

"Our Worldly Work Supplies Us": "Vulgarizing" Heidegger Through Argentinean Literature

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Against the background of Gayatri Spivak's concept of "worlding," this article stages four encounters between a major representative of Argentinean literature (Echeverría, Sarmiento, Borges, Cortázar) and a specific figuration of the "Other" (Nomad, Oriental, Hyperborean, Monster). It is argued that the target texts, all belonging to the "mainstream" of the Argentinean tradition, achieve their literary effect in a surprisingly invariable manner. Whereas the foundational fictions of Echeverría and Sarmiento seem to solicit a Spivakian reading, the works of Borges and Cortázar are commonly situated well beyond worldly concerns, in a context of postmodern, fantastic, subversive textual practices. However, when they are considered against the background of a national literature grounded on the politics of "worlding," traditional ideological schemes shine through the more sophisticated textual surfaces of these modern masters. Finally, the question is raised whether Cortázar's liminal unmasking of his own life-long fascination with monstrous otherness could be seen as a successful displacement of the traditional paradigm, or whether it amounts to yet another example of ideological aestheticizations of the "Other."

1. Down to earth? (Groundworks)

In a footnote to her essay "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism," Gayatri Spivak characterizes her notion of the "worlding of a world" as "a vulgarization of Martin Heidegger's idea" (279).¹ But

1. "Das Welten von Welt" is a phrase that recurs throughout Heidegger's work to account for the originary event of making present: "The world presences by worlding" (*Poetry* 179-180). But worlding as the presencing of being tends towards oblivion, in man's

why would anyone think of "vulgarizing" Heidegger? As far as I can tell, Spivak has never subjected her appropriation of Heidegger's idea to a systematic discussion. Rather, she *uses* it for practical purposes, investing it with both anthropological and empirical concerns. Thus the "worlding of a world" no longer refers to poetical dwelling but to colonialism and imperialism. And not only that; Spivak also relates Heidegger's idea to textuality as theoretical territorialization.² When the world worlds, for Spivak this does not primarily occur as an appropriation or "Ereignis" of Being, but in a geopolitical space where one world appropriates an "other" as if the latter had not already been appropriated by its own inhabitants. In order for such a non-ontological appropriation to take place, the territory must first be wiped clean of every trace of otherness so that it may appear as a precultural soil; which also means that the "Other" must be reduced to a malleable material for the inscription of a "New World."

As my title indicates, the trajectory to be crossed is that of "Argentinean literature," without any particularities, pure and simple. To some degree this "singularity" might be a warranted imposition, since what I review is precisely the "mainstream" - to use the term in Georg Brandes' now obsolete "neutral" meaning - which has contributed in a crucial way to the formation of a national literature in this area. Now, this is a tradition in which the workings of "worlding" have been particularly visible. Across the centuries, its vast national territory has been cast as the very emblem of an empty, unwritten surface. What should be noted, however, is the considerable difference between the Argentinean cultural scene and the postcolonial remnants of the British Empire, as regards the "geography" of the nation scene as well as its distribution of subject positions. What we have here is a situation in which the aboriginal native is demonized to such an extent that

practical dealings with it as well as in his metaphysical inquiries into its nature. Here the work (of art) intervenes as a kind of re-minder or interruptor: it sets up a world which does not disappear into utility or reflection. Something *happens* through the work (of art); it uproots and moves man from the givenness of his immediate surroundings and into something else, which is why the work is intimately related to man's destiny as an historical being. In this latter aspect, Heidegger's own conception of worlding is probably as close as it gets to Spivak's transumptive deployment.

2. "As far as I understand it," Spivak says, "the notion of textuality should be related to the notion of the worlding of a world on a supposedly un-inscribed territory. When I say this, I am thinking basically about the imperialist project, which had to assume that the earth that it territorialised was in fact previously un-inscribed. So then a world, on a simple level of cartography, inscribed what was presumed to be un-inscribed. Now this worlding is also a texting, a textualising, a making into art, a making into an object to be understood" (*Post-Colonial 1*).

he has come to entirely occupy the position of radical otherness. Most definitely, this is a subaltern who cannot speak; a figure to be driven out or extinguished through regular warfare. For nationalist purposes, the "autochthonous" native was supplanted by the (white or *mestizo*) gaucho - represented as a figure of the past, doomed to disappear by the advance of culture and industrialization. Thus, the at once lamenting, melancholy, and patriotic tone of his song (from gaucho lore through tango) has come to function as a kind of ideological screen by which the aboriginal "Other" is rendered invisible.

The following sections have been arranged into four encounters between a major representative of "Argentinean literature" (Echeverría, Sarmiento, Borges, Cortázar) and a specific figuration of the "Other" (Nomad, Oriental, Hyperborean, Monster). In this way, I hope to be able to chart some of the differential features that underlie, or frame, the construction of Argentina's cultural canon - without losing sight of the particularly literary aspects of these "worlding" enterprises. By using such optics, I hope to show that the major *oeuvres* on which I focus achieve their "literary" effect in a surprisingly invariable manner - troping on a relatively fixed set of rhetorical and ideological figures. Does this also go for the work of Borges and Cortázar, often invoked as ideologically subversive and poetically transgressive? I'm not denying altogether the subversive aspects of their writing. Still, by placing them in a national, worldly context I intend to foreground their indebtedness to the ideological schemes that "invented" the Argentinean Republic and its literary culture(s). In my view, this is precisely the aspect that has been missing from the focus on their writerly transgressions which has dominated the reception of their work during the last decades, at least in a European and Anglo-American context.

2. Echeverría and the Nomads

The idea of a literary *oeuvre* radicated in the earth of the nation scene is paradigmatically expressed by Esteban Echeverría in the "Preface" to his collection of poems, *Rimas* [Rhymes] (1837): "The Desert is our fattest patrimony, and we should put all our efforts in extracting from its bosom, not only the resources that ensure our growing and material wealth, but also poetry to secure our moral well being and foster our national literature" (*Cautiva* 117).³ Although Echeverría's *analogon* may strike us as profoundly unpoetic, its curious combination of pure mercantilism with poetic meaning

3. All translations from Spanish are my own, except where otherwise indicated.

is revealing. It recalls, on the one hand, the many ways in which the *work* is traversed by worldly regards, both etymologically and through conceptual investments in philosophical discourse. At the same time, the somewhat unrefined (and "underdeveloped") metaphor suggests an intimate relationship between technological productivity and life-giving, "pro-ductive" earth - as if the work of art had already entered the age of its mechanical reproduction.

Rima's most extensive poem, "La cautiva" [The Captive], seems to put this metaphor to work. Here Echeverría uses the desert-like, ocean-wide Pampas as a scene for a captivity narrative. As the desert "learns" about the love and suffering of an heroic *criollo* couple, it is transformed, domesticated; in the end, it is virtually "inseminated" with their chaste bodies and thus "pregnant" with future ("zukunftsträchtig," as Peter Szondi would say). One day, the poet says in an apostrophe, somebody might return and ask of it the beloved treasure "deposited" in its bosom, in order to work an eternal monument of words (209). And, in the "Epilogue," the earth actually seems to have yielded the first signs of this monumental future. "Today," towering on a hill, a "solitary cross" can be seen, sheltered by the rich foliage of an "ombú" (220-221).⁴ A leaf-sheltered cross - this rustic temple inscribes a crucial difference on the open surface of the Argentinean plains, organizing the wilderness into a world.

Echeverría's work commences the "worlding" of the Argentinean soil as a vast unwritten surface upon which the text of a newborn civilization can be inscribed. It is all ready-at-hand, a standing reserve unfurled before the gaze of the reader, waiting for the inevitable advent of technology - that is, of industrialized modes of production and of *writing*. Echeverría's "worlding" seems to presuppose writing and difference as the inscription of visible signs of belonging. And this is perhaps why the "indios pampas" (a nomadic, un-settled people) are so easily foreclosed from the nationalized territory. In "La cautiva," the Indians appear as if from nowhere, only to disappear the next moment. They do not trace any permanent territorializing script. *If* they belong to the Argentinean territory, they do so in an all-too-explicit manner, as creatures "born" directly from an essentially brutish and barbarian soil. Nomadism is a sign of an "un-worlded" world, or a non-world, which

4. In an author's footnote, Echeverría explains that the ombú is a sturdy and solitary tree on the Argentinean plains - clearly reminiscent of Arabian palms - which doesn't yield neither fruit nor firewood, "but indeed a cool and welcome shadow during summer's burning heat" (221).

the inhabitants do not properly inhabit. They do not really dwell - they are nomadic exiles wherever they erringly go.

Echeverría himself ended his days as an exile on the "oriental shore" - in Montevideo, Uruguay. He then appeared as the spectral afterlife of the man who was forced to abandon his native soil - a man whose every effort was bent towards the reconstruction of a desolated *patria*. In Sarmiento's suggestive metaphor, Echeverría becomes "the cry of a mind stamped on by the horses on the Pampas, the scream of one who, on foot and all alone, finds himself surrounded by savage cattle roaring and digging up the earth all around him, and showing him their sharp horns" (*Viajes* 45). Nomadism and exile, two ways of being "off" the earth: always on the move, a step beyond every "place" on earth; violently projected, bound to exchange the soil of one's birth or election for a forced *exilium*. Vulgarly speaking, together they constitute pre and postcolonial being. Or two versions of posthumous existence.⁵

3. Sarmiento and the Orientals

At the elusive center of the fifty-odd volumes of Domingo F. Sarmiento's collected works lurks another specter: that of Facundo Quiroga. Facundo is the "protagonist" of the essayistic-novelistic biography originally titled *Civilización i barbarie* [Civilization and Barbarism], a work which occupies a decisive position in the making of Argentinean literature. In what ways does it contribute to the "worlding" enterprise initiated by Echeverría?

Facundo appears as a synecdoche of a much more encompassing figure, namely the vast territory of Argentina. In Sarmiento's version, its land's infinite extension and ideal conditions for all kinds of pasture allow the rustic populace to live off it without much need of coordinating their activities - and this is the reason why there is virtually no "res publica" in the Argentinean Republic (*Facundo* 71). Thus "nature" may freely work through the human material at its disposal, producing the typical characters of Argentinean rural tradition. The one who rises above and dominates these creatures is the *caudillo*, the figure that Facundo incarnates. This is a man whose very *face* appears as a figural imitation of the "face" of the earth, covered as it is by a "forest of hair," a "jungle-like coerture" (129, 130). Here lies the origin of the momentous "struggle between European civiliza-

5. The English "post-humous" grafts (poetically, as it were) the notion of "humus," *earth*, onto the original *etymon* "postumus" (superlative of "posterus," i.e. *last*), associating it with what exists after inhumation (burial) - beyond the grave.

tion and native barbarism, between mind and matter" (77), which is also one of the two main pillars on which a national literature should be erected, according to Sarmiento; the other one being - quite unsurprisingly - the sublimity of the landscape itself.

Sarmiento's "worlding" of the national territory draws heavily on both foreign and local sources, such as James F. Cooper's native romances and Echeverría's "Cautiva." Sarmiento projects Echeverría's poetization of the endless horizons of the Pampas as the very ground upon which a national monument is to be erected - as one that rises high above the precursor's *prima facie* depiction of the national scene. Yet his main authority is probably drawn from French-inspired Orientalism, which Sarmiento inherited from Echeverría, as an epiphenomenon of the ubiquitous "ideology of modernism." The unlimited plains, the exorbitant troops of cattle, the unquestioned authority of the leaders, and so on, are all qualities that bespeak "a certain Asiatic tincture" (62) in the Argentinean climate. This displaced Orientalism constitutes the exotic background against which the native "Other" is represented. On a pair with these culturally laden references and allusions, Sarmiento offers a "romantic" interpretation according to which the limitless horizon incites the faculty of imagination so vehemently that it makes of the Argentineans a people naturally inclined towards poetic creation:

Now, I inquire, what impressions must be made upon the inhabitant of the Argentine Republic by the simple fact of fixing his eyes upon the horizon, and seeing nothing? - for the deeper his gaze sinks into that shifting, hazy, undefined horizon, the further it withdraws from him, the more it fascinates and confuses him, and plunges him in contemplation and doubt ... Here is poetry already; he who moves along such scenes is assailed by fantastic doubts and fears, by dreams which possess his waking hours. (Sarmiento 30-31)⁶

We are here confronting a limit experience through which Sarmiento seems to place his own conceptual edifice *en abîme*. On the one hand, these "autochthonous" instances of the sublime push his writing to the verge of the "Other," that is, towards the native, barbarian being grown from the elemental earth of America. But, on the other hand, it is precisely here, on the boundless horizon of imagination, that Sarmiento inscribes his own dream of a more civilized *patria*.

Perhaps one might say, in a vulgar sense, that Sarmiento actually traver-

6. I here quote from Mary Mann's translation, which I have eschewed elsewhere since her version on these occasions does not highlight the aspects I find important in the original.

ses the horizon in order to be able to arrive at an alternative future for his own turmoiled nation. Towards the end of the year of 1840, he crossed the Chilean border, leaving behind the now famous (and still disputed) graffiti on the public bath at Zonda: "*On ne tue point les idées*" [Ideas cannot be killed], a phrase which his oppressors needed a translator to spell out for them before exclaiming: "well, what is that supposed to mean?" (*Facundo* 32-33). The episode illustrates with extreme clarity the geo-graphic *situation* of Sarmiento's "worlding" endeavours. An inscription which expresses, in a foreign language, the metaphysical ideals of modernity, is inscribed at the very limit of Argentina's geopolitical space and grossly misconceived by the native readers. And this is the way it all works, as though in an abyssal reflection of the barbarian/civilized imaginary horizons. Sarmiento's Orientalism might be seen both as a symptom and as a reconciliation of these conflicting horizons, since it is this figurality that actually allows him to read the "barbarian" national territory in terms of the sublime. The nation scene thereby loses its specificity: the desert is everywhere the same, the native "Other" is a translation of an Oriental "original" - and the observer appears as a civilized, colonizing, European subject.

In this way, Sarmiento fills in the empty space with an almost monstrous quantity of references to the modern culture of literacy - as if it were possible to transcend the alleged "barbarian effect" of boundless space through an equally boundless horizon of writing. This impossible task has been partially accomplished through the century and a half which separates us from *Facundo* - a fact that testifies, unequivocally, to the performative power of Sarmiento's writing. Just as the shadow of *Facundo* haunts the book, Sarmiento's writing has never stopped haunting Argentina's cultural, literary, and political imaginary.

In one of his poems, Borges declares quite overtly that Sarmiento "has not died" but endures as "the witness of his native country" (*Obras* 899). What exactly is it Sarmiento has witnessed - and comprehended - so much better than any of his contemporaries? Many things; or at least two: "Sarmiento was, I think, a man who was dazzled and almost blinded by the simultaneous and double vision of a present misery and a greatness to come" (*Textos* 67). In this picture, *Facundo* represents the dark side of the Republic's potentiality, containing no more than a few hints towards the world of possibilities foreclosed by the *caudillo* regime. On the other extreme we may localize Sarmiento's *Argirópolis*, "The Silver City," a utopian project for a new capital of a reunited Republic, to be founded on an uninhabited island in the Rio de la Plata delta. As a geopolitical "center" for the entire region, *Argirópolis* will harmonize all the different - and diversely located

- interests which were presently tearing apart an organism "unified by nature" (*Argirópolis* 54). Needless to say, one of the most important functions of the new capital is to regulate the commerce between the Argentinean hinterland and the civilized world. This is "vulgar worlding," *tout court*. Sarmiento grounds a new vantage point from which the open landscape may be encircled, as in an effort to redeem this frontier of Western civilization from its autochthonous Orientals.

4. Borges and the Hyperboreans

There is little doubt that Jorge Luis Borges is the writer who eventually takes advantage of this new horizon in order to "realize" the dormant capital of Argentina's native soil. Borges collects the dispersed fragments left by his precursors and reassembles them into an *oeuvre* which is successfully exported to the "civilized" world. What is thus transmitted is an imposing version of the Argentinean nation, its history and literature, as well as its geopolitical correlations to the rest of the world. Yet the most suggestive aspect of Borges' "worlding" enterprise is the way in which he gradually expands the boundaries of his own writing, moving from climate to climate in a series of gradual displacements, thus producing a literary "world" with its own peculiar geography.

Borges' trajectory begins in the south, with a revision of the traditional scene of Argentinean writing. Borges' most important move consists in transferring the scene from the infinite horizon of the Pampas towards the urban space of Buenos Aires. Still, it is not the central and most "civilized" areas of the metropolis that are (re)created in these writings, but its margins (the "orillas"), where a labyrinthine network of streets disintegrates into an open, uncontested landscape. These suburban zones are ruled by the "compadrito" or local hoodlum, whose semibarbarous cult of courage Borges casts in a skilfully adjusted epic mode - as in an attempt to replace or supplement the traditional gaucho lore. At the same time, the southern boundaries are invested with a more metaphysical mode. In "Sentirse en muerte" [Feeling in Death] - originally published in 1928 - Borges relates what he calls an "emotional anecdote" of a nightly stroll through the suburban streets of Buenos Aires. Suddenly, he finds himself on a street corner at the very edge of town, surprised by the most simple and elemental scene imaginable. Borges' metaphysical vision of this unwritten scenario - the "elemental earth, the earth from an as yet not conquered America" (*Labyrinths* 261-262) - amounts to a metaphysical yet vulgar "worlding" of the national scene: not

only the territory, but also such basic concepts as self and time, appear as blank spaces for the writing of the "Other."

From this "epico-metaphysical" origin, Borges' writing unfolds in a twofold direction: east and westwards. First, it resumes and transforms the Orientalism of Echeverría and Sarmiento. Although the Borgesian "Drang nach Osten" [Drive to the East] goes back at least to the twice-told tales of *Historia Universal de la infamia* (1935), its most remarkable manifestation is in the "Asiatic" style and setting of some of his *ficciones*. Here, the emblematic figure is of course that of the labyrinth. It appears as a pliable metaphor of both civilization and barbarism - or else as a vertiginous figure of "totality," be it of the universe or of writing. Borges uses these paradoxical figuralities and unsettling structures in a continuing negotiation of the peripheral perspective breached by his Southern *ethos*. In "El escritor argentino y la tradición" [The Argentine Writer and Tradition], he suggests that such a marginalized viewpoint may be thought of as an "enabling" position when it comes to the enterprise of modifying or revitalizing the Western canon - as if it were the very locus of (re)invention and creativity - without succumbing to the burden of the past. "For that reason I repeat that we should not be alarmed and that we should feel that our patrimony is the universe; we should essay all themes ... for either being Argentine is an inescapable act of fate ... or being Argentine is a mere affectation, a mask" (*Labyrinths* 219). Here Echeverría's agro-poetical patrimony has been radically broadened to embrace the entire world or universe. It should also be noted how this Borgesian "worlding" invents an Argentinean world belonging exclusively, if not entirely, to Western civilization, since there is, quite literally, no place for the autochthonous "Other" in Borges' universalized idea of Argentinean tradition.

The ultimate frontier of Borges' work/world is situated at or beyond its most remote northern boundaries. Here Borges approaches the historical, literary, and *fictional* themes of a "hyperborean" cultural sphere which he grasps as essentially dreamlike or "unreal."⁷ As Josefina Ludmer has argued, Borges' *oeuvre* consummates the "modernist" autonomy aesthetics, at least in an Argentinean context. Vulgarly speaking, there is also a "worlding"

7. A cogent formulation of this thesis is found at the end of the essay titled "The Scandinavian Destiny": "In universal history, the wars and books of Scandinavia are as if they had never existed; everything remains isolated and without a trace, as if it had come to pass in a dream or in the crystal balls where clairvoyants gaze. In the twelfth century, the Icelanders discovered the novel - the art of Flaubert, the Norman - and this discovery is as secret and sterile, for the economy of the world, as their discovery of America" (*Non-Fictions* 381).

aspect to this aesthetics, which is emblematically expressed by a geographical area posited as inherently literary or fictional - with which one may enter in contact only by transgressing a limit that turns our own worldly concerns into dust and nothingness. And when these regions are finally transposed into Borges' truly fictional work, they tend to become even more radically severed from everything that might infringe upon their calm and snowy surface. In this whiteness we may perceive a utopian version of native barbarianism - a rudimentary and violent culture that has turned against its own foundations, as if recognizing that its destiny is to vanish without leaving any significant trace. This disappearance is anticipated by the state of the arts that Borges concedes to his hyperborean people. They seem to pursue an *oeuvre* purified of every circumstantial and accessorial element, leaving but an essential phrase or word - an *oeuvre* which, in its turn, is either deliberately silenced or foreclosed by the death of its author.

Borges' Nordic texts thus acquire a doubly utopian function. They project both a "civilized" future to emerge from the ruins of the self-destructive barbarian cultures and a modernist poetics of absolute autonomy and purity. The complicity of these two aspects can be seen at the very end of Borges' work, when he professes a "minimalist" poetics of resignation while at the same time editing a thoroughly revised (or even rewritten) standard edition of his *Obras completas*. The gesture with which Borges seals off this enterprise is to write a "Préface de l'auteur" to the prestigious Pléiade edition of "*ce que l'on veut bien appeler mon oeuvre*" (*Oeuvres* x), as always insisting on the impersonal and circumstantial character of his entire literary production. Borges does this as the first Argentinean to be granted a place in the Pléiade pantheon - the very symbol of French culture, and hence of civilization and modernity. Yet what makes his work so efficient in terms of its "wordling" capacity is the extremely successful way in which he has managed to transfer the "ideological" contentions over national territoriality to the seemingly autonomous space of literature. On this level Borges accomplishes the work announced by his forebears, reorganizing the national territory into a signifying field in which the foundational concepts of civilization and barbarism are gradually sublated into what Gérard Genette has felicitously referred to as a "literary Utopia."

5. Cortázar and the Monsters

It is a most common gesture to situate the work of Julio Cortázar somewhere in the margins, or in the wake, of Borges. This is so not only due to the anecdotes which associate the two writers in an imposing way,

but also because the most well-known part of Cortázar's work - especially of his short stories - clearly (and even emphatically) evokes the tradition of autonomous aestheticism. Yet at the same time Cortázar was perfectly aware that the *book* as aesthetic form had long since entered in a state of crisis, and that a rebellion was going on in the realm of art. The other vein in his *oeuvre* is therefore a constant predisposition to disperse every sign of ideological fixity or even of "cultural" cohesion, a tendency which stretches from his early writings on Surrealism to the physically severed books and the militant activism of his mature work. Thus Cortázar seems to have advanced a step further with respect to the question of literary autonomy and disinterestedness, probably influenced by Surrealism's realization of literature's absolute need to engage itself as soon as it becomes aware of its own optimal freedom. And this conflict may also be traced in the way he "worlds a world" for his own work to take place.

From the first moment, Julio Cortázar seems to busy himself reinventing the very sense of history and territoriality - and to rework the hierarchy of ideological qualifiers such as "civilization" and "barbarism." In *Los reyes* [The Kings] (1949), Cortázar seeks out what is arguably the most powerful foundational myth of Western civilization - that of the Cretan labyrinth and its monstrous dweller - and reworks it into a mythopoetical drama. In Cortázar's revised mythology, the Minotaur is a harmless monster, secretly allied to his half sister, Ariadne. They both withdraw from the "enlightened" realm of the King (Minos) and the Hero (Theseus) - governed by the rectilinear law of scepter and sword - into the curved, self-enclosed, uterine domain of the labyrinth. Ariadne reveals the Minotaur's poetical spirit: his fluid, blissful, earthly speech of constantly changing catalogues (*Reyes* 49). When there is, eventually, an encounter in the center of the labyrinth, the monster offers its neck to the hero's sword with the prophetic words that it will return in a more diaphanous realm, and the labyrinth resurge in the heart of every man (66 ff). As González Echeverría has argued, this conflict amounts to nothing less than an idiosyncratic Cortazarian "mythology of writing." I would add that in this design we may also observe a mythology of "worlding." At the very end of *Los reyes*, the empty labyrinth serves as the matrix for a future society of proto-surrealist poetical beings projected well beyond the frontiers of "civilization." Clearly, this is Cortázar's revisionary way of inventing, on aesthetic grounds, a space and an ethics of the "Other."

If we turn to Cortázar work as a storyteller, we find that, over and over again, a small "world" or community is constituted through some kind of uncanny or violent encounter between incommunicable worlds - as if this

"worlding gesture" were able to renegotiate the ideological arrangement of self and other along the axis of civilization/barbarism. In many of these texts there is a subjacent structure according to which an emerging community is constituted by identifying an inhuman "Other." But there is a curious inversion of the traditional scheme insofar as in these cases the excluded part often turns out to be the "self" - and not the "Other," as one would expect.

The most suggestive example is probably found in "Las puertas del cielo" [The Gates of Heaven]. Here, we witness a scenario from Peronist Argentina through the eyes of Marcelo Hardoy, a middle-aged lawyer who is obsessively preoccupied with the presence of new demographic groups in his native Buenos Aires. In order to gain access to these subaltern layers, Hardoy seeks, and wins, the friendship of one of his clients, Mauro, an immigrant of Italian genealogy. But the real object of Hardoy's curiosity is Celina, an authentic lower-class woman of mixed blood, whom Mauro had rescued from some filthy cabaret and turned into a seemingly respectable housewife. Hardoy incites them to resume the habit of visiting *milongas* or traditional ballrooms and steakhouses, where he can freely observe the reawakening of Celina's monstrous traits. When, some time later, Celina dies from undiagnosed tuberculosis, Hardoy tries to cheer up the recent widower by taking him out for a drink. They end up at the notorious Santa Fe Palace. At this moment, the story's apocalyptic undercurrent gains momentum. The smelling, smoky, noisy atmosphere echoes Echeverría's overexplicitly infernal scenes of indigenous feasting from "La cautiva." And it is here that the gates of heaven suddenly burst open, as Hardoy and Mauro become aware that Celina is somehow still among them. She appears, abruptly, through clouds of smoke, but withdraws without notice into her posthumous concealment. Mauro stumbles through the crowd of dancing people in a confused attempt to track her, while Hardoy regains control over himself, convinced that any pursuit is perfectly futile.

What is most striking in this tale of class and racial prejudice is the unambiguous way in which the monstrous "Other" is identified with the presence of all kinds of subaltern newcomers, especially from the "barbarian" interior. Sarmiento's old formula, according to which the urban area represents the only stronghold of civilization, has suddenly become obsolete. According to a politicized critic such as David Viñas, this is the very clue to Cortázar's continuous tarrying with all kinds of threatening and quasi-transcendental otherness; what lurks behind the hallways, folding screens and zoological metamorphoses in his fantastic stories, is nothing less than the disturbing presence of the "new" masses (Viñas 119). In later years, Cortázar regretted the appearance of some of his most overtly anti-Peronist writings.

However, in my reading these texts register ("objectively," as it were) the ideological confusion stirred by a political situation in which the traditional civilization/barbarism equilibrium - based on separation and unquestioned hierarchies - had been disrupted; they could also be seen as testimonies of Cortázar's ("subjective") need to exteriorize his own urban, intellectual prejudices - in a detached, disinterested way - by using the space of literature as a kind of inner *exilium*.

In this context, it would be impossible to avoid some remarks on "Diario para un cuento" [Diary for a Story], the story that almost literally rounds off Cortázar's work in the narrative genre. Framed by a series of metapoetic reflections, the story reads like an attempt to finally recuperate the (monstrous) "otherness" which the author (narrator) had failed to grasp in his earlier work. Its plot line evolves around the character of Anabel, a seaport prostitute who represents everything that has formerly been characterized as "monstrous." *Qua* translator, the narrator inherits the task of administering Anabel's amorous correspondence with a foreign sailor. He gets involved with her in a secret but heartfelt adventure - thus transgressing the frontier between the "civilized" and the "other" world - while at the same time he becomes aware of a serious intrigue between envious prostitutes. There is a dead body, a bottle of venom, a confession - and still worse: the complicity (and impunity) of Anabel and the amorous sailor. In order not to become implicated, the narrator withdraws from the scene for a considerable period of time, imagining how Anabel and her betrothed sailor celebrate their victory by spitting at him in the face, between tango and tango, "like one who spits on the floor without even looking at it" (*Obras* 1102).

From his Parisian exile, and several decades later, the narrator/diarist attempts to fill in the void of Anabel - only to realize his "essential" solitude: "I know, sadly, that I never had and never will have access to Anabel as Anabel" (1102). As may be noted, this narratorial situation reproduces the most basic preconditions for the Kantian "aesthetic experience" - as a detached, disinterested perception omitting the factual qualities of the object. It is therefore revealing that Cortázar quotes and rephrases a passage from Derrida which comments precisely on Kant's *Critique of Judgement* throughout the story. "Diario para un cuento" ends with a final digest of Derrida's words, followed by their application to his own "literary" dealings with the figure of Anabel:

Almost nothing remains (to me): neither the thing, nor its existence, nor mine, neither the pure object nor the pure subject, no interest of anything that is in anything that is. No interest, to be sure, since to

search for Anabel in the depths of time is always to fall back into myself, and it is so distressing to write about myself although I would still like to imagine that I'm writing about Anabel. (1104)⁸

In the end, then, everything remains the same - the only difference being the existence of yet another Cortázar story. A perfectly detached, excessive, and self-enclosed story, to be sure, like so many others. Yet this one closes off the entire cycle of Cortázar's works in the genre, tracing its margins as if it were those of a sphere or an organism - a perfectly detached, autonomous, living, and breathing organism, which Derrida would probably translate as a hedgehog. (A sphere? A hedgehog? Cut off, enrolled, created as if by accident?) Which leaves us with the basic gesture of Cortázar's "worlding" of his own autonomous world: to separate, to exile, to cut himself off ("cortar") from the immediate surroundings, from every sort of community with the world, always awaiting the intervention of an accident ("azar") as the promise of an imminent revelation. In this sense, there may well be a connection between the fear of the monstrous "Other" and the necessary act of separation from which these texts are actually "born."

6. In Conclusion: Workings of the Posthumous

In a reading of Kant's *Critique of Judgement*, Spivak demonstrates how "worlding" manoeuvres are not restricted to archival, cartographic, and legal forms of textualization, but also inhabit the "unworldly" space of transcendental philosophy. As Spivak traverses it, Kant's "Analytic of the Sublime" is shown to rest on the foreclosure of "uncivilized" natives from the realm of beauty and morality, and thus, implicitly, from humankind. They are not (yet) the kind of subjects that can be "categorized" by Kant's tripartite critique. Spivak shows how Kant's philosophical gestures are entangled in a "worlded" world - and contribute to its "worlding" - by legitimizing an imperialist project that would transform these unprepared subjects "from the raw to the philosophical" (*Critique* 36). Perhaps the representations of otherness in mainstream Argentinean "worlding" literature can be seen as different instances of such an exclusion, yet with their own peculiar textual "logic." Echeverría identifies the native with the sublime object (in its grotesque version), and thereby excludes him from the (aesthetic) contemplation of it; Sarmiento grants the native poetic capacity, but this native is, symptomatically enough, not the aboriginal Indian, and his/her "work" could hardly be

8. My translation of the first sentence follows Bennington and McLeod's in Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*.

said to belong to the realm of "aesthetics"; Borges actually sees his rudimentary hyperboreans as gifted artists, or craftsmen, yet their "work" is only fulfilled through silence and/or extinction; Cortázar, finally, is well known for his staging of monstrosities of "bad taste," using aesthetic criteria quite explicitly as a mechanism of "othering." In this particular context, the final question would be whether Cortázar's *parabasis* - the aestheticist unmasking, in "Diario para un cuento," of his fascination with the monstrous "Other" - amounts to a truly "transgressive" *event*. Does it really displace, posthumously, the outcome of his former tropings on the civilization/barbarism paradigm? Or will it end up as just another "literary" appropriation of otherness, in a spurious dialectics disguised as a metanarrative? And, finally, can these workings of the posthumous be made to appear as a "work" - of art?

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