**(The) Behind (of) Time**

by
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**Abstract**

This thesis locates the corporeal, (homo)erotic, positional, and transnational tensions that undergird the spectrality found in the works of three Latin American Neo-Baroque writers: Osvaldo Lamborghini, Severo Sarduy, and Nestor Perlonger. Through a critical hauntological framework, I identify a series of bodily and temporal movements to compare how each writer negotiates and reformulates a transgressive "time out of joint."

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## Index of Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| *CP* | Jacques Derrida, *La Carte Postale* |
| *PC* | Jacques Derrida, *The Post Card* (trans. Alan Bass) |
| *NC* | Osvaldo Lamborghini, *Novelas y cuentos* |
| *PI* | Nestor Perlongher, *Papeles insumisos* |
| *PM* | Nestor Perlongher, *Poemas completas* |
| *PP* | Nestor Perlongher, *Prosa plebeya* |
| *BB* | Severo Sarduy, *Big Bang* |
| *LS* | Severo Sarduy, *La simulación* |
| *OC* | Severo Sarduy, *Obras completas* |

# *Intro*-duction:
# Learning, at Last, to Live

“And we: onlookers, always, everywhere,
turned toward everything and never from!
We are surfeited. We set it in order. It breaks.
We put it in order again and break down ourselves.
Who has twisted us like this, so that—
no matter what we do—we have the bearing
of a man going away? As on the last hill
that shows him all his valley, for the last time,
he turns, stands still, and lingers, so we live,
forever saying farewell.”
—Rainer Maria Rilke, “The Eighth Elegy”

“Clarice, acredite que não me esqueço de amigos exilados nessas frias
terras. Penso um dia em ir revê-los, se para tanto tiver coragem de atravessar o
mar, desprender-me das pobres coisas que me prendem aqui.”
—Lúcio Cardoso, Letter to Clarice Lispector

“Aquí,
el agujero no se tapa,
“realícense”, muchachos.
Hamlets, espectros,
fusilados, desaparecidos
¿muertos? exiliados,
o soretes en pala.”
—Osvaldo Lamborghini, “Ya nadie me soporta”

Consider the twisting trail of thoughts with which Clarice Lispector begins her 1964 novel, *A paixão segundo G. H.*: “Estou procurando, estou procurando. Estou tentando entender. Tentando dar a alguém o que vivi e não sei a quem, mas não quero ficar com o que vivi. Não sei o que fazer do que vivi, tenho medo dessa desorganização profunda” (7). Lispector’s protagonist, a probing, anxious, upper-crust woman by the initials G.H., intercepts her reader from a doorway. She opens the door to the bedroom recently vacated by her former maid and thereby cracks open a temporal breach, a container in which the memory of a woman whose name G.H. cannot be bothered to remember ferments. G.H. makes her way into the eerily clean, almost sterile bedroom. She opens the wardrobe and spots *uma*

*barata*—a cockroach. With a startled shut of the wardrobe door, she crushes the animal. And as the blanched innards of the cockroach, seemingly dead, continue to ooze out, G. H. is faced with the temporal and aesthetic disjointment of such a sight. The encounter, in short, leaves G.H. “procurando… tentando entender” a state of “desorganização profunda” (7).

In 1993, Jacques Derrida opens *Specters of Marx* with the following scenario: “Quelqu’un, vous ou moi, s’avance et dit : *je voudrais apprendre à vivre enfin*” (13). It is not difficult to imagine the ontologically challenged G.H. behind such a statement; the untimely encounter with the cockroach sets her off on a quest to *learn* how to live. Alongside Derrida’s inquiry, then, reverberate G. H.’s anxious whispers. Lispector poses to her reader a seemingly impossible question that remains unanswered: how does one learn to live?

This appeal with which Derrida begins *Specters of Marx*—“je voudrais apprendre à vivre enfin”—provokes a number of other general observations. To learn to live, at least in the French, is necessarily a two-faced inquest, for “apprendre à vivre” can mean both to learn to live or to teach another how to live. In the active, pedagogical gesture of teaching how to live, we find its counterpart, the learning of how to live, exposing a tension that at once requires reciprocity and a hierarchical structure: one learns *before* another. The word “enfin” should not be overlooked here, either. The adverb functions, it would seem, as a punctuative sigh, a momentary recognition of—that is, a glance *back* at—past attempts to learn (and thus also to teach).

*Specters of Marx*, it must be noted, is a work [*ouvrage*] on mourning and, as such, a work on the work [*travail*] of mourning. Published in 1993, the book languishes in the aftermath, the looming uncertainties—the *retombée*, one may say—of the fall of the Soviet Union and with it, the “specter of communism” that Marx so intensely warned was to haunt all of Europe. And yet, this “specter” continues to haunt and revisit Derrida. At the very least, in a Western geopolitical context, he shows that Marxism lives on in a ghostly manner, that

is, as a *specter*, an element paradoxically incorporated into the political consciousness yet always still arriving, still (be)coming. Marxism remains an ideology of missed encounters, an injunction against capitalist destruction that has never quite materialized—in Derrida's words, a "being-there of an absent or departed one" (5).

Mourning, as Derrida elucidates here and elsewhere, is similarly predicated upon a positional, and therefore temporal, disjointedness. In *Politics of Friendship*, for instance, he describes how the task of mourning rests on the premise that one must come *before* another:

> 'O my friends, there is no friend.'[1]
>
> …
>
> –On each side of a comma, after the pause, 'O my friends, there is no friend'—these are the two disjoined members of the same unique sentence. An almost impossible declaration. In two times [*deux temps*]. *Unjoinable, the two times seem disjoined by the very meaning of what appears to be at once both affirmed and denied…*
>
> (1, emphasis added).

For Derrida, the death of a friend—and the mourning process that subsequently follows—invokes a temporal confusion. Mourning, it follows, ventures to make sense of this aporia, that is, and gestures towards an *apprentissage à vivre*. This sensation is not unlike that felt by Hamlet upon first encountering the ghost of his father:

> Rest, rest, perturbed spirit!
>
> …
>
> The time is out of joint: O cursed spite,
>
> That ever I was born to set it right!

[1] Derrida's opening line comes from Michel de Montaigne, who in turn attributed the line to Aristotle. The sort of philosophical genealogy drawn up by such a process can be thought of in relation to Derrida's conception of politics as "the abyssal question of the *phúsis*, the question of being, the question of what appears in birth, in opening up, in nurturing or growing, in producing by being produced… This is how life is thought to reach recognition" (viii). This perspective is valuable to keep in mind as this project attempts to contemplate questions of being, origin, and the movement of intellectual ideas between countries and time periods.

Nay, come, let's go together. (Act I, Scene 5)

When Hamlet bemoans, “the time is out of joint,” he cries into a temporal gap that must mediate tensions between presence and absence, between being and non-being. And yet, this ghost (re)visits always from behind; Hamlet “cannot control its comings and goings because it begins by coming *back*” (*Specters* 11). Or, in Shakespeare’s words: “Enter the Ghost,” “Exit the Ghost,” “Re-enter the Ghost.”

My point here is that Derrida’s “haunted ontology,” or *hauntology*, constitutes itself through a series—an *abyme*—of glances back, momentary temporal distortions that reach across and suspend themselves between past and present. This notion of looking back bears a striking resemblance to a network of concepts that David Wills will later term “the dorsal.” In *Dorsality*, Wills thinks “back” through technology and politics and literature—by means of a “turn,” a movement mediated through the back, “a departure that is also a detour, a deviation, a divergence into difference” (4). The dorsal, he goes on, “therefore names, in a number of ways, what comes from behind to inhabit us as something other, some other thing, the other; an other beyond what can be conceived of within the perspective of our frontal relations” (10). This “some other thing” that menaces us from behind, I argue, often gains a materiality through the phantasmagoric form of a specter.

We return once more to Derrida’s wish. Lispector affords her reader a glimpse, however fleeting, at a response to this quandary: “Através da barata viva estou entendendo que também eu sou o que é vivo” (206). In a rather Hegelian sense, the cockroach, an animalized other, becomes a means by which G. H. constructs a semblance of subjectivity. And, as shown by Derrida’s writings on hauntology, the remains of the cockroach are materialized as a “revenant; it itself haunts its own places more than it inhabits them” (*Specters* 36). In the pages that follow, we will not more closely examine *A paixão segundo G. H.* or any other work from Lispector, one of Brazil’s most familiar writers to Anglophone

readers. I point to *A paixão* as a heuristic to a potential entryway into this thesis' principal focus on a collection of ghostly, fragmented bodies that question and haunt the origin of the national, linguistic, and sexual boundaries across which they trespass.

This thesis picks up, in some senses, where Lispector's *barata* has left off. The Brazilian postmodernist is supplanted by a collection of three men: Osvaldo Lamborghini, Severo Sarduy, and Nestor Perlongher. Geographically, Brazil remains only as part of a larger, necessarily cosmopolitan circuit that includes Argentina, Cuba, Morocco, France, and the vast, troubled seas in between. Historically speaking, we inch slightly forward; the corpus of poems, prose, and literary criticism on which this thesis is based were predominantly written between the 1970s and 1990s.

Lamborghini, Sarduy, and Perlongher are widely considered as some of the principal figures of the Latin American Neo-Baroque, a pan-regional, avant-garde literary movement of the twentieth century. The Neo-Baroque must be understood as a fundamentally *comparative* movement; its ethos promotes a metabolization of theory and aesthetics within the historical context of Latin American encounters with other parts of the world. In other words, the literary and philosophical texts produced and circulated by *neobarroso* writers serve to materialize a regional impulse to incorporate the remains of colonial, native, African, and other influences. Such a practice is brought to another realm by thinkers such as Sarduy and the Brazilian concretist Haroldo de Campos, whose fixations on cosmological imagery simultaneously collide and fuse with the Neo-Baroque's questioning of origin and artifice. In that sense, the epistemological conventions of geography and cartography are invoked more as a mode of contact than as a way of reaffirming hegemonic understandings of political boundaries. Such a geographic dis-orientation can easily be read alongside Mariano Siskind's description in *Cosmopolitan Desires* of modern Latin American literature as approaching a "literature without attributes" (6).

This becomes quite clear upon an examination of the transnational movements of this thesis' three figures. All three hail from Hispanophone Latin America: Lamborghini and Perlongher from Argentina, Sarduy from Cuba. Two eventually seek refuge for personal, political, social, and political reasons in Europe: Lamborghini in Barcelona and Sarduy in Paris. For similar reasons, Perlongher moved from Argentina to Brazil (and very briefly to France), embodying a movement that similarly requires translation and negotiation of supposed borders and limits. This pattern of migration and the aforementioned "metabolizing" tendency stage a rigorous, imaginative engagement with intellectual movements in postwar Western Europe. For example, Lamborghini, a devoted reader of Jacques Lacan, laces his poetry with references to the psychoanalytic thinker; it is an "aventura," he confides in his poem, "*Die Verneinung*," "de tenerlo a Lacan en el cuarto contiguo" (*Poemas* 84). After moving to Paris, Sarduy developed intellectual and intimate ties with a collection of influential psychoanalysts, critics, and philosophers, such as Lacan and Roland Barthes. And Perlongher's writings, particularly his more theoretical ones, echo the distinctly poststructural voices of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari.

This project generally seeks to (re)read the connections between the œuvres of three writers who lay bare a "time out of joint" through a series of transgressive inversions—dorsal, corporeal, temporal, geographical, and otherwise. Imbricated in this tradition, too, is the privileging of a boundless circulation and expression of desire, however excessive and deviant. Between Lamborghini, Sarduy, and Perlongher emerges a distinctly queer poetics that embraces inversion, illogic, illegibility.

My first chapter reads Lamborghini's poem, "*Die Verneinung*," alongside Sigmund Freud's essay of the same name to offer a foundation of how negation can be interpreted as a gesture mediated through the back. With this in mind, we can understand how Lamborghini's cast of sodomitic characters turn their backs to temporal and sexual normativity and inhabit a

spectral presence. In my second chapter, I turn to Severo Sarduy, a Cuban-turned-French thinker with a penchant for the cosmos. We encounter Sarduy in a transatlantic spiral that leads him to Paris and, for a moment, the shores of Tanger. In his poetry and prose, Sarduy "cruises" various terrains; he reaches beyond Tanger and back to his adopted home of Paris, though he never ceases glancing back at the tropics from which he came. The final chapter returns to the muddy waters of the Río de la Plata from which emerge Nestor Perlongher and his cadaver-infested poetry. The most outwardly political of these three figures, Perlongher's œuvre exposes a hauntological depiction of political violence in 1980s Argentina. The specters of political repression exist alongside the *locas*, *maricas*, and *yiros*—various slang terms for men who are effeminate, gay, cross-dressing, or participants in sex work—who turn their backs around Buenos Aires's dimly lit street corners.

The interventions and articulations proposed in the following chapters are abundantly *queer*. And yet, this is not a thesis principally concerned with what it means to be essentially queer, nor is it about what constitutes a specifically Latin American, Neo-Baroque, or exiled literature. In the readings that follow, rather, I probe how encounters with spectral bodies and borders between Lamborghini, Sarduy, and Perlongher can move us closer to understanding these writers' understandings of what constitutes a living with, or even *as*, ghosts. Closer, perhaps, to learning how one makes sense of a state permanently distorted by "implacable anachrony" (*Specters* 116). To that end, the following chapters will stage, mobilize, and problematize a series of articulations—Sigmund Freud's *Verneinung*, what David Wills deems the *dorsal* turn, Severo Sarduy's spiral, Nestor Perlongher's soliciting of the *yiro callejero*—that lay bare a queer "time out of joint."

# Chapter I:
# Sodomizing the Specter

"Première apparition des hommes-femmes, descendants de ceux des habitants de Sodome qui furent épargnés par le feu du ciel."
—Marcel Proust, *Sodome et Gomorrhe*

"…Quién si no
podría expulsar por la boca
el aire aspirado por el ano?"
—Severo Sarduy, "Orquestica tántrica"

Osvaldo Lamborghini's 1977 poem, "*Die Verneinung*," begins with a negation. Its title refers to the German noun meaning negation, denial, or abnegation. More curiously, however, Lamborghini, an Argentine who wrote virtually exclusively in Spanish, decides to leave the title in its original German. This, too, can be interpreted as an act of negation, that is, a simple refusal to acquiesce to a universal impulse to translate. "*Die Verneinung*," at first glance, resists transformation; it turns its back to a looming rearticulation of itself into *la negación*.[2]

When a particular kind of reader encounters Lamborghini's title, "*Die Verneinung*," their first urge [*Trieb*] may be to turn to Freud. Neither Freud's popularity in *la pampa* nor Lamborghini's familiarity with the Austrian psychoanalyst should come as a surprise. Lamborghini was born in 1940 to a *porteño* family of modest means; he grew up under the care of his older brother, Leónidas, who would become a highly accomplished poet in his own right. Lamborghini has been described by critics as many things: iconoclast, bisexual, writer-in-exile, *lacanófilo*. These labels, it turns out, bring about as much clarity as the muddy waters of the Río de la Plata. Perhaps "ambivalent" has some value here. On a

[2] In his brief note to conclude the collection, *Poemas (1969-1985*), César Aira offers, "[e]xiste un original mecanografiado y titulado 'La Negación', fechado en 1976. Hay también una copia mecanografiada de la primera parte, 'Prólogo, o conclusión', sin ese título, como poema suelto, asimismo fechado en 1976" (544). Though it is not my explicit objective to explore Lamborghini's decisions to 1) revert—to turn back, so to speak—to the original German word for Freud's concept and to 2) belatedly assign such a perplexing title to the poem's first section, these decisions are worth keeping in mind.

political level, for example, Lamborghini never fully embraced the Peronist ideology that dominated domestic politics for the earlier parts of his lifetime. Nor did he fully join the Marxist resistance against the military *junta* that ruled throughout his adulthood. His commitment to leftist politics and his unabashedly deviant sexual identity, however, eventually forced him to flee Buenos Aires, and eventually Argentina, in the early 1980s. He would spend the final years of his life in the Catalan capital of Barcelona.

The majority of Lamborghinian scholarship examines his longer-form prose works, like *El fiord* and *Sebregondi retrocede*, in the context of his well documented fascination with Jacques Lacan. Aside from psychoanalytic readings of Lamborghini, much emphasis has also been placed on his negotiation of aesthetic experimentation and the politically repressive climate in which he wrote. The stories, “El Pibe Barulo” and “El niño proletario,” for instance, are often read as parodies of a national movement to produce “proletarian fiction.” Lamborghini’s career as a poet and visual artist brought him into close contact with Argentina’s literary greats, and his influence on contemporary Argentine writers, especially César Aira, is notable. And, like any lettered *porteño* of the twentieth century, psychoanalysis played a significant role in his intellectual evolution. The pages of *Literal*, the avant-garde literary magazine for which Lamborghini briefly edited, for instance, abound with references to *Lacan* and *lo inconsciente*.

One should hesitate, however, to treat Lamborghini’s œuvre as one of primarily psychoanalytical intrigue. Martín Arias offers that “[u]na de las marcas más conspicuas del ‘estilo lamborghiniano,’ se ha señalado repetidamente, … es la presencia difícilmente metabolizada del discurso psicoanalítico.” It can be argued that Lamborghini largely treats the Western European psychoanalytic tradition, with its cast of name-droppable thinkers and hyperspecific neologisms, as a structuring agent with stylistic and thematic value. Consider an excerpt from the 1981 poem, “La niña de la frontera”:

> anoche la policía me condenó
>
> porque aseguran que soy puto
>
> sexo claro
>
> palabra oscura
>
> me acaricio los senos
>
> fumo un cigarrillo
>
> adoro a mi chongo
>
> y a los textos de Freud (*Poemas* 337).

Freud's works appear as the final item in a list of recurrent themes across Lamborghini's works: political repression ("la policía"), homosexuality and illicit sex work ("soy puto"), the enigmatics of language ("palabra oscura"), and, possibly, transsexuality (the male speaker caresses his own breasts). The lines, "adoro a mi chongo / y a los textos de Freud," draw the speaker's "chongo," a slang term for either a gay man, a male sex worker, or any "no-strings-attached" sexual relation, on the same plane as Freud. Lamborghini assigns a playful, yet deeply erotic and subversive quality to the psychoanalysts' presence on the page.

A more sustained example can be found in the 1969 novel, *El fiord*. Julio Premat interprets the novel's title as a perversion of Freud's name; a similar process of intentional mis-readingings of Freud's theories structures the plot of the novel. Lamborghini's depiction of a primitive, sadistic authority figure who punishes his subjects through anal penetration, Premat argues, contorts Freud's general association of homosexuality with neurosis and his theory of "prehistory" in *Totem and Taboo*. In his contemporary rereading of Freud's somewhat antiquated thoughts, therefore, Lamborghini condemns the reader to "un tiempo indefinido" (130). To that effect, we can also view Lamborghini's reformulations of psychoanalysis, a framework imported to South America from Western Europe, as an imagination of literary production and reception beyond national and regional

categorizations.[3] My approach is less interested in measuring how effectively Lamborghini, in *El fiord* or elsewhere, *does* psychoanalysis. Instead, I hope to consider how this mode of interpretation relates to the staging of corporeal and temporal questions in Lamborghini's texts, particularly in the context of "*Die Verneinung*."

Freud's essay of the same name, most commonly translated into English as "Negation," examines the implications of uttering "no" in an analytic setting.[4] "Negation," the essay, lays a trap: the opening paragraph of the paper tempts us to read a negation articulated by Freud's patient—"You ask who this person in the dream can be. It's *not* my mother"—as an all but total confirmation of that which is alleged to be false (Freud 667). In this case, we take the negation, "*Die Mutter ist es* nicht," to mean its direct opposite: "*Also* ist *es die Mutter*." Through amending this negation, the analyst understands the subject of the patient's dream to be, of course, his mother. In that sense, negation is a technique by which "the content of a repressed image or idea can make its way into consciousness, on condition that it is *negated*" (667).

This approach proves problematic for a couple of reasons. For one, the analyst should not ethically abandon the possibility that his patient is telling the truth. In a literary context, the reader, not completely unlike the analyst vis-à-vis his patient, equally holds some sort of obligation to believe—or, at the very least, to briefly entertain the trustworthiness of—his narrator. Secondly, it is quite possible that the notion that the mother *is* in the dream is simply untrue. Perhaps most obviously, this approach is simply one of hermeneutic futility. Reading every explicit instance of negation in "*Die Verneinung*" as an affirmation of its opposite would quickly devolve into a ridiculous exercise.

---

[3] An excellent account of Freud's reception and continued relevance in Argentina can be found in Mariano Ben Plotkin's *Freud in the Pampas: The Emergence and Development of a Psychoanalytic Culture in Argentina.* Popular discourse tends to assign a certain "belatedness" to Argentina's mania for Freudian psychoanalysis that connects to this thesis' interest in both "behindness" as it relates to time and the circulation of ideas and people between Europe and Latin America.

[4] My ensuing thoughts on Freud's negation were first thought through in a paper written for a French seminar with David Wills in the fall of 2023.

And yet, shedding this elementary swapping of "no" to effectively mean "yes" does not tarnish the intrigue of *Verneinung*. Freud is correct in insisting that the act of negation tickles at the unconscious, all that is linguistically, physically, and affectively repressed. Alenka Zupančič, in her essay, "Not-Mother: On Freud's *Verneinung*," offers that negation must instead be seen as an urge to articulate that which cannot be articulated: "It is as if [the patient] has to say it, but at the same time cannot; it is at the same time imperative and impossible" (2). Whereas our elementary reading of Freud may lead us to think of negation as a checkpoint on a smooth road towards "a correct meaning" inscribed in the unconscious of the subject, Zupančič clarifies that this "correct meaning" takes the paradoxical form of the negation of a negation (667). In doing so, "we cannot eliminate the structure of the gap, or crack" that *Verneinung* leaves in its wake (Zupančič 2). To briefly return to Freud's example, the mother, as the repressed content who undergoes an attempt to undo her negativity, is reduced to something along the lines of the "not not-mother": though her absence in the dream can now be confirmed, "something of [her] persists—the repression, the symptoms persist beyond becoming conscious of the repressed" (2).

So remains the question: in bearing the title, "*Die Verneinung*," what does Lamborghini's poem negate, refuse, or perhaps unconsciously affirm? What looms above and what persists *inside* this "gap" that negation cracks open to us? At the very least, in leading with this reference to negation, Lamborghini invites a reading of his poem that, as Zupančič puts it, "'[thinks] out of the spirit of negation'" (1). That is not at all to say that "*Die Verneinung*" resists—or, dare I say, negates—the possibility of a psychoanalytic reading. Rather, I hope to show how a broader "spirit of negation"—an approach that seeks to embrace and confront the paradoxes woven into the text—can elucidate questions inscribed within and beyond the psyche.

*Para César Aira*

Directly beneath the poem's title, we find its *destinataire*: César Aira. Allow me to explore, albeit briefly, the very simple gesture of dedicating the poem to Aira (or to anyone, for that matter). In his epistolary satire *The Post Card*, Derrida asks, "Who is writing? To whom? And to send, to destine, to dispatch what? To what address?" (5).[5] According to Derrida, when the "man of discourse or writing"—in our case, the poet—"apostrophize[s]," he "interrupts the continuous development of the sequence, abruptly turns toward someone, that is, something addresses himself to you" (4). To write *to*, or even *for*, another is, in many ways, to enter an endlessly unstable condition. Time, for one, is destabilized: "I will have spent my life asking your pardon. I didn't think about the time difference," bemoans Derrida. "But I write you tomorrow, I always say it in the present" (11). Writing's endless quest to *catch up* to time, to close the temporal gap—to, ultimately, negate a negation—conjures up Zupančič's idea that through "negation… there remains a trace of that which is not" (4). Indeed, this letter [*carte*], Derrida warns us, materializes the haunting nature of the letter [*lettre*] and, therefore, the incommensurability of language. In ink endures the "residue of what we have said to one another, of what, do not forget, we have made of one another, of what we have written one another" (*PC* 7). The psychoanalytic intrigue of negation now exposes itself as one of linguistic and temporal urgency.

Naturally, the question shifts from "Who is writing?" to "*What* is being written?" (5). In a correspondence between two men, we encounter a postcard. The image on this postcard reveals a "catastrophic" scene:

---

[5] *Envoyer*, to send. In his "Translator's Introduction" to *The Post Card*, Alan Bass provides a glossary of French terms relevant to Derrida's book. His entry on *envoi* and *envoyer* emphasizes the spectral and sexual nature of *sending* a letter: "[O]ne might say that if one sends oneself, then one's en-voy or representative has to be one's double or ghost. This idea speaks to the relations between oneself and one's heirs, to whom one sends oneself via an inheritance. The transitive sense of *s'envoyer* has a special slang sense in French. 'To send oneself someone' in this sense means to provide oneself with someone for sexual purposes. What can or cannot be sent, by oneself or to oneself, in all these senses?" (xxi).

> I see Plato getting an erection in Socrates' back and see the insane hubris of his prick, an interminable, disproportionate erection traversing Paris's head like a single idea and then the copyist's chair, before slowly sliding, still warm, under Socrates' right leg, in harmony or symphony with the movement of this phallus sheaf, the points, plumes, pens, fingers, nails and *grattoirs*, the very pencil boxes which address themselves in the same direction (18).

The sodomitic act, depicted here through a thirteenth-century illustration that has been printed onto a postcard, is catastrophic, for it exposes an epistemological—and positional—insecurity.[6] The word, "catastrophe," as Christian Hite highlights in his introduction to *Derrida and Queer Theory*, is an etymological turning over, that is, an inversion back to and out of the Ancient Greek: "*kata*- + *strephein*, to turn" (11).

Lee Edelman, in *Homographesis*, observes that "sodomy and writing insist on the (il)logical possibility that what is behind can also, and properly, come before" (191). Socrates has turned his back to Plato; Plato only ever sees Socrates's back. Here, "there is only the *back*," there is only a looming dorsal totality that insinuates the possibility of total negation (*PC* 48). Before all else, sodomy and homosocial correspondence coalesce in their mutual drive on turning their backs to one another, effectively triggering a disorder of order: "The One in the other, the one in front of the other, the one after the other, the one behind the other?" (Derrida 19). The sodomite poet's "last word" is "all… in the back… everything is seen," and thus articulated, "from behind" (48). We return, therefore, to a perversion of Derrida's original inquiry. "Who is writing? To whom?" becomes "Who is sodomizing whom?"

César Aira is credited as the editor of *Poemas (1969–1985*), the collection from which "*Die Verneinung*" is taken. In a short note at the end of the collection, he writes: "Ya

[6] J. Hillis Miller, in his chapter, "Preposterous Preface," from the collection *Derrida and Queer Theory*, introduces the possibility of reading this encounter as a preposterous one; that is, in the etymological sense, the word, like the act of sodomy, "comes both before and after" (24).

señalamos, al editar sus narraciones, la resistencia que opone Lamborghini a una clasificación convencional en géneros. Hemos retenido bajo el título de *Poemas* todo lo que visualmente se pareciera a un poema (la 'prosa cortada')" (Aira 541). Lamborghini resists convention, in effect, turning his *back* to it, and Aira catches sight of this. David Wills, in *Dorsality*, uncovers the erotic sensitization of discovering and coming into contact with another's back:

> What touches the back, even the surprise prod or slap of a friend or a stranger, implies an erotic relation, a version of sexuality, a version that raises simultaneously and undecidably the questions of sex and gender, of species, and of objects. A sexuality therefore that is not, at least not in the first instance, determined as hetero- or homosexual, as vaginal or anal, as human (or indeed animal) or prosthetic, not even as embracing or penetrating, but which implies before all else a coupling with otherness (12).

In recognizing Lamborghini's deviance—in describing his poetry principally through this practice of rejection, of *negation*—Aira is left to face not only Lamborghini's backside, but with that the destabilizing "otherness" imbricated in his transgressive, perplexing poetics of the dorsal.

My purpose here is not to imply that, like Plato, Aira's phallus directly "plunges under the waves made by the veils around [Lamborghini's] plump buttocks" (*PC* 18). Though for a moment we may detect a quark of similitude between the two cases—Aira, like Plato, playing the active role in this encounter despite typically occupying the receiving role of *protégé*—such "queer detective" work is exhausting, reductive, and, frankly, beside the point. Rather, I simply wish to emphasize the notion that apostrophizing—interpellating, even—Aira into a poem of a sexually deviant nature can intensify the (homo)erotic tension that, to some extent, undergirds every exercise in writing. It is the seemingly innocuous gesture of dedicating a poem like "*Die Verneinung*" to another that will allow us to locate

specific sexual, temporal, and linguistic tensions in our ensuing reading of this poem. That is, to locate Lamborghini's understanding that, as he quips in the 1984 poem, "DICHOS, XIX," "Homo y sexual ya es la ortografía" (*Poemas* 407).

## PRÓLOGO, O CONCLUSIÓN

We now understand negation—*Verneinung*—to be an act mediated through the back. Freud's patient, to return to our very first example, verbally turns *away* from the mother, and in so doing, turns *towards* Zupančič's "not not-mother," a figure that embodies the impossibility of both the mother's presence and total absence. The turn, Wills teaches us, is before all else "an inflection, a bending, the movement of a limb that… is the sense of *articulation*" (3). It finds its home, quite Derrideanly, in "a departure that is also a detour, a deviation, a divergence into difference" (4).

Indeed, it is this notion of a turn—this "inflection," this machination of "bending" and deviating—that ultimately sets "*Die Verneinung*" into motion. The poem is divided into four parts; its opening section is entitled "Prólogo, o conclusión." The first stanza reads:

> Qué giros de pensamientos,
>
> qué ridículas torcazas
>
> qué torpe andar.
>
> Rimero desnudo sin lo propicio.
>
> Sin la intensidad. Sin la sal.
>
> Qué alboroto en medio del sueño,
>
> reunido una vez, otra más, el crisol de las hazanas.
>
> No atreverse en la lija estival
>
> donde se gira (trueca) ángulo por huero
>
> y el toco del saber por un terror agrícola
>
> merecido: carne de surco.

Una eternidad (suspiro y aye).

Ineficacia monumental. (*Poemas* 74)

These “giros” of thought, described in relation to and against the errant flight of an errant animal, indicate that the speaker writes from a dorsal position and is likewise inviting the reader to think through the back. As Wills reminds us, “[e]ven if in turning one (the human) deviates from itself in the simplest or most minimal fashion, turns just a little to the left or right—say to correct its bearing—it turns, for all intents and purposes, toward the back” (5).

A few lines later, Lamborghini writes, “se gira (trueca) ángulo por huero / y el toco del saber por un terror agrícola / merecido: carne de surco” (5). These aforementioned thoughts—described in a following line as a “toco del saber”—are simultaneously twisted *by* and traded *for* the terror of “carne de surco,” a fright that taps into a not yet articulated animalistic and earthly dimension. When read alongside the “ángulo [trocado] por huero,” however, this seemingly imminent threat of materialization through the “carne” is revealed to be empty—already butchered and thus rendered lifeless before its poetic (re)presentation. These turns and their animalistic tinges then begin to exhaust themselves. The speaker sighs at the end of the stanza, “Una eternidad (suspiro y aye). / Ineficacia monumental,” as if to resign himself to a desertous expanse of eternity (or, will be written a few lines later, he “se aduna en [este] desierto”) (74). An arrival at the temporal plane of eternity results from a chain of clashes between the *cogito* and the animalistic, between a materiality pushed up against the immaterial (74). The dorsal notion of a “departure that is also a detour, a deviation, a divergence into difference” evidently persists (Wills 5).

These preoccupations gain a significant complexity in the following lines: “Los dos cuerpos tomaron la misma pócima / y una sola pasión fueron en los órganos / que se unifican con la muerte” (Lamborghini 74). Here, at long last, we find the body, a site with the potential to mediate, clarify, and complicate the various anxieties teased out in the first stanza. Our

understanding of the poem is henceforth necessarily constructed through these "dos cuerpos," the passions and potions that intoxicate them, and, perhaps most peculiarly, the death that unites them.

From the meeting of these two bodies emerge two initial points of intrigue. First is the rather obvious idea of a relation being formed, which can be interpreted here as an entry into a type of exchange—be it of desires, words, or even bodily fluids. We are momentarily sent back to Derrida's *Post Card*, in which he highlights the haunting nature of such correspondences: "[W]e are but a miniscule residue 'left unclaimed': a residue of what we have said to one another, of what, do not forget, we have made of one another, of what we have written one another" (7). Beyond just uncertainty, Derrida points here to the impossibility of living *with*—or *in*—another, insinuating that there will always be some sort of irreconcilable difference. Similarly, Wills offers that from the effort to maintain a rapport with another, one is left "twisting and turning between love and friendship, as between *philia* and *eros*, and it is as if, in the final analysis, it all adds up to nothing so much as the turning itself" (140). What, then, allows these two bodies to converge? This question conveniently leads us to our second observation: that these bodies only "se unifican con la muerte" (Lamborghini 74). This purported impossibility of two bodies joining seems only to resolve itself through negation—in this case, through the *ultimate* negation of life, or death.

A body, for one, must always be nourished, and the two bodies in question are incessantly hungry. This hunger is initially sparked by the consumption of a mysterious potion that obliges the two entities to share one, uniting passion. In the following stanza, the speaker wonders, "¿Pero qué es un cuerpo ahíto / aunque más no fuere de la pócima aquella?" (74). The ultimate satisfaction of the body is called into question, and, subsequently, the reader bears witness to a cannibalistic hunger that may only be resolved through death. For example, "un beso" sets off the physical consummation of these bodies'

urges for one another: "Y ahora que tenemos entre los brazos / y que con mutuo sudor de títeres nos humedecemos, / … ahora tampoco podemos suplir / la pregunta ahíta por la cosa escasa" (76). Here, not even the convergence of these living bodies can supplant the inherent impossibility of their desires. Indeed, it is this very juncture that forces the speaker to finally reckon with the fact that "[e]l varón con sed empina el codo / … antes de caer y se declama translúcido" (76). This fall into a translucid state, however, should not and cannot be interpreted as a fixed death. Light can still partially filter through this voracious lover of flesh who oscillates between living and not living. He is rendered a ghost.

It is here that the title of this poem's first section, "Prólogo, o conclusión," is of particular importance. "Prologue, or conclusion" is a paradoxical gesture that implies the beginning of the poem to also be its very end. In refuting a logic of linear temporality, Lamborghini opens a temporal "crack" not dissimilar to the one that Zupančič describes in her essay on *Verneinung*, a gap that conjures the possibility of specters looming over the text. That is to say, a prologue placed alongside a conclusion clearly reveals a certain "time [that] is out of joint" of which Derrida writes in *Specters of Marx* (1). "Time is off its hinges," Derrida, reading *Hamlet*, explains. "[T]ime is off course, beside itself, disadjusted. Says Hamlet. Who thereby *opened one of those breaches*, often they are poetic and thinking peepholes [*meurtrières*], through which Shakespeare will have kept watch over the English language; at the same time he signed its body" (18, emphasis added). In drawing attention to the linguistic and temporal disjointedness that structure this poem, Lamborghini, too, is opening a "breach."

But where exactly *is* this breach? Reading through the back, as we have done thus far, naturally leads us to the bottom and, inevitably, to the anus. As declares the poem's speaker: "Éste es el cantar de gesta, el mio / Cid bajo los mandobles de un orificio / impertérrito o anal. Atrás, atrás. / Pero hay que señalar / partes del cuerpo" (75). The anus here is identified

as a locus, not just of a metapoetic uncertainty that needs to be affirmed—"Éste es el cantar de gesta, el mio / Cid"—but also of uncovering a fragmented and spectral body. It is through the anus that we can therefore (re)read the sodomitic convergence of these two bodies and the irreconcilability of their desires.

For example, when the two bodies finds themselves "detenidos, quietos brazos, / en infinita posición," so is revealed an act of sodomy that, as Edelman explains in *Homographesis*, figures itself "in terms of the (il)logic that structures the moebius loop, the (il)logic that dislocates such spatio-temporal 'situations' as 'pre' and 'post,' or before and behind" (Lamborghini 76) (Edelman 191). Neither behind nor in front of, neither here nor there—the "indistinguishability" of this structure of sodomy, so it might be called, triggers a crisis of ontological uncertainty (Edelman 176). The sodomite, as Gabriel Giorgi illustrates in *Sueños de exterminio*, becomes his own sort of specter, in other words, the "descendiente de esa 'raza' invisible, al mismo tiempo extinta y universal (y por eso sistemática, espectral)" (22).

*Atrás*, *atrás*. I am tempted here to revisit the title of this poem's section, "Prólogo, o conclusión." "Prologue" comes to us from the Greek *pro-*, or before, and *logos*. Here, the poet seeks to stand *behind* logos, incoking once again the sodomitic encounter to which Derrida refers in *The Post Card*. Throughout "*Die Verneinung*," the speaker leads the reader backwards, never unhinging himself from Derrida's notion that between sodomy and writing "[t]here is only the back, seen from the back, in what is written, such is the final word" (*PC* 48). This becomes especially clear in the lines immediately following an explicit mention of the body as a site of identification ("Pero hay que señalar / partes del cuerpo"):

Yo vivía envuelto

en una diamantina transparencia de gin, o ginebra

cuando la guerra vino a confirmar

mis fantasmas más deseables:

los más persistentes, los más bellos.

¡Y cómo corrí tras ellos!" (75).

Even in his active pursuing of his own desirable, persistent, beautiful ghosts—that, it can be noted, come to embody the sexual and temporal anxieties with which the text is afflicted—the speaker always operates from *behind*, forever ensconced in the destabilizing, "catastrophic" logic of sodomy.

## *Prosa Cortada*: Writing out of Joint

Shakespeare—*qui genuit Derrida*—writes of "time… out of joint" and thus affords time a certain corporality. That is, for time to be *out* of joint—for it to be granted a *dis*jointedness, an alienation from its own articular surface—the possibility that it was once *in* place must also exist. In revisiting the broad concept of negation that structures this chapter, one can draw a connection between Derrida's reading of *Hamlet* and Freud's suggestion that "the content of a repressed image or idea can make its way into consciousness, on condition that it is *negated*" (Freud 667). Simply put, recognizing a temporal disembodiment concurrently points to the (perhaps repressed) possibility of it once being embodied. When Hamlet bemoans that "the time is out of joint," he apostrophizes and speaks *into* a cavity cracked open by negation, thereby incorporating the question of language into this temporal instability. Derrida reminds us that "Hamlet… thereby opened one of those breaches… through which Shakespeare will have kept watch over the English language… [and] signed its body" (18). We can now see how this gap—this space of temporal and corporeal dysfunction (referred to elsewhere by Derrida as a "*meurtrière*," or "peephole")—is one through which Shakespeare and Lamborghini endeavor to (as)sign the body of language.

The second section of "*Die Verneinung*" is entitled "Prosa Cortada," or "Chopped Prose," likewise shifting the speaker of the poem's preoccupation to one defined by writing that is fragmented, "off course, beside itself, disadjusted"—*tout simplement*, out of joint (18). The ethos of a "prosa cortada," it can be argued, threads together virtually the entirety of Lamborghini's œuvre. In an essay for *Asymptote Journal*, Aira describes the wonder of Lamborghini's aesthetic *Aufhebung*:

> [N]i prosa ni verso, ni una combinación de ambos, sino un pasaje. Hay una arqueología poética en la prosa, y viceversa; una doble inversión, cuya huella es aquello en lo que muchos han visto lo más característico del estilo de Osvaldo: la puntuación. Por otro lado, él mismo lo ha dicho: «En tanto poeta, ¡*zás*! novelista».

Aira's characterization of Lamborghinian style as "una doble inversión" should be understood in terms of Freud and Zupančič's thinking on negation. Neither prose nor poetry, Lamborghini's *prosa cortada* cracks open a haunting epistemological gap. An encounter with his writing is to commence a "pasaje" into spectrality.

"Prosa Cortada" opens: "Si hay algo que odio eso es la música, / Las rimas, los juegos de palabras," and thus immediately sets down a refutation of traditional poetics (78).[7] It will be, then, through this "prosa cortada" that Lamborghini, as Aira explains to us earlier, continues to turn his back *against* convention and, more specifically, away from the musicality of poetry. He continues:

> Nací en una generación.
> La muerte y la vida estaban
> en un cuaderno a rayas:
> La muerte y la vida,

[7] In her essay, "Osvaldo Lamborghini o la muerte del poema," from the collection, *Y todo el resto es literature*, Tamara Kamenszain notes: "Casi todos los poemas escritos por Osvaldo Lamborghini durante su último exilio español (1983-1985) vienen rimados" (64). Her argument seems to support the idea that Lamborghini's exile to Catalonia signals not only a physical dislocation from Argentina, but a stylistic exile from *prosa cortada* and towards poetic convention, too.

Lo masculino y lo feminino.

Los orgasmos sin patria

Y los órganos de parte a parte,

Se perfilaban en un blanco (78).

The historicizing mantra, “Nací en una generación,” is one to which the poem will return several more times. The speaker reiterates a handful of stanzas later, for instance:

Nací en una generación, era de esperar.

Golpean con suavidad la puerta.

Aquí están, ridículos. Nací

En una generación (79).

We may be immediately compelled to read this sentiment alongside Derrida’s assertion that “one cannot speak of generations of skulls or spirits (*Kant qui genuit Hegel qui genuit Marx*) except on the condition of language—and the voice, in any case of that which *marks* the name or takes its place” (*Specters of Marx* 9).

This historical angle is, of course, not of complete irrelevance to the poem’s temporal confusion and sodomitical intrigue. In his reading of Marx’s *Eighteenth Brumaire*, Derrida is drawn to the various “overturnings, inversions, [and] conversions without border” that Marx employs in his retelling of the French Revolution of 1848 (*Specters* 117). When Marx writes of “barren and purposeless agitation in the name of tranquility,” “passions without truth and truth without passion,” and “history without events,” he is essentially approaching a critique of total appearance (Marx 51). Marx’s fixation on contradictions—particularly temporal ones, like the arrival of a revolutionary Red Specter who still dons the breeches of bourgeois Order—points to a history turning in on itself and a body losing its flesh. In other words:

"Men and events show themselves as inverted Peter Schlemihls, as shadows whose bodies have been mislaid" (Marx 52).[8]

The confounding nature of a Marxian "history without events" leads Derrida to raise the question: "Now, in what does this absence of events, and finally this ahistoricity, consist?" (117). He answers his own inquiry: "an absence of body, of course" (117). In other words, an absence of events demarcates a fundamentally corporeal absence. One can conversely argue that the mere event of the speaker being born into "una generación" calls attention to not just a body, but also "a specter that was [once] conjured (away)" (117).

Let us not forget that the bodies in and of "*Die Verneinung*" have already proved to be of sodomitical interest. In our reading from behind, we arrive at the understanding that before—or *behind—esta generación* are all the previous ones: "Nací en una generación, / Oh vida—el tonto en su reclam. / Aquellos antepasados fueron libres. / Con una libertad rayana" (78). Is Lamborghini, then, consigning time to the same (il)logic of sodomy to which he also sends poetry? The lines,

> Nací en una generación.
>
> Pero antes había otra generación.
>
> Antes que yo y antes que la mía,
>
> Y ella era sabia en sus letras,

seem to indicate this (78). For these generations past to simultaneously stand *behind* and come *before* the speaker, we must once again embrace the positional and ontological "catastrophe" described in *Post Card*: "The One in the other, the one in front of the other, the one after the other, the one behind the other" (19).

What may perhaps be even more intriguing about the admission that "antes había otra generación," is that this previous generation was wise and lettered. Here, the connections

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[8] Peter Schlemihls is the titular character of an 1841 novella by the German writer Adelbert von Chamisso. Schlemihls loses his shadow in the tale; Derrida wagers that Marx's reference to story serves to describe the "disincarnation" of the red specter in nineteenth-century Europe (117).

between spectrality, sodomy, the body, and the letter are drawn out quite clearly. Indeed, the speaker then affirms the linguistic dimension of this temporal and sexual question: "En una generación, seguro que nací en una generación. / *Primero la palabra, después la imagen*. / Ojos rayanos" (83, emphasis added). First the word, then the image; the word *behind* the image. The poem's insistence on the primacy of the letter is complemented by Derrida's reading of Marx; in *Specters*, he argues that the *Eighteenth Brumaire* "consists in saying: these men and these events who lose flesh… whose body has disappeared (*abhanden gekommen ist*), that's how they appear (*erscheinen*), to be sure, but this is but an apparition, therefore also an appearance and *finally an image*" (117). In short, the ghostly actors of which Marx, Derrida, and Lamborghini write must first historically *happen*—and thus be concurrently *articulated* and materialized—before being granted a certain visuality.

Let us return to the first mention of this confounding generation:

Nací en una generación.

La muerte y la vida estaban

en un cuaderno a rayas:

La muerte y la vida,

Lo masculino y lo feminino.

Los orgasmos sin patria

Y los órganos de parte a parte,

Se perfilaban en un blanco (78).

When placed within this historicized context, life and death gain a specific materiality tethered to writing and to the letter. Ultimately, they are found inscribed in the lines of a notebook page. These "rayas" invite a literal reading between the lines; Lamborghini concedes a fleeting opportunity to contemplate the breach that characterizes the letter and the dichotomy of life, in its plenitude, and the obscure mystery of death. Life and death exist

alongside an additional polarity that haunts the text, "lo masculino y lo femenino," two ideals between which the speaker oscillates. In never consigning himself to a specific regime of gender expression, he seeks a certain androgynous *goce*, or *jouissance*, that must be essentially "sin patria." This is, it must be noted, a fragmented body, consisting of "órganos de parte a parte." In that way, this climaxing, androgynous body is biologically *apátrido*; it remains unmappable and unstable, and it resists continual efforts to define it.

Long before his exile to the Catalan capital, the figure of an itinerant, ghostly, desiring body features prominently many of Lamborghini's poems and stories. For example, a section of an untitled poem from 1981 reads:

> Hay que ser un gaucho
>
> y un *guacho*
>
> y un hijo de puta también
>
> y también un sabio
>
> … y 'cut up'
>
> y 'bad writing'
>
> y también mierda y mareas
>
> y espuma de cadáveres (280).

The demonym "gaucho," used to identify a native of Argentina, morphs into "*guacho*," a local dialectal term for a motherless child or a person without a fixed home. A dynamic similar to Premat's "Freud/*Fiord*" wordplay is afoot here; the "gaucho/*guacho*" sublimates a deviant erotics into the act of errance, which can be interpreted as a questioning of both the Oedipal family and a totalizing national Argentine identity.

The final lines of "Prólogo o conclusión," along with the first few of "Prosa cortada," carry with them echoes of Nestor Perlongher, a contemporary of Lamborghini. In Buenos Aires throughout the 1970s and the 1980s, the two men formed a passionate, at times

puzzling rapport. In 1980, for example, Lamborghini lamented the "'silencios sospechosos'" that marked Perlongher's collection *Austria-Hungría*; he apologized a week later with a delicate poem entitled "Nocturno" (Strafacce 628). Nonetheless, they deeply respected and dialogued with each other's work. In a 1989 interview, Perlongher affirmed that "entre los argentinos, mi encuentro con Osvaldo Lamborghini fue decisivo" (*PP* 14).

Throughout his 1981 poem, "Cadáveres," Perlongher punctuates each stanza with the refrain, "Hay Cadáveres," effectively tasking the poem with locating this collective of festering, decaying bodies. He writes:

> En lo preciso de esta ausencia
>
> En lo que raya esa palabra
>
> En su divina presencia
>
> Comandante, en su raya
>
> Hay Cadáveres (119).

Like Lamborghini, Perlongher unveils a body impossibly wedged between absence and presence, between life and death. It is through this visual and ontological fissure that he uncovers a certain temporal disjointedness, too. Giorgi, in *Sueños de exterminio*, offers:

> Todo resuena en "cadáver," ya que el cadáver está ausente. Y cancela el tiempo: no hay narrativa porque no es una historia de lo visible, del devenir visible o invisible, sino una incertidumbre de lo visible como tal, de lo que se puede ver y de lo que no se puede no ver… Ver lo que ilumina el límite de lo visible y que es a la vez presencia y nada (164).

Perlongher's cadavers, in their aesthetic confrontation of the visible and invisible, "desaparecen pero no dejan resto, no hay contorno o trazo, no hay después" (162). They approach a limit that allows for the emergence of "una zona donde se desrealiza el mundo a partir de ese asedio de cadáver ausente como potencia y como virtualidad: el cuerpo que falta

ahueca la realidad y señala la inminencia de… otro tiempo" (164). In other words, the entire landscape of the poem mutates, "se vuelve… toda tumba, sitial de espectros" (162).

Through this logic, the body represented in "*Die Verneinung*" finds its shape "en un blanco": a void, a space pregnant with its own absence. If Perlongher's cadaver exposes "un gesto engañoso, una posibilidad falsa" attached to a spectral corpse, then Lamborghini's fragmented body can only inhabit a sort of perceptible materiality—that is, if we read the verb *perfilarse* to literally mean "take shape"—if it is constructed *negatively*, or in the presence of an absence (Giorgi 163). In essence, when the disparate organs of a disjointed body "se [perfilan] en un blanco," they mutate into a Derridean specter: "neither soul nor body, both one and the other" (Lamborghini 78) (*Specters* 6). To revisit Zupančič once again, this process of *Verneinung* produces not two conditions, but three: "1) affirmation (some positivity); 2) negation (absence, what is not); and 3) the *place*, or *locus*, of their difference" (6). The spectral incorporation that Derrida outlines necessarily "leaves a mark, a trace, which is precisely what the subject relies upon in its constitution" (6).

Ultimately, for Lamborghini the locus of this corporeal difference (that is, the tertiary dimension explicated by Zupančič) is revealed to be the letter—language, writing, and poetry: "Apuntes, apuntes, apuntes. / O *amputes*, / La 'roca' de la maldición" (78). As the stenographic act of "apunt[ando]" mutates into an (dis)embodied amputation, we witness a dismembering of the letter and a materialization of this looming "prosa cortada." Several stanzas later, Lamborghini writes, "Sexualmente perfecto o casi casi, / Amable Dios, / Al empezar el día el artista no te olvida, ni te rima, / Porque toda rima ofende: basta, amputes tu discurso" (80). The dismembering of the letter is accompanied by poetic and sexual anxieties; through his articulation of his disavowal of conventional poetic structure, the speaker thus reveals the interconnectedness of sexual deviance, temporal dysfunction, and language.

Lamborghini additionally describes poetic form as “una desgracia pasajera.” Structure is always ephemeral; poetic organization precludes a temporal and linguistic tension that a disjointed body is left to mediate:

> La forma de poema es una desgracia pasajera.
>
> También para que algunas partes de mi cuerpo se mantengan vivas
>
> Debo recubrirlas con harina.
>
> Desgracia pasajera, así por lo menos hablo en el ritmo buscado,
>
> El ritmo arbitrario del proyecto sin sustancia,
>
> Y escribo como un nuevo, como un novato —
>
> A mis años — “proyecto”, “sustancia”
>
> Generación, (80).

Our speaker loathes the musicality of poetry, as he reminds us in the opening line to this section: “Si hay algo que odio eso es la música, / Las rimas, los juegos de palabras” (78). He re-emphasizes this hatred two pages later: “Odio la música, odio el arte, odio” (80). However, most intriguingly, he provides here an alternative:

> Pero amo: amo el pene.
>
> Cuyo rostro no puedo adivinar enmascarado hábil por el antifaz
>
> de la bragueta.
>
> Y como entre mirarlo y tocarlo no sé qué pensar (80).

The hunger for flesh—in this case, a penis that swells beneath the veneer of a pants zipper—supplants the metapoetic anxiety that undergirds “*Die Verneinung*,” and particularly, “Prosa cortada.” A recourse to the penis permits a crude analogy to be drawn between the phallus and the ghostly fragments of chopped prose. In the 1981 poem, “El Instituto de Rehabilitación,” Lamborghini expresses a similar corporeal response to matters of writing: “me haré escritor / es decir / me meteré la lengua en el culo” (309). In *Y todo el resto es*

*literatura*, Tamara Kamenszain reads this poem as an admission that to internalize the essence of poetry "no es otra que habérsela metido ya en el lugar que le corresponde" (61). In other words, Lamborghini sticks a *prosa cortrada* up his anus.

***Y todo el resto…***

An unjust reading of "*Die Verneinung*" would neglect to consider the cast of characters that appear alongside the speaker. The final two sections of the poem, "La Madre Hogarth" and "La frontera," expand the aforementioned themes of sodomitical desires, temporal uncertainty, and poetic destabilization. The erotic irresistibility of the "puta ocasional," Madre Hogarth, for example, is constructed through bodily openings like "el culo," "la boca," and the eyes.[9] She lures in suitors with her "dilatadas pupilas azules" before fellating them to climax (89). Her ultimate trick, however, is the addiction with which these "víctima[s]" end up afflicted (89). The insatiable desires of these clients—and, by virtue, Madre's use-value as a *puta*—is dependent upon her ability to entice people through her orifices. Madre Hogarth's mantra, "Yo soy tu proveedora de droga," reaffirms the speaker's exasperated claim from ten pages prior: "¡Es tan difícil no gustarle a nadie!" (82). An insatiable *mamavergas* defined principally by the use-value of her orifices, Madre Hogarth becomes a figure akin to, say, Paul B. Preciado's idea of a *cloaca maxima*: "a sewer mouth who [absorbs] all the substances and techniques of the self produced" (*Testo Junkie* 359).

The poem also features Juana Blanco, a woman first assumed to be a former lover of the speaker. "Hoy rompí por teléfono con Juana Blanco, esa chica, la escritora," the speaker

[9] Ricardo Strafacce theorizes that Madre's surname refers to William Hogarth, the eighteenth-century English painter whose polemical, satirical works interrogate social taboos like prostitution and venereal disease. He also draws attention to Martín Arias' reading of Madre Hogarth. Arias detects a connection between the "diamantina transparencia de gin, o ginebra" in which the speaker of "*Die Verneinung*" finds himself and the *ginebra* that Madre Hogarth purports to sell later on in the poem. Apparently, gin was considered a woman's liquor at the time—some Argentines even called it "Mother Gin"—possibly revealing a certain feminine condition desired by the male actors in the poem. The legitimacy of this reading, however, seems uncertain to Strafacce.

mourns (83). Juana appears in many other poems by Lamborghini, even playing the role of the speaker in a number of them, such as in "(Juana Blanco)" from 1981:

> Yo me llamo Juana Blanco
>
> y es mucho, demasiado,
>
> lo que me pajeo. Pero,
>
> no puedo remediarlo.
>
> Me encanta estar echada
>
> y yo solita dármela.
>
> Miro el techo y primero susurro
>
> ronroneo, así empiezo,
>
> y en el cúlmine después jadeo. (194)

Juana, here and elsewhere, speaks in sultry free verse and possesses a seemingly infinite sex drive. Her descriptions of her own sex, however, teem with dysphoric sentiments and tightly associate themselves with an aversion to language and poetic form. The poem's opening lament, "odio mi lengua / tanto como odio a mi sexo," is repeated throughout and punctuated by a confession:

> quiere decir entonces que doblemente deseo
>
> anhelo
>
> la prosa
>
> el verso
>
> cambio de sexo. (182)

Ricardo Strafacce's biography of Lamborghini divulges that Juana is, in fact, Lamborghini's "heterónimo femenino," a feminized alter ego that he adapts to quell the "exceso de deseo que, más temprano o más tarde, [tiene] que desembocar en una identificación" (590-91). By means of this persona, Lamborghini explores his flirtations with crossdressing and intense

curiosities about non-normative sexual practices. In a letter to a friend, Diana Bilmezis, he remarks that through Juana he feels the same sexual ecstasy that a confident dominatrix exacts as she "agarra [a un hombre] 'entre sus piernitas' y lo usa para su propio placer" (590).

Strafacce also suggests that Juana's surname, Blanco, is a negation of "Negro," a self-assigned nickname found in the writer's *cuentos* and correspondences. In Spanish, particularly in the parlance of Lamborghini's time, the word *negro* can describe a ghostwriter. Though not confirmed by Strafacce, Lamborghini's use of the word *negro* conjures possible understandings of Juana's position within in the Lamborghinian imaginary through the logic of spectrality. Indeed, in a 1982 poem entitled "Todos contentos (y yo yambién)," Lamborghini explicitly describes Juana as "el *espectro* / de *toda* juventud: que fue locura — / en mi juventud" (374, emphasis added).

These revelations complicate Juana's position in "*Die Verneinung*," especially since the poem appears to be written with the speaker and her's *ruptura* in recent memory. Readers recall his lament, "Hoy rompí por teléfono con Juana Blanco, esa chica, la escritora," and are left to ponder what actually constitutes a parting with a spectral, feminized version of the self. Though Juana is never quite divorced from a traditional, heteronormative sexual paradigm—Lamborghini's fantasies are not impervious to the critique that they, for example, privilege the phallus as the ultimate consummation female desire—her presence in the poem welcomes an interpretation of gender inversion as an act of spectral intrigue and an act of poetic embodiment beyond the binary of *prosa* and *verso*.

The speaker, however, soon turns his back on Juana and faces the "Duque de Ohm." Ohm is a similarly autoreferential character, an allusion both to Lamborghini's other written works—evidenced by the adjective "fiordizado" accompanying his *première apparition* in the poem—and the writer's interest in sexual domination and crossdressing. For one, a reference to the gory *El fiord* assumes connotations of physical violence and domination. Secondly,

Strafacce uncovers that Lamborghini uses the *Duque*'s initials, O-H-M, to signify "Osvaldo-hombre-mujer" (478). In short, Juana Blanco's exit summons a second gender-bending character related to the life of Lamborghini.

Soon after Madre Hogarth is first introduced to us, Ohm is taken prisoner, presumably by the same den of *viciados* whom Madre has seduced. It is valuable here, I think, to examine the (bio)political context from which Lamborghini writes, and how this may deepen our understanding of what Ohm experiences next. In *Sueños de exterminio*, Giorgi recounts a legend frequently associated with the Argentine military throughout the twentieth century:

> [E]l servicio militar obligatorio argentino estuvo acompañado por la leyenda en torno a unas siglas—en tinta roja—que se estamparían en el DNI de aquellos cuyos cuerpos denunciaran prácticas 'impropias': ADF ('ano dilatado por fricción'), OAD ('orificio anal dilatado')—toda una poética del diámetro—eran las siglas más insistentemente repetidas en la circulación de la leyenda" (47).

Though this occurrence, Giorgi notes, has never been verified, "[d]esde su misma ficción"—that is, by virtue of the negation of their veracity—these red letters obstinately unveil a more pressing reality:

> Las letras rojas decían una verdad: … que la homosexualidad era un fantasma constituivo de la vida militar como una especie de segundo cuerpo, un 'espíritu de cuerpo,' que era el revés del soldado, del general, del conscripto, un revés que ninguna letra roja pudo conjurar, y que era, por el contrario constantemente invocado, requerido, presentado (48).

Here, not only does the letter expose the spectral nature of *Verneinung*—the presence of the ghostly homosexual is constitutive of constant efforts to negate his right to exist—it also materializes it. And the stamping of the letters OAD—*dilated anal orifice*—on an identification card renders the anus a locus of confrontation between biopolitical domination

and the letter. It is fascinating to ponder, if only for a brief moment, this phenomenon alongside Lacan's designation of the "letter" as "the material support that concrete discourse borrows from language" (*Écrits* 147). Indeed, (the illusion of) these "letras rojas"—these hemophiliac signs—bring forth a materiality to heterosexist discourses that demonize and punish sexually deviant behaviors, particularly those associated with sodomitic passivity.

Returning to "*Die Verneinung*," "[a]l duque," we are told, "lo tomaron prisionero / y fue a parar de cabeza al cepo / con los calzones bajos para que la tropa en su conjunto / lo gozara por atrás" (91). As punishment, Ohm is sentenced to anal penetration, his anus unavoidably becoming "dilatado por [la] fricción" of a collection of foreign phalluses. And yet, this is precisely what *Osvaldo-hombre-mujer* covets, and by the thirtieth time that he is penetrated, "[él] ya había caído en éxtasis" (91). The sadistic punishment ritual—or "costumbre enemiga"—concludes with a "refinado coronel" calling in one final penetrator, who parts open Ohm's canalized body with his erect "hacha" (91).

This unsettling encounter provokes several observations. Unlike Juana Blanco, Lamborghini only ever describes Ohm as a man throughout the poem. Despite the insinuation that he is a crossdresser, he is continuously referred to with masculine pronouns and even wisecracks during his sodomitic sentence, "'En verdad, los hombres no cuentan'" (91). Severo Sarduy's 1969 essay, "Escritura/Travestismo," takes up this peculiarity. The figure of the transvestite, Sarduy contends, is "alguien que ha llevado la experiencia de la inversión hasta sus límites" (33). Ohm asymptotically approaches, but necessarily never traverses, the essentially feminine limit of Juana Blanco. Sarduy frames this phenomenon of extreme inversion as a *matryoshka*-esque series of

*Inversiones*:

1.ª un hombre se traviste en mujer

↓

2.[a] que atrae por lo que de hombre hay en ella

↓

3.[a] que es pasivo en el acto sexual (*OC* 1148)

Even if Ohm fulfills the first condition of Sarduy's diagram, it is the second condition that may explain, in some part, the urges of "la tropa en su conjunto" to sodomize him into passivity (91).

The transvestite man playing a sexually passive role, as Ohm does with ecstatic pleasure, exposes the erotic potential of understanding inversion through Freud's *Verneinung* and Lamborghini's "*Die Verneinung*." If we treat the broad act of crossdressing as a first inversion, the assumption of passive role indicates another one. And yet, this double inversion indicates "no de un simple regreso al travestismo inicial… sino de hombre pasivo, que engendra a su pesar" (1148). Just as Zupančič emphasizes the tripartite structure of the "gap" cracked open by negation—negation, possible affirmation, and the locus that negotiates this constitutive difference—Sarduy rejects the circular logic that the negation of a negation—the inversion of a bodily inversion—will lead to a pure affirmative. The body is instead a locus, though not the final interaction, of this ontological confusion. Instead, "[e] lugar sin límites ese espacio de conversiones, de transformaciones y disfazamientos: el espacio del lenguaje" (1149).

In the prologue to *Novelas y cuentos*, a collection of Lamborghini's prose, César Aira writes: "La puesta en scene de este continuo, del que es parte el pasaje del verso a la prosa, y la transsexualidad, y, yo diría, todo en la obra de Osvaldo, es la literatura misma" (*NC* 11). In that sense, transsexuality (or *travestismo*, as Sarduy and Lamborghini repeatedly write) is a mode by which Lamborghini meditates and articulates the spectral, haunting instability of temporal, poetic, and sexual inversion.

**A Corpus Left Indecent**

Over the course of "*Die Verneinung*," time is evidently out of joint, as are writing and the limits of the body by which sexual difference, desire, and pleasure are understood. These concurrent discordances are both mediated and negotiated within an economy of sodomitical and deviant desires. Perhaps this is most plainly framed in the lines: "Ahora es de tarde, un poco / Más de tarde en este lápiz, / Y continúo por el simple gusto de andar / Como quien anda en su pieza trina" (79). Earlier, I note that the speaker of the poem insists upon positioning himself and speaking from *behind*—he runs, for example, after his "fantasmas más deseables: los más persistentes, los más bellos" (75). Here, the poet and his pen run simultaneously *behind* time and *in* line with Edelman's assertion that writing, like the act of sodomy, "insist[s] on the (il)logical possibility that what is behind can also, and properly, come before" (191). What ultimately structures this process is nothing less than a "simple gusto." In times of "implacable anachrony," Derrida reminds us, the spectral, sodomitical body takes the place of the letter (*Specters* 116). And yet, this letter proves to be an infinitely unstable one that complicates and stretches the temporal and ontological limits of absence and presence.

In a poem, "Primura," addressed to the *porteño* writer Rodolfo Fogwill, Lamborghini quips, "*a mí* / Psicoanálisis: indecencia y vanidad" (218). Indeed, to read through the back, whether in an explicitly psychoanalytical way or not, is to unavoidably seek a certain indecency—the back, the bottom, and eventually the anus are uncovered so as to be scrutinized, and thus the body of the poem is left not decent. In other words, to read this poem is to strip it bare. In so doing, we uncover a temporal confusion that allows a spectrality to emerge fundamentally intertwined with a logic of sodomy. It is through the paradoxical absence and presence of these hungry, ghostly, cannibalistic, sodomitic actors that time

begins to inherit the semblance of a body, a body whose own limits are constantly unstable and without fixed meaning.

## Chapter II:
## Cruising the Specter

"Não sinto loucura no desejo de morder estrelas, mas ainda existe a terra. E porque a primeira verdade está na terra e no corpo. Se o brilho das estrelas dói em mim, se é possível essa comunicação distante, é que alguma coisa quase semelhante a uma estrela trêmula dentro de mim. Eis-me de volta ao corpo. Voltar ao meu corpo."
—Clarice Lispector, *Perto do coração selvagem*

"EXCEPTÉ
…
PEUT-ÊTRE
…
UNE CONSTELLATION"
—Stéphane Mallarmé, "Un coup de dés"

"Posso dirle, un po' tautologicamente, che per me l'erotismo è la bellezza dei ragazzi del Terzo Mondo, è il rapporto sessuale di quel tipo, violento, esaltante e felice, che sopravvive ancora nel Terzo Mondo."
—Pier Paolo Pasolini

I open this chapter with the same essay used to conclude the preceding one. The title of Severo Sarduy's "Escritura/Travestismo," an essay from the collection *Escrito sobre un cuerpo*, immediately identifies two topoi—the act of writing *en soi* and transvestism—that predominate much of the Cuban thinker's poetry, prose, and criticism. Through a reading of *El lugar sin límites*, a novel by the Chilean writer José Donoso, Sarduy diagrams the formation of the transvestite through a series of

*Inversiones:*

1.ª un hombre se traviste en mujer

↓

2.ª que atrae por lo que de hombre hay en ella

↓

3.ª que es *pasivo* en el acto sexual (*OC* 1148).

It is by means of this chain of inversions—of negotiations between the infinitely unstable identifiers of man and woman, *activo/a* and *pasivo/a*—that Sarduy's transvestite arrives *à la limite* of ontological, temporal, and (as we will see later) geographic disorientation.

What is of initial interest here is Sarduy's description of this "cadena" of bodily inversions as a "sucesión de ajustes" (1148). His allusion to adjustment fashions a subject already always limping, forever (re)adjusting his steps, turning his back from a temporal condition *out of joint*.[10] The transvestite thus already finds himself implicated in Derrida-*qui-genuit*-Wills's spectro-dorsal logic, for like the specter, he "remains always to come and to come-back" (*Specters* 99). On the very surface of the text, his ghostly movements between the lines of Sarduy's writings serve to trace and materialize "las coordenadas del espacio narrativo" (*OC* 1148).

The metaphor of transvestism pays a visit to *La simulación*, another collection of essays. In the collection's titular essay, Sarduy affirms that "El travestí no imita a mujer. Para él, *à la limite*, no hay mujer" (*LS* 13). Seemingly influenced by Lacan's polemic from his *Séminaire XX*, "il n'y a pas La femme," Sarduy conceives of the woman as merely "una apariencia, que su reina y la fuerza de su fetiche encubren un defecto" (13).[11] Crossdressing is necessarily understood as a practice of *simulation*—not direct copying from a fixed originary object—for there does not exist a tenable "norma que invite y magnetice la transformación, que decida la metáfora" (13). This aversion to the stability of appearance and any perceptible "center" of origin is a philosophical stance that comes to structure Sarduy's œuvre of fiction and criticism.

Sarduy's 1972 novel, *Cobra*, for instance, features a cast of drag queens and other gender-bending characters who perform in a burlesque "teatro lírico de muñecas." The novel

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[10] When referring to the Sarduyean figure of "el travestí," I will use traditionally masculine pronouns (i.e. he, him, his) to keep in line with the gendered language used by Sarduy in Spanish.

[11] I submit that a much needed, critical look at the problematics of this convergence between Sarduyean criticism and Lacanian psychoanalysis is beyond the scope of this chapter.

opens with Cobra, the crossdressing protagonist, bemoaning to the heavens: “Dios mío… ¿por qué me hiciste nacer si no era para ser absolutamente divina?” (*OC* 427). Though Cobra’s cry rings as a campy, if not completely parodical gesture, it still operates within a cluster of corporeal, topological, and temporal quandaries towards which Sarduy continually guides his readers. Where, for example, does one find this “absolutely divine” condition for which Cobra yearns, if not on Earth? The ensuing journey onto which Cobra is swept—one that will even reach the Far East—harnesses this itinerant, probing, exiled desire.

It would seem that Sarduy is quite intentional in his naming of the protagonist. The name Cobra, as Roberto González Echevarría indicates in *Celestina’s Brood*, should be seen as a reference to Octavio Paz’s poem, “La boca habla,” from *Conjunciones y disyunciones*:

La cobra

fabla de la obra

en la boca del abra

recobra

el habla:

El Vocablo. (232)

Sarduy’s intertextual reference may remind the reader of Lamborghini’s insatiable *mamavergas*, Madre Hogarth, and her gaping orifices. In Sarduy’s case, we should understand such a mouth, at once agape and seeking to (re)cover itself, to be the one with which Cobra attempts to speak—to abject—a “language [that] is deliberately one of exile, of re-collection (*re-cobro*)” (459).

In line with what Sarduy argues in “Escritura/Travestismo,” Cobra expresses her metalinguistic anxiety—though this time to a decidedly feminized audience, her “estimadas lectoras”—through a series of adjustments [*ajustes*]. “La escritura,” it is first offered, “es el arte de la elipsis” (*OC* 430). This is followed up a page later with: “La escritura es el arte de

la digresión" (431). Elsewhere is proposed that writing is not digressive, but rather positively (re)constructed: "La escritura es el arte de recrear la realidad… No. La escritura es el arte de restituir la Historia" (432). A couple of pages later, however, the narrator finally settles on the following definition: "La escritura es el arte de descomponer un orden y componer un desorden" (435). This final definition seems a return to Cobra's initial proffer that writing is akin to the art of the ellipsis, thus pointing to a certain *un*finishedness——a continuously experienced chain of symbolic *re*coveries [*re*cobros]—endemic to writing.

I introduce *Cobra* as an example of Sarduy's understanding that transvestism is "la metáfora mejor de lo que es la escritura" (1150). If transvestism is, upon Sarduy's insistence, the embodied practice of "alguien que ha llevado la experiencia de la inversión hasta sus límites," then the only "*lugar sin límites*"—the *place that hath no limits*—is "ese espacio de conversiones, de transformaciones y disfazamientos: el espacio del lenguaje" (1149). This space, however, hosts the tongue of a ghostly, exiled nature. We hear throughout Sarduy's texts a language composed of "una serie de virajes," a collection of "significantes eróticos cada vez diferentes [y] ciertos planos verbales" turning their backs to and from one another (1149).

Much can be (and already has been) said on Sarduy's fascination with crossdressing. "No critic," the translator Bruce Benderson quips, "has discussed Sarduy's work without heavy reference to the metaphor of transvestism" (100). Similarly, Eric Keenaghan, in *Queering Cold War Poetry*, supposes that to merely focus on Sarduy's interest in "embodiment and materiality already runs contrary to how most have read him" (117-118). Keenaghan puts forth a critique of Sarduyian scholarship that contends that readings too focused on treating transvestism as a leading hermeneutic "erroneously [attribute] to Sarduy the capacity for an agentic, performative resignification of identity scripts" (118). The author,

as a devout deconstructionist knows, can never be “in absolute control of the text,” or even of the language that he is compelled to employ (118).

At this point, there evidently remains much to criticize. As is the case with Lamborghini, contemporary understandings of gender expression and transgender ontologies rightfully complicate and, in many instances, render obsolete Sarduy’s projection of crossdressing as a tool of deception and escape. My objective in entertaining a discussion of transvestism, therefore, is to identify a potential path to understanding how Sarduy’s writing mobilizes fragmented, spectral, and itinerant bodies to float between (meta)poetic, geographical, and cosmological inquests.

***Severo (au-delà) de la Rue Jacob***

Sarduy begins *Barroco*, his 1974 treatise on the Neo-Baroque, with the following epigraph:

> *retombée*: casualidad acrónica,
>
> isomorfía no contigua,
>
> o,
>
> consecuencia de algo que aún no se ha producido,
>
> parecido con algo que aún no existe. (*OC* 1196)

His treatment of the *retombée*, a French word most commonly understood to indicate a fallout or a rebound, as an exergue positions the concept behind an imminent confusion of time. In other words, Sarduy’s (re)definition of the *retombée* introduces the cracking open of a breach in which an object either “aún no se ha producido” or, more devastatingly, “aún no existe.” In either case, the reader is left to wait, to face the inscrutable backside of a disarticulated time. This perverted notion of a “fallout,” at least in a hauntological sense, takes shape over the

course of that incalculable span of time between the specter's disappearance—"Exit Ghost," cues Shakespeare—and its impending (re)apparition.

Before proceeding, I am compelled to look back at the life of Severo Sarduy. To this end, a biographical and intellectual history must be placed within the political and literary context in which Sarduy produced his writing. Indeed, it is my hope that the concept of the *retombée*—the achronic coincidences of life, the specters of all that which "no se ha producido"—will spill into this ensuing examination. Born in 1937 in Camagüey, a city on the southern coast of Cuba, the precocious Sarduy moved to Havana to study medicine. During his late adolescence, he switched academic paths; he began publishing pieces in national magazines and editing for vanguardist publications like *Ciclón* and *Lunes de Revolución*.

The word, "revolution," it goes without saying, holds two primary meanings in English and Spanish. One meaning refers to a political uprising, like the Cuban Revolution (1952-1959) to which a young Sarduy bore witness; a secondary meaning more broadly describes the turning of a body, especially a celestial one, around another. In the wake of the Cuban Revolution, Sarduy had already gained notoriety among the *habanero* literati; despite his association with vanguardist writers, he hesitated to embrace socialist realism as an aesthetic practice and "radicalism" as a political stance (Keenaghan 123). This resentment was linked to contemporaneous social hostility and violence towards gay men, too. In 1960, Sarduy was awarded a scholarship by the revolutionary government to study in Paris. Three years later, the government revoked the scholarship and refused to renew his passport, largely due to the publication of his first novel, *Gestos*, which was deemed "counterrevolutionary" by the Castro administration. Sarduy would never return to the Caribbean. Effectively an *éxilé*, he spent the rest of his life in Paris and passed away from AIDS-related complications in 1993.

Though Keenaghan mentions elsewhere the relevance of revolution's dual definition to studies of Sarduy, he does not extend this analogy to the politics of *Gestos*' reception in Cuba. The idea of a literary work being labeled "counterrevolutionary" is at the very least relevant to this project's greater interest in negation, inversion, and subversion. Sarduy's status as a "counterrevolutionary" obliges readers to more broadly consider the dialectical forces that permit one to identify a literary work as *counter* to a revolutionary movement. To, as I am tempted to put it, turn one's *back* to a nation that considers itself to be in the process of realizing a revolution, or a turning *over* of a political status quo. I do not wish to lambast Sarduy for leaving post-Revolution Cuba, nor will this thesis carry out a sustained critique of the Communist Party of Cuba's first years in power. Rather, I emphasize that a study of Sarduy's cosmology—that is, his interest in the secondary meaning given to "revolution"—cannot not be thought of as detached from the political torsion that brought him to Europe.

Indeed, Keenaghan quips that "Sarduy's preferred sense of the word 'revolution' hinges on its secondary meaning: a turning of one body around another. This astronomical metaphor is politicized insofar as it opens *new imaginings of home and collectivity*" (119, emphasis added). Soon after his arrival in Paris, for example, Sarduy began to rub elbows with a cast of Parisian intellectuals affiliated with *Tel Quel*, an avant-garde literary magazine. He attended a seminar directed by Barthes in 1970 at the École Pratique des Hautes Études, where he also met the likes of Tzvetan Todorov, Jacques-Alain Miller, and Julia Kristeva. With a similar crowd he also frequented the seminars of Lacan.

"Severo de la Rue Jacob," a eulogistic essay written by François Wahl, the French structuralist philosopher and Sarduy's lifelong partner, further contextualizes the "new imaginings" described by Keenaghan. Wahl remarks: "C'est à Paris et à Saint-Léonard, dans l'Oise, que Severo, sans rien renier de sa cubanité, a écrit la totalité de ce qu'il retenait

comme son œuvre, et la totalité de ce qu'on a lu… On ne peut l'approcher sans prendre en compte ce qui était devenu un double enracinement" (*OC* 1447). He continues: "Son amour du monde cubain, c'étaient ses racines, mais comme un de ces amours originaires qu'un écrivain ne peut vivre qu'à distance" (1448). The hybrid identity suggested by Wahl operates within a greater political and historical context.

From a historical angle, Sarduy's path to exile positioned him between the challenges faced by a newly Communist Cuba and a Cold War-era France still anticipating (and, in great measure, trying to quash) the arrival of Marx's red specter. Such a temporal suspension resembles the one in which Derrida finds himself in 1993. In *Specters of Marx*, he teases out the contradictions instigated by his invocations of Marx in a post-Soviet Europe:

> When, in 1847–48, Marx names the specter of communism, he inscribes it in an historical perspective that is exactly the reverse of the one I was initially thinking of in proposing a title such as "the specters of Marx." Where I was tempted to name thereby the persistence of a present past, the return of the dead which the worldwide work of mourning cannot get rid of, whose return it runs away from, which it chases (excludes, banishes, and at the same time pursues), Marx, for his part, announces and calls for a presence to come (101).

Derrida's admission of this contradiction simultaneously points to inversion as a generative, deconstructionist hermeneutic. Sarduy's *retombée* gains renewed interest here, for the ghostly dance performed by Derrida throughout *Specters of Marx* sways between the temporal posts erected by Sarduy's definition: "consecuencia de algo que aún no se ha producido, parecido con algo que aún no existe" (*OC* 1196). In this sense, then, Sarduy's privileging in his works of *dis*-location—particularly of transgressive, queer bodies that transit and translate themselves across cosmological and temporal realms—operates as a stimulant. Indeed, even in this chapter Sarduy will remain difficult to locate. Though his works are adorned with

traces of his native Cuba, postwar France, and a mystical Orient, Sarduy seems to anchor himself in the expanses of the cosmos.

To return once more to "Escritura/Travestismo," one must understand how Sarduy understood transvestism, both as a literary metaphor and corporeal practice, as an allegory of a life spent in exile. The notion of crossdressing carries a particular resonance; in it we locate an itinerant desire to both inhabit and in-habit a topography that may not "originally" be one's own.[12] This emphasis on a constant though transient movement finds relevance throughout Sarduy's œuvre, a collection of texts that traverse not only geographical limits but stylistic, generic, and temporal bounds, too.

**A Cosmopolitan Cosmology**

Sarduy's 1974 poetry collection, *Big Bang*, exemplifies a transnational circuit of aesthetic, sonoric, erotic, poetic, and historical concerns of which Sarduy was outwardly conscious. (The title of the collection would seem to anticipate a treatment of cosmology and metaphysics, too.) *Big Bang* is divided into four sections; three complex, multipartite poems precede "Otras poemas," a final section dedicated to various poems of relative stylistic convention. The first piece, "Flamenco," stages the Neo-Baroque body as a vibrant, flamboyant artifice whose surface remains irreparably fractured. Consider this excerpt:

> EN EL ESPACIO DE LO BLANCO, un instante después va insinuando sus formas, creando las franjas de color, definiendo sus bordes, apareciendo ya a medida en que la excesiva luz se retira:
>
> una cabeza,
>
> un cuadrado azafrán, óvalos azules y verdes,
>
> un prisma,

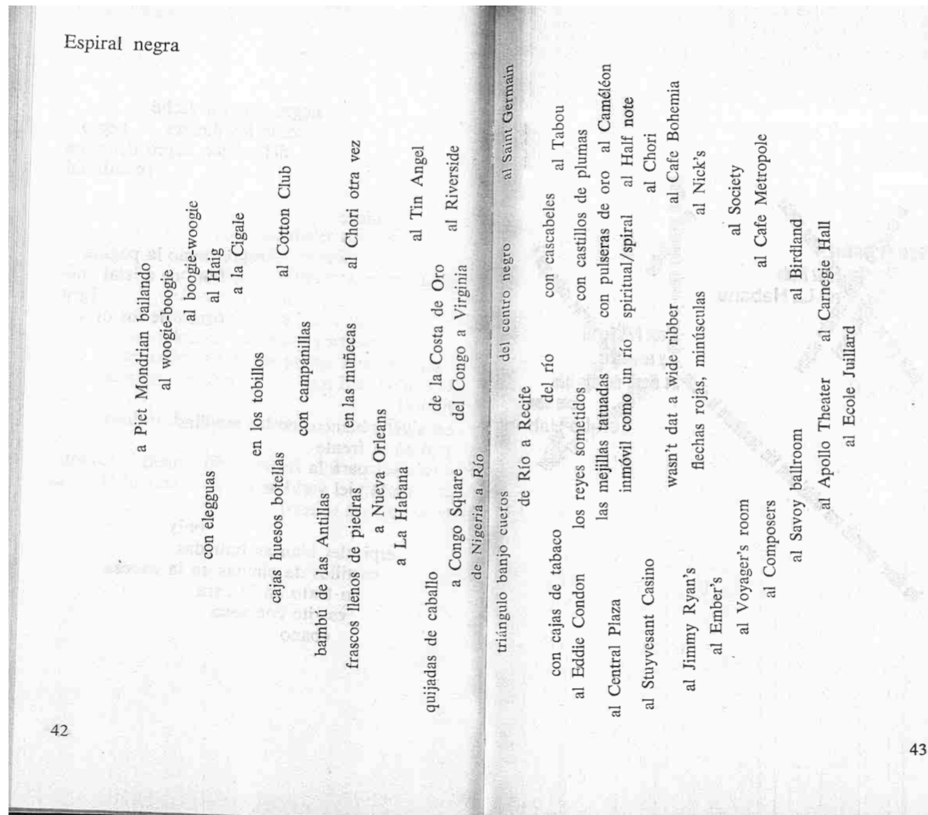
[12] In her article, "Baroque Cross-dressers in the Orient: Severo Sarduy and Pierre Loti," Ipek Sahinler crafts this pun to emphasize the orthographic similarity in French between "to inhabit" [*habiter*] and "to dress" [*habiller*].

un cuerpo segmentado.

Blanco. (*BB* 26)

*Lo blanco*, we shall recall, features between Lamborghini and Perlongher's poems as a liminal space in which ghostly, transgressive bodies take shape [*se perfilan*]. Chez Sarduy, the reader similarly encounters a segmented, fragmented body in constant (re)definition of "sus bordes" and fringes. The color white, it should be noted, appears extensively in Sarduy's poetry as both an aesthetic motif— "el cuerpo es una máquina / dentro de un cubo blanco," reads another verse of "Flamenco"—and a representation of seminal fluid (19). The generative, at times acerbic potential that Sarduy assigns to a color often thought of as neutral or contentless folds together aesthetic, material, and erotic questions. *Lo blanco* can neither be neither essentially neutral nor purely empty.

The following section, "Moon Indigo," more explicitly applies this idea of color to the racial makeup of the Americas. The tropics of the Caribbean are figured as an archipelagic mosaic of various ethnicities and their cultural referents. Sarduy, himself a mixed-race man of African, European, Indigenous, and Chinese descent, draws a Pan-American genealogy through stylistic and sonoric fragments. His form here, as Rachel Price notes in *The Object of the Atlantic*, graphically mirrors that of contemporaneous Brazilian concretists; his verses bring together distant and dissonant voices. The poem, "Espiral negra," is particularly illustrative of the windings up and uncoilings begotten by constant circulation and retroversion:



Espiral negra

a Piet Mondrian bailando
al woogie-boogie
al boogie-woogie
al Haig
a la Cigale
con elegguas
cajas huesos botellas en los tobillos al Cotton Club
bambú de las Antillas con campanillas
frascos llenos de piedras en las muñecas al Chori otra vez
a Nueva Orleans
a La Habana al Tin Angel
quijadas de caballo de la Costa de Oro
a Congo Square del Congo a Virginia al Riverside
de Nigeria a Río
triángulo banjo cueros del centro negro al Saint Germain
de Río a Recife
con cajas de tabaco del río con cascabeles al Tabou
al Eddie Condon los reyes sometidos con castillos de plumas
las mejillas tatuadas con pulseras de oro al Caméléon
al Central Plaza inmóvil como un río spiritual/spiral al Half note
al Stuyvesant Casino al Chori
wasn't dat a wide ribber al Cafe Bohemia
al Jimmy Ryan's flechas rojas, minúsculas al Nick's
al Ember's
al Voyager's room al Society
al Composers al Cafe Metropole
al Savoy ballroom al Birdland
al Apollo Theater al Carnegie Hall
al Ecole Juillard

42 43

(*BB* 42-43, courtesy of Michelle Clayton)

Here reverberates Cobra's affirmation that "[l]a escritura es el arte de descomponer un orden y componer un desorden" (*OC* 435). The poem's spiraling motion simultaneously concretizes and deconstructs a looming *unfinishedness* enacted *by* and constitutive *of* language. The reader is immediately struck by a libidinal current coursing through the page, one that exceeds national borders and pushes up against the limits of verse and structure.

In *Barroco*, Sarduy's *retombée* epigraph is followed by a description of an echo chamber in which "el eco precede la voz" (*OC* 1197). Such an acoustic confusion begets an epistemological and temporal one: "historia caduca leída al revés; relato sin fechas: dispersión de la historia sancionada" (1197). The concrete coils of "Espiral negra" embody this same confusion; with all convention utterly out of joint, Sarduy draws the reader in elliptically—*poesía leída al revés*—and attunes us to a musical history of the African diaspora in the Americas. The poem's mentions of various jazz clubs and theatres across the

United States, such as the Cotton Club, seem a continuation of the preceding poem, "Orquestica tántrica," which begins with a list of notable African American jazz musicians: Cootie Williams on the trumpet, followed by the likes of Joe Nanton, Sonny Greer, and an ecstatic Duke Ellington "al piano en llamas" (*BB* 36). The sonoric complexity of "Espiral negra" thus arrives to us from *behind*, for not only does it explicitly connect to the preceding poem, but it is also a product of a diasporic history before Sarduy. Faithful to Derrida's claim that "a ghost never dies, it remains always to come and to come-back," the echoes of history filter into the present of the text (*Specters* 99). The elliptical, disjointed nature of their revisitations haunt the very pages onto which Sarduy projects his poetry.

Sarduy's sketching of a fragmented geography of place—New Orleans, Havana, Recife, Rio de Janeiro—should similarly be understood in historical terms. The cities mentioned were some of the chief receiving ports of enslaved Africans during the transatlantic slave trade. The structure of the spiral becomes itself a historiographic statement; the displaced geography and the physical torture of enslavement coil themselves up, bleed out, and violently leave in their wake an splintered genealogy always needing to be readjusted, realigned, and rendered legible. At the center—always a tenuous word, though especially in this case—of this poetic cartography we find a "centro negro." This "centro negro" concurrently materializes a cultural history of the transatlantic African diaspora and gapes open Sarduy's penchant for the cosmos. That is, if we read Sarduy's *centro negro* as homologous to an astrological *agujero negro*—a *black hole*—so become constellated the poem's fraught origins. The "centro negro," then, is the result of an explosion, a galactic projection of transnational movements onto a textual body.

Although we may understand Cuba, and more generally the Caribbean, to be the place of Sarduy's "origin," this geographic "center" exposes itself evidently fragmented, constructed, and unstable. Price offers that "Sarduy['s work]… emphasizes the link between

sound poetry, experimental poetics, and a celebrated but also parodied American originality: they are languages invented in America but staged and authenticated in Europe" (40). Even in their origin site—their *centro negro*—Sarduy's poetics are the culmination of fabrication, the fruit of endless supplementation (however "dangerous" the latter might be).

They constitute, in other words, a *trace*, as Derrida defines it in *De la Grammatologie*: "La trace n'est pas seulement la disparition de l'origine, elle veut dire … que l'origine n'a même pas disparu, qu'elle n'a jamais été constituée qu'en retour par une non-origine, la trace, qui devient ainsi l'origine de l'origine" (90). Indeed, to read the constellation of people, places, and sounds in "Espiral negra" is to imitate a sort of (re)turn—if not a *revolución* of political and celestial propulsions—around an empty center permanently constituted "qu'en retour par une non-origine" (90). Likewise, the Derridean specter is fundamentally "a question of repetition. One cannot control its comings and goings because it *begins by coming back*" (*Specters* 11). Simply put, reading Sarduy evinces in various ways elliptical and spectral movements. Price comments to that effect: "This notion that literature's meaning is not always encountered head-on but is sometimes observed elliptically, or by circling around a center that may not immediately reveal itself, will be important to Sarduy's interest in voids" (40).

The poem concretizes a tension that is stamped onto Sarduy's entire *corpus*: one of a material and aesthetic negotiation between the *cosmos* and cosmopolitanism. That is to say, his poetry simultaneously maps out a transnational, polylingual modernity and casts its gaze upwards to the cosmos. This modernity, we must bear in mind, is scarred by the violence fundamental to the creation of a "Latin America": indigenous genocide, transcontinental slavery, racial subjugation, and more recent memories of American imperialism and extractivism. In short, an unresolvable temporal and geographical in-betweenness haunts Sarduy's poetic cartography.

**Sarduy's Dis-Orient**

The *espiral negra*'s placelessness—of a paradoxically static, transatlantic, and galactical character—will remain essential to our reading of Sarduy. I redirect our focus, however, to a foreign landscape over which many of Sarduy's works loom: the Orient. Thinking with Price, I treat the transnational and cosmological propulsions of "Espiral negra" as a heuristic to examine Sarduy's movements between Cuba, France, and the Orient, specifically Morocco. The Orient—*proche*, *extrême*, and that which inheres between—was a significant source of inspiration and fascination for Sarduy's French contemporaries. Here, I briefly call attention to another revolution of importance to this discussion: the Chinese Cultural Revolution. For a somewhat brief period, many Parisian intellectuals developed an intense fascination with the fledgling People's Republic of China, led then by Mao Zedong. Lacan studied Chinese history and included references to the nation in his lectures; Kristeva learned Mandarin and eventually wrote a book about the lives of women in China. Sollers even published translations of Mao's poetry in several issues of *Tel Quel*.

As a publication, *Tel Quel* publically espoused an admiration for post-revolution Chinese society, though their political commitments to Maoist ideology may have been less than convincing. China seemed a kind of political utopia for French intellectuals equally disinterested in bourgeois, post-*Mai 68* French politics and communist projects in Eastern Europe. In *Critical Terrains: French and British Orientalisms*, Lisa Lowe describes how the *telquelistes*' "limited" knowledge of Chinese culture and history allowed them to reduce Maoism to the "suppressed Other of French communism" (180). In other words, Maoism was treated merely as the signifier of an intriguing and distant Other, not as a politically legitimate ideology theorized and practiced by the Chinese people.

This Sinophilia professed by France's intellectual elite in the 1960s and 1970s, we must remember, is embedded within a greater tradition of French fascination—aesthetic, erotic, and otherwise—with the Orient, particularly with North Africa. Lowe concludes her chapter on Tel Quel's Chinese utopias by rightfully pointing to the "final irony" of *maoisme telqueliste* (an irony that, to be sure, haunts many other twentieth-century western Marxist movements): hyperopic figurations of China as a postcolonial, communist utopia conveniently permitted French intellectuals to ignore the immediate struggles of colonized peoples, especially North Africans, in France and directly across the Mediterranean (188).

Sarduy, too, was seduced by the East's unfamiliar aesthetic and symbolic terrains. In a brief essay written in 1990, he confesses: "Debo a Octavio Paz el regalo más extraordinario que alguien puede hacer: la India" (*OC* 1443). He traveled extensively around North Africa, the Indian subcontinent, Indonesia, and beyond. In both *Escrito sobre un cuerpo* and *La simulación*, several essays feature elements of East Asian theology and philosophy. Sarduy, however, never idealized China (or any part of the East, for that matter) to the same degree that, for instance, Kristeva or even his partner Wahl did. His interest in the Orient was demonstrably limited in its political scope; he was far more interested in the visual, linguistic, and erotic potentials located in Middle Eastern and Asian cultural traditions. Rubén Gallo puts it best: "En lugar de Mao, mantras" (*Oriente* 60).

Gustavo Guerrero, in the introduction to the collection, *El Oriente de Severo Sarduy*, argues that Sarduy's Orient "tiene poco que ver con la mítica región… [y] el producto ideológico y cosificado de un colonialismo justamente denunciado por Edward W. Said" (19). Though we understand him to traverse a space geographically identical to the Orient generated by the West, Sarduy finds himself "[m]uy lejos de aquella exótica región, muy lejos de aquel orbe separado y distante que se solía y aún se suele oponer a Occidente" (19).

Instead, Guerrero would have us believe, Sarduy sketches "el territorio de una experiencia límite del exilio y la identidad que preside la transformación del sujeto que la afronta" (19).

With this in mind, I pivot now to "Tanger," a dizzyingly brief, segmentary essay that Sarduy first published in the autumn of 1971 in *Tel Quel*.[13] The essay's title immediately thrusts the reader into a setting renowned for homoerotic exchange between the West and the Orient: Tangier, the Moroccan port city on whose shores gay Western writers such as Joe Orton, William Burroughs, and Roland Barthes cruised local men and boys. Tangier's reputation as a hedonist haven was largely supported by its unique geopolitical status as an "interzone" ruled by a coalition of European powers, rather than the Moroccan government, until 1956. As described by Greg Mullins in *Colonial Affairs*: "Suspended between nations, cultures, and languages, the interzone is a place of intermediacy and ambiguity, a place that remains outside standard narratives of nationhood and identity" (3). Such a suspension understandably attracted gay men from the West disillusioned with and repressed by totalizing narratives of (hetero)sexuality, language, and nationality. And yet, Mullins submits that the promise of sexual "freedom" in Tanger was disproportionately apportioned to Western expatriates. Sexual encounters between white Westerners, like Paul Bowles, and local hustlers reasserted structures of colonial desire and economic inequality: "Americans accustomed to the eroticization of racial difference at home can readily transfer and even intensify the nature of desire when residing in a 'colonial' space such as Tangier" (8).

Morocco regained control over the city in 1956. Still, in the decades that followed Sarduy and a number of his *telqueliste* friends traveled to Morocco and continued to engage in illicit sexual practices, such as cruising for public sex. Tangier was, in Sarduy's imaginary, a critical point of eroticized and poetic convergences between the Orient, the West, and his native Cuba. González Echevarría describes Tangier as "a central place in Sarduy's symbolic

[13] Although this is, to my knowledge, the first publication of this essay, it was apparently originally written in Spanish anyway, as evidenced by a note at the end of the piece: "Traduit par Philippe Sollers et l'auteur."

geography… a kind of hinge between the East and the West, the privileged viewpoint from which Spain can be seen as the North" (448).[14]

"Tanger," the essay, opens: "El Zoco Chico, le Petit Socco, place de la Medina, à Tanger ; Roland Barthes y a reconnu 'le lieu de l'écriture'" (86). A list of sites around Tanger frequented by Sarduy is followed by a reference to Barthes's declaration that Tanger is the "lieu de l'écriture."[15] This cartographic technique is admittedly different, though not entirely dissimilar, to that employed in "Espiral negra": a projection of Moroccan geographic fragments—notably the "socco" (derived from *souk*, the Arabic word for market) that maps an economical exchange onto the page—is punctured by the foreign voice of the Frenchman, Barthes.[16] Sarduy's invocation of Barthes here appears, at the very least, two-sided: for one, he considered the famed theorist a dear friend, and the two participated in the Parisian gay underground scene—leather bars and saunas—together. Second, it would seem a disservice to detach Barthes's description of Tangier from his extensive writings on the pleasures associated with reading and writings. In fact, Keenaghan opines that the writer, based on Barthes' description in *Le plaisir du texte*, should be thought of as one who *cruises* their reader.

"Tracer ses coordonnées," continues Sarduy. "Relever sa topologie symbolique." The two sentences are ambiguously left in the infinitive, as if to function dually as an informative statement and an imperative gesture. If we are to treat this introduction as a sort of interpretative manual, we shall consider the rest of "Tanger" as an exercise in tracing the topology of Sarduy's Tanger. This opening section is followed by a short paragraph entitled, "Espagne." A paragraph so striking that it merits being displayed in its entirety:

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[14] In the novel *Cobra*, in fact, the titular protagonist travels to Tangiers in hopes of having a sex-change operation. Rubén Gallo's article, "Sarduy avec Lacan," describes how the "penis slashing," diagram-obsessed doctor who eventually promises Cobra the surgery is a parody of Lacan.

[15] To my knowledge, this remark was spoken aloud to Sarduy; I cannot find it written in any of Barthes's works recounting his experiences in Morocco.

[16] This entire issue of *Tel Quel*, it turns out, is dedicated to Roland Barthes.

> ESPAGNE : Vue " d'en bas " — elle, au nord —, de l'exterieur, mais d'un exterieur rejeté, expulsé, et qui porte, non effacée, la trace archéologique de ce détachement : traverser cette arabité, ce bord, n'est que relire, à partir du lieu du refoulé, de la censure, à partir de sa reflexion derobée, un état initial de l'espagnol ; mais subverti, à rebours, depuis la nuit de son envers. L'objet de cette circonscription est celui de la circoncision. Espagne "trahie" : Don Julian, de Juan Goytisolo, dresse la scène de cette trahison (86).

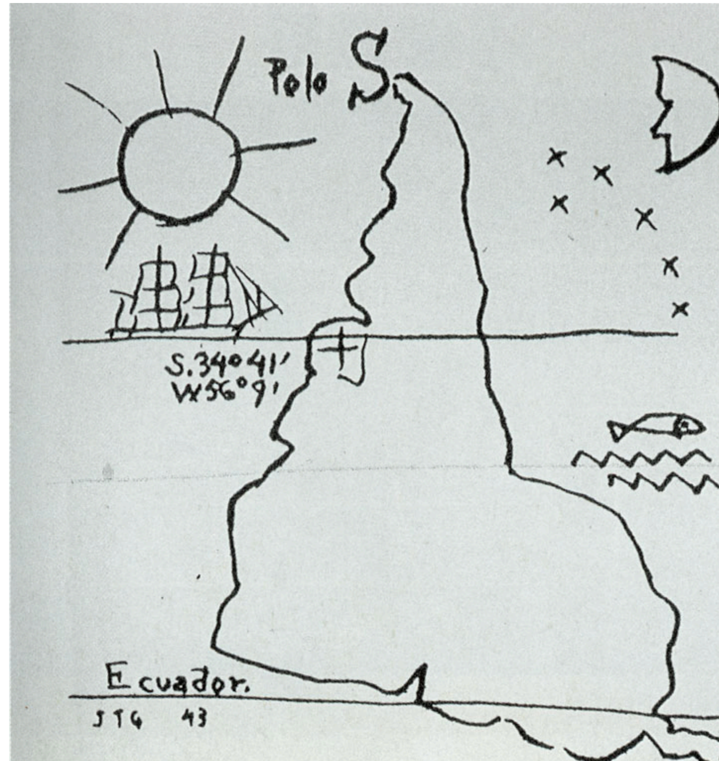
Though the reader has been led to believe that we are in Morocco, Sarduy casts his gaze upon that which lies *beyond* the sea: Spain.

As also seen in *Barroco*'s epigraph and "Espiral negra," Sarduy emphasizes inversion and dislocation as their own ecstatic. The fecund concept of viewing Europe *d'en bas*—from the ground, from below—generates (re)readings of the Orient's relation to Europe that are resistant to colonial and heteronormative epistemologies. For one, Sarduy's relocation of the periphery as center urges a critique of colonial geographies that literally position Europe *above* the Global South and a questioning of, in David Wills's words, "the frontier between… where Africa, the nondemocratic, or the Islamic begins vis-à-vis that supposed same and familiar Europe" (108).

Such an approach can be traced back to at least two figures. One is the writer mentioned at the end of this first passage, Juan Goytisolo, a Spaniard who spent the majority of his life in Tangers until his death in 2017. Goytisolo's 1971 novel, *Don Julian*, imagines a Moorish reconquest of Spain under Francisco Franco's regime. Sarduy describes the book as a "trahison" because it rehashes the complex history of exchanges between the Iberian Peninsula and North Africa. Similar to Sarduy, Goytisolo spent significant time traveling between Revolutionary Cuba, French Algeria, and his native Spain; his revulsion to European nationalism eventually motivated him to permanently settle in Morocco. This mention of

Goytisolo underlines that Sarduy envisions himself within a greater collective of writers who rethink aesthetic and political differences across linguistic and national lines.

A Spain "vue d'en bas" can also be understood in dialogue with the Uruguayan artist Joaquín Torres García's 1943 drawing, "América invertida":




(Torres García 1943).

The piece draws upon Torres García's theory of "constructive universalism," which sought to translate pre-Columbian traditions and aesthetics into a contemporary, multinational language. Sarduy widens the scope of Torres García's South America-specific preoccupation, joining the Uruguayan artist in treating cartography as a way of rupturing the hegemon and centering the peripheral. The title, "América invertida," also allows for the figure of the racialized and sexualized *invertido* to come to the forefront. The term "invert" [*invertido*] has been historically used throughout the Americas to describe either gay or mixed-race

subjects.[17] This connection between subaltern identity and broader technologies of inversion is evidently relevant to a study of Sarduy's writing.

Through his formula of inversion, Sarduy suggests an ocular agency held by those historically "rejeté[s], expulsé[s]"—exiled, even. We catch a glimpse, too, of a filiation that can be shared between Sarduy, who hails from a former Spanish colony, and the people of Morocco. (An essay entitled, "La Habana," could very well begin with the same figuration of Spain: "Vue d'en bas…elle, au nord." Or, perhaps more fitting to a twentieth-century context marked by an increase in American imperialism in the Caribbean: *Les États-Unis*, *vus d'en bas*.) He goes on: "traverser cette arabité, ce bord, n'est que relire, à partir du lieu du refoulé, de la censure, à partir de sa réflexion dérobée, un etat initial de l'espagnol ; mais subverti, à rebours, depuis la nuit de son envers" (86). Sarduy's "nuit de son envers" is hinged upon an essentially doubly negative circumstance. That is, in the absence of light we bear witness to an inversion, an alternative possibility illuminated by means of a turning over. I deploy the word "turn" with Wills' definition in mind: a movement that resides "in its sense of a departure that is also a detour, a deviation, a divergence into difference" (4).

In the first chapter of this thesis, I argued that a poetics of the dorsal innervates the (homo)erotic, transgressive, and spectral elements of a text. An extension of that idea to this chapter stretches it from Lamborghini's *porteño* milieu to the shores of Sarduy's Orient. In this case, Sarduy's *vue d'en bas* carries elements of both Derrida's and Wills's thinking; it fundamentally challenges, as the latter would profess, the "field of visual possibility" through a continuous subversion and inversion (7). Seeing "from down there," like seeing from behind, entails an attitude of transgression; it's an act that forwardly assumes a position of subordination. Yet, Sarduy does not conflate this subordination with an essential passivity; rather, the outside of which he writes—the "extérieur rejeté, expulsé," the geographical

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[17] In *Beyond Carnival*, James Green describes how the constitution of a "homosexual" identity in Brazil and in Latin America has long been predicated on the idea of an inverted [*invertido*] subject.

backside—becomes a sort of active center. A nucleus that, like Sarduy's *centro negro*, finds generative properties by virtue of lack or absence.

Let us return to the instructions given to the reader at the beginning of the piece. To "[t]racer [l]es coordonnées" of Tanger, and thus reveal the city's symbolic topology, is to see from below. Sarduy orients himself in a paradoxical approximation towards and turn away from a supposed geographic center. His very way of *seeing* the Orient—and catching sight of Spain—it can be said, paradoxically anchors itself in this very unanchoredness. Unorthodox in its brevity, its theoretical ambitions, and geographic formulations, "Tanger" draws a hermeneutic framework—blending the specter of the orient with the activation of dorsal drives and deviant desires—with which to read Sarduy's other works.

**Cruising, Isomorphisms, Anamorphosis**

Let us return to *Big Bang*. "Isomorfia," a prose-poem of the collection's titular section, continues to complicate readers' understanding of Sarduy's dis-Orient. The piece is preceded in the collection by two shorter prose-poems. The first of these, entitled, "I. Big Bang," reads:

> Las galaxias parecen alejarse unas de otras a velocidades considerables. Las más lejanas huyen con la aceleración de doscientos treinta mil kilómetros por segundo, próxima a la de la luz.
>
> El universo se hincha.
>
> Asistimos al resultado de una gigantesca explosión (*BB* 47).

Most striking is the image conjured by Sarduy of a universe swelling up [*hinchándose*] in anticipation of an astronomical explosion to which all are privy. An explosion that carries with it, to be sure, erotic and cosmological connotations of tension and a subsequent burst. In "*Die Verneinung*," Lamborghini describes a similar sensation: his pulsating phallus "[c]uyo

rostro no puedo adivinar enmascarado hábil por el antifaz / de la bragueta" (*Poemas* 50). Libidinal excess is clearly shared between Lamborghini and Sarduy; whereas the former domesticates this tension with the zipper of a jean, we witness [*asistimos*] Sarduy project it into the cosmos. Sarduy's use of the plural first person ropes the reader into an erotic rapport with the poet.

In the following piece, "II. Big Bang," Sarduy writes: "Conociendo la distancia que separa las galaxias y la rapidez con que se alejan unas de otras, podemos, a través de cálculos, *ir atrás en el tiempo*, hasta principios de la expansión" (48, emphasis added). We cannot *know* [*conocer*] time, but we *can* know—or, at the very least, recognize [*reconocer*]—by means of calculation, numerical or otherwise, the distance that separates us from it. Propelled, in an almost negative sense, by the urge to turn back [*ir átras*], Sarduy lays bare a cosmological time unavoidably off its hinges. Such a passage through time, to be sure, requires transiting between the lines that demarcate gender, language, sexuality, nationality.

Sarduyean time is beyond (b)reach. This temporal tension, it can be said, resembles that of the visual turn "*à rebours*" that we encounter on the eroticized shores of Tangier. In his reading of *Big Bang*, Keenaghan describes the reader of *Big Bang* as at once a distant "voyeur" to Sarduy's transgression and an active "cruiser" of the text; Sarduy's poetry "supplies a material universe, where reader and writer cruise one another and find a new home" (137). In my ensuing reading of "Isomorfia," I seek to incorporate this itinerant act of cruising another with my heretofore reading of Sarduy.

The prose-poem is divided into two strikingly different parts. The first part is a prose paragraph in line with the two preceding pieces, emitting a kind of sterility in its matter-of-factness. Sarduy recounts for us that the discovery of the American astrologist, Allan R. Sandage was "la más gigantesca de las explosiones de un objeto celeste jamás observado por el hombre" (49). This object, we are told, is called a quasar; it's extremely

young and almost imperceptibly distant to the human grounded on Earth. It is quite possible, Sarduy mentions, that the explosion "pudo haberse producido hace algunos billones de años, tal vez poco después de la explosión inicial que… dio nacimiento al universo" (49).

At first glance, the second part of "Isomorfia" bears little resemblance to the first, a paragraph that reads like the abstract of a scientific report. The poem, narrated in the second person, drops reader and writer in the Moroccan baths of the Hotel de la Confianza. "En los baños del Hotel de la Confianza," Sarduy writes, "apareces, aguador desnudo" (50). *You* appear. Or, perhaps a more accurate translation: You *apparate*. The reader is interpellated into the text; he is conjured and reborn into the role of a naked, Moroccan water-bearer. The poem continues, piling on images and sensorial experiences traditionally associated with the Orient. A parenthetical aside reads:

> (Afuera: sandalias arrastradas sobre el suelo cubierto de aserrín, la radio marroquí, y más lejos –jinetes que borra el resplandor naranjo–, cascos, turbantes que se deshacen al viento.) (50)

*Tú*, the reader, smell of olives; with your hands, stained with saffron, you expose yourself—"te sacas el sexo"—and begin to masturbate, thus consummating the illicit bathhouse ritual. Upon the reader's ejaculation, Sarduy describes the ejected substance as "leche en la pared: punto denso, signo blanco que se dilata." And the sound that lingers in the dark bathhouse: "Un silencio. / Una risa." The reader and writer—the bathhouse attendant and cruising guest—must eventually part ways. The former puts on his *djellaba*, the latter his raincoat. Another parenthetical aside startles our sonoric and geographic footing:

> (Afuera: el audio de la película: "Mañana, al alba, César atacará Alesia", y más lejos, el parpadeo del neón –"Luxor"–, el metro.) (50)

The lulling sounds that structure our entry into the bathhouse mutate into an urban cacophony upon our *salida*, our *corrida* even.

Sarduy leaves a geographical notation at the poem's end: "Tiznit / Barbès-Rochechouart." The former refers to a city in inland Morocco, the latter to a Parisian metro station. With the final line in reference to Barbès, in Paris, Sarduy brings the periphery to the center; a setting rooted in the "rejeté" North African exterior is drawn as level to the Parisian metropole. The cruising encounter exemplifies Derrida's "spectral moment, a moment that no longer belongs to time, if one understands by this word the linking of modalized presents" (*Specters* xx). Thus is invoked a queer "time out of joint": a deviant, implacable, and eroticized anachrony.

We can also see how Sarduy, in reaching *outside* the Orient and folding this encounter back *into* the Parisian milieu, paralyzes the poem in between what Wills would term an "artificial trace" and a "constructed past as the trace of its memory" (10). Keeping Wills' dorsal hermeneutics in mind, we also understand how "Isomorfia," in its constant glances back at an encounter that seems to build out from Morocco, functions as an Edelmanian "writing from behind." To this end, Alexander García Düttmann, in *Derrida and Queer Theory*, offers that this position affirms the deconstructionist idea that "the originary traces [is] structuring experiences itself and therefore barred from sight" (208).

Though all of these readings are of course meritorious, I wish to close this chapter by putting a mirror to "Isomorfia," that is, by positioning the poem alongside the rest of Sarduy's œuvre. To revisit "Espiral negra," we can detect a number of similarities between the disjointed geography of place and sound projected onto that poem and the fragments of sounds, smells, and touches that build "Isomorfia" up. This fragmentation, we now understand, privileges an absent center, a spectral abyss whose constitutive lack is a site generating new possibilities. The structural movement articulated by "Espiral negra" is a decidedly elliptical one; it is not perfectly circular, but, as Sarduy describes it in "Tanger," a "déformation, [la] perversion" of "un ordre du réel" (86). My focus thus far in this chapter on

the (re)turn—and, by extent, the disjointed nature of its hermeneutic *retombée*—should circuitously draw us to the concept of anamorphosis, a term often encountered in psychoanalytic and art historical writings.

"Anamorfosis," the second section of Sarduy's essay, "La simulación," begins in what should be a familiar setting for his readers: the Parisian salon. The title of the piece similarly exploits a familiar word for Sarduy's lettered readership, for Lacan used the word in a 1964 seminar to describe the pictorial and epistemological transformations when one comes to face [*regarder*] an art piece. Rubén Gallo (reading Sarduy *avec* Lacan, as if the two were on two opposite sides of a single coin) argues that Lacan's conception of anamorphosis "require[s] the subject to shift his position, assume the place to the other, and imagine how the world looks from that vantage point"—a *vue d'en bas* (55).

In the salon, Sarduy witnesses a series of conversations between Cuban diplomats representing the post-revolutionary government in Paris. Immediately, we observe a sort of "revenant" from Sarduy's Cuban past, a spectral force that, like I describe above, "one cannot control… because it *begins by coming back*" (Specters 11). The salon is cloaked in darkness by its never opened "cortinas opacas" and smells of "insistentes añoranzas tropicales" (*LS* 21). Traces, it can be said, remain of the tropics. In the corner of the room sit "[d]os hermanas consulares, apropiadamente nostálgicas de ciertos sabores inefables que perdía en la distancia… evocaban premeditados monólogos la austeridad insomne de los días revolucionarios" (21).

The room falls silent as one of the office secretaries picks up the phone. The reader can only eavesdrop on one end of the call:

> –Buenos días. Es de parte de su Excelencia. Quisiera un café con leche bien caliente, para los doce. Pero por favor, que no suceda lo del otro día, que enviaron el café por una parte y la leche por otra.

–...

– ¿De dónde viene ese café? ¿De Brasil?

–…

–¿Es fuerte?

–…

–Mejor si no tiene nada de dulce.

–...

–No la queremos. La leche de aquí es insípida, ya lo sabe. (22)

This phone call, it is revealed to us, was a ploy to solicit male prostitutes. The Cuban diplomats are punished for the illicit act; in the cacophonic chaos that ensues rings a French accented Spanish voice: "J'en ai vu de toutes les couleurs! Blancos desmadejados y pálidos; negros luchadores, gimnastas africanos desempleados en la metrópoli y deseosos de abandonar el olor persistente del cuscús en lata y la chilaba listada, y más que nada, mestizos de todos los tonos, de procedencia… sudamericana" (23). This cry plasters together a mosaic of bodies, almost didactically mapping once more the geographic circuit in which we know Sarduy to be working: the aloof Frenchman; the browbeaten black man; the itinerant, chronically unemployed North African eager to leave the Orient behind**.** The mestizo, almost always of a Latin American background, captures these all. "La leche de aquí es insípida."; *the milk here is insipid*. The curious remark is explained to the reader by Sarduy at the end of "Anamorfosis"'s opening sequence:

> Lo «dulce,» en aquella hermenéutica simplona –los blancos «leche»; los negros «café», etc.–, designaba las tendencias dóciles de los que fingían, en los trasteros de las delegaciones, resignaba sumisión, gozaban afrentas y hasta aceptaban, por un suplemento tarifado, algunos sopetones y escupitajos. Lo

> «fuerte», como era de esperarse, connotaba la tendencia francamente opuesta (*LS* 23-24).

The milk in this piece rightfully conjures the "explosion" witnessed in "Isomorfia": "La leche en la pared: punto denso, signo blanco que se dilata" (*BB* 50). By "explosion," I hope to exploit the word's semantic ambiguity. That is to say, the astral and libidinal energy enacted through "la gigantesca explosión" in "I. Big Bang" percolates and leaks into the anamorphic cruiser's ejaculation. After every *Big Bang*, we must remember, comes a crash, that is, a realization of one's own imminence, a reckoning with one's own corporeality and materiality.

## Chapter III:
## Soliciting the Specter

“hay<br>
cadáveres” — canta néstor<br>
perlongher e está<br>
morrendo e canta<br>
“hay...” seu canto de<br>
pérolas-berruecas alambres bo-<br>
quitas repintadas restos de unhas<br>
lúnulas — canta — ostras desventradas um<br>
olor de magnólias e esta espira<br>
amarelo-marijuana novelando pensões<br>
baratas e transas de michê (está<br>
morrendo e canta) “hay...”<br>
—Haroldo de Campos, “Neobarroso: In Memoriam”

Os sentimentos vastos não têm nome. Perdas, deslumbramentos, catástrofes do espírito, pesadelos da carne, os sentimentos vastos não têm boca, fundo de soturnez, mudo desvario, escuros enigmas habitados de vida mas sem sons, assim eu neste instante diante do teu corpo morto.<br>
—Hilda Hilst, *Rútilos*

Suppose a shore remarkably unlike that of (Orton *qui genuit* Burroughs *qui genuit*) Sarduy’s imagination. Here, the sparkling Mediterranean has corroded into a brackish bay. For all the substances that may have been shared on the shores of Tanger, there seems here to be only mud. A cadaver washes ashore, and we are compelled to inspect it.

The geographic and corporeal limits against which such a scenario pushes can be apprehended quite easily. For one, land meets sea, although this sea is understood to be a marginal one. It sublates itself into an Atlantic behemoth, and its high sedimentation renders it a turbid, indecipherable hue. Although this sea’s movements may seem banal—giving the impression of “nothing more than the idea of waves or walls of water, breakers on the sand, the repetition of commonplaces”—the tension generated from its recursive, breaking movements has nonetheless allowed the staging of a cadaver (Wills 106).

This decaying corpse—now motionless on the sand though still dripping in mud—encroaches not only the edges of land and sea, but also those that conventionally demarcate being from non-being. Julia Kristeva, in *Powers of Horror*, writes: “There, I am at the border of my condition as a living being. My body extricates itself, as being alive, from that border. Such wastes drop so that I might live, until, from loss to loss, nothing remains in me and my entire body falls beyond the limit—*cadere*, cadaver” (3). The cadaver, which descends from *cadere*, the Latin (and Standard Italian) verb meaning “to fall,” necessarily evinces a motion of slippage. The corpse in question, to be sure, *slips* on its passage from “living” to “dead.” It first must *fall* to the wayside before washing up on our shoreline. These two events, however, are in many senses already enmeshed in one another: the muddy, marginal sea exists as a sort of ecological wayside, and the act of washing up *onto*—that is, the *apparition* of this corpse—thus becomes *una caída*, a cadent gesture, from *carne viva* to *cadáver*.

The corpse, as Kristeva quite blunty puts it, “is death infecting life” (4). It poisons and compromises the “vigorous but pervious, violent but uncertain” opposition between the self and other, the inside and the outside (7). It follows, then, that to recognize a corpse is to violently summon a reckoning with a body suspended in a nebulous “state in which a non-subject, a stray, having lost its non-objects, imagines nothingness through the ordeal of abjection” (25). In other words, the cadaver “provokes horror… a choking sensation that does not separate inside from outside but draws them the one into the other, indefinitely” (25). The terror of encountering a cadaver thus exposes the fragility of not only one’s own existence, but that of the lines that demarcate subjectivity.

The writer—and later on, it can be said, the reader—*falls* into the role of “the inescapable witness of that torture—of that truth” (25). In *Specters of Marx*, Derrida offers the following on the subject of cadavers:

> One must, magically, chase away a specter, exorcise the possible return of a power held to be baleful in itself and whose demonic threat continues to haunt the century. Since such a conjuration today insists, in such a deafening consensus, that what is, it says, indeed dead, remain dead indeed, it arouses a suspicion… the cadaver is perhaps not as dead, as simply dead as the conjuration tries to delude us into believing. The one who has disappeared appears still to be *there*, and his apparition is not nothing (96-97).

*His apparition is not nothing*. We hear in Derrida's examination echoes of Freud's *Verneinung*, a technique that, we shall recall, can never fully eliminate the "mark, [the] trace, which is precisely what the subject relies upon in its constitution" (Zupančič 6). The formula deployed by Freud's patient—"*Die Mutter ist es nicht*!"—cracks open a tertiary dimension that, in existing *beyond* yet still being constituted *by* negation and affirmation, serves as "the *place*, or *locus*, of their difference" (6). Any encounter with Freud's *Verneinung*, as I emphasize in my first chapter, must take into account the spectrality imbricated in the act of negation. That is to say, the cadaver here is not *not* dead; at the very least, it has not *not* (been) disappeared. Since we cannot know if it is living or dead, we inescapably witness the materialization of a "non-present present, this being-there of an absent or departed one" (*Specters* 6).

The horror that one feels upon encountering the cadaver cannot therefore be consigned entirely to the aesthetic or the affective. Yes, as Kristeva could have us imagine, the limbs of a cadaver may quite literally appear *out* of joint; its remains may even emit an unbearably putrid scent. Most urgently, however, the cadaver, as a locus of the concomitant absences and presences of life, lays bare a certain "time out of joint."

Indeed, the terror—hauntological and otherwise—provoked by the cadaver is quite analogous to Hamlet's temporal anxiety discussed at length in *Specters of Marx*. Let us recall Hamlet's first encounter with the ghost of his father:

> Thou comest in such a questionable shape
> That I will speak to thee: I'll call thee Hamlet,
> King, father, royal Dane: O, answer me!
> Let me not burst in ignorance; but tell
> Why thy canonized bones, hearsed in death,
> Have burst their cerements; why the sepulchre,
> Wherein we saw thee quietly inurn'd,
> Hath oped his ponderous and marble jaws,
> To cast thee up again. What may this mean,
> That thou, dead corse, again in complete steel
> Revisit'st thus the glimpses of the moon,
> Making night hideous; and we fools of nature
> So horridly to shake our disposition
> With thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls?
> Say, why is this? wherefore? what should we do? (Act I, Scene 4).

The ghost startles Hamlet in an aesthetic sense: he arrives "in such a questionable shape" and promises to "[make] night hideous." He pushes against purported ontological limits, too, paradoxically (ad)joining the present in his very evasion of it. That is, despite his bones being already "hearsed" in the finality of death, the ghost "bursts" past this limit to (re)visit Hamlet. Such an apparition naturally provokes an epistemological confusion, too. The presence of the specter exceeds the capacities of language and conjures "thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls."

With this temporal and corporeal uncertainty looming over the text, Shakespeare closes *Hamlet*'s first act:

Rest, rest, perturbed spirit!

…

The time is out of joint: O cursed spite,

That ever I was born to set it right!

Nay, come, let's go together. (Act I, Scene 5)

Time, in Derrida's words, is "*disarticulated*, dislocated, dislodged… on the run and run down" (18). Here, as Derrida reminds us, Shakespeare cracks open a temporal breach, a disjointed space constituted by the very absence of presence. Encountering the specter—the cadaver, the abjected "other" in a free fall towards non-existence—exposes the reader too, then, to a space of temporal and ontological dislocation. Such an encounter may cause us to slip, lose our footing, and fall [*cadere*] into this abyme split open by spectrality.

Hamlet's question still remains: "[W]hat should we do?"

## The Wandering *Porteño*

Suppose now that the muddy shores on which this chapter begins are those of the Río de la Plata, and that the cadaver that we encounter is of Nestor Perlongher's poetic fashioning. Though the scenario that I have pitched only stages one cadaver, there are now, in fact, an innumerable amount of them. Their very ubiquity, as Perlongher's poem, "Cadáveres" unearths, paradoxically renders them absent to the unassuming eye:

En lo preciso de esta ausencia

En lo que raya esa palabra

En su divina presencia

Comandante, en su raya

Hay Cadáveres (19).

The vestiges—in, of course, a mortuary but also a more figurative sense—of these cadavers loom over the text and imbue the poem with a latent temporal instability. In Gabriel Giorgi's words, "desaparecen pero no dejan resto, no hay contorno o trazo, no hay después" (162). The ecological landscape of the muddy River Plate delta becomes a spectral sepulcher, and the Argentine nation a polity of swarming corpses stripped bare.[18]

The cadaver is a constant preoccupation of Perlongher's, as a cursory look at his other poems—"El cadáver," for example, or "Cadáver de la nación"—indicates. Cadavers, it can be said, take the form of a *tattoo*—if not a *tajo*—stamped onto Perlongher's œuvre of poems, literary criticism, ethnographic studies, and political essays.[19] These corpses, to use the writer's own words, stretch from muddy seas—tangled in the nets of fishermen and floating in the wakes of sunken ships—to land: in and between the seemingly infinite expanses of *el campo* and the confines of *la casa*, "Hay Cadáveres."

First published in 1984, "Cadáveres," arguably Perlongher's most recognizable poem, was famously written on a bus ride from Buenos Aires to São Paulo in 1981. Faced with the repressive violence of a right-wing military dictatorship, the *porteño* writer, an outspoken Marxist and gay activist, fled north. The transient, transnational nature of the poem's creation provides a quick glimpse at the cosmopolitan network of literary production and political activism within which Perlongher operated. His writings, the majority of which were actually written while he was in Brazil, straddle and interrogate not only national borders, but also those of language, temporality, desire, the body.

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[18] Akin to, in Pasolini's words, a "nude e formicolante" nation.

[19] Sarduy frequently compared literary creation to the art of tattooing. In *Escrito sobre un cuerpo*, he writes: "La literatura es… un arte del tatuaje: inscribe, cifra en la masa amorfa del lenguaje informativo los verdaderos signos de la significación" (*Obras completas* 1154). Perlongher, in an essay that explicitly relates the two, argues that Lamborghini treats writing more like a *tajo*—a gash or wound that is incised into the body with the capacity to live on as a scar (*Papeles insumisos* 119). Adrián Cangi's chapter, "Ardiente oscuridad," from the collection *Lúmpenes peregrinaciones* (1996), offers a profound look at how Perlongher "pone en tensión el tajo, el pliegue y el tatuaje" (72).

Though this chapter does not purport to be principally about "Cadáveres," the specters of these corpses remain with us. To that effect, it is crucial to keep in mind Giorgi's interpretation of the poem:

> Hay cadáveres 'en' todos lados pero al mismo tiempo los cadáveres se evaporan y los 'lados' se quedan sin límites: no hay allí, no hay lugar para el cadáver… *Todo resuena en "cadáver", ya que el cadáver está ausente*. Y cancela el tiempo: no hay narrativa porque no es una historia de lo visible, del devenir visible o invisible, sino una incertidumbre de lo visible como tal, de lo que se puede ver y de lo que no se puede no ver… Ver lo que ilumina el límite de lo visible y que es a la vez presencia y nada. (164, emphasis added)

One should not forget the cast of 30,000 cadavers that haunts our encounter with this dirty chapter of Argentine history, but rather concede to the fact that "one cannot control its comings and goings because *it begins by coming back*" (*Specters* 11).

The political climate of 1970s and 1980s Argentina—tempered by a latent police- and military-led repression—made life particularly difficult for Perlongher, a gay, communist sociologist who conducted fieldwork on male prostitution in Buenos Aires. In the '70s, Perlongher was a leading figure of the *Frente de Liberación Homosexual de la Argentina*, or FLH, a subversive organization with feminist, anti-homophobic, and anti-capitalist goals. Despite the FLH's dissolution by 1981, Perlongher remained politically engaged after departing for São Paulo.

Though Perlongher is widely thought of as a "writer-in-exile," the word "exile" should be used with caution here, I think. Similar to Lamborghini and Sarduy, Perlongher eventually *made* the decision to move instead of being forcibly thrown out of Argentina. Ben Bollig explains in *Modern Argentine Poetry* that Perlongher's decision to leave Buenos Aires "was to a great extent voluntary and he returned on several occasions, even before the fall of

the military" (128). Perlongher himself was far more interested in conceiving of his own estrangement from Argentina as an erotic matter, as a sort of *sexilio*. It is from this framing that Perlongher's works can open up questions of, in Harold Bloom's terms, "the exile of the drive" and " the image of a wandering exile, propelled onward in time by all the vicissitudes of injustice and outwardness" (152).

And so to Brazil he went. As Cecilia Palmeiro notes in *Desbunde y felicidad*, upon his arrival in Brazil, Perlongher joined SOMOS, a militant Trotskyist gay liberation front that eventually morphed—some would say *mutated*—into a Deleuzo-Guattarian molecular revolutionary group. On a political level, Perlongher militantly positioned himself against the normalization or assimilation of the homosexual into a hetero-patriarchal state apparatus. While organizing with SOMOS, "no sólo sostenía el concepto de devenir como antídoto contra la cristalización identitaria, sino que proponía, ya desde el FLH, una alianza con la izquierda como estrategia básica para evitar la despolitización y el encapsulamiento del grupo" (113).

This resistance is reflected in his various poetic and anthropological texts. Perlongher's focus on the experiences of the *loca*—*porteño* slang for a particularly effeminate gay man—allows for a body to emerge "como cuerpo residual en el que se lee un orden social y sexual: es un revés que verifica y expone lógicas de violencia y deseo" (Giorgi 17). This approach, interpreted by some as a formulation of queer theory *avant la lettre*, privileges disidentification, inversion, and nomadism as leading hermeneutic technologies and viable political practices.

Tracing an intellectual history of Nestor Perlongher can take many forms. One can, as is often done, situate him within the currents of the *neobarroco*—or *neobarroso*—of the 1970s and 1980s. *Neobarroso* refers to a localized rendition of the Latin American Neo-Baroque movement that disavowed "la referencialidad supuesta por un logos que

atribuiría sentido único" (25). Palmeiro explains: "El neobarroso, versión rioplatense del neobarroco, estaría jugando con el engañoso efecto de profundidad de la cultura argentina: el fondo de barro del Río del a Plato, en el que las cosas parecen sumergirse cuando en realidad están más cerca de la superficie de lo que parece" (25). Exposed here is *una fuga total*—from both logocentrism and the very artifice of appearances—a process of apparition that, *d'après* Derrida, "*is not nothing*" (*Specters* 97).

The *neobarroco* was a decidedly transnational movement, featuring a coalition of writers from across Latin America with deep fluency in Western European continental philosophy and literary traditions. Consider, for example, a question posed to Perlongher in an interview with the magazine *Babel* in 1989:

> *¿Qué frase de la literatura cita con más frecuencia?*
>
> Una de Deleuze, ya citada ['agenciamientos colectivos de enunciación… una soledad infinitamente poblada" (14)]. De Lezama Lima: 'Deseoso es aquel que huye de su madre". Varias de Osvaldo Lamborghini: "Paciencia, culo y terror nunca me faltaron"; "¡Jamás seremos vandoristas!". Boutades de Sarduy: "Lo primero para hacer la revolución es ir bien vestida". Y otras joyitas que encuentro por ahí, al azar, y presumo que encajan." (*PP* 15)

Presented here are both a circuit of French and Latin American writers and a deep investment in sexual transgression.

Compared to Lamborghini and Sarduy, however, Perlongher's writing exudes a far more political exigency. Lamborghini, as Ricardo Straffacce offers in his biography of the writer, hesitated to commit to the various strands of Peronist and Marxist activism coursing through Argentina. And Sarduy, as I mention in the previous chapter, likewise hesitated to heed to his French contemporaries' penchant for Maoism. Between these first two poets, as we know, transvestism looms over the text as a technology of inversion and deviation. In an

extrapolative sense, Perlongher's transvestite poetics bring together the erotic and the political, perhaps best embodied by his oft-cited remark: "Me llaman el padre del movimiento gay argentino cuando todos saben que soy la tía" (Palmeiro 19)

Critical scholarship on Perlongher tends to focus on his most famous poem, "Cadáveres," and his scholarly proximity to Deleuze and Guattari.[20] Palmeiro explains in her preface to *Plebeian Prose*, the English translation of *Prosa plebeya*:

> Here we may see the intersection of philosophy, politics and eroticism at the centre of Perlongher's intellectual life. Deleuze and Guattari's theory of becoming provided the foundation upon which he analytically laid out the subversive nature of microfemininity as a disruptive aspect of the *marica*, historically conditioned by the experience of the dictatorship and within the context of a specifically Latin American sexuality (xi).

Indeed, there is an immediate resonance—perhaps even too harmonious of a congruence—between Deleuze and Guattari's post-structuralist petri dish of neologisms and Perlongher's *neobarroso* ethos of errance, deviance, and refutation of fixity.[21]

The poet-in-exile is, of course, a *nomad*. Naturally, his movements across national borders take the shape of *lines of flight* across the *rhizomatic* cityscapes of São Paulo, Buenos Aires, and elsewhere. While in Brazil, Perlongher also begins writing in Portuguese and *portuñol*, thus developing a corpus of *minor literature*. In these new social territories, the nomad experiences a process of *deterritorialization*. His body, with or without organs, is an eroticized *assemblage*. The various identities prescribed to this body-as-*desiring-machine* are

[20] More broadly speaking, Deleuze and Guattari's reception—their devoration, or even their *cannibalization*—by scholars in Brazil presents a fascinating account of how (re)appropriations of French poststructuralism can illustrate the passage of ideas between nations and across disciplines, such as psychoanalysis, anthropology, and comparative literature. For one example, consult Brazilian psychoanalyst Suely Rolnik's *Micropolitica: Cartografias do desejo* (1986), a documentation of Guattari's 1982 visit to a newly democratic Brazil. Included in the book are a handful of interviews that Perlongher conducted with Guattari.

[21] With this connection in mind, we should not be surprised to learn that Perlonger, a wandering *poète maudit* from the Southern Cone, eventually found his way to Paris. In 1989, Perlongher briefly studied for a doctorate at the Sorbonne, though he quickly developed a repulsion to French society and soon returned to South America. It was also during his brief stint in Paris that he first learned of his HIV-positive status.

thus understood through a continuous process of becoming: the *loca* being a becoming-homosexual, and the transvestite a becoming-woman.

This chapter will not undertake a principally Deleuzo-Guattarian intervention. I do not, of course, mean to suggest here that Deleuze and Guattari's œuvre does not generate innovative readings of Perlongher and his contemporaries. Rather, in the textual analyses that follow, I seek to offer an alternate reading, that is, an emphasis on the spectral and the dorsal elements of Perlongher's (con)texts.

***Dejá el yiro yirar***

Our reading of Perlongher begins in Buenos Aires. As I explore in my first chapter, Lamborghini's *porteño* landscape is replete with sodomites and their specters, disjointed bodies that turn their *backs* to sexual and temporal normativity. In Edelman's words, this poetics mediated through the back—and by extension, the anus—"bespeaks the destabilization of definitional barriers and the undoing of the logic of positionality effected by the sodomitical spectacle" (182). The poet is thus tasked with negotiating an underlying, unifying tension between writing and sodomy: the two mutually "insist on the (il)logical possibility that what is behind can also, and properly, come before" (191). Lamborghini's sodomitical, *Verneinung*-esque inversions unravel into Sarduy's transatlantic *espiral negra*, a structure predicated upon an always missed return, a turn that is endlessly supplemental. An attempt to momentarily catch sight of this spiral's center—which is merely a *centro negro*, a phobically charged orifice constituted by lack—can be likened to the covert ritual of cruising, an elliptical movement across a space motivated by sodomitical desires. It has been my intention with these two movements to articulate connections between sexual transgression (particularly sodomy), temporal uncertainty, and the concept of the dorsal.

Allow me to introduce here a third movement that may supplement these articulations: *el yiro*. The distinctly *rioplatense* colloquialism (we can imagine its pronunciation, *sheero*, as almost a kind of Argentine shibboleth) can refer both to a street prostitute (usually a gay and/or crossdressing man) and, as I will pay more attention in the pages that follow, the *paseo*, the walk around the block executed by said prostitute. The *yiro* is striking for a number of initial reasons. It is, for one, a deeply performative act, propelled by both erotic and material forces, namely, the wish for sexual approval and the payout of a potential client. It conjures images of Sarduy's *espiral*, too, binding itself around a reliably repetitive, though deeply unpredictable, clandestine context. Indeed, it is ultimately a technology, an embodied strategy to eventually engage in sodomy with another. In an essay entitled, "Matan a una marica," Perlongher offers:

> Es a ese peligro, a ese abismo de horror ("Paciencia, culo y terror nunca me faltaron", enuncia el Sebregondi Retrocede[22]), a ese goce de éxtasis –salir: salir de sí– estremecido, para mayor reverberancia y refulgor, por la adyacencia de la sordidez, por la tensión extrema, presente de la muerte, que el deambuleo homosexual (¡curiosa seducción), el yiro o giro, se dirige de plano –aunque diga que no, aunque recule: si retrocede, llega– y desafía, con orgullo de rabo, penacho y plumero (*PP* 38).

The experience of *maricas* and *locas* in Perlongher's Argentina, Palmeiro explains, is fundamentally rooted in "la clandestinidad de los encuentros y de las orientaciones sexuales" (39). As such, Perlongher places the *yiro* alongside the *giro*, the standard term for a "turn," in order to emphasize its flight [*fuga*] away from what is visible or, at the very least, legible and normative. In other words, the *yiro* is not an innocuous turn [*giro*], but rather a gesture defined by its very subversion: it operates beyond the borders of the formal economy, on dark street corners and in public toilets.

[22] Reference to Lamborghini's 1973 novel.

What is drawn out by Perlongher is, quite clearly, a dorsal act. It is a turning motion that, in being defined by a "sense of a departure that is also a detour, a deviation, a divergence into difference," escapes the frontal and that which faces the public (Wills 4). The "errant but infallible assurance" of such an act also introduces the idea that this is a spectral occurrence (*Specters* 5). In other words, the *yiro* becomes, in Derrida's words, "its own revenant; it itself haunts its own places more than it inhabits them" (*Specters* 36). Like a specter, it lurks in the shadows, "working the corner" by virtue of its elliptical movement *around* this corner. The act is constitutive of a constant haunting, a spiral-like *re*visitation. This temporal confusion begets a positional one, too, as Edelman reminds us: "The sodomite… represents and enacts a troubling resistance to the binary logic of before and behind, constituting himself as a single-sided surface whose front and back are never completely distinguishable as such" (Edelman 184).

Before fleeing to Brazil, Perlongher published one collection of poems in 1980, entitled *Austria-Hungría*. Across the collection, as a good number of Perlongher's readers have pointed out, the clandestine, filthy, and abject underbelly of Buenos Aires emerges as a topos populated by a cast of errant, *porteño* sodomites (in other words, a quasi-Proustian race of specters, as Giorgi alludes to). We may be reminded for an instant of Sarduy's *Espagne vue d'en bas*; indeed, it is certainly Perlongher's intention to fabricate a poetics built out of "un extérieur rejeté, expulsé" (*Tel Quel* 86).

The poem, "El polvo," for example, thrusts this topological aporia to the forefront. The title initially presents several avenues of interpreting the poem. In Argentine Spanish *polvo* can refer to, in Palmeiro's words, at least three different things: "polvo como maquillaje artificio femenil, máscara, simulacro; polvo como metáfora bíblica de la muerte

(que en Perlongher estará siempre ligada a la sexualidad) y finalmente, según el habla coloquial, como acto sexual, coito" (43).[23]

"El polvo" manipulates what, in many ways, first appears to be a familiar, run-of-the-mill encounter between a *chongo* and a *marica* (*rioplatense* words used to describe stereotypically masculine and feminine gay men, respectively). Over the course of this covert, erotic encounter, Perlongher narrates the following conversation, one that the reader can imagine is acted out in dramatized, almost campy whispers:

> o esos diálogos:
> "*Ya no será la última marica de tu vida"*, dice él
> que dice ella, o dice ella, o él
> que hubiera dicho ella, o si él le hubiera dicho:
> *"Seré tu último chongo"* (31)

The matter of who will be the *last* ultimately boils down to the question: "Who turns their back to whom?" It is a quandary impossible to separate from the sodomy-provoked catastrophe that Derrida faces in *The Post Card*: "The One in the other, the one in front of the other, the one after the other, the one behind the other?" (Derrida 19).

In this case, however, Perlongher's portrayal of the torrid encounter stretches this positional disjointedness to a temporal extreme; both the *chongo* and the *marica* are rendered vacuous, polar opposites that paradoxically mirror one another like ghosts: "esos destrozos recurrentes de un espejo en la cabeza de otro espejo" (*PM* 31). This "tensión extrema," to return once more to Perlongher's description of the *yiro*, ultimately manifests itself a dorsal departure and return: "aunque diga que no, aunque recule: si retrocede, llega" (*PP* 38). In the *yiro*, it can be said then, we identify an erotic and political gesture mediated through the back,

[23] I am tempted to add *polvo cósmico* to this list. The "polvo" that settles atop this poem could be read, I believe, as a material precursor to a fascination with spiritual mysticism and psychedelic drugs that Perlongher would develop in his final years. It also carries traces of the cosmic *jouissance* featured so prominently in the poetry of Perlongher's contemporary, Sarduy.

by means of a series of turns, torsions, inversions. We of course should not lose sight of *yiro*'s double meaning, for the person who carries the identitarian label of *yiro*—himself a kind of *invertido*, as contemporaneous discourses on the pathology of homosexuality would describe him—is, of course, also the person who embodies the torsion and (com)motion of the *yiro* around the street corner.

**Transit and Translation Between Buenos Aires and Brazil**

Allow me once more to re*turn* to—or rather, to fall [*cadere*] *back* to—Perlongher's "Cadáveres." As the legend goes, Perlongher wrote the poem on the bus ride from Buenos Aires to São Paulo that would mark the beginning of his exile from Argentina. Earlier, I call attention to how Wills's thinking around the dorsal can inform our understanding of the corporeal and spatial mechanics of leaving one's *patria*. Perlongher, in the most basic of senses, is literally turning his *back* to Buenos Aires. Yet, as Wills repeatedly reminds us, the gesture of departing must also involve a return. It is not difficult to read, then, the very first stanza of Perlongher's poem—"Bajo las matas / En los pajonales / Sobre los puentes / En los canales / Hay Cadáveres"—as a series of glances *back* at the devastation caused by political violence and repression (*PM* 119). The cadaver is stamped onto the page as a temporal conduit, a haunting force that, despite being constituted by a paradoxical (non)presence, persists in traversing forests, bridges, canals.

A postcard, that is, a letter that the poet signs off and sends *back* to the home from which he has been exiled, may not be the first description evoked by the gory, haunting imagery of "Cadáveres." However, the transient, transnational context in which the poem was written, along with its deep preoccupation with time and historical memory, provoke a positional aporia. An exiled Perlongher is left to only see "the back" of what once was, and

"in what is written, such is the final word" (*PC* 48). What I mean to say here, quite simply, is that Derrida's *Post Card* insists upon revisiting us.

Consider a pair of consecutive letters that Derrida "sends" on June 9, 1977. The first letter extends the book's sodomitical cathexis— "cette catastrophe révélatrice : Platon derrière Socrate" (*CP* 16)—that I discuss in my first chapter. Derrida writes: "*Plato* wants to emit. Seed, artificially, technically. That devil of a *Socrates* holds the syringe. To sow the entire earth, to send the same fertile card to *everyone*. A *pancarte*, a pan-card, a billboard that we have on our backs and to which we can never really turn round" (*PC* 28). Though the notion of circulation—of disseminating writing and thereby entering into a correspondence with another—could possibly be of an artificial nature here, it still gains a materiality through its proximity to the body: we interpret Plato's "seed" to be semen and the desire to "send the same fertile card to *everyone*" as a desire to ejaculate in a sodomitical encounter. Here, the back continues to loom; by virtue of its inscrutability, the dorsal remains inescapable. *Il n'y a pas de hors-dos*.

Derrida aptly concludes the letter: "This is what I call a catastrophe" (28). Indeed, such an encounter bears a resemblance to, we shall recall, the etymological origin of "catastrophe" outlined by Christian Hite in *Derrida and Queer Theory*: "*kata-* + *strephein* to turn… twist, akin to Gk. *strobos* action of whirling" (11). More specifically catastrophic to Derrida here, however, is the looming presence of the *pancarte*, the card that insists on remaining attached to the back so that one "can no longer get rid of it" (*PC* 28). Let us recall that Derrida's titular postcard depicts a homoerotic, sodomitical encounter. Likewise, the cadavers that infest Perlongher's poem represent in large part, as any cursory look at Argentine history will reveal, the *locas*, *maricas*, and *chongos* whose elliptical *yiros* structure the underbelly of Buenos Aires. Evidently, their specters live on. Derrida shifts his focus in the following letter, opting instead for a more intimate tone:

> distance myself *in order* to write to you. If now I am still sending you the same card, it is because I would be willing to die, to enclose myself finally in a single place that is a place, and bordered, a single word, a single name. The unique picture then would carry off my immobile, extended body, then slowly
>
> how you will have sent
>
> me away… (*PC* 28)

Distancing oneself from—turning one's back to—another is thought to be a prerequisite for establishing *order*, that is, for inverting a temporal condition already understood to be *out of joint*.[24] As the residue of the preceding letter coagulates, the temporal torsion of writing and sending a letter produces an "immobile" body "extended" beyond the limits of time—in other words, a cadaver. So, yes, *the time is out of joint*, as are the dividing lines between being and non-being. Just as how Perlongher's *yiro* paradoxically "retrocede [y] llega," so too does Derrida's post-card (*PP* 38).

My point here is that "Cadáveres" can indeed be read as a *post-card*—a Derridean *carte postale*. Doing so most immediately emphasizes the belatedness endemic to exercises in writing, for a *post*-card perpetually positions itself *after* something else. In Perlongher's case, the temporal and ontological disjointment that structures Derrida's *Post-Card* becomes deeply geographical and politicized, too. For even if this post-card is addressed home to Argentina, it in fact functions as a heuristic, a North Star that leads Perlongher—behind whom we, as readers, tread—to the borders of a new, foreign nation.

Perlongher, at long last, arrives in São Paulo. Although the year is 1981, nearly sixty years after Mário de Andrade first sang his praises to "São Paulo! comoção da minha vida," we still hear echoes of the *neobarroco* progenitor's *Paulicéia Desvairada* (55). The commotion and concomitant motions—spiraling, elliptical, and otherwise—typified in

[24] Admittedly, even though the original French—"m'éloigner *pour* t'écrire"—also contains italics for emphasis, the word "*pour*" does not immediately invoke the same sequentiality that the English translation "*in order* to" does (*Carte Postale* 33).

Andrade's *modernista* poetry collection reveal a mosaic of racial difference that remains largely absent from Argentine literature, even leading into the 1970s and 1980s. Whereas Andrade professes a "devoration" of the various indigenous, African, and European influences that will even influence later *lusotropicalista* writers, such a social project would seem impractical—antithetical, even—given Argentina's long-held desire for proximity to Western European culture.[25][26]

Brazil's outward presentation as a bastion of multiethnic harmony lent itself to a privileged position, in the Argentine imaginary at least, as a haven of socio-sexual freedom, too. Bollig explains in *Modern Argentine Poetry* that Perlongher felt an attraction to Brazil largely because, despite the presence of a superficially less repressive regime that ruled the country into the early 1980s, the nation's purported openness possessed a potential for more sexual freedom, "Dionysian sensuality," and "kitsch art" (132). The prose-poem, "carnaval – río 1984" is an early example of Perlongher's attempts to articulate his experience in s/exile:

> El enterizo de banlon, si te disimulaba las almorranas, te las ceñía al roce mercurial del paso de las lianas en el limo azulado, en el ganglio del ánade (no es metáfora). Terciopelo, correhuelas de terciopelo, sogas de nylon, alambrecitos de hambres y sobrosos, sabrosos hombres broncos hombreando hombrudos en el refocilar, de la pipeta el peristilo, el reroer, el intraurar, el tauril de merurio...
>
> (*PC* 109).

The poem, littered with intentional misspellings and *portuñol* words, materializes a libidinal and sonoric flux [*flujo*] that circulates through the veins of a devout Deleuzian like

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[25] A host of scholarly books hash out the history of cannibalism in Latin American literature. Carlos Jáuregui's *Canibalia* and Isabel Gomez's *Cannibal Translation* are just two examples.

[26] Though I can't undertake a proper assessment of how fundamental a white-supremacist emphasis on proximity to (Western) Europe has been to the formation of Argentine nationalism, consider the following instance as a fleeting response to the question of how to situate Perlongher within discussions of race between Brazil and Argentina. In an interview with the magazine *Babel*, the question, "Qué habría querido ser?", is posed. Perlongher responds: "En un plano más radical, me gustaría ser negro. Ser un traidor a la raza blanca" (*Prosa plebeya*, 21). Notwithstanding the violent conditions requisite for constructing blackness that remain unmentioned here, we can note an earnest aversion to racism that was certainly not commonplace in 1980s Argentina.

Perlongher. Between the nylon strings of scantily clad *carnaval* goers, we are offered a fleeting look at how Perlongher's exile to Brazil necessitates the constant act of translation—or even trans*literation*—as a technique of transnational negotiation and subversion; the blissful chaos of Rio's yearly Carnival, for example, quite literally gets imprinted—*trans*-lated—onto the page.

Perlongher's move to São Paulo introduces new opportunities to experiment across form. In his work as a sociologist at the Universidade Estadual de Campinas (some one hundred kilometers from downtown São Paulo), he rigorously incorporates literary criticism and theory from the likes of Deleuze, Barthes, and Genet into his ethnographic studies. Likewise, his ethnographic interlocutors—almost exclusively gay male sex workers in São Paulo—begin to seep into his translingual, verse-aversive poetry and prose.

The 1987 book, *Negocio do michê*, is perhaps Perlongher's best known sociological text. The book, originally written in Portuguese, is an ethnographic study of the circuits, practices, and rituals of "prostituição viril em São Paulo" At this book's core is the distinctly Brazilian notion of *michê*, as Perlongher explains in the introduction to the book:

> O termo michê tem dois sentidos. Um alude ao ato mesmo de se prostituir, sejam quais forem os sujeitos desse contrato. Assim, *fazer michê* é a expressão utilizada por quem se prostitui para se referir ao ato próprio da prostituição. Em alguns contextos—especialmente entre prostitutas e travestis—o termo pode ser aplicado também ao cliente… é usado para denominar uma espécie *sui generis* de cultores da prostituição: varões geralmente jovens que se prostituem sem abdicar dos protótipos gestuais e discursivos da masculinidade em sua apresentação perante o cliente (17).

The *michê*, to be sure, resembles the Argentine, "trade"-esque figure of the *chongo* that I explain earlier in my reading of "El polvo." Like the *yiro*, the term dually signifies a subaltern subject and a performative act embodied by said person. From this definition,

therefore, we can identify how Perlongher manages to simultaneously sustain his interest in non-normative sexual behavior and translate this interest to a Brazilian context.

The book's title—namely, the word *negocio*—also raises questions of economics and material exchange that may help our understanding of how Perlongher maps deviant bodies onto his text. "Economy" comes to us from the Ancient Greek *oikos*, or house. In *Dorsality*, Wills uses this etymology to explain how the notion of exchange—be it of a libidinal kind, a commodified kind, or otherwise—originates in the domestic. He paints the image of a house that teeters on the edge of interiority and exteriority, not unlike the spectral actors who loom over Perlongher's œuvre:

> This is a house that exists on the frontier between interiority and exteriority, a house that is finally nothing more than that frontier, what I have called a facade, not just a front wall with nothing behind it but a wall that is both front and back, whose front is in its back and whose back is in its front. And a house inhabited by a sojourner, someone passing through, one that no sooner constitutes itself at home with itself than it externalizes itself to encounter the other, living therefore in a state of exile and *errance*, exiled both within itself and with respect to its home, crouching naked turned inside out and back to the wall in utter exposure (67).

The origin of the home, as we should come to expect, is in fact both troubled and fictive, for even there we find ourselves to be irreconcilably abandoned, exposed, and vulnerable.

This originary tension finds an immediate connection in *Negocio do michê*. Many of Perlongher's interlocutors do not originally hail from São Paulo; a good number of them, for instance, come from the Northeast, an impoverished region of Brazil that is home to significantly more Afro-Brazilian and indigenous people than the south of the country. Not only do these men participate in a steady circulation of migrants between Brazil's barren, rural periphery and urbanized centers, but, more specifically, in a homoerotic, informal

economy defined by libidinal excess. That is to say, the structure of this movement is articulated through the back and maintains a steady, elliptical shape.

*Negocio do michê*, it must be noted, takes a critical, almost indignant tone in its scrutinization of the material conditions of male prostitutes in São Paulo. The book, as I will focus on for the final paragraphs of this section, pays considerable attention to the violence tethered to (homo)erotic encounters, particularly covert ones. In one section of the book entitled, "A violência do gozo," Perlongher pulls from ethnographic, theoretical, and literary sources to articulate a kind of "terror-gozo que funciona como intensificador libidinal no dispositivo da prostituição viril" (221).

Here, he brings to our attention a line from Lamborghini's novel, *Sebregondi retrocede*: "Paciencia, culo y terror nunca me faltaron" (*NC* 53). Indeed, Lamborghini draws out in *Sebregondi* a paradigm that is quite useful to our hauntological-cum-dorsal reading of Perlongher's text. Patience, for one, implies a wait; it entertains the paradoxical possibility of a never arriving, yet unending *attente*. As Derrida laments in *Post-Card*, "the condition for [every sign… every mark or every trait] to arrive is that it ends up and even that it begins by not arriving. This is how it is to be read, and written, the *carte* of the adestination" (29). This confusion of arrival and departure—of order and thus temporal accordance—directly relates to Edelman's remarks, we shall remember, on sodomy in *Homographesis*: "The sodomite, therefore, like the moebius loop, represents and enacts a troubling resistance to the binary logic of before and behind, constituting himself as a single-sided surface whose front and back are never completely distinguishable as such" (184). It follows, then, that the "terror" to which Lamborghini refers in *Sebregondi* manifests in *Negocio* as an affective, phobically charged response to our hermeneutics of the anal.

As I emphasize elsewhere in this thesis, reading through the back—across the dorsal, like we have continuously sought to do—necessarily leads the reader to the anus. The anus,

as Perlongher points out in an earlier essay in *Prosa plebeya*, materializes itself as a locus that mediates the various forces that constitute "antihomosexual" violence:

> ¿De qué fuerzas, en el caso de la violencia antihomosexual, se trata?... Para decirlo rápido, *estas fuerzas convergen en el ano; todo un problema con la analidad*... Con el bloqueo y la permanente obsesión de limpieza (toqueteo algodonoso) del esfínter, la flatulencia orgánica sublímase, ya etérea (47, emphasis added).

This is to say that the empty, elusive "centers" around which this thesis' technologies of inversion circulate—such as the *espiral* or the *yiro*—are, in many ways, constituted by and filled with the contents of political and sexual violence. In the case of Perlongher, the cadavers that line the streets and muddy shores of Argentina under military rule mutate into the victims of homophobic violence in the dark corners of São Paulo.

In short, a look at *Negocio do michê*, particularly in the context of Perlongher's other poems and essays, contributes to this chapter's commentary on how spectral, sodomitical bodies expand beyond national, linguistic, and formal borders; that is, in his *yiros* between São Paulo, Buenos Aires, and (to a lesser extent) Paris, Perlongher exposes to the reader a series of constantly mutating circulations that give a materiality to not only a *time*, but also a desiring *body*, *out of joint.*

### *Cadente el nombre, el hombre…*[27]

Ben Bollig observes that in the final stage of Perlongher's life, "we can detect a shift from the exile or nomadism towards an attempt at, as Perlongher put it, the 'salida de sí.' Perlongher's last works, shadowed by imminent death, ponder ecstasy and the leaving of the self, and aim to answer the question posed in the poem 'titilar de ebonita', '*¿Adónde se sale cuando no se está*?'" (26, emphasis added). Wills, on the other hand, offers that "the dorsal

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[27] Reference pulled from the poem, "Nestor vive" (*Poemas completas* 29).

turn is also a turning back in the sense of a return… It is deployed along the axis that links home to exile, which, as we shall see, defines *home as originary exile*" (13, emphasis added). Suspended in this uncertainty we find a desiring nomad-in-exile slowly slipping—falling [*cadendo*]—into a cadaverous afterlife. Lamborghini, in a poem dedicated to Perlongher entitled, "Nocturno," describes an analogous sensation: "Bicharraquear e—kafkianamente" (203-04, PDF). In this "nocturno"—the "hideous night" that Hamlet comes to so deeply fear—we witness the specter metamorphosize into a *bicharraco*—a *rioplatense* word that, beneath its conventional meaning as "creature," conjures the possibility of a cadaver that lives on.

## *Extro*-duction: Prologue, or Conclusion

"la continuazione di un sogno. io trullo trullo mangio seduto nel dehors d'un caffè lungo il mare, e il mare è sotto di me. d'improvviso, senza ragione, si fa notte, l'acqua diventa fango, lente onde melmose sbattono contro la riva, ribollendo. portano con sé cadaveri, li adagiano sulla spiaggia. mi sveglio e so di avere l'aids. corro all'ospedale coi miei piedi di fango sono una di quelle onde e mi porto appresso il mio cadavere, faccio il test, negativo. lo rifaccio dopo un mese, negativo, aspetto un altro mese, negativo, poi due mesi, negativo, infine sei, negativo. ma io ce l'ho, ce l'ho lo so."
—Giancarlo Pastore, *Meduse*

"Even the dead go begging, Francis."
["Die Toten – sie betteln noch, Franz."]
—Paul Celan, "Assise"

We are running out of time. Allow me to hold us, for just a brief moment more, then, in the shadows of Osvaldo Lamborghini's "Nocturno," dedicated to Nestor Perlongher:

Nace la aurora (fuma, fuma)

y yo estoy en pie para sentarme

—.…nace la aurora… resplandeciente…—

El estilo, un vuelo de perdiz.

un desliz.

Un tropezón… (*Poemas* 219)

At first glance, Lamborghini's fixation throughout the poem on *la aurora*—an imminent dawn whose resplendent light the speaker actually lives to witness—would seem to profess, at long last, a transcendent departure from the darkness in which the poet and his transgressive heteronyms—the sexually frustrated Juana Blanca, the Duque de Ohm (*Osvaldo-hombre-mujer*), who finds ecstasy in a punishment of thirty penile thrusts *por atrás*—languish. A departure, that is, from the nocturne in which loom the spectral race of the Sodomites, Freud's haunting Not-Not Mother, and Derrida's homoerotic poiesis that

stipulates “[t]here is only the back, seen from the back, in what is written, such is the final word” (*PC* 48).

Yet even here Lamborghini still struggles to find his footing. He writes “en pie para sentarme,” afoot yet paralyzed by waiting for the right time to take a seat. The poet emerges from the *aurora*, these troubled origins of a new day, *already* adjusting himself and compensating for a disjointedness that the reader cannot yet make out. With each step, then, he is faced with, in David Wills’s words, “correcting [his] bearing, limping from one foot to the other, realigning [his] center of gravity, compensating for the disequilibrium of each movement, as [he] were turning one way then the other in order to advance” (4).

In the torsion of this positional struggle we encounter a metaliterary one, too. Style is addressed through the act of departing; it gets articulated through a fleeting, bumbling series of acts: “[u]n vuelo de perdiz / un desliz,” a line break, then finally, “[u]n tropezón” followed by an ellipsis (219). The flight of a partridge enacts a slip, a trip, a fall. The Spanish word *perdiz*, it should be noted, is often used in idiomatic expressions related to laziness, tardiness, slowness. It is as if to say that the aimless flight of the *perdiz* serves to lose—*perder*—time; poetic style, in turn, drags its feet across the page and stretches itself towards the bounds of temporality. In short, even as night turns to day, still Lamborghini turns towards the back(s) of time. Still he thrusts into Perlongher’s sight a *conjunto* of disjointed bodies and errant desires, exiled across borders and “detenidos… en infinita posición” by the troubled emptiness of origin (76).

Lamborghini, *nacido en una generación*, points in his poetic correspondence with Perlongher to a paradoxically unending though not-yet arrived *dawn*, a temporal suspension in which dwells a desiring, ghostly, and transgressive body. Thus emerges the potential for Lamborghini’s auroral cathexis in “Nocturno” to find its footing alongside the constellation

of motions—the articulations, it can be said, of *Verneinung*, the *espiral*, the *yiro*—that I have spent the previous chapters attempting to explain.

This is no coincidence; we shall first recall the various twists and turns that set "*Die Verneinung*" into motion:

PRÓLOGO, O CONCLUSIÓN

Qué giros de pensamientos,
qué ridículas torcazas
qué torpe andar.
Rimero desnudo sin lo propicio (74).

Here, flight, or departure, takes the form of the speaker's own thoughts, whose "giros" are drawn to resemble the clumsy path of a pigeon. In both "*Die Verneinung*" and "Nocturno," the reader catches sight of a speaker who is limping, *de*ambulatory, always (re)adjusting his disjointed body amidst a time that is also out of joint. In "*Die Verneinung*," this temporal confusion is hinted at from its very start.

We can extend this destabilization beyond Buenos Aires to Severo Sarduy's transatlantic cartography. As I comment in my second chapter, Sarduy's poem, "Espiral negra," exceeds its primary function as a poem to become a hermeneutic. It materializes a dizzying, often violent network of encounters and allows us to locate the dorsal and spectral qualities of homoerotic, transnational encounters in his later works written across France, Morocco, and, ultimately, back in Cuba. The œuvre of Nestor Perlongher, too, can benefit from such a reading. Marked in its earlier years by the *yiro*, the "walk around the block" performed by gay male sex workers of the same name, the scope of Perlongher's written works dilates as he flees political and sexual repression in Argentina and heads to São Paulo. The haunting memory of this violence materializes as a cast of cadavers that spill into the

streets of Buenos Aires. Their specters always remain *behind* Perlongher; that is, their (non)presence in his works takes the form of an elliptical revenant.

In a very general sense, the works of these three writers map out a series of not just inversions and negations, but connections and (trans)creations, too. They mutually move across borders and languages; they cleave apart and examine a breach of temporal, poetic, and ontological concerns. A breach into which, say, Freud's patient abjures his mother: "Die Mutter ist es nicht." Into which Sarduy can spiral between the olive-scented bathhouses of Morocco and the sterile underground of metropolitan France, never losing sight of the tropics from which he was exiled. Into which Perlongher's cadavers fall, eventually washing up on a muddy shore. We are ultimately peering, as Derrida reminds us, into a breach that continues to vibrate with the echoes of Hamlet's cry upon encountering the ghost of his father: *The time is out of joint.*

**To Conclude: A Catastrophe?**

This brings me to my current task, that of crafting a conclusion. Hamlet spies that the "time is out of joint: O cursed spite," and subsequently sets out to "set it right" (Act I, Scene 5). This thesis, admittedly, has not "set… right" any instance of temporal, corporeal, or linguistic disjointedness that it may have encountered. Nor, I would wager, could it have. Derrida identifies in Hamlet's pursuit a fundamental contradiction: by virtue of its very eliding presence and absence, Shakespeare's ghost incarnates a paradox that both "poses itself and gets carried away by itself" (20). Hamlet curses an illusion of his own making, that is, of a perverted time that he yearns to (re)adjust, to (re)align. His rectifying mission, therefore, originates out of an unresolvable emptiness. Or, in Derrida's words: "He swears against this misfortune, and this misfortune is unending because it is nothing other than himself, Hamlet" (20). In a rather perverse sense, then, it would seem that Hamlet must come

to terms with the ghost by means of—or owing *to*—its *back*. He is ultimately suspended in a condition akin to that described in Derrida's *post*al undertaking:

> Plato wants to emit. Seed… To sow the entire earth, to send the same fertile card to *everyone*. A *pancarte*, a pan-card, a billboard that we have on our hacks and to which we can never really turn round. [P]oor Freud… Plato sticks him with his *pancarte* and Freud has it on his back, can no longer get rid of it… it is then Plato who is the inheritor, for Freud. Who pulls the same trick, somewhat, on Plato that Plato pulls on Socrates. This is what I call a catastrophe (*PC* 28).

Indeed, this move towards a conclusion, whether to "set [something] right" or not, tickles at the motif of a "catastrophe" that has insisted upon revisiting this thesis.

That is to say, over the course of our various attempts to discern and unravel—to turn *over*, it could be said—the temporal and corporeal disjointedness staged between Lamborghini, Sarduy, and Perlongher, we, too, risk only ever being able to face these men—the backs, that is—from *behind*. To that effect, I am tempted here to return to Lee Edelman's *Homographesis*, in which he compares writing to the act of sodomy, for both insist "on the (il)logical possibility that what is behind can also, and properly, come before" (191). It is the preposterousness—a word that itself confuses the supposedly antonymic prefixes *pre*- and *post*-—of such an (il)logic that leads Derrida to describe sodomy as "catastrophic."

So, yes, the task of concluding may be catastrophic. It is a task that, in its position behind an imminent future-to-come, keeps us for a moment more in the darkness of the *nocturno* of Lamborghini (*qui genuit* Perlongher). Though I hesitate to describe this entire project as one irrevocably cloaked in darkness, I still find solace in what "poor Freud" proposes in chapter seven of *The Interpretation of Dreams*: "But we can console ourselves with the thought that we have been obliged to build our way out into the dark. If we are not

wholly in error, other lines of approach are bound to lead us into much the same region and the time may then come when we shall find ourselves more at home in it" (549).

We are running out of time. It is a predicament that leaves us, understandably, with infinitely more questions. For example: where has our running behind time—our reckoning with its total inscrutability, that is, its very back—gotten us so far? Or, perhaps better put, is our reading, from and of the back, *work*ing?

My invocation of the word "work" here is charged, yet intentional. Work is, for one, a word that (translated into the English) threads together several aspects of *Specters of Marx* about which we ought to be concerned. As mentioned in my introduction, we must remember that *Specters* is before all else a work [*ouvrage*] on the work [*travail*] of mourning. Derrida writes to us with a post-communist hangover rooted in the early 1990s: the fall of the Berlin Wall, the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and the sealing of French communists' fate of mutation into reformist democratic socialists would seem to point to the final death of Marxism. Marx, and the Red Specter about which he forewarned, are said to be *behind* us in the West: always thought to be arriving, never fully materializing. Crudely put, Western attempts at implementing communism have not *worked*. Derrida addresses the temporal stakes of such a historical failure:

> In "The time is out of joint," time is either le temps itself, the temporality of time, or else what temporality makes possible (time as *histoire*, the way things are at a certain time, the time that we are living, nowadays, the period), or else, consequently, the monde, the world as it turns, our world today, our today, currentness itself, current affairs: there where it's going okay (whither) and there where it's not going so well, where it is rotting or withering, there where it's working [*ça marche*] or not working well, there where it's going okay without running as it should nowadays [*par les*

> *temps qui courent*]. Time: it is *le temps*, but also *l'histoire*, and it is *le monde*, time, history, world" (*Specters* 18-19).

*Ça marche ?* Is it working? This seemingly innocuous inquiry reminds us, too, of the ethical stakes of interpretation, that is, the responsibility that readers have to move alongside a work, to always (re)adjust and attune ourselves to the ways that a text (and time, for that matter) wears itself "out of joint."[28][29] Perhaps the readings that I have proposed in this thesis have "worked" in the sense that they, before all else, affirm the errant, haunting nature of transgression—sexual, temporal, or otherwise.

**The Specters of AIDS**

As this conclusion nears its final stage, I leave Derrida mourning the fall of communism in 1993 and turn to the contemporaneous specter of HIV/AIDS. It was ultimately AIDS that ended the life of two of this thesis's three principal figures: Sarduy, in Paris, in 1993; Perlongher, one year earlier in São Paulo. (Lamborghini died in Barcelona of a heart attack in 1985.) I describe HIV/AIDS as a specter because a positive diagnosis in the early 1990s, particularly in Latin America, all but guaranteed eventual death.

My second chapter bears witness to the Cuban writer's spirals between the tropics of Cuba, the shores of Morocco, and the streets of Paris. Let us recall the great fuss that you [*tú*] took to put your *djellaba* back on, and Sarduy his *impermeable*, amidst the temporal and positional disjointing presented in the prose-poem, "Isomorfia." Material traces of a cruising encounter—semen dilates [*se dilata*] on the walls of the Moroccan bathhouse—remain;

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[28] This can be thought of, as described in my second chapter, as a movement like the one proposed by Lacan in his 1964 seminar on anamorphosis. We shall remember he describes anamorphosis as a movement that apprehends "cet objet étrange, suspendu, oblique, au premier plan en avant" and ultimately reveals "une tête de mort" (*Quatres Concepts* 83).

[29] My use of the word "wear" here should be understood alongside Derrida's writings on usury [*usure*], particularly in the essay, "La mythologie blanche," from *Marges de la Philosophie*. In it, he points to "la double portée de l'*usure* : l'effacement par frottement, l'épuisement, l'effritement, certes, mais aussi le produit supplémentaire d'un capital," be it in service of "fructifier la richesse primitive…" or "de surcroît d'intérêt, de plus-value linguistique" (250).

however, the poem's sonoric texture—the rumblings of the Parisian *métro*—transports the reader back to the *métropole*. The haunting notation with which the piece ends—"Tiznit / Barbès-Rochechouart"—extends this time out of joint to a cartographic destabilization.

What I wish to briefly focus on here, though, is the act of recovery—realignment, even—towards which Sarduy gestures:

> La leche en la pared: punto denso, signo blanco que se dilata.
>
> Un silencio.
>
> Una risa.
>
> Te pones la chilada.
>
> Yo, el impermeable. (*BB* 50)

Staged here is an encounter with two bodies approaching a re*turn* to—and paradoxically, a turning of the back away from—life beyond the shadows of the bathhouse. Through your—*tú detrás de* Severo—attempt to literally re-cover [*re*-cobrar] your naked bodies with clothing, so is laid bare a union of spectral bodies. Sarduy projects a corporeal universe always, in Wills's words, "correcting its bearing, limping from one foot to the other, realigning its center of gravity" (4).

My bracketed use of *cobrar* is deliberate. When Cobra, Sarduy's campy, crossdressing protagonist from the 1972 novel, *Cobra*, wails, "Dios mío… ¿por qué me hiciste nacer si no era para ser absolutamente divina?", she poses, in a sense, a devastating question (*OC* 427). How else to achieve an otherworldly divinity if not by arriving at the end of life as we know it? It's a dilemma with which Sarduy will, understandably, not fully grapple until the last years of his life.

Sarduy assumed the fatigue brought on by his struggle with AIDS to write one final work, a posthumously published novel entitled *Pájaros de la playa*.[30] The book's title is an apt (though, I must confess, mostly coincidental) combination of two motifs, birds and beaches, that have had paid extended visits to this thesis: the pigeons that stumble across Lamborghini's *porteño* skies, Sarduy's sunny Moroccan littoral, the muddy shores of Perlongher's Río de la Plata.

*Pájaros de la playa* is Sarduy's final, and perhaps most sustained, look *back* at the tropics from which he self-exiled. The text, before all else, wrestles with a force that menaces Sarduy from the *back*: the looming imminence of a death, an event whose imminence is as certain as it is mystical. It is narrated by a cosmologist—we easily understand his voice to be that of the ailing Sarduy—who writes "en esta ausencia de tiempo y lugar, para que esa negación sea dicha y cada uno sienta en sí mismo esa inmóvil privación de ser" (*OC* 964). He guides the reader on a voyage through the tropics, where a decaying colonial mansion now serves as a hospital for birds and young men both suffering from a mysterious illness virtually identical to AIDS. Consider the following conversation between two of the hospital's "patients":

> –La luz cura, pero no a mí. Mi espíritu ya no habita mi cuerpo; ya me he ido. Lo que ahora come, duerme, habla y excreta en medio de los otros es una pura simulación. El sol anima, es verdad, pero algo en la piel tiene que captarlo, y es eso precisamente lo que desaparece con el mal. Aquí estoy, bajo la colorinesca luz del día, pero ya todo es póstumo. Me escapé del sufrimiento físico.
>
> –¿Cómo? inquirió la de la transfusión.

---

[30] My wording here refers to what the cosmologist narrator of *Pájaros de la playa* confides in his reader: "*Asumir la fatiga* hasta el máximo: hasta dejar de escribir, de respirar. Abandonarse. Dar paso libre al dejar de ser" (*OC* 964, emphasis added).

> –Deshabitando el cuerpo. Dejándolo como un paquete de ropa maloliente, algo que es no sólo inútil, sino molesto, insoportable. Ese abandono del cuerpo a los que lo escrutan es una desencarnación.
>
> [...]
>
> –La vida volverá.
>
> –La vida volverá.
>
> –Sí. ¿Pero cuál?
>
> –La otra. La muerte es como un cambio de ropa. He sentido el movimiento de mi cuerpo ahogado tratando de nacer, de respirar aire claro. Intuyo incluso el lugar: en otra isla. (921-922)

A cunning reference to Sarduy's penchant for crossdressing— "La muerte es como un cambio de ropa"—becomes a refusal, too, here: a final act of resistance—of negation [*Verneinung*], even—against a defective, deteriorating physical state. If, as I argue in my second chapter, with every *Big Bang* comes a crash, a realization of one's own imminence, here we witness how such a realization can materialize a push beyond the limits of one's legible body.

Though *Pájaros* is evidently Sarduy's most explicit consideration of the multiplicity of afterlives, however fragmented, hosted by the spectral body, the novel fits quite snugly among the other works in his œuvre of fiction, criticism, and theory. This is, in part, what drives critic Chris Campanioni, in an article in *Latin American Literary Review*, to describe the novel as an "elegy." Beyond being a lamentation of one's own body slowly decomposing from AIDS-related complications, *Pájaros* is a textual auto-reflection, a look *back* at a corpus shaped by spirals and simulations. A corpus that, like Sarduy quips in his essay collection, *La simulación*, "conecta, agrupándolos en una misma energía –la pulsión de simulación–, fenómenos disímiles" (*LS* 7).

Though Sarduy signs this elegy to us from his present, he is already paralyzed by the temporal gap aroused by such a correspondence. He must write this final *post-card*, I contend, with Derrida's anxious words in mind: "I will have spent my life asking your pardon. I didn't think about the time difference… But I write you tomorrow, I always say it in the present" (*PC* 11).

Epistolary correspondence, it would turn out, is one way that Nestor Perlongher learns to live [*apprendre à vivre*] with the physical and emotional turmoil that scars his senectitude.[31] Perlongher discovered his HIV-positive status during a short-lived stint as a doctoral student in Paris. He famously loathed the city; his *crónica*, "Nueve meses en París," for example, labels the French a "completamente artificial, horrible, puro plástico: ¡*plástico*!" people (*Papeles insumisos* 169). "Todo entre brumas," he confesses, shortly after testing positive for HIV, in a 1990 letter to his friend, Sara Torres, "un mar de culpas y arrepentimientos. Muy confuso" (*Correspondencias* 131).

Perlongher soon thereafter returns to Brazil, where he surmises that any parting of this melancholic sea—if I may exploit one final maritime metaphor in my discussion of Perlongher—will require a *salida de sí*, that is, a parting with one's own decaying body.[32] His reckoning with the specters of death-by-AIDS are quite plainly—and devastatingly—articulated in "Canción de la muerte en bicicleta," a poem from the posthumously published collection, *Chorreo de las iluminaciones*:

**Ahora que me estoy muriendo**

**Ahora que me estoy muriendo**

[31] My thoughts in the paragraphs that follows are, whether I directly cite it or not, largely indebted to Gustavo Vargas's 2021 article, "Intimacy, Memory and Revelation: HIV/AIDS Representations in Néstor Perlongher's and Caio Fernando Abreu's Epistolary Writing."
[32] His 1991 essay, "Poesía y éxtasis," among others from the same time period, describes this *salida* at length, usually in the context of psychedelic usage as an alternative to industrial, modern medicine. Ben Bollig also comments on this in *Modern Argentine Poetry*.

Erguidas coníferas plañen como ombúes

o sauces la maraña madrugada, resmas

de leche chorrean a mares por la escrófula

en el antecedente del derrame (*PM* 366).

The poem continues with the twice-repeated dictum, "Ahora que me estoy muriendo," wedged between each stanza. This technology of repetition instantly transports the reader to Perlongher's inescapable "Cadáveres." In the poem, we shall remember, Perlongher punctuates each stanza with the stirring observation that, everywhere the eye can see, "Hay Cadáveres." In that sense, "Ahora que me estoy muriendo" becomes a kind of *supplement* to the originary "Hay Cadáveres"; it appears to substitute the cadaver, an aesthetic and temporal haunting force that, like I explain in my third chapter, ultimately refuses to be ignored. Amidst this representational impossibility, Perlongher's affirmation of his own death serves to add material depth to the marks—the *tajos*, even—of cadavers past.[33] Later in the poem, he laments:

**Ahora que me estoy muriendo**

**Ahora que me estoy muriendo**

Cansina esta letanía de arrabal

Lejos de todo se toma el ómnibus de extramuros

del que no baja, porque no para o para pronto,

en realidad no se ha movido de la parada (367)

Perlongher's focus on stasis here strikes a startling contrast to his earlier Deleuzian fetish for an eroticized nomadism propelled by libidinal flux. Even in the decidedly lugubrious "Cadáveres," the speaker finds himself always afoot and (re)adjusting his footing as he

[33] Derrida's essay from *De la grammatologie*, "Ce dangereux supplément," proves essential to my point here.

prepares to turn his back to Argentina and seek refuge in Brazil. In line with Derrida-cum-Wills' spectro-dorsal logic, then, Perlongher's *salida de sí*—his turn away from the self—professes, too, a return to a nearly moribund body. So continue to resonate a pair of questions that Perlongher first articulates in the 1991 essay, "Poesía y éxtasis": "¿Adónde se sale cuando no se está? ¿Adónde se está cuando se sale?" (*PP* 150).

***Enfin.***

We have run out of time. In the spirit of revisitation—however helical, elliptical, or illogical this movement may present itself—I close with Derrida's opening remarks of *Specters of Marx*: "je voudrais apprendre à vivre enfin" (13). Indeed, the various specters that we have encountered in this thesis seem to approach us with an invitation to rethink how to *apprendre*—to learn? Or to teach? How could one possibly know?—*à vivre*. A reading of their (non)presences, like one that this project proposes, asserts that to live amidst a time out of joint is to articulate oneself through the back, through inversions, translations, transmutations that embody generative properties in their own lack.

Lacan concludes his seminar on anamorphosis: "C'est ce que j'essaierai d'articuler la prochaine fois" (83). Indeed, perhaps in the future another attempt at articulating this thesis' arguments will present itself. Though I cannot yet make sense of this "prochaine fois," it can only, in Derrida's words, "be for ghosts. And the past" (*Specters* 37). Neither for the living, nor for the present. This *not not-future*, so we might call it (for it will be, as Zupančič shows, the locus of its own constitutive temporal difference), will inch towards me from *behind*. And, like the (com)motions embodied through writing, sodomy, or cruising, the comings and goings of time will remain as elliptical as they are catastrophic.

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