

From Hermes to Cervantes: Rafael Dieste and the Real Marvels of the Republic

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España, mientras viva, se enfurecerá rompiendo a golpes—o a voces, con blasfemias—el concepto en que el barroco, el jesuita y el nacionalizador pretendan encerrarla.

Rafael Dieste (1983,130)

In 1930s Spain discussions about the genre of the novel and the role of Cervantes' *Don Quixote* in shaping Spain's understanding of its own identity as well as how the nation was perceived abroad, were the order of the day. This was understandable, given that the novel is not just *a* genre, but *the* modern genre whose invention, attributed to Cervantes, was seen as a literary achievement tantamount to the formulation of the postulates of individual consciousness in Descartes' philosophy. The irony that Spain, a nation long in decline and, arguably, in opposition to whose culture European modernity defined itself, should be the birth-place of the novel, was not lost on many young intellectuals, active supporters of the Second Republic, for whom the meaning of the Cervantine heritage was neither a purely intellectual question nor an occasion for melancholic evocation of Spain's past glories and its immutable essence, but an existential and political issue of the first order, related to the prospect of building a new Spain, both in words and deeds.

Some of these young Republican intellectuals, as was the case with María Zambrano, raised the question of the ambiguity of the novel in terms of its treatment of the relationship between idea and reality, thought and life, while others, like Antonio Sánchez Barbudo, found that the novelistic genre and Spanish history shared a common problem, that of the fictionalization of reality, its entrapment in a vast novelistic net. For Zambrano, who during and after the Civil War frequently turned to Cervantes in order to rethink Spain's past and the history of the Republic, the key to the novel, that which distinguishes it from other genres of literature, such as the epic or tragedy, as well as from philosophy, is the way in which the novel both promotes and undercuts the hero's aspirations to live and act following the dictates of his consciousness.¹ Unlike modern philosophy, which organizes the world according to its own rules, or the epic and tragedy, in which the hero emulates or defies gods, the novel makes the reader witness the process by which the protagonist's loftiest aspirations turn into mere stories and fabrications of his mind, into "novelería." And if Zambrano saw Spain's history in terms of the tension between Cervantes' original account of the conflict between world and individual consciousness and Don Quixote's "novelería", for Sánchez Barbudo, writing in 1935 and wishing for "[u]na España limpia, nueva," both Spanish history and the novel had tipped towards "novelería." He argued that the blurring of the border between fiction and reality, not just in literature, but in history, meant that Spanish reality itself was one gigantic novel that is lived, not written. In 1937, Zambrano herself warned that Spain faced the choice between building a new, more inclusive nation and remaining trapped in a vast

¹ Indispensable in this context is Jacques Lezra's reading of Zambrano's treatment of Dulcinea as a personification of the Republic, in the Epilogue to *Wild Materialism*.

collective fiction: “O aceptamos la herencia del pasado y la llamada del porvenir, que nos manda recoger el fruto de tanta desdicha y desastre de ayer y de tanta sangre de hoy para el mantenimiento de un Estado en que se revele la nueva convivencia humana, o nos quedamos todos en personajes de novela” (1937, 312).

A contemporary of Zambrano and Sánchez Barbudo, Galician writer Rafael Dieste stands out as the author of a substantial and still understudied body of literary work. Dieste was a prominent figure in the cultural initiatives of the Republican government, first as the director of the Misiones Pedagógicas’ “Teatro de guiñol” and, during the Civil War, as the director of the “Teatro español” and one of the founders of the journal *Hora de España*. *La vieja piel del mundo, Sobre el origen de la tragedia y la figura de la historia* (1936), a book-length essay whose first edition was almost completely destroyed in one of the aerial bombings of Madrid, maps Dieste’s intellectual, aesthetic and political concerns at that tragic crossroads of Spanish history.

Inspired by Dieste’s reading of Nietzsche’s *The Birth of Tragedy*, *La vieja piel* is much more than an exegesis of the German thinker’s text. It is a poetic and philosophical exploration of the relationship between myth and history that starts with the ancient Greeks and stretches all the way to the present of Dieste’s writing. As Manuel Altolaguirre observed in his review of the book, Dieste’s return to Nietzsche and Greek myth was far from being an exercise in erudition. On the contrary, the energy of Dieste’s thought came from “la desbordante necesidad de construir una tradición, de crear un nuevo sistema, de ser la piedra angular de una cultura” (1937, 58). In order to construct that new tradition, Dieste moves away from the Nietzschean duality of Apollonian and Dionysian principles and, in his account of the relationship between myth and history, focuses on the figure of Hermes. As a messenger-god Hermes stands for the dynamic, communicative and restless component of Greek culture. The counterpart to that restlessness, however, is the tendency to unify, gather and harmonize the universe through music, to which Hermes also contributed by accidentally inventing the lyre.

Dieste’s interpretation of Hermes, I will argue in this paper, reflects his ideas about the communicative and communal function of culture, particularly theater. At the same time, it also responds to his unease with the different attempts to unify history around a theory or an idea (class-struggle, progress), which offers a universal answer to questions regarding history’s direction or meaning. Embedded within Dieste’s reading of Hermes in *La vieja piel* are his preoccupations with building a new, Republican culture, as well as his distrust of the totalizing systems that stifle historical imagination and collective invention.

Altolaguirre notes the significance of Dieste’s examination of the origins of Greek myth, theater and music in the context of the Civil War, when the role of literature became, once again, “narrar y dialogar las hazañas de nuestros heroes” (59). But, as *La vieja piel* and *Nuevo retablo de las maravillas*, the two texts analyzed in this essay, make patently clear, the return to the tradition, be it Western or national, had to do with opening the horizon of the future. That is why Dieste’s Hermes moves between different periods and historical figures, reappearing under the guise of the Holy Spirit and the linguistic sign. His manifestation even jumps all the way to the pre-Civil War context of “Novela de los dos desnovelados,” a section of *La vieja piel* that revisits Cervantes’ novel through an allegory of the conflict between materialism and idealism, revolution and reaction. Finally, *Nuevo retablo de las maravillas*, written in the first months of the Civil

War, explores the three-dimensionality of the Cervantine retablo, opening it up to the arrival of a guest: the Republican army.

War and the Cervantine Heritage

In the midst of the Civil War, Dieste's approach to Spain's Cervantine heritage was linked to his critique of nationalism, and his bitter disagreement with the indifference of the European democracies towards a struggle for the future of the Continent that was playing itself out in Spain. Denouncing nationalist clichés and mystifications, Dieste argues that the inner reality of a nation is not a given, but rather depends on the process of communication through which the intangible aspects of a nation become visible and comprehensible: "La íntima realidad de cada pueblo [...] aspira a comunicarse, no a imponerse. [...] Se muestra a los ojos y al espíritu para ser entendido y entenderse. Es, así, un mensaje y un regalo." (115) Dieste argues that the spirit of a nation is not a doctrine that can be imposed—a reference to fascism and other conservative nationalisms—but a message that needs the presence of an Other to be communicated and received.

Therefore, the Civil War was not just a tragic drama of Spain that, divided within itself, was remaking its own history, but the occasion that revealed in a new light the significance of the nation's relationship to its Others: the internal Others, divided into friends and enemies; the European Other as a reminder of Spain's marginality, and, finally, death, not only as the Other of life, but also as what Dieste calls the "muerte fraterna," which can refer to the death of the brother, sister or fellow citizen, as well as to proximity (the brotherhood) with death itself (1983, 131). In a moment of utmost danger and uncertainty, the solidarity among those loyal to Republican Spain revealed itself not primarily at the level of language (words, slogans and the like) but through multiple signs: the concerted beating of the hearts—"Mide hoy los instantes nuestro corazón con lealtad imperturbable"(idem, 132),—the gaze that communicates a clarity of intention, or a kind of writing in which the artist withdraws so as to "dar libertad a las palabras para que vuelvan a las cosas" (156).² Dieste suggests that precisely when common risk and responsibility strengthen the bonds of loyalty and mutual dependence among combatants and citizens, Spain and its people, the language also abandons its self-sufficiency and its monopoly of signification, opening itself up to other non-verbal forms of communication.³ But, this flourishing of communal bonds and forms of communication makes patent what Dieste, in the title of one of his Civil War articles, called "la soledad de España."⁴ Precisely when Spain was creating, through words and deeds, "esa palabra que queremos decir," and aspiring to communicate a message on which its future depended, it encountered a deafening silence on the part of the official Europe (133).

² The last quote comes from Dieste's 1937 review of Antonio Sánchez Barbudo's collection of stories *Entre dos fuegos*. See 1983, 154-161.

³ Another example of Dieste's treatment of non-verbal communication and closeness to death comes from a 1937 article remembering the collective suicide in the port of Vigo of nine men and a woman, betrayed while attempting to flee to Buenos Aires hidden in a cargo-hold of a boat. Dieste refers to the "diafanidad absoluta" of the gaze that communicated their decision, and compares the ten shots fired with the ten stars in the darkness of the night. He wonders: "¿Cando foron mais irmans nove homes e unha muller?" (Alonso Montero, 132).

⁴ The full title is "Desde la soledad de España. Sobre la vida y el espíritu" (1983, 131-146).

That silence, which Dieste interpreted as a sign of Europe's lack of ideas and historical energy regarding its own future, also affected the issue of Spain's Cervantine heritage. Dieste encapsulated the difficult ambiguity of that heritage in a single sentence: "El quijotismo parece ser la forma de nuestra dignidad y la causa de nuestros desastres" (147). The image of *Don Quijote* as the foremost example of Spanish genius, "[imagen] tan orgánicamente concebida por los mejores hispanistas," one that depicts Spain as "un país radicalmente inmaduro, inepto para la vida práctica, genial a su manera, pero desconcertante, y condenado a perder siempre" (147). The notion of immaturity implies that, like Cervantes' hero, Spain is unfit for historical challenges, since it has not yet assimilated the lesson many drew from the novel: that ethical commitment and practical spirit, dignity and efficiency, are incompatible, at least in Spain. While problematizing the notion of Spain's immaturity—"Madurez, ¿para qué?" (148)—which depends on a pedagogical conception of history, Dieste also insists that Spaniards who are Cervantes' readers, perhaps even his heirs, are far from grasping the meaning of Don Quijote's farewell, Cervantes' last sign "que en él no es la última palabra" and that might contain a clue about the author's intentions (148). Dieste writes: "Grande es el llanto que se queda parado en los ojos viendo esa despedida. Parado, sin poder fluir, porque tendríamos que ser padres o hijos de Cervantes para poder llorarle así, reconciliadamente, con prodigalidad que fluye de los ojos, y aún no hemos alcanzado esa potencia de la paternidad" (148).

The uncertain status of Cervantes' legacy is exemplified by the meaning of his protagonist's final goodbye, which has not been assimilated by the writer's heirs/sons (the masculine nature of the lineage remains uncontested). They cannot acknowledge that inheritance by responding to Don Quixote's farewell with a non-verbal sign of their own: the gift of tears. Instead, Cervantes' heritage has been apportioned by academic professionals (Hispanists), or appropriated by someone like Unamuno who left the writer out of the picture and declared himself a father to Don Quixote. Against academic wheelers and dealers of Cervantes' message, or those who want to turn Don Quixote into their own spiritual son, Dieste admits the problematic nature of Spain's Cervantine heritage. I would argue that the status of that heritage is, for Dieste, wrapped up not only with the future of the Republican, democratic Spain, but also with the attempts at constructing a unified interpretation of history by determining its sense and direction. *La vieja piel del mundo* critiques all-encompassing schemes of historical development using poetic and narrative means, through a series of episodes that explore Hermes' ambiguous legacy in Greek culture and beyond, in Christianity and modern era.

Hermes, the Holy Spirit and the Sign: The Impossibility of Unifying History

The importance of Hermes for the overall argument of *La vieja piel del mundo* derives from a certain duality of his character, which becomes clear in light of his accidental invention of the lyre. On the one hand, Hermes is a divinity of speed and movement whose activity as a messenger is not guided by any purpose other than delivering a message—*any* message, good or bad—to its destination. On the other hand, his accidental invention of the four-stringed lyre, which Apollo transformed into a complete, seven-string version able to capture the music of the planets, achieved what Hermes on his own could not contemplate: the possibility of *unifying* space, gathering the

vastness of the universe in the harmonious vibration of chords, through which resonates what Dieste calls “el movimiento inmóvil de la música” (235).⁵

In the transition from the mythical to historical universe that Dieste traces in *La vieja piel*, the two aspects of Hermes’ character—his tireless movement from one point to the next, and his accidental invention of the instrument able to capture the totality of the universe—give rise to two different ways of unifying history: first, through the ever increasing circulation of goods, messages and values, and second, by positing an idea or meaning that purports to direct the flow of history, giving it form and direction. In that sense, we could speak of a pragmatist and idealist Hermes, the former concerned mainly with the relationship between origin and destination, means and end, cause and effect, and the latter with discovering a unifying principle able to order particular cases. However, rather than engaging explicitly with different ideologies and philosophies of history, Dieste’s book follows Hermes’ trace through two historical forms of negotiation between unity and plurality, circulation and stabilization of meaning: the Holy Spirit in Christianity, and the linguistic sign in the secular world. If it seems that in exploring Hermes’ legacy Dieste is looking backwards, it might be worth noting that the questions implicit in that exploration reflect the concerns of his time, related to the process of reshaping (Spanish) history and creating, but not imposing, unity on the political and cultural fronts. Implicit in the narrative of *La vieja piel*, are the following questions: can we speak of history as a system or universe, in the etymological sense of the word cosmos, which means order? If we can, what are the laws that govern it? If we cannot, how do we understand and shape history, how do we direct its flow? What connects multiple subjects and discrete points of the historical universe, and can their multiplicity give rise to some kind of unity?

In the chapter “En el nombre del hijo,” Hermes’ incessant movement is a feature of the Holy Spirit, suspended against the background of primordial darkness, representing both the nothingness that precedes the creation and the void following the dissolution of the Greek world: “Y andaba errabundo el espíritu, sin puntos de partida y de llegada” (251). Without a point of departure or arrival, without a task to get him going or destination to reach, the errant Spirit is a version of Hermes exiled from his universe. If Hermes’ identity comes from the activity of transmitting messages, unifying space through movement, then being outside the space that he could unify amounts to being outside himself. As if replicating that strange and unfamiliar situation, Dieste makes one of his multiple imaginative and verbal leaps, suggesting that it is precisely by being outside itself that the Spirit is able to find its inner essence, its reason to be: “[E]s el espíritu, el comunicador, el puro mensajero, el cual también acabó poniéndose fuera de sí para ser más unidad que nunca siendo sólo mensajero de sí mismo” (249).

This hermetic (no pun intended) sentence captures the similarity and difference between Hermes and the Holy Spirit, Greek and Christian culture. While Hermes’ movement depends on an external goal, the Spirit finds the reason of its movement in

⁵ Dieste’s narrative of Hermes’ invention of the lyre is rich in detail. The day the swift Hermes encountered a tortoise, its slowness left him unhinged. He, “enamorado del espacio,” was never bothered by immobility because it was an incitement to movement. But, the tortoise, “aquello,” that previously unseen thing, “era otra cosa... Aquello se movía lentamente” (235). Altered and infuriated by the image of slowness and patience, Hermes killed the tortoise and from its shell fabricated a four-stringed lyre whose spectrum of sounds introduced the messenger god to the peculiar nature of music, its “movimiento inmóvil e invisible”: “Aquello era hermosísimo. No se movía, pero movía el aire y conmovía” (235).

itself and, through that movement, creates its own outside (“poniéndose fuera de sí”), its own world. The Spirit, suggests Dieste, is not only the messenger (“puro mensajero”) but also the message (“mensajero de sí mismo”). Reminiscent of Hermes running between different points, the Spirit adopts the shape of the Word that moves between opposites in a frenzy of creation: from darkness to light, from affirmation to negation (love to despair) or vice versa (incredulity to faith). But, the frenzy of Spirit/Word that creates and names the world by naming the opposites also produces an unexpected result; the Spirit’s yearning for an Other, for a son: “Le entraron”, says Dieste of this new turn of the Spirit, “infinitos deseos—purísimos—de objetivarse, de tener un hijo para mandarlo a la escuela y verlo crecer”⁶ (252).

In the next step of Dieste’s argument, one indicating the passage between religious and human history, even the Holy Spirit loses its unifying function as it becomes internally (and infernally) divided between evil and good spirit(s). With the Spirit divided into good and evil, it is difficult to determine which one is speaking, where the message is coming from, to whom it is sent, and with what purpose. This is when, on its voyage through history, the Holy Spirit transforms itself into a linguistic sign. The instability of the sign, its radical dependence on interpretation introduces further turmoil into history, preventing it from unifying itself.

Dieste examines the passage of the Spirit into a sign in a parable-like short story, “Las llamas en el desierto.” The latter is inserted in the middle of the most Cervantine passage of the book, “Novela de los dos desnovelados,” which is itself a story inserted in *La vieja piel*. The parable presents a hermit living in a desert, whose inner world turns into a battleground between an evil and good spirit. The battle seems to take place in a moment that never passes “un eterno instante, pero vuelto contra sí”, turning the hermit’s world inside out and upside down, placing him in the midst of “un mundo terrible, burlón, danzarín, siniestro, que se agitaba cada vez más [...] [y que] era esférico también” (262). The hermit’s torment is symbolized by two viciously spinning words, two simple syllables—“sí” and “no” —that endlessly contradict each other until that contradiction starts multiplying, resembling “una serpiente de mil cabezas contradictorias. ¡No contra no! [...] en agitación creciente de clamores” (262). The only thing that could save the hermit would be a double affirmation, a “sí” confirmed by another “sí”, and not reversed by a “no”. The double “sí” finally comes when the hermit invokes the name of the Father, asking if he remembers his son. The father’s “sí” is followed by a question “¿[y] tú”, to which the hermit replies with the second “sí.” The parable ends with the hermit freed from the torment, perched on a tree, “en éxtasis, como el cuco [que] decía: Sí-sí...sí-sí...sí-sí” (263).⁷

⁶ It is important to note that Dieste’s account of the Trinity is not religiously motivated. His anti-clericalism is already evident in *La vieja piel*, where he mocks the conservatism of the Church comparing it to an “ideal tortoise” that aspires to slow everyone down, and it becomes particularly pronounced during the Civil War. In fact, at another point in the text, he voices his disagreement with the idea of “un dios ‘personal y autoritario’”, while celebrating Nietzsche’s eternal return as “la más esplendorosa y apasionada *teología* desde hace siglos” (223, emphasis in the original).

⁷ The epilogue to the battle between the good and bad spirits appears in the chapter “Doble del signo,” which contains a fictional account of the way in which the meaning of a sign depends on interpretation. The hermit’s incessant “sí-sí” attracts the attention of the villagers who start gathering around him and asking him questions which all receive the same affirmative answer. The authorities, jealous of the villagers’ affection for the hermit, and taking advantage of his affirmative answer to any question, including those

The cuckoo and its eternal repetition of a single syllable—very likely, a nod to Nietzsche’s eternal return—can be read as Dieste’s version of the Holy Trinity in the bird-kingdom. He speaks of “el eterno padre cuco” (261), indicating that the father cuckoo is immediately present in his progeny, without a mediator such as language, memory or tradition that the humans need in order to remember and acknowledge their forefathers. Moreover, the bond between the father and the son is announced in the unity of the word and the sound that reproduces the name of the father: a single syllable repeated and eternalized in its echo: cu-cu, cu-cu. [...] But, a father cuckoo needs a mother cuckoo, and she is known for hiding her eggs in other birds’ nests. So, while affirming the eternal presence of the father in the son, the sound/name “cuckoo” also speaks of needing the mother and the Other, another voice to repeat and echo a single syllable, another nest to hatch one’s own offspring.

It is precisely that need for the Other, in this case a friend, that Dieste explores in “Novela de los dos desnovelados,” his allegory of the conflict between idealism and materialism and their respective conceptions of history.

Cervantine Forebodings of Things to Come

“Novela de los dos desnovelados” is an allegorical narrative about the unraveling and tragic end of the friendship between two intellectuals who spent their formative years together, only to find themselves, in their maturity, defending mutually irreconcilable philosophical and ideological views: idealism against materialism.⁸ The title of Dieste’s “Novela” deliberately references the genre of the novel, and its plot draws on the polarity between *Don Quixote*’s two main characters, the knight imbued with lofty and unrealizable ideals, and his loyal companion who gets by using a good amount of self-interest, pragmatism and common sense. (Who is better than Sancho at pulling out of his sleeve a “refrán” or two--or ten--whenever he needs to prove his point?). At the same time, both the title and the plot indicate the divergence of Dieste’s piece from *Don Quixote*. Not only would a novel about the two “*desnovelados*” also have to be an un-novel, *desnovela*, but the dramatic nature of the conflict between two mutually exclusive philosophies represents a stark contrast to the confluence between Cervantes’ characters, which Salvador de Madariaga famously described in terms of “quijotización de Sancho y sanchificación de Don Quijote.”

with subversive intent, burn the hermit by setting his tree on fire. The remains of his carbonized bones, taken as mementos, over time became relics, which people use to say “no,” express their resistance to authorities.

⁸ In *Testigo de excepción*, Juan Chabás observes that in the context of literary history like Spanish, full of “[escritores] enfadados y solitarios,” the importance of camaraderie and friendship among young intellectuals in 1930s was a welcome novelty. This tendency to gather among a group of people with common interests, seemingly quite normal, signaled, in Chabás’ view, an important shift in sensibility and attitude towards literary production among the writers of his and Dieste’s generation: “Mas el pretexto ha sido siempre olvidado en la mesa para dar paso a la presencia de la cordialidad pura: la amistad por la amistad. [...] Esta falta de amistad y de compañerismo es casi típica de nuestra historia literaria: estamos llenos de enfadados y solitarios. Y, por primera vez, ahora, un abierto ademán de compañerismo. No el cacareo mutuo de alabanzas. [...] El elogio desmesurado y circunstancial es más bien prueba de falta de amistad: todo ditirambo desproporcionado ofende” (2011, 83). Given this, it is highly significant that Dieste’s text would focus on a conflict between friends.

The dominant paradigm of friendship since Aristotle, one that Derrida seeks to destabilize in *The Politics of Friendship*, is based on reciprocity and the disinterested bond between virtuous men who, by fostering each other's personal development, contribute to the health of the polis. This vision of friendship is turned upside down in the case of Dieste's characters who focus on mutual differences, so that the things they share, common memories and their status as "universitarios," only serve to deepen their real or perceived divergences. While defining themselves in opposition to each other, neither protagonist can experience himself independently of the other. The predicament of the two selves that are each other's opposites and, at the same time, irremediably drawn to each other certainly belongs to the agonistic universe of Unamuno's *Abel Sánchez* much more than Cervantes' world.

Already in its title, "Novela" playfully engages with the idea of doubling that points to divergence and separation. In the title, "Novela de los dos desnovelados," a one-syllable number, "dos," stands next to the prefix "des" (*dos desnovelados*), which both echoes and alters it, only to appear the second time, without alteration, in the title's final word, participle "desnovelados" that ends in "dos." Both in terms of the sound (matter), and in more abstract terms of the way in which Dieste's title names and frames this section of *La vieja piel*, "Novela" announces its condition as a piece that is inside and outside the generic model it references; a piece that is both repeated or doubled ("novelado" is something that is modeled according to the fictional pattern of a novel), and distrustful—*desconfiado*, *desnovelado*—of its connection with the name of the genre and its forefathers (Cervantes, Unamuno).

Although part of another work, "Novela" is framed as a piece with a beginning and end; it is divided in two chapters, with the same title, only distinguished by the words "empieza" and "concluye" in parenthesis. It is set within a larger text that it interrupts, while also being interrupted by it, given that Dieste inserts three other chapters between "Novela"'s beginning and end. One has to wonder—in the sense of "maravillarse" of which I will have more to say later—at the irony of applying the name given to the large prose genre *par excellence* to a narrative fragment found inside another prose work, while indicating with the words "begins" and "ends" the fictional unity of the story that is interrupted right in the middle. If we add to this that the three chapters inserted between the beginning and the end of "Novela", discussed in the previous section, address the issues of paternity, the Spirit as a bond between the Father and Son, together with the ambiguity of the linguistic sign, we can begin to glimpse the ways in which the verbal skin of *La vieja piel* folds and unfolds around "Novela," producing multiple textual layers.

"Novela"'s historical background concerns what Dieste years later described as "the conflicting conscience of youth before the Spanish Civil War" (qtd. in Irizarry, 163). The youth in question belongs to the author's own social milieu, new generations of intellectuals who came of age during the time of the Second Republic. This coming of age leads, in the case of the two protagonists, not to vital and intellectual maturity—let's not forget the issue of Spain's immaturity and Dieste's question "Madurez ¿para qué?"—but to a sense of disorientation, blockage and entrapment in history. Approaching the end of their "carrera"—a conspicuous term in the context of *La vieja piel*, because it not only designates years spent in pursuit of a university degree, but also alludes to Hermes' swift movement between points in space—the two friends find themselves defending rival conceptions of historical development. For the materialist, history is a concatenation of

concrete causes that produce determinate effects, while the idealist sees the movement of history as a process generated by the development of an idea with its own intrinsic logic. If materialism transfers Hermes' gift for connecting points of departure and arrival into the realm of laws that bind a cause to an effect, then idealism is a continuation of the Spirit's activity of creating the world according to the dynamic of the Word or idea that seeks to fulfill itself in reality, without ever fully succeeding.

Not only does a conflict between an idealist and a materialist recall Cervantine conflict of illusion and reality, but the two friends suffer, each in their own way, the quixotic malaise of blurring the border between life and fiction, the latter represented by the visions of history based on their respective philosophical methods. But, while Don Quixote resorts to fiction in order to break free from the dull day-to-day of an impoverished Castilian hidalgo, the attachment to ideas and methods they profess threatens to encircle Dieste's characters within the walls of their all too comfortable academic existence. The quixotic "salida" that takes place at dawn—a detail María Zambrano rightly emphasizes in her essays on Cervantes—turns here into what Zambrano in a different context calls "una encerrona" (*), an entrapment in history, which disappears as a living reality, becoming merely the object of their constant, fruitless and increasingly vehement debates.

Using a mixture of dialogue and monologue, Dieste shows the dead-ends of the approaches defended by both protagonists. For the materialist, history has an inherent directionality dictated by economic laws. That means that he views the goal he pursues—a radically different and just society—as a confirmation of an implacable rationality whose fulfillment does not add anything new to the logic of the process leading to it. For the idealist, the finality of history consists in realizing an abstract idea of society, made even more unreachable because of his fear that its realization would annul the idea as such, leaving him without a goal and, for that very reason, outside history.

Even while seeking the company of workers, "gentes que trabajaban y tienen muy buen apetito," Dieste's materialist finds himself lacking desire (apetito) to struggle for a goal whose importance is overshadowed by the rationality of the process, which leaves little room for imagination or even action (255). On the other hand, the idealist who, unconcerned with action, prefers to inhabit the realm of ideas, also loses what he needs the most: memory or sight of an idea that is stable, and yet, ideal enough to justify his contemplative calm, remaining as a distant goal that he does not need to accomplish immediately. In other words, both materialist and idealist lack the very thing that defines them: in the former's case, appetite for action necessary to bring about the future society, and in the latter, memory of an idea whose historicity would be unspoiled by the fact that it might be unrealizable. At the same time, they need, or rather, *fear* that they need that which defines the other. In the case of the materialist, a goal that would be open, unpredictable or "ideal" enough to awaken his desire to carry it out, and in that of the idealist, some sense of method or strategy that would give reality, substance or "matter" to his ideal, so that it does not slip away into the ether of phantasy.

The mixture of antagonism and mirroring between the two characters amounts to an increasingly agonistic and desperate, again less Cervantine and more Unamunian, predicament. They are at first amused, and then outraged by the philosophical and political distance between them, made more striking by the fact of their friendship. At

the same time, their increasingly bitter disagreements remain necessary to determine who they are in their own as well as the other's eyes. Dieste underscores the fusion between the friends' identity and the defense of their respective -isms by the fact that they lack names, figuring merely as protagonists of "un drama dialéctico entre dos personajes ya por completo inominados" (259). This impasse pushes the friendship towards its inevitable unraveling. The memory of the beginnings of their friendship appears from that point of no return not as an announcement of the future to come, but as the first act of a story whose purpose is lost and whose promise forgotten. Dieste refers to the common betrayal of that promise using a language that points, in a veiled but unmistakable way, to the remote dawn of Don Quixote's "salida": "Habían salido de casa muy temprano, hacía de esto la mitad de sus vidas, para una gran fiesta o una gran batalla, o simplemente para un gran sosiego... Sí, tenían historia, y mucha más historia de la que imaginaban [...]. Y la historia empezaba a ser la noche para ellos, no el alba como cuando salieron aquel día." (257) For the two protagonists, history is not a shared, common endeavor but a desert of loneliness in which each one, secluded within the walls of their thought, sees only the other's blindness and hears only the silence of his own reasoning.

The scene of the friends' parting is not, as happens in Cervantes, a farewell that lingers in memory, but a silent affair plagued with distrust: "Cada uno iba pensando lo mismo: 'Este no tiene en la cabeza más que grillos'" (274). The evening when they part ways with each other, the two characters also leave behind the company of their shadows, last flickering projections of their doubling: "[C]uando los primeros faroles contrarios a la luna los dejaron sin sombras, enviándolas a su espalda [...] estuvieron a punto de gemir, pero les pareció ridículo" (274).

The friends' common history ends in silence that drowns the storm of mutual accusations and name-calling ("anarquista...conformista...demagogo"), the cacophony of well-calculated attributes with which two nameless protagonists, in a cruel parody of the Spirit's passion for naming the world, attempt to depersonalize the Other, name his absence as a friend and companion.⁹ It is precisely where the friends depart, that the history of the period makes its entrance.

The final ending of the friendship--the death of the materialist, and, years later, of the idealist--can be read as a premonition of the Spanish Civil War and the Holocaust, told in the form of a story that combines several of the book's main narrative threads. Remarkably free of pathos, the ending is filled with mentions of skeletons, broken bones, fires of self-immolation and coldness of statues. It is the materialist who first strikes a mortal blow to the friendship, calling the idealist an excellent person who, unfortunately, lacks bones: "[E]res bueno, inteligente, ingenioso; pero te faltan huesos" (270). The materialist's comment symbolically empties the idealist of materiality, turning him into a mere shadow of an idea. Interpreting his lack of bones as a tantamount to his real and symbolic annihilation, the idealist comes up with the incendiary counter-argument. Materiality of the skeleton, he says, reflects the existence of racial and individual types. Skeleton, therefore, is not just a physiological reality, but both spiritual and empirical, more or less perfect expression of a given race. Pursuing the iron logic dictated by what Dieste calls "una especie de nacionalismo óseo, terco, pujante," and employing a

⁹ Not accidentally, the parable of the hermit that interrupts the "Novela" revolves around the sound "cu-cu," which, as discussed above, simultaneously names the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit that connects the two.

triumphant tone of someone who has finally found firm ground--a bone on which to prop his idea--the idealist concludes that, by ignoring the spiritual basis of history, materialism proves to be nothing but an expression of the spurious Jewish race: "Y lo que a ti te falta [...] es eso: raza. Estás descastado por el influjo disolvente de una raza sin patria." (270). If the diagnosis of the lack of bones serves as a dissolvent for the idealist, the latter's attempt at racializing the materialist pins him down as an example of Jewishness, a race devoid of "patria," which, lacking place in the hierarchy of races, seeks remedy for its homelessness in the defense of Marxism and materialism. In a desperate attempt to sever the ties that bind them to the other, the materialist and idealist become two sides of the same, false coin; one proclaiming the domain of matter over Spirit, the other reducing Spirit to the bone, a gesture that, as is known, leads to flames after which only the ashes of "raza descastada" remain.

In a violent closure of the stories of Hermes and Spirit, "La novela" portrays the friends accelerating their race ("carrera") to the bitter end; the point at which their past, shared memories and aspirations formed in the course of the other "carrera," one spent pursuing a degree and searching for their place in history, fade and cease to matter. While lacking "apetito," a vision of history that would not only dictate the end but could, like Hermes' messages or Don Quixote's loyalty to the spirit of chivalry, set him on his way and keep him going, the materialist still manages to rush to his own end, which comes when he is killed in clashes with the forces of order; "[le] dieron los guardias un sablazo mortal" (275). For the idealist, the "sablazo mortal" and the friend's severed body consummate the triumph of materialist conception of history, burdening him with the desire for impossible revenge. A pale copy of the Spirit that connects the word and world, memory and hope, he spends the rest of his life secluded within the University walls, spreading his word among students from which not only age separates him, but also his madness, the all-consuming obsession that, like the absence of a friend, leaves nothing behind but the residue of long forgotten memories on his "faz ausente" (idem). Having spent his youth chasing the tail of an eternally valid idea of history, in his old age, the idealist becomes a figure emptied of life and idea, embodiment of what Dieste elsewhere describes as "un cadáver vivo...un simulacro real...[una] teatralidad deshabitada" (1983,135).

In keeping with the reference to the theater, the idealist's final words are spoken from the edge of his podium (estrado), but also from the border of death that takes place before the audience of students who, amazed and disconcerted—*maravillados*— "no supieron decir si para hablar movió los labios el inmóvil" (275). His last monologue closes the circle of a story within a story, that of his life and of "La novela," suffusing his last breath(s) with a winding, serpentine thread of fiction that is almost impossible to follow. "Yo tenía una idea," he starts, and continues with two propositions, one of which speaks of the disappearance of memory, while the other announces its return: "Ya no recuerdo nada. Yo tenía un amigo y lo veo volver en una inmensa nave hueca y alegre." (275) The memory of a lost friend who returns is combined with a story of Jupiter, the all-powerful but just father with "cara de viejo terrible" (275).¹⁰

¹⁰ Old fathers or sons who renege on their fathers appear frequently in Dieste's literature. The best example of this is the immensely rich play *Viaje y fin del don Frontán*, which, like *Nuevo retablo de maravillas*, uses the meta-theatrical element of retablo, a play within play. Dieste's own father was approaching old age at the time of author's birth.

The figure of old man, a combination of Jupiter and the returning friend, is a personification of loyalty--“Porque el Viejo es leal”—a virtue markedly absent from the friendship between the protagonists of “Novela” whose urge to destroy the other is a result of their loyalty to an abstract idea. (275) The loyal old man, on the other hand, is a figure of friendship that withstands the test of time and accompanies the transit between different stages in life. At the last stage of his life, the idealist appears as a tragi-comical, rather than a venerable old man, the survivor of a friendship that, without reaching maturity, was burned at the altar of history. In the end, he desires the return of the friend, Jupiter, the old man, the maker of storms: “Quiero verle después de la tormenta” (275).

That border-line experience of imminent death as the moment of utmost proximity to the Other (old loyal friend, death itself) resembles the “muerte fraterna,” of which Dieste spoke in his Civil War articles, describing the bonds of loyalty and companionship formed at the border between life and death. But, while death in Republican Spain lacks the finality of an ending— “Apenas quedan ya cadáveres en nuestra España,” writes Dieste in “Desde la soledad de España” (1983, 132)—the idealist, at the end of “La novela,” becomes the very emblem of death, “la estatua fría de su muerte.” (276)

The story of two friends and the battle between idealism and materialism feeds into the age-old separation between idea and matter, life and Spirit. In the political realm, writes Dieste during the Civil War, the ramifications of the division between spiritual and material conditions of existence translate into an all-too-real hierarchy between two social classes, “los que trabajan para vivir y los que se interesan por las cosas objetivamente, es decir, espiritualmente; llegando luego [...] a convertir los intereses del espíritu en intereses de clase” (1983, 139). But, where the two friends fail to recognize the connection between the material demands of existence and the need for a long-term ideal goal, Dieste, who in 1937 writes a new version of Cervantes’ “El retablo de maravillas,” sees the social revolution and the transformation of the artistic sphere as inextricably linked. It is Dieste’s development of the architecture of the Cervantine retablo that opens up a space for the encounter between the demands of social justice and hunger for the marvel of freely created collective existence.

Two Retablos and their Marvels

Cervantes’ “Retablo de maravillas” questions the power of theatrical and social appearances by way of the meta-fictional structure of a play within play. In an unnamed village, the night before the wedding of the mayor’s daughter, a troupe of artists on their way to Madrid, sets out to entertain the authorities with the spectacle of their marvelous “retablo,” a theatrical artifice whose novelty consists in being visible only to the spectators who are old Christians, untainted by Jewish blood in their veins, and born out of legal marriages. Honor, the intangible property ascribed to old Christians simply by virtue of being who they are, and one whose shadow hovers over all Spanish baroque theater, is invoked by the tautological formula with which Chirinos, a member of the troupe, greets the governor upon their arrival: “Honrados días viva vuesa merced, que así nos honra. En fin, la encina da bellotas; el pero, peras; la parra, uvas; y el honrado, honra, sin poder hacer otra cosa” (2012, 89). Although the humble origins of the villagers made them less suspicious of converso lineage, the zeal with which they embrace the novelty of

the retablo shows that they don't just *give* what is *given* to them as their intrinsic nature, but rather *give themselves over* to the tantalizing presence of the unheard of and, in more than one sense, unseen novelty. Before the empty retablo, occupied only by the figures that the artists' words conjure up, the spectators offer not only their hearts but their entire body-- their orifices, skin, hair, movements of their dance-- to the task of performing, making real the intangible substance of their origins.

The spectator's participation in Cervantes' marvelous retablo is not just another example of baroque aesthetic orthodoxy according to which reality is *like* theater in which we all, more or less enthusiastically, play the roles we were assigned, give what we were given. Rafael Dieste addresses the distance between Cervantes' 'Retablo de Maese Pedro' and the baroque retablo of Calderón, in his 1935 essay "Sobre teatro en cine," devoted to the relationship between theater and other arts: poetry, sculpture, architecture and film. Commenting on the link between ideology and the visual architectonics of theater in Calderón's religious plays, Dieste speaks of "el retablo, duro, litúrgico y barroco, de un drama sacramental de Calderón, con hileras de cirios ardiendo, y mil destellos de oro y plata, caminos hacia un vértice dogmático" (1935, 52). Dieste distinguishes between the "dogmatic vertex" of Calderón's plays—"ese vértice inmóvil e intangible que sólo ordena perspectivas alegóricas"—and the emancipatory potential of the sculptural or architectonic form of theatre found in the works of Shakespeare and Cervantes (*idem*).¹¹

The architectural quality of the "Retablo de Maese Pedro" episode from *Don Quixote* consists in challenging the separation between theater and reality, while revealing their common participatory, communicative dimension. Don Quixote's invasion of the fictional space of Maese Pedro's puppet theater, his transgression of the divide that separates worlds of reality and fiction brings to life the participatory nature of art that, in turn, expands the contours of reality. The "anhelo invasor" that drives Don Quixote's action is, for Dieste, a form of generosity—"generoso anhelo de intervenir en la intriga"—an outpouring of participatory energy, an excess of life that enlivens artistic form and prevents it from remaining enclosed within its limits. (1935, 53)

The generosity entailed in invading the space of fiction is a two way process; it not only concerns the way in which we experience art, but also how we inhabit the world. Dieste says that for the "anhelo invasor," there is no such thing as a flat, two-dimensional, painting: "Para el anhelo invasor no hay pintura plana" (53). In other words, by sheer force of his volition, without needing permission or reason, Quixote disturbs the surface of the painting and, by doing so, expands it and deepens it into a three-dimensional space. It is, as we know, logically impossible to invade the space of a painting or novel, but out of that impossibility, "ese maravilloso querer y no poder," arises a new form of power;

¹¹ The sculptural quality of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is, for Dieste, a product of tension and equilibrium between two dimensions of theatrical phenomenon: the dramatic conflict, and the intellectual and sensory participation of the audience that bears witness to it. Hamlet's suffering undermines the character's sense of his own reality, suspending him in a void filled with doubt and uncertainty: "una inmensa oquedad [...], un gran espacio interior, con muros de mutismo, incertidumbre, falsía impenetrable" (1953, 52). Shakespeare's audience partakes in the three-dimensional, sculptural nature of the play by, as it were, *reading* the drama *in space*: perceiving with their mind's eye the contours of Hamlet's dilemma, while hearing the echo of his thoughts and touching the transparent, invisible wall of doubt that surrounds the protagonist and exposes him to the counter-force, "las fuerzas impetuosas" of other characters' actions.

the power of moving back and forth between art and world, of defying the separation between the inside and outside, the realms of reason and imagination, and seeing both art and reality as capable of being expanded by our participatory consciousness that enlivens the world(s) we inhabit (53).¹²

Dieste's remarks on Don Quixote's generous impulse of invading Maese Pedro's puppet theater resonate strongly with the way in which reality and theater invade and penetrate each other in Cervantes' "Retablo de maravillas." That invasion operates at several levels, beginning with the fact that the spectacle takes place in the private space of the mayor's home, in order to protect the retablo from the intrusive gazes of other villagers and keep its novelty intact for the public presentation next day. In light of Dieste's reading of Quixote's "anhelo invasor," we can see the unfolding story of the marvelous retablo as an opening up to each other of the theater, the home that houses it, and the spectators that engage with the spectacle. In that sense, the marvel is not so much what occurs on the stage, which is almost nothing, but this mutual opening up, which brings the theater and the reality together, allowing for permeation of spaces to occur. In other words, the entry of the marvelous retablo, would not be the related one of permitting the entry, letting in. Throughout the spectacle, the audience is in turn assailed by Samson, bulls, multicolored rats, the waters of the river Jordan and seductive Jewish dancer. As the spectators give themselves over to the spectacle, together with the actions of opening and shutting their eyes or exposing or hiding their orifices (anus, genitalia), they also enact a (re)inscription and transgression of multiple borders that delineate and protect bodily surfaces, family lineages, limits of verisimilitude or, even, faith.¹³

Towards the end of the "Retablo," the spectacle is interrupted by the appearance of a royal emissary who announces the imminent arrival of the King's army, which the villagers are obliged to host in their homes. Rather than offering hospitality to the troops, the villagers act as if the arrival of the emissary were a part of the play and insist that the unwanted guest be made to disappear from the retablo. Caught in the participatory frenzy of the play in which they are both actors and spectators, they decide that, in order to get rid of the emissary, they first need to bring him into the spectacle of which his arrival is a part. To lure him in, they ask for the return of the seductive Jewish dancer, Herodías, whose first appearance left them wondering how a Jewess can appear in the spectacle intended to be invisible to those with Jewish blood. Chanfalla's laconic answer to this query, "[t]odas las reglas tienen excepción", finds in the interplay of exceptionality and rule the marvel the criterion for emissary's inclusion as well as exclusion. (99)

The emissary's inclusion in the retablo would attest to the exceptionality of the marvel; the fact that his appearance, like that of the Jewish dancer, is simply a result of the wise Tontonelo's whim. On the other hand, if the emissary denies the reality of the retablo and his presence in it, this would confirm not the exception but the rule that only old Christians can see the events on the stage, thereby implying that the emissary might, in fact, not belong to the cast of old Christians. The cries with which the spectators voice

¹² In another passage of this essay, Dieste wonders whether it is possible to think of something like "arquitectura inhabitable," and if such notion would automatically invoke the notion of "política inhabitable." Although "Teatro en cine" does not elaborate on "política inhabitable," in "Soledad de España" he speaks of dark forces that burst onto the European political stage in the 1930s in terms of "teatralidad deshabitada," a lifeless mimicry of theatricality (1983, 135).

¹³ Teresa Repolla affirms in one passage of the play: "¡Tan cierto tuviera yo el Cielo como tengo cierto ver todo aquello que el retablo mostrare!" (94).

their suspicion of the emissary's converso origins—*De ex illis es, de ex illis es*—unleash a bitter fight between the villagers and their unwanted guest, leading to entremés' finale: Chirinos' proclamation of the triumph of the retablo's illusion—"nosotros mismos podemos cantar el triunfo desta batalla"—and his announcement of the next day's performance (101) Chirinos' announcement extends the spectacle to the next day, potentially also to a day after that, and so on into an indefinite future that depends on the self-perpetuating structure of the retablo's marvel, based on the interplay of visibility and invisibility, rule and exception, inclusion and exclusion.

The case is quite different with Dieste's "Nuevo retablo de las maravillas." In keeping with the reference to novelty from its title, Dieste's entremés does not end with the intimation of the infinite repetition of the same, but celebrates the arrival of the new; a new art—"El arte empieza de nuevo" announces one of the characters at the end of the play—and a new era that will surmount the gap between theater and life, creative fantasy and collective production of reality" (93). The new art cannot reside in the future whose self-perpetuating structure resembles that of Hegel's bad infinite, but rather depends on the arrival of a specific event: the victory of the Republic that will arrive through the expansion of the republican loyalty in space (territory) and time (common future). Rather than announcing retablo's victory, Dieste's play ends with a promise of the republican victory and, with it, the arrival of the future.

"Nuevo retablo de las maravillas" opens with a scene of the encounter between travelling artists and peasants performing tedious manual labor, in the first months of the Civil War. At first, the encounter is marked by mutual distrust, but after each side recognizes the signs of others' loyalty to the Republic, the scene turns into a conversation about the future that will unite those who work with their hands (laborers) and those who live by fabricating graceful illusions (performers). The presence of the Civil War announces itself in the difficulty the two sides have with exchanging greetings, the first and often the only thing one offers when encountering the other, whose additional function in the war was to denote political alliances.

Upon their arrival, the artists introduce themselves to peasants as those who lie for living ("[t]enemos que mentir para vivir"), and proceed to enumerate the skills--acróbatas, habladores, músicos--with which they create their appealing lies, weightless sculptures made of words, sounds and movement. (76) As Fantasio puts it: "Artistas o botarates, como ustedes gustan. Todo pierde peso y hace volatines con nuestros juegos y con mis palabras" (76). The reference to lightness in that lighthearted enumeration of their multiple gifts reappears in Mónica's quite ambiguous statement "no tenemos más fuerza que una pluma al caer," which can either refer to the lightness of phantasy and subtle power of art, or to weakness coming from an empty stomach (76). The peasants clearly grasp the ambiguity contained in the artists' words, so that, when Fantasio finally decides to broach the topic of greeting—"Con franqueza, hermanos, ¿cómo saludáis aquí?"—his question is not answered directly. Instead, it is caught in midair and turned into a reflection on the subtle grace of artful lies and reality of hunger. "Si vuestro oficio", says one of the peasants, "es de fantasía para ganar el pan, ojalá me sobrara del mío para daros y que me hiciérais ver visiones con gracia bien alimentada." (76).

The peasant's answer to Fantasio's question points to a system of exchange based not on the traffic in goods or verbal formulas but on responding to the needs of the other. Whatever the nature of those needs, be it hunger for food or for delightful "visiones,"

they will be met not just by filling one's eyes and stomach, but by producing "visiones" and bread in order to offer them to the other. In responding to Fantasio's question, the peasant is not just greeting the artists, but also welcoming the future in which the purpose of beautiful images will not be to hide or muffle the voice of hunger, and in which the product of one's labor will not disappear leaving behind half-full stomachs and empty hands. Just as phantasy does not grow from an empty stomach—"Si vuestro oficio es de fantasia para ganar el pan"—hand is not just an instrument of labor but also a conduit for offering: "[O]jalá me sobrase del mío para daros."

The encounter between peasants and artists that announces a promise of the future capable of responding to hungers of body and imagination, undoubtedly draws some of its inspiration from Dieste's work with "Misiones Pedagógicas," whose mission was to enable and produce the "marvel" of communication between different social classes, city and rural areas, art and reality.¹⁴ In "Nuevo retablo," the marvel of communication is interrupted by the arrival of nationalist authorities, whose presence forces the peasants' departure—"No conviene que nos vean con forasteros"—and sets the stage for the performance of a new version of the Cervantine retablo which, this time around, functions as an instrument for testing ideological, rather than religious and racial purity (77). As Fantasio informs the authorities, the retablo's marvel consists in remaining invisible to those who are contaminated with the virus of Marxism.

But, unlike Cervantes' audience who opens itself up to the arrival of the retablo and not only enters but also expands it to include the emissary and the royal army, the nationalist authorities and their acolytes who participate in the spectacle put up by Mónica, Chirinos and Rabelín's, do so without stepping outside their established roles based on the traffic of privileges and symbols of power. Not only do they instrumentalize vision by subjecting it to license from authority—the bishop repeatedly warns against seeing without his permit—or by pointing out that they don't see well without glasses. They also place words under the lens of grammatical purity, something Fantasio exploits when he convinces them of the existence of the word "hisopado" by quoting its presumed etymology "[d]e hisopus, hisopo, hisopar, hisopancia y todos los derivados" (79). As the spectacle evolves through a succession of marvels, which, aside from those existing in Cervantes (bull), include some new ones (arrival of Franco's German and Moroccan allies, frustrated attack of republican forces), what sharpens the spectators' sight is keeping their eyes on the prize: the imminent conquest of Madrid and nationalist victory in the war.

In a 1975 letter to María Zambrano, Rafael Dieste spoke of the nationalist idea of the Civil War as a path to achieving celestial glory— "'del otro lado' todos irían al cielo, y pregonaban su Guerra, no como santa—para no parecerse demasiado a los moros--, pero sí como Cruzada" (1983, 68)—but in *Nuevo Retablo* the path of war leads to earthly spoils of victory: government positions, marriages of convenience, state recognition of the Church power. In preparation for that final act, the characters move through the retablo following a simple calculus of known variables. The "señoritos" keep their bravery safe behind the protective barrier of reputation and tradition: "La tradición es ver los toros desde la barrera" (84). Generals act heroically only as last recourse and just

¹⁴ The chapter devoted to "Misiones Pedagógicas" in Jordana Mendelson's *Documenting Spain* analyzes the composition of Val del Omar's photographic testimony of the "Misiones" and the facial expressions of marvel. See also Manuel Aznar Soler's introduction to Dieste's *Teatro*.

when their prestige is on line. Young women look for advantageous marriages, and marchioness parades around with a local priest whom she has just proclaimed a bishop with the help of a paper mitre.

At the pinnacle of the retablo's spectacle, as the characters surrender to the rhythms of the waltz in celebration of their victory, Dieste inserts a lengthy stage-direction indicating that at that very point "Mónica y Fantasio se apartan un poco y contemplan la farsa con cierta melancolía, aunque Fantasio, por costumbre, hace juegos de manos" (91). The melancholy with which the artists observe the spectacle they have created reflects, in part, what Dieste in an essay on Valle-Inclán describes as the author's responsibility for the creatures of their own fantasy, Cervantine *hijos de su ingenio*, whom Mónica and Fantasio can neither wholly condemn or redeem. At the same time, Mónica and Fantasio's melancholy is the sadness of a puppeteer observing the characters whose roles will be thrown in disarray only a few instants, few lines below, when everything flies up in the air, if not due to Don Quixote's generous invasion, then because of the entry of the peasants announcing the arrival of thousands of *milicianos* who are about to storm in. Even more important than who arrives is the fact that the arrival will change the rules of the game, if not the game itself. In that sense, the artists' melancholy also consists in bidding farewell to the game of retablo, just as the game is becoming utterly real, and utterly different/other.

In that other game that starts at the end of retablo there is no room for Fantasio's inventions, because the inventions develop in the space that separates art and reality, and that space has been cleared—purified, as Dieste puts it—by the arrival of the uncharted continent of reality that calls for a new art: "La tierra está purificada. El arte empieza de nuevo. Renuncio a mis invenciones. Sólo sé danzar" (93). Just as the peasants and entertainers dance and spin to the inaudible music of solidarity, Dieste ends the play with another welcome, this time to the young trumpet player who asks to be allowed to join the Republican forces, and who celebrates his acceptance with a frenzy of enthusiasm: "¡No se me pueden parar las piernas de alegría! ¡No puedo detenerme!" (94).

In a brief essay entitled "Don Quixote: Bewitchment and Hunger," Emmanuel Levinas writes: "Perhaps there is no deafness that allows me to hide from the voice of the afflicted and the needy, a voice that in this sense would be disenchantment itself. Such a voice would lead to another secularization, whose agent would be the humility of hunger. A secularization of the world effected by the deprivation of hunger, which would signify a transcendence beginning not as a first cause but in man's corporeality" (169). It is that secular marvel of hearing the voice of the hunger and responding to it by welcoming the other into the community of those that dance to the sound of solidarity that marks the end of Dieste's version of Cervantes' play.

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