

**Thematic Content and Style in the Narrative of
Alfredo Bryce Echenique (1990-2002): A
Consideration of Fantasy**

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Biography

Alfredo Marcelo Bryce Echenique was born in Lima on 15 February 1936 into ‘el seno de una vieja familia aristocrática del Perú’ (Ferreira & Márquez (eds), p.15).¹ His father was the director of the Banco Internacional del Perú, whilst his mother was a descendent of the Basque family, Vera del Bidasca, who counted amongst her ancestors a Peruvian viceroy and a president, José Rufino Echenique (1808-1879). Perhaps as a result of his illustrious ancestry, Bryce has been constantly typecast as a member of the Peruvian élite. However, far from embracing his heritage, Bryce has said of the former President who governed from 1851 to 1855, ‘no solo ya hubo un presidente con mi apellido, sino que fue el peor’ (Coaguila, p.74).² In the same vein, Bryce has consistently tried to distance himself from the label of ‘oligarch’ that has been bestowed upon him, even alluding in an interview to his decision during his youth to make a ‘rompimiento profundo con [su] clase social’ (Coaguila, p.17).³ It is repeated comments such as these that have led to Bryce being perceived as the ‘enfant terrible’ of the Peruvian oligarchy, a label that the events surrounding the publication of his first novel further contributed to.

In his compilation of ‘anti-memoirs’, aptly entitled *Permiso para vivir* (1993),⁴ Bryce humorously describes the controversy surrounding the appearance of *Un*

¹ César Ferreira & Ismael P. Márquez (eds), *Los mundos de Alfredo Bryce Echenique nuevos textos críticos* (Lima: Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 2004).

² Ángel Páez, ‘Entrevista: Soy un escritor más rebelde que nostálgico’ (1991), in Jorge Coaguila (ed.), *Entrevistas escogidas* (Lima: Fondo Editorial Cultural Peruana, 2004), pp.71-77.

³ César Hilderbrandt, ‘Entrevista con Alfredo Bryce’ (1972), in Jorge Coaguila, *Entrevistas escogidas* (Lima: Fondo Editorial Cultural Peruana, 2004), pp. 13-23. In another interview Bryce has described, ‘la distancia que con el tiempo he ido tomando frente a esa clase social’, Rubén Barreiro, ‘Entrevista con Alfredo Bryce Echenique’, in Ortega & Lander (eds), *Alfredo Bryce Echenique: ante la crítica* (Caracas: Monte Ávila Editores, 2004), p. 32.

⁴ Alfredo Bryce Echenique, *Permiso para vivir (antimemorias)* (Barcelona: Anagrama, 1993).

mundo para Julius (1970). Having appeared in print just two years after the Revolutionary Government of the Armed Forces (1968-1975) seized power in Peru, *Un mundo para Julius* found itself caught up in what Bryce terms ‘un malentendido’ (Bryce, *Permiso*, p. 53), when the military government, with its ‘antiimperialista y antioligárcico’ (Bryce, *Permiso*, p.52) ideology, declared the novel, with its scathing critique of the upper classes, as representative of their regime. Bryce was subsequently deemed ‘un intelectual verdaderamente comprometido en el proceso peruano’ (Bryce, *Permiso* p. 52), despite the fact that the novel was, as Bryce assures, written ‘sin la más mínima intención política’ (Bryce, *Permiso*, p.53). As Juan Ángel Juristo recalls, the Minister of Education pronounced the novel as having done more for ‘la colectivización en el Perú que muchas revoluciones’ (Juristo, p.17). One of the repercussions of this was that Bryce was awarded the Peruvian National Prize for Literature in 1970. Bryce recounts this particular event and some of its hilarious consequences in an essay entitled ‘Confesiones sobre el arte de vivir y escribir novelas’:

En esa época se da el golpe militar del general Velasco, de la revolución peruana del 68, la reforma agraria del 70, y me sucede algo totalmente inesperado, y es que se me otorga el Premio Nacional de Literatura en el Perú. Mi madre fue una persona absolutamente feliz, puesto que Proust⁵ vivía en París y fue a recibir el premio en mi nombre, feliz de la vida, cuando el ministro de Educación de entonces dijo que entre el general Velasco, presidente de la República, y Alfredo Bryce habían destruido a la oligarquía peruana. Mi madre fue sacada en camilla y me convertí en una especie de vergüenza proustiana. (Ferreira & Márquez (eds), *Los mundos*, p. 32).⁶

⁵ Bryce’s mother was passionate about the works of Marcel Proust. Bryce acknowledges that she was ‘una apasionada de la obra de Marcel Proust’ and that he was ‘su escritor preferido’, in Juan Ángel Juristo & Alfredo Bryce Echenique, *Para que duela menos* (Madrid: Editorial Espasa Calpe, S.A., 1995), p.15.

⁶ Alfredo Bryce Echenique, ‘Confesiones sobre el arte de vivir y escribir novelas’ (1982), in César Ferreira & Ismael P. Márquez (eds), *Los mundos de Alfredo Bryce Echenique: nuevos textos críticos*, pp. 29-44.

When Bryce refused to attribute a revolutionary voice to *Un mundo para Julius*, however, the Armed Forces Administration and the country's left-wing Peruvian intelligencia, 'labelled him as a reactionary author maintaining his links with the oligarchy into which he was born, and virtually black-listed him' (Wood, *The Fictions*, p.2).⁷ The above account of the events surrounding the reception of *Un mundo para Julius* illustrates the fashion in which Bryce's works have often been misinterpreted and caused controversy, a fact that has led him to be considered an enigmatic and contradictory figure in socio-political and cultural terms, in that he consistently resists pigeon-holing.

Yet even on that most basic of points, his class of birth, there is little agreement and this is recently proving to be a bone of contention amongst Brycean scholars. Bryce's close personal friend the poet, Abelardo Sánchez León, for example, disagrees with this over-simplified portrayal of Bryce as a representative or spokesperson for Lima's oligarchy, when he argues:

En el caso de Bryce, debemos recordar que no hay elementos biográficos que lo asocien directamente a la esfera oligárquica, ni como propietario de tierras ni vinculado al circuito commercial en areas precapitalistas del Perú. En él, probablemente no hay siquiera conciencia ni propósito de convertirse en la expresion de este grupo social. (Ferreira & Márquez (eds), *Los mundos*, p.570)⁸

Sánchez León suggests that it is Bryce's status as 'limeño, relativamente adinerado, ilustrado, con modales chapados a la antigua' (Ferreira & Márquez (eds), *Los mundos*, p.70) that renders him vulnerable to this type of label. According to Sánchez León, Bryce's oligarchic identity is due to genealogical factors rather than the life he

⁷ David Wood, *The Fictions of Alfredo Bryce Echenique* (London: Kings College London Hispanic Series, 2002).

⁸ Abelardo Sánchez León, 'Un cierto imaginario oligárquico en la narrativa de Alfredo Bryce Echenique', in César Ferreira & Ismael P. Márquez (eds), *Los mundos de Alfredo Bryce Echenique: nuevos textos críticos*, pp. 569-603.

leads. These factors have proved to be a double-edged sword for Bryce, having both trapped him into a rigid stereotypical identity whilst also giving him the very possibility of dedicating himself to writing works of literature, which began with his degree in *Letras* at the Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos.⁹

At once possibly the most prolific and popular Peruvian writer of our day, having displaced Mario Vargas Llosa since the latter's antagonistic departure to Europe, he is at the same time perceived as an often distant, even aloof character by his fellow country-men, with a reputation firmly grounded in his eccentric life-style. Despite proclaiming, on constant occasions, his pride in being Peruvian and his desire to reside permanently in his native city of Lima, his current (2005) country of residence is Spain and he recently claimed in a journalistic article that Lima was 'demasiada sucia' to be conducive to his novelistic production. In an article in *El Comercio's Revista Somos*, July, 2001, the magazine supplement with the city's principal broadsheet, on the city of his birth, he muses:

Neblina. Limeña... Humedad. Frío. Qué horror... Faltan árboles a gritos. No hay color verde. Vida. ¿Dijo usted medio ambiente? No, yo dije contaminación ambiental. Gases. Micros. Choferes asesinos como si nada. Tráfico. Ley de la selva en el desierto... Y así también la crisis. Y el Perú es un país con muchas leyes pero sin ley. (*Revista Somos*, July 2001)¹⁰

⁹ Bryce has, in typically self-derogatory fashion, stated that it was not until his entrance to San Marcos that he began to feel that he was truly living in Peru: 'Al obligarme a ingresar a San Marcos para ser abogado, yo ingresé en el Perú, realmente. Allí conocí el Perú que me había estado oculto en mi dorada vida familiar... En San Marcos encontré las razas y las clases de Perú, volvía a casa diciéndole a mi padre "encontré a un negro que estudiaba"'. As we shall see in Chapter 2, one of the characters, a black chauffeur's son goes to university, much to the disgust of the upper class masters. See Alfredo Bryce Echenique, 'El complicado oficio de escribir', in *El Comercio, Suplemento Dominical*, Lima, 23 April 1995. Bryce explains: 'Al obligarme a ingresar a San Marcos para ser abogado yo ingresé al Perú que me había estado oculto en mi dorada vida familiar y en el ridículo internado británico, del que volvíamos los fines de semana... En San Marcos encontré las razas y las clases de Perú, volvía a casa diciéndole a mi papá "encontré a un negro que estudia"'. See Carlos Franz, 'El complicado oficio de escribir', in *El Comercio, Suplemento Dominical*, Lima, 23 April 1995.

¹⁰ Alfredo Bryce Echenique, 'El invierno es mejor un cuento triste', in *El Comercio, Revista Somos*, Lima, July 2001.

Conversely, he has spoken positively of 'esta Europa que tanto me ha dado' in his 'antememorias' (Bryce, *Permiso*, p.15), and Bryce has lived the majority of his adult life in the European cities of Paris, Montpellier, Barcelona and Madrid. In this Bryce has self-consciously followed the trend adopted by many Latin American writers, leaving Peru at the age of twenty-five. Yet Bryce has consistently reaffirmed his identity as a Peruvian and has said: 'París es una ciudad que no sirve para otra cosa más que para mostrarle a uno hasta qué punto es extranjero, hasta qué punto es peruano' (Ferreira & Márquez (eds), p.34).¹¹ Perhaps this is why Peruvians share a possessive feeling of nationalistic pride when it comes to Bryce, as if, in some way, he is part of their cultural heritage, a national treasure belonging personally to them.

In 1963 Bryce simultaneously completed a degree in law, which he had been forced to undertake by his authoritarian father and a degree in literature, the latter which he undertook of his own choice.¹² The title of his undergraduate thesis was 'Función del diálogo en la narrativa de Ernest Hemingway',¹³ and the importance of Hemingway's narrative strategies and mechanisms cannot be underestimated in the influence they were to have upon the whole of Bryce's literary output. The study was an early indicator of Bryce's interest in narrative styles and literary techniques. The influence of Hemingway, his self-confessed 'modelo a seguir' (Juristo, p.15), on Bryce's narrative style will be studied in Chapter 2. Bryce was guided in his passion

¹¹ Alfredo Bryce Echenique, 'Confesiones sobre el arte de vivir y escribir novelas', in César Ferreira & Ismael P. Márquez (eds), *Los mundos de Alfredo Bryce Echenique: nuevos textos críticos*, pp. 29-44.

¹² Juan Ángel Juristo writes: 'El día en que decide hablar de su vocación en casa se arma tal revuelo que su padre le manda a estudiar Derecho a San Marcos', *Para que duela menos* (Madrid: Editorial Espasa Calpe, 2004), p. 15.

¹³ Alfredo Bryce Echenique, 'Función del diálogo en la narrativa de Ernest Hemingway' (unpublished tesis de bachiller) (Lima: Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos, 1963).

for literature by a young teacher named Mario Vargas Llosa, whom he credits with nurturing his passion for Peruvian literature. In 1964 he left Peru for Spain in a boat belonging to the US mining company Marcona and went to live in the Latin quarter of Paris, where he made the acquaintance of fellow Latin American writers.¹⁴ In Paris he began a doctoral thesis on Henri de Montherlant, despite having had the intention to write upon Maeterlinck, having mistaken the former for the latter.¹⁵ On a summer vacation in 1965 to Perugia in central Italy, Bryce finally embarked on his vocation to be a writer, when he completed the first manuscript of *Huerto cerrado* (1968). The collection of short stories was to be Bryce's first incursion into the world of professional authorship, and set him on the path to becoming one of the most critically-acclaimed and well-loved authors of Peru and Latin America in the twentieth century.

Bryce has been admitted to the French Ordre des Lettres et des Arts (1995), was given the title of Doctor Honoris Causa by Lima's Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos (1999), and was made a member of Spain's Orden de Alfonso X El Sabio in the year 2000. Bryce Echenique currently resides in Madrid and was

¹⁴ Bryce has always remained grateful for the encouragement and friendship afforded to him by other Peruvian writers, such as Mario Vargas Llosa and Julio Ramón Ribeyro. In a chapter entitled 'Retrato del artista por un adolescente', in *Crónicas personales*, pp. 92-111, he describes the support and input that both authors gave him when writing his first work, *Huerto cerrado*. See Alfredo Bryce Echenique, *Crónicas personales* (Barcelona: Editorial Anagrama, 1988), p. 101.

¹⁵ In 'Instalar el humor en el corazón mismo de la tristeza', Bryce explains: 'Incluso me doctoré en literatura por error, cosa que descubrí muchos años después. Yo quería muchísimo a mi abuelo materno, y quise doctorarme sobre un autor que él leía muchísimo, pero él entonces ya había fallecido, su biblioteca había sido destrozada, yo estaba fuera del Perú, y a un professor en la Sorbona le hablé de un doctorado sobre un escritor, y no recordaba bien el nombre, recordaba libros, la editorial Barnier de París, y le dije: "Algo así con m, Monter, Manter". Me dijo "Montherlant" y terminé haciendo una tesis sobre un detestable escritor francés llamado Henri de Montherlant, un cavernario, aristócrata, hasta colaboracionista durante la Guerra, misógino y detestable. Después descubrí que el autor que leía mi abuelo era Maeterlinck, o sea que lógicamente todo esto me obligaba ya a empezar a reírme un poco de mí mismo, de mi formación, de mi familia, de mi abuelo, de mi padre, de todas las cosas del mundo que me había tocado vivir' (*Nuevo Texto Crítico*, año IV, n° 8, 1991, p. 59).

recently awarded the Premio Planeta literary prize (2002) for his latest work, *El huerto de mi amada* (2002).

Justifications and Aims

It ought to be mentioned that until recently Bryce's work has received relatively little critical attention. David Wood in his comprehensive study on Brycean fiction suggests that the most likely explanation for this is that 'as an author in self-imposed exile in Europe from 1964 to 1999, his work was largely passed over – at least during the 1970s and 1980s – by Peruvian academics' (Wood, *The Fictions*, p.2). This thesis will consider four works of fiction by Bryce Echenique published between 1990 and 2002, three of which – with the exception of *No me esperen en abril* – have received very little critical attention, despite Bryce's position as one of the most prominent authors in contemporary Peruvian literature. The main critical works on Bryce's fiction to date include Julio Ortega's *El hilo del habla, la narrativa de Alfredo Bryce Echenique* (1994), Margarita Krakusin's *La novelística de Alfredo Bryce Echenique y la narrativa sentimental* (1996), José Luis de la Fuente's *Más allá de la modernidad: los cuentos de Alfredo Bryce Echenique* (1998) and David Wood's *The Fictions of Alfredo Bryce Echenique* (2002), along with three collections of essays: Jean Franco and Christiane Tarrow's *Co-textes 34: Hommage à Alfredo Bryce Echenique* (1997), Ferreira and Márquez's *Los mundos de Alfredo Bryce Echenique: nuevos textos críticos* (2004) and Julio Ortega and María Fernanda Lander's, *Alfredo Bryce Echenique: ante la crítica* (2004). With the exception of Wood's study, which contains a chapter on *No me esperen en abril*, three papers in Franco and Tarrow's

book,¹⁶ and four articles on the same novel in Ferreira and Márquez's compilation, no studies have examined the novels considered in this thesis in depth.¹⁷ Bryce's earlier works, on the other hand, such as *Un mundo para Julius* and *La vida exagerada de Martín Romaña* have received substantial critical attention. A more balanced assessment of Bryce's later fiction is hence needed and the first intention of this thesis is to begin to bridge the gap in critical studies of the author's more recent works.

The second purpose of this study is to consider Bryce's portrayal of the Peruvian oligarchy from the 1950s to the 1990s. This theme is examined in chapters 3, 4 and 6 which consider the novella *Dos señoras conversan*, and the novels *No me esperen en abril* and *El huerto de mi amada* respectively. Bryce has often been labelled an oligarch but this term has been used uncritically based on his ancestry rather than the life he leads or, indeed, his fiction. In fact, Bryce is critical of the lives the oligarchs lead and of the hierarchical colonial structures that sustain power-class relations. In light of this it is necessary to consider the changing destiny of the oligarchy in order to ascertain whether Bryce's identity can be deemed oligarchic. The élite social group in Bryce's fiction is portrayed as out of touch with the realities of a changing nation. Chapter 5 provides a discussion of *Reo de nocturnidad* which is the only work considered in this thesis that is set outside of Peru and in this chapter the

¹⁶ See Edmund Cros, 'Fonctionnement du chronotype dans *No me esperen en abril* d'Alfredo Bryce Echenique'; François Delprat, 'partir, Revenir, Hantises dans *No me esperen en abril*, d'Alfredo Bryce Echenique'; and Annie Figarde, 'Pour en finir avec Julius ou la vision d'un monde dégradé', in Franco, Jean & Christiane Tarroux (eds), *Co-textes 34: Hommage à Alfredo Bryce Echenique* (Montpellier: Centre d'études et de Recherches sociocritiques, 1997) pp. 195-203, 205-17, and 219-26 respectively.

¹⁷ See also Margarita Krakusin, 'Tragicomedia bryceana: *No me esperen en abril* de Alfredo Bryce Echenique', in *Alba de America*, 16 (July 1998), 323-35; and María Fernanda Lander, '*No me esperen en abril* o el relato de la nostalgia y el olvido', in *Inti: Revista de Literatura Hispanica*, 45 (Spring 1997), 243-48.

experiences of a Peruvian in self-imposed exile are examined. The third objective of the thesis has been to throw new light on the role of fantasy as a leitmotif in Bryce's fiction since the common denominator linking Bryce's narratives is the unwillingness of many of his characters to accept the socio-economic and political realities of their time. A study considering the role of fantasy in Bryce's fiction, is indeed, yet to be published. Carmen Bustillo's paper 'Los espejismos Bryceanos', however, does begin to tackle the theme when she refers to his characters' need to 'deslindar la fantasía de la realidad' and to the dissolution of the frontiers between 'la realidad (textual), la imaginación, la memoria y la ficción' in *Reo de nocturnidad*, to be discussed in Chapter 5.¹⁸ I aim to show that the characters in Bryce's novels create imaginary existences based on, for example, their past or elements of popular culture or simply as a result of their desire for social betterment, as evident in the case of the Céspedes Salinas twins analysed in Chapter 6. In the context of the above, I will consider the recurrence of certain narrative strategies that are developed in Bryce's works such as oral register and shifting narrative perspectives as well as the common themes found in his works such as nostalgia and the convergence of the fictional and non-fictional worlds. This thesis will therefore look at the above issues with a preliminary chapter on the oligarchy and Peruvian socio-political reality from the 1950s to the 1990s (the dates during which the works under examination are set), followed by separate chapters on *Dos señoras conversan* (1990), *No me esperen en abril* (1995), *Reo de nocturnidad* (1997) and, finally, *El huerto de mi amada* (2002).

¹⁸ See Carmen Bustillo, 'Los espejismos Bryceanos' in Julio Ortega & María Fernanada Lander (eds), *Alfredo Bryce Echenique: ante la crítica*, pp. 211-29. pp. 213, 215.

Overview of Themes, Influences and Style

Recurrent Themes in Bryce's Fiction

This section of the chapter aims to provide a brief synopsis of the themes and motifs that occur in Bryce's literature. That Bryce consistently develops the same themes throughout his work suggests the need to see his fiction as part of a continuous development and not as a series of isolated works. Renowned for his novels and short stories, Bryce is also known for his journalistic articles, whose topics range in subjects as diverse as the director William Wyler¹⁹ and the composer Johann Sebastian Bach.²⁰ Indeed, Bryce has been a regular contributor to *Somos* which is the most widely read magazine by Peruvians of the upper social strata.²¹ Bryce began his vocation as a writer of fiction with a set of stories entitled *Huerto cerrado* (1968) which constitute a series of episodes in the life of a middle-class adolescent, Manolo. The major themes to emerge in his early fiction were alienation, nostalgia and social marginalisation, and these were to form a blue-print for the major part of his literary output to date. The influence of Hemingway's short story compilation, *Men Without Women*, and the adventures of its protagonist, Nick Adams, on this coming-of-age narrative, has been acknowledged by Bryce.²² However, Bryce is most famous for his novels, the first and most acclaimed of which is *Un mundo para Julius* (1970), rumoured to be the leading contender for that year's prestigious Seix Barral prize

¹⁹ Alfredo Bryce Echenique, 'William Wyler: el hombre que rozó la perfección', in *El Comercio, Revista Somos*, Lima, 4 August 2001.

²⁰ Alfredo Bryce Echenique, 'J.S. Bach: el heroísmo de la elegancia', in *El Comercio, Revista Somos*, Lima, 26 January 2002.

²¹ The majority of Bryce's journalistic articles have been collected in two volumes entitled, *A trancas y barrancas* (1996) and *Crónicas personales* (1998).

²² Ernest Hemingway, *Men Without Women* (London: Arrow Books, 1994).

before the subsequent disintegration of the illustrious publishing house. He has also published a children's book, *Goig* (1987), a collection of novelas *Dos señoras conversan* (1990), and a collection of 'anti-memoirs' entitled *Permiso para vivir* (1993). This last work, in which Bryce, in his own words, tells the story (or rather a series of stories since the compilation is comprised of unrelated anecdotes) of his life, is perhaps the best opening, together with the multitude of interviews he has given, for a consideration of the extent to which autobiography plays a role in his fiction.

Those of Bryce's works which have a Peruvian focus (namely *Un mundo para Julius*, *Dos señoras conversan* and *No me esperen en abril*) bear witness to the socio-economic changes that have taken place in the last fifty years in a country that Bryce himself – and in this he mirrors the lives of his characters – feels unable to live in and regularly flees. In these works Bryce considers the changing position of the oligarchy in the second half of the twentieth century since their final demise due to the implementation of the Agrarian Reform Movement by the left-wing military government of General Velasco (1968-75), from a vantage-point which is simultaneously internal (as a so-called member of the oligarchy) and external (due to his geographical location, writing from Europe). His protagonists, too, for the most part members of Lima's so-called 'oligarchy', which as Bryce notes: 'es lo que los sociólogos llaman el "imaginario oligárquico"',²³ live their everyday realities in the realms of fantasy and imagination. In point of fact, the common denominator linking many of Bryce's works of fiction is the unwillingness of his protagonists to come to terms with the world in which they live. Alienated from realities that they are unable

²³ Yolanda Vaccaro, 'No voy a desaparecer', in Jorge Coaguila (ed.), *Entrevistas escogidas*, pp. 97-100. Originally published in *El Comercio*, Lima, 17 October 2002.

to accept, they either take refuge in the world of their past or invent an alternative world, in order to combat their sense of alienation from their previously pre-eminent position in society. Memory and nostalgia are hence recurring themes in Bryce's literature since they are the vehicles of the creation of alternative realities.²⁴ Through the experiences of his protagonists, Bryce examines the social and political history of Peru; in other words, Bryce considers the public history through the personal experience. As Graciela Coulson has remarked, 'la conducta de los personajes de Bryce refleja sobre todo el mal de la época'.²⁵

Bryce's other works, such as *La vida exagerada de Martín Romaña* (1981) and *El hombre que hablaba de Octavia de Cádiz* (1985), focus on the experiences of upper-class Peruvians who have settled, in a self-imposed exile, in European cities. The themes, however, have remained the same. Bryce's characters are characterised by their inability to adapt to the environment in which they live; aimlessness becomes a principal leitmotif in his works. Although it is important not to consider Bryce's works as autobiographies, Bryce has claimed that he has lived life as a marginal figure, both as a Peruvian in Paris and, for refusing to comply with his father's

²⁴ Bryce has said in an interview with R. F. Lafuente: 'Para empezar, en mí ha habido siempre una enorme incapacidad para discernir entre realidad y ficción, lo cual no quiere decir uno sea incapaz de saber dónde está y a qué hora comienzan las clases. No tiene que ver con eso... Es, quizá, una concepción de la vida de tono camusiano que ofrece al escritor un comportamiento ante la realidad dentro de lo posible. Pero así, me gusta exaltar en el comportamiento humano esa mezcla de realidad y ficción que hace muchas veces me haya sentido más cómodo en Europa porque nadie me conocía y yo podía contar mi pasado, todas las historias de mi vida...; siempre he distinguido profundamente el engaño de la fantasía. Quizá este hecho se ha convertido en uno de los fantasmas y en una de las obsesiones de mi vida literaria. En mi literatura ha habido, es cierto, un trapaso peligroso, como un juego con fuego, de no deslindar verdad y mentira, pero es que, a veces, la verdad es tan chata, tan poco interesante, tan poco sugestiva, y la literatura no es sino una composición de la vida, y este deslinde, que se produce como una suerte de nebulosa, está tan ligado a mi carácter'. See Fernando R. Lafuente, 'Una poética de la piedad', in Julio Ortega & María Fernanda Lander (eds), *Alfredo Bryce Echenique: ante la crítica*, pp. 97-140 (p. 130). Originally published in *Ínsula*, Madrid, no° 571, January 1990, pp. 26-28.

²⁵ Graciela Coulson, 'Ser y parecer en el nuevo realismo: Bryce Echenique y la apoteosis de la memoria', in César Ferreira and Ismael P. Márquez (eds), *Los mundos de Alfredo Bryce Echenique: nuevos textos críticos*, pp. 61-69 (p. 69). Originally published in *El Urogallo*, 35-36, September-December, 1975, pp. 95-101 (p. 101).

ambitions for him. He has admitted: 'Yo siempre tuve presente el fantasma de la marginalidad' (Hilderbrandt, p. 15).²⁶ Bryce's characters struggle to find their place in a world which lacks moral values but have little success due to their sensitive natures. Bryce's characters attempt to forge links with their world through friendship and love, the leitmotifs which are the driving force behind his works. Another recurrent theme in Bryce's works is the merging of the fictional and non-fictional universes, epitomised by the self-reflexivity of many of his texts.

This thesis aims to consider the fantasies and illusions that Bryce's characters take refuge in and to ascertain the reasons for or the ideology behind, their desire for escapism. On the subject of confronting reality, Bryce has stated: 'se inventan nuevas realidades verbales un poco para suplantar la realidad. Yo creo que es una suerte de rebeldía como decía Camus, de rebeldía metafísica a través de las palabras contra el destino humano en realidad' (Lóez Ricci, p. 65).²⁷ These words suggest that Bryce and – this is true of his characters – replaces reality for fantasy, via the written and spoken word, in an act of rebellion. The rebellion is constituted in the denial of real realities and in the act of supplanting them with false ones. Yet fantasy for Bryce functions in a similar way to humour, in that it makes reality more bearable:

Creo que los escritores y los artistas en general son seres que construimos mundos paralelos: verbales, pictóricos, musicales, o escultóricos, a base de aquello que la vida no nos dio y que debía habernos dado. ¿Qué es lo que nos lleva a ese asombro? El no aceptar la realidad, porque nos es difícil. Somos seres no adaptados a la realidad finalmente. Yo creo que eso produce el empacho de asombro, ver que los hechos de la realidad son siempre reales, mientras uno preferiría que sean irreales. (Planas, p.91)²⁸

²⁶ César Hildebrandt, 'Entrevista con Alfredo Bryce', in Jorge Coaguila (ed.), *Entrevistas escogidas*, pp. 13-23.

²⁷ José Lóez Ricci, 'Entrevista: La soledad ha sido la más fiel de mis amantes', in Jorge Coaguila (ed.), *Entrevistas escogida*, pp.61-70. Originally published in *Domingo*, supplement of *La República*, Lima, 8 July 1990.

²⁸ Enrique Planas, 'El primo de Tarzán', in Jorge Coaguila (ed.), *Entrevistas escogidas*, pp.89-95. Originally published in *El Sol*, Lima, 10 July 1998.

The influence of Julio Ramón Ribeyro is also evident in Bryce's preoccupation with the blurring of reality and fantasy. Bryce has described the writer as an important influence on his work, and observes: 'En cuanto al mundo contemporáneo de Perú, pues, en cada relato de Ribeyro hay un personaje que sueña, que se evade de la realidad.'²⁹

Sterne: A Major Influence

Reading one of Bryce's novels is like listening to a conversation, or a storyteller spinning yarns to the listeners present. This impression surely derives from Bryce's self-confessed love of story-telling; of one of his literary heroes, Laurence Sterne, Bryce writes: 'En su monumental *Vida y Opiniones del caballero Tristram Shandy*, Laurence Sterne afirma que la escritura no es más que otro nombre para la conversación' (Bryce, 'El narrador oral', p. 52).³⁰ Bryce admits that, when writing a work of literature, what spurs him on is the 'goce mío de comunicación afectiva con el lector' (Bryce, 'Instalar el humor', p.19),³¹ which suggests that for Bryce the reader is very much present during the creation process and involved in the reconstruction of his texts. Bryce, however, was not always passionate about literature, as he affirms in an interview: 'Yo fui una persona que detestaba a la

²⁹ See 'Instalar el humor en el corazón mismo de la tristeza' (p. 64).

³⁰ Alfredo Bryce Echenique, 'El narrador oral', in César Ferreira & Ismael P. Márquez (eds), *Los mundos de Alfredo Bryce Echenique: nuevos textos críticos*, pp. 51-53.

³¹ Alfredo Bryce Echenique, 'Instalar el humor en el corazón mismo de la tristeza', in Julio Ortega & María Fernanda Lander (eds), *Alfredo Bryce Echenique: ante la crítica* (Caracas: Monte Ávila Editores, 2004, pp. 4-29. Originally published in *Nuevo Texto Crítico*, vol. 4, n° 8 (segundo semestre de 1991), 52-72.

literatura, los libros' (Lévano & Pita, p.39).³² He explains that, as a child, if a friend of his father offered him a book for his birthday, 'yo lo ponía realmente en la lista negra' (Lévano & Pita, p.39). Bryce does however draw a distinction between the importance of the written word and the art of storytelling, during this formative period of his life. On several occasions he has referred to the hours he would spend as a child, lying on his bed inventing stories and characters:

volvía a esa cama y ahí me instalaba a contar historias en voz baja, a pensar historias en las cuales, claro, fallecía alguno de la ficción aquella, y yo lloraba, como un loco ¿no? Se me moría y yo sabía cómo resucitarlo porque lo había matado en un crimen perfecto, por ejemplo. O de pronto, el amigo más querido le daba una paliza al más odiado y entonces eran unas carcajadas que explicaban, lógicamente, la preocupación de mi padre.
(Bryce, 'Instalar en humor', p.5)³³

The pleasure that Bryce procured telling stories continued into his years as a schoolboy in Lima; he has stated: 'Y cuando fui un poquito más grande, en el colegio, me encantaba contar historias, fue realmente lo que me fascinó en la vida' (Ortega, 'Prólogo', p.vii).³⁴ In these accounts of his childhood experiences are found Bryce's beginnings as a storyteller. In point of fact, Bryce classes himself as a storyteller rather than a novelist: 'Yo no creo ser un novelista: soy contador de historias. Si yo pudiera usar el micrófono, hablaría y no escribiría' (Hilderbrandt, p. 14).³⁵ Perhaps this is why Bryce's narratives contain abundant digressions and why

³² César Lévano & Alfredo Pita, 'Entrevista: La novela y la vida de Alfredo Bryce', in Julio Ortega & María Fernanda Lander (eds), *Alfredo Bryce Echenique: ante la crítica*, pp. 39-58. Originally published in *El Diario de Marka*, Lima, 9-11 August 1981.

³³ Alfredo Bryce Echenique, 'Instalar el humor en el corazón misma de la tristeza', in Julio Ortega & María Fernanda Lander (eds), *Alfredo Bryce Echenique: ante la crítica*, pp. 4-29. Originally published in *Nuevo Texto Crítico*, vol. 4, n° 8 (segundo semestre de 1991), 52-72.

³⁴ Julio Ortega, 'Prólogo', in Julio Ortega & María Fernanda Lander (eds), *Alfredo Bryce Echenique: ante la crítica*, pp. i-ix. In the same essay Bryce relates his story-telling passion and his inability to distinguish between reality and fiction as his day to day experiences flowed into his imagination: 'Esta mezcla de la realidad y la ficción ha predominado a lo largo de mi vida. Esa relación distorsionada del creador con los seres reales, con el mundo real, ya se estaba dando en mí desde esa temprana edad' (p. vii).

³⁵ César Hildebrandt, 'Entrevista con Alfredo Bryce', in Jorge Coaguila, *Entrevistas escogidas* (Lima: Fondo Cultural Editorial Peruana, 2004), pp. 13-23. Originally published in *Caretas*, Lima, 24 July 1972.

their strength is based on their oral register rather than a tight narrative structure. Bryce has confessed that the structure of a work ‘me interesa poco’ and that what does interest him is ‘simplemente poner mi historia oral en papel’ (Bareiro Saguier, p.34).³⁶ In the same vein, Bryce does not see himself as an intellectual writer, but rather as someone who writes intuitively: ‘Yo siempre he dicho que no soy un escritor inteligente, intelectual, sino visceral, emotivo, intuitivo. Nunca he planificado ni he pensado conscientemente que en determinado momento o en determinada obra debe entrar tal ingrediente’ (González, p.53).³⁷ For these reasons, Bryce’s writing has the effect of a direct stream of consciousness that flows between the author and the pages of his work.

From the above, it is clear that both the digressive and oral nature of Bryce’s works emerge from the same intention to convert the spoken word into print. In both these aspects of his narrative style, the influence of Laurence Sterne and his novel *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (1759-1757),³⁸ whom Bryce admires greatly, are palpable. Bryce has confirmed that Sterne’s masterpiece: ‘tuvo influencia, y grande, en lo formal (más bien debería decir lo informal)’ upon his writings.³⁹ *Tristram Shandy* is arguably the greatest shaggy-dog story in the English

³⁶ Rubén Bareiro Saguier, ‘Entrevista con Alfredo Bryce Echenique’, in Julio Ortega & María Fernanda Lander (eds), *Alfredo Bryce Echenique: ante la crítica*, pp. 31-37. Originally published in *Hispanamérica* (Maryland, College Park), 6 (1974).

³⁷ Esteban González, ‘El escritor y la política’, in Jorge Coaguila, *Entrevistas escogidas* (Lima: Fondo Cultural Editorial Peruana, 2004), pp.49-60. Originally published in *Debate*, N° 48, Lima, December 1987.

³⁸ Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 2003) [1759- 1757].

³⁹ Guadalupe Ruiz, ‘Entrevista epistolar con Alfredo Bryce Echenique’ (1985), in Julio Ortega & María Fernanda Lander (eds), *Alfredo Bryce Echenique: ante la crítica*, pp. 71-81. Originally published in *Granada*, n°11, 19 October 1985. Bryce explained: ‘En efecto, Tristram Shandy es una de las novelas que más me ha gustado en mi vida... hablo de las veraderas y buenas influencias... de aquellas que lo llevan a uno a descubrirse a sí mismo como artista, que le revelan a uno algo oculto en su carácter y estilo ... y por último le dan a uno la justificación suficiente para seguir adelante en lo suyo... Pore eso te digo que más que una influencia formal, las enormes digresiones que hay ya en *Un mundo para Julius* y en *La vida exagerada de Martín Romaña*, ese goce de la escritura que segrega

language and, through its pages, Shandy's love for storytelling is consistently evident. Bryce's novels share many common traits with *Tristram Shandy*, including the first-person narrator that Bryce often employs, the oral register, a relative lack of sentence structure, and of course, frequent forays into digression.⁴⁰ In this last point, the influence of Julio Cortázar is also of great importance.⁴¹ Bryce, for example, admired the fashion in which the Argentine: 'escribía como le daba la gana,'; he admired the fact that Cortázar, 'había roto con una serie de tabúes, que había destrozado la gramática... Es el salto de un estilo atado de manos a un estilo desatado de manos' (Niño de Guzmán).⁴² Whereas many of Sterne's digressive passages borrow from popular scientific theories of the eighteenth century and classical literature, Bryce's works are replete with references to the world of popular culture, such as pop music and the cinema, as well as the inclusion of references to works from the French, English, North American and Spanish literary canons. Sterne's narrator-protagonist, Shandy, whose meandering style of writing and awareness of audience is consistent through the course of the novel, frequently gets caught up in digressions, which he self-consciously refers to: 'As I never had any intention of beginning the Digression, I am making all this preparation for, till I come to the 15th chapter- I have this chapter to put to whatever use I think proper' (Sterne, p.562).⁴³ Sterne even stipulates the necessary protocol that should be adhered to when entering into a literary digression: 'if it is to be a digression, it must

escritura, esos inmensos defectos formales, en estas novelas, ¿no están ya, e inmensos en *Tristram Shandy*? Esa novela me dio, me da la razón, sobre cualquier crítico a la imperfección formal de mis libros' (pp. 77-78).

⁴⁰ For further discussion on the influence of Sterne on Bryce's writings, see Margarita Krakusin, *La novelística de Alfredo Bryce Echenique y la narrativa sentimental* (Madrid: Editorial Pliegos, 1996), pp. 43-66.

⁴¹ Bryce recalls how having been influenced by Cortázar's writings, when he came to writing *Un mundo para Julius*, 'la llené de digresiones: no tiene intriga'; Alfredo Bryce Echenique, 'Instalar el humor en el corazón mismo de la tristeza', *Nuevo Texto Crítico*, N° 8 (second semester 1991), p.63.

⁴² Guillermo Niño de Guzmán, 'Bryce por él mismo', *Oiga*, 2 November 1981.

⁴³ Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*.

be a good frisky one, and upon a frisky subject too, where neither the horse or his rider are to be caught, but by rebound' (Sterne, p.559). Whether or not his digressions are 'frisky' enough as to avoid the reader being overwhelmed is another matter. Bryce's writing, heavily influenced by Sterne, hence seems to have been written 'más con los nervios que con la inteligencia, más por caminos intuitivos e irracionales que por logros culturales' (Bryce, 'Una actitud' p.25).⁴⁴ A further example of Sterne's influence on Bryce's writing is his apparent lack of structure so that he appears to write without planning: 'I write free from the cares, as well as the terrors of the world.- I count not the number of my scars... In a word, my pen takes its course; and I write on as much from the fullness of my heart, as my stomach' (Sterne, p.394). This fashion of writing which allows the author's thoughts to spill forth unmediated is surely what leads to those sentences, to be found in both Sterne and Bryce, that can last entire paragraphs, even pages.

Oral Register and Digression in Bryce's fiction⁴⁵

In an article that appeared in 1990 Bryce wrote: 'la narración hablada puede ser considerada como la actividad más antigua de la humanidad'⁴⁶. He later described the historic importance of the art of storytelling, in a lecture he gave to the Congreso de la República del Perú, in 1999, when he stated: 'el comienzo de la literatura

⁴⁴ Alfredo Bryce Echenique, 'Una actitud ante la literatura y el arte', in César Ferreira & Ismael P. Márquez (eds), *Los mundos de Alfredo Bryce Echenique (Textos críticos)*, pp. 21-27. Originally appeared in *Oiga*, Lima, 25 January 1982, pp. 63-64.

⁴⁵ For an idea of the importance of the digression in Bryce's works, see Lafuente, 'Una poética de la piedad', p. 129, where Bryce admits that, 'si a mis novelas les quitas las digresiones, las dejas sin alma... porque la vida de mis libros está en las digresiones'.

⁴⁶ Alfredo Bryce Echenique, 'El narrador oral', in César Ferreira & Ismael P. Márquez (eds), *Los mundos de Alfredo Bryce Echenique (Textos críticos)*, pp. 51-53. Originally published in *Oiga*, Lima, 5 January 1990, pp. 56-57 (p. 56).

siempre estuvo en el cuento oral'.⁴⁷ Bryce's preference for an oral style of writing is clear in his avowal that 'las mejores historias suceden a aquéllos que saben contar' (p. 12),⁴⁸ which emphasises the privileging of the imaginative faculties in the manner in which a tale is told. Julio Ortega, in his excellent study of Bryce's style, *El hilo del habla: la narrativa de Alfredo Bryce Echenique* (1994), has given much consideration to Bryce's oral style. He writes:

En (su) registro recordar, evocar, extrañar, son un discurso que opera digresivamente, avanzando en la espiral de la conversación, del habla asociativa. El 'yo' es ese movimiento del discurso en la secuencia metonímica que lo desplaza, como el puro recomienzo del acto de recordar en el acto de hablar... Se recobra así, el rumor discursivo de un lenguaje totémico, capaz de proveer la certidumbre, la revelación, el reconocimiento en la fuente de la elocuencia, en la matriz de la charla circular, donde el 'yo' es una fábula, hecho de cuento y de habla.
(Ortega, p.12)

Ortega's analysis of Bryce's style highlights the direct correlative between the oral register and memory. Nostalgia, the recuperation of the past through memory, is, as mentioned above in 'Recurrent Themes', amongst the principal themes in Bryce's literature. Nostalgia is involved, however, with the retrospective emotion of yearning for the past, and in this it differs from the simple act of remembering. The oral register, subjective, intimate and replete with emotion, is hence, conducive to the nostalgic consideration of the past. Ortega notes: 'La oral es también la material de la emotividad' (Ortega, p. 23). The oral style is hence employed in Bryce's narrative to evoke the world of his personal experiences and those of his characters. Bryce employs an oral register in his works in order to communicate emotionally with his reader, placing the latter on a level of understanding equal to his own.⁴⁹ Through the

⁴⁷ Alfredo Bryce Echenique, 'La historia personal de mis libros', paper dictated in the conference, 'El Perú y los albores del Siglo XXI' (1999), *Congreso de la República del Perú* (Lima: Fondo Editorial del Congreso de Perú, 2000), p. 1.

⁴⁸ Alfredo Bryce Echenique, 'La historia personal de mis libros'.

⁴⁹ Jennifer Ann Duncan has observed how one of the principal sources of enjoyment in *Un mundo para Julius* is the possibility for the reader 'to recognize our own world' in that of the novel. See Jennifer Ann Duncan, 'Language as Protagonist: Tradition and Innovation in Bryce Echenique's *Un*

oral register, Bryce's narrative seeks to engage in a dialogue with the reader. This is particularly evident in novels such as *La vida exagerada de Martín Romaña* and *Reo de nocturnidad*, which are narrated from the perspective of a first-person narrator who seeks to recount his story to a listener.⁵⁰ The oral register is the conduit for the expression of emotion, but also for the articulation of autobiography.

Jennifer Ann Duncan, in her excellent paper on *Un mundo para Julius*, also considers Bryce's oral style. She writes that the narrative's 'circumlocutory style', is 'verbal rather than strictly adjectival, dynamic rather than static' (Duncan, p. 151). The characters' 'imitation of the spoken word' (Duncan, p. 151) is a narrative device present throughout Bryce's work. *No me esperen en abril*, for example, begins with an excerpt of dialogue which the reader is privy to: '¡Púchica diegos, cómo sería aquello!' (Bryce, p. 13). These words set the oral tone of the novel, in which dialogue is frequently used as a storytelling device; they also introduce the inclusion of colloquial language. Bryce's preference for colloquial and popular discourse over an elevated style of language further contributes to the verbal register as much of his narrative is 'spoken' rather than 'written', 'heard' rather than 'read'. Bryce's recourse to a colloquial register acts conversely, for example, to Louis-Ferdinand Céline's incorporation of the popular into his works. Whereas slang in Céline is a language of exclusion and hate, in Bryce it serves to co-opt other sectors of society into the narrative.⁵¹ Bryce has also acknowledged the influence of Céline on the oral

mundo para Julius', in César Ferreira & Ismael P. Márquez (eds), *Los mundos de Alfredo Bryce Echenique: nuevos textos críticos*, pp. 147-165. Originally published in *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, XVI (1980), 120-35.

⁵⁰ For further discussion, see Chapter 5 of this thesis.

⁵¹ For an example of Céline's cruel and alienating use of '*argot*', see, his *Voyage au bout de la nuit* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1952): 'Seulement moi, si tu veux savoir... Tout absolument... Eh bien, c'est tout, qui me répugne et me dégoûte à présent! Pas seulement toi!... Tout!... L'amour surtout!... Le tien aussi bien que celui des autres... Les trucs aux sentiments que tu veux faire, veux-tu que je dise à quoi ça ressemble moi? Ça ressemble à faire l'amour dans des chiottes?', p. 493.

nature of his writing which has the quality of an: 'oralidad que viene tal vez de Céline, aunque en mi caso menos violenta y algo más mordaz. Menos amarga'.⁵²

Bryce has stated his objectives regarding this matter, which constitute an act of rebellion against the marginalisation imposed upon those subjects to whom language can act as an exclusionary vehicle: 'yo he querido recuperar ese lenguaje y hacerlo estallar en una oralidad más incluyente y menos excluyente que tuvimos nosotros' (Lafuente: p. 119). As the colloquial language is particular to Peru, it also situates the novels within the specific geographical framework of Bryce's native country or identifies the narrator and characters as Peruvians. Hence, the reader often has the impression that he is listening in to a conversation at a point not far from the centre of the narrative's action, which reduces the distance between the narrator/character and the reader. The distance between the narrator and the implied reader is further reduced when the narrator speaks directly to the implied reader. A good example of this is found in *Un mundo para Julius* when the narrator says: 'Se escapaba hacia la sección servidumbre del palacio que era, ya lo hemos dicho, como un lunar de carne en el rostro más bello' (p. 78). The expression 'ya lo hemos dicho' not only gives the reader the impression that he is involved in an ongoing conversation, but also suggests the complicity involved between the reader and narrator, whose perspective the latter is intended to adopt.⁵³ Duncan also notes the lack of narrative structure in *Un mundo para Julius* which she reads as a series of anecdotes: 'There is in fact no

⁵² Rubén Barreiro, 'Entrevista con Alfredo Bryce Echenique', in Julio Ortega & María Fernanda Lander (eds), *Alfredo Bryce Echenique: ante la crítica*, pp. 31-37 (p. 36).

⁵³ For further discussion on the oral register of Bryce's narrative, see Wolfgang A. Luchting, *Alfredo Bryce: humores y malhumores* (Lima: Editorial Milla Batres, 1975).

plot as such; the narrative is comprised of various anecdotes' (Duncan, p.150).⁵⁴ This evaluation could also be applied to *Dos señoras conversan*, *Reo de nocturnidad* and *No me esperen en abril*, since the narratives appear to involve the sequencing and ordering of anecdotes, rather than operating through tightly structured linear trajectories. The reader has the impression that he is being told a series of short stories that have been grouped together, a fact which further promotes the novels' orality.⁵⁵

The recurrent recourse to digressive passages is also revelatory of the novels' oral register. In Bryce's own words, the digression is borne from 'el goce de la escritura', and consists in:

abandonar el hilo central, la intriga, perder el sendero por una buena historia que se nos viene a la mente mientras estamos contando otra historia... perder el tiempo, única forma de impedir que el tiempo lo pierda a uno. (Ruiz, p. 78)⁵⁶

In Bryce's novels, digressions can span the duration of whole chapters, as is the case with the three chapters in *No me esperen en abril* entitled: 'Alicia en el país de las Maravillas', 'La lavandera y el Caballero de la Orden de Malta' and 'Historia de amor de Marlen Von Perpall y Judas Tarrillo con subteniente Panteón Motta incluido para por poder amar a Marlen, él también'. These three chapters, found in the second section of the novel, recount the amorous adventures of Manongo Sterne's peers, but are entirely incidental to Manongo's own story. The title of the third chapter is in

⁵⁴ Jennifer Ann Duncan, 'Language as Protagonist: Tradition and Innovation in Bryce Echenique's *Un mundo para Julius*', in César Ferreira & Ismael P. Márquez (eds), *Los mundos de Alfredo Bryce Echenique: nuevos textos críticos*, pp. 147-65.

⁵⁵ David Wood writes: 'As J. Ann Duncan points out, the abolition of a structural hierarchy which typifies certain other innovative Latin American novels (such as *Pedro Páramo* or *Rayuela*) is not a feature of *Un mundo para Julius*. Instead there is a conventional framework and a chronological progression in the sequence of events. As Duncan also notes, however, "neither the events nor their sequence is really significant; they could all be replaced by others, or could occur in a different order."' See David Wood, *The Fictions of Alfredo Bryce Echenique*, p. 33.

⁵⁶ Guadalupe Ruiz, 'Entrevista epistolaria con Alfredo Bryce Echenique', in Julio Ortega & María Fernanda Lander (eds), *Alfredo Bryce Echenique: ante la crítica*, pp. 71-81 (p. 78).

itself revelatory of the digressive nature and oral language that Bryce employs throughout the work. Their inclusion is testament to Bryce's love of spinning yarns, and is the reason for which, together with the many other digressive passages to be found in the work, the novel is of such substantial length.⁵⁷ Alluding specifically to Tristran Shandy, 'la extraordinaria novela inglesa', but also to other works in the same style, Bryce writes of how these 'novelas de digresionistas, de enamoradas de contar una historia, de gente que deja incluso capítulos inconclusos, que mete un ensayo, que mete una poema', were the impetus that 'me fueron autorizando a seguir por mi propio camino' (Bryce, 'Instalar el humor', p. 20).⁵⁸ Digression, for Bryce is also a means of establishing a communication process with his reader: 'siendo mi literatura bastante oral, una narración que yo cuento a un presunto lector, mantengo para mí el derecho de alargarla como se alarga a veces una conversación que es buena y agradable' (Bareiro, p. 34).⁵⁹ In point of fact, the whole of *Reo de nocturnidad*, to be discussed in Chapter 5, is narrated through digressions based on oral memories. The digressive strategy is hence closely linked to the recuperation and reconstruction of memory.⁶⁰ It is important to note that Bryce is aware of the

⁵⁷ Bryce has written of the digression in association with the oral narrators who told their stories verbally before the advent of the printed word: 'esta gente contaba gratuitamente, perdía el hilo, nunca volvía más a él... la oralidad finalmente es el gran placer de estos espectáculos públicos que al parecer remontan a tiempos homéricos', in Alfredo Bryce Echenique, 'Instalar el humor en el corazón de la tristeza', in Julio Ortega & María Fernanda Lander (eds), *Alfredo Bryce Echenique: ante la crítica* (Caracas: Monte Ávila Editores, 2004), pp. 4-29. Originally published in *Nuevo Texto Crítico*, Stanford, vol.4, n°8 (segundo semestre de 1991), 52-72.

⁵⁸ Alfredo Bryce Echenique, 'Instalar el humor en el corazón de la tristeza', in Julio Ortega & María Fernanda Lander (eds), *Alfredo Bryce Echenique: ante la crítica* (Caracas: Monte Ávila Editores, 2004), pp. 4-29. Originally published in *Nuevo Texto Crítico*, Stanford, vol.4, n°8 (segundo semestre de 1991), 52-72.

⁵⁹ Rubén Bareiro, 'Entrevista con Alfredo Bryce Echenique', in Julio Ortega & María Fernanda Lander (eds), *Alfredo Bryce Echenique: ante la crítica*, pp. 31-37. Originally appeared in *Hispamérica*, 6, (1974).

⁶⁰ For further discussion of the relationship between the narrator and implied reader in Bryce's narrative, see Rosanna Merino Silicani, 'Discurso que refiere y discurso referido en *Un mundo para Julius*', *Lexis*, XIV. 2 (1990), 241-253, and Cecilia Lesevic, 'Una lectura transtextual de los cuadernos de Bryce Echenique', *Lexis*, XIV. 1 (1990), 7-79. See also Wolfgang A. Luchting, *Alfredo Bryce: humores y malhumores* (Lima: Editorial Milla Batres, 1975).

tradition of oral literature in Peru that starts with Caviedes and continues through the writings of Ricardo Palma and Mario Vargas Llosa.⁶¹

Of significance to the oral register in Bryce's novels is the changing narrative perspective which gives the effect of heteroglossia as the words of different characters are interwoven into the text. The interchangeability of perspective facilitates a more intimate understanding of the works' secondary characters and also provides the reader with alternative versions of events. A good example of this is the frequent incorporation of Tere's words and thoughts into the principal narrative voice in *No me esperen en abril*:

Definitivamente, piensa Tere, Manongo no ve las cosas como los demás las ven ni es como los demás son, Manongo, piensa Tere, es como nadie es así. Y eso le gusta y la asusta. Pero sin embargo ella se ríe y trata de bromear y entonces también él piensa que si la vida es tan atroz en las perezosas de los barcos, en los transatlánticos que regresan de los amores muertos para siempre, una muchacha como Tere, por más sensible que sea, no tiene el menor derecho a ser tan alegre y tan traviesa.

(Bryce, *No me esperen*, p.68)

Y además, la felicidad es algo frívolo, inexistente, o existente sólo en la música barata y en las novelas para imbeciles, en los radioteatros y esas cosas... Y se lo prueba, además: el momento más doloroso de su vida había sido Tere...¿Cuál, Manongo? Pues el otro día, Tere, cuando apareciste tú en esa fiesta y desapareciste en seguida... Pero si yo, en cambio Manongo, me quedé feliz, me quedé encantada y llena de esperanzas... ¡Tere, por Dios! (Bryce, *No me esperen*, p. 68)

Punctuating the narrative with the words and feelings of the characters also allows the narrative to penetrate into their innermost thought processes, allowing the reader to know them more intimately. This perspective which contributes to the oral tone is

⁶¹ Bryce is very much aware of the oral literary tradition in Peru. See for example Ricardo Palma's gossip-laden *Tradiciones Peruanas* and Vargas Llosa's *Conversación en la catedral*. Bryce writes of 'el placer de narrar, el placer de ser yo, que me unía con tradiciones que habían existido y que también estaba en la literatura de mi país. Estaban en la oralidad, en el coloquialismo, de un Ricardo Palma', in Alfredo Bryce Echenique, 'Instalar el humor en el corazón mismo de la tristeza', in Julio Ortega & María Fernanda Lander (eds), *Alfredo Bryce Echenique: ante la crítica*, pp. 52-72 (p. 64).

further facilitated by the frequent recourse to interior monologue and free indirect speech.

Forms and Use of Humour and Irony

Although Sterne's narrative is laden with examples of satire and bawdy humour, Bryce's humour can perhaps best be seen as deriving from Cervantes's *Don Quixote*. Humour in Bryce exists precisely in the distance between, on the one hand, the characters' lack of understanding of the situation that they find themselves in and, on the other hand, the reader's informed understanding of the situation. For this reason, Bryce's humour is often ironic. Since Bryce's characters are situated 'por bajo la línea de visión de las demás', as Juristo explains, they are best positioned 'para desvelar las miserias del mundo' (Juristo, p.29).⁶² Bryce's humour is generally of a tragicomic nature since he resorts so frequently to humour in order to make reality more palatable; humour thus acts as a palliative in Bryce's literary universe. Once again the influence of Cortázar is present, as Bryce acknowledges: 'un escritor humorista no es un escritor irresponsable. Yo creo que, como dice Cortázar, el humor es la manera de ver el lado cómicamente serio de la realidad y que es una arma increíblemente sutil, de observación, de penetración de la realidad' (Ferreira & Márquez, p.42).⁶³ For Bryce, then, humour is a vehicle that can be employed to better understand reality especially when that reality is negative or makes one uncomfortable: 'El humor, creo, yo, es la sonrisa de la razón, siempre y cuando no sea mera comicidad o escarnio, cosa de la que huyo como de la peste. Vela la

⁶² Alfredo Bryce Echenique & Juan Ángel Juristo, *Para que duela menos* (Madrid: Editorial Espasa Calpe, S.A., 1995).

⁶³ Alfredo Bryce Echenique, 'Confesiones sobre el arte de vivir y escribir novelas', in César Ferrerria & Ismael P. Márquez (eds), *Los mundos de Alfredo Bryce Echenique: nuevos textos críticos*, pp. 29-44. Originally published in *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos*, 417 (March 1985), 67-76.

realidad, pero solo para sugerirla mejor y crea además lazos fraternales con el lector' (Bondy, p.82).⁶⁴ Bryce has described Cervantes's humour as a gentle humour: 'la ironía cervantina... es simplemente el ponerte en el pellejo del otro. Es un humor equiparador. Te hace entender al otro, a dialogar con él, a que tolere las opiniones del otro.'⁶⁵ Bryce employs humour as a means of bridging the gap between himself as author, the narrator and the reader; if they can laugh at the same experience, they share a common bond. In this way, humour establishes a community between characters, narrator and reader, providing, as Liliana Checa points out, the humorist is of lower moral stature than the object of his humour:

Cuando los episodios cómicos carecen de complicaciones la risa resulta natural, pero cuando la estatura moral de los burlados es superior a la de los burladores, la risa resulta incómoda. Por eso no podemos compartir el humor de Juan Lucas cuando se burla de la servidumbre, gente que para él carecen de sentimientos, o de los Duques que le toman el pelo descaradamente a Don Quijote en casi toda la segunda parte.⁶⁶

Humour is at the very heart of Bryce's narratives; he builds them around strikingly ludicrous situations and embellishes their account with word play, or verbal humour. A good example is seen in the novella *Los grandes hombres son así. Y también así* (1990). The narrator, Santiago receives a telephone call from his friend Raúl, from a Parisian morgue, where he is mourning the death of his wife. Rather than console his friend, Santiago makes him an absurd proposition, which is to accompany him to the jungle to exterminate spiders, a creature of which Santiago is mortally afraid. It is worth quoting the text in full, to give an idea of Bryce's aesthetic aim:

Sabes perfectamente bien que me vine a vivir a Europa porque el porcentaje

⁶⁴ Juan Carlos Bondy, 'El humor es la sonrisa de la razón', in Jorge Coaguila, *Entrevistas escogidas*, pp. 79-88. Originally published in *Domingo*, supplement of *La República*, Lima, 19 June 1994.

⁶⁵ Enrique Planas, 'El primo de Tarzán', in Jorge Coaguila, *Entrevistas escogidas*, pp. 89-95. Originally published in *Diario El Sol*, Lima, 10 July 1998.

⁶⁶ Liliana Checa, 'Commentary', on Alfredo Bryce Echenique, '*Charla magistral: 'Del humor quevedesco a la ironía cervantina'*' (Lima: Universidad Peruana de Ciencias Aplicadas, 1998), pp. 51-7 (p. 54).

de arañas, sobre todo en las ciudades, es infinitivamente mejor que en el tercer mundo peruano, y, por consiguiente, las posibilidades de toparse con un monstruo de ésos es muy remota, siempre y cuando te abstengas de salir al campo, ese horrible lugar en el que los pollos se pasean desnudos, a decir de los civilizados ingleses.⁶⁷

From the above example we see how humour functions in Bryce in two complementary ways. Firstly, Bryce creates an absurd situation (Santiago moved to Paris to avoid spiders) and, secondly, through the quips that punctuate the text (mocking the English for being so prudish that they are offended by even animals being naked). In Bryce's fiction the way in which an idea or situation is expressed is as important as the idea or situation itself.

It is necessary to consider Bryce's *Charla Magistral*, entitled 'Del humor quevedesco a la ironía', delivered at San Marcos on 9 July 1998, in order to locate Bryce's fiction within the Cervantine tradition of irony.⁶⁸ Bryce begins with a citation from Mikhail Bakhtin's, *Popular Culture in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, about the humour of Rabelais:

La verdadera risa, ambivalente y universal, no excluye lo serio sino que lo purifica y lo completa. Lo purifica de dogmatismo, de unilateralidad, de esclerosis, de fantasismo y espíritu categórico, del miedo y la intimidación, del didactismo, de la ingenuidad y de las ilusiones, de la nefasta fijación a un único nivel, y de agotamiento.

(Bryce, 'Charla magistral', p.18)

For Bryce, the above are the functions of humour in literature through the ages and outline the effects that he himself attempts to achieve through its uses. This does not mean to say that Bryce's humour lacks serious intention for, as he says of Buster Keaton and Chaplin: 'Ellos saben que no hay asunto más serio que la risa' (Bryce,

⁶⁷ Alfredo Bryce Echenique, *Los grandes hombres son así. Y también así*, in *Dos señoras conversan* (Barcelona: Plaza & János, 1990), p. 171.

⁶⁸ Alfredo Bryce Echenique, 'Charla magistral: 'Del humor quevedesco a la ironía cervantina'', (Lima: Universidad Peruana de Ciencias Aplicadas, 1998), pp. 19-48.

‘Charla magistral’, p. 20). Humour not only involves laughing at the absurdities and cruelties of life but also the ability to laugh at oneself, to not take oneself too seriously. Bryce then quotes Erica Young, in her novel, *Fear of Flying*:

Yo no creía en sistemas. Todo lo humano era imperfecto y absurdo, en última instancia. Entonces, ¿en qué creía? En el humor. En reírme de los sistemas, de la gente, de uno mismo. En reírme aun de mi propia necesidad de reírme constantemente. En ver la vida, multilateral, diversa, divertida, trágica, y con momentos de belleza terrible.

For Young as for Bryce, humour is an act of rebellion and establishment of identity. It is also about laughing at the tragic. Bryce’s narrator/characters like Martín Romaña or Max Gutiérrez in *Reo de nocturnidad*, discover that the act of learning to laugh at oneself can be therapeutic as a result of its self-reflexivity. Bryce comments on how Cicero elevated humour by attributing to it ‘un inmenso poder catártico y purificador’ (Bryce, ‘Charla magistral’, p. 27). Humour in Bryce can also denounce injustice, specifically that of the Peruvian oligarchy, as is the case in *No me esperen en abril* or *Dos señoras conversan*, as we shall see in Chapters 3 and 4. The laughter here is borne of the moral superiority of the narrator and intended readers over the characters. In a similar vein we laugh at the dreams and pretensions of the Céspedes Salinas twins in *El huerto de mi amada*, simply because we are aware of their unrealistic nature, whereas the twins are entirely unaware. Humour in Bryce’s narrative is hence based on observation and is in the reader’s, rather than the characters’, purview.

Bryce’s *Charla magistral* is centred upon the distinction between the styles of humour employed by Quevedo and Cervantes. Through the course of his argument it becomes clear that Bryce’s form of humour negates Quevedo’s model and espouses

Cervantes'. Bryce refers to the 'terreno de lo sarcástico y cruel, como en Quevedo, y de lo sonriente, tierno y irónico, como en Cervantes' (Bryce, 'Charla magistral', p. 29). It is important to note that, although Bryce gently mocks his characters, his criticisms are never acerbic. Quevedo's humour is entirely lacking in compassion; his satire is malicious whereas Cervantine irony, like Brycean humour, is full of compassion and sensitivity. Irony in Bryce, as in Cervantes, is subtle and revelatory; for this reason it can arrive at a 'realismo extremo' (Bryce, 'Charla magistral', p. 30). Hence, as Bryce acknowledges, 'la más mínima reflexión de un humorista se convierte en un diablillo que desmonta el mecanismo de cualquier personaje, de cualquier fantasma urdido por el sentimiento, que lo desarma para ver cómo está hecho' (Bryce, 'Charla magistral' p. 32); humour in Bryce is an exploratory tool that permits the unveiling of reality, the evaluation of the self and his surroundings. Irony, Bryce notes, is intellectual and is based therefore on a shared understanding and perspective between the narrator and readers. It excludes those characters who are of an inferior intelligence or cultural awareness, but is still 'tierno' in its mocking of those characters with whom the reader empathises. Satire, Bryce notes, on the other hand, is alienating and dehumanises (p. 40); Bryce's use of irony renders his characters all the more human by alluding to the weakness and idiosyncrasies that we see reflected in ourselves.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ For further discussion of humour in Bryce's narrative, see María Rita Corticelli, *La narrativa de Alfredo Bryce Echenique* (Lima: Instituto de Investigaciones Humanísticas, Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos, 2003), pp. 65-71. See also Julio Villanueva Chang, '“En la cojera de todo poder está la grandeza del humorista”: entrevista con Alfredo Bryce Echenique', in César Ferreira & Ismael P. Márquez (eds), *Los mundos de Alfredo Bryce Echenique: nuevos textos críticos*, pp. 643-55.

For the very reasons stated above, which amount to an experimental style of narrative, Bryce, like Cervantes, Sterne and Rabelais should be considered a postmodern writer, as Ortega has stipulated.⁷⁰ José Luis de la Fuente observes:

Sobre todo en sus novelas, pero también en su cuentos... se aglutinan esas direcciones que va marcando la narrativa que se ha dado en llamar posmoderna: el requerimiento del papel activo del lector, la violación de las fronteras entre realidad y ficción, la marginalidad de los personajes y el propio narrador, y el papel del testimonio y la nostalgia, que junto a procedimientos como la carnavilización, la parodia o la metanarración y el uso de la cultura popular, conforman un universo literario que demuestra, desde su anclaje en la modernidad, la superación de ésta.

(José Luis de la Fuente, p. 23)⁷¹

⁷⁰ See Julio Ortega, *El hilo del habla*, pp. 32-33: 'El yo es una instancia posmoderna... el yo de la crisis, de la civilización moral contemporánea, en la cual nos reconocemos mutuamente vulnerables, y al recomienzo de una política de la cultura comunitaria.'

⁷¹ José Luis de la Fuente, *Más allá de la modernidad: los cuentos de Alfredo Bryce Echenique*, p. 23.

Chapter 2: Socio-Political Background

In order to provide an adequate assessment of the portrayal of the oligarchy in Bryce's novels and, indeed, to answer the question as to whether he can be pigeon-holed as an oligarchic writer, it will be necessary to offer an historical overview of the development of the oligarchy in Peru. As we shall see, the oligarchy was not a static social class, but changed dramatically in the mid-twentieth century. Bryce was linked to – though not wholly defined by – the fortunes of the oligarchy in Peru, as we shall see. Three of the novels considered in this thesis focus on the reactions of members of the Lima oligarchy to the changes taking place in their society and the hostile relations between the upper class and the middle and lower classes. It is necessary therefore to define the term 'oligarchy' and to trace the history of the oligarchy in Peru. Indeed, the very existence of the Lima oligarchy has been brought into question and is a matter which has generated much debate amongst sociologists and economists whose studies focus on the distribution of wealth and the administration of power in Peru. Bryce has been labelled an oligarch by many critics, but as Abelardo Sánchez León has suggested, this is possibly a misconception.¹

The purpose of this chapter is to establish whether or not the small group of Peruvian families who are said to hold the monopoly over political and economic power in Lima can be considered to constitute an oligarchy. I will first trace the history of this supposed oligarchy from its genesis in colonial times to the present day and then assess the extent of its power. This latter question will involve a consideration of the sources of the oligarchy's power and an examination of the extent of its influence in

¹ See Abelardo Sánchez León, 'Un cierto imaginario oligárquico en la narrativa de Alfredo Bryce Echenique', in César Ferreira & Ismael P. Márquez (eds), *Los mundos de Alfredo Bryce Echenique*, pp. 569-603.

Peruvian political, commercial and economical life. I will then consider Bryce's interpretation of Lima's elitist classes, with the aim of establishing whether or not his position as a member of the upper class has conditioned his vision of the oligarchy and, whether his views confirm or reject the observations and analyses found in the studies of established scholars. Thus I will be able to establish whether Bryce forms part of the 'succession of Peruvian writers' who, in the words of Richard H. Stephens, are 'vehement in condemning the supposed moral and personal deficiencies of the upper class'.²

The Oligarchy in Lima

In his study on wealth and power in Peru, Richard H. Stephens writes that Peruvian society and social relations in the city of Lima are 'strictly hierarchical' in nature (Stephens, p. 5).³ As a starting point I will consider José Matos Mar's compilation of essays on Lima's oligarchy, entitled *La oligarquía en en Perú* (1969),⁴ which was written around the time in which *No me esperen en abril* and *El huerto de mi amada* are set.⁵ Published a year after the agrarian reforms of 1968, the study was written during the oligarchy's final fall. Matos Mar summarises three principal arguments. According to Mar, the first of these is held by French sociologist François Bourricaud, for whom the existence of a national oligarchy in Peru was an 'hecho incontestable' (Mar, p. 7). Mar writes that Bourricaud conceived the Peruvian

² Richard H. Stephens, *Wealth and Power in Peru*, p. 111.

³ Richard H. Stephens, *Wealth and Power in Peru* (Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press Inc., 1971).

⁴ José Matos Mar, *La oligarquía en Perú*, ed. José Matos Mar (Buenos Aires: Amorrortu editors, 1969).

⁵ Although *Dos señoras conversan* is set in the 1980s, the period that the sisters reflect on and consider the golden age of their lives took place between the 1930s and the 1960s.

oligarchy at this time as ‘un núcleo de familias que ejerce estrecho control sobre la vida económica del país, que extiende sus tentáculos hasta la distribución del crédito, de la importación y exportación y de la especulación inmobiliaria’ (Mar, p. 7). Mar does, however, draw attention to Bourricault’s belief that, although the oligarchy did hold a monopoly over the Peruvian economy and commercial relations, its power was threatened due to the fact that ‘las fronteras que la separan de otros grupos se hacen cada vez más difíciles de delimitar’ (Mar, p. 7). For Bourricault, then, the oligarchy existed, but its position was an unstable one and this instability is reflected in *No me esperen en abril* which, along with *Un mundo para Julius*, recounts the collapse of oligarchic power structures in Peru.

Mar goes on to summarize the argument of Jorge Bravo Bresani who, he writes, believed that the Peruvian oligarchy was at this time a ‘mito’ (Mar, p. 8), yet one predicated on a ‘base real’ which he locates ‘en la trama de las relaciones del poder económico’, and ‘en la red que constituyen los sistemas de intercambio de informaciones y de control de los créditos exterior e interior’ (Mar, p. 8). However, according to Mar, Bresani maintained that true political and economic power in Peru was the domain of ‘empresas anónimas gigantescas’ which were generally ‘extranjeras o dirigidas desde el extranjero’ (Mar, p. 8). For Bresani, then, true economic power in Peru was commanded by imperialist relations and thus lay in the hands of foreign investors. This theory undermines the former contention that there existed an all-powerful group of wealthy Peruvian families controlling the country’s economic relations, both internally and on an external level, because the group ‘carece de capacidad autónoma de decisión y no es permanente ni homogénea’ (Mar,

p. 8). Both *Dos señoras conversan* and *No me esperen en abril* show that the oligarchy's power did not, indeed, endure.⁶

According to Mar, a third observer, Favre, conceded that the *limeño* oligarchy was a reality. He writes that for Favre, 'como para Bourricauld, las 44 familias no configuran un mito, sino una realidad. La oligarquía peruana existe, y es algodонера y azucarera' (Mar, p. 8). However, according to Mar, Favre's vision differs from that of Bourricauld because he believes that the oligarchy in Peru had already undergone a series of dramatic transitions, including its fusion with an emerging class of capitalists whose origins were found within and outside national boundaries. Thus he writes: 'al diversificar sus actividades y al extenderlas más allá del cuadro estrictamente peruano (la oligarquía) se ha fusionado con una clase capitalista que dirige una economía sin fronteras' (Mar, p. 9). Contrary to Bresani, then, Favre believed that although the Peruvian oligarchy existed, it no longer consisted merely of old aristocratic families but encompassed a new class of Peruvian capitalists as well as foreign investors. This ongoing polemic that articulates the indecision amongst scholars suggests that the oligarchy's fortunes were on the verge of turning and is a view that Bryce's fiction corroborates. With these perspectives in mind, the question needs to be asked: what defines the existence of an oligarchy?

François Bourricauld⁷ defines the term oligarchy as 'un grupo muy reducido (en el Perú se habla de 44 familias...) estrechamente solidario, ligado por vínculos de parentesco o amistad, que controla la riqueza... sin participar directamente en su

⁶ Marvin Alinsky's views concede with this perspective. The first chapter in his study on Peruvian politics contains a sub-section entitled 'The Oligarchy of Yesteryear'. See Marvin Alinsky, *Peruvian Political Perspective* (Tempe, Arizona: Arizona State University, 1975), p.10.

⁷ François Bourricauld, 'Notas acerca de la oligarquía peruana', in *La oligarquía en el Perú*, (ed.) José Matos Mar, pp. 13-44.

producción, y que reina en estados o pseudoestados a los que pretende tratar como su patrimonio más o menos individuo' (Mar, p. 14). Stephens's definition is of a more sociological nature as it encompasses the effects of minority rule on all social classes. In defining an oligarchy, he writes: 'Such persons are an élite consisting mainly of a number of well-known families, persons who identify each other as élite. This upper class comprises many functional élites impossible to define with any precision, other than they share common sets of values' (Stephens, p. 5).⁸ He draws attention to the reverse side of the coin when he states that: 'Most of the rest of the population are effectively excluded from power', adding, 'the wealth that flows from possession is equally denied them' (Stephens, p. 5). This reiterates Bourricault's belief that the existence of an oligarchy or an élitist minority is defined by a situation whereby 'entre las diversas categorías sociales se observa una asimetría, más o menos pronunciada, y que este "efecto de dominación" se ejerce en provecho de unos cuantos que deciden en nombre -o en lugar- de todos' (Mar, 13). In fact, for Talcott Parsons, it is this very imbalance in wealth and power that characterises under developed societies: 'Lo que caracteriza a la sociedad subdesarrollada es la oposición, la polarización entre una alta clase especializada en actividades político-religiosas, que reina sobre una masa que se dedica principalmente a las actividades agrícolas' (Parsons, 107).⁹

For Bourricault, the oligarchy was comprised of *hacendados* whose members 'se reclutan entre los modernos productores de las grandes materias primas tropicales y exportables' (Mar, p. 7) and whose wealth is the result of 'los ingresos que les

⁸ Richard H. Stephens, *Wealth and Power in Peru*.

⁹ Talcott Parsons, *Structure and Process in Modern Society* (Glencoe: Free Press of Glencoe, 1956).

proporciona el cultivo del azúcar y del algodón' (Mar, p. 7). Yet if we are to accept his belief that at the same time the oligarchy in Lima was a '*grupo reducido no constituido por empresarios, ni por burócratas, ni por políticos*' (Mar, p. 13), we need to question how they managed to obtain control over public affairs and maintain this control over time and from a distance. In order to do this it will be useful here to consider the birth of the oligarchy and its ensuing history. Henri Favre provides a synopsis of the origins and transformations of the Peruvian oligarchy from its beginnings as regional aristocracies to the formation of a national oligarchy.¹⁰

After the defeat of the Spanish at Ayacucho in 1824 Peru was left '*sin élite*' (Favre, p. 73), with no-one successfully regaining the control that the Spanish Crown had maintained until its departure. The reason Favre gives for the *criollos* inability to create national cohesion is that there was no '*personal calificado capaz de ejercer el gobierno con la plenitud de sus anteriores prerrogativas*' (Favre, p. 73). He further stipulates: '*Durante todo el régimen colonial, la Corona, en forma deliberada, separó de la función pública a criollos y mestizos, y reservó a los nacidos en la península los cargos administrativos y los honores concomitantes*' (Favre, p. 73). As such, national unity disintegrated and small, vaguely confederated regional societies were formed. Real power then, was assumed by the appropriation of lands and exercised by '*las aristocracias terratenientes que dominan las sociedades regionales y que, cada una en su región, no dejan de extender sus privilegios y de acaparar cada vez más tierras, concentrando en ellas la propiedad*' (Favre, p. 73). This appropriation of lands by

¹⁰ Henri Favre, 'El desarrollo y las formas del poder oligárquico en el Perú', in *La oligarquía en el Perú*, ed. José Matos Mar, pp. 71-115.

wealthy aristocratic *criollo* families was to continue throughout the nineteenth century.

New legislation introduced into the Civil Code in 1852 which abolished all forms of census allowed national properties to be liberated and freed for purchase. Thus new *haciendas* could be created from collective lands belonging to the Indians. Wealthy families saw their properties grow in size and consequently their personal wealth increased. In addition to these new legislative measures, prefects were inciting the Indian population to renounce their existing rights to land (the result of decrees introduced by Simón Bolívar on 8 April and 4 July 1824) and to relinquish them to the local landowners. The expropriation of the land belonging to the Indians was a nationwide phenomena and epitomes the abuse inflicted by the conquering culture upon the autochthonous peoples. José Gregorio Paz Soldán, the governor of the province of Castriveirreyna, summed up the situation in 1868, when he wrote: 'Se ha constituido una nueva clase de propietarios que convierte a los indios en esclavos, sin tener siquiera que comprarlos, que los coloca bajo su yugo total y que los somete a la abyección y al embrutecimiento' (Favre, p. 76). In addition, the Indians, reduced to a status of dependence and 'ligados a la propiedad donde [habían] nacido' (Favre, p. 76) were denied 'el derecho de desplazarse', thus becoming for Favre, 'el producto directo de un cierto sistema de relaciones de dominación y dependencia' (Favre, p. 77).

What is clear however, is that power in Peru became centralised, with wealth and political affairs being concentrated in the coastal region and specifically in Lima.

Favre provides an explanation of how this shift took place which demonstrates that the genesis of the Lima oligarchy was not accidental:

La sociedad de la costa se ve singularmente afectada por una serie de cambios profundos. Bajo el efecto de estos cambios, la aristocracia de la costa se transforma y se carga de un nuevo dinamismo, extiende progresivamente su poder por el resto país, avasallando, desplazando y después marginando a las aristocracias de terratenientes del interior, de las cuales no se había diferenciado sustancialmente hasta ahora. Emprende la reestructuración del Perú fraccionado, dividido en regiones autónomas, dentro de un estado unitario que crea y en que desarrolla los organismos, y donde, cada vez más centraliza el poder en su provecho. En resumen, tiende a afirmarse como oligarquía nacional. (Favre, p. 78)

One such change that permitted the recovery of the oligarchy in Lima took place in 1850 and involved the exportation of *guano* or bird faeces. The revenues from the *guano* industry provided the government in Lima with the financial means to exercise authority in the provinces and were invested in coastal *haciendas*. 1850 was a time when ‘los propietarios de las haciendas de la costa gozaban de gran disponibilidad financiera para su explotación’ which, coupled with the mechanisation of the coastal industries of sugar cane and cotton, saw the coastal aristocracies assume the lead. As Bourricault notes: ‘En contraste con las haciendas de la sierra... la hacienda azucera y algodонера de la costa... es una empresa capitalista que dispone de medios técnicos poderosos costosos’ (Bourricault, pp. 20-1). In this way a constellation of economic empires came into being, through which finance, banking, imports and exports were controlled. Government tactics also played a role in the centralising of power in the capital, for, as Favre notes: ‘Los diversos gobiernos republicanos practican en Lima una libertad política de manumisión, para tratar de ampliar así la base de su poder’ (Favre, p. 79).

By 1961, approximately the era in which *Un mundo para Julius* and *No me espren en abril* are set, the coastal economy was firmly established. According to Julio Cotler, 'En 1961, la costa tenía el 47% de la población total y aportaba el 61% del ingreso nacional, lo que determinaba que el ingreso por persona fuera 23% superior al promedio nacional' (Cotler, p. 18).¹¹ These statistics reveal the dramatic imbalance in wealth between the coastal and sierra and Amazon regions. If we consider that a small minority of the Peruvian population possessed the majority of the wealth, we get an idea of just how wealthy the élite class of Lima had become compared to the rest of the population. To arrive at this position, however, the Peruvian oligarchy had undergone various metamorphoses.

Despite varying opinions on whether an 'oligarchy', in the true sense of the word, existed at this time in Lima, most critics agreed that an upper class of élite Peruvian families ruled. Contrary to European countries, where the monied classes have built their wealth upon the administration and organisation of production, critics such as Bourricauld believe that: 'En la mayoría de los países latinoamericanos, el núcleo de la oligarquía no está constituido por los dirigentes de una industria naciente, sino en primer lugar, por los propietarios de tierras' (Bourricauld, p. 17). This goes some way to explaining the collapse of oligarchies in countries such as Peru where wealth is based upon ownership of land. Bresani, on the other hand, did not conceive of the ruling élite in Peru as an oligarchy in the typical sense of the word but did concede that a relatively dominant upper class existed at this time and that its members controlled the majority of the wealth and political power, at least within Peru itself.¹²

¹¹ Julio Cotler, *Política y sociedad en el Perú: cambios y continuidades* (Lima: IEP, 1994).

¹² Jorge Bresani Bravo, 'Mito y realidad de la oligarquía peruana', in *La oligarquía en Perú*, ed. José Matos Mar, pp. 45-70.

He describes how, in the post-Independence era, ‘los grupos progresistas y burgueses, compuestos en su mayor parte por extranjeros, asumen el control social y económico, aunque adoptando para ello las formas de comportamiento de las clases aristocráticas desplazadas o absorbidas’ (Bresani, p. 50). Although Bresani refused to coin the term ‘oligarchy’ because the upper class was not comprised of uniquely aristocratic land-owning families, he did accept that a ruling upper class reigned in Peru and that this included capitalists who acquired their wealth through economic and political control obtained at a much later date.

Stephens provides a bridge between the two perspectives when he writes, ‘upper-class Peruvians live happily in both worlds: the colonial feudal order of the past and the cosmopolitan, bustling order of the present’ (Stephens, p. 96)¹³. This notion is supported in *No me esperen en abril* where, as we shall see in Chapter 4, Manongo Sterne socialises at the Country Club which stands as a paragon of the heyday of Lima’s élite and lives in a family whose relationships with their servants mimic the ‘upstairs-downstairs’ model, but later joins his father’s international business projects, hence becoming a representative of what Stephens terms the country’s ‘new rich’, whose position is ‘based in commerce, industry and banking’ (Stephens, p. 103).

Bresani’s essay focuses on the changes in the structure of the oligarchy, from the times of the Spanish based aristocracy to the arrival of the ‘nuevos ricos’ who came from abroad as well as from Peru (Bresani, p. 50). He sees the ‘acceso masivo de las clases burguesas a la cumbre del poder económico y político’ (Bresani, p. 50), as the

¹³ Richard H. Stephens, *Wealth and Power in Peru*.

replacement of the traditional upper classes who underwent a dramatic metamorphosis from a uniquely landowning élite to an élite that comprised both the wealthy *hacendados* and the new 'self-imposed aristocracy' who achieved their goal through economic and hence political control. For Bresani, true economic power lay in the hands of foreign investors and thus the richer element of Peruvian society could not form a true oligarchy in the typical sense of the world. However, he does accept that there existed a body of Peruvian nationals to whom a large share of national wealth belonged. He writes: 'La palabra oligarquía no nos parece... muy apropiada por designar al grupo de nacionales que participan en el poder con otras fuerzas más poderosas' (Bresani, p. 64).

In the second part of this section I wish to look at the roles played by the élite classes in Lima during the second half of the twentieth century, the period in which Bryce's novels are set, and assess the extent of their power. Bourricauld provides one major link between the coastal landowners and the capitalist classes that demonstrates the extent of the power of the Peruvian élite. Speaking of the principal financial enterprises and commercial societies, he writes:

En su presidencia o directorios encontramos a la mayor parte de los grandes propietarios de la costa; y si hacemos la prueba contraria, no tendremos dificultad para verificar que todas las grandes fortunas del azúcar y del algodón se encuentran en el nivel más elevado de los organismos que controlan la distribución del crédito. Los oligarcos presentes en los bancos son también los amos de la importación y exportación. (Bourricauld, p. 22)

He also notes that the same names were found on the director's lists of the different principal national enterprises. Bourricauld also draws attention to the symbiosis that existed between what he terms 'el mundo', that is the circles pertaining to the higher échelons of the social circuit, and the domain of 'los negocios': 'Si se consultan de

manera simultánea las listas de miembros del Club Nacional y de los directorios, esta coincidencia casi no deja de sorprender' (Bourricault, p. 25). The Club Nacional, the playground of the élite, features in *Un mundo para Julius* and *El huerto de mi amada*, whilst the Phoenix Club, Lima's other principle exclusive men's club, figures in *No me esperen en abril* and *Dos señoras conversan*. Needless to say, access to the clubs is barred to members of lower social classes.

Stephens also draws attention to a second overlap: a large proportion of high-ranking politicians emanated from the families of upper-class landowners. He states: 'A significant finding coming out of biographic data on cabinet ministers is the high proportion bearing the names of families identified with the landed élite' (Stephens, p. 105), which demonstrates the extent to which the wealthy of Peru had control over political decision-making, a privilege which in turn they used to their favour. Recalling President Belaunde Terry's cabinet, he notes that of the 68 cabinet ministers, '42 were among the nation's leading landowners' (Stephens, p. 107). Furthermore, the important posts such as the minister of the 'Hacienda' were all held by the rich élite, proving that 'a close tie exists between the holding of land and the holding of power positions (defined mainly as cabinet posts)' (Stephens, p. 107). In fact, under the governments of Belaunde and Prado: '28% of ministers were members of families holding 5,000 ha. or more' and 8% belonged to the 'medium landowner category (1,000- 5,000 ha.)' (Stephens, p. 107). Thus, 39% of all ministers of the decade 1956-1966 belonged to the large or medium-landholders category. These figures show that the landed élite as a class was grossly over-represented in cabinets. Stephens also states that the largest of the landholders had large shares in many of Peru's more lucrative businesses and that the aim of the

larger families was to strategically place members of their families into key positions such as the Cabinet or in banks. Furthermore, they did not permit members of other classes to participate in or share power. Stephens cites the case of one minister, 'a man of many years and honours' who served as a 'cabinet minister, banker, industrialist, diplomat or government adviser (or, as often as not, in a combination of all these) in a rich and varied career' (Stephens, p. 107), to demonstrate the cross-over between positions in power domains. The career of this gentleman is instructive in two ways: it illustrates the links between the worlds of business and politics and also the 'flexibility of the system of patronage which permits a single person to serve under such diverse administrations' (Stephens, p. 52).

As Parsons observes, it is the 'grupo superior' that enjoyed 'las prerrogativas del poder político' whilst the 'grupo inferior' consisted merely of 'campesinos, algunos artesanos y pequeños comerciantes' (Parsons, p. 107). Furthermore, this 'enorme poder de los ricos y de los gobernantes se opone a la impotencia de los pobres y de los gobernados' (Parsons, p. 107). Bresani describes the characteristics of this exchange:

Lo que los franceses denominan 'monde', o sea los altos círculos, más o menos herméticos, donde se realiza la actividad de los grupos – compuestos, en especial por jóvenes y mujeres – de las familias que se consideran a sí mismas bien nacidas y cultivadas, y son reconocidas como tales... 'El mundo' constituye el terreno donde se realiza cierto tipo de intercambios; la influencia social se pone a disposición de los objetivos económicos, haciéndose pagar a sus servicios o recíprocamente. En suma, las relaciones sociales sirven a las relaciones económicas despersonalizadas después de un regateo eficaz... (Bresani, p. 64)

Favre alludes to the extent of the political and economic power of the élite classes when he states that: 'Un partido, una formación, una agrupación política, sea cual

fuere, no dispone de los medios suficientes para gobernar contra la oligarquía' (Favre, p. 91). This claim is supported by Stephens who writes: 'To protect its privileges, the landed élite tends to obstruct the development of new leadership and the creation of new wealth... The result is a rigid structure of political and economic controls, a relatively static social order... their primary interest is in maintaining their power, their style of life and value system' (Stephens, p. 42).

Yet what exactly is Stephens referring to when he alludes to the 'value system' of the upper classes of Peru and specifically Lima? What behaviour patterns and values characterise this affluent group? Firstly, as Bourricault notes, the élite held the monopoly over all matters on the socio-political and economic plains. They even controlled access to their circle, forming a nucleus that is 'rigorosamente cerrado' (Mar, p. 14), something which says much for their attitudes and prejudices. In *No me esperen en abril*, as we shall see in Chapter 4, Indian pupils who attend Manongo's boarding school are relegated to a segregated dormitory, whilst in *El huerto de mi amada*, as will be seen in Chapter 6, the middle-class twins are denied access to the inner circle of the upper classes, despite their perpetual attempts.

Stephens supports Bourricault's view that access into the élitist class was virtually impossible when he observes that:

In all classes one notes passivity and subordination of the individual to those higher in the social scale as outstanding characteristics (...) Prospects for bettering one's place, for members of the lower classes, are virtually nil. 'Keeping distances' is an outstanding trait of the social system (...) (the) lower class is extremely conservative, accepting the existence of strict hierarchy and a pre-ordained low rung on the ladder for members of its class. (Stephens, p. 30)

It would seem that members of all social classes unquestioningly accepted their place in predestined social hierarchies and that transcendence of social class and access into the world of the *élite* was virtually impossible.

It is the study by Stephens that probes most deeply into the ethics and mentalities of the upper classes in Lima. He poses the question: 'What, in general are the values and attitudes instilled in elite youth?' and, provides the following response:

Work is something to be avoided, while leisure is valued, to be interrupted only occasionally by work. Not producing anything, but rather congenial human relationships is what is assiduously pursued, at one's club, among one's cronies at a café, within the extended family, in one's government bureau where one spends two or three hours a day. Upper class Peruvians devote much of their time to congenial social past-times. (Stephens, p. 85)

Two parallels can be drawn between these observations and the characters in the above-mentioned Bryce novels. The first point made is the lack of work ethos instilled in the young members of the *élite*. Julius's older brothers, Santiago and Bobby, are encouraged to ride around in fast cars and pursue their leisure activities, which include visiting brothels, pursuing women and doing weight training by the pool, whereas very little mention is given to them concentrating on their studies or considering career options. Neither is there any attempt made to instil moral values into the boys nor to provide them with a moral education. In the same vein, although their step-father, Juan Lucas has clearly built his wealth upon business transactions, they are rarely mentioned in the narrative. A great deal of attention, however is paid to his leisure time which amounts to a whirlwind of cocktail parties, dinners, trips to Europe and rounds of golf with friends. In fact at no point in the novel do we see Juan Lucas embarking on any kind of business venture, but we do see that he is constantly consuming alcohol in the company of his close circle of friends.

In *No me esperen en abril*, as will be shown in Chapter 4, the founder of the boarding school that Manongo attends, Don Álvaro Harriman y Aliaga, spends more time socialising with friends in the prestigious Phoenix Club, than at his government office, where he does indeed spend only a couple of hours a day. Bryce's observations about the work ethics of the *élite* do indeed corroborate the findings of Stephen's study. Much of the novel's action takes place in Lima's various sports clubs and social clubs and Stephens describes these venues, which include, the 'Club Nacional, Country Club de Lima, Country Club El Bosque' as the 'strong-hold' of the *élite*' (Stephens, p. 103).¹⁴ Stephens also makes reference to the 'value called machismo or *hombría*' which he notes 'involve approval of male sexual conquests and the ability to maintain a succession of mistresses' (Stephens, p. 85). In *No me esperen en abril* the adolescents discourse on women and sex reveals machista tendencies, as does the language of the men of Lima regarding the principal female character of the *El huerto de mi amada*, Natalia de Larrea. Reiterating these points, Bourricaud observes that: 'Esta elite es improductiva, no sólo glotona y gastronoma, sino también estéril... ésta compuesta solamente de consumidores, por los que gozan' (Bourricaud, p. 14). In both Bryce's Lima-based novels, along with his collection of novellas entitled *Dos señoras conversan*, the impression given is that the oligarchy is stagnant, idle and lacking in dynamism.

¹⁴ Francisco Durand observes the role of these institutions in the self-imposed segregation of the *élite*: 'The *élites* remained secluded in residential neighbourhoods, summer towns, clubs, and casinos (Laos 1929), their social isolation as extreme as their wealth', in Francisco Durand, 'Growth and Limitations of the Peruvian Right', in Maxwell A. Cameron & Philip Mauceri (eds), *The Peruvian Labyrinth: Polity, Society and Economy*, pp. 152-75 (p. 155). The insularity of the upper classes is examined in Chapter 6 of this thesis, in relation to the middle-class Céspedes Salinas twins whose repeated attempts to scale the social hierarchy and enter the world of the *élite* are consistently thwarted.

Stephens refers to the new capitalist-orientated branch of the oligarchy as the 'counter-élite' (Stephens, p. viiii) and states that it is largely composed of 'technician-type upper middle-class representatives'. Bourricauld qualifies these technicians as architects, engineers and urbanists, but also adds doctors and lawyers to the list. As we shall see in *El huerto de mi amada*, Carlitos Alegre, the protagonist is training to be a dermatologist, following in the footsteps of his father and grandfather before him. The axis upon which Bresani's essay rotates, however, is his opinion that global foreign investors came to have more control in the Peruvian economy than any Peruvians themselves and writes of Peru's 'dependencia global... respecto al exterior' (Bresani, p. 47). Manongo Sterne is alone amongst his friends to achieve financial success and he is obliged to leave Peru and deal with international companies in order to do this, whilst the sisters' sons in *Dos señoras conversan* also resort to emigrating to the States in order to improve their chances of financial prosperity. Bresani places the influx of foreign intervention after the First World War, when English influence gave way to American rule. Bourricauld supports the belief that a new up-and-coming, commercially-orientated sector of the population was gaining headway, when he writes that in Peruvian society: 'Se opone un sector moderno y progresista a un sector arcaico', which centres upon 'el hombre de negocios, activo, ingenioso, inteligente' (Bourricauld, p. 14). The two views differ because Bresani believes that this new group came from outside Peru, whereas Bourricauld believes that it came from within Peru itself. For Bresani, the changes in structure of the upper class were a direct result of the shift in power from landowning, aristocratic families to capitalist entrepreneurs and the increasingly wealthy middle class of technicians, doctors and lawyers. He labels this phenomenon 'el ennoblecimiento de los ricos y el enriquecimiento de los nobles', and observes

that: ‘La constante alteración de los apellidos de la clase alta, son pruebas suficientes del papel conservador y “transformador” del “mundo” peruano” (Bresani, p. 64). Juan Lucas in *Un mundo para Julius* or Manongo Sterne in *No me esperen en abril*, indeed, provide apt examples of this new business-minded Peruvian, who has built his empire upon commercial relations and negotiations with the outside world. Thus, for Bresani, the Peruvian ‘oligarchy’ was a ‘poliarquía de intermediarios, heterogénea, variable y solamente capaz de negociar las “condiciones”’ (Bresani, p. 68). He does concede however that for those whose social status lay beneath that of the ‘oligarchs’, the latter ‘aparece como una realidad palpable’ (Bresani, p. 68). Bourricault prefers to refer to this shift as the creation of a ‘segunda oligarquía, de un sector moderno, promotor o beneficiario de la reciente ola de industrialización’ (Bourricault, p. 127) which occurred in the 1960s.¹⁵

Whatever their origins, as Stephens notes, in recent years an influx of ‘new rich’ has occurred, whose wealth is ‘based in commerce, industry and banking’ (Stephens, p. 103). He further stipulates that the upper class consists of both entrepreneurs and landowners, thus bridging the gap between the theories of Bourricault and Bresani:

Peru’s upper class contains at the top a layer of bankers, financiers, the largest importers and exporters, the coastal and larger sierra hacendados... They personify the ‘oligarchy’. A lower layer is composed of ranking politicians, owners of companies, military officers and clergymen of high rank, holders of real estate, economically secure intellectuals and the lesser hacendados of the coast and the interior. This upper class is relatively *homogenous*. *It shares an élite viewpoint and demonstrates social and psychological cohesion*. (Stephens, p. 116, my italics)

¹⁵ François Bourricault, ‘La clase dirigente peruana: oligarcas e industriales’, in José Matos Mar, *La oligarquía en el Perú*, pp. 119-135.

He concludes his study by defining the *élite* as a 'fusion of the upper class descending from the nineteenth century and the new rich'.

In Peru of the 1950s and 1960s there indeed existed a nucleus of wealthy families who systematically dominated the country's economic and political affairs and, furthermore, this *élitist* group can be considered to have constituted an oligarchy, in the broader sense of the word. Despite the fact that the oligarchy had undergone various metamorphoses during recent centuries and, despite the fact that its autonomy had been threatened by external forces, leaving their reign an unstable one, they still lived on as a decisive influencing factor in the country's affairs. Hence, although in reality, the oligarchy depicted in the novels of Bryce Echenique differed from the old, aristocratic-style, land-based rulers, his portrayal of the behaviour and the trajectory of the Lima oligarchy appears to corroborate the findings of political sociologists such as Bourricault and Henri Favre. Although not a vehement critic of the oligarchy in the sense of other Peruvian writers such as Arguedas or Alegría, Bryce does indeed cast a critical glance over the behavioural patterns and attitudes of his country's *élite*. His fiction, it would seem, does reflect a true and accurate image of the oligarchy's dominance in the social, economical and political realms of contemporary Peruvian society.

Political Climate in Peru: 1948-1990

In light of what has been said, it would be beneficial to my thesis to briefly consider the political climate in which the novels are set and to ascertain its economic and social implications for the *limeño* oligarchy. Two of the novels and the novella that I will be considering are set in Lima and between them cover a time-span

encompassing the second half of the twentieth century, from the 1950s through to the 1990s. Chapter 3 looks at *Dos Señoras conversan* which takes place in the 1980s, long after the fall of the oligarchy and the period known in Peruvian history as *la crisis*, Chapter 4 considers *No me esperen en abril* which spans a fifty-year period and portrays life before the fall of the oligarchy through to its collapse and on to the end of the last century and, Chapter 6 examines *El huerto de mi amada* which portrays a pre-Edenic Lima, when the oligarchs were almost entirely unaware of the catastrophe that was about to befall them.

The last sixty years have been a turbulent period in Peru's history and one that has witnessed the advent of successive and radical political change. Furthermore, it is palpable at a glimpse that corruption has infiltrated the very core of the political structure throughout this entire time. This was never more so the case than during the dictatorship of General Manuel Apollinario Odría, popularly referred to by historians, sociologists and economists alike as the *ochenio* since it lasted for eight years, from 1948 until 1956. According to Werlich in his study on Peruvian political history, corruption was a 'salient feature' (Werlich, p. 248) of Odría's reign.¹⁶ As we shall see in Chapter 6, this period of political history is recounted in *El huerto de mi amada* which reflects the immoral ethos of the times through scenes of blackmail and hired hit man assassinations by cabinet ministers. When Odría overthrew Bustamente y Rivero, he was 'welcomed by the coastal élite oligarchy' (Rudolph, p. 43).¹⁷ The 1950s under Odría and his 'administration's capitalist morality' (Werlich, p. 250)

¹⁶ David P. Werlich, *Peru: A Short History* (London: Carbondale & Edwardsville, 1978).

¹⁷ James D. Rudolph, *Peru: The Evolution of a Crisis* (Stanford: Praeger Publishers, 1992). Peter Findell Klarén corroborates this view when he writes: 'At first, Odría's rule was marked by his embrace of the oligarchic Right'; Peter Flindell Klarén, *Peru: Society and Nationhood in the Andes*, p. 300. Flindell Klarén also provides a detailed account of Odría's rule, see pp. 299-307.

was, indeed, an economically fertile period that benefited the interests of Peru's oligarchy.

Werlich provides an account of how this occurred; he writes:

Resumption of service on the foreign debt, in default since the 1930s, improved the country's credit rating and enabled Odría to obtain substantial loans from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Private United States investment in Peru doubled Between 1950 and 1955, reaching a book value of 300 million dollars. (Werlich, p. 250)

In fact, a cover story about Peru that appeared in the prestigious U.S. magazine *Fortune* praised the regime for its 'scrupulous respect for private property' (Werlich, p. 250). This, coupled with Odría's 'benevolence toward foreign capital' (Werlich, p. 251) meant that the value of imports and exports doubled leading the nation's manufacturers (members of the oligarchy, as the lower classes were excluded from the world of finance and investment) to increase their output by two thirds of the Gross National Product. The result of the above according to Werlich was that 'the modern sector of the economy advanced' (Werlich, p. 252) and that, while the artisan and agricultural sectors of the economy decreased, economic benefits were 'accrued primarily to the coast' (Werlich, p. 252), the site of the major administrative centres and the hotbed of the financial and entrepreneurial coastal oligarchy. For these reasons, Odría's administration had the 'support of most of the nation's wealthy élite' (Werlich, p. 254). In point of fact, as Rudolph stipulates, 'Peru's export oligarchy', along with foreign capital investors, were the 'major beneficiaries' (Rudolph, p. 43) of the regime. In addition to his pro-oligarchic programme, Odría set about repressing *APRA*, the major left-wing political party that had the workers'

interests at heart.¹⁸ Haya de la Torre, the party's leader, who is much maligned by Carmela and Estella in *Dos señoras conversan*, was obliged to spend five years in the Colombian embassy which offered him refuge before allowing him to flee the country into exile in 1954 (see Rudolph, p. 43).¹⁹ Hence, in all senses, the fifties was a 'prosperous period for the oligarchy' (Rudolph, p. 43); the voice of the opposition was banished and currency devaluation and generous tax concessions lead to an export boom which lined the pockets of the coastal oligarchy. In both political and economic terms the oligarchy was triumphant.

To an extent this climate of economic ease is reflected in *El huerto de mi amada*, firstly by the luxurious lives of the oligarchs and their attitude of insouciance and secondly by the ignorance of the text to the economic situation in general. Indeed, the oligarchs lead affluent, care-free lives, whilst the lower middle classes, represented by the Céspedes Salinas family, struggle to make ends meet. In *No me esperen en abril*, on the other hand, although the first two parts of the novel which relate the early years in the life of Manongo Sterne from the 50s through to the mid sixties show a similarly *laissez-faire* attitude on the part of the oligarchs to national affairs, particularly those in key ministerial positions, the characters in the last three sections of the novel, which cover Manongo's early adulthood through to his middle age years, are starkly aware of the economic and political crises that rage on around them. As we will see in Chapter 4, many are forced to flee the country as economic migrants and only Manongo remains oblivious to the political and economic tempest

¹⁸ For an interesting discussion of the struggles of APRA under the dictatorship of Odría and his predecessor José Luis Bustamante y Rivero (1945-1948), see Peter Flindell Klarén, *Peru: Society and nationhood in the Andes*, Chapter 10, 'Democracy and Dictatorship, 1945-63', pp. 289-301.

¹⁹ See also David P. Werlich, *Peru: A Short History*, p. 248.

that rages on around them and, by diverting his business interests outside Peru, manages to reap the benefits of his investments.

In 1956 Manuel Prado y Ugarteche assumed presidential power and at this point the country's élite saw a decline in their economic production whilst experiencing a 10% increase in the price of consumer goods, although this probably did little to reduce their purchasing power. Despite the Prado regime comprising members of a 'distinctly aristocratic class' with many old men from wealthy Lima families (Werlich: p. 281), he did little for the country's élite. His economic policies were denounced daily in the nation's second leading newspaper, *La Prensa*, and, although his troubles were in part a legacy of Odría's administration, he nonetheless contributed to the weakening of the economy. Flindell Klarén observes that: 'The inauguration of Prado as president in 1956 represented the final apogee of direct oligarchic rule in the twentieth century' (Findell Klarén, p. 307). He was succeeded by Belaúnde, 'el arquitecto', on 28 July 1962 by means of a military coup.

Belaúnde, leading the party *Acción Popular*, chose a much younger, middle-class cabinet that reflected the nation more completely by inclusion of citizens from the provinces. His policies represented a nationalistic and reformist ethos that favoured the middle classes; he was described as 'centre-left' (Rudolph, p. 47). This immediately placed him out of favour with the country's élitist class who perceived his ideology with his dedication to public works and the inclusion of the 'remote' eastern departments as 'developmentalist and technocratic' (Rudolph, p. 48). Belaúnde's heavy public spending obliged him to borrow money externally at high interest rates, the country's external debt quadrupled, rising to \$750 million, thereby

increasing inflationary pressures (according to Werlich, inflation rates reached between 63 – 66%; p. 287). In September of 1967, in a move that ‘aroused widespread opposition’ (Rudolph, p. 50), he agreed to a 40% devaluation of the old Peruvian Sol. According to Werlich, there ensued a ‘serious flight of capital’ as ‘wealthy citizens sought safer ground for their savings’ (Werlich, p. 287). In Chapter 4, as we shall see, Manongo Sterne and his father survive financially by laundering money in tax havens around the world. By this time the country’s business élite were beginning to see a drop in their fortunes and were, indeed, avid supporters of the military coup that was to follow and change their fortunes dramatically and definitively.

Clearly in need of a new regime if their financial interests were to be secured, the oligarchs initially backed the change of leadership which took the form of a military coup on 3 October 1968, led by Division General Juan Velasco Alvarado of the armed forces.²⁰ This turbulent period is described in *No me esperen en abril* and although Manongo (functioning, as we shall see, in Chapter 4 as Bryce’s alter-ego) meets and likes Velasco, his peers who are now grown men struggle to adapt to the changes. José Antonio Billinghurst, for example, who owns a *hacienda* in Ica, constantly complains that ‘La cosa se está poniendo difícil’ (*No me esperen en abril*, p. 536) whilst Manongo’s father, Lorenzo, soon develops an ‘odio mortal’ (*No me esperen en abril*, p. 448) for Velasco. Eventually, following the effects of Velasco’s land reforms, the sons of the sisters of *Dos señoras conversan* will explain to their mothers that the haciendas are a thing of the past: ‘... las haciendas hace siglos que te

²⁰ For an account of the coup staged by the Revolutionary government, biographical information on Velasco and a detailed assessment of the economic legacy of the reforms, see Peter Flindell Klarén, *Peru: Society and Nationhood in the Andes*, pp. 336-58.

lo expliqué, mamá, son irrecuperables, la reforma agraria ya es cosa de otro siglo’ (*Dos señoras conversan*, p. 38).

The patriarchal and paternalistic feudal system had remained the rotating axis upon which social and economic relations in Peru were based for over four centuries. The changes that were about to take place were more momentous than anything that had occurred in the country’s history since the conquest. Velasco not only altered the dynamics of the social order, he changed the lives of the oligarchs and the course of Peruvian history for ever. The oligarchs were about to enter the worst period in their history and this incident is reflected in Bryce’s narrative as having been one of the most damning that the oligarchs were to experience. It is fair to say that the lives of all but a few of the characters to be discussed in this thesis are irretrievably altered by the events that took place on the morning of 3 October 1968 in the form of a ‘bloodless’ (Rudolph, p. 50) *coup d’état*. However, it must be added that Velasco was only answering a call from Peru’s citizens, for as Alberts points out, ‘pressures on Peru’s élite began to mount from an increasingly urbanized and literate population that was insistently seeking a larger share of the nation’s resources’ (Alberts, p. 26) even before he came to power.²¹

In the wake of Belaúnde’s infamous ‘11 page scandal’, concerns for internal security and the anticipation of an upcoming Aprista victory in the next general elections, the military officers who took control were ‘convinced that the political party system had become both dysfunctional and inimical to Peru’s progress’ as a nation (Rudolph, p. 51). Also fearful of an Aprista victory, which would have brought law reforms in

²¹ Tom Alberts, *Agrarian Reform and Rural Poverty: A Case Study of Peru* (Doctoral thesis, University of Lund, Sweden) (Lund: Research Policy Institute, 1981).

direct opposition to their economical interests, the oligarchs welcomed Velasco and his troops. However, as Adolfo Figueroa points out, at the heart of the military's ideology was the belief that 'the traditional structure of Peru' (Figueroa, p. 163),²² which meant that around 80% of land was owned and farmed by only 1 % of the population, was detrimental to national progress and had to be altered. Division General Juan Velasco Alvarado was the general commander (Comandante general) of the army and the chairman of the joint military command at the time of the coup. He was named President of the Republic as soon as the junta seized control of the government and immediately issued a revolutionary statute which led to the disbandment of both congress and all popularly elected municipal governments. At once the interests of the country's élite were thrown into turmoil. This period of instability is implied through the voices of secondary characters in *No me esperen en abril*, specifically Manongo's former school mates, who, although once the sons of the country's affluent, now struggle to survive and much malign the times. This point in history also represents the deflection of old-fashioned anglophile obsession to the new wave of US interest in the narrative, which in turn reflects the oligarchy's change of ethos and direction. Details of the new government's manifesto, with its rhetoric of social justice for the masses, are discussed in the next section of this chapter.

Velasco's aspirations were in dramatic conflict with the goals of the oligarchy because they were aimed at stemming the economic freedom with which they had previously reigned and their total control over the financial status quo. Tom Alberts summarizes the aims of the regime as being to 'accelerate the rate of economic

²² Adolfo Figueroa, *The Impact of Current Reforms on Income Distribution in Peru* (Lima: Estatuto del Gobierno Revolucionario, 17 December 1963).

growth, redistribute the income' and to 'assure the incorporation of Peruvians of all regions of the country in the benefits of progress' (Alberts, p. 1). Integration was vital if the country was going to develop at the same rate as other modern Latin American nations but had been hindered by 'a colonial heritage of highly structured colonial relations' (Webb, p. 13),²³ with its 'markedly contrasting modern and traditional sectors' (Webb, p. 14). As Rudolph describes, the regime aimed to create a 'socially responsible' (Rudolph, p. 59) private sector that would co-exist with an 'expanded' (Rudolph, p. 59) public sector, increase the workers' participation in companies' management and develop share potential to up to 50% of a company's ownership. All this meant increased state intervention in the running of businesses and the working of the economy. In addition they expanded social programmes by increasing taxes that were now to be paid directly to the government rather than via privately-owned banks, meaning that they would be more strictly regulated.

By 1975, 20% of all industrial production was attributable to government-owned businesses and two-thirds of the banking system lay under their control. As Fitzgerald points out, the public sector handled nine-tenths of all exports and half of all imports.²⁴ Since the oligarchs had previously dealt with almost all overseas trade, a drop in their productivity and fortunes was inevitable. In addition to this, assets were directly seized from private business holders as 'most of the new government enterprises were created from assets acquired from domestic interests' (Rudolph, p. 61). In a word, there was a massive augmentation in state regulation of the private economy, which led to a diminishment in the oligarchy's total control. Werlich sums

²³ Richard C. Webb, 'The Distribution of Income in Peru', in Alexandro Foxley (ed.), *Income Distribution in Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp. 11-25.

²⁴ E.V.K. Fitzgerald, *The State and Economic Development: Peru since 1968 (Department of Applied Economics Occasional Papers)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976).

up the situation: 'After 1968, economic benefits for the nation's poor were achieved largely at the expense of the upper class' (Werlich, p. 304).

The June 1969 Agrarian Reform Law was 'one of the more sweeping agrarian reform programmes' (Rudolph, p. 63) to take place in the history of modern Latin America. 40% of all agricultural land and a quarter of all farming families were affected. By 1976 all private latifundia (properties over 50 hectares on the coast, or 30 in the sierra) had been eliminated, 'along with the last vestiges of the once powerful landed oligarchy' (Rudolph, p. 63) as properties were gradually confiscated over the next few years. Webb describes how 'rich families' were the 'prime target' (Webb, p. 18) of reform measures that were accordingly met with 'virulent protests from the land owners, who objected strongly' (Harding, p. 7).²⁵ Spelling disaster for the upper-class land owners, the regime earned the enmity of the political right and led to the dissolution of the *Sociedad Nacional Agrícola*, the major representative organisation of the landed élite. This, according to Rudolph, 'marked a definitive end to (the oligarchy's) once politically dominant position' (Rudolph, p. 64).²⁶ The reaction of the oligarchs was nothing short of despair; in June 1971 the Agricultural Association of the Valleys of Supe, Barranca and Patricia published a communiqué headed 'We are doomed to disappear' that was published in *La Prensa*, June 26 1971. As Harding states, this reflected the 'hysterical mood of many of the coastal landowners by this time' (Harding, p. 11).

²⁵ Colin Harding, *Agrarian Reform and Agrarian Struggles in Peru* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974).

²⁶ For a list of the basic reforms of Velasco's programme, which included restructuring the education system, mining commerce and the fishing industry, see Marvin Alinsky, *Peruvian Political Perspective* (Tempe, Arizona: Arizona State University, 1975), pp. 20-21.

To give an overall view of the economic landscape, we may note that by 1974 inflation had grown to 17%, public foreign debt had quadrupled to \$3billion dollars by 1975, in 1976 the 'sol' was devalued by 44%, and by 1977 less than half the population were in full time employment. By the end of the seventies the advent of an extraordinarily volatile period in Peruvian history was imminent, with street demonstrations, strikes and general public unrest. A gradual build-up of what was to be the most catastrophic decade in Peruvian political and economic history was well under way. The Agrarian Reform Movement had 'capped the long decline of Peru's traditional rural oligarchy' (Rudolph, p. 74). By 1980, the foreign debt deficit had reached \$10 billion dollars.

The military had been discredited as political rulers; hence in 1980 Belaúnde's resumption of the presidency was met with 'a great wave of optimism' (Rudolph, p. 77). His conservative ideological stance coupled with an economic team that stressed free-market strategies, export-led growth and integration into the global market, whilst pledging to reduce the state's intervention in the economy seemed favourable to the strengthening of the private sector. However, high interest rates and the frequent devaluation of the Peruvian 'sol' in order to increase export volume, led to 'an unprecedented number of bankruptcies among Peruvian businesses and a sharp slow-down in the operation of others' (Rudolph, p. 82). Between 1980 and 1984 a 'deep economic recess' (Rudolph, p. 82) was underway, brought in part by austerity measures undertaken to comply with foreign creditors. In 1980 inflation rates had risen to 60% and by 1984 they soared to over 125%; a fiscal crisis followed by a foreign debt crisis meant that the first half of the decade was a disaster in economic terms. In *No me esperen en abril*, while the majority of his friends are forced to

borrow money and find their businesses in a state of decay, it is only Manongo who manages to escape from the recession financially unscathed, primarily because he has invested uniquely in the European market.

Coupled with the economic woes of the nation was the increasing threat of terrorist guerrilla activity from a Maoist group of rebels known as the *Sendero Luminoso*.²⁷ Although attacks had previously been centred around provincial towns, by 1982 they had arrived at the capital with their mission to destroy all 'symbols of the bourgeois state' (quoted in Rudolph, p.88) they perceived as 'enemies of the people'. Bombings and an assassination campaign became increasingly common in Lima and in May 1983 several large business establishments were destroyed by incendiary devices. Flindell Klarén explains that it was the élite who were often targeted: 'Terrorist acts such as the political assassinations by the Shining Path and the kidnapping of businessmen and other rich people, a hallmark of a new group called the Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Amaru (MRTA), became more frequent' (Findell Klarén, p. 376).²⁸ As Findell Klarén points out, Abimael Guzmán's criticism was directed at a nation beset by 'bureaucratic capitalism' that was still essentially 'semifeudal' and

²⁷ For further information on the *Sendero Luminoso*, see James D. Rudolph, *Peru: The Evolution of a Crisis*, pp. 86-92, where he discusses the terrorist attacks that took place between 1982 and 1983, bringing 'terror to Peru's capital city' (p. 89). See also Orin Starn, Carlos Iván Degregori & Robin Kirk (eds), *The Peru Reader: History, Culture, Politics* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1995). Gustavo Gorriti's essay, 'The Quota' is particularly interesting since he presents an account of the ideologies, strategies and motivating factors behind the terror campaign. Gustavo Gorriti, 'The Quota' in Orin Starn, Carlos Iván Degregori & Robin Kirk (eds), *The Peru Reader: History, Culture, Politics*, pp. 316-327. The essay's title takes its name from the quota of blood that Guzmán believed should be shed in order that the revolution succeed. Carlos Iván Degregori also provides an interesting account of the fundamentalist philosophies of The Shining Path's ideological leader, Abimael Guzmán in, 'After the Fall of Abimael Guzmán: The Limits of Sendero Luminoso', in Maxwell A. Cameron & Phillip Mauceri (eds), *The Peruvian Labyrinth: Polity, Society, Economy* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania University Press, 1997), pp. 179-91. The essay emphasises the cult of personality that emerged around its leader.

²⁸ Peter Flindell Klarén, *Peru: Society and Nationhood in the Andes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). See p. 377 for an explanation of the origins of the MRTA and an overview of their campaign strategies. See pp. 369-72 for a discussion of the origins of The Shining Path.

'semicolonial' (p. 369). As Rudolph writes, the years of 1980-85 were a 'dismal period' (Rudolph, p. 92) for a nation 'hopelessly adrift'. The climate of fear and desolation characteristic of this period is acutely reflected in the atmosphere of *Dos Señoras conversan* through conversations between the two sisters that give a voice to the 'morale and moral crisis' of the times (Rudolph, p. 97) coupled with an image of the women being cut off from the world, that runs through the novella. The mood of *Dos Señoras conversan* is dark and claustrophobic as they dare not venture past their front door whilst voicing scathing attacks on the social and moral turpitude in which the country flounders, coupled with their criticism of terrorist activities of which they have little understanding. The sisters, who as members of the old-style aristocracy had once led opulent life styles, now live in relative misery, able to afford luxuries such as imported sherry, but unable to survive on a daily basis.

As Rudolph writes, APRA's charismatic leader, Alan García, was seen as a 'brightly shining star in an otherwise dimly lit political universe' (Rudolph, p. 107) in a country in which politics has always been more about figures than parties.²⁹ A public opinion poll published at the time of his election victory showed that 96% of the population backed him (Rudolph, p. 108). García's stance was very much anti-imperialistic at a time when the IMF was demanding \$70 million dollars in arrears from Peru and this automatically won him favour as he refused to appease the financial creditors. His failure to remain up to date on payments to the World Bank,

²⁹ APRA (Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana), was founded in May 1924 by Victor Raúl Haya de la Torre while he was in exile and living in Mexico City. It was initially a reformist political party whose activities were led by the Marxist thinker and writer José Carlos Mariátegui (1894-1930) until 1927. APRA advocated social reform, the emancipation of Peru's Indigenous peoples and the socialization of some industries. Implicated in terrorist activities they were outlawed from 1931-45 but were legalised in 1945. APRA gained power in 1985 under the leadership of Alan García. For further discussion on APRA, see Harry Kantor, *The Ideology and Program of the Peruvian Aprista Movement* (Berkeley: University Press of California, 1953).

however, meant that Peru was ostracized from the international financial community and found itself unable to successfully apply for further foreign investment loans. *Senderista* activities were also particularly problematic during García's rule.

Yet García's economic strategies were all about finding short-term solutions to problems that were soon to re-appear. Although initially employment figures rose under García's rule and inflation dropped (by 200% in 1986), by 1987 it had risen again to 115%, an indication that fiscal and foreign exchange imbalances were on the rise. A total lack of both foreign capital and private domestic investment hurled the country into the midst of a hyperinflation crisis. In addition, the attacks carried out by the *senderistas* were becoming ever more violent and brutal, the psychological implications of which are depicted in the *Dos señoras conversan*. In November 1989 the head of the senate's Special Commission on Violence, Enrique Bernal, estimated that nine and a half years of fighting and guerrilla activity had cost the country \$11.84 billion dollars. The situation was becoming increasingly out of control. Furthermore, the agricultural sector of Peru's economy, which had had little structure since the expropriation of lands in the 1960s was in what Rudolph terms a 'crisis state' (Rudolph, p. 121). The rapid growth of coca culture, now responsible for taking in more than the combined value of the copper and petroleum industries, was greatly exacerbating 'the corrupt practices endemic throughout Peru's judicial system' (Rudolph, p. 121).

García further irked Peruvian business men by confiscating and taking over the remaining insurance companies and banks belonging to the private sector, which was perceived as a 'direct blow' (Rudolph, p. 131) to the business élite. The climate of

economic hardship and financial insecurity witnessed in both *No me esperen en abril* and *Dos Señoras conversan* was exacerbated by a series of monetary calamities. The economic climate was in the throes of its worst depression since the beginning of the twentieth century. Those members of the élite who had lost their land during the implementation of the agrarian reform measures, were now losing their businesses, all of which were operating at a loss as foreign investment dried up and the World Bank measured declines in the Gross Domestic Product of 8.8% in 1988 and 14% in 1989 (statistics from International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, World Development Report, 1990, Washington D.C., as reported in *El Comercio* (Lima, 1 April 1990, p.15, section A1; quoted in Rudolph, p. 134).

The statistics relevant to García's term are shocking: between July 1985 and July 1990 the purchasing power of the minimum wage decreased by 49%, whilst the average salary in the private and public sectors decreased by 52% and 62% respectively. The state's fiscal deficits reached unprecedented heights which in turn led to the state of hyperinflation that began in 1988. After nearly doubling in 1987 to 115%, the consumer price index rocketed to 1,722% in 1987 and to a staggering 2,778% in 1989 (Rudolph, p. 134). A report in *El Comercio* on 9 May 1989 measured Peru's inflation at 3,339%. According to the same newspaper, 'Hyperinflation ravished the Inti, the currency that had replaced the old Sol at a rate of 1,000 to one in early 1986, to such an extent that in late 1990 it was announced that the Inti was soon to be replaced by the New Sol at an exchange rate of 1,000 to one' (*El Comercio*, November 15, p. 14 section A1, quoted in Rudolph, p. 134). Rudolph sums up the catastrophe: 'Peru's economic crisis was thus comprehensive – simultaneously battering the population through economic depression,

hyperinflation, and an all-out foreign exchange crisis' (Rudolph, p. 135). He describes García's term in office as 'disastrous' (Rudolph, p. 144) whilst remembering the total 'disillusionment' of the people. As Alan Riding, reporting for the *New York Times* was to write, it was 'not simply a government but an entire society (that was) falling apart', in an article entitled 'Peru fights to overcome its past' (*New York Times Magazine*, 14 May 1989, p. 40, quoted in Rudolph, p. 135).

La crisis, as the period was to become known, aggravated poverty which in turn led to further social and moral decay. The national crisis, which was 'practically without bounds' (Rudolph, p. 145) led to increased immigration, primarily to the US (figures jumped from 38,000 in 1986 to 120,000 in 1988), an indicator of the extent to which Peruvians believed the crisis to be irreversible. In *No me esperen en abril*, the majority of Manongo's friends are in the process of emigrating by the late 1980s, or damning the economic disaster that is causing their businesses to fold, whilst in *Dos señoras conversan*, the sisters' sons have already left Peru and are living in Miami. Natalia de Larrea, the millionairess lover in *El huerto de mi amada*, owns a successful antique business, but she deals principally with buyers in Paris.

As I hope to have shown, the second half of the twentieth century was an increasingly disappointing period for the members of Peru's oligarchy, who had placed their trust in regimes that continuously let them down. Their power in the political and financial fields diminished, but conversely did little to improve the fortunes of other social classes. One corrupt presidency after another led to the biggest moral crisis that the country had witnessed and irresponsible public spending provoked an economic crisis to equal it in size. This climate of despair and disaster is

aply portrayed in Bryce's novels set in Peru, whose characters, for the most part, are critical of their leaders and malign their financial circumstances. Although as an author Bryce has always maintained that he writes without a political agenda in mind, indirectly, the fortunes of his characters and the voices through which they imagine the nation remain critical of the way in which their country was led. Bryce doesn't overtly criticise the leaders of the Peruvian nation but paints a picture of a society and its citizens in such dire straights that no other conclusion can be drawn from Bryce's works.

Velasco's Manifesto

At this point it would be useful to review the ideology of the military government in order to assess the extent to which it differed from that of the power-hungry, capital-orientated oligarchy. Rudolph describes the military as 'progressive-minded' (Rudolph, p. 52) individuals who imposed a revolution that would put an end to the 'historical predominance of foreign economic interests and the local oligarchy in the political and economic life of the nation' (Rudolph, p. 52). This was detrimental to the oligarchy's needs and intentions to promote and encourage foreign investment in order to increase its personal wealth. The new government's manifesto was published in *El Comercio* on 4 October 1968, in which they pledged to reverse the 'unjust social and economical order which places... the national wealth solely within the reach of the privileged, while the majority suffer the consequences of a marginalisation injurious to human dignity' (Rudolph, p. 52). An extended form of their ideological impetus was presented in the following year under the title, *Transformación social y económica: Mensaje a la nación con motivo de la*

*promulgación de la Ley de Reforma Agraria, 24 de junio de 1969.*³⁰ The thrust of this meticulously planned speech is based on the idea that only through implementation of an agrarian reform project will a free and just society thrive. The oligarchy and the land-owners are perceived as an obstacle to this and are vilified through the course of the text.

Consideration of the manifesto's content reveals the anti-oligarchic ideology that was the driving force behind the military's policies and the anti-oligarchic propaganda that it promoted. One of the first ideals it cites is for the implementation of 'una grandeza cimentada en la justicia social y en la participación real del pueblo en la riqueza y en el destino del país' (Velasco, p. 43). This implies that not only would the working classes have access to the country's wealth but also that they would play a part in decision making, something which they had previously played no role in. Immediately, then, the oligarchy's ultimate hold of power was being placed in jeopardy. When the manifesto announced a law that 'pondrá fin para siempre a un injusto ordenamiento social' (Velasco, p. 44), it is clear that the unjust order in question is that which saw the élite at the top of the social hierarchy with a monopoly over political, judicial and economic domains, that reigned over a people 'tantas veces engañado' (Velasco, p. 46). Describing the people as deceived is designed to drum up emotions of anger in the peasant community and to incite a drive towards positive action. The manifesto continues in this vein by describing how the current social order has been one within which 'la mayoría de nuestro pueblo siempre fue mayoría explotada... mayoría desposeída' (Velasco, p. 44).

³⁰ This has since been published in book form as: *Velasco: La Voz de la Revolución. Discurso del Presidente de la República General de División J. V. Alvarado (1968-1970)* (Lima: Ediciones Participación, 1972), Tomo I.

The most damning strike comes when the question of land ownership is broached directly. Announcements are made heralding the advent of ‘la cancelación de los sistemas de latifundio y minifundio’ (Velasco, p. 46) which is followed by the claim that: ‘la tierra debe ser para quien la trabaja, y no para quien derive de ella renta sin labrarla’ (Velasco, p. 50). The accusatory finger is quite clearly pointed at the land-owning oligarchs. Then the manifesto cites the measures to be taken:

La propiedad tiene que tener un límite. Es esencialmente injusto un sistema en el cual la inmensa mayoría de la tierra – y de la tierra mejor – esté en muy pocas manos, como ha ocurrido hasta ayer en nuestro país. Esta desequilibrada e injusta situación toca a su fin con la Ley de Reforma Agraria que el Gobierno Revolucionario acaba de promulgar. (Velasco, p. 50)

The oligarchy are then referred to in a placatory effort that nonetheless undermines their values and promulgates an anti-élitist ideology: ‘Y si por cierto habrá quienes que se sientan afectados en sus intereses, éstos, por respetables que sean, no pueden prevalecer ante los intereses y las necesidades de millones de peruanos, quienes, al fin van a tener, un pedazo de tierra para ellos y sus hijos en el suelo que los vio nacer’ (Velasco, p. 50). The manifesto goes on to label the land owners ‘egoistas’ (Velasco, p. 51), whilst referring to the campesinos as ‘víctimas indefensas’ (Velasco, p. 52), who have suffered ‘el castigo de todas las expoliaciones’. Here we see an attempt on the part of the military to create a dichotomy based on exploited and exploiters with the landowners being increasingly vilified and portrayed as the enemies of the masses and social justice.

The ideology of the manifesto, with its justice-for-all rhetoric, is overtly revolutionary and progressive; the language used is succinct but passionate and phrases such as ‘injustice’, ‘abuse of power’ and ‘the revolutionary ideal’ are employed to incite anti-oligarchic sentiment amongst the peasantry. Such sentiment

is also achieved by the use of the first person plural 'nosotros' to signify the government and the peasants, creating an 'us versus them' attitude that seeks to vilify the enemies of social change, although it is possible that the words have been cleverly chosen to manipulate the minds of the peasantry so that they may become tools to be used by the military in their quest for power. Finally the oligarchy are outwardly named and shamed when they are labelled as 'los grupos privilegiados que hicieron del monopolio económico y del poder política' (Velasco, p. 53). Labelling the oligarchs as 'privileged' sets them up in direct opposition to the 'exploited peasantry'.

The manifesto also strives to induce mobilisation amongst the peasants in what resembles a call to arms: 'A esa oligarquía le decimos que estamos decididos a usar toda la energía necesaria para aplastar cualquier sabotaje a la nueva ley y cualquier intento de subvertir el orden público' (Velasco, p. 53). The manifesto was written for and speaks directly to and *on behalf* of a working-class audience whilst undermining the oligarchy with the use of criminal terms, pejorative names and accusations of future resistance. Thus the military ideology succeeds in alienating the oligarchs from the rest of Peru and thus reverses the previous situation under which only the minority did not find themselves marginalised from national life. There is also an obvious attempt to 'de-Peruvianise' the oligarchs by disassociating them from a country's whose interests they clearly do not nurture: 'tendremos a nuestro lado a los campesinos, a los obreros, a los estudiantes, a la inmensa mayoría de los intelectuales, sacerdotes, industriales y profesionales del Perú' (Velasco, p. 54): only the land-owning élite are left unmentioned.

A deliberate attempt is also made to differentiate between the white, Hispanic élitist classes and the autochthonous peoples of Peru on account of their respective race, with the 'dominant' and conquering race perceived as a negative force. This is achieved by invoking the regal and glorious past of the Amerindian civilisation:

Así verdaderamente... las comunidades campesinas, el ayllu antiguo, símbolo de un milenario ideal de justicia que nunca fue totalmente abatido, verán renacidos su fuerza y su vigor para ser, otra vez, dinámicos elementos de progreso como fueron añtano en la antigua y grandiosa civilización de nuestros antepasados. (Velasco, p. 52)

By reminding them of their illustrious past and stirring feelings of pride within the peasant community, the military clearly hoped to arouse feelings of resentment towards the oligarchs and a will to act on the part of the masses. It also links their miserable destiny back to the arrival of the Spanish and the initial appropriation of Peruvian soil, hence reminding the peasants that this land is rightfully theirs. The ideology behind the speech is nationalistic, patriotic, revolutionary and progressive. It ends with a quote that draws upon one of the greatest figures in Peruvian history:

¡Compatriotas! Al hombre de la tierra ahora le podemos decir en la voz immortal y libertariana de Tupac Amaru:
"¡Campesino, el patrón ya no comerá tu pobreza!"

The agrarian reforms of Velasco's government were the final nail in the coffin for an oligarchy already struggling to adapt to a changing nation.

Chapter 3: *Dos señoras conversan*

Published in 1990, *Dos señoras conversan* is Bryce's first – and at present only – venture into the genre of the novella. The work is a compilation of three short narratives entitled *Un sapo en el desierto*, *Los grandes hombres son así. Y también así* and the first story that lends its name to the triptych, *Dos señoras conversan*. The stories are linked not only to each other, but also to Bryce's fiction as a whole, through the common themes that they explore including nostalgia, memory, self-imposed exile, the oligarchy in decadence, fantasy and alienation, as well as the stylistic devices employed such as irony, orality, shifting narrative perspectives and, above all, humour. Each of the stories follows the changing socio-economic reality of the Peruvian nation through the comparative, retrospective devices of memory and nostalgia.¹ Through the examination of the personal spheres inhabited by his various subjects, Bryce considers the public history that encompasses the whole socio-geographical spectrum since, rather than focussing solely on the capital city and coast as in other works, here Bryce also uses the Peruvian highlands and the Amazon

¹ The prevailing mood of the novel is one of nostalgia. Nostalgia is one of the salient motifs of Bryce's works. José Luis de la Fuente writes: 'La nostalgia, moda de la posmodernidad, siempre paródica y tan vinculada a lo autobiográfico, aunque no necesariamente, es uno de los elementos más caracterizados de la narrativa de Alfredo Bryce Echenique y recorre por igual sus cuentos y novelas', in José Luis de la Fuente, *Más allá de la modernidad: los cunetos de Alfredo Bryce Echenique*, p. 146. He reads nostalgia in Bryce's works as the 'intento de restauración de aquellos momentos del pasado que la escritura recupera... porque la nostalgia resulta del tratamiento irónico que de la historia lleva a cabo la posmodernidad' (p. 146). Bryce describes his interpretation of the term 'nostalgia' in the following words: 'Un recuerdo es algo terminado, y por enésima vez, bueno, malo, o regular, si se quiere. La nostalgia, en cambio, tiene algo de terrible y maravillosamente interminable. Como un iceberg, su peso verdadero está sumergido en las marítimas y, aparentemente, tranquilas profundidades de nuestro inconsciente'. See 'Terrible y maravillosa nostalgia', in *Oiga*, 28 (November 1988), 68-72 (quoted in De la Fuente, p. 147). Bryce's characters resort to nostalgic interpretations of life in order to make their lives palatable. De la Fuente writes: 'eso sucede cuando esos personajes adivinan que algo se agota, cuando inician el tránsito hacia otra etapa nueva en la vida, porque ciertamente presienten que algo termina' (José Luis de la Fuente, p. 147). In the case of *Dos señoras conversan*, it is the golden age of the oligarchy and their fall from grace that causes the ladies to resort to a nostalgic view of life.

region as backdrops to the action, which provides for a panoramic portrayal of the nation.

This chapter will focus on the first of the tales, which is set in the city of Lima at the beginning of the 1980s, the decade popularly known as *la crisis*. The chapter will examine the notion in Bryce's fiction that fantasies can act as blockages, which, when analysed, become pointers to the problematic relationship between the individual (or social class) and the society in which he lives. In *Dos señoras conversan* Bryce returns to the theme of the physical and spiritual decadence of the fallen oligarchy, which he had, of course, considered two decades before in *Un mundo para Julius* as well as in many of his short stories.² Running parallel to the sisters' personal story of loss and alienation is that of the decline of the Peruvian élite. Both the novel and its characters are aware of the traumatic events that wracked the Peruvian nation during the decade of the eighties, with several allusions made to terrorist activities and soaring inflation.³ The sisters constantly compare their present unfavourably to the past. In the afore-mentioned interview that Bryce gave to Lima's *La República*, entitled 'Soy un escritor más rebelde que nostálgico',⁴ he humorously offered an alternative title for the novella, '*En busca de la oligarquía perdida*'. This homage to Proust may suggest that the novella is Bryce's Peruvian reworking of the

² The decline of the oligarchy is a subject that Bryce has considered both in his short stories and in his novels. Bryce recalls in his essay entitled, 'Instalar el humor en el corazón mismo de la tristeza', how the decay of the Peruvian élite became apparent to him as a schoolboy in San Pablo. He recalls how every morning his peers would be told the words: 'Ustedes son la futura clase dirigente del Perú'. Bryce writes that upon hearing these words: 'yo ya miraba a mi lado y veía caer babas, gente que no lograba atarse la corbata, en fin, veía que la clase se estaba extinguiendo, literalmente' (p. 8.). See Julio Ortega & María Fernanda Lander (eds), *Alfredo Bryce Echenique: ante la crítica*, pp. 4- 29.

³ See Chapter 2 of this thesis, pp. 60 and 63.

⁴ Angel Paéz, 'Soy un escritor más rebelde que nostálgico', *La República*, Lima, 6 January 1991, pp. 30-31.

classic Proustian novel, as the novella deals primarily with time, memory and the aristocratic class.⁵

Dos señoras conversan is the story of two widowed septuagenarian sisters, Carmela and Estela de Foncuberta, who live together in their apartment in the residential suburb of San Isidro, amidst antique furniture and daily nightcaps of a rapidly diminishing stock of Bristol Cream sherry, mourning their paradise lost. Time in the novella is circular and monotonous and the sisters while away the hours, nostalgically reminiscing about the Lima of their youth. To put it simply, Lima, for the aristocratic siblings, is not the glorious place that it once was. In reaction to their loss of position and illusion, Doñas Carmela and Estela, weave around themselves a web of fantasy which resembles very much the glorious Lima of their younger years. In point of fact, a major part of the work is told through the retrospective strategy of the analepsis, and the remaining part via reminiscences and digressions in the form of dialogue that as readers we are privy to. As such, the novella oscillates continuously between the present and past through the recuperative device of memory and it is precisely the evocation of memories that gives rise to the novella's dialogue and hence to its oral register. The ladies recreate their reality through dialogues based on memories; they thereby recreate a mere illusion of reality. These analepses focus upon the history of the de Foncuberta family and in particular the curious destiny of the patriarch of the family, the sister's beloved *papacito*. The general mood of the novella is one of nostalgia; the painful utterance 'Qué linda era Lima entonces, ¿no?' is pronounced on a total of six occasions (pp. 12, 15, 35, 36, 49, 68) throughout the novel's sixty pages. Nostalgia is hence intrinsically bound to

⁵ For further discussion, see Herbert E. Craig, *Marcel Proust and Spanish America: From Critical Response to Narrative Dialogue* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2002), pp. 131- 31, where Craig presents a case for the links between *Un mundo para Julius* and *À la recherche du temps perdu*.

the formation of the ladies' identity, which is ironic because it causes them to stray from their present reality and delve further into the world of their past. Nostalgia hence distances the ladies from their true identity and ultimately perpetuates their condition of alienation. The standard reply to this rhetorical question is 'Preciosa. Era una ciudad realmente preciosa' and, this repetitive pattern of speech reinforces not only the fact that the siblings are living nostalgically through their past, but also that time has stopped still in their lives as every moment resembles the previous one. Caught up in a *diálogo de sordas*, Carmela also repeatedly accuses Estela of suggesting that she lacks intelligence: '¿me estás insinuando que soy corta de entenderas?' (pp. 14, 30, 35, 39, 42, 52, 62, 63, 68), as multiple allusions to the same paranoid suspicion serve to emphasize the stagnancy of the sisters' lives. The sisters represent the decaying oligarchy in the work and their indolence must be taken as a pointer to the upper classes' immobility.

As with all of Bryce's works, with the notable exceptions of *Un mundo para Julius* and *La vida exagerada de Martín Romaña*, both of which have received the lion's share of critical attention, *Dos señoras conversan* has provoked little interest in literary circles. Apart from the interview mentioned above which, although it coincided with the release of the collection, all but avoids engagement with it, several journalistic articles and two longer essays consider the narrative. The most comprehensive of these is David Wood's article that appears in Ferreira and Márquez's *Los mundos de Alfredo Bryce Echenique*.⁶ Wood considers the re-appearance in the novellas of common characteristics in Bryce's work. He notes the continuum of themes, style and setting in *Dos señoras conversan* that were first seen

⁶ See David Wood, 'Dos señoras conversan: dialogando con el pasado', in César Ferreira & Ismael P. Márquez (eds), *Los mundos de Alfredo Bryce Echenique: nuevos textos críticos*, pp. 391-401.

in Bryce's collection of short stories, *Huerto Cerrado*, which leads him to consider the novellas as 'un amalgama de los considerables logros alcanzados por Bryce en sus obras de las décadas de los setenta y los ochenta' (Wood, p. 391).⁷ Of particular interest are Wood's observations on the incorporation of subaltern voices as well as those of members of the oligarchy into the narrative perspective. The fluidity of the change from the voice of the third-person narrator to the voice of other characters, as Wood observes, had already been seen in *Un mundo para Julius*, but *Dos señoras conversan* represents the first occasion in which the voices of the serving staff and other members of the lower classes are incorporated into the narrative perspective and given the opportunity to express their own conditions. Wood reads this as evidence of the collapse of previously stable power structures in Peru. He suggests that the narrative voice is no longer the 'propiedad exclusiva' (Wood, p. 393) of the hegemonic group, 'sino que pertenece a todos los sectores de la sociedad que participan en ella'. This provides evidence within the text not only that the oligarchy's once dominant position in society is increasingly unstable and that colonial hierarchies are collapsing, but also that the lower classes are gaining increasing control over their destinies, as will be shown later, when the servants demand better working conditions. In the second article, apart from observing the role of the author in Peru, whereby, 'los escritores nos enseñan a comprender la historia mejor que los científicos sociales' (Córdova Cayo, p. 375),⁸ Daniel Córdova Cayo limits himself to a brief synopsis of the three texts. Whilst his point is relevant, since Bryce, in attributing prevalence to the 'private history' provides a more totalising vision of twentieth-century Peruvian history, my aim in this chapter is to

⁷ David Wood, 'Dos señoras conversan: dialogando con el pasado', in Ferreira & Márquez, *Los mundos de Alfredo Bryce Echenique: nuevos textos críticos*, p. 391.

⁸ Daniel Córdova Cayo, 'Dos señoras conversan y las lecciones de Bryce', in César Ferreira & Ismael P. Márquez (eds), *Los mundos de Alfredo Bryce Echenique: nuevos textos críticos*, pp. 375-81.

provide a more comprehensive study of *Dos señoras conversan* than either Córdova Cayo, or other critics, have undertaken.

The Symbolic Function of Death in the Novella

Doñas Carmela and Estela de Foncuberta are introduced to the reader as widows with the words: ‘viudas las pobres de los hermanos Juan Bautista y Luis Pedro Carriquirí’ (p. 11). Their identity is hence bound to bereavement and this, the first sentence of the work, introduces the notion of death into the novel. With Carmela and Estela left alone after the demise of their husbands, it becomes clear that the oligarchy is dying out. In point of fact, as the text will show, it is almost at the point of extinction. Death is indeed ubiquitous within *Dos señoras conversan*, with all of the sisters’ family and acquaintances (with the exception of their sons and a cousin) meeting their death through the course of the novel. In fact, no less than eight members of the oligarchy will meet their deaths, including the sisters’ husbands, parents, doctor, and two old friends of their father. This situation reflects both the death of Julius’ (significantly) un-named father who represents the traditional feudal system in *Un mundo para Julius*, and of whom we are told ‘moría [como] hombre elegante, rico y buenmozo’ (*Un mundo para Julius*, p. 78), and the deaths of the oligarchs of *No me esperen en abril*, Don Lorenzo Sterne and Don Álvaro Aliaga y Harriman, to be discussed in Chapter 4. The deaths of the novella’s oligarchs symbolise the disintegration and final demise of the élite class of Peru, a notion underlined in the fact that Juan Bautista and Luis Pedrín, the sisters’s sons, ‘asistieron a muchos entierros de gente noble, generosa, honrada, y ejemplo de trabajo y empeño en bien de la Patria’ (p. 25).

The narrative shifts between the past and present and does not follow a linear chronology and so the first deaths that are recounted are those of Juan Bautista and Luis Pedro. The latter, we are told, died ‘de infarto en la cama de una amante’ (p. 18) and the immoral activities that lead up to his death (he has committed adultery with numerous women), followed by the debauched nature of his demise (during extra-marital carnal activity) symbolise the moral and physical degeneracy of Lima’s élite. Throughout the narrative, Carmela is surprisingly bitter about her brother-in-laws’s libidinous ways and only towards the end of the narrative, when we discover that the lover was a black woman, does the reason for her hatred emerge as being racially motivated. Through the circumstances in which Luis Pedro died, coupled with the reaction to his death, Bryce builds a portrait of *limeño* high society. Funerals (as we shall see in Chapter 6) are an opportune occasion for an overview of the morals of Lima’s élite for Bryce. The narrator informs us that ‘Lima entera se enteró de las circunstancias en que había muerto el gran tarambana de Luis Pedro Carriquirí. Finalmente murió como vivió, se dijo por calles y plazas’ (p. 18). Lima ‘entera’ does of course not refer to the entire population of the city but rather to the intimate circles of the élite, who popularly refer to themselves as *Lima pañuela*. What is clear is that the rumours of Luis Pedro’s death spread through high society circles like wildfire until people were gossiping about it throughout town. Bryce is taking a jibe here at the gossippy nature of *limeño* society and the scandal-mongers who revel in the shortcomings of their fellow men. This ambience of whisperings and rumours is redolent of the society described in the *costumbrista* sketches of Ricardo Palma, which often give the reader the sensation that he is present at the conversations

transcribed.⁹ Their scorn does not prevent them from attending his funeral service though, nor do they desist from pronouncing him a ‘persona noble, generosa, y honrada’ (p. 18) which amounts to the convenient shadowing of his spurious character. In this instance, Bryce is exposing the falseness of the modalities of behaviour of the upper classes. As the mourners stand with their heads bowed in a gesture of respect, despite their previous judgments, their hypocrisy and double-standards are evident and it is apparent, if we consider the nature of Vilma’s dismissal in *Un mundo para Julius*, that their sanctimoniousness is not afforded to lower sectors of society. In the earlier novel, of course, when Julius’s nanny is sacked following her rape by his older brother, a confused Julius, having clearly been influenced by the opinions of his family, declares: ‘Vilma era gigantescamente puta’ (*Un mundo para Julius*, p. 589). The difference between the acceptance of the upper classes to the self-perpetuated dishonour of a member of their caste and their condemnation of the unsolicited dishonour of a member of the servant classes is, literally, worlds apart. Interestingly, it is only through the function of memory that the upper classes are recalled and enter onto the stage of the novel – they are all now dead. In the Lima of the present day the sisters socialise with no-one from their social group through fear of leaving their home and, as Carmela points out to Estela,

⁹ James Higgins describes the *Tradicción* as a ‘chatty anecdote’, in James Higgins, *A History of Peruvian Literature* (Liverpool: Francis Cairns, 1987), p. 67. Ricardo Palma, *Tradiciones peruanas completas*, ed. y prólogo de Edith Palma (Madrid: Aguilar S.A., DE Ediciones, 1953). See for example *Un Santo varón*, pp. 1129- 21, in which Palma writes: ‘El cura de Caraz, presbítero don José María Saénz, que corriendo los años murió en el antiguo manicomio de San Andrés...’ (p.1129); *Los Repulgos de San Benito*, pp. 1112-13, ‘Los pocos mataperros de 1845 que aún comen pan en esta metrópoli limeña recordarán al hermano Piojo Blanco...’ (p. 1112); *Las mentiras de Lertzundi*, pp. 1093-96, in which the reader is privy to long segments of dialogue and a narrator who knew the general Lertzundi personally and remembers details from his past; *Juana la marimacho*, pp. 922-23, ‘No la ví yo, por supuesto... pero oí decir...’ (p. 922); *Los Primitos*, pp. 1201-03, ‘Desengáñate, lector... creánme ustedes, como uno y uno son dos’ (pp. 1201-2), in which the narrator is clearly aware of his audience; *¡Buena Laya De Fraile!*, pp. 915-20, ‘Fray Pablo habría sido un fraile ejemplar si el demonio no hubiera desarrollado en él una loca afición por el toreo’ (p. 915); and *Un virrey hereje y un compañero bellaco*, pp. 400- 410. For further discussion, see Raúl Porras Barenchea, ‘Palma satírico’, pp. 9-15, in *Tres ensayos sobre Ricardo Palma* (Lima: Librería Mejía Baca, 1954), pp. 1833- 1919. See also Ricardo Palma, *Tradiciones Peruanas*, selected and annotated by Pamela Francis (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1966).

there would be little reason for them to do so, since ‘la gente buena se ha muerto o se ha ido’ (p. 36). ‘Gente buena’, the text leaves little room for doubt, signifies the monied classes and, in light of the portrayal of Luis Pedro and his mourners, it would appear that Bryce does not share the view that they are ‘good’.

Whilst it is the president of the *Sociedad Nacional Agraria* who conducts the obituaries at the funeral of Luis Pedro, it is the President of the *Sociedad Nacional de Industrias* who presides over the eulogies at Juan Bautista’s funeral. The two brothers hence personify the two main tenets of Peruvian economic life: the agricultural sector that farms the haciendas and the national industries that control commercial interests. Luis Pedro’s death is, as such, a metaphor for the dilapidation of the haciendas and the demise of the landed élite. Bryce points the finger of blame at the oligarchy’s antiquated methods of agricultural management since his son, Luis Pedrín, will later attempt to revive the flagging family industry, ‘que tan mal llevaba su padre’ (p. 22). Bryce, therefore, places no blame on Velasco’s reform programme and as such the conclusions that he draws differ dramatically from members of Peru’s élite and specifically the sisters themselves (see below). The death of Juan Bautista, as a member of the ‘national’ sector of industrial affairs, a man described as an ‘ejemplo de trabajo y empeño de bien de la Patria’ (p. 19), meanwhile, is clearly a metaphor for the crisis in which Peru’s private sector found itself in the aftermath of Velasco’s programmes of nationalisation and the further crisis of Peru’s nationally-owned industries following the neo-imperialist dominance of the commercial interests of the United States (see Chapter 2). Juan Bautista, it appears, truly was a person worthy of a eulogy describing him as ‘noble, generosa, y honrada’ (p. 19), yet in death, the brothers are afforded the same honours, despite the obvious discrepancy

in their moral aptitude. Furthermore, the brothers had spent the past forty years refusing to speak to each other which seems to suggest a break-down in relations within the community of the aristocratic classes who become alienated from each other.

The next death to be described and the one that is afforded the longest description is that of the sister's father. It has been suggested above, and will be considered in depth below, that the sister's inhabit a fantasy world of their past which amounts to their determined denial of the changes that history has brought to their lives. The character, however, who went furthest in denying the world in which he lived, and indeed, historical progress itself, is the sisters' father, the aristocratic patriarch, Don Jacinto de Foncuberta López Aldana. Contrary to lamenting the fact that having produced only daughters: 'desaparecería con él, al menos en Lima [...] el ilustre apellido de Foncuberta' (p. 20), Don Jacinto is actually delighted. We are told that:

Si don Jacinto llegaba a sentir incluso aún alivio, a veces, al saber que con él desaparecería el apellido de Foncuberta, era porque el mundo en que le había tocado vivir no podía durar eternamente. (p. 20)

Although his lack of male heirs effectively signals the death of his line and hence eventually his very memory, Don Jacinto chooses oblivion over the continuation of his family name because he is aware that the world in which he lives, the remnants of the aristocratic republic, cannot continue eternally. There is a sense in the work that the oligarchs are conscious that the world as they know it is slipping away from them. Don Jacinto cites the encroachment of 'demasiada injusticia, demasiada corrupción' (p. 20) into society's dealings as his reason for wanting to withdraw from the world. The irony lies, however, in the fact that Don Jacinto fails to realise that he belongs to the very social group responsible for political and economic

corruption in Peru, the oligarchy's existence is threatened not only from without but also from within. He places all blame instead on 'hombres como Luis Pedro Carriquirí', whom he believes 'pueden precipitar ese cambio' (p. 21). In an obvious reference to Luis Pedro's libidinous ways, Don Jacinto mentions immorality and a decline in values as the reasons for which 'el mundo está cambiando lentamente' (p. 21). He fails to see that he himself precipitates his own decline, by clinging on to colonial structures and relations that are increasingly inappropriate to the times. For example, he forbids his wife, also named Doña Carmela, to allude to his preoccupations in front of his chauffeur Jesús Comunión padre, 'ya que Jesús Comunión padre... no tenía por qué enterarse de que el mundo ni nada estaba cambiando, por más lentamente que fuera' (p. 21). Underlying Don Jacinto's instruction is the fear that his servant may rebel against him if he is made aware of his master's increasingly unstable position. It is also clear that he believes in a 'natural' division of race and class; his attitude infantilises his servant since it represents an attempt to maintain him in a state of ignorance. This is reminiscent of what Said terms the 'childish primitive'.¹⁰ However, keeping the lower classes in a state of perpetual subordination and ignorance is no longer possible since they are gradually gaining an understanding of their rights. Don Jacinto ignores the changes that are taking place in Peruvian society, and as such, finds himself increasingly marginalised from the narratives of social history.

He continues in this way, until one day, in the year of 1953, he solemnly announces that:

¹⁰ For further discussion on the 'childish primitive', see Edward. W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books, 1995) [1978], p. 246. This notion is also alluded to with regards to Manongo Sterne's behaviour in *No me esperen en abril*, see Chapter 4, p. 137 of this thesis.

Abandonaba los banquetes de palacio y la historia del Perú, toda, haciendo hincapié en toda, absolutamente disgustado por los apoyos políticos que estaba recibiendo el General Manuel Apolinario Odría, desde su elección a la presidencia en 1950, o casi desde entonces, porque él ni siquiera había querido darse por enterado en un primer momento pero ahora no sólo se daba por enterado de todo sino que quería que el Perú entero se enterara de que él, por su parte, abandonaba la historia del Perú, y toda, y que se me entienda, por favor. (p. 21)

By incorporating Don Jacinto's hyperbolic words into the principal narrative voice, Bryce reveals the latter's ignorance of Peru's political affairs; he locates Odría's ascension to the presidency in the year of 1950, whereas Odría assumed leadership powers two years prior to this in 1948. This is followed by the apathetical admission that initially he hadn't cared to find out what party was governing the country; his knowledge of his country's political affairs is at best unsound. Don Jacinto, much like Don Álvaro, as we shall see in Chapter 4, personifies the old oligarchy in the novella. As such, Bryce seems to be suggesting that the oligarchy is out of touch with Peruvian politics.

From the above quotation we see that as soon as Don Jacinto gains an understanding of his circumstances within the national political framework and his resulting diminishing wealth, he decides to turn his back on the world. His decision to abandon history and the world is ludicrous as ultimately, he merely alienates himself, retreating into an enclosed fantasy world, where he leaves the house once a week on Thursdays to meet with a friend at the élitist old men's club, the *Club Nacional* (ironically the epicentre of political and high society activity in Lima); on Fridays he visits his daughters and sons-in-law. The remainder of his time is spent in the personal library that he houses in his 'palacete' (p. 20), where he reads 'los clásicos latinos' and 'las grandes obras de la literatura universal' (p. 20). Don Jacinto's choice

of reading matter shows that in literary terms he gives primacy to Western culture since, coupled with his affection for Latin works, we must assume that in the 1950s Peruvian fiction did not figure in the international literary canon.¹¹ It appears, then, that his decision to abandon Peruvian history had been made long before his definitive pronouncement. It is possible that the inspiration for this gentleman, at least in part, was Bryce's maternal grandfather, whom Bryce recalls in his decision regarding the subject matter of his doctoral thesis, was himself the owner of a comprehensive library.¹² Foncuberta, then, opts for the impossible: to live outside the parameters of history and time in an attempt to escape the social, political and historical realities of his country and the changes they bring to his life. Redressing his life through fantasy is an ideological strategy that allows Don Jacinto to mask from himself the real historical and material conditions in which he lives. Locked in a struggle between memory and oblivion, his ideology is one of retrenchment and is hence intentionally deceptive or predicated on a false consciousness. Much like the other oligarchic figures of the novella, adopting a typically oligarchic stance (history is a mistake best forgotten about), Don Jacinto attempts the impossible task of trying to pretend that history has not happened; like an ostrich, he buries his head in the sand.

Doña Carmela Falcón de Foncuberta, on the other hand, is set up as a foil against both father and daughters. Doña Carmela accompanies her husband to the banquets held in the presidential palace but her character, which is described as 'travieso y tan

¹¹ It is fair to assume that 'literatura universal' denotes European works since Bryce has explained in an interview that in the upper-class families in Peru 'se leía mucho a Wilde, por ejemplo; se leía a Byron. Más bien, no se leía a los norteamericanos. Se leía a los ingleses y a los franceses'. See Rubén Barreiro, 'Entrevista con Alfredo Bryce Echenique', p. 42, in Julio Ortega & María Fernanda Lander (eds), *Alfredo Bryce Echenique: ante la crítica*, pp. 31-37.

¹² See for example, 'Doctor por error', in *Permiso para vivir*, pp. 128-31.

poco solemne' (p. 20), prevents her from adhering to the necessary behavioural protocol. Although she clearly enjoys attending official functions, where she is often seated next to the President himself, she is perceived as an enigmatic and contradictory figure who forgoes rules of etiquette, spontaneously bursting into laughter at inopportune moments. The inspiration for her character might come from Bryce's maternal grandmother. In the essay entitled *Para que duela menos*, Bryce notes that his grandfather was an old friend of Mariscal Óscar R. Benavides who would invite him to attend banquets at the palace.¹³ The invitations, he writes, were a source of 'desesperación de mi abuela que simplemente se moría de pereza de tener que vestirse tanto y tan a menudo para estar seria en los banquetes de palacio' (pp. 13-14).

As soon as doña Carmela's husband decides to retreat from the real world she begins to 'pensar en voz alta' (p. 23). At the few important social functions that they attend together, we read that doña Carmela 'veía pelucas postizas, escotes podridos, culos como la Central Hidroeléctrica del Cañón de Pato, tetamentas urbanizables, generales de muchos pedos por banquete, en fin, de todo veía doña Carmela' (p. 23). Deemed by all to have become utterly insane she is the only lucid member of the family and the society in which she moves; like a modern-day Cassandra, she is the only one who sees the truth. As such, Doña Carmela does not function as a foil solely to her husband but to the oligarchy as a whole. This is a good example in the text of how Bryce uses both situational and verbal humour along with irony to uncover the wrong-headedness of the élite. He creates a comical situation in which the reader can only imagine the reactions of horror and embarrassment as the guests sit helplessly

¹³ Alfredo Bryce Echenique & Juan Ángel Juristo, *Para que duela menos* (Madrid: Editorial Espasa Calpe, S.A., 1995), pp. 13-14.

by as doña Carmela unveils the faults that they are so desperately trying to hide from their fellow diners. To do this Bryce employs a bawdy style of humour replete with vulgarities that render her words ('culos y tetas') even more anomalous in a setting so regal. The irony stems from the fact that Doña Carmela alludes to obvious discrepancies, yet is the only person present who dares to speak the truth. Doña Carmela reacts to mishaps and misdemeanours in much the same way as her creator, Bryce, who, like her, uses humour to uncover the ludicrous nature of reality. As such, she functions as an alter ego of Bryce's view of Peruvian society. The sisters later refer to their mother as 'la más moderna, la única moderna' because she was 'la única que sabía reírse en público y en palacio' (p. 50). A clue to her deep lucidity is found in the sentence, 'no sólo empezó a resultarle cada vez más difícil tragarse sus carcajadas, sino que además terminó creyendo que realmente estaba en los banquetes en palacio de gobierno y de los años 30, 40, y hasta 50' (p. 23). Doña Carmela is, of course, present at these banquets which suggests that she is acutely aware of what is occurring around her.

The family doctor, Dr. La Torre, blames Carmela's husband for her 'madness', saying, 'no debió abandonar usted la historia del Perú; o en todo caso, debió abandonarla poco a poco... Perdóname don Jacinto, pero doña Carmela se divertía tanto en los banquetes de palacio, le gustaba tanto ese gran teatro del mundo, le sacaba tal partido a cada detalle' (p. 24). Dr. la Torre's diagnosis, then, cites don Jacinto's decision to abandon Peruvian life as the reason for his wife's ailing health. It is no coincidence that following don Jacinto's retreat from the narratives of history: 'fallecieron todos en línea recta' (p. 24). Bryce seems to be implying that the oligarchy is dying out because of its refusal to accept the truth of its changing

fortunes. This is emphasised by the fact that the allusion to their deaths encompasses the notion of genealogy, which seems to suggest that the oligarchic line is reaching its conclusion. The notion is repeated with the words, ‘Don Jacinto Foncuberta López Aldana murió porque era el más viejo de todos, o sea que en línea recta lo siguieron el doctor José Luis La Torre, don Antenor Larrañaga y don Juan Luis Mendívil’ (p. 25). Here we may note the recourse to an oral register since the term ‘o sea’ is a typical colloquialism. Doña Carmela foretells the deaths of the work’s oligarchs and her predictions are substantiated as one by one they are picked off until she is the last one alive. She herself will repeat the words of Dr. La Torre to her husband on his death-bed, in what appears to be a premonition after the event: ‘No debiste haber abandonado la historia del Perú’ (p. 25). She acts as an indicator in the text to the fact that her husband’s deceptive ideology of fantasy is misguided. Her words function as a warning to the Peruvian upper classes regarding their denial of real life and, are all the more relevant for being pronounced at the death-bed of her husband, the personification of the oligarchy in the novella. With four family members encountering death within the first three chapters, it is clear that the family functions allegorically within the work.

Circular Time and Object-Memory Stimuli

Such reminiscences take place in the apartment amidst an antique collection that comprises examples of fine porcelain, bronze and marble furniture and, the *pièces de résistances* two grandfather clocks purchased in Europe by their parents. The clocks are heirlooms that have travelled with the sisters from their marital residences to their present abode and are, amongst other ornaments, a means of evoking the past. This

indicates that the sisters hold on to the past through the presence of material objects, which recalls Proust's notion of object-memory stimuli. The passing of time is a salient feature in *Dos señoras conversan*, which is paradoxical since time effectively goes nowhere in the novella. In the opening sentence of the work we learn that Carmela and Estela, 'acostumbraban tomar la primera copita de Bristol Cream a las ocho en punto de la noche, y hacia las ocho y media, la segunda copa' (p. 11); their lives are not only governed by routine but also by the oppressive passing of time. Since each passing second removes the sisters further away from their idyllic past, time is experienced as a negative force in the text and is eventually described as 'el inacabable e hiriente paso del tiempo' (p. 42). The futility of their lives is all the more obvious since they are waiting to partake in vice (the vast consumption of alcoholic beverages) and the hour at which they finally go to bed and another interminable day is over. The irrelevance of the sisters' actions and their strict adherence to time suggests that their routine allows them to forget the conditions in which they live, by imposing insignificant conditions upon their lives which displace their genuine concerns. Their lives are both oppressed, and overshadowed by the presence of the grandfather clocks which loom over them.

It is also significant that the clocks are not synchronised and keep irregular time; of the clock positioned in the hallway, we are told 'cada día se atrasa más' (p. 12, p. 66). This second clock acts as a metaphor for the backward-looking mentality of the sisters and a defunct oligarchy that is stuck in the past and refuses to advance. The fact that the clocks chimes are out of synch and consequently that 'real' time can never be established symbolises the irrelevance of time in their lives. Time does not merely recede but is also static, eternal and circular. A sense of this is captured in the

account of their same routine being repeated, ‘día tras día’ and ‘año tras año’ (p.11). The omnipresence of time is made increasingly obvious as the sisters place events on timescales in relation to the death of their husbands.

Closer examination of the last sentence, the first in the work of its kind, reveals the way in which Bryce allows the sentiments and words of his characters to infiltrate the narrative voice of the omniscient third-person narrator: ‘Sí, ése es el momento en que, día tras día y ya también año tras año, porque Juan Bautista murió hace cuatro años y el pobre de Luis Pedro, parece mentira pero van a ser ya seis años que murió el pobre de Luis Pedro...’ (p.11). Carmela appears to have ‘highjacked’ the narrative flow and the narrator is unable to finish his sentence, which suggests a destabilising of the narrator’s omnipotent position. The transition from the narrator’s voice to that of Carmela’s (for the distinction she makes between ‘pobre Luis Pedro’ and ‘pobre de Luis Pedro’ becomes apparent several pages later and is not an opinion that Estela shares) is marked by the increased presence of colloquial language which sees the converse suspension of syntactical rules. The language of the narrator himself is relatively informal and, whilst his speech does not descend to the realms of the language and register employed by the sisters, it remains popular in the lexical sense and tends to mimic their patterns of speech, both through the use of the vernacular and through the abeyance of grammatical laws. This is reinforced by the narrator’s constant recourse to digression and his unwieldy sentences, many of which contain multiple clauses as if imitating the patterns of spoken speech. An example of this is seen in the following extract which also highlights the narrator’s mimicking of the characters’ speech patterns:

Doña Estela y doña Carmela no leían ya antes de acostarse, porque en un tiempo a esta parte, desde Azorín exactamente, no hay un solo escritor que

no le quita a una el sueño. Habían descubierto, en cambio, que estarse las dos un buen rato, una buena media hora, dedicadas en cuerpo y alma a la limpieza de sus respectivas dentaduras postizas con productos norteamericanos –qué no nos tocaría ver en nuestra larga vida- Carmela, y pensar que hubo una vez en la que absolutamente todo se hacía con productos franceses que se vendían en la botica Inglesa, Estela- era el mejor sucedáneo del mundo para lo que antes fue la literatura. (p. 13)

It is interesting to note that the sisters are described as being ‘espantadas’ (p. 11) when the clock strikes nine and that they hastily drink down a third glass of Bristol Cream Sherry which is supposed to be their last. However, every night, as their butler, Isaías enters and offers to take away the drinks’ trolley, they give the command: ‘sírvanos otra copita más’ (p. 11), only to turn to each other once more with looks described as ‘aterradas’ (p. 12). They proceed to vow that the fourth glass will be their last and that they will limit themselves to water, only to take a fifth glass, this time of cognac. It is implausible that the sisters’ reaction to their behavioural patterns, which they surely know they will daily reinact, can result in surprise and horror. The evidence of the lengths to which they will go in denying their daily realities is seen in their claim that they are experiencing multiply-repeated activities for the first time. This is redolent of the sisters’ habit of repeating the same phrases and conversations. It should be mentioned that much of the novel is repetitive, reinforcing the notion that the sisters’ lives go round in ever-decreasing circles. Their routine, it should be signalled, mimics that of their late father and serves as a gesture of solidarity with a fellow oligarch who himself suffered deeply from the changes in the society in which he lived. The Bristol Cream Sherry is hence redolent of the *madelaine* in *À la recherche du temps perdu*, when the narrator’s consumption of it evokes memories of events in his past.¹⁴ The sisters are attempting

¹⁴ When the narrator in *Du Côté de chez Swann* is given a *petite madelaine* by his mother he recalls the Sunday mornings of his childhood when his aunt would feed him the cakes dipped in tea. The recent consumption of the *madelaine* hence evokes memories of his past. He remembers: ‘Et tout d’un coup le souvenir m’est apparu. Ce goût c’était celui du petit morceau de *madelaine* que le dimanche

to perpetuate their father's presence in their lives, as, enslaved to his daily routine, they repetitiously re-enact the past, through their actions in the present. It is significant that they do so by consuming excessive amounts of alcohol. It should be recalled here that many of Bryce's characters, including Manongo Sterne (*No me esperen en abril*) and the narrator-protagonist of *Baby Schiaffano* (*Cuentos completos*, pp. 185-215) also resort to alcohol in order to evoke the world of their past or an idealised present.¹⁵ The fact that Don Jacinto depended on alcohol and that his actions are repeated by his daughters suggests that the shadow of genealogy looms over them. Bryce seems to be pointing here to the willingness with which younger generations repeat the errors committed by previous generations. His comment could be inadvertently directed at the oligarchy as a whole who seek to perpetuate antiquated ways of life. The overriding irony is that the sisters are awaiting nothing more than their respective deaths, to such an extent that, even in life, they assume the identity of phantoms. The atmosphere of the novel hence becomes claustrophobic; it is as if the women were already talking from their coffins, rather like the characters in Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo*.¹⁶ This claustrophobic sensation is reinforced by the *mise-en-close* setting of the work which takes place within the

matin à Combray (parce que ce jour-là je ne sortais pas avant l'heure de la messe), quand j'allais lui dire bonjour dans sa chambre, ma tante Léonie m'offrait après l'avoir trempé dans son infusion de thé ou de tilleul... Mais, quand d'un passé ancien rien ne subsiste, après la mort des êtres, après la destruction des choses, seules, plus frêles mais plus vivaces, plus immatérielles, plus persistantes, plus fidèles, l'odeur et la saveur restent encore longtemps, comme des âmes, à se rappeler, à attendre, à espérer, sur la ruine de tout le reste, à porter sans fléchir, sur leur gouttelette presque impalpable, l'édifice immense du souvenir' (pp. 90-91). Indeed, there are some poignant similarities to be drawn between these lines and the lives of the sisters: everyone dear to them is dead, their material possessions are no more, nothing of their past remains. They hence choose to consume their past (and dead father) through their Bristol Cream. As we shall see in Chapter 4, Manongo and Tere will also devour each other and their past together in the Country Club through the consumption of *butifarras* and coca-cola later in their lives. The old ladies, it should be pointed out, unlike Proust's narrator, do not chance upon the memory stimulus but actively seek it in a bid to perpetuate their past. See Marcel Proust, *À la recherche du temps perdu: Du Côté de chez Swann* (Paris: Livre du Poche, 1992) [1913].

¹⁵ In the opening story of the collection *Huerto cerrado*, entitled, 'Dos indios', which tells the tale of two Peruvians reminiscing in a café in Europe about their youth in Lima, alcohol is also used as a catalyst for the retrieval of memory.

¹⁶ Juan Rulfo, *Pedro Páramo* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1955).

confines of the four walls of their home. In point of fact, the only time that the women exit their enclosed space or participate in events pertaining to the outside world is when they journey through their abundant archive of memories.

The presence of the grandfather clocks also introduces the notion of the juxtaposition of the Old and New Worlds into the novel. Purchased during the sisters' childhood voyages to Europe with their parents, they provide a springboard for the question of the primacy given to the European (colonial) over the Peruvian (colonised). This in turn recalls the feudal era when a European-based aristocracy ruled Peru and so the clocks, as European artifacts pertaining to Lima's past, provide a link in the text between the dominance of imported European cultural models and Peru's pre-columbian past. This is all the more relevant since they were purchased in an epoch during which colonial hierarchies were still relatively stable in Lima. The fact that the clocks were bequeathed to Carmela and Estela by their parents reiterates the notion of cultural inheritance and the preference they have for objects from the old world points to the attitudes of the conquerors, who gave prevalence to European forms of culture over autochthonous ones. The sisters' penchant for amassing European antiques is reminiscent of Susan with her antique collection that includes an 'inmensa consola... adquirida en Bruselas' (p. 80) in *Un mundo para Julius* and her desire to hold onto the old way of life through decorating her new house with Ayacuchan antiques, paintings and 'alguna inglesa finísima' (p. 232).

The sisters both learned French and English as children and nostalgically reminisce about how in the Lima of their youth, they could purchase 'productos franceses' in the 'botica Inglesa' (p. 13). The Peruvian élite, in an attempt to articulate their

identity draw on their links to Europe rather than finding inspiration at a national level. In turn, their snobbery towards American products is encapsulated in the exclamation: ‘productos norteamericanos – qué nos tocaría ver en nuestra larga vida’ (p. 13). At a further point in the narrative, the ladies will criticise the prominence of the North American accent when they remember their father’s opinion that, ‘En cualquier idioma los norteamericanos se traen abajo hasta el peor acento’ (p. 45). The supposed cultural superiority of the European over the North American will be discussed in *No me esperen en abril*, when Don Álvaro chastises his wife for speaking with an American accent that causes him embarrassment. When he complains that the country’s youth: ‘no tienen internados británicos donde ir. Están yendo todos a colegios norteamericanos’ (p. 17), and his wife finds nothing wrong in this, he condescendingly asks her: ‘¿Y la vulgaridad dónde la dejas?’ (p. 17). This is evidence of the primacy he gives to Europe over the United States and, he criticises the manner in which she pronounces the word ‘coca cola’ in an American accent. Here Bryce uses bathos to highlight the snobbery of the upper classes whose linguistic pretensions are comically reduced to the level of the trivial through an argument about the pronunciation of a product as mundane as coca cola. The same mentality reaches new levels of humour in *Dos señoras conversan*, when the old ladies reflect on their sons’ previous return from Miami. Estela, with a clearly limited knowledge of US popular culture, remembers how the sons have become so distanced from their lives in Lima, that it was ‘como si estuvieran comiendo un *hot-dog* todo el tiempo que pasaron con nosotras’ (p. 62). Carmela, with her even greater limitation of both knowledge and intelligence, fails to perceive the semantic connection (the hot dog is merely a linguistic metaphor for their Northern neighbour) and retorts: ‘¿Volvieron con la boca llena?... Pero si hasta comieron sus empanaditas

de pollo' (pp. 62-3). Rendering their pretensions absurd and incongruous, Bryce provides a critique of the cultural snobbery of the upper classes through comic association and misinterpretation.

The Onslaught of Modernity: The Beginning of the End

Meanwhile, amidst such reminiscences, doñas Carmela and Estela, now the only surviving members of the original family sit in their apartment in San Isidro, counting the hours until they can go to bed. Even the type of housing they now inhabit is significant for, whereas they once lived in a 'palacete' (p. 20) with their father, and later in 'grandes residencias' (p. 53) which the deaths of their husbands forced them to renounce, they now live in an apartment which despite being 'moderno' (p. 44) is much smaller. The changing face of architecture hence becomes a metaphor for the changing face of Lima as the old *casas señoriales* are replaced by modern, utilitarian apartment blocks. Such a move represents a change in fortune and life-style for the sisters who are coerced into moving by their sons:

mamá, comprende, ni ti ni mi tía Estela necesitan ya de casas tan grandes, tenemos que venderlas, además, mamá, ya te lo he explicado mil veces, mejor es liquidarlo todo al menos por ahora, y además vas a vivir con mi tía Estela en un departamento superlindo y nada les faltará...ya verás qué lindo departamento les vamos a comprar. (p. 38)

The sisters have been forced to downsize due to financial obligations which is evidence of the oligarchy's diminishing wealth. The text suggests that the assets that are being liquidated are their old homes, businesses and haciendas and, the coexistence of the modern and the antiquated, introduced through the apartment with its collection of antique furniture symbolises a juxtaposition of the old and new cities of Lima. The notion of the changing architectural face of the city is also a salient

feature of *Un mundo para Julius*. This is symbolised by the family's move from the 'palacio de la avenida de Salaverry', with its paintings from the Cuzco school and a 'carroza' (p. 78) belonging to the great-grandfather in the garden (p. 77) to a 'casa modernísima' and 'realmente funcional' (p. 206) in the suburb of Monterrico, which is comically described as 'mucho más San Isidro que San Isidro' (p. 330), as Bryce mimicks the pretensions of the élite.

The ladies' sons, Juan Bautista and Luis Pedrín, in a move that emulates the journeys made by many of Bryce's characters from the younger generation, have emigrated in search of economic prosperity. Manongo Sterne converts his wealth into a fortune in Europe and the States and his financial comfort, compared to the economic hardships suffered by the friends who remain in Peru, is suggestive not only of Peru's dwindling national economy, but also of the need to look outside of Peru in order to achieve financial success. It is ironic that Don Jacinto should have placed his hopes for the future with grandsons that he perceives as 'serios y trabajadores' (p. 15), never imagining that, rather than reverse the oligarchy's fortunes, they would abandon the sinking ship. His wife, however, the children's grandmother, with her foresighted gaze had predicted years before that her grandsons 'morirán en inglés' (p. 25). Juan Bautista and Luis Pedrín, work in a launderette and a liquor store respectively. As members of the service industry, it is clear that their lives bear no resemblance to that of their ancestors. Their relative financial security and economic autonomy, however, seem to imply that the route of self-imposed exile that they have chosen is one better adapted to the demands of changing times. The character of Luis Pedrín, who runs an off-licence called *Foncuberta's Liquor Shop* (p. 57), would later be developed in *No me esperen en abril*, in the character of el Gordito Cisneros, who

runs a store in Miami called *Fat's Cisneros Liquor Shop* (*No me esperen*, p. 558) and shares his obsession with car-racing. A clue to the younger generation's ability to adapt to change is expressed in the comment made by Carmela to Susana Mendizábal, a friend of the grandsons who has remained in Lima. Carmela, feeling utterly overwhelmed by changes in society, that are magnified by a burglary that the sisters are victim of, tells Susana: 'Tú eres todavía una mujer joven y puedes adaptarte a todo' (p. 59). What the text leaves unsaid is of more relevance here, through the implication that members of the older generation, by comparison, find themselves unable to adjust. One reason that they are unable to make the adjustment as opposed to their sons is that the women's universe is virtually hermetically sealed; they permit no entrance into it to members of other social groups. This in itself is evidence that the ladies do not accept that Lima, as a city, is evolving and becoming more racially diverse. The sons however, even as children, associated with Peruvians from all walks of life. When they reached the age of secondary school, for example, 'las calles del barrio más alejadas de ambas casas', were 'las que preferían para reunirse a fumar los primeros cigarillos y hablar de las primeras chicas' (p. 26).

Whilst the ladies struggle to hold onto their past, their sons have accepted that a new work ethic and new modes of behaviour must be undertaken if they are to survive and prosper. This amounts to their distancing themselves from the ethos of the oligarchy and the role of feudal masters and fostering a new identity as independent entrepreneurs. With this in mind they try to explain the effects of historical progress to their mothers when they tell them: '... las haciendas hace siglos que te lo expliqué, mamá, son irrecuperables, la reforma agraria ya es cosa de otro siglo' (p. 38). The sons accept that their lands have been re-appropriated, choosing to surrender to

change rather than blindly fight it and their trajectory reflects the action taken by many Peruvians during the 1980s. Their mothers, on the other hand, have been left behind by the narratives and processes of modernity and refuse to accept the changes in their society. The national economic crisis led to increased emigration, primarily to the US, when figures for people leaving the country soared from 38,000 in 1986 to 120,000 in 1988, an indicator of the extent to which Peruvians believed the crisis to be irreversible (see Chapter 2).

The sons' attitude contrasts starkly to that of their mothers, who remain embittered by the national agrarian programme and demonise the figure of Velasco and his left-wing attempts to modernise Peru. However, it is important to signal that, whilst the ladies allude to Velasco, they never directly pronounce his name, preferring to refer to 'los militares de 68' (p.36). Like their father before them, their knowledge of Peruvian political history is full of blanks, so that whilst they have a vague awareness of the country's pivotal political figures, they understand little about their policies other than that they were detrimental to their family's wealth. In other words, Peru's political events are of little importance to the sisters, who represent the remnants of the country's upper classes. A sense of this is caught in the following extract of dialogue: 'Hasta los militares de 68, nada más. Desde entonces, Carmela, los evangelios por los suelos' (p. 36).

The two figures to whom they allude, and who are apparently solely responsible for the problems afoot in society, are Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre and General Juan Velasco Alvarado. Haya de la Torre, who led the left-wing party APRA (Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana) from exile since 1924, is mentioned by the

ladies on several occasions, usually in connection with the former family doctor, La Torre, even though there does not exist even the remotest connection between the two men. The first time they mention them appears in the following conversation which is integrated into the main narrative stream:

se apresuraban en desearse las buenas noches en la Lima horrible de hoy y en apagar sus lamparitas de mesa de noche y a menudo doña Carmela ni siquiera lograba contestarle a doña Estela cuando ésta le hablaba de lo linda que era Lima entonces, ¿no Carmela?, y cuando Víctor Raúl de la Torre, que no era pariente ni por Adán del doctor La Torre, siempre estaba preso y su partido aprista y del pueblo también siempre estaba preso o algo así que nuestro papacito creo que llamaba las catacumbas y cómo se sonreía, ¿no, Carmela? (p. 15)

That the conversation is recounted in the imperfect tense implies that it has been often repeated whilst the incorporation of the sisters' words, 'la Lima horrible de hoy', into his flow is an example of how the narrator assimilates their words into his voice. It does not suggest that he shares their opinions but rather demonstrates the manner in which he appropriates their words in order to expose them as wrong-headed. Estela, at least, is aware that Haya de la Torre was aligned with APRA and that his party represented the interests of the masses. In Estela's opinion Lima was a better place when Haya de la Torre was incarcerated. She is, however, more concerned in distancing herself from him through her statement that he was in no way related to Dr. La Torre. The ideology expressed by Estela is also one of retrenchment as she voices her distaste for the entrance of the popular classes onto the political scene. Yet her line of thinking is confused for she interweaves fantasy and reality, past and present; every time she mentions the revolutionary leader, she recalls the long-dead family doctor. Don Jacinto laughs as he refers to the APRA members' prison as 'catacombs' in an image linked to death. His laughter functions

as an example of dramatic irony in the text, since it is not APRA that will meet its death but the members of his own social class, including himself.

The sisters' knowledge of Velasco is even more limited and their ignorance regarding their country's affairs is a constant metaphor for an oligarchy out of touch with the society in which it lives. Typically, Bryce uses humour and parodies the ladies' speech to make his point as they discuss the implications of Velasco's regime on the national press:

- Los falsos periódicos limeños fueron los de los militares del 68.
- Qué torpes los militares del 68, ¿no?
- Los más torpes de todos, mujer. Hay que ser realmente el colmo de la torpeza para quitarle su periódico a la gente y dárselo a los campesinos, a los obreros, a... a... a no sé quién más.
- Pues creo que había periódicos para todos menos para la gente como nosotras.
- ¡Qué horror!, sí lo recuerdo. Abrías un periódico y nunca lograbas a ver a nadie conocido. (p. 53).¹⁷

This is a satirical remark at the expense of the glossy Lima society magazines, and the vanity of the *limeños* who scour them for their photos every week, hoping that their presence at the exclusive social functions will be documented. However, it also draws the reader's attention to the way in which the ladies conceive of a question as important as censorship and the control of the press. They negate its magnitude by shunting it to the realms of the trivial and élitist fashionable glossies, thereby ignoring the more newsworthy papers such as *El Comercio*. The only adverse effect of the military reformists that the ladies are concerned with is their lack of access to society life. Furthermore they have no understanding of distinctions between the lower classes, as they group the working class and the Indian peasantry and 'who knows who else' together, which serves to homogenise the lower classes. Their

¹⁷ Bryce has affirmed: 'Yo creo que a partir de Velasco se da un fenómeno de peruanización del Perú precisamente porque aparecen todos los sectores populares en escena'. See Esteban González, 'El escritor y la política', in Jorge Coaguila (ed.), *Entrevistas escogidas*, pp. 49-60, p. 60.

racism towards economically disadvantaged sectors of Peruvian society becomes apparent through the aversive utterance, ‘¡Qué horror!’, which is also an articulation of their fear of insurgency.

Although in *Dos señoras conversan* President Belaúnde is vaguely praised for reversing censorship measures, in other works by Bryce, such as *No me esperen en abril*, he is specifically criticised for the failure of his public works programmes. Even the sisters’ criticism of Velasco tends to elude reality since they omit any reference to his Agrarian Reform Programme, which is arguably the greatest legacy his government left. General Velasco of the Revolutionary Government of the Armed Forces successfully staged the military coup in 1968 that led to a dramatic change in the fortunes of the oligarchy, through the wide-spread Agrarian Reform Programme that he subsequently implemented, nationalising industry and re-appropriating expropriated lands. This event whose consequences were enormous, is related by the old ladies in a conversation that undermines the extent of its economical and political implications, stressing that their interpretation of this corner-stone in Peruvian political history and the economic and social shock-waves that it produced, are not only not misinterpreted by the two ladies, but pass entirely over their heads, as seen in their amusing conversation which locates the event in the mundane trivialities of everyday aristocratic Lima. Their interpretation of the agrarian reforms, indeed, stands in dramatic contrast to their sons’ appreciation of events.

La Crisis: The Spheres of the Public and Private Collide

The sisters are more aware of the problems that have consequences on their daily domestic lives, that is, those problems that have an effect on the private sphere. The first of these is the soaring inflation rates which caused the devaluation of the Old Peruvian 'sol' and the implementation of the replacement currency, the 'Inti'. This in turn led to massive economic instability in Peru and spiralling prices on domestic goods. The Peruvian economy was in 'deep economic recess' (Rudolph, p. 82)¹⁸ during the first half of the decade of the 1980s with interest rates soaring at 125%, whilst a report in *El Comercio* on 9 May 1989 measured Peru's inflation at 3,339%. Inflation affected the price at which consumer goods were bought and, after nearly doubling in 1987 to 115%, the consumer price index rocketed to 1,722% in 1987 and to a staggering 2,778% in 1989 (Rudolph, p. 134). When their cousin Guillermito, the owner of an antique shop, burgles them towards the end of the novel, the sisters excuse his behaviour, on the one hand because he is family and the sisters are anxious not to incriminate their own kind and secondly because of his personal financial hardship. Guillermito himself apportions blame on society's economic problems, when, in an attempt to divert blame from himself, he cries, 'Y que mi tienda de antigüedades, con estos tiempos que corren, se está yendo al diablo' (p. 64). His statement reflects the effect that the recession had on small businesses in the private sector.

Meanwhile, the average salary in the private and public sectors in the 1980s decreased by 52% and 62%, respectively.¹⁹ The reaction of the serving staff is to

¹⁸ Rudolph, James, D., *Peru: The Evolution of a Crisis* (Stanford: Praeger Publishers, 1992).

¹⁹ For more comprehensive statistics, see Chapter 2.

demand higher wages. Carmela complains of their requests to Estela: ‘Y a este borrico de Isaías y a Julián el jardinero cada día hay que darles más plata para que [lo] limpien’ (p. 45), to which Estela replies, ‘Y más plata para que limpien todo lo demás’ (p. 45). Whilst this is evidence in the text that the serving staff are increasingly aware of their economic rights, it also implies the resistance of the upper classes to their demands for justice. The servants are also aware of the irregular hours that they work and consequently ask for ‘aumento y permiso para salir un rato’ (p. 17). The precariousness of the servants’ financial circumstances however, ensures that they remain subjugated to the caprices of their mistresses. Isaías, disgruntled by the manner in which Carmela treats both himself and Estela, fantasises about knocking over their drinks trolley, as a means of revenge. Despite this he refrains, reminding himself that ‘en fin, el azúcar y el arroz estaban cada día más caros y él tenía una mujer y una hija que alimentar allá en su pueblo joven’ (p. 42). Whilst a direct reference to the increase in prices of consumer goods, his thoughts also demonstrate the difference in lifestyles between the poor and the wealthy. For, whilst Isaías and his family’s diet is dictated by need – they survive on subsistence foods such as rice and sugar – the old ladies feast on luxury imported goods that include Bristol Cream and Hennessey Cognac. More significantly, despite the serving classes’ awareness of their rights, they are still not able to achieve them, constricted by relations of colonial power that are still in force; Isaías depends on the ladies’ money in order to feed his family. The servants take vengeance by stealing from their employers, but this means that they are forced to resort to criminal actions in order to survive. Crime is rife in the society that the book portrays, but it is clear that it is symptomatic of the racial and social problems and a direct result of the prevailing economic climate. The text does not vilify the servants for their involvement in petty

theft but rather implies that their circumstances are forced upon them through economic constraints and the limitation of opportunity.

When Isaías's inner thoughts enter the narrative stream, it is to inform the reader that theft is commonplace amongst the staff and, that the cook, the black female servant and the laundress also resort to criminal activity. It is interesting to note at this point the inclusion of the voices of members of the lower class into the narrative. Not only do the thoughts of Isaías enter the narrator's perspective, but also those of the family chauffeur, Jesús Comunión Junior. Although in *Un mundo para Julius*, for example, the replacement nanny known as La Decidida directly asks Susan for a pay rise (pp. 420-22), her thoughts on the matter never enter the narrative unmediated, but rather are disclosed through mediated dialogue. Characters who are members of the upper classes such as Susan, Julius's mother, however do enter the narrator's perspective, which amounts to an imbalance between social classes with regards to their possibilities for self-expression. As such, the lower classes find themselves marginalised from the dominant narrative discourse and are allowed only to voice their subjectivity through the filter that is controlled by the upper-class narrator. In *Dos señoras conversan*, however, the thoughts of the servant class enter the narrative in unmediated fashion,²⁰ which means that the reader has a vehicle through which to identify directly with them. With the 'barrier' between their words and the reader, which in *Un mundo para Julius* the narrator represents, erased, the reader has direct access to the thought processes of lower class characters, who can represent themselves on an equal footing. The increasing power of the lower class characters

²⁰ It should be pointed out that the dialogue is not entirely 'unmediated' since nothing in the text can be so due to the real author writing the text in the first instance. When the term 'unmediated dialogue' is employed therefore, it is rather to suggest that the text gives the impression that the dialogue is unmediated.

for self-representation must be taken to signify not only their increased activity in public life, but also the destabilising of the nation's previously dominant structures of power.

Racism and Resistance: Maintaining the Status Quo

Racism is still rife, however, and is presented as a social and ethnic problem that is expressed in the text through several different strategies. The most obvious manifestation is found in the ladies', generally Carmela's, bigoted speech and intolerant attitudes since she frequently refers to the serving staff in derogatory terms. For instance, Carmela refers to Isaías as 'este idiota de mayordormo' (p. 40), which is evidence of her recourse to the trope of the stereotype that promotes false knowledges of the Other. The implication in this remark is that it is the butler's ethnicity that renders him intellectually inferior since there is nothing in the text to suggest that he is intellectually challenged. Carmela clearly sees herself as an intelligent being (see above), which demonstrates how she antithetically evaluates Isaías as her racial inferior, constructing his identity through his difference to her and in turn fictionalising her subjectivity through him.²¹ On many occasions Carmela refers to the staff as 'esos borricos' (p. 49) which shows how she relegates the racial Other to the level of primitive beasts which results in their dehumanisation. The women have a preference for the serving staff from the Northern town of Cajamarca whom they previously employed because they were 'blancona[s] y limpísima[s]' (p. 39) and the new staff in comparison are considered dirty and with more obvious Indian facial factions, including the colour of their skin. The stereotypical

²¹ Hall and du Gay observe that 'identities are constructed through, not outside difference'. See Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay, *Questions of Cultural Identity* (London: Sage Publications Ltd, 1996), p. 4.

representation of Indians as unclean has implications here of impurity and savagery and suggests that the Indians are fetishised on the basis of their biological features, in this instance their skin. Neither are the new generation of serving staff 'honrados... agradecidos' or 'educadísimos' (p. 17) as were their predecessors. More damning, however, is that the servants are seen by the ladies as morally inferior to the white, hegemonic group, as encapsulated in Carmela's reaction to their involvement in the burglary.²² The sisters blame the serving staff for turning a blind eye to Guillermito's antics and, whilst Guillermito is exonerated due to his confession, the serving staff are dismissed for allowing him access to the house and not confessing, even though the narrator clearly states that, 'prácticamente no tenían nada que confesar' (p. 64).²³ In this way, the narrator alligns himself with the lower classes and subtly discloses the upper class's prejudices towards them. Even Jesús Comunción hijo is anxious lest he be accused of 'tamaño perpetración' (p. 57), despite being the most respected member of staff. The narrative again enters his thoughts, allowing him to defend both himself and his class, as he thinks, 'a lo mejor me lo

²² The ladies' discourse allows them to remain in a position of control and superiority over the subaltern class. As such it recalls Foucault's theory of the 'apparatus' of power. Bhabha defines Foucault's concept as something that: 'turns on the recognition and disavowal of racial/cultural/historical differences... it seeks authorisation from its strategies by the production of knowledge of coloniser and colonised which are stereotypical but antithetically evaluated... The objective of colonial discourse is to construe the colonised as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction... despite the 'play' in the colonial system which is crucial to its exercise of power, colonial discourse produces the colonised as a social reality which is at once 'other' and yet entirely knowable and visible'. See Homi K. Bhabha, 'The Other Question: Stereotype, discrimination and the discourse of colonialism', in *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 66-84 (pp. 70-71).

²³ The racist ethos of Lima's society and the distinction that the upper classes make between themselves and those of mixed race, which is based on the belief that material wealth supposes high moral values, has been seen in 'Anorexia y la tijeira'. Raquelita complains to her husband: '¡Cómo es esa gente, Joaquín! ¡Qué país! No había pasado ni un minuto y ya me habían robado el reloj de diamantes. Quién podía ser más que el negro inmenso que tenía parado a mi izquierda. Se creyó que porque yo era una señora decente... Cobarde. Negro Asqueroso' (*Cuentos completos*, pp. 308-09). Not only has Raquelita falsely presumed that the black man has stolen her jewellery, because of an underlying belief that all blacks are dishonest, but, the reader will note, she tarnishes them all with the same brush: 'ya me habían robado'. This statement groups all blacks together under the same stereotypical shadow and negates difference between individuals of the same race.

acusa de tamaña perpetración y sólo porque uno es pobre pero honrado, perro honrado es lo que es uno, en realidad, aunque tampoco es justo juzgar así nomás por prejuizar' (p. 57). In this case the causes of racism have economic implications. The chauffeur, for example, believes that he will be assumed guilty on account of his poverty and, his frustration at the prejudicial behaviour of the oligarchs is experienced first-hand by the reader. Presenting the argument through Jesús's words is another example of how the text denounces the racist assumptions of the oligarchs. The hierarchical duality of Self and Other, which is based on the binary oppositions of white and Indian, rich and poor and results in the natural segregation of the upper and lower classes, is perpetuated amongst the serving staff. Jesús Comunión hijo, for example, by dint of his superior employment status as chauffeur, must eat in a separate room from the other serving staff because he is considered socially superior to them. Evidence of the master/slave dialectic is also evident in remarks such as, 'Limítese a obedecer mis órdenes, Isaías, que para eso está usted en esta casa' (p. 47).

A further example of upper-class racism is encapsulated in their resistance to the lower classes' opportunities for self-betterment. This is expressed in the belief that the Indian, for reasons of race and class, should not be allowed access to the civilising discipline of education, for fear that enlightenment should have negative outcomes. The son of Jesús Comunión hijo, the third generation of the family, should have followed in his father and grandfather's footsteps and become the family chauffeur. Unfortunately, and much to the anxiety of his father, he has joined the ranks of the terrorist guerrilla movement, presumably the *Sendero Luminoso*.

According to Guillermito and the sisters, this comes as a direct result of the university education that he has received, as seen in the following conversation:

- Pobre hombre, jamás podrá comprender cómo ha podido salirle un hijo terrorista.
- Guillermito dice que eso le ha pasado por mandarlo a la Universidad.
- Pero el pobre hombre querría que su hijo estudiara.
- Guillermito dice que es un cambio muy brusco. Dice que ni el hijo de un chófer ni el de una costurerita debería ir nunca a la Universidad. Y Guillermito sabe lo que dice. (pp. 52- 53)²⁴

The above conversation is evidence of the upper classes' resistance to the processes of modernity as seen in their unwillingness to accept the incorporation of the lower classe into mainstream life. Furthermore they seek to perpetuate the subjugation of the lower classes by denying them access to disciplines and structures that will lead to their enlightenment. Implied in Guillermito's reasoning is the notion that if the subordinated are given the tools to improve their conditions they will revolt against their masters. A second belief of Guillermito is that the lower classes are not ready or equipped for education as a result of cultural inferiority.²⁵ It is preferable for the hegemonic group to maintain the subaltern in a position of ignorance as it allows them to maintain their superior cultural status. Access to disciplines that lead to enlightenment would, of course, allow the repressed to understand their own

²⁴ Bryce has self-mockingly remembered his experiences of encountering a black person at university in his article 'El complicado oficio de escribir'. See Introduction, p. 4 of this thesis.

²⁵ Guillermito cites this belief, which produces a certain knowledge with regard to the racial Other, as a legitimate truth whilst also managing to convince the sisters of the legitimacy of his claim. Stuart Hall, in a discussion of Foucault's famous concept of the dynamic relationship between knowledge and power, explains: 'knowledge linked to power, not only assumes the authority of "the truth" but has the power to make itself true'. See Stuart Hall, *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: Sage Publications, 1997), p. 49. Guillermito's words do not reveal any truth about the intellectual capacity of Indians. Rather they function as a 'regime' of truth. Foucault describes this concept in the following terms: 'Each society has its regime of truth... that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true'. See Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge* (Brighton: harvester Press, 1980), p. 131. Guillermito's knowledge of the racial other, then, is shown to function strategically (Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, p. 145) in that it rationalises oppressive relations. For further discussion of Foucault's power/knowledge dyad, see Joseph Rouse, 'Power/Knowledge', in Gary Cutting (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), Chapter 4, pp. 92-114.

conditions and react against them, as Jesús's son has clearly done. Guillermito's words and the sisters' advocacy of his sentiments can be considered an act of cultural and epistemic violence.

It is through Jesús Comunción nieto, that the subject of terrorism is introduced into the text. In part the sisters' disgust of his connection with terrorist factions is that it has prevented him occupying his pre-determined place in society: '¡Qué horror, cómo ha cambiado todo! Pensar que, en vez de terrorista, a Jesús Comunción nieto le habría correspondido ser chófer a Carriquirrí' (p. 50). The implication here is that times have changed to such an extent that the subaltern classes, instead of assuming the positions that they are supposed to, are finding alternative options, thereby rendering the position of the ladies even more precarious. This extract of dialogue directly succeeds a reference to Dr. La Torre, who is praised for his intelligence, 'Un verdadero sabio es lo que era el doctor de la Torre' (p. 49), which shows a marked difference between the progressive attitudes afforded to the dominant social group and the repressive attitudes shown to the subaltern. Education can hence be used to widen the gap between social classes by being made available to and considered appropriate for the upper classes alone.

Whilst the sisters, who tend to perceive national politics through the filtering gaze of Guillermito have few criticisms to make on terrorism, except for the effect that the blackouts have on them, their cousin takes a hard-nose line on such issues. Carmela tells her sister that 'Guillermito tiene razón cuando dice que un terrorista no merece ayuda alguna. Según él, lo único que merece una terrorista es que lo fusilen' (p. 50). Jesús Comunción hijo, equally disgusted by his son's connections, takes a less radical

approach and ponders how he would like to give him a beating. The difference in the strategies envisaged by the two men perhaps reflects cultural differences; it is certainly indicative of their racism since it implies that their lives are worthless. Jesus Comunción's greatest fear is that the police torture his son, in a reference to the human rights abuses consistent with the times: 'que no me lo torture, que no me lo deje morir por la policía' (p. 54). The corruption of the civil authorities is echoed in the anxieties of Susana Mendiábal, when the text reads: 'Y ahora de quien más miedo tenía Susana Mendizábal era de la propia policía, de las autoridades, de qué sé yo' (p. 60). It would appear that corruption is prominent within the governing and administrative sectors of society, yet, since the text is written primarily through the perspectives of the oligarchs, this idea is only hinted at through the refracted consciousness of subaltern characters. That Guillermito criticises the criminal activities of the chauffeur's son and condemns him to a violent death is evidence of his hypocrisy. He too has criminal tendencies, as revealed in the burglary that he stages.

Retrenchment and Nostalgia: History Repeated

The sisters typically allude to terrorist activities in a confused and illogical fashion which tends to trivialise the implications that terrorism had in Lima in the early 1980s. They experience the campaign in terms of material lack rather than issues of national security. As such, their ignorance of political violence mimicks their late father's ignorance with regard to political change. The following conversation shows how they misinterpret the current socio-political climate:

cuánta confusion y los evangelios por los suelos y nosotras pisoteadas y un terrorismo que nos deja sin luz horas y horas, velas y más velas, días y días,

ah, Carmela, un velorio es lo que parece nuestro Bristol Cream mientras los terroristas nos devuleven la luz de antes, esa luz que, a veces, hasta aclara nuestras vidas. (p. 61)

This reference to the blackouts that resulted from terrorists cutting off electrical supplies has but one significant effect upon the lives of the ladies: it forces them to drink their Bristol Cream Sherries by candlelight, thus undermining their pleasure. The sisters do not consider the wider effects of terrorism, but only the implications that it has for their hermetically-sealed domestic sphere. In point of fact, terrorism arouses the sentiment of nostalgia as the ladies evoke fantasies of the Lima of the past, suggesting that rather than leading them to confront reality it turns them away from it. Like their father, the more the ladies learn about their present reality, the more they are inclined to retreat into their pasts. Knowledge does not enlighten them it causes them to flee the truth. This is seen in Estela's remark to Carmela: 'Y estos apagones de Sendero Luminoso y Jesús Comunión terrorista a mí me hacen soñar bastante, la verdad. ¿Tú te acuerdas, por ejemplo, de la Lima alumbrada a gas de que hablaba siempre nuestro papacito?' (p. 62) and Carmela's reply: 'Me acuerdo, sí, pero como en un sueño' (p. 62). Rather than providing them with a more acute understanding of contemporary Peruvian society, the activities of the *Sendero Luminoso* propel the ladies further back into the idealised world of their past. This leads to arguments, as follows:

- Pues mira, ya ves: el gas hace soñar.
- Pero Sendero Luminoso no tira gas, tira bombas.
- Yo nunca he oído decir que Sendero Luminoso bombardea, Carmela.
- No me digas que estás defendiendo al hijo de Jesús Comunión hijo. (p. 62)

Bryce uses irony, here, in order to draw attention to and criticise the sisters' ignorance of Peruvian history; it is an angular type of conversation reminiscent of Chekov's dramas. Irony is a constant vehicle for the expression of the sisters'

oblique view of reality since their knowledge contrasts starkly to that of other elements involved in the creation of the text. Their knowledge is inferior to that of the narrator who allows their words to slip into his narrative, the other characters in the work and, more significantly, that of the intended reader, who, if he/she is to understand the jokes at the sisters' expense, must be presumed to have a broader knowledge of Peru's affairs than their limited awareness. Irony is hence employed to represent the cultural discrepancy between the sisters and other characters in the work.

The burglary is clearly the catalyst in the text for the sisters' conversations about terrorism since they read both events as symbols of a society in moral and social decay. The event is also the impetus behind the sisters' final and alarming descent into fantasy and their total detachment from reality. When they discover that the perpetrator of the crime has severed their telephone wires, Carmela cries out, '¡Nos han aislado del mundo!' (p. 56). This is an ironic statement since, like their father before them, they have been isolated from the world for a long time and were themselves responsible for their predicament. The burglary also leaves their apartment 'vacío' (p. 60) since all their possessions have disappeared. The apartment hence acts as a metaphor of a dispossessed oligarchy, which has lost its status and possessions in the wake of Agrarian Reform. Suddenly, Doña Carmela begins to invoke the dead figures from their past, including their parents, their husbands, Dr. la Torre and indeed, 'todidita la Lima de antes' (p. 57). In the aftermath of the burglary Doña Carmela not only decides that the now long-dead Dr. la Torre is the best doctor in Lima and a truly wise man, but also the best doctor in the world and at the same time, the most famous vet of 'perros finísimos' (p. 57) in Paris. In the minds of the

two elderly ladies, past and present, fact and fantasy have finally merged into one. This becomes evident when Doña Carmela cries out to all who will listen to her: ‘ni una sola palabra de esto a nuestros hijos [...] Ni siquiera al doctor La Torre’ (p. 70), since the doctor has, of course, been dead for decades. The ending of the novel sees the two sisters awaiting their Bristol Cream Sherry and the arrival of the dead doctor in a bid to recuperate, ‘la tranquilidad y el confort y al doctor La Torre’ (p. 71). From the above, we see that Doñas Carmela and Estela’s attempts to perpetuate the world of their past increase as their changing position in society and their helplessness become more evident to them. In this desire to cling to the past, fantasy becomes a socially necessary illusion for the sisters, a strategy of escapism from their material conditions and a survival mechanism. Here we may note that fantasy, as an ideology, is not necessarily a negative choice for the sisters since its apparent aimlessness can be related to serendipity, and, thereby, to the imaginative faculty of the human mind, that helps them through life’s vicissitudes.

Their attempts to hang on to their illustrious past are seen in their decision to alter their sons’ names from Luis Pedro and Juan Bautista, to Foncuberta and Carriquirí, the surnames of their grandfather and father respectively, in a bid to carry on the grand aristocratic family name. For the sisters, naming the second son Foncuberta means, ‘también mantener vivo en el Perú aquel gran apellido que realmente había empezado a extinguirse con lo flaco que era su papacito’ (p. 37). However, the sisters’ reason for their father’s lack of male heirs and the subsequent disappearance of the family name is his skinniness. This appears to be a metaphor for an issueless upper class. Bryce is taking a jibe at the sisters’ futile project of continuing the family name through the absurdity of their reasoning. Their decision to create for

themselves the aristocratic-sounding surname of Foncuberta de Carriquiri is also a fantasy of pretence, since they are adhering to the illusion that they still belong to a powerful aristocratic family. Their decision to maintain their surnames is ridiculed by their sons, who tell them that

por más ilustre que sea, ya no lo es, mamá y resulta larguísimo y totalmente incomprensible más allá de la esquina de la casa, mamá, y además imagínate lo que sería tener que explicar tremendo apellidón en el aeropuerto de Nueva York o Miami, te registran mucho más el equipaje, mamá. (p. 37)

Bryce employs bathos here, contrasting the family's sublime aristocratic roots, with the triviality of excess baggage in the airports of the U.S. It is interesting to note that although Bryce mocks the primacy given to Europe and the U.S. over Peru by Peruvians, he himself has spent most of his adult life outside of Peru, in European cities such as Paris, Montpellier, Barcelona and Madrid. So, whilst he gently mocks both mothers and sons, his life mimics the actions and attitudes of his characters. This points to the fact that there is perhaps a difference in the value-systems or ideologies held by the real and implied authors of the text.

Carmela, who is the more cruel and stupid of the sisters, has always made it her policy to prolong the continuation of the family line against failing odds. The younger and gentler sister, Estela, suffered years of an unhappy marriage because her sister coerced her into marrying a young aristocratic philanderer, who never loved her and could not remain faithful. Carmela's reason for doing this was to prolong the survival of the oligarchy, as shown in a snippet of a conversation she had years ago with her husband: 'ya veremos cómo casamos a Estela con Luis Pedro, Juan Bautista, claro, eso es lo que tenemos que hacer, en los días maravillosos y felices en que dos apellidos ilustres se unieron y crearon un mundo que nunca se iba a acabar' (p. 38).

The oligarchs are so intent on marrying within their limited social group that they are forced to marry repeatedly into the same families, creating a society that is almost endogamous in nature. However, the product of the enforced unification of two grand surnames was an unhappy and unsuccessful marriage whose disastrous nature serves as a reminder to the couple that it is pointless to try to go against history and force the oligarchy to stand aloft in all its former glory. The resounding message is that the oligarchs cannot take history on and win or prevent it from happening, but, to the contrary, must accept to go with the flow of the changing times.

Popular Culture

One major clue to the changing times in Lima is the entrance of manifestations of popular culture onto the national stage, and, it comes as no surprise that they are linked to the experiences of the sisters' sons who embrace the *Criollo Waltz* and whose attitudes to the lower classes are more flexible.²⁶ Narratives of popular culture are prominent in the majority of Bryce's works of fiction, as will be seen in chapters 4, 5 and 6 and tend to symbolise increasing cultural and social diversity in the city of Lima. Although less attention is given to popular modes of culture in *Dos señoras conversan* than in the other novels studied in this thesis, both the cinema and the *Criollo Waltz* are mentioned. Every Sunday as children, for example, the cousins attend a matinée performance of a Western or a film about automobile races. Luis

²⁶ References to popular culture are typical of postmodern narrative and in this, Bryce's works are redolent of, for example the presence of the cinema in Manuel Puig's *La traición de Rita Hayworth* (1968) or radio broadcasts in Vargas Llosa's *La tía Julia y el escribidor* (1977). For a discussion of cultural references in Puig's novel, see René Alberto Campos, *Espejos: la textura cinematográfica en La traición de Rita Hayworth* (Madrid: Editorial Pliegos, 1986). Of Puig's inclusion of elements of popular culture, Bryce has said in an interview: 'En el caso de Puig su aportación es gigantesca, pues incluye dentro de su obra y a través del antihéroe todo aquello que la literatura anterior había despreciado, pues se consideraba subcultura como el cine de bulvar, la cursilería, los sueños de la clase media'. See Inmaculada García & Samuel Serrano, 'Entrevista con Alfredo Bryce Echenique', in *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos*, N° 641 (November 2003), 135-41 (p. 136).

Pedrin is obsessed with fast cars and at the end of each weekend trip to Lima, he races home to his hacienda in Cañete, attempting to beat his 'récord de velocidad Lima-Cañete' (p. 28). It appears that Luis Pedrin's penchant for racing and fast cars is directly influenced by his love of car-chase movies. His weekly actions represent an example in the text of how popular culture influences the behaviour of a character in 'real-life', as the car races step out of the movie screen and into the streets of the city of Lima. The fact that they watch Westerns, an archetypal Hollywood genre, also suggests the early cultural impact of the northern neighbour on the cousins' lives. It would not be unreasonable to suggest that is hence through manifestations of popular culture that the boys are first introduced to the United States, and, furthermore, perhaps goes some way to explaining the ease with which they assimilate themselves into U.S. culture later in life, when they contentedly emigrate to Miami.

In a fancy-dress party that the two boys attend, in which everyone must wear a mask, Juan Bautista dresses up as the secret agent, 007, James Bond. Juan Bautista is the cousin who enjoys success with girls, whereas Luis Pedrin is consistently unlucky in love. As an echo of the Don Juan or Casanova figure, with a total of 'ocho primeros amores' (p. 27), Juan Bautista is reminiscent of the character of James Bond who earned fame as much through his multiple romances as for his daring exploits. It is hence apt that Juan Bautista should choose to disguise himself as a character whose life he emulates, and his characterization clearly acts as a wink of the eye from Bryce to the intended reader. There is also evidence in the text to suggest that Juan Bautista actively models himself on the character of the suave, sophisticated James Bond. When the object of Luis Pedrin's affections, Susana Mendizábal, snubs and

humiliates his cousin, Juan Bautista strides up to her, having fully assumed the James Bond persona and a hilarious episode ensues. Pointing to a gold badge on his suit he asks Susana to read what it says and the frightened girl replies: 'Dice que tienes licencia para matar, James Bond' (p. 32). It is no coincidence that, as the narrator steps in to inform us, 'La primera película de James Bond acaba de llegar a Lima' (p. 32) and it is clear that Juan Bautista, conscious of the charm he has over the opposite sex, has recognised himself in the latest screen legend. Juan Bautista is modelling his behaviour on a popular cultural figure and this is reaffirmed by the narrator who refers to him as 'James Carriquirí' (p. 33) and '007 Carriquirí' (p. 33). A true gentleman, like his alter-ego, Juan Bautista declares, 'Yo sólo mato a hombres' (p. 33) and ends up inviting Susana to dance in the hope of humiliating her. Suddenly something unexpected occurs, as he finds himself mysteriously attracted to her. In a dramatic turn of events, the party comes to a halt as the orchestra stops playing and 'los ojos de centenarios máscaras y antifaces' (p. 33) turn to face them. A sense of fate looms over them as Juan Bautista falls in love with 'la primera mujer que había amado realmente en su vida' (p. 34), with whom his cousin is also enamoured and the 'desenlace' (p. 33) of the drama is watched by the masked faces who resemble the Greek chorus overseeing the tragedy. Through this event, Bryce transposes the high drama of the Greek Tragedy to the everyday occasion of a high school summer party, in a gesture which relocates a genre of high culture to the popular arena. High culture and low culture hence collide and Bryce demonstrates, in a postmodern rhetorical flourish, the fluidity of the boundaries that delineate them.²⁷ As such

²⁷ Donald Shaw, paraphrasing Fredric Jameson, writes: 'What began to happen in Spanish American fiction after 1968 was what Jameson, referring to "metropolitan" literature, calls "the effacement of the older (essentially High-Modernist) frontier between high culture and so-called mass or commercial culture and the emergence of new kinds of texts infused with the forms, categories and contents of Cultural Industry so passionately denounced by the ideologues of the modern'. See Donald L. Shaw, *The Post-Boom in Spanish American Fiction* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), p.

cultural hierarchies are demythified or democratised. This is reiterated in the disguise that Luis Pedrín opts for when he attends the party dressed as the king of Greek myth, Midas, since the anomalous and incongruous partnership of Midas and Bond arrive together, leave together and re-establish the rules of their friendship.

The other form of popular culture present in the narrative is the *Criollo Valse*. Jesús Comunión hijo introduced the waltz to the boys when he drove them through the city streets as children every Sunday to the sounds of *criollo* radio stations. The *canción criolla* sprung from the lower-class working districts of Lima such as La Victoria and Vitarte in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and it is thus fitting that Jesús, a member of the lower classes, who comes from the *barrio* La Victoria, should introduce the children to the tradition.²⁸ It is also interesting to note that the Creole waltz became popular due to radio airtime and was, as Higgins suggests, ‘a creolization of European music’ (Higgins, p. 152) adapted from the Viennese Waltzes that had been popular with Lima’s élite.²⁹ It is also of relevance to note here the significant role played in the introduction of popular forms of culture to Lima, by the dissemination of radio broadcasts, since it points to the incrementation of working class’ access to modern commodities, which is further evidence that their status is improving. The waltz that the cousins remember years later, on the eve of Juan Bautista’s departure for the States to study, is Felipe Pinglo’s *El plebeyo* (1899-1936) and, when the cousins decide to repeat the Sunday experience one last time before their separation, it is the song that they request as background music. That the

38. Shaw quotes from Fredric Jameson, ‘Postmodernism; or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism’, *New Left Review*, 146 (1984), 54-55.

²⁸ See, James Higgins, *Lima: A Cultural and Literary History* (Oxford: Signal Books, 2005), pp. 152-58.

²⁹ Higgins writes: ‘The *canción criolla*’s big breakthrough came in the mid-1930s with the growing influence of broadcast radio, when stations began to feature it on their programmes and it caught on with the listening public. From then on, its history is closely linked to the development of the entertainment industry’. See James Higgins, *Lima: A Cultural and Literary History*, p. 154.

cousins choose to listen to the tune that they heard every week is an example of the power that a song can have in recreating past memories. Felipe Pinglo's *El Plebeyo* functions nostalgically in the text, permitting the cousins to 'volver a esos tiempos de la infancia' (p. 27). More importantly it demonstrates the way in which expressions of popular class culture were becoming increasingly popular with different social groups, as implied in the cousins' enjoyment of it.

The lyrics of *El plebeyo* recount the anguish of a young man from the working classes who falls in love with an aristocratic lady. He is described as 'el hijo del pueblo' and 'un humilde plebeyo', whilst his beloved is referred to as 'ella de noble cuña'.³⁰ The line: 'Señores por que los seres, no son de igual valor', suggests that the love is doomed to failure because of class differences. The overtly sentimental *El plebeyo*, then, is a plea for equality that criticises racial discriminations in the city of Lima. It expresses the limitations experienced by lower-class groups and it is fitting that Jesús Comunión Junior should introduce the song to the boys, since he is, more so than any other, the character in the text who exposes and denounces social injustice. The boys, however, laugh at Jesús when he explains to them that the lady of the song is 'una mujer de alcurnia' (p. 28), suggesting that although the boys have spent time in lower-class barrios, they still see themselves as racially and culturally superior. An extension of this is conveyed when they drive through the barrio of La Victoria and the boys look uneasily out at the people in the street: 'se miraron, pero no sonrientes, y es que era tal la cantidad de plebeyos por las calles que mejor era regresar ya a San Isidro' (p. 29). The irony here is that although the boys still enjoy listening to *El plebeyo*, the people of whom the song speaks are deemed by them as

³⁰ See: http://www.adonde.com/historia/1936_pinglo.htm for the lyrics of the song (consulted 14 September 2003).

undesirable and they are uncomfortable in their presence. Ultimately, although music as a form of popular culture partially bridges the distance between social groups together (Jesús and the boys enjoy the song together), it cannot dispel racial aversions nor dismantle socially-erected barriers.

Literary Allusions: Interpretations and Misinterpretations

A further cultural discipline that it is worth mentioning in this context is the 'civilising' discipline of the written word.³¹ Jesús Comunción Junior is illiterate and this is a source of mockery for the cousins. It becomes evident to them when they drive past a school named Emilia Nosilgia and Jesús reads the name as Emilia Nostalgia, a fitting choice of word since nostalgia is perhaps the principle theme of *Dos señoras conversan*. That the school was in the process of being constructed ten years earlier when the boys were young and is now completed is evidence of the urbanization of the city, a theme that Bryce had already touched on in *Un mundo para Julius*. It is not only forms of popular culture that are alluded to in *Dos señoras conversan*, since there are several references made to literary works. However, as one would suspect, all allusions to high culture are connected to the sisters, who, as members of the upper classes, have access to works of literature, specifically those emanating from Europe.

³¹ See Terry Eagleton (1976) *Criticism and Ideology: A study in Marxist Literary Theory* (London: Verso Editions, 1976), p. 16, where he refers to literature as a 'civilising discipline'. For an interesting discussion on the use of education and literature as civilizing tools, see Chapter 9 of Doris Sommer, *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), pp. 257-289, pp. 277-78, 283, 287.

The sisters often quote, or rather misquote lines from the poem *Volverán las oscuras golondrinas* by the Spanish poet Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer (1836-1870).³² They refer to the poem on several occasions in the text and the swallows in the poem act as a metaphor for their long-lost sons. As David Wood suggests, ‘Bécquer forma parte del bagaje cultural europeo que las hermanas viven cargando desde su adolescencia, y cuando los hijos en Miami se comparan con las golondrinas de la famosa rima, la esperanza es que vayan a volver’ (Ferreira & Márquez, p. 392).³³ Bécquer’s poem, of course, suggests that the sons never do return, for two of the three stanzas end with the words: ‘¡No volverán!’ This is supported in the text by events which show the brothers’ increasing disinterest in their mothers’ welfare. A further clue to the identity of the ‘golondrinas’ in *Dos señoras conversan* is that in the Cono Sur the word can also be used to denote ‘migrant workers’ and, as such, Bryce’s use of the poem’s title to refer to the sons appears to be a play on words, with a second level of meaning. The situation of the sisters who constantly look to the past is mirrored in Bécquer’s inability to adapt to his circumstances in the poem. As Wood continues, ‘la incapacidad de Bécquer de adaptarse a su situación es un símbolo, entonces, de la caducidad de los puntos de referencia europeos y de la imposibilidad de vivir en el pasado’ (Ferreira & Márquez, p. 393).³⁴ The sisters make this comparison between the poem and themselves when for every line of the poem that Carmela recites, Estela likens it to their circumstances:

-De su dueño tal vez olvida...
 -De sus dueños más bien olvidadas...
 -Silenciosa y cubierta de polvo...
 -Más bien silenciosas y cubiertas de polvo. (p. 43)

³² See Rafael Montesinos, *Gustavo Alfonso Bécquer* (ed. Rafael Montesinos) (Madrid: Cátedra Letras Hispánicas, 2004), p. 145.

³³ See David Wood, ‘*Dos señoras conversan*: dialogando con el pasado’, in César Ferreira & Ismael P. Márquez (eds), *Los mundos de Alfredo Bryce Echenique: nuevos textos críticos*, pp. 391- 401.

³⁴ See David Wood, ‘*Dos señoras conversan*: dialogando con el pasado’, in César Ferreira & Ismael P. Márquez (eds), *Los mundos de Alfredo Bryce Echenique: nuevos textos críticos*, pp. 391- 401.

Their identification with the poet's predicament highlights their solitude and inability to adapt to the changing times, that they give prevalence to and identify with a European poet suggests that they see their predicament reflected in occidental, rather than Peruvian, culture. It is when Carmela unwittingly alters the last line of the stanzas to, 'Volverán, ya verás. Volverán como en el poema de las golondrinas de Bécquer' (p. 46), that the (informed) reader's suspicion about the futility of their wait and the fact that the sons will never return is confirmed.

The second group of literary reference in the text relate to Sebastián Salazar Bondy's seminal work, *Lima la horrible* (1964).³⁵ *Dos señoras conversan* is replete with echoes of Bondy's essay which are voiced either by the sisters or by their father, with the obvious examples being the phrase, 'se apresuraban en desearse las buenas noches en la Lima horrible de hoy' (p. 15), and the above-mentioned rhetoric question, '¿Qué linda era Lima entonces, no?', which, according to Bondy, characterises the attitudes of *limeños* with regard to the colonial past. The question can be qualified as rhetorical since there is only one (affirmative) response to it and it is never a moot point of discussion between the sisters. The sisters' nostalgia for the past means that they have no possible present or future. In *Lima la horrible* Salazar Bondy criticises the upper echelons of *limeño* society for living their lives as if the colonial republic [which he claims they perceive as an 'arcadia colonial' (Salazar Bondy, p. 17), and an 'edén perdido' (Salazar Bondy, p. 15)] were still thriving. In

³⁵ Bryce has provided his own interpretation of the use of the word 'horrible', affirming that it does not refer to the physical appearance of the city, but rather to the mentality of its inhabitants: 'la horrible... este calificativo que no es estético, es moral', in 'Instalar el humor en el corazón mismo de la tristeza', p. 22, in Julio Ortega & María Fernanda Lander (eds), *Alfredo Bryce Echenique: ante la crítica*, pp. 4- 29.

his analysis of Peruvian society Bondy argues that *limenos*' visions of their city and social hierarchies have been distorted by a set of 'reassuring illusions' whose origin lies in the memories of the viceregal age. He writes, 'Como si el porvenir y aún el presente carecieran de entidad, Lima y los limeños vivimos saturados de pasado' (Salazar Bondy. p. 12). It is immediately obvious that these words acutely summarize the ideology adhered to by the sisters who glorify the past and for whom the present has no meaning. Bondy goes on to suggest that this attitude has left *limeños* in a state of perpetual alienation as they are disconnected from the realities of everyday life and wilfully blind to the narratives of history because of the primacy given to the past over the future in their minds. The alienation experienced by the sisters is obvious throughout the text: they dare not venture outside of their home, they are ignorant of their country's social and political structures and finally, they convince themselves that they are living in the world of their past. Bondy quotes the infamous words of Manrique, which he critically refers to as a hoax: '*cualquiera tiempo pasado fue mejor*' (Salazar Bondy, p.16).³⁶ No other words describe more aptly the nostalgic vision shared by Carmela and Estela. As early on as the second page of the novella, Carmela, almost reproducing the phrase in its exactity, explains to Estela, 'Es que todo tiempo pasado fue mejor' (p. 12), thereby setting the mood of nostalgia that prevails until the final page. This notion of the self-delusional character of the *limeños* and the way in which they idealise the past is a recurring theme in Peruvian

³⁶ The phrase, '*cualquiera tiempo pasado fue mejor*', is taken from Jorge Manrique's (1440?- 1479) poem, *Coplas a la muerte de su padre*, written upon the death of his father. Manrique was an aristocrat, issue of a noble Castilian family. The poem's salient theme is death. The first verse of the poem ends with the words: '*Cualquiere tiempo pasado fue mejor*'. The tenth stanza, however, comments directly on the death of the Castilian oligarchy and in this sense, reflects the sense of an oligarchy that is dying out in Bryce's works: '*Pues la sangre de los godos/y el linaje e la nobleza tan crecida/por cuántas vías e modos/se pierde su grand alteza/ en esta vida*'. See Pedro Salinas, *Jorge Manrique o tradición y originalidades* (Barcelona: Ediciones Península, 1947), pp. 97-172.

literature, and is reflected in the work of, amongst others, Bondy and Palma as well as Bryce.³⁷

It is important to point out, however, that although Estela entertains a nostalgic vision of the past, she is more level-headed than Carmela and her words do, on occasions, act as a form of resistance to her sisters' rose-tinted view of the past. Hence, when Carmela tells Estela that 'todo tiempo pasado fue mejor', Estela reins her sister back down to earth, with the words, 'Yo sólo sé que Dios sabe que todo tiempo pasado no fue mejor siempre' (p. 13), thereby acting as a counterbalance to her sister's views. It is also clear that Carmela is the more ignorant and evil of the sisters. Not only does she fantasise about killing her sister but she is also more prejudiced towards the serving staff and more convinced of her superiority over them. In point of fact, Estela tends to echo Carmela's views and agrees with her only through fear of her sister's aggression. The sisters operate as doubles in the narrative, yet, rather than precisely mirroring each other's behaviour, they function as a system of distorted mirrors, as Estela's mild behaviour magnifies her elder sister's evil designs.³⁸ In *Dos señoras conversan*, whilst the sisters initially appear to be of similar dispositions, with Estela often repeating Carmela's words, it becomes clear that, when their behaviour is juxtaposed, Estela's gentler nature acts as a pointer to Carmela's cruel character. Whilst Carmela is described as having a 'carácter fuerte' (p. 20), her sister is described as 'la bondad personificada' (p. 20). Much of their

³⁷ In his writings Palma glorified Lima's colonial past. Higgins writes: 'It would seem that, in part, the past represented for Palma a form of escapism. "Prefiero vivir en los siglos que fueron", he wrote in one of his letters' (p. 68). He explains that Palma saw his writings as a 'mission to preserve a national heritage that [was] in danger of being lost forever' (p. 68). He continues: 'he regards the past with affection as his national heritage and with the nostalgia that each new age feels for the supposedly more romantic one that preceded it' (p. 69). See James Higgins, *A History of Peruvian Literature* (Liverpool: Francis Cairns, 1987).

³⁸ The motif of the double occurs in the four works that are discussed in this thesis and will later be considered later in chapters 4, 5 and 6.

behaviour resembles that of the other, rather as if they were two sides of the same character, one personifying the good, the other personifying evil. This is nowhere more obvious than in the episodes when Carmela wishes to annihilate the other half of her character through her fantasies of murdering her sister by ringing the serving bell during the night and provoking a heart attack. It is noteworthy, however, that Carmela is unable to survive without her other half as the sisters depend entirely upon each other for survival. A sense of this is captured when Estela cries out in desperation at the end of the novel, 'Yo me caigo' (p. 70) and Carmela answers with the words: 'No tienes el menor derecho para hacerme eso. Yo que te quise matar dos veces y ahora se te ocurre...' (p. 71). Carmela, it seems, is dependant on Estela's constant presence in order to have a sense of her own identity.

Conclusion or Back to Page One

Whilst the ladies regretfully accept that their sons will never return either to Peru or to the maternal hearth, they cling stubbornly to their deluded belief that the servants of Cajamarca will return and that they can perpetuate the world of their youth with its prevailing colonial hierarchies. That the serving population in Lima no longer originates from Cajamarca is perhaps indicative of changes in national internal migratory patterns and Lima's increasing ethnic diversity. One subject close to the old ladies' hearts is the poor quality of the serving staff of today compared to those of past times. Doña Carmela almost spits out her views on the subject as she accuses:

a los borricos de la servidumbre de haber tenido la culpa de todo, porque tenían la culpa de todo, y por qué no iban a tener la culpa de todo si en los tres o cuatro años que llevaban con ellas en el departamento ni siquiera habían aprendido a servir las como era

debido y todo el tiempo andaban pidiendo aumento y permiso para salir un rato y no eran ni honrados ni limpios ni eternos ni agradecidos ni hasta blancones y educadísimos y de Cajamarca, que de ahí venían los mejores sirvientes, como eran los que tuvimos en casa de nuestro papacito y que él había heredado del suyo porque eran tan fieles que ni se morían siquiera para que no hubiera que buscarles reemplazo y causarnos problemas. (p. 17)

As if Carmela's unfounded prejudices are not enough to condemn her in the reader's eyes, the ridiculous nature of her demands renders her judgement even more misguided.³⁹ Carmela believes that her servants are so inferior to her that they do not have even the right to die, lest it cause her inconvenience. As seen in this passage, the sisters' desire to claim back the past is so strong that they end up becoming stuck in it.⁴⁰ The sisters' fantasies and delusions hence function as an allegory of the Peruvian nation from a perspective inside the oligarchy, acting as flashpoints to the lacks and absences experienced. Yet Bryce exposes their wrong-headedness in trying to deny reality through his mocking criticism and parodying of their racist ideals. As readers we are encouraged to laugh at their miseries as they are transformed into eccentric follies. This is seen in their ensuing attempt to 'Cajamarcanise' the replacement serving staff, when the ladies set about training the new-comers, secure in the belief that within 'unos diez o quince días más [...] serán de Cajamarca' (p. 70). The sisters' racism functions at different levels according to 'geo-social' status.⁴¹ Indeed, even the loyal chauffeur, Jesús Comunion Junior, will soon be made a

³⁹ Of the world depicted in *Un mundo para Julius*, Bryce has said: 'Ese mundo se denuncia a sí misma con sólo describirse se viene abajo por su propio peso'. See Rubén Bareiro, 'Entrevista con Alfredo Bryce Echenique', p. 35, in Julio Ortega & María Fernanda Lander (eds), *Alfredo Bryce Echenique: ante la crítica*, pp. 32-7. The same might be said of *Dos señoras conversan*.

⁴⁰ As Leo Bersani points out in *A Future for Astynax*, 'Desire is a hallucinated satisfaction in the absence of the source of satisfaction. In other words, it is an appetite of the imagination'. See Leo Bersani, *A Future for Astynax: Character and Desire in Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), p. 10. Quoted in Lynette Hunter, *Modern Allegory and Fantasy*, p. 93.

⁴¹ The ludicrous nature of their demands is an example of how Bryce uses humour to denounce the oligarchy's antiquated colonial mentality. Charo Núñez, in an article on *No me esperen en abril*, observes: 'El humor es el gran juez al que se somete la historia y que, cumplido el veredicto, funciona, entre otras cosas, como antídoto a las continuas agresiones racistas'. This observation, as we see, is

resident of Cajamarca, despite the fact that the text makes plain that he is actually from the largely black *limeño* district of La Victoria.

With this in mind, the sisters baptise the last day of the novella, '*el primer día cajamarquino*' (p. 72). As the novel draws to a close, we find the sisters, once again, sitting in their armchairs awaiting the hour of their Bristol Cream Sherry. *Dos señoras conversan* portrays the decadence of the oligarchic class and this drink is perhaps the most obvious motif of decadence in the work. As such, the last scene of the work recreates the first scene, giving the novella a circular narrative structure which serves chiefly to emphasise the aimless lives that the sisters lead. A good example of the sisters' reluctance to accept their circumstances is seen in their unwillingness to believe that supplies of Bristol Cream Sherry have, in fact, run out in Peru. The conversation that they have with their new butler Jesús Comunion Junior, over the event, is worth transcribing in full:

- ¡Jesús! ¿Qué pasa? Acaba de sonar la octava campanada del reloj de la sala y usted no entra con el Bristol Cream.
- Señoras... ¿Otra cosita no les apetece? El Bristol Cream se ha terminado.
- ¿Y a usted no se le ha ocurrido salir a comprar más?
- Llevo días intentándolo, señoras, pero el Bristol Cream se ha terminado en el Perú.
- Y a mí eso qué me importa, Jesús [...] Usted haga lo que se le dice, Jesús, y tráiganos el Bristol Cream.
- Eso, exactamente. Muy bien dicho, Estela.
- Muy bien, señoras- lloró Jesús Comunion hijo, y fue a traer el Bristol Cream de las señoras-. (p. 72)

At the end of the novella the sisters' fantasy has assumed its full proportions. The reality of their world has disappeared in their attempts to construct a new reality and the fantasy world of their past has consumed normality. A sense of this is captured in

also relevant to the uses of humour in *Dos señoras conversan*. See Charo Núñez, '*No me esperen en abril*', in *Reseñas, Hispamérica*, 74 (1996), 127-28 (p. 128).

the final words of Jesús Comución Junior that close the novel, 'Pobrecitas, por andarles yo discutiendo, ya se les ha pasado su hora' (p. 72). Firmly entrenched in the world of their past, in a state of moral and physical decay, the sisters' lives have passed them by, they have been unable to adjust to their city's new socio-political realities brought on by the processes of modernization. This is the predicament of the old aristocracy throughout Bryce's literature.⁴²

The patterning of events and specifically the ending of the novella demonstrate that fantasy is adopted by the two old ladies as a survival strategy, allowing them to combat the difficult reality of everyday Lima. Bryce, who constantly sets the sisters up in order to mock and pull them down, is quite clearly critical of the ways in which they deal with reality. He achieves this by creating caricatures of stock *limeño* characters and portraying their farcical actions and conversations for the reader in such a way that both reader and author share many a joke at the sisters' expense; humour becomes a tool that is used to criticise subtly the way in which the sisters live their lives. The sisters' ideology of fantasy allows them to resolve 'the conflicts and contradictions' (Eagleton, p. 6)⁴³ of their situation, thereby permitting them to convert these into a manageable set of circumstances. Their strategy of re-creating the Lima of their past, all be it futile and wrong-headed, allows them to cope with the de-stabilising of their once eminent position in society. If make-believing their lives softens the blows that history has dealt the sisters, then, this leads us to the possibility

⁴² Julio Ortega observes with regard to the upper classes in Ribeyro's short story, 'El ropero, los viejos y la muerte': 'su identidad ya no tiene lugar en la sociedad modernizante, y su renuncia le devuelve a su linaje fantasmático'. This is equally relevant to the sisters' predicament since they opt for a fantasy existence rather than accept the changes that modernisation has imposed upon their lives. See Julio Ortega, 'Prólogo', in Alfredo Bryce Echenique, *Cuentos completos* (Madrid: Alfaguara, 1995), pp. 9-16 (p. 15).

⁴³ See Terry Eagleton, *Ideology* (London and New York: Longman, 1994).

that behind their fantasies lies a strategy of survival; otherwise put, behind their fantasies lies an ideology.

However, the ladies' ideology of fantasy is in conflict with the society in which they live as it negates the importance of the political and social changes that have taken place in Peru since the times of their childhood, leaving them enclosed in an 'horrible y aterrada soledad' (p. 57). Refusing to engage in life, the sisters choose to look at reality through a sort of obscuring or distorting lens, simply because they wish that history had not happened. Living out an alternative existence they seem to be as much victims of their own unrealistic allusions as the socio-economic conditions in which they live. In this sense, it is true to say that 'ideology may indeed contain certain important truths, but ones deformed by the impact of social interests' (Eagleton, p. 15).

The aim of this chapter has been to establish whether or not Bryce's position as a member of the élite social group has conditioned his view of the oligarchy. While not a vehement critic of Peru's ruling élite, as were other Peruvian writers such as Ciro Alegría⁴⁴ or José María Arguedas⁴⁵ before him, Bryce, a self-confessed apolitical

⁴⁴ Alegría's works differ from those of Bryce in their consideration of the oligarchy, since rather than criticising them from a position within, they portray the oligarchy as an evil force from above. Alegría's protest is hence more formal. *El mundo es ancho y ajeno* (1961), for example, depicts the Andeans' confrontation with the dominant social order that is corrupt and based on intimidation and exploitation. Their immoral ways lead to the dispossession of Indian land and the work is a criticism of the feudal system. The novel is also more politically motivated than Bryce's novels and it closely reflects the political programme of APRA, at least in its early days. For further discussion on the works of Alegría, see James Higgins, *History of Peruvian Literature* (Liverpool: Francis Cairns, 1987), pp. 129-37 and Jean Franco, *An Introduction to Spanish-American Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 207.

⁴⁵ For a discussion of Arguedas, see William Rowe, *Mito e ideología en la obra de José María Arguedas* (Lima: Instituto Nacional de Cultura, 1979) and Antonio Cornejo Polar, *Los universos narrativos de José María Arguedas* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Losada, S.A., 1973). *Los ríos profundos* (1958), which examines the individuation process of the protagonist, Ernesto, also examines the abuses wielded by the hegemonic order over the autochthonous culture. The town of Abancay, for example, 'no podía crecer porque estaba rodeada por la hacienda Patibamba, y el patrón no vendía

writer, nevertheless shows up the follies and foibles of an oligarchy whose ideology amounts to the deliberate self-masking of reality. Unlike the ideology animating the works of the magical-realist writers, whose characters step outside of everyday reality into magical realms in order to bring interpretations of Latin American realities into the light of day, Bryce's work is an example of how fantasy is predicated on a determined blindness with regard to history. Through this strategy Bryce is revealing the ways in which ideology conditions his characters' view of reality, which is not necessarily his own. His works express that sense of an oligarchy that is turning away from history and opting for a comfortable, make-believe existence. Hence within the text it is ideology that 'determines the historically real' (Eagleton, p. 72).⁴⁶ History does enter the text, but it enters it 'precisely as *ideology*, as a presence determined and distorted by its measurable absences' (Eagleton, p. 72).

tierras ni a los pobres ni a los ricos' (Arguedas, p. 191). Cornejo Polar writes that it is this, 'institución de la violencia' (Cornejo Polar, p. 115) that leads to Ernesto's sense of increasing isolation, when he laments that 'los odios no cesaban, se complicaban y se extendían' (Arguedas, p. 215). See also Antonio Cornejo Polar, *La novela peruana* (Lima: Editorial Horizonte, 1989). See also Ángel Rama, 'Processes of Transculturation in Latin American Narrative' *Journal Of Latin American Cultural Studies*, 6.2 (1997), 155-71, when he writes: 'Arguedas articulates an Andean conflict which still bears witness to the drama which gave birth to Latin America, when a conquering Western culture imposed itself on an autochthonous one, which in turn became rigid and insular'; p. 168. Society and the authorities are seen as the enemies in the novel, subjecting the Indian population, who are presented as downtrodden and humiliated, to subhuman conditions. Good examples of this is the *pongo* who doesn't speak because 'No se atreve' (Arguedas, p. 157); or the *colonos* who live in silence because the dominant group and authorities 'les habían hecho perder la memoria' (Arguedas, p. 200). Both Alegría's and Arguedas's novels, like Bryce's fiction, provide a space for the fusion of personal and national narratives, but the tensions and dramas, belonging to distinct worlds, are of a very different order.

⁴⁶ Terry Eagleton, *Criticism and Ideology: A study in Marxist Literary Theory* (London: Verso Editions, 1976).

Chapter 4: *No me esperen en abril*

No me esperen en abril (1995) marked Bryce's return to the novel after eight years, *La última mudanza de Felipe Carrillo* having been published in 1987. Bryce's longest work to date, it is a melting pot of the familiar themes that the author has explored through the years in his novels and short story collections, leading David Wood to consider it 'very much a novel for Bryce readers and for Bryce himself' (Wood, p. 123).¹ The author's acknowledgements at the beginning of the work are testament to this. Bryce expresses his gratitude on the dedicatory page to two friends, Luis Alberto Sánchez and Abelardo Sánchez León, for spending twenty years encouraging him to write this novel that he terms an 'adiós a toda una época de la vida' (p. 7). It is apt that friendship should be one of the driving impetuses behind the uptake of this project since it is a recurring motif in Bryce's narrative and one of the two rotating axes on which the narrative is based, the second being love.² Furthermore, the recognition also makes explicit that the completion of the novel represents the conclusion of an era in Bryce's personal life, pointing to an

¹ David Wood, *The Fictions of Alfredo Bryce Echenique*, p. 123. Bryce hinted in interviews, over the course of many years, that he was intending to write the novel that was to become *No me esperen en abril*. Although it was not the first time that he implied that he was writing the novel, Bryce said in an interview in 1987: 'Hace mucho que estoy tentando por una historia o dos que podrían formar un volumen sobre algo que empecé hace muchos años a escribir y que hasta ahora no había alcanzado la madurez necesaria. Es una novela sobre la adolescencia mía en el Perú, que sería un poco la continuación de *Un mundo para Julius*. No la continuación de esta novela, porque ya no soy el mismo que escribió esa novela. No soy el escritor candoroso de los años setenta. Pero sí me gustaría mucho escribir sobre el mundo de mi adolescencia peruana en la oligarquía limeña de los años sesenta, entre los años cincuenta y los setenta a grosso modo... La historia que quiero escribir es concretamente sobre la vida en un internado en el cual estuve muchos años de mi educación secundaria. Era un internado británico donde pasé años perfectamente felices, pero absolutamente fuera del Perú, y eso es lo extraordinario. No solo fuera del Perú, sino que el Perú estaba fuera de nosotros.' See Esteban González, 'El escritor y la política', pp. 55-57, in Jorge Coaguila (ed.), *Entrevistas escogidas*, pp. 49-60.

² In an interview with Julia Trigo, Bryce has emphasised the importance of these factors in his private life: 'Mi vida siempre ha estado guiada por sentimientos privados, por el culto a la amistad y al amor... Eso lo pongo encima de todo'. See Julia Trigo, 'Alfredo Bryce Echenique', p. 93, in Julio Ortega & María Fernanda Lander (eds), *Alfredo Bryce Echenique: ante la crítica*, pp. 83-95.

intersection where literary production and the author's life converge. The merging of the fictional and non-fictional worlds, of course, a constant theme in Bryce's narrative, spills out into his own life, appearing to assume a cathartic function. Furthermore, although not an autobiographical work as such, the narrative contains innumerable references to Bryce's experiences of growing up in Lima and,³ as the first sizeable work to use Bryce's native city as a backdrop since *Un mundo para Julius* (1970), it also runs parallel to his personal circumstances; representing the dawn of a new cycle, it preceded Bryce's permanent return to Peru, as if he were preparing himself for his homecoming.⁴

Continuations

As with all but a few of Bryce's works, this, the most complex of Bryce's novels, has received relatively little critical attention considering its richness, both in terms of narrative technique and thematic content. David Wood provides a thorough examination of *No me esperen en abril* in a chapter in his afore-mentioned study, and the recently updated *Los mundos de Alfredo Bryce Echenique* (2004) edited by Ferreira and Márquez has included four short essays, of which two specialise on the

³ Mercedes Serna refers to the novel as an 'autobiográfica[s] ficticia[s]'. See Mercedes Serna, 'Del amor y otras (divertidas) tragedias', *Quimera*, 136 (May 1995), 60-63 (p. 63).

⁴ Although Bryce did return to Peru for a short while upon completing the novel he returned to Europe shortly after. He did not return to Peru with the intention of residing definitively until 1999; he explained in an interview with César Güemes in 1998 that he had intended to return to Peru shortly after completing *No me esperen en abril*. He said: 'A propósito de mi regreso a Perú, tuve la intención de volver hace tres años, pero me quedaban en el tintero un par de novelas que terminaron por ser, *Reo de nocturnidad* y *Guía triste de París*. Quise hacerlo acá antes de volver a América, porque el shock de encontrarme con mi país será fuerte. Sé que mi sensibilidad será agredida por muchos aspectos de la realidad peruana'. César Güemes, 'Nunca seré otra cosa que un escritor peruano', p. 143, in Julio Ortega & María Fernanda Lander (eds), *Alfredo Bryce Echenique: ante la crítica*, pp. 141- 47.

text. Both José Castro Urioste (Ferreira & Márquez, p. 478)⁵ and Mercedes Serna (Ferreira & Márquez, p. 452)⁶ read *No me esperen en abril* as a testimonial novel of the upper classes, in much the same way as *Un mundo para Julius* was received by critics at the time. It would be tempting to read *No me esperen en abril* as *Un mundo para Julius*'s sequel as in some senses it picks up from where the latter left off. *No me esperen en abril* represents a return to the familiar world of the *limeño* oligarchy of the 1950s and, furthermore, traces the life of an adolescent outsider who, as the novel begins, is approximately the same age as Julius when we last saw him, that is, teetering on the brink between adolescence and adulthood. Furthermore, the attentive reader cannot fail to notice that the words used to describe Julius's last emotions, 'un llanto largo y silencioso y llenecito de preguntas' (*Un mundo para Julius*, p. 593; *No me esperen en abril*, p. 15), are the very same ones used to introduce Manongo to the reader and present the first insight into his state of mind, suggesting that they are of a similar disposition.⁷ Yet aside from the fact that Julius is mentioned in *No me esperen en abril* and is hence very much a separate character in Bryce's literary universe, Manongo is a more melancholy personality with a darker, more introspective nature. Furthermore, Manongo is a more complex character, due partly

⁵ See José Castro Urioste, 'Decadencia social y forma novelesca en dos textos de Bryce Echenique', in César Ferreira and Ismael P. Márquez (eds), *Los mundos de Alfredo Bryce Echenique: nuevos textos críticos* (Lima: Fondo Editorial de la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 2004), pp. 471-79.

⁶ See Mercedes Serna, 'Del amor y otras (divertidas) tragedias', in César Ferreira and Ismael P. Márquez (eds), *Los mundos de Alfredo Bryce Echenique: nuevos textos críticos*, pp. 451-56.

⁷ José Luis de la Fuente observes this link when he writes: 'De *Un mundo para Julius* saltan igualmente a *No me esperen en abril* los ambientes adolescentes, la piscina y el Country Club, y personajes como Susan, Juan Lucas y sobre todos Vilma, la ama de cría de Julius. También en la estructura llega la proximidad con la primera novela, por el inicio del segundo capítulo, que pone en conexión ambas obras, ya que la última trata de responder a las cuestiones que la entrada en la adolescencia le plantaba a Julius en su llanto con preguntas'. See José Luis de la Fuente, *Más allá de la modernidad: los cuentos de Alfredo Bryce Echenique*, p. 32.

to Bryce's recourse to interior monologues to present his emotions and the incorporation of Manongo's own thoughts into the principal narrative voice.⁸

No me esperen en abril takes place between 1952 and 1995 and spans the life of Manongo Sterne Tovar y de Teresa⁹ from his early days as a *limeño* schoolboy to his adult life as an international business tycoon. It is a story of growing up in the whirlwind social circle of Lima's upper classes, of not fitting in, of struggling to bridge the gap between adolescence and adulthood, of love and friendships forged, and of the unwillingness to leave the past behind. Although the book is divided into five sections it can be roughly broken down into two phases of Manongo's life; that of an adolescent attempting, often futilely, to come to terms with the world within which he moves and, as a man making his way through life nostalgically looking to his past. At the same time, running in counterpoint to Manongo's personal story, the history of twentieth-century Peru unfolds. The book becomes an allegorical account of twentieth-century Peruvian society because, as the novel advances, Manongo's personal decline mirrors that of the Peruvian nation-state, as both accelerate concurrently towards an increasingly desperate demise. Of all Bryce's novels, *No me esperen en abril* demonstrates perhaps the greatest awareness of the nation's political and economic trajectories, with references made to Velasco's military coup of 1968 and the soaring inflation of the 1980s, amongst others.¹⁰ The decadence of a swiftly

⁸ The early life of the protagonist of the short story 'Un amigo de cuarenta y cuatro años', Manolo, perhaps more closely approximates that of Manongo Sterne. Manolo, like Manongo attended the British boarding school in Los Ángeles and remembers his time there in the work: 'Aún recuerda los días pasados en aquel colegio. Los amigos. Las fotografías de las enamoradas de los amigos. Las lavanderas tan feas... Los profesores... Los Ángeles... Hotel de lujo en sus buenos tiempos'; 'Un amigo de cuarenta y cuatro años', p. 83, in *Cuentos completos*, pp. 83- 88.

⁹ The connotations of the family name Sterne are discussed on pp. 208-09 of this chapter.

¹⁰ Bryce has described the preparation behind the novel's political interest to explain its high degree of political content: 'la que más tiempo me ha implicado es *No me esperen en abril*, porque tuve que leer historia de Perú, ciencias sociales, antropología, economía y estudios sobre el poder en mi país. Todo para convertirlo en una novela como la que espero haber conseguido, con un personaje de doble y

decaying oligarchy, that is examined so acutely in this work had previously been the subject matter of *Un mundo para Julius* and of several short stories, such as 'Eisenhower y la Tiqui-tiqui-tín', in *La felicidad ja ja* (1974). Whilst the former was considered from the perspective of a third-person narrator and the latter was considered from the point of view of a first-person protagonist-narrator, *No me esperen en abril* employs a strategy whereby a third-person narrator's discourse is heavily punctuated with excerpts of interior monologue attributable to the protagonist and therefore merges the two styles.¹¹ The protagonist of this short story, like Manongo Sterne, is unable to adapt to the social spaces within which he moves such as the family, the primary school and the church.

Yet for all the narrative's awareness of real life and time, the personal space inhabited by its protagonist, Manongo Sterne, is one that turns its back on such constants. Manongo, an inherently introspective and emotionally fragile character who seems to be constantly striving towards an illusory ideal, lives in a world of his own making, based on an imagination that draws heavily from popular culture and his past. In a similar vein, those characters who are members of the country's élite seek ways of perpetuating their privileged status, which also amount to forays into fantasy and the deliberate rejection of reality. Whilst Manongo, it will be argued,

contradictoria personalidad'. See César Güemes, 'Nunca seré otra cosa que un escritor peruano' p. 143, in Julio Ortega & María Fernanda Lander (eds), *Alfredo Bryce Echenique: ante la crítica*, pp. 141-47.

¹¹ In this short story, the narrator recounts the decay of the oligarchy through the demise of his family and the sale of the family home and heirlooms: 'te veo pasearte por los salones de aquella maravillosa casa, la última gran casa de mi familia... La vendimos, gordo, bueno, eso tú ya lo sabes, era el fin, el principio del fin, había muerto el último de los grandes y no quedaba nadie para que la cosa volviera a empezar. ¿Quiénes quedábamos? Mi hermano y yo, dos tipos problemáticos, algo desadaptados ya; herederos de una fortuna en que había más recuerdos que fortuna, herederos de unos nombres que nos quedaban grandes; cansados, asustados, no muy bien acostumbrados a quedarnos solos', *Eisenhower y la Tiqui-tiqui-tín*, in *Cuentos completos*, pp. 139-51 (p. 140). *Una mano entre las cuerdas*, however, is perhaps the most obvious early consideration of the love and friendships of an adolescent schoolboy in Lima's Country Club. See *Cuentos completos*, pp. 69-82.

escapes to a different level of reality in order to protect himself emotionally from personal circumstances with which he is unable to cope, the oligarchs revert to fantasy because they refuse to accept that their social standing is rapidly diminishing as a result of dramatic political changes and a string of economic catastrophes. In other words, whilst Manongo's fantasies reflect a resolute blindness with regard to his personal circumstances, those of the ruling class characters stem from their determined blindness with regard to the changes that history has brought upon their lives. Bryce places this climate of delusion in which Manongo and the oligarchs live at the forefront of the narrative with a quote from Guillermo Thorndike: 'Como el pueblo de Pedro Páramo, el Perú era un lugar gobernado por entes que ya habían desaparecido de la realidad hacía mucho tiempo...' (p. 10).

The aim of this chapter will be to consider the different fantasies and forms of escapism effectuated by characters in *No me esperen en abril*, as they attempt to flee a present that they have trouble accepting. One of the reasons that Bryce's characters resort to fantasy is due to a profound nostalgia for times past. It has already been shown in Chapter 3 that the protagonists of *Dos señoras conversan* are so immersed in memories that they eventually take precedence over their present. Although Bryce has famously declared in an article entitled, 'Alfredo Bryce y la crisis nacional': 'Soy un escritor más rebelde que nostálgico' (Páez, p. 31),¹² nostalgia, the sentimental recreation of the past, is both a major theme in and driving force behind Bryce's literary production, which points to a discrepancy between Bryce's self-image and the reality of his personality. Bryce, to all intents and purposes, relives his past,

¹² Angel Páez, 'Alfredo Bryce y la crisis nacional', *La República*, Lima (Jan 1991), pp.30-32.

specifically his youth, through the creative process of writing the novel, and nostalgia must be presumed to be an influencing factor. Bryce describes nostalgia as an uncontrollable and involuntary emotion that 'aflora, surge, brota, nos invade, nos llena, nos moja' (*Crónicas perdidas*, p. 221). As will be seen, the majority of characters in the novel face life with a retrospective and sentimental outlook that situates them in a precarious position between the real world and a fantasy world of their own making. On Bryce's treatment of nostalgia, Ismael P. Márquez writes:

Tanto en sus cuentos como en sus novelas, Bryce hurga en un mundo personal en que el 'yo' narrativo existe en función de un pasado que se reconstruye sobre la base de la memoria, pero a una memoria mediatizada por fuerte dosis de ficción. Esa visión retrospectiva y nostálgica... oscila precariamente sobre la tenue línea que separa la realidad de la fantasía. (Ferreira & Márquez, p. 105)¹³

From Márquez's words a close link between nostalgia and fantasy in Bryce's writing can be ascertained. They also suggest that Bryce's work is not pure autobiography but rather a fictional reconstruction and elaboration of his past. This chapter will attempt to consider the ideology behind the characters' reversion to fantasy, that is, their motivations for converting their nostalgia, as a mental state, into fantasy. Nostalgia, as it will be shown, results from the subject's separation from the desired object/ place/ person/ time and his attempt to re-possess it. In this sense, Bryce's recreation of past memories mirrors the introspective and retrospective actions of his characters. If, as Greenwald and Banaji have shown, identity and memory are inseparable, then as Márquez points out, 'la memoria autobiográfica de los múltiples narradores bryceanos es más un proceso de reconstrucción personal que de fiel reconstitución' (Ferreira & Márquez, p. 109). From this we see that memory and nostalgia are part of a subjective cathartic process through which the subject seeks to

¹³ See Ismael P. Márquez, 'Celebración de la memoria nostálgica: *Guía triste de París*', in César Ferreira & Ismael P. Márquez (eds), *Los mundos de Alfredo Bryce Echenique: nuevos textos críticos*, pp. 105- 114. Márquez quotes from A.G. Greenwald & M.R. Banaji, 'The Self as a Memory System: Powerful but Ordinary', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 57 (1989), 35-45 (p. 44).

preserve itself, rather than from a concern to regain the past per se, or recreating it exactly. In recreating his memories, Bryce also strays from the strictly autobiographical realm, since the novel is not a compilation of his memoirs, but rather a fictitiously altered version of them. In this way, nostalgia and fantasy become a subjective dialogue between imagined past and present.

However, nostalgia is not the only route through which characters arrive at their fantasies. As well as the 'transversal' escapism of the oligarchs, which draws upon their nostalgia for England, or the 'transtemporal' nostalgia for the days of the colonial republic and adolescent love, the paradises lost, different forms of fantasy and escapism exist. This will include the resort to popular cultural models, such as film and music, which are often, although not always, linked to personal fantasy. However, due to the ability of a song or a book to recreate the emotion felt when first heard or read, and its subsequent potential to recuperate events and epochs past, it should be noted that popular culture also functions within the concept of nostalgia and, thereby, the collective recreation of the past. Other manifestations of fantasy, as will be shown, result directly from the social conditions of certain classes and the moral and social laws that govern the Peruvian nation. These two types of fantasy will be the first to be discussed.

Alienation and the Sanctuary of the Imagination

Manongo is an outsider unable to incorporate himself into the social discourses that as a male member of the Peruvian upper classes he is expected to identify with. Labelled an 'espíritu maligno' (p. 43) by his teachers and a 'mariconcito' (p. 42) by

his peers, he is alienated by the very people that he is supposed to establish a rapport with because he is unable to insert himself into the codes of machismo and aggression that govern the social fabric. Manongo is critical of the cult of enforced and exaggerated masculinity that prevails in society: 'odiaba la disciplina con gritos, jamás se había querido ni sentido más alto ni más macho ni más nada que nadie' (p. 40). Yet behind the incident involving the military parade that sees him labelled a 'queer' and an 'evil spirit' and leads to his expulsion from school, lie the shame and humiliation he feels at knowing that he is weak and different from the other boys.

In a family in which 'los hombres eran muy hombres' (p. 43) Manongo, like Julius, finds solace with society's fellow weak and rejected. Manongo is reassured by the fact that, 'Quedaban su perro Óscar, y la servidumbre en la repostería. Ahí lograba reír, contar, entretener, bromear, fabular, éste era el lugar más entrañable del mundo, sólo ahí no le dolía la vida, sólo ahí no le había pasado nunca nada' (p. 43). Manongo's retreat to the servants' quarters and his adoption of the role of storyteller is a means of escaping the realities of a world in which he is the outsider. Through the creation of stories and the temporary diversion that they afford, Manongo's imagination provides a sanctuary for him. It is a shield that he will arm himself with throughout his life-long battle with the world. A good deal of important information regarding Manongo's psychology can be deduced from these lines. Firstly, life is a struggle for Manongo: the nature of his existence literally 'pains' him. Furthermore, he feels more affinity with members of the servant class than with the upper class to which he supposedly belongs but from which he feels alienated. In seeking solace with the underdogs of his society, Manongo's behaviour is, of course, redolent of Julius's before him. More significantly, however, is the knowledge that it

is only when in the sanctuary of the servants' quarters that he is able to lose himself in his imaginary stories. This in part must be due to the positive response he receives which allows him to form an alternative, although socially unacceptable, community with members of the serving classes. Manongo's behaviour, it is important to note, infantilizes the serving staff whom he amuses with his boyish antics. His belief that he finds a like-minded audience in the serving staff is symptomatic of Said's belief that the hegemonic group equates the subaltern with what he terms 'the childish primitive'.¹⁴ The approbation they afford him also hints at the submissive attitude of the serving classes with regards to the son of their master.

An existential and all-consuming melancholy lies at the core of Manongo's being and this predisposes him to his condition as a loner. When he awakes each morning it is to the lament of the wood pigeon whose fate he likens to his own in a gesture reminiscent of pathetic fallacy. As each new day dawns, the bird with his mournful song appears to Manongo to 'matarlo de pena' (p. 29) and Manongo ponders over the likelihood of ever finding tranquillity: 'la música de fondo que liquidaba toda posibilidad de recuperación de alegría en aquella habitación... ¿Cómo se podía ser un chico alegre en una ciudad con esos amanaceres?' (p. 29). The suggestion implicit here is that the city of Lima contributes to his dispirited mental state, which is significant as it locates Manongo's frame of mind squarely within his habitat. It is also interesting to note that, during the course of these words, Manongo's thoughts become incorporated into the perspective of the third-person narrator who assimilates them into his speech. This sentence establishes a pattern within the narrative whereby Manongo's thoughts and words slip freely into the narrator's voice and demonstrates

¹⁴ For further discussion on the 'childish primitive', see Edward. W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books, 1995) [1978], p. 246.

the intimate knowledge that the narrator has of the functions of Manongo's mind. Manongo's state of alienation is further reinforced because nobody else shares his existential agony which the bird comes to symbolise: '¿Por qué nadie habla de la paloma cuculí? ¿Es que nadie la oye, como yo, desde la madrugada?' (pp. 29-30). However, Manongo *is* able to identify with the bird, who, like himself, appears detached from and incongruous in his place of residence: '¿por qué el lamento de esa paloma es andino, aquí en Lima?' (p. 30).¹⁵ Manongo understands that to pacify his turbulent mind he would need to 'matar para siempre a la paloma cuculí, convertirse en... matador de hembras... matador en las plateas de los cines y en las fiestas miraflores y sanisidras' (pp. 34-35), which, due to his strong identification with the bird and their similar spiritual states, effectively means killing his inner true self. In other words Manongo would be required to behave as society dictates: deny his interior impulses and learn to adapt to society's dominant gendered codes. Unfortunately, playing the macho and aggressively pursuing girls are past times that do not appeal to Manongo. Manongo's character recalls the Schopenhauerian notion that the source of subjectivity in itself is misery, which, in turn, is the pre-eminent state of all consciousness.¹⁶ The pessimistic philosophy of Schopenhauer states that the life of a human being automatically contains pain and suffering. This most

¹⁵ A possible source of Bryce's inspiration for the 'paloma cuculí' and its effects on Manongo's emotions are the *canciones rancheras* of the Mexican Tomás Méndez Sosa, which were popular at the time in which the narrative is set. *Gorrión cillo pecho amarillo*, which was released in 1954, contains the lyrics, 'Cuando se cansa se para y canta/y hasta parece que está llorando...Ay pajarillo, gorrión cillo pecho amarillo/ nomás de verte ya estoy llorando/porque Dios sabe al estar mirando/que ando sangrando igual que tú'. The song he released the year after, in 1955, entitled *Cucurrucucú paloma*, contained the words: 'Que una paloma triste/muy de mañana le va a cantar/a la casita sola/y juran que esa paloma/no es otra cosa más que su alma'. The sentiments both felt by and produced by the bird, reflect Manongo's experience closely. See Arturo Balderrama, http://www.puroconjunto.com/PC1208_files/page0279.htm (consulted on 1 March 2005).

¹⁶ See Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, vol. 2, p. 573: 'Awakened to the night of unconsciousness, the will finds itself as an individual in an endless and boundless world, among innumerable individuals, all striving and suffering, and erring... No possible satisfaction in the world could suffice to still its craving... and fill the bottomless pit of its heart... Everything in life proclaims that earthly happiness is destined to be frustrated, or recognized as an illusion'. Quoted in Christopher Janaway, *A Very Short Introduction to Schopenhauer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 103.

certainly reflects Manongo's predicament and his hypersensitivity and later will provide an explanation for his intimate identification with character in a film who 'knows what suffering means'.¹⁷

Manongo 'el gran fabulador' (p. 30), however, banishes his emotions and effectively dons a mask when at school he adopts the guise of 'colegial alegre, bromeador, fabuador' (p. 30) as he strives to 'ocultar el interminable llanto de sus noches inquietas y preguntonas' (p. 29).¹⁸ His alter-ego of happy-go-lucky entertainer reflects what Maurice Lévy describes when he says: 'the fantastic is a compensation that man provides for himself, at the level of imagination (l'imaginaire), for what he has lost at the level of faith' (Lévy, p. 617).¹⁹ Manongo is effectively creating an alter-ego that he exteriorises in order to cloak his true self as he tricks the world into believing that he is content when in fact he has lost faith in his world. Rosemary Jackson writes that fantasy and the imaginary are involved in the 'escaping of human condition' (Jackson, p. 1) and are designed to fulfil the desire for 'a better, more complete, unified reality' (p. 1), a notion that accurately explains Manongo's behaviour, since his alter-ego of joker is more complete and socially acceptable.²⁰ Manongo's adoption of the identity of clown is his attempt to escape his own

¹⁷ Ángela Romero Pérez describes Manongo as possessing 'una aguda hipersensibilidad que lee hace enfrentarse al mundo desde una conciencia trágica del mismo'. See Ángela Romero Pérez, '*No me esperen en abril: una novela privada*', in *Kipus Revista Andina de Letras*, Quito, 4 (1995-1996), 83-90 (p. 84).

¹⁸ Here it is clear that Manongo attempts to use his imaginative faculties in order to forge friendships that he believes will help him to establish links with the world around him. De la Fuente notes that 'la amistad y el poder de la imaginación' are called upon to 'solventar las carencias de la realidad', by the protagonists of the stories of *Huerto Cerrado*. José Luis de la Fuente, *Más allá de la realidad: los cuentos de Alfredo Bryce Echenique*, p. 32.

¹⁹ See, Maurice Lévy, *Le Roman gothique anglais, 1764-1824* (Toulouse: Association des Publications de la Faculté des Lettres et Sciences, 1968).

²⁰ See Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: Literature of Subversion* (London: Routledge, 1981).

condition by means of role-playing, and in living out a fantasy persona, he is playing games with the world.²¹

Aside from taking refuge in jokes, Manongo has made a safe haven out of childhood memories, reverting to the world of his past in a bid to escape the present. A lonely, friendless Manongo attempts to re-enact an incident that had previously taken place in the primary school in the belief that he can correct past misdemeanours and re-establish a friendship with a play-mate whom he had beaten. Manongo returns to the scene of the crime (the school lavatories) and attempts to exchange his present-day reality with the episode from his infancy by focussing his thoughts on the event. Yet even as he attempts to construct ‘un refugio’ and ‘retornar al bunker de los juegos de la infancia’ (p. 32), the narrator warns us that retrieval of the past is impossible: ‘ni el mismo Manongo lograba entender qué había intentado hacer toda la mañana... por qué había intentado algo completamente imposible. Le habían enseñado que cuanto uno más crece más pasado tiene’ (p. 32). Instead of his memories being a cathartic attempt to recuperate the past they serve only to bring the reality of the present to the foreground, and Manongo asks himself: ‘¿Por qué no tenía un pasado donde refugiarse?’ (p. 32).²² Finally, Manongo reluctantly acknowledges the illusory nature of his game-playing upon his realisation that childhood amounts to a series of ‘hermosísimos instantes de la vida’ that later ‘se rompían en pedazos’ (p. 33). The past cannot be recaptured, and, when the narrator wonders, ‘¿Existiría ese retorno, ese refugio más allá?’ (p. 30), but subsequently refers to Manongo’s attempt as an

²¹ For a discussion on fantasy as ‘game’, see Lynette Hunter, *Modern Allegory and Fantasy: Rhetorical Stances of Contemporary Writing* (London: Macmillan Press, 1989), pp. 61-78.

²² Manongo’s intentions to recuperate the past reflect the ethos behind Manrique’s *Coplas a la muerte de su padre*, in which the poet concludes, ‘Cualquiera tiempo pasado fue mejor’. See Pedro Salinas, *Jorge Manrique o tradición y originalidades* (Barcelona: Ediciones Península, 1947), pp. 97-172.

‘ilusión’ (p. 30) and ‘imposible’ (p. 32), he is condemning the exercise of looking to the past in order to rectify the present, as futile. The past having proved to be a redundant source for comfort, Manongo understands that ‘tenía tenía tenía que encontrar un refugio’ (p. 30) from his unhappy existence, and this he will eventually do through a lengthy identification process with a Hollywood actor.

Autobiographical Echoes

It is Manongo’s expulsion after his disastrous performance in the school military parade that causes his parents to send him to a newly opened boarding school in the village of Los Angeles to the east of Lima (not to be confused, of course, with the city bearing that name in the United States). Bryce’s inspiration for Saint Paul/San Pablo’s school stems from his own experiences at a boarding school named San Pablo that he attended as a teenager in a building that had once been a popular hotel with Lima’s élite in Los Angeles. Bryce has recalled that he first attempted to write the novel upon completion of *La Felicidad ja, ja* in 1974: ‘a través de los cuentos de *La felicidad ja, ja* me propuse conscientemente escribir una novela sobre la oligarquía peruana a otro nivel, al nivel de la adolescencia. El tema era un tema muy concreto. El de un internado increíblemente anacrónico en el cual tuve que vivir y padecer y también encontrar alguno que otro amigo inolvidable, pero en el cual nunca me sentí bien. Era un internado creado por un ministro de Hacienda del Perú...’ (Ortega, p.111).²³ This passage reveals Bryce’s experiences of San Pablo’s school as the inspiration for the kernel of the novel’s plot and also suggests that the subject matter

²³ It is interesting to note that although in this quote Bryce says that he was never happy at the school, in the interview cited in the first footnote of this chapter, he contradicts himself by saying that he spent several happy years there.

of the book is at least in part semi-autobiographical, with Bryce sharing the same unhappy experiences as his protagonist at the school. In an essay entitled 'Lo autobiográfico' (Ortega, pp. 121-22) Bryce confirms this hypothesis when he acknowledges: 'En el libro que escribo actualmente me he planteado más profundamente el problema de lo autobiográfico y me he dado cuenta de que me queda por hacer toda una profunda reflexión sobre las diferencias entre la autobiografía, las memorias, el diario, el diario íntimo, etc.' (Ortega, p. 121). *No me esperen en abril* is clearly only semi-autobiographical as Bryce admits that in recalling and recounting a memory, 'Tengo que crearlo de nuevo, con personajes' (Ortega, p. 121), which suggests that it would be erroneous to equate Manongo with the young Bryce. *No me esperen en abril* is not an anecdotal account reconstructed purely from memory; nevertheless, there are many circumstantial similarities between the experiences of author and character.

The Function of Dialogue

In the narrative the school's founder is the anglophile Don Álvaro Aliaga y Harriman, Peruvian Minister of Finance. For a man with such a crucial role to play in national affairs it is astonishing that he should declare: 'yo soy ministro y qué diablos, lo que me preocupa es Inglaterra' (p. 13), with no apparent irony.²⁴ Don

²⁴ The character of Don Álvaro may also have its roots in Bryce's own father. Bryce writes: 'mi madre (...) fue una persona que vivió siempre mentalmente en Francia, mientras que mi padre vivió siempre en Inglaterra'; Alfredo Bryce Echenique, 'Instalar el humor en el corazón mismo de la tristeza', p.59, in Julio Ortega & María Fernanda Lander (eds), *Alfredo Bryce Echenique: ante la crítica*, pp. 4- 29. Manongo's mother in the novel has a similar fascination for France: 'Era una mujer muy cariñosa, pero se pasaba la vida entera suspirando y pensando en algún lejano viaje a París' (p. 43). In the same essay, Bryce also acknowledged that the oligarchy's passion for Europe lies in 'la formación del latinoamericano: hemos recibido todas las culturas del mundo' (p. 67). The question as to where the oligarchs' passion originated is an interesting one. Bryce seems to provide a possible answer to the question in an interview with Rubén Barreiro. The interviewer poses the question: '¿Cuál era el clima cultural de la aristocracia peruana? Un libro encontrado en una librería de viejo indica que Bryon era

Álvaro is representative of the Peruvian oligarchy in the novel and his words define and crystallize its dismissive and apathetic attitude with regard to the Peruvian nation and its fascination with Europe, particularly England. Don Álvaro's wife's response to his question is, '¿Pero qué tiene que ver el Perú con nuestros hijos y conmigo?' (p. 13), to which, ironically, he responds: 'Ahora que lo pienso, no mucho' (p. 13). This extract from their conversation, to which the reader is privy, suggests that the Peruvian oligarchy is distanced from the affairs of their country and that the upper classes, whilst living in Peru, are emotionally and psychologically detached from it. Their speech is also distanced from the principal narrative perspective since it is presented as an unmediated dialogue and, as such, can be seen as isolated from the narrative's ideological perspective. Their conversation highlights the informative function of dialogue in the novel, whereby information is gleaned from the verbal exchanges between characters, without – or, indeed, this is how it seems – passing through the filtering gaze of the narrator. When unmediated dialogue is attributable to the oligarchs and they effectively represent themselves, it serves to distance the narrator (and by implication, the reader) from the characters speaking and the opinions that they express. This strategy underlines the wrong-headedness of the oligarchs, who effectively condemn themselves with their own words and marginalises them from the novel's community through their isolation from the narrator's, and indeed, other characters' points of view.²⁵ Wood writes:

leído al empezar el siglo. ¿Cultivó la oligarquía las lecturas inglesas?', to which Bryce replies: '¡Cómo no! En mi familia se leía mucho a Wilde, por ejemplo; se leía a Byron. Más bien, no se leía a los norteamericanos. Se leía a los ingleses y a los franceses'. See Rubén Barreiro, 'Entrevista con Alfredo Bryce Echenique', p. 42, in Julio Ortega & María Fernanda Lander (eds), *Alfredo Bryce Echenique: ante la crítica*, pp. 31-37. His answer, which suggests the strong cultural influence of English novels in Peru, does go some way in providing an answer to the question.

²⁵ Bryce himself reinforces this technique when he makes the point, 'Ese mundo se denuncia a sí mismo con sólo describirse se viene abajo con su propio peso' (Barreiro, p. 35). In Rubén Barreiro, 'Entrevista con Alfredo Bryce Echenique', in Julio Ortega & María Fernanda Lander, *Alfredo Bryce Echenique: ante la crítica*, pp. 31- 37. For example, Tere is initially hostile to Adán Quispe and questions Manongo, '¿Por qué eres amigo de un cholo?... no es igual, para mí, no es igual' (p. 142).

the use of dialogue also maintains a distance between the narrator and those characters whose words are thus presented... On one of Don Álvaro's returns to the narrative, this time with his friends at the elite Club Nacional, it is no coincidence that their discussions are all reported in direct speech, for the world that they aspire to perpetuate is described by the narrator as anachronistic and out of place. (Wood, p. 134)²⁶

This strategy is employed elsewhere in the text. The first chapter that consists of the conversations between Álvaro and his wife is composed almost entirely of excerpts of dialogue, with the narrator maintaining a safe distance from their views. In the same vein, other lengthy conversationstions transcribed in dialogic format occur in Chapter 4 when Manongo's parents express their approval of the vision behind San Pablo's, Chapter 11, when a pupil's racist mother questions an Indian student's right to an equal education, which expresses classist cultural fundemantalist beliefs, and Chapter 12, when two oligarchs express their desire to abandon Peru and their distaste for APRA. Chapter 22, which covers twenty-five pages, is the only other chapter to be recounted almost entirely (seventeen pages) through the medium of dialogue. This is no surprise as the chapter focusses principally on conversations between various members of the oligarchy who air their critical views on the political affiliations of the press, the electoral campaign of Odría and the ostentatious behaviour of Peru's presidents. In the same chapter, when Manongo's father, Lorenzo Sterne, finds an unknown gentleman (Francisco Echeandía, who is of white descent) with his fingers trapped in the lock of a bank, despite the latter's obvious involvement in a crime, he sets him free:

She later gets to know him and regrets her prejudices. As her interior monologue enters the narrative she thinks, 'qué bruta había sido y qué mala y mal pensada, sí, ése sí era un pecado que tendría que confesar... sólo porque Adán Quispe era un cholo de corralón, qué bruta y qué mala he sido' (p. 143), which suggests a development of character. It may be noted that whilst Tere's prejudices are expressed through dialogue, her acceptance of Adán and her guilt are expressed through interior monologue that is incorporated into the narrator's perspective. The oligarchs of the novel, however, never attempt to establish relationships with the lower classes, other than those dictated by colonial hierarchical relations and hence never break with their racist ideals.

²⁶ For further discussion of the function of dialogue in *No me esperen en abril*, see David Wood, *The Fictions of Alfredo Bryce Echenique*, pp. 130-34.

-En un primer momento, Don Lorenzo, pensé que le debía una explicación de todo lo ocurrido, amén de mi más profunda gratitud. Sin embargo, hay de por medio asuntos concernientes a la seguridad de mi Banco que...
-Don Francisco, aparte del inmenso placer que me da el haber logrado servirlo debidamente, debo decirle que, para mí, la verdadera solidaridad se ejerce...
-¡Ni una sola palabra más, don Lorenzo! ¡Usted y yo sí que sabemos lo que es la verdadera solidaridad! Y no sabe cuánto me alegra que aún quede en esta ciudad gente de la que ya no queda, como usted y yo. (p. 447)

Through the transcription of the gentleman's conversation, Bryce exposes the corruption of the upper classes who are prepared to abandon their moral codes if it is to help a fellow oligarch out. An explanation would be surplus, the oligarch's immoral ways are captured through their speech, with its misplaced chivalry and exaggerated forms of polite address. Their culpability is evident through the irony of their remarks (the gentleman extoll their virtues whilst committing a crime) which is ultimately lost on them, but not the reader.

Oligarchic Attitudes: Nostalgia, Exclusion, Snobbery, Racism...

It is with his college days at Oxford in mind that Don Álvaro develops the nostalgic project of creating an English-style boarding school for the sons of Peru's upper classes. The minister is obsessed with England and his project attempts to fulfil his fantasy of transferring a piece of England to Peru after he complains: 'cada día queda menos Inglaterra en el Perú' (p. 17), which expresses a wistfulness for the days when English presence was prominent in Latin America. Sporting a 'bigote Old England' (p. 15), Don Álvaro's anglophile fantasies influences his dress sense. His daily donning of a 'corbata universitaria' (p. 16) from his treasured days in Oxford is an example of how Don Álvaro uses material objects as stimuli to recapture his youth. Underlying the nostalgia suffered by Don Álvaro is his wish that Peru, which he

refers to as 'este endemoniado país' (p. 22) could be more like England, hence his dream to 'traer Inglaterra entera al Perú, en lo que a educación se refiere' (p. 24). His plan to mould future generations who will lead Peru is an act of resistance against a social order that he believes is going down hill, and reflects the Eurocentric diatribe of upper-class Peruvians who wish to identify with their European ancestry as opposed to their Peruvian origins.

Both Álvaro and his wife pretentiously substitute Castilian words with English phrases, giving primacy to a foreign language over the national tongue, with notable examples including 'breakfast room' (p.15), 'Let me kiss you' (p.20) and 'That's it' (p.21).²⁷ Their 'huachafo' attitude epitomises their inferiority complex with regard to their Hispanic status. As such, they are committing an act of linguistic violation, which is redolent of the deeds of the conquerors when they arrived in Peru and destroyed the autochthonous culture, replacing it with a supposedly superior Western culture. In an act that Spivak would term 'epistemic violence' (Spivak, p. 25),²⁸ Don Álvaro and his wife are privileging Western culture and language over those of the Latin American continent. This exercise marginalises his serving staff from the process of communication, since we must assume that they have no knowledge of English, demonstrating how language can be used as an instrument of exclusion.

²⁷ Of the prevalence given to English over Spanish, Bryce has stated: 'Como recordaba Borges, "en el principio todos hablábamos francés", después nos olvidamos del francés para aprender inglés, que nos hizo olvidarnos del castellano también', p. 105. See Fernando R. Lafuente, 'Una poética a la piedad', in Ortega & Lander (eds), pp. 97-140. It is also interesting to note that whilst Bryce is critical of this practice his narrator's discourse often contains anglicisms. An example of this is: 'Eso en inglés se dice blackout y el diccionario lo traduce por apagón aunque no dice que se emplea para casos de borrachera total' (p. 348). This points to a discrepancy between the ideologies of the real author and narrator. This sentence with its obvious conversational register is a good example of orality in the text.

²⁸ For further discussion see Gayatri Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak', in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, (eds) Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths & Helen Tiffin, (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 24-31.

This is reinforced by Don Álvaro's dismissive treatment of the serving staff whom he perceives as commodities. He haughtily informs his wife: 'yo distingo muy bien entre los mayordomos, los choferes y el río' (p. 14), in a sentence that arguably naturalises and objectifies his staff by grouping them with a feature of the landscape. In an act which reiterates the Spanish agenda in the sixteenth century to erase all traces of the native culture and language, Álvaro forgets the name of his Indian butler, despite the man's longstanding service to him. Addressing him, he bumbles: '¿Saturnino, Paulino, Fortunato?' (p.16), which betrays his tendency to stereotype the racial other by assuming that all Indians will answer to one of these three common names and implies that he has no real knowledge of his Indian Other. Don Álvaro's disrespect for the butler is further promulgated by his insistence in speaking about him as if he were not in the room. His lack of respect for and understanding of his country and his people is epitomised in his decision to 'reroute' (p. 14) the river Rímac, which serves as a metaphor for the oligarchy's desire to alter Peruvian reality and their disdain for the national patrimony. More significantly, he altered the course of the river in order to create space for a nine-hole golf course and a bull ring, sacrificing the Peruvian (in the form of the natural landscape) for the foreign (golf in Scotland and bull-fighting in Spain) being past-times that originated in Europe. His disdainful evocation of his country as an 'artefacto incaico llamado Pe-pe-perú' (p. 28) suggests that he is frustrated with a country that he sees as backward and stagnant and, his stutter emphasises the erroneousness of his evaluation and demonstrates how language can be used as a vehicle of denunciation.

Don Álvaro voices the wish: 'Que la gente vuelva a creer en el ayer' (p. 19) which indicates that his behaviour is born of nostalgia for a way of life that used to exist.

Since Don Álvaro looks nostalgically back to a past, and a past which took place outside of Peru, it is fair to say that he is both temporally and spatially removed from the realities of a country that he is in part responsible for governing. Implicit in his complaint is a distaste for the ever-growing presence of Andean migrants in Lima, before the days when Lima was a city largely populated by whites. Many of Bryce's characters, amongst them Julius's mother, Susan, and the two old ladies of *Dos señoras conversan*, share the same sense of longing for an older, more conservative way of life.²⁹ They, like Don Álvaro, are subject to the nostalgia 'que se esconde en todo buen conservador' (p. 16). This primacy towards Europe is echoed in the absurd remark made by Marquitos Echeandía, an idle, jobless Phoenix Club member: '¿Por qué no vendemos este país tan inmenso y horroroso y nos compramos un país chiquitito al lado de París?' (p. 176), which epitomises the oligarchy's disdain for Peru. Marquitos's proposition is absurd and revelatory of his limited understanding and unrealistic pretensions, his words are an exaggerated example of the oligarchy's disdain for Peru and their European aspirations. Hence through a style of humour, reminiscent of Cervantes,³⁰ in which the reader is acutely aware of the discrepancy between the character's proposition and its plausibility, Bryce takes a jibe at the Eurocentric ideology of the oligarchy.

The idea behind San Pablo's is to create an establishment in which the sons of the élite are transformed into 'los futuros dirigentes del país' (p. 151).³¹ Don Álvaro's

²⁹ For a discussion of *Dos señoras conversan*, see Chapter 3.

³⁰ For a discussion of irony in Cervantes, see Auerbach, Erich, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1953), pp. 334-58, and see discussion in Chapter 1, pp. 25-29.

³¹ Bryce recalls in his essay entitled, 'Instalar el humor en el corazón mismo de la tristeza', how every morning during assembly, his peers would be told the words: 'Ustedes son la futura clase dirigente de Perú' p. 8. See Julio Ortega & María Fernanda Lander (eds), *Alfredo Bryce Echenique: ante la crítica*,

ambitions are dispelled by the narrator who mockingly refers to his school as ‘*su juguetería old England*’ (p. 398), as well as ‘anacrónico’ and ‘alejada de la realidad nacional’ (p. 188), obviously because the inspiration behind the project is to re-establish colonial and anglophile presence in Peru. Education and enlightenment, then, rather than acting as a modernising force are inspired by and intended to cultivate regressive tendencies. Humour is used to denounce his ideals and is created through the disparity between Don Álvaro’s grandiose ideals and the narrator’s derogatory evaluation of them, coupled with the informed reader’s knowledge of narratives of Peruvian history and awareness of the oligarchy’s fall from grace. Exasperated by recent social and political changes, such as the reformation of the APRA movement, internal migration and the threat of reforms detrimental to the oligarchy’s hegemony, the aim is to create a class of men who will be able to put the country back on the right track. Immediately, the school’s ethos and the future leaders are shown to have little understanding of the nation they aim to govern. When the pupils gather in central Lima to board the school bus, for example, there are those who are enraged to find that amongst their number are boys of mixed and Indian race, because ‘un indio no venía en el prospecto con fotos del colegio’ (p. 151). The aesthetic of the brochure promotes an exclusive, pro-white ideology which, in a heterogeneous nation such as Peru, is one that excludes the majority of citizens. It indicates that the founding principle of the school was to create an establishment where pupils would mix only with white people descended from European lineage. In turn, this unveils the fantasy of the upper classes to live, in self-

pp. 4-29. In light of the changes in the oligarchy’s fortunes Bryce’s use of the phrase is rendered ironic.

imposed isolation, in a world distanced from the socio-ethnic reality of their country.³²

The comment made about the prospectus is situated at the end of a paragraph in which the narrator incorporates the reactions of the boys when they first meet each other into his perspective:

Un provinciano llega en el Expreso de Miraflores, la cagada, cholo tenía que ser, y cuando dijo que era de Huaraz, del mesmito corazón de Huaylas, lo dijo con acento serrano además de todo y aunque sea hijo de diputado, según contó también, como quien se justifica y dice yo soy un blanco allá arriba...cholo, indio, serrucho de miércoles tenía que ser'. (p. 151)

Blas Punete-Baldocea writes that the narrator's incorporation of another pupil's value system into his words signifies that he shares his same racist vision: 'Los comentarios valorativos del narrador en el párrafo anterior coinciden ideológicamente con los del personaje, puesto que ambos pertenecen a la alta burguesía étnicamente blanca que se ufana de un abolengo aristocrático cuyo racismo a ultranza condiciona la visión estereotipada sobre los sectores socioétnicos considerados subalternos' (Ferreira & Márquez, p. 484).³³ I believe that this is a misinterpretation of the narrator's (and author's) intentions and furthermore suggests that all members of the white ethnic group share the same racist views. Due to his admission into the spaces within which the oligarchs move, such as the Phoenix and Country Clubs, coupled with his frequent identification with Manongo and his friends' inner thoughts, it is fair to say that the narrator does belong to the same

³² Bryce has acknowledged the current of racism prevalent in Peruvian society: 'lo que pasa en ese sentido es que el Perú es una sociedad de tantos regimenes económicos diversos: semif feudales en algunas zonas del Perú, precapitalistas en otras; posmodernos en algunos lugares, arcaicos en otros. Es un país no integrado culturalmente, y es ahí donde se da el problema racial. Ahora, es un racismo que ha sido siempre latente. En estos momentos se convierte lógicamente en algo muy violento'. Esteban González, 'El escritor y la política', pp. 59-60, in Jorge Coaguila (ed.), *Entrevistas escogidas*, pp. 49-60.

³³ Blas Puente-Baldoceda, 'Representación del otro en la ficción de *No me esperen en abril*', in César Ferreira & Ismael P. Márquez (eds), *Los mundos de Alfredo Bryce Echenique: nuevos textos, críticos*, pp. 481-99.

socio-ethnic group as the oligarchs. That the narrator allows the words of the character to infiltrate his discourse does not mean that he identifies with his views, especially since he refers to one of the boys who upholds this view as ‘bruto entre los brutos’ (p. 152) on the following page. This is reinforced by the colloquial nature of the language of the extract, which differs from the narrator’s normal mode of expression. He incorporates the pupils’ racist diatribe into his perspective so that their prejudices are experienced first-hand which allows the reader to know them in all their disturbing preciseness. This strategy has a satirical, rather than an identificatory, agenda. The fantasy of racial and economic segregation points to an elitist ideology that ignores Peru’s ‘mestiza realidad nacional’ (p. 160). It negates the increasing presence of Andean migrants in Lima³⁴ and the fact that Peru is a non-homogenous nation in ethno-racial terms that is rife with poverty. That ‘parejas divorciadas con hijos flaquísimos’ (p. 309) live in the surrounding village, highlights the discrepancy between life in the school and national reality, as does the description of the soccer team from the local school who are referred to as ‘chontriles todos y en estado de avanzada desnutrición y agravada realidad nacional’ (p. 259). The school hence functions as a time capsule and a hermetically-sealed utopia, unaffected and unaware of the world on its doorstep.

Unmasking Reality: Humour and Irony

It is through the inclusion of irony and humorous anecdotes that Bryce sways the reader towards a negative appraisal of the school. Don Álvaro, for instance, arrives at

³⁴ For further discussion of urban migration from the Andes to Lima, see Karsten Paerregaard, *Linking Separate Worlds: Urban Migrants and Rural Lives in Peru* (Oxford: Berg, 1997).

the inauguration ceremony in a soaking school uniform, having attempted to make the journey from his mansion across the river to the school:

Resulta que el ilustre señor ministro había sucumbido a una trampada de su eterna nostalgia británica y en su afán de llegar cuanto antes al cóctel de bienvenida, había optado por ir dando saltitos de *boy scout* de piedra en piedra del río Rímac y había resbalado en el intento. (p.164)³⁵

The use of the word ‘illustrious’ to describe a fully grown man in a soaking school uniform is ambiguous and functions ironically. Bryce’s employment of the term serves as a wink to the reader who, as the receptor of the joke, is understood to be complicit, whilst guiding him towards a depreciatory view of San Pablo’s ideological leader. The incident is attributed to his ‘eternal nostalgia for Britain’ which is hence, via the implication of cause and effect, a criticism of such a mentality. What is more, in a cruel twist of events, it is the river Rímac that spoils Don Álvaro’s appearance and renders him ridiculous, as if it were taking vengeance upon him for his previous decision to alter its natural course. In a series of events that foreshadow the disaster that befalls the project, Mr. Patterson, the teacher responsible for greeting the boys, slips into an alcohol-induced coma and dies and the headteacher Mister Owens greets the new-year’s intake, by barking the inappropriate words, ‘*Welcome to this bloody school*’ (p. 170), which, through a converse dynamic, ridicules the pretensions of those Peruvians, like Álvaro and his wife, who choose to speak English whilst living in Peru. Through situational and verbal humour, the narrator causes the founders’ pretensions to come crashing down around their ears. Uncovering the discrepancy between the grandiose philosophy behind the school and its catastrophic actuality, such events produce a ‘sabor de amargo realismo’ (p. 178).

³⁵ Here we have a good example of how Bryce errs from a purely autobiographical account of his schooldays. During the month of April, which marks the start of the academic year, the torrent of the river Rímac is at its peak and jumping from stone to stone would have been impossible. Rímac denotes etymologically ‘talking river’ in a reference to the period of early summer, when its torrent causes the rocks to crash against each other. Information supplied by Robert Barker Seminario, a former pupil of San Pablo’s in an interview, 30 April 2005.

However, the anachronous and incongruous nature of Don Álvaro's 'flamante proyecto inglés' (p. 71) truly becomes evident when the list of classes are announced. Subjects given preference are those taught by English teachers. Many of these are of little relevance to Peruvian schoolboys and include: 'Historia de la humanidad, aunque principalmente de Europa, en inglés' (p. 183), 'Piano y canto en inglés' (p. 183), 'Historia de Inglaterra' (p. 183), 'Literatura inglesa' (p. 183) and 'Historia de la City y de la Monarquía inglesa' (p. 183). These subjects deliberately ignore national reality and it is inconceivable that they could provide adequate training for boys destined to rule a South American nation; furthermore, they demonstrate that Don Álvaro's nostalgia has more to do with his fondness for certain aspects of his past and his monarchic leanings than with a concern to recreate England and his past exactly. The Peruvian staff who are mainly concerned with secondary subjects such as 'Teatro al aire libre y expresión corporal' (p. 184), are also responsible for the political education of the boys. However, a profound ideological imbalance is evident as three annual conferences are to be given on the Peruvian Left, whilst Don Álvaro and his nephew will dictate weekly classes entitled 'Derecha, antiaprimismo y anticomunismo en el Perú' (p. 184). The biased nature of the political programme means that the boys will be brainwashed by lessons that condition them ideologically, indoctrinating them with conservative values and discouraging them from left-wing politics and independent thought.³⁶ The very nature of this project is ironic, since the student body comprised renegades who had been expelled from other educational establishments. Don Álvaro's strategy functions allegorically, since it is indicative of the right-wing in Peru who continually suppressed attempts by left-

³⁶ Julio Ortega writes: 'El lugar por excelencia social es, claro, el colegio: paradigma colonial ilustrado; no sólo aparato ideológico sino modelo de nación y programa de control'. See Julio Ortega, 'Bryce, melancólico', in *Hueso húmero*, No° 32 (December 1995), 79-94 (p. 84).

wing parties to accede to power, such as the exiling of the *aprista* leader Haya de la Torre in 1954, the approximate year of the school's creation and the outlawing of the party between 1931 and 1945.³⁷ The school is here the space for the socialisation of the subject and Bryce is clearly denouncing the oligarchic/bourgeois political ideologies of the school and the biased manner in which it creates the social subject.

Manongo's entrance into San Pablo's represents an emotional rupture of sizeable proportions, since it requires his enforced detachment from the new space that he has recently made his niche. In the summer preceding his enrolment he frequents the Country Club, which is the playground of Lima's affluent and familiar territory in Bryce's literary universe, having been one of the principal centres of action in *Un mundo para Julius* along with several of his short stories. Here Manongo forges a tight friendship with a group of boys which allows him to reinsert himself into the community. His previous friendship with Adán Quispe, a boy of mixed race, was frowned upon in a social order that deems miscegenation and social interaction between different classes a taboo. His links with Quispe and the alternative community he formed with him were based on the status of reject that both held,³⁸ as seen in the incident when Manongo scandalously invites the *cholo* to his church and is chastised by his mother. Not only does his friendship with the boys of the 'barrio Marconi' reel him back into the social order, it also suggests how important group

³⁷ Haya de la Torre was given asylum by the Colombian embassy for five years before being allowed to flee the country in 1954. For a further discussion see, James D. Rudolph, *Peru: The Evolution of a Crisis* (Stanford, Ca: Politics in Latin America: A Hoover Institution Series/ Praeger Publishers, 1992), p. 43.

³⁸ It is interesting to note here that whilst Manongo is ostracized for his lack of virility, Adán Quispe is arguably the most macho character in the work. He assumes the role of Manongo's protector (both physical and, most notably, emotional) which is interesting in that a supposedly weaker member of society (Adán belongs to the subaltern group) is the more dominant partner in the relationship. In this sense their friendship reverses typical social relations between the privileged hegemonic class and the subordinated subaltern.

identity is in the individuation processes of the social subject: as a 'barrio Marconi' boy, Manongo is somebody. He belongs.³⁹ It is through his new-found friends that Manongo is introduced to Tere Mancini.

When Manongo initially sets eyes upon Tere he is swept away on a tide of passion. However, the controlling behaviour that will become characteristic of their relations immediately surfaces when he questions Tere's light-hearted nature upon their first encounter:

Él piensa que si la vida es tan atroz en las perezosas de los barcos, en los transatlánticos que regresan de los amores muertos para siempre, una muchacha como Tere no tiene el menor derecho a ser tan feliz. (p. 68)

Manongo's assumption that Tere should not be happy is borne of his confusion of real life with the film *Historia de tres amores* which is both comic and absurd, and it is apt that the film starring Mason was called *The Jealous Lover*, with Bryce demonstrating how life mirrors art. The plot of the film has stepped off the cinema screen and entered the phenomenal world, overriding reality on some level of Manongo's mind. Manongo is living life through the film as if he were assuming the life of its protagonist and alarmingly expresses the wish to 'querer ser como James Mason y morir en el intento' (p. 83), which points to the dramatic nature of his character, as a resistance to the mundanity of everyday life. Manongo aspires to live life as if he were a character in a film because he finds his own life dreary and unexciting. Popular culture is, as we shall see, a salient feature in Bryce's narrative.⁴⁰

³⁹ Agustín Prado Alvarado reads Manongo's incorporation into the Marconi gang at the Country Club as his 'social reinsertion'. See Agustín Prado Alvarado, 'Manongo Sterne: el caballero de la triste figura del barrio de Marconi', in *Martín: Revista de Artes y letras: en homenaje a Alfredo Bryce* (Lima, Universidad San Martín de Porres), 5 (August 2002), 61-69 (p. 62).

⁴⁰ The inclusion of elements of popular culture is a typical feature of the Post-boom narrative. As Raymond Leslie Williams writes, 'The Postboom represents a return to accesibility, more realism, and popular elements that reflect a greater cultural autonomy'. See Raymond Leslie Williams, *The Twentieth-Century Spanish American Novel* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003), p. 173.

Many of his characters look to film and music as forms of inspiration through which to experience the world, which points to the importance of the various facets of popular culture manifested in the psychological and emotional development of his characters. The above lines show that Manongo is modelling his love story with Tere on his favourite film. That the film is doomed to tragedy speaks volumes about Manongo's psychological state and his vision of the nature of romantic relationships.

Popular Culture and Identity Formation: (1) Cinematic Influences

That Manongo should choose to fantasise over a film star highlights the unrealistic nature of his individuation processes due to the discrepancy between the life of an actor in Hollywood and his life as a misfit schoolboy in Lima. In his identification with a North American movie star, Manongo is not alone since the other adolescent boys of the barrio and his primary school all model their behaviour and dress-sense on famous Hollywood stars.⁴¹ In order to convey a sense of this the narrator, approximates the mindset of the local boys by adopting their point of view and employing the present tense, when he acknowledges: 'Los objetos más importantes del mundo son el peine y el espejo' (p. 35), which transports the reader to the novel's real time and place. Appearances are of great significance in this society, but what is more important still is who Manongo's peers emulate, for it is here that, once again, his difference from the others becomes apparent.⁴² Whilst other adolescents impersonate James Dean and Marlon Brando, Manongo admits to himself that 'le

⁴¹ Miguel García Posada writes that: 'la mitología cinematográfica norteamericana (...) actúa de correlato metafórico de la conducta de los personajes'. See Miguel García Posada, 'Un tiburón sentimental: El Perú de Bryce Echenique, de las dictaduras a los boleros', p.13. Quoted in José Luis de la Fuente, *Más allá de la modernidad: los cuentos de Alfredo Bryce Echenique*, p. 210.

⁴² Manongo's condition of outsider will later be echoed in the words of his girlfriend Tere, for whom Manongo 'es como nadie es así' (p. 68).

aburran tanto estos matadores de celuloide' (p. 35) and so does not identify with the common role-models of his generation. Instead, Manongo strives to 'parecer a un actor en el que nadie se fija' and opts to model himself on, the 'culto, elegante inglés de acento perfecto', the 'clásicamente vestido James Mason' of 'la dentadura más fea de Hollywood' (p. 35). Mason was, of course, known for playing disturbing roles, such as Cary Grant's tormentor, the spy, Phillip Vandamm, in Alfred Hitchcock's *North by North West* (1959).⁴³ Having rejected the Hollywood archetypes of beauty, the boyishly good-looking James Dean or the rugged Marlon Brando, Manongo opts for an alternative role-model-hero in the shape of a brooding actor who deviates from the aesthetic norm. Manongo has chosen a figure that he can relate to for his lack of perfection and for his status of breaking the mould. In Manongo's identification with James Mason his negative self-image can be ascertained. Manongo sees himself as an ex-centric subject who is different from other boys and 'other' to what is perceived as the conventionally accepted norm.

However, Manongo's empathy with this anti-hero⁴⁴ is primarily based on the psychological connections that he believes they share. Manongo's perception of James Mason is founded entirely upon his screen performances and, as a result of the latter's role in the film *Historia de tres amores* (*Story of Three Loves* [1953])⁴⁵, he deduces that Mason, like himself 'sabe sufrir' (p. 45). It is through this knowledge

⁴³ For information on the film and Mason's role see <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Oracle/6494/north1.html> (consulted 3 April 2005).

⁴⁴ James Mason can be considered an 'anti-hero' because he was famous for his 'frequent portrayals of men with a dark side', see <http://www.reelclassics.com/Actors/Mason/mason.htm> and recognised for his 'talent for playing protagonists of a decidedly hard-bitten or melancholy stripe', see Lynne Dougherty <http://classicmoviefavorites.com/mason/bio.html> (consulted 3 April 2005).

⁴⁵ *Story of Three Loves* (1953) is an anthology of three films involving passengers on a transatlantic ocean liner. In the first, 'The Jealous Lover', Charles Coudray (James Mason) recounts the story of Paula Woodward (Moirá Shearer), a ballet dancer with a heart condition, who died after he urged her to dance for him. For more information on *Story of Three Loves*, see <http://movies2.nytimes.com/gst/movies/movie.html> (consulted 29 March 2005).

that Manongo establishes a sense of common destiny with Mason based on their proclivity to suffer life. Yet this community is entirely fictitious since not only is Mason a far-removed screen idol whom Manongo will never meet but, more significantly, Manongo's perception of him is based on his actor's persona which has nothing to do with the person that Mason is in the phenomenal world. Manongo's fantasy takes on such proportions that he begins to imitate Mason physically, as well as empathising with him mentally, donning dark glasses which he hides behind and refuses to remove even at night. They become a form of protection, acting as a barrier between him and the outside world. The lengths to which Manongo goes in order to imitate the object of his obsession lead him to adopt the persona as if he were a method actor getting into character; hence he is James Mason until he goes to bed, since only then will he reluctantly move the glasses. Manongo is ridiculed at the Country Club because 'quiso ser James Mason en pleno verano' (p. 51) and, despite the heat, enters wearing a dark suit, black tie and sunglasses. Unfortunately as a result of this guise he is again labelled 'maricón' which further perpetuates his solitude, highlighting his unconventionality: 'sintió la soledad de no poder ser diferente al mundo entero ni en apariencia, la soledad de no poder sentirse diferente' (p. 51). Attempting to forge an alternative individual identity spells social disaster in a society where conformity to the norm is paramount and Manongo does not know how to act in a world whose accepted codes of behaviour alienate him. He finds a vent for his loneliness and marginalised condition by visiting the cinema to scour *Historia de tres amores* and Mason 'una y otra vez' (p. 44) and imagines that he is the actor in the film. Mason becomes a tragic cinematic figure as he grieves over the death of his girlfriend, played by Moira Shearer, who uses her last energy to dance for him and dies for her performance. It is surely no coincidence that the young girl

that Manongo will soon meet and fall in love with, Tere Mancini, bears a striking resemblance to Shearer, who is described as, 'pelirroja, blanquísima, pecosa' (p. 45).

Manongo's fantasies remove him from the material universe and transpose him to the world of Mason's character so that the cinematic and 'phenomenal' worlds merge into one and become confused in his mind.⁴⁶ An example of this is seen in the following lines which interchange distorted pieces of Manongo's reality with random scenes from the film:

En la cubierta muy elegante de un barco, tumbado en una perezosa, traje de franela gris azulado...absorto en el mundo muerto de una pelirroja pálida y pecosa que nunca debió bailar, amigo Adán Quispe, que se murió sin nombre, sí el amor sí ha muerto, Adán Quispe igual que mi padre, igual que mis amigos... Igual, exacto, realmente metido en el tema de Paginini, confundido con él, solitario y perdido para siempre en recuerdos, navega Manongo Sterne... (p.49)

This extract demonstrates the use of interior monologue as Manongo's own thoughts are weaved into the narrator's speech.⁴⁷ In this instance, the words 'sí el amor sí ha muerto, Adán Quispe, igual que mi padre, igual que mis amigos', must be attributed to Manongo specifically because of their oral tone, syntactical breakdown and

⁴⁶ Agustín Prado Alvarado, in his discussion of Manongo's relationship with forms of popular culture, writes that he is 'un adolescente solitario sumergido en su propio mundo imaginario' (p. 65). His essay is centred upon the links between Manongo Sterne and Don Quijote. He writes that Manongo is 'igual que don Quijote, que está sumergido en su mundo imaginario que transforma el mundo real' and that both characters, 'rompen las reglas del mundo real' (p. 66). See Agustín Prado Alvarado, 'Manongo Sterne: el caballero de la triste figura del barrio de Marconi', in *Martín: Revista de Artes y letras: en homenaje a Alfredo Bryce* (Lima, Universidad de San Martín de Porres), 5 (August 2002), 61-69.

⁴⁷ In his consideration of Bryce's short stories, de la Fuente reads the incorporation of other voices into the narrator's as a destabilising of the narrator's previously omnipotent position. He writes: 'En los relatos de Alfredo Bryce Echenique, como en otras narraciones últimas, el papel del narrador omnisciente ha ido perdiendo las funciones que tradicionalmente le asignaba el autor tradicional. Como el personaje, el narrador sufre un menoscabo de su papel... El narrador queda desplazado porque presta su espacio a otras voces, a los personajes, o utiliza éstas para canibalizarlas y transformarlas en el interior de su discurso en diferentes formas'; José Luis de la Fuente, *Más allá de la modernidad: los cuentos de Alfredo Bryce Echenique*, p. 71. Although the term 'traditional' narrator is ambiguous if we are to take Flaubert's narrative style into account, it remains clear that the narrator of this novel is not omnipotent. Rather, he appears to assume the role of a character himself, who from a close distance to the action, recounts the lives of the other characters, whose voices he often allows to substitute his own, in order to give the reader greater insight.

emotional intensity (they seem to be shouted in a gesture of pain), whilst the remaining words, which are informative and devoid of emotion, are spoken by the narrator. The effect of such a narrative strategy is that the reader is given an insight into Manongo's mind without the mediation of a third party. This decreases the distance between the reader and character and provides a more intimate awareness of Manongo's state of mind. The inclusion of multiple narrative voices and free indirect discourse are employed throughout the novel and contribute to its oral tone, which is further strengthened by the inclusion of colloquialisms and lengthy passages of dialogue. At other points in the narrative, the strategy provides other characters with the opportunity to voice their feelings directly and allows for greater intimacy between reader and characters. When, for example, Tere's words and correspondence with Manongo enter the narrative flow we learn of her impressions of Manongo and her own doubts, as seen in her often-repeated phrase, 'Manongo es como nadie es así'. These thoughts, almost spoken aloud, contribute to the novel's oral register and as such the narrative appears on occasions to be 'heard' rather than 'read'. In the case of Adán Quispe a voice is given to the lower classes which creates a first-hand and authentic insight into their social conditions, allowing the reader apparently direct access to a hitherto unknown universe.⁴⁸ From the above lines, not only is it apparent that in Manongo's mind the boundary separating his world from that of his idol is precarious but also that Manongo, as an adult, is confusing his past with his present. This is deducible from the references made to the death of his friend, Adán Quispe, which Manongo is only able to accept in adulthood years after the event, along with the allusion to the death of his father, since neither, at this point in the narrative, have

⁴⁸ To a lesser extent, Bryce employs this strategy with the character of Jesús Comunión Junior in *Dos señoras conversan*. However, *No me esperen en abril* he substantially develops this technique, allowing the work's subaltern characters to provide a much more complex insight into their conditions. There is a slight discrepancy however, since the real author of the text is, of course, a member of the upper class.

taken place. Although *No me esperen en abril* follows a rigorous linear trajectory, in this particular instance, it appears that Bryce has chosen to disrupt the chronological flow of the narrative in order to draw attention to Manongo's disordered state of mind. Manongo's rêveries show him to be a lonely fantasiser who repeatedly seeks out other levels of reality in a private, alternative universe which consists of the cinema where he watches the film and his bedroom where he listens to the theme-tune, Rachmaninov's *Tema de Paganini*. The bedroom, servants' quarter and cinema hence form a system of hermetically-sealed sanctuaries into which he withdraws from a world that has rendered him an outsider as a result of his diverging from accepted codes of behaviour; his supposed lack of virility is equated with homosexuality, reminiscent, for example, of the novels of Manuel Puig.⁴⁹

Popular Culture and Identity Formation (2): Musical Influences

The other obvious manifestation of popular 1950s culture in the narrative is music. Manongo and his band of friends establish a dialogue with certain popular songs through which they are able to articulate indirectly their sentiments and model their patterns of courtship. In a society that places great emphasis on its cult of machismo openly expressing sensitivity and romantic impulses is construed as a sign of weakness. This masculinist ideology is expressed through language; men are referred to as 'matadores' which reiterates their code of courage and brute force. Women, by contrast, are referred to as 'hembritas' a word which, through its biological connotations naturalises and carnalizes women in the novel, leading to their consideration in uniquely sexual terms. As language is our foremost contact with the

⁴⁹ For a discussion of homosexuality in Puig, see Elias Miguel Muñoz, *El discurso utópico de la sexualidad en Manuel Puig* (Madrid: Editorial Pliegos, 1986). See specifically Chapter 2, part 5, 'El discurso de la homosexualidad', pp. 76-81.

world it influences the way in which we act, communicate with others and perceive ourselves. It is through language that culture is defined, crystallised and expressed.⁵⁰ In this way, the language adopted by the adolescent boys will directly influence their behaviour towards women and the resulting patterns of sexual interaction at play in society. The *Marconi* boys maintain a cool edge by fulfilling certain roles that conform to their macho ideals, however, when it comes to finding an outlet for their softer sentiments they do it through the guise of song.

Chapter 3 of the novel takes the name of ‘Rachmaninov’s Piano Concerto N. °2: “Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini”’, whilst Chapter Four is entitled ‘Lucho Gatica and Nat King Cole’. Rachmaninov’s piano concerto (which featured on the sound track of *Story of Three Loves*) and the songs of Gatica and Cole set the ambience of their respective chapters and so represent the transition that has occurred in Manongo’s life from his solitary, friendless days to those when he is assimilated into the gang. The first piece of music is a peculiar choice of listening material for a boy in the early stages of adolescence and it would seem that Manongo recognises his sentiments in the alternatively brittle, dramatic, passionate, contemplative and tense movements of the piece. The reader familiar with the *Rhapsody*, with its incorporation of the Latin Requiem Mass for the dead, the *Dies irae*, and its soaring crescendos and diminuendos, will better appreciate Manongo’s confused and

⁵⁰ Lévi-Strauss recognises the close link between language and culture when he writes, ‘language can be said to be a result of culture: the language which is spoken by one population is a reflection of the total culture of the nation’ (p. 68), in Claude Lévi-Strauss, ‘Linguistics and Anthropology’, in *Structural Anthropology*, trans. Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grundfest-Schoepf (New York: Basic Books, 1963), pp. 67-80. This perspective is also proposed by Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong’o in his statement: ‘Culture is almost indistinguishable from the language that makes possible its genesis’. See Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong’o, ‘The Language of African Literature: Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature’, in Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths & Helen Tiffin (eds), *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* (London: Routledge, 1997) pp. 285-90 (p. 289).

melancholic state of mind in Chapter 3.⁵¹ On the other hand, one who lived through the fifties might feel nostalgic (in much the same way as Manongo will in later life) as he remembers the excitement of his youth and the sensations experienced on first hearing the second chapter's songs. Both the musical score and the lyrics of Cole's song, *Pretend*, which assumes an increasingly important role as the novel advances, reflect Manongo's newly-acquired relative well-being. The melody is light and jazzy and punctuated by melodic echoes, whilst the lyrics divulge a sense of optimism and evoke the search for happiness and love.⁵² As such, music in the text assists in the reader's appreciation of Manongo's state of mind and decreases the distance between reader and character, since they have both participated in the events and shared the same music. Furthermore the reader can enter the text, taking part in its construction by remembering and reconstructing the songs.⁵³

A comprehensive list is given of the songs that evoke the summer of 1953 and includes *Unforgettable* and *Pretend* by Nat King Cole, Elvis's *Love me tender* and

⁵¹ Sergey Rachmaninov (1873-1943) composed the *Rhapsody*, which has three movements, in 1934. It is based on Fokin's ballet of Paganini's life, according to which the violinist had sold his soul to the devil, whom the *Dies irae*, with its baleful tones, is taken to represent. It is a powerful and passionate piece that includes sections of lyrical tenderness, with an initial section that oscillates between being taut, intense and flamboyant, a central section of romantic intensity and a final section with tense hesitations, overwhelming diablerie and climatic melodies. Often overwhelming, the thirty-two variations are alternatively comprised of thundering marches, stormy chord sequences, surging harmonies, weeping violins, passages of broken staccato, melancholy flutes and spiralling melodies, all of which represent the torment of a man who has exchanged love for his soul. Given Manongo's love story and its outcome, it is fair to say that in some senses the musical narrative has undertones of his own life, as Bryce demonstrates how art (music) mirrors life, and vice versa.

⁵² Nat King Cole released *Pretend* in 1952. The introductory bars of the tune convey the sense of an awakening, a new dawn, whilst the lyrics include the lines, 'and you'll find happiness without an end, whenever you pretend/remember anyone can dream and nothing's bad as it may seem...you'll find a love you can share/one you can call all your own/just close your eyes, she'll be there/you'll never be alone... the world is mine it can be yours my friend/so why don't you pretend'. Manongo, it appears, will take the advice of the song literally and it accurately sums up his tendencies to make-believe his life.

⁵³ For further discussion on the function of popular music in Bryce's narrative, see Margarita Krakusin *La novelística de Alfredo Bryce Echenique y la narrativa sentimental* (Madrid: Editorial Pliegos, 1996).

Written in the wind by The Four Aces (p.57).⁵⁴ As these songs play, the boys assimilate the lyrics and through them find a veiled outlet for their own emotions. The singer may transmit the lyrics, but it is the boys who become the conductors of the emotions, as each one expresses the sentiments that he recognises in the lyrics of the song: 'Paul Anka le ruega a una chica de pantalón toreador *Put your head on my shoulder* mientras Pat Boone le escribe *Love letters in the sand*, adolescentes del mundo unidos por una canción' (p. 59). Yet, since the emotions are expressed through the lyrics, the boys manage to uphold their pretence of virility and, as such, the songs function as vehicles of emotional displacement:

Nat King Cole en inglés y en castellano, Lucho Gatica en el idioma imposible de los boleros, que a nada real se refieren pero que ahí todos entienden, sienten y sueñan y acercándole una mejilla a su pareja, *cheek to cheek*, ensueñan nerviosos pero matadores siempre, claro que sí. (p. 58)

These songs, written 'para amar' (p. 57), are the medium through which the adolescents imagine and express their love.⁵⁵ Music also establishes a thread of continuity in Bryce's fiction, linking his various works. In *La vida exagerada de Martín Romaña* (1981), for example, Martín informs the reader: 'Mi adolescencia siguió viento en popa. Nat King Cole en inglés y en español, acompañó día tras día la ansiedad con que viví mi primer amor' (p. 57). As such the same experience is

⁵⁴ Here it should be noted that the boys do not seek to express their sentiments through the *canción criolla*, but rather through popular forms of music imported from the United States, with their Western-style rhetoric of love. The *canción criolla* was popular at the time in Lima among all social sectors. For further discussion, see James Higgins, 'The Canción Criolla', in *Lima: A Cultural and Literary History* (Oxford: Signal Books, 2005) pp. 152-158. Higgins writes: 'From (the) lower-class districts emerged a form of music known as the *canción criolla*... in contrast to the high culture of the élites, that culture was popular in character, a hybrid that had grown out of the intermingling of Hispanic and Afro-Peruvian traditions' (p.152), he continues: 'The *canción criolla* came to be seen as the expression of national identity' (p.153). Higgins further notes: 'despite its commercialization, the *canción criolla* never became mass culture in the manner of western pop' (p.154). He finishes with the acknowledgment that: 'From the 1960s onwards, as new modes of communication expanded horizons and as culture became increasingly international, Lima's middle-class youth turned to Western pop and to Latin American tropical music like *Salsa*' (p.158). Manongo, however, does listen to *canciones criollas*, alone in his bedroom.

⁵⁵ As Mercedes Serna observes: 'Bryce define a los personajes y su mundo no por lo que son sino por los objetos, gustos, sensaciones y referentes culturales que les rodean'. See Mercedes Serna, 'Del amor y otras (divertidas) tragedias', *Quimera*, 136 (May 1995), 60-63 (p. 63).

shared by two protagonists from different novels who experience their first love affairs respectively under the influence of the same song. The title of the song encompasses the function attributed to music by the boys:

escuchan las palabras de Nat King Cole y saben finger y estudian los rituales de la hombría... *They Pretend... They all pretend*, Manongo, sólo así, según la canción, el mundo puede ser tuyo. ¿Lo lograrás, Manongo...? ¿*Pretend*, Manongo? (pp. 64-65)⁵⁶

Unfortunately Manongo will ultimately be unable to pretend that his world is anything but 'completamente imperfecto' (p. 69) which will lead to his eventual downfall when he gives up his dream of love. Without his dreams and fantasies, Manongo will eventually commit suicide, significantly at the point in his life when he requests the music to stop.

The Many Sides of Love

Manongo's love affair with Tere will last three years but the seed of destruction is sown from the onset because Manongo is so convinced their love will last forever that he cannot conceive of life without her. Love in Bryce's world is a two-forked path that can be both a gateway to happiness and a road to self-destruction. Tere represents for Manongo 'el anhelado reposo, el consuelo y descanso final' (p. 82); although these words will assume an ironic meaning as the novel draws to a close,

⁵⁶ Nat King Cole's *Pretend* is a particular favourite of Bryce's. When an interviewer asked Bryce the question, '¿Cuáles son las canciones de tu vida, las eternas?', he replied, 'Una, sobre todo, 'Pretend', de Nat King Cole'. See José López Riccci, 'La soledad ha sido la más fiel de mis amantes', in Jorge Coaguila (ed.), *Entrevista escogidas*, pp. 61-70, (p. 62). It should be noted that the pop songs, boleros and classical melodies that feature in the text should not be seen as isolated unities within the text. Rather they form part of its ambience. Three chapter titles take their name from either songs or singers and as such these pieces become the novel's *música de fondo*. Chapter 15 begins with the words: 'Habría sido necesario nacer telegrafista para abreviar algo más este título, el capítulo anterior, que aquí continúa, y las páginas que se nos vienen encima, sentimental, tierna y divertidamente, porque así sucedió, tal cual. Bueno música maestra' (p. 284). These words not only highlight the importance of music as a backdrop to the action of the text and suggest that the music must begin in order that the narrative continue, but also represent one of the few occasions on which the text is aware of itself as an object in the phenomenal world.

when their final rupture becomes a catalyst for his suicide. Manongo, in love, sees the world through new eyes; the Country Club with its flowers and gardens seems ‘más lindo que nunca’ (p. 80) and his world ‘por más conocido que sea’ appears ‘nuevo’ (p. 89). Manongo is filled with illusion, and by projecting his inward happiness onto his surroundings is redefining his reality. The demise of their relationship results from Manongo’s jealousy and Tere’s inability to comply with Manongo’s far-fetched and restrictive definition of the feminine ideal. For Manongo entertains fantasies that equate the perfect woman with the virtue of chastity, which proves to be impossible for Tere to live up to since it denies her nature as a happy, sexual being.

From the onset Manongo sees Tere as a collection of bodily features rather than as a single entity and every time he sets eyes upon her he lists her physical credentials: she is described as, ‘blanca, muy blanca...nariz respingada... brazos, que pecan deliciosamente carnosos y tienen pecas’ (p. 62), ‘pecosa, de nariz respingada, de pelo corto y oscuro, *italian boy*’ (p. 64), ‘brazos tan ricos’ (p. 118) and ‘pecas y nariz respingada’ (p. 313). Manongo perceives Tere as a list of bodily parts, almost as a disembodied collage of noses, freckles, white skin and arms. Manongo is fetishising Tere, through the distortion of her bodily unity and it is of no coincidence that her looks are constantly likened to those of Moira Shearer, which indicates Manongo’s further immersion within the James Mason fantasy.⁵⁷ Tere is no longer a true person

⁵⁷ In point of fact, the same description is ubiquitous with the female love interest in Bryce’s literary universe. Martín Romaña’s first girlfriend, for example, is called Tere. More significantly, since this could hint at the identity of the Tere to whom the novel is dedicated, in the essay entitled, ‘Después del amor primero’, Bryce recalls his first love in the following words: ‘Teresa era una muchacha de tez muy blanca y nariz respingada. Su sonrisa era irónica, era inteligente, pero sobre todo preciosa. Preciosa y traviesa’, in Alfredo Bryce Echenique, *Permiso para vivir* (Barcelona: Anagrama, 1993), pp. 204-10 (p. 204). Tere Mancini is often described as ‘traviesa’ and, furthermore, the real Teresa, Bryce recounts, left him for an older man with a better car, in a scene that recalls the break-up scene in the novel. In the novel, the two lovers live only eight blocks away from each other in the same road.

but a physical ideal, a projection of Manongo's desire. It is interesting to note however, that Manongo does not fetishise those features of a woman's body that are associated with her sexuality, such as the lips, breasts or buttocks, but sexually neutral features such as her nose and her freckles. He hence creates a displaced rhetoric of fetishistic arousal.

Manongo wishes to maintain his relationship in a state of pre-Edenic innocence and equates the sexual acts of masturbation and intercourse with sin, not wanting the stain of carnal desire to taint his fantasised image of Tere. Manongo elevates Tere to the status of angelic being on several occasions, and thinks to himself: 'Tere sí, parecía más que un ángel de Leonardo' (p. 123) and 'Tere era, además y todavía un ángel' (p. 238). Envisaging Tere as an angelic being suits Manongo's purpose since angels are, of course, asexual creatures of neither biological sex. At the end of the novel, Tere will appear as an angelic presence in the form of Manongo's beloved angel of death. For the time being, however, there exists a distinct discrepancy between Manongo's idealisation of Tere as a mixture of the divine and the human and the girl of flesh and blood that she is in reality.

Manongo fantasises over women in magazines but refuses to fantasise over Tere. He feels guilty after his forays into eroticism and his erection is experienced as 'gozoso-dolorosa' (p. 315), which is evidence of the cult of Catholicism's far-reaching influences and of its equation of carnal desire with sin. Manongo aspires to keep Tere's purity intact, so when Tere does perform an act of masturbation on Manongo

In 'Después del amor primero', Tere, Bryce remembers: 'Vivía en la misma calle que yo y a tan sólo siete u ocho cuerdas de ridícula distancia para un amor como el nuestro' (*Permiso para vivir*, p. 205). In the short story, *Una mano entre las cuerdas*, Cecilia is described as having 'brazos y bonitas piernas' (p. 80), 'pecas que le quedaban tan graciosas' (p. 80) and a 'nariz respingada' (p. 80), as is Susana Mendizábal in *Dos señoras conversan*.

it shatters his ideals of her as a creature comprising 'lo humano en el divino y lo divino en el humano' (p. 318) because it brings her down to the level of the profane. Whilst debasing Manongo's idealised image of Tere, the act also reveals cracks in Manongo's fantasised version of reality through which empirical reality seeps in and this disturbs him. He tries to imagine Tere as 'un amor sin pantorillas, sin ni culo ni tetas' (p. 342), but his reality crumbles at the realisation that 'Tere fuera una muchacha como Ornella o cualquiera otra, como muchas, como tantas y tantas pantorillas y como tantos y tantos sexos y muslos y culos empapados' (p. 317). We may note here the use of rambling sentences and the breakdown of syntactical structure as evidence of Manongo's confusion. His paradoxical predicament of simultaneously experiencing dilemma and sexual exacerbation is encapsulated in the repetition of clauses which give the impression that his speech is speeding up. Ornella is the girl whom Manongo's equates with female sexuality and who, like the devil tempting Christ in the desert, leads Manongo into a world of sinful urges. Hence her name is linked to that of the devil in the phrase, 'Ornella y el Demonio' (p.329), as if she were a malign force possessing supernatural seductive powers. The name Ornella is synonymous with sexual deception in Bryce's literary universe. In the later *Reo de nocturnidad* (1997), discussed below in Chapter 5, for example, the protagonist's lover Ornella represents the dark side of the female psyche, deceiving Max Gutiérrez and betraying him whilst the student Claire, the other principal female character in the novel, represents compassion and maternity.

Not only do Manongo's words reveal a tendency to see women in purely sexual terms (thighs, breasts and buttocks) they also show that Manongo has been conditioned ideologically by a society bound by strict Catholic values. His mentality

is also revelatory of the patriarchal ideology of that society since it suggests that for a woman to be valued she must remain chaste and pure. Adherence to Marianism, the idealisation of the Virgin Mary, places women in an impossible position since, whilst being objects of masculine desire, they are not supposed to be contaminated by the stain of sex.⁵⁸ Manongo's inner struggle of simultaneously desiring and sanctifying Tere is revelatory of the cross-values of his society. Ramoncito Fitzgerald Olavarría, for example, the school's priest and 'confesor bucólico-místico-sexual' (p. 256), appears to experience a perverted gratification upon hearing those confessions of students that are inspired by sexual guilt which discloses the hypocrisy and lecherous impulses at the heart of religious institutions.

Manongo's perverse sexual values are also implicated in the elevation of the white race. He reassures himself that his sexual abstinence with Tere results from mutual racial respect, when he thinks to himself: '¿No es el colmo del amor y del respeto que no se me para delante de una chica decente y muy blanca y pecosa...?' (p. 312). The implication in these words is that it would be disrespectful to Tere to visualise her in such blatantly sexual terms because she is a member of the 'pure' and morally superior white race. Women who are biologically impure, due to their mixed-race or Indian blood, however, are deemed as fodder for morally corrupt relations and are not perceived as morally wholesome. As such, none of Manongo's schoolmates has the slightest difficulty in sexually degrading women of the Indian race, as seen in the collective fetishistic perception of Vilma, the school maid, as a purely sexual being comprised of nothing but a pair of buttocks and breasts:

La tal Vilma dejó a medio colegio muerto de envidia y a Carlitos lo dejó

⁵⁸ For further discussion, see Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (London: Picador, 1985) [1976].

equipado hasta para tirarse mejor que lo que Mister Owens, su pañuelo de seda y Dios mandan, a la mismísima Viuda y sus tetas Loren, pero con la camiseta empapada y sin mangas, o sea infinitamente mundo, demonio y carne. (p. 255)

When Vilma's affair with the pupil Carlitos de la Noue is discovered, he justifies his sexual relations with a *chola* by apportioning blame to Vilma, with the depreciatory words: 'Las tetas de esta chola me arrancaron de mis clases' (p. 262). However, he dissociates his actions from his social class, when he says, 'Mi alma, mi corazón, mi clase social no los puse nunca' (p. 262). In layman's terms, a *chola* is good for a detached sexual encounter but not deserving of romantic attachment. Carlitos de la Noue justifies his relationship with Vilma by insisting that his actions were not representative of his social class and his words imply that sexual relations between an upper-class male and a lower-class woman would threaten racial purity and the insularity of his caste. As a member of the white hegemonic class whose origins lie in Europe, Carlitos's sentiments remind us of the degradation of the Amerindian women by the European conquistadores who carried out a campaign of systematic and arbitrary rape upon them to satisfy their sexual impulses.⁵⁹ In this sense, the incident also functions allegorically. It appears that the boys' dismissive attitude towards subaltern women's sexuality, which conceptualises them as objects, is still perpetuated in contemporary class-gender relations and is one that has been instilled in the psyche since the times of the conquest.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ For a further discussion of the violations brought upon the women of the indigenous population of the Americas, amongst other atrocities, see Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Mar Océano, 1953). The work, originally published in 1552, provides several example of such acts, including: 'El pago que dieron a este rey y señor tan bueno y tan grande fué deshonrarlo por la mujer, violándosela un capitán, mal cristiano' (p.30). For a description of the despoliation and slaughter of the Peruvian Indians, see pp. 87-92.

⁶⁰ It should be signalled here that the chapter in which this episode takes place, entitled 'La lavandera y el Caballero de la Orden de Malta' (pp. 250-270), is incidental to Manongo's personal story and as such functions as a digression. It is digressions such as this that contribute to the novel's oral register giving the impression that it has been written spontaneously and without a meticulously planned structure.

Manongo has created an illusory image of Tere, but, despite her initial resolve to comply with his illusions ('yo procuraré ser tal como tu me has soñado', p. 333), she eventually finds his behaviour restrictive. Tere has understood that Manongo's dream world determines his actions and tells him: 'inventaste a James Mason... Pero no voy a dejar que termines de inventarme a mí también' (p. 416). Tere's evaluation of Manongo's behaviour, which, it must be said, is accurate, is in contradistinction to the second of the novel's dedications, which is addressed to a 'Tere, en la ensoñación y en La Violeta' to whom the author declares: 'No te he inventado, como inventé a otras mujeres' (p. 7). Since the Tere of the dedication must be, at least in part, the inspiration behind the character in the novel of the same name (as will be shown later, Tere's absence is very much implicated in Manongo's own 'ensoñación'), it is fair to say that Bryce has re-invented her to a degree. This is a defining moment in Manongo's demise because it symbolises the collapse of his ideals and the shattering of his illusions as his grip on reality begins to slide. His anguished state of mind is evident in his understanding of the situation for, despite his desire to cling on to his cinematic fantasies, he reluctantly acknowledges that '*Historia de tres amores* era en el cine' (p. 386) and has no bearing on his life. Manongo approaches the rupture with Tere with the realisation in mind that:

No, no llevaba un sombrero a lo James Mason para expresión de amor muerto bajo el ala caída del sombrero igualmente herido. No iba en un transatlántico de regreso a Nueva York porque el amor había muerto en Europa, ni iba tampoco tumbado en una perezosa derramada en la cubierta. No había música de fondo y sin embargo el cielo era igual de azul... Porque él no era James Mason... Porque *Historia de tres amores* era en el cine. (p. 386)

In other words, Manongo has simultaneously relinquished the two overriding illusions that shaped his adolescent mind and his existence begins to lose its appeal for Manongo when he realises that life is 'ni siquiera como en el cine' (p. 387). The

rupture, signifying the coterminous dismantling of his dreams, results in the disintegration of his personality since he had modelled himself and his reality entirely on illusionary factors. Tere, for example, notices that during a discussion that lasted only minutes, Manongo, 'cambió tantas veces de estilo, casi de personalidad' (p. 393). Unfortunately it is when he realises that 'los ídolos nada solucionan' (p. 406) and reality hits him that he becomes more deluded than ever. When reality does come crashing into Manongo's world, as expected, he is unable to accept it: 'realmente le costó trabajo asumir que esta vez la historia era real' (p. 411).

Internal Migration and Fear of Contamination

Manongo will spend his entire life dreaming of and attempting to recreate his lost love. Similarly, he will spend the majority of his adult life awaiting Adán Quispe's news from the United States, in the hope of reviving their lost friendship. Absence and separation characterise the novel.⁶¹ Adán Quispe is the novel's principal representative of the subaltern classes and his story represents the dilemmas experienced by an Andean migrant in the 1950s trying to forge a life in the capital city.⁶² The story of Adán's family, who have set up home in Lima, is indicative of

⁶¹ Manongo not only loses Tere and Adán but eventually all his friends, his homeland, family and finally his dreams of recapturing his past. José Alberto Portugal writes: '*No me esperen en abril* está marcada por el motivo de la despedida y la separación. La historia de la protagonista, Manongo Sterne, se construye en una alternancia de separaciones y pérdidas'. See José Alberto Portugal, '*No me esperen en abril*: Alfredo Bryce Echenique y la anatomía de una melancolía peruana', in César Ferreira & Ismael P. Márquez (eds), *Los mundos de Alfredo Bryce Echenique: nuevos textos críticos*, pp. 457-69 (p. 467).

⁶² Adán Quispe's name merits consideration as it surely, ironically (Adán never encounters his paradise, which is the United States, since its defence policies lead to his death), recalls Adam in the Garden of Eden. Adam is the principal representative of the Indian race in the text and the name Quispe is a generic Quechua surname in Peru. His name, then, denoting both the Indian ethnic group and Adam in Genesis, seems to signify a return to reality before the fall of the conquest. There are also signals in the text that suggest that Adán's character is linked to the poet Martín Adán: 'Un par de décadas atrás, Martín Adán había hablado con sorna de un Perú Eterno y había escrito certeras páginas acerca de todo aquello' (p. 397). Adán Quispe, like Martín Adán, flees from his environment in search of a greater truth.

the millions of migrants who journeyed to Peru's coastal cities in a bid to improve their prospects but ended up living in shanty towns (known in Peru as *barriadas* and *pueblos jóvenes*).⁶³ Adán narrates the story of his own social group when he explains to Manongo that 'estaban viniendo muchos parientes de su pueblo, allá en Puno, que había sequía' (p. 91). Teddy Boy, Manongo's favourite teacher and the most élitist character of the work, hints at the migration phenomenon and the increasing urbanisation of Lima, when he says: 'mucho cholo está invadiendo Lima y cada día hay más barriadas' (p. 214).⁶⁴ That he refers to the indigenous classes collectively as 'mucho cholo' shows that he perceives them as a homogenous group, which is a stereotypical evaluation as it denies them individual identities, inferring that racial Others are all the same.

When Manongo takes Adán to Church (pp. 47- 49) he provokes a scandal because the latter's appearance reminds the congregation that a *cholito* lives in their suburb. This is a society in which access to social spaces is restricted to certain classes and these spaces, aligned to colonial hierarchies, are rigidly impenetrable. Adán's presence threatens the upper classes' pretence that they inhabit an enclosed white

⁶³ For a discussion of migratory patterns and the history of internal migration in Peru, see Karsten Paerregaard, *Linking Seperate Worlds: Urban Migrants and Rural Lives in Peru*, esp. pp. 9, 19, 42. See also José Matos Mar, *Desborde popular y crisis del estado: el nuevo rostro del Perú en la década de 1980* (Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 1985; Informe Demográfico del Perú, compiled by the Centro de Estudios de Población y Desarrollo (CEPD) (Lima: 1972). Matos Mar writes, 'En los últimos años, que van entre 1940 y 1984, la capital del Perú aumentó su población en casi diez veces. En efecto, según el censo de 1940 Lima albergaba 645,172 habitantes; 21 años después (Censo 1961) la cifra se había triplicado con 1,652,000 habitantes; según el censo, en 1972 llegó a quintuplicarse con 3,302,523, para luego alcanzar, en 1981 (Censo), un volumen siete veces mayor, 4,492,260 y avanzar en 1984 hacia los seis millones, igualando casi la población que tuvo el Perú todo en 1940' (p. 72). For an extensive discussion on the implications of internal migration in Lima and information on the challenges faced by migrants, from, amongst other antagonistic elements, the oligarchy, see David Collier, *Squatters and Oligarchs: Authoritarian Rule and Policy Change in Peru* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1976).

⁶⁴ At the point in time when Teddy Boy pronounces these words, Odría, who was publicly identified with the emergence of migrant settlements, was president. For a discussion of Odría's role in the promotion of the development of *pueblos jóvenes* that contributed to his populist appeal, see David Collier, *Squatters and Oligarchs: Authoritarian Rule and Policy Change in Peru*, Chapter 4, 'Paternalism and Informality: Settlement Policy under Odría', pp. 55-65.

utopia in which *mestizos* do not exist unless as servants, because he penetrates this forbidden space. Manongo's mother, representing the collective voice of the congregation, chastises him with the words: 'Nunca te presentarás más en misa con el cholito ése' (p. 49), because Manongo challenges the boundaries of segregation.⁶⁵ Both the perspectives of Adán and the upper class congregation are incorporated into the principal narrative voice, but the space afforded to Adán's point of view heavily outweighs the single sentence attributable to the collective upper class voice: 'A su lado, se ríe un personaje qué no tendría por qué andar con Manongo' (p. 47). Rather than identify with their perspective, the narrator is mimicking, in the second clause, the language of the oligarchs. We must assume that this is not the opinion of the narrator himself but rather his exposure of a gossipy and prejudicial society, which he nevertheless associates with in the same church, presumably as he sits in adjacent pews to them. Through his close proximity to the congregation, which his social class affords, he is intimately familiar with their words and hence able to replicate them accurately. However, the congregation's discourse soon gives way to Adán's voice as he bitterly complains: '¿Ves a ese cura de mierda, ese alemán de mierda, Manongo? Pues todos son iguales, santos varones para el público y peores que Hitler en el convento... Yo sé lo que te digo Manongo, quién lo va a saber mejor que yo? Me trataron como a un indio de mierda' (p. 47), which gives the reader an insight into his anger. Indeed, who could better understand the prejudice than Adán, the victim of it, and his avowal here serves to justify his opinion. He questions the favouritism shown to apprentice white servers, wondering, 'qué tienen ellos que no tengo yo?' (p. 47), and finishes with the conclusion, 'un cholo de mierda como yo no

⁶⁵ José Alberto Portugal is right in proposing that *No me esperen en abril* is a 'novela social', since, as we see here, Manongo learns that to bring an Indian to church is deemed unacceptable behaviour in this society. His mother's words seek to develop his understanding of his position in society and class codes and hence lead to Manongo's socialization.

puede ser cura en San Isidro ni en esta congregación' (p. 48), thereby answering the seemingly rhetorical question himself. By allowing Adán Quispe's words to penetrate the narrative voice Bryce is providing the racial other with the possibility of representing himself in his own words, which is important because self-representation is no longer uniquely the privilege of the ruling class. This hints at a destabilising of hierarchies within society itself. Furthermore, as the perspectives of each class are presented simultaneously, precedence is accorded to neither, but as it is Adán who elaborates his emotions the reader is more likely to sympathise with his point of view since he appeals to his sense of moral justice. It is Adán Quispe, and not the narrator who, through access to interior monologue, denounces the attitudes of the upper classes. Allowing Adán as a marginalised character to speak in his own colloquial dialect not only develops his character further and contributes to the novel's oral register but also allows him entrance into a narrative community which is otherwise dominated by characters of the upper classes.

The white élite do not want the heterogeneous racial reality of Peru to penetrate their picture-perfect suburbs because it threatens their ideology of racial preservation. The richest members of the community occupy the pews at the front, whilst the 'pobres' are relegated to the back, which is where Manongo must stand if he is to attend accompanied by an Indian. The same system of racial segregation is enacted within the walls of San Pablo's, whereby the Andean members of the student body are sent to live in segregated dormitories known as the 'barrio marginal' (p. 164) in order to resolve what is termed the 'problema racial' (p. 164), in a measure reminiscent of apartheid. In this sense the racial discordance prevalent in San Pablo's mirrors the divisions maintained outside its walls, and so in some senses, the school serves as a

microcosm for the Peruvian nation and functions allegorically in the novel as such. The narrator's explanation for this system's implementation is that it complies with the laws of 'la selección de las especies' (p. 163), and we may note that the narrator's cultural knowledge, implicit in his discourse, elevates him over other characters in the work in intellectual terms. His explanation indicates that the system is based on biological and cultural/racial factors such as skin colour and the supposition that one race is superior to another. José Antonio Billinghurst, who is of mixed race, however, is assimilated into the white clique. This is evidence of a hierarchical system in operation that is based on the graduation of skin colour and is redolent of the pyramid/pecking order in the town of Ruby, in Toni Morrison's novel *Paradise*.⁶⁶ Billinghurst also originates from Nazca and hence, by dint of his geographical identity of *costeño*, is deemed superior to those Indians or mestizos who reside in the Andes. In effect, there are 'unos cholos muchísimo más cholos' (p. 163) than Billinghurst. The absence of pupils from the Amazonian region of Peru suggests the Selva is marginalised still further within national parameters. Racism is hence rife within the school and Percy the *Serrano* is called *Pircy* by the others in a gesture that mimics his accent, demonstrating how language can have subtle racial implications, as seen in the take-off of his pronunciation. Cochichón-Seltzer is also relegated to the 'barrio marginal' despite his father having achieved considerable financial success. This shows that economic prosperity and cultural mobilisation are not sufficient grounds for acceptance into the dominant social group. Ethnic identity is the only factor that dictates class and social standing, which is evidence of the prevailing ethic

⁶⁶ Toni Morrison, *Paradise* (London: Vintage, 1998). For a discussion of the portrayal of race in the novel see Ronald Walter, *Narrative Identities: (Inter) Cultural Inbetweenness in the Americas* (Bern: Peter Lang AG, European Academic Publishers, 2003), pp. 201-64. Walter writes: 'in Ruby skin colour and gender determine the hierarchical social structure' (p. 231). See also Dinitia Smith, 'Mixing Tragedy and Folklore', *Rev. of Paradise*, *New York Times* 8 (January 1998), B2, and A.J. Verdelle, 'Paradise Found: A Talk with Toni Morrison About Her New Novel', *Essence*, 28.10 (February 1998), 78.

of racial essentialism. In a similar vein, one of the pupils of Saint Pablo's is scared because he believes another Indian student 'podía ser contagioso' (p. 189) and, although the text does not stipulate the nature of the contagion, it is to be assumed that the pupil equates Indians with uncleanness and fears that he may somehow become contaminated through association, which is redolent of the segregational-motivated behaviour of the congregation in the church.⁶⁷ The Indians pose a threat to the élite because they threaten its sense of self; it is a fear that has been used historically to marginalise the Untouchables of India's caste system and the Jews of Nazi Germany.

The *corralón*, in which Adán lives, the material testament to the death of his class's dreams (although Adán naively still believes that his family 'van a construir una casa como la tuya... Manongo' (p. 48), is interestingly presented through Manongo's eyes.⁶⁸ Manongo resumes their predicament in a single sentence: 'Dolía todo en el corralón de Adán, pero dolía sobre todo que quedara tan cerca y tan lejos de su casa' (p. 90). The distance between their respective houses, small in geographical terms but immense in socio-economic terms, represents the elusiveness of the lower class's ambitions.⁶⁹ Unlike other members of the privileged class, Manongo sympathises

⁶⁷ This scene is redolent of a scene in Rosario Castellanos's *Balún Canán*, in which the child-narrator's mother, Zoraida, does not wish her children to bathe in the same pool as the Indians, lest they become contaminated. See Rosario Castellanos, *Balún Canán* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1957). Zoraida cries, 'Van a ensuciar nuestra poza... ¿Viste? La poza está ya turbia' (p. 150).

⁶⁸ Like Manongo, Bryce had friends from the lower classes with whom he formed strong bonds. He has said: 'me las ingeniaba siempre para detectar personajes de otros mundos y establecer grandes amistades... en el campo peruano y masculino tuve desde niño grandes amigos que eran muchachos de corralón con los cuales jugaba y a los que visito cuando voy a Lima'. See Rubén Barreiro, 'Entrevista con Alfredo Bryce Echenique', in Julio Ortega & María Fernanda Lander (eds), pp. 31-37 (p. 55). The relationship between Adán and Manongo is therefore, at least, partly based on autobiographical accounts.

⁶⁹ It is important to signal the different reactions to the *barriada* of Manongo and Julius in *Un mundo para Julius*. Whereas Manongo feels empathy and sadness at the poverty he witnesses, Julius, who is less mature is appalled. When Julius accompanies a family servant to her home, he is so shocked by the poverty in which she lives that he is physically sick.

with the lower-class predicament, possibly because he identifies with their marginalised condition. In point of fact, Manongo is the only character who forms an intimate relationship with a subaltern character if we discount Billingham's popularity with his fellow students. Adán's speech intersperses with Manongo's which suggests that their respective points of view coincide. Whereas Manongo's words express the distress felt by an outsider upon initially witnessing the poverty of the *corralón* (here, the reader will identify with Manongo's emotions since he too, alongside Manongo, is entering the *corralón* for the first time), Adán's words provide explanations for such poverty, since he is familiar with the predicament. Through Adán's inside knowledge, the narrative reveals that the objectives of the migrant classes are impossible to achieve for reasons of cultural resistance, as he explains: 'nada de academias, nada de colegios, no hubo nunca nada de eso para la gente de corralón, Manongo' (p. 91). His words expose the subaltern's lack of opportunities for social mobility in a society in which rigid colonial hierarchies keep them subjugated, preventing them from gaining access to the civilising discipline of education. The dream-strategy of the lower classes is founded on a converse dynamic to that of the oligarchy who actively impose their superiority. The migrants, in a bid to adapt, try to 'forget themselves' by erasing manifestations of their own culture, which suggests that they perceive their own culture as inferior and an obstacle to their social betterment. One of Adán's female relatives, for example, is consciously 'aprendiendo a olvidar el quechua' (p. 92)⁷⁰ in her dream to emulate the cultural-linguistic identity of the dominant group. Forgetting one's own language ultimately signifies the loss of the individual's identity, due to the close links between language

⁷⁰ Although Bryce stipulates that the relative is trying to forget her Quechua, he also affirms that she comes from Puno, which is a predominantly Aymara-speaking region. Is this a discrepancy, we may ask, on the part of the author? Or evidence of appealing to an international audience?

and culture, ethnicity and identity. Furthermore, the relative is not attempting to learn Castilian which leaves her stranded in a linguistic no-man's-land.⁷¹

The Lower Classes: Tales of Non-Identity

Adán's story shows how the subaltern class also entertains fantasies, but fantasies of a very different kind. Adán's 'personal' illusion is to emigrate to the 'Yu-Es-Ei' (p. 91) and follow his dream of becoming a karate professional.⁷² Hence, whilst the upper classes dream of importing English culture to Peru, Adán's dream of a more prosperous life requires his emigration to the United States. Although Manongo imagines that Adán would have entered the *corralón* wearing a poncho and sandals, he now dresses in jeans and a Texan-style shirt and answers to the name of 'Adam' (p. 93). This is a precursory measure to his changing destiny as Adán tries to imagine his future (and is the converse dynamic of Don Álvaro wearing his university tie as a reminder of days gone by) but is also indicative of the native Peruvian's attempt to assimilate the culture of the northern neighbour. Whilst his step-mother abandons the autochthonous language, Adán alters his name for an anglicised version. It is also fair to say that Manongo, although sympathetic to the plight of the Indian classes, does entertain a stereotypical vision of them, as he imagines Adán arriving in a poncho. Furthermore, whilst the white elite snub the United States the subaltern classes privilege it as culturally and economically superior. Adán can conceive of no future for a *cholo* in Peru and hence aspires to go, Dick Whittington-style, to the States in

⁷¹ Paerregaard explains the migrant's need in Lima to 'learn to speak proper Spanish', if he/she is to have any chance of an education or upward mobility'. See Karsten Paerregaard, *Linking Separate Worlds: Urban Migrants and Rural Lives in Peru*, p. 19.

⁷² In San Pablo's school, there was a Karate instructor by the name of Quispe and it appears that Bryce took inspiration for this character from him. The source of this information is Robert Barker Seminario, former pupil of San Pablo's. Interviewed on 30 April 2005.

an attempt at carving out a more prosperous life for himself. Unfortunately the reader is acutely aware that Adán's aspirations are pipe-line dreams, since his over-enthusiastic nature and self-assuredness serve to highlight their implausibility: 'de ahí a Miami, y de ahí a Nueva York, de ahí a Washington D.C. hay un solo paso, Manongo, después pescas a tu gringa, triunfas en Karate, el mundo en un bolsillo, hermano' (p. 91). Furthermore, as the text oscillates between Manongo's negative perception of the *corralón* and Adán's dreams of the USA, the distance between the two becomes palpably too difficult to negotiate. The unhappy message here seems to be that the subaltern classes of Peru have little or no chance of bettering themselves as Adán's untimely death further suggests. This predicament is reconfirmed in the tragic destiny of Pírcy Centano who, despite the advantage of an exclusive education with its possibility of a brighter future, finishes his days toiling in a hacienda, with his head customarily bowed, in a gesture of submission.

Adán Quispe's dreams of making it in the United States are reduced to ashes. The reader's suspicions are aroused when the postcards he promises Mangongo become less frequent and eventually peter out altogether. Manongo will always remain hopeful that his friend is prospering, which places the reader (along with Tere) in a superior position of knowledge.⁷³ Adán's photos show a progressive decline in his constitution and his increasingly wasted appearance suggests that he is suffering from malnutrition, so it is of no surprise to the reader when news of his death arrives. Events come to light that he was killed whilst serving in the U.S. Marines by a bomb

⁷³ See Stanley Fish, 'How to Recognise a Poem When You See One', in *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, MA/London: Harvard University Press, 1980), pp. 322-37. For a discussion of 'interpretive communities', see pp. 335- 36, 'if the self is conceived of not as an independent entity but as a social construct whose operations are delimited by the systems of intelligibility that inform it, then the meanings it confers on texts are not his own but have their source in the interpretive community (or communities) of which it is a function' (p. 335). See also, 'What makes an Interpretation Acceptable?' in *ibid*, pp.338- 55.

fired, in a twist of bitter irony, by Alan James Oxley, one of Manongo's friends from San Pablo's during the Vietnam War. His death at the hands of a fellow countryman (along with Montoyita, an Andean boarder at the school) is a metaphor for the destruction of the indigenous classes of Peru resulting from the systematic abuse of the hegemony. The deaths of Adán and Montoyita are described as the 'price' they paid for their 'loco afán de llegar a ser norteamericanos' (p. 180), whilst Alan James Oxley is glorified as a war hero, despite the fact that they die in the same incident in the same war, fighting for the same cause. This not only points the finger of blame at Adán (and Montoyita) for entertaining unrealistic dreams of personal betterment in a world that does not allow them social mobility, it also places Peru in a peripheral position to the States since it suggests that the American dream is unattainable for a lower-class Peruvian, in a manner similar to that of Gregory Nava's film, *El Norte*.⁷⁴ It is important to note, however, that the narrator's use of the phrase, 'tan caro habían pagado' their 'loco afán' (p. 180) is used ironically in order to highlight the wrongheadedness of such a point of view. It is not the lower classes who are at fault but a world that has clipped their wings at birth.

Political Backdrop

The Vietnam War is one of several historical events referred to in *No me esperen en abril* that the reader, it must be presumed, is familiar with. Through the inclusion of these events and their accurate depiction in chronological sequence, the novel becomes to some degree a documentary-style account of Peruvian history and the inclusion of many historical figures, such as various Peruvian presidents, heightens

⁷⁴ For further discussion, see Stephen M. Hart, *A Companion to Latin American Film* (Woodbridge: Tamesis, 2004), pp. 99-106.

this sense.⁷⁵ This gives the narrative a sense of reality whilst serving to anchor the action firmly in the second half of the twentieth century and explains why the novel is considered by some as a testimony of Peruvian social reality. Although Bryce has continually reaffirmed his apolitical intentions,⁷⁶ the circumstances surrounding Adán's death and the criticism of the war (implicit in the futile nature of his death) shows that this is not necessarily true. Bryce is not an overtly political writer, but his allusions to the political history of Peru are not entirely neutral, as is seen when Manongo meets President Juan Velasco and actually quite likes him. Interestingly, Velasco, who oversaw the implementation of the Agrarian Reform movement, is the sole political leader presented in sympathetic terms. Since the reader experiences the conversation through Manongo's perspective he empathises with his point of view and the lasting impression of the president is a favourable one. What is obvious, as the fortunes of Manongo's contemporaries unfold, is that the political and economic climate becomes increasingly problematic for the oligarchy.

From the onset, it is implicit that corruption is rife in the higher échelons of society, through the insight given into Don Álvaro's affairs, the above-mentioned incident regarding the bank and the anti-*aprista* rhetoric of the school's political lessons. A

⁷⁵ Despite the novel's structural chronology due to the accurate recording of historical (public) events, Manongo's wanderings in his memory and regressions means that his 'personal' chronology is non-linear. This mirrors the behaviour of the oligarchy and as such the characters' psychological chronologies distort or clash with the chronology of the text. As Romero Pérez writes: 'la cronología real que estructura la novela no admite discusión por su pautada objetividad a través de fechas expresas, si bien el devenir textual se complejiza con un tiempo de orden psicológico que afecta únicamente a Manongo a no aceptar el desarrollo convencional', in *Kipus*, 4 (1995-1996), 83-90 (p. 85). This is seen, for example, in his complete rejection of the month of April as the novel's title suggests. Romero Pérez cites Manongo's enforced separation from Tere when he attends school as an example: 'Que cada fin de semana empezará donde se acaba y eso es verse nunca, o peor: porque cada fin de semana empezará donde se acabará el mismo fin de semana. Será todo, un instante, pero inmediatamente será como si todo se hubiese acabado para siempre por cinco días y medio y por seis de las siete noches que tiene la semana' (p. 85) as an example of this attitude. Manongo's rebellion against chronological time hence begins and, as we shall see, ends with his separation from his beloved Tere.

⁷⁶ See for instance, 'Una novela y sus consecuencias', in *Permiso para vivir*, pp. 52-56.

caricature in the national daily newspaper *El Comercio* portrays Don Álvaro, as Minister of Finance, with a counterfeit-currency-making machine. This is an allusion to the fashion in which Odría's government (1948-56), in their quest for improving imports and exports, in repaying the national debt and encouraging foreign investment, flooded the market with surplus capital. David P. Werlich in his study on Peruvian political history notes that corruption was a 'salient feature' (Werlich, p. 248) of Odría's reign.⁷⁷ That the source of the information is *El Comercio*, Peru's leading newspaper, lends support to the accusation since the reader familiar with Peruvian reality will also be aware of the paper's solid reputation. It later comes to light that Don Álvaro's nephew, Benito Harriman Sánchez, in his position as the principal treasurer of the Trade Ministry, has inculcated strategies resulting in the lowering of inflation (p. 167), which suggests that through his nephew, Álvaro, has had involvement with the scheme. In addition, Álvaro who, due to the office he holds, must be seen as representative of Odría's government, is shown to be corrupt, which suggests that the oligarchy is, in part, responsible for its own downfall. As mentioned above, the oligarchy is obviously out of touch with Peruvian reality and this extends to the political policies they make. The bridge built as a short cut between the towns of Chacabayo and Chosica is said to leave San Pablo 'aún más alejado de la realidad nacional' (p. 293), which shows how governmental policies intended to improve the nation's infrastructure actually proved to be detrimental and act as a gauge to show how removed the upper, political class was from the needs of the nation.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ For further discussion of Odría's reign, see David P. Werlich, *Peru: A Short History* (Southern Illinois University Press, 1978), pp. 248-54.

⁷⁸ This bridge is mentioned in 'Un amigo de cuarenta y cuatro años', together with an explanation of why the removal of the bridge left the school isolated from national reality: 'Se había llevado a

It is during the inauguration ceremony of the school that the first reference to the Revolutionary Government of the Armed Forces is mentioned when the Minister of Education cries out: ‘¿no sabe usted que en este país no ha habido ni habrá nunca más clase dirigente que nuestras gloriosas Fuerzas Armadas?’ (p. 172). The irony of the comment being made at such an auspicious occasion and furthermore during the inauguration of the school of the country’s intended future directors, will not be lost on the reader. His predictions come true and are once again related to the rise and fall of San Pablo’s, which in turn also mirrors the rise and fall of the oligarchy. Employing the strategy of the prolepsis to create the effect of dramatic irony, the demise of the school is foretold through the evocation of a sociological study carried out by Abelardo Sánchez León, the Peruvian poet and critic and Bryce’s close personal friend, who visited the ruins ‘veinte años después’.⁷⁹ His presence evokes an example of the overlapping of the fictive and non-fictive worlds in the novel since Sánchez León is acknowledged in the dedications as having influenced Bryce’s uptake of the project. Bryce alludes to this work in *No me esperen en abril* and, through its consideration, invites the reader to visit the ruins as seen through the eyes of the poet. Following Sánchez León’s appraisal of the destruction of the building the reader is invited to make a comparison between the elegant school as it currently stands, and the future ‘edificio semiderruido’ (p. 222), producing the effect of dramatic irony, when narrative time is subsequently resumed. At this point, where Bryce evokes his friend, the personas of author and intended narrator are barely

Huampaní el antiguo Puente sobre el Rímac, que traía el tráfico hasta la puerta del colegio’ (*Cuentos completos*, p. 83).

⁷⁹ Abelardo Sánchez León (Lima, b. 1947) is a Peruvian poet and sociologist known principally for his poems. He is also the author of several works of fiction, including *Por la puerta falsa* (Lima: Ediciones Noviembre Trece, 1991). Sánchez León has been a regular contributor to the magazine *Que Hacer*.

distinguishable from each other. The narrator subsequently takes up once more the narrative thread, to inform the reader that 'Fue por esos años velasquistas, militares y policiales, cuando el destrozado pero excelentemente bien ubicado local... fue adquirido para club social y recreativo de la Policía de Investigaciones del Perú' (p. 223). The school, designed to educate the oligarchy's new generation of leaders, has been replaced by a stronghold of the new military regime. Placing the the fall of San Pablo's and the rise of the military government side by side serves to link the two, and the philosophies behind them, in a cause and effect equation. Ascribing this evaluation to Sánchez León and his sociological study, which exists in the phenomenal world, anchors the events in the real world and enhances their veracity.

The overthrowing of Belaúnde by General Juan Velasco Alvarado is recounted in substantial detail:

Y al frente, al otro lado de aquel río Rímac desviado por Don Álvaro de Aliaga y Harriman, tal vez en su misma casa... vivía el General Chino Cholo Pendejo y Simpaticón don Juan Velasco Alvarado, Jefe de Estado del Perú desde que en 1968 mandó sacar a patada limpia de palacio al arquitecto Fernando Belaunde Terry, mientras el pobre dormía el sueño de los justos y los probos y soñaba con una comunidad de estados latinoamericanos atravesados por una interminable carretera marginal y por su gran filosofía política: El Perú como doctrina y La conquista del Perú por los peruanos, que fue cuando el coronel de turno le metió un tancazo a la reja de palacio y el demócrata presidente preguntó si había temblor o qué. (p. 223)

In this passage, which recounts the military's storming of the Presidential Palace, the former house of Don Álvaro serves as a metaphor for the replacement of the disintegrating oligarchic regime by the triumphant military powers. Velasco, the personification of the military government and the revolution, now inhabits the house of Don Álvaro, who personifies the oligarchy in the narrative. The passage also ridicules the ousted President, Fernando Belaunde Terry, through the allusion to his

public works programmes. As a social reformist and nationalist, Belaunde was unpopular with an élite who saw their fortunes plummet as a consequence of his investment programmes and devaluation of the Peruvian Sol. He is referred to with mocking sympathy as 'el pobre' and the reference to his 'interminable carretera', the roadway he partially constructed with the aim of integrating the Amazon region into the national framework, is a jibe at his inability to finish his projects. The final impression that the novel leaves of him is that of a failure, 'medio izquierdo en sus promesas y pusilánime y medio en sus incumplimientos' (pp. 245- 46). This also appears to be the opinion held of Belaunde by the oligarchs who bestow upon him the nick-name of 'Belagogo' (p. 245) and who later criticise the 'ilustres peruanos de los años veinte' (p. 246) who 'se nos convertían desgraciadamente en Belagogos' (p. 246). In this instance the pronoun 'nos' is attributed to the oligarchic group and is a rare example in the text of the coincidence of the narrator's (and author's) perspective with theirs. Here the narrator's class identity is quite clearly located within the hegemonic group. We must assume that Bryce has a negative view of Belaunde since he is so heavily criticised in the novel. Perhaps Bryce is not such an apolitical writer as he would like to have us think.

Manuel Prado Ugarteche, Belaunde's predecessor, receives an even rougher deal, primarily through his friendship with Marquitos Echeandía y Peralta. Marquitos Echeandía is the character who is ultimately synonymous with the oligarchy's inertia, degeneration and decadence. Relying on a diminishing wealth based on old money, the character has not worked a day in his life. Consequently he spends his time in the Phoenix Club where the oligarchs meet to drink. The avocado that he eats on a daily basis becomes, in effect, a subtle metaphor for the oligarchy's decline

when Felipón Canaval, a significantly more enlightened member of the clique, warns Don Álvaro that if he persists in his ‘endogamous’ intentions and refuses to incorporate different sectors of the nation into his project, the ‘futura clase dirigente’ ‘va a terminar exacta en lo de la palta a Marquitos Echeandía’ (p. 167). Prado’s libidinous nature (he is named the Teniente Seductor [p. 245]) already places him on a par with the hedonistic Marquitos, but it is through a conversation they hold that the reader is privy to that the real similarities between the two characters become apparent (it should be noted that their entire conversation is transcribed in unmediated dialogue). Prado (whose son Leoncio attended San Pablo), flatters Marquitos by inappropriately praising him: ‘Tú eres un rey, Marquitos, aquí entre nosotros’ (p. 247), on the basis of his elaborate theory of buying a small country next to Paris in exchange for Peru. He continues: ‘te doy la razón en lo de la venta del Perú y la compra de un paisito ideal’ (p. 247), not questioning, due to the ultimacy of his power, whether the notion of an ideal country does or does not exist. Whilst these words cannot be attributed to the President outside of his novelised persona, it does indicate that Bryce holds a critical view of Prado and his commitment to Peru. He hence creates an imagined character through direct speech, bestowing upon him words that epitomise what is known of his public persona. An example of this is when the president laments: ‘¡La gran vaina que representa tener que abandonar París para ser presidente del Perú!’ (p. 247), which questions in, a humorous way, the motives of a Peruvian president who would prefer to live in France. Later he will rent out his apartment in Paris and move to Fort Lauderdale, Florida, in order to be ‘más cerca del acontecer nacional’ (p. 430). The irony of this remark is borne of his converse logic of moving outside of Peru in order to be closer to national events and,

given his geographical distance from Peru, this is directly proportional to his indifference to the nation's affairs.

The discrepancy between the narrator's and the reader's (by dint of the information supplied to him) awareness of history and the characters' determined blindness towards history becomes palpable if we compare Manongo's reaction to the military coup with the very concrete information that the text provides. Manongo, now an international business man, no longer resides in Peru and, on his return visits to Lima, he consciously tries to ignore national reality by avoiding the television and newspapers.⁸⁰ This suggests that although, as an adolescent, Manongo sympathised with the plight of Peru's needy and was hence aware of national reality, as an adult, he distances himself from national affairs and has hence taken on the mindset of the oligarchs with regard to their nation.⁸¹ When the military coup takes place, Manongo is sitting in the terrace of a bar near the Plaza de Armas and is so absorbed in his memories of a past with Tere, spent at the Country Club, that he is unaware of what is happening around him. What *is* occurring around him is perhaps the single most important event of Peruvian twentieth-century political history and certainly the

⁸⁰ Lima becomes almost a stranger to him: 'El cielo sin cielo y sin ciudad- repetía una y otra vez' (p. 590).

⁸¹ Elsewhere, in *Un mundo para Julius*, Bryce also suggests that the subject's incorporation into his predestined social group is inevitable. Julius initially forms close bonds with the serving staff, identifies principally with Vilma and detests his stepfather, Juan Lucas. Wood notes that in the alternative opening paragraphs to the novel that feature at the end of the book, Julius is actually described as a boy who, 'vivió de espaldas a su mundo, como si no quisiera saber de él' and these words can be ascribed a metaphorical agenda (David Wood, *The Fictions of Alfredo Bryce Echenique*, p. 34). However, as the novel draws to a close, Julius's identity is qualified through his connections with his family: 'Julius aprovechó tanta paz para quedarse tranquilito, hijo de Susan casada con Juan Lucas, hermano de Bobby, regresando del aeropuerto de dejar a su otro hermano, acercando por fin a la casa...' (pp. 588-89), which suggests that he has established new models with whom to identify. It must be assumed that these words can be read on two levels: the first, according to which he is physically journeying to his family home and the second, according to which he is symbolically on a journey to assimilation into the hegemonic group.

event credited with definitively altering the fortunes of the oligarchy.⁸² As the soldiers of the Gobierno Revolucionario de las Fuerzas Armadas arrive to storm the Presidential Palace, Manongo, ‘Sin vivir ni morir ni olvidarla ni nada... pidió otro café y continuó recordando a Tere bañada en las buganvillas del Country Club’ (p. 48). The passage continues:

En esas andaba cuando un arbusto le apoyó una bayoneta sobre un muslo y le dijo que se hiciera a un lado, por favor. Y, la verdad, a Manongo se le hizo un tremendo enredo entre el arbusto con bayoneta que tenía al lado y las enredaderas, las buganvillas, y los floridos arbustos de Tere Mancini paseando para siempre por el Country Club. (p. 448)

The preceding sentence, ‘tuvo oportunidad de presenciar en parte aquel golpe de estado’ (p.448), is intended ironically, since as the above extract makes plain, Manongo by no means witnesses the event. Manongo is transposing his past reality with Tere to present-day events, and past and present mingle in his mind. Hence the bayonet camouflaged with greenery and the bougainvilleas are one and the same plant in Manongo’s mind (‘Eran todos como una misma planta’ [p. 449]). The incident also functions allegorically as a metaphor for the introspective vision of an anachronistic and out-of-touch oligarchy. In the seven years since Tere left him, Manongo appears to have receded into a world of his past that he tries desperately to reconstruct and it is significant that his demise mirrors the socio-political decline of the country; his resolute blindness with regard to political affairs is redolent of the oligarchy’s refusal to accept their change in fortune. Manongo is as ‘alejado de la realidad nacional’ as his former school and its founders.

⁸² For a discussion on the extent of the implications of the Agrarian Reform Programme implemented by the military government in 1969, the year after they acceded to power, see James D. Rudolph, *Peru: The Evolution of a Crisis* (Stanford: Praeger Publishers, 1992). Rudolph writes that the Agrarian Reform Movement ‘capped the long decline of Peru’s traditional rural oligarchy’ (p.74). He also notes that the confiscation of lands ‘marked a definitive end to (the oligarchy’s) once politically dominant position’ (p. 64). See also discussion in Chapter 2 of this thesis.

The make-believe conversation that Manongo has with General Velasco follows an allusion to the house where Velasco was born.⁸³ When Manongo visits the house his reaction is one of sympathy for the military leader: ‘Si yo hubiera nacido en esta casa también habría sido un resentido o, cuando menos, también habría resentido a un señor llamado Lorenzo Sterne’ (p. 528). Manonogo’s empathy with the General is surely linked to his close bond with Adán Quispe; indeed, the last time he visited such a deprived housing area was when he visited the latter’s home years earlier. While the rest of his acquaintances struggle to come to terms with a nationalisation programme that has expropriated land and private business interests from the upper classes and returned them to the national domain, Manongo has found the transition easy: ‘Manongo se había acostumbrado a que ahora todo se llamara Petro Perú, Centromín, Pesca Perú, Minero Perú...’ (p. 528). Manongo’s fortune depends on his foreign business interests and so it stands to reason that he has no problem with the nationalisation of Peruvian industry. Manongo’s imagined friendship with the ‘antioligárquico’ (p. 452) Velasco is evidence that, in this instance, his political vision differs dramatically from that of the rest of his class, yet colludes with that of Bryce as identified in this chapter. His father’s reaction to the changes is credited with inducing his death, in the sentence: ‘el gobierno nacionalista e imperialista del General Kausachum Chino-Cholo Juan Velasco Alvarado como él solía llamarlo con el odio mortal ... lo mató a fuerza de disgustos y nacionalizaciones’ (p. 448), which suggests that the revolution is the final nail in his coffin. When Manongo recalls

⁸³ In an interview in 1972, Bryce said: ‘Yo tengo una profunda simpatía por el personaje del General Velasco. No lo conozco, pero me encantaría emborrocharme con él, porque estoy seguro de que sabe las Quico y Caco y que ve a través del alquitrán. Debe ser un personaje encantado. Lo que pienso, lo que haga, me tiene sin cuidado’; in César Hildebrandt, ‘Entrevista con Alfredo Bryce’, in Jorge Coaguila (ed.), *Entrevistas escogidas*, pp. 16-23 (p. 20). Later that year he met him and recalls, ‘Mi entrevista con el General Velasco, por ejemplo, en 1972, fue una cosa absolutamente divertida y delirante’, describing how it ended in a handshake and embrace. See Alfredo Bryce Echenique, ‘Confesiones sobre el arte de vivir y escribir novelas’ in Ferreira & Márquez (eds), *Los mundos de Alfredo Bryce Echenique*, pp. 29-44 (p. 41).

hearsay regarding Velasco he admits that the General 'le cayera francamente simpático' (p. 529), which, if we are to take Bryce's remarks quoted in footnote 83 of this chapter at face value, appear to reflect the opinion of the author himself. In ideological terms the author and his protagonist appear to be of the same political persuasion and here their personas converge. Whilst providing an outlet for Manongo's left-wing sympathies, the imagined conversations also give an insight into his psychological decline.

When the conversations with the president take place Manongo is approximately in his mid-thirties. Unable to cope with the loss of his only true love, Tere Mancini, Manongo, the man 'que se fue por amor' (p. 512), cuts his ties with Peru and undertakes to be his father's partner. This entails him travelling internationally in order to invest the money that they have made in Peru through overseas money laundering.⁸⁴ The narrator categorically points blame at father and son: 'el origen de esa fortuna fue una gran fuga de capitales' (p. 599). Manongo soon comes to appreciate 'lo insignificante que era burlar íntegros el código civil y penal y hasta la constitución peruana, por qué no, después de todo, ¿no lo habían educado desde el colegio San Pablo para ser un futuro dirigente de la patria?' (p. 501), words which suggests that he is aligning his actions with the ideology of the school. When

⁸⁴ Manongo's life hence becomes characterised by the leitmotif of the journey: he journeys in the geographical sense in an attempt to advance his life (in economic terms) whilst simultaneously travelling backwards (in psychological terms) in his inner journey through his past. In this he represents the oligarchs who attempt to move forward with the building of a school to create the nation's future leaders, yet in order to do so journey back to their colonial-anglophile past. Both are attempting to recapture their paradises lost and their journeys become, in this sense, conflictive, involving regression rather than progression. See José Alberto Portugal, 'No me esperen en abril: Alfredo Bryce Echenique y la anatomía de una melancolía peruana', in César Ferreira & Ismael P. Márquez (eds), *Los mundos de Alfredo Bryce Echenique: nuevos textos críticos*, pp. 457-469 (p. 458): 'el motivo de viaje como búsqueda se inicia con la perspectiva de un double movimiento. De un lado, el viaje se define como un avance, un impulso hacia delante o progresión hacia un objetivo... Pero a la misma vez, este viaje se construye como deseo, ansia de retorno al espacio de origen... lo cual configura el sentido de este movimiento como regresión.'

Manongo's words are incorporated into the narrative stream it is generally because the narrator intends the reader to sympathise with his emotions. In this instance, the narrator is emphasising his immoral reasoning through the inclusion of Manongo's apathetical comment, 'por qué no', which distances the reader from Manongo, with whose vision he surely disagrees. Furthermore, the reader has continuously been guided towards a critical appraisal of the school's ideology. Even though Manongo has previously sympathised with the poor of his country, in business terms he adopts the dog-eat-dog attitude which epitomises his social class. This betrays the radical change in his character from sentimental, caring schoolboy, to hardened, self-centred businessman. Money has replaced love in Manongo's life, becoming the new altar at which he worships and the new dream that he chases.

The Demise of the Oligarchy: The Inability to Forget the Past/Move Forward

Manongo, who is described as a 'canalla' (p. 470) in business, is alone amongst his friends in achieving financial success.⁸⁵ His trajectory is similar to that of Juan Lucas in *Un mundo para Julius*. When Julius's father, who personifies the landed élite, dies, he is replaced by Juan Lucas, who, as part of a new breed of entrepreneurs who look outside of Peru for their capitalist inspiration, represents the class of new, dynamic upper-class capitalists. Manongo, like Juan Lucas, and the sons of the sisters in *Dos señoras conversan*, has understood the need to look outside of Peru if he is to flourish economically. As the novel progresses we see how the cream of the country have fallen from their pedestal, with many having emigrated to Europe or the United States: those who remain live in a state of relative obscurity. When Manongo

⁸⁵ Here we may again note the presence of the theme of the double or split personality: Manongo is both a sentimental character and a decidedly ruthless one.

returns to Peru, on one of his reunion visits to see the friends he made at school some twenty-one years earlier, he discovers, 'que se iban unos y se quedaban otros, de que en este país de mierda ya no tenían nada que hacer pero que algunos no se iban porque ni siquiera tenían cómo irse decentemente' (p. 534). The moral decay of the oligarchy which was apparent in characters such as Marquitos Echeandía has now evolved into an economic decline. Manongo's cousin, El Gordito Cisneros, now runs a liquor store in Miami and the Cholo Antonio Billingham's speech is dogged with the repetition – a sign of the oligarchy's inertia – of the phrase: 'La cosa se está poniendo difícil, Manongo, créeme...' (p. 536). Coupled with this are the deaths of the great oligarchic figures of the work, Don Lorenzo and Don Álvaro, and there is no doubt that their deaths are caused by the collapse of their dreams, the latter dying of 'la misma tristeza que terminó con tantos socios más del Phoenix Club: lo poco dirigente que era la clase dirigente desde las épocas de un Victor Andrés Belaunde... de un Javier Prado' (p. 179). Yet the text proposes that his demise is a direct result of his fantasies, as is evident in the lines: 'Fue en realidad espantosa la soledad británica en que murió don Álvaro' (p. 179), which suggest that his nostalgia has contributed to his death. The oligarchs, in refusing to keep up with the changing times, 'por ser conservadores y por ser extravagantes' (p. 248), have hastened their own demise, and their deaths, along with that of Marquitos Echeandía, symbolise the death of the oligarchic state.

Long before the advent of the Revolutionary Government and the deaths of the oligarchs the narrative is replete with clues regarding their demise. Hence, if it comes as a surprise to some of the characters, the reader is well aware of what the future holds for them. The eccentric but enlightened school teacher, Teddy Boy, is the first

to show awareness (aside from the narrator, whose privileged position is attained either by the transcendence of time boundaries, as is seen in his knowledge of Sánchez León's report, or by the fact that, like Bryce, he is reconstructing a past with which he is familiar through memory) of the situation when he tells Álvaro: 'la causa popular está cercana' (p. 214), predicting that the revenge of the masses is imminent.⁸⁶ Evidence of the changing ethnic face of the nation is found not only in the personal tale of Adán Quispe's family, but also in the public history of the mass Andean exodus, found at the end of the fourth section. Immediately following his split from Tere, Manongo drives through the city on a journey that takes in the new *barriadas*:

El Augustino... *histórico lugar de nacimiento de las barriadas limeñas en años de prados y odrías cuarenta y cincuenta y del problema estructural migración campo-ciudad que hace llegar a Adán Quispe, una guagüita, a Lima, después a unos seis millones más como él, sea por migración, sea por nacimiento en hacinamiento, se tuguriza la puente, también el río y también la almeda, que es cuando Chabuca Grande compone nostálgica, La flor de la canela para que los limeños recuerden siquiera las risueñas, coloniales y altamente limeñas Tradiciones peruanas de don Ricardo Palma, el evocador de una Lima que también para él se iba ya con algo de todo tiempo pasado fue mejor...* (p. 482)⁸⁷

In this extract two very different socio-economic universes are shown to exist coterminously in Lima, the first consisting of the shanty developments inhabited by

⁸⁶ Teddy Boy (don Eduardo Stewart Valdelomar) teaches the boys literature but also educates them in music, love and life in general. He has a great influence on the academic and sentimental education of the boys and remains dear to them throughout their lives. Perhaps a clue to the person who influenced Bryce when creating him is to be found in the words: 'Mi pasión por la literatura despertó el último año de secundaria, cuando el professor Ricardo Nugent Valdelomar... empezó a hacerme escribir cuentos'; César Lévano & Alfredo Pita, 'La novela y la vida de Alfredo Bryce, in Julio Ortega & María Fernanda Lander (eds), pp. 39-58 (p. 40). In the same article Bryce also mentions two other teachers who influenced his love of literature, namely Carlos Eduardo Zavaleta and Estuardo Núñez. It appears that Teddy Boy's name is an amalgamation of the names of these three mentors and serves as a homage to the guidance that they offered him.

⁸⁷ James Higgins writes: 'Another growing trend was the nostalgic evocation of the old Lima which was fast disappearing. The classic example is Chabuca Granda's "La flor de la canela", which evokes the old bridge over the Rímac leading to the Alameda de los Descalzos at the heart of creole Lima. Significantly, "La flor de la canela" was the most popular *vals* of all time, for it expresses Limeñans' yearning to cling to their sense of identity as the city was changing around them as a result of modernization and migration from the countryside'; James Higgins, *Lima: A Literary and Cultural History* (Oxford: Signal Books, 2005), p. 158.

migrants and a second that models itself on the colonial republic of Palma's *Tradiciones peruanas*. The song *Flor de la canela*, composed as a reaction to the migration phenomenon is a case in point of how an example of popular music enters the national imagination and not only reflects the angst of the time and acts as a defence mechanism against it by returning the old order to the song's recipients, but can also presumably instigate a reaction of resistance towards the new order. Evoking the glorious epoch of the republic when 'todo tiempo pasado fue mejor', the song draws attention to the changes in Lima that resulted from internal migration. This is an example in the text of the phenomenon of mass nostalgia elicited by popular music. In much the same way as Manongo and his friends lived their adolescent romances through the medium of song, those who listen to *Flor de la canela* will relive a collective fantasy: the glorious past of Lima. In this sense the song functions both allegorically and recuperatively.

The text suggests the oligarchy's demise was inevitable and can be traced to the 'original sins' of the conquest and colonialism: 'es simple y llanamente que Lima no ha dejado de irse a la mierda desde el día en que Pizarro puso su pezuña analfabeta en un valle con culturas imperio incaica y fundó la futura ciudad de los virreyes y de los villorios...' (p. 483) and the novel can, of course, be read in terms of post-colonial theory as an allegory of the errors of colonialism in the New World.⁸⁸ Pizarro's project is referred to, in derogatory terms, as an 'invention', and serves as a warning to the oligarchy that it should not try to resist history and repeat the errors of the past.⁸⁹ The descendants of the conquerors, are consequently the recipients of a

⁸⁸ For a discussion of allegories of the errors of colonialism, see José Rabasa, 'Allegories of Atlas', in Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths & Helen Tiffin (eds), *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, pp. 358-64.

⁸⁹ It should be noted here that Don Álvaro's dreams of bringing Europe to Peru consciously mimic the acts of the conquest.

false premise, ‘herederos de algo que había quedado bastante bien inventado desde muchísimos antes de que vinieran al mundo’, and perpetuate ‘una ficción que también era verdad’ (p. 396). That the identity of these descendants is established with the description of the pupils of San Pablo’s as ‘hijos de todo aquellos, nietos y bisnietos de todos aquellos’ (p. 396), suggests that their destinies are already foreshadowed.

It is perhaps the metaphor of the photograph that most aptly sums up their predicament. Teddy Boy looks upon the boys and notes:

Aquellos muchachos eran personajes de una inmensa fotografía de familia, a la que cada cierto tiempo la necesidad, más que el progreso, le añadía algún retoque, algún pequeño cambio formal que permitía acicalar un resultado que, por lo demás, siempre había sido bastante satisfactorio y semejante a sí mismo. (p. 396)

The analogy of the boys’ lives with a photograph, as a mechanical representation of fossilised time, is apt since as oligarchs they are living ‘frozen’ in the past. Placing the photo in the category of the family portrait is also significant since the boys, as members of the élite, belong to a tight-knit group that, like a photographed family unit, is closed to outsiders. Furthermore, the extract implies the resistance to progress which draws upon the anti-progressive nature of the oligarchs. As Teddy Boy looks upon the photo, he predicts: ‘Eran muchachos históricos pero empezaban a tener algo de reliquia y Teddy Boy no estaba convencido de que alcanzaban a colocar a sus hijos en la próxima fotografía peruana’ (p. 396).⁹⁰ Teddy Boy’s foresighted analysis (although he is not foresighted enough to realise that he will never have children, nor that should they have been born they would they have have been the product of

⁹⁰ In ‘Eisenhower y la Tiqui-tiqui-tín’, in a similar vein the narrator-protagonist compares the once grandiose houses in Lima to museums: ‘cada casa rica en Lima es hoy un pequeño museo’ (*Cuentos completos*, p. 141).

miscegenation since he eventually marries an Indian woman) serves as a warning that the oligarchs are doomed since, even in youth, the boys are living fossils. Living their lives as if their illustrious past were not affected by the realities of a changing nation, the boys are like exhibits in a museum. When Teddy Boy ironically predicts that ‘sólo el que se moviera lograría quedarse en la imagen’ (p. 397), he is foreseeing the need to adapt to an evolving nation whose changes will exclude them from the future. The boys have no awareness of the demands of their changing nation and remain too heavily reliant on tradition. In short they are the protagonists of a work of fiction:

Pero estos muchachos estaban siendo educados para un inmovilismo de padres a hijos, para que siempre les perteneciera la dictadura y la democracia, el dinero y la libertad, la costa, la sierra y la montaña – aunque despreciaran olímpicamente de las dos últimas – , las buenas costumbres y la moral, el sentido del humor, lo bonito, lo feo, lo sublime y lo ridículo. Todo aquello les pertenecía aún, con mucho haber y sin deber alguno, porque les pertenecía también el balance de una ficción que continuaba funcionando aunque ellos mismos la llamaran a veces republiqueta, sin incluirse por supuesto en el paisaje. Lo suyo era un país sublimado, repintado e inverosímil. (p. 397)

The above lines suggest that the boys, blinded to their predicament, are part of a continuing cycle that needs to be broken. They still believe that they are masters of Peru (the coast, the sierra and the Amazon) but the reader knows that the situation is already altering.

The Demise of Manongo Sterne: The Inability to Retrieve the Past/Go Back

Although Manongo is outwardly prospering in the world of international business, he is simultaneously retreating further into an imaginary world which is the world of his past. His constant circumventing of the globe is ultimately a pretext which allows him an escape route out of a reality that he finds increasingly hard to handle. His

travels, like the *Sentimental Journey* of Sterne, are motivated not for political, or merely financial, reasons but also out of love. His is a willful ignorance:

De todo aquel mundo no quería saber nada, absolutamente nada. Era una cuestión de eficacia, de amor y de amistad. Todo aquello quedaba latente, mudo y quieto. Todo aquello quedaba en suspenso para que no me invadiera, para que no me venciera el sentido. (p. 516)

As the text penetrates further into Manongo's mind, the narrative perspective switches from the narrator's to Manongo's. The text makes plain that 'cohabitaba en él otra persona' (p. 573) and, although this has always been the case (as a schoolboy he would play for a different team during each half of the match [p. 335],⁹¹ the disparity between the two sides of his personality becomes increasingly apparent: 'era uno por dentro y otro por fuera' (p. 497). Inside Manongo, like Golyadkin in Dostoyevsky's *The Double* (1846),⁹² or Stevenson's Mr. Hyde, exist two different people, one who reveals himself to the outside world, the other bent on a course of destruction and insanity, who slowly but systematically consumes the first. Tere eventually tells him 'a veces, pareces otra persona' (p. 583). In the other works considered in this thesis, the notion of the double will be discussed. The characters that function as doubles depend on their other half for their survival, as is the case with the two old ladies of *Dos señoras conversan* and the Césped Salinas twins, to be discussed in Chapter 6. When Manongo loses his 'spiritual' mate his personality becomes schizoid and he begins to lead a double life; having lost his other half he becomes Other to himself. Manongo's world is fractured and disjointed because he

⁹¹ This episode is directly lifted from Bryce's personal experience. In his collection of 'anti-memoirs', entitled *Permiso de vivir*, Bryce has recalled his days as a schoolboy when he would play the first half of a football match on one side, and the second on the other. He writes: 'por ser todos amigos, en los partidos del fútbol se me permitía jugar el primer tiempo en un equipo y el segundo en el otro... Me encantaba sentir lo que sentía el otro' (p. 315).

⁹² See Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Notes from Underground and the Double* (London: Penguin Books, 1972).

operates on two separate levels, firstly through the world of the bars and the ‘ensoñación’ and, secondly, through his prospering business affairs.⁹³

To channel his loss, Manongo constructs a series of eight villas in tax havens that he intends to give to his friends as a means of resolving their financial problems and in a bid to bring them (and the past) back.⁹⁴ It is no coincidence that Manongo chooses this figure since he and Tere had dreamed of having eight children together, signalling that the fulfillment of his project is closely linked to the unfulfillment of his dreams and is therefore a displacement of them. The name of each villa is connected to his past; hence one is named ‘Pretend’, another is named ‘Unforgettable’, and a third is named ‘Tyrone’ (p. 469). The choice of names is apt since it chimes with the notion of living life through the medium of song and, ‘Pretend’ and ‘Unforgettable’ are perhaps the notions that best describe Manongo’s adult life. It is during his visits to these villas that Manongo embarks on a bizarre, ritualistic homage to Tere and the world of his youth that he calls his ‘ensoñación’ and which amounts to Manongo psychologically reliving his past with Tere. The ‘ensoñación’ involves Manongo bringing Tere back to him by imagining his past with her, in a bid to transpose temporal reality.⁹⁵ On a level in the present Manongo endeavours to spatially transpose Tere, asking her to shout down the telephone during their phone calls, ‘para oírla como si estuviera ahí’ (p. 470). It consists of Manongo

⁹³ Juristo observes that in Bryce’s fictional universe: ‘hay dos tipos de hombres, los de negocio y los sentimentales’; Alfredo Bryce Echenique & Juan Ángel Juristo, *Para que duela menos*, p. 38.

Manongo attempts to be both, but finally, unable to reconcile the two, it is the man inside of him, the man urged on by love and desire, who eventually takes over the other.

⁹⁴ Ricardo González Vigil observes that such behaviour is Manongo’s attempt to ‘eternizar sus amistades adolescentes’. See Ricardo González Vigil, ‘La nueva novela de Bryce: Primer amor y adolescencia perpetua’, in *El Comercio, Suplemento Dominical*, Lima, 11 June 1995. Like San Pablo’s school, the villas are spaces created by the characters that stimulate a return to the past.

⁹⁵ It has previously been shown, with regards to the incident in the school playground, that re-imagining the past does not mean that the past can necessarily be transposed to the present. See pp. 140-41 of this chapter.

purchasing run-down, colonial-style bars that he restores in an identical fashion to the original bar in Puerto Rico named *La Violeta*, from which each takes its name. It is significant that this final fantasy, which will ultimately lead to his death, occurs in a 'colonial-style' bar since the constant revindication of the colonial republic, the over-riding fantasy of the oligarchy, has been shown to be the fatal flaw that leads to their self-annihilation. It is also of relevance that the bars are all dilapidated and described as being in a state of 'deterioro por humedad caliente' (p. 517), since this description recalls Don Lorenzo's constant equation of Lima's deterioration with its 'maldita humedad' (p. 158).

The path that he must take leads Manongo on a literary journey:

se trasladaba a un bar Violeta o tipo Violeta, en cualquier lugar que se encontrara, se instalaba bajo un farolito timidón cual candil, y exigía el mejor oporto. Después las frases tantas veces releídas y subrayadas reaparecían solas en su memoria y gracias a ellas lograba ver cómo se desplazaban silenciosos, siempre sonrientes pero sin lograr pisar el suelo, sus amigos más queridos. (p. 518)

In this passage, the recourse to alcohol as a means of recreating the past and of fiction as a means to experience the world, are evident.⁹⁶ As Manongo lives much of his life through popular song, we see in this example how he also uses the written world to similar ends. It is worth noting that the majority of his 'correspondence' with Tere during the years since their separation has involved Manongo reading novels from the international canon and sending them to her. Like a ghostly procession, Manongo's treasured friends from his youth in Lima are invoked through

⁹⁶ In the short story, 'Baby Schiaffino', the protagonist, Taquito, also resorts to alcohol in order to create the necessary ambience to overcome reality and return to his past in a process that resembles Manongo's 'ensoñación': 'Su respuesta fue un sorbo de whisky cuyo sabor permaneció largo rato en le boca. Le encantaba su departamento, le encantaba contemplarlo así, apoyado en su bar, bebiendo una copa. No era la primera vez que lo hacía mientras esperaba que Ana regresara de la calle, y no era tampoco la primera vez que se imaginaba que en vez de Ana, era Baby Schiaffino la que llegaba de la calle...'; 'La Felicidad ja ja', in *Cuentos completos*, pp. 188-89.

lines from books that draw upon the nature of friendship. The ultimate objective of the fantasy is to conjure up the arrival of Tere who now lives in Lima with her husband of almost twenty years. Manongo's 'ensoñación', for all its apparent aimlessness, can be related to serendipity and thereby to the imaginative faculty of the human mind to help overcome life's vicissitudes. Manongo's constant denial of reality serves as a cathartic process since, through it, he is attempting to re-piece together the world that Tere's departure has shattered. The villas, Manongo's constructions, hence become Manongo's material testaments to love and friendship, in the same way that Bryce's novel, if we consider the dedicatory page and acknowledgements, becomes a literary testament to his own personal friendships and loves.

The last and most beautiful house, built on the island of Formentor, is Manongo's 'última ilusión' (p. 469).⁹⁷ It is clearly built in homage to Tere since he forbids the planting in its grounds of bougainvilleas in the hope that she will one day arrive bearing her own. The flower is synonymous with the Country Club, the backdrop to their courtship, so this last dream is borne of the desire to recuperate the innocence of youthful love.⁹⁸ An air of expectation hence lingers around the house; it comes to be known as 'Villa Puntos Suspensivos' but the plaque simply bares the mysterious inscription: '...'.⁹⁹ As suspension points generally signify expectation of events to

⁹⁷ Juan Ángel Juristo observes that the villa in Formentor, symbolises, 'un Edén ya muy lejano' (*Para que duela menos*, p. 44). Manongo's project is nothing more than a nostalgic journey into an idealised past, through the medium of memory.

⁹⁸ The Country Club is also one of the settings of 'Una mano en las cuerdas'. Manolo meets Cecilia in the Country Club and Manolo exclaims, 'Tenemos nuestra banca' (p. 78), which is reminiscent of the bench that Manongo and Tere appropriate as their own.

⁹⁹ Perhaps a clue to Bryce's reason for naming the villa 'Puntos Suspensivos' and a further clue as to Manongo's intentions behind the creation of the villa lies in Bryce's comment: 'Yo creo que la felicidad existe con puntos suspensivos'; José López Ricci, 'La soledad ha sido la más fiel de mis amantes', in Jorge Coaguila, pp. 61-70 (p. 64).

come, a tale to 'be continued', it is plausible to assume that they herald the desired return of Tere to Manongo, a supposition further supported by Manongo's refusal to plant bougainvilleas. The house will only be completed if the flowers arrive with Tere and so the house comes to represent his unfulfilled dreams. Furthermore, directly preceding the description of the final villa, whose name, at this point in the narrative is unknown to the reader, is a reference to the song *Ella*. The increasingly unchronological narrative has jumped back in time to the couple's break-up scene and, as Tere gets out of Manongo's car, we read that Tere: 'le terminó de cantar *Ella* con una parte típicamente Tere: "... (reflexiones)' (p. 468), which implies that she refuses to complete the lyrics.

At this point it is worth pausing to consider the breakdown in the chronology of events in the novel which, until this point, if we exclude references to the political realm, has been relatively systematic. This occurs in the ultimate section of the work which focuses almost entirely on Manongo's life. The disintegration of narrative chronology hence mirrors Manongo's psychological breakdown upon the loss of Tere and his (at least, geographical) distancing from his friends, both of whom served to anchor Manongo in the real world and counterbalance his marginal status. The suspension points are clearly synonymous with Tere, representing her intentions in the separation process, since she is refusing to sing the words of the song and hence complete it. The suspension points on the plaque represent Tere (una parte típicamente Tere: "...") and are therefore an invitation to Tere to pick up their story where she ended it, which she refuses to do. Tere is the 'Ella' of the song, the one for

whom Manongo Sterne 'Perdiera su amor' (p. 457).¹⁰⁰ By refusing to complete the song Tere is effectively cutting the relationship short.

The final stage of Manongo's 'ensoñación' takes place in this villa. The construction of a building to attain his dream suggests that Manongo attempts to realise his fantasies through materialistic means. He believes that he can buy his own happiness through the villa that he thinks will bring Tere back to him: 'cuando no le daba la gana de aceptar que algo había cambiado, simplemente desconectaba, enceguecía, y no se enteraba de absolutamente nada, o lo que era aún peor, hablaba de comprarlo todo' (p. 583). Having listened to the words of the song *Cielito lindo*, 'y ésa pienso vencerla, / cielito lindo, / con la fortuna' (p. 498), he is struck with the idea that, with his own personal fortune, he can buy what he lacks:

Con su inmensa fortuna lograría recomponer íntegro el mundo de todos y cada uno de sus seres más queridos. Porque de sus seres más queridos sólo había perdido a Tere, pero Tere le había roto en pedazos su mundo entero. O sea que tendría que luchar también para recomponer íntegro ese mundo y luego para mantenerlo siempre intacto. (pp. 498-99)

Since his misinterpretation of the lyrics seems to be the impetus behind the real-estate campaign which will consume his entire life, it is clear that much of this has been based on misunderstanding. Manongo also wants to buy the Country Club, the place where he met Tyrone and Tere, 'para que volviera a existir' (p. 583). His eternal fondness for *butifaras* and coca cola, the food they always ate together, stems from this. Even after their separation both Tere and Manongo will evoke memories of each other by submitting themselves to 'la prueba de la butifarra' (p. 571), in an act through which they symbolically consume and devour their Other, the object of their desire.

¹⁰⁰ See also 'sonreía Tere bañada en bouganvillias, reina de mi corazón, y otra vez le latían de ansiedad y esperanza total aquellos intensos e imperecedores puntos suspensivos tan *Unforgettable*, tan *Pretend*...' (p. 515).

The years pass and, as they do, the novel's time frame speeds up dramatically, thereby giving the impression that events are surging on towards an increasingly dramatic climax. Towards the end of the novel, in the space of one paragraph, a decade passes with references to Manongo's love for Tere in the years of 1985, 1988 and 1994 (p. 596). By comparison, the first five hundred pages of the novel span no more than five years. This is perhaps a reflection of the principal character's desire to live in his past. Tere and Manongo eventually meet but Tere finds a man stuck in the past, whilst she has embraced her present status as a mother and grandmother: 'Y mientras que Tere, que había seguido creciendo antes que él, siempre más que él, sintió y comprendió y vivió el horror de notar, de descubrir, de comprender que Manongo estaba acariciando el ayer, protegiendo el pasado con sus manos tan flacas y además cómo le tiemblan' (p. 572). This is a good example of how Tere's thoughts interrupt the narrative in order to provide an alternative perspective into Manongo's state of mind. Manongo is not in love with Tere as she stands before him but with the eternal teenager of his memories that he fell in love with decades ago and the passing of time becomes an antagonistic force.¹⁰¹

The final chapter recounts Manongo's suicide following Tere's visit and departure from Villa Puntos Suspensivos on the island of Formentor. Left alone in the Violeta bar, Manongo requests that no music be played. This is significant since Manongo has lived his friendships and love through the lyrics of popular music. Friendship and love are the driving impetuses behind his life – indeed, we might argue, and Bryce's motivations for writing the novel – which suggests that the literary and non-fictional

¹⁰¹ See for example, 'porque Manongo no soportaba un solo cambio en el milímetro de una peca, de una nariz respingada, de una mirada o una sonrisa de mujer' (p. 472).

worlds are separated by a precariously thin frontier. Manongo's decision to turn off the music prefigures the end of the novel and is accompanied by his decision to cease contact with both Tere and his friends.¹⁰² As the material present in the form of the bay of Formentor disappears, the imagined past takes over and Manongo receives a visitation from a twenty-three year old Tere, her age when she stopped belonging to him (she married someone else in April 1964 – hence the novel's title – Manongo never moves on from the month of March) and his fantasy world was born.¹⁰³ Manongo's life and fantasies, therefore have come full circle. Aware that his fantasies cannot to be fulfilled and that reunification with the desired object is impossible Manongo takes a cyanide pill and ends his life. Although Manongo's death results from his abandonment of hope and unrealistic pretensions and could be considered tragic, as David Wood points out, it could also represent a moment of 'ecstatic release' (Wood p. 146), upon which Manongo is finally relieved of his pain. If we evoke once more the writings of Schopenhauer, this evaluation is immediately justified. According to Schopenhauer one chooses to end one's life when suffering becomes unmanageable: 'to die willingly, to die gladly, to die cheerfully, is the prerogative of him who gives up and denies the will to life... The Buddhist faith calls

¹⁰² Bryce has recognised the fact that 'mis personajes mueren por razones sentimentales'; César Güemes, 'Nunca seré otra cosa que un escritor peruano', in Julio Ortega & María Fernanda Lander (eds), pp. 141-147 (p. 147). Manongo's friends, for personal reasons, never take up residence in the villas. As he becomes increasingly distanced from them he becomes increasingly detached from reality and vice versa. Luis Eyzaguirre notes: 'Manongo se va quedando más y más solo así como la distancia entre él y la realidad aumenta'. See Luis Eyzaguirre, 'De Julius a Manongo Sterne: la saga del protagonista en la narrativa de Alfredo Bryce Echenique', in Jean Franco & Christiane Taroux (eds), *Co-Textes*, 34 (1997), 49-62 (p. 62).

¹⁰³ Mercedes Serna observes that: 'Manongo, como Julius y Martín Romaña, es un ser que no quiere crecer. Manongo decide quedarse para siempre en el mes de marzo (en el mundo del sueño)...'. See Mercedes Serna, 'Del amor y otras (divertidas) tragedias, in *Quimera*, 136 (May 1995), 60-63 (p. 61). Julio Ortega reads this as Manongo's obsession with his youth, that leads him to 'rehúsa la adultez para no admitir lo real'. See Julio Ortega, 'Bryce melancólico', in *Hueso húmero*, 32 (December 1995), 79-94 (p. 85).

that existence, *Nirvana*'.¹⁰⁴ The following passage accurately encapsulates Manongo's life and death:

Then, instead of the restless pressure and effort; instead of the constant transition from desire to apprehension and from joy to sorrow; instead of the never-satisfied and never-dying hope that constitutes the life dream of the man who toils, we see that peace that is higher than all reason, the ocean-like calmness of the spirit, that deep tranquility, that unshakable confidence and serenity.¹⁰⁵

Manongo's suicide is one of the few occasions in his life when Manongo's actions have been motivated by his awareness of reality; the ecstasy of his death recalls the final lines of Baudelaire's poem, 'N'importe où hors de ce monde': 'Enfin, mon âme fait explosion, et sagement elle me crie: 'N'importe où! N'importe où! Pourvu que ce soit hors de ce monde!' (Baudelaire, p.174).¹⁰⁶

The Convergence of Life and Literary Creation

The plot and Manongo's quest culminate on the island of Formentor, the location in which Bryce finished writing the novel. At this point the paths of life and literary creation come full circle and converge. Here we may recall the decision at the beginning of the novel to dedicate the work to, amongst others, Luis Alberto Sánchez and Abelardo Sánchez León 'porque se pasaron veinte años empujándome a escribir este adiós a toda una época y una edad de la vida' (p. 7). Bryce, it would appear, like

¹⁰⁴ See Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, vol. 2, p. 508. See also, 'we can infer how blessed must be the life of a man who is silenced not for a few moments, as in the enjoyment of the beautiful, but forever... Such a man who, after many bitter struggles with his own nature, has at last completely conquered... Nothing can distress or alarm him anymore... he has cut all the thousand threads of willing which hold us bound to the world, and... which drag us here and there in constant pain', *The World as Will and Representation*, vol. 1, p. 390. Quoted in Christopher Janaway, *A Very Short Introduction to Schopenhauer*, p. 111.

¹⁰⁵ See Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, vol. 1, p. 411. Quoted in Christopher Janaway, *A Very Short Introduction to Schopenhauer*, p. 111.

¹⁰⁶ Charles Baudelaire, 'N'importe où hors du monde', in *Le Spleen de Paris* (Paris: Le Livre de Poche, 1972) [1869].

Manongo, is exorcising his own ghosts in the writing of the novel and, whilst Manongo's death represents an act of catharsis, so too, does Bryce's involvement in the fictional project. This appears to suggest a close convergence of the author's life outside the pages of the novel with his literary creation, that is, a merging of his fictional and non-fictional universes, an idea which is, indeed, central to Bryce's work and ludic intentions.¹⁰⁷ But there is more to this than meets the eye for Bryce's fiction is ludic and self-reflexive. Indeed, the novel's awareness of the writing process is determined by the reference to Manongo's final débâcle earlier in the narrative as 'el romántico, largo y patético epílogo de su vida' (p. 468). This prediction, which fictionalises the death of a fictionalised character and is given some one hundred and fifty pages before the event, demonstrates the fashion in which the narrative plays with time and the reader's expectations. It also brings the subject of metafiction into play since the novel is aware of its own genesis and dénouement.

Similarly, the narrator addresses the reader directly at various instances. The example, 'Pero dejémoslo en Manongo y Tere Mancini, o mejor aún Tere y Manongo. Sí. Dejémoslo ahí. Para que no suene todo a predestinación o algo así' (p. 303), serves to remind a reader immersed in the plot that he is actually the recipient of a work of fiction. This not only involves the reader in the creative processes of the narrative by assigning him a role and function to fulfill but enhances the oral register of the novel; the narrator is aware that he is recounting the story to someone, in other

¹⁰⁷ Edmund Cross notes that Manongo is approximately fifty-five years old when he commits suicide, the same age as Bryce when he completed the novel. See 'Fonctionnement du chronotype dans *No me esperen en abril* de Alfredo Bryce Echenique', in Jean Franco & Christiane Tarrow, *Co-textes 34: Hommage à Alfredo Bryce Echenique*, pp. 195-203 (p. 199).

words, that he is addressing his words to a listener.¹⁰⁸ The title of the penultimate chapter of the work: 'La versión de Tyrone Power' (p. 599), indeed, alludes to the construction of the creative processes of a character (Tyrone) as he pieces together and orders events in order to present them to his wife, in an interview-style conversation reminiscent of journalism. This interview, which provides Tyrone's version of events leading up to Manongo's death, contributes to the notion of metafiction as the reader becomes aware that he is being provided with two separate accounts of the same event, and must therefore adjudicate like a detective between them. Providing the reader with two versions of the same event leads him to question reality, and does away with notions of empirical or ultimate truth.

The Function of Literature

At this point it is worth noting the function of literature in *No me esperen en abril* since the narrative contains a wealth of allusions to novels, many of which are amongst the author's personal favourites. The protagonist's name, Manongo Sterne, is a good starting point as it is a clear nod to Laurence Sterne, one of the writers who has most influenced Bryce. In the naming of the protagonist's father he goes a step further by calling him Laurence Sterne. In *Permiso para vivir* (1993), Bryce has included a chapter entitled 'Mis diez libros preferidos' (pp. 103- 04), the third of which he names as *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy* (1761, 1767). Of this work Bryce writes: '¿qué manera de alejarse de cualquier arte poética, qué absurdas digresiones, qué manera de perder el hilo, cuántas páginas de más?' (p. 105) an

¹⁰⁸ It should also be noted that the novel's title, *No me esperen en abril*, contributes to the oral register and the reader, upon reading it, finds himself in the same position of interlocutor as the characters to whom the command is addressed in the novel. For further discussion, see François Delprat, 'Partir, revenir, hantises dans *No me esperen en abril* de Alfredo Bryce Echenique', in Jean Franco & Christiane Tarroux, *Co-textes 34: Hommage à Alfredo Bryce Echenique*, pp. 205-17 (p. 209).

appraisal that many a critic could be tempted to attribute to the narrative of *No me esperen en abril*.¹⁰⁹ Indeed, it is not implausible that the fluidity of Sterne's style and his use of humour, along with his questioning of the developing conventions of the novel, have left their impression upon Bryce's narrative style. Several similarities can be drawn between *No me esperen en abril* and *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*. The life of Manongo Sterne, like Tristram Shandy's, is episodic, and both Manongo and Lorenzo go backwards and forwards and around in circles, very much like the life of the character of the picaresque novel. Julio Ortega refers to the narrative as a 'novela de ida y vuelta'.¹¹⁰ Like Tristram Shandy, the oligarchic characters are very much like a rudderless ship with no direction in life.

The most sustained inter-textual reference, however, must concern the allusiveness to *Un mundo para Julius* (1970), Bryce's first novel. It has already been acknowledged that the words used to introduce Manongo are directly lifted from the closing lines of the earlier novel (see above, p. 130). Whilst other characters such as Julius, Juan Lucas and Susan Linda are all mentioned, the most surprising appearance is made by Vilma, Julius's nanny, when she returns to Lima and finds work ironing in the boarding school. On one level this is a triumphant come-back for Vilma who, as *Un mundo para Julius* draws to a close, has been forced to work as a prostitute following her dismissal. The reader familiar with the injustice of her story will feel some encouragement at the improvement in her social status and possibly enjoy some vicarious revenge on behalf of a lower-class Indian woman so abjectly treated by her

¹⁰⁹ Charo Núñez, for example, writes of the 'momentos de tedio producidos por una especie de atomización de los hechos y de los acontecimientos'. See Charo Núñez, 'No me esperen en abril', in *Hispanérica*, 74 (1996), 127-28 (p. 127). For a reading of the influences of Laurence Sterne and his novel *Tristram Shandy*, see Margarita Krakusin, *La novelística de Alfredo Bryce Echenique y la narrativa sentimental*, pp. 43- 66. See also discussion in Chapter 1, pp. 14-18 of this thesis.

¹¹⁰ See Julio Ortega, 'Bryce, melancólico', in *Hueso húmero*, 32 (December 1995), 79-94 (p. 80).

previous masters. One particularly interesting passage reads: ‘Y en cuanto a las tetas de la propia Vilma, estaban muchísimo mejor descritas ahí, mientras planchaba empapada en sudor... que en *Un mundo para Julius*, la novela del sentimentaloides Bryce Echenique que, como eran tetas de mujer pobre, le metió ternura a su descripción caritativa’ (p. 255). Whilst poking fun at himself and his writing Bryce also questions the accuracy of the description and his intentions in the former work, inviting the reader, who is forced to cross-reference and question events, to do the same. Bryce is effectively inviting the reader to look beyond the superficial and question the veracity of the literary text. To an extent this is what he is doing when he provides two versions of Manongo’s death; the two perspectives each offer a slightly different angle. Such inter-textual references indicate a thread of continuity running through Bryce’s oeuvre and suggests that a more layered reading is achieved by contextualising the various novels, reading them as in some sense commentaries on each other. In turn, this suggests the benefit gained from reading Bryce’s works in conjunction with each other.

Another example of metafiction occurs when, before his approaching death, Manongo reads an extract from *Cien años de soledad* and recognises his own life in its pages. Another of García Márquez’s works (*El amor en los tiempos de cólera*)¹¹¹ is alluded to in the chapter title: ‘El amor en los tiempos de Odría, Prado, Belaunde, Velasco etc’ (p. 456) as Bryce pays homage to a writer for whom he has a profound respect. Such references to the world of fiction raise the question of the identity of the novel’s intended reader, since they suggest that Bryce is writing for a reader with a relatively rich knowledge of literature and, once again, they serve to include the

¹¹¹ Gabriel García Márquez, *El amor en los tiempos de cólera* (Bogotá: La Oveja Negra, 1985).

reader in the construction process of the text. Furthermore they lessen the gap between the reader, narrator and characters, since they all share the same cultural universe and reference points. In addition, at this point in the narrative, Manongo's is an entirely fictitious love which renders the basing of a chapter title upon a work of fiction apt. Manongo hands a copy of *Cien años de soledad* to Tere and tells her that, if she replaces the word 'cuarto' with 'Violeta' in the following extract, she will recognise Manongo's personal story in the fictitious one:

Le gustaba irse de cuarto en cuarto, como en una galería de espejos paralelos, hasta que su compadre Prudencio Aguilar le tocaba el hombro. Entonces regresaba de cuarto en cuarto, despertando hacia atrás, recorriendo el camino inverso, y encontraba a Prudencio Aguilar en el cuarto de la realidad. Pero, una noche, dos semanas después de que lo llevaran a la cama, Prudencio Aguilar le tocó el hombro en un cuarto intermediario, y él se quedó allí para siempre, creyendo que era el cuarto real. (p. 608).¹¹²

Manongo's life thus becomes a fiction within a fiction. The fashion in which many of the characters are living out a fiction has already been discussed and this is never more so the case than with Manongo. In this instance Manongo himself recognises the *mise-en-abyme*, which might suggest that he is finally about to achieve an understanding of himself. In this extract there are many pointers to the nature of Manongo's death and similarities between it and that of José Arcadio Buendía. José Arcadio Buendía's 'cuarto de realidad' is redolent of the wall of Manongo's existence that the latter will come crashing up against when he recognises the illusory nature of his ideals. Both men die because they prefer to remain in the world of their illusions and so the act of discovering 'reality' will lead to their death. Furthermore Tere, in this extract, plays the same role as Prudencio Aguilar, for it is

¹¹² Gabriel García Márquez, *Cien años de soledad* (Madrid: Ediciones Cátedra, 1997) [1967].

when she abandons Manongo to his delusions (or when she returns to him as a vision) that he is forced to confront reality and, instead, chooses death.

Bryce also recalls Peruvian writers past and present, from Caviedes, Ricardo Palma and Sebastián Salazar Bondy to Mario Vargas Llosa, all of whom, as close observers of Peruvian society, are relevant to the question of the ideology of fantasy in the work. Vargas Llosa is credited with the damning rhetorical question ‘¿En qué momento el Perú se jodió?’, which is expressed through the character of Zavalita in *Conversación en la Catedral* (p. 1)¹¹³ and has become synonymous with the demise of the Peruvian nation state. In *No me esperen en abril* it appears after a brief discussion of the disintegration of the worlds of Peruvian finance and politics, which mentions the lost documents of the ‘página 11’ (p. 452) affair, the nationalisation of private business, military coups, the devaluation of the Sol, and Velasco. The text reads:

Y todo eso mientras Zavalita, el personaje de Mario Vargas Llosa en *Conversación en la Catedral*, un libro repleto de malas palabras y humedad, como lo calificara don Lorenzo Sterne, poco antes de morir ya que fue su última lectura, seguía repitiendo por las calles y plazas, no ya aquello de ¿En qué momento se jodió el Perú?, de muchos años atrás, sino ¡El Perú se sigue jodiendo, carajo! O sea una version actualizada. (p. 453)

These lines establish an inter-textual link between Vargas Llosa’s novel and Bryce’s *No me esperen en abril*, through Lorenzo is here seen taking Vargas Llosa’s character’s claim a step further. As David Wood notes, such inter-textual references

¹¹³ Whilst Vargas Llosa locates this event in the times of Odría’s dictatorship, as do the characters of *Dos señoras conversan*, in *No me esperen en abril*, Bryce portrays it as the result of Velasco’s regime. See Mario Vargas Llosa, *Conversación en la Catedral* (Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1969), p. 1. For further discussion of Bryce’s consideration of this question, see Alexander Cavalli, ‘El huerto por excelencia’, interview with Bryce Echenique, at [http:// www.libruda.com/entrevista_bryce_echenique](http://www.libruda.com/entrevista_bryce_echenique) (consulted 5 May 2004).

serve to ‘blur the boundary between the reader’s world and that of the (character) and draw the former into the latter’ (Wood, p. 141). It is important to note that in *No me esperen en abril* references to popular culture enable the reader to identify with the perspective of their recipient in the narrative. However, in this instance, the words are read by Don Lorenzo, a character whose perspective the intended reader does not identify with. Hence, instead of bridging the gap between the reader of the phenomenal world and the character of the novel, the opposite effect is created, and character and reader are further distanced. As the reader belongs to the community of and shares the opinions of the narrator and has been encouraged to disagree with the oligarchs’ perspective, the literary reference here serves to highlight the ignorance of Don Lorenzo Sterne with regard to the part he has played in his own downfall. Don Lorenzo believes that his decline in circumstances is due to changes in the governing of the state. Yet everything in the text points to the fact that the oligarchs have caused their own demise through their wilful disregard for and refusal to adapt to such changes, as we have seen in this chapter. A later reference to the ‘arcadia y siesta colonial’ (p. 472) clearly recalls Bondy’s *Lima la horrible*, which follows Manongo’s understanding that his school friends, stuck in a cycle of repetition and still enacting the revindication of the colonies, will be ‘exactos a sus padres’ (p. 472).¹¹⁴ References to popular culture such as song lyrics have always been associated with Manongo and his friends, characters whose perspective the reader is encouraged to sympathise with. Don Lorenzo’s empathy with the phrase ‘¿En qué momento se jodió el Perú?’, links its sentiment to that of the oligarchy, demonstrating that the content of the references and who they are attributed to is

¹¹⁴ Sebastián Salazar Bondy, *Lima la horrible* (Mexico: Letras Latinoamericanas Ediciones Era, 1964).

significant with regards to the reader's sympathies. Don Lorenzo's empathy with the phrase merely reiterates the point that the oligarchy is out of synch with society.

The inclusion of a section of a poem by Caviedes, *Doctos en chafalonía* (p. 435)¹¹⁵ is used for similar ends since it alludes to the superficial nature of an oligarchy obsessed with appearance. Once again the words are rendered ironic through their pronunciation by Francisco Echeandía to his nephew Marquitos Echeandía, without either realising that the sentiments expressed in the lines refer to people such as themselves and that nothing has changed: 'pondrás mucho cuidado, / en andar bien vestido y aliñado, / de aquella facultad que representas, / que de esta suerte ostentas, / lo que ignoras y nunca has aprendido, / que es ciencia para el vulgo y bien vestido' (p. 435). Caviedes writings were, of course, bitterly satirical and here Bryce recalls his writings in order to satirize the hypocrisy of the two gentlemen. This produces an effect of humour and the reader smiles to himself not the smile that, 'inspira carcajadas, sino el de la sonrisa inteligente, el de la sonrisa de la razón' (Planas, p. 92).¹¹⁶

It should also be noted that literary allusions are associated with the upper classes which presupposes that the subaltern classes of the society in question have little access to the 'civilising discipline of literature'.¹¹⁷ The form of popular culture equated with the masses is sport. For example, Adán Quispe's dreams of a new life

¹¹⁵ The poem entitled, *Remedio para ser lo que quisieres, que son observaciones del autor*, is split into five sections and 'Doctos en chafalonía' is the third. Others are addressed to 'Hipócritas' and 'Caballeros chanflones'. The lines that Bryce quotes are numbers 1-8 and are found in Juan del Valle y Caviedes, *Obra completa* ed. Daniel R. Reedy, (Barcelona: Bodoni, S.A., 1984), pp. 161-84, pp. 171-73.

¹¹⁶ See Enrique Planas, 'El primo de Tarzán', in Jorge Coaguila (ed.), *Entrevistas escogidas*, pp. 89-95.

¹¹⁷ Terry Eagleton, *Criticism and Ideology: A Study in Marxist Literary Theory* (London: Verso Editions, 1976), p. 16.

are realised through his fantasies of becoming a professional at karate. In addition, sport is used as a vehicle for the examination of the subaltern classes such as the malnutrition of the boys in the local football team that challenges San Pablo's. As seen in the list of school subjects, certain games such as hockey and cricket are taught by English teachers and intended for the *limeño* boys, whilst football is absent from the list, which suggests that a social hierarchy is attributed to sport. However, Manongo does play football (see the above-mentioned reference, in which his decision to play for both teams is discussed) and the boys form a team irrespective of its omission from the curriculum. This suggests that sport, in this instance football, can be credited with crossing socio-economic barriers, as it is enjoyed by members of all classes. Finally, the mention of the 'autogol' in the international against Ecuador, brings the nation's classes together in their common grievance over the unfair outcome.

Conclusion

The culmination of *No me esperen en abril* in Manongo's suicide, coupled with the deaths of the oligarchs, the closure of San Pablo's, wide-spread emigration and the demise of the oligarch state, provides for a negative appraisal of the ideology that motivates the characters' fantasies. Escaping to alternative levels of reality can be, initially, serendipitous, but, ultimately, this desire to escape leads to death and destruction. The patterning of events and the novel's ending suggest that Bryce is critical of the lives the oligarchs lead and particularly of their recourse to fantasy. Whilst behind the characters' fantasies lies an ideology that allows them to resist the negative effects of the narratives of history, ultimately, *No me esperen en abril*

suggests that this is not a viable option, since it is but a temporary solution. The characters' fantasies have been shown to be attempts to perpetuate their past and the paradises lost, be it eternal love or the colonial epoch. Part of the problem, it should be signalled, is literature itself, which allows the characters to escape to other worlds. Bryce is not critical of the lower classes who fail to achieve the dreams they strive towards, but rather of a society in which rigid colonial structures and mentalities persist (racism, class insularity, etc.) that act as forces of resistance to their attempts at social mobility. As such the ideology of the novel (and the author himself) is anti-oligarchic. On the other hand, it could be argued that, in not allowing them to survive, he could be imposing an oligarchic straight jacket on them. Although Bryce's overriding vision of the oligarchy is critical he does not, however, afford a place in this novel to the middle classes, whose absence is noteworthy. Furthermore, manifestations of Peruvian culture play a significantly smaller role in the narrative and indeed in the characters' lives than elements of foreign imported culture. Although Bryce alludes to several Peruvian works of fiction and the *canción criolla* in one instance, it is from the perspective of a shanty-town dweller. The country's youth are not, on the other hand, inspired by the *canción criolla*, but rather by US popular music and film. Bryce is, however, not critical of this mentality and it must be said, that Bryce's cultural influences and preferences (perhaps with the exception of Peruvian literature and the *bolero*) tend to emanate from Europe and the States. He has, as has been mentioned, chosen to live his adult life outside of Peru. In this sense, then, and even though he is critical of the oligarchy's eurocentrism, his life emulates that of his characters. Yet his works do not problematize this. Characters in *No me esperen en abril* can be divided into two groups: in the first (which includes Tere Mancini and Tyrone Power) are those characters who are content with their

situation in life whilst in the second (which includes characters such as Manongo Sterne, Don Álvaro Aliaga y Harriman, Marquitos Echenandía and Adán Quispe, a group which heavily outnumbers the first), are found those characters who are unhappy with their emotional lives or social circumstances. There is a sense that the characters of the latter group express the ethos of Baudelaire's poem: 'Il me semble que je serais toujours bien là où je ne suis pas' (Baudelaire, p.172). The final message of the novel appears to be that Peruvians need to embrace their present and look to their future, rather than embracing their paradises lost.

Chapter 5: *Reo de nocturnidad*

Reo de nocturnidad (1997) appeared two years after the publication of *No me esperen en abril* and, a year later, in 1998, it was awarded the Premio Nacional de Narrativa de España. Its protagonist, Max Gutiérrez, a Peruvian university lecturer living in France, recounts the nightmare that has been his life since he met and fell in love with the beautiful but vindictive Ornella Manuzio. Bryce has described Ornella as ‘una de las personajes femeninos más amargos de mi literatura... Capaz de destruir a una persona sana y buena’.¹ *Reo de nocturnidad* stands apart from the other works discussed in this thesis for several reasons. Firstly, the narrative is not set in Peru, but rather sees a return to a familiar theme in Bryce’s fiction: the experiences of the middle/upper-class Peruvian living in self-imposed exile in Europe. Secondly, it is unique amongst the four works in terms of perspective in that it is told from the point of view of a first-person narrator; a stance which is conducive to its oral register and, in this, is clearly joins hands with other of Bryce’s novels.² In this sense the protagonist, Max, is his own creation and the reader learns of him exactly what Max wants, with little information to guide the reader to what is real and what is Max’s creation, that is his imagined vision of himself. It does share common features with the other works, however, in that it deals with the themes of the subject

¹ Alfredo Bryce Echenique, ‘La historia personal de mis libros’, in Julio Ortega & María Fernanda Lander, *Alfredo Bryce Echenique: ante la crítica* (Caracas: Monte Ávila Editores, 2004), pp. 149-71. Originally presented at the conference, ‘El Perú en los albores del Siglo XXI’, organised by the Congreso de la República de Perú (1999).

² On his oral style of writing, Bryce explains: ‘yo escribo un poco como hablo sin técnica. Hablo con mucha emoción, sí. Pongo mucho en cada palabra, a veces juego íntegro en una frase...’. Of *Un mundo para Julius*, he recalls: ‘Todo lo fui inventando a medida que la emoción de la novela y su sistema nervioso así lo requerían. Tal vez por eso di con un tono de lenguaje que la gente considera válido... Si se pudiera leer algunos pasajes de mi novela en voz alta resultaría tal vez mejor’. See Wolfgang A. Luchting, *Alfredo Bryce: humores y malhumores* (Lima: Editorial Milla Batres, 1975), pp. 104-05. The same effect is created in *Reo de nocturnidad*. Through Max’s outpouring of emotions and the impression that he tells his story from a bruised heart, the novel’s oral quality has a ‘raw’ feel to it. For further discussion of orality in Bryce’s narrative, see Chapter 1 of this thesis.

struggling to find his own identity through those around him, the solitude of modern man, the inability to confront reality, the destructive power of love, and the redeeming potential of friendship. The novel also considers the question of the constant merging of the fictional and non-fictional universes and the fragility of the human mind through the familiar vehicles of humour, irony and oral register. The fact that *Reo de nocturnidad* shares a number of features and leitmotifs with Bryce's other works of fiction is suggestive of the need to see his works not as self-contained novels but rather in conjunction with each other. Bryce constantly develops the techniques and themes that constitute the essence of his work.

Critical response to the novel has been limited, although two short essays are devoted to it in *Los mundos de Bryce Echenique* (Ferreira and Márquez).³ In the first, 'En torno a *Reo de nocturnidad*',⁴ Ramírez-Franco considers Gutiérrez's vanities as a starting point for the examination of both structure and plot.⁵ He analyses the novel's narrative strategy using Genette's theories of the autodiegetic narrator in order to consider the narrative creation as a cathartic process. He writes: 'Implica también una catarsis, pues Gutiérrez, narrador autodiegético, confía en que relatar su frustrado amor por Ornella Manuzio le permitirá librarse del insomnio que padece así como explicar cabalmente la experiencia' (Ramírez-Franco, p. 503). He argues that the impetus behind Max's uptake of the narrative project is 'la puesta en escena de la vanidad que guía a los seres y sus metamorfosis' (Ramírez-Franco, p. 503). He

³ César Ferreira & Ismael P. Márquez (eds), *Los mundos de Alfredo Bryce Echenique (Textos críticos)* (Lima: Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú Fondo Editorial, 1994), chapter 11, pp. 501-14.

⁴ Sergio Ramírez-Franco, 'En torno de *Reo de nocturnidad*', in César Ferreira & Ismael P. Márquez (eds), *Los mundos de Alfredo Bryce Echenique (Textos críticos)*, pp. 501-10.

⁵ He writes: 'Los personajes de Alfredo Bryce Echenique: manipuladores, vanidosos, egocéntricos e indignos' (Ramírez-Franco, p. 509).

proceeds by analysing the positive and negative effects of the relationships that Max has with those who share his world, including the antagonistic presences of Olivier Sipriot and José, the lovers of the objects of his affection. Devoting a section to the rivalry that inspires his relationships, Ramírez-Franco concludes: ‘el amor de Max por Ornella se verá incrementando miméticamente por la rivalidad que lo enfrenta a Sipriot. Esta rivalidad se sustenta en los celos pero, sobre todo, en la vanidad y la envidia’ (Ramírez-Franco, p. 504). Whilst Max’s love for Ornella - the reason behind the depression which provides the motivation for him to recount his story - could be considered possessive and obsessive, Max is a victim of the couple’s callousness and his love is genuine, rather than motivated merely by his inferiority complex.⁶ I hence believe his analysis to be a misreading of Max’s affections and his assertion that Max uses an intermediary (Claire) to piece together his story as an excuse for his ‘manipulación’ (p. 504) of her, furthermore erroneous, since his feelings for her are sincere.

Joaquín Marco,⁷ on the other hand, privileges the autobiographical nature of the narrative when he writes that Max Gutiérrez ‘posee rasgos del autor’ (p. 511) and highlights the fashion in which ‘Bryce se sirve... de experiencias vividas, exagerándolas’ (p. 511). Although it would be erroneous and against the author’s wishes to attribute too great an autobiographical influence to the novel, it is clear that, as in the case of *No me esperen en abril* (1995), at least the basic plot is centred upon a particular event and time in the author’s life.⁸ Marco also approaches the

⁶ He quotes René Girard: ‘para que un vanidoso desee un objeto basta al convenderlo de que ese objeto es deseado por un tercero al que se asigna cierto prestigio’ (pp. 10-14)

⁷ Joaquín Marco, ‘Reo de nocturnidad’ in César Ferreira & Ismael P. Márquez (eds), *Los mundos de Alfredo Bryce Echenique (Textos críticos)*, pp. 511-14.

⁸ Bryce has ascribed a semi-autobiographical tone to his fiction: ‘Creo que un autor lo que debe pretender es estar en todos y ningunos de sus personajes’, ‘Historia personal de mis libros’, p. 167.

presence of humour in the narrative and the protagonist's confusion of the worlds of fantasy and reality, summing up Max's inherent characteristic as 'la locura quiijotesca del personaje' (p. 513). My reading of the text will aim to expand upon this latter point together with the importance of memory in the novel and the role it plays in the creation of the text.

In 1997, the year of *Reo de nocturnidad*'s publication, a conference dedicated to the work of Bryce Echenique took place at the Université Paul Valéry in Montpellier. The papers, given by a number of prominent Brycean scholars, were compiled in an anthology entitled: *Co-textes: Hommage à Alfredo Bryce Echenique* (1997).⁹ Whilst none of the papers in the compilation deal exclusively with *Reo de nocturnidad*, several of the speakers refer to the work and its protagonist. Luis Eyzaguirre, for example, argues that, 'el amor motiva la escritura' (Franco, p.51) in the work, rather than vanity, as Ramírez-Franco perceives it.¹⁰ José Luis de la Fuente analyses the predicament of the intended reader, who he believes, 'ha de delucidar cuál es la realidad creada por el autor y cuál la que inventa un personaje que no acepta la

From this it may be assumed that Bryce's works contain elements of autobiography, but do not faithfully portray his personal life story. What perhaps gives the impression of autobiography in Bryce's works, particularly *Reo de nocturnidad* and *La vida exagerada de Martín Romaña*, is, as Bryce explains, the impression given of listening to the spoken word and the sensitivity of his narrators. He has said: 'La sensibilidad desnuda unida al tono oral es lo que da idea de autobiografía', in 'Alfredo Bryce Echenique', Juila Trigo, in Ortega & Lander (eds), *Alfredo Bryce Echenique: ante la crítica* (Caracas: Monte Ávila Editores, 2004) pp. 83-95 (p. 86). Originally published in *Diagonal*, Barcelona, 30 (1985-1986), 39-41.

⁹ Jean Franco & Christiane Tarroux, *Co-textes 34: Hommage à Alfredo Bryce Echenique* (Montpellier: Centre d'études et de Recherches sociocritiques, 1997).

¹⁰ Luis Eyzaguirre, 'De Julius a Manongo Sterne: la saga del protagonista en la narrativa de Alfredo Bryce Echenique', in Jean Franco & Christiane Tarroux (eds), *Co-textes 34: Hommage à Alfredo Bryce Echenique*, pp. 49-62.

verdadera' (Franco, p. 64)¹¹ but concedes that the work differs from Bryce's other novels, in that, 'el lector es avisado del engaño' (Franco, p.71). The involvement of the reader in the construction of the text is an area that I also wish to consider in this chapter.

Origins of a Novel: Autobiography, Memory and a Short Story; The Convergence of Life and Fiction

Reo de nocturnidad is the story of Profesor Max Gutiérrez, a patient in the psychiatric ward of a clinic in the city of Montpellier, who is receiving treatment from the comically titled Doctor Lanusse. Admitted to the clinic eight months before the narrative's present time, having lost his grip on reality following the end of a traumatic love affair, Max is suffering from delusion and acute insomnia. Immediately, then, the narrative approaches the terrain of autobiography. Max lectures in Latin American literature in Montpellier's Paul Valéry University and Bryce himself was not only a lecturer in Montpellier from 1977 when the novel is set, where he taught courses in Hispanic Civilisation and Literature, but also spent some time recuperating in a psychiatric clinic in the city.¹² In an interview with José López Ricci, Bryce admits that: 'el ultimo año en que viví como profesor en Francia, estuve en la clínica siete meses e iba a clases en ambulancia y con enfermera' (Coaguila, p. 68).¹³ Max's illness stems from the deep mental anguish and insecurities that his frustrated love affair with the deceitful seductress, Ornella, and

¹¹ José Luis de la Fuente, 'En busca del mundo perdido: Métodos de fuga en la obra de Bryce Echenique', in Jean Franco & Christiane Tarroux (eds), *Co-textes 34: Hommage à Alfredo Bryce Echenique*, pp. 63-76.

¹² It is not the first time that Bryce's protagonist has been a university lecturer. Martín Romaña also gives classes, this time in the University of Nanterre, where Bryce also lectured.

¹³ José López, 'La soledad ha sido la más fiel de mis amantes', interview with Alfredo Bryce Echenique in José Coaguila, *Entrevistas escogidas* (Lima: Fondo Editorial Cultura Peruana, 2004), pp. 68-77.

the cruel treatment that he received at the hands of her criminal lover, Olivier Sipriot, have engendered. The memories of this doomed love affair haunt Max who continuously returns to and relives his passion, in much the same way as Manongo Sterne, in *No me esperen en abril*, reconstructs and lives his life through his memories of a defunct romance. Having resisted all forms of conventional therapy, Max decides to dictate his experiences in the form of a confessional,¹⁴ to his former student, Claire, in the hope that this will liberate him from his nightmare.¹⁵ As Max explains, ‘el doctor Lanusse insiste en que debo aclararlo todo ordenadamente y como quien, página tras página, se atreve por fin a darle cara a la realidad’ (p. 21). Fiction in effect becomes a form of therapy for Max as he faces up to reality through the illusion of the printed word.¹⁶ He records his thoughts, feelings and memories on a dictaphone and Claire faithfully transcribes and orders his words each night. Memory, although debilitating – his insomnia is the product of an ‘incontenible rememoración’ (p. 21) – hence plays a major role in the exorcism of anguish and

¹⁴ *La vida exagerada de Martín Romaña* also has a confessional tone. In point of fact there are several similarities between the two works. Both are, as mentioned above, university teachers and, whilst Martín simultaneously loves and hates Paris, the city from which he narrates his story, Max experiences the city of Montpellier, both as a sort of hell and as an historic, picturesque Mediterranean town. Bryce has said of the confessional mode: ‘Yo diría que hay un tono confesional en algunos de mis libros, muchos de ellos escritos en primera persona, primera persona que apela al lector de una manera directa. El lector se puede palpar. El sujeto narrante recrea relatos a partir de la memoria; hay una reconstrucción de vida a través de relatos. Los personajes son, en general, perdedores que narran sus historias de desencantos, de heridas, pero, en la medida en que cuentan su humor los distintos episodios de su vida, recuperan la dignidad’. See Reina Roffé, ‘Entrevista a Alfredo Bryce Echenique’, in César Ferreira & Ismael P. Márquez (eds), *Los mundos de Alfredo Bryce Echenique: nuevos textos críticos*, pp. 677-92 (p. 667).

¹⁵ In an interview Bryce explained one of his own personal reasons for writing: ‘La literatura me salvo de la tristeza, de la desgracia o de la locura; ha sido para mí una posición maravillosa. Me siento un tipo muy afortunado por haber hecho lo que deseaba: escribir’. Bryce, it would appear, writes for similar reasons as Max does, namely as a means of escaping sadness and insanity. César Güemes, ‘Nunca seré otra cosa que un escritor peruano’, p. 147, in Julio Ortega & María Fernanda Lander (eds), pp. 141- 47.

¹⁶ In *La vida exagerada de Martín Romaña*, Martín’s writing also begins as a form of therapy and later becomes a novel. Bryce has said of Martín, ‘cuando empieza a escribir, lo hace solo por terapia. Sin embargo, después se va dando cuenta de que está escribiendo una novela, de que realiza plenamente su vocación. Entonces anuncia que va a escribir una nueva novela sobre otra aventura que le ocurrió después de todo esto’ (Vasi, p. 38). See Paloma Vasi & Mario Ghibellini, ‘El abrazo con el lector’, in Jorge Coaguila, *Entrevistas Escogidas*, pp. 33-39.

pain. The daily recordings form a transcript that becomes the core part of the narrative, with excerpts of dialogue between the student and teacher forming the second, outer layer of the *mise-en-abyme*-style, fiction within a fiction structure of the narrative. The narrative is primarily based on the re-creation of Max's memories of his life in the cities of Paris and Montpellier and traces his encounters with his picaresque group of friends until the dramatic downfall that leads to his internment in the clinic. For, in order to escape the trauma of his everyday life, Max frequently has recourse to a world of fantasy and illusion and creates an alter-ego in the form of a secret agent who travels the world to carry out what he terms 'misiones imposibles' (p.33), a humorous allusion to the popular television programme of the same title. He circumvents the globe performing astonishing feats of bravery and recounts his adventures to a group of friends who accord credulity to his tales. Max recounts his exploits with such alarming conviction and such increasing frequency that they begin to seem real to him. Subsequently, Max finds himself unable to distinguish between the fantasy of his fictitious life and reality, like Manongo Sterne and the two elderly ladies of *Dos señoras conversan* (1990), before him. The salient feature of the narrative is its oral register.

The origin of the character of Max Gutiérrez is perhaps to be found in Sebastián, the infirm protagonist of 'Antes de la cita con los Linares'.¹⁷ The story opens with a dialogue between Sebastián, who confesses to suffering from 'insomnios, de sueños raros... rarísimos', (p. 227), to a psychiatrist, the second speaker in the conversation. Doctor Juan Luna encourages Sebastián, like Lanusse does with Max, to recount his story, since he left Paris, in an orderly fashion: '-Un poco de orden, Sebastián.

¹⁷ Alfredo Bryce Echenique, 'Antes de la cita con los Linares', *La felicidad, ja ja*, in *Cuentos completos*, pp. 227-39.

Empieza desde que saliste de París' (p. 228). As a means of exorcism of the pain he is currently experiencing, Sebastián begins to recall his tale to the doctor. Memory and the recollection of the past hence have a recuperative function in the text, acting as vehicles to banish pain and begin the process of mental healing. As is the case with *Reo de nocturnidad*, the memorial digression is punctuated with an ongoing dialogue between the doctor and patient; in this sense, perhaps, Juan Luna's role more closely resembles that of Claire. The motif of the train, as a link between past and present lives and the space of the solitary wanderer, the rootless loner, is also present: 'Llegó a Barcelona en la noche del veintisiete de Julio y llovía. Bajó del tren y al ver en su reloj que eran las once de la noche, se convenció de que tendría que dormir en la calle' (p. 231). Here, it should be noted that the digressive passages are told from a perspective principally in the third-person that oscillates on occasions between a third-and first-person narrator, whilst those in *Reo de nocturnidad* are told in the first person. The novel appears, then, to be a development of the confessional tone in Bryce's fiction, which through the use of a first-person narrator, is now more intimate and the reader is more obviously present. As the story concludes, the notion of metaliterature is brought into play, with Sebastián handing the Linares a manuscript. The conversation follows:

-¿Y esto, qué es, Sebastián?

-Ah, un cuento; me puse a escribir mientras los esperaba; tendrán que que soplárselo.

-Vamos!, ¡vamos!, ¡arranca!

-No, ahora no; tendría que corregirlo.

-¿Y el título?

-Aún no lo sé; había pensado llamarlo *Doctor psiquiatra*, pero dadas las circunstancias, creo que lo voy a poner *Antes de la cita con los Linares*.

(p. 239)

The story is aware of its genesis, as the character-narrator acknowledges its existence and his office as a writer, and steps outside of its pages into the phenomenal world, transforming itself into the book that the reader is holding in his hand.

The narrative's centres of action are significant. Max's love affair with Ornella takes place between the cities of Paris and Perugia in central Italy, two of the major geographical locations in Bryce's fiction. Bryce, of course, spent many years living in the Latin Quarter of Paris and, in the summer of 1965, discovered Perugia where he wrote the original draft of his first compilation of short stories, *Huerto Cerrado* (1968). Both cities form the backdrop to much of his fiction; *La vida exagerada de Martín Romaña* (1981), for example, is set in Paris whilst much of the development of *Tantas veces Pedro* (1977) takes place in Perugia. At this point it is worth mentioning the apparently incongruous inclusion of a text based in Europe in a study that purports to examine Bryce's portrayal of Peruvian society. However, one of the principal motifs in Bryce's narrative is the fate of the Peruvian who has emigrated to Europe and Bryce himself has stated that the principal discovery he made in Europe was the extent of his *peruanidad*, as if his experiences served to reconfirm his national identity. In an interview that took place in 1991 with Ángel Páez, when asked: 'Usted, que ha pasado la mitad de su vida en Europa, ¿hasta qué punto es peruano?', Bryce replied: 'Yo en Europa lo único que he aprendido es a ser peruano' (Coaguila, p. 75).¹⁸ In a second, earlier interview with Esteban González, he elaborates upon this point, when he says:

Ya lo decía a Julio Cortázar: el exilio es algo que se puede convertir en experiencia muy positiva, de enriquecimiento personal, de aprendizaje de otros lugares, de otras culturas y luego de explicación de nuestras realidades desde dentro de esas nuevas culturas, lo cual permite ver mejor los problemas de nuestros países que son a veces tan urgentes que para el creador llega a ser muy difícil crear un medio tan apremiante. (Coaguila, p. 57)¹⁹

¹⁸ Ángel Páez, interview with Alfredo Bryce Echenique, 'Soy un escritor más rebelde que nostálgico', in Jorge Coaguila, *Entrevistas escogidas* (Lima: Fondo Editorial Cultural Peruana, 2004), pp. 71-77.

¹⁹ Esteban González, 'El escritor y la política', *Debate* (Lima), 48 (December 1987).

The important point to underline here, though, is that in *Reo de nocturnidad*, Max's identity as a Peruvian is constantly vindicated. Furthermore, the ending of the novel, which is unusually upbeat compared to the endings of the majority of Bryce's novels and short stories, suggests that the re-encounter with the homeland, Peru, is very much implicated in Max's recovery. In this sense we see a merging of life and fiction since, upon completion of the novel, Bryce decided to return (supposedly) definitively to his native land.²⁰ César Güemes who interviewed Bryce for the Mexican publication *La Jornada* in 1998, noted that, having completed and promoted the novel, Bryce appeared 'decidido a regresar a su país por razones sentimentales, las mismas que mueven a sus personajes' (Güemes, p. 141).²¹ Bryce, in response to the question regarding his reasons for returning, stated: 'Es una de esas cosas probablemente irracionales y sentimentales. Finalmente la tierra lo atrae a uno, la familia, los paisajes de toda la vida, los amigos. He vivido a caballo por el mundo, pero no sé si alguna vez salí de todo de Perú' (Ortega & Lander, p. 142).²² Max's return journey to Peru, perhaps foreshadows Bryce's intentions to return home. Max hence follows in the footsteps of many of Bryce's characters in that he lives his early adult and middle age life in Europe. He is unique, however, in that he returns to Peru and that his return brings positive consequences. In this respect the character of Max represents a radical departure from the character of Javier in *Una tajada de vida* (*Magdalena Peruana y otros cuentos*, 1986), who finds himself unable to adapt to the idea of returning home and experiences a sense of total upheaval and rootlessness when he returns.

²⁰ Ferreira, however, mentions that Bryce spent only four years in Lima after his arrival in 1999, returning to Barcelona in 2002; Ferreira & Márquez (eds), p. 16.

²¹ Julio Ortega & María Fernanda Lander (eds), *Alfredo Bryce Echenique: ante la crítica* (Caracas: Monte Ávila Editores, 2004).

²² Julio Ortega & María Fernanda Lander (eds), *Alfredo Bryce Echenique: ante la crítica*.

Writing the Self: Oral Narrative and the First-Person Narrator

Reo de nocturnidad is narrated in the first person from the perspective of its protagonist Max. In this sense, the narrator can be classified as the autodiegetic narrator, according to Genette's theory. Sergio Ramírez-Franco points out that the narrative structure is also 'intradiegetic': 'Su carácter intradieético deriva de que recibe una narración inscrita en un nivel inmediatamente superior al del relato marco' (p. 503). As mentioned above, *Reo de nocturnidad* is alone amongst the works discussed in this thesis because of its recourse to a first-person narrator. It is interesting to note a general pattern that emerges in Bryce's work, at least with respect to his novels. For, whereas the novels that take place in Peru, such as *Un mundo para Julius* (1970) and *No me esperen en abril*, are, without exception, told from the perspective of an omniscient third-person narrator, those novels that deal with the Peruvian in Europe, such as *El hombre que hablaba de Octavio Cádiz* (1985) and *La vida exagerada de Martín Romaña* (with the exception of *Tantas veces Pedro*) are narrated in the first person. The question that must be asked is: why does Bryce choose to refer to a first-person narrator when relating the account of an exile in Europe, yet resort to a third-person narrator and protagonists whom we view (primarily)²³ from an exterior perspective, when his stories are set in Peru? There may be many possible answers to this question and only an educated guess is possible. Yet one major factor distinguishes the 'Peruvian' novels from the 'European novels'. Whereas the European-based novels have for their protagonist a child or adolescent protagonist through whose immature and often confused eyes the reader experiences the world, those novels set in Europe deal with adult protagonists.

²³ Here I use the qualitative 'primarily' due to the incorporation of the characters' thoughts and words into the principal narrative stream.

Perhaps Bryce is acknowledging, through the use of a third-person narrator who remains at a distance from the action, the distance between his own experience and perspective and that of his youthful protagonist in the 'Peruvian' novels. Secondly, Bryce has lived the majority of his adolescent life in Europe and his personal experience may more closely resemble that of his 'European' protagonists than that of those in Peru. In this case a first-person narrator might better approximate Bryce's own life experiences. Thirdly, since the 'European' novels deal with more mature protagonists and hence more dramatically emotional experiences it is possible that a first-person narrator may be more suited to probing into the psyche of the mature character. A fourth possible explanation could be that Bryce has written from a geographical position outside of Peru, in Europe. Considering Peru from an outside, third-person perspective may also reflect his status of an outsider reflecting on the events of a country from which he is spatially distanced.

The novel opens in *medias res*, with the sentence: 'Yo soy ese hombre que bajó del tren. Sí. Ese mismo. O, mejor, mucho mejor, yo soy *aquel* hombre que bajó del tren' (p. 15). These words, which give the impression of an ongoing conversation, not only firmly establish the oral register of the text, but also the relationship between the narrator and the implied reader. The reader is directly addressed, literally 'hailed' into the text and assumes the stance of interlocutor, listener, or even a character of the text, as a close relationship is established between himself and the narrator.²⁴

²⁴ Of the conversational tone of Bryce's work and the resulting relationship with his reader Carlos Eduardo Zavaleta writes: 'En las últimas décadas, sobre todo con la respuesta latinoamericana del *boom*, ese autor, y sobre todo el narrador, ha vuelto a hacerse presente y a organizar la masa narrativa. El antígono "yo" de la picaresca española ha vuelto también, y el "yo" de Hemingway ha sido asimismo aprovechado, y ahora el novelista organiza la "conversación" no como un narrador omnisciente, sino dentro de un vaivén objetivo-sujetivo. Cuenta su cadena de aventuras, pero previamente adopta una táctica, se coloca bajo la protección del lector, se hace víctima, sufre todas las vejaciones como antaño sufría el Lazarillo, y ya con esa simpatía natural del lector, escribe o habla, lo mismo da. Una vez

The intimate register and the constant evocation of emotions suggest that the reader is not only complicit, but familiar with Max and his trauma.²⁵ The reader is also, consequently, implicated in Max's recuperation process and, for once, instead of the narrator having the upper hand, the reader, due to Max's anguish and desperation, assumes the dominant role, or that of protector. The text also draws the reader in through his optic senses through the assumption that the latter has witnessed the event: 'Sí. Ese mismo... que bajó del tren' (p. 15), which functions as an invitation from the character-narrator to the implied reader to begin visualising him. The intimate tone also sets the narrative up as a confessional, with the reader assuming the role of confessor. Furthermore, although, as it quickly transpires, Max is dictating his memoirs to his former student and a character in the novel, Claire, he is also acutely aware of the extended audience he is writing for, those who will eventually read his words. On one occasion, for example, he speaks to his audience in the plural: 'La cosa se puso fea, como pueden ver' (pp. 20-21). This is evidence that the text is aware of itself and that Max is aware of his role of narrator/story-teller. From the above we see that the narration process and text are operating on several different strata.

disminuida la distancia entre el lector y narrador, se establece el vínculo del diálogo interminable, que zigzaguea con gracia y humor en las páginas que resultan ser cada vez más amigas y cómplices'. See Carlos Eduardo Zavaleta, 'Alfredo Bryce Echenique: la óptica tragicómica y la subjetividad bienintencionada', in *La Casa de Cartón de Oxy: Revista de Cultura*, (Lima), 18 (Winter-Spring 1999), 22-27 (p. 27).

²⁵ Mara Aparicio writes that 'Bryce desea que sus libros sean leídos como si se escuchara a un amigo (o probablemente una amiga) espontáneo y charlatán', 'Acciones, pasiones y voces', *Nueva Estafeta*, 40 (March 1982), 81. Quoted in Margarita Krakusin and Patricia Vining Lunn, 'Ex-centrismo dialógico en *La última mudanza de Felipe Carrillo* de Alfredo Bryce Echenique', *Hispania*, 78.4 (1995), 751-61 (p. 759). With regards to whom Bryce writes, or to whom the narrator speaks, Bryce has further suggested that: 'Todos mis libros han sido hechos con la sensibilidad muy grande, buscando siempre contactar con un lector concreto y real: mis amigos, la gente que amo... Luego está el lector ideal, aquel con quien sin ningún conocimiento previo se establece una relación; con él trato de establecer unos vasos comunicantes por los que yo, que me doy mucho, espero una respuesta afectiva' (Julia Trigo, p. 87).

Bryce is continuing a tradition of orality and awareness of an implied reader in Hispanic literature that has its debut in *Lazarillo de Tormes*, which begins with the words: 'Pues sepa vuestra merced, ante todas cosas, que a mí llaman Lázaro de Tormes, hijo de Tomé Gonçales y de Antonia Pérez... Pues siendo yo niño de ocho años' (*Lazarillo de Tormes*, p. 63).²⁶ Both *Reo de nocturnidad* and *Lazarillo de Tormes* open, then, with a narrator-protagonist introducing himself and presenting his life-story to an intended narrator of whom he is aware. The life story is based on a recompilation of memories. Of this opening, Bryce notes: 'Estas palabras parecen incluso notoriales. Lázaro quiere dejar bien claro su nombre y después dice dónde nació y cómo etcetera. Sin embargo todos sabemos que nada tiene que ver la vida de este pícaro con la de su autor y creador' (Bryce, Ortega & Lander, p.162).²⁷ A further similarity is that both novels belong to the genre of the picaresque, since they both have a first-person narrator, are constructed upon a series of digressions and follow the process of degradation and disintegration of character, which has also been seen in *Manongo Sterne*. In the case of Max, however, the degradation processes occurred before the narrative's present and the story here represents the process of recuperation, a reversal from the state of degradation to sanity and health. On

²⁶ *Lazarillo de Tormes*, *La vida de Lazarillo de Tormes y de sus Fortunas y Adversidades* (Madrid: Imprenta Aguirre, 1967). For a good introduction to the use of orality in *Lazarillo*, see Francisco Garrote Pérez, *Cómo leer al Lazarillo de Tormes* (Madrid: Guías de Lectura Júcar, 1991), pp. 52-55. He writes, 'la lengua se encamina por la línea de un equilibrio entre el lenguaje coloquial, en el que no faltan las expresiones populares, los refranes y los modismos, y, por otro lado, un cierto artificio y la elaboración del material lingüístico... Tal vez, la mejor interpretación del estilo elegido por el autor sea considerarlo como estilo llano y natural, el empleo de una lenguaje viva y real, pues el que habla es el propio Lázaro... El escribir como hablo se convierte en la regla fundamental del estilo de la novela' (pp. 51-52). For a discussion of autobiography as 'spoken epistle', see Robert L. Fione, *Lazarillo de Tormes* (Boston, Twayne Publishers, 1984) p. 83.

²⁷ Alfredo Bryce Echenique, 'Instalar el humor en el corazón mismo de la tristeza', in Julio Ortega & María Fernanda Lander (eds) *Alfredo Bryce Echenique: ante la crítica* (Lima: Fondo Editorial del Congreso de Perú', pp. 149-71.

numerous occasions, Bryce has confessed to being a keen reader of works of this genre.²⁸

In his excellent study on Bryce's narrative technique and register, Julio Ortega writes: 'Se podría decir que en sus novelas Bryce escribe la biografía de un narrador autobiográfico a partir de las memorias, diarios, y otros residuos de notación autoanalítica de ese narrador narrado' (Ortega, p. 11).²⁹ This evaluation is relevant to an analysis of the narrator-character of *Reo de nocturnidad*, which is the biography of a fictional character, not to be confused with the autobiography of the author of the world outside the novel. To use Ortega's term, *Reo de nocturnidad* is an 'imaginary' biography.³⁰ In effect, Max is evoking memories of events and occurrences and reconstructing them to form the narrative of his life. In other words, *Reo de nocturnidad* is, in structural terms, a fiction within a fiction. Once again it returns to the question of the interspersing of the literary and non-literary worlds, as Bryce, recreating, exaggerating and adding to his memories mirrors the memory-reconstruction process that Max undergoes in order to bring his experiences to the light of day. The narrative is hence retrospective, in much the same way as is the majority of *Dos señoras conversan* and the text is built around digressions that emanate from Max's memory. Ortega argues that in Bryce's fiction: 'el pasado es un Babel', that is, a confusion of several different voices; he continues: 'una reconstrucción reinterpretada por los hablantes, por el acto mismo de la digresividad

²⁸ Fernando R. Lafuente, 'Una poética de la piedad', in Julio Ortega & María Fernanda Lander (eds), *Alfredo Bryce Echenique: ante la crítica*, pp. 97-140 (p. 123). Bryce stated: 'mucho antes de venir a Europa, en Perú, yo era un loco de la literatura picaresca española', and that, 'no sería raro encontrar rasgos de la novela picaresca' in his works.

²⁹ Julio Ortega, *El hilo del habla: La narrativa de Alfredo Bryce Echenique* (Universidad de Guadalajara Dirección de Publicaciones, Guadalajara, Mexico, 1994).

³⁰ See Julio Ortega, 'Bryce Echenique y el arte de narrar', prologue to *Cuentos completos*, pp. 10-16 (p. 10).

del habla' (Ortega, p. 11). Critics have made much of the digressive nature of Bryce's works, which, the oral register compliments. Bryce's narrative and, in particular *Reo de nocturnidad*, reads, for this reason, like a stream of consciousness in which the digressions are the product of a confused and infirm memory. Indeed the digressive nature of the text, which is prominent to the picaresque novel, is redolent of the writing of Laurence Sterne whom Bryce has cited as an influential force in his own work (for discussion, see Chapter 4, pp. 208-09). Max refers to his system of writing as 'cajas chinas' (p. 16), an apt description of his digressive style, since recalling one memory leads to the invoking of another, which leads to the arousal of another, and so forth. The oral tone is also achieved through language, specifically the inclusion of the colloquial which is afforded an equal status to the elevated literary language of the fictionalised memoirs. Max's resort to the exclamatory 'Caray' on the first page is redolent of the opening words, 'Púchica diegos' (p. 13) that open *No me esperen en abril*. The inclusion of colloquial phrases also establishes and reiterates Max's identity as a Peruvian, since those colloquialisms that he employs are specific to the form of Spanish spoken in Peru.

To return to the previous quotation, the first sentence not only establishes the oral register but, through the differentiation between 'ese' and 'aquel', also brings to the forefront the psychological trauma that Max is suffering. Max appears to be a stranger to himself; he has changed and is no longer the man he once was. The purpose of his recounting his memoirs is hence an attempt at reconciliation with his former self: Max is purging reality through literature and memory, like Don Álvaro, the two old sisters and Manongo Sterne; in effect he is exorcising the ghosts of the present through the evocation of the past. He explains: 'Busco ese hombre que bajó

del tren' (pp. 15-16). Max's case stands alone, however, in that he does not desire a return to the past which is possibly the reason why he finally recuperates, whereas the others find only solitude or death. Retracing his past through his memories is Max's attempt to bring order to his present reality; it is a process of catharsis. He says (and here the emphasis is on the sound, the spoken word) that he is, 'encerrado y luchando por escribir estas páginas para recorrer a fondo, nuevamente, aunque con una finalidad terapéutica' (p.15). Contrary to the other characters whose regression to their past precedes their downfall, Max's regression and reconstruction of the past is his saving grace. Yet Max's relationship with the past differs dramatically from those of the other characters mentioned, since whilst they look back to a desired past through nostalgic eyes, Max is looking back on a past that he is unable to bear, a past that is debilitating. The protagonist of *Reo de nocturnidad* also follows a diametrically opposite emotional trajectory to those of the previously mentioned novels. Whereas the protagonists of Bryce's other works tend to be in a position of relative happiness at the start of the novel and descend into unhappy states, Max begins by believing happiness is an illusion when he speaks of 'la ilusión de una felicidad' (p. 15), only to find happiness at the end of his journey.

Self-Reflexivity

The narrative is also a self-conscious one, highly aware of its own genesis.³¹ Of great interest in the novel are the narrative voices employed and their self-reflexivity. The

³¹ Metafiction has, of course, been a principal feature of the Latin American novel since the 1960's, with notable examples being Cortázar's *Rayuela* and García Márquez's *Cien años de soledad*, where a character reflects on the novel that has afforded him an existence. Structural parody is at the forefront of both *Cuadernos de navegación en un sillón Voltaire* and *Reo de nocturnidad*, where, as de la Fuente observes: 'los protagonistas son escritores y se dedican a escribir una parte de su vida, que puede coincidir... con el texto que posee el lector'; de la Fuente, p. 185. The metafictional narrative brings the question of the limits between the fictional and real world into play.

sentence that begins with ‘Caray’ is the first clue to this: ‘Caray. Para qué diablos habré escrito *caída... cada rato me voy por las ramas, caray, y el resultado es una página más que dar a la basura* ’ (p.15). From these lines we see that both text and narrator are aware of the ongoing narrative process and the construction of the work of fiction. Furthermore, the words are evidence of a wandering mind that ventures into digression in much the same way as Bryce’s writing style. In this way narrative content mirrors narrative style in the work. The text *Reo de nocturnidad*, as a novel in the phenomenal world, is also referred to: ‘La verdad, creo que, sin la ayuda de Claire, esto no lo hubiera contado ni en el libro que ha resultado ser este *Reo de nocturnidad*’ (p. 97). Bryce has, of course, in *No me esperen en abril* referred to himself as an author and to others amongst his works of literature, most notably with regard to *Un mundo para Julius*. Here he goes one step further by alluding to the novel he is writing about within the space of the novel itself. Hence the impression is given that the novel steps outside of its pages and enters the phenomenal world upon the moment of realization of the reader, who realises that he is holding the text that Max speaks of in his hand. This crossing-over action between the fictive and non fictive worlds is redolent of the prologue for the second part of Cervantes’s *Don Quijote*³² and Blanca’s reconstruction of her grandmother’s *cuadernos de anotar la vida*, in *La casa de los espíritus*: ‘Los tengo aquí, a mis pies, atados... Clara los escribió para que me sirvieran ahora para recatar las cosas del pasado y sobrevivir a mi propio espanto’ (Allende, pp. 453-54).³³ Blanca’s revision of the past and reordering of memories into the novel format is a way to make sense of the present

³² See Prólogo al lector, in Miguel de Cervantes, *El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha*, (Madrid: Clásicos, 1978) [1615], vol. II, pp. 33-37. For further discussion of Cervante’s influence on Bryce’s fiction, see Chapter 1 of this thesis, pp. 25-28.

³³ Isabel Allende, *La casa de los espíritus* (Barcelona: Plaza & Janés, 1995) [1982].

through the past, in much the same way as Max's confession is for him, rather like Unamuno's *Niebla* and Borges's *Ficciones* (1944).³⁴

Following on from this, the novel seeks literary approbation through Max, as protagonist, comparing his circumstances to that of the protagonist in Camus's *La Chute*.³⁵ He says: 'Inmediatamente me ha sonado a Albert Camus y su novela *La caída*, en que el personaje termina hundido en una absurda miseria o, más bien, en la miseria del absurdo' (p. 15). The text is replete with allusions to works pertaining to the international literary canon that contribute to the narrative's intertextual discourse. Max is, of course, a professor of literature and his spectrum of cultural references will be greater than that of Bryce's other protagonists, which perhaps explains this phenomenon. His initial decision to give the book the title 'Crónica de una enfermedad crónica' (p. 16) is clearly a comic homage to García Márquez's *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* (1981);³⁶ indeed, the novelists he refers to include Céline, Proust and Stendhal, all of which feature amongst Bryce's personal favourites.³⁷ When Max quotes Borges, though, we see more evidence of the text's self-consciousness, since Max's declaration: 'Dormir es distraerse del mundo, según Borges' (p.9, p. 47) during a conversation with Claire, is also one of the five citations that precede the body of the text, an invitation to the reader, perhaps, to become involved in the text through the cross-referencing of the novel's autonomous

³⁴ Jorge Luis Borges, *Ficciones* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1971) [1944].

³⁵ Albert Camus, *La Chute* (Paris: Gallimard, 1972). [1956]

³⁶ Gabriel García Márquez, *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* (Madrid: Mondadori, 1981).

³⁷ For a discussion of Proust's influence on Bryce's fiction, see Herbert E. Craig, *Marcel Proust and Spanish America* (Lewisburg: Buchnell University Press, 2002), pp. 130-31, and pp. 222-23. Juristo also notes the similarities between Proust and Bryce's work, citing *La vida exagerada de Martín Romaña*: 'La similitudes con la obra de Proust son evidentes y explícitas. Martín Romaña comienza a escribir en el momento en que termina su experiencia vital y, por lo tanto, recurre a una estructura circular donde la memoria se enseñ de toda la narración', Juan Ángel Juristo, 'Para que duela menos', p. 38.

reality.³⁸ In point of fact, Max consistently likens his situation and his fantasised existence to that of fictitious characters. He compares his alter-ego secret agent's predicament to that of Ole Anderson in Hemingway's *The Killers* (1928).³⁹ He reminisces:

Yo odiaba tanto a Olivier Sipriot que estuve a punto de decir que, en ese caso, ya sólo nos quedaba sentarnos a esperar que llegara la policía o los miembros de la banda rival, un poco como el cuento 'The Killers', de Ernest Hemingway, en que un gánster ha roto la ley del hampa y se tumba quietecito en una cama porque ya no le queda absolutamente nada que hacer y está harto de huir. (p. 77)

This represents a double dislocation from the real world as a fictionalised character fictionalises his life, confusing the limits between reality and fantasy. Later in the narrative, Max takes another female student, Nadine Auriol, to look at the sea, 'para que se me aclare todo, como en la película así llamada *Nunca en domingo...* La de las putas simpatiquísimas' (p. 221).

The creation of the text is an attempt to escape the 'mundo fantasmal' (p. 20) that Max has constructed. It begins when he decides to 'enfrentarme a esa cruel realidad' (p. 20) which is his past, guided by Doctor Lanusse. Writing, according to Lanusse will function as a purgative, is a way to 'desangrarse si es necesario para llegar al fondo' (p. 16) and, the Doctor extols the inclusion of humour as part of the process.⁴⁰ He advises Max: 'Así debería usted burlarse de todo' (p. 18), that is, to use humour

³⁸ Bryce's intention to involve the reader in the creation processes of the text is obvious in his reference to the reader as: 'el público escritor, ese ultimo escritor de una novela', 'Historia personal de mis libros', p. 166.

³⁹ Ernest Hemingway, 'The Killers', in *Men Without Women* (London: Arrow Books, 1994), pp. 43-53. Bryce is referring here to Ole Anderson's decision to remain in a rooming house, although he knows that his prospective killers will find him, simply because he is tired of his life-style: 'Couldn't you get out of town?', 'No,' Ole Anderson said. 'I'm through with all that running around' (p.51)

⁴⁰ 'In *Reo de nocturnidad*', Bryce points out, 'el humor está instalado en la locura, en el dolor, en el sufrimiento más amargo', 'La historia personal de mis libros', p. 170.

as a palliative that softens the blows that reality deals him. Bryce has often stated in interviews that he uses humour to render reality less difficult to deal with. In an interview he gave in 1987, Bryce explains:

Yo creo que en mis últimos libros el humor ha sido planteado en forma mucho más profunda que en libros anteriores. Yo me hice una apuesta al tratar de instalar el humor en el corazón de la tristeza y llevarlo a las situaciones más dramáticas, más patéticas. Pero también el humor, y eso también es un hallazgo, es una forma de salvación como recuperación de estatus humano y de la unidad de los personajes. (Coaguila, p. 60)⁴¹

Humour, for Bryce, is a means of making reality, this 'carcajada sin rostro' (pp. 20-21) more acceptable; in his often repeated words: 'Para que duela menos'.

Humour and Literature as Therapy

Initially Lanusse is against the idea of an intermediary, insisting that Max write 'con las tripas' (p. 22). In other words, Max must delve into the innermost realms of his psyche and release the emotions that gnaw away at him from within. Proust, Max notes, took this route but it induced his asthma, in Stendhal his passion and in Céline his anger (p. 22), which suggests that it is a path that can lead to the stirring of emotions or states that are (sometimes) undesirable. Rabelais is eventually held up as the only appropriate model to follow. Rabelais, according to Max, triumphs over misery because: 'lo suyo en la literatura fue el humor, la risa con que se curaba y con que curaba a la gente de los males de su tiempo' (p. 23). Bryce's notions of the functions of humour palpably descend from Rabelais's, as he uses Max to voice the

⁴¹ Esteban González, 'El escritor y la política' (1987) in Jorge Coaguila, *Entrevistas escogidas* (Lima: Fondo Editorial Cultural Peruana, 2004), pp. 49-60.

cult of humour to which he aspires.⁴² Max explains, ‘François Rabelais fue un gran médico de alma... descubrió que era más saludable reír que llorar ante los horrores y miserias de este valle de sangre, sudor, lágrimas, y caca’ (p. 23). Whilst a grim appraisal of reality, these words prescribe laughter as the only antidote to the ills of the world: the ability to laugh at one’s own predicament will eventually conquer pain.⁴³ Max acknowledges that reflecting on his past woes with humour, is vital in the healing progression:

ahora que logro reírme ya de vez en cuando y meterle algo de humor al asunto, como quien busca recuperar un tiempo que siempre fue positivo, a medida que va recuperando también la dignidad. (p. 92)

Lanusse prescribes two contiguous methods of treatment – namely putting memory to print and leaving the clinic to face the world outside – means intended to force Max to confront ‘esa cruel realidad’ (p. 20) which is life. Yet Max, despite Lanusse’s wishes, feels as yet unable to leave the sanctuary of the clinic. Max feels safe in the clinic, ‘protegido exteriormente por los muros... profundamente adormecido para este mundo’ (p. 22). The notion of a ‘safe haven’ that acts as an escape mechanism or barrier to real life is a familiar leitmotiv in Bryce’s fiction. In *Dos señoras conversan*, for example, it is the sisters’ house from which they dare not venture out, lest they are confronted with the reality of a changing nation; for Manongo Sterne, in *No me esperen en abril*, it takes the form of the bars of *La Violeta* and *Villa Puntos Suspensivos*, the spaces conducive to the recollection of his past, whilst in *El huerto*

⁴² César Ferreira observes, ‘En la obra de Bryce el humor, por un lado, expande la realidad narrada y hace plausible en el espacio ficcional una visión hiperbólica de la misma, lección que está presente en Rabelais’. See César Ferreira, ‘Bryce Echenique y la novela del posboom: lectura de *La última mudanza de Felipe Carrillo*’, in *Chasqui*, XXII.42 (November 1993), 34-48 (p. 37).

⁴³ ‘Ante el dolor, ante el paraíso perdido, ante el recuerdo atroz, la única manera de recuperar la verdadera dignidad del momento perdido, del ser amado y perdido, es mirar hacia atrás con ternura y humor. Dignificación de la vida. Condición, *sine qua non*, el humor, empiece por casa’ (Ruiz, ‘Entrevista epistolar con Alfredo Bryce Echenique’, p. 79).

de mi amada, it is the hacienda to which the lovers flee from a scornful society. And so Max goes out into the world, accompanied by a nurse, and returns to the classroom to teach his classes.

It is at this point, Max confesses, that the process of recuperation begins, which suggests that the only way to overcome the traumas that life entails is to confront them head on: 'a partir de aquella primera salida... empecé a bajarme del tren que me trajo a Montpellier por primera vez' (p. 24). The train is hence a motif for Max's unwillingness to confront reality. Yet, if he is to see reality aright, he must step off the train, arrive at his destination and cease his flights of escapism. The train is a metaphor for the aimless displacement, the constant motion which prevents Max from stopping still and facing up to life.⁴⁴ It is at the university that Max re-encounters Claire, past memories are evoked and the digressive body of the text commences.

Here begins the lengthy path to recuperation and the first obstacle that Max must confront – which is also the route of his insanity – is his inferiority complex. Since Ornella's departure, Max has suffered from feelings of insecurity because his identity of university lecturer is shadowed by the thrill and excitement of Olivier Sipriot's criminal lifestyle. Faced with the class and consumed by anxiety, Max's lies, as a manifestation of his unconscious desires, begin, and his alter-ego makes its entrance into the text:

Lo primero que hice al encontrarme con los alumnos, por supuesto, fue mentir. En fin, no exactamente mentir, pero sí alterar las veraderas razones por las que me veía obligado a dictar mis clases acompañado de una

⁴⁴ Lanusse urges the importance of Max's descent from the train as a means to leave the past behind and advance in his treatment, '¿Porqué no se baja de ese tren, entonces? Siéntase protegido' (p. 18).

enfermera que al final en vez de ser el insomnio aterrado por la precariedad de su mundo y por su propia persona, el hombre que, queriéndolo o no – eso estaba por verse – había buscado protección y alivio entre muros de una clínica, me convertí en el sobreviviente heroico de una peligrosísima misión secreta en Liberia, secreto de Estado, más bien. (p. 28)

The secret agent alter-ego has all the attributes that Max would ideally possess; he is brave and virile and leads a dangerous existence. The above passage demonstrates the fashion in which Max makes a fiction of his life in order to deflect attention from his true self.⁴⁵ As with all of Bryce's works, narrative technique mirrors thematic content in *Reo de nocturnidad*. There is a clear parallel between the blurring of literary and real spaces in the text and the blurring of fictitious and factual spaces within Max's mind. It is Max's attempt to 'ocultar la realidad' (p. 28) from his pupils, but the only person whom Max fools when he masks reality is himself. Through fiction, in this case, an oral narrative, Max is 'colocando una realidad admirable encima de la triste realidad que fue [su] existencia' (p.29), that is, substituting the circumstances of his own life, with a fictitious one that he feels happy with.

Memory: Catharsis and Deception

Max confesses to not recognising himself at times, so entangled is he in the web of his own deceit. It is important to recognise that Max genuinely believes the lies he fabricates and, as such cannot be considered a liar in the true sense of the word. As Bryce explains:

⁴⁵ De la Fuente observes this strategy of the protagonist-diary writer in 'Las notas que duermen en las cuerdas', when he writes of his 'recurso a la imaginación, a la mentira inventiva, para sobre ponerse a los percanes de la realidad' (José Luis de la Fuente, *Más allá de la modernidad: los cuentos de Alfredo Bryce Echenique*, p. 33).

Las personas consideradas mitómanas son las únicas que creen en sus mentiras, por lo cual tienen un fondo de verdad total, en tanto implican un gran sentimiento, una alegría profunda para la persona que cuenta la mentira. Siempre me interesó mucho esta frase de Cocteau: 'Yo soy un mentiroso que siempre dice la verdad.'

(Ampuero, p. 28)⁴⁶

With regards to the inventive and imaginative potential of lies, Stendhal and Hemingway have clearly been influential upon Bryce's work since he concedes that they are both 'profundamente mitómanos e imaginativos'; and adds 'donde ponían los pies inventaban una ciudad' (Lafuente, p. 125).⁴⁷ Through the fabrication of truth, memory is hence linked to the imagination.⁴⁸ It is important to signal at this point that the very reason that Max moved to Montpellier was to forget Ornella, whose name he inexplicably writes on the blackboard: 'Ornella, la muchacha que había venido a olvidar a Montpellier pero que cada día recordaba más, y más dolorosamente también' (p. 45). Here we see how memory and oblivion function interdependently as part of the same equation since Max can only liberate himself from his painful memories precisely through their retrieval. In other words, the reflexes of remembering and forgetting can not be dissociated from each other. In this way, memory in Bryce differs from memory in Proust as it is very much a voluntary retrieval process, although it should be pointed out that as in *À la recherche du temps perdu*, material objects conduce memories associated with them. It is in this sense that a glass of champagne reminds Max of Ornella as it is associated with the times when they drank it together. Similarly, places can also evoke past memories, as he returns months later to the city of Perugia, where they

⁴⁶ Fernando Ampuero, 'Secretos de Bryce', in Jorge Coaguila, *Entrevistas escogidas: selección, prólogo y notas*, pp. 25- 31.

⁴⁷ See José Luis de la Fuente, *Más allá de la modernidad*, p. 125.

⁴⁸ See Alfredo Bryce Echenique, 'La historia personal de mis libros'. Bryce avows that 'nada inventa tanto como la memoria' (p. 169).

had once lived in order to 'recordar aquellos tiempos' (p. 84). On the journey to Perugia he listens to pop and rock songs to evoke her presence (p. 80) which suggests the capacity of music to evoke that time in the past when they were originally heard. Max observes, how 'curioso resulta la manera en que a veces las palabras de una canción, más que nada por su tema traumático, nos acercan a nuestro propio verdad, nos la cuentan casi' (p. 98). In this sense, thematic content mirrors Bryce's narrative style, since Bryce regularly uses music as a vehicle to call to mind an epoch or an emotion, as has been seen in *No me esperen en abril* with the music of Nat King Cole (for further discussion, see Chapter 4, pp. 163-65), and as will be seen with the piece *Siboney* in *El huerto de mi amada* (for further discussion, see Chapter 6, pp. 285-86). Max, at least at this point in his life is aware of the make-believe component of the explanation he has given to the students and this is why, as he turns to stare at the name on the blackboard, which reminds him of her absence, he begins to cry.

The positive effects of Max's fantasy are hence only a short-term solution as reality is always present and awaiting him. Memory can also be deceptive in order to make not only present, but also past realities more palatable. Max shows how the past can be altered and salvaged through memory, leading to the resurrection of the happy self in the present. Max, for example remembers, how the mechanisms of his memory can function deceptively as a defence:

La más feroz melancolía se apoderó de mí al recordar la única noche de Navidad que logré pasar con Ornella. Deseaba hablar de ella, llenarme la boca y el alma con su nombre, con la evocación de los días que pasamos en Ischia y aun de aquellos días en Roma que precedieron a la primera aparición de Olivier Sipriot. Eran los momentos en que lograba tener la certidumbre de que sólo esos días habían existido entre Ornella y yo, en que olvidaba todo lo demás, y me entregaba sereno y emocionado a esos recuerdos. (pp. 137-38)

Incredibly, Max is so unable to function without Ornella and with only unhappy memories to feed off, that he manages to deceive himself, due to the temporal and special distances that memory affords. Through memory, Max attempts to perpetuate this paradise lost. Furthermore, Max's lies reveal his fantasy of the type of person he would like to be, his desires and his dreams. This is redolent of a comment Bryce made in another interview: 'la mentira es sueño y también ponemos nuestros sueños... en nuestros libros' (Ruiz, p. 80).⁴⁹ Max can make his dreams reality, only by lying to himself. In this way he escapes his real conditions through fantasy, in an attempt at recovery and consolation. Max hence constructs an imaginary persona which is concerned with desirability, rather than actuality.⁵⁰ This recalls Freud's theories in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920). Freud describes how the pleasure principle is bound to the avoidance of pain, achieves the need for constancy in neurosis and functions ultimately as wish-fulfilment.⁵¹ Although Max, it must be stated, experiences little pleasure as such, his fantasies do encompass wish-fulfilment since they allow him to achieve his desired identity and act, as an at least temporary, avoidance of pain. Max's lies and fantasies are hence tightly linked to his survival, in that they act as a barrier to truths that would otherwise destroy him.

⁴⁹ Guadalupe Ruiz, 'Entrevista epistolar con Alfredo Bryce Echenique', in Julio Ortega & María Fernanda Lander (eds), *Alfredo Bryce Echenique: ante la crítica*, pp. 71- 81.

⁵⁰ See J.R.R. Tolkien, 'On Fairy Stories', in *Tree and Leaf* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1964). Lynette Hunter, quoting from this work, writes: 'The aim of fantasy is to provide patterns of escape..., through the conscious sub-creation of a world concerned with desirability, rather than possibility. Sub-creation "makes a Secondary World which your mind can enter" (Tolkien, p. 36), which is unlike the "Primary World" and hence free from the domination of observed "fact" (Tolkien, p. 45), and which maintains its own inner consistency of reality' (Tolkien, p. 46) through its image-making power'. See Lynette Hunter, *Modern Allegory and Fantasy*, p. 44. The term "inner consistency of reality" here applies to Max, since he believes that the lies he invents are true and accord with his world. Leo Bersani, in the same vein, writes, 'Desire is a hallucinated satisfaction in the absence of the source of satisfaction' (quoted in Hunter, p. 93).

⁵¹ See Sigmund Freud, 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle', in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle and Other Writings* (London: Penguin Classics, 2003), pp. 43-102. He writes, 'There can be no doubt that the resistance of the conscious and pre-conscious ego serves in the interests of the pleasure principle; it seeks after all to forestall the unpleasure that would be caused if the repressed part of the psyche were to break free' (p. 58). For an explanation of wish-fulfilment see p. 71.

Then, curiously, a confused Max suddenly ceases to acknowledge the make-believe nature of his story and begins to worry that he cannot share his supposedly secret identity with either his colleagues or his students: ‘Muy difícil era que, en un mundo así, a alguien le importa la misteriosa doble vida del professor Max Gutiérrez’ (p. 30). Max’s fantasies hence isolate him from the world of his contemporaries as they abolish the possibility of communication. Whereas his encounter with the world should have led to his reintegration into it, his actions, characterised by a deception of memory, serve merely to compound his psychological alienation. The above quote introduces the notion of the double into the text. Max, suffering from a split personality, is not only alienated from those around him; unaware of who he really is and without a fixed identity, he is also in a state of existential alienation from himself. Isolated, through fantasy, from his community and his ‘self’, Max is, in Rosemary Jackson’s words, one of those characters who have ‘ceased to coincide with themselves’.⁵²

Alter Egos and The Double

The notion of the double has already been discussed in the previous chapters of this thesis (see Chapter 3, pp. 121-22 and Chapter 4, pp. 198). In *Dos señoras conversan*, Estela and Carmela function as a system of diffracting mirrors, one representing the good side of the ego and the other the bad, so that between them, they complement each other and form a more whole subject. In *No me esperen en abril*, Manongo’s contemporaries note with alarm the adoption of a split-personality that develops with

⁵² See Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*, p. 13.

the realisation that his two worlds, that of the idealised past and the true present, are utterly irreconcilable. As we shall see in *El huerto de mi amada*, the devious Salinas Céspedes twins are the mirror image of each other, functioning as two dark sides of the same coin.

In *Reo de nocturnidad* the notion of the double goes considerably further. The first clue to the schism in Max's character is the distinction placed upon the words 'este' and 'aquel' in the first sentence of the novel. This sentence hints at a fractured, fragmented personality, but Max cannot rationally be two different people at the same moment in time. In this sense, Max has gone beyond the limits of what Leo Bersani terms 'a centred, socially defined, time-bound self' (quoted in Hunter, p. 93). Later, to Claire, Max confesses that up to *three* different people exist within him. Initially, it is simply a question of two sides of Max's personality existing coterminously, Max confesses that he was: 'alegre y extrovertido, en presencia de mis colegas... pero sumamente angustioso, triste y callado durante que permanecía encerrado en mi casa' (p. 135). Later these two opposite sides of his character metamorphose until each assumes a life of its own and he functions as three separate people.

Max conceptualises the rift between the various facets of his personality as a 'divorcio tan profundo entre el professor que perdura en mí y aquel hombre que bajó del tren' (p. 177). He returns time and again to the episode surrounding the train because it represents the moment in which the final processes of his mental collapse began. The use of the term 'divorce' is perhaps a play on the rupture with Ornella, since this is effectively the catalyst for Max's breakdown. Once again, to arrive at the

realisation that he is leading a double-life, Max turns to memory, to a 'recuerdo infantil' (p. 177). The passage is long but worth quoting in full; in it Max humorously describes how, even as a schoolboy, a split personality was inherent in his character:

Yo siempre sorprendía a las monjas con un doble comportamiento, a veces realmente desconcertante. En cosa de impresión, según decía una de ellas, podía dejar de dar la impresión de ser un chico callado, muy ordenado y disciplinado, y dar de golpe la impresión totalmente opuesta. Y así se lo dijo a mi madre la superiora de aquel colegio, un día en que vino a hablar con ella de alguna fechoría que yo acababa de hacer, me parece. Mi madre, que era una mujer realmente divertida y llena de un perspicaz sentido del humor, dejó turulata a la monja con su respuesta.

-Es que Maximiliano no es sólo Maximiliano- empezó a explicarle a la pobre superiora que, la verdad, no se distinguía particularmente por sus luces.

- Mi hijo se llama Maximiliano Herminio que es un nombre muy antiguo en la familia. Bien. Maximiliano y Herminio se entienden y complementan a la perfección. El primero es emotivo, nervioso, y puede ser la pata de Judas, con su perdón, madre superiora. En cambio, Herminio como que hubiera nacido por las ciencias exactas, los manuales de urbanidad, y para impedir que Maximiliano se convierta en un ser enteramente desordenado e impuntual. Nadie más voluntarioso, disciplinado y puntual que Herminio Y a él le debemos usted y yo que, en el fondo, Maximiliano obtenga resultados escolares a todo nivel, incluyendo conducta, aunque a veces dé la impresión de que está a punto de poner el mundo a patas arriba. ¿Ve usted, madre? (pp. 177-78).

At the time of crisis, Max's alter-egos rear their heads, so that it is as if several people cohabit simultaneously within him. The above passage, although the product of his mother's sense of humour, reveals that he was always of such a disposition. A third, latent subdivision of his self also exists to whom Max refers to simply as 'Max'. 'Max' is the tortured soul that was born when Ornella left Max, plunging him into the depths of an insatiable despair:

hoy mis clases las dicta un fatigado Herminio, desgastado ya por la pésima calidad de vida que le ha dado Maximiliano, desde su patética y desolada relación con Ornella despertaba al doliente y miserable Max que dormía a en él, que entonces, en aquellos meses atroces de 1983, parecía buscar desesperadamente el apoyo que en otros tiempos le diera

Herminio is hence the strong side of Max Gutiérrez's character, the one who struggles for order and sanity; Maximiliano is the weak side to his personality who allowed Ornella to destroy him and finally, Max, is the miserable, tortured character who was roused by the deceit of Ornella Manuzio. Max has become a disintegrated subject and the plurality of selves produced poses a very immediate threat to his existence and his internal (psychological) integrity. There is evidence in Bryce's work of the crippling potential of love although, later, as will be shown in the case of Claire, love is a double-edged sword since it can also provide salvation. The theme of the duplicity, or in this case, the multiplicity of the self, is a common theme in the genre of fantasy. Through the dichotomy of Maximiliano and Herminio, and the trychotomy established when 'Max' surfaces, Max becomes a character who is 'other' to himself. The narratives of Shelley, Wilde, Stevenson and, of course, Dostoyevsky, demonstrate the fashion in which the 'origin of the other is internal' (Jackson, p. 53). The doubles function in their narratives as manifestations of good and evil. However, in the case of *Reo de nocturnidad*, they function as manifestations of weakness and strength.⁵⁴ The other sides to Max's character are hence opposite (as is the case with Herminio) or exaggerated (as is the case with 'Max') facets of the self. Max represents the destructive side of Gutiérrez's character, the side generated by feelings of inadequacy *vis-à-vis* Ornella and Sipriot:

⁵³ Robert Louis Stevenson, *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), ed. Robert Drury. [1886]. In some sense, Max's awareness of his split personality or 'double-consciousness', is reminiscent of Dr. Jekyll, who also recognises the schism in his character. See for example Jekyll's words, 'And hence, as I think, it came about that Edward Hyde was so much smaller, slighter and younger than Henry Jekyll... When I looked upon that ugly idol in the glass, I was conscious of no repugnance... This, too, was myself... I had now two characters as well as two appearances' (pp. 61-62). Henry Jekyll, like Max, relates his story in the first person, in the chapter of the work, entitled, 'Henry Jekyll's Full Statement of the Case' (pp. 58- 73), the inclusion of his own testimony functions as a 'fiction within a fiction', as does Max's account of his past to Claire in *Reo de nocturnidad*..

⁵⁴ Max explains: 'me convierto en una suerte de presa; en un animal herido y atrapado' (p. 19).

Maximiliano era el hombre que no lograba contener a Max en su empresa de autodestrucción y Herminio era ese professor aún cumplido y puntual que soportaba la feroz tarea de repetirse de paporreta hasta en su seriedad, reproduciendo incluso, pero cada vez más agotadoramente, el entusiasmo de años mejores. Lo malo, claro, es que lograba reproducirlo a costa de su sistema nervioso y con la honda y constante preocupación de alimentar con ello la insomne y desesperada euforia del incontenible Max. (p. 179)

At several points in the text, when Max is particularly unhappy with his vision of himself, or an event is too traumatic for him to recount, he resorts to referring to himself in the third person, in order to achieve the desired distancing effect. A good example of this occurs when Max remembers the last time he saw Ornella and Sipriot, who, in order to swindle money out of Max have hatched an elaborate ploy whereby Sipriot will pretend to beat Ornella, demanding a ransom for her release. Both parties understand that Max's love for Ornella is his Achilles' heel and he is persuaded to sell his apartment and car and hand over the profits to Sipriot. Having been deceived through what he esteemed more than anything, namely his passion for Ornella, and unable to accept that he has been utterly tricked by the lovers, his perspective undergoes a transition from first-person to third-person narration:

absolutamente todo había sido un montaje hecho a la medida del perfecto imbécil que insistía en vivir la ilusión de una felicidad que creyó inherente a su naturaleza y que, sin dars cuenta, fue intercambiando por limosnas de amor aue al final se daba a sí mismo, en el cruel trayecto que lo llevó de Ischia a la más ciega desesperación. (p. 95)

This is an example of how Max, at times, dissociates himself from his actions in order to retain his dignity and sanity. It is as if Max, as a narrator/character, steps 'out' or rather 'back' from the text. In this way, he is able to stand aside from his personal involvement in a humiliating situation, and distance himself from the 'imbécil' who is referred to in the third person. He is experiencing himself in an indirect manner, using language in order to create a protective shield around his ego.

Max occasionally refers to his status as an intellectual or university professor in the third person and always with the adjective 'aburrido' (p. 74, p. 80) accompanying it. This is because he feels that, in comparison to the international con artist, Sipriot, he is unworthy of Ornella's love. Losing the 'yo' of the narrative discourse and metamorphosing into the 'él', also represents, for Max, his loss of sense of self and identity. Thus he manages to displace the rejection, by attributing it not to the simple fact that Ornella doesn't love him, but rather to the fact that he is intellectually superior to the couple: 'me redujera nuevamente a la misérrima calidad de resignado y doliente imbécil que le corresponde a un intelectual acomplejado ante un hombre de acción' (p. 74).⁵⁵ Max proceeds to tell the unfortunate pair that he is a secret agent, precariously involved in a *coup d'état*. Due to his superior intellectual status Max believes that he can fool them with the inclusion of words into his story such as 'complot', 'estrategia' and 'tráfico de armas' (p. 88).

The Destructive Potential of Love

At this point, before consideration of the 'secret-agent' complex mentioned above and the *soirées* Max and his entourage devote to it, it is worth giving some consideration to Max's relationships with Ornella and Sipriot and the adversarial effects that they have on him, since it is Max's inferiority complex that induces the neurosis which leads to his insomnia. When Max first meets Ornella he observes that she is someone 'atormentada por el paso de los años' (p. 66), which is a bleak reflection on the effect that the passing of time leaves on the soul. Ornella, once a beautiful model, is bitterly aware that she is past her prime, and so the question of the

⁵⁵ Max remarks: 'Diablos, que fácil era mentirle a personas que, al nivel cultural, están muy por debajo de uno' (pp. 87-88).

ravages of time and the destruction it engenders is brought into focus. Ornella is terrified of ageing, not for sentimental reasons, but because of the aesthetic damage it brings, she recognises that physical beauty and youth are fleeting and finite. She reflects nostalgically on the time in her life when she was beautiful. Once again memory and, in Ornella's case, the inability to forget prove debilitating. She tells Max, 'si lograra olvidar que una vez fui una buena modelo, he cumplido los treinta y cinco años y estoy gorda' (p. 74) and forbids him to speak of adolescents (p. 75) which suggests that Ornella, too, experiences her past as a destructive force that consumes her. Interestingly, Ornella's physical description resembles that of Tere in *No me esperen en abril*; she has a 'nariz perfecta' (p. 74), is 'pálida' (p. 75) and her hair is 'castaño y corto'. Ornella's preoccupations express society's obsession with the cult of beauty and youth, the despair at their loss and the lengths to which one goes in order to recuperate them.

Olivier Sipriot, however, a former lover of Ornella, returns to her life and destroys Max's illusions, as he soon realises that Ornella's love for him was nothing but a delusion on his part. A bizarre love-triangle is subsequently born. Through the sexual act, Max attempts to banish Olivier Sipriot from Ornella's thoughts; he tells her:

'-Entonces, abrázame y hagamos el amor hasta que Olivier Sipriot desaparezca, al menos por esta noche' (p. 76). Max's belief that making love to Ornella will expel him from her thoughts is a fantasy that resembles a game, based on the notion that an action, here an intimate one, will free her mind from the evil hold of Sipriot. Sipriot is a member of the criminal underworld and so Max sets up the dichotomy of good and evil in his mind, envisioning Sipriot as all that stands for corruption in the world. Similarly, Ornella entertains the fantasy of accompanying Max to Peru, believing

that this will enable her to exorcise both the ghost of Sipriot and the ghost of her former, beautiful self: ‘a ella le gustaba huir de la realidad inmediata hablando conmigo de un viaje al Perú que jamás haríamos’ (p. 77).

Max’s nickname for, Sipriot, ‘El Aventurero’, reflects his own personal anxieties that the other brings out in him and betrays the fact that Max knows that his rival ‘encarna(n) posibilidades que él no realizará’ (Ramírez-Franco, p. 507). Max tries to imitate Sipriot, his antithesis in several different ways, which shows that whilst the latter is the object of his hate and he seeks his annihilation, he simultaneously desires him, needs almost, to consume him. The first image that Max has of Sipriot is of the latter in his white Alfa Romeo car (p. 71), entwined in Ornella’s arms. Max, whose only desire is to be in Sipriot’s place, later buys the exact model that Sipriot owned, only newer and whiter and more luxurious. This recalls a previous scene in *No me esperen en abril*, where a jilted Manongo arrives at Tere’s house, only to find her in a red MG, kissing the car’s owner. Years later, Manongo will buy himself his own MG sports car in the racing green colour, which for its authenticity and classic status is superior to his rival’s model and somehow allows Manongo to settle his score, recuperate his past humiliation and triumph in the present.

Through simultaneously wishing to become and destroy Sipriot, Max loses sight of who he is. Ornella’s indifference towards him has similar effects. Hence when she chooses to ignore him or discards him in favour of Sipriot, Max has the sensation of ceasing to exist. At one point, during his return to Perugia, Max recognises that: ‘Ornella ni siquiera me vio y entonces sí que dejé de existir’ (p. 78). Here, it is palpable that Max’s conception of his own identity and existence is inauthentic, since

he only exists if he exists in Ornella's eyes. When Ornella ignores him, he feels invisible as his existence is dependent on her. Similarly, he sees himself as 'boring' because he is seeing himself through the gaze of Sipriot. When he observes that the lovers are sporting wedding rings, he sees his existence slip away from him once again, since the only identity that he can conceive of for himself is that of Ornella's lover. As his project of belonging to Ornella goes up in smoke, he loses sight of his dream and, since his dreams have been the founding basis for his existence, Max loses his identity: 'Y como si una vez más yo no existiera y ahora, además, no hubiera existido nunca, me explicaron lo de su matrimonio con lujo de detalles y mil excusas, no bien adivinaron la razón por la que, de golpe, yo me había enmudecido' (p. 84). Left without a cohesive and coherent identity, Max is obliged to actively reconstruct a new identity of his own. Furthermore, Max has built his existence around Ornella and worships her. He likens her to an almost godlike entity when he says, 'aquellos cristianos resuelven sus problemas con Dios. También yo resuelvo directamente mis problemas con Ornella' (p. 238-39). Consequently, when Max loses Ornella, he finds himself in the dilemma of a man who has lost his faith in God.

In Perugia, Ornella and Sipriot are destitute and living as vagabonds. Understanding that they are now dependent on his 'saving' them, Max decides to 'steal' Sipriot's identity. Fostering a new identity is a means of disguising his real condition from himself and restoring his pride: 'Había llegado pues el momento de convertirme, yo, sí, yo, en el otro Aventurero, el de verdad, el de la vida oculta, el hombre que escondía toda una doble vida tras la apariencia digna, apacible y aburrida de un profesor' (p. 87). This represents the time in Max's life where the commencement of his imaginary double-existence can be pinpointed, as he metamorphoses into 'el

Nuevo Aventurero' (p. 87), in an act that attempts to displace Spiriot as he appropriates his identity. Max proceeds to explain to the lovers his identity as a secret-agent, employed by the state to realise a *coup d'état* and, resorting to the only card he has to play, namely his intelligence, he strategically infuses his sentences with words such as 'tráfico de armas' and 'complot' (p. 88). Max further deludes himself by excusing Ornella for her vile actions. When she steals his wallet for example, he pardons her, only later as he dictates his story to Claire, does he recognise that it was a 'ciega fantasía de mi parte' (p. 91). Later, he acknowledges that his tales are based on lies: '- Entonces debe ser que pasé siempre muy rápido por la India – empecé a mentir, porque en mi vida he puesto un pie en la patria de Gandhi' (p. 157). These recognitions suggests that the process of writing his memoirs is allowing Max to acknowledge his fantasies and distinguish between fact and fiction.

Theatrical Metaphors and Music: Fictionalising the Self

Max's invented identity resurfaces later in the narrative, when he recounts his exploits in convincing fashion to the group of friends that he has met in Montpellier at 'Bernard's Bar'. The tales he fabricates become the focal point of the soirées conducted in Max's apartment and assume such power over both storyteller and public that they begin to impinge on reality. Claire realizes that through the process of fictionalising his history, Max appears to be distancing himself from his life. She says that he is speaking 'como si fuera(s) tomando distancia frente a los hechos' (p. 117). Max refers to these reunions as 'patéticas veladas' (p. 158) and it is interesting to note the abundance of theatrical metaphors that Max employs when describing

them. This points to the close relationship between reality and the spectacle created by the imagination. Examples of this trend are the references to ‘el gran teatro de mi pequeño mundo’ (p. 158), ‘salón espectáculo’ (p. 161) and the words: ‘Elisá y el Gitano se habían convertido en nuevos e indispensables *espectadores* del *escenario* que había *montado* en mi departamento’ (p. 154) (my italics). Such references to the theatre introduce the notion of role-playing and acting into Max’s tales. The implication is that Max is enacting a performance, like an actor who is pretending to be somebody that he isn’t, since the actor creates the illusion of being a person or character other to him/herself. Max is creating an image of his self and an image of the world that is not the veritable one. In referring to his living room as an ‘auditorio’ (p. 158), Max manages to transpose a fictitious space upon a real space, through the application of imagination. Max will later openly acknowledge to Claire that he was leading a double life (‘mi doble vida’), which he still has a tendency to validate, to the extent to which Claire has to remind him that he is ‘hablando de (su) vida, no de una obra de ficción’ (p. 177). Since Max feels ‘mal, solo, triste, inútil y abandonado’ (p. 126) he needs fiction in order to create a positive self-image.

The principal difference between these fantasies and those previously discussed is Ornella’s presence. However, her presence is only implied, since Max fantasises her death, which is a way of exorcising her ghost from his life and is possibly a manifestation of Max’s unconscious desires. If Ornella is dead, after all, Max would be liberated from her definitively and he is, quite clearly, caught up in a struggle between wanting her back and wanting to be freed from her hold. Killing Ornella off in his stories is a means for Max to purge the past: if Ornella died in Liberia, she cannot possibly have abandoned him and be living happily in Brazil with Sipriot,

where the couple have fled from the law. To the ‘asistentes’ (p. 161) present, Max recounts their involvement in a string of ‘conflictos políticos, militares y sociales, entre los que figuraban, por supuesto, sabotajes, raptos, acciones terroristas y actos de espionaje de los que hice uso y abuso’ (p. 158). The audience remains ‘crédulo, conmovido y entregado’ (p. 158), suggesting that his fictions wield a power over the audience as well as Max. The situation becomes farsical when each member of the group, aware of the discrepancies in Max’s accounts, find themselves arguing about who is the owner of the ‘versión real’ (p. 260) of events. Once again, it is, Max avows, his ‘superioridad cultural’ (p.158), which allows him to deceive his ‘espectadores’ (p. 151) as Max admits that the above events he was involved in were transposed from a history book that his editor had given to him and that the others, with their limited access to culture, are ignorant of. Max journeys across the globe with Ornella, who meets her death in various different countries, including Brasil, Liberia and Tanzania. The last country on the list is clearly a pointed reference to Hemingway’s *The Snows of Kilimanjaro*,⁵⁶ which is evidence that Max transposes fiction into his own fictionalised story. In this way, not only Bryce, but also Max, is rendering homage to Hemingway and, the literary and non-literary universes merge once again as Max’s passions and literary intentions mirror those of Bryce. When Max remembers ‘no lográbamos rescatar a Ornella herida de muerte en las cumbres heladas del Kilimanjaro’ (p. 110) he is, curiously, transposing Ornella’s guilt onto himself. Max isn’t looking for vengeance and so this displacement of guilt would suggest that he is merely placing himself in a stronger position than Ornella to invert the weakness of character that she has provoked in him: ‘como cada vez que se acordaban de mí, ella y Olivier Sipriot debían desternillarse de risa, qué duda cabe,

⁵⁶ Ernest Hemingway, ‘The Snows of Kilimanjaro’, in *The Snows of Kilimanjaro* (London: Arrow Books, 1994) [1939].

como mejor sería que estuviese muerta' (p. 125). These words suggest that Max kills Ornella in his fantasies as a means of restoring his dignity, rather than as a means of gratuitously gaining retribution. Only Ornella could have saved Max from his despair through a return to his love. In Max's fantasies he enacts a role-reversal by attempting to save Ornella but failing, thus transferring onto her the vestiges of misery that she has made of his life.

By bumping Ornella off, Max is purging life through imagination; as he explains to Claire, 'no podía aceptar la realidad acerca de Ornella y preferí arrastrar el orgullo imaginativo y doloroso que se desencadenó en mí' (p. 98). That he didn't accept his stories were false in the past, but does at the moment of writing his memoirs, is evidence that Lanusse's project is enjoying a degree of success. He continues:

La muerte de Ornella me redimía. La vida de Ornella me hundía en la miseria moral. Pero si yo sobreponía una nueva y trágica verdad a la vieja, me salvaba de la vergüenza, del dolor, y hasta del horror que me producía la verdad. (p. 98)

Max refers to his spectacles as 'patéticas representaciones' (p. 150) and representation, signifying either an imitation and a performance or production in both the Spanish and English languages, could here have a double meaning. A representation, is by definition 'an image, likeness or reproduction of a thing';⁵⁷ Max might be suggesting here that his stories are not the truth but his altered representation of it. Her death also allows Max to redeem Ornella and see her through the same eyes that he saw her with when they first met, before she had abused and betrayed him: 'Y volvía a ver a Ornella con la misma mirada, que me hizo sacarla de una trattoria en Ischia' (p. 98). Memory alters reality so that Ornella

⁵⁷ Referenced in *The Oxford English Reference Dictionary* (eds Judith Pearsall & Bill Trumble) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 2nd edition, p. 1223.

has never hurt Max and he can reconstruct his relationship with her as a positive affair, yet, at the same time, we see that his memories are able to send large parts of his past into the realms of oblivion.

A final important aspect of Max's fantasies is that he manages to perpetuate Ornella's presence. He wonders, '¿qué haría yo si olvidaba a Ornella, la mujer cuya memoria me mantenía en vida?' (p. 188). This attitude betrays, once again, the inauthenticity of Max's perception of self. A memory exists not in the phenomenal world but rather in the non-material space of the mind; Max is hence basing his existence on an ethereal condition which is no longer a reality, but his mere subjective representation of what has been. Memory, as has been shown, can lie. Bound to the act that Max undertakes as he recounts his stories to his audience is the notion of the oral storyteller, an aspect of literary culture that Bryce has confessed that he is fascinated with.⁵⁸ In this instance, subject matter mirrors narrative style, since the figure of the oral narrator and the element of the oral narrative are introduced into a text which, as has been stated, has a decidedly oral tone and is primarily concerned with the function of telling a story. This is especially evident in Max's description of his narration process as 'las más *fonética y lingüística* de las nostalgias' (p. 160).

Aside from using his imaginative capacities to reinvent himself, Max also uses music to create a new identity. The potential of music to evoke past memories has already been discussed above where it has been shown that listening to specific songs can facilitate a return to a past self. In the case of Tino Rossi's (1907-1983) *Marinella*

⁵⁸ See Alfredo Bryce Echenique, 'Bryce Echenique por sí mismo', in Julio Ortega & María Fernanda Lander (eds), *Alfredo Bryce Echenique: ante la crítica*, pp. 4-29 (p. 20).

(1936), however, Max uses a song that has played no role in his life, in order to reinvent himself. In the apartment directly above Max's lives an old judge who has retired. Every Sunday, without fail, at exactly a quarter to five in the afternoon, the old man puts the song *Marinella* on the record player and listens to it once (p. 126). Max can be sure that the gentleman, who lives alone, is alive and has survived the week, only when he hears the song on Sundays: 'Sólo por aquel patético *Marinella*... me enteraba a saber que seguía con vida ese viejo cuya cara no llegué a ver ni el día en que se lo llevaron muerto' (p. 126). The elderly judge hence becomes a metaphor for the solitude of modern life in the narrative. This notion is further emphasised by the absence of community links and relationships between individuals, since Max never meets the man who was his neighbour, despite cohabiting in the same building as him for several years. Max's personal solitude is hence echoed in the loneliness and isolation in which the old man lives. Sundays, as Max observes are days devoted to the family and, since Max has no family in Montpellier, he is obliged to spend his Sundays wandering the deserted city streets and alone in his apartment: 'éste era un día reservado a la familia, a los padres, a los abuelos, a los hijos, y que no tenía cabida en él' (p. 126). As Max listens to the gentleman alone in his apartment, his awareness of his own solitude is reinforced.

The lyrics of the refrain suggest that the old man is remembering a past love:

Quand le soleil se levera
Je sais que tu partiras
Et que notre roman joli
À jamais sera fini
Oui mais avant, comme autrefois
Viens vite tout près de moi
Et pour une dernière fois.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ <http://www.paroles.net/chansons/18125.htm> (consulted 1 April 2005)

and in this way his condition reflects Max's own lost passion with Ornella. Familiar with the song, which he recalls was a favourite of his parents, Max surely sees his own affair with Ornella and his desire to recuperate his lost love, mirrored in the words of the song. As both the old man and Max listen to the words: 'Ah ...reste encore dans mes bras / Avec toi jusqu'au jour / Danser cette rumba d'amour / Son rythme dans / Nous emporte loin de tout / Vers un pays mystérieux', it transports them to their past life, since the song is about the attempt to cling onto a love-story that the singer knows has finished, yet wishes to keep alive. In this way, the song echoes all the futility and hopelessness of Max's love for Ornella. The nostalgic tone of both lyrics and musical score send Max into a spiral of depression and constitute an invitation for Max to 'ingresar en el infierno del abandono total y la certidumbre de algún mal atroz, tal vez la locura' (p. 127). On Sunday nights, Max attempts to combat his insomnia by listening to a selection of his records, but every one turns in to *Marinella*, as he projects his sense of 'aplastamiento anímico y moral' (p. 129), his solitude and sadness onto every one.

Later in the novel, two students of theatre, Sylvaine and Francine, whom Max admits possess the same 'camaleónica capacidad de convertirse en otros seres humanos' (p. 193) as himself, take up residence in his apartment. Max, aware of their capacity for happiness is plunged further into despair and, desperate that they should not learn the true reason behind his sadness, begins a bizarre ritualistic practice that recalls Manongo's 'ensoñación'. The first step he takes is to close every pair of curtains in the apartment which is a step further from the single set of curtains which he would close as one of the pre-conditions of his performances to his group of friends. This suggests that his fantasies are no longer limited to a confined area of his life but are

now spilling over and flowing into all areas: ‘El gran teatro de mi pequeño mundo se ampliaba de esa manera su escenario, extendiéndolo al resto de mi departamento’ (p. 193). Here, Max resembles a set designer preparing the sets for his performance. At the same time he stops referring to his bedroom as his ‘dormitorio’ and begins to refer to it as his ‘alcoba’ (p. 193) which, with its connotations of ‘anti-chamber’, are reminiscent of the vocabulary of eighteenth-century theatre, an area in which the two actresses specialise. This is an example of how Max re-names material objects familiar to him in a bid to forge a new identity.⁶⁰ The next step in his plan is to place a photo of Ornella on his bedside table and finally, to search for a copy of Tino Rossi’s *Marinella*. Unable to obtain a copy, and aggrieved by the quality of the only photograph that Ornella has given him, which he refers to as ‘una miserable foto’ that ‘me había dejado la muy desgraciada’ (p. 193) he decides to replace them. He subsequently substitutes them with an ‘amarillento fotograma de Alida Valli’ and *De niña a mujer*, by Julio Iglesias (p. 194), since the latter’s voice reminds him of Rossi’s. The attachment to a photograph of a person that Max has never met is redolent of Pedro Balbuena’s obsession with the photo from a magazine in Peru, of a model named Sophie whom he has never known. Here, the photos underscore the illusory nature of their passions since neither Max nor Pedro are any closer to fulfilling their desires of love with Ornella or Pedro’s various companions respectively, than they are with the unattainable stranger in the photo. With this photo, that evokes unattainable love, and a voice that recalls Rossi’s, Max sits in his chair at exactly a quarter to five, every Sunday, closes the curtains drinks a few glasses of champagne and dons a velvet jacket. Here is an example of how Max, like Manongo, uses alcohol to induce the processes of the imagination. As alcohol is a

⁶⁰ In Chapter 6, p. 340, we shall see how Carlitos y Natalia also rename their bedroom ‘alcoba’ in an attempt to redefine their world in semantic terms, in order that it represent their love.

prerequisite for Manongo's 'ensoñación', so too is it necessary for Max to indulge in alcohol to recreate his past with Ornella. He explains: 'Ahí me tumbo, ahí pienso en Ornella, ahí la invoco, la llamo, la convoco cada noche. Y ella viene, termina por venir, entre trago y trago de whisky puro y duro termina por venir' (p. 239). The bizarre ritual, Max's attempt to recreate a new identity that approximates that of the elderly judge, whose Sundays he begins to re-enact. As to why Max chooses to assume the judge's identity, it is possible to hypothesise that he identifies with his solitude and the nostalgia that we must assume Max believes that the old man felt every Sunday as he repeatedly played his song. Max explains:

al final opté por enmarcar una amarillenta foto de Alida Valli, en *Senso*, y por tocar todos los domingos, a un cuarto para las cinco en punto de la tarde, *De niña a mujer*, una canción de Julio Iglesias, cuya voz me hacía pensar en la de Tino Rossi, luego en el fallecido juez que fue mi primer vecino de los altos, en seguida en Alida Valli vestida de juvenil en decadencia veneciana, y después ya en nada, o más bien en la nada, dado que mi estado de ánimo era lo único sincero y real del famoso espectáculo.
(p. 194)

With all the conditions in place, Max sits in darkness and evokes a fantasy world in his salon. Through music and its capacity to evoke memories, Max is establishing an imaginary community with the deceased judge and, the photo of a decadent young Venetian clearly leads to memories of the once beautiful Ornella. As Max performs his ritual, he is able to '*ser solo en Montpellier, como un juez jubilado en domingo por la tarde*' (p. 194), which suggests that he identifies with the judge, whose existential alienation he believes to be reflected in his own. The imaginary community that Max forges is based upon loneliness and nostalgia, and, Max is further alienated, both from the judge and himself, because of his false expectations: 'Alida Valli no era Ornella Manuzio ni Julio Iglesias Tino Rossi' (p. 195). This suggests that Max is losing his grip on reality and this is further emphasised when it

transpires that the ritual is presently no longer confined to Sundays: ‘mientras tomaba una copa de champán y brindaba por Ornella, al compás de *Marinella* y a un cuarto para las cinco en punto de la tarde de un domingo, y de pronto se me aparecía la voz de Tino Rossi y me informaba que era jueves, no domingo, que además tenía adelantadísimo el reloj’ (p. 244). Max is rapidly losing track of the fixities of both space and time. *Marinella* is an example of how a song, if listened to continuously, can provide a means of escape from one’s present conditions.

The Anguish of Exile: Marginalisation and Nostalgia

As Max listens to *Marinella* and reflects on his solitude, his thoughts drift to the Arabs whom he has often seen aimlessly wandering the streets of Montpellier: ‘Después pensaba en los tristes árabes que caminaban desolados por la ciudad semidesierta’ (p. 126-27). He sees his own wretchedness reflected in these rootless men:

los árabes debían seguir caminando por una ciudad semidesierta, deteniéndose a veces en una esquina para conversar, con las manos en los bolsillos y la cabeza siempre agachada, esperando a ese tipo que aún nadie conocía en el Montpellier de los domingos, pero que no tardaba en acercárseles y que fatalmente iba a ser yo. (p. 127)

While this appears to be a rather grim portrait of the city of Montpellier, it is important to remember that Max is projecting his own gloom on to the city and that at other points in the text, he acknowledges its historic and architectural beauty. Reality can change for Max, depending on the eyes through which he sees it. When he is miserable and finds himself alone at night in the city streets, he describes them as ‘aquellas angostísimas y enrevesadas calles de fría piedra’ (pp. 161-62), but acknowledges that they would appear, ‘hermosas en cualquier otra circunstancia,

hostiles y angustiosas ahora' (p. 162).⁶¹ Ornella is altering not only the image that he has of himself, but also the image that he has of the outside world: 'Me he quedado tan solo y triste, tras la muerte de Ornella, que hasta a la soleada Montpellier la veo en blanco y negro' (p. 102).

The image of the Arabs, however, with their heads bowed, is not Max's subjective opinion, for the men truly cut a rootless and lowly group of misfits. The Arab diaspora found in the ancient, innercity centre of Montpellier is mentioned at several points in the narrative. An example of this is:

unos cuantos inmigrantes árabes que paseaban con su aspecto desolado o que se paraban en las esquinas, con las manos en los bolsillos y la cabeza siempre agachada, para conversar en un idioma que me era completamente extraño. Su imagen era la de unos eternos perdedores, la de seres que nacieron sin esperanza alguna de participar algún día en el festín que podía ser la vida en Montpellier. La idea de ser yo uno de ellos me espantaba y por momentos hasta me hacía sentir que era un extranjero extraviado con su gran pena en un mundo totalmente indiferente, si no hostil. (pp. 125-26)

The Arabs come to symbolise in the text the rootless and nomadic existence of the foreigner in exile. They are marginalised figures who are banished from the life of the country in which they have taken up residence and remain displaced. They are not afforded the status of legitimate subjects and remain excluded from the community in which they have come to live. With their heads always bowed in a gesture of humiliation and their inactive hands permanently in their pockets they appear to be aware that their only identity is a non-identity of outsider. They are seen, by everyone who forms part of the community as a homogenous group of people without individual status or merits, always being referred to collectively as 'los

⁶¹ On page 33 of the novel Max, for example, refers to 'ese delicioso sol de Montpellier'.

árabes'. Max, in his loneliness and unable to establish genuine links with those around him, sees his sorrowful condition reflected in theirs.

The experience of exile in France is examined in detail in this novel. Since Bryce has spent the majority of his life in self-imposed exile, the experiences of those in exile in his narratives, must surely be familiar to him. The predominant impression given of the condition of the exile in his narrative is of a relatively traumatic one, as seen in the short story 'Muerte de Sevilla en Madrid' or *Tantas veces Pedro*. Bryce's exiles find themselves trapped in a cycle of illusions and disillusion, hopes and disenchantments, departures and returns, as they attempt to forge new identities for themselves. The pressures they face cover a broad spectrum, ranging from nostalgia for the homeland, a sense of not belonging, and the prejudices they must combat. In *Reo de nocturnidad*, these conditions are encountered by various characters including the false political exile, Nieves Solano, and the Moroccan immigrant, Nadine Auriol, whom Bryce befriends. Nothing however, formulates such a damning and devastating depiction of the inhumanity and the psychological consequences of living as an exile, than the death of Passepartout el Iraní. Passepartout takes his life by lying, in an inebriated state, on the motorway, awaiting the arrival of a car. The message that the police find in his pocket reads: 'Como el exilio se me estaba haciendo un poco largo, he querido aprovechar la ocasión que me brinda mi amigo François. ¡Adiós, compañeros y gracias por la acogida!' (p. 189). 'Acogida', signifying both 'welcome' and 'shelter', is palpably far from the reception that the desperate Iranian feels he has been offered.

The phrase that perhaps best sums up Nadine Auriol is 'Nadine Auriol era un montón de gente' (p.209). Nadine is a many-faceted character who can switch from a caring angel to a vicious demon in a matter of minutes; although it is the latter side of her character that Max habitually experiences. Max describes Nadine to Claire during an excerpt of dialogue, with the words 'Nadine Auriol era Nadine Uno, y Dos, y Tres, y Cuatro, y vete tú a saber cuántos números más era Nadine' (p. 209). The text suggests that her disequilibrium which almost amounts to a personality disorder is the result of her (non)status as an exile. Max meets Nadine in Bernard's Bar during the most acute crisis he experiences in Montpellier, which will be discussed later. It is Nadine who manages to get Max interned in the clinic and after doing so she disappears without a trace. Max explains this to Claire by insisting: 'es que era un fantasma' (p. 209). Nadine is a phantom of sorts, although not the sort of phantom that Max believes her to be. Nadine can be considered a ghost in the text because, like a soul in purgatory, she exists between two worlds, but is present in neither. When she is in France, in one of her two apartments in Paris and Montpellier, she is living in Morocco in spirit, whereas when she is in Morocco, she is psychologically living in France. She experiences this condition as an existential angst since she is unable to articulate a cohesive identity, and complains to Max: '¿Tú sabes lo horrible que es sentirse francesa en Marruecos y marroquí en Francia?' (p. 219). Nadine appears to feel both an exile in Morocco and an exile in France; she belongs nowhere, feels solidarity with no-one and as such lives a life shadowed by solitude. Nadine feels neither Moroccan nor French and hence is unable to articulate a national identity for herself. This notion is best summed up in the descriptions Max gives of her childhood homes as 'la monumental casa-hacienda, o más bien Castillo de la Loire-hacienda, de la gran propiedad agrícola de su infancia en Marruecos' (p. 228),

and 'la vilá que habitaron en Casá fuera un perfecto aunque ampliado calco de una veraniega villa de la Costa Azul' (p. 228).

Max compares Nadine's status to that of the 'first Peruvian', Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, born of the union of an Incan princess and a Spanish conquistador, when he explains that: 'lo primero que hizo fue trasladarse a España y escribir sobre lo visto y oído en su infancia cusqueña, aunque tal vez sería más exacto decir que a aquel hombre... le dio por escribir sobre lo visto y oído perdido' (p. 234).⁶² Inca Garcilaso de la Vega's quest to convert memories of the homeland into print perhaps more closely resembles Bryce's works, since many of them consider Peru and Peruvians from a place in Europe. Furthermore, works such as *Un mundo para Julius*, *No me esperen en abril* and *El huerto de mi amada*, are based on Bryce's recollections of a childhood spent in Lima and, were all written from a point outside of Peru. However, Nadine is, in effect, re-writing her own past through the amalgamation of objects belonging to her native land in her department. When Max likens her furniture to relics in a museum that belonged to 'la belle époque' (p. 29) of her life, he recognises that Nadine is using objects to recall her past, in much the same way that Proust does in his work. The phrase 'belle époque' appears at several points in the narrative to express an idealised past. Max goes a step further, however, when he suggests that nostalgia is an inherent aspect of the Peruvian's character. The 'pobre Peruano I', as Max recalls, wrote his *Comentarios*: 'en los cuales convirtió el Perú en el país, por esencia, en todo el universo mundo, donde anida la nostalgia. ¿Me entendiste, Nadine? No hay, ni puede haber, nada ni nadie más nostálgico y con más

⁶² For an interesting discussion on the life and work of Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, see F.G. Crowley, *Garcilaso de la Vega, el Inca and his Sources in Comentarios Reales de las Incas* (The Hague: Mouton & Co. N.V. Publisher, 1971), and Donald D. Castanien, *El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1969), Chapter 2, 'The Inca Garcilaso de la Vega: His Life', pp. 17-50.

bienes perdidos que un peruano' (p. 234). It has been demonstrated in the discussion of *Dos señoras conversan* (chapter 3) and *No me esperen en abril* (chapter 4) that Bryce equates nostalgia with the national character and also that people resort to nostalgia when they are unhappy with their present conditions. Nostalgia is a shield that Bryce's characters erect to combat the conditions in which they live; their fantasies of creating an alternative world mask the realities of the world in which they live. Furthermore, as shown in the above quote, Max (and through him, it appears, Bryce), locates the origins of the Peruvian's tendency to nostalgia in the conquest that led to Peru's formation as a nation-state. Bryce is referring here to the losses experienced when one race attacked another, wiping out its culture and history. There is a sense, then, that Peruvians feel that they are missing a part of their culture and, by dint of this, their identity. The nostalgia of the Peruvians, like that of Nadine Auriol, is located in the ruptures that the narratives of the conquest have left in their culture.⁶³ It is important to remember here that Morocco was also a colonised country and remained under the authority of the colonial powers until 1956. The suffering of both Nadine and Max articulates the dilemma of a person born or living between two worlds, what might be called the Inca Garcilaso de la Vega syndrome.

When Max enters Nadine's apartment, he compares it to a scene from the movie *Casablanca*, since there is not a single stick of furniture that has not been imported from her native land.⁶⁴ Nadine even welcomes Max with the words 'Bienvenido a Casablanca' (p. 216). Nadine has furnished her apartment in such a way that she

⁶³ Peruvian history is experienced as a series of losses. Julio Ortega writes: 'Reveladoramente, el pasado peruano ha sido representado... como una "memoria del bien perdido"'. See Julio Ortega, 'Bryce, melancólico', in *Hueso húmero*, 32 (Dec 1995), 79-94 (p. 86).

⁶⁴ *Casablanca* (1942), directed by Michael Curtiz and starring Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman, does share some similarities with *Reo de Nocturnidad*, since it is the story of a love triangle, in which two men attempt to woo the same woman. See <http://www.reelclassics.com/Novies/Casablanca/casablanca.htm> (consulted March 2 2005).

never feels separated from her country and, as such, is living a fantasy of recuperation, born of nostalgia. Nadine uses objects associated with her past and another land to recreate a time and place in her present and, Max refers to her apartment as a 'santuario de nostalgia' (p. 256). She constantly pours over old photo albums, buys her cakes at 'la mejor y más nostálgica repostería marroquí' (p. 227) and, when at home, wears a white tunic and cooks Arabic dishes. Nadine wears her tunic nostalgically since it reminds her of her life in Morocco and when she puts it on, it is as if she were dressing up as her former self and acting out her childhood. When she is not in character Nadine dons a black blouse and red trousers whereas, at home, Max notes: 'le había cedido paso ya a la nostálgica anfitriona de la túnica blanca' (p. 227). It later transpires that Nadine owns twelve white tunics so that she can dress the same each day. Nadine is, in effect, ensnared in a trap of both temporal and spatial nostalgia. She is so consumed by memory and nostalgia that she lives both in the past and in a geographical space outside of her present location. Her preferred restaurant was also her deceased father's favourite and she unfalteringly drinks his favourite champagne and eats his favourite dish. Like Manongo Sterne and Tere Mancini, who in adulthood continue to devour their past and recall childhood memories through consuming 'butifarras' and coca cola, Nadine consumes her past and evokes the memory of her beloved father, through the consumption of his favourite drink and food.

Max sees his own solitude and his yearning for Ornella reflected in Nadine's yearning for her country and a father who has come to symbolise it. He realises that, regarding Nadine's 'bien perdido' (p. 227), which signifies her lost past, like the lost past of Inca Garcilaso and Peruvians: 'no se sabía nunca muy bien dónde estaba, más

o menos como Ornella' (p. 227). Max hence perceives Ornella as his 'bien perdido' and, as such, understands that they are both searching for a lost possession, which they will never regain.

Simultaneously, Nadine realises that several different people exist within Max. Max explains that, depending on his state of mind, he behaves either as the 'convencional y correcto professor' (p. 226) that is Herminio, or the 'taciturno e insomne' (p. 226) Maximiliano. This prompts Nadine into remarking: 'Es que tú te conviertes en otro hombre no bien pones los pies en esta casa' (p. 229), to which Max humorously replies: 'nosotros dos deberíamos presentarnos cada vez que nos volvemos a ver' (p. 229). This is a good example of the fashion in which Max uses humour to soften the harshness of reality, since he is able to laugh at himself. Indeed, as he laughs at himself, Max recognises the predicament he is in and the illusions he entertains. Recognising his idiosyncracies means that Max is facing up to his problems and in this way, humour is shown to be therapeutic, if not comforting.

The Carnavalesque and Alienation

Nadine remains an outsider even to Max's picaresque group of friends, who reject her on account of her bitterness and her cruel behaviour towards Max. Through this motley crew, Max/Bryce introduces the notion of the carnivalesque into the work. All its members are exaggerated personalities who appear to be caricatures of specific archetypes rather than multi-faceted subjects. José Luis de la Fuente notes that the carnivalesque is a recurring theme in Bryce's work. Taking Bakhtin's work *Popular Culture in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: The Context of François*

*Rabelais*⁶⁵ as his starting point, he examines Bryce's short stories and demonstrates how the carnivalesque exists in Bryce's work in all its varying manifestations. The first element of the carnivalesque that de la Fuente mentions is the osmotic nature of the literary and non-literary worlds. It has been shown that not only the structure of *Reo de nocturnidad* follows this pattern, but also that it is one of the principal themes of the work, as seen in the discussion of Max's soirées, for example. De la Fuente refers to this as 'un proceso de carnavalización literaria' (De la Fuente, p. 194); thus the metaliterary nature of the novel abolishes any previously secured hierarchy of the phenomenal world over the fictional world and the possibility of the autonomy and authority of the text. In addition the active role that the reader is invited to assume in the recreation of the text, does away with the hierarchy of implied narrator/author and implied reader that is typical of the postmodern narrative and places the reader on an equal footing with the former. In other words, the narrator/author is not to be accepted as the ultimate creative force behind the text. As Barthes writes in the essay, 'La lecture, l'oubli': 'Plus le texte est pluriel et moins il est écrit avant que je le lise; je ne lui fais pas subir une operation predicative, conséquente à son être, appelée *lecture*, et *je* n'est pas un sujet innocent, antérieur au texte et qui en userait ensuite comme d'un objet à démonter ou d'un lien à investir' (Barthes, p. 15). He continues: 'Lire, cependant, n'est pas une geste parasite, le complement réactif d'une écriture que nous parons de tous les prestiges de la creation et de l'antériorité. C'est un travail... mâ tache est de mouvoir, de translater des systèmes dont le prospect ne s'arrête ni au texte ni à moi' (Barthes, pp. 15-16).⁶⁶ In other words, the text only truly

⁶⁵ Mikhail Bakhtin, *L'Œuvre de François Rabelais et la culture populaire au Moyen Âge et sous la Renaissance*, trad. Andrée Robel (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1970), see especially, pp. 25-26, 156-58, 170-71, 190.

⁶⁶ Roland Barthes, *S/Z* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1970).

comes into being when read by a reader who gives it its meaning and the text no longer has autonomy over the reader.

The notion of the caricature contains an element of parody, a common feature of the carnivalesque work. This is immediately made obvious through the nicknames that Max bestows upon each member. These include 'el Monstruo', which conjures up images of the grotesque; 'Pierrot', which recalls the character of the *Commedia dell'arte* and later the *harlequinade*; whilst 'El Gitano', suggests somebody exiled from the community, a wanderer, and is linked to notions of the bohemian, socially unconventional subject.⁶⁷ In point of fact, one of the members of the group is a writer who refuses to write and a couple who, like Pierrot are consistently disappointed in love, as is Max. The physical description of the character they all refer to as Pierrot as a man with 'ojos muy negros y saltones' and 'una inmensa boca' (p. 109), is strikingly similar to the appearance of the theatrical stock character.

Max's friends lead aimless existences; they are all heavy drinkers and meet in a bar where each drinks alone and in their solitude they come together. Alcohol is their only common ground and the group hence finds a common ground in an antisocial and even destructive pastime. The members of the group are all misfits and through their status of relative marginalisation they see their own unconventionality and alienation as a bond that connects them. Max originally drinks in the bar to avoid being alone but soon discovers that the other patrons frequent the establishment with the same objective. That he spends all his free time in the bar, saying, 'se convirti6

⁶⁷ For a discussion on the *Commedia dell'Arte* and Pierrot, see *The Commedia dell'Arte: From the Renaissance to Dario Fo*, ed. Christopher Cairns (Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1988); see also Allardyce, *The World of Harlequin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), pp. 89-94 and pp. 192-93.

en muy poco tiempo, en el lugar de todas mis citas extrauniversitarias en Montpellier' (p. 109), is indicative of the futile and pointless existence that he leads. The lives of the customers of the bar are going nowhere. Throughout the day, for example, Pierrot, we read, 'no cesaba de aparecer por el bar para tomarse dos o tres rápidas copas de pastís o pernod' (p. 109). The fact that he is a driving instructor but works in a continual state of inebriation suggests that he acts above the law and as such is on the fringes of the criminal world. The emergence of the underworld, which the presences of Sipriot and Pierrot imply, and the violation of law, is a typical manifestation of the carnivalesque as society's rules are thwarted and rebuked. Moral standards are absent. Max observes that 'desde que Pierrot logró incorporarme a la banda de parlinchines parroquianos, estuvo muy estrechadamente ligada a la mala calidad de mi vida en Montpellier' (p. 109-10), which implies that entrance into the group of marginalised characters symbolises Max's departure from the conventional, and functional central social group into a dysfunctional one inhabiting the periphery.

The interactions of Max's entourage betray the abnormal nature of their relationships and this is particularly evident in the relationship of Elisá and El Gitano, who are perpetually in a state of alienation from each other. Max notes that: 'el gitano parecía sufrir del mismo problema de sincronización que su mujer' (p. 153). The most dysfunctional of the group is labelled the Inefable Escritor Inédito who is ironically a writer who hates nothing more than the idea of seeing his books in print. He takes inspiration from literary figures such as Kerouac and Bukowski, although not from a literary perspective but rather attempting to emulate their penchant for alcohol and self-destruction. The writer is, as his name suggests, as of yet unpublished, yet his intentions are ironically to never publish his work since this would amount to him

‘prostituting’ himself and becoming ‘bourgeois’ (p. 160). In other words, the act of accomplishing his vocation would force him to enter into society and adopt a socialising function. In denying himself this possibility he allows himself to remain socially marginalised and without an identity. In a humorous episode, three of his acquaintances in Montpellier group together to publish one of his novels and, when the Inefable Escritor Inédito discovers this, he beats them up.

De la Fuente also notes the ‘transgresión de códigos prestigiados’ (De la Fuente, p. 195). This manifests itself in the text through the immoral values of the underworld and also the primacy given to popular forms of language, which according to Bakhtin is ‘un lenguaje antiliterario, familiar, plebeyo, vulgar, coloquial, obsceno’ (Bakhtin, p. 182).⁶⁸ The language of *Reo de nocturnidad* can be ‘vulgar’ or ‘obscene’, as seen in the phrase, ‘todo el trayecto hasta ese lugar lo había hecho con la pinga en la mano’ (p. 31), whilst an example of the ‘coloquial’ is, ‘imaginarse esas cochinadas de mí’ (p. 23). Max’s tone of speech is highly ‘informal’, not least because he is ‘speaking’ to his audience and specifically to Claire, with whom he has a great affinity. De la Fuente mentions the presence of eccentric personalities in carnivalesque literature and, it is clear that the balance of eccentric characters, such as Max and Nadine, greatly outweighs the stable characters, such as Lanusse and Claire, who is not only the writer of the text existing outside of its parameters but also a character involved in the action. Integral to the notion of the carnivalesque is the suppression of hierarchies and the reversal of the quotidian. In the picaresque entourage of the soirées, for example, Max is a character who is intellectually superior to all his friends. However, Max behaves, due to his emotional instability, in

⁶⁸ See Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoyevsky’s Poetics*, ed. Wayne Booth (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. 182. Quoted in José Luis de la Fuente, *Más allá de la modernidad: los cuentos de Alfredo Bryce Echenique*, p. 195.

such a way that his friends are obliged to assume control and, in point of fact, the only instances during which he wields any power over them is when he converts fiction into reality. A similar situation occurs when Claire, as pupil, is obliged to emotionally re-educate the teacher, Max, through assuming a role of editor of his story and eventually teaching him to love again. De la Fuente notes that also common in the carnivalesque is 'la adopción de heroes sobre los que se proyecta toda una vida' (p. 197) and, as has been seen in the quote above where Max likens Ornella to God, not only do we see how he projects his entire existence upon her, but also how he blurs the boundaries between the sacred and the profane. Max continuously reinvents himself by donning masks and disguises and as such we see how the spectacle of the imagination 'es una buena manera de solventar carencias' (De la Fuente, p. 197). De la Fuente explains that: 'La mentira sobrepone a la realidad para dar cuenta más de deseos que de realidades' (De la Fuente, p. 197) and that this results in the transformation of truth as seen in the alternative version of events that Max gives his life. Furthermore, the credulity that his friends afford his tales means that the transgression process remains obscured, since they are never aware that he is manipulating both them and the truth. The carnivalesque, as can be seen from the examples given, results from the characters' inability to adapt to change, which they reverse through the creation of fantasy and illusion; they convert their dreams or exteriorise their anxieties by reversing the laws of empirical reality.

Constructing the Text: The Osmotic Nature of the Fictional and Non-Fictional Worlds

The notion of the blurring of the fictional and non-fictional worlds is best expressed in *Reo de nocturnidad* through the dialogic excerpts that take place between Max and Claire since they reveal the processes of the creation of the text. *Reo de nocturnidad*, as a narrative is 'heard' rather than read. This revokes the precedence given to the printed word in literature, and places it upon the oral act, amounting to a destabilising of literary hierarchies and a return to the originary form of storytelling.⁶⁹ In fact, *Reo de nocturnidad*, which is both 'spoken' by its narrator-protagonist and later 'read' by its readership, allows both oral and written narrative to coexist on the same level. The oral nature of the novel becomes increasingly obvious when Claire appears and, although the reader assumes that he is the intended listener, it soon transpires that Max is dictating his memories to Claire, which leaves the reader in the position of eavesdropper. In *Reo de nocturnidad* dialogue is presented in an unmediated fashion, which, in a way, is reminiscent of Hemingway's style.⁷⁰ This gives the reader the impression that he is privy to an unmediated conversation, which serves to abolish the distance between him and the characters and action of the text. In temporal terms, the dialogue is set in the novel's present

⁶⁹ To emphasise the importance of the printing press and the subsequent appearance of works of literature in print and the mass marketing of novels, Jean Franco writes, 'con la invención de la imprenta la obra se reproduce en forma fiel a la intención del autor quien por lo tanto cobra una nueva importancia'; Jean Franco, 'Memoria, narración y repetición: la narrativa hispanoamericana en la época de las masas' (p. 112), in Ángel Rama, *Más allá del boom: literatura y mercado* (Mexico City: Marcha Editores, 1981), pp. 111-129. Benedict Anderson explains how print-capitalism, 'gave a new fixity to language' as a book keeps 'a permanent form, capable of virtually infinite production' (p. 44), in Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991). He interprets the advent of the printed word as a liberating act for both the word, the author (as Franco perceives it) and the reader, allowing them to relate to others in new ways.

⁷⁰ For further discussion of Hemingway's influence on Bryce's work, see Alfredo Bryce Echenique, 'Función del diálogo en la narrativa de Ernest Hemingway' (unpublished *tesis de bachiller*, Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos, Lima, 1963)

whilst the digressive passages of memory belong in the past and a pattern of temporal change allows the narrative to shift between two lives and two temporal perspectives.

In effect, the conversations between Max and Claire serve to interrupt the narrative flow, as is seen when Max chastises Claire for her interruptions into his stream of conscious thought, grumbling, 'me has hecho perder el hilo, jeune fille' (p. 117). Their conversations demonstrate their own awareness of a novel that, in effect, they are co-authoring. The novel can be considered to have a co-author, since Claire's constant comments and questions, which often reveal her own personal jealousies regarding Ornella, frequently force Max to change the direction of his narration. The oral tone of the narrative hence becomes particularly prominent in retorts such as, 'Te estaba contando una historia sobre el ogro de Nieves Solórzano' (p. 117), as does the novel's awareness of itself as a book in the phenomenal world. *Reo de nocturnidad* does not, due to Claire's interjections, have a meticulously planned structure, an aspect of the text that is complemented by the novel's relative lack of chronology. Max himself ignores issues of structure when he decides to speak of a certain event because of a whim. Here Max is consciously altering the narrative's chronology since the event at hand does not follow the preceeding event recounted. An example of this is the sentence: 'De algo me acuerdo muy bien, sin embargo, y me encanta la idea de contarlo hoy, aunque me adelante un poco a los acontecimientos' (p. 118). Here we notice how Max writes from the heart and privileges emotions. In this way we see how his own way of constructing a text is reminiscent of Bryce's writing processes, since Bryce has stated that his writing is motivated by sentiments rather than being meticulously planned and tightly-

structured, as has been shown in the introductory chapter. However, Max does not exist independently of Bryce and it appears that the author is playing with different levels of reality, which leads us to wonder – is Max assuming Bryce’s authorial persona? Using the analogy of the projection reel, Max, explains the consequences of Claire’s invasive comments: ‘Imagínate que una falla técnica a la mitad de la proyección de la película... cada espectador puede cambiar completamente el contenido de la película’ (p. 117), a comment that further suggests that Max is aware of his participation in an artistic process. Hence a pattern is established which sees Max and Claire oscillating between the roles of writers of, and actors in, the drama, distancing themselves from the narrative recounted only to enter back into it several pages later. Claire also substantially influences the reader’s opinions of certain characters, particularly those of Ornella and Nadine. It is fair to say that even before the reader truly gets to know Nadine, he/she already has a negative view of her as a result of Claire’s obvious dislike and mistrust of the woman whom she refers to as ‘[el] monstruo ése de Nadine Auriol’ (p. 209) and ‘maldita Nadine Auriol’ (p. 209). As such she lends an objective quality to the text which is no longer based on Max’s subjective opinions alone. All this makes, however, for a multi-voiced, heteroglossial narrative which contributes to the richness and depth of the text.

Claire’s input goes further than this, however, since as Max admits, she is responsible for both the subject matter that is included in the text and for that which is omitted:

Y, más adelante, la gran observadora que resultó ser Claire hizo que aquel monólogo se convirtiera en un curioso y muy intenso intercambio de voces en el que ella no sólo cumplía una misión muy similar a la de un apuntador, sino que además suprimía cosas ya dichas o sin valor en ese momento añadía comentarios que yo aceptaba o no, y cuya verdadera finalidad era de llegar siempre al fondo de las cosas, por más doloroso que

Claire, it appears, has had a great influence over the editing of narrative content in the work, as she guides Max and encourages him into speaking of subjects that he might not otherwise be able to confront. As such she dramatically changes the subject matter of the text, which we must suppose would have been very different had Max been its sole author. The narrative is no longer Max's interior monologue but rather a conjunction of Max's words and Claire's editing and input. The inner layer of this *mis-en-abyme* narrative hence mirrors the framework of the book as a whole, which is also interspersed with dialogues between Max and Claire, as well as between Max and Lanusse. Through the dialogue the actual physical process of writing a novel, as well as the afore-mentioned mental mechanisms are alluded to. An example that illustrates this is when Max gives Claire the command: 'Entonces, enciende la grabadora y escribe' (p. 117). The dialogic excerpts also emphasise the temporal distance between the position of writing and the events being written about, since the former is always told through the medium of the present tense, whilst the latter is recounted in the past.

Through the discussion of and reflection upon the events recounted, the passages of dialogue between Max and Claire constitute an integral part of the text, acting as pointers to the reader not only of their relationship but also providing background information about the events discussed. It is Claire who informs the reader, for example, that Max is now able to attend classes at the university unaccompanied (p. 143), although this is never mentioned in the main body of the text that Max narrates. As such, the dialogue functions informatively and, an example of this is when, after listening to Max reminisce about a lunch date with Nieves Solórzano in a local

restaurant, Claire interrupts him to say: '¡Max! ¡me acabo de dar cuenta! Ésa fue la primera vez que nos vimos fuera de la facultad' (p. 115). She is also able to illuminate the reader about Max's state of mind when she follows this exclamation with the reflection, 'La verdad, nunca me he olvidado de la expresión de impotencia que tenías' (p. 116), which serves to give an outsider's perspective on Max's mental health. Max is similarly able to reflect on his current mental status and as such give an idea as to his thoughts regarding the advancement of his psychological health, although, it must be stated, these are the subjective opinions of a man still suffering from poor mental health: 'pero el tratamiento sigue igual y apenas logro dormir una o dos horas, cada noche' (p. 143). Through the dialogue the reader is also able to appreciate the pattern of their developing relationship, which is effectively born out of their art, since writing the book reunites them. Max, for example confesses to Claire: '¿Sabes lo que siento en este momento, Claire? Siento que si te hubieras quedado en Montpellier, yo no hubiera llegado jamás a esta clínica' (p. 116).

As they sit together and write, Max and Claire reveal the tenderness and honesty on which their relationship is based. Claire, for example, acknowledges that she is the only person whom Max is able to open up to and trust: 'Mira, Max, yo reconozco que a mí me has dicho siempre la verdad y que conmigo no hubo nunca doble vida ni nada' (p. 147). This friendship will eventually develop into an amorous relationship with Max confessing that he loves Claire. Their love is hence a by-product of the creative processes that they realise together. Love is usually portrayed in Bryce's fiction, as in the case of Manongo or Natalia de Larrea in *El huerto de mi amada* (see discussion below in Chapter 6), as a destructive force capable of destroying the lover. In *Reo de nocturnidad*, however, with its unusually positive conclusion, love is

shown to have the potential of saving the person who loves and giving them the strength to continue. Claire refuses to believe that Max has forgotten Ornella and rejects his declarations which are cause for much bickering through the text. Gradually, however, through the creative process which allows Max to exorcise his ghosts, their love evolves, until eventually, she accepts that Max has purged Ornella from his system and accepts his avowal. In point of fact Claire is the only character in the novel to whom Max has never lied about the death of Ornella, which suggests that not only the cathartic process of writing but also the rehabilitating process of falling in love has healed Max: 'Y, te juro, Claire, que sólo cuando te conté a ti que Ornella estaba vivita y coleando, pero sabe Dios dónde, logré creer también yo que ésa era la única verdad. Y, de paso, asumí enteramente, de principio a fin, la realidad de mi relación con esa mujer' (p. 262). Claire's name, which means 'clear', may here be significant, since she has permitted Max, as it were, to clarify his reality. Max manages to finally convince Claire of his feelings by including them into the life-story that he is narrating:

No podía nadar sin ella, pues, porque ella es lo limpio de mi vida en Montpellier, Claire es el único momento en toda mi vida en esta ciudad en que salió en sol de los prospectos y la publicidad, finalmente el sol que vine buscando, el sol que afecta positivamente, que limpia, que lava, que logra hasta que uno conozca el olvido... es Claire, nuevamente, la que me interesa... la mujer más hermosa que vi en mi vida. (p. 179)

Here we see how Max makes use of the work that they are co-authoring to make known his feelings for Claire. Claire's love has achieved more than providing Max with the ability to forget Ornella. She is also the 'sun' who has thawed the 'snow' into which Max stepped out of the train upon his arrival at Montpellier and which represented the cold-hearted Ornella and the desolation and bleakness that she had abandoned him to. The two principal female characters in the text are the polar

opposites of each other and, as such, act as foils for each other: one symbolises compassion and the other temptation and deception. Claire's feelings for Max notably change after this declaration, since the next time she enters into the narrative space she asks Max for a kiss and agrees to accompany him on a date. This date amounts to Max's first steps outside of the clinic and his entrance into the real world. Max's story, typical of the Post-boom narrative, presents love as a beneficial and positive force: love can, and does, in effect, cure loneliness.⁷¹ The epigraph from Coleridge which precedes the final chapter surely refers to Claire: 'Si un hombre atravesara el paraíso en un sueño, y le dieran una flor como prueba de que había estado allí, y si al despertar encontrara esa flor en su mano...entonces, qué?' (p. 267).⁷² Max has been through Hell rather than Paradise, but has, happily, come out of it bearing a rose which is Claire. Max's relationship with a woman who reciprocates his love resolves his existential anguish and, able to relinquish himself from the

⁷¹ For a discussion of the Post-boom narrative and particularly the motif of love, see Donald L. Shaw, *The Post-Boom in Spanish American Fiction* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1998), p. 28, where he refers to the 'reevaluation of love' in Post-boom fiction and, 'the importance attached to love as distinct from the Boom's emphasis on sex'.

⁷² These lines are found in Coleridge's notebooks dated 1815-1816, Notebook 22, p. 84. Coleridge wrote, 'If a man could pass through paradise in a dream, and have a flower presented to him as a pledge that his soul had really been there, and found that flower in his hand when he awoke – Aye? and what then?'. For further discussion see, Seamus Perry (ed.), *Coleridge's Notebooks: a Selection* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 536; and *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (ed.) Kathleen Coburn (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973) Vol 3, 1808-1819, p. 4287. Coleridge is believed to have come across the idea in Jean Paul's *Geist*, Vol II (1801), where he writes: 'Oh if a mortal man were to wander in a dream through Elysium, if vast unfamiliar flowers were to close above him; if one of the blessed were to offer him one of these flowers, saying: "Let this remind you when you awake that you have not been dreaming" – how he would yearn for that Elysium land, whenever he looked at the flower', pp. 23- 29. The notion appeared in Latin American fiction in Borges's *Otras inquisiciones*, in an essay entitled, 'La flor de Coleridge' (pp. 10- 13). Borges writes: 'No sé que opinará mi lector de esa imaginación; yo la juzgo perfecta. Usarla como base de otras invenciones felices, parece previamente imposible; tiene la integridad y la unidad de un *terminus ad quem*, de una meta. Claro está que lo es; en el orbe de la literatura, como en los otros, no hay acto que no sea coronación de una infinita serie de causas y manantial de una infinita serie de efectos. Detrás de la invención de Coleridge está la general y antigua invención de las generaciones de amantes que pidieron como prenda una flor' (p. 18). Borges observes the recurrence of the image in H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine*, when the protagonist returns from the future with a wilted flower in his hand: 'Tal es la segunda versión de la imagen de Coleridge. Más increíble que una flor celestial o que la flor de un sueño es la flor futura, la contradictoria flor cuyos átomos ahora ocupan otros lugares y no se combinaron aún' (pp. 18-19). Jorge Luis Borges, *Otras inquisiciones* (1937- 1952) (Buenos Aires: Sur, 1952), pp. 17-20.

masks he previously hid behind and his imagined past identities, he no longer feels the need to reinvent himself.

Conclusion: Psychological and Geographical Dislocations Reconciled

The narrative process comes full circle when Max tells Claire: 'El resto es cosa ya conocida, mi querida Claire' (p. 261). The sixth and final chapter of the work, although not labelled as such, takes the form of an epilogue to the story. Max, from his home town of Lima, informs us that he is now living in Peru and still maintains his romantic relationship with Claire who visits him every October. The month of October is significant for Max since it was the month when he arrived in Montpellier and when he initially fell ill. Max is able, by inviting Claire to visit him, to turn the month of October into a positive time. In this he differs from Manongo Sterne, who is unable to turn the month of April from a negative experience into a positive time. In *No me esperen en abril*, Manongo is initially obliged to leave Tere Mancini behind in Lima for the first time in the month of April in order to attend boarding school and later renounce her definitively when she marries another in the same month. In his mind the month of April becomes synonymous with pain and he subsequently declares himself unable to attend the school reunions which take place in Lima in the month of April and hence sacrifices his relationship with his former peers. Effectively, whereas Manongo is unable to face reality head on and can hence never cure himself of his obsession with the past, Max confronts his circumstances and is able to look toward the future. Max does not combat his insomnia whilst living as a couple with Claire in Montpellier, however. He only manages to do this when he returns to Lima and informs us: 'Tomé un avión que me llevó a París y ahí esperé un cambio de vuelo hasta la ciudad de Lima, donde ahora vivo y trabajo y duermo

perfectamente bien' (p. 272), bringing the events of the novel into the present day. We understand from this that Max only fully recuperates and manages to sustain both good physical and mental health when reunited with his homeland.

It is important to remember that *Reo de nocturnidad* is the story of a Peruvian living in exile. More significantly, it is the story of a Peruvian who learns about who he is, and discovers that his identity is intrinsically Peruvian. The end of the narrative which sees his reconciliation with Peru and his subsequent return to health, suggests that Max's experiences in Europe have allowed him to develop as an individual but also that it is only possible for him to fully make peace with himself when he returns to his native country. Recovery is only made possible through reconciliation with Peru and this reminds the reader, as the novel reaches its conclusion, that those novels by Bryce that are set in Europe follow characters who are not at home in the metaphorical sense of the word. They are about people who are unable to incorporate themselves into the community and, when all is said and done, remain outsiders. *Reo de nocturnidad* is one occasion in Bryce's literary universe where Peru is not a country of fantasy and disillusionment but a country where reality is accepted on its own terms and given prevalence over imagined communities. The over-riding message of the novel is: 'there's no place like home'.

Chapter 6: *El huerto de mi amada*

El huerto de mi amada appeared in Lima's bookshops in summer 2002 and has been warmly received by critics and public alike since that time. It appears that Bryce was well aware of the novel's literary worth and rumour had it in Peruvian literary circles that he stalled the timing of its publication to coincide with the arrival of the much-coveted Premio Planeta prize.¹ The book, indeed, spent the first few weeks of its life on the best-seller shelves of bookstores in Spain and Peru and, according to Yolanda Vaccaro, the Spanish correspondent for Peru's leading newspaper, *El Comercio*, was amongst the ten highest-selling novels in the months succeeding its publication in Spain.² *El huerto de mi amada* staved off competition from the 521 other novels that were entered into the 51st annual Premio Planeta competition and won first prize at the awards ceremony held in Barcelona on 15 October 2002.³ The novel was entered under the pseudonym 'Stanley Black' and the fictitious title *El efecto Siboney*.⁴ In the speech Bryce made upon receiving the prize, he stated that, as in the vast majority of his writing, 'nostalgia' is the 'protagonist' of this work. To illustrate this point and

¹ In the 'Cultura' section of the Lima daily *Perú*, that appeared the day after the prize was awarded, we read: 'En algunos círculos literarios se rumoreaba que Bryce, seguro de la calidad del texto, había decidido guardar el manuscrito para presentarlo al premio Planeta'. The same article informs us that Bryce had been anticipating the novel since the time of publication of his last novel, *La amigdalitis de Tarzán*, back in 1998. 'Alfredo Bryce Echenique ganó el premio Planeta', in *Perú*, Lima, 16 October 2002, p. 29.

² Yolanda Vaccaro, 'Ironía y humor en Barcelona', *El Comercio*, Lima, 16 December 2002, p. C3.

³ The jury, comprised of seven representatives from the worlds of Hispanic art and publishing, including Alberto Blecuá, Pere Gimferrer, Carmen Posadas, Antonio Prieto, Carlos Pujol, Terenci Moix and Manuel Vázquez Montalbán. These details are provided in *El huerto de mi amada*, p. 2.

⁴ At Barcelona's Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, Bryce was presented with the 600,000 dollar prize by the wife of the president of the Spanish Government, Ana Botella, in front of an audience of 1,200 spectators. At least some of the significance of this prize lies in the fact that its sum is second only to that of the Nobel Prize for literature, making it the world's second highest literary prize earner. 'Alfredo Bryce Echenique ganó el premio Planeta', in *Peru*, Lima, 16 October 2002, p. 29. In an interview given the following month to *El País*'s Karmentxu Marín, Bryce expressed his astonishment at receiving such a large sum, joking: '¿Qué hago yo ahora? No entraba en mis cálculos'. Karmentxu Marín, 'Creo que soy un gran desvalido', in *El País*, 10 November 2002, p. 72.

explain the relevance of the pseudonym and alternative title, it should be noted that the popular song *Siboney*, interpreted in the 1950s by the orchestra of London's Stanley Black, contributes to the evocation of the climate of 1950s Lima when the novel is set and is an example of how popular culture functions nostalgically for Bryce in the recreation of epochs past.

At present, due to the relative lack of critical studies on *El huerto de mi amada*, the interviews that Bryce has given to newspaper reporters of the Hispanic world provide a helpful insight into his latest novel. In one interview Bryce stated that the principal axes of the narrative are 'La nostalgia', and 'el fracaso', which he claims 'persigue a los escritores peruanos desde César Vallejo, pasando por Julio Ramón Ribeyro y llegando a nuestros días'.⁵ In this statement Bryce emphasises the *peruanidad* of his novel, situating it in a long tradition of literary works in Peruvian letters that reflect on the themes of nostalgia and failure as national issues and include the writers Salazar Bondy and Mario Vargas Llosa and their respective works, *Lima la horrible* and *Conversación en la Catedral*, to name but two salient examples. Bryce acknowledges in another interview that failure is ubiquitous in Peruvian fiction, saying 'el tema de fracaso está presente en toda la literatura peruana',⁶ and it is precisely sentimental failure, that this novel, like *No me esperen en abril* and *Reo de nocturnidad*, examines.⁷

In the same interview, Bryce reveals the inspiration for the character of Carlitos Alegre. It has been suggested in previous chapters that much of Bryce's narrative is

⁵ Yolanda Vaccaro, 'No voy a desaparecer', in *El Comercio*, Lima, 17 October 2002, p. 7.

⁶ Karmentxu Marín, 'Creo que soy un gran desvalido', in *El País*, p. 72.

⁷ See Chapters 4 and 5 of this dissertation.

partially based on autobiographic, or at least semi-autobiographic, material. However, in *El huerto de mi amada* quite the opposite occurs since, as Bryce admits, the character of Carlitos Alegre is based on ‘todo lo que yo no pude hacer a los 17 años’.⁸ In some senses, then, the novel represents an attempt to create an imagined or idealised autobiography, an adolescence that Bryce would like to have lived. Julio Ortega has noted that *El huerto de mi amada* stands alone amongst Bryce’s other novels, because ‘es una de las pocas en las que el autor no está presente, ni como voz autorial, ni como personaje casual’, and this statement could also be extended to include the absence of autobiographical anecdotes.⁹ Bryce continues: ‘Ese personaje: está basado en un primo beato, santo, cuyo padre, Guillermo Basombrío,¹⁰ hermano de mi abuela maternal, está enterrado en la catedral de Buenos Aires, beatificado y en proceso de santificación’, which suggests that Bryce has taken a real person (a member of his family)¹¹ as the inspiration behind his protagonist and constructed a fictional life around him.

⁸ Karmentxu Marín, ‘Creo que soy un gran desvalido’, in *El País*, p. 72.

⁹ Julio Ortega, ‘Alfredo Bryce Echenique: *El huerto de mi amada*’, in *Identidades*, Lima, No° 3, 24 March 2003, pp. 8- 9. The other obvious example of a work containing no autobiographical references is the epistolary novel, *La amigdalitis de Tarzán* (1998).

¹⁰ The records of the ‘Cursos de Cultura Católica’, an Argentine organisation that began in 1921, and aimed to educate students in the philosophy and history of the Catholic Church and its sacred writings, in reaction to the lay and liberal climate that prevailed at the university of Buenos Aires at that time, make mention to a certain Guillermo Basombrío. The association had a network of international relations and Mario Pinto and Jorge Luis Borges were linked to it. Basombrío joined the organisation’s Management Commission (Comisión Directiva) in 1936 and by 1941 had a pedagogical role in their work. ‘Cursos de Cultura Católica’ tackled issues such as ethics in medicine and the influence of pornography on youth. See http://www.geocities.com/tomistas/c_c_c.htm (consulted 24 June 2003).

¹¹ In *El huerto de mi amada*, the presence of Argentina is prominent, when Bryce pokes fun of the pretensions of his two Argentine characters, Dante (Che) Salieri and the Conde Lentini, the latter of whom has bought his title in Europe. Bryce explains his allusions to Argentina in the novel and the characterisation of his fictional Argentines: ‘Fue un guiño de ojo, ya que la Argentina tiene un significado grande para mí. Una gran parte de mi familia es argentina. Tengo abuelos y tíos argentinos de todas partes del país... entonces esos personajes como el doctor Salieri, por ejemplo, son un guiño de ojo para ellos, para que se rían, agregaría que quizá para que no se olviden de mí’. See Alejandro Cavalli, ‘El huerto por excelencia’ at http://www.librusa.com/entrevista_bryce_echenique.htm (consulted 5 may 2004). Bryce’s words suggest that he writes for different groups of people who will

Set in Lima during the 1950s, *El huerto de mi amada* recounts the improbable romance¹² between a religious, yet inherently absent-minded schoolboy, Carlitos Alegre, and a bewitchingly beautiful divorcee of notable family origin, nearly twice his age, Natalia de Larrea. The lovers abandon the city for the sanctuary of Natalia's 'huerto', taking flight from the scandal that permeates Lima's élite and bourgeois classes. Their encounter coincides with the sudden appearance into Carlito's life of the Machiavellian, social-climbing Céspedes Salinas twins from the lower middle classes, intent on social ascendancy via a strategic marriage. These events provide for a highly entertaining and humorous vision of the morals and customs of Lima's higher social echelons and the plight of the lower-middle classes along with an examination of the city's caste system that is perpetuated in Lima, despite the advent of industrialisation. This is the first time that Bryce has focussed on characters belonging to the lower end of the middle classes, since until present those works set in Peru have portrayed the lives of members of the upper classes to which Bryce belonged. Whilst the lower classes have been consistently present in the form of servants who penetrate the élite's domestic sphere, the middle-class sector are unrepresented, presumably because cross-class relations are frowned upon in Lima and the élite virtually never came into contact with members of the middle classes. Bryce's previous choice of subject matter may also suggest that he wrote only about

have different levels of understanding of the text as if his readership could be placed in a series of concentric circles which start from his inner circle of family and friends.

¹² Julio Ortega, 'Alfredo Bryce Echenique: *El huerto de mi amada*', in *Identidades*, Lima, No° 3, 24 March 2003, pp. 8-9. Ortega writes, 'cuenta una historia de por sí novelesca (los amores improbables de un chico de 17 años y una bella divorciada de 35)', p. 8.

those classes with which he had been familiar and with whom he had established intimate relationships.¹³

In recent Peruvian literature the theme of an age-induced illicit love affair had already appeared in Mario Vargas Llosa's *La tía Julia y el escribidor*¹⁴ with its additional twist of incest. It is possible to argue that, in Bryce's novel, Natalia de Larrea's behaviour towards her underage lover has undertones of incest due to the maternal role that she assumes and her previous close friendship with Carlitos's own mother. The novel can be considered a coming of age, specifically a coming of sexual age, novel. There are several instances in the text in which allusions to the incestuous nature of the relationship are made. When Carlitos awaits Natalia's return to Lima following a European business trip, for example, he tells a friend that he needs to cry before her arrival, 'para luego no estar temblando y reteniéndome todo cuando me meta entre el cuerpo de Natalia y más parezca un bebe de pecho que el fogoso amante que dice que soy' (p. 155). The image of Carlos penetrating Natalia's body in the sexual act here becomes confused with the image of him nestling into her body to suckle on her breast and is an example of how irony is used to suggest the ambiguous nature of their relationship. Such references become increasingly explicit as the text advances. One of Natalia's jealous suitors ironically refers to Carlitos as

¹³ Middle-class Lima is, however, familiar territory in Peruvian twentieth-century fiction, and is examined most acutely in the urban narratives of Julio Ramón Ribeyro and Mario Vargas Llosa. Ribeyro, for example, depicted the struggles of the urban middle classes of Lima in his short stories such as, 'Tristes querellas en la vieja quinta', whose protagonist, Memo, lives in 'la modestia, la moderación y la mediocridad' (p. 38). Julio Ramón Ribeyro, 'Tristes querellas en la vieja quinta', in *La palabra del mudo: cuentos 1952/1993*, vol III (Lima: Jaime Campodonico, 1994), pp. 35-58. Whilst in Vargas Llosa's *La ciudad y los perros*, many of the pupils who attend the Leoncio Prado military school pertain to the middle classes, for none of them would have been permitted access to *No me esperen en abril*'s San Pablo's on account of their social (non)status. See Mario Vargas Llosa, *La ciudad y los perros* (Madrid: Alfaguara, 2000) [1962].

¹⁴ Mario Vargas Llosa, *La tía Julia y el escribidor* (Madrid: Suma de Letras, S.L., 2003) [1977].

her ‘amante pródigo’ (p. 179),¹⁵ explaining his choice of language with the aside: ‘porque hijo habría sido incesto’ (p. 179), in an overt reference to the parable of Luke 15:11- 32. Later, Natalia chastises Carlitos for his ignorance of the implications of their escape to Europe, saying, ‘me pongo en el pellejo de tus padres. Y te miro y eres un niño’ (p. 194), thereby not only seeing Carlitos’s immaturity as evidence of his difference to her as an adult figure, but also seeing him through the eyes of his parents, thus identifying with the parental role. Finally, after a direct reference to Freud’s ‘Gigantescos complejos recíprocos de Edipo’ (p. 212), the narrator’s inclusion of Natalia’s self-questioning into his perspective reveals her inner conflict regarding the affair: ‘¿Estaba empezando a observar a Carlitos desde una óptica maternal y psicoanalítica? Bah... Babosadas, hombre, ya quisieran tú, Freud, tú y tus charlatanes de secuaces y discípulos...Tanda de acomplejados’ (p. 215). Blaming Freud, Natalia diverts her feelings of culpability whilst her dismissing his theories as ‘stupidities’ reveals her underlying awareness of the implications of their union and her personal guilt.¹⁶ The novel’s treatment of the upper classes and the bourgeoisie (to which Carlitos’s family and their friends belong) in *El huerto de mi amada* is critical, yet the above examples place the reader in an ambivalent position. The reader, generally guided to view the oligarchy in negative terms on account of its hypocrisy and prejudicial attitudes, is in this particular instance morally obliged to agree with their prejudices.

¹⁵ Carlitos, it emerges, eventually does become the prodigal son, when he returns to the bosom of his family at the end of the novel. In this his trajectory is redolent of Manongo’s who returns to a father with whom he was initially at odds in order to strike a business partnership. In this sense, the ideology of Bryce’s protagonists and their behaviour, which represents a return to the father, is conservative and reactionary. However, whereas the outcome of the reunion is experienced positively by Carlitos, for Manongo it becomes negative, turning him into a hard-nosed entrepreneur. (for further discussion, see Chapter 4, pp. 192-93).

¹⁶ For a discussion of the Oedipus Complex, see Sigmund Freud, ‘The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex’, in *On Sexuality* (London: Penguin, 1991), pp. 315-22. [1924]

Rafael Anselmi Samanez presents a case for the similarities and differences between *El huerto mi amada* and *La tía Julia y el escribidor*, yet unconvincingly suggests that Natalia and Carlitos live ‘sin apartarse de la realidad’ (Anselmi Samanez, p. 562).¹⁷ It is my assessment that the protagonist of the novel and his lover live their lives in a fashion that utterly negates reality, and this contention will be one of the principal points under examination in this chapter. Gerardo Castillo, however, does observe the ‘sensación de irrealidad’ (Castillo, p. 552) that characterises the novel when he refers to the ‘mundo mágico y atemporal con que [Carlitos] vive con Natalia’ (Castillo, p. 555).¹⁸ Aside from considering notions of fantasy and reality in the novel, this chapter will examine the principal themes and narrative techniques employed. Ortega describes the work as ‘una novela que se propone un feliz autoironía del género’ (Ortega, p. 8),¹⁹ possibly due to the fashion in which it parodies several novelistic genres, the sense in which it reads as one continuous conversation, or its apparent lack of structure, despite its being a meticulously structured work, as will be discussed later. The chapter will also consider Bryce’s parodying of the art forms of theatre and cinema and the genres of melodrama, the thriller and the detective novel; the novel’s oral register and multiple narrative perspectives; the functions of the narrator, humour and irony; and the familiar themes of love and friendship, together with the narrative’s new awareness of eroticism in this comedy of manners.²⁰ Consideration will also be given to the reader’s role in the

¹⁷ Rafael Anselmi Samanez, ‘Vidas paralelas: de *La tía Julia y el escribidor* a *El huerto de mi amada*’, in César Ferreira & Ismael P. Márquez (eds), *Los mundos de Alfredo Bryce Echenique: nuevos textos críticos*, pp. 559-66.

¹⁸ Gerardo Castillo, ‘Memoria y olvido en *El huerto de mi amada* de Bryce Echenique’, in César Ferreira & Ismael P. Márquez (eds), *Los mundos de Alfredo Bryce Echenique: nuevos textos críticos*, pp. 551-58.

¹⁹ Julio Ortega, ‘Alfredo Bryce Echenique: *El huerto de mi amada*’, in *Identidades*, Lima, No° 3, 24 March 2003, pp. 8-9.

²⁰ The playful eroticism of the novel is typical of Post-boom fiction. Donald L. Shaw, quoting Antonio Skármeta, writes, ‘La sexualidad y su ejercicio pasará a ser un tema privilegiado de la generación:

construction of the text which in this latest novel is more active and complex than ever.

Oral Register and Heteroglossia: The Clamour for the Parole

Much has been written on Bryce's oral style of writing and, as he has evolved as a writer, the *oralidad* that he has cultivated has developed concomitantly.²¹ Nowhere in Bryce's fiction is the oral register more developed or more experimental than in *El huerto de mi amada*. It is important to remember that the novel takes its title not only from a song (that is, a verbal medium in which lyrics are sung aloud), but also from a popular idiomatic expression, 'llevarse alguien al huerto', which means to deceive someone, especially in order to take them to bed. The narrative is told by a third-person narrator who frequently stands aside as the voices of the characters, whose tale he tells, enter into the narrative perspective, much as is the case in *No me esperen en abril* and *Dos señoras conversan*. However, in *El huerto de mi amada* the narrator's voice is frequently consumed by the other voices jostling for space on account of the plurality of narrative voices, with the novel, on occasions resembling a Babel. Whereas in previous novels the narrator has freely allowed the characters words to take over from his own, in *El huerto de mi amada*, there is a sense in which the narrator is struggling for the 'parole' and vying for his own voice to be heard amidst the constant interruptions with which he must contend, as such his position is

suprimidas las causas traumáticas, se entrega a una desenfrenada exploración del erotismo', Donald L. Shaw, *The Post-Boom in Spanish American Fiction* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), p. 9. See also Antonio Skármeta, 'Tendencias en la más nueva narrativa hispanoamericana', in *Avances del Saber*, vol. 9 of *Enciclopedia Labor* (Barcelona: Labor, 1975), pp. 753-71.

²¹ See Chapter 1 of this thesis for a discussion of Bryce's oral style.

destabilised.²² This becomes evident in the pattern that develops through the novel, according to which he begins to narrate an event, is interrupted by several passages of free indirect discourse, unmediated conversations between characters or dialogue, only to resume his account or repeat the precise words with which he began his story, several pages later, which gives the effect that he is voicing the phrase: ‘as I was saying’. The clamour for the parole is further reinforced since the characters’ words are frequently followed by suspension points, giving the impression that the narrator is attempting to re-establish order and gain control over the direction in which the text is heading.

This point is conveyed in the following example. On page 158 the narrator begins to recount an episode which occurred between Natalia and Carlitos one morning with the words: ‘En todo el huerto no había un alma, aquel domingo cuando Natalia and Carlitos se despertaron para desayunar’. The end of the paragraph, which coincides with the end of the narrator’s perspective, finishes (or rather, doesn’t finish), with suspension points. Immediately the reader finds himself ‘listening’ to an extract of dialogue between Natalia and Carlitos which took place that morning and appears to have interrupted the narrator’s flow. It is not until two pages later that the narrator manages to make his voice heard again as he resumes the narrative with the same words: ‘En todo el huerto no había un alma, aquel domingo’ (p. 160). The narrator appears to have ‘spoken over’ the dialogue that the reader had previously been listening to, since Carlitos final words, ‘Yo toco el timbre, y...’, are not only succeeded by suspension points, but, ending with the conjunction ‘and’, appear to have been cut off in mid-sentence. The dialogic digression placed in between the

²² Donald Shaw mentions the ‘loss of authorial authority’ as a significant feature of the postmodern narrative. See Donald Shaw, *The Post-Boom in Spanish American Fiction*, p. 171.

narrator's two attempts to recount the same event, however, does have an informative function and advances the plot, since it gives the reader the opportunity to overhear Carlitos explaining to Natalia the sadness that he felt upon driving past his parent's house where he used to live. It is apt that unmediated dialogue is the medium through which Carlitos's preoccupations are expressed,²³ since they are of a very personal nature. As such their intimacy can only be effectively conveyed to the reader if he is to hear them at first hand without commentary from a third party which would act as an obstacle, deflecting from their intimate intention. As such, the reader, entering into Carlitos's intimacy, is able to better identify and empathise with the young Carlitos, nostalgic for the family home, assuming the role of confessor. Unmediated interior monologue and free indirect speech are employed to similar ends.

This cacophonous effect occurs throughout the work with the characters and narrator constantly competing to be heard. An example occurs when the Césped Salinas twins hatch a plan to meet the wealthy but inordinately ugly Vélez Sarsfield sisters in the hope that they will woo them and gain access to their world. On page 99 the twins inform Carlitos that they have plans to discuss with him and a page later, in reaction to their plans, the nature of which the reader is unaware, Carlitos exclaims: 'Las cosas que se les ocurren a ustedes' (p. 100). As such, the reader's suspense is maintained. The narrative perspective temporarily shifts to incorporate the words of the narrator who, corroborating Carlitos's evaluation of the twins, thereby validates it: 'Los tipos estos sí que eran cien por ciento increíbles' (p. 100). This is a typical strategy employed in the work whereby several different characters and the narrator

²³ See comment in footnote 20 of Chapter 3 on p. 101 of this thesis.

give their opinions on an event or character. Since the information the characters provide does not contradict the information supplied by the narrator, the reader has the impression that he is being informed by a reliable source. An example of this is the information that the text gives regarding the character of the protagonist. The narrator says, 'Carlitos Alegre jamás se fijó absolutamente en nada' (p. 12), later, his grandmother will think to herself as she watches him enter the house, 'Dios mío qué falta de suspicacia y sentido de las cosas, qué falta de todo' (p. 18)²⁴ and, some eighteen pages later, the narrator will explain that his mother, the Señora Antonella, 'conocía a Carlitos a fondo, su total ingenuidad, su eterno despiste' (p. 36). To emphasise the point, Natalia, we read, 'sabía lo distraído que podía llegar a ser' (p. 42), whilst the twins remark, '¿no nos habría resultado Carlitos un cojudo a la vela?' (p. 15), when they propose that he study with them for their medical school entrance exams and he fails to ask them who they are, how they know him and how they found out that he wanted to study dermatology. These different perspectives contrive to produce the sense of a faithfully represented, extralinguistic reality.

For a few sentences the narrator remains at the helm, steering the reader towards an explanation of how Carlitos fits into the brothers' plans, with the words:

Pero Carlitos también vivía en las nubes, gracias a Dios, y con eso contaban los mellizos para que, una vez más en la vida, se le escapara lo elemental del asunto ... éste era el momento, o nunca, para enterarse de la verdadera razón por la cual aparecieron un día en su vida, por puro interés, claro, está.
(pp. 101-02)

The narrative then switches to a conversation between the twins regarding the designs they have on Carlitos, which is punctuated by the narrator's retorts:

²⁴ Carlitos later remembers: 'pero qué duda cabe de que una vez más en mi vida se me han escapado las cosas más elementales. Siempre me lo dijo mi abuela paterna' (p. 73).

porque eran un gran par de trepadores, y porque en su inefable escala de valores, él, nada menos que él, mamita linda, había resultado ser el puente y la escalera, y el ascensor, y todo, más la llave ganzúa, por supuesto, también, si se quiere, capaz de hacerlos llegar a las más altas esferas, hasta la mismita *high*, Arturo, y abrímos una tras una las puertas de la alta sociedad de Lima, más su propia, Raulito... (p. 101).

In this passage which begins with the narrator speaking, a change in orator occurs and the twins finish the explanation, that the narrator had started to give, in their own words. Both sets of information, regarding the twins' designs on Carlitos, which emanate from different sources, typically validate each other. The twins' friendship with Carlitos is as interested as the narrator had suggested. That two voices (that of the narrator and that of either of the twins – they often overlap) are present, is made obvious by the different registers employed – the narrator (as an educated member of the upper classes) would never employ the popular expression, typically associated with the lower classes, 'mamita linda'. Furthermore, the majority of the words spoken in this passage – from 'el puente' onwards – must also be attributed to the twins, since the narrator is derisively mimicking words that they have previously spoken.

In the above passage the narrator very quickly retreats and the twins' conversation continues, presented in unmediated form, for another page. Once again, the digression has several important functions, since the continuation of their conversation expresses their reservations regarding Natalia and the detrimental effects of their association with a scandal. Firstly, it is important to note that, with very few exceptions, the conversations that take place between the twins appear in the form of unmediated dialogue, which is not transcribed in typical dialogic format but rather is inserted into the main body of the text, as seen in the above example, and without speech dashes. All their discussions revolve around their schemes of

social *arrivisme* and it appears that the narrator, scornful of their Machiavellian mentalities, wishes to dissociate himself from them and hence stands back. It also allows the reader to view their emotions at first – hand, without them passing through the subjective filter of the narrator’s gaze. As such the characters, in this instance the twins, ‘pronounce themselves’ guilty, a strategy to which Bryce has frequent recourse. Secondly, frequently described as ‘los mellizos almas gemelas’ (p. 12), or words to that effect, the brothers are indistinguishable one from the other. They share the same dreams, pretensions and prejudices. As such, it is apt that the twins’ words are presented in this form of unmediated dialogue since this allows their thoughts to flow into each other and gives the impression that they are spoken by the same person, which in effect, the twins are. All that separates Arturo’s thoughts from Raúl’s is their naming of the other as interlocutor. Thirdly, the narrator’s retreat facilitates the reader’s penetration into the personal sphere of the twins to listen to a private conversation and, since the scheming intentions it reveals are not the sort that the twins would wish to share with an outsider, it is apt that the reader has the impression that he is listening to a private conversation spoken in whispers. This strategy of incorporating the twin’s first-person perspectives into the text, which allows the reader to sneak into their private sphere, reinforces the underhand nature of their dealings.

The twins’ conversation continues for a page until Carlitos repeats his original words and with him the reader is transported back, two pages later, to Carlitos’s initial exclamation: ‘Las cosas que se les ocurren a ustedes’ (p. 102). Finally, almost five pages later, the subject of the twins’ plan is disclosed to the reader and the Vélez Sarsfield sisters are named. On page 105, the narrator finally manages to render his

voice audible and is able to describe to his interlocutor (the reader) the identity of the girls: 'Pero las Vélez Sarsfield eran tres y' (p. 105) but is interrupted once again, until on page 109 he reels the narrative back in, with the words: 'Pero volviendo a las hermanas angloperuanas' (p. 109). These words, which resemble those of a storyteller resuming his thread, serve to remind the reader that he is listening to a story, whilst also demonstrating the narrator's awareness of his function and of his audience. Ten pages have past before the narrator, competing with the conversations, interior monologues and digressions of his characters, is able to lead the reader to the telephone conversation in which Carlitos proposes that the sisters accompany the twins on a date. For all its apparent confusion and meanderings, the narrative has advanced, with the seemingly digressive conversations between characters and the insights into their minds actually serving to advance the plot, whilst also providing plenty of important background information.

The conversations and excerpts of free indirect discourse not only permit the reader to delve deeper into the minds of the characters but into the minds of several different characters simultaneously, enabling him to extract information that broadens his knowledge of their circumstances. The narrator's words constantly weave themselves in and out of the plot, but the characters narrate their own story as much as the narrator does, thereby leading to a decentralising of his role. In the course of these ten pages, the narrative perspective shifts seventeen times. This does not lead to a disjointed reading, however, since each new voice picks up where its predecessor left off, leaving for a fluid and cohesive portrayal of events. It is the narrator, nevertheless, who remains the pivotal figure in the text's construction, picking up snippets of the words and thoughts of the characters and, together with his

own, sewing them together, as if fabricating a patchwork quilt. His knowledge over events is also superior, specifically because he is recounting a story in the past, retrospectively, whilst the characters narrate their present. Hence when Carlitos speaks to his deceased grandmother, sharing her dislike for funerals, he reassures the corpse, 'ya se acabó todo, por fin, abuelita' (p. 171), only for the narrator to resurface and inform us with a cruel laugh: '¿Acabarse todo? Ja' (p. 171), thus proving Carlitos to be in the wrong by contradicting his appreciation of events.

Reader as Interlocutor

Reading *El huerto de mi amada* is like listening to a conversation or, as has been shown above, multiple conversations merged into one. For this reason, it would be fair to say that the novel is 'heard' rather than 'read'. The vernacular register that the narrator employs contribute to this effect and with his inclusion of profanities, hesitations, repetitions and colloquial turns of phrase, his speech does not differ dramatically from that of the characters. This gives the reader the impression that he is sitting down before someone who is recounting a story, perhaps in a café or bar somewhere in Lima.²⁵ The narrator often speaks directly to his interlocutor, with whom he appears to be sitting face to face, which draws the reader's presence further into the text. The very present reader is hence, to all intents and purposes, a character in his own right, all be it one with a minor role, that of listener present.

²⁵ Bryce has said in an interview that the language of *El huerto de mi amada* is, 'el habla de mi ciudad'. He continues, 'Lima es una ciudad en la que nos gusta contar historias y también oirlas'. See Rodri García, 'Bryce Echenique: "Cometí el error de la radicalidad y me quemé mis naves"' <http://www.lavozdegalicia.es/entrevistas/boticia.jsp?TEXTO=100000024950> (consulted 23 May 2005).

The reader's involvement in the construction of the text is made evident through several strategies. Examples of the narrator speaking directly to his 'listener' include his recourse to questions. At the end of the novel, he questions the activities of the lovers as they await their imminent departure to Europe: 'Y ahora, ¿Qué les quedaban por hacer en Lima en los próximos días, los últimos que pasarían en esta ciudad?' (p. 257). As the narrator is posing a question, then we must assume that he is directing it at someone. Furthermore, since he refers to Lima as 'esta' ciudad, we must assume that the conversation is taking place somewhere in the city, or, like Galdós in Madrid, suggesting that he was an inhabitant of Lima, like his readers. Perhaps the narrator's question serves merely as a stylistic device to arouse the reader's sense of suspense as to the outcome of events, in which case he is conscious of his story-telling technique. On the other hand, he could be anticipating the questions that the reader is asking himself, or simply providing a link between events. Either way, the narrator is clearly aware that he narrating a tale, of the fashion in which he narrates that tale, is keen to maintain the reader's interest.

On another occasion the narrator discusses Natalia's jealousy regarding Melanie Sarsfield, the youngest of the three sisters. She is worried that she will appear in Paris and steal Carlitos's heart. The narrative enters into Natalia's thoughts, to witness her preoccupation: '¿y si la tal Melanie esa aparecería algún día con su trencita pelirroja por *acá*...?' (p. 272). The obvious malice with which the words 'la tal Melanie esa' are spat out, coupled with the word '*acá*' and its signification 'over here' or 'round here' (they are now in Paris), mean that these words are attributable to nobody other than the jealous and insecure Natalia. The narrator then jumps in to explain the reaction that Natalia would have to Melanie's arrival: 'En este caso, a

Natalia no le bastaba con ver a su Carlitos feliz, para descartar...' (p. 273), but cuts his own words (which in truth are really the thoughts of Natalia that he is conveying) short, to exclaim incredulously: '¿Para descartar qué, por Dios...?' (p. 273). This question, albeit a rhetorical one is again nonetheless aimed at a listener. This is evident from the emotion felt (we imagine that we hear an increase in decibels as he shouts out 'por Dios' in frustration) and from the colloquial utterance. The question is a rhetorical one here since the narrator assumes that the reader, with whom, over the course of two hundred and seventy three pages he is now familiar, understands his sentiment and agrees with it. The cry is hence more of a statement than a question.²⁶

At another point, the narrator's line of questioning seems to suggest that the reader has directed a question at him and that he is replying to his question by repeating it. It is at this point in the text that the reader's presence is most obvious. Carlitos has typically stunned Natalia with his belief that his precocious prowess in the bedroom is based on God's will. The reader explains Natalia's reaction to this: 'Natalia se había quedado absolutamente tutulata, es cierto, muy cierto, pero también lo es que se había quedado absolutamente convencida' (p. 93). The repetition of the words 'es cierto' is a good example of the narrator's employment of verbal turns of phrase, as is the phrase, 'también lo es que', since there is an obvious departure from correct syntactical structure and such a repetition or phrase would not typically be written in

²⁶ On another occasion the narrator shares his uncertainty with the listener. When Carlitos arrives at the twins' rundown home he does not perceive it as shabby, as he had previously found it to be and the narrator wonders: '¿O era que él había terminado por acostumbrarse a todo aquello, por encariñarse a todo aquello?' (p. 259). The narrator presumably believes that Carlitos has simply become accustomed to the twins' humble abode, but in presenting his thoughts in question form which renders the supposition merely implicit, he allows the reader to make up his own mind with regards to Carlitos's sentiments.

formal literary language. After explaining Natalia's sentiments to the reader, the narrator embarks on a series of questions: '¿Convencida de qué? Pues de eso. ¿De qué *eso*? Pues de pe a pa, de todas y cada una de las respuestas y explicaciones que su amante maravilloso le había dado' (p. 93). The first question suggests that the narrator has heard the reader speak and that the latter has asked a question since the narrator's question appears to function as a response to something that the reader has said. In effect, the narrator is repeating the question that the reader has directed at him.²⁷ The second question confirms this, specifically because the narrator emphasises the word 'eso' (as conveyed through the use of italics) almost in frustration caused by the reader's second question and inability to follow events, which obstruct the flow of his tale. The reader's presence here enters dramatically into focus.

The Meta-Narrator

The narrator also refers to himself frequently in the third-person plural, something that he does on two occasions in *No me esperen en abril*.²⁸ Examples of this strategy also appear in *El huerto de mi amada*, and not only serve to remind the reader that he is listening to somebody telling a tale, but also allow him to identify with a narrator whose third-person addresses suggest that they are involved in the act of creating the text together. This is seen in the following example where the twins, having

²⁷ A similar effect occurs in Palma's *Una aventura amorosa del Padre Chuecas in Tradiciones Peruanas*, pp. 896-99: 'Si, señor, ¿Y por qué no he de contar aventuras de un fraile que, si percó, murió arrepentido y como bueno? Vamos a ver, ¿por qué? ¡Vaya! Pues no faltaba más' (p. 896).

²⁸ David Wood has noted this and writes: 'A significant feature of the meta-narrator, whose repeated comments to the reader draw us into the creative act, as in the following examples: "Veamos, pues, esta segunda historia en su totalidad, que bien vale la pena, por la pena que da" (p. 249), or the closing lines of the novel's second section, "Pero dejémoslo en Manongo y Tere, o mejor aún, en Tere y Manongo. Sí. Dejémoslo ahí. Para que no suene a predestinación o algo así..." (p. 303)'; *The Fictions of Alfredo Bryce Echenique*, p. 139.

committed a *faux pas*, look to Carlitos with a regard that seems to inquire: ‘¿metimos la pata otra vez?’ (p. 129). The narrator then picks up the narrative thread and explains that the look,

es algo que Carlitos Alegre lleva aún grabado en el fondo del alma, algo para lo cual, además, en su vida ha logrado encontrar respuesta alguna. Y si la hubiera encontrado, hace rato que la habría añadido a una suerte de *Antología universal de la infamia*. Pero, bueno, digamos que, para todos los efectos, aquella mirada llegó esa mañana hasta aquel ambiente de las academias de equitación. (p. 129)

In the above citation we see that the narrator, having digressed to share a joke with the reader, pulls the narrative back on track and redirects the reader’s attention to the tale being told at the point where he employs the third person imperative, ‘digamos’. This gives the effect that the narrator is speaking spontaneously and informally (which supports the idea that we are listening to an oral and not a written narrative) and also demonstrates the narrator’s awareness of his interlocutor through the use of the third-person plural imperative. The joke functions as a digression since it really has nothing to do with the action of the plot, which is evidence that their ‘chat’, full of unrelated asides, unravels spontaneously. Furthermore, we see from the narrator’s allusion to Carlitos in the future ‘aún lleva grabado’ accompanied with the subjunctive mood followed by a clause in the conditional tense ‘si hubiera encontrado... habría añadido’, that the narrator is narrating his story from a point in time in the distant future looking back to events past, and that he is still aware of Carlitos’s thoughts and movements. In effect, then, the narrative has two present times, the first in which the events of 1957 unravel and the second in which the narrator sits down to pass his story on to his listener some twenty years later. Other examples of third-person plurals occur in the lines, ‘Con los diecinueve años cumplidos, a Carlitos Alegre le había salido, o se le había puesto, o le había quedado, y esperamos que no para siempre, una impresionante cara de quince, que realmente

torturaba a Natalia' (p. 211), in which the narrator invites the reader to share his opinion, or even assumes they share the same opinion, for example when he says, 'hasta hubiese optado por el suicidio, estamos convencidos' (p. 187) or 'conversan los hermanos Raúl y Arturo Céspedes Salinas, que, como bien sabemos, además de ser mellizos y exactos son almas gemelas...' (p. 57). When the narrator informs us that: 'Despedirse de Natalia... era algo que, incluso, se agravaba a ciertas horas del día y podía ser demasiado duro cuando un reloj de pie, en la penumbra de la sala, le golpeaba con su tictac esas horas de la noche en que mantenemos los ojos abiertos y todo absolutamente nos duele' (p. 112), he facilitates the reader's understanding of Carlitos's state of mind by way of invoking a 'universal' and emotional situation that he expects the reader, like himself, to have experienced.²⁹

The narrator, fully aware that he is recounting a tale and aware of his role as storyteller, hence earns himself the title of meta-narrator. In point of fact, at one point the narrator alludes to a section of the plot entitled 'Acto Seguido' which stands apart from the rest of the narrative in structure (although it is a continuation of the plot, as its name suggests) and, written in the form of a play script, is a parody of the theatrical genre. The narrator places himself in the shoes of the reader who has, three pages earlier, read the 'Acto Seguido'. In doing so he shows that he is aware of the novel that he has narrated propelling his work into the territory of meta-fiction. The novel, through its 'creator's' allusion to a section of it, is now aware of itself as a

²⁹ In other instances, he may use the third-person plural in order to clarify events to his interlocutor, as in the example, 'para que nos vayamos entiendo de entrada' (p. 201).

book that is being read by a reader in the phenomenal world, rather like Cervantes.³⁰

The text reads:

y los mellizos allá afuera tratando de escalar y resbalándose una y otra vez con el pedrón, y un resbalón más y de nuevo trepa y trepa, cual Sísifos de sociedad, porque así de complicada era su vida, o así de frívola y de poco complicada; en fin, que cada cual saque sus propias conclusiones sobre la parejita, aunque, creo a estas alturas y habiendo leído su acto seguido, sobre todo, tan melodramático e interpretación de los sueños, tan lamentable y tan poco sutil, uno ya no puede... (p. 71)

We may note the presence, once again, of suspension points, and the narrator's words are indeed interrupted by a conversation transcribed in dialogue that takes place between Carlitos and Natalia. What is more interesting, however, is that the narrator refers to himself in the first person ('creo'), intentionally directing the narrative focus at himself. This is one of few instances in the text in which he does this, which is surprising because due to his very prominent presence, the narrator is to all intents and purposes a character of the text. On another notable occasion, Carlitos arrives at the twins' house and is given a black eye by their sister. One of the twins remarks: 'sólo a ti te pasan esas cosas hermano' (p. 143). The narrator begins the next paragraph with the knowing words, 'pues ya lo creo' (p. 143), in reaction to the event, and we get the impression that he is raising an eyebrow to the reader, who surely shares his view. This last example reveals that there is a humorous side to the narrator's character.

Sometimes, however, the narrator refers to himself in a third-person plural that does not include the reader. In doing so he reveals himself not only to be a citizen of Lima, but also as a member of the upper classes. When recounting the story of the

³⁰ For a discussion of Cervantine irony, see Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1953), pp. 334-58 and pp. 25-29 of this thesis.

conde Lentini, an Argentine who has purchased his noble title, he tells us, 'e incluso el títulillo que se gastaba lo había comprado – no sabemos si pagado – , en un viaje tan, tan rápido a Italia' (p. 124). In this instance the third person plural 'no sabemos' refers to the narrator and others who we must presume to be acquaintances with whom he has discussed the Count's affairs. It has already been mentioned that different classes do not mix socially in Lima. Since the Count owns an equestrian school in the upper class barrio of San Isidro, it would be fair to say that those who know of him and his school are people who live in San Isidro and probably know someone who attends the school. From this we can deduce that the narrator socialises with members of this class and is familiar enough with them to share their gossip. This is reinforced by the reference to a snide remark made in an article in a high-society magazine that the narrator has obviously read: 'lo había comprado hace poco – en un viaje tan, tan rápido a Italia, que un periodista de sociales aseguró en su diaria columna que, de la avenida Italia, ese señor nunca pasó' (p. 124). These magazines, Peruvian versions of the socialite glossies *Hello* or *Paris Match*, are of no interest to Peruvians outside of the upper classes, since they portray a world in which they know nobody and to which they have no access. Their readership is based on *limeños* from the upper classes who scour their pages for pictures of people from their world attending important social functions. It is fair to say, therefore, that a narrator who reads these magazines probably belongs to the upper classes, a supposition supported by the fact that he gains entrance to their parties, homes and even funerals. In another instance, the narrator again refers to hearsay regarding one character's hatred of another, with the words, 'Rumores había, claro...las malas lenguas afirman' (p. 126), which again suggests that he is part of the same grape vine as the gossipers and scandalmongers. Of course, by passing this information on to his

interlocutor (the reader/listener), the narrator is as much part of the gossip society that he professes to criticise as any of his characters.

Aural and Visual Narrative Strategies

It is the narrator's frequent recourse to verbal forms of speech above all that makes the oral register of the work so prevalent. In some instances, the narrator's verbal turns of phrase suggest that he is speaking to an interlocutor of whose presence he is aware, as in the example, 'Los mellizos Raúl y Arturo Céspedes Salinas, hay que reconocerlo, actuaron con verdadero coraje' (p. 181). On other occasions, the narrator's recourse to verbal turns of phrase, seem to suggest that he changes the direction in which the narrative is heading, as if he were speaking spontaneously and as if his narrative were not pre-meditated which contributes to the conversational effect of his speech. In the following instance, for example, the repetition of the expression, 'O sea', gives the effects that he is chatting informally with the 'listener' and that he changes his mind with regards to what he is going to say at the end of his sentence, as if sensing the need to reassert his point of view. All this gives the narrative an effect of immediacy and gives the reader the impression that the narrator is literally creating his narrative in the present as he speaks:

en el fondo sí que valió la pena, y mucho, tanto dolor físico y social porque Carlitos accedió a prepararse con ellos para el ingreso a la universidad, y esto significaba que iban a pasarse todo ese verano juntos, estudiando mañana y tarde. O sea... Pero además, Carlitos accedió sin preguntarles ni siquiera de dónde habían salido, ni cómo ni cuándo se habían enterado de su existencia, en qué colegio estaban, o cómo sabían que él deseaba estudiar dermatología, y así mil cosas más que habría resultado lógico averiguar. O sea... En fin, Carlitos accedió sin preguntarles absolutamente nada, lo cual sí significaba mucho para los mellizos. O sea...
(pp. 14-15)

On a separate occasion, the narrator appears to correct himself, saying, 'su papá jamás contrataba mozos para estas reuniones, le bastaba con sus dos mayordormos,

Segundo y Prime... En fin, con el primer y segundo mayordormos, qué bruto, caramba' (p. 20). In this particular instance it is difficult to ascertain the identity of the speaker. It could be the narrator since Carlitos is referred to in the third person 'su papá', equally, it could be Carlitos, since he is most likely to confuse his words due to his distracted nature. This is a good example in the text of how, on occasions, narrative viewpoints coincide and change so rapidly that the words could be attributed to different speakers. If it is the narrator who is speaking (a strong possibility since the preceding and succeeding sentences are definitely spoken by him), then the example shows how his thoughts are so quickly formulated and spontaneous that he occasionally trips over his tongue.

The narrator's speech is also peppered with colloquialisms and vulgarities. These not only reinforce the oral register, but are also cause for confusion with regard to point of view, since the narrator employs the same register as the characters. This confusion is further compounded because the narrator frequently darts into and back out of the characters' thoughts in mid-sentence so that a single sentence may contain clauses attributable to the narrator as well as several different characters. Such sentences, whilst spoken in the third person, seem to be emanating from the character's inner thought processes, when actually it is the narrator who is mimicking their thoughts or speech. One such example is: 'Carlitos, por supuesto, no les entendió ni jota, de qué demonios le estaban hablando este par de locos, caray' (p. 100) and here the narrator's language has reverted to the popular tongue because he is faithfully reproducing Carlitos's own confused reaction. When the twins initially contact Carlitos, the narrator refers to them as two boys, 'a los que no conocía ni en pelea de perros' (p. 12), an example of his recourse to verbal idiomatic phrases. Carlitos's grandmother is described as, 'muy Lima antigua' (p. 17). The narrator

describes the barrio in which they live as being, 'ni siquiera en la vieja Lima histórica de Pizarro, nada, ni eso siquiera, sino en la *vejancona*' (p. 10) (my italics). These words betray the narrator's snobbery regarding the middle classes and his distaste for the poorer, inner city residential areas. They also show a breakdown in syntax and sentence structure which is typical of the patterns of informal speech. He employs augmentatives to describe Natalia's initial reaction of passion towards Carlitos, 'estaba ridiculísimo' (p. 24), thereby acknowledging the very implausibility of the tale that he is telling; reveals his condescending attitude towards the twins by playing on their recourse to expressions that betray their cultural inferiority with regards to their informal use of language, 'se desnudan o más bien se calatean' (p. 57); and uses verbal turns of phrase to identify with and anticipate the reader's evaluation of events: 'Y aunque parezca mentira...' (p. 208). The novel also marks the first instance in which a Brycean third-person narrator resorts to vulgar language, as when he describes the twins' misinterpretation of the effects that their arrival at the Sarsfield house in Natalia's Daimler will have on the sisters: 'Hechos mierda, los mellizos se sintieron siempre más mirados que nunca' (p. 115). The narrator also refers to the twins as a couple of cretins, here mimicking the vulgar language that Molina, the chauffeur uses to describe them. However, by appropriating Molina's choice of expression he is clearly reinforcing an opinion with which he agrees. The inclusion of such verbalisms and colloquialisms serves to reinforce the notion that the novel is a spoken, and not a written, narrative.³¹

³¹ The narrator does have two sides to his character however and, as well as employing coarse language, he is equally able to employ elevated language or even Latinisms, such as 'el requisito sine qua non' (p. 191). It is the use of elevated and literary language that sets the narrator (and presumably the reader) apart from the work's other characters and ultimately places him in a position of superior intellect.

As a way of involving his reader in the construction of the text, the narrator often appeals to his visual and aural senses. When Natalia and Carlitos first dance together in his parents' party and she touches his muscular physique, for example, Natalia cries out, 'qué rico, caray, uauu' and, 'pero uauu, qué rico y con amor, te quiero, Carlitos' (p. 25). Transcribing the resonant quality of her cries in onomatopoeic fashion allows for the reader to 'hear' the ecstasy that she feels, bringing him closer to the centre of the action. The same effect occurs when the naked couple kiss passionately and Natalia wails with pleasure: '¡Qué haces, Carlitos, ayyy!...¡Pero Carlitos, ayyyyy, mi amor...' (p. 46). Here the narrator uses sounds instead of describing the actions of the couple to convey a sense of what is happening to the reader. The reader, then, without being specifically told, can well imagine where Carlitos's kisses are heading as he descends further down his lover's body. Transcribing Natalia's cries phonetically also heightens the sense of sensuality in this scene.

Appealing to the reader's visual senses, allows the narrator to heighten the dramatic effects of certain scenes. For example, when Carlitos first catches sight of Natalia at his parents' party, he appears on the balcony with his hair sticking up from scratching his head and a look of such happiness that the narrator comments: 'Había que verlo' (p. 21). The narrator's words also suggest that he saw Carlitos in this state and was therefore present at the party. The narrator also refers to 'un mechón de cabello rascado y punk, mil años de esta moda' (p. 21), which, although an apparent anachronism, supports the theory that the narrator is telling his tale at a point in the future. When Natalia stands naked before Carlitos for the first time, the narrator describes her body feature by feature: 'Un cuerpazo. Un pelo melena castaño oscuro

ondulado... una piel sumamente blanca, y qué hombros, qué senos, qué piernazas perfectamente torneadas. qué caderamen, qué tafanario divino... los labios carnosos y húmedos, puro deseo, como también la mirada' (p. 45). Here the narrator appears to get carried away and sexually excited himself, as the repeated exclamations suggest that his speech is accelerating. As he paints her body piece by piece, he appears to invite the reader to marvel at Natalia with him. The use of colloquialisms, such as 'cuerpazo' and 'piernazas', convey the sense of lust and excitement that he is feeling, since they are redolent of the macho speech used by men when derogatorily discussing women in sexual terms.³² He also fetishises the female body, much like Manongo in *No me esperen en abril*, by describing Natalia's body in such a way as to dismember it. It is interesting to note that one of the features that the narrator fetishises is Natalia's skin, describing it favourably as 'exceedingly white', which reveals his preference for whiter skin. The narrator may criticise other characters for their racist views but, in this instance, he too is promoting an aesthetic of feminine beauty that privileges the white race. Such comments also suggest that the narrator was present at the events described. The narrator employs the strategy of appealing to the implied reader's visual and aural senses to increase his involvement in the story that he is recounting and to encourage the reader in the phenomenal world to imagine the events.

Intra and Intertextual References: The Reader's Role in the Construction of the Text

Another way in which the reader (as opposed to the implied 'listener') is involved in the creative writing process is found in the structuring of the text itself. Certain

³² Whereas Bryce in *No me esperen en abril* humorously criticises the cult of enforced machismo, his narrator in *El huerto de mi amada* appears to uphold such values.

phrases, for example, are repeated during the course of the narration and the reader is required to cross-reference these if he is to gain maximum insight into and enjoyment of the text. The narrator begins the first chapter, for example, with the words, 'Carlitos Alegre, que nunca se fijaba en nada...' (p. 9) and variations of this sentence are subsequently repeated over the course of the following pages as if he were attempting to emphasise his point: 'Carlitos Alegre, en todo caso jamás se fijó absolutamente en nada' (p. 11), 'Carlitos Alegre jamás se fijó absolutamente en nada...' (p. 12) and, 'regresaba Carlitos Alegre sin fijarse en absolutamente nada...' (pp. 16-17). Some fifty pages later, the second chapter opens with words almost identical to those of the opening page of the first chapter: 'Definitivamente, Carlitos Alegre no había nacido para fijarse en las cosas' (p. 69), which as the most emphatic of the set of phrases, appears to represent its culmination. In repeating the same phrase, the narrator (or Bryce) is inviting the reader to cross-reference the intra-textual reality of the novel. The narrator's objective is to show that, as the second chapter gets underway, the events of the first chapter have validated his initial statement and the word 'definitivamente' seems to suggest that he has proved his point sufficiently.

On the other hand, an ironic effect is achieved when the narrator repeats words already spoken by the characters. For example, when the twins are invited to tea at the Grau Henstridge household, they render themselves ridiculous by adopting a forced and exaggerated rhetoric and inappropriate language in a bid to impress their hosts. It is worth transcribing the conversation in full:

- ¿Qué tal el té, muchachos? – les preguntó don Jaime.
- Me ha agradado – respondió Raúl Céspedes, que toda su vida había dicho que las cosas le gustaban, o no.
- Ha sido de mi entero agrado, sí, don Jaime –completó Arturo, al que

también toda su vida las cosas le habían gustado, o no.

-¿Y la mantequilla? – les preguntó Carlitos, jamás nunca se supo si en uno de sus famosos despistes, o si contabilizando ocultamente para el repertorio de Molina.

-Muy agradable también, sí.

-De mi entero agrado, también sí.

-Y la mermelada.

-Sumamente agradable, Carlitos.

-Me sumo al agrado, Carlitos.

-¿Y todo lo demás?

-De lo más agradable. (p. 207)

The above passage of dialogue is a good example of how verbal humour is used to send up the twins' social climbing and pretensions. As the reader, Carlitos and the narrator laugh at the twins, their lack of understanding of the social group that they are trying to gain access to is evident. Ultimately Bryce is taking a jibe at the twins' quest for social ascendancy, which seems to suggest that he is not as critical of the rigidity of the caste system as his other works, such as *No me esperen en abril* have suggested. Transcribing the conversation in dialogue creates an effect of distancing between the reader/narrator and the twins, rendering their isolation all the more evident as they flounder hilariously. The narrator does comment, however, in order to emphasise the disparity between the twins' language as they act for their public compared to the language that they would normally use. A situation with the potential to make the reader squirm in his seat, however, is diffused by Carlitos whose jokes make us laugh. Here, the narrator, reader and Carlitos are sharing a joke at the boys' expense and as such, united in laughter, form a community from which the twins are excluded. When the conversation has terminated the narrator seizes the opportunity to comment directly on their 'mil variantes del uso y el abuso de la palabra agradable' (p. 208) and, two pages later, makes a joke at the twins' expense, when referring to the 'té tan agradable y la mantequilla tan de mi agrado y la mermelada me sumo al agrado' (p. 209) as he mimics their language. The intended

irony of the narrator's joke, of course, only assumes its full comic potential if taken in the context of the twins' previous conversation and, the reader is required to cross-reference their conversation if he is to appreciate the joke fully. It is interesting to note that the narrator's sense of humour is often maliciously intended and as such differs from Bryce's typical Cervantine style of humour and more closely resembles that of Quevedo.³³

At another point in the narrative, a conversation between the twins, in which they discuss the unassuming and humble nature of the Grau Henstridge family, is transcribed in unmediated dialogue. Raúl remarks, 'Dicen que son muy genuinas' (p. 199) and, unbeknown to himself, coins a new word when he asks his brother, '¿Qué querrá decir eso de la *genuinidad*?' (p. 200). Arturo, betraying his own ignorance replies, 'Ni idea Raúl. ¿Y tú crees que se puede decir *genuinidad*?' (p. 200). Raúl's response to his brother's uncertainty is, 'Bueno, al menos mientras no nos oiga nadie' (p. 200), which suggests that they place great emphasis on not letting their guard slip in front of those they wish to impress. They will, of course, impress no one if their lack of intelligence is revealed by such blatant linguistic errors. The effect of irony is created because the reader, unlike the twins, is fully aware that the word 'genuinidad' does not exist.³⁴ Here their desire to keep up appearances is rendered ridiculous as their poor command of language exposes and emphasises the inappropriateness of their social-climbing pretensions. By appropriating their coining of the phrase 'genuinidad' into his next sentence: 'Todo era un dechado de *genuinidad* en el mundo de Silvina y Talía grau Henstridge' (p. 200), the narrator is

³³ For further discussion see Chapter 1, pp. 28-29.

³⁴ The word 'genuinidad' does not appear in the *Diccionario de la lengua española de la Real Academia Española*. On p. 1131 it would be placed between 'genuino' and 'genulí' but is absent. See *Diccionario de la lengua española de la Real Academia Española* (vigésima segunda edición), (Madrid: Editorial Espasa Calpe S.A., 2001).

clearly sending their pretensions up, as well as showing disdain for their misuse of Castilian and the italics reinforce his intention. A page later he mocks their pretensions, by mimicking their use of the word 'genuine' and, their misunderstanding of the word is rendered further evident in their inability to act genuinely themselves: 'Y nada menos que ahí fueron a caer los mellizos Arturo y Raúl, con su neologismo y todo, aunque lo menos genuinamente' (p. 201). In this instance it is up to the reader to make the link between the twins' use of the neologism and the narrator's ironic appropriation of it, if he is fully to appreciate the comic effect of the narrator's words and the criticism implied. On a separate occasion, when four of Natalia's jealous suitors are pursuing the lovers at Carlitos's parent's party, the head of the group, Dante Salieri, having been punched by Carlitos, knocks the other men to the ground. The narrator likens them to skittles falling, with the words, 'los tres caballeros se convirtieron en palitroques y salieron disparados' (p. 32). Several pages earlier, the over-exuberant Salieri had been described as having hurtled into the lovers like a 'feroz bola de bowling' (p. 26) in a bid to prevent their romantic encounter from taking place. If the reader recognises the link between the original analogy of Salieri with a bowling ball and the reference to Carlitos knocking him into his skittle-like companions, then the reader will laugh at Carlitos's usurpation of events as Salieri becomes a bowling ball, this time to Carlitos's advantage.

The final strategy that encourages the reader's participation in the construction processes of the text involves allusions to cultural references, with which the reader is invited to identify. These cultural references contribute to an understanding of the profile of the implied reader. The implied reader, it will be shown, is familiar with

the international literary canon, is a reader familiar with Bryce Echenique's other novels and is aware of popular forms of culture, specifically Hollywood films and popular Peruvian music. As in other works by Bryce, several references are made to Salazar Bondy's work *Lima la horrible*.³⁵ The narrator, for example, refers to the medical breakthroughs made by Carlitos's paternal grandfather that earned him the Nobel Prize for Medicine as well as a respected reputation in Lima with the words, 'y sus progresos en el tratamiento de la lepra eran sencillamente extraordinarios, reconocidos en el mundo entero y parte de Lima, la horrible, ciudad adonde había llegado por primera vez, precisamente para visitar el horror del Leprosorio de Guía' (p. 12). Later, Natalia will describe Lima as, 'esta ciudad nublada y triste, horrible' (p. 24), to Carlitos. These references, not only evoke the title of Salazar Bondy's essay, but also the words spoken by the sisters of *Dos señoras conversan*, when they bid each other goodnight in 'la Lima horrible de hoy' (p. 15).³⁶ Another reference directly lifted from *Dos señoras conversan*, the sisters constantly repeated phrase, 'los evangelios por los suelos y nosotras pisoteadas', (pp. 59, 66, 70),³⁷ is humorously turned on its head in *El huerto de mi amada*. In this novel, it is Jacinto Antúnez, one of Natalia's suitors, who cries the words: 'El mundo al revés y los evangelios por los suelos' (p. 35), when outwitted by none other than an adolescent, a 'hembrón' and 'cuatro cholos del diablo' (pp. 34-35). The reader familiar with the earlier text will be aware of the irony with which this phrase is charged. Similarly, the twins find their world 'patas arriba' (p. 30) when four Indians challenge and vanquish the four illustrious gentlemen. The metaphor of the world turned on its head that is employed by the two ladies and serves to ridicule their nostalgia for the

³⁵ Salazar Bondy, Sebastián, *Lima la horrible* (Mexico: Letras Latinoamericanas, Ediciones Era, 1964). See Chapter 3, pp. 119-20 for discussion.

³⁶ Alfredo Bryce Echenique, *Dos señoras conversan*, p. 15.

³⁷ Alfredo Bryce Echenique, *Dos señoras conversan*, pp. 59, 66, 70.

colonial epoch, is here used by the middle-class boys to express their horror when the Indians challenge the upper classes. The twins hence align themselves to the very class who scorn the middle classes to which they belong. Several links are also made which connect the novel to *No me esperen en abril*. Natalia and her friend, Olga Henstridge, for example, recall that Louis de Bourbon, the Duke of Anjou, bears a striking resemblance to Tyrone Power (p. 206), which is the nickname of Manongo Sterne's closest friend in *No me esperen en abril*. This comment may serve as a wink to a reader familiar with Bryce's earlier novel. Other Hollywood stars mentioned include, Charlton Heston (p. 215), to whom Carlitos is ironically likened as he struts naked around the bedroom and Ava Gardner, in the hyperbolic phrase: 'ni Ava Gardner siquiera, resulta comparable a Natalia' (p. 139).

The novel also contains many references to works of literature which, if the reader is to understand them, suggest that he is educated and well-read. One such example is found in Carlitos's realisation that people's reactions to events vary, since: 'en vez de tomar el mismo rumbo, cada uno se había metido en un camino distinto, como en un jardín cuyos senderos se bifurcan' (p. 72). This is a clear reference to the short story entitled, 'El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan' (1940), in Borges's *Ficciones* (1944), which we must presume that only an educated reader would be familiar with.³⁸ At another point in the narrative, an allusion is made to Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (or Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*),³⁹ with the phrase:

Y por supuesto que no hay música de ambiente alguna, en este caso, sino una suerte de sonido y furia, y todo debido a que un shakespeareano Carlitos Alegre acababa de demostrarles, con hechos y con palabras, que la vida sí que es un cuento contado por un idiota. (p. 57)

³⁸ Jorge Luis Borges, 'El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan', in *Ficciones* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 2003), pp. 100-18. [1944]

³⁹ William Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury* (London: Virago, 1995) [1929]

The phrase, 'sound and fury', of course, is found in Macbeth's soliloquy in Act V Scene V, when, after the death of his wife he is struck by the terrible realisation of what he has done: 'Life's but a willing shadow, a poor player/That struts and frets his hour upon the stage/And is then heard no more. It is a tale/Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury/Signifying nothing'.⁴⁰ Indeed, it is the twins who, like Macbeth, are ultimately responsible for their own downfall as well as being the two idiots of the tale. Obviously the twins' plans for social betterment cannot be likened to those of a literary figure of the status of Macbeth in his quest for the throne. Bryce is simply rendering homage to a literary hero whilst also establishing communication with a reader he assumes has enjoyed the same books as himself and will therefore appreciate the irony of the reference. The same can be said for allusions to D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's lover* (1928/1959),⁴¹ when the Sarsfield sisters liken Carlitos to 'una suerte de *El amante de Lady Chatterley*' (p. 114). At this point in the narrative Carlitos, embroiled in the twins' plans to court the sisters is pretending to be an Englishman named Carlos Sylvester, which makes their analogy of him to the figure of a great literary work, which will not be lost on the reader, all the more ludicrous.

Another less explicit intertextual reference concerns Cervantes' *Don Quijote de la Mancha*. The twins eventually meet two sisters, who although very wealthy, having been born to a man from the provincial town of Chimbote who built his own fortune,

⁴⁰ William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, ed. G.K. Hunter (London: Penguin, 1995), p. 132.

⁴¹ D.H. Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (Atlanta: Grove Press, 1959). Two publication dates are provided since the novel was published only privately in 1928 for its sexual language and content. In point of fact, there is some similarity between the novel and *El huerto de mi amada*. Lawrence's novel is about a sexual scandal, provoked by the adulterous affair between an upper-middle class lady, Connie Reid and a gardener, Oliver Mellors. The scandal surrounding Natalia and Carlitos's love affair is not without its scandal and, although it is age – and not class – motivated, there is a sense in which Lima perceives Natalia as an adulteress since it is her status as 'divorciada' that, in part, renders her liaison with Carlitos scandalous.

are not members of the élite. The narrator remarks that Lucha and Carmencita Zapata Zetterling are, 'medio impresentables, según dicen' (p. 230) and Carlitos refers to them as 'brutas' and 'bárbaras' (p. 233) following a telephone conversation with them in which they fail to understand a single one of his jokes. Indeed the sisters appear to be both superficial and exceedingly dull. When the twins, on the other hand, meet the girls, it becomes apparent that theirs is 'un mundo hecho a la medida de los mellizos' (p. 243) and the twins remark: 'qué muchachas tan encantadoras, qué sencillez' (p. 245). They immediately pair up with the girls (eventually marrying them) and instantly fall in love. The following conversation reveals not only the sisters' grotesque stupidity and inanity, but also how Raúl and Arturo's opinion of them differs from that of everyone else:

-¿Una qué, Duquecito? – le preguntó, algo inquieta, su Luchita a su Duque y señor, esa misma colorida noche.

-Mi papá no se llama Redundancia sino Rudecindo, Osito mío – le decía, paralelamente, a su Osazo, su Carmencita, esa misma colorida y florida y bailadísima noche.

Y la pobrecita ya quería enfermarse, también, para que tú me cures, sólo tú, cuando me duela aquí, Osito mío...

-La cumbre en el estrellato – repetía Arturo, girando un vals

-Y la meca en el firmamento – repetía Raúl, quebrando un tango. (p. 244)⁴²

This scene has undertones of the episode in *Don Quijote*, Book two Chapter ten, when Don Quijote believes the ugly, coarse servant girl before him is the beautiful Dulcinea of his dreams.⁴³ Despite her unladylike actions and her crude language,

⁴² This quote requires an explanation. Firstly, El Duque and El Oso are the boys' nicknames for themselves that function almost as alter-egos. The night is described as 'colorida' because the family's bad taste is epitomised in the colour schemes (or lack of) of the interior of their home which has twenty nine different telephones in different colours and multicoloured plastic flowers as ornaments, amongst others. The term 'colorida' is hence a jibe at the family's 'huachafería'. The phrase 'la cumbre en el estrellato' and 'la meca en el firmamento' are terms frequently employed by the twins to denote the apex of their dreams which is the summit of Lima's high society.

⁴³ Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quijote de La Mancha* (Madrid). In this scene Cervantes' use of linguistic irony works by creating a particular image of reality (i.e. an elevated form of reality) that is different to the reality that the reader recognises (i.e. a much shabbier version). The irony is born of the distance or conflict between the version of reality that is set up by the language used by the characters and the reality of the events as the reader understands it. The scene in question involves Sancho's attempt to avoid discovery and denouncement over the lies he had earlier told his master.

Don Quijote believes that she epitomises feminine charm. Sancho and the reader, of course, see the wench for what she is, but Don Quijote creates his own version of reality to coincide with his fantasies. The scene is an overwhelmingly comical farce as Don Quijote exercises his 'ability to transform events to harmonize with his illusion'.⁴⁴ The humour and irony in this scene are born from the clash of, on the one hand, the vulgar language and actions of the peasant woman and the image that Don Quijote has of her in his mind that is expressed in the lofty style of language that he uses to describe her. In this way, a conflictive relationship between reality and language is established. Hence, as Auerbach observes, this scene 'represents a clash between Don Quijote's illusion and an ordinary reality that contradicts it' (Auerbach, p. 339). A very similar effect is created in *El huerto de mi amada*. Whereas the narrator and Carlitos (and hence the reader) see the girls as ugly and unintelligent, the twins find them to be charming and laud their praises. The humour and irony that ensue are born of the disparity between the twins' version of reality and their exaggerated speech, and the narrator and Carlitos's appreciation of the girls.

There is another group of references in the text that function ironically as a critique of the twins' ambitions, their inflated self-image and the inevitable implausibility of their dreams of social ascension. These are related to figures of European history and

Hence he pretends that an ugly peasant woman on a horse is the beautiful but imaginary Dulcinea of Quijote's heart. Sancho describes the beauty of the wench in such colourful, eloquent and convincing terms that Don Quijote finishes by believing that the ugliness that he sees before him is really a manifestation of extraordinary beauty. As the repellent woman indelicately falls off her donkey and then hurls herself back on, Quijote who dashes to 'levantar a su encantada señora' hails her talents of horsemanship: '¡Vive Roque, que es la señora, nuestra ama más ligera que un alcotán, y que puede enseñar a subir de la jineta al más diestro cordobés o mexicano' (p. 111). Quijote's eloquent words of praise which still maintain the chivalric style despite the peasant's crude speech sound farcical to the reader who has just read of her clumsy, unladylike actions; it is a good example of Cervante's linguistic irony.

⁴⁴ Auerbach, Erich, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1953), p. 339. For further discussion, see Chapter 1, pp. 25-28 of this thesis.

Greek mythology. The first of these occurs when the twins humiliate themselves in front of Carlitos's sisters, in an episode in which verbal and situational humour combine to expose the twins' misplaced illusions of grandeur. Ashamed of their out-dated car they attempt to hide behind it but, as they run towards it, they crash into it and are thrown in to the air. Raúl, in an attempt to console his brother, declares: '- Como Churchill, Arturo: con "sangre, sudor y lágrimas", pero llegaremos' (p. 14). These words are borrowed from Churchill's famous speech that he gave to the House of Commons on 13 May 1940 upon becoming prime minister.⁴⁵ The brother's tribulations and suffering cannot in any real sense be compared to the courage and wartime feats of Churchill, so their recollection of him serves merely to highlight the triviality of their plans. Their words do, however, suggest that the twins are aware of the difficult nature of the challenge that they have set themselves. It also suggests that their grasp on reality is not as firm as they believe and that, identifying themselves with the wartime hero they see themselves and their task ahead as more important than they are in reality. Another famous military figure to whom they are compared, this time by the narrator, is to Napoleon, as the narrator sends up their 'battle' to scale the social strata. He says, appropriating Carlitos's words, 'este par de locos van de Waterloo en Waterloo como si nada, caramba' (p. 123), in a reference to the battles of their campaign which in this instance is a fancy dress ball to which they escort the Sarsfield's. An effect of bathos is created here due to the discrepancy between the historic importance of the battle of Waterloo and a fancy dress ball that Raúl attends dressed as a bear. He also refers to them as 'cual derrotados Napoleones' who 'se niegan a partir rumbo a Santan Elena' (p. 123), seemingly

⁴⁵ The actual words spoken were: 'I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat. We have before us an ordeal of the most grievous kind. We have before us many, many months of struggle and suffering.' See Robert Mackay, *Half the Battle: Civilian Morale in Britain during the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), p. 150.

suggesting that their quest is futile and that they should surrender. Comparing the twins to a historical figure of Napoleon's status is, again, intended ironically and serves to remind us how insignificant the twins are and how petty and doomed their plans are. The third reference that I wish to point out comes from Greek mythology and regards the analogy of the twins' plans of social ascension to Sisyphus pushing his rock up the hill. The Sisyphus leitmotif is repeated at various points in the text and is a metaphor for the futility of their illusions. On one occasion, the narrator says, 'y los mellizos allá afuera tratando de escalar y resbalándose una y otra vez con el pedrón, y un resbalón más y de nuevo trepa y trepa, cual Sísifos de sociedad' (p. 71), which suggests that the twins' 'hill' is the social hierarchy pyramid that they wish to ascend and their hopelessness highlights the rigidity of class barriers in Lima.⁴⁶

Popular Culture and Music

There are also several references to the worlds of popular and orchestral music found in the work. The novel's title, for example, is taken from Felipe Pinglo's *canción criolla*, *El huerto de mi amada*, whilst the first citation at the beginning of the text is the first verse of the song:

Si pasas por la vera del huerto de mi amada,
al expandir tu vista hacia el fondo verás
un florestal que pone tonos primaverales
en la quietud amable que los arbustos dan. (p. 7)⁴⁷

Naming the book after a song that belongs to the tradition of the *canción criolla* represents an important decision by the author. The *canción criolla* is a style of

⁴⁶ For the myth of Sisyphus, see Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths: I* (London: Penguin, 1960), pp. 216-20. [1955]

⁴⁷ For a discussion on Felipe Pinglo (1899-1936), see James Higgins, *Lima: A Cultural and Literary History*, pp. 153-54.

music that originated in the *barrios* of Lima such as La Victoria and Vitarte, known for their Afro-Peruvian population. As such it is a form of music associated with the city's lower and immigrant classes. Therefore, not only is it a specifically Peruvian style of music, but it is also a form of mass, as opposed to high, culture.⁴⁸ This marks a departure from Bryce's other works, for although *No me esperen en abril* does mention Chabuca Granda's *La flor de la canela*, the majority of songs that appear in the earlier novel and provide its 'musical score' tend to belong to Western popular culture (specifically the United States (Nat King Cole) or European high culture (Rachmaninov). Manongo, we are told, listens to popular Peruvian music, but it is the songs emanating from the West that have the greatest influence on his behaviour and that of his friends. Providing the work with a title of a song that belongs to the Peruvian musical tradition, in a sense, privileges the national over the foreign. Bryce, it is important to remember, left Peru during the 1960s and the novel is therefore an exercise in nostalgia as Bryce remembers and recreates the atmosphere of his youth in Lima. *El huerto de mi amada*, still popular in the decade of the fifties, is integral in recreating the ambience and thus functions nostalgically in the novel.⁴⁹ Nat King Cole is mentioned but not his music (the lovers' favourite pianist writes a song that Cole releases), as is Frank Sinatra in the amusing sentence:

⁴⁸ See James Higgins, *Lima: A Cultural and Literary History*, pp.152- 58, for a discussion of the origins of the *canción criolla*, which includes information on its public appeal.

⁴⁹ By the time that Bryce returned to Lima in 1999 to write *El huerto de mi amada*, the popular expression, 'llevarse alguien al huerto' was no longer in common usage. He explains his decision to use the song as the novel's title in the following words: 'Todo esto me nació ahí, al volver al Perú, y tenía escrita una novela que era "A Carlitos Alegre se lo llevaron al huerto", y me dijeron, "qué cosa hablas como español presumido, te las quieres dar de europeo, y no sé cuantas cosas más" porque llevarse alguien al huerto se ha dicho toda la vida, pero ya no se decía, había caído en el olvido total. Hablé con una lingüista muy importante y me dijo que no, no se usa; y me quedé despalabrado, me quedé sin título, Carlitos Alegre se entristeció profundamente... hasta que un día escuché algo aún más triste, el vals "El huerto de mi amada" y volvió a renacer la novela, es la palabra y es muy importante, quise que incluso el sonido tuviera algo que ver con el significado', in Rodri García, 'Bryce Echenique: "Cometí el error de la radicalidad y me quemé las navas"',

<http://www.lavozdegalicia.es/entrevistas/noticia.jsp?TEXTO=100000024950> (consulted 23 May 2005).

‘Carlitos era tan flaco como Frank Sinatra’ (p. 32), which acts as a cultural point of reference that the reader will recognise, thus serving to anchor events in the real world.

The most important musical reference, however, is to *Siboney*,⁵⁰ interpreted by Stanley Black’s London orchestra which, in effect, becomes the novel’s theme tune. The melody’s first appearance is possibly the single most important event in the novel since it draws the lovers together and is hence the catalyst for the plot’s events. Many of Bryce’s characters have a very dramatic relationship with elements of popular culture, and this has already been discussed in chapter 4 in the case of Manongo Sterne of *No me esperen en abril*. Cinema and music accompany Bryce’s protagonists through life, and as such many live their lives through a certain song, waltz, character in a film or poem, as seen in the case cited in *Dos señoras conversan*. As such, Bryce’s novels often have a poetic, lyrical or cinematographic quality to them, which contributes to the flavour of so many of his works.

On the eve of his parents’ party Carlitos arrives home and as he walks up the staircase he hears the first notes of *Siboney*: ‘Con los primeros compases, Carlitos había sentido algo sumamente extraño y conmovedor, explosivo y agradabilísimo, la sensación católica de un misterioso gozoso, quizás’ (p. 19). In this scene, *Siboney* is experienced by Carlitos as a magical force that appears to be altering the course of

⁵⁰ Bryce has said of the song: ‘Es una canción que entró a mi casa probablemente con un tocadiscos de mi padre, y se quedó en el recuerdo mío y ahora, años después, con las mudanzas, que uno fija en las cosas, tenía todavía la versión de Stanley Black, que fue probablemente la que algún día yo oí, sin que ocurriera nada malo... le había ocurrido a mi primo pero no a mí’, in Rodri García, ‘Bryce Echenique: “Cometí el error de la radicalidad y me quemé las naves”’ <http://www.lavozdegalicia.es/entrevistas/noticia.jsp?TEXTO=100000024590> (consulted 5 May 2005).

his destiny. The reader familiar with the song will partly share in Carlitos's experience if he recreates the tune in his mind and is encouraged to visualise Carlitos walking up the stairs whilst simultaneously listening to the piece of music he hears, as if watching a motion picture. As Carlitos mounts the stairs we enter into his thoughts, and find that he believes that, 'a uno le tocaban música mientras sube' (p. 18), as if the music he hears is being played to accompany his walk. This is the first instance in the novel in which a cinematographic effect occurs, as an image is presented of Carlitos mounting the stairs accompanied, rather like a character in a film by the notes of a musical score. We read of the magnanimous effects that the music is having on Carlitos's soul when the narrator says:

El de la música era de su padre, probando los parlantes...
seleccionando algunos discos, sin imaginar por supuesto
que el efecto tan extraño y profundo de aquellos acordes,
interrumpidos cada vez que cambiaba de disco o de surco,
había empezado a alterar brutalmente la vida de su hijo. (p. 18)

The effect of the music on Carlitos's destiny is made implicit in these lines. Carlitos's father, meanwhile, is unaware of the effect that his music is having upon his son. As the focus of the narrator changes and directs the reader's gaze from Carlitos on the staircase to his father in the garden, and back again, a shot-reverse-shot effect is created. As a film reel is edited to cut from frame to frame, so does the narrator's gaze, and the reader's with it, cross-cut from one scene to another.⁵¹ It is at this point that Carlitos, as if bewitched by the music, drops his rosary beads. This portentous occurrence lends an air of foreboding to the event; functioning as a wink of the eye to the reader, it suggests that some catastrophe will ensue. Here, the narrative approaches the genre of the melodrama and, through the course of the

⁵¹ The text is replete with allusions to the cinema. Carlitos, for example, refers to Natalia's home as 'una casona cinematográfica' (p. 54), while on one occasion, a seductive Natalia is described as falling onto her bed in slow motion: 'Natalia se tumbaba a su lado en cámara lenta' (p. 45).

narrative, several melodramatic devices such as the letter appear, as Bryce parodies the genre.

Hours later, *Siboney* is played again and reawakens Carlitos from his rêverie: ‘la melodía traviesa y veraniega de *Siboney*... se le metió hasta en su reloj-pulsera a Carlitos Alegre. De un salto comprendió que llevaba tres horas rascándose’ (p. 21). It appears that time stopped for Carlitos when he first heard *Siboney* play and it is not until he hears it again, three hours later, that he snaps out of the trance. The text suggests that the piece had the power to detain time in Carlitos’s world and only when it is replayed is the spell temporarily broken. *Siboney* is described as ‘la melodía traviesa’ (p. 21) and is hence personified as if it were a playful spirit. It compels him to descend and enter the party, rather as if the music were pushing Carlitos and Natalia towards their first encounter. This is emphasised by a reference to the piece as, ‘aquel *Siboney* embrujador’ (p. 21), and when it ends Carlitos feels compelled to play it again in order that he may dance his first dance with Natalia. At this point in the narrative Carlitos’s reality changes definitively. This is symbolised by his impression that the waters of the swimming pool begin to boil and bubble. As Natalia symbolically smoothes down his ‘punk’ hairstyle (‘había logrado domesticarle el mechón de pelo izado’ [p. 23]), she captures and tames his heart. The scene parodies the sentimentalism of the bolero which, acting as Cupid’s bow, has the power to make two people meet and instantaneously fall in love.

Parody

In point of fact, several genres are parodied in the text, including melodrama, theatre, cinema, pantomime, the fairytale, the detective novel/film and Greek tragedy.⁵² For example, as Carlitos and Natalia fall in love, Dante Salieri cries: 'Che, parece que el pibe *andase* en busca del absoluto' (p. 22) and the reaction of the *limeños* as they respond as a national collective who mock his accent transports the narrative to the domain of the Greek amphitheatre: '-*Anduviere* y cambiemos de tema –le respondió un verdadero coro, ahí en la terraza' (p. 22). The doctor rebukes them with the words: 'Ah... Ustedes los limeños: siempre tan presumidos de su buen castellano...' (p. 22), to which the 'coro' reply as if stating a universal truth: 'Sabido es mi querido Che' (p. 23). This introduces the notion of the Greek chorus into the narrative that responds in unison to reveal supposed 'truths', which is, in fact, the *limeños* and their biases and prejudices. The unified body of *limeños* are a gossip-mongering, judgmental upper class who consider themselves as superior to their lower-class countrymen and, in this instance, to their fellow Latin Americans. Of course, the Peruvians' snobbery with regard to their style of Castilian is a trivial issue compared to the life and death issues of Greek tragedy and their elevated language is inappropriate given the context. During the course of the text the upper class inhabitants of Lima are referred to collectively as 'Lima' and are not given individual identities. Examples of this are: 'Lima entera se habría dado cuenta de la segunda intención que había en aquella invitación, de lo interesada que era la propuesta de los hermanos Céspedes' (p. 13), and 'Lima entera quería hacerme reina del carnaval' (p. 25). Without individual identities they appear to be faceless, hence resembling the masked figures of the Greek chorus. As will be shown later, their appearances are

⁵² Antonio Skármeta observes that in Post-boom fiction, 'la parodia de los géneros literarios y los códigos oficiales de lenguaje' is a common feature. Quoted in Donald L. Shaw, *The Post-Boom in Spanish American Fiction*, p. 9.

characterised by rumours and whisperings as their commentary on events and people in Lima filters into the text.

Meanwhile, *Che* Salieri, besotted with Natalia, smashes the record and attacks Carlitos. A chase ensues through the house, which is joined by two eminent doctors, Alejandro Palacios and Jacinto Atúnez, and the ‘senador ilustre’, (p. 27) Fortunato Quiroga. The apparent irony with which the term ‘ilustre’ (which is used in a similar fashion to mock Don Álvaro) is employed soon becomes obvious, as the supposedly refined gentlemen behave like barbarians and lose control. What follows is a slapstick series of events as the lovers are pursued through the house in a chase reminiscent of a B-movie which, as it picks up momentum, rather than thrilling the audience, merely makes them laugh. The register of the language that the gentlemen employ contrasts starkly to their farcical actions, as when the rotund *Che* slips and gets wedged under a bed. As they race around one can almost imagine the strobe lights flashing and hear the bars of music traditionally associated with the pantomime chase. Carlitos’s father attempts to bar their path and declares: ‘Señores, soy el dueño de casa y, de verdad, les ruego...’ (p. 27) and the *Che* replies dramatically: ‘quitáte de la escalera o pasamos sobre tu cadáver. Como que me llamo Dante Salieri’ (p. 27). Their dramatic language and the intensity of the *Che*’s intentions are ill-fitting given the real situation (four grown men hotly pursuing an over-sexed schoolboy through a summer garden party). Situational and verbal humour complement each other and the comic effect is born from the disparity of their foolish actions and the elevated language with which they speak; the effect is Cervantine. The narrator seizes the opportunity to ridicule the characters further when he appropriates their chivalrous tone to describe how Carlitos ‘protegía a su dama, abrazándola con toda su alma’ (p.

30). It is the string of rosary beads that Carlitos had dropped that reveal the lovers' hiding place bringing the narrative back into the territory of the melodrama and, when Fortunato Quiroga spots them and cries, 'Hay un rosario tirado al pie de la cama' with a 'voz de ajá, los pescamos' (pp. 30-1), his tone recalls a detective in a crime series as he discovers the murder weapon. The suspense has already been built up by a second allusion to the 'olvidado rosario' (p. 21) that Carlitos treads on as he exits his bedroom. It is when an 'envalentonadísimo' (p. 32) Carlitos declares, '¡Tú confía en mí, Natalia de mi corazón!' (32), as if a knight protecting his damsel, that the narrator shatters his bravado and heroic intentions by informing us that he is as skinny as Frank Sinatra and Carlitos plummets from the sublime to the ridiculous. The four 'illustrious gentlemen', meanwhile, who function as pantomime baddies, are finally vanquished by the family's butlers. Bryce's parodying of the Greek chorus becomes plain when the narrator likens the evening's events to the myth of Troy: 'Troy ardió en San Isidro, aquel viernes por la noche, y hasta bien entrada la madrugada' (p. 26), since the analogy of the comic pantomime chase to the heroic battle is clearly overblown.

Another genre to be parodied is the fairytale, specifically Sleeping Beauty. As the lovers dance the narrator explains: 'La verdad, estaba ridículísimo, pero a Natalia de Larrea, hacía mil años que nadie le alegraba la vida en esta ciudad nublada y triste' (p. 24). In her youth Natalia was forced into a loveless marriage with 'un hombre tan brutal y celoso, tan lleno de prejuicios, tan acomplejado, tan braguetero' (pp. 39-40) because she had fallen pregnant and was left no other option in a society as morally-driven as Lima. He stole from her and abandoned her for another, but since she chose

to divorce him Lima condemned her to a life of solitude. Her solitude is further compounded because she still grieves for her one true love who was tragically killed in a car accident. The sensations that she feels upon dancing with Carlitos not only erase the unhappy memories of her double abandonment but also evoke beautiful memories of a time when she was happy and loved: 'regresó del todo a la belleza de su adolescencia, a su reinado de carnaval y al único hombre que amó en su vida, muerto trágicamente a los veintidós años' (p. 37). It is hence Natalia's nostalgia for her lost youth and lost love that impel her towards Carlitos and her lust for him is motivated by her desire to recapture the past. As such, Carlitos's kiss reawakens her heart and allows Natalia to experience emotions of love and happiness: 'Y Natalia, que dormía ahora también, en la cama del acompañante, soltó sus primeros lagrimones de amor en casi dos décadas' (p. 37). In a sense, then, Carlitos assumes the role of Natalia's saviour emancipating her from a life without love. The Sleeping Beauty effect, however, is hugely improbable since Carlitos is a devout Catholic schoolboy and Natalia an adult millionairess; Bryce's employment of the fairytale motif of the dashing prince kissing the sleeping beauty and bringing her back to life parodies the fairytale genre in order to produce humour. The fairytale is further inverted since there is no 'happy ever after' for Natalia, who finds herself alone and paranoid about her wrinkles as the novel draws to a close. If the fairytale love story is timeless and eternal, Natalia de Larrea discovers that she is not.

Natalia's four suitors, meanwhile, do not stop in their quest to put an end to the affair. In a parody of the crime thriller, Bryce satirises the political and judicial administrations, showing the former to be corrupt and the latter to be inept. Fortunato Quiroga is the new president of Peru (the plot has jumped forward in time and

Quiroga is imagining the future) and summons a gentleman to his offices where he asks him to murder the lovers in exchange for two thousand dollars. In a conversation resembling two professional criminals as they plot their crime, Lucas affirms, 'El trabajo sucio déjemelo a mí, señor presidente' (p. 64) and the president orders him to realise the crime, 'sin dejar la más mínima huella' (p. 64). It is Quiroga's jealousy and the insanity that his passion provokes that lead him to ask for the 'elimination' of the lovers. A love so intense that the desired object must be killed by the spurned suitor is of course, a typical melodramatic motif. Quiroga's wish that Natalia be shot with a 'solo balazo, y en el corazón' (p. 64) along with the order that her face not be disfigured so that her beauty remain intact in death also suggests that this is a parody of both the melodrama and the crime novel. This is further underlined in his wish that he attend the funeral and bestow upon Natalia 'Ese beso que ella jamás permitió que yo le diera' (p. 65). As the scene closes the president, left alone, 'llora amargamente' (p. 65) and dramatically cries out: '¡Adiós, Natalia' (p. 65).

The crime is committed by a gloved assassin and the newspaper sellers sensationally announce the crime in hyperbolic terms as 'el crimen más extravegante y complicado del mundo' (p. 66). Carlitos is framed for the crime and in the *Corte Suprema de Justicia* he explains: 'Pues yo les sigo asegurando, señores magistrados, que el asesino usaba guantes, que yo sólo recuerdo haberlos usado el día de mi primera comunión' (p. 67). This farcical statement is an example of Bryce's use of verbal humour to parody the courtroom drama. Carlitos, in true melodramatic style has been framed for a crime that he did not commit and the role of the tabloids in swaying the opinions of the judiciary must be taken as a satirical comment on the sensationalism

of Lima's press. Such a ridiculous statement of defence emphasises the absurdity of the case and the Peruvian justice system is, as a result, satirised as inept and inefficient. It is only a year later when Consuelo Céspedes awakens from a coma that she is able to provide an alibi that leads to Carlitos's release, but not before an innocent man has spent a year behind bars. It should be noted, to avoid confusion, that these events are Quiroga's fantasies and never actually take place.

The last artistic genre to be considered is the theatre. The first theatrical reference immediately follows the allusion to Shakespeare's *Macbeth*⁵³ and appears with the description of a curtain rising on the twins' apartment, which the reader, as spectator, is encouraged to visualise: 'Y ahora como que se había levantado el telón en el segundo piso de la casona más triste y desconcertada de la calle de la Amargura' (p. 57). On the following two pages the twins unveil their plans to use Carlitos and Natalia in their bid for social ascension and their discussion closes with the line: 'Y el telón se alzó aún más' (p. 59), which seems to equate with the idea: 'and the plot thickens', and could be a sign that their plans are beginning to formulate. Each time the curtain rises, the reader gains further insight into their minds and schemes. The twins are actors, pretending to be something that they are not and it is, thus, fitting that Bryce employs the theatre stage to describe their actions. The next page begins with the heading 'Acto Seguido' (p. 60) and the following two pages are not transcribed in prose but as a play script complete with stage directions and descriptions of sets which are written in italics:

Una pequeña habitación, un saloncito, muebles viejos y libros de medicina. Resultado triste. La señora María Salinas, viuda de Céspedes, los mira desde el umbral de la puerta. El traje es negro y el pelo blanco. Se la ve

⁵³ The Shakespearian theme continues when the lovers are referred to as 'los amantes de Verona' (p. 78).

cansada, pero ella es una mujer resignada y siempre sonríe y se persigna no bien abre la puerta de su casa y ve tantos escalones. Raúl y Arturo dudan en incorporarse, pero finalmente los dos pegan un gran salto y besan y abrazan a doña María. (p.60).

By placing the action in a theatrical context, Bryce is dramatising reality. It represents a change in the reader's role of 'listener' and places him in the position of spectator as he suddenly has the impression that he is sitting in a theatre auditorium as a member of the audience. The curtain lowers but not before we find that Carlitos and Natalia are also watching the play and commenting on the action. The reader, drawn into the plot, is now sitting alongside two of the novel's characters and watching the action with them, which transports the narrative to the domain of metafiction. It also aligns the reader with Carlitos, whose perspective he now shares, and emphasises the twins' alienation as they occupy a separate space to the other characters (including the reader/spectator). To create the effect in the reader's mind that he is watching a dramatic performance, Bryce focuses very much on the visual and oral aspects of the action, as seen in the extract above. Suddenly the twins appear from under the curtain and begin to hurl stones at Carlitos who in turn hurries to pick the stones up in order to throw them back at them: '*Va recogiendo las mismas piedras que a él le han lanzado desde el escenario y se apresta a arrojarlas*' (p. 61). As such, the twins cross from one reality (the world of art) into a different reality (that of Carlitos and Natalia) and appears to be a metaphor for the fact that Carlitos and the twins inhabit separate universes. Although they can watch each other and interact from within their own space, their worlds always remain separated.

In the following two pages a return to the original prose format occurs. The text reads: '*Pero nunca se sabe con una obra como Acto seguido*' (p. 62) which shows

that the text is aware of its textual reality and that *Acto Seguido* is to be considered a separate unit from the rest of the novel. The theatre script format returns two pages later, under the heading, '*Acto Seguido (continuación)*' (p. 64), this time to the above mentioned scenes in the presidential palace, the court room, the hospital room and the murder scene. Again the narrator is careful to appeal to the spectator's senses of sight and sound: 'Silencio total. Y de pronto, como cien plomazos. Y otra vez silencio y luego otros cien plomazos. Ladridos de perros, luces que se encienden, gritos de pavor' (p. 66). Suddenly the scene switches to a Lima newspaper seller, announcing the murder: '¡Todo sobre el crimen más complicado del mundo!' (p. 66). This sudden change of scene and space draws heavily on the cinematographic technique whereby a close shot of one space suddenly pans out into a long-distance shot of another. These asides are also redolent of the heading '*Paréntesis único y real*' (p. 458) in *No me esperen en abril*. David Wood notes that, 'Examples such as these... place the focus on the act of narration rather than its content', whilst 'encouraging the reader to share in the pleasure of the literary act'.⁵⁴ The section ends with the curtain falling on the desperate Céspedes twins as Carlitos and Natalia applaud the '*melodramón*' (p. 68) and the chapter closes with a play on the traditional cinematic closing shot of the words 'The End': 'POR FIN' (p. 68). The narrator refers, mockingly to the *Acto Seguido* as the twins' '*interpretación de los sueños, tan lamentable y tan poco sutil*' (p. 71), which suggests that he could be satirising psychoanalysis or merely taking a cruel jibe at their dreams of social arrivisme. Above all, this sequence of short scenes hints at Bryce's enjoyment for playing with different forms of art and different levels of reality and the metaliterary

⁵⁴ David Wood, *The fictions of Alfredo Bryce Echenique*, p. 140.

quality of the text is a return of the Brycean theme of the merging of the fictional and non-fictional worlds.⁵⁵

Fantasy in *El huerto de mi amada*

The theme of the blurring of the boundaries between fantasy and reality is one of the most salient themes in *El huerto de mi amada*. Arturo and Raúl, for example, in their fantasies of social ascendancy one day chance upon a statue of the naval hero Admiral Miguel Grau and realise that he must have descendants still living in Lima. Filled with a new desire to meet the girls who will assist them in their quest to arrive at the doorstep of the élite, they formulate a plan to seek out Grau's granddaughters and great-granddaughters. They compile a list of potential candidates from the telephone directory and approach the statue, asking him to consult it and give his advice. Carlitos recounts their exploits to Natalia in the following way: 'se instalan en plena plaza y sacan su padrón y lo van corrigiendo y perfeccionando ante la mirada histórica de don Miguel, para que éste los ilumine con su ejemplo ...es también el héroe quien les va a aconsejar cuáles son las descendientes que debo yo llamar por teléfono' (p. 196). Carlitos's words to Natalia reveal how the twins believe they are being guided by a stone statue. A conversation between the twins and the statue reveals that they even believe that it speaks back to them:

-¿Les ha pedido algo, acaso, vuestra santa madre, a cambio de sus desvelos?

⁵⁵ *El huerto de mi amada* is replete with allusion to the theatre and acting. Carlitos, for example, is consistently forced into improvising on the telephone when talking to the twins' future conquests. The rule of thumb is that Carlitos, in the 'papel protagonista' (p. 110), must pretend to be one of the twins in a series of role-plays and invite the girls on a date. Bryce renders the situation farcical when one day Carlitos has to 'pretend' to be himself: 'Lo complicado vino el miércoles, porque a Carlitos le tocaba ser Carlitos Silvestre' (p. 111) and admits, 'llevo unos días maravillosos desde que no soy yo' (p. 112). Arturo, on the other hand: 'nunca había colgado tan satisfecho de sí mismo' (p. 110), when Carlitos speaks on his behalf.

-Bueno, la verdad es que, así, muy directamente, señor héroe, no nunca, pero... -le argumentaba Arturo a la estatua.
-Pero es que uno quisiera, señor héroe...
-Señores, piénsenlo bien y sigamos conversando otra noche. Esta estatua está cansada y aún tiene que vigilar muchos siglos de historia en el horizonte patrio. (p. 196)

The twins' belief that a stone statue communicates with them suggests that their quest for social ascendancy has so consumed their thoughts that they are no longer able to distinguish between fantasy and reality or reason logically. They appear here almost to be hallucinating. The 'opaque' stone statue that they consult to 'clarify' their decisions symbolises the blindness of their schemes, referred to as 'delirios' (p. 112), and the impossibility of their quest.

The twins' presence also introduces the familiar Brycean theme of the double into the narrative. The brothers are described as 'almas gemelas' (p. 57) and the narrator informs us that, 'hasta su propia madre dice que sus hijos son desconcertantemente parecidos, y, además, almas gemelas' (p. 58). It is also acknowledged that 'cuando habla uno, bien podría ser el otro, y viceversa, y qué importa cuál de los dos dijo tal cosa y cuál de tal otra, ya que siempre lo que afirma o niega Raúl es el eco de lo afirmado o negado por Arturo' (58). This is reminiscent of *Dos señoras conversan*. In the novella although Estela is the subject of her elder sister's plotting and scheming, the two siblings, as sole inhabitants of their fantasy world, are mutually dependent upon one another. Each needs the other to perpetuate the fantasy if they and their world are to survive. Carmela and Estela entertain the same nostalgic fantasies that govern their lives as well as sharing the same behavioural patterns. Indeed, the two sisters live the same life to such an extent that it is almost as if they are two different sides of the same coin, sharing one existence between them. Carmela, of course, represents the evil side of their personality, whilst Estela is the

good half, as if they are the two opposing facets of the one person, representing the good and bad in everyone. The lives of the Céspedes twins are equally bound. They are dependant on each other in the execution of their strategies towards their goal of social betterment. Described as ‘un juego de espejos cantando a dúo’ (p. 197), Raúl and Arturo chase the same dream, think the same thoughts, finish off each other sentences and suffer the same vanities and insecurities. The words of Raúl echo those of Arturo, whilst the decisions of Arturo are always seconded by Raúl. They function as one and the same person but, since neither of them possesses any redeeming qualities, they are like two dark sides of the same moon. Closer than the sisters, they are like two moving parts of the same machine; they are the mirror image of each other: if Raúl looks in the mirror Arturo is reflected back at him and vice versa. Carlitos sums it up: ‘cada uno es, además, el otro’ (p. 61).⁵⁶

It has already been stated that Natalia’s passion for Carlitos is born of a fantasy of regression and that the intoxicating notes of *Siboney* act as a supernatural force that pushes their destinies together. As the twins entertain fantasies of entering society life, it becomes clear that Carlitos and Natalia entertain fantasies of an opposite kind. Natalia’s dream is to withdraw from a society that has condemned her for being beautiful, a divorcee and a woman with a powerful job.⁵⁷ After their performance at the party and the scandal that ensues, the lovers take flight to Natalia’s country estate that she treats as her refuge (‘-El huerto será nuestro refugio’ [p. 38]) in which their controversial passion can flourish unthreatened. The joy that Natalia procures within

⁵⁶ It is interesting to note that whereas Golyadkin in Dostoyevsky’s *The Double* becomes two people, the reverse dynamic occurs with the twins who are two separate human beings who function as one. For further discussion on the split of Dostoyevsky’s character, see Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoyevsky’s Poetics*, trans. R.W. Rostel (USA: Ardis, 1973), pp. 176-77.

⁵⁷ ‘Natalia soportaba todo tipo de vejámenes, inherentes a su condición de mujer que trabajaba y no debería’ (p. 156).

the limits of her utopian sanctuary will later be described as ‘la felicidad enmurallada de su gran amor’ (p. 70). In point of fact, at several points in the text, the *huerto* is referred to in terms of a military stronghold, as, for example, when Natalia tells Carlitos: ‘Ésta es nuestra fortaleza’ (p. 54). The idea behind the *huerto* is indeed to create an idyllic paradise that locks the rest of the world out, where, as Natalia tells Carlitos, ‘sólo entrará la gente que a nosotros nos guste’ (p. 38). The notion of the hermetically-sealed utopia is a common motif in Bryce’s fiction. The *huerto* represents for Natalia and Carlitos, what the apartment represents for the sisters of *Dos señoras conversan*, what the *Violeta* bar or *Villa Puntos Suspensivos* represent for Manongo in *No me esperen en abril* and what the psychiatric clinic initially represents for Max in *Reo de nocturnidad*: the spaces in which they realise their fantasies of escapism.

Once inside Carlitos marvels: ‘Tu casota parece un cortijo andaluz en pleno corazón del África, Natalia, y afuera el Sahara, o algo así’ (p. 42). Carlitos employs exotic imagery to imagine Natalia’s estate, although his comparison shows disregard for geographical logic, as he locates a Spanish farm in central Africa. More importantly, however, he is imagining the estate as a stronghold surrounded by desert and therefore a defensive edifice unattainable to enemies. The ‘huerto’ will be referred to, by a narrator who is closely reproducing Carlitos’s thoughts, as an ‘oasis’ (p. 69), which recalls the concept of the *locus amoenus*.⁵⁸ In this particular instance, as

⁵⁸ A popular topos in medieval literature that continued into the Renaissance, the *locus amoenus* takes its name from the Latin, meaning ‘pleasant place’. A common motif in medieval romances that signified a rural or garden retreat, even by Ovid’s time the *locus amoenus* had become a poetic convention, a description of an ‘idyllic setting’. Often a place in which a romance blossomed, it was almost inevitably the site of a violent or destructive encounter, its pleasant atmosphere belying an impending threat. The translation for the term in the Spanish language has often been given as ‘huerto’. Since their affair culminates in violence and abandonment, it is a fitting that the *huerto* should be construed as a *locus amoenus*. For a discussion of the *locus amoenus*, see Alex Preminger &

the text reads: 'Dios le había colocado un oasis particular' (p. 69), it appears that we are dealing with an oasis that God himself has personally granted Carlitos. Finally, several pages later, when Carlitos corrects Natalia's exclamation 'por nada de este mundo' (p. 73) with 'nada de este oasis, mi amor' (p. 73), it becomes clear that in their minds, the world beyond the limits of the 'oasis-fortaleza' (p. 71) in which they live no longer exists.⁵⁹ Finally the fixities of time and space will melt away altogether as the entire household slips in and out of the present reality. Shortly after they have moved in together, for example, in the middle of a conversation the thought suddenly hits them like a bolt out of the blue that 'había una vez una ciudad llamada Lima y un año calendario 1957' (p. 73), as empirical reality filters in. Carlitos even refers to his entourage as 'compañeros de mi oasis' (p. 76), which makes them sound nothing short of an angelic host. The biblical theme continues with the notion of the paradisiacal garden when Carlitos refers to the *huerto* as: 'Nuestra perfecta fortaleza árabe: muralla de piedra por fuera y jardín por dentro' (p. 54).⁶⁰ The *huerto* becomes a sort of Garden of Eden for the lovers, which is fitting since it is the site on which Carlitos will lose his innocence in a sexual initiation which is deemed by all to be sinful. Functioning as a sanctuary for the lovers' illicit romance, the orchard assumes a symbolic role in the novel that both represents the challenging of social conventions and recalls the *locus amoenus*. The text however makes plain that their fantasies are but illusions, for, their oasis will always remain 'el mismo oasis clavado en pleno centro de la sociedad de Lima' (p. 71).

T.V.F. Brogan (eds), *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 320 & 1294.

⁵⁹ See also 'divino oasis' and 'oasis privado' (p. 70).

⁶⁰ At one point, the narrator refers to Natalia as 'Eva' (p. 139).

Initially, the lovers flee for practical reasons as Natalia fears the continuing wrath of the four humiliated gentlemen. But there is a deeper reason. For, although Natalia really believes that she is fleeing 'toda aquella gente' (p. 39) amongst whom she has spent 'los peores años de su vida' (p. 39), in reality she is trying to flee memory itself.⁶¹ Although on the surface, with her wealth and beauty, Natalia should have fitted easily into Lima society, she always felt apart from the élite class amongst which she lived. Judged, envied and criticised by fellow socialites, 'tan sólo por ser quien era y poseer lo que poseía, y por ser hermosa' (p. 39), Natalia has been alienated by a jealous, vindictive and malicious world that is unsure of itself and fears its own precarious position in history, due to changes in society: in this case an independent, entrepreneurial woman who provides for herself without relying on the charity of a male figure.

One of the first fantasies that the lovers indulge in is the re-creation of their world through language, which naturally begins in the bedroom. One evening Natalia replaces the world 'dormitorio' with 'alcoba' (p. 78) in her desire to project her new-found sensuality onto the world around her. The word 'alcoba', she explains, sounds: 'más cálido, más íntimo' (p. 78) and so hence provides a more apt setting for the

⁶¹ The same can be said of the twins, who like their father before them are prepared to do anything in a bid to forget their roots, or disguise them from others. Their desire for change is clearly bound to unhappy memories. As they hear their mother mount the stairs, for example, they are reminded of the same hardships that characterise every day of their lives: 'los mellizos Arturo y Raúl oyeron los mismos pasos cansados de siempre subiendo la misma escalera crujiente y lastimosa de siempre y pensaron en el pan nuestro de cada día y hágase, Señor, tu voluntad, y muchas cosas así de duras y de tristes, porque su madre continuaba subiendo, silenciosa, resignada, igualito que ayer y que cuando éramos niños, y continúa subiendo, desde que tenemos memoria, una tras otra, todas las noches, de la misma manera en que, todas las mañanas, baja y baja y continuará bajando y subiendo' (p. 59). The staircase that seems to lead nowhere as their mother continues to mount and descend day in and day out, appears to be a metaphor for the twins' uphill struggle and the futility of their dreams. The twins want to break this suffocating and stifling cyclical existence. In the same vein, the twins get angry when Carlitos persists in speaking of their parents' financial hardships: 'el tipo no puede seguir metiendo... hasta con nuestro padre y nuestra madre' (p. 104).

staging of their passions.⁶² The word also serves to intensify and elevate their love and Carlitos observes:

Pasemos a mi alcoba dicho por ti ya no sólo suena oscurito y delicioso, sino que suena muy sexi, también, aunque a mí no me gustaría alejarme del placer etimológico o histórico o algo así, que me ha producido la palabrita. Nadie dice el dormitorio del rey sino la alcoba real. (p. 79)

It is as if, by re-appropriating words to their passions and re-naming the world around them, they are re-creating the phenomenal world in the image of their love for each other.⁶³ In addition, as Carlitos notes: 'por ser palabra de otros siglos', the word 'alcoba', 'suena a amor eterno' (p. 79), an idea which allows them to imagine their love as a force so powerful that it outlives death, representing a return to the melodramatic.⁶⁴ Other examples of this fanciful game are their decision to call lamps: 'candiles' (p. 84), or their bed-side cabinet 'velador- que no mesa de noche' (p. 86). The idea of re-naming the world has biblical undertones, echoing the original act of the naming of the world in the book of Genesis. Their love, it turns out, despite being carnal and sensual, has numerous links to the divine.

Whereas Lima is referred to as 'esta ciudad del diablo' (p. 75), Carlitos believes that God created the 'huerto-oasis' as proof that he is 'misericordioso' (p. 73). The references to the Christian religion culminate in an episode in which Carlitos, like

⁶² Bryce explains that: 'nombrar una cosa en literatura es darle una vida o una existencia', in 'La historia personal de mis libros', Julio Ortega & María Fernanda Lander (eds), *Alfredo Bryce Echenique: ante la crítica*, p. 151. In giving original and new names to objects and spaces that define and represent their love, Carlitos and Natalia are, in effect, creating their love, giving life and existence to it.

⁶³ Manongo and Tere adopt the same practice in *No me esperen en abril*, as encapsulated in the words: 'como si todo se abriera camino a nuestro paso y uno lo pudiera bautizar todito de nuevo porque en nada se parece ahora a la vez pasada' (p. 88).

⁶⁴ It should be noted here that the very fact that the lovers must flee a society that scorns their illicit affair propels the narrative into melodramatic territory. For discussion of a love affair that defies social convention and a discussion of melodrama, see Stephen M. Hart, 'Bemberg's Winks and Camila's Sighs: Melodramatic Encryption in Camila', in *Revista Canadiense de Estudios Hispánicos*, XXVII.1 (2002), 75-85 (p. 85).

Joseph in the book of Genesis, is visited by God in a dream. As Carlitos dreams of his lost virginity, three of the principal motifs of the narrative: the divine, dreams and the cinema, converge: 'En realidad, él era al mismo tiempo espectador y actor de una película llena de buenos sentimientos y dirigida nada menos que por Dios' (p. 43). Carlitos is dreaming that he is an actor in a play that is being directed by God. In a party thrown in Natalia's honour the guests are all named Víctor y Manuel, whilst each of the thousand waiters is named Dante Salieri. In his dream Carlitos is correcting the injustices of the social order by inverting colonial hierarchies. Since his dream inverts order in a carnivalesque fashion, it can be seen as a criticism of the caste system that exists in Lima and the treatment of the Indian classes by the ruling élite. This first part of Carlitos's dream which reveals his inner desires suggests that fantasy can have a cathartic function as it permits him to right the wrongs he witnesses in waking life, in a triumph of the unconscious over the conscious mind. Carlitos thanks God, the 'Todopoderoso Director de tal maravilla' (p. 43) before the dream sequence abruptly changes and he steps out of his parent's party and strikes up a one-to-one conversation with God.

Carlitos is preoccupied because he has lost his virginity and looks to God for reassurance. The problem, he resumes, is that Natalia is divorced and he is 'todo sexo' (p. 44). Carlitos's sexual fantasies override his moral composure as he pleads: 'No le pongas FIN a esta película' (p. 44), a sentence which recalls the words that close the first chapter 'POR FIN. God replies: 'No temas, Carlos Alegre. Dios no castiga nunca a los amantes' (p. 44), which reverses the situation in the Garden of Eden, since God now no longer bans the lovers from carnal activity but openly gives them his blessing. God then proceeds to inform Carlitos that, whilst he has been

dreaming, Natalia has showered, wrapped herself up in a silk bathrobe and is now exiting the bathroom. It is bizarre enough that Carlitos speaks directly with God in a dream but the situation becomes utterly surreal when the dream flows over into reality. Fantasy invades dream and in turn dream invades real life. When Carlitos awakens he sees Natalia walking out of the bathroom wearing the 'bata que Dios le había puesto' (p. 44). Carlitos believes that God has given his blessing to their sexual union and cries out: 'Tengo autorización divina para todo' (p. 44). However, the situation becomes highly comical as Carlitos tells Natalia 'Dios me ha mandado ver y tocar' (p. 45).⁶⁵ Carlitos is legitimising his sexual desire to justify his actions following a Catholic upbringing. The above conversation with God is not the only example of unorthodox communication that Carlitos is involved in. Upon the death of his grandmother, he enters into conversation with her when her corpse chastises him with the words: 'llegas un poco tarde... porque ya me morí, pero bueno, llegas a tiempo todavía para darme un beso, ven, acércate aquí... te van a matar tu mami y tu papi por la cara de felicidad que pones al verme muerta' (p. 166).⁶⁶ Carlitos's imagined conversation is, like his dream, a way of exorcising his guilt at having abandoned the family home.

⁶⁵ Here we may note that Carlitos manages to invert the normal objective of talking to God, which is to enter into a more spiritual realm of consciousness since, by uniting his body with his lover in the quest for physical pleasure, he actually establishes firm physical contact with the world around him.

⁶⁶ His parents' real worry regarding Carlitos's smile is that, 'alguna gente podría interpretar esto muy mal' (p. 167). Image and what other people think is tantamount to members of their social group. In point of fact, only Carlitos is oblivious to the regard of others in the novel.

Socio-Political Reality in *El huerto de mi amada*

Despite the prevalence of fantasy in the novel, *El huerto de mi amada* also contains a heavy dose of realism. Although there is less explicit criticism of dynamics between social classes and of the oligarchy itself than in *Dos señoras conversan* and *No me esperen en abril*, the novel does examine class relations and provides a negative appraisal of the morals of Lima's upper classes. Bryce's other works give a detailed account of an oligarchy that is dying out or, as in the case of *Dos señoras conversan*, already extinct. There are, however, only three indirect references in the text to the events that led to this and the first regards Natalia's parents' chauffeur, Molina, whom we are told is a, 'servidor sin patrones, ya, proveniente de un mundo casi desaparecido' (p. 237).⁶⁷ The Agrarian Reform movement is hinted at in a single sentence that does not directly name the programme or its perpetrators, but rather glosses over events: 'Los cambios políticos, económicos y sociales que se produjeron en el Perú, a finales de los sesenta y durante buena parte de los setenta', we are told, had, 'imprevisibles consecuencias' (p. 265) for the lovers' friends and families. It has been shown above that through a parody of the crime thriller and melodrama Bryce satirises the injustices of the judicial and administrative systems. However, the narrative contains much less political content than *No me esperen en abril*. Prado is the only president to be named and references to him appear on two occasions. The first is when the narrator alludes to Prado's residence in the centre of Lima: 'conservaba su residencia de notable balcón limeño el presidente don Manuel Prado Ugarteche – entonces en su segundo mandato – , claro que porque Prado vivía en

⁶⁷ Interestingly, whilst Natalia is the only surviving member of the oligarchic family (and she eventually emigrates to Paris) since her parents and brother are dead, the entire body of their serving staff are alive, having survived the earthquake that killed their upper class masters. This appears to be a metaphor for an oligarchy that cannot survive the events of history, but also suggests that the lower classes are surviving. The second reference comes when Natalia realises that her world, referred to as 'todo aquel mundo heredado de épocas coloniales', will very soon no longer belong to her as she hands it over to her servants.

París y así cualquiera, salvo cuando gobernaba el Perú' (p. 10), in a criticism of the president who favoured life in Europe to life in the country he was responsible for governing. The second reference occurs when Quiroga proposes to Natalia, promising to make her first lady since the 'teniente seductor' (p. 179) will not last another year in office. Bryce is employing dramatic irony here, giving the reader, who will be aware that Prado was replaced by Belaúnde, a knowledge which transcends that of his characters.

An examination of the middle classes is realised through the exploits of the twins. Despite Bryce's sympathetic portrayal of the struggles of the lower classes in works such as *Un mundo para Julius* and *No me esperen en abril*, he appears to have little sympathy for the middle class which he describes derogatorily as a 'frágil clase media aspirante, suspirante, desesperante' (p. 11). The Sarsfield sisters tell one twin: 'Tú eres un futuro, mi querido Oso, que se hace cada vez más pasado, pero que jamás llegará a presente' (p. 123).⁶⁸ Without exception, all middle class characters are portrayed as social climbers desperately trying to scale the social stratum.⁶⁹ The twins' father, César Céspedes, was a talented provincial dermatologist, who:

empezaba a abrirse camino en la Lima de los 40 y ya andaba soñando con construirse un chalet en San Isidro y todo, con consultorio al frente, también, por supuesto, y aprendan de su padre, muchachos, que este ascenso profesional y social me lo estoy ganando solo, solito... (p. 9)

⁶⁸ These words echo the words of Teddy Boy in *No me esperen en abril*, when he says that that the pupils of Saint Pauls: 'Eran muchachos históricos pero empezaban a tener algo de reliquia y Teddy Boy no estaba convencido de que alcanzaban a colocar a sus hijos en la próxima fotografía peruana' (p. 396).

⁶⁹ It is interesting to note, however, that the upper classes are portrayed as dreamers. Hence, Carlitos's sisters are an 'aparición ausente' (p. 14), Carlitos, meanwhile, 'nunca se fijaba en nada' (p. 9), and the Sarsfield sisters, 'siguen en las nubes' (p. 122), and, 'soñar era su más intenso placer, hasta el punto de que parecían no prestarle atención alguna al mundo que les rodeaba' (p. 122).

Here, César's words to his sons are incorporated into the narrator's perspective to reveal that he hopes that his 'professional' ascension will produce his 'social' one. It appears that the latter is his true objective. César dies, however, and, like the deaths of the oligarchs in the previous novels, is a metaphor for the death of the oligarchic state; here César's death appears to symbolise the futility of the middle class dreams. That he is buried in his 'terruño' (p. 9), Chiclayo, and hence returns to rest eternally where he comes from, further emphasises the impossibility of social betterment in Peru. Even Quispe Zapata, who is initially the richest man in the country, loses his fortune by the end of the novel. Despite his initial wealth he is never allowed access to high-society circles and so, despite Bryce saying, 'Nosotros decimos: "El dinero blanquea"', this does not appear to be the case in the society he portrays.⁷⁰ The twins, whom Carlitos meets in a conference twenty years later, have also failed in their quest for wealth and are now 'dos seres seres resignados, callados y sin vida' (p. 278).

The middle classes are as prejudiced towards the lower Indian classes as the élite. Ashamed of the of the 'miradita más una sonrisita' (p. 10) of anyone who might chance on their humble abode, and 'reducidos a la nada existencial que para ellos era... la social limeña' (p. 116), the twins' dreams stem from complexes brought on by feelings of inferiority and alienation. They can only achieve a sense of worth by feeling superior to those further down the ladder of social hierarchy. When the twins learn of the fight between the Indian butlers and eminent gentlemen, they are: 'desperados con semejante hecatombe social, con tanto y tamaño desorden en su escala limeña de valores' (p. 29) and refer to the servants as 'cholos de mierda' (p.

⁷⁰ See Esteban González, 'El escritor y la política', in Jorge Coaguila (ed.), *Entrevistas escogidas*, pp. 49-60 (p. 59).

29), revealing themselves as racist and reactionary. The twins have utmost respect for the social class that they wish to belong to and when the Indian servants triumph and the 'natural' order is overturned, they are profoundly disturbed: 'el orden del universo se les había puesto patas arriba y ya nada quedaba en su sitio' (p. 30). The whole affair spells disaster for the twins because it challenges their fixed notions of class, prompting them to wonder if: 'nuestra ciudad de Lima jamás habrá sido verdad' (p. 29). By criticising the 'cholos' not only do they create the illusion that they are aligning themselves with the upper classes by sharing their viewpoint but also, they can take comfort in the fact that there is always someone further down the ladder than them.⁷¹ The twins' depreciatory view of the lower classes is proportional to their diminishing status. At the end of the novel the narrator, incorporating their words, describes how, 'se limitaban a ver pasar un mundo nuevo y cholo, cada día más cholo, mierda, con un odio contenido y más bien callado, aunque lleno de ideas y conceptos muy despectivos, eso, sí, y profundamente reacios al más mínimo cambio e innovación' (p. 279).⁷² Never having managed to transcend class barriers, however, the twins remain 'satélites que giraban incesantemente alrededor de todo aquello' (p. 267), as final proof of the rigidity of the class system.

⁷¹ This is all the more interesting because, as Carlitos tells the Sarsfield sisters, the twins are 'medio cholazos y huachafones' (p. 118). This statement betrays Carlitos's racist tendencies as well as the twins' desire to disassociate themselves from their ethnic roots. Furthermore, Carlitos has to be reminded, when he goes to a party with the twins' sister and asks the fellow guests, who are all mestizos, 'de qué playa lejana o de qué veraneo tropical' (p. 245) they come from, that, 'no todo el mundo es siempre rubio' (p. 245). Carlitos's questions suggest that he is unaccustomed to socialising with people who have Indian origins. This in turn is evidence of the caste system that operates in Lima, according to which different classes do not socialise. Carlitos's world, the world of the upper classes is hermetically sealed to outsiders of different races.

⁷² Similarly, Natalia's chauffeur, Molina, poses a 'problema racial' (p. 97) in the twins' 'atormentada vida etnosociocultural' because, tall and blonde, he is the epitome of the white, Arian race. The twins' values are once again challenged as they observe that, despite being a lowly chauffeur, he is, 'más bien de raza blanca... y hasta superior a nosotros' (p. 97).

Thee upper classes are equally racist. When the butlers arrive to defend Carlitos, the gentlemen refuse to believe that they exist: 'parecían ficción y de la mala' (p. 34).⁷³ The Indian butlers are deemed so grotesque by the gentlemen, that the latter are unable to conceive that they could possibly be real and are standing before their eyes. Furthermore, the gentlemen cannot envisage their defiance as they abandon their subordinate position in class society and rise up against them. They refer to them collectively as 'la indiada' (p. 34), in a statement which generalises the Indian other and negates their individual identities. An attack by Indian servants is unexpected and alters their previous comfortable notions of a stable reality. To the gentlemen, this represents the reversal of the order of their normally stable world based on rigid colloquial hierarchies. Their cry: '¡La puta! ¡Se levantó la indiada!' p. 34), betrays their fear and they perceive the uprising as, 'una insubordinación de mayordomos, de cholas de mierda' (p. 34).⁷⁴ Finally vanquished, one man laments: 'derrotados por cuatro cholos del diablo' (p. 35), demonising the Indian other and aligning them with the supernatural and the occult. The gentleman are so obviously caught off guard by the attack that the scene appears to be a reversal of the conquest of the Incas and hence an attempt to recuperate history. The narrator, too, is élitist (which is unusual since Bryce's narrators tend to have liberal attitudes) and his snobbery for the uncultured masses is seen in his disdain for the twins' ambitions and the snide

⁷³ In point of fact, Carlitos enjoys a similar relationship with his family's serving staff as Manongo. Whereas Manongo spends time as a youth recounting amusing stories to the servants, as a youth, Carlitos would spend time playing football with the servants, who refer to him as 'Carlitos, compañero nuestro de tantos juegos, desde muy niño' (p. 33). Carlitos, like Manongo, is the only character in the work who forms close bonds with the lower classes. The narrator explains that, 'su ferviente y rotundo catolicismo lo convertía en una persona totalmente immune a los prejuicios de aquella Lima de los años cincuenta' (p. 12).

⁷⁴ Quiroga's racism is also apparent when he mocks the Indians' pronunciation of Castilian. Appropriating Quiroga's speech, the narrator refers to the butlers as: 'indios de mierda, carajo, mientras Víctor, a su vez, le replicaba que él era el premer mayordomo di don Ruberto Aligre y la señora de Locca, madre que es del joven Carlitos' (p. 36).

comments he makes about the Quispe Zetterlings and the tasteless decor of their house. He can also be racist; the Quispe Zetterling's mother is white whilst their father is Indian and the narrator remarks, 'desgraciadamente, muchísimo tenían del papá y casi nada de doña Greta' (p. 231).⁷⁵ Even the lower classes discriminate against each other. Jacinto, Natalia's servant, for example, 'se jactaba de no tener acento serrano ni provenir del mundo andino' (p. 76). Four Andean acquaintances of the twins hand out maps of Peru without the Amazon region. This is evidence that a hierarchy exists between the lower classes, and that Coastal Indians preside at the top whilst Amazonians are relegated to the bottom.⁷⁶

The white élite fare no better than the middle classes. It has already been shown that they are prejudiced, gossipy, hypocritical and judgemental through their treatment of Natalia, who refers to the, 'hipocresías y moralinas' of her 'Lima de eme' (p. 24). When Antonella de Alegre arrived from Italy she always defended Natalia before Lima; now, however, Natalia finds her, 'llena de prejuicios, ya que tomaba en cuenta únicamente lo que la sociedad podía decir o pensar' (p. 55). Lima is experienced as a corrosive force since now Antonella, 'era una limeña más, un satisfecho y convencido miembro de aquel mundillo que Natalia tanto despreciaba' (p. 55). Lima is also a gossipy society. The doctor who treats Carlitos, for example, in order to impress and feed of Natalia's fame spreads the rumour that she arrived

⁷⁵ The narrator does, however, play with the reader's expectations, since although the reader will have assumed that the 'multicolor' (p. 243) Quispe Zetterling house is decorated in poor taste as a result of Rudecindo, he later informs us: 'Y también, así como doña Greta era extrovertida, bailarina, botarate, muliicolor y hasta multiascensor (lo de los mil teléfonos arcoiris y los tres ascensores era todo, absolutamente todo, cosa de ella; era idea, capricho, antojo, o lo que sea, de doña Greta y su exuberancia), su Rudecindo era gomina y cabello sumamente planchado, día y noche... y todo un caballero ejemplar... y hombre de muy pocas palabras' (p. 243). The reader hence finds himself to hold the same prejudices and racist views as the novels' characters and Bryce, here playing with the reader and showing him up, seems to be suggesting that in the work of art, we are wrong to take anything for granted.

⁷⁶ Jacinto's perspective can be classified as inauthentic, since here he is clearly seeing his racial identity through the eyes of the upper white class.

‘escandalosamente desnuda’ (p. 56) at the clinic, although the reader knows that this was not the case.⁷⁷ It is perhaps the scene of the grandmother’s funeral that best sums up the hypocrisy and lack of charity of the upper class.

The narrator refers to the grandmother’s wake as ‘la macabre puesta en escena de una convención’ (p. 167). It is apt that he should use a theatrical term because it suggests that the mourners are acting and therefore insincere in their grief. As they keep vigil over the body, the mourners are rather more outraged with Carlitos’s presence than saddened by the loss. The following day at the graveside everyone wears a ‘cara de qué horror, qué pena’ (p. 170); the suggestion here is that their grief is but a facade that goes no further than the expression on their faces. The narrator enters into the mourners’ thoughts to expose their hypocrisy, so whilst everybody feigns sadness what they are really focusing on is the sweltering heat: ‘la gente debería morirse sólo en invierno, caray, qué falta de sensatez, qué falta de todo’ (p. 170).⁷⁸ They appear unbothered at the loss of a friend; rather they focus on their physical discomfort. Later, at the reception at Carlitos’s family home, the guests’ conversations are filtered into the narrator’s perspective. The reader is privy to these conversations and can experience for himself the falseness and insincerity of the mourners who complain amongst themselves, ‘qué tal cura de mierda, nos metió a todos al baño turco, compadre, mira cómo estoy yo, viejo, empapadito todo’ (p. 171), but immediately turn to Roberto to give their condolences: ‘qué gran mujer la

⁷⁷ The doctor addresses his words to a collective identity denoted as ‘señores’ (p. 56), which can be equated with the gentlemen of high society Lima. His erotic fantasies seep into his speech when he tells the gentlemen, ‘se le pone a uno la verga en palo con sólo verla’ (p. 57) which contrasts starkly to the narrator’s purely factual account. In addition he repeats the phrase: ‘se lo juro señores’ (p. 57), which undermines his version of the truth since he is asking to be believed too desperately.

⁷⁸ The funeral seems to be an opportune occasion for Bryce to highlight the hypocrisy and shallow behaviour of the *limeños*. In *Dos señoras conversan*, as has been seen in Chapter 2, the mourners at the funeral of Luis Carriquiri bow their heads solemnly in a gesture of respect but are really remembering his scandalous behaviour in life, specifically his numerous affairs.

difunta, qué señora, su señora madre, don Roberto, mis respetos' (p. 171). What is of importance to each mourner is, 'que se vea también lo dolido que ando yo' (p. 171), that is, that they are seen to be doing the right thing. Bryce uses the funeral as a satire of the insincerity and hypocrisy of Lima and as such exposes their lack of piety and moral values. The twins meanwhile, in their 'desesperación social' (p. 172), arrive at the home hoping to take advantage of the opportunity to hobnob; mimicking their words, the narrator remarks: 'los entierros son un lugar ideal para hacer relaciones públicas, para darse a conocer' (p. 172). They single out the most prominent guests to converse with in what they term a 'selección natural de las especies' (p. 175), not taking into account that precisely because they are at the bottom of the chain, nobody will speak to them.⁷⁹

Conclusion: The Past Reconciled

At the end of the novel Carlitos and Natalia leave for Europe in a bid to escape the scandal of their illicit affair. Self-imposed exile is a recurring theme in Bryce's fiction and we have already seen examples of this through the sisters' sons in *Dos señoras conversan* (see Chapter 3) and Max in *Reo de nocturnidad* (see Chapter 5). It is not the lovers' first attempt at exile, however, since their escape to the *huerto* can be considered an exile of sorts as they try to forget *limeño* society, albeit whilst still remaining on the very outskirts of the city: 'En el huerto nada de aquello existía, o, en todo caso había quedado atrás para siempre...' (p. 40).⁸⁰ Once outside the *huerto*, however, the spell initially cast by the intoxicating *Siboney* is broken and a spiral of

⁷⁹ In *No me esperen en abril* the pupils of San Pablo's are allocated dormitories also on the basis of natural selection. Andeans are hence relegated to the 'barrio marginal'. See Chapter 4.

⁸⁰ Their cry: 'Dios te oiga y Lima nos olvide' (p. 41) reveals that theirs is a deliberate attempt to be forgotten.

events occurs that leads to the break-up of their relationship. On the day before he abandons Lima, signs of Carlitos's future nostalgia for his country and family are already apparent. Molina accompanies him on a farewell tour of the city but, as Carlitos looks on, he is unable to recognise it: 'la ciudad conocida y desconocida le resultaban igualmente extrañas. Jamás había vivido en la avenida Javier Prado, jamás había estudiado en el colegio Markham, jamás había ingresado a la Escuela de San Fernando' (p. 259). The narrator, typically clarifying events provides his listener with an explanation for Carlitos's enigmatic behaviour, '¿Un mecanismo de defensa totalmente inesperado, totalmente independiente de su voluntad? Para qué, si se sentía profundamente tranquilo y dueño de cada uno de sus actos' (pp. 259-60). Carlitos is trying to forget Lima, yet, Paris, on the other hand appears immediately familiar to him.

As Carlitos's nostalgia, fuelled by his chance meeting at the conference with the twins grows, Natalia becomes increasingly jealous and aware of their age difference. Obsessed with the onslaught of wrinkles and old age, Natalia's hostility grows and, nostalgic for a time when she was every man's fantasy, she embarks on an affair that betrays her need to be desired. Carlitos, meanwhile, overcome with a 'viejo cariño' (p. 283) for the twins, forgets Natalia's fiftieth birthday and in a fit of jealous rage she breaks his arm and sends him to hospital. Melanie Sarsfield, the youngest of the Sarsfield sisters and the solitary female figure of Carlitos's youth, visits him in hospital. Her father is no longer an alcoholic and the ugly duckling Melanie has developed into a swan. Melanie has always loved Carlitos and her wish comes true when she finally marries him. The fairytale happy ending that the novel promised does happen but Natalia's role is closer to that of the wicked step-mother. It is

interesting to note that Natalia suffers the same fate as the fallen women of the nineteenth-century realist novels such as Balzac's Valérie Marneffe⁸¹ or Dumas Fils's Marguerite Gautier,⁸² who are punished for their sexual transgressions (or perhaps merely their open sexuality). Here, Bryce's habitually sympathetic treatment of the female predicament appears to be slightly more paternal. Natalia has acted illegally but her love for Carlitos was genuine.

It is, then, a double nostalgia that causes the downfall of the relationship. Natalia, nostalgic for her youth and beauty cannot accept the reality of the passing of time and Carlitos, no longer under the spell of eroticism, *Siboney* and the *huerto*, is finally able to release his pent-up nostalgia and confront reality and his past, through his reunion with Melanie. Natalia's predicament appears to be a metaphor for those Peruvians who still idealise their golden age of history; her youth and beauty equating with the colonial epoch. The final message of the work appears to be that, in order to fully live the present, the past must be accepted on its own terms and subsequently left behind. As Natalia, who like Manongo Sterne and the two old ladies is never able to leave her past behind, she dooms herself to a lonely existence. Carlitos, however, like Max Gutiérrez, is able to throw off the shackles of a suffocating love, step aside from the fantasy-induced world of the *huerto*, and look towards a future with a girl of his own age. Only Bryce's protagonists who make a break with the past and abandon their fantasies to live in the real world can ever win the day. Natalia's destiny is one of loss and lack because she lives nostalgically for her past. As the narrator explains, 'la nostalgia es así, agranda las cosas y les añade fuerza y calor, volviéndolas casi agresivas con su carga latente de pérdida

⁸¹ Honoré de Balzac, *La Cousine Bette* (Paris: Gallimard, 1972) [1846].

⁸² Alexandre Dumas Fils, *La Dame aux camélias* (Paris: Gallimard, 1974) [1848].

irreparable, y de destino jamás alcanzado' (p. 129). In other words, nostalgia is a double-edged sword. Aside from Natalia's predicament – and the reader, it must be said, identifies not with Natalia but Carlitos – *El huerto de mi amada* is the first of Bryce's novels set in Peru to have a happy end. After over twenty years of struggling with his past in Lima, Bryce, it seems, has finally made peace with the past.

Conclusion

This thesis has considered four recent works of fiction by Alfredo Bryce Echenique: *Dos señoras conversan* (1990), *No me esperen en abril* (1995), *Reo de nocturnidad* (1997) and *El huerto de mi amada* (2002). As stated in Chapter 1 of this thesis (see pp. 7-8), at least three of these works have generated little interest from critics. The fourth, *No me esperen en abril*, has received some critical attention, however, this interest does not match the wealth of examinations dedicated to Bryce's earlier novels such as *Un mundo para Julius* (1970) or *La vida exagerada de Martín Romaña* (1981). The first intention of this thesis has hence been to readdress this imbalance in critical studies and provide more in-depth analyses of these texts. The second objective of the thesis was to consider Bryce's portrayal of the demise of the Peruvian oligarchic state. Brycean critics have tended to refer to the upper classes using the term 'oligarchy', taking this term for granted and without analysis of the changes that took place within its structure and fortunes.¹ The purpose of Chapter 2 was hence to consider the historical and sociological aspects of the fortunes of Peru's élite in order to determine whether the term 'oligarchy' was applicable. It was established that although the Peruvian oligarchy does not exist in the true sense of the word, their heyday having terminated during the nineteen-twenties, a privileged upper class of Peruvians did still exist during the decade in which Bryce's novels are set and that the term 'oligarchy' was still relevant and could be used to loosely describe the Peruvian élite. The third aim of this thesis was to examine the leitmotif

¹ The obvious exception to this are the considerations of the transformation of the oligarchy from the old-style landed élite to the dynamic class of entrepreneurial capitalists regarding *Un mundo para Julius*, as experienced through the death of Julius's father and the arrival of his step-father, the businessman Juan Lucas, who models his business projects on the imperialist strategies of the United States. See for example, David Wood, *The Fictions of Alfredo Bryce Echenique*, p. 31.

of fantasy in Bryce's works since it is a prominent theme that has received virtually no consideration (see Chapter 1, p. 9). Finally, through consideration of the above, this thesis examined the principal themes and stylistic devices that Bryce employs in the four works of fiction that were studied.

It emerged particularly in Chapter 3, which looks at *Dos señoras conversan*, that the ideology of the oligarchy is one of retrenchment. The prevailing mood of that novel has been shown to be nostalgia since a large part of the work is told through memory. The traditional oligarchy is only alluded to through discussions based on memory or through the retrospective device of the analepsis, which is evidence that as a social group, it no longer exists in its original sense. The inertia and stagnancy of the upper classes is reinforced through the novel's circular structure and the repetition of actions and speech. Here we see that in Bryce's narrative, thematic content is complimented by narrative technique. Through the figures of Luis Pedro Carriquirí and the cousin Guillermito, it becomes clear that, for Bryce, the oligarchs are immoral and were directly responsible for their demise which is no longer the sole responsibility of General Velasco. Compared to the oligarchy, whom Bryce suggests has little knowledge of national affairs, the lower classes are shown to have gained an increasing awareness of their rights. They demand higher wages and improvements in working conditions; one has even attended university. A sense of this is also captured in the fact that their thoughts and speech enter the main narrative perspective. The upper classes, however, are anxious to maintain the lower classes in a state of subordination. Their racism comes to the forefront when certain characters suggest that education can become a subversive weapon in the hands of the lower classes: the sisters blame their chauffeur's son's involvement with terrorist guerrilla

factions upon his access to tertiary education. This in turn introduces aspects of Peru's political history into the narrative. The novella depicts the 1980s as a dismal era beset by economic hardships and socio-political instability, although it is not as politically aware as others amongst Bryce's novels, such as *La vida exagerada de Martín Romaña* or *No me esperen en abril*. The characters resort to fantasy as a means of self-preservation but the only successful strategy appears to be self-imposed exile that is carried out by the sisters' sons who depart for the United States as economic migrants. With regard to the cultural references that influence the oligarch's lives it is palpable that European forms of culture are given primacy and tend to belong to the division of 'high' culture. It is also clear that national forms of popular culture are becoming increasingly present and are enjoyed by upper class adolescents and the lower classes alike, as seen in the inclusion of the *canción criolla*. The sisters are imprisoned in an imaginary world based on nostalgia and memory as their present is consumed by their past. In Bryce's fiction, it transpired that memory and nostalgia are intimately linked and can be, on the one hand negative, leading to the characters' marginalisation from society, or on the other hand, positive, allowing characters to cope with life's vicissitudes.

In Chapter 4 which considered *No me esperen en abril* I discussed the role of popular culture in the individuation process of the protagonist Manongo Sterne and the manner in which imported culture influenced the behavioural patterns of the novel's adolescents, functioning as templates for their sentimental exploits. It arose that they, too, give preference to foreign culture – specifically North American – over national culture, whose absence from the narrative is noteworthy. The élite emerged as an enclosed social group who alienate members of the subaltern group by denying them

access to their privileged spaces but are nonetheless alienated themselves from the realities of a changing nation due to their nostalgia for the colonial epoch and obsession with Europe, specifically England. The philosophy behind San Pablo's and the climate of racism that prevails within suggest that in ideological terms it functions as a microcosm of the nation. The decline of the oligarchy is reflected in the psychological decline of Manongo and, as such, Bryce examines the public sphere through the private sphere as the work becomes an allegorical account of twentieth-century Peru. As is the case in *Dos señoras conversan*, the deaths of the novel's oligarchs are a principle metaphor for a social class that is dying out. A sense of Manongo's decline is reflected in the break-down of chronologic order in the narrative as he retreats ever more frequently to the world of adolescence and, in this sense, structure and thematic content are seen to be bound in a dynamic relationship. In the same vein, the novel's time frame speeds up towards the ending, giving the impression that the oligarchy are sliding to an increasingly imminent end as they blindly cling to colonial structures. Language is shown to be an instrument of exclusion but also a vehicle of denunciation as the oligarchs' words slip freely in and out of the narrator's perspective. The oral register (specifically the incorporation of interior monologues and dialogues) is hence one of Bryce's principal tools in denouncing upper class morality. Humour (both situational and verbal, as Bryce parodies the oligarchy's speech) together with irony are employed to the same end. When the words of a lower class character such as Adán Quispe enter the narrative, however, they provide the character with the opportunity to express his own conditions in unmediated fashion. The issue of the changing ethnic face of Lima and incrementing internal migration are also shown to have been depicted in the novel from opposite perspectives. This is achieved through the racist and insular discourse

of Teddy Boy's speech, on the one hand, and the erection of migrant settlements and the struggle of Andean migrants in Lima, on the other. Once again, emigration is proposed as the only solution to Peru's economic crises and by the end of the novel the upper classes are shown to be living in a state of relative oblivion. The middle classes are noticeably absent in the text.

Although replete with humour, *No me esperen en abril* is a pessimistic vision of the last fifty years of Peruvian history. Love and friendship, the two major themes of the novel ultimately offer the protagonist, who has built his life around them, no hope and their final disappearance from his life propels Manongo into a private make-believe world of his youth. In true Schopenhauerian style, the only solution that life offers Manongo is a blissful exit via suicide. Another prominent theme in Bryce's fiction that emerges in *No me esperen en abril* is the osmotic nature of the literary and non-literary worlds, with Manongo dying in the same location in which Bryce's creative writing processes terminated. Bryce, as we have seen, makes a 'guest-appearance' in the novel, as well as another of his literary creations, specifically *Un mundo para Julius*. The text is also replete with inter-literary references as Bryce pays homage to his favourite writers. Such references also allow the implied reader to become actively involved in the creation of the text. They also serve to locate the novel in the phenomenal world, as do the numerous references to Peruvian twentieth-century political history. *No me esperen en abril*, which reads like an epic of Peruvian history, above all functions cathartically for Bryce, in much the same way as fantasy amongst his characters is employed as an instrument of recuperation.

Chapter 5 considered *Reo de nocturnidad* and particular attention was given to the cathartic capacity of writing fiction and in this (as argued above) Bryce's own life reflects that of his characters and the ideas found in his works. Autobiography and the implications of the recourse to a first-person narrator in the autobiographical narrative were also considered. Ortega, for example, reads the work as an 'imaginary' biography (see p. 14). My analysis points to how the novel assumes the tone of a confessional with a narrator who speaks directly to his interlocutor, which in turn contributes to the text's oral register and, once again, the reader's participation in the construction of the text. A sense of the oral register is also conveyed by Max's frequent digressions which emanate from his abundant source of memories. Such digressions, it was suggested, contribute to the impression that the novel is not meticulously structured but rather is written spontaneously. With allusions to the dictating and editing of the text the processes of writing a novel were considered and the narrative voices (of Max and Claire his scribe and intermediary) were seen to be self-reflexive. It arose that the fiction within a fiction effect gave a metafictional quality to the text and the implications this has on Max's awareness of his role of story-teller were also discussed in that context. The novel, as we have seen, is aware of its own genesis which signals a return to the common theme in Bryce's work of the blurring of the fictional and non-fictional worlds. Another principal theme, love, as in *No me esperen en abril* is portrayed as both a destructive force and a means of salvation; in the later work, however, love triumphs and the novel is the only one to conclude on a truly upbeat note. Memory, it was suggested also acts as a double-edged sword. The dual nature of memory which can function both deceptively as a defence or become a form of anguish upon the realisation that the paradise lost cannot be recaptured was thus discussed. Memory in Bryce's fiction

is generally posited as a destructive force. As in all Bryce's works, an initially cathartic mechanism, it always brings the subject's alienation to the foreground. In a similar vein, the passing of time is also perceived as a destructive force, as was seen in Ornella's despair regarding her diminishing beauty. The leitmotif of fantasy was also shown to play an important role in the novel, for example, as in the discussion of the presence of the double, Max's fantasies of killing/saving Ornella and his adoption of several alter-egos. The motif of the theatre and the spectacle of the imagination were discussed in this context through Max's repeated attempts to fictionalise his life. Another prominent theme in the novel, it arises, is self-imposed exile. Contrary to the other novels discussed in this thesis, all of which propose exile as a beneficial force, in this novel, the experiences of all exiled characters are thoroughly negative, as epitomised in the futile death of a member of the Arabic diaspora. In fact, Max's return to his homeland is deemed responsible for his rehabilitation and Max's identity as a Peruvian is reiterated throughout the text.

The final chapter of this thesis considered *El huerto de mi amada*, the most striking feature of which is its narrative style. Throughout his work Bryce has incorporated different characters' voices into his novels and all his novels are testament to his interest in the roles of and relationship between the implied narrator and reader. In this latest work it emerges that narrative technique and devices are considerably more developed and experimental which provides for a more challenging read. The narrator's position of authority, it emerges, is destabilised due to the continual interruptions from characters with whom he must compete. The plurality of the narrative voice often gives the impression that the narrator must fight to be heard with so many characters jostling for space. The reader's interpretative skills are

tested in *El huerto de mi amada* more than any other of Bryce's works of fiction. As was observed the narrator is hailed into the text throughout the narrative through various strategies. The overriding impression is that the novel is 'spoken' rather than 'written', 'heard' rather than 'read'. This produces the effect that the narrator is directly recounting his tale to a reader who is accompanying him in his narration, giving the narrative the effect of a conversation which obviously reinforces the oral register. In the same vein, the narrator poses questions (sometimes rhetorical) and utters exclamations, which must be assumed to be directed at an interlocutor. Furthermore, on occasions the narrator refers to himself in the third-person plural, thereby seeking the reader's alignment with his point of view. The narrator's speech, it was shown, is also peppered with colloquial turns of phrase and vulgarities which serve to reinforce the oral register. His colloquial speech, it was noted, implied his identity as a Peruvian. Another way in which the reader was involved in the narrative processes was the structuring of the text when repeated phrases invite the reader to become involved in cross-referencing. The reader also becomes involved in the text's construction through the inclusion of cultural references (both popular and 'high') however, references to 'high' forms of culture (specifically works pertaining to the international canon) generally outweigh references to mass culture. This has implications regarding the socio-cultural identity of the implied reader who it must be presumed is expected to be familiar with a vast array of literary works. Bryce also parodies several forms of culture, including the melodrama, Greek tragedy, film and theatre which implies the flexibility of the boundaries between different forms of art.

This is the first of Bryce's works that discusses Lima's middle classes and as such stands alone in his narrative in providing a complete examination of the caste system.

The upper classes appear to hold the middle classes in equal contempt to the lower socio-economic groups and this is reinforced by the narrator's disdain. The narrator of *El huerto de mi amada* differs from Bryce's other narrators in that he displays tendencies towards snobbery and elitism and his tone is often acidic. The middle classes are portrayed as desperate and aspiring but social hierarchies, it emerges, are impossible to transcend. This is a society in which there is no possibility of self-betterment. The upper classes display prejudicial and hypocritical tendencies refusing the middle classes access to their social spaces and adhering to stereotypes of the racial Other in their discourse regarding the Indian servants. The role of fantasy is also prominent in the narrative. Whilst the social-climbing twins entertain fantasies of gaining access into the élite social circles, Natalia and Carlitos's fantasies are bound to their flight from an oppressive social order that condemns their passion. Natalia's fantasies and her very passion for Carlitos were also shown to stem from a need to recuperate her past in what amounted to a return of the repressed. While her nostalgia for her lost youth and love lead her to fall in love with Carlitos and triggers off the spiral of events that lead to her self-destruction, unexpectedly, and in contradistinction to the idea expressed in Bryce's other works, nostalgia turns out to be a positive mental mechanism in the case of Carlitos. Nostalgic for the family and city he left behind in order to follow his dreams of love with Natalia, Carlitos eventually recuperates his past, returning to the family fold and marrying his childhood soul-mate.

In Bryce's fiction, as we have seen, that it is not so much what the character's fantasies say but rather what they mask. Fantasies hence act as blockages which, when removed, point to the problematic relationship between the individual (or

social class) and society. Bryce's fiction, thus, analyses the public history through the private sphere. It has also been shown that the character's fantasies function as survival mechanisms which allow them to escape their material and cultural confines and conditions. Through an exploration of the notion of fantasy in Bryce's works, this thesis has also considered a set of pivotal themes in Bryce's writing, including love, friendship, nostalgia, memory, the interdependence of the fictional and non-fictional universes, autobiography and marginalisation as well as the destabilising of colonial power structures when set against the social and political backdrop of twentieth-century Peru. The thesis also provides an evaluation of the diverse narrative strategies that Bryce employs. These include the oral register, shifting narrative perspectives, heteroglossia and the incorporation of multiple voices into the narrative stream, the roles of the narrator and the reader, humour, digression, satire and irony.

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