

SUBLIME SELF-FASHIONING IN GOYTISOLO'S *REIVINDICACIÓN DEL CONDE DON JULIÁN*

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During the latter period of Francisco Franco's reign, the deconstructive writings of Juan Goytisolo threatened to subvert Spanish culture. Created in exile, Goytisolo's linguistic subversion owes a debt to the literary theory that he encountered in Paris during the 1960s, as Michael Ugarte has noted, "his move to Paris allowed him to assimilate certain literary concepts that were not part of the intellectual climate of Spain . . . such theoreticians as Roland Barthes and Julia Kristeva" (vii). Years after Franco's death, however, perhaps the only thing that might surprise in a new Goytisolo work would be an absence of shocking material. The avowed intentions of a novel such as *Reivindicación del conde don Julián* to linguistically subvert Spanish culture frankly loses much of its punch in today's liberal atmosphere. Some recent reassessments of Goytisolo's *oeuvre* turn the legacy of deconstruction against him as they argue that his texts lack sensitivity to the Other. Brad Epps, for example, writes: "In *Conde Julián*, the act of violence, incessantly replicating itself, reintroduces a standard of reading that violently implicates the reader's knowledge and critical skill . . . I cannot help but think that the trouble with such textual fulfillment is all the more acute for those readers who are women or gay" (295). Randolph Pope has seconded Epps's assessment, writing that in chastising "the author's silencing of women and his reiteration of a traditional image of women as only desiring male domination and inviting male violence . . . Epps is right. Goytisolo is not correct, nor, it is probable, would he want to be" (121). Assessments of representational inequities in this and other Goytisolo novels ignore an important consideration, namely the allegorical nature of Goytisolo's text as it relates to related themes of fetishism and identity. The present study will attempt to point to a reconstructivist quality in *Conde Julián* by demonstrating the protagonist's efforts to fashion an identity in an exilic space wherein ultimately marginalized voices are heard.

NAMING: NON-EXISTENCE AND INFINITY

As its title suggests, *Reivindicación del conde don Julián* is a novel about names and naming. The narrator, exiled from a European 20th century cultural purification project, finds his proper name and identity negated by his homeland ("seres apurados al límite estricto de los huesos, humano ganado hacinado en vagones, eliminado allí . . . para tranquilidad de conciencia de la escogida," 84). As Jean-Francois Lyotard subtly points out in *The Differend*, the radical denial of the Other's identity during a cultural purification project goes further than mere negation of status, rights or opportunity within his or her culture. Their very status as victims is denied inasmuch as they are excluded from the referent position of the official language's phrase universes. In Hitler's Germany, for example, the murder of Jews, homosexuals, Gypsies, etc. would constitute a non-event according to Nazi "logic": no crime against the Other has been committed for the simple reason that no such Other has ever existed in the ruling group's phrase universes. Wholesale extermination of marginalized groups within Nazi culture is simply a linguistic fulfillment, *a priori* exculpating the perpetrator in his own eyes at the same time that it seemingly eliminates the witnessing of such atrocities: "Now 'Auschwitz' is the name of a phrase or rather of two phrases which have no addressee marked in the universes they present. This is what the Nazis mean when they state that they make laws without having to refer to anyone other than themselves. . . The absence of an addressee is also the absence of a witness" (102). Inasmuch as written testimony is possible for the narrator of *Conde Julián*, according to the paradoxical logic of testimony, it is simultaneously *impossible*; as a survivor, his testimony may be used as evidence of the non-threatening nature of his accusers. Or they may cast doubt on his own veracity as a witness, a "true witnesses" being one like Lorca, whose death gives testimony to his victimization: "Either you are the victim of a wrong, or you are not. If you are not, you are deceived (or lying) in testifying that you are. If you are, since you can bear witness to this wrong, it is not a wrong, and you are deceived (or lying) in testifying that you are the victim of a wrong" (Lyotard *Differend* 5).

The notorious "Little Red Riding Hood" scene in *Conde Julián* bears recalling here. Does the narrator get to have his cake and eat it too, effectively testifying to his own death as both victim and perpetrator, becoming in fact an absolute witness? "It can be answered that no one can see one's own death. To every realism, it can be answered that no one can see 'reality' properly called" (Lyotard *Differend* 33). *Conde Julián* disproves this analysis with its own hyper-textuality. Like naming and narrative, this ideal testimony would be severely limited by "deictics," which, by definition, "relate the instances of the universe presented by the phrase in which they are placed back to a 'current' spatio-temporal origin so named 'I-here-now'" appearing only long enough to "designate their object as an extra-linguistic permanence, as a 'given'" (33). It is in its acute awareness of the subject's limitations (forever ontologically limited to be presented by phrase universe) that *Conde Julián* testifies to the subject's impossible status as such. Furthermore, this reflects a basic definition of the sublime: its incomprehensibility somehow gets presented or represented.

A key to understanding *Conde Julián* is the narrator's own voice in relation to his own "language" (symbolic order). He cannot be silenced inasmuch he is not recognized in the phrase universes of the official *intelligentsia* and its innumerable accomplices. Hence the reconstructivist aspect of his linguistic subversion: the fashioning of a new identity must be a reconciliation with language by asserting his position as addressee within as series of phrase universes. Following a brief introductory passage consisting of an apostrophe wherein his first person addresses his homeland's second person ("jamás volveré a ti" 11), the narrator splits himself into his own Other, effectively assuming addressee status for himself perhaps for the first time since the beginning of the cultural purification project. He in effect becomes his own referent. His subsequent assuming of the conde don Julián identity is not so much the negation of femininity, but rather a necessary act preliminary to recognizing the feminine. As a non-entity, he is unable to hear his

own voice, let alone that of an Other. Now, fully existing in his own writing as a referent of self-generated phrase universes, he may go about the business of fashioning a self that ultimately will be open to the Other: "reviviendo el recuerdo de tus humillaciones y agravios, acumulando gota a gota tu odio: sin Rodrigo, ni Frandina, ni Cava: nuevo conde don Julián, fraguando sombrías traiciones" (16).

Critics who see in the above passage an affirmation of "Julian's" identity only at the expense of other identities likewise ignore the importance of names and naming in the novel. Despite its masculine associations, the name "Julián" like all other names in the novel ultimately functions as an *empty* place holder. As such it is pure form, pure becoming, that only acquires significance in relation to a network of other names. It excludes other names (Cava, Rodrigo, Frandina) only out of necessity to assume its place in a network of names: "The name fills the function of linchpin because it is an empty and constant designator" (Lyotard *Differend* 44).

According to Lyotard, the possibility of "reality" is paradoxically dependent upon names insofar as they function as quasi-deictics. Thus origin and reality only exist for the duration of the current phrase at hand. At every colon of *Conde Julián* there exists the possibility that a subject (or object) of one phrase will not reappear. It is the phrase universe, according to Lyotard, that presents the subject as a given: "un minuto más, señor verdugo" (13). Hence the narrator's obsessive listing of names in the novel, demonstrating his compulsion to situate his identity within a textual "reality." It is not the case that the narrator sets up a textual reality as an alternative to the empirical reality of the senses, but rather any perceived reality in the final analysis is textual. This becomes especially clear during a genocidal historical period such as existed in Spain initially under Franco: an "attempt at extermination on paper runs relay for the actual extermination." This is because there is no such reality except as testified on "paper" (Lyotard *Differend* 32). This notion that reality is textual is played out in *Conde Julián* with the repeated emphasis that as the narrator strays in Tangiers; he is "reading" its signs as one would read a text (and an Arabic text at that): "por el concertado caos ciudadano: ideograma alcoránico, sutil paradoja de líneas" (83). This notion of reading the world as an Arabic text goes in tandem with a liquidating of traditional mimetic art forms in favor of an "Arabic" aesthetic which will be discussed later in this essay.

In spite of the establishment of "reality" through naming in *Conde Julián*, it would be a mistake to conclude that the novel has anything to do with any kind of literary realism. As has been demonstrated, the novel's "phrase universe" composition coincides with a system of naming forever severed from any kind of phenomenal reality. Rather they function as catachreses: names as placeholders in the absence of a technical or proper name. Like fetishes, catachreses, though holding the place of an empty space, somehow acquire marvelous qualities (Apter 182). Catachreses, as Paul de Man comments, "are capable of inventing the most fantastic entities by virtue of the positional power inherent in language. They can dismember the texture of reality and reassemble it in the most capricious of ways. Something monstrous lurks in the most innocent of catachreses: . . . the word can be said to produce of and by itself the entity it signifies, [one that] has no equivalence in nature. When one speaks of the legs of the table or the face of the mountain . . . one begins to perceive a world of potential ghosts and monsters" (21).

It is through a subtle strategy of catachreses that identity is miraculously fashioned between phrase universes (bordered off by colons) in *Conde Julián*. Some examples include the following, "mientras comenta las dominicales incidencias del campeonato nacional de liga con un futuro Di Stéfano local: mozo de una veintena de años" (29). "Y el breve huracán de pronto: una inconfundible españolita que avanza elástica y ágil" (27). Names and naming systems found in the novel become synonymous with the commodity fetish: they both constitute a catachreses (or as the narrator would have it a "cero") through which substitution extends infinitely—a manifestation of the sublime. The "names" James Bond and Tarzan (both of which are part name and part

commodity object) become alter egos for the narrator, formally presented through catachreses in phrase universes. They are no less real than other characters in the novel: "JAMES BOND, OPERACION TRUENO, última semana" (28). In the final analysis, the novel reveals all its characters (including the narrator) to be merely names, which is to say inscription, animated by catachreses.

SUBLIME FETISHISM AND FETISHISTIC SELF-SUBLIMATION

In his book *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, Slavoj Žižek argues that an object at the heart of an experience of the sublime (which for Žižek includes fetishism) can be described as possessing the extraordinary qualities that the subject attributes to it. The viewing subject may experience a kind of terror upon viewing the apparent vastness of the sea or a storm, yet such affects have existed prior to beholding the image. Likewise, a fetishistic obsession with, say, the shoes of one's beloved cannot be explained by any qualities inherent in the shoes. What gives pleasure then in either of these experiences is not the desired or feared object itself. Instead, displeasure paradoxically precedes pleasure, and this displeasure stems from an albeit dimly avowed knowledge of the impossibility of the image to correspond with an actual physical object. This discrepancy between image and object constitutes the definition that Kant himself gives to the sublime as the representation of something that would seem to defy representation: "The Sublime may be described in this way: It is an object (of nature) the representation [Vorstellung] of which determines the mind to regard the elevation of nature beyond our reach as equivalent to a presentation [Darstellung] of ideas" (Kant 119). Thus within the anguish of the real object's ability to measure up to the ideal image lies the pleasure arising from a kind of inverse knowledge of the image's greatness—I know it's just my "imagination," yet I continue to be mesmerized by it! In his book *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime*, Lyotard comments: "The imagination does not contribute to pleasure through a free production of forms and aesthetic Ideas, but in its powerlessness to give form to the object" (99).

In *Conde Julián*, the sublime object of desire becomes the elusive identity of the exile itself. As an exile from a cultural purification situation, the narrator anguishes over his perennial non-existence through victimization in an act of non-pleasure. Yet he continues finds pleasure in being mesmerized by the possibility of assuming identities (Julián, Tarzan, James Bond, the evil wolf, etc.). The narrator's challenge is formally similar to the sublime or the fetish: how to create something from nothing. The adoption of the name "Julián" is an important step in the creation of an identity. As a name it is pure form, devoid of any essence—a zero that somehow functions as a one in a chain of potentially infinite number of substitutions (within a network of names). Lyotard explains this kind of phenomenon of subjective nullity miraculously transformed into a plural sense of self as being predicated on a kind of sense substitution which inevitably leads to unforeseen signification for names: "It cannot be determined *a priori* which senses are appropriate to a real referent" (47). Rather than close itself off, this metonymical occurrence carries itself out infinitely in a manifestation of the sublime: "Is it possible that the number of senses attached to a named referent and presented by phrases substitutable for its name increases without limit? . . . the inflation of senses that can be attached to it is not bounded by the 'real' properties of its referent" (Lyotard *Differend*, 47). An awareness of such a phenomenon of reconstruction of identity through a naming that leads from subjective lack to subjective infinity may illuminate many passages from the novel: "abandonarse al excitante *juego de las combinaciones* y extraer de cada operación un beneficio cualquiera : . . . traición grave, traición alegre : traición meditada : traición súbita : traición oculta, traición abierta : traición macha, traición marica : hacer almoneda de todo : historia, creencias, lenguaje : . . . rehusar la identidad, comenzar a *zero* : Sísifo y, juntamente, Fénix que renace de sus propias cenizas" (135 emphasis mine). At one point the novel seems to equate such catachresistic naming systems to Hitchcock's birds that likewise emerge from a zero point. At first appearing as a seemingly insignificant,

minuscule stain within one's field of vision, they suddenly multiply in unexpected, terrifying ways, blocking efforts to fix signification: "Thus the birds, far from functioning as a 'symbol' whose 'signification' can be detected, on the contrary *block, mask*, by their massive presence, the film's 'signification,' their function being to make us *forget*, during their vertiginous and dazzling attacks, with what, in the end we are dealing: the triangle of a mother, her son, and the woman he loves" (*Zizek Looking* 106).

In many passages describing the sublimity of identity, fetishism makes an appearance. In one such section the life of the exile is described in terms of scientific sublimation, "probeta de intrincados experimentos" (20). The exiles enjoy the lowest of three spheres (solid, liquid, gas): "el hombre-gas, el hombre-globo : asombroso por su grandeza y su aparato y su fama : elevándose olímpicamente hacia alturas sublimes" (21). It is noted that the commodity fetishism of fashion has yet to remedy such social inequalities: "los beneficios de la ínclita sociedad de consumo no se manifiestan aún en esas tierras y la moda no uniforma ni iguala a los miembros de las diversas capas" (21). This passage exemplifies the image of the bombastic sublime (continually referring to hegemonic culture in *Conde Julián*), associated with a kind of visual fetishism related to witnessing revered objects which Walter Benjamin calls "aura": "the associations which, at home in the *mémoire involuntaire*, tend to cluster around an object of perception" (186). (This kind of sublime is made manifest from the first sections of the novel wherein an immeasurable, hence sublime, storm—geographically associated with Spain—threatens to disrupt the morning tranquility with its "infallible doctrina" [11].)

The connection of fashion with "sublimation" here points toward a liberation from traditional culture through a very different kind of fetishism, that of the commodity object of consumer society. It points toward the exile's potential self-sublimation from his lowered state, using the commodity fetish as mediator. The exile's true sublimation will only come through the destruction of aura-producing objects along with an affirmation of more radical artistic forms related to the commodity fetishism and mechanical reproduction. It is only through understanding how such emerging aesthetic forms destroy aura that the infamous "shocking" scenes of the novel can be fully appreciated for their reconstructive value.

FETISHISM AND THE GAZE

Hal Foster notes that for Benjamin the two essential components possessed by the auratic object are its maternal (pre-symbolic order) quality, and its ability to return the viewing subject's gaze: "But aura is also effected for Benjamin by an object that somehow returns our gaze, and clearly in this regard the ur-auratic object is the gaze, the body, of the preoedipal mother" (Apter 264). Throughout *Conde Julián*, "matriarchal," Spain (so despised by the narrator) produces this kind of returned gaze. From his first awakening moments, he experiences a dread of gazing at his homeland on the other side of the shore (he likewise continually attempts to avoid the glances of passersby in Tangiers). Canonical literary works become associated with this returning gaze as the literary subversive narrator's eyes are met with those of tradition guarding librarians. The entire description of auratic images in the library scene is suffused with the returning gaze: "guerreros, santos, mártires, conquistadores : de mirada inspirada, trascendental, ecuménica, bajo la autoridad enmarcada del Ubicuo" (34). Even as the narrator destroys literary texts by squashing insects into them, a spider's eight eyes glance at his verdugo—its gaze is described as "stereoscopic".

The insects that the narrator collects for literary destruction constitute an image of holocaust (images of piled up bodies), as well as one of several images of the victim's returning gaze. Another example is the dissection scene wherein the narrator as a boy has been forced to witness the gaze of an insect being killed. This gaze before the slaughter is also found in the opening passages of the novel in which the narrator, upon opening his eyes, senses the foreshadowing of his

own execution: "Caperucito Rojo y el lobo feroz, nueva versión sicoanalítica con mutilaciones, *fetichismo*, sangre : despierto ya del todo : ojos abiertos, vista atenta a los juegos y trampantojos de la luz en el cielorraso" (13 emphasis mine). In the final sections of the novel, the narrator splits himself into his own rapist/murderer, in the kind of scene that some recent criticism has deemed insensitive. I would argue, however, that these scenes should be taken allegorically: the narrator destroys what is represented by the reflected gaze itself—canonical, traditional culture. The allegorical nature of these scenes is repeatedly underscored by aura-related imagery showing us what really gets destroyed, namely aura. The wide-eyed child, the nun Isabela, and "la mulata," et. al. continually return the gaze of the fascinated observer. Allegorically they constitute auratic objects of desire: "Isabel la Católica es de mediana estatura . . . los ojos entre verdes y azules, el mirar gracioso y honesto" (162-63). Isabela as an auratic object self-destructively dances to the mechanically-produced mass culture strains of The Rolling Stones. Their titles sound the death toll for traditional mimetic, auratic artistic forms: "IT'S ALL OVER NOW" (163). These scenes, rather than promote the kind of phallic violence, serve to point to the complete vulnerability of the perpetrator. By arising from a panic to avoid being objectified by the Other's superficially maternal auratic gaze, these violent acts obey an economy of masochism, as described in Gilles Deleuze's book on Sacher-Masoch: precisely at the moment when masochism malfunctions, the subject's fictive identity is threatened to be unmasked by the penetrating gaze of the Other (the "servant"): "And the Real of violence breaks out precisely when the masochist is hystericized—when the subject refuses the role of an object-instrument of the enjoyment of his Other, when he is horrified at the prospect of being reduced in the eyes of the Other to *object a*; in order to escape this deadlock, he resorts to 'irrational' violence aimed at the other" (Zizek *Metastases* 93). The "Caperucito Roja" scene then functions in the text in the same way as those containing violence against woman inasmuch as all of these scenes present moments of vulnerability for the protagonist fearful of having his apparently stable identity unmasked and exposed for the fictitious creation that it really is. Furthermore, the murder of the split-self in the "Caperucito Roja" scene may also represent the protagonist's attempt to eradicate the superficially maternal aura within himself, a destructive act preliminary to the creative ones to be discussed here shortly.

The fact that this novel surpasses a mere deconstructive/destructive critique of then fascist Spain and postulates a construction based on fetishism may be further established by extending this allegory more. Throughout his article, Epps decries the novel's celebration of Arabic "phallogocentric" culture, as well as its assaults on "maternal" Spain and disfiguring of the human body, as symptomatic of the author's silencing of other voices: "If the scenes of rape and pillage, ecstasy and death, are initially shocking, their very repetitiveness not only lessons their force but also ironically fulfills the reader's expectations: heterosexuality will be rigorously denigrated, homosexuality will be negated even as it is championed, tenderness and love eradicated, and the body violated and destroyed" (Epps 295).

But to be fair to what Goytisolo's text is doing, one might ask if the events in *Conde Julián*—forever filtered through a drug-distorted gaze—lend themselves to such a literal interpretation. Instead, the dialectic in the novel between gaze and violent disruption of that gaze serves as an allegory concerning art. Thus far it has been suggested that the reflected gaze in the novel represents canonical (what Benjamin terms auratic), culture. It is only fitting that the destruction of aura in the text will be conveyed by violent images, for Benjamin has described such moments of auratic disintegration as ones of shock or *stoss*, even as Paul de Man conveyed similar moments with the image of bodily disfiguring. One major image of the novel conveying the death of aura is the longed-for Arabic invasion. The invasion represents the very radical artistic forms that will replace traditional discourses (along with their hegemonic values of order, racial superiority, meaning, origins, and tradition). These new forms are "Arabic" not in terms of actual origin or value but inasmuch as they represent a rejection of western aesthetic art forms in favor of a return to what Hegel attacked as "symbolic" art. This kind of artistic expression has been characterized by a resistance to fixed interpretations in favor of a plurality of signification

found in Ancient Egyptian and Ancient Jewish art. Such art represents a disconcerting confrontation with the sign's inability to fix meaning, and thus an encounter with the sublime: "These features constitute in general terms the character of the primitive artistic pantheism of the East . . . by doing violence to its structure . . . it becomes bizarre, grotesque, and deficient in taste . . . By such means the significance cannot be completely presented in the expression, and despite all straining and endeavor the final inadequacy of plastic configuration to idea remains insuperable. Such may be accepted as the first type of art—symbolic art with its yearning, its fermentation, its mystery, and sublimity" (Hegel 523).

The rape of Isabela or the murder of Alvarito may allegorically represent traditional mimetic art's destruction by emerging radical mass art forms based on mechanical reproduction (photography, cinema, fashion being early historical examples of such emerging forms). Benjamin has noted that such forms of mass communication are distinguished by an acceleration of reproduction and a closer proximity between viewer and object that finally produces the "disintegration of aura" (189). The camera records our likeness without returning our gaze. But looking at someone carries the implicit expectation that our look will be returned by the object of our gaze. Experience of aura thus rests on the transposition of a response common in human relationships to the relationship between the inanimate or natural object and man (Benjamin 188). Benjamin found the initial stages of mass-produced representational forms such as photography and caricature worthy of study inasmuch as they repel their viewers eyes, thereby jeopardizing the status of traditional mimetic art (Buck-Morss 289).

In *Conde Julián*, traditional narratives fall short as vehicles for witnessing events of genocide which leaves its victims, like the gazing witnesses to violence in the novel, to choose silence as a means of expression, "the testimony of the muted witness," as Shoshana Felman has termed it (144). This silent witnessing, however, is obviously not adapted by the vociferous narrator in *Conde Julián*; his narration displays more than an acute awareness of mass art's saturation of the Tangiers milieu (Islamized Coca-Cola, James Bond). As readers of his narrative, we see the world through the narrator's eyes, already conditioned by perceptual modes based on mechanical reproduction (namely, photography and cinema): "todas las moscas de Tánger no bastarían a emborronarlos y a ti con ellos, su cronista, su relator, su fotógrafo" (58). This phenomena involves self-deception on the part of the protagonist as to his own sensations: he often times fancies himself as having truly merged into the Arabic culture, unlike the ugly tourists who whose encounter with the Other is *a priori* filtered through cinematic imagery ("Lawrence Arabia con Peter O'Toole" [46]). He criticizes their encounter with the Other as one forever mediated by photography (65). Early on in the novel, he claims that there are sections still uncontaminated by "el fausto del hollywoodiano tecnicolor" (43). Yet his own reactions to his environment constantly refer to cinema ("con sonrisa de galán de cine español de los años cuarenta," 58). Throughout the novel there even exists some ambiguity as to whether or not the data that we receive constitutes film imagery or the narrator's empirical observations.

From the novel's earliest passages, perception of the Arabic world gets mediated by photography: "retrato de una jeune fille Arabe muy comienzos de siglo, rabiosamente coloreado a posteriori" (19). The fact that this form of mass art—the picture post card—is used to scoop up the "holocaust" remains of dead insects later to be used to destroy canonical texts gives further evidence of the dialectic between mass and traditional cultures: popular culture imagery continues to destroy traditional cultural forms and permeate all sensations. Even the narrator's own sexual desire is shown to be mediated by photographic imagery: "las fotografías retocadas que adornan las paredes dan la impresión de añorar como tú las notas agudas de la flauta y las femeninas ondulaciones del niño bailarín" (41).

Another manifestation of this tension in the novel is played out in musical imagery. Throughout his lengthy promenade through Tangiers, the narrator overhears musical reproduc-

tions intermixed in such a way as to not privilege "high" or "low" discourses. The songs of the Rolling Stones are overheard alternately with classical and folk works, all equally mechanically reproduced by an invisible transistor radio (40). The Benjaminian aura (a halo) associated with a culturally arrogant radio announcer is undercut by its own mechanical reproduction: "han escuchado ustedes, señoras y señores, una selección del balé la sífilis de Federico Xopén : sífilis o sílfides? : igual da : el mensaje está ahí y el faraute se aleja con su músico y *transparente halo* dejándote sumido en un mar de aleatorias conjeturas" (42 emphasis mine). The relativization of western and eastern culture is evidenced by the Arabic pronunciation: "Frederic Xopén." The presentation of music in *Conde Julián*, postmodern in its equalization of musical discourses (related to the reader through cinematic technique), finds much in common with a tribute to the late, under-appreciated "Loony Tunes" composer Carl Stalling offered by the contemporary composer John Zorn: "All genres of music are *equal* —no *one* is inherently better than the other— and with Stalling, all are embraced, chewed up and spit out in a format closer to Burroughs' cut ups, or Godard's film editing of the 60's, than to anything happening in the 40's" (Stalling).

Echoing Walter Benjamin's purpose in exhaustively cataloguing 19th century Parisian commodity fetishes, Michael Taussig writes that "the task is neither to resist nor to admonish the fetish quality of modern culture but rather to acknowledge, even submit to, its fetish powers and attempt to channel them in revolutionary directions" (229). Goytisoló's project is akin to Benjamin's in that he sees in commodity exchange a revolutionary potential that would usher in true radical forms of social expression (free from class, ethnic, and, yes, sexual oppression). Nonetheless, there exists a perennial danger in such a project: mechanically-produced mass forms of communication (combined with traditional historicism and traditional mimetic art forms) became tools of tyranny in Franco's regime. This is clearly evidenced in *Conde Julián* in a series of Franco-related, consumer culture images. Interestingly enough, some of these images suggest the possibility that commodity fetishism will eventually serve to undermine the fascist regime it has initially served: "el deslumbrante progreso industrial, *la mirífica sociedad de consumo han desvirtuado los rancios valores* : Agustina sirve hot-dogs en un climatizado parador de turismo : el tambor del Bruch masca chicle y fuma Benson and Hedges" (136 emphasis mine). In her masterful re-creation of Benjamin's *Arcades Project*, Susan Buck-Morss describes this threat that haunts Benjamin's writings: "Such juxtapositions of past and present undercut the contemporary phantasmagoria, bringing to consciousness the rapid half-life of the *utopian* element in commodities and the relentless repetition of their form of *betrayal*: the same promise, the same disappointment" (Buck-Morss, emphasis mine 293).

A key to Goytisoló's solution to this impasse may be found in the book's prologue in which a quotation from the exile writer Jean Genet is found: "Je songeais à Tanger dont la proximité me fascinait et le prestige de cette ville, plutot repaire de traitres" (10). What Genet and *Conde Julián*'s narrator have in common is a sublime activity of subversive exile: a heterogeneous wandering in the void which threatens yet sustains a fascist society's symbolic order (Ortega 114). A book that finds its chief inspiration in the subversive texts of Genet, *The Powers of Horror* by Julia Kristeva manages to represent the simultaneous pleasure and displeasure of such a sublime experience: "The *sublime* triggers —it has always already triggered— a spree of perceptions and words that expands memory *boundlessly* . . . 'I am —delight and loss" (12). Those commentators who find in *Conde Julián* an expression of violence against the maternal should note that at this deeper, sublime level described by Kristeva it represents a fixation on something so radically maternal and removed from the symbolic order that it causes a disintegration of aura (Pérez 171). This radical, abject maternal quality has been present throughout the narrator's descriptions of Spain's parched, cruel landscape, representations remarkably devoid of aura: "Castilla! : llanuras pardas, páramos huesosos, descarnadas peñas erizadas de riscos : seca, dura, sarmentosa : extensas y peladas soledades : patria rezumando pus y grandeza por entre agrietadas costras de cicatrices" (34).

Ultimately, the narrator offers himself as the supreme sacrifice in an effort to destroy the aura of traditional historicism as represented by Menéndez Pelayo, the Generation of '98 writers et. al. as he demonstrates a consciousness akin to that expressed by Benjamin's famous dictum: "There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism" (*Illuminations* 256). The narrator realizes his potential as a Benjaminian dialectical image, defined as functioning as a "shock" or "blast" out of the "homogenous course of history" (*Illuminations* 263). In the novel, this awakening or radical reorientation is achieved through the transformative capacity of the dialectical image offered by the figure of the narrator himself (Gelley 239, 243). As Julián, the narrator becomes this dialectical image. In a brilliant analysis of Benjamin's dialectical image, Michael Taussig likens it to the fetish object of the Emile Durkheim's *impure sacred*. As Durkheim explains, every culture will have such a figure already *inscribed* within itself (224-37). As such, the narrator of *Conde Julián* will function as a placeholder for the space on to which those at the center project their own fantasies. Taussig analyzes this phenomena of the center's penetration by its own *impure sacred* as manifested in the subversive acts of Jean Genet: "But the thief . . . likewise caresses the images of the State . . . but instead of his body being penetrated by the sacred image, he penetrates it . . . Now he is one of Walter Benjamin's treasured devices, that infamous 'dialectical image' . . . For Durkheim something called 'society' . . . was written into sacred objects" (247).

It is here that the constructive aspect of Goytísolo's artistry becomes fully apparent. In his affirmation of fetishism, he goes beyond the aporia of many current analyses of the fetish object's aporia. In doing so he does not affirm rape and murder any more than other prominent Genet describers (Kristeva, Taussig) do. Rather he sees in such subversive literature the disorientating event that can jar the reader or viewer into a contact with the radically feminine—the semiotic space of the exile, completely outside of the hegemonic culture, yet somehow inscribed by it: "Imagine this thing called Genet as a taboo object, epitome of the *impure sacred*, writing the sacred designs on himself as a churinga of the modern Western underworld, where he gathers and concentrates into himself all the fantasies of those at the center" (247).

It is precisely this dialectical image of the *impure sacred* (mysteriously inscribed within the social order) that those in power at the center paradoxically depend on in order to function. Goytísolo's narrator wittingly becomes the despised Other that penetrates power's center, whether that power is manifested in fascism or, *a posteriori*, in political correctness. The "powers at be" benefit from the *impure sacred*, forever using it as a scapegoat. Nonetheless, the *impure sacred*'s efforts serve to subvert the center in such a way as to give space for marginalized voices. It is thus important to examine the final passages of *Conde Julián* (those that take place after the novel's rape and murder scenes). Julián, having purged himself that day of auratic images, is free to wander in the void, to become what Kristeva describes as the Genet-inspired exile that "strays in the abject": "The traitor, the liar, the criminal with a good conscience, the shameless rapist, the killer who claims he is a savior" (Kristeva 4). The *impure sacred* sacrifices himself in order that others may have access to this extra-symbolic, heterogeneous space wherein previously silenced voices may finally be heard. A female figure in this scene, the Shirley Temple doll (note the obvious mass culture referents), reveals her non-auratic quality through her gaze: "en los ojos opacos, con párpados pintados de bermellón, captas una mirada torva, de inquietud y disgusto" (232). Although she does not survive this vertiginous state, there are other feminine voices that do. These voices are heard intermixed among the de-privileged discourse of Western "classical" music, effectively creating a post-modern counterpoint, as she defends her own rights: "tu vecina acuna amorosamente la encolerizada gallina instalada en su regazo sobre una cesta de huevos, llora un niño y la radio trasmite a grito herido los danzarines compases de "Las sílfides" de Chopin : coño, no magreen! : no apriete usted, señora! : abusón, quita las manos!" (235).

Reinvindicación del Conde Julián as textual object continues to function as a dialectical image (*impure sacred*) in western culture, penetrating and upsetting our most cherished positions,

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an event that Brad Epps's article unwittingly attests to. As Kristeva writes, "Any crime, because it draws attention to the fragility of the law, is abject" (4). The novel's function as a dialectical image is not a condoning of sexual violence but, rather, the producing of a cathartic self-estrangement in the reader, a wake-up call to radical awareness of the de-centeredness of our own culture (and selves), and of the utopian potential inherent in commodity objects, effectively reflecting the revolutionary imperative of Walter Benjamin (as paraphrased by Michael Taussig) to, "Get with it! Get in touch with the fetish!" (Taussig 229). Once freed from restricting auratic forms of human communication, the exile and other repressed persons may find expression for their voices within the space provided by emerging art forms akin to Goytisoló's novels.

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