms of the national, pointing out that from Iraq to China, American political and cultural influence has shaped these distant cultures, and thus these sectors of the world must be taken into account when conceiving of American Studies. This is, however, even more important for the relationship between North and Central/South America. In his comparative history *The Making of the Americas: The United States and Latin America from the Age of Revolutions to the Era of Globalization* (2007), Thomas O’Brien acknowledges a position similar to Friedman’s but makes an important caveat:

The evolving American mission in Latin America during the past two hundred years has profoundly influenced the course of the region’s history...Latin Americans have not been passive recipients in that process. They have variously embraced, rejected, and reconfigured elements of the American mission and now promise to have a transformational impact of their own in the United States. This history has importance far beyond the Western Hemisphere, because for more than half a century the United States has been pursuing a comparable global mission. There are of course considerable differences between these two projects. The United States has never enjoyed the level of dominance in regions such as Asia and the Middle East it achieved in Latin America for much of the twentieth century. So, too, the cultural differences that separate many of these societies and the United States are far more profound than those within the

Western Hemisphere where its elites share common Western traditions.  
(326-27)

In this dissertation, I have adopted an inter-American or a Hemispheric American approach that reflects O'Brien's own concerns regarding the recording of history as multiple processes (and perhaps, to a certain extent, Vargas Llosa's meta-awareness as well), rather than as static or autonomous moments, as informing our understanding of present social conditions and relationships. I believe that the notion of con-scription is shared across the boundaries of literary traditions as a narrative strategy as an alternative to the relativism of postmodern or new historical fiction, which I have suggested does not necessarily fulfill the revisionist dreams that many critics pan. While I do not wish to suggest that con-scripts represent the only form of expressing a concrete relationship between the theory and practice of revisionist history, I do certainly maintain that this is an important way to conceive of literary fiction as being able to elicit a response from readers regarding misrepresentations of the past. Indeed, con-scripts are certainly not the last "word" on the matter. The fact that many of my examples have been culled from the 1970s and 1980s raises important questions as to the continued validity of the con-script's strategic presentation and undermining of false documents. This trend does continue in the literary sense, adopted by popular fiction, but its overlap with other genres must also be taken into account.

As much as I have characterized con-scripts in terms of the written word, this concept needs to also be applied to cinematic representations in terms of movie scripts. As more media and government information becomes interactive, disseminated via internet or television, rather than printed newspaper, film becomes a vital form of

gauging and responding to this process. That said, the con-script in a filmic dimension must be considered under distinct methods of production as a visual genre. Randal Johnson has pointed out that the split in filmic discourses between documentary and fiction can be traced to cinema's very origins in Lumière's and Mélié's pioneering work at the end of the nineteenth century. The nature of the illusion of veracity presented to the audience by film is quite distinct from that of the mimetic capacity of literature, since the "difference between documentary and fiction film thus does not lie in the relative proximity or likeness of the filmic image or a pro-filmic or empirical reality [as the] visual image, whether photographic or cinematic, fictional or documentary, is a representation" (Johnson 36).

The filmic con-script would not focus so much upon recreating media conventions, so much as the creation of those conventions (although Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane* does offer an effective example of the recreation of contemporary newsreel footage, while later following the work of an investigative journalist). One such form, the false documentary or mockumentary, plays with the conventions of the documentary film. By this characterization, I am not referring to parodic works that highlight their fictional status in comedic fashion, but rather those films which make the process of filmmaking within a historical, geopolitical context itself the film's focus. In other words, Fellini's *And the Ship Sails On* (1983), which the director has stated presents itself as a "false document" in its opening black and white scenes, does not constitute such a specimen, as this initial documentary device quickly shows itself to be nothing more than a device when it gives way to comic relief. However, there does certainly exist a trend in film that downplays parody as humor, just as the con-script in literature does. In *Visions*

*of the Past: The Challenge of Film to Our Idea of History*, historian Robert Rosenstone devotes space to briefly suggesting types of postmodern historical films, among which invented documentaries such as *Far from Poland* (1984) play a role. The list that Rosenstone provides is informative, though he is not interested in a specific regional focus, nor does he approach the matter from the critical standpoint of cultural studies, whether American or of the Americas.

The inter-American work of Chicana filmmaker Lourdes Portillo does offer important examples, and would offer an intriguing point of departure for a film-based study of the con-script that deals with contemporary manifestations of the trend. *Al más allá* (2008) is a metafictional documentary about drug-trafficking in Mexico that plays with the process of making documentaries as political documents. The film references literary texts, blending fictional elements with interviews of real individuals to analyze the effects of globalization upon local Mexican fisherman. Portillo utilizes a dysfunctional (and fictional) documentary crew on-screen in self-reflexive fashion, according to her website, to both parody the importance allotted to filmmakers and also to protect her own crew, since she has been threatened by traffickers for her previous work in Mexico.

Portillo's film suggests a focus upon the process of creating documents, rather than on necessarily reproducing the document itself. Nonetheless, if we are to note Fernando Aínsa's claims regarding the democratization of what constitutes a documents and also take Dominick LaCapra's prescription regarding the narrow reading of documents seriously, then all film itself is transforming into a form of documentation. Despite its relatively short history, in cinema the dynamic between audience reception of

fiction and nonfiction is distinct from the divide between historiography and literature, perhaps stemming from the appearance of reality that the act of filming can produce for the viewer. As such, cinematography represents a crucial next-step in the theorization of the ability of fictional sources to act as revisionist resources for the historical record, both as education and as contestation.

Taken together, literary and filmic con-scripts offer a “documentable” form of linking theoretical claims to artistic practice in order to revise versions of history that have been misrepresented. By revisiting the moments of formation of these histories, these texts do more than suggest an alternative or counter-history; they provide the tools for understanding how constructions of history are themselves processes, nontransparent ones that take on the semblance of authority through repetition and dissemination. It is in this sense that the con-script can act to revision history. Like Eloy Martínez’s counter-memories/memoirs in *La novela de Perón*, its constructed version no more represents the definitive or singular claim to historical truth than the official representations it seeks to displace. The importance lies within understanding that by placing the two scripts together for comparison, the reader has already begun taking an active role in undoing the monumental status of documents into which Foucault believes history has transformed them.

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