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(Re)Conceptualizing Violence in Contemporary Spanish  
Literature, Drama, and Film

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

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by

Matthew Carey Greenhalgh

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Dissertation Committee:

Dr. David K. Herzberger, Chairperson

Dr. Benjamin M. Liu

Dr. Alessandro Fornazzari

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The Dissertation of Matthew Carey Greenhalgh is approved:

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Committee Chairperson

University of California, Riverside

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

(Re)Conceptualizing Violence in Contemporary Spanish  
Literature, Drama, and Film

by

Matthew Carey Greenhalgh

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in Spanish  
University of California, Riverside, December 2019  
Dr. David K. Herzberger, Chairperson

This project explores the impact and role that violence plays in Contemporary Peninsular Literature and Culture. I approach violence in three ways: language, torture, and situational ethics in a trilogy by Javier Marías, *Tu rostro mañana*; a play by Antonio Buero Vallejo, *La doble historia del doctor Valmy*; and two films, *El laberinto del fauno*, by Guillermo del Toro; and *Goya en Burdeos* by Carlos Saura. This analysis focuses on how representations of violence provide critical commentary against social injustices, oppressive political figures, and state-sanctioned censorship and torture. In Section One, I analyze the violent act of torture through its use as a literary and visual aesthetic. In Section Two, I examine how language is used to control others, and how it subsequently represents the oft-unnoticed beginning of oppression that trends towards violent action. Lastly, in Section Three, I focus on situational ethics to examine the impact that violence has on unique individuals—aggressors, victims, and witnesses. The four works I analyze

each explore violence and test the justification of its use. Throughout this project, I maintain an understanding that the study of violence is a continually evolving field studied from varying disciplines. As a theme, these works critique how we view violence in the past and present, leading us to reconceptualize it as we move toward the future.

## Table of Contents

<i>Introduction</i>	1
Subjective Violence	8
Objective Violence	13
Other perspectives	16
Subjective and Objective Violence in Contemporary Spanish Literature	17
<i>Section 1</i>	20
<i>Violence and Torture in Contemporary Spanish Narrative, Drama, and Film</i>	20
Chapter 1	25
<i>Goya en Burdeos: Adapting the First Modern Spanish Critique of Violence</i>	25
<i>The Slaughtered Ox</i>	28
<i>Saura's Adaptation of Goya's "Disasters of War"</i>	30
Conclusion	38
Chapter 2	42
Understanding Historical and Fictional Representations of Violence	42
in <i>Tu rostro mañana</i>	42
Tupra and the Sword	44
The Torture and Death of Emilio Marés	49
The Execution of Torrijos and His Companions at Málaga Beach	51
Jaime's Confrontation with Custardoy	53
Conclusion	60
Chapter 3	63
The Pain of Torture: The Seen and Unseen Scars of Violence	63
in <i>La doble historia del doctor Valmy</i>	63
The Scars of Torture	64
Conclusion	81
Chapter 4	83
Man as Monster: Reimagining the Fairy Tale Villain in	83
<i>El laberinto del fauno</i>	83
Capitán Vidal	85
Torture and Murder	90
Man as Monster: The True Villain of Reality and Fantasy	97
Conclusion	104
Section Conclusion	107
<i>Section 2</i>	112
<i>The Violence of Language</i>	112
Chapter 5	119

Censorship in <i>Tu rostro mañana</i> and <i>La doble historia del doctor Valmy</i>	119
“Careless Talk”: Discouraging Communication in Society	120
The Barriers of Censorship in Theatrical Expression	124
Verbal Coercion	130
Unreliable Characters	138
The Consequences of Language	151
<i>Rostro</i> and <i>La doble historia</i> as Literary Warnings	160
<i>Section 3</i>	<i>164</i>
<i>The Situational Ethics of Violence</i>	<i>164</i>
Chapter 6	169
Narrative Legacy in <i>Tu rostro mañana</i>	169
Narrative Horror	171
Chapter 7	185
(Un)Justifying Torture in Buero Vallejo’s <i>La doble historia del Dr. Valmy</i>	185
Justifying the Use of Torture	187
Accomplices of Violence	200
The Awakening of Conscience	203
The Audience as Representatives of Society	206
Chapter 8	209
The Need for Violence: The Post-Civil War Arena of Good versus Evil in Guillermo del Toro’s <i>El laberinto del fauno</i>	209
The Sadistic Nature of Capitan Vidal	212
The Justified Violence of Rebels	221
Conclusion	231
Section Conclusion	234
<i>Conclusion</i>	<i>238</i>
<i>Bibliography</i>	<i>248</i>

## List of Figures

Figure 1 Slaughtered Ox .....	29
Figure 2 Saura's slaughtered ox.....	30
Figure 3 .....	37
Figure 4 .....	37
Figure 5 Fusilamiento de Torrijos y sus compañeros en las playas de Málaga.....	52
Figure 6.....	100
Figure 7 .....	122

## **Introduction**

No matter where we look or go at some point in each of our lives, we will see violence. We may not experience or witness it firsthand; we may not even recognize it if we did, but it's always there. We see it reported in newspapers, the internet, and on television. It drives the action in many of our books, music, movies, and video games. Violence can even be a part of our language, in what we say or how we keep others from speaking. And while one may never be forced to resort to violence, each one of us will likely see or hear something about it. From my admission, I am fortunate to say that I have witnessed very few acts of physical violence. In writing this, I recognize that not everyone can change or escape violent situations or environments in which they live. But even if we come from a place or time that does not necessarily feel violent, how we conceptualize violence is vitally important if we hope to change it. As I have studied violence as the central theme of this dissertation, I continue to see more clearly the impact that violence has on the physical body, language, and ethics. The indisputable conclusion I have come to from my readings is one that we likely already know, that is, that violence is everywhere.

In this dissertation, I focus on violence—which I define as any intentional physical, emotional, or mental harm on an individual or group—and the role it plays in modern Spain. I analyze Spain from the beginning of the Civil War (1936), through Francisco Franco's thirty-six-year dictatorship, and to the present Spanish democracy. I am compelled to focus specifically on Spain because of the prevalence

of violence during this period. But why Spain? If violence is so prevalent throughout the world, then what makes Spain unique? The answer for any scholar who studies contemporary Spain in any discipline is undoubtedly the *Pacto del olvido*.

The *Pacto del olvido* (Pact of forgetting)—officially the *Ley de Amnistía*—was signed into law in 1977, two years after Franco’s death in 1975. The law, which had approval from by right and left political parties—freed political prisoners and permitted those living in exile to return to Spain. However, the *Pacto* also guarantees immunity for those who participated in crimes during the Civil War and Francoist Spain. At the time, the *Pacto* seemed to make sense for the country to heal, but now it is more problematic than ever as older generations that have lived in silence pass on; their children and grandchildren have taken it upon themselves to uncover the secrets of the past. The law still exists and is the primary reason for not investigating and prosecuting human rights violations that occurred under the Franco regime. Regardless of the purpose of the law, it could never erase the slate of atrocities that occurred. The *Pacto* sets Spain apart from other countries as the legislation provides legal precedent for ignoring past violence in an attempt to build a democratic future “donde las viejas heridas sanaran en silencio y por sí solas” (Carracedo and Bahar).

One of the most effective ways to document violence in Spain has been to represent it in art. Spanish writers, artists, and filmmakers have incorporated violence, from Goya to the present, to influence audiences to think critically about how it affects the past, present, and future. Artists recreate violence in artforms to

show the historical impact of violence and the consequences it produces for others, even in the present. Writers and filmmakers, including Saura, Buero Vallejo, Marías, and del Toro, preserve the past through representations of violence that memorialize victims and provide evidence of the atrocities committed. We must reconceptualize how we view violence in the arts so that we may better understand its effectiveness in critiquing the injustices of reality.

To illustrate this point, I recall the reader to the recent scenes of the controversial Catalan Independence Referendum of October 2017 in Barcelona. The vote led to much discussion within Spain and the European Union as well abroad resulting from extensive media coverage. Much of what was reported focused on images of a significant police presence tasked by the Spanish government to crack down on and even close polling stations. Recordings of riot gear-clad officers entering polling areas and dragging out voters sparked international debate about the justification of what many within the region characterized as violence against a peaceful movement. Officials representing Catalan independence claimed that ninety percent of the forty-three percent registered voter turnout favored independence. Meanwhile, those who opposed the movement denounced the vote as illegal. Regardless, the comparison between the referendum and the country's turbulent past reopened the national discussion on violence.

While I do not offer my opinion on Catalan or Spanish politics in this analysis, I used this previous example to introduce a column penned by Javier Marías in *El País* several weeks after the referendum. Marías lambasted those who used the

word "violence" in his column, titled "Las palabras ofendidas," calling out Anna Gabriel, spokeswoman for the Popular Unity Candidacy, a pro-Catalan independence party. Marías took exception to claims that police actions were savagely violent, methods of torture, and that the Catalonia region suffers from oppressive police and military occupation. Marías took particular offense to Gabriel's words saying "hablar de los 'métodos de tortura' de la policía el 1 de octubre en Barcelona es un agravio a cuantos sufren y han sufrido torturas verdaderas en el universo" (*El País*). He continued to denounce Gabriel's comments as insensitive and disrespectful towards "true victims" of violence. While Marías's column provides substantial criticism of how we claim oppression and denounce violence, however, any who watched the news reports likely saw images of police confiscating polling equipment and breaking through barricaded doors to discourage crowds from voting. However, those who have experienced totalitarian regimes, like Marías, provide an understanding of violence for those who have not directly witnessed such oppression.

In instances such as the referendum, how and who are we to believe that violence did occur? Considering such events is a precarious task as we witness them from outside the time and space where they occurred. Even if torture did not happen, such as Marías argues, does that not mean that people did not feel threatened as they attempted to vote? Contradicting claims conflated the problem for those trying to make sense of what they heard or saw. Gabriel skipped mentioning any non-corporal forms of violence by immediately claiming physical

violence, which is coincidentally the most polarizing and newsworthy type. And Marías himself, an author whose own works tend to explore the consequences of words, bypassed the role that language or the suppression of one's voice played in discouraging the vote. All studies on this subject must understand that violence is not only used to break, maim, destroy, or kill. For example, one sees that through the communicative field of language, human beings are capable of harming others in ways that do not directly affect others physically. Violence is manifest in many ways, some more subtle than others, but regardless of how, it always produces consequences.

There are many answers offered in philosophical and academic discussions of violence, but there are even more questions asked. It is beyond my influence or ability to give any instruction for ridding the world of violence, and I do not pretend to know how to do so. Instead, I focus on reconceptualizing violence in contemporary Spain by analyzing narrative, drama, and film. While there is nothing wrong with working towards an end to violence, history shows that it continues to persist, regardless of changing ideologies and movements. For this reason, I understand that violence as a topic of study is far more complicated than one individual can ever hope to comprehend. However, this does not mean that we should not discuss and debate violence and its prevalence in all corners of society. There must always exist a dialogue that connects those who have experienced violence to others who are willing to listen and learn. In the context of Spain one

cannot think of past violence without considering the impact that it has on the country's historical memory.

Given the pervasive presence of violence, I believe it is prudent to ask, are there situations in which violence is justified? Many have argued that violence can be explained as a means *only* if it prevents a more violent act from occurring. However, all who are victims, witnesses, and even perpetrators of violence are likely to experience its consequences. As I look at violence in torture, language, and ethics, there do exist gray areas where societal principles are called into question. We must ask, did a violent act against one prevent another from occurring against an individual or group? If the act is justifiable, how do we explain why? Spanish artists have long explored these questions and sought answers through the development of characters in their works, which are confronted with circumstances in which they must choose between using violence or not. The works that I analyze by Carlos Saura, Antonio Buero Vallejo, Javier Marías, and Guillermo del Toro all explore violence and test the justification of its use. As a theme, this critique of how we view violence in the past and present leads us to reconceptualize it as we move toward the future.

Much has been said about violence by intellectuals who provide answers and commentary on its causes while searching for solutions. As a topic of discussion, violence offers continual opportunities for dialogue from varying perspectives, some of which I present in this introduction. First, let me begin by saying that the issue of violence is broadly studied from a wide range of academic and professional

disciplines such as Sociology, Political Science, Criminal Justice, Religion, History, Literature, and Philosophy, to name a few. My approach will be from a literary criticism point of view as I analyze the prevalence of violence within Contemporary Spanish literature, drama, and film. The works I use in this study recreate violence to draw attention to historical injustices within Spain, recognizing that even though such atrocities did occur, they are not forgotten. Before continuing with the first chapter of my analysis, I provide a summary of my readings on violence that constitute a small portion of the existing discussion on the subject.

For my understanding of violence I draw primarily from ideas by philosopher's Hannah Arendt and Slavoj Žižek as I examine the role violence plays in Spanish narrative, Javier Marías's trilogy, *Tu rostro mañana* (*Fiebre y lanza* 2002, *Baile y sueño* 2004, *Veneno y sombra y adiós* 2007), drama, Antonio Buero Vallejo's *La doble historia de doctor Valmy* (written in 1964, premiered in 1968), and film, Carlos Saura's *Goya en Burdeos* (1999) and Guillermo del Toro's *Pan's Labyrinth*<sup>1</sup> (2006). I use Arendt and Žižek's philosophical critiques to frame my conceptualization of violence and its role in language, torture, and ethics across these mediums. I first provide a summary of what others have said about violence and how they have approached its problems and what answers, if any, have been proposed. First, I begin by summarizing key points from Arendt's essay and Žižek's

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<sup>1</sup> From this point forward, I primarily refer to the *Tu rostro mañana* as *Rostro*, *La doble historia de doctor Valmy* as *La doble historia*, *Goya en Burdeos* as *Goya*, and *Pan's Labyrinth* by its abbreviated Spanish name, *El laberinto*.

book. Second, I provide additional summaries on what other scholars have said regarding violence. I conclude by giving an outline and my method of approach to violence in which I analyze it as a literary or visual aesthetic in the previously mentioned art forms.

Both Arendt's and Žižek's essays, along with those summarized below, help place the works that I analyze within a turbulent world that is troubled continually by violence and when and where it appears: imagery, language, economics, and war, to name a few. Regardless of if one uses or witnesses violence, it is as George Faust says, "in all its manifestations an integral part of our past," (np<sup>2</sup>) and, I would add, an unyielding part of our present. Indeed, violence is a behavior that humanity continually tries to escape but cannot. While Arendt's analysis assists in understanding the vicious actions of characters within the works that I analyze, Žižek's in-depth exploration of "symbolic" and "systemic" spaces guide how I approach language as a possible means of violence. I examine how these works give resonance to violence, its implementation, and meaning from three primary approaches: the violence of language, torture, and, finally, situational ethics.

### **Subjective Violence**

Many studies of violence naturally focus on visible acts. An unprovoked physical attack by an assailant against another individual is an example of subjective violence. Many scholars and social critics focus heavily on the subjective as it is not

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<sup>2</sup> Faust's introduction and summary in *The Ethics of Violence: A Study of a Fractured Word* do not include page numbers.

only the most easily recognizable but also the form of violence that is most appalling to our senses. After studying and witnessing much of the political and social turmoil of the twentieth century, Hannah Arendt published her essay, *On Violence*, in 1970. She wrote of violence not as a lone entity, asserting instead that it always requires implements to be carried out (4). She suggested that one must use the tools at their disposal, whatever they may be, for violence to occur, arguing “[it] is by nature instrumental; like all means, it always stands in need of guidance and justification through the end it pursues” (51). Violence cannot occur unless one *does* something. Arendt’s words give a solid foundation for looking at violence through a lens that focuses primarily on physical violence that is easily recognizable.

When thinking of any philosophical study on violence Walter Benjamin’s essay, “Critique of Violence,” stands as a landmark analysis. He changed from the narrative that “the ends justify the means” by focusing on violence itself. Benjamin asks numerous questions about violence and its relation to both law and justice that challenge his readers to come up with their answer. Aside from his descriptions and several criteria which he developed, he makes two key observations about the end that violence ultimately brings, explaining:

A totally nonviolent resolution of conflicts can never lead to a legal contract. For the latter, however peacefully it may have been entered into by the parties, leads finally to possible violence. It confers on both parties the right to take recourse to violence in some form against the other, should he break the agreement. (288)

While this excerpt highlights a somewhat defeatist attitude when thinking of humankind’s ability to find a resolution, Benjamin does make a solid argument.

Violence itself is often used to end violence. But in doing so, violence inevitably results in *more* violence, just as Arendt, a friend of Benjamin's, would later add to her essay.

Italian philosopher Sergio Cotta explored violence phenomenologically by focusing on the structure of violent behavior, going beyond *how* violence occurs to ask *why* in his book, *Why Violence? A Philosophical Interpretation* (xii). Cotta explains that violence was historically understood as an inevitable part of conflict up until the nineteenth century when it began to be appreciated and exalted. Cotta explores the impossibility of ridding the world of violence without violence:

If we have violence in *everything* and *everywhere*, we have one, and only one choice: either to suffer it with resignation (in which case violence appears to be the supreme law of life, man's destiny) or to try to eliminate it. But if we choose the second, we become prisoners of an all-encompassing premise: in order to eliminate violence, it is necessary to make use of it, since there is no other means for antiviolent action. (16)

Cotta shares similarities with Arendt and Benjamin—using violent means to stop violence consequentially leads to more violence. Cotta's ideas are framed by looking at violence historically, from which he presents it as inevitable, "without hope of ever eliminating it" (15). According to Cotta, the world has not necessarily become more violent. Instead, attitudes towards violence have changed—from indifference to it or even celebrating it as a spectacle.

Brad Evans and Terrell Carver openly admit that their research in *Histories of Violence: Post-war Critical Thought* does not solve the problem of violence. Instead, they explain that their goal for examining violence is not necessarily to come up

with a definitive solution, but rather to open difficult avenues of thought surrounding the subject. Evans and Carver's ideas caused me to ask myself what ways do we, and specifically, I, hope to think or change how we feel about violence? How do we approach and teach it with "a proper ethical care for the subject" (1), as Evans and Carver propose? Although they do not necessarily provide answers to solve the problem of violence, they offer eight principles for approaching violence as a topic of serious discussion, the last two of which I find most applicable to my study. The seventh principle states: "violence is not carried out only by irrational monsters. Sadly, most violence is not exceptional or deviant—it is rationalized, calculated and perfectly in keeping with political and social norms and legal frameworks" (6). The eighth and final principle argues that violence will always be challenging to understand if only thought of regarding what it kills or destroys. They propose that violence is more than power and annihilation; it is an attack on one's dignity, selfhood, and beliefs (6).

Vittorio Buffachi's *Violence: A Philosophical Anthology* compiles another collection of multifaceted critical approaches to issues of violence, similar to Evan's and Carver's. The majority of the essays are guided by the questions "what is violence?" and "can it be justified?" In "Justifying Violence," Bernard Gert outlines moral rules that are at times necessary to violate if it means preventing greater violence. However, Gert explicitly states that "[violence] is justifiable only when one would publicly advocate such a violation [of the rule]" (75). Gert does not endorse violence, arguing: "to desire death, pain, disability, or loss of freedom, opportunity,

or pleasure for oneself, unless one has a reason [is irrational]" (67). Indeed, he suggests that it is because of our ability to reason that we may be prohibited by our rationale, which in turn allows us to thoroughly contemplate our actions and weigh the justification for them against possible consequences.

In Faust's treatise, *The Ethics of Violence: A Study of a Fractured Word*<sup>3</sup>, he explores ethics and their application to violent action(s) in political and religious conflicts in history. The book canvasses centuries of historical violence as it relates to religion, culture, and ideology and concludes with a warning against further fragmentation within these spaces. He asks: "are there universal standards of social conduct in peace and war?" (np). As part of his analysis, he explores the historical struggle with violence in different regions of the world, stating:

Our world society faces increased religious, ideological and cultural confrontation. Terror is a common weapon which, when put to use, can cause deep and enduring suffering. None of the world organizations appear to know how to begin to resolve or alleviate the pain, or its causes. (np)

Faust is driven to answer the reasoning behind using violence as well as society's attempts at healing historical wounds, "[we] will have the courage to denounce all acts of violence and terror which continue to shatter today's world" (np). The book canvasses centuries of historical violence as it relates to religion, culture, and ideology and concludes with a warning against further fragmentation within these

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<sup>3</sup> I also use Faust in the introduction to section three, "The Situational Ethics of Violence," but have included it here in the summary of what others have said on violence.

spaces. Faust focuses on how technology has led to more violence and implores that we consider our limits for using such advances against others.

Each of these scholars presents violence with tangible examples that are seen either historically or in the present. From explaining the dependence of violence on instruments to questioning if and when it is justified as a means to an end, those who emphasize subjective violence primarily analyze the examples that make headlines and attract our attention. While their respective analyses provide profound arguments concerning the debate of physical violence, they do not consider the non-physical acts that produce violent results that I categorize, as Žižek does, as objective violence.

### **Objective Violence**

Not all forms of violence are as graphic as others. Objective violence does not necessarily require physical action to inflict harm on a person or group. Instead, the objective forms of violence usually go unnoticed by the public outside of the victims directly affected by the policy or system that makes it appear as ordinary or necessary. Historically this has been a less appealing way to examine violence because it lacks the vivid examples that make it an engaging topic of study. However, a study from this perspective can lead to an unveiling of symbolic or systemic oppression that appeases one group while preying on another.

Slavoj Žižek is one such theorist who focuses heavily on the problems that objective forms of violence cause. Žižek highlights the term in his book *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections*, dividing it into subcategories: the “symbolic,” or violence “[that

is] embodied in language and its forms” (1) and “systemic,” characterized by “the often-catastrophic consequences of the smooth functioning of our economic and political systems” (2). Paul Taylor, a scholar of Žižek Studies, explains that this approach fascinates Žižek because “[it’s] the low-visibility, background nature of objective violence [which] makes it media unfriendly and therefore less noteworthy” (200). Žižek’s *Violence* stresses that language, or symbolic violence, and communication are inevitably violent and that our systems—economic and political—are overrun by the violence that exists to provide a “comfortable life” for some while subjecting others to suffering (9).

Another simplified approach to violence is to view it from a historical perspective. Author and professor Byung-Chul Han traces violence in his 2018 analysis, *Topology of Violence*, from its archaic uses, in which it was more visibly identifiable, to the present, where it is challenging to recognize. While we may feel that violence is decreasing as the years go by, Han draws attention to the social and political systems that it continues to invade: “Modernity is not distinguished by an aversion to violence...Today it is shifting from the visible to the invisible...creating the false impression that it has disappeared” (vii). Han also shifts attention from subjective violence to objective, where we see, or may not see, how the smooth functioning of society thrives on oppressing others to preserve that function. Han, like Žižek, explains that the types of violence that were once so easily identifiable have evolved to hide in plain sight. But to find this violence, one must begin by asking how and why things are the way they are.

Jamil Salmi provides an engaging analysis of violence by separating the ways we more easily identify it from others that are more difficult to recognize. These include direct violence, when one deliberately harms another, indirect violence, such as not helping those in danger from natural and social environments, repressive violence, such as the deprivation of fundamental, civil, and political rights, and alienating violence or the denial of higher rights seen in living conditions, social ostracism, and ethnocide. Salmi's interpretation of violence adds to the debate among scholars about what violence is and how it is justified.

By studying the symbolic and systemic, we can come to understand the prevalence of objective violence in society. This type of violence creates the underlying circumstances that provide the language and systems that we casually overlook in our search for subjective examples. As Žižek explains

Subjective violence is experienced as such against the background of a non-violent zero level. It is seen as a perturbation of the 'normal,' peaceful state of things. However, objective violence is precisely the violence inherent to this 'normal' state of things. Objective violence is invisible since it sustains the very zero-level standard against which we perceive something as subjectively violent. (2)

Objective forms of violence are easiest to identify when we start by asking how the norms or comforts of our society exist—Where do they come from? How are they created? As we analyze the use of our language and systems, we come to realize the pervasiveness of violence that infiltrates spaces where we least expect it. Those who study objective violence bring attention to it as an understudied and underrecognized problem. But by learning about the prevalence and impact of

objective forms of violence, we can begin to recognize the underlying causes of unrest, which ultimately lead to outbreaks of subjective violence.

### **Other perspectives**

Not all view violence as an inherent biological quality of humankind. On the 16<sup>th</sup> of May 1986, an international meeting of scientists, convened by the Spanish National Commission for UNESCO, drafted the "Seville Statement on Violence." In this declaration, the group, made up of individuals from different academic and professional disciplines, refuted ideas that have historically been used to justify violence and war. In it, they make five propositions. First, "it is scientifically incorrect to say that we have inherited a tendency to make war from our animal ancestors." Second, "it is scientifically incorrect to say that war or any other violent behaviour is genetically programmed into our human nature." Third, "it is scientifically incorrect to say that in the course of human evolution, there has been a selection for aggressive behaviour more than for other kinds of behaviour." Fourth, "it is scientifically incorrect to say that humans have a 'violent brain.'" And fifth, "it is scientifically incorrect to say that war is caused by 'instinct' or any single motivation" ("The Seville Statement on Violence"). These scholars disapprove of those who defend violence to benefit from it economically and politically. Although their assertion that violence is not an inevitable part of our nature does not explicitly address the subjective or objective forms, it does remind us to remember our ability to reason. As in all instances, when violence presents itself as a possible course of action, one must never forget that consequences will always follow.

## **Subjective and Objective Violence in Contemporary Spanish Literature**

I focus on physical acts of violence in the first chapter of the dissertation. The act of torture makes art, for lack of a better word, intriguing. It attacks our senses, what we see and hear, and provides action that captivates our interest. Here I must clarify that I do not mean that physical violence or torture is entertaining as artistic depiction in the sense of entertainment—although it is unfortunate that much of society does indeed consume violence for this purpose—instead, I propose that it makes art compelling. In particular, when an artist uses violence as a social or political critique, it is often done to catch the audience’s attention and direct that attention to the injustice created by such violence. Viewing such an act in art may influence the audience to ask questions similar to scholars that I have previously included, *why does this happen? How does this happen?* For this section, I look at scenes of physical violence and torture in all four works (*Goya, Rostro, La doble historia*, and *Pan’s Labyrinth*) as they depict brutal scenes of individuals inflicting harm on another to create fear, punish, or extract information. Torture affects the recipients of the violent act. I argue that it also leaves a terrible impact on witnesses, including those who learn of it secondhand, and even the torturer. The authors and film directors whose works I analyze use scenes of torture to criticize the ease with which it used and often accepted as necessary to protect the State. By viewing torture as a performative act that makes an impression on those who experience,

see, and use it, we can begin to understand its reach as well as the severity of its impact.

In chapter two, I examine the role that violence plays in language, and against language, in Javier Marías's trilogy, *Tu rostro mañana*, and Antonio Buero Vallejo's play, *La doble historia del doctor Valmy*. In both of these works, the words said, the things written, and the secrets kept and shared lead the characters to witness and commit terrible acts. This chapter forms the basis of my analysis of what Žižek refers to as symbolic violence as Marías's novel and Buero Vallejo's play critique the impact and power that words have. By exploring censorship, a theme that is visited numerous times in *Rostro*, Marías recreates the turbulent environment of the Civil War and Franco-era Spain, to show all language and utterances have consequences. Even not speaking, or refusing to share information, may produce unanticipated or even undesirable results. Buero Vallejo's play demonstrates the problem that knowing about a terrible act, such as torture, can lead to by exploring how sharing this information with another can lead the latter individual to feel guilty and accomplice to the original and unseen act. As I analyze language in these works, I do so to show that violence is not only physical—explosions, torture, murder—but instead that it begins with what we say and share. Information once shared through language becomes the catalyst for later violent action.

In chapter three, I provide my commentary on the situational ethics of violence in *Rostro*, *La doble historia*, and *Pan's Labyrinth*. These works depict scenes in which a character, usually the protagonist, considers the consequences of a

violent act they are about to perform. I focus more on the question of *when* and *why* violence is justified in this part of my analysis. In each instance, I look at the characters in question to consider what committing the act means for themselves as well as what violence might befall others if they do not follow through. It is in this last section that I contend that violence, whether it be subjective or objective, is not always black and white. There does exist a gray area where one must rely on their conscience to guide them toward the least violent outcome.

Regardless of how we approach violence, it is a part of our past, present, and, unfortunately, our future. Scholars stress that understanding violence is essential for improving how we react to it and can attempt to prevent it. They present explanations to show how we use violence to gain influence or power over others. Violence is not just a part of our history or current events, but it is also embedded in our culture. I'm not proposing that violence is a part of one's culture that should be celebrated, although that undoubtedly does happen, but rather that we must preserve it in our artforms. This is done for many reasons, perhaps even celebrating the act itself, but it is most effective when done as a critique to influence others to see the problems that violence creates. Artists, writers, poets, playwrights, and actors make violence an integral part of their work to point out social injustices, critique oppressive political figures, denounce state-sanctioned censorship and torture, and even explore what a violence does to their characters.

## Section 1

### Violence and Torture in Contemporary Spanish Narrative, Drama, and Film

“The object of persecution is persecution. The object of torture is torture. The object of power is power. Now do you begin to understand me?”  
—George Orwell

While there do exist a variety of approaches through which one views physical acts of violence, for the works that I have chosen to examine (*Goya en Burdeos*, *Tu rostro mañana*, *La doble historia del doctor Valmy*, and *El laberinto del fauno*) I focus primarily on torture. As I have proposed in the introduction, physical depictions of violence—even torture—are used as an artistic aesthetic to reframe violence and influence how individuals challenge it.

Although there is an increased demand for audiences seeking violence in entertainment, in particular in television, film, and video games, this is most evident in contemporary television and film with the popularity of so-called “splatter films,” also widely referred to as “torture porn,” “gorn,” or “gorno.” Isabel Pinedo describes the genre as “a filmic category or cycle of the horror film [that] exceeds the thematic treatment of torture,” adding “torture porn is defined by its extensive and graphic depiction of torture. It dwells on the details of incisions in spectacular close-up. It utilizes special effects technology to deliver verisimilitude and a sense of immediacy” (346). According to Pinedo, films in this genre achieved greatest box office success between 2004 and 2008, the same time that Marías published his second and third installments of the *Rostro* trilogy, *Baile y sueño* (2004) and *Veneno*

*y sombra y adiós* (2007), and Del Toro's *El laberinto* premiered (2006). I include this genre to give an opposing approach to violence than the works that I have chosen to analyze, which cause audiences to react to violence and contemplate its historical use in sociopolitical contexts.

While some art uses violence solely for entertainment, others utilize it in a way that encourages critical thinking about what is depicted. Oliver Conolly, a philosophy scholar, asks, "why do we enjoy the depiction, in imaginative literature, of situations that typically arouse negative emotions such as pity, sadness, and horror?" and responds: "[because] we have emotions for fictional characters" (305). This attachment to characters makes audiences invested in their stories, as what does or does not happen to them ultimately impacts the parallels made between their fictional space and reality. Saura, Marías, Buero Vallejo, and Del Toro are masters at provoking this emotional attachment by portraying violence in a way that demands serious reflection not only on the act itself but also on the consequences that act.

In this section, I focus on scenes that depict an individual or group who uses violence to harm another. Violence is used in these scenes to communicate to the audience the fear and pain felt by the victims of said violence. In scenes that depict torture, the detainee or victim is punished to coerce him—or her—to reveal information that the torturer deems to be of value. I demonstrate that while torture does indeed affect the tortured, in particular through physical or psychological scarring, the torturer can also be adversely affected. I have chosen each work

precisely because they do not reproduce violence for the audience's enjoyment but rather endeavor to understand how its historical use in Spain affects how it is conceptualized today. By approaching torture this way in Spanish cultural production, I argue that we can appreciate the depiction of violence across different art forms as a necessary theme to critique oppression and injustice.

Before proceeding with my analysis of *Goya, Rostro, La doble historia*, and *El laberinto*, I would first like to offer two definitions of torture. The first one comes from Fernando Savater<sup>4</sup>, who has long criticized torture, who explains: "*torturar es intentar conseguir una respuesta de alguien que se resiste a darla, por medio del dolor*"<sup>5</sup> (21). The second definition comes from Michael Richardson, who wrote *Gestures of Testimony: Torture, Trauma, and Affect in Literature* in response to the images and testimonies of tortured prisoners from Abu Ghraib. Richardson explores the impact of torture in literature and fiction writing, "torture simply constitutes an unacceptable violation of the body, being, and freedom of another." He argues vehemently against the use of torture: "to so thoroughly abuse the capacity of a person to exist within the world is, in my view, utterly unjustifiable" (24). Both Savater and Richardson view and criticize torture as a practice intent on causing intense and long-lasting physical or psychological pain.

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<sup>4</sup> Savater is a renowned Spanish philosopher and writer.

<sup>5</sup> Italics original. Savater goes onto describe "dolor," as a term that describes the range of physical, psychic or moral torment—from live skinning to showing a lack of courtesy, uncertainty or even lying (21).

Historically torture has been used to coerce information from subjects while simultaneously punishing the body and mind. In antiquity, torture was used for many purposes, including public terror, interrogation, sadistic pleasure, and even as a spectacle to entertain the masses. Over time methods of torture and those using them have become more sophisticated. Courtenay Conrad and Will Moore explain that torture was used historically by states and considered a tool for establishing truth in criminal proceedings, determining guilt, and even innocence (460). Conrad and Moore also add:

Techniques that scarred the body were not only acceptable, they were required—one needed evidence of the torture to establish that it had been carried out. [However] the nineteenth and twentieth centuries bore witness to the decline of torture as an accepted procedure. (460)

However, both scholars acknowledge that while torture is in many ways considered medieval, it has not disappeared. Instead, it has become a clandestine act as the public has continued to disapprove of it gradually. Michael Flynn and Fabiola Salek highlight the movement of torture from spectacle to covert operation, explaining: “[now] crimes committed by intelligence officers and their adjuncts are usually invisible to the public, at least until a released prisoner testifies to his or her maltreatment” (8). This brings us back to the works of my analysis as each explores not only the pain felt by the tortured and the subconscious guilt of the torturer but also the consequences of societal indifference toward the use of torture, often in places and by people one would never imagine.

In this section, I show how Saura, Buero Vallejo, Marías, and del Toro provoke their audiences to question how they view and understand violence. To do so, I have organized it into four parts in which I analyze each work individually. First, I focus on how Saura portrays Goya in a way that reimagines how the artist might have seen the events of his life and how they shaped his works. In the second chapter, I examine the historical and fictional reproduction of violence, in particular in scenes that depict torture or execution in Marías's *Rostro*. Marías trilogy approaches the history of twentieth-century Spain by juxtaposing it with the violence that Jaime, the novel's protagonist, faces in the fictional present. In the third chapter, I analyze the pain of those who receive, perform, and are indirectly affected by torture in Buero Vallejo's *La doble historia del Doctor Valmy*, a play written to criticize violence during Franco's dictatorship. In the final chapter of this section, I analyze the role that torture plays in Del Toro's *El laberinto*, by focusing on the cruel behavior of Capitán Vidal.

## Chapter 1

### *Goya en Burdeos: Adapting the First Modern Spanish Critique of Violence*

Carlos Saura Atarés started making films in his twenties and has since become one of Spain's most innovative and renowned filmmakers. His work, which spans six decades, is celebrated in particular because it highlights Spanish cultural themes in flamenco, art, and literature. Saura incorporates these traditions in his work with his fascination for photography and writing. Linda Willem explains the importance of his contributions to Spanish historical memory:

Film scholars and critics consistently join his name with that of Luis Buñuel and Pedro Almodóvar to form a triad of Spain's most renowned filmmakers. But whereas Buñuel belonged to the generation of Spaniards who pursued their careers in exile, and Almodóvar is of the generation which came to artistic maturity after Franco's death, Saura embodies the generation of liberal filmmakers who lived under the thirty-six-year dictatorship and creatively circumvented its censorship. (vii)

One particular aspect of Spanish history that Saura tends to explore is a recurring theme of violence. Saura was born in Huesca, Aragon<sup>6</sup> and from a young age was exposed to the atrocities of violence. Willem explains that "more than any other aspect of his life, what colors his work the most are his remembrances of his early years during the Spanish Civil War<sup>7</sup>" (ix). These experiences led him to question his

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<sup>6</sup> Beyond Goya and Saura's shared interest in examining violence, both share other similarities as Saura was born a mere 125 kilometers to the north of Goya's hometown of Fuentedetodos, Aragon.

<sup>7</sup> Saura still remembers the traumatic events of the outbreak of the war when his family moved to Madrid, where they experienced aerial bombing and severe food shortages (Willem xvii).

country's past and sift through its struggles in search of understanding. As a young filmmaker, his works regularly used metaphors and other symbols to skirt Franco's censorship. One of his films, *La caza* (1966), follows war veterans who spend a day together hunting rabbits and reminiscing. The relationship between three of the men quickly dissolves as their frustrations with one another become triggered, causing them to fire on each other. With each of the three finally killed, one of the men's teenage relatives, Enrique, remains unhurt, yet unable to understand the inexplicable carnage that remains. Many view the film as an allegory for the tensions during the Franco dictatorship that followed the Civil War. I mention *La caza* before proceeding with my analysis of Saura's *Goya en Burdeos*<sup>8</sup> because the film portrays violence, and more importantly, its repercussions. Saura's films provide a necessary visualization of violence that goes beyond the physical by focusing on the consequences of those actions.

Saura again returned to exploring violence in Spain when he directed *Goya*. The film approaches violence from the titular character, a fictionalized version Francisco de Goya<sup>9</sup>. Thematically Goya's works gradually became darker, reflecting a pessimistic outlook on his own personal, social, and political experiences. After Napoleon invaded Spain in 1805, the beginning of what is known as the Peninsular War, Goya's art began to convey his response to the conflict and, in particular, its

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<sup>8</sup> *Goya en Burdeos*, Saura's thirty-sixth film, won five Goya Awards in 2000, including Best Actor for Francisco Rabal, who portrays an aging Goya in the film.

<sup>9</sup> Goya (1746-1828) was a romantic painter and printmaker who came into prominence as a court painter to the Spanish Crown in the late eighteenth century.

consequences. From an artistic perspective, Goya's work in this period provides a compelling visualization of the violence that occurred. Goya is the first Spanish artist to distance himself from romanticizing war, as was tradition, and instead opted for a realist approach that reflected the pain and suffering felt by the Spanish people.

It was in *Los desastres de la guerra* that Goya offered a visual record of the Peninsular War by highlighting the most disturbing atrocities in each of his works. As a collection, *Desastres* expresses the immediacy and brutality of war, drawing connections to—and likely influencing—nineteenth and twentieth century photojournalism (Licht 130-133). However, because Goya's motivation for depicting such scenes is not entirely clear, I rely on Saura's recreation of the painter's life to analyze his works. Francisco Vega suggests that Saura chose Goya to explore themes he is familiar with, "se fija en Goya, toma para sí algo de su arte, pero lo recrea para reflejar, por un lado, lo que se le ocultaba en su infancia y, por otro, lo que siguen siendo los males opresores de la España en que vive y que prefería mejorar" (91). Saura's film was a project to understand his own life experience through the life of another who had also witnessed war as he did.

Saura recreates Goya's experiences in film, giving a new element of movement to some of his most famous pieces by converting them into living paintings (Vega 95). Saura uses a variety of works that reflect Goya's life, beginning with his appointment as a painter for the Spanish Crown to his later years that were marked by illness and dark artistic aesthetics. The film uses flashback narration that, "although not completely chronological, trace Goya's development as an

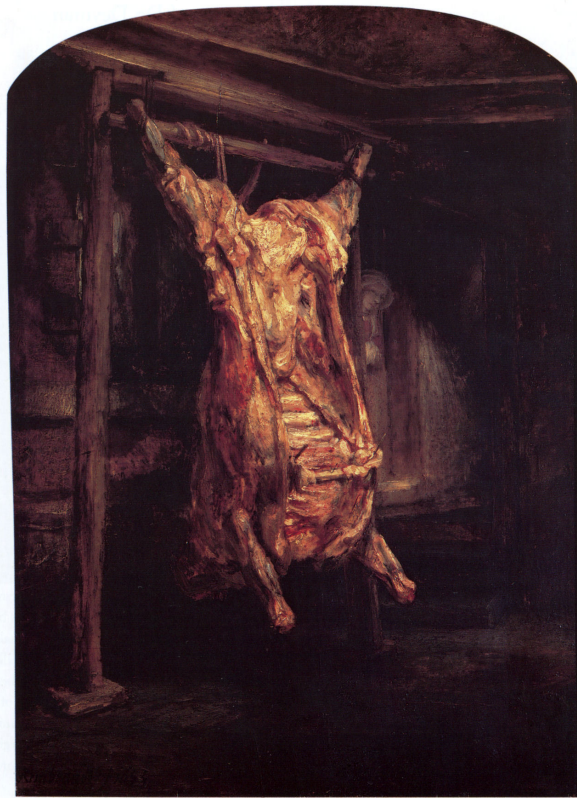
increasingly politically conscious painter, culminating in his *Desastres de la guerra*" (Sager 110-111). In this chapter, I focus on several instances in the film that depict varying degrees of violence. First, I look briefly at the opening sequence in which a slaughtered animal carcass is slowly dragged across the screen. Next, I analyze Saura's portrayal of the miracle of San Antonio de Padua, a Portuguese Catholic priest and friar of the Franciscan Order (1195-1231), who is believed to have used divine violence to absolve a man wrongly convicted of murder before executing the real killer. Lastly, I focus primarily on Saura's cinematic adaptation of war from Goya's point of view. This penultimate scene is the most fluid, dramatic, and violent of the film. Its source material comes primarily from *Desastres*, which it uses like a storyboard to express Goya's disillusion with war and the despair for the resulting loss of life in a way that "could transmit a subtle social critique" (Hortelano 29).

### ***The Slaughtered Ox***

From the opening scene, Saura implements techniques that set the tone for the film by focusing on death as a theme. As the credits begin, an animal carcass is slowly dragged across the floor—the camera tracking it as it moves—until it is lifted upwards by a pulley where it hangs in the air. The unsettling scene is provocative for an audience who is watching to learn more about Goya. Saura's artistic approach in this biopic is apparent as the camera zooms in on the middle part of the animal's organs only to transform into the weathered face of an elderly and dying Goya.

While the inclusion of the cattle carcass is no doubt unexpected, it is done by Saura with specific intent. In the years that Saura spent developing *Goya*, this scene

had been an integral part of how he wanted to begin the film by directly referencing Rembrandt's *Slaughtered Ox*<sup>10</sup> (1655). Saura brings the painting to life, depicting the decapitated animal, flayed of its skin and hair, with its chest cavity stretched open, internal organs removed, revealing only a mass of flesh and bones<sup>11</sup>. Paul Smith points singles out the carcass scene as a perfect example of Italian Cinematographer Vittorio Storaro



*Figure 1 Slaughtered Ox*

expertise with lighting and color, used in the film to produce powerful graphic effects that focus intensely on the subjects that he shoots: “[Storaro] slowly tracks over the sodden black earth and tilts [the camera] up to a blood-red hanging carcass whose entrails morph into the dying Goya’s head” (Review of *Goya*). The carcass, dragged across the dusty ground, serves as a metaphor for Goya’s impending death, the artist himself an enduring symbol of some of Spain’s more turbulent and violent

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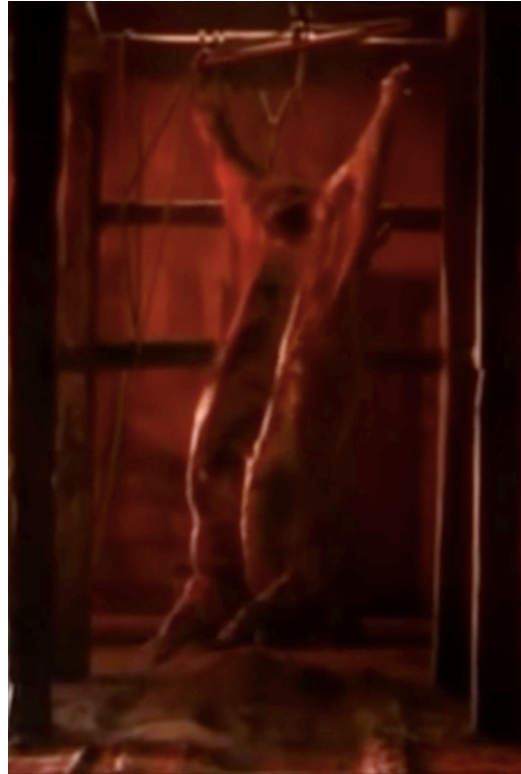
<sup>10</sup> *Slaughtered Ox* is a part of the Louvre’s collection.

<sup>11</sup> Saura signals to the audience that a knowledge of art and its history will be essential to understand the film as the Rembrandt painting he recreates follows an artistic tradition that portrayed the butchery of animals.

times. The film begins at the end of Goya's life, and that, like the slaughtered ox, he too will be consumed by death.

Saura uses the aging Goya as the focal point of the film to explore several moments in Spanish history through the artist's eyes. In doing so, Saura examines events that range from formal and casual aristocratic gatherings, late-night painting sessions, and moments of intimacy.

However, at the end of the film, violence receives the spotlight—quite literally on a



*Figure 2 Saura's slaughtered ox*

stage—as Goya looks on. Pietsie Feenstra and Hub Hermans argue that Goya permits Saura to resurrect “un período fundamental de la historia nacional mediante un testigo privilegiado de los trastornos sociopolíticos que marcaron la entrada de España en el siglo XIX” (120). The scene highlights the level of detail that *Goya* gives to the people and events that Goya preserved in his works.

### ***Saura's Adaptation of Goya's "Disasters of War"***

One of the film's advantages in depicting violence is that it provides audiences with continuous motion between separate objects in rapid succession. Thus offering simulated experiences that communicate complex ideas and emotions like real-life. A film such as Saura's *Goya* takes renowned drawings and paintings by

the artist and develops them from that medium to what the viewer experiences in the film. While this certainly does not minimize nor detract from Goya's superb artistic talent nor his ability to commemorate the emotion and violence he took from his life experiences, Saura's film offers further techniques through which to observe the artist's life and his work. One such area that Saura achieves this is the creation of a battle scene depicting skirmishes and executions. The large cast and cinematographer's ability to continually follow them afford Saura the ability to recreate death and destruction on a scale that a single painting or drawing has difficulty replicating. Goya's artwork has influenced how we historically record violence through imagery, as well as how we respond to those images, beginning a tradition in Spain and abroad in which artists use their work to recreate and critique violence. It is through this same creative vein that contemporary filmmakers, like Saura, rely on the cinematographic experience precisely because "[it] offers unique opportunities to explore both the routines of violence as well as the rhetoric and imagination that begets violence" (ten Brink and Oppenheimer 3).

While *Goya en Burdeos* is not an overly violent film, its penultimate scene gives the needed dramatic climax to show the emotional and mental burden that Goya carries with him to his death. Saura described the scene's purpose in his notes, saying, "trateremos de mostrar la brutalidad de la guerra tal como Goya la vio, o la sintió" (39). The scene uses a vast amount of material, highlighted in particular by Goya's art, although not limited to it. Saura adds influences from his own life, mixing modern sounds such as military helicopters used in the Vietnam War and fragments

of music from Russian composers Dmitri Shostakovich and Sergei Prokofiev that are blended with the sound of firing squads, the boom of cannons, the sound of the trumpets, and the rhythm of nineteenth-century style drums (Saura 39).

The elder Goya narrates to his daughter, Rosarito, the experiences that inspired his works throughout the film, and asks her if she thinks he could sell his *Desastres*. At this point, he picks up a brush and says to her, “no le temo a nadie niña con la espada en la mano. Nunca he tenido valor de pelear con el arma. Y ahora en la edad de la cordura. Bueno, me he peleado con los pinceles” (*Goya*). Art it would seem for Saura is a tool with which to fight violence—at least it appears that he envisioned Goya combating violence with his paintbrush, not the sword. Saura’s Goya criticizes man's use of force as he asks his daughter, “¿sabes cuál es el mayor monstruo que hay en el universo?... Es el hombre, niña... Los animales son inocentes de las crueldades que cometen. Obedecen a su naturaleza al cambio el hombre cuando hace daño sabe que hace daño” (*Goya*). We are to understand through Saura's cinematic depiction of Goya's work that humankind's greatest fault is a tendency to resort to violence when, unlike animals, we possess a higher capacity to communicate and reason.

Returning to *Goya*, we see the artist as he is reaching the end of his life, envisioning once again the middle-aged version of himself sitting at the bed as the former continues to talk about the artists that inspired him, in particular, Velásquez and Rembrandt. Goya refers to the era that defined their art as a time of artistic illumination. This causes him to reflect on his imagination which is deeply affected

by the terrible things he has seen, leading him to wish a different reality for Spain: “¡Qué época más siniestra nos ha tocado vivir! Yo hubiera querido otra cosa para mi país. Pero la ignorancia, las intrigas y las corruptelas se adueñaron de todo” (*Goya*). Nancy Berthier comments on the importance this reflection has for the film, explaining: “Se trata de la secuencia que precede inmediatamente la evocación de la Guerra de la Independencia, siendo ésta el último segmento retrospectivo antes de la secuencia dedicada a la muerte del pintor” (158). When Storaro turns the camera from Goya's face, it cuts to the battlefield scene where we see the events unfold through the artist's eyes:

Se jugará con el material gráfico comentado por Goya y con cualquier otra pintura o grabado del pintor que esté relacionado con guerra y violencia: *Hay un material extraordinario sobre el tema en cuadros, grabados y dibujos... así como en múltiples dibujos y en pinturas, el tema de la violencia, de la brutalidad y de la guerra están presentes: Fusilamientos de hombres y mujeres, incendios de hospitales, imaginarias brutalidades y masacres, torturas y condenas de la Inquisición...<sup>12</sup>* (Saura 39)

Although Saura uses his imagination to develop some of the dramatic scenes further, Goya's work provides him with a scope through which to recreate the massacre. The main inspiration for the scene is, of course, Goya's *Desastres*<sup>13</sup>, a series of 82 prints created between 1810-1820. Gómez explains “[Saura] toma *Los desastres de la guerra* para construir el penúltimo relato de su película, pero de los 82 grabados

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<sup>12</sup> Italics original

<sup>13</sup> Paul Bouvier explains that *The Disasters of Wars* engravings were originally entitled by Goya, "Fatal consequences of the bloody war in Spain with Bonaparte" (112). Thus suggesting that the primary goal of the collection was to single out the most significant problem of war and violence, that is the death that it leaves behind.

solo veremos y con enormes diferencias 15, y únicamente uno, el 39, ¡Grande hazaña! ¡Con muertos! se llevará a la pantalla” (101). This differs from Laura Sager’s analysis as she argues “*Aun podrán servir, También esos, Populacho, Lo merecía, ¡Grande hazaña! ¡Con muertos!*, and *Al cementerio* are transformed back into life, becoming real-life events that are recognizable as inspirations [in *Goya*]” (111). Thus, as Gómez has argued, Saura effectively takes historic drawings<sup>14</sup> and adapts them lighting, music, and acting for the silver screen.

When the film cuts from the contemplative Goya, it shifts immediately to a procession of people physically worn and wounded people carrying a body for burial while soldiers watch them pass. A mass grave dominates the screen, with its mangled bodies piled on top of each other. The scene is not excessively graphic or gruesome, there is, for example, no visible blood, but the mood is undeniably gloomy. The scene is highlighted by the movement of its characters portraying the invading French army and the nearly defenseless Spanish people. The film set physically resembles a large theater stage in which the characters<sup>15</sup>—portraying the invading French army and the nearly defenseless Spanish people—choreograph violence with a fluidity that evokes an actual battlefield. The actors speak no lines, and the few words uttered are either French commands to kill or Spanish pleas or

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<sup>14</sup> Goya’s prints, which are viewed today as visual protests against the violence of the 1808 Dos de Mayo Uprising, the Peninsular War of 1808-1814, and the setbacks to liberalism following the return of the Bourbon monarchy in 1814.

<sup>15</sup> The characters are played by La Fura deis Baus, a professional Catalan theatrical group known for blurring the boundaries between audience and actor (Otero Vázquez 434).

protests. The audience does not see close-ups of these characters, and because of this, we do not know their emotions as we do with the film's other characters. Their constant movement directs our focus to the unfolding brutality in a way that portrays right (the massacred people) against wrong (the soldiers). The true protagonist of this memory is violence, just as it was in *Desastres*, as Goya described its consequential terror, destruction, and suffering (Otero Vázquez 435).

After the audience sees the mass grave, the pace at which the camera moves around the set drastically increases. First, the soldiers line up, forming a firing squad, adjacent to a platform where several men stand waiting to be executed. A woman runs forward to stop the killing, but as she reaches them, the soldiers open fire. The men, who had previously moved on the platform as they shouted in protest, now fall slowly, in a way that does not detract from the camera's movement, which now follows the soldiers' methodical march. The next victims of the violent spectacle are blindfolded men and women tied to wooden poles—they too are executed. Soldiers then fire on defenseless people tied to a tree with their hands above their heads. In each stage of this sequence, the soldiers execute defenseless people without explanation for why they are put to death.

While the scene undeniably concentrates on the soldiers as the aggressors, Saura does portray how the people react when able to fight back. The scene cuts from the victims tied to the tree to the body of a soldier being dragged along the ground. The people strike and jab at the body with poles, pitchforks, and large

sticks. Soldiers then shot these people; the men die, but the women charge forward and engage the soldiers in close combat with their rudimentary weapons.

Saura allows the film a very brief intermission from violence by fading away to the elder Goya's face. The abruptness of the violent imagery depicted in this scene is unexpected. However, because the film reimagines Goya on the big screen, it is inevitably destined to arrive at the artists' more graphic works that depict war. Returning to Goya's expression in the film, his gaze is now as it was at the beginning of the scene, solemn and contemplative end to his life (Bongestab 34). The melancholic theme of the on-screen battle is most powerfully conveyed and felt because of the lighting, music, and violence, the results of which end in the devastation of human life, inspired by Goya's *Muertos recogidos*, part of his *Desastres*. This scene has a troubling impact on the artist and the way that he lived out the remainder of his life in exile, wishing for a different reality and future for his homeland, one not ravaged by violence. The battlefield scene depicts war as a disaster, focusing, instead, on the results of violence as bodies hang motionless from gallows, as others are covered with snow, a woman is seen clutching the hand of one of the deceased bodies being carted away.

The scene leaves the audience questioning, just as Goya does in the film, the consequences of violence. Saura saves this scene for the end so that audiences might contemplate these problems as Lorenzo Hortelano explains:

In social cinema, directors do not choose spectacular violence but, rather, less explicit violence whose main role is social critique in line with the socio-

political positions of the filmmakers. Such positioning helps us better to understand social issues. (30)

The film does effectively do this by centering on the problems that violence leaves behind—famine, suffering, and death. Stephen Hunter, a former *Washington Post* film critic, offered in his review of the film that “the crescendo of all [Saura’s] effort is ‘The Disaster of War,’ that series of searing etchings Goya created between 1810 and 1814, which stripped military violence of its romantic beauty” (Hunter, “Portrait”). The film ends with Goya contemplating the consequences of violence until the very end of his life. This scene recalls how Goya’s work in *Desastres* changed the way that violence is depicted and consumed in the arts in Spain.

Figure 3



Figure 4

## Conclusion

Violence gradually becomes more prominent throughout Saura's *Goya*. Although it is difficult to identify in the film's earlier scenes, where it focuses on Goya's experience socializing with and painting for the Spanish aristocrats, the film makes death its focus from the beginning through the recreation of the *Slaughtered Ox* painting that transforms into Goya's face—a foreshadowing not only of his own death but also of the brutal events he saw. Because of this, the film's narrative must arrive at a point when it does depict the violence. Goya was so impacted by these scenes that he preserved them in paintings and lithographs, seemingly to free himself from the mental and emotional burden of carrying alone such memories.

The film is an exploration of what Goya's life *might* have been like and how he might have seen it. However, the viewer must remember that *Goya* is made from Saura's perspective, which he recreates “desde su realidad, la cotidiana y la que él ha vivido, aunando historia, literatura, música, danza, pintura, fotografía dentro del mismo marco fílmico, elaborando otro material, más cercano a la época que le ha tocado vivir” (Vega 87). As a product of Saura, the film bears his artistic touch and unique perspective, including his childhood experience during the Civil War, such as the games he played and songs he sang, but also darker memories of fighting, bombing, blood, hunger, and death.

For both Francisco de Goya and Carlos Saura violence has impacted their lives and their respective works. Both experienced different wars, The Peninsular War (1808-1814), and the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), yet they feel the same

artistic responsibility to recreate for others the consequences of violence they witnessed. Vega explains that as a filmmaker exploring historical memory:

La labor de Saura es la de mirar al pasado, retratarlo, pero evocándolo hacia el presente para reconstruir los sentimientos y los móviles del ser humano y reflexionar sobre ellos: muerte, amor, religión, violencia, poder. Diríase que es una mirada al pasado para conocer mejor el presente, su presente. Tal y como intentan sus personajes. (87)

Understanding historical violence is essential to see how it functions in the world we live in. Vega's argument is founded in a continuous longing to comprehend violence in Spain during the past century. Saura does this by adapting works by Goya to explore conflict in Spain from early nineteenth-century conflicts to the present. Highlighting the artistic similarities between Goya and Saura's portrayal of war, violence, and death, Otero Vázquez suggests "si podemos decir que para Goya la guerra era la fatal consecuencia de una sociedad conducida por gobiernos nefastos, para Saura también lo es" (434). Berthier also argues that "la reflexión sobre la muerte es una de las grandes constantes de la obra de Saura," (158) and I would add that death, as it is portrayed in art as senseless destruction of human life, forms a recurring and essential theme in Goya's work.

The violence plaguing the world continues to do so in the present and will remain in the future. However, this does not mean that violence cannot be reduced—of course, it should—but knowing how is what drives the debate in many spaces and forums. Nowhere is the question of how to reduce violence asked more than by the victims who feel, the witnesses who see, and even the perpetrators who use it. Cotta argues, "[it's] naïve to think that violence, brought to light in the face of

being, vanishes as does a nightmare. It is and remains a real possibility, inborn in the *finite* and *defective* human condition” (138). We see this in Saura’s film through as the semi-biographical Goya struggles to clear his memory of the horrors he has seen. Saura himself grapples with a similar difficulty to rid his mind of traumatic experiences and turns to filmmaking to understand it. Thus, we see that the memory of violence does not simply vanish, but rather endures.

Although Goya dedicated much of his work to recreate his memories of war and death, which, understood as a critique of conflict, violence still exists. Even in a progressive place like Spain, writers, artists, and filmmakers still grapple with the country’s turmoil over the last hundred years, just as Goya did in the early eighteenth century. For Goya and Saura incorporating violence as a theme in art and film is an attempt to understand the past. Looking at violence philosophically, Cotta explains the purpose of analyzing violence:

It is not in the power of one individual to escape the violence of an epoch, much less put an end to it. But to try to overcome it is, I believe, a fundamental personal commitment for anyone endowed with a sense of respect for man and, consequently, himself. Undoubtedly, reflection is not enough to eradicate violence from one’s own soul. One must subject it to analysis, disassemble its mechanisms, evaluate its justifications and promises. (xi-xii)

Violence often becomes, in many ways, the protagonist of stories in literature, art, and film. Artists do this for a variety of reasons, but primarily with the intent to influence how others conceptualize it—thus urging audiences to weigh the consequences of violence against the justification of its use.

I analyze the ways that violence is implemented in the works of Marías, Buero Vallejo, and Guillermo del Toro in detail in the following sections of this dissertation. I do so to understand what violence is, specifically its depiction as a physical act, but also as a way of using language to gain power over others. By looking at violence as Goya did, and as Saura recreates it, we can deconstruct it to understand its use better. Looking at violence can be a challenging task as it causes one to reflect on the darkest moments and aspects of humanity, but it is a necessary task. In an interview with Robin Lefere, Saura described his country and the need he felt to make *Goya en Burdeos*:

*Creo que España es un país bárbaro, y a veces violento y visceral. Eso no quita para que muchas de nuestros grandes artistas han sido capaces de conciliar la violencia con la mayor sensibilidad: Goya, Buñuel, Picasso... No lo digo yo. A la salida de la proyección de Los Golfos, en el Festival de Cannes 1960, unas señoras muy elegantes comentaban indignadas 'Quel pays de sauvages'. Y a mí me pareció correcta la definición.<sup>16</sup> (291)*

While Saura does not include himself with other Spanish artists who have embraced violence in art, he too belongs with those that use their energies to thoroughly explore the motivations and real-life consequences that surround its use. It is through artistic expressions, such as *Goya en Burdeos*, that cause us to contemplate and consider the immediate and historical impact of our actions.

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<sup>16</sup> Italics original.

## Chapter 2

### Understanding Historical and Fictional Representations of Violence in *Tu rostro mañana*

Much of *Rostro* focuses on how language can be used for and against people, as I discuss in section two. However, there abound scenes of subjective or physical violence within the novel. In them, Marías demonstrates Jaime's development as a spy, and moral downfall, by juxtaposing historical violence with altercations that the protagonist first witnesses in the bathroom scene with Tupra and De la Garza, and later instigates in his altercation with Custardoy. Jordi Gracia expounds on *Rostro's* historic elements, explaining:

Los espacios históricos que aborda recrean la brutalidad del espionaje actual (con Tupra como jefe turbio) y la crueldad practicada por los servicios de información de la Segunda Guerra Mundial recrean también la imprevisibilidad de las conductas en nuestra guerra y la exploración misma de las razones del miedo, el silencio o las venganzas aplazadas desde entonces. (63)

By surrounding the novel with historical events and people, Marías's characters transcend fiction by extending the reach of their stories into reality. There are four different instances of violence that I analyze here; three fictional and one historical. As I continue, it is crucial to remember Arendt's argument that the legacy of violence is usually a more violent world (80). As Jaime immerses himself in the world of espionage, a space where violence is easily justified, he will ultimately question his capabilities.

Much of Marías's work writing communicates his fascination with the past and consequences that is own capabilities past has for the present and future. Marías relies heavily on historical anecdotes to create a story—the spy trilogy *Rostro*—that becomes more credible as the line between fiction and reality gradually becomes indiscernible. In doing this, *Rostro*'s characters such as Jaime, Peter Wheeler, Mr. Tupra, Juan Deza, and Custardoy, among others, become more believable and emotionally engaging for the reader. Marías, to a great extent, explores events that did happen in the years preceding and during his life, thus bridging the gap between reality and biography. Conolly explains this connection:

The fictionality gap is the idea that, in so far as it makes sense to say that the same situation can be imagined as either real or imaginary, we feel less strongly about it when it is imagined than when it is real. In the case of a biography, we are dealing with real suffering, yet its extent can only be inferred, even from a highly documented life. In the case of fiction, we have a vivid and direct grasp of the suffering of the characters, yet we know they do not exist. It may be argued that all things being equal, we would feel more strongly about real than about fictional characters: that is, if we had the same degree of knowledge in both cases, we would feel more strongly about the real one. (306-307)

This seems to be a point that Marías is trying to make to avoid viewing the novel solely as fiction. He blends *Rostro* with historical and even personal examples of violence and torture, thus decreasing the fictionality gap as the reader attempts to empathize with Jaime's actions and moral dilemmas in the context of a country that has experienced terrible violence in the modern era. Marías's writing, and use of digressions, in particular, make these scenes of violence, such as the bathroom torture scene, palpable for the reader. Marías not only decreases the gap between

fiction and reality but also between imagined and actual violence. In doing so, the reader must learn of past actions and how they affect the present and future.

### **Tupra and the Sword**

The first shocking events of the story are set in motion when Tupra and Jaime take Manóia, an Italian visiting London, and his wife, Flavia, out to a club. The evening comes to a climax with the brutal beating of Jaime's acquaintance and fellow Spaniard, Rafael "Rafita" De La Garza. When Jaime realizes that the womanizing Rafita and the flirty Flavia are missing, he tells Tupra/Reresby<sup>17</sup>. Tupra has been nothing more than a pleasant supervisor of his team of analysts who secretly interview people out of sight of the public. But here his actions become much swifter and his instructions more precise as he instructs Jaime in English, not wanting to be misunderstood, "*bring her back. Don't linger or delay*" (BS 133). When they finally locate the two on the dancefloor, Tupra accompanies Flavia back to Manóia while Jaime takes Rafita to the handicap bathroom where they are to wait. When Tupra arrives, he sprinkles out a line of cocaine on the toilet lid and offers it to Rafita, a drug addict, "*help yourself*" (BS 264). The offer seems peculiar to Jaime, who observes the position that Tupra puts Rafita in, "*parece un condenado antiguo a muerte, pensé, que ofrece su nuca vencida, su cuello desnudo al hacha o a la guillotina, la tapa del retrete como tocón o tajo*" (270). Rafita's weakness for drugs

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<sup>17</sup> Tupra uses the alias Reresby when he is with Manóia. It is essential that he only be referred to by this name as it is the only name by which the Mafioso knows him.

has put him in a precarious situation, one preparatory for the violence that Jaime imagines is about to unfold.

While Rafita snorts the drugs, Jaime sees Tupra remove a Katzbalger<sup>18</sup> sword from his trench coat. Jaime recalls the fear in Rafita's eyes as he saw the sword, "le vi la expresión de muerto, de quien se da por muerto y se sabe muerto" (278). Tupra then lowers the sword as if he were going to kill Rafita stops mere inches from his neck (*BS* 279). Tupra repeats this several times, traumatizing the helpless Spaniard and causing Jaime to experience a panic attack, pleading with his boss to stop. When Tupra finally finishes, he leaves his victim "medio muerto del susto" (*BS* 290). Threatening Rafita—or anyone for that matter—with such a brutally medieval act appalls Jaime—no doubt surprising the reader as well—who questions the method. Tupra responds, "es el miedo, Jack. El miedo," (*BS* 390) before elaborating in greater detail:

Si yo le saco a un individuo una pistola o una navaja, es seguro que se asustará, pero será un susto convencional, o trillado, como te he dicho, quizá esa es la palabra. Porque eso es lo habitual hoy en día y desde hace ya un par de siglos, de hecho va para antiguo. (*BS* 394)

For Tupra, "torture is 'normal' in the sense that it is commonly used as a tool of statecraft that is not yet widely appreciated" (Conrad and Moore 474). Tupra considers it necessary to torture Rafita to protect Manóia as a contact. This contrasts sharply with Jaime, who is initially shocked by torture in any

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<sup>18</sup> A Katzbalger is a short Renaissance arming sword. Approximately 2-2 ½ feet in length.

circumstance. From this part of the story, Marías seemingly prods the reader to pick a side between what violence can be considered as "normal" and what is unacceptable.

The torture does not cease with Tupra threatening Rafita with the sword. Instead, he continues to beat him before forcing his head into the toilet and under the water. He does this in such a forceful way that Jaime explains, "el impulso fue tan fuerte que hasta los pies [de Rafita] fueron levantados del suelo" (*BS* 291). Just like with the sword, Tupra repeats this action multiple times, nearly drowning Rafita (*BS* 292). This is akin to waterboarding, an act in which victims are given brief moments to struggle to catch their breath before being forced again underwater. What results is a simulation of drowning that provokes intense panic in the tortured subject, much like Tupra intentionally does to Rafita.

Jaime recalls a comment his father once made about the Spanish Civil War as he watches Tupra torture Rafita. His father told Jaime that he was lucky never to experience real violence, adding "por fortuna, y ojalá os dure eso siempre, no habéis estado en situaciones en las que no había más remedio que contar con ella" (*BS* 296). But what constitutes this "real violence?" Marías digresses into Juan Deza<sup>19</sup>'s experience with violence by situating it in historical events. As part of Marías's literary style, there is, of course, a unique and specific purpose for such lengthy

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<sup>19</sup> The character Juan Deza is inspired by Javier Marías's father, Julián Marías, a Spanish philosopher who, as a consequence of his criticism of Franco, was briefly imprisoned after the war and later banned from teaching.

digressions. José María Pozuelo Yvancos comments “[hace] la dimension digresiva del discurso rítmico, para ofrecer una fluencia, un *dictum* rítmico de la emoción vivida, la misma emoción y perplejidad con que su padre pudo sufrir y ser espectador de violencias extremas” (289). Anne Walsh also adds, “It would be wrong to say that such a narrative dilutes the violence of the scene described. Rather, by prolonging the tension, it teases the reader in a Hitchcockian manner, creating a masterly sense of dramatic suspense” (67).

The digressions add an element to the story that connects Jaime’s experience in the present to the past that has been passed down to him. On one occasion he remembers that his father, now in his later years, described to him the daily horrors that he witnessed during the outbreak of the Civil War

Uno veía detenciones por doquier, a empellones y a culatazos a veces, o cacerías en las casas, sacaban y se llevaban a las familias enteras y a quienes estuvieran allí de visita, podía uno cruzarse con una persecución o un tiroteo en la esquina menos pensada, y oía de noche las descargas de los fusilamientos en las afueras...Lo mejor era seguir, no mirar, alejarse rápido, no podía uno hacer nada, después de verlo, y si lo veía solo de reojo podía darse con un canto en los dientes. (*BS* 297)

This anecdote proves vital to the story as it shows that Jaime’s perception of violence is formed by years of his family and nation grappling with a violent past. But even the past can be problematic through its subjection to a variety of perspectives that are deeply influenced by how we think in the present, “the past is always debatable. So are its documents. And so is memory” (Resina 299). This calls into question what one believes about the past, whom one believes, and the limit to which one can trust their version of it. Juan Deza cautioned Jaime to never be in a

situation where he too must use violence. Now, by recalling this conversation, Jaime's "innocence," so to speak, abruptly ends as he is consciously aware that he is no longer guiltless as he stands by watching Tupra torture Rafita.

After the bathroom scene, Jaime accompanies Tupra to his house and asks him repeatedly why he used the sword. For Jaime, the answer is important as he feels that any other easily concealed weapon would have been just as threatening. However, Tupra explains that the Katzbalger proves a valuable tool for inflicting fear:

Una vez te dije que es la mayor fuerza que existe si uno logra acomodarse a él, instalarse, convivir con él con buen temple. Entonces puede sacarle uno provecho y utilizarlo en su beneficio, y llevar a cabo proezas que ni el sueño más fatuo, combatir con gran coraje, o resistirse, y hasta vencer a uno más fuerte. (390)

The sword recalls Arendt's observation that violence is dependent on implements (4). Had Tupra pulled out a gun, it would have struck some level of fear in Rafita. But because a pistol or even a small knife is a common weapon used by assailants, both in real life and in fictional portrayals, it does not create the same level of fear in the victim, and shock for the reader, that a sword does.

While the bathroom scene occurs for much of *Baile y Sueño* (257-368), it chronologically lasts only ten minutes or so (BS 351). Marías does this by using Jaime's panic attack to revisit Juan Deza's stories and fatherly counsel. When Tupra's sudden outburst against Rafita ends, he is not entirely done intimidating his victim. Jaime interprets for Tupra, who warns Rafita not to contact the police. Tupra has Jaime tell Rafita that he has two to four broken ribs, but that it could have been

his head, “y como no la ha perdido, dile que está aún a tiempo, otro día, cualquiera de estos, sabemos dónde encontrarlo. Que no olvide eso, dile que la espada siempre estará ahí siempre” (*BS* 347). The effectiveness of the threat succeeds only to the extent that Rafita believes Tupra will follow through with it if he deviates in any way from the instructions. Indeed, it is just as Jean-Jacques Lecercle explains “[that] the violence of insinuation and threat, as the opponents try to gain the most favourable position, always threatens to give way to physical violence” (254). The ending of the bathroom torture scene is well placed by Marías to show the position that Tupra now has over his victim (Rafita) and to an extent, the witness (Jaime). Tupra exercises authority over Jaime because, as his boss, he demands a degree of obedience or at least compliance. As a spectator or passive participant in violence who does nothing to prevent it, Jaime demonstrates no noticeable intentions of stopping Tupra's attack. Even though Jaime does not intervene, he is, at some level, an accomplice who feels obligated to stand by and do nothing because of his relationship with Tupra. This scene demonstrates how spectators enable violence that individuals or groups in positions of power exploit in their quest to control others.

### **The Torture and Death of Emilio Marés**

While Jaime witnesses Tupra torture Rafita De la Garza, he remembers several conversations with his father. His parents struggled with the decision of when and how to tell their children about what had happened in Madrid during the Civil War, the place where they were raised, only fifteen to twenty years before they

were born, “a lo largo de mi vida yo he procurado medir lo que podía contarse, antes de contar algo. A quién, cómo y cuándo” (BS 307). But that is not to say that Jaime’s parents (or any other individual who lived through the Civil War) are incapable of retelling their experience. For much of the novel, it has been the younger generation, represented by Jaime, who eagerly wants to know the stories of the older generations. Jaime is preoccupied with the past, similar to Spain, which Ryan has noted “while the generation that survived the war has been able to live with their memories of conflict, death and injustice, the second generation may not be as willing to turn the other cheek” (255). By continually asking for stories from the past, Jaime keeps his father’s experiences and stories alive. One of Juan Deza’s stories was that of Emilio Marés, an old friend from a small town in Andalusia where his father served as the socialist mayor. In the fall of 1936, three men, including Emilio, were forced to dig their graves before being executed by firing squad. Emilio refused: “a mí me podréis matar y me vais a matar. Pero a mí no me toreáis” (318).

The actual execution of Emilio mimics bullfighting. His captors take his words literally and parade him through a brutal and painful death. Juan Deza described Emilio’s death as he heard it told to him by one of the executioners:

Allí mismo lo banderilleamos, lo picamos un poquito desde el techo de la camioneta haciéndole pasadas lentas, y luego fue su paisano el que se encargó del estoque. Un tipo atravesado, muy cabrón, y se vio que tenía algo de práctica, le entró muy bien a matar, la primera hasta el fondo, cruzada en el corazón. Yo le puse sólo un par de banderillas cortas, en lo alto de la espalda. (319)

This represents one of the more explicit examples of violence, even more so than Tupra torturing De la Garza, in the novel. Marías incorporates part of Spanish culture, the controversial *corrida de toros*, to portray the execution vividly. The dehumanization of Emilio is difficult for Juan Deza to share, as he explains to Jaime, “quien ha vivido la violencia a diario durante una época de su vida no jugará nunca con ella, ni se la tomará a la ligera” (333). For Juan Deza, the experiences are both difficult to remember and even harder to share. But Marías does not appeal to a desire to forget, juxtaposing it instead with Jaime's longing to understand the weight of his actions in the present through others' past experience and pain.

*Rostro* is Marías's attempt at conceptualizing violence by engaging tragic historical events that he blends with Jaime's fictional story. Indeed, it appears that Marías cautions any rush to judgment as we analyze the past by reminding us, through Jaime, how quickly situations, where violence may seem to be the only remedy, might arise. I am not suggesting that Marías advocates turning a blind eye to the past, as it would significantly devalue the experiences of those who have lived through and suffered the consequences of conflict, such as Marías's father. Instead, Marías appeals throughout *Rostro* to a historical reconceptualization of the endless effects of violence.

### **The Execution of Torrijos and His Companions at Málaga Beach**

In the scenes after the torture of Rafita De la Garza, Tupra shows Jaime a collection of top-secret videos. Jaime struggles to understand the purpose of the secret recordings of bribery, sex, and violence, as Felix de Azúa explains: “en esas

cintas se esconde un poder terrorífico...la vil simpleza que exhibe constantemente la televisión en sus programas. Y sin embargo, es real para aquellas personas que la sufren” (52). Because Jaime has never witnessed such atrocities he relates a particular video, depicting an execution on a beach in Italy's Golfo de Taranto, to Antonio Gisbert Pérez's nineteenth-century painting<sup>20</sup> of the execution of José María de Torrijos y Uriarte's<sup>21</sup> without trial<sup>22</sup>. Jaime remembers the painting and quotes Lorca's ballad<sup>23</sup> “lo atrajeron con engaños que él creyó, por su desdicha” (VSA 182).



Figure 5 Fusilamiento de Torrijos y sus compañeros en las playas de Málaga

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<sup>20</sup> *Fusilamiento de Torrijos* is one of the more unique works in the Museo Nacional del Prado as “it is the only history painting commissioned by the State for the Prado.”

<sup>21</sup> Torrijos, also known as General Torrijos, was a Liberal Spanish soldier who fought during the Peninsular War (1807-1814). Seventeen years later, after his exile in England and before his execution, he and sixty other men landed off the coast near Málaga, where they planned a rebellion against the absolutist government of Ferdinand VII.

<sup>22</sup> José de Espronceda also wrote of the death of Torrijos in his “Asuntos históricos” in a sonnet titled “A la muerte de Torrijos y sus compañeros” (97).

<sup>23</sup> Federico García Lorca's ballad of the death of Torrijos appears in his play *Mariana Pineda*, written between 1923-1925 and first performed in 1927.

Marías includes this painting within the novel, as well as a variety of other texts, and creates narrative layers that give more depth to Jaime’s experience. Isabel Cuñado explains that in this example, “la historia llega mediatizada por la pintura de Gisbert, que el lector puede ver y que también es descrita por el narrador a la luz de los versos del *Mariano Pineda* de Lorca” (238). These instances of intertextuality—art, poetry, history—help to understand how Jaime, and Marías, view betrayal and execution from their experience in modern Spain. Herzberger comments that Marías’s use of historical and even pop culture figures “create a dense intertextual foundation for the novel that demands cultural knowledge and active participation by the reader in both seeing and understanding how the texts interact” (*A Companion to Javier Marías* 181). Marías’s intertextual technique substantiates the warnings against the violence that *Rostro* appears to make.

Tupra explains the video to Jaime, in a very matter-of-the-fact way, “esto es un ajuste de cuentas en alguna playa escondida del Golfo de Taranto” (*VSA* 185). But for Jaime, it recalls Spain’s violent national history, envisioning not only Torrijos but also others killed by Francoist supporters on the same beach without trial over a century later (*VSA* 184). Although Jaime does not know any of the individuals killed in the videos, it causes him to revisit his country’s violent past, one that his father had tried to shelter him from.

### **Jaime’s Confrontation with Custardoy**

For much of the third book, Jaime attempts to reenter life in Madrid, spending time with his children and father. When Jaime’s ex-wife, Luisa—who keeps

their interactions to a minimum—returns from a date with a black eye, he feels the immediate need for revenge. Arendt explains this impulse to violence:

In private as well as public life there are situations in which the very swiftness of a violent act may be the only appropriate remedy...The point is that under certain circumstances violence—acting without argument or speech and without counting the consequences—is the only way to set the scales of justice right again. (63-64)

But does Jaime's situation demand violence to achieve justice? Before Jaime may not have known *how* to react, but as Edmundo Paz-Soldán explains "a Marías siempre le interesó el qué hacer con lo que sabemos, lo que hemos escuchado, lo que hemos visto" (56). Because Jaime's work has exposed him to violence, he now understands the ease with which one uses it, justifiable or not. With a different perspective on how to handle this type of situation, Jaime investigates and learns from Luisa's sister that the abusive boyfriend is a chauvinist art forger named Esteban Custardoy. The hardened Jaime suggests, "podríamos intentar convencerlo a él" (VSA 292), thus foreshadowing that he is now willing to "make Custardoy an offer he can't refuse."

Jaime knows that he must do something to Custardoy for him to leave Luisa alone and never come back. However, this dilemma bothers Jaime, "a veces uno sabe lo que quiere hacer o lo que tiene que hacer o incluso lo que piensa hacer o lo que va a hacer casi seguro, pero necesita que además se lo digan o se lo confirmen o se lo discutan o se lo aprueban" (VSA 431). As Jaime feels the pressure to confront his ex-wife's abuser mounting, he calls Mr. Tupra, who suggests: "si quieres quitar el problema de en medio, quítalo" (VSA 435). But when Jaime struggles to understand Tupra clarifies in English "*look, Jack, just deal with him. Just make sure he's out of the*

*picture*" (VSA 436). Jaime explains his inability to comprehend: "el lenguaje es difícil cuándo uno no sabe a qué atenerse y necesita saberlo con precisión, porque casi siempre es metafórico o figurado. No debe de haber mucha gente en el mundo que diga abiertamente 'Kill him,' o que en español diga 'Mátalo'" (VSA 437). Had Jaime heard the same words in *The Godfather* or *The Sopranos*, he would have clearly understood them to mean to kill Custardoy (VSA 437). But when Jaime asks Tupra "how," he gets a response he had not anticipated, "si verdad no sabes cómo, Jack, entonces es que no puedes hacerlo...Pero yo creo que sí sabes cómo. Lo sabemos todos siempre, aunque no estemos acostumbrados. Otra cosa es que no nos veamos en ello. Es cuestión de verse" (VSA 438). The "question of imagination" here is key as Jaime would never have imagined using violence against another before working with Tupra. However, Jaime's new perspective on violence "allows him to achieve his aims. Instead of being an aimless, disenchanting, powerless postmodern man, Jaime plots and plans and sees his ambitions realized" (Walsh 66). After being exposed to the "poison" from Tupra's recordings, Jaime's imagination darkens, becoming more violently inclined.

Now that Jaime understands that he needs a weapon, he calls an old friend, Miguel "Miquelín" Yanes Troyano, and asks if he can borrow the former bullfighter's sword, recalling the reader to the execution of Juan Deza's friend, Emilio Marés. Jaime resorts to what he has seen, plotting to use a sword—just as Tupra did with Rafita—to threaten Custardoy. However, Miquelín invokes the imagery of bullfighting while describing the sword's effectiveness: "El estoque sólo hiere por la punta, clavándolo,

y para eso hay que coger impulso si quieres que de verdad pinche hondo; filo no tiene casi, para dar un tajo no te sirve<sup>24</sup> (VSA 443). Miquelín instead suggests “no, hombre, no, para dar un susto una pistola” (VSA 443). This runs contrary to Tupra’s lesson that guns are efficient but do not strike enough fear. Jaime accepts Miquelín’s pistol, a Spanish *Llama*, and plans to use it on Custardoy. At this point, it is essential to note that it is not explicitly clear that Jaime plans to kill Custardoy, but he knows from others that if he brandishes a pistol, he must be prepared to pull the trigger. Jaime answers for himself the question, “why can’t one go around killing or beating others up?”:

Ahora veía muy claro que yo no quería tener la suerte ni la desgracia de que Luisa muriera o de que la mataran (suerte en el imaginario y en la realidad desgracia), que no podía permitírmelo porque lo de la realidad no tiene vuelta y jamás puede ser deshecho. (VSA 452-453)

Now Jaime’s attitude towards the use of violence aligns more closely with Tupra’s as he too justifies the elimination of one individual to save others. Jaime sees this clearly as it is Luisa, his children, and to an extent himself, who will benefit from Custardoy’s disappearance.

When Jaime finally does confront Custardoy, he questions actions but reminds himself that he is there to defend and protect his family (VSA 465-466). Jaime is methodical, as Ilse Logie comments, “no sólo se muestra, pues, dispuesto a

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<sup>24</sup> The types of swords are rather interesting because the bullfighter sword has a sharper point whereas the Katzbalger that Tupra used in the bathroom with De la Garza has a rounded tip, ill-suited for thrusting, but a broad blade designed for cutting.

administrar la misma violencia calculada que tanto le había repugnado en Tupra, sino que hasta le gusta la sensación de poder que confiere la capacidad de intimidar a otro ser humano” (175). However, Jaime finally realizes that he does not want to kill: “no me atrevo, *I do not dare*” (VSA 493). Randall Collins explains the problem with such situations:

Violent situations are shaped by an emotional field of tension and fear. Any successful violence must overcome this tension and fear. One way this is done is by turning the emotional tension into emotional energy, usually by one side of the confrontation at the expense of the other. Successful violence batters on confrontational tension/fear as one side appropriates the emotional rhythm as dominator and the other gets caught in it as victim. (19)

Now that Jaime has decided not to kill, he fears what Custardoy might do in retaliation. This scene demonstrates that Jaime still has a conscience, one formed from hearing his father’s stories about the Civil War and Franco’s dictatorship. But Marías does not allow his protagonist to escape the climax that *Rostro* has finally reached. Although Jaime knows he can choose to leave Custardoy’s apartment, he cannot forget Tupra’s comment, that is that if he does nothing, others will suffer.

The tension increases until Jaime seizes a fire poker and viciously breaks Custardoy’s hand. As Jaime wields the fire poker, mimicking how Tupra used his sword, he realizes the power of such a weapon: “Me miró con pánico...el de quien no sabe si le van a caer más tajos ni cuántos porque así son las espadas...matan de cerca y viéndosele la cara al muerto, sin que el asesino o el justiciero o el justo se desprendan ni se separen de ellas” (VSA 499). Jaime goes beyond what Tupra as he uses the weapon to make physical contact, demonstrating his strength and force,

making it more terrifying than if he were to have used the pistol to kill Custardoy quickly. Walsh explains that this violence not only affects Jaime and Custardoy but impacts the reader as well:

As Custardoy's hand is crushed so are our beliefs in consistency. As we hear, or rather read of, bones breaking, we reach a crucial point in the novel, a point where, along with bone, expectations are shattered. It is unexpected and shocking. Nothing has prepared us for a violent Jaime Deza, for his unwillingness to use words to persuade, or for his belief that words are not enough. (73)

Contrary to Walsh's analysis of this scene, there is much evidence to support that Jaime's confrontation with Custardoy and the use of violence to intimidate him was inevitable. Although the reader may previously have viewed Jaime as a passive character, numerous examples show the consequences of his actions throughout the novel. Much of Jaime's work predicting people's behavior seems innocent enough. Initially, the reader may even overlook what Jaime's work does to others. However, this scene with Custardoy shatters any hope that Jaime was above using violence.

The reader may perhaps not yet see Jaime as an inherently violent individual in *Fiebre y lanza*. However, as the story continues, and Jaime begins to work with Tupra, he becomes increasingly exposed to and even desensitized by witnessing violent acts. The first part of the third book, *Veneno*, literally describes how Jaime's mind has been infected with violent imagery as he struggles to forget and even begins to imagine the simplicity with which he could take similar action if necessary. When Jaime strikes Custardoy it parallels the earlier scene in the bathroom, with the difference being that Jaime performs Tupra's role as the attacker, Custardoy takes

De la Garza's role as the victim, and the reader becomes the lone witness. Just as Jaime did not physically intervene earlier to stop Tupra's assault, this scene also places the reader in a bit of a moral dilemma. Much like one might read of historical violence, Marías implores and guides the reader to objectively contemplate Jaime's situation through an invitation to ethical reflection.

The confrontation with Custardoy serves as *Rostro's* climax as Jaime has only heard of or witnessed violence up to this point in the novel. I see Jaime's shadowing of Custardoy as a pivotal moment that Marías continually works towards throughout the story. After Luisa enters her apartment with a black eye and Jaime sees her, it creates an effect in which the reader may even begin to want Jaime to beat up or take care of Custardoy. Because of this, the reader sympathizes with Jaime's actions as "the torture victim's bodily pain is represented as an essential and beneficial quality, intrinsic to the restoration of social and political order, the saving of 'innocent' lives" (Flynn and Salek 11). Jaime justifies using violence, knowing that any pain he inflicts on Custardoy may prevent him from abusing Luisa again. Yet Jaime's process of confronting Custardoy is slow and drawn out. First, he shadows Custardoy and becomes familiar with his habits and routine. Then he seeks advice from those who have experience using violence, Tupra, and Miquelín, asking how to "take care of" Custardoy, and even requesting a weapon. The actual encounter out, allowing Marías to demonstrate Jaime's fear of the consequences he will face if he does or does not kill Custardoy.

Much like Marías uses digressions that mimic reflections, Jaime's struggle to quickly eliminate Custardoy, as Tupra would another, or as Miquelín would kill a bull, is the author's way of showing the difficulty to use violence for individuals not trained to use it. *Rostro* would likely have ended with Jamie dispatching Custardoy if it were an action novel or thriller. Even though *Rostro* may indeed qualify as a spy novel, it is more contemplative than stylized. Although Jaime had previously thought that threatening Custardoy would bring the closure that he desired, he is more concerned about what his violent actions may lead to. Upon returning to England, he discovers that even his previous analyses for Tupra have produced terrible consequences, one of which he feels personally responsible for as it led to the death of one Dick Dearlove. It is also in his return to England that he finally learns of the fate of Valerie Wheeler. Now he understands the impact not only of physical violence but also of language, leading to his retirement from working for Tupra and return to Madrid. Marías's cautions that violence may not always provide answers; in truth, it often leads to more questions. Perhaps more than anything, Marías does not advocate for violence in *Rostro* but uses the novel to caution its often-contradictory consequences.

## **Conclusion**

Reading violence is most effective when it connects the reader to historical violence, whether it be from oral history, books, or art. Marías's digressions immerse the reader in a world where violence is not only plausible but has already happened. Laura Tanner explains that to be effective

Representations of violence must subvert the disembodied tendencies of the reading process in order to offer the reader the fullest experience of reading violence. They must, in effect, remind the reader of his or her own violability. This does not suggest, however, that the reader becomes passive. Negotiating the representation of violence, the reader finds him—or herself more vigorously placed and more intensively manipulated than in most texts. (13)

In *Rostro*, Marías uses his writing to explore the different uses of violence, excelling, particularly in its depiction of physical violence. Jaime's attitude toward the use of force also changes as he gradually evolves from translator to spy. First, Jaime is an observer of violence and torture, in particular the bathroom scene with Mr Tupra/Reresby and Rafita De la Garza, which he tries to understand by comparing it to what he knows from the past, both in history and second-hand experience from older generations, such as his father, Juan Deza, and mentor, Peter Wheeler. However, because Jaime feels compelled to use violence himself towards the end of *Rostro*, Marías must also evolve from describing violence through a historical lens to a fictional one.

Depicting violence is not a simple task in narrative. However, Marías expertly navigates the action, from Jaime ambushing Custardoy before attacking him, thus fulfilling Arendt's argument that violence leads only to more violence. Marías's writing must build suspense while continually providing descriptions that heighten the seriousness of Jaime's predicament. Any doubt of Jaime being incapable of following through is ended when he viciously smacks and breaks Custardoy's hand. Tanner explains that writers can effectively convey violence by tapping into "the body's susceptibility to pain...[which] recreate for the reader the sensation of an

ever-present, ever-vulnerable body" (36). Although Jaime only knows violence through history for much of the novel, he succumbs to using it as he feels that it is his only recourse. If Jaime were violent at the beginning of the trilogy, it would have been less believable. However, Marías surrounds and reinforces Jaime's story with other historical or fictional examples of violence, set in historical context, thus, making Jaime's beating of Custardoy more plausible.

Reading violence is not a particularly tricky task depending on how it is depicted. Violence is often portrayed as a way to merely entertain the reader. However, the representation of violence in narrative may also serve a reflective purpose. As philosophers and scholars question *what* violence is and *why* it occurs, authors such as Marías go beyond the *what* and *why* by provoking visceral fears of '*what if I do nothing?*'

### Chapter 3

#### The Pain of Torture: The Seen and Unseen Scars of Violence in *La doble historia del doctor Valmy*

The depiction of violence plays an important role in representing injustices in fiction. Buero Vallejo uses *La doble historia* to offer a glimpse into the brutality of violence by plunging the audience into a space where they are confronted with torture and must come to terms with its consequences. Frank Casa suggests that “[*La doble historia*] had been banned for more than ten years because it deals with the use of torture as a political instrument” (113). *La doble historia* offers the audience a different look at torture by showing what happens to those involved before and after the act is committed. The play’s second story follows Daniel and Mary Barnes and their visits with psychologist Dr. Valmy. Daniel works for a branch of state security, the S.P., a unit that interrogates and tortures political prisoners. As the two divulge their concerns to the doctor—the latter narrating their experiences—the audience comes to know the vicious details of Daniel’s work, of which Mary is ignorant. I focus on the role violence plays for Aníbal Marty (torture), Lucila Marty (rape), and Mary (mariticide).

Dr. Valmy presents *La doble historia* to the audience from the beginning as events that have already transpired. Iglesias Feijoo explains that Buero Vallejo engages the audience by using different temporal and spatial planes, which, with the narrative interventions, “contribuyen a mantener despiertos el interés y la reflexión crítica del espectador” (327). The technique forces the audience to critically

contemplate what they see. It is the doctor who presents the story of Daniel and Mary Barnes, engaging the audience by alternating between Daniel and Mary's storylines throughout the play. Beyond the narrative structure, Buero Vallejo offers his audience captivating subthemes to torture, such as marital strife, secrets, and a climactic death. While on the surface *La doble historia* makes a compelling argument for what violence does to others, the audience unknowingly becomes a part of the play in which the playwright experiments with how the audience will react to what they see and know. This is an essential part of any reading or viewing of *La doble historia*. However, I focus here on the visual aspect of the depiction of violence, in particular, torture.

### **The Scars of Torture**

One of the critical messages that Buero Vallejo conveys in *La doble historia* is that *all* suffer from torture, not just the recipients of the act, but also those who torture. Iglesias Feijoo explains that is because “todo aquel que tortura infringe la esencia de su propia humanidad, por lo que nunca puede ser un hombre normal” (330). This view is shared by scholars who analyze violence, both real and fictional, asserting that such acts leave physical and psychological scars that harm those who receive and inflict them. Iglesias Feijoo later adds: “el sistema atrapa a todos, los que padecen y los que hacen padecer” (330). Buero Vallejo's play shows that torture is not limited to those who directly use or receive it, but that it also impacts secondary victims, such as Mary, who must also endure its consequences.

One of the salient points that *La doble historia* makes about torture is who it affects. While the play does not refer to a specific country by name, other than the fictional Surelia, the violence it explores should resonate with all audiences.

Although Buero Vallejo undoubtedly draws from his personal experience living under the Franco regime, Barry Jordan argues that *La doble historia's* lessons are invaluable for all:

[It] reaches far beyond the geographical confines of a particular country and raises issues as relevant today as they were thirty years ago. Buero is suggesting that wherever torture is practised, in whatever country or regime, it not only destroys the victim but also degrades and destroys the torturer, who is to be pitied as much as the victim or even more so. (1-2)

There are several characters in *La doble historia* that demand empathy and even anger toward political systems that value fear inflicted through torture. While Aníbal Marty is the most obvious example of a victim of torture, he is not, however, the play's focus. It is one of Marty's torturers, Daniel, who becomes one of the primary characters through whom the audience experiences pain. Daniel's corruptible and malicious behavior at work contrast with his at home, "family man," persona (Jordan 1). Mary offers another lens through which the audience may come to understand torture as she is an indirect victim, although no less guilty than her husband. *La doble historia* also appeals to the audience's ability to understand the reach of torture by making them accountable for what they see.

#### *The Torture and Dismemberment of Aníbal Marty*

The first instance of violence discussed is the torture of Aníbal Marty, which sets in motion the events of the *La doble historia's* second story. This scene occurs

after which an embarrassed Daniel admits to Dr. Valmy his impotent and shares the details of Marty's torture (46-50). The portrayal of the torture scene, with the mutilation and dismemberment of Marty, would present difficulties for any playwright, director, or actors. Acts of violence are not performed on stage, but that does not mean that the scene is any less menacing as Buero Vallejo effectively utilizes dialogue to create corrupt and cruel antagonists. The play does not waste time with the graphic depiction of Marty's mutilation, focusing on the torturer instead of the victim. Eric Pennington explains that by doing so, "[Buero Vallejo] prevents the play from slipping into melodrama, and the spectator from losing focus of its central issue: the global issue of torture itself and society's reactions to it" (*"A View from the Feminine"* 131).

The scene begins as Daniel tells Dr. Valmy what happened twenty days before when he and his coworkers took extreme measures to extract information from Marty. The S.P. is a small group that consists of Daniel, Marsan, Pozner, and Luigi, who all revere and obey their boss, Paulus, without question. It begins when Daniel informs Paulus that he has successfully obtained a confession:

PAULUS (*mira su reloj*): ¿En dos horas?

DANIEL: No aguantó mucho.

PAULUS: Muy bien, hijo. Si Marsan quiebra a los suyos, podremos redondear el asunto. ¿Un cigarrillo?

DANIEL (*lo acepta*): ¿Y Marty?

PAULUS: Ahora lo suben. Por eso te quiero a mi lado. A ese hay que doblegarlo<sup>25</sup>, cueste lo que cueste.

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<sup>25</sup> "Doblegar," as well as "aguantar" and "quebrar," communicate the S.P.'s effectiveness—and determination—at breaking detained prisoners, be it their

DANIEL (*se encoge de hombros*): Después de lo que se le ha hecho... (46)

When Paulus calls Daniel "hijo," he reciprocates how Daniel and the others address him, "Papaíto" (45). If we return to Arendt's explanation of authority, this is significant as she says, "[whose] hallmark is unquestioning recognition by those who are asked to obey; neither coercion nor persuasion is needed...to remain in authority requires respect for the person or the office" (45). Paulus thinks highly enough of Daniel's results that he entrusts him to work on the most difficult prisoners. This detail, coupled with the father and son-like dynamic within the S.P., is crucial to the play as Daniel and Paulus's relationship becomes strained.

Because of the S.P.'s success with other prisoners, Marty represents the last and most crucial detainee they need to break. Although the men boast of their interrogation abilities, they are unsuccessful with Marty, for whom they resort to extremes. The first method of torture made known to the audience that Paulus's men use is electroshock. The United Nations' *Istanbul Protocol*<sup>26</sup>, explains the method and effects of electroshock torture by providing the following example:

The power source may be a hand-cranked or combustion generator, wall source, stun gun, cattle prod or another electric device. Electric current follows the shortest route between the two electrodes. The symptoms that occur when electric current is applied have this characteristic. For example, if electrodes are placed on a toe of the right foot and on the genital region, there will be pain, muscle contraction and cramps in the right thigh and calf muscles. Excruciating pain will be felt in the genital region. Since all muscles

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silence or their body. These terms indicate that Paulus and his men are not afraid to resort to an extreme measure, but appear comfortable doing so.

<sup>26</sup> The official name of the *Istanbul Protocol*, which it is commonly referred to, is the *Manual on the Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment* and was written in 2004.

along the route of the electric current are tetanically contracted, dislocation of the shoulder, lumbar and cervical radiculopathies may be observed when the current is moderately high...Torturers often use water or gels in order to increase the efficiency of the torture, expand the entrance point of the electric current on the body and prevent detectable electric burns. (40-41)

Even though the audience may be familiar with electroshock from other plays, films, or novels, it is necessary to consider the intense pain it would cause a victim to feel for an indefinite amount of time. When Marty enters the stage, he rubs his wrists after his handcuffs are removed, and Paulus comments: "¡Ah, las quemaduras! (*Le toma a MARTY las muñecas y las mira.*) Pero no son más que chispitas, que saltan entre el metal y la piel. El procedimiento aún no es perfecto. ¿Cuántas veces le aplicamos la corriente, Luigi?" (47). The "quemaduras," referring to electroshock torture, has been applied to Marty, not one, but six times, which his captors mockingly remark as "muy pocas" (47).

The second method of torture used against Marty is the removal of fingernails, also known as denailing. Although denailing is currently used as a method of torture, the practice dates back to Medieval Times. This method is generally conducted by extracting nails from the fingers or even toes, one by one while interrogating the tortured subject. The United Nations explicitly describes and denounces denailing as a form of torture (*Istanbul Protocol 37-38*). The reference to denailing in *La doble historia* is almost done in passing as Marty's torturers taunt him. After seeing Marty's wrists, Paulus asks: "a ver las uñas. (*Le aprieta levemente la punta de los dedos de la mano izquierda. MARTY ahoga un gemido.*) No te quejes, muchacho. Aún conservas las de la derecha, porque tienes que firmar" (47). Until

this point, these are the only methods of torture mentioned in the play. The brief mention of the burned wrists and bloodied wounds where fingernails once grew might prevent the audience from overlooking what Marty has already endured. The audience does not witness either of these acts and has little time to reflect on what has happened, and even less time to judge those who have tortured Marty.

Marty has been interrogated and tortured for days—even having to witness the interrogation, beating, and rape of his wife—before Daniel and the S.P. castrate him. The problem for Marty, however, is that he has shared all the information he knows, but *not* the information the S.P. wants, which is where and to whom Marty delivered a message. Marty has confessed several times that he received an envelope, which he left at a drop-off point, from an unknown individual. But Paulus believes he is lying and that he took it to a house instead. The problem with torture is that regardless of any information that Marty might confess, even if it is what happened, it is considered a lie if it is not what Paulus wants to hear. Savater's criticizes the objective of obtaining a confession: "se tortura en nombre de las ideas: para imponerlas, para averiguarlas, para confirmarlas, para reprimirlas, para extenderlas, para enseñarlas" (20). Torture is much more than merely extracting the truth. In essence, it is a conflict between individuals for the power of information. When power is questioned, doubted, or not confirmed, it causes those who torture to decide between ceasing or escalating their tactics. Because Marty can only share

the information he knows, it causes Paulus and his men to lose their patience and result to their most drastic method of torture to this point, castration.

After Marty has suffered through numerous rounds of electroshock and denailing, the audience watches as Paulus, Marsan, Luigi, Pozner, and Daniel continue to threaten him. Paulus's men mock Marty claiming that he will become more of a sister to his wife than a husband (49). This threat, enhanced by the "resulting physical trauma," insinuates that Marty will not only lose his manhood and societal respect (*Istanbul Protocol* 41). Daniel, however, believes their threats to be nothing more than just that, a threat: "yo creo que hablará. Esa amenaza le ha roto" (49). Paulus replies that not only is it *not* a threat, but that Daniel, one of his best interrogators, will castrate Marty (50). However, Daniel is reluctant and even shows concern for Marty's physical health—in so much as it may hinder the S.P. from getting the confession it desires: "¿No habrá peligro... de que muera?" (50). Paulus reassures Daniel of the method's effectiveness in getting prisoners to talk: "al hombre le quiebra el daño en sus centros vitales: eso no falla" (50). If Daniel is as skilled as Paulus says, he should be able to perform the castration. This moral pause, regardless of Paulus' claim of the method's effectiveness, is an indication of Daniel's limits as he knows that unlike his previous victims, who had the possibility of recovering from their wounds, the mutilation of Marty's genitals is irreversible. Although Daniel does not wish to share specific details with Dr. Valmy, he does describe the mark he left on Marty. Daniel explains to the doctor, "está casi curado, pero ya nunca será un hombre" (50). Because of Daniel's participation his inability

to perform sexually is tied to what he did to Marty, and thus Buero Vallejo ingeniously intertwines the physical suffering of the tortured subject with the psychological suffering of his torturer (Podol 261). Peter Podol adds that “the situation acquires additional irony and impact in a machista society like Spain’s, which placed such value on male sexual prowess and fertility” (262). The defilement of Marty’s body has the potential—and clearly the purpose—to ruin his life, as the physical and irreparable damage will prevent him from ever having children with his young wife, Lucila<sup>27</sup>.

#### *The Rape of Lucila Marty*

Dialogue in *La doble historia* focuses on how the violence that the audience does not see is visible to them. Buero Vallejo does not waste time attempting to depict these callous acts but instead has his characters reflect on them. The torture of Marty’s wife, Lucila, is not shown on stage but rather disclosed to the audience by her, the victim. Before Lucila physically enters the play for the first time, Daniel mentions her, although not by name, to Dr. Valmy, explaining that the S.P. threatened to Marty that they would bring her back if he refused to talk. After Dr. Valmy listens to Daniel’s story, he inquires about Lucila:

DOCTOR: ¿Puedo preguntarle qué hicieron con la mujer de ese detenido?

DANIEL: Eso es anterior. Y yo estaba en el sur, practicando detenciones.

DOCTOR: No ha contestado a mi pregunta. ¿La golpearon?

DANIEL: Tal vez.

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<sup>27</sup> Evans and Carver argue “violence is all about the violation of bodies and the destruction of lives...It points to a politics of the visceral that cannot be divorced from our ethical and political concerns” (5).

DOCTOR: ¿Abusaron de ella? (*Un silencio.*) No conteste si no quiere. Quién sabe si también se está usted castigando por lo que le hicieron a ella.

(DANIEL *lo mira.*)

DANIEL: Yo no hago esas cosas...

Jordan argues that because Daniel has “deprived the prisoner of his virility, Daniel has expressed his repugnance at his action by subconsciously suppressing his own. By castrating the prisoner, he has thus castrated himself” (1). But there may be more to Daniel’s condition as Dr. Valmy suggests that his impotence may be a form of subconscious guilt for working with the men that harmed Lucila. Unlike Marty’s torture, which appears in the story because Daniel shares it behind closed doors with Dr. Valmy, Lucila represents herself as a victim of the S.P.’s inhumane methods.

The reunion between Mary and Lucila proves vital to understand the role ignorance plays in sustaining power. Lucila visits her former teacher, Mary, because she feels that it is the best chance for her husband’s release. Mary speaks to Lucila as if she was still her student, calling her “Trencitas” (56) or even “hija,” presenting herself as a wise and experienced woman as she describes a previous boyfriend who died in the war,<sup>28</sup> meeting and marrying Daniel, and having her son Danielito. This is difficult for Lucila to hear and she pleads with Mary to persuade Daniel that they stop torturing her husband<sup>29</sup>. Mary, however, doubts the allegations:

MARY: ...¿Has dicho torturar?

LUCILA: Sí. (*Llora.*)

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<sup>28</sup> Although not clearly indicated, as much of the references in *La doble historia* are not, it is assumed that the war refers to the Spanish Civil War.

<sup>29</sup> At this point in the play Aníbal Marty has been tortured numerous times and in multiple ways (electroshock, denailing, and castration); having been imprisoned for forty-two days (58).

MARY: ¡No llores, te lo ruego!... ¿Quieres decir que lo han tenido algunas horas de pie, o bajo un foco de luz mientras lo interrogaban? (LUCILA *la mira, asombrada.*)

LUCILA: Por eso no le habrían llevado al hospital.

MARY: ¿Qué?

LUCILA: ¡Pues claro! (MARY *se levanta y pasea, nerviosa.*)

MARY (*se vuelve*): Creo que eres sincera, Lucila. Pero no creo que te des cuenta de lo que estás haciendo. (*Dulce.*) Porque, ¡vamos!, repara en que has venido a mi casa para decirme que mi marido tortura...

LUCILA: Yo no he dicho...

MARY: ¡Claro que lo has dicho! Te lo perdono porque no has dejado de ser una niña y porque estás pasando un mal momento... Acepta un consejo de tu antigua maestra, hija mía: no creas esos infundios... Tu marido se pondría enfermo y por eso lo hospitalizarían.

LUCILA (*en el colmo del asombro*): ¿Es que no sabe lo que allí pasa? (59-60)

Buero Vallejo uses Mary and Lucila's conversation to communicate societal attitudes—one concerned and the other ignorant or even in denial—toward torture. Mary's vehement refusal to accept Daniel's involvement in anything more than interrogation—from the spouse of one of *his* victims—makes her complicit in a system that uses secret political violence against any it deems a threat to power.

Mary's denial of these allegations of torture leaves Lucila with the burden of proof. Lucila begins by explaining to Mary some of the methods that the audience already knows, such as using electric currents and even describes an additional one, the forcible immersion of the head in water or waterboarding, not shared by Daniel with Dr. Valmy. The *Istanbul Protocol*<sup>30</sup> refers to the technique as a "wet *submarino*," a vicious method that can cause pneumonia (41), asphyxiation (29), neuropsychiatric memory impairment (28), and even brain injury (55). Although

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<sup>30</sup> The *Istanbul Protocol* explains that the term *submarino* "has become a part of human rights vocabulary" because of the method's wide use in Latin America.

only briefly mentioned by Lucila, near drowning shows the vast repertoire of methods used by Paulus and his men. One of the supposed reasons for using the technique is because “it usually leaves no mark, and recuperation is rapid” (*Istanbul Protocol* 41), which “gives plausible deniability...an incentive for state agents to use ‘clean’ techniques to obtain compliance, confessions, or intelligence from prisoners—even though others might judge this type of torture as illegal (Conrad and Moore 461). However, such “clean” techniques become ineffective when torturers do not receive the desired information, often leading to escalation of more violence. In *La doble historia*, Lucila’s allegations, which should not be taken lightly by anyone, fall on deaf ears, which forces her to share with Mary her experience as a survivor of the S.P.

The scene with Lucila and Mary quickly deteriorates once the allegations are out in the open, as both characters argue against each other, much like a court case. Mary defends the S.P. by denying all allegations. Although Mary admits to knowing little about her husband’s work, she denies Lucila’s claims as slander that threatens to disturb what she views as a peaceful society:

MARY (*corre a sentarse a su lado*): ¡No, no! ¡Reacciona! ¡Hay leyes, hay tribunales! ¡Si fuera cierto, se sabría, Lucila!

LUCILA: Hay muchas personas empeñadas en que no se sepa. Y muchas otras... que no quieren saberlo. (*Desvía la vista.*) Como usted.

MARY (*después de un momento*): Lucila, debe verte un médico.

LUCILA (*se levanta*): ¡Cállese! ¡No quería decírselo, pero usted me obliga a ello! A mí me detuvieron también, ¿se entera? (MARY *se levanta*. LUCILA *da unos pasos, muy alterada.*) ¡Y me golpearon horriblemente! (*Grita, llorando.*) ¡Y abusaron de mí delante de mi marido! (*Llora, convulsa.*)

The conversation comes to a climax and presents the audience with an essential detail that will affect the rest of the play. Lucila relies on her experience and reveals she was beaten and raped in front of her husband by Daniel's coworkers. But divulging this information is extremely difficult for Lucila, as is evident by her "use of the euphemistic verb 'abusar' rather than the more exact 'violar' [which] captures the horror of the event which she cannot bear to communicate in a more direct manner" (Podol 262). The sexual violence employed by the S.P. has left its mark on Lucila to "enhance the humiliation and its degrading aspects" (*Istanbul Protocol* 41). While Lucila does not add more detail, it is implied that this would have been a tremendously degrading and traumatic experience for her.

In addition to the sexual nature of the torture of Lucila's husband, there are significant health concerns as well. Rape is always associated with the risk of developing sexually transmitted diseases, the trauma of potential pregnancy, losing one's virginity, and also a fear of not being able to bear children (*Istanbul Protocol* 41). Although Lucila is initially unable to convince Mary, she is an essential character in *La doble historia* as the play primarily focuses on the consequences of torture, and it is her alone that directly provides the victim's testimony.

*Mary becomes violent: The nightmare and killing Daniel*

Besides Mary's increasing guilt, she begins to suffer from knowing what Daniel has done to others. Pennington argues: "In the end, her burden is heavier. She must learn the previously hidden truth about the nature of Daniel's profession and decide how to act upon this knowledge" ("*A View from the Feminine*" 131-132).

While Daniel copes with his actions by self-medicating with alcohol, Mary struggles physically and mentally, finding it difficult to sleep, explaining to Dr. Valmy her fear and even nightmares that Daniel might do to Danielito what he has done to detainees. Mary is more disturbed by Daniel's actions than he is, as she explains to Dr. Valmy her difficulty for showing affection toward her son: "en su carita veo ya la cara de su padre. Y es la cara de un verdugo" (95). However, Mary is determined to protect Danielito at all costs, saying to him: "Tú no tienes culpa de nada. Tú eres mío. Mío y de nadie más. Tu madre te quiere. Porque sólo eres de ella... Sólo de ella" (108). Just as Daniel's participation in torturing Marty leads causes his impotence, Mary's knowledge of what her husband has done and is capable of doing hinders any attempt at returning to life as it was before.

In *La doble historia* Buero Vallejo explores not only the consequences felt by the torturer for his actions but also the culpability of those around him who may also come to feel responsible. When Mary studies torture from a mysterious book, *Breve historia de la tortura*, which the play implies Lucila sent to her, she must take action; either accepting what Daniel does or not. From this point the audience begins to witness the book's impact and how it affects Mary's relationship with Daniel. Mary explains to Daniel what she has learned and even cites the book's description of torture:

¡Es espantoso! ¿Te imaginas? Millones y millones de torturados: ojos reventados, lenguas arrancadas, empaladas, lapidados, azotados hasta morir; descuartizados, crucificados, enterrados vivos... Quemados vivos... ¡Y no era para obligarlos a hablar! ¡Eran castigos, eran sacrificios a los dioses! Y ahora mismo... ¡Ah, no quiero ni pensarlo! ¿Que están haciendo ahora mismo en tu

Jefatura? (*Fuerte.*) ¿A qué dios espantoso estáis sacrificando?... Y las cosas odiosas, repugnantes, que les han hecho a las mujeres... Pechos cortados, violaciones... (*Él se levanta, tenso.*) ¡Es el mal por el mal, la borrachera de la sangre, el cobarde y sucio deseo de martirizar a seres indefensos! (74)

Mary now approaches her husband with skepticism as the systemic veil of her ignorance has been removed to reveal horrific acts she once thought were only practiced in foreign lands. She sees that anyone capable of such actions could repeat them against any other, including her or her son. Nowhere are Mary's fears more evident than in the nightmares she describes to Dr. Valmy.

As Mary comes to know the truth, she loses the trust she once placed in Daniel. She struggles mentally to comprehend what he has done and also physically; she becomes restless and has difficulty sleeping, overwhelmed by nightmares (91). Mary relates a dream to Dr. Valmy in which Daniel asks for a pair of scissors, a metaphor for Marty's castration, to use on Danielito, causing Mary to panic.

DANIEL: Habrá que cortar los dedos.

MARY: ¿Qué vas a hacer?

DANIEL: Si no duele, muchacha. (*Corta y ella grita. La lámpara se apaga.*) No sale sangre.

MARY: (*Se mira los dedos*): No. (*Mirándolo con los ojos muy abiertos, retrocede. Él extiende la mano con las tijeras empuñadas.*)

DANIEL: Toma. Debes guardarlas tú.

MARY: ¡No! (*DANIEL avanza. Ella se escurre, rápida.*)

DANIEL: Si te mueves no podré dártelas. (*Le asesta una puñalada, que falla.*)

MARY: (*gime y se aparta*): ¡Piedad!

DANIEL: Ven.

MARY: (*se abalanza hacia él con los brazos extendidos*): ¡Hierre! ¡Atraviésame si quieres! (*DANIEL sonrío, va al radiador y toma los pañales. Luego se dirige a la cuna.*)

DANIEL: Los va a necesitar. (*Levanta el embozo de la cuna y abre las tijeras.*)

MARY: (*corre a su lado para sujetarlo*): ¡No! ¡A él no!

DANIEL: Tú quieres una niña... (92-93)

Because Mary had desired more children, especially a girl, in her nightmare Daniel attempts to make his son a daughter<sup>31</sup>, much like he made Marty “como una hermana” for Lucila (49). Because Mary now imagines Daniel's work in their own home, she cannot return to live a normal life. Even though she nightmares of Danielito becoming a victim, Mary also sees Daniel’s likeness in her infant child and with it the possibility that he will grow to be just like his father.

For *La doble historia* to thoroughly explore the pain felt by those who torture, it must convey the impact actions have on their life. Daniel does not share his struggles with others, passing the majority of his pain to his wife. Mary's nightmare is two-fold in the play. When she is awake, she is racked continually with guilt, whereas in her dreams—a time when Mary should be able to find some rest—she is unable to escape the violence, knowing now what Daniel does. Pennington expounds on the importance of Mary's nightmare:

[The dream] dramatizes Mary’s mental state [and] gives us a clearer idea than anything else as to the emotions behind her suffering... The scene is effective because it is a glimpse of raw emotion – psychosis – exposing the mentality that prompts Mary’s final act of killing her husband at the play’s conclusion. He is thus drawn empathetically into the events on stage, much more than if Mary or Valmy had merely attempted to rationalize and define the fears she is experiencing. Here the dream as point of view device is dramatically powerful and psychologically compelling, as the visualization speaks louder than rational narration. (“Subjective Drama” 99-100)

As Mary shares the dreams, she also shares the torment she feels from being unaware and in denial that torture was being used, especially by her spouse. These

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<sup>31</sup> The dream daughter is referred to in the play as *Danielita*.

dreams express symptoms of psychological wrongdoing that torturers often experience, including: “anxiety, sleep disturbances, paranoia, and alcoholism or drug addiction” as well as struggling to perform sexually (Flynn and Salek 11). The psychological side effects take a toll on Mary, “[as] her burden is heavier. She must learn the previously hidden truth about the nature of Daniel’s profession and decide how to act upon this knowledge” (“*La doble historia del doctor Valmy: A View from the Feminine*” 131). Mary’s inability to find a solution for her guilty conscience ultimately leads the play to its fateful climax as she grapples with the problem that is at the heart of *La doble historia*, how does one react to torture?

In *La doble historia* killing is presented differently than torture in that the former is portrayed as a last resort for self-defense, and the latter is a means to an end. At the play’s conclusion, Mary instinctively protects Danielito as she shoots Daniel twice and kills him. Mary’s drastic and irreversible action stems from a fear that any contact between Daniel and Danielito will cause their son to become just like his father. This occurs at a tense moment when Mary believes that Daniel is incapable of remorse, and she can no longer continue living as an accomplice (Neglia 99). Just as Mary has expressed a negative world view to Dr. Valmy, it is clear that she cannot go on living in a world where Daniel also exists. Francis Donahue explains, “the theme comes through clearly: torture for political reasons not only destroys the victim but also psychologically destroys the torturer himself” (110). The play reaches its conclusion by pitting husband and wife against each other as their marriage ends in a final conflict.

MARY: ¡No des un paso más!

DANIEL: *(con los ojos húmedos)*: ¡Mary!

MARY: ¡Vuelve con ellos! ¡Tú volverás siempre! ¡Tu jefe lo sabe y tú también lo sabes! ¡porque quieres volver! ¡Quieres volver!

DANIEL: El doctor me lo advirtió. Paulus me ha engañado y nunca curaré. *(Mira a su mujer con obsesiva fijeza. Se le desmayan los brazos. Las lágrimas le resbalan por el rostro.)*

MARY: Eres un monstruo. *(DANIEL acepta la palabra: cierra los ojos y agacha la cabeza.)*

DANIEL: No hay escape. *(Abre los ojos y mira hondamente a su mujer, a su hijo, a la pistola.)*

MARY *(grita)*: ¡No te muevas! *(Lentamente, DANIEL comienza a andar. MARY vuelve a gritar.)* ¡No te acerques! *(Pero él sigue avanzando sin dejar de mirarla. Presa de un terror indomitable, ella grita de nuevo, al tiempo que dispara. DANIEL cae, casi sonriente. Aún logra incorporarse con esfuerzo para mirar a su mujer.)*

DANIEL: ¡Gracias!... *(MARY vuelve a disparar. El niño llora. MARY deja caer el arma al suelo y mece al niño, mirando con ojos angustiados el cuerpo de su marido. (112-113)*

The scene culminates in Daniel's inability to recuperate his sexual prowess and highlights the humiliation he feels because of it. Mary is unable to cope with a violent world she once thought did not exist; her only remedy is to kill her husband. Daniel's death and final "¡Gracias!..." confirms that the inescapable system of violence has trapped the couple (García 585).

The play emphasizes a feminine perspective that presents women as the first to recognize what is morally wrong but also those who suffer most for the actions of men. Lucila is a steadfast character that continually denounces and speaks out against the pain felt by victims of torture, such as her husband, herself, and nameless others. Mary's stance against torture develops over time, destroying her marriage and life as she is ultimately escorted away by Paulus's men after killing Daniel (114). At this point, Mary finally understands Lucila's pain:

[The] final destructive act of killing her husband then can be interpreted not so much as a move of desperation, but as one of liberation and hope. Her deed will be seen to symbolize not only a rebellion against what man (generic) does to man, but what man (specific) inflicts upon women. (132)

Although it is implied that she too will be taken by Paulus's men to the Jefatura, where she is likely to endure imprisonment or even torture as Lucila had, she ceases to be responsible for her husband's crime. The only way Mary can end her nightmares and seemingly absolve herself of feeling guilty for Marty's castration and Lucila's rape is by killing Daniel.

### **Conclusion**

*La doble historia del Doctor Valmy* uses anti-torture themes to influence the audience to consider the suffering felt by victims, torturers, and secondary characters, such as their respective family members. For these last characters, Buero Vallejo's critique seems to be that "knowledge of such practices should not be hidden but revealed and stand as a provocation to our shame and anger" (Jordan 2). For instance, Mary's failure to initially denounce Daniel's actions reflects how society would likely respond, through denial. However, the shame of knowing that her spouse is capable of torturing takes an irreversible toll on her.

Buero Vallejo appeals to his audience's humanity to learn from Daniel and Mary Barnes and not commit the mistakes of collaborating, whether it be willingly or unknowingly, with those who torture for political purposes. While most portrayals of violence, in particular, torture, are presented to audiences through the victim, *La doble historia* conveys the anguish generated by such acts by focusing on

those who torture, as well as those who empower them. The play was highly effective at influencing audiences to question their contribution to this problem, “[as] attested to by the number of anonymous death-threat letters which Buero Vallejo received after the premier” (Donahue 111). Now regarded as a critique of the Franco regime and any state that abuses its power, the play has received wide critical acclaim. Frank Casa expounds on the effectiveness of *La doble historia* after its premier explaining:

Buero's plays are always well-received because he manages to deal with broader human problems while reflecting on contemporary events. His play (*La doble historia*) is as relevant to Spain as to any country in which dictatorship rules. As such, it carries message of condemnation against those who pervert their own by breaking the bodies of their enemies. (113)

Buero Vallejo critiques the injustices he experienced as a political prisoner in dramatic works, such as *La doble historia*, but also—and most importantly—immerses his audience in uncomfortable situations where they too must witness torture. In doing this, he advocates that society cannot remain apathetic towards this form of political violence, but we must—like Mary—learn to question and demand change. In this light, *La doble historia* asks audiences nothing more than honoring the humanity of others.

## Chapter 4

### Man as Monster: Reimagining the Fairy Tale Villain in *El laberinto del fauno*

When Guillermo del Toro's film *El laberinto del fauno*<sup>32</sup> or *Pan's Labyrinth* premiered in 2006 Roger Ebert went so far as to call it one of the greatest fantasy films, "even though it is anchored so firmly in the reality of war." Del Toro is a renowned creator of cult classics and award-winning horror, fantasy, and science fiction films. However, *El laberinto del fauno*, much like a previous project, *El espinazo del diablo* or *The Devil's Backbone* (2001), both draw heavily from reality—the Spanish Civil War—and juxtapose it with fantasy to confront fascism.

The film begins five years after the Civil War, when the eleven-year-old Ofelia, and her pregnant mother, Carmen, arrive to live with her new stepfather, Capitán Vidal. Vidal is a staunch Falangist who hunts Maquis<sup>33</sup> at a mountainside outpost in rural Spain. The curious Ofelia finds an abandoned labyrinth and meets and interacts with a mysterious faun whom only she can see. From this point forward, the film switches between the fantasy world Ofelia explores and the one that she lives in at the mill with her mother and Vidal. As the violence in the real world between Vidal and the Maquis worsens, Ofelia is tasked by the faun to enter a

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<sup>32</sup> I refer to the film as *El laberinto del fauno*. However, it is commonly referred to as *Pan's Labyrinth*—which many of the scholars and critics that I cite do.

<sup>33</sup> Anti-Franco Spanish guerrillas who fought against the regime from the Civil War until the early 1960s.

fantasy world full of monsters and complete three trials to save her mom and unborn brother.

*El laberinto* uses fantasy to portray the experiences and anxieties of Ofelia as she struggles to understand the lack of humanity she experiences in reality. The film transcends del Toro's other fantasy or sci-fi projects while building on his talent for dark storytelling and creating fantastic creatures that are both frightening and original. Del Toro was particularly influenced by Spanish exiles to create *El laberinto*, which presents 1944 postwar rural Spain "as a place of conflict and repression, with fascist troops attempting to 'put down' the resistance fighters" (Jones 15). Jonathan Ellis and Ana María Sánchez-Arce suggest that *El laberinto*, along with *El espinazo*, "are the cultural equivalent of the grandchildren's gaze. They are as much an attempt to recover Spain's past as to mythologise it" (173). The resulting work produces a strong argument for how fantasy, and its accompanying creatures and themes, can better present past tragedies that are difficult to discuss but are essential to continue retelling.

As my focus in this in this dissertation has been on violence, I approach *El laberinto* by looking at how it is portrayed and what that means for audiences. While *Rostro* and *La doble historia* force audiences to consider the consequences of violence through the eyes of those who inflict it, *El laberinto* clearly defines good and evil in an easily recognizable way. Del Toro insists, "the idea in the movie is to try to juxtapose violence and fantasy. Violence and magic if you would. And how the quote-unquote real-world scoffs at the girl's interest in the fantasy world and the

magic". This creates a space where the line between reality and fantasy becomes blurred with grotesque monsters mirroring tyrants.

In this chapter, I argue that Capitán Vidal is the most terrifying, effective, and tangible villain that del Toro has created. Del Toro relies on the rigidity of Vidal's character, portrayed by Spanish actor Sergi López, and his accompanying props and brutal outbursts to create suspense. Vidal's antagonism drives the film's action, which invites us "to confront our own moral responsibility in the proper mourning of a traumatic past" (Yarza 261). It is through this character, who is the embodiment of evil that we must despise fascism as Vidal's actions demonstrate the timeless need to oppose oppressive ideologies.

### **Capitán Vidal**

Writers and filmmakers often use violence to create drama and move the story forward. Some writers use contemplative violence to influence the audience's perception of violence. However, not all portrayals of violence require an in-depth analysis of the moral implications for or against its use. As a fairytale, *El laberinto* offers viewers a surface-level approach to good vs. evil, such as the innocent Ofelia vs. the grotesque toad, the eye-less Pale-Man, and Vidal. The dynamic between these characters does not require the audience to think about who is right and who is wrong. The film, however, evokes more profound reflections on the inevitability of violence as the conflicts in the real and fantasy worlds that Ofelia explores frequently interconnect with each other.

While the majority of the most violent scenes occur towards the end of *El laberinto*, there are numerous instances in which Vidal uses physical, systemic and even patriarchal violence. Del Toro interlaces these scenes with various symbols to create a villain that hoards rations, relentlessly hunts Maquis, beats and kills innocent peasants, subjugates his pregnant wife to be cripplingly dependent on him, and treats Ofelia, a child, with constant cruelty. Del Toro brilliantly employs a wide array of props and clues that shape who Vidal is, the fairytale “gender reversal of the wicked stepmother” (Perschon). An analytical approach to the film and its techniques portray Vidal beyond the real-life villain as he becomes the apex monster who terrorizes both reality and fantasy.

To better understand Vidal's role as the villain, it's necessary to know who he is and what he does in *El laberinto*. As an officer in the Falange, Vidal is responsible for “cleansing the land of enemies of fascist Spain” (Jones 182). María Teresa DePaoli adds that Captain Vidal is the very personification of fascism, an ideology that becomes synonymous with fantastic evil in the film (51). Vidal's need for control and his obsession over his image provide vital clues that del Toro expertly creates for the audience to comprehend his behavior better. Two key scenes illustrate Vidal as a villain when he hosts a dinner party and later when he gives himself a morning shave.

The dinner party scene is emblematic of fascist opulence at the expense of others. At the table, Vidal discusses ration cards. His primary concern is not just controlling local access to food or other necessities but preventing such items from

being smuggled to the Maquis, while his guests are served copious amounts of delectable looking foods. Del Toro explains the scene: "It's very important to see this banquet in 1944...a time when nobody had food this guy is not only hoarding the food to make the rebels come to him and hoarding the medicine to make the rebels come to him, but also, he is throwing a huge party" (Director's commentary). Everything this scene depicts symbolizes control, including servants who suffer from rationing, the amount of extravagant food<sup>34</sup>, and especially the dinner conversation:

VIDAL: A partir de hoy una cartilla de racionamiento por familia.  
Examinadlas.

ALCALDE: ¿Sólo una?

VIDAL: Sólo una.

ALCALDE: Capitán, no sé si será suficiente.

SACERDOTE: Si la gente es cuidadosa sí.

VIDAL: Lo que no podemos permitir es que sigan enviando comida a los del monte. Están perdiendo terreno. Andarán puestas al menos con un herido.

DOCTOR: Con perdón, Capitán, pero, ¿cómo está tan seguro?

VIDAL: Hoy casi los cogemos. Llevaban esto, antibiótico.

SACERDOTE: A esta gente, Dios le ha salvado el alma. Lo que al cuerpo le suceda, bien poco le importa.

ALCALDE: Nosotros le asistiremos en todo lo que necesita, Capitán. Sabemos que no está aquí por gusto.

VIDAL: En eso se equivoca. Yo estoy aquí porque quiero que mi hijo nazca en una España limpia y nueva. Porque esta gente, parte de una idea equivocada, que todos somos iguales. Pero hay una diferencia. La guerra terminó y ganamos nosotros. Y si para que nos enteremos todos hay que matar a esos hijos de puta, pues los matamos y ya está. Todos estamos aquí por gusto. (*El laberinto del fauno*)

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<sup>34</sup> Including two skinny rabbits that Vidal took from hunters he killed for believing to be Maquis spies.

The scene is crucial to understand how other characters view Vidal as the guests interact with each other in a way that is always subservient to his authority, except Dr. Ferreiro.<sup>35</sup> At the end of Vidal's rant, his guests also raise their glasses, imitating him, and shout, "¡Por gusto!" (*El laberinto*). Vidal's dominant ideology exhibits unrelenting brutality towards the opposition, to whom he feels not only a duty but a pleasure to punish (Jones 68).

Another scene in which we see Vidal as a disturbed villain is when he shaves. His exactness to routine and conformity to the military dress standards, "cleaning and polishing his boots with the clinical efficiency of every other cinematic sadist" (Jones 186). The audience watches him shave privately in his room, as they have earlier in the film, but this time there is more detail and emphasis on the act. Vidal listens to "Soy un pobre preso," a *pasodoble* by Angelillo<sup>36</sup>, a song that exemplifies his confinement to an unchanging and cruel character. The camera glances down at his father's pocket watch<sup>37</sup>, a haunting reminder of "the pressure to hand on a similar legacy of bravery to his own son" (Ellis and Sánchez-Arce 186). When the camera returns to Vidal's face, it does so through the mirror as he looks at himself as

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<sup>35</sup> In the film, Dr. Ferreiro represents rationality, wisdom, and humanity. He straddles the line between both sides, helping supply the Maquis with medical supplies, such as antibiotics, and treating their wounded, while attending to Vidal's pregnant wife, Carmen, at the mill.

<sup>36</sup> Ángel Sampedro Montero (1908-1973), better known as Angelillo, was a famous Spanish singer of *coplas* and supporter of the Republic and who was forced to live in exile in Argentina before returning to Spain in the 1950s.

<sup>37</sup> Although Vidal denies the watch is stuck on the time his father died in battle, he keeps the watch as a reminder.

if he were an enemy, raising his blade to mimic slitting his own throat. Alejandro Yarza argues that the scene is significant for the impact Vidal's character has on the film:

The Captain's death drive, and his pathological obsession with detail, make him thus a chained character—as the title of the song, 'I'm a prisoner,' clearly suggests—trapped inside his rigid, immoral, world view. He cannot budge from fascist conduct. This intolerant, self-destructive behavior starkly contrasts with Ofelia's moral struggle for freedom and authentic self-expression. (273)

Capitán Vidal's strict attention to detail and fascist principles— apparent in his appearance—permeate all aspects of his life. Vidal's meticulous and unmistakably authoritative demeanor leaves no doubt that he is the incarnation of an ideology that values a regimented society based on the violent suppression of opposition.

Vidal's obsession with his image and self-preservation is one of the most prominent examples of his heinous behavior. He is motivated to maintain an identity that demands "total compliance from everyone around him, including his family whom he constantly scrutinizes. When he is not obeyed, he turns violent and merciless" (DePaoli 51). All other characters must acquiesce to Vidal's command as he dominates the frame when he is on screen:

By fear and a fascistic insistence on order, rules, systems and control. This is symbolized by the pervasive presence of timepieces, locks, keys— characteristic mechanical paraphernalia for a del Toro film—as well as uniformed soldiers who respond as automata to Vidal's orders. (McDonald and Clark 152)

Three characters that challenge Vidal—Ofelia, Dr. Ferreiro, and Mercedes—face severe consequences, the first two ending in death. While the audience knows from

the very beginning that Vidal is evil, there is numerous evidence that foreshadows him becoming the ultimate villain of both the real and fantasy world. Vidal's character is ultimately more complex than traditional fairytale beasts and monsters as he crosses between both spaces to terrorize those who disobey his rule.

### **Torture and Murder**

Themes of violence are present throughout *El laberinto* and proliferate the film's story as it moves forward. The film intricately weaves symbols, actions, behavior, and dialogue together to craft a dismal reality from which the protagonist Ofelia escapes into the fantasy world every chance she gets. The violence that drives the negativity does not necessarily grow in its severity but instead comes in and out of the film as Ofelia, Dr. Ferreiro, and Mercedes provide much-needed relief. However, there is indeed a cynical aura that violence casts over the film, as its characters to suffer its consequences, in particular when they perform heroic acts for others. I focus in this subsection on the props that Vidal uses in several scenes as implements of violence that epitomize his sadistic nature. I begin with a brief overview of some of the props used to attack, maim, torture, and kill. Next, I proceed with three scenes where Vidal is particularly violent: when he kills the rabbit hunters, tortures the *Tarta*<sup>38</sup>, and when he shoots Dr. Ferreiro. Each of these scenes builds upon previous ones, reinforcing the remorseless behavior of Vidal.

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<sup>38</sup> Vidal's victim that he interrogates, and tortures is referred to in the film as the *Tarta*, short for *Tartamudo* or stuttering man.

In the scene where the rabbit hunters are brought before Vidal as suspected rebel sympathizers, a bottle is used as the murder weapon. When the young man refuses to be quiet, pleading his and his father's innocence, Vidal repeatedly strikes him "[as] we hear the crunching of bone and the hard clunk of the bottle" (Jones 68). The shot then changes from behind Vidal to a victim's point of view, looking up at his attacker. This puts the audience in the place of the young man receiving the beating and helps us begin to see Vidal, beyond a meticulous and strict authoritarian figure, as a genuinely terrifying villain. Before Vidal begins torturing the *Tarta*, he shows his victim the implements he will use to get the information he wants. Vidal describes each item that he retrieves from a toolbox, flaunting them before his victim—pulling out a hammer, then forceps, and finally, a leather knife—each tool has a specific purpose. Besides the hammer—which we see Vidal use on the *Tarta*—the audience is left to wonder how the other tools are used to beat, remove, and cut. The shocking way in which Vidal uses each of these everyday objects makes the violence much more shocking than if he simply shot the young rabbit hunter or the *Tarta*.

There prevails anticipation that excessive violence is about to erupt on the screen just before Vidal kills the rabbit hunters. Two farmers, a father and a son who were using a shotgun for rabbit hunting, are detained by Vidal's men for being rebels. The young man denies the accusations, "Capitán, mi padre es un hombre honrado," much to the displeasure of Vidal, "Eso lo decido yo. Descúbrete cuando estés delante de mí" (*El laberinto*). Vidal's order that the young man remove his hat

is a way for him to enforce his authority and demand respect. However, when the young man again speaks without permission, which is intolerable for Vidal, who strikes him repeatedly in the face. Besides using the scene as to prove to the audience just how terrible Vidal truly is, del Toro explains that he had additional motivations for including it in *El laberinto*:

This particular episode is unfortunately based on an oral account from a post-war occurrence in a grocery store where a fascist came in and a guy, a citizen, didn't cover himself, didn't take off his hat. And the fascist proceeded to smash his face with the butt of his pistol and then took his groceries and left. (Director's commentary)

Vidal removes two skinny rabbits from the hunter's bag, commenting to his officer, Garcés, "a ver si aprendéis a registrar a esta gentuza antes de venir a molestarme" (*El laberinto*). Killing the rabbit hunters was no more than a nuisance for Vidal who shows no regret for the mistake. When watching the scene, we want to disbelieve what is happening and discredit it as fiction. Del Toro portrays this on-screen to create discomfort and make us hate Vidal, which it certainly does. However, this is a crucial element of using historical events or real-life anecdotes from times of war or oppression and adapting them to the big screen for the audience to visualize, albeit momentarily, the brutality of unchecked and abused power.

Violence is an essential theme for the film as it contrasts with the innocence and adventure of Ofelia as she repeatedly seeks refuge in a fantasy world. One of the most compelling, yet violent scenes, occurs when Vidal tortures the *Tarta*. Vidal mocks his prisoner while smoking a cigarette that he brags is made with real tobacco, handling each of the tools and telling his prisoner that he will get the

information he wants. The dynamic between Vidal and the *Tarta* comes from “the threat of that pain, the constant awareness of its potential to intrude upon and destroy the self, that lends the torturer his power” (Tanner 36). Flynn and Salek add that the torturer will inflict as much pain as possible on his subject to receive a confession, knowing the traumatic consequence of bodily pain will haunt the victim for life (15).

Although the *Tarta* is initially resilient towards his captors as he manages to utter “v-v-váyase a la m-m-mierda” (*El laberinto*), Vidal merely laughs. The Captain then mentally attacks his prisoner: “Coño, Garcés. El uno que cogemos y resulta que es tartamudo. Nos vamos a pasar aquí la noche entera<sup>39</sup>” (*El laberinto*). Vidal opens his toolbox of torture and begins to remove the instruments, taking the time to show each to his prisoner.

VIDAL (*al Tarta*): Mira, al principio, no voy a poder confiar en ti. Pero...(*Levanta el martillo.*)...cuando acabe de usar esto. Me dirás alguna que otra verdad. (*Levanta ahora las pinzas.*) Y cuando use éstas. Ya vamos a tener una relación... ¿cómo diría yo...?, más estrecha, como de hermanos, ¿eh? Ya lo verás (*Levanta la navaja para cortar cuero.*) Cuando lleguemos a ésta, te creeré todo lo que me digas (*pausa*). Ahora, ¿quieres tabaco? (*El Tarta asiente. Vidal le da el pitillo. El Tarta fuma. Vidal coge el martillo.*) Pero para que sepas que lo que yo diga, va totalmente en serio...(*pausa*)...te propongo algo: Si cuentas hasta tres sin t-t-tarta-mudear, te dejo libre... Te puedas ir (*El Tarta mira a Vidal y a Garcés.*) No le mires a él. Mírame a mí. Ya verás que hablo en serio (*El Tarta está nerviosísimo, al borde de las lágrimas.*) Hasta tres. Anda...(*El Tarta respira hondo, agitado y lo intenta-*)  
TARTA: Uno...(*Vidal le pasa el pitillo a Garcés. Haciendo un esfuerzo sobrehumano, el Tarta dice:* Dos...  
VIDAL: Vamos, uno más y estás libre. Vamos...(*El Tarta, sudoroso, cierra los ojos, haciendo un esfuerzo y dice:*)  
TARTA: T-t-tre-tres.

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<sup>39</sup> This line was not included in the script. It's unclear López or del Toro added it.

VIDAL: Lástima. (*Le da un golpe brutal.*) (*El laberinto del fauno* guión cinematográfico 85-87)

This mostly one-sided exchange demonstrates an important dynamic in torture, in that the torturer has all the power and very little to lose, whereas the *Tarta's* very life is at stake. Richardson explains, "torture performs the subjection of the body to power from which, perhaps, speech or representation become a near-impossible task. For the tortured, their sense of self is shattered" (8). Instead of del Toro using a character who becomes unable to talk out of fear, he utilizes a stutterer whose natural inability to speak is compounded in a pressured situation such as Vidal forcing him to count to three. When Vidal gives his prisoner a chance to go free, it also "[gives] a sense of hope and further anxiety mounts as the spectator prays for the prisoner's ability to move beyond the number two, which he arrives at with extreme effort. He is unsuccessful, of course, and the gruesome torture session begins" (Swier 71). Del Toro uses the *Tarta* as the victim here because it gives the audience another opportunity to empathize with him and even more reason to despise Vidal. He achieves this by showing torture techniques that are effective but cannot be at the same time just as Savater explains:

La pregunta del torturador saquea la intimidad de la víctima, la devasta; pero esta labor de asolamiento es inacabable, pues nunca se puede estar absolutamente seguro de que ya se ha revelado *todo*. Para estar seguro de que el torturado dice la verdad, el verdugo tiene que saber de antemano cuál es la verdad o, al menos, cuál es la verdad con la que él va a conformarse. *Lo más terrible de la tortura, lo que hace objetivamente inacabable, es que la verdad sea establecida por el verdugo*<sup>40</sup>. (19-20)

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<sup>40</sup> Italics original.

Vidal wants to know where the Maquis are hiding, and like all that torture, he will not settle for anything less. The Captain is compelled to obtain the information and, if necessary, will punish his prisoner physically and psychologically. As Vidal explains, they will become like brothers, not out of some bond, but because the pain that the *Tarta* will experience will be so severe that he will come to a point at which he can no longer keep his secrets. *Tarta* is destined to fail, as any victim would, because "la víctima debe decir la verdad, pero no *su* verdad o *la* verdad (si es que hay tal cosa), sino la verdad del inquisidor, la que el inquisidor espera y exige, la única que el inquisidor va a reconocer como verdad" (Savater 20). The film then cuts from the torture scene in the mill's cellar to Mercedes working in the kitchen. With this quick cut, del Toro leaves the audience to imagine what is simultaneously happening to the *Tarta* as they now watch as a quotidian scene. The audience is not permitted to see Vidal as he works the *Tarta* over; mocking, beating, and mutilating his flesh.

Del Toro uses the film cut to his advantage as he makes the audience wonder in terrible suspense what has happened to the *Tarta*. After Vidal hits the *Tarta* with the hammer, the film first cuts to Mercedes in the kitchen, then to the fantasy level where Ofelia talks to the Fauno in the attic, and then back to the mill's cellar where Vidal now washes his bloody hands outside in the rain. At this point Vidal even asks Dr. Ferreiro for help with the *Tarta*:

VIDAL: Haga lo que pueda por él. Necesito que dure un poco más.

DOCTOR: Dios mío, ¿qué le han hecho?

VIDAL: No mucho. Pero las cosas van mejorando. (*El laberinto del fauno*)

Here Vidal is asking something vital to understanding how torturers operate, what their motives and goals are, and how they plan to achieve them. As the audience sees the *Tarta* again, he is almost unrecognizable: his right hand is broken and mutilated, blood drips from his lips almost like drool, his face is bloodied and his right eye swollen shut. What remains of him when the camera returns “is revealed as a brutalised canvas” (Jones 48). The *Tarta* tried to resist, but he talked, and Vidal wants to keep him alive so that he will continue talking. Jones argues that this torture scene is “the most obvious indictment of Vidal as both war criminal and monster” (48).

Even though we do not witness the actual torture del Toro has made it possible for us to infer what has happened because of how Vidal has been portrayed to this point. Just as Vidal said that he and the *Tarta* would get to know each other intimately, del Toro to our discomfort has forced us to know Capitán Vidal as well. Del Toro explains the importance of the scene for the film:

It’s actually one of the earliest things I wrote for the movie. I wrote it in 1993 more or less....and I wrote this interrogation scene that early...and I thought it would define the character (Vidal) that did it by making him an absolute control freak...I love the scene because it defines the character and his need for controlling. (Director’s commentary)

Del Toro wants the audience to see Vidal as the villain, as we should, and to despise him for who is and what he does. Because del Toro spent significant time developing *El laberinto*, he was able to give the film an antagonist who, unlike his other fantasy and sci-fi projects, is inspired by the horrific actions of real men. The film's villain is

so convincingly evil because of the terrible things he does can happen—and have happened—in reality. In the story, Vidal's character is familiar yet new as

He is cast as the villainous step-parent of classic fairy tale...[and] enacts a more complex set of behavioural characteristics including a thoroughly perverse eroticism or homoeroticism as he lovingly handles his instruments of torture and talks about becoming intimate with his victims. (McDonald and Clark 153).

At this point in the film, Vidal becomes more than the evil leader of the Falange or the embodiment of fascism as his characteristics and actions resemble more a monster with an insatiable appetite for violence.

### **Man as Monster: The True Villain of Reality and Fantasy**

While monsters are nothing new<sup>41</sup> for del Toro, some of his most imaginative creations appear in *El laberinto*. Del Toro utilizes many creatures in the fantasy world young Ofelia frequents. These creatures include fairies, an ancient faun,<sup>42</sup> a giant tree-dwelling toad, and a child-like mandrake root. Not all of these creatures are bad; some, such as the fairies, even help Ofelia. In comparison, the child-eating Pale Man is a reflection of Vidal that results in a "transcendent fascist-monster archetype" (Hei 231). With the faun, however, it is not always clear if he has Ofelia's best interest in mind. Regardless, Ofelia attempts to complete the tasks he gives her

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<sup>41</sup> Del Toro's monsters include: human-hunting mutant termite/mantis hybrids (*Mimic* 1997), variations of vampires (*Blade II* 2002, *The Strain* 2014-2017), zombies and a tentacled beast (*Hellboy* 2004), humongous monsters called kaiju (*Pacific Rim* 2013), ghosts (*Crimson Peak* 2015), and most recently the unique Amphibian Man (*Shape of Water* 2017), among countless others.

<sup>42</sup> The titular faun is who believes Ofelia to be the reincarnated Princess Moanna, whose father is king of the underworld, and gives her tasks that she must complete to obtain immortality and be able to return to the kingdom.

—which I elaborate on in the next paragraph—as they provide a much-needed escape from the prison-like military outpost at the mill.

Ofelia's first test is to obtain a key from a giant toad who lives in a tree. This task parallels when Vidal kills the hunters, "and is intercut with his fanatical search for Resistance fighters in the nearby mountain, whose hiding spot is close to the location of Ofelia's first test" (Levine 121). Her second test is to retrieve a dagger from the Pale Man's lair, using the key obtained from the toad. The Faun's final test requires Ofelia to bring her now newborn baby brother to the labyrinth and sacrifice a few drops of his innocent blood to open a portal to the underworld. Ofelia, however, refuses. Moments later, Vidal finds and shoots her, her blood now fulfilling the requirement. This last task contrasts significantly with the numerous violent acts committed by Vidal, including: "torture, murder, and the willing sacrifice of his wife to save his unborn son" (Levine 121). While the Pale Man is unlike any monster seen before, his terror is even less alarming than the violence inflicted by Vidal, "the cipher by which the [film's] monstrosities of faerie can be understood" (Perschon).

One way that del Toro molds Vidal's character as a monster is the scene where he stitches up his own face. Vidal takes Mercedes to the cellar to torture her, just as he did with the *Tarta*, after finding out that she was helping the Maquis. Vidal is unaware, however, that Mercedes has taken a knife from the kitchen, which she uses to cut herself free and stab him in the back while he prepares his torture

instruments. Before Mercedes escapes, she slashes a large cut on the left side of Vidal's face that he later painfully stitches back together:

It's a moment when he transforms himself into the ogre, into the big bad wolf, into a thing that will not stop. I once said he shines his own boots, he fixes his own watch, and by God he's going to sew his own cheek. I think it defines who the character is and who he's going to become because we need to know that in order for her (Ofelia) to truly be afraid at the end of the film and truly say no to the faun with a lot of loss that this guy is going to kill her. (Director's commentary)

This scene, much like others in the film, causes discomfort for the audience. The difference being that Vidal is not bashing in the face of an innocent rabbit hunter with a bottle or torturing a stuttering man, instead he, the man del Toro has convinced us to hate, makes us feel uncomfortable as we watch what Vidal does to himself. Del Toro speaks of the scene as if it were one of the film's best: "I like this moment where he drinks the alcohol and he burns his cheek...It defines his character because after it burns through the wound what he does is, of course, pours himself another one, and that defines what kind of guy he is." (Director's commentary) Vidal is the ultimate villain, whose relentlessness indicates that a confrontation with Ofelia is inevitable. as the commander of the mill and in no way can be seen as weak. This scene allows the audience to see something that they have not yet witnessed with the Captain and tells us that because he will not rest confrontation with Ofelia is inevitable.

The Pale Man stands out as one of del Toro's most terrifying creations as it exemplifies in every way a monster of nightmares. When Ofelia descends into the Pale Man's well-lit banquet hall, everything she sees—the food, the paintings, the

shoes—symbolically connects him, the monster of the fantasy world, to Vidal. The Pale Man sits at the head of a table prepared for a feast with delicious foods: cakes, meats, fish, liquor, and exotic fruits. The feast represents the decadent meal Vidal hosted earlier while talking about rations. The food itself is a test for Ofelia, who had been dismissed from the banquet for ruining her dress, as she was instructed not to eat the food nor linger too long in the lair.

Everything about the Pale Man is repulsive. Physically he is tall and lanky, with long fingers and sharp claw-like nails, slits for nostrils, and an eyeless face<sup>43</sup>.

Paintings in the banquet hall depict him killing and even eating children, which most scholars and film critics agree is a direct reference to Goya's *Saturno devorando a su hijo* (see figure 6). Ellis and Sánchez-Arce suggest that "the position and theme of the paintings bring to mind the biblical massacre of the innocents and Francisco Goya's famous painting...The Pale Man is another version of Saturn, eating generations of children to preserve himself" (184). The painting portrays the



Figure 6

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<sup>43</sup>. While the Pale Man does not initially appear to have eyes, Ofelia quickly notices them on a plate.

Greek myth of the titan Cronus, who, after escaping and later deposing of his father, Uranus, feared a similar prophecy and ate his children. Barry Spector explains that the painting depicts "[the] Roman equivalent *Saturn* [which] eventually came to personify Father Time, which devours all things" (81). Del Toro wants us to make the connection between the Pale Man and Vidal. Time, in particular, is a vital clue to seeing Vidal as the Pale Man in the real-world, and because of this del Toro has made sure that the camera captures Vidal continually glancing at his watch.

After Ofelia gazes in horror at the paintings that depict a massacre of children, she looks down and sees a large pile of worn shoes. The moment is undoubtedly a reference which, with the paintings that mimic Cronus, "[along] with the semicircular fireplace, and the date (1944) all evoke the Holocaust" (Spector 83). The way the Pale Man hoards the food and lives in extravagant comfort while surrounded by symbols of his bloodlust for a particular group of people, in this case, children, evoke the worst of fascist ideology. In Vidal's banquet, "the inhumanity of most of the guests' comments and the grotesque amounts of food that the panning camera present(ed), foreshadow(ed) the lair and symbolism of the Pale Man" (Jones 58). Each symbol causes the viewer to contemplate their meaning. If they have paid close enough attention to del Toro's clues, they will come to understand the connection between the Pale Man and Vidal's violence, linking fascism with slaughter. Hei adds that "what makes the Pale Man Captain Vidal's double is twofold: his hatred of children and the way he uses food to achieve his fascist objectives" (239-240). Vidal not only uses the storehouse in the cellar to stockpile

foods and necessities but also to draw the Maquis in, much like the Pale Man uses the food to entice children, like Ofelia, to his lair.

The effectiveness of the scene with Pale Man is evident in how it builds suspense and anxiety as Ofelia struggles to flee from him and return to the real world. The scene's power comes from its symbols, whether we are familiar with them or not, which cause us to fear for *El laberinto's* heroine. Del Toro achieves "one of the most original and terrifying scenes...[which] is constructed precisely around the ghost of Goya's *Saturno*, with the 'hombre pálido' that has eyes on his hands, persecutes Ofelia, and devours the fairies" (Gómez-Castellano 8). Because of how the film is structured, switching back and forth between reality and fantasy, the narrative levels and their respective characters become interconnected. No connection is more obvious or essential to make than between the Pale Man and Capitán Vidal. Although there is little physical connection between the two villains, Francisco Sánchez suggests, "their parallelism is embedded in a representation of a violence that is essentially emotional and psychological: it is a senseless, evil violence aimed at killing innocent people irrationally" (140).

Although the film has shown evidence of Vidal and the Pale Man's cruelty and violent demeanor, the connection between the two may still be unclear for some viewers. However, the link is made apparent in the final scene as Ofelia takes her baby brother and flees into the labyrinth. Vidal is more than the film's most dangerous villain. He is undoubtedly worse than the giant toad and more terrifying than the Pale Man, but also del Toro's most terrible monster, not because he is

fictional but because men like him are real. Jones explains why the character, played excellently by López, excels at being more than a man: "Vidal is Fascism distilled, he is also the monster that lurks at the back of every child's psyche. Unlike the men of the resistance or Dr. Ferreiro, Vidal has no sense of empathy or sympathy for other individuals" (33-34). Like the Pale Man, who satisfies his hunger with the flesh of children, Vidal is incapable of fulfilling his sadistic nature.

Much like how the Pale Man's feast draws comparisons to the real world, the final scene, where Vidal chases Ofelia into the labyrinth, makes similar connections to fantasy. When Vidal pursues Ofelia, he does so with his shirt bloodied and his face stitched up from Mercedes' attack, stumbling after her in a drugged state in a way that resembles the Pale Man's stagger as he pursued after Ofelia. Vidal replicates the Pale Man and "becomes a true ogre, ready, like the big, bad wolf, to devour Ofelia" (Yarza 266). The audience watches and witnesses Vidal shoot Ofelia, his "[inhumanity] is unprecedented, dissolute, and even supersedes the horror provoked by the grotesque creatures in the underground world of the fairy tale." (Swier 71). While del Toro received much of his inspiration for *El laberinto's* fantastical elements from other classics, including *Alice in Wonderland* and *The Wizard of Oz*, the primary monster is a fascist captain inspired by the historical violence of men. When Vidal finally shoots Ofelia, the film returns to where it began, with its protagonist bleeding out on the ground. Ofelia's confirms her role as the film's heroine by selflessly sacrificing herself for her baby brother. In doing so, she returns to her father's kingdom and is honored by the king, her mother, and brother,

as well as the faun and fairies, and an unknown number of the king's subjects who applaud her return. Similarly, "Captain Vidal is a monster, a true ogre who kills innocent Ofelia at the center of the labyrinth" (Yarza 269).

## **Conclusion**

The depiction of dark tones and violent action in *El laberinto del fauno* is stunning. The film presents a new rendition of classic fairy tale themes that can be difficult to watch, mainly because of the excessive violence on unarmed or innocent victims. A year after *El laberinto's* premier del Toro explained, in an interview with Marcus Leshock, the process of getting funding and support to produce the film in Hollywood:

[It's] a very strong, very brutal movie...I actually showed the movie early on to a Hollywood producer/director, very famous and he looked at it, and he said 'Oh it's great! If you could only cut the violence, the children would go, and it will be a success'. I said yeah, but the whole point is to have the violent and the fantastic together. (*Metromix*)

Del Toro envisioned violence as one of the film's central and nonnegotiable themes when he began the story in the early nineties. While this might discourage some from seeing the film, it is crucial to see del Toro's purpose for using violence was not for entertainment. Instead, he recognized the need to portray violence creatively, by connecting fantasy with reality, for audiences to better comprehend the historical impact of fascism in Spain.

At the beginning of my analysis of *El laberinto*, I proposed that it was a film that establishes good and evil. As the plot moves forward, the narrative spaces in reality and fantasy come into contact through Ofelia to show that acts of violence

thought to be unimaginable are, in actuality, real. If one begins viewing the film thinking it to be a traditional fairy tale, they will likely finish disappointed and disturbed. Laura Hubner argues:

To claim that *Pan's Labyrinth* is tame gives a misleading and incomplete picture, particularly bearing in mind its head-on confrontation of the horrors of human brutality following on from the Spanish Civil War, and the graphic level of detail used to represent the carnage. ("*Pan's Labyrinth*" 51-52)

The fantasy world del Toro creates for Ofelia is not a place for children's entertainment. The real world had to be so dark that it would necessitate Ofelia getting away as often as possible to the fantasy world, thus making her experience there of great importance. Levine argues that Ofelia's fantasies are "her playroom and refuge, the way she magically transforms a brutal remote military outpost in 1944 into a place of space and freedom." Levine also adds, "[her] fantasies help her manage disturbing feelings and offer an emotional escape from the violence" (119). For the audience to truly understand why Ofelia, a child who is sheltered from conflict because she is Vidal's stepdaughter,<sup>44</sup> must fulfill the tasks asked by the faun, they need to understand the conditions against which she struggles.

*El laberinto* excels precisely because it does not avoid creating a story for children but rather embraces one that is unforgettable for adults. The film

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<sup>44</sup> This is not necessarily to say that she is privileged with a better or safer position than others. While Ofelia does have access to Vidal's storehouse, it is only because she is the daughter of the woman who carries his unborn son. Vidal has no love for Ofelia, and the two come into conflict several times, including when she tries to save her mother with the mandrake root and later when she attempts to run away with her baby stepbrother.

influences how the audience sees violence by repeatedly exposing them to it with the fighting between Vidal and the Maquis, the murder of the hunters, the Pale Man devouring children, the torture of the *Tarta*, Mercedes stabbing Vidal, and Vidal shooting Dr. Ferreiro and Ofelia. Del Toro crafts these scenes to make the audience uneasy, anxious, and even scared. In doing so, he makes us think about what we are witnessing and why; he makes us learn. Irene Gómez-Castellano suggests: "del Toro's film does not sanitize the past but makes this traumatic past more complex and, above all, does not beautify its violence but acts as a personal reminder of its presence and the difficulty of accessing it, of encountering this ghost" (4). Del Toro does not shy away from interpreting historical violence. Instead, he embraces it in the film through an imaginative and unconventional approach. Del Toro himself understands the film's impact, stating, "the violence in the movie is very affecting. It's not a violence that by any chance anyone would want to emulate," also adding, "I am aware that there is a very dark side to the world and that one of the best ways to cope with it is fantasy" (Leschock). Films such as *El laberinto del fauno* serve a significant purpose to learn of the injustices that have occurred, do occur, and will continue to happen if we do not question them. *El laberinto* shows that artistic depiction of violence, when done with respect for those who have suffered because of it, is crucial to understanding how to change and advance beyond using it.

## Section Conclusion

The purpose of this section is to explore physical violence and demonstrate the importance of its portrayal across artforms. Saura, Buero Vallejo, Marías, and del Toro implement violence as a central theme in their respective works as each makes it a point to investigate and question it. In their works violence is identifiable through the portrayal of killing, such as the mass execution of civilians by military (*Goya*), stories of friends tortured and killed for political beliefs (*Rostro*), a mother shooting her husband to protect her child (*La doble historia*), and the execution of peasants for disregarding the authority of a monstrous captain (*El laberinto*). I began this first section with Saura's *Goya* as the titular artist the film pays homage to criticizes violence through art instead of glorifying it<sup>45</sup>, as was tradition before the early nineteenth century. Nearly two hundred years later, Buero Vallejo, Marías, and del Toro have continued to analyze the impact of physical violence in their artistic fields. Saura depicts an old Goya remembering the terrible events he witnessed during the Peninsular War, whereas the others incorporate elements of violence that are specific to their times: in particular, the torture techniques portrayed, including, but not limited to, denailing, electroshock, and keeping a victim conscious with medicines, among others.

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<sup>45</sup> This is most apparent in Goya's *Los desastres de la guerra* (*The Disasters of War*), but also in *El dos de mayo de 1808 en Madrid* (*The Second of May 1808*) and *El tres de mayo de 1808 en Madrid* (*The Third of May 1808*), both painted in 1814.

Violence experienced or witnessed is a horrible thing. We must denounce the act, show compassion for its victims, and at the same time, seek to understand it. But why, we might ask, should violence be reproduced in art? It is undeniably a regrettable part of the human experience, but still a part of what many see and live with. Byund-Hal Han approaches violence by examining its value for power:

Killing has an *intrinsic* value. It is not mimetic but a *capitalistic* principle that controls the archaic economy of violence. The more violence a person carried out, the more power he accumulated. Violence carried out against the other increased the other actor's ability to survive. One overcame death by killing. (10)

Han later adds, "exerting violence increased one's sense of power. More violence meant more power" (13). Although Han looks at violence as it was used anciently, his argument applies to today as we still see it used for gain, whether it be personal or collective, primarily to obtain power over others. The critical questions we must ask when viewing depictions of violence are: what does the subject who uses violence hope to gain? What is their motivation? And if their act is indeed justifiable, what will be the consequences?

The portrayal of violence has long formed a central part of artistic works. As I previously proposed, this first comes to prominence in Spain through Goya's work, in particular, *Los desastres de la guerra*, which recreates for the viewer the atrocities of war. This work was pivotal in creating an artistic culture that is consciously concerned with influencing attitudes towards violence. John Fraser defended the representation of violence in the arts: "the enduring appeal of a good many violent works is not just that they are violent works but that they re-immense us vicariously

in physical action” (63). The depiction of violence brings us to feel, albeit momentarily, the seriousness of it in reality. Although seeing or reading about violence does not put an audience in harm's way, it does bring audiences and into the debate on violence.

Artistic implementation of violence varies significantly between eras and across genres. Some choose to use techniques that inspire, shock or even frighten audiences. Some works are more concerned with using violence for its entertainment value, catering to crowds that value seeing violent acts and the gore that follows. However, artists, writers, and filmmakers who are concerned with how violence will affect the audience's emotions value a more contemplative approach. Not all audiences want to see violence or are even willing to consume it, which is understandable. However, violence does play a role in the arts, “[as] the right kinds of violence in art are not only charged with meaning but serve to block off, or at least make harder, a contrasting attitude” (Fraser 152). The recreation of violent events in artistic, literary, theatrical, and cinematographic spaces is crucial to frame discussions on violence, especially for those who are fortunate enough never to have experienced, witnessed, or been forced to use it.

Fictional stories can have a tremendous impact on the present and future as storytellers re-envision history in a way that allows us to examine events through their artistic eye. Richardson explains the value of using fiction to give readers a different historical perspective:

Even when fiction is tied to historical facts, it can offer a relation of experience to events that is distinct from memoir, testimony, and history...Fiction has the capacity to reform arguments, changing the terms of debate and the very ground upon which it is fought. (9)

Richardson's words are also applicable to fictional reenactments of violence, adding to the discussion on how such conflicts are perceived. As violence is used as a theme in art, it becomes capable of affecting the very way that it is debated in local, regional, national, and even worldwide forums. Although not all view or respond to depictions of violence in the same way or even how the artist originally intended, it does provide an important starting point for collective contemplation and questioning.

Many artists incorporate violent themes to directly critique violence and supply their audiences with the necessary material to make their assumptions or inquiries on the subject. Torture is a crucial part of artistic depictions of violence, Richardson argues "[it] should be known, not simply in the abstract as something that happens over there, to someone else—but as an experienced event, one with a terrible and traumatic aftermath" (8). Depicting torture is not a simple undertaking, especially as it "'revile[s]' and 'titillate[s]' the 'imagination';...both seduc[ing] and disgust[ing] the viewer" (Richardson 8). An important part of the public discussion of violence stems precisely from artistic depiction because their imagery allows one to experience it vicariously and indirectly.

The use of violence is much more prevalent than one might like to think. While violence is used in ways that are more perceptible than others, we should

always be aware of our ability to recognize it. Fraser defends violence in the arts precisely because it helps those who have not seen it to form their own beliefs:

What counts above all is the clarity, integrity, and validity of one's thought, the completeness of one's commitment to one's own ideas, and a clear-sighted understanding of the ways in which, in the short or the long run, those ideas connect with the physical world, the world in which violences occur. (162)

As art links adaptations of historical or created violence to reality, it can effectively provide audiences with the problem of violence that needs to be questioned and solved. Unlike film and theater, which depict physical violence, literature must rely on creativity to portray pain, “[using] metaphors—burning, searing, or stinging, for instance—or reliant on objects external to the body—cutting, piercing, crushing. Putting pain into language frequently calls for simile: pain must be likened to razor blades or needles” (Richardson 49). What literature lacks in visuals it can make up with descriptions that cause readers to visualize violence through their own eyes and experiences. However, there is no perfect art form for presenting violence to any single audience. All art that depicts violence is essential to forming a well-rounded perspective of what it is and what it means to us.

## Section 2

### The Violence of Language

“Oppressive language does more than represent violence; it is violence; does more than represent the limits of knowledge; it limits knowledge.”  
—Toni Morrison

As mankind’s primary system of communication, language relies on social conventions and learning. Its complex structures allow for a wider range of expressions than other known forms of animal communication. As humans grow their language and ability to communicate evolve over time. Although language possesses numerous properties that are positive and crucial to human development, language itself can also be negatively utilized in ways that harm others through lies and slander, verbal oppression and manipulation, and even threats.

In language violence tends to be more difficult to identify than the more visible forms of physical which I analyze in section one. Žižek maintains that with language, “instead of exerting direct violence on each other, we are meant to debate, to exchange words, and such an exchange, even when it is aggressive, presupposes a minimal recognition of the other party” (60). Most would agree that the “recognition of the other party” to which Žižek refers to is far more productive than attacking another with whom one disagrees. This recognition forms a relationship which at times can be quite volatile. However, that does not mean it cannot be a positive experience between multiple communicators. Unfortunately, we know that not all interactions are productive nor are they always positive. Indeed, there exist times

when language is used for gain—even “infected by violence,” as Žižek says—even at the cost of others. Žižek argues in his analysis that the symbolization of things in language has the power to dismember and destroy, explaining: “When we name gold ‘gold,’ we violently extract a metal from its natural texture, investing into it our dreams of wealth power, spiritual purity, and so on, which have nothing whatsoever to do with the immediate reality of gold” (61). But just as language can make anything violent—by symbolizing it in a way that makes it more than its natural raw form—it also has the potential to challenge violence through the very same symbolic field.

In artistic expression, such as narrative and drama, language allows the creator to develop a relationship with their audience. They use symbols, in this case language, to share an influential and unique message with others. In *Tu rostro mañana* and *La doble historia del doctor Valmy*, which I analyze in this section, Marías and Buero Vallejo use their writing—and the words the actors say, in the case of Buero Vallejo—to communicate, uncover, and even warn those who listen within the story, as well as those who watch or read it. Taylor expounds on Žižek’s theoretical approach to language and violence, adding “the cardinal philosophical point is that all communication has an inescapably violent element; the key political question merely rests on the type of violence a society decides to privilege” (196). Because objective violence, such as language, has such low visibility it does not typically attract attention. In fact, it seems that much of Žižek’s approach to connecting violence and language is precisely aimed at uncovering the negative

systemic impact it has on society, which ultimately manifests in the visible form of physical violence. This is what much of Marías and Buero Vallejo's works show, that is, that there is more to violence than physically harming the body. Violence is first formed in thought, then revealed in language, and finally realized in behavior. The problems that *Rostro* and *La doble historia* recreate within their respective stories reflect how language is used to control others and thus drawing attention to the ever importance of words in understanding and defeating oppression.

Language and its usage form a very important aspect of *Rostro* as well as Marías's writing in general. One of the more common themes in his work revolves around the dangers of storytelling, a key aspect being the unforeseen consequences it can lead to. This is not to say that Marías does not understand the power of writing, in fact, he understands it quite well. But one might ask, why tell stories if there are consequences, many of which may be unintended or even undesirable? There is an undeniable value in storytelling—in particular as it allows us to narrate experiences and to express who we are—which Herzberger explains in regard to Marías's work:

The coincident interventions of language, reference, agency, and structure hover above all storytelling, and these in turn are circumscribed by readers (listeners) who receive stories and determine what they might mean as well as for what purpose they might be used. The idea of 'usefulness' is crucial here. As stories circulate within social communities they often spin beyond control of original intent—felicitously so, for many readers, as products of the imagination. But danger can hide behind and within such circulation, for stories may place people into narrations that they have not chosen to be part of, but which can transform the nature of their individual lives as well as the course of human events. (204)

Just as a writer's work is uniquely read by each individual, the value in what one says is open to different interpretations that often deviate from a speaker's original intention. While the adaptable nature of stories makes them accessible and impactful for many, it also makes them dangerous. Speaking on the importance of Marías and storytelling, Ryan advocates: "stories must be told, if memories are to be kept alive. Without a past, we cannot be prepared to face the future" (264). The dilemma to tell or not to tell stories is at the heart of *Rostro* as it focuses on the constant struggle between preserving and honoring the memories of others while also worrying about how a story will change, where it will end up, and how it will be used.

Similar to Marías's work in *Rostro*, Antonio Buero Vallejo's play *La doble historia del doctor Valmy*, also explores the impact of language. The way the characters speak to each other—as well as with the audience—recreate conversations, discussions, altercations, and interrogations typical of the societal conditions of an authoritarian state. Buero Vallejo was born in 1916, and as Carmen Chávez explains, his exemplary work, "[as he] lived through the Spanish Civil War, the Transition and entered the 21<sup>st</sup> century [make] him one of Spain's most representative playwrights of contemporary Spanish theater who did not leave Spain" (6). Buero Vallejo was devoted to the free expression of exposing Spain's oppressive conditions and sought to convey the voice of those silenced by the nationalist state. Frank P. Casa suggests:

[Because of] his unshakeable support of human dignity, his integrity in the exploration of difficult human and social problems, his inflexible resistance to tyranny, [which] miraculously, garnered him both the admiration of liberals and the respect of the right. (115)

There is no doubt that Buero Vallejo was greatly impacted by his experience as an art student before the war—where he studied at the San Fernando Escuela de Arte, his service as a medical aid in the Republic army during the war, and especially postwar imprisonment of six years. Because of these experiences Buero Vallejo was motivated to use his artistic voice to speak out against the dictatorship, as he, “like the whole nation, had been scarred by its savage Civil War [and] everything he wrote before the death of Franco in 1975 can be seen as an indirect critique of the dictator’s regime” (Dixon<sup>46</sup>).

Buero Vallejo’s intimate understanding of the hardships faced by those who opposed nationalism gave him the firsthand perspective necessary to recreate these stories within his works. Because of this his plays are unquestionably focused on creating discomfort with certain political climates, some which can be directly connected to Spain, while others are applicable anywhere authoritarian regimes are in power. Barry Jordan explains that above all Buero Vallejo’s plays are “fundamentally concerned with troubling moral dilemmas and serious political issues” (8). Buero Vallejo originally wrote *La doble historia del doctor Valmy* in 1964,

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<sup>46</sup> This quote comes from the Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes and does not have a page number.

but after numerous attempts it was banned by censorship<sup>47</sup>, which Jordan explains “was not surprising, given the parallels between Buero’s [fictional] Surelia and Franco’s Spain in the 1960s” (1). *La doble historia* tells the story of Mary Barnes and her husband Daniel, who works for the secretive and violent Security Police or S.P. Their story is told to the audience through the perspective of Doctor Valmy, a psychologist and the play’s title character, who recalls working with the couple, in particular the violent interrogation, torture, and mutilation of a prisoner, Aníbal Marty, and how it destroyed Daniel and Mary’s marriage. Phyllis Zatlin explains that after the 1976 premiere of *La doble historia* on the Spanish stage, “the play was highly successful, running for more than 800 performances,” as the story resonated with a country starved for recognition for the suffering it had endured over decades. Despite the play’s success at a pivotal moment in Spain’s transition to democracy, “Buero received death threats for dealing with a taboo topic: the torture of political prisoners” (469).

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<sup>47</sup> According to Michael Thompson *La doble historia del doctor Valmy* passed initial approval by censors in 1964, however references to the torture of political prisoners was considered “problematic but manageable as long as explicit links to Spain were avoided” (103). However, final authorization was withheld and left pending. In October of the same year the play received the necessary votes for authorization, but it was still not given. In 1966 a new application was made but ruled against and it was subsequently banned until another unsuccessful application in 1967. Eight years later, and a year before the play’s Spanish premiere, seven voters of the censorship board recommended prohibition on the grounds that “the [play’s] implied accusation against Franco’s police was valid but should not be acknowledged at such a tense moment in history” (Thompson 103), that moment no doubt referring to Franco’s impending death in November 1975. By the time the play finally premiered in January of 1976, it had been denied or delayed five times.

While other writers had previously tackled the theme of torture in an authoritarian state, Buero Vallejo's work stands out because he wrote from within the system, constantly testing the *Normas de censura* that had been applied to the performative arts beginning in 1963 (Thompson 99). Unlike other works that explore the suffering of victims, *La doble historia* took an unconventional approach by delving into the psychological consequences felt by *torturers*. However, this isn't all that *La doble historia* achieves as Zatlin explains:

Because theatre is closely tied to the political context in which it is created, an analysis of the post-Franco stage provides not only an interesting case study of what happens to culture following a long period of repressive censorship, but also of what happens to society as a whole. (459)

*La doble historia* presents an ample amount of content from which to analyze societal indifference and ignorance toward the practice of torture as it occurs within one's immediate community. In this way the play serves as a reminder of how language determining factor of attitudes that ultimately influence actions.

In this section I use *Rostro* and *La doble historia* to analyze how language is used for violence. I approach this subject by examining how language conveys symbolic violence through censorship, coercion, slander, and manipulation. I finish by describing how Marías and Buero Vallejo use their respective characters to establish the consequences of vengeful and even careless language. Their works show that one's actions, in particular towards others, are the result of what begins with language and how it is used to express one's self.

## Chapter 5

### Censorship in *Tu rostro mañana* and *La doble historia del doctor Valmy*

While language may not always come to mind as inherently violent, there are ways in which it is used for control that ultimately make it so. Broadly described, we know that physical violence as behavior is often used with the intent to hurt, damage, or in extreme cases, or kill. However, when we think of words, in particular, the suppression of certain information, we may not always realize the depth of their impact. Oppressive regimes and individuals in positions of power are known to employ censorship as a tool to change or prohibit language that they might describe as obscene, culturally or politically unacceptable, or even threatening to the security of the state.

When censors restrict language, whether it be words that are said or the transmission of media, they attack one's liberties for the benefit of those few in power who value control over many. Thompson explains that recent theorization of censorship focuses on two concepts: "first is a recognition that freedom of expression is constrained in a variety of ways by various agents in both authoritarian and democratic societies" (94). This is easily seen in how different forms of the performative arts are subject to evaluations by numerous groups that alter what is ultimately presented to an audience. Thompson describes the second concept "[as] a Foucauldian idea of censorship as implicit, constitutive, and productive, inevitably built into discourse and always conditioning in advance what

is sayable and showable" (94). These two points that Thompson illustrates apply to *Rostro* and *La doble historia* through their portrayal of censorship—especially Buero Vallejo's experience with Spanish censors. Just as we try to make sense of physical violence by asking questions, Thompson endorses language to combat oppression:

Specific questions need to be asked about each particular censorship system. Who is involved in operating it and what other roles do they play in the cultural system? How is it linked to other political and cultural institutions? How does it change over time? How do the artists and audiences affected by it respond, and what overall impact does it have on cultural productivity?  
(95)

These are the questions that audiences *must* ask when reading works that provide a historical reflection or current critique of censorship. By questioning the control of language as Marías and Buero Vallejo's works do, one comes to a better understanding of how violence is utilized, not only physically but also symbolically, to manipulate others with a specific objective. In this section, I present the manipulation of language through censorship as a dangerous tool—that even when used with the best intentions—which significantly alters human interaction.

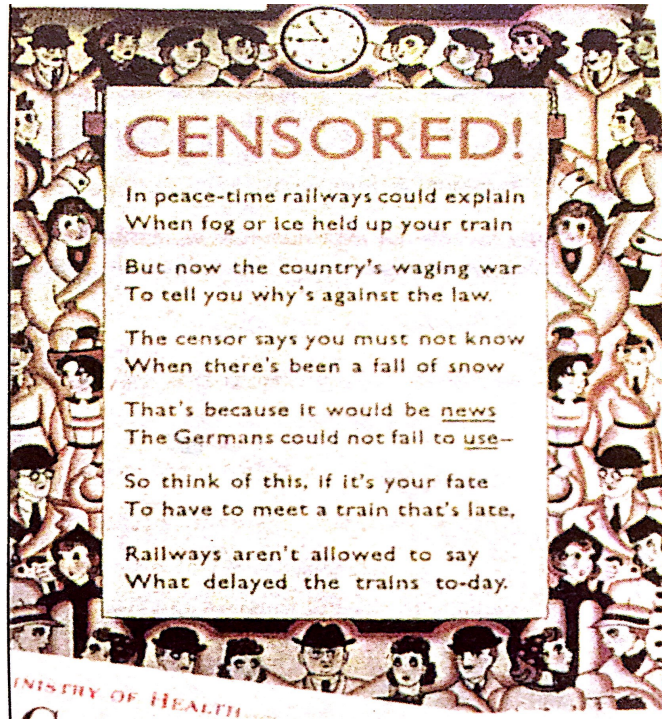
### **“Careless Talk”: Discouraging Communication in Society**

Marías explores World War II propaganda tactics, referred to as *Careless Talk*, throughout much of *Rostro*. The idea behind such propaganda was that one could never quite know if what they said would be used by an enemy. When I say “enemy,” I recognize that I am referring to a person or group that was (and is) not always so easily identifiable. For example, an individual living in Great Britain during the war would have seen a German SS Officer as a recognizable enemy.

However, many spies had long formed part of the fabric of British society and would thus be difficult for citizens to distinguish from others. Gonzalo Navajas explains that it was essential to include *careless talk* in the novel as it is a clear example of influencing communication: “El espionaje y las actividades de manipulación de la opinión pública, como ocurre en la propaganda política y militar en tiempos de guerra, generan una parte sustancial del núcleo narrativo” (153). *Careless Talk* was not only a historical campaign against speech, but it serves in the novel as an ominous reminder to the reader of the dangers of language.

The character Peter Wheeler, a former British Intelligence analyst with MI6 and Hispanist at Oxford, first introduces *Careless talk* to Jaime—and the reader—in *Fiebre y Lanza* (388) by showing his protege posters, many of them cartoons, that warn the public about the sharing of any information—including the seemingly innocent quotidian discussion of one’s schedules. Several examples appear to be more like slogans with their caricatures and easy to remember instructions. One example says, “be like dad, keep mum!” while another gives even more thorough directions about limiting the discussing of information concerning forecasts and travel. This state promoted propaganda sends a general message that “*careless talk costs lives*” (407). Of course, the idea that an individual should choose their words cautiously seems reasonable and even provides an impetus for the novel: tell stories and risk their consequences? Or remain quiet and let memory fade from existence? But even silence produces repercussions as Beatrice Hanssen explains that speaking “[is] more than just an instrumental means to freedom, [as] free speech time and

again, without fail, enacts the most basic personal liberty, yielding nothing less than a ‘free-speech-act’” (160). While this type of propaganda may help to slow an enemy from obtaining valuable information, it also has dire consequences for the citizens it restricts. By discouraging a most basic personal liberty, such as discussing even mundane details like weather, *careless talk* propaganda creates a society of fear in which the only source that can be trusted is the government.



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Figure 7

In countries and conflicts where individuals coexist in close approximation with “the enemy,” such as Spain before, during, and after the Civil War, discouraging and prohibiting undesirable communication enhances the state’s power to control its narrative—often a detriment to very people it feigns to represent. In *Rostro*, Jaime is not initially aware of such a campaign occurring in his native Spain, other than hearing things such as: “el enemigo tiene miles de oídos” (FL 407). Wheeler, however, recalls that during the Spanish Civil War, there was a similar attitude toward silence:

Se pidió a la gente que mantuviera los ojos abiertos y vigilara la retaguardia...pero lo que no creo que hubiera nunca es una campaña como esta contra la *careless talk*, en la que no sólo se puso a los ciudadanos en guardia contra los posibles espías, sino que se les recomendó el silencio como norma general: se les encomendó que no hablaran, se les ordenó y se les imploró callar. (FL 408-409)

While at this point in the story there exists no evidence of a specific campaign against communication, such as *Careless Talk*<sup>48</sup>, the overall attitude in Spain was that speaking was dangerous and that silence was safer. Jaime should know from his own father's reluctance to tell him about the war and dictatorship—just as the book's author, Marías, knows personally as the son of Julián Marías, a philosopher and intellectual, who was slandered and imprisoned for his political beliefs—that silence of others pervaded much of the sociopolitical landscape of twentieth-century Spain. Žižek suggests that we utilize language in a way that recognizes another to allow for a more mutual interaction between (60). But with *Careless Talk* or the discouraging of communication between persons, identifying the other party tends to become a negative relationship as one must always be aware of what they say to others. While the idea seems simple, reduce unnecessary or unsanctioned communication and the state will be safer, it does not account for the long-lasting consequences such practices are likely to produce in the future for those they claim to protect.

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<sup>48</sup> Later in the story, while on vacation in Madrid, Jaime visits several books shops where he finds a propaganda book about the Spanish Civil War featuring posters, some of which include slogans, similar to *Careless Talk*, much like the ones that Wheeler had previously shown him from WWII (*VSA*).

## The Barriers of Censorship in Theatrical Expression

As a provocative play for its time, *La doble historia* was—and remains—an influential critique of apathetic attitudes towards torture and other inhumane treatment within society. The play serves as a prime example of the difficulties of censorship as it passed through years of government scrutiny and rejection. Patricia O'Connor analyzed censorship under Franco in 1969, explaining:

Writers, publishers, producers and artists of all kinds must be careful not to offend Church, State or the existing morality, which is rather Victorian, if they are to earn a living and avoid the fines that are imposed should certain boundaries be overstepped. (282)

Even though the religious influence on censorship had begun to wane, “with regard to matters of language, morality, and religion,” in the years prior to Buero Vallejo finishing *La doble historia*, “expressions of dissidence or social critique, increasingly common in the exciting diversification of the theatrical landscape of Spain taking place in the 1960s, were suppressed as firmly as ever” (Thompson 99). As a result, this led to strong rejections of any dissenting voices, such as intellectuals and artists. Many who publicly held such views were forced to flee the country, living years or even decades abroad in exile. Other options for those who did not agree with the politics of Franco’s Spain were limited, including remaining silent or attempting to publish within the gauntlet of censorship<sup>49</sup>. Although Buero Vallejo valiantly

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<sup>49</sup> Censors generally worked in their positions over long periods, with many working on reviewing and censoring both film and theater productions. According to Thompson, “a distinctive feature of the Francoist censorship apparatus was the involvement of writers, intellectuals, and (unlike, for example, its Portuguese counterpart under Salazar) film and theatre professionals” (102).

remained in Spain, *La doble historia* did not “satisfy” the requirements of pro-nationalist ideals, finally forcing him to seek other options abroad for publishers and audiences that would receive the play’s message against torture.

When Buero Vallejo finished *La doble historia* in 1964, the play seemed unlikely to reach publication and performance in Spain. Because the play revolves around the debate of torture, and how it affects the primary individual(s) who not only perform the action but also the secondary individual(s) who have knowledge of the practice and deny it exists, it was improbable to reach the Spanish stage while Franco remained in power. Víctor Dixon explains that for censors, “*La doble historia del Dr. Valmy* (*The Double Case History of Dr. Valmy*), [was] an attack on political torture” (“Antonio Buero Vallejo”). Not only did the play’s content provide a compelling critique against the use of torture, but it also unveiled the darker sides of systemic oppression that led many Spaniards to believe that such terrible things could not happen in their country. Additionally, the play’s problem was not only how it criticized torture but also any connections to the political climate that might have influenced citizens to question how the country was being run. Finding parallels between fiction and reality would not have been—difficult to make—nor are they now—as O’Connor explains:

The theme [of *La doble historia*] was potentially dangerous because of the miner’s strike in Asturias in 1963, and the subsequent publication in the newspapers of a letter signed by 101 intellectuals (Buero among them) calling for investigation of claims by striking miners that some of them and members of some of their families had been tortured, mutilated and killed by police. (286)

The Asturian Mining Strike seemed to ultimately motivate Buero Vallejo to explore torture as a theme in his next work. José María Rodríguez García echoes O'Connor's comparison saying that Buero Vallejo used the experience, along with his time as a political prisoner, to recreate torture scenes in *La doble historia* (586-587). The accusations of torture and killing by police drew apparent connections to the play, in particular with Daniel Barnes' employment as an officer working in interrogation for the fictional Sección Política de la Seguridad Nacional or S.P. Any connection between fiction and reality, such as this, would seem to undermine any belief that Franco's regime did not use torture and thus make it difficult for the play to pass censorship. Buero Vallejo's imprisonment in the years following the civil war would have made his efforts to publish much more difficult as he was already highly scrutinized by nationalist authorities. However, this did not wholly deter his efforts to critique the injustices that he had witnessed and continued to see in his country.

While the miner's strike played a factor in the play's censorship, it was not the only reason authorities deemed it unfit for performance or publication. Among other reasons was the connections between the play's setting and characters to Spain—a link easily made because of places and names that were familiar and identifiable with the country. O'Connor explained that several different companies attempted to stage the *La doble historia* but were ultimately unsuccessful. First, it was due to an unresponsive censorship office, and second, when another company learned that the “unofficial word from the censorship office was that the play would be approved [but] with minor changes, one being that the names and places be made foreign” (286).

Buero Vallejo complied with this feedback, which included changing the play's original name, *La doble historia del doctor Varga*. However, he received more feedback that he refused to follow, thus making other companies reluctant to schedule production of the play as approval by The Office of Censorship seemed unlikely<sup>50</sup>It is no coincidence that *La doble historia* occurs in a foreign—and fictitious—country called Surelia. Negative connection to Spain would have drawn unfavorable comparisons for the society that Franco's regime had meticulously cultivated.

Another example of censorship occurs within the *La doble historia* itself as its characters even debate the merit of books from differing standpoints, no doubt a nod to the writing process Buero Vallejo endured. At one-point, Abuela mentions to her son, Daniel, that a book came for him, but his wife, Mary, took it with her before going out for coffee. When Mary returns very late after reading the book from cover to cover, Daniel, confronts her about how she got it. Mary explains that the book was sent to her by an unknown sender. While Buero Vallejo initially appears to let us wonder who might have sent it, the issue is quickly resolved when Daniel takes the book and reads the title out loud, *Breve historia de la tortura*. At this point, we conclude that the unknown individual must be Lucila Marty, who revealed to Mary

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<sup>50</sup> Another reason for the plays inability to pass censorship might likely have been because of some its secondary themes, as the *Normas de censura* prohibited “the justification of suicide, mercy or revenge killings, divorce, adultery, extramarital sex, prostitution, and abortion” (Thompson 99). No doubt *La doble historia's* ending alone would have ruffled a few feathers in The Office of Censorship.

that Daniel had been involved with torturing her husband, Aníbal. However, Mary's reluctance to listen forced Lucila to find another way to reach her former teacher, which was done by sending the book. Returning to Daniel and Mary's dispute over the book, their attitudes mimic, albeit on a small scale, similar debates over the censorship of works that occurred under Franco. As Mary tells Daniel about the book's contents, which she defends as a complete and unbiased work, he begins to get upset, immediately interrogating Mary about where it came from before attempting to discredit the work and dissuade his wife from believing it. The words that Daniel says cannot be viewed as coincidental, as they mirror the same polarizing language that individuals in positions of authority use to denounce dissenting voices, including: "¡Es un libro repulsivo!," "Cómo se pueden publicar estas cosas?" and "¡Literatura sensacionalista! ¡engañabobos!" (73). The inclusion of the book points to another problem. Buero Vallejo appears to suggest that when society will not believe victims of oppression and violence, that the written word, represented by *Breve historia de la tortura*, is essential to unveil the terrible realities that occur in secret.

Unfortunately, many individuals remain unopen to learning about the use of violence in the world, and much less those occurring in a place they call home. For example, just as Daniel denounces the book, Luis Iglesias Feijoo explains that Abuela also struggles with its very presence: "ella ve, pero prefiere no seguir leyendo, prefiere continuar 'ciega' ante esas brutalidades" (334). However, the book changes Mary's attitude as she shifts from never questioning Daniel to expressing serious concern at the possibility that he has participated in acts of torture: "Yo sé que tú no

puedes haber hecho esas cosas! Se las estás viendo hacer a ellos y tienes que callar. Es eso lo que pasa, ¿verdad?" (73). When Mary learns that Daniel has indeed participated in torturing prisoners she attempts to persuade him to find other work: "¿Cómo has podido colaborar con esas fieras? ¿Te resulta difícil abandonarlas cuando te diste cuenta? ¡Pobre mío, lo que habrás sufrido! ¡Pero yo te ayudaré a salir de ese pozo! Ahora que ya nada nos ocultamos, lo lograremos" (73). As Mary educates herself, she grows bolder to the point of questioning not only what Daniel does but the type of man he is. In actuality, Buero is doing the same thing with *La doble historia's* audience as he does not tell us what to think about the play but instead guides us to a point where we begin to ask questions before making our own conclusions about torture.

In *Rostro* and *La doble historia*, we see how Marías and Buero use the theme of censorship to show the barriers it creates for everyday speech and artistic expression. Both works provide examples of how onerous censorship made conditions for the spoken and written word, in particular, as the sharing of specific messages became a difficult task to do without losing the original idea that the speaker or writer intended to convey. During Franco's dictatorship, publishing works with approval from the censorship office was an arduous task to accomplish without losing themes that writers, such as Buero, hoped to explore. When writers use examples of censorship in their works, such as Marías with *careless talk*, it reminds the reader to rethink attitudes they may not have initially seen as wrong towards societal injustices. *Rostro* examines the role censorship played during the Spanish Civil War, as well as WWII in

Great Britain, by utilizing history books and war-era posters to recreate banned or discouraged language. This has a resounding impact on Jaime as he comes to question how secrets affect his life and the lives of others he analyzes for a living. Buero Vallejo, whose *La historia* was heavily restricted and ultimately disapproved of by censors, uses the *Breve historia de la tortura* as a literary device to guide Mary, as well as the audience and the reader, to reconsider her stances on torture. Indeed, both the censorship occurring within the play and the process of publishing and performing it demonstrates how strongly differing ideas and criticisms were censored during the dictatorship years. *Rostro* and *La doble historia* portray censorship as a violent anti-speech act that represses societal growth through dialogue, often leading to outbreaks of physical violence.

### **Verbal Coercion**

Language gives human beings a vast array of expressions with which to communicate with one another. However, not all view language as a positive exchange. Coercion, for example, is one of the more negative uses of language, trending closer to violent action than a productive interaction between two-parties. In both *Rostro* and *La doble historia* coercion is used by some characters to exert their power over others, sometimes in a highly sexual way—either exploiting one for sex or abusing, and even threatening the genital mutilation of a prisoner. In *Rostro*, Jaime uses his position with Tupra to coerce his female colleague, the younger Pérez Nuix, into having sex with him. Even though he is the "hero" of the trilogy, Jaime is unable to resist using Pérez Nuix's vulnerable position for his

gratification. In *La doble historia*, coercion is much more barbaric as the audience witnesses the interrogation of Aníbal Marty by the S.P., who repeatedly mock and beat him in an attempt to extract information. The interrogation is futile and results in the S.P. using extreme measures by threatening to castrate Aníbal. In both the scenes with Pérez Nuix and the interrogation of Aníbal Marty, characters resort to coercive methods to violently establish their position in relation to others. From threats that range from sexual favors to emasculation, Marías and Buero Vallejo communicate the terrible that language has when used in violation of another's free will.

*Pérez Nuix: Language as Collateral*

The inclusion of Pérez Nuix and her father in *Rostro* is a small storyline that Marías uses to blend historical and fictional examples of the possible dangers of language within the novel's many layers. On a rainy night, another one of Tupra's analysts, Pérez Nuix<sup>51</sup>, makes an unexpected visit to Jaime's London flat seeking a favor (FL 475, BS 33-35). She asks Jaime, whom she views as a gifted interpreter of people and, more importantly, Tupra's new favorite analyst, to give a man named Vanni Incompara a favorable assessment. Jaime comments on what Pérez Nuix is asking of him: "sólo que ayudase a Incompara, en la medida de mis probabilidades y de mi prudencia, a salir del escrutinio con un notable o un aprobado; que emitiera una opinión favorable en lo relativo a su fiabilidad...que en ningún caso lo

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<sup>51</sup> When Jaime mentions Pérez Nuix in the novel he uses her family names.

perjudicara" (VSA 105). Jaime discovers the reason for Pérez Nuix's desperation as her father owes large gambling debts to Incompara, a dangerous mafioso, who is willing to forgive the debt in exchange for a highly coveted positive evaluation by one of Tupra's analysts. While she continually insists that such a favor means nothing, Jaime unsure at this point precisely what Tupra's reaction would be if he realizes he has been deceived by one of his own—especially Jaime.

The inclusion of Pérez Nuix's story in the overall plot of the novel shows the exchange value of language as a sort of currency. Although Pérez Nuix's father owed nearly two hundred thousand pounds (VSA 127), Jaime's report is the only thing that can satisfy the massive debt that Incompara requires. The information that Pérez Nuix asks Jaime to include in his report is valuable not only to Incompara and her father but to her as well. Furthermore, because of this value, Jaime is in a new position of power where he can demand the price for his participation. Pérez Nuix understands this, and using the pretext of a rainy night, asks to stay over and subsequently sleeps with Jaime. Although Pérez Nuix seems prepared to have sex if she must, it is Jaime who recognizes the power dynamic of the situation and exploits her for sex (VSA 143-152). This scene serves as one of the best examples to demonstrate Jaime's sense of moral behavior that continually declines throughout much of the novel. In the beginning, Jaime's conscience—or innocence—shelters him from using violent means for any gain, but as he continues to work for Tupra, his ethics slowly erode.

Another critical aspect of the favor that Pérez Nuix asks of Jaime relates to plausible deniability. Before Jaime agrees to help her father, he hesitates because of the lack of information that he receives from his colleague, remaining apprehensive about deceiving or even possibly betraying Tupra—a man who believes that no one is above suspicion. Pérez Nuix, however, sees Jaime as Tupra does: a talented interpreter of people who can predict what they will do in moments of danger or violence, who can foresee if they will be heroes, cowards, or even do nothing. Pérez Nuix praises Jaime as a talented professional and points out that even Tupra has said so (VSA 120-121). This, however, causes an internal dilemma for Jaime as he recalls what an intermediary provides, remembering Del Real and what he had done to his father:

[Él] también había actuado por personas interpuestas contra mi padre: primero reclutó al segundo nombre, aquel profesor Santa Olalla que prestó su firma para reforzar una denuncia contra quien no conocía, y luego...No habían ido por él ellos dos, por Juan Deza, el día de San Isidro del 39, sino que habían enviado a la policía de Franco para detenerlo y meterlo en la cárcel, y después habían intervenido testigos, fiscal, abogado y juez de farsa, casi nada es nunca directo ni cara a cara, ni vemos el rostro de quien nos pierde, casi siempre hay alguien en medio, entre tú y yo, o yo y el muerto, entre él y ella. (VSA 115).

Jaime realizes that just as his father had faced accusations by nameless individuals, Pérez Nuix's request also makes him an intermediary in what he fears could also be a lie. The very role of an intermediary is critical to recruiting another individual, snowballing into a web of intermediaries—few of which, if any, know the motive behind the conspiracy—who provides the most evidence against, or for in the case of Jaime and his analysis of Incompara, the individual. This realization troubles

Jaime as he knows recalls how not just one accuser destroyed his father's reputation but many, some even unseen—perhaps only doing a "favor" for another.

*The Interrogation of Aníbal Marty*

While the majority of Buero Vallejo's play focuses on Daniel and Mary Barnes' struggle to cope with what the former has seen and done, there is still a wealth of content worthy of analysis concerning the character of Aníbal Marty. While I focus more on the actual torture of Marty<sup>52</sup> later in this dissertation, here I analyze the tactics used by Daniel's police unit to viciously interrogate so-called political agitators. Daniel's unit, the feared S.P., uses language to collectively belittle, mock, intimidate, and threaten their prisoners who are detained and interrogated alone and without the possibility of judicial recourse. By watching the interrogation scenes, one comes to realize that what the S.P. says is more than just words but also foreshadowing the extreme measures they are inclined to resort to in order to obtain the information they want.

There are numerous methods that fictional characters in literature, drama, and film used to interrogate prisoners. A common tactic is often for a character, to begin with a calmer attitude, such as joint questioning or the well-known "good cop/bad cop routine," that sometimes intensifies toward an impending physical act—or eruption of violence. When the S.P. first interrogates Marty, there are five

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<sup>52</sup> Aníbal Marty is referred to by his last name in *La doble historia*.

members of the S.P. present: Paulus<sup>53</sup>, Luigi, Pozner, Marsan, and the play's protagonist, Daniel Barnes. They bring Marty into the room and remove his handcuffs while nonchalantly discussing his torture—were his handcuffs too tight and how many times did they give him the electric shock—while taunting that his friends have already talked. Paulus even prepares Marty's story for him, or at least the version the S.P. wants to hear and allows him a chance to give a "satisfying" answer:

PAULUS: ¡Silencio!... Dale un cigarrillo, Daniel. Esta es una conversación amistosa. (Enciende un cigarrillo, mientras DANIEL le pone al detenido otro cigarrillo en la boca y se lo prende, volviendo luego a su sitio.) Marty, tú no eras más que un enlace. El día dos del mes pasado recibiste la visita de un desconocido que venía del extranjero. Y no sabes quién es. Te dio un sobre que tú debías llevar a algún sitio. Y tampoco sabes el contenido. Bien; admitámoslo. Pero el lugar a donde fuiste y la persona a quien se lo entregaste sí los conoces.

MARTY: ¡Ya le he dicho que fue en un café!

PAULUS: ¡Fue en una casa! (Levanta las declaraciones.) Ya has visto que todos coinciden. (47-48)

This first part of the interrogation scene sets a precedent for what the S.P. expects from Marty but is ultimately unable to extract. Marty, terrified from the electric shock, offers the only information that he knows, but it is simply not enough. The idea of getting a "truthful" confession from Marty is incredibly flawed as the S.P. does not seek to discover what he knows but rather what they desire to hear. Thus we see how coercion can be an easily flawed method for receiving intel, as the interrogators are no doubt biased by the information they seek.

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<sup>53</sup> Paulus, the leader of the S.P. unit, is also called "Papaíto" by Daniel and his fellow officers, directs the interrogation of political prisoners.

In *La doble historia*, Buero Vallejo smartly uses the S.P.'s interrogation tactics to demonstrate how oppressive state-run security crafts—and then supports—narratives to keep their system of oppression in place. The S.P.'s very efforts to extract intelligence from Marty demonstrates their nature as unjust law enforcement—there are no Miranda Rights, no opportunity for an attorney, or trial before a jury<sup>54</sup>. Marty is expected instead to confess what the S.P. wants, which is simply information that he does not have. García explains that the interrogation is at an-impasse:

Como la verdad se produce cuando el prisionero pronuncia un testimonio autoinculpatario, es muy significativo que Aníbal Marty muera en las dependencias de la S.P. sin confesar su culpa. Así se revela la arbitrariedad e ilegitimidad de todo testimonio obtenido por medios coercitivos. (601)

This seems to be the point that Buero Vallejo is trying to make by recreating an interrogation scene for the stage that not only builds towards the violent act of Marty's castration but leaves the prisoners with no option but to accept the story that is dictated to them by their captors. It also makes a key point for how the threat of torture does not necessarily, or at least effectively, always lead to a truthful confession from prisoners that is reflective of reality. However, if the admission of guilt is what is needed, then any individual who is innocent of accusations shows a gaping flaw in the system of gathering intelligence. A prisoner, such as Aníbal Marty,

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<sup>54</sup> This is opposite to how Marías explores Miranda warnings in *Rostro* as the circulation of stories, or any utterance for that matter, can put one in danger as the initial idea or message becomes open to interpretation. But in *La doble historia*, Marty, as a political prisoner who is secretly detained, is on trial before a police agency that has already determined his verdict.

is guilty not necessarily because of the information he knows—which, in Marty's case, is quite limited—but because his captors need a scapegoat.

The S.P.'s attempts to force Marty to confess do not cease with their pressure for an answer. Instead, their verbal attacks become more violent. Paulus continually ridicules Marty by telling him that he has been betrayed by the other prisoners<sup>55</sup>, promising him four "short" years of jail time, before threatening him "si no...hablarás de todos modos, pero lo que nosotros queremos. Entonces serás uno de los jefes y tú mismo lo firmarás. Aquí no hay escape, ya lo sabes. ¿Te decides?" (48). Paulus and the others then threaten to bring Marty's wife, Lucila, back in for interrogation, but since it did not make him talk before Paulus comes up with a new and more terrible threat. Seeing how Marty and Lucila are only a year and half into their marriage, Paulus says to Marty: "Si sales de ésta, ¿no te gustaría tener hijos?... ¡Contesta!" (49). Here Paulus is not merely asking Marty about his and Lucila's plans for having children, but leads to his next and most violent threat:

PAULUS: ¿Sí?... Pero es que, de todos modos, habremos de apretarle. Y como nos habrá obligado a apretarle mucho...ya no tendrá hijos (MARTY lo mira, asustado. DANIEL se levanta. Todos se miran.) Pero él no querrá vivir toda la vida con su mujer como con una hermana. Sería un precio excesivo para esta locura suya de juventud.

LUIGI: (silba levemente): Fantástico.

PAULUS: ¡Supongo que me entiendes! Lo he dicho muy en serio y ya nos tienes hartos. ¿Vas a hablar?

MARTY: ¡Yo no sé, yo no sé nada...!

PAULUS: ¡Basta! Tú lo has querido. Llévenlo adentro y que se desnude.

Daniel, quédate conmigo. (Entre POZNER y MARSAN arrastran al detenido hasta la puerta del foro. Luigi la abre.) (49)

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<sup>55</sup> Paulus even shows Marty the signed confessions of his associates, calling them cowards that do not deserve Marty's silence.

As the interrogation scene comes to an end, the audience and reader see the power that Paulus and the S.P. have with their threats as they are not limited to the constraints of what one might consider acceptable language towards another. The S.P.'s is secretive, keeping Marty and his fellow prisoners are held captive outside of the view of the public and without any opportunity for defending themselves within the judicial system. Through the verbal attacks, Paulus has searched for Marty's weak spot and found it by threatening his ability to have children with his wife. While Paulus does not directly tell Marty that they are going to castrate him—which they indeed do—the actual threat sounds far worse as Paulus says that Marty will live the rest of his life with Lucila like a sister instead of a husband. In this way, Paulus and the S.P. show that language, used as a tactic for intimidation, becomes far more useful when words connect with imminent action.

### **Unreliable Characters**

It is not always what we say with language but rather what others say that may lead to violent consequences. Besides censorship and coercion, slander and denial affect how we see others. Individuals use these statements to alter another's reputation and to gain from their loss. Characters use this type of language in both *Rostro* and *La doble historia* to vilify individuals or messages with which they disagree. Marías relies heavily on historical examples of slander and betrayal, while Buero Vallejo creates two characters who openly denounce his play both at the beginning and the climactic ending. What both writers had seen and the discourse

they heard, from others to disparage another within their country, influenced how they conceptualized language. *Rostro* and *La doble historia* recreate the insecurity that this sort of language leads to and the subsequent volatility of situations on the brink of conflict.

### *The Tragic Case of Andrés Nin*

Marías uses multiple persons from Spain's history in *Rostro* to convey the consequences of language in a way that makes them more relatable and tangible for the reader. Ever fascinated with the power of storytelling, Marías uses the novel to show that stories have a time and place in which their value increases for the audiences that hear them. At one point, Jaime recalls a comment that Tupra made at Wheeler's party: "todo tiene su tiempo para ser creído, hasta lo más inverosímil y descabellado" (FL 142). Nevertheless, as Marías explores, an individual such as Andrés Nin<sup>56</sup>, was not allowed to refute his accusers or live to see others deny their accusations (FL 142). Writer and fellow communist José Bergamín had denounced P.O.U.M., the Marxist party that Nin belonged to, claiming that it had betrayed the ideology and was not a party at all but rather "una organización de espionaje y colaboración con el enemigo...no una organización en connivencia con el enemigo, sino el enemigo mismo, una parte de la organización fascista" (FL 152). Among the accusations brought against Nin, was a narrative fabricated by other leftists that he,

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<sup>56</sup> Nin, also known by the Catalán form of his name, Andreu, was a communist party member who helped form the *Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista* (POUM)/Party of Marxist Unification in Spain in 1935.

and his party, had collaborated with Franco in espionage or other pro-fascist activities.

The oppression Nin was subject to by Communists was not unique, as many involved with P.O.U.M were also accused of pro-fascist sympathies. George Orwell, in *Homage to Catalonia*, explained that P.O.U.M. was declared an illegal organization by the Negrín Government and slandered by the Communist Press for supposed participation in a vast Fascist plot. Orwell described the persecution Nin others in P.O.U.M. were subject to:

The Communist-controlled secret police acted on the assumption that all were guilty alike and arrested everyone connected with the P.O.U.M. whom they could lay hands on, including even wounded men, hospital nurses, wives of members and in some cases, even children. (173)

Many Republicans used slanderous language to garner support from Moscow and Stalin, showing how easy it is to abandon another—in this case, one's countrymen and companion in the fight against fascism—for greater access to ideological and financial power. Speaking on the dangers of language—in particular accusations within one's own party—Navajas adds: "se realiza la versión de la duplicidad de la realidad política en cuanto que Nin fue devorado por la misma maquinaria ideológica y política a la que sirvió lealmente y a la que entregó y sacrificó su vida" (154). In *Rostro*, Jaime struggles to comprehend the "disloyalty" that preceded Nin's demise, commenting later to Wheeler: "él no habló, no contestó, no dio nombres ni dijo nada. Nin, mientras lo torturaban. Le costó la vida, aunque seguramente habrían acabado quitándosela de todas formas" (FL 458). Nin's character is highly symbolic

in the schism that formed amongst Republicans in Spain. Nin was denounced a fascist, along with others like him, by Negrín's Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) and the Communist Party of Spain (PCE), who sought to purge those who were independent of Moscow or anti-Stalinist.

It is apparent in Marías's writing that he believes that language has a significant power to place individuals in precarious situations—some even mortally dangerous. As Jaime ponders how words are used against others, "seguro que tampoco Nin tenía idea de que iba a resistir hasta la sepultura, cuando lo torturaron sus vecinos políticos en la lengua que él había aprendido y a la que bien había servido" (FL 183). Marías's inclusion of Nin as a historical figure in *Rostro* shows that not only fascists weaponized language but also the leftist Republicans were known to use it—even amongst themselves. Navajas also argues that part of Marías's reasoning for including Nin in the novel was to give his story a different narrative as his memory "es recuperado por la textualidad ficcional y aparece dentro de ella no como un traidor sino como una víctima de las maquinaciones políticas" (155). Marías thoroughly explores multiple stories of those who lived through turbulent times in *Rostro*, such as Nin, to give meaning to the tragedies of the past.

#### *Juan Deza: Betrayal and False Testimony*

Slander and betrayal form an integral part of what violence can lead to when used against another individual. Another such instance, revisited several times in *Rostro*, concerns Jaime's father, who took part in the Spanish Civil War as a

correspondent for the Republicans but never participated directly in any fighting. Jaime finds multiple references to his father as he browses the books in Wheeler's study, even finding some written by him, and as he does so he cannot help but reflect on his betrayal:

Allí estaban los juveniles textos, que sin duda constituyeron parte de los muchos cargos de que se vio acusado—la mayoría inventados, imaginarios, falsos—al poco de terminar y perderse la guerra, cuando lo traicionó y delató a las vencedoras autoridades facciosas su mejor amigo de entonces, un tal Del Real con el que había compartido aulas y conversaciones, intereses y cafés y amistades y tertulias y cines y seguramente algunas juergas a lo largo de los años. (FL 192)

Marías uses Juan Deza's betrayal to demonstrate just how dangerous language can be, even when one feels comfortable and confident in the loyalty of friends. As a particularly gifted analyst of people, Jaime himself is unable to understand how his father could spend so much time with another and never suspect their true nature. Reflecting on his father's betrayal, Jaime asks "¿cómo puedo no conocer hoy tu rostro mañana, el que ya está o se fragua bajo la cara que enseñas o bajo la careta que llevas, y que me mostrarás tan sólo cuando no lo espere?" (FL 199) and remembers asking his father if he had sensed that Del Real would betray him, to which he responded:

Jamás había imaginado algo así. Cuando lo supe, no di crédito al principio, pensé que tenía que ser un error o malentendido...luego cuando la cosa me llegó por demasiados conductos y ya no pude hacer caso omiso y la tuve que creer, y resignarme a aceptarla, me resultó incomprensible, inexplicable. (FL 203)

This fictional anecdote from the novel shows how language is used to attack one's character for personal gain. Del Real abused the trust of his friend, Juan Deza, to

profit from the valuable, albeit fabricated, information. His reward for assisting the Nationalists' search for Jaime's father and putting him in jail led to his appointment as a professor at a university in northern Spain (FL 195). The inaction of Jaime's father bothers him most, "posteriormente su padre haya renunciado a la venganza y haya preferido mantener silencio, porque sólo así tendrá plena seguridad de no haber dicho nunca nada que pudiera perjudicar a cualquiera" (Logie 179). Any utterance after it has left one's lips can later be used against the one who spoke it, even in the most relaxed and intimate situations. As Marías warns from the very beginning, one must remember never to say anything.

One of the powerful and ironic messages of *Rostro* is Marías's caution to refrain from storytelling. While Jaime repeats this several times, Marías himself is telling many stories within the novel. As we have seen, one of the stories that Marías tells is that of his own father's betrayal through the semi-fictional Juan Deza.

Carmen Moreno-Nuño explains why Marías would include such a story in the novel:

The author's supposed betrayal of Spanish literary tradition is indeed superceded by another treason with much more serious consequences; the treason that sent his father, Julián Marías, to prison right after the war is what nourishes his writing. This treason has never been forgotten by the offspring, for his philosopher father was falsely accused by one of his best friends. (132)

Just as Marías included Nin's story within the novel to recuperate his memory, he seems even more motivated to recreate his father's to explore and better understand the past. Marías's writing appears driven to answer, discuss, and find

reasons for the atrocities committed against an older generation now dismissed with silence.

It is not surprising that as soon as Marías decides to explore the national reality in order to incorporate it into his fiction, a family trauma emerges. Jaime reflects on his own family's experience by incorporating it into his writing as a leitmotiv. (Moreno-Nuño 132)

Marías explores the complicated past of his father and his country, criticizing, through Jaime, the many social and political practices that led to years of suffering. Silence or never telling anyone anything is a powerful idea because once a story (or joke, gossip, information, to name a few) is told, it escapes the original speaker's control and floats through time and space. Herzberger comments that as one speaks, their "stories insinuate themselves (or are thrust) into the social order and thus can never be restrained by original intent or desired effect" (212-213). There are two such fictional examples from the novel that demonstrate the danger of sharing information. First, the father of Patricia Pérez Nuix; second, the wife of Peter Wheeler, Valerie, whom I discuss more in-depth in the section on the ethics of violence.

*Deniers of Torture: El Señor and la Señora in Buero Vallejo's La doble historia*

From the very beginning of *La doble historia* Buero Vallejo creates a theatrical environment in which the audience is unsure of what to believe. Before the main cast even enters the stage, two characters, the Señor and the Señora, address the audience directly. Buero Vallejo uses their presence to create an environment of distrust as they do not welcome spectators to the show but instead

warn them that what they are about to see is not graphic, violent, or even real, but that it is false (25). Pennington explains that the couple "present[s] their point of view and request that the audience weigh it against the narrators... they have succeeded at instilling doubt in the audience concerning the play they are about to witness" ("Subjective Drama" 101). I agree with Pennington to a point, that is, I do not agree that the couple "request[s]" the audience compare their point of view with Dr. Valmy's version of Daniel and Mary Barnes' story. Instead, they directly and explicitly tell the audience not to believe this other version. While this does create uncertainty for the spectator, it also leads to a possible bias against believing Dr. Valmy. Then again, this may also be a point that Buero Vallejo wanted to make, that is, that unless we witness something firsthand, we can never truly have an unbiased view of it, as all viewpoints presented to us are influenced in some way or another. However, this is not all the couple says as they attempt to manipulate how the audience views the play :

SEÑORA: Y no han sido ustedes congregados aquí para creerse nada, sino para pasar un rato agradable...

SEÑOR: Ya saben cual es la manera: gozar de lo que se nos cuenta sin llegar a creerlo. Queremos recordárselo, porque siempre puede haber algún ingenuo dispuesto a dar por ciertos los mayores desatinos. (25)

The Señor and the Señora accurately remind the audience that the play is a work of fiction. However, their appearance influences what the audience is about to see.

Carmen Chávez argues that "the couple is completely oblivious to the torture and monstrosities that exist in their country" (38); however, I disagree. For the couple to have enough knowledge to persuade the audience against Dr. Valmy's version of the

story, they could not be completely ignorant of the S.P.'s tactics. Instead, I believe they have just enough knowledge of what goes on in Surelia to realize that it is easier—or in their interest—to deny the use of torture than to question why it is happening. Before the audience can take in the play's themes concerning torture and its effect on those who use it, they may knowingly or unknowingly put up barriers that bias their perception. When scenes do appear that impact and push the boundaries of dramatic aesthetic, thus creating discomfort, they remind the audience of what the Señor and Señora said at the beginning.

The appearance of the couple at the beginning plays an essential role in framing the rest of *La doble historia*. The couple is the focus of the "first story," framing the "second story," in which Dr. Valmy relates the experiences of his patients, Daniel and Mary Barnes. The Señor and the Señora preface the play's central story (25-26) before returning to interrupt the "second story" near the end of the play. This final interruption is not an epilogue per se, as Dr. Valmy explains the aftermath of the second story's final scene. The Señor and Señora's second interruption is a blatant effort to undermine the engrossing story that Dr. Valmy has told and to remind the audience that the play is not to be believed. In the beginning, before Dr. Valmy enters with his secretary to begin the story of Daniel and Mary Barnes, the Señor and Señora emerge on stage and directly denounce the contents and themes of the play the audience is about to see:

SEÑOR: Por si las hay entre ustedes, les repartiremos algo muy sabido todo el que cuenta una historia la recarga.

SEÑORA: Y la aproxima: siempre parece como si hubiese sucedido a nuestro lado.

SEÑOR: Eso también debemos dejarlo claro. Si sucedió algo parecido no fue entre nosotros. Esas cosas tal vez pasen, si pasan, en tierras aún semibárbaras...

SEÑORA: En algún país lejano.

SEÑOR: Permanezcan, pues, tranquilos, ya que la historia, probablemente falsa, nos llega además de otras tierras y no nos atañe.

SEÑORA: Y, sobre todo, conserven la sonrisa. En el mundo hubo y hay todavía muchas desgracias; pero a costa de ese precio, hemos aprendido a sonreír.

SEÑOR: Y la sonrisa es el más bello hallazgo de la humanidad. ¡No la pierdan

SEÑORA: No la pierdan nunca. (26)

This final advisory before the Señor and Señora return briefly at the end of *La doble historia* represents attitudes that are far too familiar in societies controlled by oppressive and violent regimes—such as Franco's Spain. The very words that Buero Vallejo's characters use expertly mirror what naysayers living within such societies use. They claim the story is an exaggeration and that such events could never happen there, in the fictitious Surelia, but could only occur in a foreign and less civilized nation. While the couple prepares the audience to remain calm or to "continue smiling," before the second story commences, their words mirror the way language is used to placate concerns about the use of torture. In this way, the Señor and Señora are unreliable commentators on the social conditions of Surelia, where Buero Vallejo's play takes place. Even before the play has even begun, they aim to convince the audience that what they have come to see is no more than a work of fiction. This draws similar comparisons to how governments and even citizens deflect or openly deny allegations that acts of torture occur in a land they call home.

This opening scene is a prime example of the violent, yet subtle, ways language is weaponized in *La doble historia*. The couple's words are an indirect attack against those who suffer the very acts of torture they denounce as exaggerations and lies. Chávez explains that the couple has a profound impact on the play: "the public has been instructed to watch but not to believe...At first, this scene seems to emotionally distance the spectator from the horrors presented on stage; in actuality, it lures the spectator into a false sense of security" (39). As tragic as the couple's words may seem, when considering the entirety of the play's events, they imitate real societal indifference or even denial that torture is used. Speaking on torture as a theme in Spanish theater Emilio Neglia explains:

Hoy como dice Daniel, se oculta [la tortura] como a un hijo deforme porque el hombre se cree más civilizado. Hasta existen declaraciones universales contra su uso. Sin embargo, a pesar de no ser aceptada legalmente, la práctica de la tortura ha vuelto a aparecer en muchos países...los interesados y los representantes del gobierno siguen diciendo que son fantasías, falsedades, exageraciones y propaganda. Hasta la gente decente como la esposa de Daniel, puede no enterarse de la verdad hasta que la tortura le afecte directamente. Esta gente, parecen decir Pavlovsky y Buero Vallejo, es cómplice por ignorancia. En efecto, no son los torturadores los únicos responsables. Toda la sociedad lo es. (99-100)

As Neglia points out, we are all capable of being duped into thinking that torture does not exist—or at least not by our government and not where we live. Because of this, the audience should be asking questions and voicing concerns instead of falling into the trap laid by the Señor and Señora. When the couple says that if something similar did occur, then it must have occurred somewhere else; one must ask, "if

what occurred?" and if it is torture, "why would it matter where?" While we should ask questions and try to "learn, learn, learn" (8), as Žižek says, we too often do not.

When the play comes to its dramatic ending, with Mary killing Daniel, the Señor and Señora make another surprise appearance to interrupt Dr. Valmy's narration of Daniel and Mary's story. They appear at the climactic moment in which Mary feels threatened by Daniel and warns she will shoot him if he comes closer. At this point, Dr. Valmy appears with his secretary, questioning why Daniel never considered how his work might affect his family. It is at this very moment when the doctor reflects on the Barnes family situation that the Señor and Señora impede the narration "SEÑOR: Nos obliga a intervenir de nuevo. SEÑORA (al público): No le hagan caso, amigos míos. Ya les dijimos que la historia es falsa" (111). Again, we are reminded of the couple's previous warning to not listen. After witnessing the tragic events of what has occurred in the play, some might still see the story as having no relation to any events with which the audience might compare them. The couple's interruption causes the audience to reconsider the simplicity of their narrative. That is that the story is an exaggeration, false; "no le hagan caso, amigos míos. Ya les dijimos que la historia es falsa!" (111-112). The couple's attempt to alter the public reception of the play is either expertly placed by to preserve a system that relies on torture as a practice or is proof of their instability as they are unable even to consider the story's authenticity.

Buero Vallejo does end the play with opposing voices dividing the audience on what happened. Instead, he sends a more profound message of the consequences

that torturers and their families with which they must reconcile. As the Señor and Señora vehemently deny the story, "Y si ocurrió algo parecido, no fue tan espantoso. Ya sabemos que alguna vez, hay quien se excede... y quizá se le escapa alguna "galleta," Dr. Valmy signals to a nurse to remove the couple. When this happens, the audience's eyes are opened to the reality of the couple's madness as they are forcefully removed from the stage and continue to shout "¡No pierdan la sonrisa!" (111-112). The Señor and Señora are two of Doctor Valmy's former patients as they discharged because they refused to believe, as the Barnes' neighbors, what happened to Daniel and Mary (112). The audience must now reconsider how they received the play's message, especially if what the couple said at the beginning influenced their opinion. However, the audience must remember the most poignant observation that Buero Vallejo conveys in the play as Doctor Valmy speaks about the couple, his former patients: "en nuestro extrañísimo mundo, todavía no se puede calificar a esa incredulidad de locura. Y hay millones como ellos. Millones de personas que deciden ignorar el mundo en que viven. Pero nadie les llama locos" (112). Before the mental state of the couple is revealed to the audience, their words are without question influential, now their words are suspect at best. *La doble historia* is seemingly an experiment conducted on the audience to test how willfully ignorant or gullible they might be. If they sit back—and smile—without asking questions, then they are another "loco," just as Buero Vallejo feared, easily swayed against the reality that violence occurs in places and by people we would never want to believe.

This interruption in the second story's plot allows the audience to reevaluate their stance before finding out that Mary does, indeed, kill Daniel. In doing this, *La doble historia* gives the audience, and to an extent, society, an opportunity to redeem themselves by changing the way they have witnessed tragic events unfold. Undoubtedly this is one of the most enduring messages Buero Vallejo conveys, that is that we should never believe or disbelieve what others are telling us just because of what they say, instead we should learn and ask as many questions as possible. If we do not, works such as *La doble historia* show that ignoring that such tragic events do occur in the world surrounding us, we are doomed to end in a madness that is impossible to remedy, just like the Señor and Señora.

### **The Consequences of Language**

Although language lacks the evidential wounds visible from physical violence, that does not make it any less significant. In truth, many are astonished when physical violence is manifest and left asking "how can such a thing happen?" It is in words, and the way we use them, we can see the beginning of a trajectory towards violent action. Speaking and silence are, in reality, speech acts that equally produce repercussions. However, because words are usually less aggressive than physical altercation, their impact may be mistakenly overlooked. Vital to discussing and understanding the depth of *Rostro* and *La doble historia* is the link between language and violence. As we come to understand this connection, we see that both works urge readers to pay close attention to how the words we say—or do not say—impact the way we act.

*Silencing Speech in Tu rostro mañana*

According to Žižek's proposal that humans are different because of our ability to use language, we are capable of another degree of violence through the expression of words. This is seen in how language can easily be abused as a mechanism for control. Returning to Jaime and Wheeler's conversation about history and the political campaigns regulate speech, with which I began this subsection, Wheeler comments to Jaime:

Se alertó a la gente contra su principal forma de comunicación; se la hizo desconfiar de la actividad a la que se entrega y se ha entregado siempre de manera natural, sin reservas, en todo tiempo y en todo lugar, no sólo aquí y entonces; se nos enemistó con lo que más nos define y más nos une: hablar, contar, decirse, comentar, murmurar, y pasarse información, criticar, darse noticias, cotillear, difamar, calumniar y rumorear, referirse sucesos y relatarse ocurrencias, tenerse al tanto y hacerse saber, y por supuesto también bromear y mentir. Esa es la rueda que mueve el mundo, Jacobo, por encima de cualquier otra cosa; ese es el motor de la vida, el que nunca se agota ni se para jamás, ese es su verdadero aliento. Y de pronto se pidió a la gente que lo apagara, ese motor; que dejara de respirar. (FL 409-410)

Here, Marías presents the profound power and reaches of language in speaking, storytelling, commenting, criticizing, gossiping, and more. Language as expression gives meaning to life. Herzberger clarifies this, noting that Marías "has persistently embraced the idea that the world depends on its stories, or perhaps more concretely, that human beings depend on stories to understand the world in which they live" (203). For Marías, politically censored speech, even with the best of intentions, creates a societal void which can be filled in many ways, including betrayal, false accusations, and blackmail, as seen in the examples cited above. Fear perhaps best describes such a vacuum among people unable to freely express

themselves through language. By censoring the speech of citizens, governments create circumstances in which its people become suspicious of each other, like Spain during the Civil War and Franco's dictatorship as well as Great Britain during World War II, which Mariás shows in *Rostro*.

Much of the novel is concerned with the need for younger generations to ask their elders about the past. Not just the collective memory of Spain during the war and dictatorship years but, more specifically, the experience of individuals from those periods. Jaime repeatedly asks Wheeler and his father about their wartime experiences when he is not working with Tupra, experiences. Wheeler finally explains, "había un odio abarcador que saltaba a la menor chispa y que no estaba dispuesto a tener en consideración ningún otro factor, ningún matiz, ningún otro elemento" (VSA 584). Wheeler's explanation leads Jaime to make vital observations, but, above all, prompts him to listen and learn from his teacher:

En [todas las guerras] hay muchas mentiras, son parte fundamental de ellas, si no su principal ingrediente. Y lo peor es que nada se desmiente nunca definitivamente. Por muchos años que pasen, siempre hay personas dispuestas a hacer perdurar el embuste viejo, cualquiera, hasta los más inverosímiles y perturbados. No hay ninguno que se apague del todo. (VSA 591)

Wheeler's expertise at crafting narratives capable of changing the trajectory of conflicts is similar to what Jaime does now as an analyst, and he cautions mentee of the repercussions of such work. His wartime experience and later work with British Intelligence are one of the primary influences on how Jaime conceptualizes the power of actions and words.

While the consequences of language form the basis of the novel's initial warning, Marías also includes the positive ways that it is used to circumnavigate censorship. Although the suppression of speech creates a state of fear, it also leads to new methods of communication, as Wheeler likens to the need to speak to breathing. Wheeler explains to Jaime that people learned to go around communication barriers by using metaphors and half-words during World War II (FL 440). Jaime adds that the same often occurred in Spain during the dictatorship years

Para sortear a la censura...muchacha gente pasó a hablar y escribir de manera simbólica, alusiva, parabólica o abstracta. Había que hacerse entender dentro del oscurecimiento deliberado de lo que se decía. Un sinsentido: camuflarse, velarse, y aun así, sin embargo, pretender el reconocimiento y que fueran captados los mensajes más difusos, crípticos y confusos. (FL 440)

Through these words, Marías conveys the complexities of language and difficulties to express oneself under censorship during the Franco regime. Marta Perez-Carbonell explains that the public's reaction "can be understood as an attempt to retain control over one's words by limiting their comprehensibility" (Perez-Carbonell 78). Logie comments on Spanish campaigns that promoted silence, saying, "esta apelación al silencio por miedo al uso que puede hacer el enemigo de aquello que se diga no sólo se aplica, sin embargo, en tiempos de guerra, sino que posee valor universal" (181). Both Wheeler and Juan Deza share this message, as survivors of terrible violence, and try to convey to Jaime. At one point, Wheeler tells Jaime that speech is something that all human beings share, "hasta los víctimas con sus verdugos, los amos con sus esclavos y los hombres con sus dioses. Los únicos que no

lo comparten, Jacobo, son los vivos con los muertos" (BS 249). For a former agent, whose profession was the investigation and gathering of information, Wheeler's perspective crucially demonstrates how Jaime's development as an analyst will be affected by how he chooses to use language to interpret others.

I return now to the careless talk campaign, which I began this section with, as it is essential to contemplate the richness of storytelling in *Rostro* as the novel continually calls into question the very warning it starts with. Words, language, and any form of communication can be a weapon, but they also provide the tools necessary to avoid conflict. Žižek explains language as "the first and greatest divider, [that] it is because of language that we and our neighbours (can) 'live in different worlds' even when we live on the same street" (66). In *Rostro* language allows spies to fill the gap created by language and discover the identity of the unknown Other. One of the most compelling observations of speech made in the novel concerns how Wheeler learned that the most effective method for gathering information against one's enemy was not censorship but instead not interfering at all with communication. He found people would reveal their characteristics, weaknesses, and limitations—enemies would even give themselves away unknowingly— as people spoke freely. The method proved valuable for Wheeler and his colleagues and continued as the primary method that Tupra implements, listen, observe, analyze, and report.

*Secrets in La doble historia del doctor Valmy*

Language has the power to fix problems, but as I have demonstrated in the previous subsection with *Rostro*, the restriction of communication may also produce dire consequences. It is not only used as a way to control others through censorship or coercion but also can become an internalized conscious or even subconscious effort to self-regulate one's speech. One often becomes aware of the impact of their words in times of violent conflict, just as Peter Wheeler and Jaime discuss in *Rostro*. Daniel Barnes is wary of how his secrets might affect others, in particular, his wife, Mary. Because Daniel is unable to cope with the things he has done to Aníbal Marty, it becomes necessary for him to seek the help of Dr. Valmy.

The secrets that Daniel keeps from his wife produce double-edged consequences. Because Daniel is unable—and unwilling—to share what he has seen with anyone, he becomes physically weak, evident in his impotence after castrating Aníbal Marty. When Daniel finally seeks help from Doctor Valmy, he comes to understand the reason behind his impotence, recognizing that his suffering, and eventual death, are necessary for some degree of reparations. But Mary ceases being indirectly ignorant to feeling directly complicit when Daniel shares the details of his work with her. As one of the play's characters with the most depth, Mary demonstrates an awakening that causes her to feel immense guilt. García describes her awareness, explaining: "en la conciencia de Mary se activa el sueño amenazador, subconsciente, de un Daniel castrador de Danielito y violador de ella misma, como lo pudo haber sido de Lucia" (600). Mary comes to fear Daniel, and what he could do to

their child, Danielito, the more she knows about the secrets he has kept from her. The change is significant for the once doting wife and demonstrates just how dynamic her character is.

The trajectory of Mary's character continually evolves throughout *La doble historia*. She changes from believing Daniel without question, defending his work habits to her mother-in-law, and criticizing her ex-student, Lucila, for insinuating that her husband has tortured detainees. The scene when Lucila visits Mary is a turning point for her. The two catch up as Mary tells Lucila how she met Daniel after her boyfriend died fighting in the war, "ya verás que nene más rico me ha dado. Tenemos nuestros problemillas, pero también pasarán. ¡No hay nada que yo no sea capaz de hacer por su felicidad!" (58). The visit has been cordial. Still, such a comment is too difficult for Lucila to withstand, and she reveals that her husband, Aníbal, had not only been detained and interrogated by the S.P. but also viciously and repeatedly tortured. Lucila's purpose in sharing this information is to plead with Mary that Daniel ceases torturing Aníbal. Before Mary's awakening to this truth, she vehemently denies Lucila's claims and attempts to appease her concerns: "él nunca me habla de su trabajo" (58), "no puedo creer que tu marido sea uno de esos agitadores..." (59), and "creo que eres sincera, Lucila. Pero no creo que te des cuenta de lo que estás haciendo. (Dulce.) Porque, ¡vamos!, repara en que has venido a mi casa para decirme que mi marido tortura..." (59). As the visit continues Mary becomes defensive and angry as she launches into full on defense of her husband's secret work: "acepta un consejo de tu antigua maestra, hija mía: no creas esos

infundios..." (60), "me cuesta creer que tú pertezcas al coro de los calumniadores. ¿Qué ventaja sacáis propalando esas cosas?" (60), "¡no, no! ¡Reacciona! ¡Hay leyes, hay tribunales! ¡Si fuera cierto, se sabría, Lucila!" (61). Lucila then reveals what cannot be denied, that is, that she was beaten and raped by the S.P. in front of her husband. Upset that her former teacher will not listen, Lucila leaves, saying to Mary: "¡Maestra!... ¿De qué? ¿De ignorancia? ¿Quién es ahora la vieja y quién la niña?" (61). This scene is the pivotal moment when Mary begins to question what Daniel does. Although Mary is content with her life, she must now reckon with the fact that her lifestyle is provided for by the cruel actions of her husband and his secretive police unit.

Lucila's role in the play is brief but powerful. The impact of Lucila's character is most directly felt by Mary, who, when she cannot shake the troubling accusations, decides to know the truth for herself. As Mary becomes more curious about the details of Daniel's work, she finds other ways to learn, such as the book on torture. After Mary reads it<sup>57</sup>, she is confronted by Daniel, who is suspicious of how the book arrived and from whom. Once Mary has shown Daniel the book, she is no longer able to restrain her concerns:

MARY: ¡Es espantoso! ¿Te imaginas? Millones y millones de torturados: ojos reventados, lenguas arrancadas, empalados, lapidados, azotados hasta morir; descuartizados, crucificados, enterrados vivos... Quemados vivos... ¡Y no era para obligarlos a hablar! ¡Eran castigos, eran sacrificios a los dioses! Y ahora

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<sup>57</sup> The play is specific that Mary has read the book cover to cover (73). This is important for Mary—and the play—as her learning sparks a desire to know more.

mismo... ¡Ah no quiero ni pensarlo! ¿Qué están haciendo ahora mismo en tu Jefatura? (Fuerte.) ¿A qué dios espantoso estáis sacrificando? (74)

Because Mary has educated herself on various methods of torture, she gradually becomes aware that one, Daniel's employer could easily be employing such tactics and two, he has been keeping it a secret from her all along. When Daniel tries to dismiss Mary's questions about his work, she responds:

¡Siempre hubo quienes lo condenaron! Y muchos, muchísimos que procuraron evitarlo. (Dulce.) Como tú... Cómplice a la fuerza, como yo he sido cómplice por ignorancia... Pero eso va a terminar, Daniel. Tienes que abandonarlos. ¡Mañana mismo pides la excedencia! Yo volveré a mi escuela entretanto; ya encontraremos otro medio de vivir. ¿Quieres? (75)

With Daniel's secret now out, Mary is determined that they must sever all ties with the S.P. and start anew. However, this is not all, as the play continues Mary's suspicions grow, causing her to be more protective of Danielito. Beyond Mary's learning the truth about her own husband's use of torture she has come to know the violence that he is capable of, ultimately leading her to take extreme measures to protect Danielito from his father. After Mary visits with Lucila and studies the book on torture she evolves to no longer recognize her husband as the man she once loved.

While the ending of *La doble historia* is indeed tragic, Mary's ability to open her eyes demonstrates her capacity to distance herself from the lie that is the oppressive system that dominates Surelia. García explains the depth of her character: "[ella] encarna al personaje que más intensamente ha sentido el abismo entre el lenguaje como instrumento para conocer la realidad y el lenguaje como

impostura de esa misma realidad" (601). Daniel's secrets that once sheltered Mary from truth are now revealed, freeing her from the ignorant state in which she previously lived. Language, as I have argued, has the power to set one free to question the world that surrounds us. But that does not mean that language is without consequences. As Mary's eyes open to the realities of how her life is provided for, she comes to fear Daniel—and that her son would grow to be like him—causing her to shoot him. Daniel and Mary's story, as Dr. Valmy's patients, serves as an example of how secrets and their reveal affect how we see others. The audience witnesses the terrible cost that accompanies knowing the truth behind secrets from Mary as she resorts to killing Daniel.

### ***Rostro and La doble historia* as Literary Warnings**

Both of the works that I have presented in this chapter incorporate language as an inseparable part of conflicts in which words can alter what people see and hear. Speaking, as well as the restriction of speech, has the potential to violate an individual's free will. One begins to see the critical role language plays in behavior by thinking of violence outside of solely physical acts. Evans and Carver point out, "violence belongs to the realm of thought as well as the realm of physical action. Ideas give rise to violence just as it provides reasoning and explanations. Violence as such is a very fraught intellectual affair" (5). By approaching violence this way, as Evans and Carver suggest, it can be traced back to where it often starts, that is, in our language.

While there are many ways one could study *Rostro* and *La doble historia*, I argue that their similar approaches link the two works to language and depictions of violence, especially torture. Both are works of fiction, for which the authors draw heavily upon direct—in the case of Buero Vallejo—or second-hand—for Marías—experience with Franco's regime that limited, discouraged, restricted, and even eliminated the use of certain words in communication or literature. In *Rostro*, Jaime continually learns of the lasting impact that language can have, even decades afterward, are uttered or silenced. Other characters who have more experience with censorship during wars and dictatorships tell him about the effect it had on society as a whole, turning friends into enemies. Similarly, *La doble historia* itself serves as an artifact of Franco-era censorship. Although the work had some success with initial reviews, it never received full approval, thus leading to the play's international premiere and publication. Both works use posters, sayings, and books to directly bring the topic of censorship to the attention of their respective audiences. Although Franco's government justified censorship, we see its representation in these two works as a violent act against the speech of others, ultimately fostering an environment of suspicion and fear.

Marías and Buero Vallejo depict language as a precursor to violence in both *Rostro* and *La doble historia*, respectively. The examples I have used from both works in this chapter to analyze coercion are sexual in nature. In *Rostro*, Jaime exploits his position to obligate Pérez Nuix to have sex in return for giving a favorable analysis to the man her father owes a substantial debt. While the scene

may not appear overly violent, especially compared to when Tupra nearly beats Rafita de la Garza to death in a bathroom, it does demonstrate the power dynamic between Jaime and Pérez Nuix in exchange for a few words. *La doble historia* provides a more direct example of coercion as Marty's interrogators threaten to dismember and make him live the rest of his marriage more as a sister than a husband. These words are particularly terrifying as the S.P. shows scant hesitation—besides Daniel Barnes—to follow through with their threats. In these examples, both works use coercion as a corrupting tool used by individuals who see it as just another tool for power.

Marías and Buero Vallejo show that language employed for violent purposes is always multifaceted, exploring the volatility of both speaking and listening to others. There is great importance focused on who speaks and how they alter the perspective of listeners. *Rostro* does this by using historical characters—or at least historically inspired—such as Andrés Nin and Juan Deza to show the role that language plays in creating narratives that incriminate others. The portrayal of these individuals in Marías's novel helps to understand the blur created between friend and foe during the Civil War and Franco's dictatorship. Individuals attacked others in an attempt to purge enemies to the nationalist cause or merely move to a better position in society. Buero Vallejo, on the other hand, uses a fictional and nameless couple to directly denounce his play to the very crowd that has paid for it. This affects the way the audience sees and feels about the play from the very beginning,

in a way that mimics how we view similar incidents in reality. Buero Vallejo wrote

*La doble historia* to elicit a reaction from the audience, as Jordan suggests:

What Buero attempts to do in his modern tragedy is to move, disturb or unsettle his audiences, in particular to disrupt their 'taken for granted' and complacent attitudes in an attempt to raise questions and ultimately stimulate critical awareness. (10)

Understanding the political power of language is crucial to having a broader comprehension of how it is used against others. Unfortunately, it is most often in the aftermath of atrocities when we start questioning how and why. But there is another way of approaching the problem, that is, by finding where it starts. In doing so, we see that violence is the evolution of words used by those in the relentless pursuit of power and subjugation of others.

### Section 3

#### The Situational Ethics of Violence

“There’s nothing wrong with standing back and thinking. To paraphrase several sages: ‘Nobody can think and hit someone at the same time’”.  
—Susan Sontag

The philosophical questioning of ethics is “[a] systematized set of inquiries and responses to the question ‘what should I do?’” (Molinaro 1). Beyond this question, I add, one must consider another, that is, “what will happen because of—or in absence—of ‘what I do?’” In this section, I engage violence in literature and film to better comprehend the ethics, or the lack thereof, of those who use it. However, it is necessary to provide a brief history of ethics—which is in no way exhaustive—from Greek and seventeenth and eighteenth-century philosophers and finally modern-day theories that have influenced how I interpret violence in the arts. In my analysis, I approach ethics situationally, examining the time and place that give rise to violent outbursts, while simultaneously considering the artistic motives for depicting such violence.

The study of ethics continues to form a central part of philosophical discussion, in particular, because the world's changes necessitate ongoing inquiry on the subject. These needed changes are primarily the result of rapid technological advances that coincide with sociopolitical instabilities in an increasingly globalized world. In *the Art of Time: Levinas, Ethics, and the Contemporary Peninsular Novel*, Nina L. Molinaro describes the history of ethics:

From its inception, ethics has been closely aligned with the relational, the rational, and the religious. As a discourse it addresses deep and abiding concerns about obligation, virtue, happiness, theology, and politics...in the Western world [ethics] is formed frequently conceived as normative and, as such, is organized around the articulation and analysis of binaries; these include good versus bad, right versus wrong, individual versus collective, human versus divine, reason versus emotion, subject versus object, and so on. (1)

As the world changes and advances occur, and conflict arises, the value we place on ethics must also adapt. Violence is a complex concept, the ways we see it portrayed in the arts—the justifications, emotions, and consequences of the characters who use it—influence how we conceptualize it in reality, making a study of ethics more urgent than ever.

Among two of the historic Western philosophical approaches to ethics that Molinaro describes are the synchronic and diachronic strategies. The synchronic strategy focuses on the link between ethics and “regulatory and concrete human actions,” of how we should live and “how our actions and choices shape sociality” (3). Whereas the diachronic strategy “considers changes in ethics over time...[that] ethical concepts are altered as social life changes” (7). Molinaro explains that Western reflections on ethics began with classical Greek philosophers—Socrates, Plato, Aristotle—who understood ethics as “assessments of *arête*, or ‘human excellence,’ which was itself designed to complement a society organized around an accepted hierarchy of prescribed roles” (10). Molinaro then traces ethics to seventeenth- and eighteenth-century philosophers—Thomas Hobbes, Immanuel Kant, René Descartes, and David Hume—who sought to “[rethink] the extent to

which human beings could direct and control their behavior and their choices... [viewing] rationality and volition, as distinctly human capacities" (15). The twentieth century saw a renewed interest in the study of ethics. Molinaro highlights approaches that include value realism, the ethics of personal transformation, philosophical responses to the rise of totalitarianism (of which Hannah Arendt was influential), and phenomenological approaches to ethics (16-19).

One of the primary approaches that Molinaro uses to present Emmanuel Levinas and ethics in her study on contemporary Spanish narrative is the relationship between self and the Other (22). This relationship prioritizes ethics as a more expansive term than morality:

[Ethics] endeavors to enunciate and elaborate relationships between individual human actions and the social world in which such actions arise and by which they are constituted. Moreover, where there is human behavior, there is difference, and with difference inevitably arises the drive to evaluate and set the optimal values and conduct for societies throughout human history. (6)

Molinaro and Levinas' reflections on ethics and difference have influenced the way I address ethics situationally in the narrative, drama, and film in this section. By understanding the importance alterity, in which we must understand our differences and "acknowledge our relationship to the Other" (27).

George Faust explored ethics in his book, *the Ethics of Violence: A Study of a Fractured Word*, as it applies to the historical use of violence in political and religious conflicts. Faust begins by posing simple questions that frame his approach, such as: "are there universal standards of social conduct in peace and war? What is

war? How are violence and terrorism defined concerning war, civil disobedience, and armed or unarmed revolt?" (np). As part of his analysis, Faust explores different regions and their historical struggle with violence and concludes, "our world society faces increased religious, ideological and cultural confrontation. Terror is a common weapon that, when put to use, can cause deep and enduring suffering. None of the world organizations appear to know how to begin to resolve or alleviate the pain, or its causes" (np). Faust's conceptualization of violence aligns with the modern sentiment that views violence as a suffocating epidemic. However, all inquiries and discussions of violence constructively refocus attention to ethics, which is where we ultimately decide whether we are for or against violence.

As I see it, to understand violence, one must first consider its ethics to truly envision the circumstances that cause it and the consequences that come from it. While not all would agree, I argue that there are indeed instances in which the use of violence may be necessary to stop violence. Self-defense is a widely accepted instance to use violent means—or at least empathized as needed—to protect oneself and others from violence. Bernard Gert, a theorist on moral philosophy, argues "all killing and torturing for pleasure or profit is clearly immoral, whereas killing and torturing to prevent greater killing and torturing may sometimes be allowed by public reason" (72). He also added that "in most situations, a necessary condition for being able to publicly advocate such a violation is that there be a good reason to believe that the violation will prevent more death, pain, etc., than it causes" (75). However, violence is abused, often by groups or individuals, as a

method to suppress others in their quest for power. The usage of violence to obtain power is reprehensible and should be criticized as such. Because of this, one is—or ought to be—restrained by their ethics, as it is through rational thinking that one may weigh the possible consequences of their actions against the justification of their use. I, similar to Gert, do not endorse violence but rather recognize the situations in which it may be permissible by the majority of the public, in particular, if it is to prevent more violence.

The problem with public perception in the debate on violence is that it is easy to manipulate. Each instance of violence is unique and necessitates individual analysis, which takes into account the subjects involved, as well as the time and place where it occurs. The three works that I use are *Tu rostro mañana*, in which I examine the idea of narrative legacy in relation to violence; *La doble historia del doctor Valmy*, which I use to demonstrate the promotion of violence and the problems stem from it; and finally, *El laberinto del fauno*, which juxtaposes unjustified and justified violence. Ideologies support their characters' predisposal to violence in each of these works—coming from direct orders, implied approval, and public indifference or even ignorance—that believe such acts are necessary. If we are ever to restrain violent behavior, then we must question and explore it through ethics, which form the foundational principles that ultimately influence our behavior.

## Chapter 6

### Narrative Legacy in *Tu rostro mañana*

*Rostro* seeks to answer the reasoning behind using violence while simultaneously exploring how society's attempts to heal historical wounds. Jaime continually contemplates the use of violence and how it affects not only others but also himself. Through stories he hears from others, he wonders how one could resort to such brutality. But, later, it is he who must decide whether or not to use violence to eliminate Custardoy—or at the very least chase him off. If Jaime does not take action, he fears that Custardoy's abusive tendencies towards his ex-wife, Luisa, will worsen and perhaps affect his children, thus affecting him. But we must ask, would Jaime take such preemptive measures if he knew Custardoy was harming an individual with whom he had no relation?

Marías's work seemingly justifies Jaime's response to Custardoy as he acts in defense of his family. Self-defense is generally understood as protecting oneself, their family, or even their ideology (Andreu Nin, Emilio Marés, José Marías de Torrijos y Uriarte and his companions, Juan Deza, etc...). However, in the story, it is with Tupra, with his actions and influence, where ethics become noticeably murky as he beats Rafita De la Garza and surreptitiously keeps violent recordings as blackmail on behalf of an unnamed state-run intelligence agency.

Violence and the consequences that stem from it form the center of Marías's *Rostro*, as a variety of characters, some historical and others fictional, face unique

instances in which they hear of, witness, or even take part in violent acts. Navajas explains the novel as “una narración conceptualmente ambiciosa ya que se plantea cuestiones que le dan dimensiones extraliterarias y se adentran en el campo del conocimiento y la filosofía” (151). Marías uses the characters in the novel to prompt the reader to contemplate and question the decisions and actions that surround the violence Jaime hears about and sees. What does it make one live with? How will not only the victims but also the perpetrators of violence be remembered? *Rostro* identifies the ability of violence to produce long-lasting psychological effects on the victim(s), the perpetrator(s), the witness(es), and even the posterity of those who experienced such traumatic events. Marías has the exasperating task of understanding, explaining, and also rectifying violence.

*Rostro* explores these themes throughout the trilogy, but it is the final installment, *Veneno y sombra y adiós*, that examines them in considerable detail. In *Fiebre*—and again at the end of the story in *Adiós*—Jaime is unsatisfied with Wheeler’s response when he asks what happened to his wife. As Jaime’s mentor, Wheeler responds, “no debería uno contar nunca nada” (*FL* 473). Ryan insists that Wheeler’s statement is perplexing for a novel in which the characters and narrator “depend upon their ability to recount events for their livelihood. Yet, wrapped up in the many layers of stories which make up this work, is a fundamental fear of the consequences of telling too much” (249). As Jaime searches for how to confront his circumstances in the present, he learns from his father, Juan Deza, and his mentor, Peter Wheeler. When these two finally do share their tragic experiences with Jaime,

it is on their terms and at a much later time, thus demonstrating one's difficulty to reconcile with the enduring impact of exposure to violence. Their experiences impact Jaime, however, "now that the ghosts of the past have been allowed to speak, have heard their stories told, will he be able to accept the past and understand what lies ahead?" (Ryan 249).

### **Narrative Horror**

Much of the third volume, *VSA*, focuses on how society remembers an individual. Marías dedicates the third installment to the real-life inspirations for Wheeler and Juan Deza: "*Y para mi amigo Sir Peter Russell, y mi padre, Julián Marías, que generosamente me prestaron buena parte de sus vidas, in memoriam*" (*VSA*). This memorial reminds the reader of the historical context of some of the experiences the fictional characters—inspired by real individuals—faced in 1930s-1940s Europe. *Veneno* begins with Jaime and Tupra debating cowardice, heroism, and "narrative horror." This discussion frames the final three parts of *Rostro* as Jaime expresses his disapproval of the use of extortion and torture, recalling the reader to the *corrida* style execution of Emilio Marés. This conversation proves a crucial reference point for the impending scene in which Jaime must choose between resorting to violence or not. While Tupra is not bound by ethics when using force, Jaime idealizes chivalric action, such as in situations of self-defense. Tupra's words solidify what the reader has already seen with Rafita de la Garza, while Jaime's own words later confine him to a standard he struggles to uphold.

The debate of cowardice and heroism forms a compelling way to analyze an individual's actions. Tupra explains to Jaime the selfish subconscious tendency people have to avoid death, "uno no lo desea, pero prefiere siempre que muera él que está a su lado" (VSA 13). Tupra continues by adding that the majority of human beings lack the romanticized heroic characteristics Jaime supports:

Es verdad que aún hay unos pocos que tienen esa preocupación arraigada y a los que eso importa, y que por lo tanto actúan para el testigo a quien salvan, para quedar bien ante él o ella, y ser recordados con admiración y agradecimiento eternos; sin acordarse de veras en el decisivo momento, sin plena conciencia entonces, de que nunca disfrutarán esa admiración ni ese agradecimiento, porque serán ellos quienes un instante después ya se habrán muerto. (VSA 14)

While Jaime does not agree with such a discouraging perspective, he recognizes the application amongst bullfighters, *vergüenza torera*, which he describes in English as "a bullfighter's sense of shame," (VSA 15). In addition to heroism and cowardice, the idea of narrative horror that Marías presents shows why one would be more inclined to either of the previously stated characteristics. Tupra explains Narrative Horror as an effective way to interpret others, "temen que el final lo emborrone y lo condicione todo, un episodio tardío o último arrojando su sombra sobre cuándo vino antes, cubriéndolo y anulándolo" (26). It is a theme throughout *Veneno*, as well as *Rostro's* first two volumes, that frames one's fear of how future generations will remember them.

Tupra elaborates by adding what he calls the K-M Complex—the "K," standing for President John F. Kennedy and the "M," standing for Jayne Mansfield—as a method to describe those who have such a fear. While President Kennedy's life

is well detailed and considered common knowledge by many, Jane Mansfield's popularity as an actress and sex symbol is generally unknown among younger generations. Marías utilizes them because their lives are remembered primarily by one moment, Kennedy's assassination and Mansfield's fatal car accident, "[que] las definen o las configuran y casi anulan cuánto hicieron antes" (VSA 37). Such a way of remembering a person provides a frame through which Jaime will later view others and even himself. Although the K-M complex refers primarily to high-profile individuals, it perhaps explains why those who live through war tend to refrain from sharing the more traumatic aspects of their experience. Possibly out of fear of being defined solely by one moment or one violent act—as even telling their story exposes it to the inevitable criticism and changes that occur when shared with others. While brief moments often define how and why we memorialize an individual, *Rostro* canvasses an individual's life to portray better the circumstances they faced in the past and the ensuing consequences that pursue them in the present.

### *Poison*

Marías centers the final part of the third installment of *Rostro* on the repercussions of violence. As a theme, Marías continually and explicitly presents violence as an addictive and contagious poison (Logie 184). After Jaime witnessed De la Garza's beating, he vocalizes his disapproval to Tupra, adding that he is not capable of resorting to the same measures. Tupra then asks Jaime a question that becomes essential to understanding the ethics of violence that Marías explores, "¿por qué no se puede ir por ahí pegando, matando?" (BS 408). The problematic

question catches Jaime off guard—as it should any individual—and he responds incredulously: “¿Cómo que por qué? ¿Qué quiere decir, por qué?” (BS 408). Marías expertly places this question in the final two pages of *Baile y sueño* as a philosophical cliffhanger that leaves the reader to contemplate the answer by examining their interpretation of ethics and violence.

Much of *Veneno* focuses on how even witnessing violence, primarily through repeated exposure, has a desensitizing effect on a person. Parts I and II of *Rostro* portray little violence outside of the retelling of incidents that occurred in the past and Tupra torturing De la Garza. The latter causes Jaime to question Tupra’s use and justification of such violence. Tupra responds by showing Jaime top-secret video recordings that he admits are highly useful albeit difficult to watch:

Esto que vas a ver es secreto. Nunca hables de ello ni lo menciones, ni siquiera conmigo más allá de esta noche, porque mañana ya no te lo habré enseñado. Son filmaciones que guardamos por si un día hacen falta...No va a gustarte su contenido, pero no los desprecies ni los condenes. Ten presente lo que valen y para lo que valen. Y el servicio que rinden, el bien que hacen al país a veces. (VSA 162-163)

Not only is Tupra well trained in intimidation tactics through torture, but he also uses this information to blackmail high-profile individuals. This type of extortion, mainly provided to or supported by a state agency, gives clear evidence of systemic violence with the sole purpose of coercion. The surreptitious recordings have the power to alter the public’s perception of the filmed individual(s) or even damage their so-called narrative legacy. The videos have a terrible impact, in particular, on Jaime, “a medida que miraba y entreveía y veía, un Veneno me fue entrando, y si utilizo esta palabra,

veneno, no es del todo a la ligera ni sólo metafóricamente, sino porque se introdujo en mi conocimiento algo que nunca había estado allí antes” (VSA 165).

Jaime struggles to see the value of the video's content as they are an affront to the ethics he believes in—or thinks he believes in. Jaime raises his concerns with each video that Tupra shows him, questioning, in particular, the importance of a sex tape of a member of the Royal Family. Tupra responds, lecturing Jaime, “qué pregunta más ingenua, Jack, eres decepcionante a veces. A nosotros nos conviene eso siempre, con cualquiera que tenga importancia, peso, capacidad de decisión, nombre, influencia. Mejor para nosotros, cuantas más manchas y más altas” (VSA 170). But for Jaime, the existence of such content, let alone its preservation for future use, seems completely unethical. The recordings breach any notion of ethics that Marías proposes, as Logie suggests, “cabe preguntarse a partir de qué momento se convierte la violencia en una fuerza exclusivamente contraproducente, dónde reside el punto de equilibrio y si es posible vacunarse contra el impulso de ejercerla” (184). The other recordings contain all kinds of obscene incidents: sex, adultery, beatings, illicit drug use, bribery, scams, conspiracies, cruelty and sadism, torture, improvised homicides, and even planned murders (VSA 207). Among the perpetrators in Tupra's top-secret collection are soldiers, politicians and government officials, wealthy businessmen, and also one of Arturo Manóia<sup>58</sup> torturing and killing a man. Perplexed by Manóia's methods Tupra asks Jaime “¿por qué añadiría ese sufrimiento previo a quien iba a matar de todas

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<sup>58</sup> Arturo Manóia is important because Jaime met him when Tupra/Reresby took him to lunch before beating up De la Garza for flirting with his wife, Flavia.

formas, a los pocos segundos?" (VSA 214). But if Tupra himself cannot imagine a use for Manóia's methods, then why would he feel it necessary to show Jaime? Tupra's inquiry appears genuine as he sees the future value that torture causes for a victim who can be manipulated out of fear. Tupra presents each video as a necessary part of preventative intelligence, but for Jaime, they confirm his suspicions of government, failing to persuade him to accept such means.

With each video it becomes evident that no criminal, citizen, celebrity, public servant, or even royalty is safe from Tupra. Each recording has a specific purpose, the last of which Tupra explains to Jaime, "es probable que le haya salvado la vida de ese imbécil, a ese Garza. En vez de enfadarte conmigo, deberías dar gracias de que yo me haya encargado de su castigo, por seguir con tu palabra. No se habría ido sin uno, eso es seguro" (VSA 215). Throughout the exhibition of these recordings Tupra maintains the value of their content and even justifies their use to serve the purposes of their work and the nation, "puede salvar más vidas obligar a algo a alguien señalado...andamos siempre haciendo cálculos, sopesando si vale la pena dejar morir ahora una persona para que luego vivan muchas otras por eso" (VSA 189). Ethically Tupra finds nothing wrong with the tapes, he does not worry about them being permissible in the present but rather emphasizes their future value:

El estado necesita la traición, la venalidad, el engaño, el delito, las ilegalidades, la conspiración, los golpes bajos (las heroicidades, en cambio, solamente con cuentagotas y de tarde en tarde, por el contraste) ...Nos hace falta la violación, el quebranto. De qué nos sirve las leyes si no las incumpliera nadie. Sin eso no iríamos a ninguna parte. No podríamos ni organizarnos. El estado precisa de las infracciones, lo saben hasta los niños, aunque sin saber que lo saben. Son los primeros en prestarse a ellas. Se nos educa para enterar en el juego y

colaborar desde el principio, y en él seguimos hasta el último día, y aun después de muertos. Las cuentas jamás se saldan. (VSA 171)

Tupra's explanation points out systemic approaches to control society through the creation of laws that will inevitably be broken. According to this line of thinking, and considering Tupra's work in espionage, laws serve a purpose not only to maintain order through conformity but also to detect lawbreakers and coerce them, sooner or later, towards a specific course of action. Tupra safeguards the recordings to extort lawbreakers and anyone, for that matter, in a position of power that has trespassed societal rules by engaging in indecent behavior, such as the examples mentioned above of sexual deviance.

Jaime begins to comprehend the usefulness of such content for leveraging individuals to do whatever Tupra—or his unknown superiors—wants. However, the videos take a personal toll on Jaime, “a medida que se sucedían las escenas me sentía más encogido, disminuido, anquilosado...Esa es la facultad del veneno, se infiltra y lo contamina todo” (VSA 206). While the videos appear to initially fuel a slow burn in Jaime the detestation of what he sees does not last, as their content infects him in a way that subtly alters his perception of right and wrong. Instead of Jaime reaffirming his stance against violence, as his father and Peter Wheeler mentored him, he comes to adopt an understanding of violence closer to Tupra's.

### *Jaime's Dilemma*

The K-M complex proves a troubling concept for Jaime's character as he finally decides to intimidate and threaten Custardoy in the final volume of the

trilogy. When he discovers that his wife, Luisa, has been dating Custardoy, and that the latter has become increasingly abusive towards her, he justifies the use of violence to put an end to their relationship, “había de salvarla [Luisa] sin que sospechara mi intervención, o lo menos posible” (VSA 388). Jaime feels the pressure to protect his ex-wife and children through carefully planned countermeasures that span much of *Sombra*. With Jaime determined to finally confront the “other” man, Marías employs a sort of internal dialogue to include reader in the plot:

A veces uno sabe lo que quiere hacer o lo que tiene que hacer o incluso lo que piensa hacer o lo que va a hacer casi seguro, pero necesita que además se lo digan o se lo confirmen o se lo discutan o se lo aprueben, en cierto sentido es una maniobra que uno lleva a cabo para descargarse un poco de responsabilidad, para difuminarla o para compartirla...Con eso ya está envuelto, si es que no enredado, si es que anudado. Lo hemos obligado a ser partícipe, sea nada más como oyente, y a plantearse la situación y preguntarse por el desenlace; le hemos hecho conocer nuestra historia y ya nunca podrá ignorarla o borrarla. (VSA 431)

This introduction to the last part of the final book foreshadows the dilemma Jaime faces as he employs his knowledge and experience to choose a course of action. Jaime's actions follow Arendt's theories as he seeks a useful implement (Miquelín's bullfighter sword, although he eventually settles for a pistol) and involves others, thus leading to a “combination of violence and power” (47). For Jaime, the sword is essential to strike fear in Custardoy, but it “stands in need of guidance and justification through the end it pursues” (Arendt 51). Jaime knows that by choosing a weapon—and taking it with him to confront Custardoy—that he must be prepared to follow through with his plans.

Although Jaime initially struggled to comprehend Tupra's methods, he fears more the consequences of doing nothing: "ahora veía muy claro que yo no quería tener la suerte ni la desgracia de que Luisa muriera" (VSA 452-453). Jaime goes back and forth on whether or not to eliminate Custardoy, but later proudly describes the power he feels from a pistol in his hand, "soy además el que puede matar a ese segundo marido ahora mismo, con mis guantes puestos y en mi humor airado. Llevo una pistola en la mano y está cargada, sólo tendría que montarla y apretar el gatillo" (VSA 467). However, Jaime recognizes his inability to follow through by connecting himself to others who resorted to violence:

Puede unirse y asimilarse mi rostro al de tantos hombres y no tantas mujeres que han sido dueños del tiempo y han sostenido en su mano el reloj –en forma de arma, en forma de orden—, y que decidieron pararlo de pronto sin esperar ni entretenerse, obligando así a otros a no desear más los deseos a desprenderse aun del propio nombre. No me gusta esa unión. (VSA 488).

Jaime fears what he will become if he kills Custardoy. Jaime's narrative horror is that future generations will remember him among those who murdered Emilio Marés, tortured Andre Nin, and ordered the execution of Torrijos—violent men he has vehemently denounced throughout the novel. Jaime knows that actions are irreversible, just as "el tiempo de Marías es unidireccional, no tiene regreso, es irrecuperable," (Azúa 53). Logie explains why Jaime hesitates, "la consecuencia de la violencia es que paraliza a quienes la sufren, pero también a quienes la ejercen" (175). Jaime as he now comprehends the severe and personal ramifications such actions lead to, "no, no quiero que desaparezca nadie...ni siquiera que este hombre falte de aquí. No me atrevo, *I do not dare*" (VSA 492-493). His thoughts now align

more with Arendt's than Tupra's, as he contemplates the danger, and knows "[that] the practice of violence, like all action, changes the world, but the most probable change is to a more violent world" (80).

By exercising some level of restraint and not killing Custardoy as he had planned, Jaime's restraint displays his personal ethics which prohibit him from lethal violence. However, Jaime knows that Custardoy must be threatened, and using a fire poker, strikes his victim, "oí cómo se le rompían huesos" (VSA 498). Now he understands the appeal of Tupra's Katzbalger sword, "[y] el propio se convierte en actor de la violencia durante su transformación en vengador al estilo Tupra" (Cuñado 244). After Jaime breaks Custardoy's hand he gives him detailed instructions:

Yo me voy a ir ahora tranquilamente y tú te vas a estar quieto durante treinta minutos desde que yo salga, sin moverte de aquí ni llamar a nadie aunque te duela: te aguantas. Luego llama a un médico, ve a un hospital, haz lo que te dé la gana. Te llevará un tiempo curarte esa mano, si es que la recuperas del todo algún día. Piensa siempre que podía haber sido peor, y que siempre estaremos a tiempo de darle a la otra, o de cortártela con una espada, tengo un amigo muy ducho al que le encanta la espada, allí en Londres. (VSA 504)

As violent and descriptive as this scene with Custardoy is, Jaime, regains the composure that he had lost momentarily. Although Jaime fears being remembered among killers, his ethics are corruptible to a point as he does resort to violence by maiming Custardoy's hand—imitating how Tupra threatened De la Garza. Jaime, who had once steadfastly opposed the use of force, "has now crossed an important line from being witness to criminal. His identity has changed, and his notion of self has suffered as a consequence" (Walsh 65). Tupra's K-M Complex now applies to

Jaime as he fears his life narrative would be defined by killing Custardoy in a single murderous act, he does see violence as the sole solution to ending Luisa's abuse (Walsh 66). Although Jaime's response to the situation is disappointing, there is justification: "the extent that it is effective in reaching the end that must justify it" (Arendt 79). Even if Jaime's actions are justifiable, it does not mean that they are without consequence as they cause him to question what he has done, what he is capable of, and who he has become.

#### *The Tragedy of Valerie Wheeler*

Marías continually exposes the reader to numerous depictions of violence throughout the trilogy. These instances are defined by either "objective" or "subjective" violence, which Zizek, and to an extent, Arendt, help to identify. One such example is that of Valerie, the deceased wife of Peter Wheeler. Jaime asks Wheeler about her several times throughout *Rostro*, yet it is not until the end of his mentor's life—and the third installment of the novel—he finally shares her story. Valerie worked for the Political Warfare Executive (PWE), a secret and temporary department, whose tactics included using radio and propaganda, especially in Germany, to turn one's enemies against each other (VSA 617-623). The PWE's operations specifically led to the shedding of blood during World War II (VSA 614). Jaime has pressed Wheeler on the sensitive issue, understanding from his father how difficult it is to discuss the past, but wonders why he would tell her story now (VSA 646).

In her youth, Valerie lived at times with a family in Austria and had even been close friends with one of their younger daughters, Maria. Much to the family's displeasure, their eldest daughter, Ilse, fell in love with and married a man named Rendl, a dedicated Nazi, who the family knew to be a quarter Jewish (VSA 637). Maria shared this secret with Valerie, who, during the war, mentioned it to the PWE, resulting in the propaganda of a Jewish officer infiltrating the ranks of fascism within the German military. This story, along with countless others in *Roostro*, provides an invaluable opportunity for Mariás to exhibit the immense and far-reaching power of stories as Valerie's words were "utilized for purposes suffused with a harshness that she had not originally intended. Rather than dismissal from the army for Rendel, it caused the death and exile of family members and ultimately led her to take her own life" (Herzberger, "Knowledge and Transcendence" 216). Although Valerie was not directly engaged in violence, "[her] language emerges as a lethal weapon, for her spoken revelations were the reason for multiple deaths in her friend's family. After that, her curse was to have heard the truth of what happened" (Perez-Carbonell 78).

It is not always what one does in a single moment that defines a life. In Valerie's case, it was what she said that caused her the insurmountable grief from which she was unable to recover. Wheeler painfully recalls how she took the news of what happened to the family, as she struggled to understand how she could do such a thing to Ilse, "la traicioné sin pensármelo, cómo pude hacer eso, cómo no caí en la cuenta. Y esas niñas muertas por mi culpa en un campo, no entenderían nada, y

su madre que se montó con ellas, qué otra cosa iba a hacer la pobre, santo cielo..." (VSA 661). Wheeler tells Jaime that one cannot revisit the terrible things done in the past as they produce awful consequences, "la guerra trastorna todo, o crea dobles lealtades inconciliables" (VSA 661). Jaime recognizes the truth in his mentor's words, something he has been unable to do with Tupra, as he has now done things he never thought he would do. Following Arendt's theory that violence as a course of action leads only to more violence, Valerie's slip of information is no different. As Ryan explains, "once a story has been told, it is no longer ours to control. Our own words can betray us at any time in the future" (250). Because Valerie viewed her actions outside of the context of the war, she could no longer continue living with the knowledge that she contributed to the death of a family so dear to her.

One might ask, why does Marías include Valerie's story in *Rostro*? What makes her story, an anecdote compared to the rest of the epic spy novel he has created, so important? The story already contains a great deal of convincing content to demonstrate the long-lasting effects of violence without ever including her. However, this story, in particular, follows Herzberger's analysis, in that Marías sees a human need for stories to better understand the world that surrounds them ("Knowledge and Transcendence" 203). Jaime needs to hear Valerie's story from Wheeler at this specific time to better comprehend the implications of the violence he has witnessed, and himself instigated in the present by comparing it to what others have told him about the past, particularly the Civil War and World War II.

Valerie's story has a certain 'usefulness' for Jaime as it serves as a warning for the psychological consequences he too might face if he continues to work for Tupra.

Even though Marías's characters repeatedly say, "don't tell stories," *Rostro* is a *tour de force* that fulfills a need for meaningful stories that explore and interpret the ways violence is implemented to better understand its consequences. We see through Jaime that ethics are essential to how we conceptualize and—dare I say—use violence. But as important as it is to hold fast to one's beliefs, especially concerning what is "right" and "wrong," one must understand, as Jaime finds out, that one's principles are not impenetrable to the pervasive powers of violence. We learn from Marías that ethics our ethics can be strengthened by turning to the past and searching for meaning from the experience and suffering of others. It is from there where we, along with our ethics, can learn to evolve.

## Chapter 7

### (Un)Justifying Torture in Buero Vallejo's *La doble historia del Dr. Valmy*

Buero Vallejo makes a point of questioning the use of torture and the effect it has on those who use it as a method of interrogation from the beginning of *La doble historia*. But he does not stop there; instead, the play goes beyond exploring the inner struggle of the torturer by also considering how anyone who knows such tactics, such as the torturer's family, might react and what consequences they might live with. The play's titular two stories examine the impact of violent actions done in secret. In the first story—which bookends the second and main story—the insane couple, referred to as Señor and Señora, directly break the fourth wall in an attempt to dissuade the play's audience from believing what they are about to see acted out. The second story follows Daniel Barnes, who is affected physically and later mentally by what he has done to detainees, and his wife, Mary, who struggles to come to terms with what her husband does for work. Their story is not intended to entertain audiences, per se, but rather elicit a response to a question that Buero Vallejo seems to ask, that is, what responsibility does the audience—and as an extension, society—have in stopping torture.

While Buero Vallejo does not explicitly tell the audience what to think, his play provides countless scenes that should cause one to reflect upon the way government agencies, in particular, police, intelligence, and military agencies, are run. *La doble historia* points out the often-overlooked consequences of torture,

including the unpopular and seldom considered effect left on the torturer or torturers. *La doble historia* excels, as Carmen Chávez points out, at showing that "each individual, according to Dr. Valmy, is responsible for the ills of society," before adding "society must remember the pain it sees... [and that the] spectator shame should also motivate change" (42). The consequences of torture made evident in *La doble historia* make the audience witnesses of violence and accomplices to it if their attitudes towards it do not change.

*La doble historia* is the rare story that can and should cause audiences—sitting in a theater or reading from a hard copy—to demand political and social change. Sadly, the terrible consequences of torture remain prevalent. Philosopher Carlos Eymar explains the destructive nature of torture:

Ni todas las precauciones adoptadas por el torturador son suficientes para eliminar el rastro de su acción, ni a la víctima le abandona por completo el aliento para intentar poner al descubierto la barbarie de su verdugo. La palabra de los supervivientes del horror llega a nosotros como una lección humanizadora que sacude nuestras conciencias. (24)

While the everyday person may not prefer to discuss the use of torture, it must be studied and scrutinized. Torture is likely to affect any who examines it. The ideal outcome being that such an individual calls for change in the way the treatment that political prisoners receive. News and government hearings that investigate torture alone are often not enough to reach the ears of society that remain indifferent or ignorant of violence committed under the guise of protecting the safety of the state. This limitation is what necessitates the writing and performance of creative works, inspired by reality, such as *La doble historia*, that present the problem of violence to

broader audiences. The goal of Buero Vallejo is seemingly to pull viewers out of a state of passivity or even stupor, and thrust them into the debate on the (un)ethical use of torture.

### **Justifying the Use of Torture**

Any justifications of torture made by those who employ it as a method must be thoroughly debated and challenged. Many see interrogation as a necessary means to prevent future criminal acts and provide security to the state. However, when torture becomes a central part of the questioning, violence is often used and seldom restrained. Even when a state or organization, such as the United Nations, create laws that prohibit the inhumane treatment of detainees, violence still occurs. Conrad and Moore explain that one cannot expect that just because legislation that restricts torture exists, it does not mean that those who are positions to use such force will follow said policies. That is not to say that policies preventing the use of torture are ineffective, but rather "we [must] assume that jailers and/or interrogators have a range of beliefs with respect to (1) the expected effectiveness of torture and (2) the likelihood of being held accountable for using torture" (462). Such prohibitive laws are abstract, and therefore must be implemented with the necessary oversight; those who are responsible for gathering intelligence and involved in interrogations must be held publicly accountable. While it is easier for a democratic nation to monitor this, typically through a committee that has been elected by citizens, it does not mean that torture methods are less likely to be used than in a non-democratic country. Torture must be kept in check, by investigative journalism and especially,

as I present here, by creative works, such as *La doble historia*, that question it as a method and those who use it.

Central to the problem of the role of the torturer is the justification of their methods. When one learns of the suffering of tortured subjects and the methods used to inflict pain on them, it is likely to elicit a response of disgust or outrage—and it should! However, when we begin to question specific methods, we unknowingly enter a gray area where it becomes easy to justify their usage.

Fernando Savater explains justifying torture:

Unos y otros coinciden en una tajante distinción entre *fines y medios*, hasta el punto de que los oponen frontalmente: para alcanzar la libertad, será lícito recurrir a la dictadura; para llegar a la paz, se deberá emplear la violencia; para mantener el orden legal, podrán violarse las leyes y acudir a la arbitrariedad de la fuerza; para que reine finalmente la justicia mañana, no habrá injusticia tan grande que no pueda ser cometida hoy. (“El adversario absoluto” 31)

It is far too often that the use of torture goes beyond the defense of oneself or nation as it occurs in a power dynamic where only one individual or group has all the power to inflict immense suffering on a restrained subject. I describe it as a gray area because interrogation and torture are supposedly preventative methods to obtain information that will prevent worse violence by the subject. There are numerous questions and considerations to make when considering the use of torture. One is that most citizens would disprove of such methods, which is why they are generally covert. However, the public must learn of these clandestine activities to question, scrutinize, and, if necessary, denounce their use. With this, I turn my attention to the characters of *La doble historia* who use secret and violent

methods in their work for the S.P. at the Jefatura. Through them, Buero Vallejo gives the audience a window into the mind of the torturer.

For Buero Vallejo to create this dramatic space, capable of fostering debate within the play and after it has ended, his characters needed to clash on the issue of torture. Doctor Valmy helps Mary and Daniel see the mental consequences of their actions and ignorance, Mary denounces Lucila's accusations, and the Barnes' marriage dissolves over their disagreements after Mary studies the subject of torture. But as Pennington explains, the primary example of opposing viewpoints is that of Daniel (the subordinate) and Paulus (the director of the S.P.):

The philosophical and ethical heart of the play resides in their antithetical ideas... Paulus pragmatically argues for society, the status quo, and figuratively turning the other way when the issue of torture arises. [While] Daniel exhibits a higher consciousness and yearns to break away, to follow the transcendent "otro hombre" inside him... The debate between them adumbrates one of the important points of the play, centering on who possesses the proper point of view by which to make the correct choice. Metaphorically they represent the conflicts within the human mind and, ultimately, within society. ("Subjective Drama" 101)

The conclusion that Pennington draws between the differing perspectives of fictional characters on violence reflects the actual attitudes of the Franco regime, during which time Buero Vallejo wrote *La doble historia*. Some see violence, in this particular case, torture, as a necessary tool, while others hope to find a more peaceful way to resolve conflict. Buero Vallejo urged the discussion forward, but needed characters who could not remain passive towards violence but instead would feel compelled to challenge its use. Through these characters, Buero Vallejo

presented the attitudes, both active and passive, that either denounced or justified torture.

The audience first sees Daniel Barnes in a quotidian scene as he returns from work, says hello to his wife, Mary, and his mother, and reads the paper. When his mother asks if he will be staying for dinner, as he is often called back to work, he responds, "sí. Hoy ha habido suerte. (*Va al sillón y se recuesta en un brazo mientras desdobra el periódico.*) Habrás leído la gran noticia, ¿eh?" (34) What he is referring to is the fictional Surelia's space station launching into orbit—marking the play's historical setting. When Mary excitedly responds that she also read the news, Daniel replies, "estas cosas levantan el ánimo. Nuestra labor también contribuye a esos triunfos" (34). At this point, neither Mary nor the Abuela—or the audience—know what Daniel's work entails. But according to Daniel, he is a vital contributor to his nation's advancements and triumphs. This mentality is fundamentally problematic because it convinces one to overlook questioning what Daniel does for Surelia. But as we gradually learn more details about what Daniel does, will we look back on his comment and ask: how can his work contribute to this? Does he believe that interrogating and torturing defenseless subjects can be equated with the triumphs of space exploration? And if he does believe it—which he does—we must ask why?

Daniel first visits Doctor Valmy to receive professional help for his impotence. But when the doctor tells Daniel that his condition correlates with his participation in castrating a detained prisoner, the latter justifies his actions. Doctor

Valmy begins the first visit by asking a series of questions to understand better what Daniel's condition stems from, and then asks:

DOCTOR: ¿Lamenta lo que ha hecho?

DANIEL: Cumplí con mi deber.

DOCTOR: No sé si se da plena cuenta de cómo ha revivido la escena.

DANIEL: Esas cosas no son agradables. Pero hay que hacerlas. (51)

When Daniel confesses, he maintains that he was only doing his duty as a government agent. He admits that such methods are not pleasing to discuss—even he struggles to talk about torture, especially outside of work—they are necessary, which is in and of itself another justification, that is, that there exists a need for their usage. At this early point in the play, Buero Vallejo puts two of his main characters at ethical odds. When Doctor Valmy suggests that Daniel's impotence is a result of his lack of remorse and guilt for his actions, the latter replies, "no tengo nada de qué arrepentirme" (51). Daniel is ideologically at odds with Doctor Valmy, who advises his patient, "para curarse, tendría que admitir que ha cometido algo injustificable y espantoso" (51).

Doctor Valmy attempts to understand further Daniel's reasons for believing in the validity and necessity of his work and history with violence. The questions and their subsequent responses reveal significant reasons for Daniel to defend his actions. Doctor Valmy does this by asking Daniel to recall the first prisoner he laid his hands on, which for Daniel is relatively easy to do:

DOCTOR: ¿Recuerda al detenido?

DANIEL: ¡Sí! ¡Y tampoco me arrepiento! Era un canalla que había abusado de un niño.

DOCTOR: Claro. Supongo que al principio es fácil aprender a despreciar. Degenerados, estafadores, timadores, borrachos... Luego le cambian a uno de sección y hay que torturar a políticos. Pero para eso se madura políticamente.

DANIEL: Esos sediciosos son mucho más despreciables que los delincuentes comunes.

DOCTOR (*seco*): Puede ser. Pero usted debe considerar la posibilidad contraria la de que haya madurado políticamente, como usted dice, porque preveía que un día le llevarían a la Sección Política y sospechaba que no sería capaz de cometer ciertos actos sin una justificación que, al menos en parte, le tranquilizase.

DANIEL: Toda esa psicología es pura bazofia. (52-53)

When Doctor Valmy mentions "politically maturing," the audience should remember that these same words were used by Daniel when he explained how he came to work at the S.P. at the beginning of their appointment (44). However, Daniel's political maturation has not caused him to be more objective. It has the inverse effect as it clouds his conscience to justify his actions because others have told him it was what was needed.

Any argument in favor of using torture is predicated on the perception that its results are in demand. In *La doble historia*, it quickly becomes evident that Daniel relies on this demand to prove that it is not only his job but his duty to witness and use such methods. We see this throughout the play, in particular in Daniel's discussions and arguments with his wife, Mary. However, as she studies torture, her position evolves to one of disgust while his, for the majority of the play's first act, is reinforced by the belief that a prisoner's supposed guilt, which is determined by the S.P., justifies his actions. When Mary asks Daniel to do something to help Aníbal Marty, he responds, "son criminales. Deben confesar..." (65). When Mary probes

further, asking Daniel if he has tortured Marty, he becomes nervous and agitated: “¡Esa mujer no puede saber nada! ¡Todo lo que te haya dicho son mentiras o exageraciones! (*Sin mirarla.*) Mary..., es a tu marido a quien debes creer. Si te ha dicho que la violaron...” (65). But how can Daniel possibly know if what Lucila told Mary is a lie or an exaggeration if he does not know what she has said? It's simple; he cannot. Ironically, Daniel's attempts to deny the accusations all but confirm what Lucila told Mary. When Daniel recognizes Lucila as a past detainee at the Jefatura, he begins to cover for his actions. Daniel does know what he *has* done, thus putting him in a defensive position because, in some part of his being, he is morally conflicted.

While Daniel is hardly an endearing character, he does not always appear as a morally corrupted character in the play, making several attempts to transfer or even quit working at the Jefatura, the S.P.'s headquarters. But Daniel's efforts to resolve his impotence and repair his marriage, coupled with his attempts to understand others and regret his actions, are inconsistent—especially when compared with his wife's complete reversal in attitude, which I discuss at length later on in this section. The lack of consistency in Daniel's character—in particular, the moral principles that guide him—are manifest in his sexual frustration resulting in an inability to perform. Without Daniel ever experiencing erectile dysfunction, it is unlikely that he would have begun to question what he has done. Daniel's lack of virility is his motivation to seek help—not the later pleadings from Mary that he leave his job. José María Rodríguez García explains, “al confesarse autor de crímenes impronunciados, [Daniel] intensifica y legitima su necesidad de compasión” (607).

In a play about torture, the torturer (Daniel) ironically becomes a victim. While I agree that this is how Buero Vallejo intended the play, our compassion for Daniel must differ from the compassion we have for those who are the defenseless recipients of the physical and psychological violence that he has inflicted. More so than a victim of brutal acts, Daniel is a victim of a political ideology that believes in the use of torture to sustain its system. However, one must see that Daniel has inherited his defensive attitude from somewhere and someone. As Daniel's story unfolds on stage, it is revealed that torture is learned from authority figures—as is often the case—who promote it as a tool for fulfilling one's 'patriotic' duty.

While each person is ultimately responsible for their actions, justifying violence in *La doble historia* stems from one individual, Paulus. As the commander of the S.P. Paulus directly oversees interrogations where his employees not only use force, but he encourages it. Although Paulus says very little during the first act, it must be stressed that the S.P. officers are acting under his tutelage and, as such are an extension of him as they verbally and physically abuse detainees. However, when Daniel begins to grow restless about leaving his profession at the end of act one, Paulus's idea of interrogation comes to light. Paulus's corrupted or rather non-existent values on display in multiple ways. First, he pushes his men beyond their limits in torturing detainees—putting the detainee in mortal danger and thus risking the opportunity to gather more information. When Paulus's men begin to doubt their work, which Daniel does, he is quick to entice them with the prospect of promotion; but when they question his authority, he threatens them. Paulus

endorses totalitarian oppression on a systemic and secret level, arguing two justifications of torture: first, torture is used all over the world, and second, that he knows what happens physically and psychologically to his men, but their work *must* go on.

Although Paulus is a figure of authority in the fictional Surelia, he is still prone to irrational emotional responses and decisions. The final time the audience sees Aníbal Marty alive his expression conveys that there is nothing left in him, the torture has left him physically and emotionally benumbed. Upon seeing this, Pozner, one of Paulus's strongest men, even goes to remove his shackles. However, when Paulus says no, another man, Luigi, also interjects: "Hágame caso, jefe. La bañera y la corriente a un tiempo. Eso ya no lo aguanta" (68). These men have tortured Marty for an unspecified amount of time<sup>59</sup>, and perhaps wanting to either preserve Marty for further questioning or even to spare him from suffering more torture, they intercede on his behalf. However, they are stopped by Paulus, who says to Marty: "¿Qué te crees imbécil? ¿Que ya no hay nada peor? ¡Te engañas! Ya no eres más que un guiñapo<sup>60</sup>, y a los guiñapos se les hace trizas y se les tira a la basura. ¿Vas a hablar?" (68). However, it is not just Paulus's men that fear Marty is unable to withstand more torture, as even Doctor Clemens, the Jefatura's resident physician,

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<sup>59</sup> From the S.P.'s repeated comments that all of Marty's friends have "talked," it is evident that he is the last detainee—or in other words, Marty has endured his imprisonment, interrogation, and torture the longest. He is the final political detainee that Paulus must break.

<sup>60</sup> *Guiñapo* is a derogatory term similar to "low life."

examines him and advises Paulus against proceeding. It is no surprise then when Marty becomes unresponsive from the torture, Paulus calling the doctor: "Oiga, Clemens. Suba inmediatamente con algún tónico cardíaco. Hemos tenido un percance... Sí, sí, con el detenido. Está sin pulso... ¡Ya sé que me lo avisó! ¡Dese prisa!" (69). Results drive Paulus, but his brutal dedication to using extreme methods shows his inability to collect intelligence without endangering detained subjects, in particular, when said subjects resist.

It is inevitable to think that not all torturers are physically or mentally capable of continually brutalizing defenseless subjects without end. So it should be no surprise when the conflicted Daniel asks for a transfer from the Jefatura. However, it appears that Paulus is accustomed to this sort of request and quickly attempts to dissuade him. He does this first by praising Daniel, "tienes una hoja de servicios excepcional y quizá el ascenso está cerca..." and comparing him favorably to his other men, describing Daniel as one of his best and favorite employees (81). While Paulus does indeed describe Daniel as one of his most effective interrogators earlier in the play, his repeating it here in confidence and at this moment cannot be understated. If Daniel is indeed one of his best, then it goes without saying that Paulus would want to retain his services, not doing so would set a precedent with other men who are unable to adjust to what they do. Because of this, Paulus must make Daniel feel that he is not only capable of torturing and coping with the effect it has on him. Paulus has to praise Daniel and promise recognition *if* he continues.

Another way Paulus defends what he does is by warning those who question his work. When Daniel presses for a transfer, resorting to insubordinate behavior, Paulus becomes irritated. Paulus previously had a response for each of Daniel's doubts, but now, seeing that the latter may not be convinced, he turns to threats. He changes from the father-like figure, "Papaíto," as his men call him, denying Daniel's request before adding: "te voy a hacer una advertencia, muchacho. En momentos como este, no resistir es simpatizar con el enemigo" (81). We must ask ourselves when seeing or reading this, how does trying to *stop torture* become an act of sympathizing with the enemy? How does one become so ideologically corrupted that a request to not participate in violence against a defenseless individual becomes a traitorous act? This response calls to mind the saying, "if you're not with us, you're against us," as the two finish their argument, Paulus warns Daniel, "nadie está libre de encontrarse un día entre los detenidos. Y ya ves cómo temenos que tratar a los detenidos..." (82-83).

When bribery and threats no longer work, Paulus resorts to openly justifying what the S.P. does. The idea that torture is ethically wrong is lost on Paulus, who instead views it as a valuable tool to achieve his duty to the state. The way Buero Vallejo has created Paulus's character is undoubtedly a reflection of individuals who have historically defended the use of torture. Fernando Savater and Gonzalo Martínez-Fresneda argue that those who use torture do not think that it is wrong, "sino que se trata siempre de un crimen contra algo cuya conservación es prioritaria al triunfo de cualquier proyecto político" (*Teoría y presencia de la tortura en España*

9-10). Paulus believes this, telling Daniel, "si estuvieran en nuestro puesto no serían menos duros" (82). The second time Daniel speaks with Paulus about resigning, he works up the courage to denounce their work as a crime and vow that he will not torture again. Now Paulus in a way that is perhaps worse than denying what they do, instead he justifies it:

PAULUS: Y ahora escucha, imbécil: yo no he inventado la tortura. Cuando tú y yo venimos al mundo ya estaba ahí. Como el dolor y como la muerte. Puede que sea una salvajada, pero es que estamos en la selva. Entonces, es una salvajada justa.

DANIEL: ¿Contra seres humanos?

PAULUS: ¡Cuánta preocupación por el ser humano! Tú los has visto aquí: la mayoría no vale nada. Y no hay en la historia un solo adelanto que no se haya conseguido a costa de innumerables crímenes. (*Se oye un grito. Ambos miran a la puerta.*) (102)

With each retort from Daniel, Paulus has a response for why their work is necessary. Paulus is not like Daniel, who has been guilted to a different level of understanding by his wife Mary and Doctor Valmy, but rather he understands what is expected of the S.P. and embraces it. When Daniel suggests that they have made martyrs out of their prisoners, Paulus scolds him and clarifies his own stance on torture:

Eres un niño que ve el mundo como un cuento de buenos y malos. Pero a menudo, un torturador es un mártir que ha sobrevivido, un torturador que no se murió a tiempo. Como podría serlo mañana, por ejemplo, cualquiera de nosotros... Mártires, torturadores... Palabras para la propaganda. Pero ahora estamos solos y te diré la verdad. (*Otro grito. PAULUS mira al fondo.*) Lo esencial es tener la razón a nuestro lado. Cuando eso ocurre, poco importante los medios a emplear. (102-103)

One bases their justification for using torture on how they view the Other. If an individual is a "threat," then it is all the easier to approve of methods such as electroshock, waterboarding, and denailing. For one who believes this, such as

Paulus, detainees are sub-human. Torturers convince themselves that if they do not extract the intelligence in question, then they or others they supposedly protect will become victims of the conflict. Paulus's mentality is typical of those who torture as he explains that he is consciously aware of his actions: "yo he elegido el poder, ¿entiendes? Entre devorar y ser devorado, escojo lo primero" (104).

To consider the toll torture takes on the torturer, we must reflect on, as Buero Vallejo appears to want us to, the difficulty of justifying it. The first time the audience witnesses an interrogation in the play, they see the S.P. interrogating Aníbal Marty about an envelope he received from a stranger, which he was supposed to deliver another, unknown individual. When Marty replies, "¡Ya le he dicho que fue en un café!" (48) Paulus quickly corrects him, "¡Fue en una casa!" (48). But if the S.P. already has this information, then why ask? Marty's response shows that the S.P.'s intelligence is either wrong or that he knows little about what they are asking. Such questioning is suspect as it continues throughout the play:

Como la verdad *se produce* cuando el prisionero pronuncia un testimonio autoinculpatario, es muy significativo que Aníbal Marty muera en las dependencias de la S.P. sin confesar su culpa. Así se revela la arbitrariedad e ilegitimidad de todo testimonio obtenido por medios coercitivos. (García 601)

Torture is a fallible method of gathering intelligence as the confessions that it produces are not always what has, in actuality, occurred. Instead, it is blatantly apparent through Aníbal Marty's response that the tortured subject may not know about the events or individuals in question but is compelled through coercion to answer as his captors desire. If torture is justified based on results, then said

justification is put in jeopardy—or even nullified—when a captor predetermines a prisoner's response.

### **Accomplices of Violence**

Not all who use, or witness violence justify it. Often the accomplices necessary for approving its usage are as simple as a passive society that is indifferent to knowing that it occurs, much less demanding change. Savater and Martínez-Fresneda argue:

Los mayores enemigos de una visión lúcida sobre la tortura no son sólo los torturadores, sino muy especialmente aquellos que están dispuestos a excluir de tal consideración abominable ciertos comportamientos brutales que ellos consideran más o menos *justificados*" (*Teoría y presencia de la tortura en España* 9).

For the public to justify torture or violence, they would not only have to know about its usage but also believe that without it, they would be in danger. By viewing torture as a preventative measure, it becomes an accepted, yet undiscussed, norm for providing security. As torture goes undetected, many remain unaware that such methods are used in or by their own country. The two best examples in *La doble historia* are Mary Barnes and Daniel's mother, Abuela. Before Mary reads the *Breve historia de la tortura*, she is unaware of what Daniel does, even vehemently denying that Paulus's men tortured Lucila and her husband. While Mary does eventually change her stance toward torture, which I examine in the next subsection, Abuela refuses.

Buero Vallejo recreates societal attitudes toward violence in varied ways through the play's characters. Those that work for the S.P. follow the authority of

Paulus, who views torture as a need. Mary, a teacher by trade, follows her conscience through what she learns, first through what little Daniel tells her and later by educating herself about torture. Daniel struggles to come to terms with the physical and psychological consequences of his actions. Lucila denounces the use of torture because she is a victim. Doctor Valmy encourages his patients to understand that their suffering stems from their actions. Although Abuela is not one of *La doble historia's* main characters, she plays a vital role in reflecting societal indifference as she knows that torture is used and does nothing.

To begin to understand Abuela it is necessary to summarize who she is and how she acts. Abuela rebuffed Paulus's romantic advances as a young woman but continues to hold him in high regard as he helped Daniel get a job, "siempre tan cumplido," she refers to him (33). As Daniel's mother and Danielito's caregiver, when Mary is not home, she is an integral part of the Barnes' household. Abuela is a doting mother, proud of Daniel and his perceived accomplishments, yet is simultaneously jealous of Mary's closeness with her son—as is evident in her constant disapproval of her daughter-in-law (30-32). She does have hearing problems; however, at times, she selectively listens, in particular, when Mary is speaking to her. Abuela listens to what she wants and to who she wants to hear it from, embodying the selective reaction that is far too prevalent in society.

When *Breve historia de la tortura*, a book explaining the history of torture and its various methods, appears in the house, it is apparent that Abuela disapproves of it. For her, the book is a disruption that makes her feel

uncomfortable. After Mary reads *Breve historia* and confronts Daniel about his work, she leaves the book on the kitchen table. When Abuela sees it, she approaches it, puts on her glasses, lifts it, reads the cover, opens it, and contemplates a picture. Just when it seems that she too might begin to change, as Mary has, she puts it down. In doing so, Abuela makes a conscious effort in refusing to learn about the realities of torture. Iglesias Feijoo explains, "ella ve, pero prefiere no seguir leyendo, prefiere continuar 'ciega' ante esas brutalidades" (334). But why does Abuela do this? The answer is quite simple—for her, it is easier to do nothing. She prefers not to learn but to remain deaf and even blind to reality. Abuela represents some of the attitudes during Franco's reign, in which many remained indifferent to the atrocities committed by the Nationalist regime. It was easier to feign ignorance that Franco built his political system on the brutal suffering of many.

The excuse of not seeing torture or the evidence of torture only goes so far. Buero Vallejo seemingly tells the audience that if they cannot see or refuse to see the truth, then they will be told. Mary makes this clear as she responds to Abuela's accusations that she convinced Daniel to quit his job:

"¡Allí se cometen cosas horribles, abuela!... ¡Es que estoy tan sola! ¡Pero usted sabe, abuela, yo sé que usted sabe! Usted conoce al comisario Paulus desde que era joven... (*Un silencio.*) ¿O no lo sabía?... ¿Le pasaba lo que a mí, que no sabía? (*Un silencio.*) O quizá no se atrevería a creerlo... Pero usted lo ayudó a caer en esa trampa y debe ayudarlo a salir de ella. (LA ABUELA *tiene los ojos húmedos.*) ¡Es muy triste, lo comprendo! ¡Ver al hijo así, y al final de la vida!... ¡Yo la quiero, abuela! (*La abraza.*) ¡Nos ayudaremos las dos! ¡Para que se salve Danielito, al menos!... Pero ayúdeme. Ayúdenos. (87)

This scene allows Buero Vallejo to show one's dedication to deny torture in a place they call home. Abuela, who chose to close the book on torture and remain blind to the truth, now responds to her daughter-in-law "*(sin mirarla, deniega)*: No te oigo... nada. No... te oigo" (87). We cannot blame her inability to hear on any lack of hearing but rather a desire to *not* listen. Mary, who has had her differences with Abuela, offers her mother-in-law a chance for redemption if she will help and support her in fixing the problem before it affects another generation, represented in her child, Danielito. However, because Abuela chooses not to hear, she becomes guilty of the same crimes as Daniel in the sense that she now knows what he has done but is more comfortable doing nothing.

### **The Awakening of Conscience**

The events portrayed on stage in *La doble historia* demand reflection and discussion for the play to reach its true potential and influence how the audience sees torture. Multiple characters in *La doble historia* are disrupted by the use of torture coming to light. For example, Daniel and Mary Barnes become victims through their destruction; Mary shoots Daniel before being finally imprisoned at the Jefatura for killing him. Buero Vallejo makes the torturer—and as an extension, his family—a new victim, rethinking who the act of torture affects and how. Laura Tanner explains, "[violence] has the capacity to destroy not only the form of the victim's body but the familiar forms of understanding through which that victim construct him—or herself as a subject" (4). Buero Vallejo knew all too well the life of a political prisoner, as he was imprisoned during Franco's reign, and yet he did not

portray violence on prisoners in *La doble historia*. Instead, he used the play to explore the limitless consequences of torture.

In the play, there is an awakening of conscience that Buero Vallejo wants the audience to witness in Mary Barnes. Her trajectory shows how one's attitudes can change over time as she begins as an ignorant and doting housewife who enables her husband by never discussing his work with him. But regardless of how repulsive her initial indifference and denial of torture may be for Buero Vallejo's audience, "critics perceive in Mary more psychological change and certainly a rounder character than is the case with Daniel" (Pennington, "*A View from the Feminine*" 132). As a former teacher, Mary must educate herself on the subject of torture before reevaluating her position and taking a stance against it. Once she obtains the knowledge necessary to understand what it is, its use, and who is affected by it, she questions Daniel and asks him to quit his job (76). Buero Vallejo uses her character, in particular, to show: "hasta la gente decente puede no enterarse de la verdad hasta que la tortura le afecte directamente" (Neglia 99-100).

As Mary becomes more aware of the realities and consequences of torture, she struggles to maintain the naïve view of society she once had. Iglesias Feijoo explains that Mary "[es] la única que evoluciona ante la verdad. Ella, esposa de un torturador...es una muestra perfecta de hasta qué punto se puede ser inconsciente" (332). But her awakening comes at a significant cost, affecting her view of bringing more children into the world, as she explains to her mother-in-law: "¡No voy a tener ningún niño, abuela ¡Ninguno más!" (86) and later to Dr. Valmy, "ya nunca me

atrevería a traer a otro hijo al mundo. No me lo perdonaría" (90). Mary's new repulsion towards having more children is emanate from the guilt she feels from not listening to Lucila, whose inability to conceive a child with Marty is a direct result of Daniel's work.

Several scenes near the play's end are crucial to show Mary's desire to make reparations for disbelieving Lucila. These scenes contrast with the storyline of her husband, Daniel, whose humiliation from impotence does enough to make him feel victimized by what he has been ordered to do and seek change, although only when it is demanded of him by his wife. Mary demonstrates the importance of a continually evolving attitude, as she learns and admits her wrongdoing—even if it was only refusing to listen—and adopts an anti-torture stance. First, Mary tries to make amends with Lucila by attempting to understand her suffering. However, the relationship is beyond repair for two reasons. Although Daniel's impotence has affected Mary's ability to have sex, she cannot truly comprehend Lucila's suffering, because one, she already has a child, Danielito, and two, Daniel's impotence is not permanent like Marty's castration. Of course, it would be unreasonable to expect that Lucila to accept Mary's apologies, but that is not to say that nothing is accomplished from their final exchange as Mary asks: "Fuiste tú quien me mandó el libro, ¿verdad? ¿Fuiste tú?" and later, "gracias por el libro, Lucila" (97). This act alone indicates Mary's recognition that she knows that she was wrong as well as her new desire to change. When Daniel confronts Mary for speaking to Lucila and tells

her that they must leave Surelia, Mary responds, "donde vayamos nos estará esperando otro comisario Paulus" (99).

Even though Daniel recoups his sexual prowess, Mary comes to a breaking point in the final scene as she can no longer withstand his presence. Mary's sense of right and wrong makes her aware that Daniel might torture again, even fearing her son could be one of his victims. She becomes fiercely defensive of Danielito, holding him close while keeping her husband at bay with his pistol: "¡Duerme tú, hijo mío! ¡Tu madre te defiende! ¡Ojalá no te hubiera dado la vida! ¡Perdónamelo tú, ángel mío! ¡Tu madre te protege! ¡él no nos hará nada, nada! ¡Tú jugarás con todos los niños del mundo!" (110). Instead of Mary pretending she never knew about the S.P.'s practices, as Daniel suggests, she is determined to defend her child—to defend the future—from further consequences of torture, with violence if necessary. John Fraser explains, "it is in violent encounters that one is required most obviously to reaffirm or reassess one's own values and to acknowledge the necessity of having a strong and clearly articulated value-system" (157). Mary can no longer deny her conscience and is compelled to defend her child. In doing so, Mary does become a violent killer. But instead of Daniel's death liberating them both, Mary frees herself of the guilt and pain her husband has brought her but at the cost of her physical freedom, as she is subsequently imprisoned by Paulus's men.

### **The Audience as Representatives of Society**

It is vital to remember that within the performance—or reading—of *La doble historia* the audience represents those that Buero Vallejo sought to change. He does

not explicitly tell us what to believe<sup>61</sup>, as the audience never sees torture performed on stage, but rather allows us to witness how torture causes life itself to unravel. Buero Vallejo prods the audience—as he does with his characters—to take a stance against torture. Iglesias Feijoo suggests that one of the play's essential critiques is “quien siga manteniendo que el tema no le afecta, o lo rechace como una exageración y un desatino, o lo niegue como un infundio, es un loco...[es] culpable” (337). We are all guilty of participating in torture or denying its use; some are more directly implicated by their actions, such as Daniel Barnes, while some are impacted by what others have done, such as Mary's guilt. As an audience, or society, we too become accomplices of the torturous act if we are made aware of it and do nothing, for doing nothing is truly insanity.

The play demands active contemplation of its content both during the performance and after. *La doble historia* is meant to shock and disturb, to make one think and, perhaps, even mad. I agree with Pennington, who, in his analysis, wrote: “because of its subject the play invites analyses of the ethical questions it raises” (“Subjective Drama” 96). The audience should feel uncomfortable with the play's themes and also a responsibility to denounce the inhumane treatment of others. Daniel, in a brief moment of moral clarity, defines the problem with torture when he confronts Paulus towards the end of the play, “hoy hay que esconder la tortura como

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<sup>61</sup> It is important to remember the Señor and Señora, who directly address the audience at both the beginning and just before the end of the play, to try to convince the audience that what they are about to see or have seen is not true.

a un hijo deforme. Para defenderla, usted tiene que cerrar las puertas y bajar la voz. En público está obligado a poner la cara afable del buen señor que ama a sus semejantes" (103). While *La doble historia* was no doubt influenced by Buero Vallejo's experience, it must stand as a work of fiction that presents audiences with a central problem which they must consider how to resolve it. The play is not meant to be taken lightly, as any viewing or reading of it from an approach grounded in ethics requires that one examine and, if necessary, reconsider the way they think about torture.

## Chapter 8

### The Need for Violence: The Post-Civil War Arena of Good versus Evil in Guillermo del Toro's *El laberinto del fauno*

Any analysis or discussion of the representation of violence in the arts would be incomplete if one always and immediately dismisses it as unacceptable without considering the circumstances that necessitate such drastic action. This, however, is easy to do as violence is often judged as we reflect on it from the present, where one learns about it after the fact. This position allows one the privilege of not having to choose between using violence or not. But it is when one is faced with the immediacy of such a situation—or one that may later equally match or even surpass that violence—that we must account for the unique situational ethics. It must be acknowledged that circumstances exist when violence may be necessary or even the only course of action, in particular when it is to prevent further or greater violence from occurring.

The arts portray violence in many ways. But how a work represents violence is critical for how audiences, whom it is intended to influence, will receive it, whether it be positively or negatively. How violence is portrayed is of utmost importance for an audience to feel the need to contemplate what they are seeing, reading, or hearing. Guillermo del Toro's *El laberinto del fauno* demands a thoughtful response from its audience. The film takes a well-known conflict of modern Spain, set in the early years after the Civil War, and presents it to audiences as a fairy tale, as seen through the eyes of a curious young girl. The result is a film

that is visually beautiful and brutal, one that challenges the viewer—much like Marías's *Rostro* and Buero Vallejo's *La doble historia*—to think about what they see, to contemplate the history, and to question the violence.

There have been many works of fiction created that seek to understand the Spanish Civil War and Franco's dictatorship. The need for these works persists as the country is still searching for how to address its collective wounds, whether to close them entirely or thoroughly clean, bandage and allow them to heal. Ellis and Sánchez-Arce explain:

Spanish society remains in two minds about the Spanish Civil War. While the generation with memories of the war and its aftermath are nearly always cautious about 'reopening anything,' from an archive to an unmarked grave, the grandchildren who cannot remember anything because they did not see anything are desperate to learn more. (173)

Mexico has a long and tragic history with Spain starting with the latter's conquest of the Americas. While Mexico has long felt the sting of centuries of unjust rule and treatment by Europeans, many Spaniards were welcomed to the country with open arms when they sought refuge from the war and dictatorship. As these Spaniards integrated into Mexican society, their struggle became well-known throughout Mexico. Guillermo del Toro was fascinated by these stories as "[he] found textual sympathy with the tragic, idealistic arena of the Spanish Civil War—a modern sort of 'children's crusade,' insofar as the conflict seems from the outside to possess a clear-cut, right-versus-might purity" (Atkinson 52). Fairy tale and horror genre classics have heavily influenced del Toro's work; however, it took del Toro years to have the time and financial support to complete a project in which he could use both

to explore historical conflict. Del Toro did this first with *El espinazo del diablo* (2001), a film taking place at a small orphanage in rural Spain during the last year of the war. His second project, *El laberinto*, for which he had a larger budget and the necessary creative control to bring his vision to life, was completed five years later. Famed photographer Robert Capa's visual record of the war influenced del Toro, "[as] the definitive images of the Spanish War and his juxtaposition of bloody conflict and 'ordinary' life offers a template" (McDonald and Clark 57).

Many films explore the historical memory of Spain's Civil War and dictatorship years. These films are no doubt motivated by years of one-sided stories, creating a void in the nation's memory by relegating the defeated to silence. The need to tell stories that show the other side has reopened Spain's past to allow for the creation of a more encompassing and authentic vision of its history. Motivated by telling his own story, del Toro's "film focuses on a sadistic military officer and his determination to kill and torture people, and on a child, his stepdaughter, who rebels and escapes to a world of fantasy" (Sánchez 137). The audience watches as Ofelia completes three tasks given to her by the mysterious faun and must overcome the evil and repression of a fantasy world that mirrors the events occurring in the real world, which is dominated by her wicked stepfather. Ellis and Sánchez-Arce explain:

Directors like del Toro can help in the psychological rather than the actual recovery of historical memory. Cinematic 'false' memories like those of del Toro would not hold up in a court of law. But they are narratives of what might have occurred, and at least as convincing as many of the myths

propagated during Franco's dictatorship which were neither challenged during the Transition nor the first thirty years of democracy in Spain. (174)

*El laberinto*, like the other works analyzed in this section (*Rostro* and *La doble historia*), provides its audiences with stories that can—and should—foster a discussion of violence. While many of del Toro's films are intended to entertain through their fantastic or horrifying themes and creatures, *El laberinto* does the same but without distracting from a good versus evil story that he wants to tell. This conflict is easily identifiable as we see Captain Vidal—the Pale Man or fairy tale villain in the flesh—use violence as a means of advancing his political ideology while satisfying his sadistic nature. Through the rebellious and compassionate actions of Ofelia, Mercedes, and Dr. Ferreiro, in comparison to Vidal's vicious tendencies, I analyze how *El laberinto* shows when violence is unacceptable and when it is needed.

### **The Sadistic Nature of Capitan Vidal**

One cannot comprehend the violence that Captain Vidal uses without first trying to understand him as a person. *El laberinto* portrays Vidal as an incredibly rigid military officer: he is always conscious of time, the sharpness of his appearance, and the enforcing of strict obedience to his orders. Critics are particularly fascinated with López's portrayal of Vidal, as Barry Spector says that despite the character's rigidity, "he is not a one-dimensional brute. Vidal is a true Fascist, a *believer*, decisive and savage" (82), while Tanya Jones adds: "as a representative of the brutality of Fascism, [Vidal] is the most dangerous of all [the

film's villains] and kills the Princess/heroine in his own quest to take control of his son and by extension his particular region of Spain" (18). The consensus among film critics and scholars is that Captain Vidal is the embodiment of fascism—clearly evident in his dress, mannerisms, and language. We know Vidal is the bad guy early in the film; however, as we follow Ofelia on her quest and see the parallels between her fantasy and the real world, we begin to see him as the apex villain of all of del Toro's work.

Captain Vidal demonstrates a particularly horrific tendency to bring immense suffering to "the bodies and minds of those who come into contact with him" (Jones 48). This sadistic tendency is manifest as Vidal comes into contact with the Maquis resistance he has orders to defeat, the innocent civilians he murders (the rabbit hunters and Dr. Ferreiro), and even his own family (his wife, Carmen, and stepdaughter, Ofelia). Although the audience sees Vidal in uniform and at the command of nationalist soldiers, his actions often exceed the standard conventions of military violence:

The officer is portrayed with an essential disposition toward murder and the inflicting of pain. Vidal carries out the killing of civilians and the persecution of anti-fascist fighters with a sort of personal passion that is above and beyond what his subordinated officers are willing to do...Vidal's drive to inflict death and torture does *not* respond to a *political* plan. (Sánchez 140)

Vidal's violence is so extreme that it goes beyond any possible justification in the conflict between the fascists and the Maquis. Lorraine Markotic's approach to his character is similar, as she cites one particular scene as an example: "During his dinner party, [Vidal] informs his guests that he is not just hunting down the Maquis

because he is required to do so. He tells his guests that he is doing so by choice" (187). While I do agree that Vidal goes beyond the "normal" violence of military conflict, I would not say that he does not embody fascism, especially if Vidal is—as many have suggested—the real-world double of the Pale Man. Vidal represents the extremes of an ideology that allows and even helps his sadistic nature to flourish, resulting in a ruthless monster. As a character, "Vidal is presented as naturally evil" (Hubner, *Fairytales and Gothic Horror* 171), which is most clearly evident in his actions, it is torturing and killing that "makes Vidal feel alive and effective" (Levine 124). Here I examine how Vidal's villainy pertains to his masculinity through the murder of innocent hunters and the torture of a political prisoner, and finally, the killing of the film's heroine, Ofelia. Each instance portrays Vidal as the antithesis of all that is good, and as such, his actions are not, nor could they ever be, objectively justified.

Vidal's unconscionable treatment of his wife and Ofelia occurs when the three are first seen together on-screen. Vidal speaks to his pregnant wife and stepdaughter in a way that is subtly misogynistic for the non-Spanish speaking audience, yet not so subtle for those that understand how the language is gendered. When Vidal welcomes Carmen and Ofelia to the outpost, he removes a leather glove and places his hand on his wife's belly and says, "bienvenidos." Speaking formally and respectfully, Vidal should have used "bienvenidas," as a respectful greeting for his new wife and stepdaughter. Instead, "[Vidal] embodies a masculinity so exclusive it barely acknowledges the existence of the feminine" (Smith, "*Pan's*

*Labyrinth*" 6). The moment stands as a clear example of how much Vidal values masculinity as he assumes that the unborn child must be a son (Smith, "*Pan's Labyrinth*" 6). This evidential scene shows the monster that Vidal is, as it is an early indication of just how little he cares for Carmen—who is merely a vessel to carry his child—and even less for his stepdaughter, Ofelia.

Captain Vidal's extreme misogyny is evident in his relationship with Carmen and Ofelia. The portrayal of the relationship between Vidal and Carmen reveals a marriage absent of romance or love. Vidal is the epitome of the masculine archetype that has little regard for women except that they serve him, "his only interest in Carmen is the son she will bear him" (Jones 85). Ofelia's adventurous and warm spirit contrasts with Vidal's cruelty. Carmen is the intermediary between the two, but her role is temporary, as she dies in childbirth halfway through the film. However, that does mean to say that Carmen favors her daughter, instead she is passive and often submissive to the will of Vidal:

[She] gives up personal control and allows herself to be oppressed because of her own needs and the socio-economic position that she perceives a woman like her to be in. Carmen acquiesces to Vidal when he wants her to use the wheelchair, a piece of iconography that represents taking away her mobility and freedom. She allows herself to be silenced by Vidal at the dinner party and embarrassed when he calls her account of the beginning of their relationship 'silly stories'. (Jones 30-31)

The closer that Carmen gets to childbirth, Ofelia's disappearances, necessary for completing her tasks, become more frequent, the more strained the relationship between the two becomes. For Ofelia, a girl who loves reading stories, her experiences in the fantasy world become incredibly important and personal to her,

but the one person she should be able to share them with, her mother, disregards and even scolds her, especially when Vidal discovers that Ofelia put a mandrake root underneath Carmen's bed, following the Faun's instructions to heal her mother heal from fever:

VIDAL: Es toda esa mierda que le permites leer. Mira lo que has conseguido.

CARMEN: Por favor, déjanos solas. Yo hablaré con ella.

VIDAL: Muy bien. Como quieras.

OFELIA: Me dijo que te curaría. Y te curó. Te curó.

CARMEN: Ofelia. Ofelia. Tu padre tiene razón. Tienes que escucharle. Tienes que cambiar.

OFELIA: No. No. Quiero irme de aquí. Llévame lejos de aquí. Por favor. Por favor. Vámonos.

CARMEN: Las cosas no son tan sencillas. Estás a punto de hacerte mayor. Ya pronto entenderás que la vida no es como en tus cuentos de hadas. El mundo es un lugar cruel y eso tendrás que aprenderlo, aunque te duela (*Mira la mandrágora y la arroja a las llamas.*)

OFELIA (*Ofelia grita y trata de impedirlo.*): ¡No!

CARMEN: La magia no existe Ofelia. No existe. Ni para ti, ni para mi, ni para nadie. (*El laberinto del fauno*)

This scene is pivotal for del Toro to present the beneficial properties of a child's imagination—one that believes enough to heal her mother!—in contrast with the bleak outlook of an adult. By doing this Carmen is commanding her daughter to live and suffer in the real world as she does. In this regard, Carmen's fate is tragic as she struggles to overcome the hardships of her time, in particular, the impossible balance between raising a daughter fascinated by learning and fantasy while acquiescing to a totalitarian husband.

The examples of Vidal's indifference to his wife and stepdaughter are prevalent in *El laberinto*. There are many references in the film that point to Vidal as the ultimate villain or monster of Ofelia's fairytale, identifiable through symbolism,

action, and language. One such instance occurs in an exchange between Vidal and Dr. Ferreiro when the latter visits Carmen, who is bedridden with a fever.

VIDAL: Que le quede claro...(pausa) Si tiene que escoger: salve al niño.

DOCTOR: Por el momento no hay necesidad de—.

VIDAL (*interrumpe*): Pero si la hubiera, que quede claro desde ahora (pausa). Ese niño llevará mi nombre—y el nombre de mi padre—sávelo a él. (*El laberinto del fauno*)

Earlier in the film, when Carmen first arrived at the mill, Dr. Ferreiro examined her and told Vidal that she should not have traveled so late in the pregnancy. Vidal responds to the doctor's professional opinion with his own: "le daré entonces la mía, Doctor: un hijo debe nacer dondequiera que esté su padre. Eso es todo". Before the conversation ends, the doctor asks Vidal, who told him that the child was a boy, to which the latter replies, "no me jodas." The strained relationship between Vidal and Ofelia worsens after Carmen's death, as he never "[he never] registers that Ofelia is a motherless child who should now be under his protection" (Jones 85). Instead, Vidal is consumed wholly by his hunt for the Maquis and the birth of his son. Vidal's disregard for Ofelia follows the pattern of evil stepmothers whom fairy tale heroines must overcome. However, in del Toro's story, Vidal is "[the] tyrannical figure who has usurped a role for which he has no other interest but his own self-affirmation" (Sánchez 138).

### *The Rabbit Hunters*

*El laberinto* portrays Captain Vidal's brutal violence in multiple situations in which different types of characters are the victims of his wrath. The first, and undoubtedly one of the most horrific, is when Vidal kills two rabbit hunters, a father,

and his son. Believing the two to be spies for the Maquis, Vidal beats the son's face in with a bottle—that does not break—and then shoots the father. In section one, I provided a more in-depth analysis of the physical violence portrayed in this scene. In contrast, here I mention it briefly to frame Vidal's actions as beyond unethical as "he dispatches the rabbit poachers without conscience or emotion" (Jones 85). Graphic violence is a necessary aesthetic technique which del Toro uses to craft the villain he wants in Captain Vidal:

[Its usage] represent[s] the carnage resulting from Franco's power...making it a very hard film to watch and listen to...We see, for instance, a starving father and son (who are out hunting rabbits) slaughtered by Captain Vidal, who assumes that they are resistance fighters. He smashes the son in the nose and face repeatedly with a metal truncheon until he is dead, then shoots the father in the throat. Within the frame, the specks of blood fly. When Vidal finds the skinny dead rabbit afterwards, he takes it home for supper. (Hubner "Fear and the Fairy Tale" 47)

While I, for the most part, agree with Hubner's analysis, I differ on several points. First, Vidal does not beat the son to death with a metal truncheon, but rather an empty bottle. As a prop, the bottle is significant as it's something that a young del Toro witnessed happen to a friend; however, much to his surprise, the bottle did not break. Another point in which I disagree with Hubner is that she does not go far enough in saying that Vidal takes the rabbit home for dinner. Instead, he says to his men as he discovers the rabbits, "a ver si aprendéis a registrar a esta gentuza antes de venir a molestarme," later the scrawny rabbits are next seen cooked and in the middle the table at Vidal's feast. This rebuke of his men shows Vidal's callous nature

toward his irreversible actions as the execution of the hunters is a “brutal murder [from which he] is only irritated that his time has been wasted” (Markotic 181).

### *Torturing the Tarta*

In several of the instances in which the audience witnesses Vidal use violence, his actions erupt on-screen with unexpected brutality. His disposition to cruelty causes the audience to wait in suspense of what horrible thing he will do next but generally surpasses those expectations—killing a man with a bottle and then shooting his starving father before finally murdering Ofelia in cold blood. However, in the scene where Vidal tortures the *Tarta*, the audience knows what to expect as he presents the tools he is going to use to his prisoner—and the audience—and how he will use them to get him to talk. Jennifer Schubert explains that “[Vidal’s] sadism is rendered undeniable for viewers as they repeatedly watch him inflict bodily pain on his victims” (1). Vidal’s cruelty is most apparent when he taunts the *Tarta*, by promising that he can go free by counting to three; he cannot.

The act of torture is difficult to analyze because the severe pain it inflicts on another is not a pleasant topic of discussion, nor is it easy to view depicted in any artform. However, scenes such as Vidal torturing the *Tarta*, are necessary for the film to distinguish the former as a sinister character by creating heightened levels of discomfort for the viewer. When Vidal enters, he talks down to his prisoner, who is shackled to a post, shivering from the cold. Vidal creates tension for the film as he handles each instrument; by now, the viewer has come to expect extreme violence from him at any moment. However, “the spectator is spared the more grotesque

details [of torture] as the camera abruptly cuts to the next scene...[when it returns] Vidal now stands washing the human blood of his victim off his hands in the pouring rain" (Swier 71). The *Tarta* elicits sympathy for his struggle to speak but even more so as he does not reveal everything to Vidal. Vidal's actions are undeniably deplorable. In this scene, as no reason can explain the extent of violence he uses against the defenseless prisoner.

### *Killing Ofelia*

The final confirmation of Vidal's evil nature is when he murders Ofelia at the center of the labyrinth. When Ofelia offers to sacrifice herself to the faun instead of her brother, said sacrifice is completed as Vidal shoots her and spills her blood, thus opening the portal to the underworld and proving Ofelia's innocence and destiny to return to her father's kingdom. We must ask in this scene if Vidal shooting Ofelia is necessary for her to complete her task and receive her reward—which it indeed is—or if there is something more. While Ofelia's death is the focus of scene, the screen is dominated by Vidal's presence, who seems to have won, in this aspect his "[cruelty] is unprecedented, dissolute, and even supersedes the horror provoked by the grotesque creatures in the underground world of the fairy tale" (Swier 71). Yarza adds:

Ofelia's story follows Christ's own story of descent and ascent, his recursive journey. She is a sacrificial lamb; she contains within her, as did Christ, both the beginning and the end, the Alpha and the Omega (letters which Ofelia's own name, meaning 'help' or 'aid,' also contains in reverse as if reflected in a mirror). Her death, like Jesus's own, points to salvation and rebirth, a journey to hell and back to save the trapped souls visually represented. The story of

Ofelia, like that of Jesus, is also that of a recursive journey from the magical kingdom to Franco's Spain and back to the magical kingdom. (270)

The connection Yarza makes between Ofelia and Jesus makes Vidal killing Ofelia a damning act, particularly poignant for an officer in the service of a military that protects the ideals of a devout catholic regime. In questioning whether Vidal's actions are ethical or unethical, one needs to look no further than the Pale Man, a monster driven by an appetite to inflict suffering and devour all that is good. Captain Vidal is the epitome of this creature, a beast who is consumed by power and violence.

### **The Justified Violence of Rebels**

Although Captain Vidal dominates the screen in nearly every shot he appears, several characters subvert his power. While Ofelia is the principal character that undermines Vidal and whom he climactically executes, others challenge him in supporting roles to her quest. Ofelia's completion of the tasks is more than just saving her brother but rather symbolizes the overall struggle between freedom and fascism (Vaz and Nunziata 26). While much of the film takes place in a beautifully imagined fantasy world, a place where Ofelia is the only human capable of entering, much of its story is rooted in the harshness of reality, the very space where Mercedes and Dr. Ferreiro combat fascism.

One of the *El laberinto's* most unwavering characters, Mercedes, doubles as a servant at the mill and a spy for the Maquis. Mercedes sneaks food and other provisions, especially medicine, from under the nose of Vidal, who, from the

beginning, suspects someone is assisting the rebels. At one-point, Vidal tells Mercedes that there is an informant at the mill, the information he obtained from torturing the *Tarta*, and he asks her to help find out who it is. The request insinuates that it was Mercedes who helped the Maquis raid the storehouse earlier in the film as the lock was unbroken, suggesting that she has used the key. Mercedes, fearing for her life, takes young Ofelia and attempts to flee. However, Vidal and his men thwart the escape. Vidal locks Ofelia in the attic of the mill and ties Mercedes up to the same post where he tortured the *Tarta*.

VIDAL: Puede retirarse, Garcés, y llévese a los hombres. Que descansen, mañana será un día agitado.

GARCÉS: ¿Está usted seguro, señor?

VIDAL: Por el amor de Dios. No es más que una mujer.

MERCEDES: Eso es lo que pensó usted siempre. Por eso pude estar cerca, porque yo era invisible para usted.

VIDAL: Joder. Encontró usted mi punto débil: la soberbia. Pero, estamos aquí para buscar sus puntos débiles. (*El laberinto del fauno*)

Vidal then turns from Mercedes as he begins to remove the same implements he used previously. At this point the viewer is to believe that Mercedes will also be tortured. However, Mercedes produces a small kitchen knife from the hem of her apron and frees herself while Vidal once again boasts about what he will do to his prisoner:

El asunto es muy sencillo: usted va a hablar y yo tengo que saber que me está diciendo la verdad. Precisamente para eso hemos traído unas cosillas. Nada complicado. Cosas que aprende uno por allí. Al principio no voy a poder confiar en... (*El laberinto del fauno*)

As Vidal boasts about what he will do to his next victim, Mercedes sneaks up behind and stabs him in the back, dragging the blade downward in a long, deep gash. When

Vidal turns towards her, she stabs him again in the upper part of the chest, causing him to collapse to his knees. Now, as Mercedes looks down at him, she forces the knife in his mouth and says to her would-be torturer: “yo no soy un viejo ni un hombre herido. Hijo de puta. No se te ocurra tocar a la niña. No serás el primer cerdo que degüello”. With that, Mercedes viciously slashes Vidal’s left cheek with the blade. Although she leaves the mill quickly—as she must—her moment of defiance shows Vidal's weakness. Vidal underestimates the power and abilities of women. As such, he was unable to detect the presence of the Maquis' informant in Mercedes, who cooked his food, cleaned, and took care of his wife and Ofelia.

The scene in which Mercedes frees herself before stabbing Vidal and escaping represents a pivotal moment in *El laberinto's* plot. Up until now, no one has been able to challenge Vidal without succumbing to his retaliation. But here, Vidal is alone, having dismissed his men, foolishly believing that his masculine strength would allow him to easily dominate the submissive female servant he thought Mercedes to be. The outcome, however, is reversed, as Jones explains:

[The knife] is a prop, therefore, that once symbolized Mercedes’ enforced domestic servitude that is then used to release her from it. Mercedes slits Vidal's face into a bizarre, lopsided grin. Like Batman's nemesis the Joker, Vidal has the happiness he destroys in others carved onto his face as a grim reminder of his actions and an ironic representation of his state of mind. (48-49)

I agree with the comparison Jones makes to the gashed Vidal and the Joker smile and add that it is more than a reminder of his actions. When Vidal is later seen drugged and stumbling after Ofelia in the labyrinth, his movements appear eerily

similar to the Pale Man, as the gash in his face becomes a sign that confirms him as a monster by now marking his outward appearance.

Mercedes' ability to thwart Vidal is a pivotal moment for the film as it proves he is a villain who has weaknesses and can be defeated. This scene provides a counterargument to Vidal's previous masculine dominance, showing that a woman can and must rebel against the inhumane treatment she suffers from evil men. The woman—portrayed by Mercedes—is aligned with the rebels in the conflict against fascism because it is an ideology that does not allow her to fulfill her full potential. Flynn and Salek explain that "for most men, Western masculinity is based on the principle of domination: men must be able to 'dominate some men and all women.'" (7). This observation that Flynn and Salek make is essential for understanding how necessary Mercedes injuring and escaping her captor is for the story, becoming the lone individual who might be able to save Ofelia and defeat Vidal.

The final scene begins with Vidal proudly carrying his son as he turns the last corner of the maze. However, when he emerges, he sees the Maquis waiting, they have taken the mill and are waiting for him; at the front stands Mercedes, and he quickly realizes what is about to happen as the camera zooms in on his face. Vidal steps forward, feigning the courageous soldier, ready to accept his fate as he extends the child toward Mercedes, "mi hijo," he says as she takes and soothes the child. Vidal then holds his father's pocket watch—the watch itself a motif for time, as well as his father's patriotic legacy that he has struggled to live up to—speaks to the rebels: "Decidle a mi hijo. Decidle a que hora murió su padre. Decidle que yo—,"

Mercedes interrupts “No. Ni siquiera sabrá tu nombre”. The rebel next to Mercedes immediately points a pistol at Vidal and fires. The viewer witnesses the bullet enter Vidal’s right cheek before he brings his hand up to the wound, his right eye slowly rolls backward, and he falls to the ground dead. Schubert suggests:

The scene is a satisfying moment for the viewer who has watched Vidal maim and kill over the past two hours of film. As Vidal is defeated, a new hope emerges in the form of the infant who will never know of the violence his father inflicted on others, nor the violence that ensured his own life. This latter violence—which included blowing up trains, slicing cheeks, and shooting an unarmed man—was, within the world of the film, necessary and performed by good resistance fighters, not evil fascists. By this time in the film, we no longer question who is good and who is evil because the violent images of torture have drawn this line for us. (4)

Mercedes’ return allows the rebels to eliminate the man who caused much suffering in their rural part of Spain. Although the story occurs in 1944 and Franco was in power for decades (until 1975), this victory allows the Maquis to celebrate and mourn their losses, especially of the innocent civilians, such as Ofelia, who were victims of Vidal’s unflinching cruelty. The slashing of Vidal’s cheek and when he is later killed serve as del Toro’s example of the necessity of violence to eliminate individuals whose very existence is a threat to many. Thus the Maquis killing Captain Vidal is required to prevent more violence.

The second character in *El laberinto* that challenges Captain Vidal is Dr. Ferreiro. The role was played by Álex Angulo<sup>62</sup>, who del Toro called “a great actor,” adding in his commentary “everyone was saying he was miscast because he’s a

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<sup>62</sup>Angulo was tragically killed in a car accident in July of 2014.

comedy actor” (Director’s commentary). Sara Bilbatúa, the casting director for *El laberinto*, explained that although Angulo’s experience was primarily in comedy, he excelled in a dramatic role. She explains that because doctors were so important in the Spanish Civil War, “you can imagine them as towering, commanding figures. But Guillermo [del Toro] didn’t want that. Angulo is not very tall, but I think he played the part of the *pequeño gran hombre*—‘little big man’—wonderfully”. (qtd. in Vaz and Nunziata 32). The casting of a versatile actor that audiences are accustomed to seeing in comedies is compelling as his on-screen presence alleviates tension when violent men surround him.

Dr. Ferreiro’s comprehension of the severity of the conflict provides the film with the balance it needs to show the extensive consequences of violence. The doctor possesses the unique ability to go-between conflicting ideologies, and as he shows compassion to all that he treats. On a secret visit to examine some of the injured Maquis, Dr. Ferreiro cautions the leader, Mercedes’ brother, Pedro:

PEDRO: Ya pronto tendremos gente de Jaca. Unos cincuenta hombres. Entonces nos veremos las caras con Vidal.

DOCTOR: ¿Y qué va a pasar? Lo matan a él y viene otro, y otro, y otro más...Vidal tiene todo el tiempo del mundo, tiene armas, un techo...Lo tenéis jodido. Necesitáis medicinas, comida.

MERCEDES: No pueden bajar ahora. Eso es lo que él está esperando.

PEDRO: Déjame a mí.

DOCTOR: Los hombres como Vidal siempre ganan, Pedro. Siempre.

From this point and even earlier in the film, we see the Doctor’s wisdom, not because he believes the fight is a lost cause, but because he values life. Jones describes Dr. Ferreiro as “a man whose humility and dignity are evident from the

start" (33). These characteristics are especially evident when he administers medical care to others. Similar to how the film contrasts Ofelia with the monsters of the fantasy world, Dr. Ferreiro is the opposite of Vidal: "[he] is smaller and less rigid in his posture, but he is the character who directly admonishes Vidal for his subservience to ideology" (Jones 33). Dr. Ferreiro is compelled to stay at the mill because of a moral responsibility to treat the victims of the violence caused by Vidal. The doctor's profession and ability to comprehend conflict is what causes him to tell the Maquis that their fight is naïve as "the fascists will simply send another like him" (Markotic 183). Dr. Ferreiro comprehends the reason for the conflict, but above all, understands its consequences, knowing that as long as the fight continues, people will suffer.

It is not only Dr. Ferreiro's words that question the violence used by others but also his actions. When Vidal summons him to administer care to the *Tarta*, the request is not made out of mercy but rather so he can continue with torturing his prisoner. Vidal tells the doctor, "haga lo que pueda por él. Necesito que dure un poco más," to which Dr. Ferreiro responds, as he examines the *Tarta's* disfigured and broken body, "Dios mío, ¿qué te han hecho?" While Dr. Ferreiro attends to the *Tarta* with great compassion, Vidal looks through his medical briefcase and removes a vial of medicine that is similar to one he found on a dead Maquis, leaving briefly to check if it is the same. In Vidal's absence, Dr. Ferreiro quickly goes to work, examining the mangled prisoner:

TARTA: Hablé, muy poco. P-p-pero hablé...

DOCTOR Lo siento. Lo siento muchísimo.

TARTA: M-m-máteme. Máteme, ahora. Por favor.

Dr. Ferreiro looks at the *Tarta* with compassion, but the viewer can also see how heavily the situation weighs upon him. Del Toro explains, "in rapid succession we see the doctor choosing to kill, to disobey the Captain, to kill the rebel and risk his own life" (Director's commentary). The camera briefly cuts to Vidal, who confirms the medicines are the same and that the doctor has been assisting the Maquis. Dr. Ferreiro administers a "tiro de gracia," or coup de grâce—in this case, a fatal injection—promising "no sentirás más dolor," as he puts his hand on the *Tarta* and says "ya casi acaba todo." When Dr. Ferreiro euthanizes the *Tarta*, he places himself in a precarious situation because he knows Vidal and must assume that there will be repercussions for his actions. While one typically thinks of the act of killing another under the umbrella of unacceptable violence, the *Tarta's* death is a merciful act that the Doctor does to end his suffering. Dr. Ferreiro is an educated and wise man. He has spent the movie quietly navigating the conflict between the fascists and the Maquis to assist the sick and wounded, giving him a deep understanding and appreciation for human life, which he honors by granting the *Tarta* his final wish.

There are indeed certain instances that constitute the use of violence to combat other or greater violence from continuing to occur. While I have previously mentioned Mercedes, Dr. Ferreiro's "violence," if we can call it that, is not intended to harm a defenseless individual. Instead, as the doctor pushes the medicine from his syringe into the *Tarta's* arm, he is injecting mercy; the *Tarta* will not be tortured

again, nor will he continue to suffer. The doctor's actions align with Gert's philosophies: "sometimes [the] violation of a moral rule may result in preventing significantly more evil than is caused by the violation" (69). María Teresa DePaoli similarly argues that Dr. Ferreiro's act has an incredible impact on *El laberinto's* good versus evil story "[as] Vidal is only a symbol of Fascism; an institutionalized lack of choice that can only be transgressed through civil disobedience" (51). This is confirmed when Vidal finds the *Tarta's* deceased body.

VIDAL: ¿Por qué lo hizo?

DR. FERREIRO: Era lo único que podía hacer.

VIDAL: No. Hubiera podido obedecerme.

DR. FERREIRO: Hubiera podido, pero no lo hice.

VIDAL: Pues hubiera sido mejor para usted. Eso lo sabe. No lo entiendo. ¿Por qué no me obedeció?

DR. FERREIRO: Es que. Obedecer por obedecer...así sin pensarlo. Eso solo hace gente como usted, Captain.

The physical differences between Vidal and Dr. Ferreiro are easy to spot throughout much of *El laberinto*. The doctor is a small and humble man, whereas Vidal is tall, has broad shoulders, and driven by authoritarian characteristics. However, in this exchange, Dr. Ferreiro now appears as an equal as his disobedience and selflessness make him a legitimate threat to Vidal's power. Jones suggests that as Ferreiro challenges Vidal, "[he] at the same time critiques his ideological standpoint that demands submission," which ultimately leads to his death (68). Dr. Ferreiro knew and understood the danger of helping the Maquis but now faces Vidal courageously, explaining that he, unlike Vidal, cannot act or live without thinking.

The scene in which Dr. Ferreiro is killed begins with the stark contrast between Vidal's inability to comprehend why his orders were not followed and the doctor's simple explanation that he could not. Dr. Ferreiro has proven himself as a morally sound individual whose sole calling is to better the lives of others. In comparison, Vidal appears emotionally wounded by the transgression that has been committed against his authority—mentioning twice that he was not obeyed. After Dr. Ferreiro explains why he killed the *Tarta*, he packs his medical bag and walks out of the mill into the rain. Del Toro has expressed solemn respect for the way this scene is portrayed, explaining:

I always wonder if those twentysomething or eighteen-twenty-five paces the doctor takes outside in the rain right before he is killed, I always think those are probably the most absolutely amazing moments of his life, the moment where he is at his highest, where he feels the best. You know? Where he feels the most alive. And if that is so then the choice of the doctor is validated by the film, the disobedience...It's all a single shot and it's an almost serene death of this guy. And it's beautiful, if there is such a thing. It's a beautiful, poetic, tragic and fragile death. (Director's commentary)

What happens next further establishes the gulf separating the men's principles, when, "in an act of utter cowardice, Vidal shoots Ferreiro in the back...[revealing] yet another monstrous facet of Vidal" (Jones 59). The death of Dr. Ferreiro is one of the film's most gut-wrenching scenes behind only when Ofelia is killed. But it is a death that *El laberinto* must portray to separate rational and irrational violence.

Vidal demonstrates the problem with his illogical use of extreme and irreversible violence as he murders Dr. Ferreiro. Vidal "imprudently shoots and kills the town doctor, but he desperately wants a son, and his ill wife has not yet given

birth; so eliminating the doctor is hardly in his own interest" (183). Because Vidal kills Dr. Ferreiro, he must resort to a troop paramedic to preside over the delivery of his child, which undoubtedly contributes to the death of his wife. While Carmen's health never mattered to Vidal, why, we must ask, does he kill Ferreiro and risk the life of his son to the inexperienced hands of a military medic? Deborah Levine suggests, "killing makes Vidal feel alive and effective" (124). Vidal differs strikingly from Dr. Ferreiro, who feels fulfilled only by his service to others. The two men's ideologies are irreconcilable. As such, Vidal cannot allow the doctor to continue living, as doing so would compromise the fascist and sadistic tendencies that define him.

## **Conclusion**

Violence is a key thematic element for del Toro to create his fairy tale. In *El laberinto*, violence is not meant to entertain audiences as it is often used in many other films—including del Toro's. The violence that del Toro depicts on the screen brings the audience to a greater understanding of Ofelia and the rebel Maquis' struggle. In doing so, he exposes the viewer to a variety of violent acts in different situations, each one evoking a unique array of emotions disgust, disbelief, horror, compassion, and even relief. Schuberth explains:

[As] a film in which the logic of redemptive violence—violence necessary for the creation and maintenance of an ethical order—rules... While not gratuitous, the images in *Pan's Labyrinth* nonetheless demonstrate how visual representations of intense violence can be harnessed to provide a form of ethical and even theological certainty that resists moral questioning—even when such questioning issues from characters within the film itself. (1)

The need for representing violence in the cinematic arts is part of the reason that *El laberinto* has received such high acclaim from both critics and audiences. The film, told from the perspective of Ofelia, makes the brutality of the experiences under Franco's power accessible for viewers in a way not seen before. Critics such as Tsuei Hei have suggested that *El laberinto* explicitly focuses on fascism (230<sup>63</sup>). While del Toro is motivated to denounce the extreme ideology, the film has broader implications that indict any unjust use of violence against innocent human beings.

*El laberinto* provides essential lessons that should provoke the audience's scrutiny of unjustified and justified violence. The viewer sees Vidal "[who] functions as a male tyrant, conflating in his person a male domination and the leader of the execution of violence. In other words, he is both the individual patriarch and the chief of repression" (Sánchez 143). Although Vidal's character continually attempts to commandeer the story through brute force, the goodness of characters such as Ofelia and Dr. Ferreiro ultimately prevails. Because *El laberinto's* depiction of violence is so graphic—both visually and audibly—it is not an easy film to pop popcorn and sit down and watch. But while the film is full of violence and suffering, "del Toro is able to transform its horror into hope and meaning" (Levine 122).

The process of extracting meaning from the violence portrayed in the film is not an easy task nor is it always pleasant. However, when searching for the reasons

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<sup>63</sup> Tsuei's analysis of the film does an excellent job of highlighting the strong references to the ideology, such as, but not limited to the hoarding of food, piles of children's shoes, and chimneys.

for reproducing violence in *El laberinto*—or other films for that matter—we must ask ourselves what violence causes us to feel and why. As a period piece, the film's recent historical context is still felt personally by many today. Because countries such as Spain still seek to understand the conflict its people have endured, the production of films such as *El laberinto* will continue. What makes del Toro's award-winning project unique is how "[he] uses fairy tales in a way that is totally legitimate for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. [Using] fairy tale structure to talk about deeply serious political events, like civil wars and the death of children" (McDonald and Clark, "Guillermo del Toro as Alchemist"). Within the context of the film, violence itself is purposefully used to generate a reaction from the audience, "the intention is for the violence to make you more susceptible to violence. And the fantasy to make you more vulnerable to the brutality of the violence of the movie" (Director's commentary).

## Section Conclusion

I have sought to examine standards of conduct in conflict by arguing that the use of violence may be justifiable when it prevents greater violence from occurring. I have reached this understanding by analyzing the ethics unique to each instance of violence to debate whether it is warranted or not. However, violence is not a discussion that is always as simple to distinguish merely between what is right and what is wrong. Indeed, violence is an unjust method to protect or increase one's power. However, there are also instances when one must use it as I have sought to examine in *Rostro*, *La doble historia*, and *El laberinto*. These works conclusively demonstrate when violence may be justified by surrounding such scenes with others that are unjustifiable. However, one cannot objectively advocate for the use of violence without considering the impact the act will have after it has been performed. Works such as these provide understanding as they frame violence and its ethics, in both fiction and reality, by portraying the terrible consequences it produces, many of which are far-reaching and undesired.

Remembering historical violence is a painful process that can reopen the wounds of the past. Evans and Carver question how we approach and teach violence and propose that it must be done “with a proper ethical care for the subject” (1). We must then develop a critique of violence that fits specific times and situations, evolving from the way we see past conflicts, to affect how we approach it in the present and future. Marías's characters in *Rostro* discuss at length an idea referred to in the novel as Narrative Legacy or Narrative Horror, which is the fear of how one

will be remembered by future generations. This idea is ultimately part of what causes Jaime to rethink what he does for Tupra and eventually leave his job, fearing that his memory will be synonymous with violence. Mary Barnes has similar fears in *La doble historia* as she perceives the torture that Daniel has performed on others invading the previously safe space of their home. She becomes afraid that her husband's profession will become a legacy that her son, Danielito, will inherit. Likewise, Dr. Ferreiro in *El laberinto* is also concerned by a similar idea as he cannot fathom acting—in particular using violence—without questioning the act itself. Each work shows that to justify violence, we must have an understanding of what it does, which one can by searching through the stories and experiences of the past.

Any justification of violence requires a debate on its usage. This discussion can be done internally, where the instigator of violence contemplates within themselves, or externally with other individuals. Regardless, the justification of a violent act makes a stronger case for its use when multiple individuals can also attest to the need for it. That is not to say that violence is wholly admissible with greater public support, but rather that its use becomes better understood as a necessity. Works like *Rostro*, *La doble historia*, and *El laberinto* all portray characters who question violence and seek to understand why it is needed and what the repercussions will be. Such characters compelled to follow some degree of ethics include the morally conflicted Jaime Deza in *Rostro*, Mary Barnes' and her awakening of conscience in *La doble historia*, and the logical and compassionate Dr. Ferreiro in *El laberinto*. These characters and their actions contrast with the

remorseless violence of *Tupra in Rostro*, Paulus in *La doble historia*, and Captain Vidal in *El laberinto*. The dichotomy between the two highlights the scrutiny which any justification of violence must undergo. While there do exist instances in which violence appears to be used without thought, it is essential to know that violence is founded in one's principles from which it is rationalized and, in extreme circumstances, manifest in the physical world.

Different artistic mediums explore and portray the situational ethics of violence for audiences who are often fortunate enough not to have lived such experiences. Narrative, drama, and film are practical tools for examining the justifications of violence by provoking responses from their respective audiences. The practice of representing violent acts in the arts is often done to draw the reader and viewer to what the writer, playwright, or filmmaker wants to critique. The experience of reading a work—or viewing a play, film, or art—should cause one to question not only the violence in a scene but also their participation in reading it. Tanner argues, "the reader in the scene of violence must negotiate a position relative not only to victim and violator but to the attitudes about violation encoded in representation and experienced through reading" (3). Scenes that portray violence in the works that I have analyzed demand a response to that violence. We are to read or view violence and then contemplate what it is that we are seeing, what it makes us feel, and how it might change the way we see our reality.

One of the most important ways to look at violence in the arts is to contemplate the emotions it causes one to feel. Violence as a theme can stir a wide

variety of sensations, such as guilt, discomfort, and disgust. It can also empathy for the victims, witnesses, and even perpetrators. Artistic works often use violence to critique oppression while simultaneously influencing audiences to reexamine their principles and make adjustments if necessary.

I included Gert's words at the beginning of this section as he argued that there exist instances in which the violation of harming another is permissible when the breach prevents greater violence from occurring. Gert himself did not endorse violence, but rather his analysis allows instances that might require violence, such as Dr. Ferreiro euthanizing the Tarta in *El laberinto*. Gert's perspective contrasts violence that we might support or see as needed with clearly unjustifiable acts, such as David and the men of the S.P., *La doble historia*, and Captain Vidal, in *El laberinto*, torturing defenseless detainees. Savater argues that "desde un punto de vista ético, la tortura es lo plenamente *injustificable*...la tortura es siempre directamente inmoral" ("El adversario absoluto" 27-28). Torture itself is argued for or against based solely on the outcome or information that it produces, which supports the torturer in their cause. The instances in which I have analyzed and argued in support of violence lead either to the quickest end to suffering or prevent violence from continuing to occur. Violence ultimately receives its justification from the set of circumstances surrounding each unique situation, coupled with an understanding of the consequences that accompany it.

## Conclusion

“La consecuencia de la violencia es que paraliza a quienes  
la sufren, pero también a quienes la ejercen”  
—Ilse Logie

Violence pervades our cultural landscape as it is adapted for audiences through representations that often reflect the real violence that affects people throughout the world. The consequences of violence are indeed felt by many, but in Spain, a country that passed legislation to officially forget the atrocities of the Civil War and Franco's thirty-six-year rule, the portrayal of violence has continually drawn attention to the untold stories of the past. Because of this history, I have focused on analyzing violence in narrative, drama, and film in Contemporary Spain from the beginning of the Spanish Civil War (1936) to the present. I have organized my research around physical violence (in particular, torture), the violence of language, and situational ethics as they are manifest in Spanish narrative, drama, and film. In this analysis, I examined first the easily identifiable instances of physical violence, second the symbolic field of communication that precedes such acts, and finally, the situational ethics that cause us to question the justifications of violence.

The objectives that have guided my study are focused on examining where violence comes from and how it is manifest in artistic works. The use of these concepts in literature, drama, and film shows that violence is justified when preventing more violence from occurring. In this regard, the writers' violence aligns philosophically with Arendt, who argued, "under certain circumstances violence—

acting without argument or speech and without counting the consequences—is the only way to set the scales of justice right again” (64). However, no study of violence is simple. It is crucial to understand violence is likely to produce undesirable consequences for an unknown number of individuals. It is not always easy for audiences to consume representations of violence. Still, when it is done well, with the artistic care and respect for the subject, we owe it to those who have endured violence to bear witness to their suffering.

This study has centered on subjective (physical) and objective (language, systemic) forms of violence in contemporary Spain. However, many nations have endured wars, dictatorships, censorship, and torture. Individuals and groups in power have restricted and even prohibited language, resulting in distrust throughout societies. This has affected much of the world, from early twentieth-century Europe to a Cold War conflict that saw the rise of military coups seizing control for brutal regimes throughout developing nations in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. What, then, makes Spain compelling for my study if other countries and regions have experienced similar conflicts and struggles? Ellis and Sánchez-Arce explain: “During Franco’s dictatorship there was no shortage of first-hand experiences of the Spanish Civil War; the problem for contemporary historians is that only the winning side of the story was available” (174). The winning side controlling the historical narrative is generally correct for all conflicts. Still, with Spain’s *Pacto del olvido* (Pact of Forgetting), the collective memory of the country has been limited to the few who are willing to explore what those memories might

have said—or would say—if those who experienced them could speak. Carmen Moreno-Nuño emphasizes the impact that the children of the war—those who grew up in Spain or exile during Franco's regime—have had on preserving this memory. In her analysis, Moreno-Nuño specifically highlights Mariás's contribution to this effort, although I would argue that her words similarly apply to del Toro, who, although not a Spaniard, also grew up listening to stories about the war from Spanish refugees in México:

The works of the children of the war have, for a long time now, coexisted with a narrative that is the fruit of the next generation. [They] did not live through the Civil War... [But they] were raised on an oral tradition that rehashed the horror of the conflict. (129)

Outside of the few writers and filmmakers who criticized Franco's regime, either from exile or creatively navigating the gauntlet of censorship, dissenting voices have been suppressed for so long that remembering the victims of the Civil War and dictatorship has fallen mainly on the children and grandchildren of those who lived it. These younger generations have taken it upon themselves to recover the memory of loved ones and have used it to heal national wounds. From this perspective, cultural production is a critical tool for exhuming the past through historical and fictional stories that allow us to reconceptualize how we see violence in the past and present.

Violence is cyclical, requiring continual study from different times and spaces. Violence can and should be approached in a variety of ways and from different disciplines to study it more effectively. Regardless of whether we see

violence as a necessary or unnecessary means to achieving an end, we must continuously scrutinize it and at the same time, reevaluate our attitudes towards it. One cannot become complacent in how they view violence or even believing that it does not exist. Doing so would make us like one of Buero Vallejo's characters (such as the Señor, Señora, or Abuela) who not only refuse to believe that torture is being used in their own country but *choose* to deny it. Buero Vallejo involved the audience in *La doble historia* by giving them responsibility, both during the play and after the curtain closed, to seek reform as "[el público] no puede ser ajeno al problema que el drama plantea" (Iglesias Feijoo 337). Inaction or indifferent attitudes are some of the significant problems that Buero Vallejo—and other writers, filmmakers, and artists that incorporate violence in their work—draw attention to studying violence from different eras, disciplines, and approaches to continuing an active and healthy debate of the subject. The study of violence can be broad, but because it is so prevalent, both in reality and fictional portrayals, it can conversely be examined with a very narrow scope.

Intellectual discussions have long sought to offer solutions to the problem of violence but often lead to more questions than answers. This does not mean that violence should not be critically examined but it must be understood that it is a continually evolving field of study that requires constant attention. Some have even suggested guidelines for using or not using violence, the latter is generally the case made by intellectuals. Gert, for example, proposed ten moral rules restricting intentional violence against another who has no desire to have those rules violated

against himself (66). Savater has similarly used his philosophical writings to denounce violence, especially torture. Arendt examined the turbulent events and conflicts that defined much of the twentieth century up to the early nineteen seventies in *On Violence*. She primarily focused on physical violence and its relation to power, strength, force, and authority (43-47). Today, Žižek uses history, philosophy, books, movies, and even jokes to examine how we perceive violence through its subjective (physical) and objective forms (language and the catastrophic results of political and economic systems). However, he argues, "when we find ourselves bombarded with mediatic images of violence. We need to 'learn, learn, and learn' what causes this violence" (8). Different avenues that demand critical approaches to violence will continue to emerge as long as violence persists. Discovering new ways and different vantage points to scrutinize violence will build upon the knowledge previously offered by countless others. While the aim should always be to end violence, it is through sensibly and respectfully learning about it as a subject that generates new thought and influences action.

In the process of researching the primary and critical materials for this dissertation, I have relied on the ideas of philosophers, academics, and critics alike to form how I see violence in Spanish cultural production from the Civil War to the present. I consider the consequences of violence in ways that I did not see before to show how and when it may be justifiable. Like many others, I had previously thought of violence solely in terms of what I could see, which allowed me to empathize with the victims of physical violence but limited my understanding of it

as a concept worthy of study. I had to broaden the scope with which I viewed violence to consider how and where it is manifest and who, ultimately, it affects.

While one traditionally thinks of violence in terms of physical harm, there are many other ways to violate the human body and mind. By approaching violence outside of acts strictly performed on a physical body, one comes to understand the role of language in oppression. From works like *La doble historia* and *Rostro*, one sees how essential language is to communicate, particularly when it is juxtaposed with violent language that harms others through manipulation, lies, slander, and threats. Much like Jaime Deza learns in *Rostro*, we see that the act of speaking—or not speaking—can lead to tragic consequences. In looking at how the symbolic field of language may contribute to violence in these works, one sees that it often precedes—although not always—instances of physical violence. Writers use works such as *Rostro* and *La doble historia* to establish a dialogue with their audiences, which they cultivate through the language used in the text itself. It is apparent in both works that the writers sought to influence how the audience feels towards violence and any justification for its use. Jordan explains that while Buero Vallejo—and I will add for the sake of this study Marías, del Toro, and Saura—does not explicitly propose solutions for how to change the problems created by violence, “[his] plays tend to suggest that social change is predicated, not only on a radical rearrangement of social structures and forces, but also on a transformation of individual consciousness and outlook” (8). Buero Vallejo and Marías’s works explore the societal consequences that accompany power structures that use such means.

Both criticize violence and turn their audiences' attention to contemplate the pain it causes as their characters hear of violence, witness others who are victims of it, and even use it themselves. In doing so, their characters portray the results of what happens if violence goes unquestioned.

Violence has the potential to affect innumerable individuals when directed toward another as the traumatic effects are not restricted to direct victims but rather extend to any who see, hear, or know of any act or utterance that harms another. Likewise, works such as *Rostro*, *La doble historia*, and *El laberinto* demonstrate the very real psychological and physical consequences that affect perpetrators of violence long after the act has been carried out. Jaime Deza sees how easily he too can become violent, Daniel Barnes struggles to come to terms with his guilt, and Captain Vidal is left scarred by a brutal gash to the face which marks him as the epicenter of violence in del Toro's fairy tale film. The violence portrayed in each of these works has far-reaching consequences that are evident in the individuals they impact.

It is essential to keep in mind that each instance of violence is unique. One must then consider that certain ethics must be applied to the use of violence as it pertains to individual situations. Susan Sontag warned, "to those who are sure that right is on one side, oppression and injustice on the other, and that the fighting must go on, what matters is precisely who is killed and by whom" (10). Any argument to present a case for justifying violence is ultimately inadmissible since it lacks the understanding to prove what is right and what is wrong. Instead, situational ethics

are founded in the attempts to put a stop to violence by using the least violent means possible. This is evident in each of the works in this study as violence is portrayed not void of patriotic glory but rather highlights the horrors of its consequences. I believed at the beginning of my project that violence could be justified. However, I failed to consider—as many often do—the harmful byproduct that accompanies all uses of violence, even in cases of self-defense. While society will agree to approve some results of violence, we cannot forget to scrutinize each instance—whether it be actual or fictional—individually and according to the circumstances of each unique situation.

The debate on violence in Spain again dominated national conversation during the Catalan Independence Referendum of October 2017. The referendum attracted international attention to Catalonia as the vote turned to unrest and even several instances of violence, which were recorded and broadcast across the globe. Much of the media depiction of what occurred following the vote focused on civil unrest and, in some cases, instances in which force was used by police to suppress a vote that the Spanish government had deemed illegal. Javier Marías, in particular, took exception to how the events were characterized, directly denouncing those who called police actions extremely violent, even referring to said actions as akin to torture. Although much of Marías's work in *Rostro* and other novels probes the consequences of violence, his comments are not particularly surprising, as his work has long sought to give meaning to the present and future by examining the past.

The referendum and the subsequent clash between pro-independence Catalans and police demanded an international discussion on the region's ability to engage in such a vote free from government reprisals. This debate can and should happen. However, labeling actions as excessively violent should not be done lightly, as Marías suggests, as doing so is a gross disservice to those who have endured and perished from such violence. The referendum and the events that followed are a reminder that there are many ways to approach violence critically besides looking at merely the physical or subjective forms. Instead, as we consider the objective ways violence is manifest, we will better understand how to critique it.

Of the many thoughts that this subject has stirred in me, one prevails above all others, that is, that violence is everywhere. It will, unfortunately, continue to happen. But instead of focusing on how to stop violence with violence, we must strive to understand it first through learning. To better understand the breadth of violence and its consequences we must examine who it affects and how. We can learn from violence in reality, through things we see in person or relayed to us by another medium, and we can learn from fictional representations of violence in the arts. Just as Sontag said that photography is a means of making things 'real' or even 'more real,' narrative, drama, and film, similarly show audiences this is what violence looks like, this is what it does (7-8).

By remaining open to the messages that writers and filmmakers seek to convey about violence, we will better understand its victims as we question what is happening and why. It is my sincere hope that this analysis has answered questions

about how violence is viewed in modern Spain. But more so, I hope that this dissertation challenges us to take a more in-depth look at how we conceptualize violence and how we might change the way we approach it. While I may not have answered specific questions on violence that a reader may have, I encourage that any unanswered inquiries be the start of a new investigation.

We must ask ourselves how violence makes us feel and why when we see it in the arts. The representation of violence is embedded in the cultural production of places like Spain because it allows artists the creative latitude to identify social injustices, critique oppressive political figures and regimes, and denounce state-sanctioned censorship and torture. Writers and filmmakers, such as Saura, Buero Vallejo, Marías, and del Toro, tell stories that portray the pain of the past and recognize those who have endured social and political injustices. Such representations of violence draw attention to where it is needed, giving a voice to the voiceless that will stand through time as a memorial to the suffering of the past.

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