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# Victoria Ocampo: Some Perspectives on the *Autobiografía*

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*Si no he sido capaz de transmitir esa visión, ese testimonio, es porque no era mi destino. Poco importa. Otros lo harán y será como si yo lo hubiera hecho. Muchos trabajamos, de diferentes maneras, en la misma tarea. ¿Cómo tener yo la pretensión de explicarle al lector lo que apenas me explico a mí misma?*

Victoria Ocampo, *Autobiografía*, 3

If we ask of a female writer: What is the place of reading and writing in the life of a woman?, we must also ask: How does the passage from reading to writing come about? What happens when a *woman* makes the journey from the private sphere to acquiring a public voice and becoming a public figure, that is, to becoming a writer? Within the context of contemporary Latin American literary and cultural figures, I find the case of Victoria Ocampo (Argentina, 1890-1979), to be a compelling one in which to consider these questions.

The designation of Victoria Ocampo as “writer” is unusually complex, so that in her case the term requires elucidation and qualification. Throughout her career as the founder and director of the literary and cultural journal *SUR*, beginning in 1931, Ocampo wrote and published dozens of essays on an impressive variety of topics—literary, social and cultural. These essays are now collected in eight volumes under the title *Testimonios*, the significance of which I shall examine in a moment. Her only other authored work is a six-volume autobiography, published posthumously by Ediciones Revista *SUR* between 1979 and 1984.

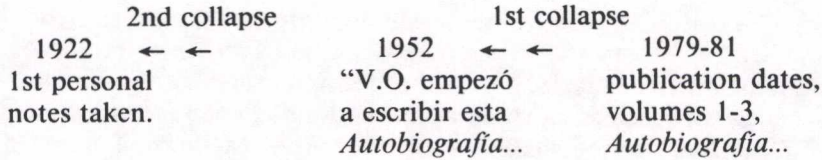
The title *Testimonios* is a strong clue as to the direction Ocampo’s writing takes. Ocampo always wrote in the first person, and almost exclusively about personal experience. In this sense, all of her writing is linked to a private, personal world, and the formal tension resulting from the private sphere/public sphere dialectic is a prominent issue throughout her writing career. I want to stress that in Ocampo’s life and work, private and public are not just discrete terms interacting with one another. In the process of interacting, private and public simultaneously create one another and mutually constitute

themselves as parts in a larger whole in the continuum of the voice. The genre of autobiography by definition directly confronts the reader with the private vs. public dilemma. One can say that Ocampo's extended account of her life, her *Autobiografía*, raises to the highest intensity the unresolved tension between public and private that is of such significance throughout her literary career.

I hope to trace some of the issues, ideas and effects associated with this formal (and personal) tension. I will attempt to direct my discussion across Ocampo's texts in a way that evokes the tensions that exist within and between those texts. I will be looking at a series of Ocampo's texts in "chronological" order, beginning with the third volume of her autobiography, titled *La Rama de Salzburgo*, and proceeding through two of her essays first published in *SUR* over a period of ten years, in 1931 and 1941, respectively. I write "chronological" with quotation marks because the publication date of volume 3 of the *Autobiografía* appears as 1981. This raises the complex and crucial question of dates and sequence with regard to Ocampo's autobiography.

Following the title page of each volume of the autobiography appears the enigmatic sentence: "Victoria Ocampo empezó a escribir esta *Autobiografía* en 1952." The wording of this sentence, the undefinitive "empezó a escribir", signals a number of ambiguities. When did Ocampo finish writing the autobiography? The reader wonders, did she write consistently or on and off throughout the years? Here we must recall the almost *thirty-year* lapse of time between when Ocampo "empezó a escribir" (1952), and the first volume's publication date of 1979. A further complication in date and sequence, what we could call a second collapsing back into time, is explicitly referred to by Ocampo in volume I of the autobiography, as she describes the genesis and process of this writing project: "Utilizaré notas escritas hace 30 años. Tal vez esas notas no sean significativas más que para mí misma. Constituyen un *aide-mémoire* sobre mi persona, para mi persona" (71). If we accept as legitimate this information, then we have, with specific regard to volume 3 of the *Autobiografía*, a publication date of 1981, a beginning writing date of 1952, and a reference to a date thirty years earlier, 1922, as the year in which Ocampo began to take personal notes, to keep the diary which would become the basis for her autobiography. We can diagram this double movement back in time in the following way:

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Freud's concept of repetition compulsion, as described in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, is an interesting one from which to approach this repetitive sequence of writing moments. For Freud, repetition involves the return from the unconscious of those thoughts that have been repressed. For an individual, this means that the full significance of an event will not be manifested until a later date, when a later event, a repetition of the first event, places the first occurrence in a sequence of repetition. In the above case, the earlier dates become meaningful only in light of the later one. Thus, though the dates occur in one (chronological) order, they gain significance only by one's moving through them in a reverse order. 1922 becomes important only in light of 1955, a year which in turn becomes important in light of 1979. What could be the purpose, and what are the results, of this process of deferral, this distancing through time? If we consider the question of time chronologically (1922- 1952- 1979-81), it seems safe to say that the lapses of time between Ocampo's note-taking, actual writing and then publishing of her *Autobiografía* are highly significant and have a clear purpose. Further evidence of the importance of waiting in the evolution of Ocampo's writings can be gleaned from the links between significant dates in her personal and professional lives.

Ocampo's long love affair with Julián Martínez ends in 1929. Her father, Manuel Ocampo, whose influence with respect to social propriety was paramount over his daughter Victoria, dies in 1930 (Matamoro 9-12). The fear of her parent's discovery of her affair with Julián, and of thus disgracing her (father's) family name, is obsessively referred to in volume 3. In addition, a recurring theme of this volume is the "clandestinidad odiosa", the "ocultamiento" that Ocampo abhors and is forced to adopt in her affair with Julián, precisely because of her father's (the superego's) powerful sway over her and her determination not to cause him pain and social disgrace. It is only in 1931, *after* the end of her relationship with Julián in 1929, and Manuel Ocampo's death in 1930, that Victoria founds *SUR*. The proximity of these events, and the great significance of each of them with respect to the others links them to one another and, most importantly, links them to her writing. In this period of her life, 1929-31, we see that Ocampo has had to work first through a private stage before entering a public one.

The condensation (the Freudian connotations of this term are significant) of key events at this point in Ocampo's life—the end of a long relationship, the father's death, the beginning of a professional career—makes for fascinating study of a time fundamental to the evolution of Ocampo's public voice. During these years, the tension, both literary and personal, between private and public is at its height. In literary terms the tension goes back to 1920 when Ocampo's first essay on Dante's *Purgatorio*, "Babel", was published in *La Nación*. With respect to this essay, Ocampo writes "Este artículo, como los que siguieron (pese a los elogios de Ortega y de Eugenio d'Ors), torpes y literariamente muy imperfectos, *partían de una necesidad del alma...*",<sup>1</sup> and a few lines earlier, the powerfully blunt statement "Yo vivía Dante, no lo leía" (Ocampo 3: 97-8). In autobiography, of course, the private life, the experienced event, is inextricably wound within the public voice, within the telling and re-creating, through language, of personal experience. As was the case with the dates we studied earlier, there is a *double* movement, in volume 3 of the *Autobiografía*, which covers the period 1913 to 1929, another double collapse of what here can be called private into public, and vice versa. On one level, it is the collapse of all autobiography, private experience made public through language. On another level (the second movement) is the narrative situation particular to volume 3. This volume recounts not the inherently private moments of a life (as do volumes 1 and 2); rather, what is recounted—the emergence of a public voice in Ocampo's first publications—is mirrored in the work's very structure, the autobiographical project, this being the transformation of private experience into literature. An awareness of this uncanny doubling, this twinning of a theme with and within a genre, will underlie my discussion of volume 3 of the *Autobiografía*.

I will here make explicit that I am reading volume 3 as chronologically anterior to the other Ocampo texts to be considered because of the period of time it covers in Ocampo's life—1913 through 1929. I have embarked upon this reading, however, without disregarding the significance of actual writing and publication dates, as I hope the preceding discussion will have shown. My concern with chronology is in part prompted by Ocampo herself. There is a strong sense (inherent in but not limited to what I have touched upon earlier concerning the key events of the period between 1929-31) in both Ocampo's life and writings of there being a proper time for events to take place, and of appropriate moments. As a summing up of the relationship she has just finished recreating for the reader, in the penultimate paragraph of volume 3 of the *Autobiografía*, Ocampo

writes:

Ahora, cuando vuelvo la mirada hacia el pasado, cuando veo las vidas mezcladas a mi vida, anudadas a ella y que forman la malla apretada que intento describir, me parece que para llegar a comprender las leyes de la condición humana—y otras sin nombre que, sin embargo, existen—tenía que recibir el bautismo de este fuego, de esta clase de amor. *Lo recibí ni demasiado pronto, ni demasiado tarde, cuando estaba en condiciones de vivir plenamente lo que me revelaba.* (143-144)

In this paragraph Ocampo speaks of “las leyes de la condición humana”, and remarks that her coming to understand these laws was contingent upon (“tenía que recibir”) the “bautismo” which was her love affair with Julián, and which, as it is with baptisms, came neither too early nor too late. The reference to “leyes” is worth considering; it reflects Ocampo’s often repeated, almost obsessive insistence throughout volume 3 that her illegitimate relationship with Julián is justified by their true love for one another, that it is decent, proper and honorable; in short, that it *is* lawful:

Ningún prejuicio religioso ni social hacia que me avergonzara de ese amor. Por lo contrario, *lo sentía legítimo y honroso.* J. me quería. La sociedad estaba en deuda con nosotros y no nosotros con ella. (95)

Her indignant firmness upon this point as well as her adherence to a strict conception of time in which events occur when meant to occur are both artificial constructs; one could even say, highly literary creations. In volume 3 of the *Autobiografía*, Ocampo creates the fiction of the legality of her relationship with Julián (it is legal within the laws of the heart, as true love), just as she creates the fiction of a predetermined, optimized order of things. Both of these tendencies have strong parallels in Freudian psychological theory. Ocampo’s repeated insistence in volume 3 that her relationship with J. is a legitimate one is that of a compulsive-obsessive narrator. As Freud says, the act of repression always results in the return of the repressed. Ocampo obsessively returns in her narrative to that which is repressed, that which is prohibited—the “clandestinidad odiosa” she and J. were forced to maintain. This is also, again, an instance of repetition compulsion, with the terms “amor decente” and “amor indecente” locked into a cyclical bond.

Both of these constructs, legality and timeliness, are indispensable to the image Ocampo works to create of herself in her writings.

The attainment of and control over both is integral to her acquisition of a public voice and, what amounts to the same thing, her cultivation of a public persona. In what follows I will continue to look at the three Ocampo texts I have selected—volume 3 of the *Autobiografía*, the opening essay from the first issue of *SUR* (1931) and a personal recollection of Virginia Woolf written in 1941—with attention to Ocampo's different voices (the *difference* in her voice) and the development of her public persona.

Although volume 3 chronicles a period in Ocampo's life when she had as yet very little, if any, public persona, the time during which it was written, 1952 and after, was one in which Ocampo was very much a public figure. Her journal *SUR*, with twenty flourishing years of production to its credit by this point, had established her as a cultural leader in Argentina and throughout Latin America. Sylvia Molloy, in an essay in which she describes certain organizational strategies she detects in the autobiographies of Latin American women, astutely emphasizes the significance of Ocampo's professional position with respect to the writing of the *Autobiografía*:

En 1952, cuando decide integrar las notas sueltas de treinta años antes en un proyecto autobiográfico orgánico, Victoria Ocampo es figura pública dentro de la institución. Es fundadora y directora de *SUR*, promotora de intercambios culturales con Europa, embajadora de las letras argentinas en el exterior, mediadora y maestra cultural y por último, nada desdeñable en esos años, representante (en su opinión y en la de un amplio sector de la institución literaria) de una cultura en peligro. (290-91)

The curious paradox is that in volume 3, a writer conscious of her high profile within the institution is relating to us an intensely personal and private time in her life. She recreates a relationship which, as it was taking place, could not be spoken of, and was sentenced to secrecy and silence. "A partir de esa conversación, pasaron años sin que yo hablara de J. con ninguna persona" (28). It is only with the passage of time that Ocampo can speak about this very significant chapter in her life (recall the importance of timeliness for Ocampo).

How else does Ocampo smooth over the private/public tensions of volume 3? One important tactic she uses throughout the volume is that of literary framing. The volume's title, *La Rama de Salzburgo*, is taken from Stendhal, and the work has as its first epigraph a quotation from his *De l'amour* which explains the significance of this "rama" as a metaphor for the crystallization process that transforms those lovers

caught up in an “amor-pasión”. This quotation is then followed by two more, one from C.G. Jung, and another from Stendhal, both of which further introduce the reader to the principal concern of what will follow, what Ocampo names “amor-pasión”. Later, at regular intervals throughout the text, Ocampo discourses at length on those literary figures whose sensibilities with regard to passion and love she finds parallel her own. Dante is of great importance to Ocampo during these years; indeed, she identifies so strongly with Francesca and Paolo’s excessive (and therefore tortuous) passion that she publishes a highly personal essay on these literary lovers. After recounting a particularly upsetting lover’s argument with Julián, Ocampo remarks the following with regard to her reading of Dante: “En esa crisis me puse de nuevo, *buscándole explicación a mi drama, a releer La Divina Comedia...*” (94). This attitude holds as well for her readings of the other great writers she strategically plants in her narrative, Shakespeare and Proust. With Proust, it is the anguish and suffering passion produces that Ocampo identifies with, while in Shakespeare’s sonnets she finds the finest expression of the lover’s desire to immortalize the object of his or her love, a desire she convinces us that she felt for Julián. In comparing her experience of love with the passionate love described by these authors, Ocampo’s purpose is to position her experience *within the framework of literary discourse*, with the ultimate aim of legitimizing—legalizing—her relationship of “amor-pasión” with Julián. The authority these authors possess is manipulated in order to justify and therefore purify her and Julián’s story, which, victim to “*censura familiar, social, eclesiástica, legal...*” (130), remained clandestine for its duration and inescapably dirtied by the rigid moral codes of a repressive society. The framing of her affair with Julián within the realm of universal feeling (as captured by these writers) assists in Ocampo’s creation of a universal voice to express a private experience.

As volume 3 begins, with Ocampo’s first encounter with Julián in 1913, the private end of the private/public dialectic is heavily favored, and well in control of the narrative. As critical aspects of the constructs private and public, we must consider issues of body vs. mind, what-is-experienced vs. what-is-written-about, and sight vs. speech. All of these issues come to a head in the description of Julián and Victoria’s first meeting. Physical, and above all *visual* sensation is prioritized over all other forms of communication here. The effect of the “*mirada*” on the lovers-to-be is extraordinary, and Ocampo’s re-creation in writing of its effect is no less impressive:

Antes de saber que era J., éste me atrajo como jamás me había atraído nadie. Me ruboricé cuando M. (su primo) me lo presentó. Tal fue mi fastidio al notar lo que le hablé secamente. No me atrajo porque era J. sino a pesar de ser J. En el momento *en que lo vi*, de lejos, *su presencia me invadió*. El me hechó una mirada burlona y tierna (más tarde descubrí que sus ojos solían tener esa expresión). *Miré* esa mirada y esa mirada miraba mi boca, como si mi boca fuese mis ojos. Mi boca, presa en esa mirada, se puso a temblar. No podía desviarla como hubiese desviado *mi mirada*. Duró un siglo: un segundo. Nos dimos la mano. Era mucho más alto que yo, y delgado sin flacura. La arquitectura de la cara (los huesos) era de una sorprendente belleza *que no he vuelto a encontrar hasta conocer a Virginia Woolf*. La nariz aguileña, la frente alta, los ojos de un pardo verdoso, el pelo negro, la piel mate, y la boca, en medio de ese rostro ascético, de una imprevista y sensual ternura. Boca grande y delicada, sensible sin blandura, firmemente dibujada. Los dientes muy blancos revelaban en un fumador (vi que fumaba) especial cuidado. ¿La edad? Representaba menos de los treinta y seis años que calculé (por lo que sabía). Sólo nos saludamos, esa noche, entre mucha gente. Pero ya *lo miré* como si temiera *no volverlo a ver*. Fijándome en todo. *Este temor de no volver a ver a J.* me ha perseguido desde el primer momento. Y el día que, al abrir *La Nación*, supe que había muerto, comprendí. Todo se había cumplido como en mis pesadillas, al pie de la letra. (19-20)

In this single paragraph, there are at least twelve uses of the verb *ver* and the nouns *ojos* and *mirada* combined. And this emphasis on *seeing* comes at the expense of *speaking*, at the expense of language, as we learn from the striking simile used in this sentence: "Miré esa mirada y esa mirada miraba mi boca, *como si mi boca fuese mis ojos*." The transformation suggested here—of mouth into eyes—suggests the *silencing* that accompanies this movement into the visual and the sensual, the domain of the body. As Ocampo proceeds more deeply into the realm of "amor-pasión", as the relationship (and the narrative) develops, the scale tips more and more *away* from language, and towards those experiences which words cannot express. Another thing to note in this passage is the careful attention given to facial details, and the comparison of the beautiful composition of Julián's face to that of Virginia Woolf's. Physical beauty was of great interest and

attraction to Ocampo, as is manifested throughout her writings, and her admiration of Woolf's beautiful face will be a direct concern of the final text by Ocampo which we will discuss here.

Words continue to be positioned as inferior to physical communication throughout volume 3. But the very language of the text is able to raise to the level of consciousness the latent, ever-present tension between what words can and cannot convey. A "hidden" writing comes brilliantly to the surface at about the middle of the volume, where Ocampo describes the climax of "amor-pasión".

Un día, no se me borra, y nada tenía que ver con asuntos de celos; un día queda claro en mi memoria, como si lo siguiera viviendo. Me pareció haber llegado a la cima del amor pasión. Sé cuál fue ese día como distingo de las otras la mañana en que murió mi padre, en San Isidro. Estábamos J. y yo sentados en la cama, en el departamento de la calle Garay. Yo lo miraba. Le tomé la cara entre mis manos y puse la boca sobre sus parpados cerrados, primero sobre uno después sobre el otro... (¿Existe caricia más hecha de pura ternura? ¿En que el corazón esté más apartado de *la fureur d'aimer*? Beso que damos a un chico que ha llorado, a un muerto. Lo besé después en la frente, en la boca, esa boca que había temblado por mí. Pero esos besos míos ya no eran besos. Eran pobres medios para alcanzar lo que me decían esos ojos, esa frente, esa boca. Esos ojos, esa frente, esa boca eran una traducción en términos de belleza, un comentario, una promesa de no sé qué. Eran un signo. Algo que ni siquiera delectaba. Y yo necesitaba ahora leer el texto entero. No necesitaba la boca sino "*il disiato riso*", que iba más allá de los labios. Contra esa roca viva que es un cuerpo (así sea de sensible), yo, ola de pasión, rompía en busca de una imposible unión. Yo ola, con inútil ímpetu marino, rompía desesperada. *Desesperada* de soledad en una pasión compartida y satisfecha. *Desesperada* de amor...

Recuerdo que levanté la cabeza y miré la cara de J. como los ciegos tantean un rostro para adivinarlo. Yo, para hacer pasar a no sé qué dominio lo que mis ojos veían y que quedara traducido. ¿Qué sentido en nosotros está amputado? Mis ojos trataban de leer un mensaje... ¿Quién me revelaría el misterio del temblor de amor que ese rostro me comunicaba? El misterio de un amor que tomaba otro derrotero, que *se dirigía a otra parte, dejando atrás los*

*sentidos, sobrepasándolos.*

Sé que ese instante fue la cima y que no sentiría nada semejante (dentro del amor pasión). Era la llegada a una frontera. La cabeza de nuevo apoyada contra el latir de un corazón (¿por qué *ese* corazón? Pero ese fue), sentí *la nada* junto a la inmensidad de todo gran amor pasión, como si los términos pasión y amor encerraran una contradicción. (63-65)

The references in the first part of the passage to the *cara*, the *boca* (hers and his), and the *beso* recall the description of the first meeting between Julián and Victoria. As in that passage, here *looking* at the face, with the added sensation of touching the facial features with the lips, seems to be Ocampo's attempt at *reading* Julián, by means of a private and silent use of language. Indeed, Julián and Victoria will soon be forced by their circumstances into developing a secret form of communication, what we can call *un idioma hiper-privado*.

To emphasize the concentration of terms referring to language and communication, to the need to decipher, decodify, translate and interpret an elusive message, I will loosely paraphrase the passage here:

Pero esos besos míos ya no eran besos. Eran pobres medios para alcanzar lo que me decían esos ojos, esa frente, esa boca... eran una traducción... un comentario... Eran un signo. Algo que ni siquiera deletreaba, y yo necesitaba ahora leer el texto entero... más allá de los labios... y que quedara traducido... Mis ojos trataban de leer un mensaje..."

The speaker voices a need now to "leer el texto entero", which signals that within the text, as within the life, the balance is shifting: the control physical experience exerts over verbal expression is rapidly diminishing. The mediation that is language forcefully asserts itself; that is, language as mediator between passion (physical pleasure) and intellect and as a means of gaining immortality. The speaker, "desesperada" for something more ("algo más", "más allá"), senses a lacking and seeks fulfillment through metaphors of language, such as translation and deciphering, in order to come closer to what can only be alluded to. Indeed, what Ocampo is striving for, "il disiato riso", she does not (and *cannot*) write in her own tongue. As the use of Italian seems to imply, this plenitude will always remain beyond reach. Not wholly physical, but neither completely verbal, rather an other, forever foreign, though accessible, language.

As Ocampo writes, "Era la llegada a una frontera". The moment has come to overstep the boundaries. Silent transgression is a basic theme of volume 3, a silent defiance of moral and social codes and a reappropriation of the physical and sensual fulfillment that had been systematically denied to women before and during her time. Any characterization of Ocampo as a feminist must ground itself in the repeated acts of transgression she performs throughout her life. In the *Autobiografía*, the impulse to transgress manifests itself in the taking of a lover, and therefore remains a silent transgression—the pressures against speaking out ("desocultamiento") are just too strong. But with the crossing of the border from private to public, from lover to writer and editor, Ocampo moves against the social order in a way more radical than ever before and in a mode that cannot accommodate silence. More than a public voice, she builds an institutionalized framework for her voice; in 1931, Ocampo founds the journal *SUR*.

Ocampo's "Carta a Waldo Frank" (1931), is the first essay of the first issue of *SUR*. The word *Carta* in the title suggests intimate, private communication, much like "Testimonios" does with regard to Ocampo's collected essays. Here, this being the text that inaugurates *SUR*, the contradiction and tension between a private tone (*carta*) and a public, conspicuous forum is very strong.

In this text Ocampo reapplies the fiction of a prescribed order of events, a fiction so evident in the final paragraphs of volume 3, as we have seen. Here she addresses herself to Frank:

Existe la angustia de los que, en plena inactividad, *esperan* que una tarea, que un deber les sea impuesto por las circunstancias. Tal vez había usted, generoso amigo, leído en mi semblante esta última angustia, tal vez decidió así ser la circunstancia.

Nunca se me hubiera ocurrido por sí sola la idea de fundar una revista. *Y creo que sin esa constante insistencia suya, capaz de sacudir mis dudas, no habría siquiera sentido en reflexionar al respecto.* (7)

The concept of *waiting*, for *un deber que sea impuesto por las circunstancias*, strongly suggests that in Ocampo's mind, the founding of *SUR* has in some sense been predetermined, and destined, to happen. In this way, within a simultaneously private and public context (letter/essay), Ocampo gains control over her new enterprise. It is as if she were saying to herself: "I can manage this (public) project, and this project will succeed, *because it was meant to be.*" This technique is meant to convince her and the reader of her command of this newly

found voice and occupation.

In assuming this new role, Ocampo must transfer (also in the Freudian, psychological sense), or redirect, her passion from Julián to someone or something else. In the following remarks Ocampo is specifically talking about repositioning her focus in *SUR* from Europe to America, but the passage can also be read as descriptive of the transference of her energies from the private sphere (Julián), to a professional, public forum:

Claro está que nos vemos irremisiblemente obligados, en el sentido *físico* como en el *intelectual*, a dar la espalda a alguna cosa si queremos volver la cara hacia otra. Pero eso no implica forzosamente que nos demos vuelta en sentido figurado. (11)

Her own use here of the dichotomy “físico/intelectual” powerfully recalls her (physical) relationship with Julián. The passage implies the opposition between the physical and the intellectual, and further reveals that “amor-pasión” must be, and has been, transformed into what I call *pasión de escritura y de América*. The similarities between these seemingly different *pasiones* are startling. They spring, of course, from the *single* word I am using to describe these *two* separate fields of interest: *pasión*. Although Ocampo’s relationship with J. ends and she now redirects her energy towards her new undertaking, the “Carta a Waldo Frank” evinces her need for attachment to a masculine figure in order to transgress. The essay’s title, indicates how crucial it is for Ocampo’s psychic energies to be bound *to a masculine figure/principle* in order to accomplish an act of transgression. This need could not be more clear than in these lines:

*Usted, Waldo, me ha impuesto esta tarea. Finalmente vencida, la he aceptado de usted como un don precioso. He creído poderla aceptar debido a los amigos que están en mi torno y en quienes tengo confianza. Gracias a su ayuda todo se hace posible.*

Esta revista no será mi revista sino por que es la revista de ellos y la revista de usted. Ella será el lugar constante de nuestro encuentro. (13-14)

But this essay is more than an acknowledgement of friends—it is the opening statement of *SUR*, and as such it sets the tone for and describes the goals Ocampo has for the new journal. The purpose of the journal will be to celebrate what Ocampo proudly calls “nuestra América” and characterizes as “el tesoro oculto,” “un país por descubrir,” and “esa América del oculto tesoro” (17). The sense Ocampo

has of her commitment to America justifies my use of the term *pasión* to describe this new involvement. America is a new love for Ocampo, "Lo que desde ya sabemos afirmar de América es que estamos enamorados extrañamente de ella" (18). The continent is her new *gran amor*; the *pasión* has been redirected, but remains within the same psychological framework.

The final essay I will look at was written in homage to Virginia Woolf, on the day of her death in April of 1941. It is titled "Virginia Woolf en mi Recuerdo". As Blas Matamoro succinctly states, "Durante casi cuarenta años, Victoria producirá textos sobre Virginia Woolf" (189). Woolf was a great influence on Ocampo; she was probably the contemporary writer with whom Ocampo felt the greatest affinity, for a number of reasons, including her innovative style, her feminist concerns, her upper-class background (somewhat similar to Ocampo's), and her sex.

This very personal recollection, this *homenaje*, begins with the dedication by Woolf to her sister Vanessa Bell from the novel *Night and Day*: "A VANESSA BELL. PERO BUSCANDO UNA FRASE, NO HALLE NINGUNA QUE PUDIERA PONERSE JUNTO A TU NOMBRE". Immediately following this citation, Ocampo writes:

Con estas palabras encabeza Virginia Woolf una de sus primeras novelas, *Night and Day*, dedicada a su hermana. *No encuentro otras que expresen mejor la dificultad que siento para escribir estas páginas, y quisiera limitarme a ellas.* (277)

Ocampo does not, however, limit herself to these words, but writes an eight page essay, part meditation on death, part remembrance of Woolf. This beginning, however, does serve to place her essay as a text-within-a-text, as a repetition of Woolf's own sentiments, as expressed in the dedication to her sister. Ocampo's essay is enclosed within Woolf's own text, as the last lines of the essay further suggest:

Por eso, yo hubiera querido ahora poder limitarme a escribir:

A Virginia Woolf...

Porque yo también, buscando una frase, no hallé ninguna que pudiera ponerse junto a su nombre. (285)

Elements of Woolf's novels, and of Woolf's speech, are woven into Ocampo's recollection. For example, Ocampo makes use of Clarissa Dalloway throughout this essay to express her own sentiments

and to explain some aspects of Virginia Woolf, the woman. The essay is also peppered with parenthetical inclusions of Woolf's own speech, phrases Ocampo recollects from past conversations, such as the amusing "Ya sabe usted que detesto ser fotografiada. ¿Para qué?" (281)

But to return to the dedication, and to Ocampo's own beginning and closing lines of this essay: we can see a rigidly dichotomous relationship created between the *nombre* and the *frase*, the idea being that there is no phrase that can do justice to the name. This idea is thematized in the essay in different forms. At one point Ocampo recalls the "tapa horriblemente vulgar" to the Spanish translation of *The Waves* and writes "¿está tan en desacuerdo con el *contenido* del libro...!" (281). A similar opposition, a similar point of disjuncture (*frase/nombre, tapa/contenido*), is repeated in the pair *obra/mujer*. In discussing Woolf *la mujer*, as opposed to Woolf's *obra*, Ocampo remarks:

¿Hablar hoy de *la obra* de Virginia Woolf? Pero si ahí está, intacta. No es ella la que se ausenta del mundo. Cuando esta mañana me anunciaron por teléfono: "Murió Virginia Woolf", *no pensé en esa obra*. (280)

The only pair of terms that seems to escape this oppositional, manichean structuring in the essay is *el rostro/el ser*. For Ocampo, Virginia's *rostro*, as did Julián's *rostro* in volume 3, faithfully reflects her *ser*, and as such it is the perfect, appropriate expression of her inner being. She writes of the last time she was with Woolf: "Virginia, muy delgada, de negro, sin polvos, sin rouge, sin alhajas: infinitamente bella, *impresa en su rostro* la marca de todos sus sueños" (285). Woolf's spirit, as well as her intelligence and imagination, are made visible to Ocampo in her serene countenance. And it is in this harmonious image, this communion between the *rostro* and the *ser*, that we can begin to find a resolution to the tension between private and public in Ocampo's own life and work, a resolution which, though never wholly arrived at, emblemizes the elegance and beauty of Victoria Ocampo's professional and personal achievements.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Emphasis in the quotations throughout is my own.

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