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Alienation, Anarchy, and Masculinity in Juan Goytisolo's Count Julian

Ellen Mayock / Washington and Lee University

Introduction and Rationale

*The mechanic yells into the wind, "You're not your name."
(Palahniuk, Fight Club, 143)*

*where are you going? you inquire
look at my back, he says
who in the world did that to you? you ask him
I have to go, he says: I'm in a hurry
wait a minute, you say
I can't, he answers
please, you say: I think I know you: your name is
so long
(Goytisolo, Count Julian, 59) [1]*

Literature whose protagonists “walk forward and point out their masks” (Barthes, 34, 40) asks its reader to distance herself or himself from the work while at the same time inevitably attracting the reader to the “strangeness” or “otherness” of the work itself [2]. Literature that effectively alienates requires the attentive reader to begin to question the fabric of reality or realities, the nature of

identity and alterity, and the relationships between and among history, culture, and politics. In effect, the reader must shift her or his own reading position, exist as many pronouns at once, accept a lack of absolutes, and delve into the “allergen” contained in the writing. J. Hillis Miller, for example, says that “De Man’s work as allergen is something alien, something other, that works to bring about a reaction of resistance to that otherness” (*Others* 220), a phenomenon that manifests itself as well in *Count Julian*. Various questions present themselves in *Count Julian*: how does language both construct and deconstruct identity?; how does language become art?; how does language as art confront tradition, culture, and politics? I will attempt to respond to these questions by examining the roles of alienation, anarchy, and masculinity in Goytisolo’s *Count Julian*.

Juan Goytisolo speaks often in interviews and his memoirs of his own sense of alienation, both within himself and from Spain (see, for example, Gazarian Gautier’s interview with Goytisolo, pages 139 and 142, and *Forbidden Territory*). Juan Goytisolo’s trilogy that contains the novels *Señas de identidad* (1966 / *Marks of Identity* [1969]), *Reivindicación del Conde don Julián* (1970 / *Count Julian* [1974]), and *Juan sin tierra* (1975 / *Juan the Landless* [1977]) is precisely the type of literature that attempts to distance its reader from preconceived notions of a monolithic Spain by rendering senseless the nation’s literary production, religious iconography, and sexual repression. The first novel establishes the “Spanishness” of the shifting protagonist as a boy (a simplified term for the way in which the “boyhood” is described and socially gendered). The second novel, the focus of this study, undoes, destroys, and, in a way, reconstructs each of the concepts of identity set forth in the first novel, while the third novel definitively takes the “Spanish” out of the Spaniard by taking from him that which most makes him Spanish—his Castilian language—and giving him in its place only words in Arabic. It is worthwhile to note, at least to the extent that Alvaro Peranzules, the protagonist, shares several biographical details with his creator, that in this trilogy Goytisolo creates

a Castilian/Arabic dichotomy rather than a Castilian/Catalan dichotomy because he feels more alien among Catalan speakers than among Arabic speakers. Abigail Lee Six summarizes the point: In sum, he [Goytisolo] confirms that when he left the country, he was ‘fleeing...from a world where I felt alien and marginal’ (*CV*, p.251; *FT*, p.213). It would seem, indeed, that this period prior to his departure from Spain and from Catalonia ‘where I had always lived as a foreigner’(*CV*, p.234; *FT*, p.199) provides the least contentious example of living in exile to be found in Goytisolo’s life. (Portable *Patria* 82)

Although Goytisolo’s protagonist also may equate the Barcelona/Cataluña of his childhood with the rest of Spain, consistent with the Francoist rhetoric of unity in the fatherland, the real linguistic distinction between Castile and Cataluña, the spatial antithesis of Barcelona and Tangier, and the dark and vague references to the Barcelona of Alvaro’s youth supply more complicated shades of meaning to the already omnipresent theme of cultural difference.

Goytisolo publishes his three novels in the ten years immediately preceding the death of Francisco Franco. The timing is significant for several reasons. First, the author had by 1966 lived in exile from Spain for a decade and therefore had the distance of time and space to evaluate a culture both overly familiar and strangely foreign to him. Second, this artist, opposed to the fascist regime, boldly experiments with literary techniques in order to present a narrative that not only questions the worthiness of monolithic Spanish culture, as propagated by the regime, but actually denigrates that very culture and promotes its proposed opposite, the labyrinthine culture of the north of Africa, where much of the novel takes place. Finally, the student protests of the late 1960’s in France (Goytisolo’s primary home) helped to promote a similar, if muted, spirit of rebellion in Spain, and particularly in Cataluña, and therefore created a terrain more open to avid and critical reading of Goytisolo’s trilogy.

Count Julian (Reivindicación del Conde don Julián) is based on the intertext of the popular legend of Florinda la Cava, a young and beautiful woman and daughter (perhaps wife; see Epps' "The Politics of Ventriloquism" 283) of Count Julian, who is in possession of the keys to the Iberian Peninsula. Florinda is raped by Julian's countryman, Rodrigo, and Julian exacts his revenge by giving the keys of the nation to the Moorish troops anxiously awaiting the initiation of their invasion of the Peninsula. The Spanish nobleman Julian therefore privileges his individual honor over national loyalty in his betrayal of Spain, a theme common to much of Golden Age Spanish literature. The events of Count Julian serve to glorify this type of betrayal of fatherland (or *madre patria*, a term whose significance I will return to later in this essay) and rejection of all things Spanish, such as order and unity, the Stoic nature of its people dating back to Spain's philosopher king (Seneca), sexual repression, prohibitions on linguistic expression, and single-minded insistence on Catholicism and its heroes. The Moorish conquest of 711 actually brings to fruition the "convivencia," or "living together," of religions and the sharing of their cultures that Goytisolo finds truly laudable in Spain's Middle Ages and deplorably absent in the Spain built by Ferdinand and Isabella. The plot balances the criticism of Catholic Spain with a celebration of what Goytisolo interprets as Arabic cultural norms, such as the chaos and confusion of the streets and markets of Tangier, the hedonism of its hashish cafés, the multiple meanings of its peoples' glances and words, the acceptance of many definitions of sexuality, and the relatively peaceful coexistence of religions.

Alienation

¡Y la locura, que me trae loco, se llama...el otro!
(Unamuno, El Otro, 72)

Goytisolo, in his interview with Gazarian Gautier, speaks of his characters as "purely linguistic creations: they are constantly transformed, they die, they are reborn, and they change age and sex according to the rhythm of the narration" (143). It is no coincidence that insects and snakes appear

often in the novel to remind the reader of the constant metamorphosis and molting of action, narration, and characters. [3] The action of Count Julian is carried out by variably named protagonists and is narrated in many voices, thus heightening the sense of alterity that imbues the work, as well as the reader's need to be attentive to subtle transformations in narrative voice. [4] Julian is one of the narrator-protagonists, and he has many different names in the narration. Julian is related to the celebration of the Arabic, but Julian as child is called Alvarito (the child version of the Alvaro narrator of the first novel), and this child represents all the tradition and Stoicism of the Spaniards. Luis de Góngora, a Spanish Golden Age poet celebrated for the plurality of meanings that come from his work, serves as a counter-narrator who revives or changes the direction of the plot.

The term “ventriloquism” that Epps uses in his discussion of multiple characters and sexual discourse in Count Julian relates to my view of the shifting protagonists in Count Julian. I refer more to *metonymical* shifts that give rise to horizontal multiple voices (others, in the sense that J. Hillis Miller uses the term in his work Others, based largely on a Derridean, deconstructionist definition) but that sporadically emerge vertically as a dichotomous framework of that which is either Spanish or Arabic (i.e. a raced, gendered, ethnic Other, in the sense of what Miller sees as the “Other” of cultural studies [1]). [5] It is essential to note that the plural “others” flow into and out of the dichotomous “Other” in this complicated work. It is precisely this point which gives rise to the immense bibliography on the novel and its transcendent ability to relate to other works of literature and other cultures. [6]

J. Hillis Miller derives from Derrida and Lévinas two ways of looking at alterity:

On the one hand, the other may be another version of the same, in one way or another assimilable, comprehensible, able to be appropriated and understood. On the other hand, the other may be truly and radically other. In the latter case, the other cannot be turned into

some version of the same. It cannot be made transparent to the understanding, thereby dominated and controlled. It remains, whatever effort we make to deal with it, irreducibly other. As Jacques Derrida puts this: “Tout autre est tout autre. (Every other is completely other.)” (2)

For the average Spanish reader, Goytisolo’s text and characters might well be simply “assimilable, comprehensible, able to be appropriated and understood” in the Spanish/Arabic dichotomy. That is to say, the Arabic convert Julian attempts to negate everything his Spanish self, Alvarito, used to be and likely still is. Nevertheless, abundant critical readings of the text show that its content, narrative style, characters, and circular movement cannot be forced *only* into a dual cultural reading but rather must be examined from a shifting, moving perspective that transforms itself so many times so as to become “tout autre.” [7] Miller sees chaos, which I interpret here as a chaos within the text and its meanings, as the “wholly other, beyond consciousness and beyond any literal naming” (17; also mentioned in relation to alterity on p.73) and adds later that chaos can be related to “that absent center” (21). This chaos, this shifting from one element to the next and the next, forces the reader into a space in which she or he can no longer pin down a character, place, or time. That is to say, the reader has effectively been introduced to the uncomfortable, itchy zone of the “Other.” The reader is experiencing what Miller terms the “roar on the other side of silence” (74). That itchiness, that “allergic” reaction to the text in Count Julian is precisely what Miller sees as “generating otherness” (220) in Paul de Man.

Adam Smith’s concept of the impartial spectator, as defined in Section III of The Theory of Moral Sentiments, also finds itself at the intersection of “others” and the “Other.” The first quote (III.1.6) from Smith will bring to mind the ways in which all of us already exist as “others” to ourselves, while the second quote (III.1.3) will place our others in the context of society’s others:

When I endeavour to examine my own conduct, when I endeavour to pass sentence upon it, and either to approve or condemn it, it is evident that, in all such cases, I divide myself, as it were, into two persons; and that I, the examiner and judge, represent a different character from that other I, the person whose conduct is examined into and judged of. (113)

Bring him into society, and he is immediately provided with the mirror which he wanted before. It is placed in the countenance and behavior of those he lives with, which always mark when they enter into, and when they disapprove of his sentiments; and it is here that he first views the propriety and impropriety of his own passions, the beauty and deformity of his own mind. (110)

Charles Griswold, Jr. elucidates these points by stating that “we do not have a moral self outside of the human community” (105). Goytisolo successfully creates characters who share these universal qualities, thus establishing the relevance of Smith’s “impartial spectator” (internal), and places them in a specific sociopolitical context (external), thereby providing the necessary mirror for the celebration or condemnation of the anarchic events of the plot. Adam Smith’s “impartial spectator” serves both as individual observer, witness, and conscience and as communal filter and censor. Griswold summarizes this effect (citing text from Smith, III.2.32): “Conscience, which is the internalized impartial and well-informed spectator, ‘the man within the breast, the great judge and arbiter’ of our conduct, is like ‘the demigods of the poets, though partly of immortal, yet partly too of mortal extraction” (133).

In a 1975 article, Janet Díaz carefully delineates the narrative techniques used by several Spanish authors to create a sense of alienation in their novels. Goytisolo’s Count Julian is included in Díaz’ list, and her article gives rise to the closer look at alienation in Goytisolo taken up subsequently by numerous critics. Díaz establishes the fluid identity of the protagonist of Count Julian and then sets

that horizontal identity within a spatial framework to evaluate its effectiveness as a cultural (raced, gendered, ethnic) “Other”:

This geographical and cultural separation from the visible object of his obsession, aggression and murderous desire constitutes a powerful metaphor of near-total alienation. His lack of a definitive name parallels the absence of a clearly defined personality or identity, and certain hallucinatory or fantastic episodes in the novel may well be schizophrenic interludes. (9)

Díaz insists on the “geographical and cultural separation” as conditioning the sense of alienation in Count Julian. These realms of geography and culture that pertain so intimately to the realms of identity and alterity are examined carefully by Daniele Conversi in his The Basques, the Catalans, and Spain. In this extensive study of nationalisms, language, and culture, Conversi characterizes three concepts of identity and nationhood, with the last having diminished importance in today’s world (215-6): (1) territory (physical space), (2) voluntary efforts towards national unity, with an emphasis on language, and (3) origin and descent. Basing themselves on Goytisolo’s memoirs and his professed feelings of alienation from his Catalan homeland, most critics evaluate the trilogy from the perspective of Castile-as-Spain set up against Morocco-as-Africa. I, however, put forth that the complicated nuances of metamorphosis and transformation in the trilogy, and particularly in Count Julian, arise also from an authorial position of alienation in a micronation struggling to define itself against its macroholder (Cataluña versus Castile/Spain). Alvarito is born in the capital of Cataluña, Barcelona, but speaks Castilian and not Catalan. Alvaro as youth must feel the double repression of Spanish monolith and micronational marginalization. The multiple transformations of character and the chaos and anarchy in the text may well respond in part to Goytisolo’s estranged relationship with Cataluña and Cataluña’s confused relationship with Spain.

Conversi discusses parallels between Catalans and Jews in some Catalan literature (specifically that by the great poet Espriu) and foregrounds the fact that pre-1492 Spain is praised in much of Catalan

literature for its acceptance of religious coexistence (122). These impulses are precisely what Goytisolo discusses in interviews and nuances in Count Julian. Conversi also cites numerous reasons for which inhabitants of Cataluña have “a remarkable capacity to absorb external cultural elements” (220), a skill and tendency that is certainly salient and significant in Alvaro’s development as shifting character in the trilogy. Furthermore, Conversi examines the possibility that Catalanism is “a pure bourgeois product” (219), and Goytisolo may well carry this realization into his scathing criticism of bourgeois mores via Julian and his textual cohorts. Although the Catalan language may be the single most defining element of Catalan culture, these extralinguistic elements that arise from territory, or location, are echoed in the persona/personae of Alvaro in Count Julian.

Abigail Lee Six uses similar terminology to evaluate, in a sense, the existence of the cultural “Other” in Goytisolo’s Count Julian, and she emphasizes Conversi’s second determining factor of national identity, that of language. Lee Six writes: “...the notion of the Spanish language and by extension, its cultural—and especially literary—heritage, emerges as Goytisolo’s redefinition of *patria*, replacing the more usual territorial idea of the homeland” (“Portable *Patria*” 85). [8] Certainly, Count Julian privileges Spanish language over all other considerations. The Castilian language becomes the principal tool of both acceptance and rejection, construction and destruction, pride and shame, violence and peace, cacophony and silence. The spaces created within the narration become exactly that space of “others” to which Miller alludes. The space is all-encompassing and escapes definition. The struggle towards some understanding of textual meaning is contained in the “insólito encuentro” (284, Spanish edition) between self and selves, in this case the violent encounter between the invading rapist Julian (and his multiple narrative counterparts) and his unwitting childhood alter ego, Alvarito. [9] The two, after a flood of assaulting words that constitute part of an ontological search, meet face to face and, significantly, face to back, to confuse characters and readers even

further. In essence, the Arabophile is violently confronting his younger Castilian counterpart in a territorial, linguistic, religious, and sexual war.

As I look at the “raced, gendered, and ethnic other” or, in the case of Count Julian, “others,” I now turn in particular to Goytisolo’s use of anarchy as political and linguistic weapon of destruction and his questioning of traditional definitions of masculinity as he places a many-voiced, multifarious male character (or characters) in the space between order and disorder, government and anarchy, and one culture and others.

Anarchy

*violence, inescapable violence: crossing your path
at regular intervals: suddenly and unexpectedly: thus
instantly destroying the illusion of order, revealing the
truth hidden beneath the mask, catalyzing your scattered
forces and your donjulianesque plans for invasion:
a grandiose act of treason, the collapse of entire centuries:
the cruel army of Tariq, the destruction of Sacred Spain:
as you enter the Calle Chema Djedid, then Chorfa,
heading for the Calle de Baño.
(Goytisolo, Count Julian, 39-40)*

Critics agree that Count Julian is a novel of violence and destruction. The chaos established within the form and meaning of the text becomes a leitmotif of the text, and, by extension, of language itself. Violent use of language, in effect, “obliterates” identity (Lee Six, “Portable *Patria*” 93), an identity that I am defining here both as an internal search for plurality and a national label that is often attached solely as a stereotype. Evaluating again a possible Catalan influence in Goytisolo, I turn to Conversi, who cites many examples of Catalan violence throughout its history leading up to the Spanish Civil War (222-3). Conversi (basing himself on John Hooper) also mentions an internal Catalan dichotomy between the tendency towards *rauxa* (“passionate extremism”) and towards *seny* (“common sense”) (223). These two elements and the tension created between them are certainly present in Goytisolo’s Count Julian. The rational, methodical evaluation

and destruction of Spanish culture waged by the protagonists of the work contain elements of both poles of stereotyped Catalan behavior. Conrasi believes that nationalism is “the most powerful contemporary ideology” (267) and sees border creation and maintenance as fundamental to the understanding of nationalism(s). Again, Goytisolo recognizes conflicts among nations and cultures by establishing stern borders (set up right from the start of Count Julian, when the protagonist looks out his window in Tangier and across the strait towards Spain) and by throwing them into a disorder that questions the very fabric of nationalism. The author also breaks through linguistic borders by surprising the reader at every turn with his constantly creative, innovative use of the Spanish language and by using as well phrases in Arabic, French, and English.

As has already been displayed to some degree, violence and self-destruction inform the evolution of plot, language, and imagery in the novel. Each part of the narration plays upon images presented before (Part I can simply be read circularly from Part IV). The images are reestablished and transformed and, ultimately, destroyed. In Part I, the narration sets up the basis for destruction as the protagonist regards Spain from across the strait and plans to attack canonized Spanish literature by smashing insects within the covers of the books at the local library and as he considers infecting the Spanish people with syphilis (an obvious reference to the Spanish decimation of vanquished lands by the spread of syphilis in the New World). The protagonist has daily anti-syphilis treatments during which he reads signs around the clinic that say “GIVE BLOOD. SAVE A LIFE.” He mocks this health care propaganda as he considers “giving blood” in order to infect the Spanish nation with his already infected blood (e.g. 19-21). This, combined in the same sequence with a flashback to Alvarito in his Natural Science class in Barcelona, plays into Foucault’s comments in The History of Sexuality about the imposition of dysfunction on sex and disease:

Imbedded in bodies, becoming deeply characteristic of individuals, the oddities of sex relied on a technology of health and pathology. And conversely, since sexuality was a medical and

medicalizable object, one had to try to detect it—as a lesion, a dysfunction, or a symptom—in the depths of the organism, or on the surface of the skin, or among all the signs of behavior. (44)

It has become obvious that it is impossible to speak of Goytisolo's textual anarchy without treading on the ground of sexuality, a theme that will be treated more fully in the next section.

Part II is more oneirically driven as the reader accompanies the narrator on his hashish-induced visions of the destruction of Spanish culture, represented alternately by its literature, its philosopher Seneca, Queen Isabella (paragon of virtue and religiosity), and the little scared boy (the protagonist's alter ego), who will be unable to live up to the standards of masculinity upheld in his nation. Part III circles back upon the images presented in Parts I and II and contains the metaphorical brutal invasion of Isabella's vagina, represented as a large and strange ride at an amusement park. This section of the novel also contains an amusing and revealing parody of a "purified" Spanish language stripped of its Arabic lexicon. Finally, Part IV picks up the trope of anal rape alluded to throughout the narration. In this part, the grown narrator rapes and destroys (suicide? homicide?) his childhood counterpart from Barcelona.

While focusing on the disorder and destruction within the text, the reader must realize, too, that the continuous, repetitive, and circular nature of the narrative implies necessarily a *constructive* bent to the work (that is to say, a truly self-annihilating text would have to end). Velásquez summarizes the phenomenon with respect to Fight Club: "In order to identify what to destroy we must first *remember*. This novel [Fight Club] is as much about remembering as it is about forgetting" (587). The same is certainly true of Count Julian. The protagonist of Goytisolo's novel is truly its language, which enthusiastically and ironically places its characters on a hyper-conscious *theatrum mundi*. [10] This thread of the actor is augmented by the ironic play with theater and television lexicon presented

early in the narration (“silence, please, ladies and gentlemen, the curtain is about to go up: the play is beginning” [5]). Brad Epps says of language in Count Julian:

Revolutionary textuality is in a certain sense always the function of a strategic positioning—on the part of the readers, writers and other characters—with respect to conflict. Hence, if Goytisolo is truly revolutionary, it is, at least from my position, in a way decidedly *different* from what the vast majority of his critics think. His radicalness lies not, as I see it, in the way he violates language, but in the way his language violates itself, in the way *his* language throws itself into something different. Reiterating the silent history of women’s oppression, Conde Julián slips a scandalous truth in the body of the text and trips itself up in the process. (“The Politics of Ventriloquism” 295) [11]

Count Julian’s shifting protagonist keeps the reader in an ever-necessary bind of attempting to derive fixed nomenclature for characters, places, and concepts, while knowing the textual transformations to be infinite and undefinable. For example, on one page alone, the narrator addresses his narratee and leads him (himself?) along the streets of Tangier, where he meets the Spanish attorney (and alter ego of the traitor Julian), is led to a hashish café, smokes a pipeful of hashish, and then is open to meeting the Arabic “Ulyan, Urban, or Julian” (30), “friend and crony of good old dependable Tariq” (30). This movement from narrator into narratee and through other characters continues and becomes ever more dramatic several pages later:

tracing with your footsteps as you walk (rather than dropping little pebbles or crumbs to make the way back) a complicated pattern that no one (not even yourself) will ever be able to interpret: finally splitting in two to tail yourself better, as though you were another person: a guardian angel, a jealous lover, a private eye: knowing that the labyrinth lies within: that you are the labyrinth: the famished minotaur, the edible martyr: at once the executioner and the victim: (40)

This quote very obviously foregrounds both the “complicated pattern” or labyrinth, which I associate with the plurality of others, and the “Other,” dichotomous definition of minotaur/martyr, executioner/victim, Spanish/Arabic (with all positions capable of logically being inverted).

Furthermore, the quote displays many of the narrative techniques so important to the anarchic nature of Goytisolo’s writing: fragmented phrases closed off by colons; lack of capital letters; numerous parenthetical remarks that are at once meandering and pointed; repetition and variations on a theme; nonmarked segments of dialogue; white spaces; real and metaphorical insistence on the mirror; use of epigraphs to augment the already rich intertextual nature of the narrative; omnipresent tone of parody, particularly in the imitations of insipid conversations shared among Spaniards (e.g. pp. 78-80 [Little Boy Red Riding Hood goes to visit his grandmother]). [12] In addition, Goytisolo creates and enriches linguistic meaning at every turn by means of word play, a fact that complicates significantly the task of translation of his work. In the aforementioned textual quote, Helen Lane does an admirable job of capturing Goytisolo’s ludic style by adopting the translation “finally splitting in two to tail yourself better” (40). The brilliant play on words of “tail yourself” alludes both to the enlivened sense of alterity in the text and the final scene of self-anal rape.

Andrew Sobiesuo is one of the few critics to examine the positive ramifications of “fraternal” discourse in Goytisolo’s trilogy. He states:

...this trilogy is also primordially non-violent to the extent that it has to do with the convergence of different cultures and souls, of the self-marginalizing narrators on the one hand and, on the other, the marginalized Africans, a convergence that stands in ironic contraposition with the hostile divergence brought to bear on the Spanish population at the behest of a false *Pax Hispana*. Furthermore, it would appear that the force underlining each

of these novels is, insofar as Africa is concerned, fraternizing rather than paternalizing. It therefore seems to represent an intuitive understanding of the Other. (185)

The strength of Goytisolo's anarchy is its plural base and its innovative presentation of cultural others. Barthes summarizes the workings of textual construction and reconstruction:

Thus we find, in the Novel too, this machinery directed towards both destruction and resurrection, and typical of the whole of modern art. What must be destroyed is duration, that is, the ineffable binding force running through existence: for order, whether it be that of poetic flow or of narrative signs, that of Terror or plausibility, is always a murder in intention. But what reconquers the writer is again duration, for it is impossible to develop a negative within time, without elaborating a positive art, an order which must be destroyed anew. So that the greater modern works linger as long as possible, in a sort of miraculous stasis, on the threshold of Literature, in this anticipatory state in which the breadth of life is given, stretched but not yet destroyed by this crowning phase, an order of signs. (38-39)

Therefore, in a sense, Goytisolo in Count Julian has achieved the phenomenon of "writing degree zero."

In the next section I examine how the author again uses notions of nations to undo traditional societal definitions of the masculine.

Masculinity

*nobody knows who the father is, I tell you
oh, I see!
yesterday afternoon
that same man?
at her place
no, she wasn't home
do you know what he did?
come on, tell me everything
he walked straight over to the kid and pissed on him
what!
yes, that's precisely what he did
he pissed on the kid?*

*they were right there and they say that
did he cry?
no, he has no idea what's going on around him
well, it's a good thing he doesn't
did they see him?
yes, with his pecker right out where everyone could see, and then he
buttoned up his pants and went away, as calmly as you please
(Goytisolo, Count Julian, 80)*

Judith Butler examines Wittig and Foucault in their claim “that the category of sex would itself disappear and, indeed, *dissipate* through the disruption and displacement of heterosexual hegemony” (18). The disorder natural to the anarchy adopted by Goytisolo’s protagonist helps him to undo cultural expectations based on gender. As the protagonist attempts to discard labels in his movement towards violent destruction, he also calls into question heterosexual norms so entrenched in Spanish culture, particularly the culture firmly imposed by the Franco regime.

Although feminist critics would likely applaud the attempt to destruct the tendency to define identity via sex, Goytisolo’s protagonist successfully eludes labels, for while giving some type of voice and legitimacy to homosexual and bisexual paradigms, he also steals voice from the female, represented in Count Julian as whorish object (the loud tourist, Mrs. Putifar; Queen Isabella as vagina; the protagonist’s mother). The parodic flavor of the narration might ask the reader to question the validity of objectifying women, but the fact remains that women in Count Julian represent little more than symbols of consumer culture, outdated religious codes, and overly protective mothers. Epps states that “homosexuality may be read in Goytisolo’s text as merely disrupting the straight movement of such authority without actually disengaging it from phallogocentric logic” (“Space” 82). A fundamental part of this “phallogocentric logic” is the intricate masculine imagery centered around the invading serpent and the seductive instrument of the flute player of the plaza, two images that recur throughout the narration, but often contextualized in the realm of the “limbo del ser o no ser” (Spanish edition, 177). [13] While the protagonist leaves behind and plans the destruction of the centuries-old traditions of masculinity in Spain—Golden Age “honor” dramas, bullfighting,

Stoicism, military strength, male public debate—he discovers and rejoices in the homosocial spaces of his Arabic surroundings—the hashish cafés, the library, the public baths. The “embodiment” of the male as cultural entity allows the protagonist to question gender-based stereotypes and to explore fantasies other than those proscribed by the monolithic, heterosexual Spanish nation. The transgression essential to the narrative, that is, the celebration of an Hispanocidal traitor, is contained as well within the male body, his imagination, and his desire (physical and metaphorical) for something other (homosexuality) and yet the same (another male).

Count Julian’s alter ego, Alvarito, is the product of what many Spaniards might have considered a broken home. There is no father in the household, and the mother exerts an influence that is considered too powerful. The absent father of the mother’s house is found in the overly present father of the homeland, the ubiquitous (a term used constantly by Goytisolo to mock Franco’s image) figure of Francisco Franco. Alvarito simply does not belong in his body, home, region, or nation. His not belonging makes him other to himself, a condition which will foment the frantic search for the identity of the Arabic other and a nihilistic destruction of the seminal Spanish identity. The gendered and sexed nature of both of his selves escapes easy categorization, as the protagonist slips from mask to mask and from repressed desire to expressed desire.

The term *madre patria* (more or less, “Mother Fatherland”) is often used to describe Mother Spain. I see the term as a simple means to look at the confused relationship between family home, or domestic, maternal space, and national “Fatherland,” or *patria*. [14] The necessary and innovative tension established between mother/father and homeland are easily observed early in Count Julian: at other times, the fog seems to shorten distances: the sea, having turned into a lake, links you to the other shore, as the fetus is tied to the mother’s blood-engorged womb, the umbilical cord between them coiling like a long, sinuous strip of *serpentin*: you are overcome with anxiety: (4)

This space between mother (blood-engorged womb) and mother/father (long, sinuous strip of *serpentin*) creates the anxiety that drives the plot of the novel and the ontological and destructive search of its protagonist.

This birth sequence is followed by the introduction of Count Julian as Little Red Riding Hood, a name which in Spanish (*Caperucito Rojo*) with its masculine ending allows again for language to rupture trained modes of thought surrounding ingrained stories such as fairy tales. “*Caperucito Rojo*” works linguistically and metaphorically like the term “*madre patria*”: instead of annulling any externally defined sense of gender or sexuality, the lexicon adopts and almost caresses both the feminine and the masculine. The presence of both and the tension between them are what motivates the violent rape and destruction of Isabella’s vagina and the peeing-upon and anal rape of Alvarito, or Little Red Riding Hood. All marks of identity, both the feminine and the masculine, the intimate and the national, must be destroyed in order to reconstruct and redefine a plural set of identities that can peacefully coexist in one body.

Despite my firm declarations about gender and sexuality in the text, nothing about the text is firm. Goytisolo is constantly creating variations upon a theme, exemplified by this quote that appears in the final pages of the novel: “...the major theme will be heard again, played each time by fewer and fewer instruments, until finally the movement, and with it the entire symphony, fades away into a hauntingly sad flute solo” (203). And Count Julian ends and recommences his textual invasion and invasive text with: “sleep weighs heavily on your eyelids and you close your eyes: as you know, all too well: tomorrow will be another day, the invasion will begin all over again [*no period or colon used at end of novel*]” (204).

Notes

[1] This article was originally prepared for presentation at the 2002 Conference of the International Society for the Study of European Ideas at the University of Wales in Aberystwyth. Funding for this

research was provided by the Glenn Grant and Robert E. Lee Scholars programs of Washington and Lee University. I am indebted to Professor Eduardo Velásquez for making me acutely aware, via Adam Smith and Charles Griswold, of the importance of the themes of the impartial spectator and *theatrum mundi*. In addition, Professor Velásquez' magisterial probing of the multiple meanings of self and other in Fight Club ("Where the Wild Things Are: Re-Creation, Re- and In-surrection in Chuck Palahniuk's Fight Club) has helped to shape the beginnings of this essay.

[2] Brad Epps signals the significant relationship between "masquerade" and ventriloquism in his 1992 article, "The Politics of Ventriloquism: Cava, Revolution and Sexual Discourse in Count Julian" (293). Epps defines ventriloquism thus: "Ventriloquism is an uncannily complex speech act. It refers, that is, to the slipperiness of reference, to the mystifying ability to take one thing for another, one's words for another's. Ventriloquism, in other words, is an act of speech that hides its sources and throws itself, disembodied, into the bodies of others" (292).

[3] In her article "Juan Goytisolo's Portable *Patria*: Staying on Home Ground Abroad," Abigail Lee Six addresses this imagery: "The same imagery of metamorphosis and reptilian skin-sloughing that is so powerful in the fiction also appears in the memoirs" (93).

[4] See Velásquez' discussion of multiple voices, fragmentation, and alienation in Fight Club.

[5] Several critics, among them Brad Epps, see the flow of the text and repetition in the text as a Derridean influence in Goytisolo. See, briefly, "The Politics of Ventriloquism" (279).

[6] Much of what I say about Count Julian can be related quite closely to the content and style of Palahniuk's Fight Club. This essay originates from a comparison of the two works.

[7] Estrella Cibreiro emphasizes the dual nature of Marks of Identity and the plural base of Reivindicación: "Alvaro se convierte y transforma en el Otro, lo cual implica que sólo a través del estudio de la otredad podremos llegar a su conciencia. Pero lo que en *Señas* constituía una dialéctica entre dos entidades bien delimitadas—el ser y el mundo (el Otro)—en Reivindicación se convierte

en un todo inseparable ya que ambos componentes aparecen indisolublemente ligados. Alvaro ES el Otro; su identidad es una combinación de todo ese pasado mítico-histórico que conforma su país, y su existencia se convierte en una lucha diaria contra los fantasmas y espectros de dicho pasado” (11).

[8] Lee Six distinguishes other shades of meaning for *patria* following a partial quotation from Goytisolo’s Reinos de Taifa: “When I renounced the underlying values of my former ‘engagé’ literature, I of course did so aware of belonging not to a weak or persecuted culture but to one as strong, vast, rich, and dynamic as the Castilian is with its double edge of Spain and Latin America. The act of detaching myself from oppressive, sterile marks of identity, opened the way to a plural literary space without frontiers: banned by Francoism, my books could find asylum in Mexico or Buenos Aires. Henceforth the language and only the language would be my real *patria* (Reinos de Taifa, pp. 71-72).’ But as this quotation highlights, the distinction between *patria*-equals-territory and *patria*-equals-language is far from clear-cut. The implication seems to be that the two definitions are causally linked: it is because Goytisolo lost interest in the country that he transferred his affection to the language and by extension, the literary tradition of his native country. Since he remained close to these through reading and writing, the danger of losing touch and then romanticizing the *patria* (construed as language) could not arise” (90).

[9] I use Helen Lane’s translation of Reivindicación del Conde don Julián for textual quotes given in English. In some few cases, I have kept the original Spanish in order to maintain the sense of the language that is so powerful in this novel.

[10] Griswold examines Smith on this point: “From Smith’s spectating standpoint in the philosophical critic’s balcony of the *theatrum mundi*, the (so to speak) non-natural nature of moral standards is inseparable from the fact that all of morality, and indeed all of the human ‘world,’ is a complex whole that we communally impose on ourselves” (146).

[11] Brad Epps has done substantial and important work on Goytisolo. I cite his examination of anarchy in Count Julian here: “As a result, the violence of Goytisolo’s text, ostensibly contained in an intricate masochistic and narcissistic cycle, can never be fully situated or represented within the narrative, but instead moves openly through the reader, as product and producer of ethics and epistemology, of ideology: ‘un desorden sin fin, una corrupción general, una epidemia fulmínea, devastadora’ (137). Anarchic, terroristic, hateful, and destructive, this text written under the sign of Sade paradoxically invokes a fusion more discursively furious, and perhaps for that reason more fast, than that of El cuarto de atrás. Through the shattered, hopelessly self-contained dialogic act of Conde Julián, there is an intimacy that ‘transcends’ the confines of the familiar and the homey, a frightening, ironic intimacy that ‘liberates’ the self in(to) revolution” (“Space” 78).

[12] Sobiesuo cites Leonilda Ambrozio, who “has perceptively noted that parody in its modern usage is intended to ridicule and destroy” (178-79). This is a fundamental technique in Goytisolo’s work.

[13] Of course, the recurrent imagery of male genitalia is, in itself, objectifying. Goytisolo deals with sex and gender by parodying stereotypes of both genders. Nevertheless, it is certainly the case that images of the female in Goytisolo are portrayed as powerless, weak, even repugnant, and images of the male are vital, strong, and desirable.

[14] Char Prieto’s 1997 article entitled “El complejo de Edipo: Elemento transgresor en Reivindicación del Conde don Julián” nuances effectively the relationship between *madre patria* and the Oedipal theme running through Count Julian.

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