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ENTRAPMENT AND ALIENATION IN FOUR NOVELS OF MANUEL PUIG

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ABSTRACT

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FOUR NOVELS OF MANUEL PUIG

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This study focuses upon entrapment and alienation as themes and structural devices in four novels by the Argentine author, Manuel Puig (1936-1990). These two elements exist on numerous planes within the texts that potentially deceive the characters as well as the reader. The introduction explores the various narrative and structural elements that unmask potential subtexts that continually converge and mesh. The introduction also explores the significant role of disillusionment in the face of the repressive society of Latin America. These chapters follow: Chapter two: La traición de Rita Hayworth, Chapter three: Boquitas pintadas, Chapter four: El beso de la mujer araña, and Chapter five: Sangre de amor correspondido.

For Dr. Priscilla Meléndez and for my family
for their encouragement and patience.

In memory of the meteorologist, my brother, Chris Gentry.

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INTRODUCTION: SOCIOHISTORICAL CONTEXT AND CRITICAL METHODOLOGY IN THE NOVELS OF MANUEL PUIG

The "Boom" era of Latin American literature of the twentieth century, which peaked in the 1960s, has produced a number of novelists as well as contemporary innovative narrative techniques that have transformed Latin America's definition of literary brilliance. A result of this movement is the following generation of "Junior Boom" authors of the 1970s and 1980s, such as Reinaldo Arenas, Alfredo Bryce Echenique, and Manuel Puig, who not only have refined, expanded, and redirected the techniques and themes of the "Boom" authors but also have incorporated into their writing a new social realism.[1]

Manuel Puig (1939-1990), one of the catalysts of the "Junior Boom," concentrates on a unique version of the Argentine social novel. This version underscores a close relationship between a recognized political and historical context, and narrative fiction that is a masked social and political reflection of Argentine society, and more specifically of Buenos Aires. In four of his eight novels, La traición de Rita Hayworth (1968), Boquitas pintadas (1972), The Buenos Aires Affair (1973), and El beso de la mujer araña (1976), Puig narrows his focus to his native

country's capital. Although it seems that no overtly documented events take place in his novels, the narrative structure is built on a general scheme of Argentine repressive government, which is indeed a product of historical influences, such as the Perón regime of the forties and afterward.[2] The novels of Manuel Puig are based on strong intertextualities that not only reflect the social and cultural realities of twentieth-century Argentina and Latin America, but also establish a dialogue with the literature that sustains them. However, Puig's texts are not categorized under the heading of social realism.[3] They differ in several ways, including the fact that the novels do not overtly denounce political factions. On the other hand, Puig's novels do share the disillusionment and alienation typical of the genre. This study focuses on **alienation** as a principal theme and structural device in the following works: La traición de Rita Hayworth, Boquitas pintadas, El beso de la mujer araña, and Sangre de amor correspondido as these works reflect the oppressive society that marginalizes the texts. Moreover, through the narrative, discursive, and thematic strategies of the novels, the reader becomes a potential victim as well. As a consequence of **alienation**, the theme of **entrapment** plays a significant role in the above texts, which is the second focus of this study. Both characters and reader are vulnerable to Puig's textual snares.

Furthermore, the themes of alienation and entrapment

co-exist on two different levels: the textual, and that which is apparently repressed from the text but found lurking "underneath" it. By means of the undercurrents of the texts, I will show how the narrative structure of the novels is based on fragmentations and discursive interactions and how the text is alienated from parallel narrative voices and structures, and from the reader. Through narrative conventions such as footnoting, the presence of Grade B movies, and soap operas, among others, Puig supplies the materials for alienation and entrapment by providing conflicting or isolated texts. He is able to achieve this by placing the focus completely on the text(s) underneath or by actually omitting bits and pieces of the primary text. The fragmented chapters of Puig's novels are generally alienated from the other chapters by theme, subject, or temporal and spacial planes, and only seem to make sense at the end of the novel. Due to the deceptive circular narrative structure of the four texts, these endings offer a convincing "explanation" of the very first chapter as well as the rest of the text. Puig's novels invite readers to be active participants in interpreting the material they are encountering, but by the end, the readers are manipulated to re-interpret the entire novel from a deceptive a priori point of view. That is, readers are supplied with sufficient clues to lead to misleading interpretations of the novel. Little by little they are offered other clues or information that was previously

absent, and they must deviate from original deductions. Readers are led to approach the novel from a distance, relating the readings to sociopolitical markers borrowed from the extra-textual
which potentially leads them to become members of an isolated and deceived whole.

This introduction will explore the parameters which provide for the study of the four novels by Manuel Puig and perhaps account for their popularity. First, the historical and social contexts of twentieth-century Latin America, more specifically, Argentina, must be considered as central aspects in the analysis. Secondly, I will delineate the critical methodology which is necessary for investigating the themes of **alienation** and **entrapment** on various textual levels in La traición de Rita Hayworth, Boquitas pintadas, El beso de la mujer araña, and Sangre de amor correspondido.

SOCIAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

To fully understand the contemporary Latin American novel and more specifically, Puig's texts that mirror the socio-politcal ramifications of Argentina and Brazil, the historical and social context which encompasses them must be determined.[4] Puig's novels follow the influential literary epochs of Social Realism from 1930 to 1950 as well as the "Boom" novel of the 1960s. His writing is one more manifestation of the long-standing historical links between Latin America's sociopolitical reality and its literature.

History is a process which includes the significant events affecting nations or institutions as well as the societies and languages which experience it. Through the process of interpretation, history becomes a discourse that reaches back to the past and extends toward the present; and through history's recognition and analysis of itseslf, history is coupled with its literature.[5] This does not suggest, however, that history and literary production in a particular time reflect each other. Some critics, such as Octavio Paz accept the idea that they are opposites.[6] In order to explain and analyze the evolution of Latin American literature, we must keep in mind the relationship between the two.

The text and its context result from the interpretation of a society and its culture at a given time. The text also serves as a point of departure for future texts as well as a reflection of previous ones. The intertextual relationship that exists among texts cannot be broken.[7] The novels of Manuel Puig demonstrate this strong kinship between the past history of Latin America and its present identity. Puig's works exemplify Argentina's definitive literary production that shares a dialogue with history. This is especially evident on sociopolitical and cultural levels that underscore the oppresive environment under which literature has been written. One can see as far back as 1848 with Domingo Faustino Sarmiento's sociopolitical commentary on the Rosa dictatorship in Facundo. His novel underlined the

oppressive and alienating force of Rosa's reign, but also engendered a new social criticism that opened the way for later authors like Manuel Puig. As time progressed into the twentieth century, so did

Argentina's literary contributions that underscored the marginalization of the big city, a prominent characteristic that Puig has borrowed for La traición de Rita Hayworth, Boquitas pintadas, and El beso de la mujer araña. By the 1920s, the stifling atmosphere of urban centers such as Buenos Aires, became a focus of narrative production, emphasizing man's entrapment in a large "enclosure." Moreover, innovative experimentation with narrative form and language became an evident characteristic. Along with the urban focus, the vanguardist movement burst into prominence in the 1920s. Still entrapped by the ties with Europe's artistic forces, the influence of the avant garde was evident in the magazines that had been founded by young writers such as Jorge Luis Borges, who would become Argentina's creative paragon and authorial model for Manuel Puig. The vanguardist tendencies seemed to express Latin America's preoccupation with its personal identity, which has provided the foundations for much of its current literature. The problem of identity exists on both an individual as well as a collective level and can be linked to a greater force: the sociopolitical machinery of Latin America, and more precisely, Argentina. The oppression of class and race described in Puig's novels establishes the

foundations for his texts. All of his works emphasize the marginality of his characters based on the oppressive boundaries fostered by social class and political control. Puig's social awareness can be traced back at least one generation. Inspired by the Russian revolution and Marxism, Argentine intellectuals responded to the dire sociocultural situation of 1930. David W. Foster suggests the Argentine writers felt:

> the need to respond critically and in a denunciatory fashion to the various mechanisms of repression and the frustration of personal and collective aspirations during the period. It was a period marked by the violent military [Uriburu] takeover of September 1930. (14)

Foster contends that the social and political situation as well as the writers formed the conscience for Argentine literature of 1930 to 1950, emphasizing the disillusionment and alienation of the period. Foster supports Jesús Méndez's evaluation of the feelings of Argentine writers:

> During the previous 50 years, Argentine intellectuals had been praising their country on the basis of two trends, the unprecedented economic growth and prosperity, and the political stability along democratic lines. These two characteristics became the basis for the formation of the Argentine "national mythology," in the absence of a long cultural and historical tradition. The combination of the world economic depression and the overthrow of the constitutionally elected president by a military coup seemed to undermine the foundations of the nation. In this regard, the literature of pessimism and disenchantment of Argentine intellectuals in the 1930s reflected the general discontent and disillusionment of the Argentine population as a whole.... The intellectual expressions of the 1930s are part of an increasing alienation which had its origins in the early years of the century. The crisis underscored that state of individual impotence which had overtaken Argentine intellectuals as a result of their overdependence on patronage.... The absence of

> self-generated parameters of behavior led to a deep crisis of individual identity when the veneer of national stability vanished. (15)

As Foster reminds us, the social realists were not the cause of Argentina's ideological crisis, rather they furthered the quest for a national conscience and identity (16). The novel of social realism that reflected Argentina's struggle with repression represented a commitment to social causes arising from the national situation of the decade. This literature stands out for its documentary realism, not for its technique. Although the novels of social realism produced during the period were not considered masterpieces, their critical influence on future writers such as Puig, however, is evident.

The social realist writers of Argentina who conceded that "la literatura funciona como algo autónomo de su contexto inmediato económico, político y social" (Shaw, 15) left their mark on the next generation of authors that included Jorge Luis Borges, Julio Cortázar, and Roberto Arlt. The social realist author viewed his responsibility as to create a communion between literary reality and "una realidad de una cultura que busca su identidad en la denuncia del sistema social vigente y en el rechazo de la dependencia cultural" (Shaw, 16). In other words, Argentine narrative did not just express the search for an identity within the confines of a repressive atmosphere, but it also carried the weight of social responsibility.

Roberto Arlt's Los siete locos (1931), for example,

parallels social realism, emphasizing the oppression of the middle lower class in Argentina, much like Puig's novels. Arlt shows the relationship between the individual and society through the stories of seven locos who form a secret club. In essence, because these locos are both entrapped within their own psychological prisons and are alienated mentally from society, they must form their own commonalty.

With their obsessive goals of changing society, they actually set out to destroy it. At the same time, the intimate narration creates a close relationship between reader and characters. The themes and preoccupations of Los siete locos parallel and reflect the social, political and cultural problems of Argentina and Latin America. Narrative also emphasized the human condition, which stands out in the works of Juan Carlos Onetti (1909) and Eduardo Mallea (1903-1982). From Brushwood's point of view, these authors portray the "novelization of the human spirit" (124). For example, Mallea's Historia de una pasión deals with the contrast between human relationships on a superficial level and those of deeper concern. Furthermore, Mallea presents a broader picture: the gap between the superficial and the real Argentine society, once again underscoring man's struggle to break from the limitations that society has imposed.[8] The text links the individual struggle of existence and identity with that of society, which was a tendency of the novel at the close of the 1930s. Novels of psychoanalitical inquiry and existentialism served as models

for younger authors in South America as well as in Europe and North America.[9] Themes of social concern and individual anguish, combined with vanguardist techniques from the previous decade, produced the criteria for the novel of the 1940s. However, with the new decade, the novel was to enter into crisis.[10]

By the middle of the 1940s, the novel experienced "the reaffirmation of fiction." Brushwood describes the new novel in the following way:

> They all deal with the Spanish American world, but they are excellent examples of the difference between personification and novelization. In other words, they are all based on objective reality but they accomplish more than the addition of life to the facts of history. They transform objective reality, create worlds in the novels. (159)

No country could provide better examples of the new novel than Argentina, having felt the adverse effects of World War Two. Exiled Spanish intellectuals fled to the port city of Buenos Aires further affirming it as the principal cultural center of Argentina, as well as of South America. These new arrivals offered Argentine writers a needed boost. Argentina's supply of critical thought and theory had been severely curtailed due to the wars and the censorship of the new Franco regime in Spain. The fresh wave of creativity still dealt with universal themes, yet the emphasis was on the individual in his vast and, at times irreal, surroundings. Jorge Luis Borges' contribution of Ficciones in 1944 laid the foundations for future literature, emphasizing man's constant struggle in the universal

labyrinth in which he has precariously entrapped himself while in search of identity as well as literary reality.

According to Borges: "No hay clasificación del universo que no sea arbitraria y conjetural. La razón es muy simple; no sabemos qué cosa es el universo".[11] Along with Borgesian ideology, new currents in psychoanalysis and existentialism further influenced Argentine authors, evident in Eduardo Mallea's Todo el verdor perecerá (1941) and Ernesto Sábato's El túnel (1948). Both novels relate the personal account of an anguished protagonist in a desperate and endless search for communication. They also reflect the social and cultural state of Argentina. At the time of the publication of Todo el verdor percerá, Argentina was responding to World War Two. Exiled intellectuals were not the only ones to escape to South America. The presence of Axis spies was notable, causing internal political splits which led to violence and instability in several nations. In Argentina, fascism had been apparent, although it was not a real threat to the country. However, in 1942 the Río conference was held, at which United States asked Latin America for support in the fight against the Axis. Argentina took a neutral stance, which in reality favored the Axis powers. This political upheaval forced Latin America and its authors to face a broader horizon and to focus on a more international level.

The political crises had a profound effect on the novel in Argentina and in Latin America, inspiring intellectuals

and authors to produce a more universal novel. In other words, the novel maintained its unique regional characteristics but showed an international appeal, touching on human themes that crossed social, cultural and political barriers. Another political situation radically changed Argentina: Juan Domingo Perón's rise to power in 1945, which as stated previously, provides the underlying theme of Puig's La traición de Rita Hayworth, Boquitas pintadas, El beso de la mujer araña, and Maldición eteran a quien lea estas páginas. Although Eldemiro Farrell was the elected president, Perón controlled the country. It was just a matter of time before he consolidated and organized his regime. Along with Perón's dictatorship came a sense of nationalism and political liberalism. He was the workers' Messiah, publishing decrees and establishing new unions and social programs that benefitted the lower and middle classes. Pamela Bacarisse points out that "it was the power of the workers who actually brought about Perón's release from prison in 1945," which in turn led to his regime.[12] He and his wife, Evita, had created a New Argentina, masking previous political and social problems with visions of middle class utopia. Workers enjoyed new luxuries--attending the opera, viewing Hollywood movies (not to mention to emulate the lifestyles portrayed in them), and living in homes in urban areas with modern appliances. His subjects supported him although:

> they knew little, and cared less, about Perón's Nazi sympathies and Fascist training or his lack of

> scruples. They rejoiced in a newfound sense of nationality, resenting what they saw as foreign interference when their leader's more distasteful practices and leanings were brought light abroad.[13]

However, not everyone supported the Perón regime. Two opposing political factions were evident during the Perón years: the peronistas, who saw Perón as the vindicator of past wrongdoings, and the antiperonistas, who regarded the Perón government as "the onerous outgrowth of past mistakes" (Brushwood, 201). This political split not only caused friction among the people, but also contributed to an emphasis in narrative on the individual who questions his existence in the universe, and more specifically, in modern society thus demythifying the utopian image of Argentina.

Sábato's El túnel (1948), for example, demonstrates man's need for communion and communication with others in a complex and faceless society. Critics have suggested that Leopoldo Marechal's Adán Buenosayres (1948) also expresses the relationship between the individual and universal man. This text exemplifies the shift from regional concerns to universal themes and values. As the title suggests, regional man from a distinct urban areas is coupled with a universal symbol, Adam. These novels exemplify the trend in Latin America at the end of the 1940s toward a new perspective in the novel: the shift toward universal themes expressed through the world created by the novelist.

Argentinian novels also reflected the era of change during the Perón regime, which brought on anxiety from the association of tradition with identity (Brushwood, 192).

Perón's fall from power in 1955 brought about a sense of failure within Argentine society. A generation of authors who reflected that attitude were know as "parricidal." They were critics and writers who examined Argentina in order to discover its true reality by rejecting Perón's vision of middle class utopia and to "push aside hypocrisy, false patriotism and hero worship so Argentines could face up to their true past" (204). At the forefront were David Viñas' Cayó sobre su rostro (1955), which delves back to the presidency of Julio Roca in 1879, and the essayistic novel of existentialist alienation and the search for identity expressed in La fatalidad de los cuerpos (1955) by Héctor Murena. Both novels coincided with the year of Perón's downfall and further established the reflection of social, political and cultural reality in the novel.

The culmination of the novel came about with the "Boom" novel in the following decade which stood out for its portrayal and unique re-creation of reality, and paved the way for the next generation of writers that includes Manuel Puig. The focus of the novel no longer rested on the story itself. In fact, the story became non-existent in many works, for example, those of Julio Cortázar. The novel transcended the traditional parameters of the nature of reality and creation through the conceptualization of the text and the consciousness of the act of writing. In other words, the creation of narrative and its internal reality became the context of the work instead of its method. The

idea of the proper novel was replaced with that of the antinovela, a precursor to Puig's novela de desmitificación, which as Donald Shaw suggests, implies that:

> La desintegración aparente del mundo antes aceptado como <<real>> dejó al escritor enfrentado con la autonomía de su propia fantasía creadora, o sea, con algo que (para él, al menos) es incontestablemente real y verdadero. Cabría interpretar la destrucción de la realidad externa a él como equivalente a la liberación absoluta (por primera vez) de su propio genio creador ya sin trabas de ningún género. (16-17)

Cortázar offers his artistic view of reality in Rayuela (1963), which seems to contradict the entire concept of literature by throwing its language, structure and form into apparent chaos. Through this process, the novel refutes external reality and its pretexts, and engenders its own existence through the search for internal reality. Through such a quest, much of Argentinian narrative of the 1970s narrowed its central focus to the covert criticism of sociopolitical ideals and myths upheld by previous literature. Whereas the latter further supported the mythification of ideals, the former manifested itself in its demythification.[14] Moreover, the novel seemed to shift its focus around the stifling limitations of Buenos Aires. This societal revelation can also be noted in the works of Puig's contemporaries. Foster suggests that by emphasizing social degradation, Enrique Medina's Striptease (1973) and Las tumbas (1972) expose Buenos Aires' underbelly, producing "calculatedly precise images of the worst of our sociocultural myths" (72). With the demythification of values and idols, Argentine literature of the 1970s focuses

on the dynamics of social reality. The volatile combination of the art of demythification and the "Boom's" influence on the next generation of authors is evident in Manuel Puig's novels. His narrative closely follows the novel of self-referentiality of the 1960s, which not only tells a story but comments on how it is told. Furthermore, this type of writing, often dubbed "metafictional," exploits the manipulation of artifice. Puig published his first metafictional novel, La traición de Rita Hayworth, in 1968. The novel is based on strong intertextualities of both social reality and self-referentiality through twentieth century's most influential and deceptive devices: pop culture and the mass media. The role and presence of the narrator and authorial voice virtually disappear, leaving the reader seemingly alone in the act of creation of the novel. The focal point of the novel is the dialectic created by the gaps in the text and the proliferation of palimpsestic texts and contexts, resulting from the manipulation of a variety of artifice and narrative techniques, such as the incorporation of Grade "B" movies, tango lyrics, interior monologues, diaries and letters. The parts of the novel are provided in isolated fragments, and the reader must evaluate them to make a coherent whole. The fragments themselves contain missing information. The reader must attempt to link them or even provide the missing pieces of each fragment. Yet the conflictive messages offered by narrative techniques function as text and

context, and at the same time comment on themselves. Thus the reader is provided a significant role as the co-creator of this metafiction.

On the national level, La traición de Rita Hayworth reflects a trend in Argentinian narrative of the 1960s and 1970s, as David Lagmanovich points out:

> Una tendencia se marca con claridad: el narrador argentino de la década del 60 (y de la del 70) asume en forma más plena que en el pasado la realidad nacional, con inclusión explícita de las alternativas de la penosa vida política argentina de estos últimos años.... La novela y el cuento de hoy aparecen, en consecuencia, considerablemente más <<politizados>> que las obras similares de décadas anteriores.[15]

La traición de Rita Hayworth reflects the national reality of the time between 1933 and 1948 when society and culture were relatively stagnant, as a result of the unstable and censorial governments that prevailed during that time. Puig covertly criticizes the political climate through his presentation of characters from all walks of life who aimlessly wander about the text searching for some meaning of existence. The structure of the text seems to revolve around the thoughts and events of Toto, the insecure and effeminate child of Berto and Mita who lives in the barren town of Coronel Vallejos. A conglomeration of unhappy thoughts and obsessions of life's incompleteness provides a deceptive narrative structure that sends the reader through the story, which ironically leads back to 1933, suggesting eternal suffering and imprisonment. Toto, his parents, relatives, acquaintances, and schoolmates provide the outbursts of consciousness which constitute the text.

Puig's subsequent novel, Boquitas pintadas (1969) repeats the formula of La traición de Rita Hayworth. Again, the characters are found identifying with and even imitating the situations they have witnessed through the conventions of pop culture, in this case, the soap opera as an esape mechanism. A striking contradiction exists between their belief in the romantic passion produced by television and radio serials, and the daily reality of their mediocre relationships, entrapping themselves in the margins between the real and the fantasized.

Boquitas pintadas is based on nostalgia, which functions as theme as well as narrative technique. The focus of the novel revolves around Nene's recollections and regrets in life. Her story is presented through letters, conversations, one-sided dialogue, and soap operas, which are structured in folletín style, imitating the entregas of the nineteenth-century romantic novel and the twentieth-century radio and television serial, leading the reader to follow deceptive narrative strategies. Each entrega consists of a separate installment, dispersing vital narrative and structural cues. Cultural reality and the conventions of pop culture and literature become so intertwined that the two converge, thus blurring reality and the representation of reality on which the interpretation of the text depends.

Through the 1970s, Puig continues experimenting with the representation of culture, reality and its distorted

images with The Buenos Aires Affair (1973) and El beso de la mujer araña (1976). The former is a 'novela policial which at first glance may seem to be a typical detective mystery. However, Puig parodies the genre by constructing the apparent rape of the female protagonist, Gladys, at the beginning of the novel, presenting one-sided mysterious phone calls to the police, and a murder for which there is no corpse--that is, until the end when Leo, the other protagonist, falls victim to his own fabrication.

The Buenos Aires Affair demythifies the sexual taboos that were so prevalent in the traditional Latin American novel. Detailed acts of sadism, sodomy and erotic ostentation set the tone of the text. The mystery and tension created by these quasi-pornographic acts and the sexual frustration produced by them contrast with the characters who enact them. A non-traditional portrayal of the problematics of sexual identity is also evident in El beso de la mujer araña (1976). The novel focuses on two protagonists, Valentín and Molina, who share a prison cell in Buenos Aires, physically and psychologically alienated from the rest of the world. Each one is living on the margins of society. Valentín is a "subversive revolutionary" and Molina is a homosexual accused of "influencing" young males. Valentín and Molina become emotionally united through Valentín's recollection of Grade B movie plots to pass the time. These "metatexts" function on several different levels. First, they serve as plots

within plots, representing the utopia to which Molina wishes to belong. They also serve as a narrative voice which not only entraps Valentín, but the reader as well, reflecting the contrast between the values represented through pop culture and the cultural reality of Buenos Aires, as well as Latin America. Puig's last novel of the decade, Pubis angelical (1979), follows the patterns of his first three novels. The representation of characters under the thumbs of a repressive government is evident, as well as the role of the female in a male-dominated society. Pubis angelical is perhaps Puig's most blatant criticism of the Perón regime.

The novel revolves around Ana, a young Argentine who is dying from an incurable disease in a Mexican hospital. While awaiting her death, she is visited by Beatriz, a feminist free from oppressive macho domination; and is also visited by Pozzi, a leftist who wants to convince Ana to co-operate in helping to kidnap her ex-husband in Argentina for political reasons. Pubis angelical portrays social reality in order to protest its inequality and injustices. Yet, Puig offers no solutions; rather, he seems to portray inherent characteristics of social and cultural reality which are manifested in the oppressive conditions of Latin America of the 1970s: entrapment in an inescapable and unchanging environment.

Puig also portrays Latin America's political situation from a distanced point of view in Maldición eterna a quién

lea estas páginas (1981). Whereas the previous novels take place in Buenos Aires, this text is set in New York City. The relationship formed by Larry, an unemployed historian from the city, and Señor Ramírez, an old Argentinian political exile, provide the thematic and structural foundation of this novel. Like Pubis angelical, Maldición eterna a quien lea estas páginas is a text that demands the active participation of the reader. However, it differs from the other novels in the absence of pop culture conventions.

The diachronic dynamics of Argentina's social reality are also evident in Maldición eterna a quién lea estas páginas. Larry's historical quest is to unlock and decode Señor Ramírez's hieroglyphic document about the repressive government of the previous decades, a text which the latter secretly wrote as a political prisoner. The interpretation of history through Señor Ramirez's eyes would elucidate not only the historical process of Argentina, but also the present state of social and cultural reality of the nation. The focus on Argentina's social and cultural reality is strong in Puig's following novel, Sangre de amor correspondido (1982). It is set in rural Brazil and again avoids the glitz of Buenos Aires pop culture. However, other social conventions fill the void, such as soccer, around which Josemar's life revolves. He, along with his ex-girlfriend, María are the protagonists of the novel. He returns to their small rural town, years after he had

abandoned her, which supposedly had driven her crazy. The focus does not remain on them; rather, the reader spends the entire novel decoding the dialectic between the first person present tense and the third person preterite. Due to the mismatching tenses, the reader cannot analyze the text through the traditional act of reading. Instead, he must picture the novel as if it were a tape-recorded interview. The reader is challenged to supply the missing information which the discrepancy of the tenses erases. The dialogue which ensues between Josemar and María da Gloria entraps them in their world and snares the reader in the act of (re)creating the text. The sublety of narrative strategies which Puig employs in Sangre de amor correspondido creates a seemingly more "readable" text, but in actuality the novel requires a greater manipulation of artifice and technique, thus creating a more complex experience through the act of its re(creation).

Puig's final creation, Cae la noche tropical, is perhaps his most conventional novel. Like his previous works, this one takes place amidst urban sprawl, this time in Rio de Janeiro during 1987-1988. Two elderly women, Luci and Nidia nostalgically pass the time reminiscing the Buenos Aires of the past while openly criticizing its current state. Their main focus rests on the lives of others around them who are portrayed through their mediocrity. Unlike Puig's other works, the narrative unfolds a simple, tender story of two lonely women whose lives are about to close.

Manuel Puig and his contemporaries, such as the Cuban, Severo Sarduy and the Peruvian, Alfredo Bryce Echenique, continue the evolution of the contemporary Latin American novel by creating worlds in the text where meaning must come from within, conflicting with ideas and conclusions that are derived from the extra-literary world. Therefore, the reader's interpretation of the novel cannot arise from assumptions from his own experience; rather, he must encounter meaning in the text itself. This study will examine the unique use of narrative strategies that question the act of reading, the role of the reader and the influence of extra-literal reality, and at the same time search for a definable cultural reality.

In final consideration I wish to propose several generalizations which describe the evolution of Latin American writing. As we have seen, Latin American narrative has experienced a grand evolution in the twentieth century. By the middle of the 1960s, the "Boom" novel followed its predecessors' ideals (Borges, Carpentier), focusing on the novelization of the text. Two characteristics made the "Boom" unique--the conceptualization of the novel and of the act of writing, and the concern with cultural heritage and identity. The focus on internal reality led to the self-referential novel which emphasized the act of creation.

These novels were replaced by the metafictional novel of which Manuel Puig is a master. The quest of cultural identity is explored, questioned, and masked through the act

of narration. The act of reading and interpretation is therefore abstracted from the seemingly inseparable literary and extra-literay worlds. In order to analyze Puig's innovative use of narrative strategies, it is necessary to explore the critical presuppositions which underly them, clarifying Puig's novelistic techniques.

CRITICAL APPROACHES TO READING PUIG'S TEXTS

The novel of Social Realism from 1930 to 1950 and the "Boom" Novel of the 1960s provide the underlying foundation of Manuel Puig's novels. The former offers a thematic base, whereas the "Boom" Novel contributes to Puig's use of innovative narrative techniques. In his works, Puig borders on social testimonial without commiting himself to the ideals of the Novel of Social Realism. Unlike the authors of those novels, Puig manifests no political persuasion nor does he offer any solution to the repressive governments under which his characters exist. On the other hand, although no documentable historical events take place, and in some cases no identifiable time frame seems apparent, vestiges of Argentinian social, historical, and cultural contexts act as the structure for Puig's works.

As an inheritor of the "Boom's" innovations, Manuel Puig has expanded the continual process of experimentation with and discovery of heterogeneous norms and conventions in the novel. The reader's participation in the act of creation must also evolve with the text. The result of this process is the proliferation of several readings and

interpretations based on the numerous texts and subtexts produced in the novel. The diachronic paths along which the reader can travel often entrap him into misreadings or distorted interpretations which arise from numerous narrative, figurative and literal cues. Thus, several readings are manifested in each text. Readers are often entrapped and isolated within the boundaries of a given text until they encounter the existence of other texts and subtexts.

The participation of the reader plays a significant role in Puig's novels. Wolfgang Iser suggests that the novel is nonfunctional without the participation of the reader, who actively discovers the effects of the text instead of its meaning.[16] The reader complements the text as he opposes the artistic pole of the author. Iser states that "the reader provides aesthetic realization and the work must be situated between the [author and reader]." (21) In turn, the reader views the text as a set of instructions to which he responds. The reader's role is structured by three basic components:

> the different perspectives represented in the text (narrator, characters, plot, etc.), the vantage point from which he joins them together, and the meeting place where they converge. The whole process is set in motion by the need to familiarize the unfamiliar (Iser, 36).

The text is unfamiliar because no context exists for the reader's comparison. The text does not reproduce reality, rather it creates its own. However, the text brings into it a variety of conventions of the real world which clashes

with the reader's perceptions of it. The reader brings to the text several presuppositions formed by historical and social norms which he applies during the act of reading. These same norms are found within the text, but in a very different light:

> The fictional text makes a selection from a variety of conventions to be found in the real world and it puts them together as if they were interrelated. It brings them before us in unexpected combinations so that they begin to be stripped of their validity. These conventions are taken out of their social contexts, deprived of their regulating function and so become subjects of scrutiny themselves. (Iser, 61)

This discovery of "performance" leads to the basic comprehension of the possible underlying texts and sets up what Iser terms "expected expections" which occur when the literary text interferes by taking "the prevalent thought system or social system as its context, but does not reproduce its frame of reference which stabilizes these systems." (71) However, these expectations are generally thwarted because it is the frustration caused by defeated expections that stimulate the reader to respond to the text.

In Puig's case, these frustrations are brought about by the extensive use of popular culture from the extra-textual world. The reality evoked in the text is not confined to the printed page and is not intented to be a mere replica (Iser, 69). The extra-textual elements go through a transformation in the text and become an "intregal feature of the whole process of communication" (Iser, 69). This opens the door o new connections in the text. However, the old connections for the reader still remain present. Puig

takes advantage of this clash, by maintaining the frustration level and forcing the reader to constantly react to the textual world.

The interplay between text and reader involves a restructuring of textual perspectives and aesthetic meaning. The theme, which Iser deems as "the view that the reader is involved with at one time," (98) constantly shifts through Puig's texts. This also changes the "horizon," which is the other perspective segments in which the reader had been previously situated (Iser, 99). The reader must continually re-evaluate both theme and horizon as they shift back and forth through time, space, and viewpoint. He must also keep in check the transformation of the extra-textual interference that provides the frame of reference of his response.

In sum, the reader is an active force in the deceptive web spun in Puig's texts. The reader provides the expectations, effects, and responses cued by the text. However, the interference between extra-textual reality and the reality offered in the work clash. This reaction to cues points to an element of frustration for the reader that stimulates a response to the text. The effects of such response are what guide the interpretation of the text. However, extra-textual interference continually blurs the point of perspective of the text. This study concentrates on this constant clash of perspectives through the exploration of two distinct themes: **entrapment** and

alienation in the novels of Manuel Puig as they apply to the act of reading on various textual, and fictive levels in the following novels: La traición de Rita Hayworth, Boquitas pintadas, El beso de la mujer araña, and Sangre de amor correspondido. I will also analyze the process of evoking possible readings, in other words, the "scraping" of the palimpsest which provides the potential to unearth explicit and implicit readings. The roles of narrative discourse, narrator and author also pose dilemmas that exploit meaning through masked and elusive representation which lead to potential reader entrapment. Lastly, the presence of pop-culture reveals the dialectic between intra-textual and extra-textual structures which reinforces the problems of interpretation on several levels, once again leading the reader down a deceptive path of (re)creation of the text.

Throughout this study, several points will be addressed in thematic, narrative, and literal planes. **Alienation** and **entrapment** are the key themes to be discussed. However, in order to fully understand their repercussions, one must explore the many possibilities through the notion of the palimpsest. The key to unlocking the text, as Iser suggests, lies in the hands of the reader, who is in turn, manipulated of the very text that constantly masks through such control. In order to fully elucidate the possibilities of textual proliferations, the following must be discussed: entrapment and alienation evoked by thematic and narrative strategies, such as the role of pop culture.

All of Puig's novels manifest the themes of entrapment and alienation, yet they have never been fully analyzed from the clash between various textual and subtextual levels. Alienation, on a literal level applies to characters who are isolated from others physically as well as emotionally, and imprisoned on spatial, societal and psychological levels. The alienated characters experience a sense of disconnection between the self and the world. For example, in El beso de la mujer araña, Molina and Valentín, who live on the periphery of society and are imprisoned in a cell on the outskirts of Buenos Aires, are captives both spatially and psychologically. As a homosexual and a political rebel respectively, Molina and Valentín manifest ideals and behavior which are unacceptable to society. Hence, they have been isolated from the the world in which they cannot fit. In The Age of Alienation, Bernard Murchland suggests that:

> The facts to which the term alienation refers are, objectively, different kinds of disassociation, break or rupture between human beings and their objects, whether the latter be other persons, or the natural world, or their own creations of art, science and society; and subjectively, the corresponding states of disequilibrium, disturbance, strangeness, and anxiety.[17]

Puig's characters are hoplessly subjugated to a sense of emptiness, isolated from the rest of the world, lacking the ability to communicate with those who surround them. I will explore in depth how the fragmented structure of discourse, the interaction (or lack of it) between characters and their reality provide an alienating text.

In addition to being alienated from their world, the characters are also separated from a literary reality, from the text itself. This sense of alienation includes the reader as well as the act of writing and reading. Puig provides extra-textual references, such as imaginary soccer radio broadcasts and footnotes, that displace the characters from the literary world through the clash with the reader's extra-literary standpoint of interpretation. Furthermore, the reader becomes alienated through the very same act. Puig adopts these conventions from the extra-literary world and places them in the text, leading the reader to identify with these cues from a personal frame of reference.

Literary and extra-literary worlds are spuriously incompatible because the reader bases the act of interpretation on a world (the extra-literary) which is covertly incongruous to the novels. Moreover, information that the reader retrieves in the novel is distorted, hidden or withheld from him, therefore requiring a reading below the primary textual level, which may also be deformed. The reader is further alienated through the act of interpretation and the unmasking of the proliferation of texts and subtexts.

Puig provides undercurrents of the texts that are presented in fragmented discourse. His premises for alienation are offered through narrative conventions and a constant bombardment of extra-textual references based mostly on mass communications. The focus of his texts is

distorted, shifting back and forth to the texts underneath, or omitting fragments of them. Thus, the reader must play an active role in a continual process of (re)interpreting the text.

Entrapment is the result of Puig's alienating texts. From the very outset of his novels, Puig's characters find themselves in a politically repressive society from which they cannot escape. However, that realization does not stifle their attempts to flee from repression. With each endeavor the characters entangle themselves further in deception, and the web they spin also entraps other characters. The deception is usually reciprocal, intentional and unknown to the intended victims. The characters betray each other along with themselves. The result of the novels is "complete" entrapment both on the textual and subtextual levels, since the characters both create and are created by the conventions which entrap them.

On a purely thematic level, the characters victimize others through their narrative, fictive, and textual dominance. As creations of the author (and reader as well), they are subjugated to the whims of authorial control or displacement. And, on other levels, they are at risk of being unwittingly exposed. They are unaware of what underlies the text, leaving the reader to believe that the control and interpretation of the novels rest in his hands. Therefore, the various levels of the texts work with and against each other, in turn alienating and deluding the

reader. Like the characters, readers are left with the mirage of control which they cannot fully grasp. Readers are victims of deception and entrapment through the process of reading. They become caught up in interpreting and re-interpreting the exposed texts, which reveal themselves as fragmented and isolated from each other. Through specific narrative strategies, such as using movies as narrator or dialogue disguised as movie script for example, Puig exposes the myths and cliches of pop culture, psychology and societal values. These guises entrap readers due to their own frame of reference based on the extra-literary world in which they experience them. By exposing readers to several different textual and subtextual messages and omitting key referents, Puig takes advantage of the readers, deceiving them and guiding them to misinterpret the novel.

Yet, the subtext provides a key to reading the textual cues. A medieval term such as "palimpsest" may seem archaic and out of place when defining contemporary novels, especially when one considers the overwhelming presence of modern technology in Puig's works, such as the cinema and the soap opera. Nevertheless, the palimpsest metaphorically explains the development of La traición de Rita Hayworth, Boquitas pintadas, El beso de la mujer araña, and Sangre de amor correspondido. The metaphor of the palimpsest reveals the proliferation of several intertexts through the process of intermingling the acts of writing, reading, and narration

with implicit and explicit modes of discourse. These devices appear in conventional forms, such as narrative dialogue, monologue, and diaries; and in the unconventional forms, such as the cinema, soap opera, radio broadcasts and even hallucinations. They all reveal and mask several readings in the text, due to the possible readings evoked by the constant multiplication of underlying texts and subtexts.

Priscilla Meléndez in "Writing and Reading the Palimpsest: Donoso's El jardín de al lado" states that the palimpsest is a system that:

> functions as a literary metaphor in which the substitution of the object and its referent for one or more other objects and referents does not imply the disappearance of the first set. Although in the medieval practice of "scraping again" the text substituted is not necessarily linked to what it covers, the dialectical implications suggested by the palimpsestic metaphor...connect and unmask the multiple covert/overt texts that demand to be read.[18]

By its very nature, the palimpsest unveils single units of texts while at the same time it obscures others. The discovery of multiple texts and subtexts, both overt and covert, suggests a level of intertextuality. Thus, on the first reading of the text, Puig's four novels seem to struggle with internal conflict because they yield to fictive and literal boundaries yet to be effaced. The result is fragmentations of texts and subtexts that somehow relate to each other but are in need of a missing link. The reader must search for:

> the illusory discovery of footprints, of ruins [which] submerges the observer (reader) in a world that has

> apparently disappeared and on which new worlds -- or texts -- have been built or written (Meléndez, 200).

It is the reader who assumes responsibility not only for the act of interpretation but also for the process of discovery which produces the complete text, whether it consists of a primary text or includes possible subtexts waiting to emerge.

INTERPRETIVE APPROACHES ON THE THE TEXTUAL AND SUBTEXTUAL LEVELS

It is pertinent to clarify that the term **subtext** is used in this study as a critical approach to what underlies the literal text. Unlike the text, the subtext is not immediately apparent even after the palimpsestic "scraping," and depending on the reader, it is perhaps completely obfuscated. Terry Eagleton refers to the subtext as:

> the unconscious of the work itself. [It is] a text which runs within it, visible at certain 'symptomatic' points of ambiguity, evasion or overemphasis, and which we as readers are able to 'write' even if the novel itself does not.[19]

The text, much like the brain, is intimately involved with insights and omissions, and it is important to explore what the text does not say as well as what it says. Exploring the subtext involves a psychoanalytical approach to analyzing the novel which is pertinent to the study of Puig's works. Narrative techniques used by Puig, such as footnotes of an omniscient author and first-person interior monologues, are much like a dream text in that the techniques focus on symptomatic places--distortions, elisions, ambiguities, absences, ambivalences and points of

intensity in the narrative. The places are like dreams in that the fragments of information, whether distorted or not, must be pieced together to form a coherent whole. It is the reader who must explore and uncover the layers of clues in order to reach and decode the subtext. As Eagleton suggests, there the reader can discover not only what the text means, but also how it works. (182)

Another vehicle for the subtext to manifest itself is through the absence of an authoritative voice that offers the reader several possibilities for a controlling narrative voice. On the one hand, the proliferation of many intertexts without an obvious narrator both create confusion and offer several readings. But on the other hand, this proliferation opens the door for the reader to be imbued with a false sense of authority.

Through the presentation of various implicit and explicit discourses, the reader must sort out the figural and literal nature of the text(s) at hand in oder to expose and interpret the multiple readings underneath. However, the narration, fragmented formal structure, and the role of pop culture within the text complicate the process of interpretation.

The act of narration places the reins of authorial control in the hands of the reader. Yet the presentation of various contradictory narrative devices makes the process of sorting out the multiple readings a difficult and deceptive task. within each novel, no character plays a key role in

narrative control, thus shadowing the focus of the text.

Furthermore, fragments of narration stem from unconventional devices (through the use of the cinema, radio broadcasts, and the soap opera) which not only speak for the characters but also provide them with a sense of anonymity and the feeling of otherness which is also suggested by the proliferation of texts. Thus, the metaphor of the palimpsest conceptually elucidates the act of substitution. These devices, by creating a text of their own, replace the original text leaving the characters' "footprints" in its path.

Narrative devices represented by the act of writing through diaries, letters, and other communicative texts, etch in stone the characters' actions, thoughts, and experiences. The act of writing suggests the desire to be accounted for permanently, which contradicts the messages sent by the unconventional devices. Yet, like those devices, writing transforms the created being into a creator. Writing one's experiences and infusing them with modes of pop culture, trigger the metamorphosis of character into author; and reading the several texts offered through these devices makes the reader a co-conspirator of the act.

Other kinds of narrative discourse abound in the texts, which invite the possibilities of several contradictory levels of reading. Variations of dialogue and monologue exploit the act of reading through both traditional and non-traditional presentation. In La traición de Rita

Hayworth, Puig offers a dialogue in the form of a telephone conversation--as if the reader were standing next to the speaker, Choli, and were thus unable to hear the interlocutor's responses through the receiver. Through the act of inferring the parts of the missing dialogue, the reader must piece together a two-way conversation. In other words, meaning, text(s), and context(s) all must stem from the reader.

Traditional devices of dialogue and monologue are no easier to read in Puig's works. Underneath a common structure lie several texts to be revealed. The discourse presented and that which is interpreted may not be the same, due to unique narrative twists, such as interlocutors who speak in completely contrasting tenses. In Sangre de amor correspondido, for example, the structure of the novel rests on a spoken discourse between two ex-lovers, Josemar and María da Gloria. However, Josemar addresses her in the second-person present tense and she responds in the third-person preterite throughout the entire text. Therefore, the text lends itself to potential mis-matching readings that spiral endlessly.

Finally, the role of pop culture must be considered. As I stated previously, the phenomenon of pop culture serves as a narrative device in Puig's four novels. The narrative structures of La traición de Rita Hayworth, Boquitas pintadas, El beso de la mujer araña, and Sangre de amor correspondido depend on modes of popular culture. Puig has

attempted to demythify the conventions of mass culture, bringing them to "the level of serious literature."[20]

Popular culture has been viewed as a means of entertainment and escape that appeals to the masses, usually by evoking extremes of human actions and reactions. Many critics have analyzed modes of popular culture that are larger than life, such as the tango and cinematography. The glitter of the movies and radio in the novels has been analyzed as a means of escape and fantasy for the characters, emphasizing their alienation from society or from the world. On the other hand, they have entrapped themselves in a created world from which they do not attempt to escape. What many critics have overlooked is that the cinema and other modes of entertainment are not soley used in literary writing as a representation of twentieth-century pop culture. In Puig's novels they serve as a basis of communication as well as a basis of narration and text.[21]

Puig utilizes elements drawn from or patterned on forms of mass communication and entertainment to translate art into life and life into art. In order to demythify pop culture, Puig has patterned Grade B movies, soap operas, tango lyrics, the <u>folletín</u>, and radio broadcasts to fit the structures and functions of literary conventions such as diaries, monologues, dialogues, movie scripts, epitaphs, and one-sided telephone conversations.[22]

The spectacle of film, radio, and the <u>folletín</u> provide the characters with a form of entertainment as well as an

exercise in idealized perception, presenting a rather predictable larger-than-life story. The Hollywood ideals reflect diachronic narrative conventions based on "historically distinct set of norms of narrational construction and comprehension."[23] Moreover, through the act of viewing, the spectator (in this case, the characters in the novels) acquire certain social prototypes and procedures that may contradict reality and potentially alienate one from it. Thus, the narrative of the cinema and other modes of entertainment provide the social and historical models through its very presentation and through the reiterations and interpretations by the characters in the text. Narrations of pop culture are conventionally considered to be anything but complex, based on "infantile logic" (Bordwell, 159) and causality with the objective of encountering absolute truth. Bordwell explains:

> [They] present psychologically defined individuals who struggle to solve a clear-cut problem or to attain specific goals. In the course of this struggle, the characters enter into a conflict with ends with a decisive victory or defeat, a resolution of the problem and a clear achievement or nonachievement of the goals. The principal causal agency is thus the character, a discriminated individual endowed with a consistent batch of evident traits, qualities, and behaviors.... The star system has as one of its functions the creation of a rough character prototype for each star which is then adjusted to the particular needs of the role...usually the protagonist...and the chief object of audience identification (157).

The conventional result is the victory of absolute truth and a happy ending. The star is held up to be an idol and provides an opportunity for the reappearance of his or her persona in spectacle after spectacle. This offers the

observer the possibility of utter absorption into each presentation and the identification of such a star with extrinsic social norms and ideals. These images which the stars and pop culture represent, reflect the cultural reality of the time, and in Puig's case, criticizes and demythifies that very image. Puig explores cultural reality by exploiting the conventions on which it rests, namely pop culture. He has borrowed the entertainment world of Hollywood, using it as a mode of enjoyment and escape, and at the same time providing deceptive and false role models to the public.

As previously stated, the conventions of pop culture are found not only on the literal level but also on the figural level. Through their presentation, the products of mass communication shift from thematic to technical devices. Popular culture is mimetic, in other words, it is conveyed through dramatization of an unattainable fantasy world. In Puig's novels, though, mimesis is converted into a narrative voice. The movies, soap operas, tangos, folletín, and radio broadcasts become part of the fictional world of the novel, reiterating stories of the intra-textual world. Thus, the modes of pop culture represent the world, thoughts and speech of the characters in the text. Through the conversion from mimesis to diegesis, pop culture becomes distorted, alienating the literary convention from its extra-literary form. The gaps between popular culture and life blur the boundaries between the two, making it difficult to

distinguish where one leaves off and the other begins in the literary world.

Modes of popular culture are representations of cultural reality. In La traición de Rita Hayworth, Boquitas pintadas, El beso de la mujer araña, and Sangre de amor correspondido, pop culture is not only placed within the literary world, but it is also presented, inferred, and interpreted by characters in that world. One must also consider the literary world's source: the world of the author and reader, which accounts for deviations in the act of reading and interpretation. Moreover, the modes of pop culture serve as a narrative voice, calling into question any authoritative voice in the text, further blurring the distinction between what is literal and what is figural.

The modes of popular culture are generally presented by an omniscient and omnipresent narrator, an invisible observer such as the "camera eye." Yet, once a mode of popular culture becomes adopted by a character in the text, the form of entertainment no longer possesses those traits. Thus, the role of popular culture in the text becomes questionable.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the novels of Manuel Puig reflect the unique history and literary history of Latin America and Argentina. Puig has linked the undercurrents of Argentina's repressive society with the contemporary narrative techniques that catalogue his writing with his fellow

"Junior Boom" authors. I have proposed various critical presuppositions which underlie the acts of reading literature and its interpretation, and which provide the tools which will be employed in my analysis of La traición de Rita Hayworth, Boquitas pintadas, El beso de la mujer araña, and Sangre de amor correspondido.

An understanding of the themes of **entrapment** and **alienation**, which are key elements to reading Puig's novels must be gained. They exist on various levels and apply to both the textual characters as well as the reader. The fragmentary structure of the novels in question isolates the text from the characters, creating literal and figural gaps, which in turn isolate the reader from a consolidated text. Due to the deceptive nature of the texts, several readings and interpretations arise that evoke the metaphor of the palimpsest. The shifting authoritative voice combined with deceptive narrative devices open up the text or devices to the greatest possibility of interpretations.

The most prominent of these techniques is the use of **popular culture**. I will show how this mode of mass entertainment serves more than a means for enjoyment or escape for the characters. It also provides one narrative voice among many that speaks for them and leads the reader astray in the act of reading. Pop culture is converted into a literary convention, blurring its extra-literary function with the possible levels of its inter-textual role.

The novels that are not included in this study are: The

Buenos Aires Affair , Pubis angelical, Maldición eterna a quien lea estas páginas, and Cae la noche tropical. Although one can find the themes of alienation and entrapment in these novels, the themes are not inherent features of the texts. For example, The Buenos Aires Affair parodies the detective novel, depending on irony and omission. This novel, along with Pubis angelical, Maldición eterna a quien lea estas páginas and Cae la noche tropical are texts based upon straightforward narrative structures that do not display overtly the themes of entrapment and alienation. Rather, they all depend on plot, adventure and action instead of the narrative conventions underlined in this study. They do share one element in common with the texts studied here: the undercurrent of repression runs through each text, perhaps a constant mark left by Manuel Puig for history to contemplate.

NOTES

1. The term "Junior Boom," as used by Donald Shaw's Nuevanarrativa hispanoamericana (Madrid: Cátedra, 1985), refers to those Latin American authors born after 1930. Other critics, such as John Brushwood, David Foster, and Jean Franco refer to the same authors as the "third generation of the 'Boom'." "Junior Boom" implies a separate generation from its predecessor, yet it shows that it is a product of the "Boom." On the other hand, the label "third generation of the 'Boom'" suggests a mere continuation of the narrative techniques and ideas of the "Boom." Although this is true to a certain extent, the "Junior Boom" explores new avenues of technique and observation; therefore, the latter term is preferable.

2. Although La traición de Rita Hayworth spans from 1933 to 1948, the other novels focus on the years of the first Perón regime (1946-1955) and the post-Perón era, (concentrating on the forties and the fifties) and the social, political and economic realities which resulted from it. See Joseph Barager's Why Perón Came to Power: The Background to Peronismo in Argentina (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968). For a study on the influence of Eva Perón on Argentine society, also see Lucía Fischer-Pap's Eva: Theodora. Evita Perón: Empress Theodora Incarnated (Rockford, Ill.: LFP Publications, 1982).

3. For a precise explanation of Social Realism in an Argentine context, see David W. Foster, Social Realism in the Argentine Narrative (Chapel Hill: North Carolina Studies in the Romance Languages and Literatures, 1986).

4. My sources include: Giuseppe Bellini, Historia de la literatura hispanoamericana (Madrid: Castalia, 1986); John S. Brushwood, The Spanish American Novel: A Twentieth-Century Survey (Austin: Texas UP, 1975); and David W. Foster Alternate Voices in the Contemporary Latin American Narrative (Columbia: U of Missouri P, 1985).

5. Paul De Man, Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism (Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 1983), 160.

6. Los hijos del limo (Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1974), 23.

7. See M.H. Abrams, Glossary of Literary Terms, Fourth Edition (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1982). He credits Julia Kristeva with the invention of the term "intertextuality," which he defines as "the multiple ways in which any one literary text echoes, or is inescapably linked to, other texts, whether by open or covert citations and illusions, or by the assimilation of the features of an earlier text by a later text, or simply by participation in a common stock of literary codes and conventions" (200).

8. In Brushwood's analysis of Historia de una pasión, he emphasizes Mallea's pessimistic view of man entrapped within Argentine society: "The basis of much interpretation is Mallea's distinction between a 'visible Argentine' and an 'invisible Argentine.' This difference refers to superficial human relationships as contrasted with deep human concerns--the kind that make an individual feel ultimately inadequate with regard to his role in life. The visible Argentine is the veneer of the society--false but accepted values, forms, and prejudices; the invisible Argentine seeks the most basic human values, to know the meaning of struggle and of anguish.... [T]he meaning of pessimism comes through completely only if the reader understands that authentic life is a search rather than a discovery (125).

9. Bellini contends that "Es el caso de Mallea con sus novelas de indagación psicológica y de temática existencial. [Es una] influencia sobre las generaciones más jóvenes de autores como Kafka, Mann, Proust, Gide, Faulkner, Dos Passos, Hemingway" (524).

10. Bellini calls the crisis of the 1940s "el surgimiento de una atmósfera parricida, pero escencialmente se produjo una búsqueda afanosa, experimentalismo ilimitado y audaz, insatisfacción y negación de precedentes que con su peso modélico impiden el avdentimiento de nueva luz y más propia orientación" (524).

11. Otras inquisiciones (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1960), 142-143.

12. "Peronism in the Novels of Manuel Puig," The Historical Novel in Latin America: A Symposium, ed. Daniel Balderston (Gaithersburg, MD: Hispamérica, 1986), 188. Bacarisse provides a comparative analysis on the Perón years and how they are reflected within Puig's novels. She does not explore the Perón regime with great depth. However, the article does show the relationship of society and its context within literature.

13. Bacarisse explains that Argentina resented the United States for publishing the famous "Blue Book," yet Perón used this resentment to his advantage: "this indictment of Argentina's pro-Nazi activities undoubtedly helped Perón

in his election campaign just after the end of the Second World War" (190).

14. David W. Foster offers an analysis of the demythification of the Argentine novel of the 1970s in Alternate Voices in the Contemporary Latin American Narrative (Columbia: U of Missouri P, 1985), 60-106.

15. See David Lagmanovich, "La narrativa argentina de 1960 a 1970," Nueva narrativa hispanoamericana 2.1 (1972): 116. His article provides a brief overview of authors and their literary tendencies of Argentinian narrative throughout the decade.

16. The Act of Reading (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP), 1978.

17. Bernard Murchland, The Age of Alienation (New York: Random House, 1971), 29.

18. "Writing and Reading the Palimpsest: Donoso's El jardín de al lado," Symposium 41.3 (1987): 202.

19. Terry Eagleton, Literary Theory: An Introduction to Criticism (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1980), 178.

20. Stephanie Merrim, "Through the Film Darkly: Grade "B" Movies and Dreamwork in Tres tristes tigres and El beso de la mujer araña," Modern Language Studies 5.4 (1985): 300.

21. Popular culture has been evaluated in Puig's novels as a means of escape for the characters as well as a means of subjugation. See Stephanie Merrim's article that suggests a Freudian interpretation of the use of cinema and mass culture. The following articles offer an in depth study of the use of pop culture in Puig's novels: Lydia Hazera, "Cinematic Influences in the Works of Cabrera Infante, Puig, and Vargas Llosa," The New Orleans Review 12.3 (1985): 43-52; Naomi Lindstrom, "The Problem of Pop Culture in the Novels of Manuel Puig," The American Hispanist 4.30 (1978): 27-30; Francine Masiello, "Jail House Flicks: Projections by Manuel Puig," Symposium 32 (1978): 15-24; Phyllis Mitchell, "The Reel Against the Real: Cinema in the Novels of Guillermo Cabrera Infante and Manuel Puig," Latin American American Literary Review 11 (1977): 22-39; and Frances Wyers-Weber, "Manuel Puig at the Movies," Hispanic Review 49 (1981): 163-181.

22. The folletín style was used extensively in nineteenth-century literature. The work was presented in installments ending at a climactic moment, leaving the reader anxiously awaiting the next installment. For a more detailed study of this form within Boquitas pintadas, see Alicia Andreau, "El Folletín: De Galdós a Manuel Puig," Revista

LA TRAICION DE RITA HAYWORTH: DISJOINTED UNITY

La traición de Rita Hayworth (1968) sets the standard for Manuel Puig's following novels, revealing itself to be a puzzling text which, as Emir Rodríguez Monegal points out, "no sólo cuestiona la realidad que el novelista examina o transcribe sino que empieza por cuestionar su propia forma."[1] The success of La traición de Rita Hayworth can be attributed to its attractibility as a "pop" novel as well as its complex diversity on thematic, narrative and formal structural levels that evokes further study. At first glance, La traición de Rita Hayworth may seem like a mere tale of those caught up in the fantasy world of pop culture.[2] Yet, underneath that facade lies a potential of deceit and entrapment as the reader participates in the creation of La traición, and as he-she attempts to reveal the underpinnings of the text, the reader may actually contribute to his-her own delusion. La traición de Rita Hayworth takes place in Coronel Vallejos, a small, barren town south of Buenos Aires, where "la vie ist ailleurs."[3] The central focus seems to revolve around the Casals family during the years of 1933 to 1948.

Roberto Casals, an unsuccessful businessman, is married

to Mita, a hospital pharmacist who longs to move back to the life, family, and happiness she had abandoned in Buenos Aires. Their son, Luis (Toto) Casals is an inquisitive, naive boy whose growing years provide part of the structure of the novel. Friends and relatives wander in and out of the text, weaving disjointed stories that seem to hold together. They all share one common bond: a life doomed to mediocrity (Rodríguez Monegal, 361).[4] The only source of escape for the characters is by the absorption of mass communication and pop culture through the means of the cinema of the 1940s. La traición de Rita Hayworth relates the characters' individual accounts separately, which constitute an entire text. Yet, there seems to be a missing narrative voice that binds the chapters into a cohesive entity.

The reader plays a key role in the creation and direction of this novel by searching for its elusive links. One could maintain the level of a superficial reading which consists in the story of the stagnant existence of the Casals family and their acquaintances in the small town of Coronel Vallejos. On the other hand, it is possible to unmask narrative and thematic structures, conventions, and characterization that expose the underlying potential readings. La traición de Rita Hayworth is not what it

seems--a collective voice of dull existence represented by a cohesive writing. Indeed, at times the text seems to flow from chapter to chapter, linked by inter-textual acquaintances and extra-textual movies.[5] For example, Toto (whose "importance" is questionable), participates, is the focus, or is mentioned in every chapter.[6] Yet the relationship that links this central character to the other characters and narrative voices remains vague.

Each of the sixteen chapters reads like an isolated installment from the "folletín," a form of popular literature in Nineteenth Century Spain and Latin America.[7] No chapter overtly relates to the next. Even its chronology, which seems to systematically flow from 1933 to 1948, is deceptive. The very last chapter, dated 1933, reveals Berto's unsent letter to his brother, leading the text (and the reader) back to the chronological beginning.

The reader is posed with a dilemma that the novel may be a closed text which provides solutions, or one that poses more questions. The response would suggest the latter supposition. Pere Gimferrer notes:

> Estalla la escritura; se vuelve contra sí misma, indaga en su envés, se atomiza, se somete a crítica....Se ha desvanecido la ficción del escritor-hablante único, del texto unívoco....[E]l texto se bifurca, prolifera, se multiplica, se ramifica: para decirlo con la terminología al uso, "el texto produce texto.[8]

La traición de Rita Hayworth not only presents a story but also comments on the very act of its creation and interpretation. Through its self-reflection, the levels of possible readings multiply. The formal structure of the

novel, its narrative voice and its characters evoke the diversity of readings in La traición de Rita Hayworth, which lead to the physical, psychological, social and even textual alienation and entrapment of the characters. The constantly shifting narrative, thematic, structural planes weave entanglements that cross and twist, leading the reader in a multitude of directions at once that set the trap for his/her potential deception and alienation.

THE TWISTED PASSAGE OF TIME

The most basic of these potentials is the foundation and framework of the text. Puig presents the formal structure in a systematic order which consists of two symmetrical parts of eight chapters each. As noted before, each chapter is indicated by a specific year, beginning with 1933, extending to 1948, and returning to 1933 in chapter sixteen, that suggests a closed, circular text. However, the final chapter reconsiders the organization of the text and exposes the underlying readings evoked by Berto's letter to his brother, Jaime. Furthermore, it reflects the novel's framework based on the dichotomy of presence and absence of authorial control, narrative voice, character and action. The scaffolding of La traición de Rita Hayworth depends not just on what the text reveals through intra- and inter-chapter dialogue and relationships, but also it depends on what it represses. As the chapters progress, the readings shift from one of discovery to one of concealment. The novel exposes underlying texts while it covers,

establishing a pattern in the first chapter which presents the text in a seemingly erratic fashion. On the surface, chapter 1 is an everyday dialogue between a group of chattering women, but underneath, it reveals the inherent foundation of the novel of constant unexplained shifts and chaos that not only alienate the characters from each other and from a sense of reality, but also marginalize the reader through the lack of systematic pattern of events. This first chapter provides the structural basis for the novel, setting its pace, tone and style. Yet the novel's foundation is constructed on a shifting and deceitful ground, dependent on the juxtaposition of presence and absence of pertinent details. The discourse which takes place throughout the chapter revolves around characters both present and absent, with the emphasis on those who are not there. Furthermore, the characters who participate in the dialogue are interspersed and are spuriously deprived of identification. The reader learns the characters' names only through intermittent direct dialogue, making the identity of the speaker difficult to ascertain. The reader discovers that it is simpler to identify the characters through the subject of the discourse and their relationship to it. For example, Mita, who serves as the center of much of the conversation, is referred to as Clara's sister: "Escríbele a tu hermana, que está siempre deseando noticias" (10). The reader also discovers that Mita's mother is a participant, but only by the title of the chapter: "En casa de los padres de Mita, La

Plata 1933" (9). Clara's relationship is made clear as Mita's sister, and because Clara refers to her addressee as "Mamá," the reader must infer that she is mother to both Clara and Mita.

The reader is initiated immediately to the puzzle-like dialogue that accompanies their embroidery session. Although it appears to be mindless conversation to pass the time, the dialogue reveals how chapter one begins to "tejer el texto:"[9]

> ---El punto cruz hecho con hilo marrón sobre la tela de lino color crudo, por esto te quedó tan lindo el mantel.
>
> ---Me dio más trabajo este mantel que el juego de carpetas, que son ocho pares... si pagaran mejor las labores me convendría tomar una sirvienta con cama y dedicar más tiempo a labores, una vez hecha la clientela ¿no te parece?
>
> ---Las labores parece que no cansaran pero después de unas horas se siente la espalda que está un poco dolorida.
>
> ---Pero Mita quiere que le haga un cubrecama para la camita del nene, con colores vivos porque tiene poca luz en los dormitorios.... (9)

This social activity provides the reader with vital clues about the organizational and narrative structure. The discourse compares to the embroidered bedspread mentioned in the above dialogue, since both dialogue and bedspread consist of a variety of shades and designs.[10] Their bits and pieces are meant to come together to form a finished totality, yet neither the conversation or the bedspread ever come to fruition. Rather, they remain in fragments waiting to be pieced together like a puzzle and it is the reader's

responsibility to complete the task. Although it seems that the conversation serves no purpose, it establishes the dichotomy of presence and absence as well as the novel's alienating structure.

As stated previously, there is a complete lack of narrative direction. No blatant clues are provided to indicate any characteristics of the speakers or their relationship to the text. The names of Clara, Mamá, and Violeta are revealed through direct address, and as quickly as their identities are ascertained, other characters appear, this muddles the discourse even further. One of the topics of conversation converts into interlocutor.

Adela, who is pitied for working such long hours and spending a great portion of her salary for "anteojos de carey legítimo" (13), enters without warning or notice.

Once Adela is present, the dialogue shifts away from her and focuses on something or someone absent. The participants of the conversation are isolated from their own discourse, not only alienating them from their subjects, but also sending them into marginalized existence. Faithful to the text, the dialogue focuses on absence.[11] Very little information is provided about the characters participating in the conversation, making it difficult to follow the interconnecting dialogical threads.

The reader is deprived of any detail that could attach him emotionally to a character who actively contributes to the discourse. The reader knows that Mamá longs to have Mita

return to Buenos Aires to live, but no revealing information focuses upon Mamá. Instead, the conversation shifts away from the speaker. Clara, Mamá, and Papá (who appears suddenly on page 12), Adela, and Violeta remain faceless characters. On the other hand, the text reveals a deceptive focus of the chapter and the confused direction of the text: the isolated mediocre existence of Mita, Berto and Toto Casals who are geographically alienated from the family. As with the rest of the text, chapter one jumps from one subject to another, never staying on one topic for long. While it seems that the Casals family is the main concern, the chatter shifts to the chicken coop, emphasizing the lack of excitement or common goals in their lives. To pass the time, the dialogue is filled with free association and people become intermingled with banal chores, as Jonathan Tittler suggests, "Mita is just another topic of conversation, along with the embroidery, the movies and the dirty laundry" (Tittler, 83). No one seems to respond directly to the dialogue, instead each speaker seems to be alienated in the margins of his own "text," observing from the periphery of the dialogue, just as the interlocutors seem to do:

> ---A mí me parece injusto que se haya casado en ese pueblo en vez de ayudar a tu mamá después de tantos sacrificios para hacerla estudiar.
>
> ---Los anteojos nuevos de Adela son de carey legítimo.
>
> ---Perdóneme no lo ayudo a matar el pollo porque me impresiona, pero papá se lo va a agradecer con toda el alma.

---Mita tampoco quería mirar cuando yo mataba un pollo, pero después se lo comía todo.

---La que más aspaviento hacía era aquella compañera de Mita de la Facultad, la hija.(13)

Due to its incongruence, the reader cannot follow a logical dialogical pattern.

Characters who are both participants in the dialogue as well as referents in the conversation surreptitiously enter and exit the text, causing its fragmentation and constantly shifting its focus. Chapter one is presented as if the reader were watching a movie rather than reading a text.[12]

One must follow the camera-eye as it focuses on one character and then suddenly shifts to another; or more abruptly one must follow the spatial distortion as the scene switches without warning from the conversation in the house of Mita's parents to the dialogical exchange in the chicken coop. The camera-eye technique reinforces both the script style of presentation of chapter one and its evasive focus. One topic of conversation does seem to weave through the chapter: the plight of Mita, Berto and Toto Casals.

The details provided about the family stem from the periphery of the text. Mita and her family are created by insinuations and sparse details. Mita's image is painted with shadows, indistinguishable characteristics imbued with her marginal existence. She is described by what she does not possess. She lives in a dry town--Coronel Vallejos--where nothing flourishes nor does it fit her desires, as Clara points out: "Mita debe extrañar en Vallejos la vida

que hacía acá" (13). Instead, she works in a hospital pharmacy which, in Violeta's eyes, keeps her from making worthwhile her mother's sacrifices for helping her pay for her schooling. Mita's marriage to Berto took her away from Buenos Aires and is responsible for her absence (and her mother's suffering).

Mita is described with nostalgia through her "college relationship" with Sofía Cabalús, who of course, is also absent. The intent of the conversation is to persuade Sofía to write a letter to persuade Mita to return so that Sofía's father can provide her a job at the university. Ironically, the subject of letters that never get mailed becomes a key to La traición de Rita Hayworth. Mita's involvement in chapter one is based on absence, both textually and subtextually. Her character development is based on her repression within the text--as a subject and as we shall see, as an alienating example for other characters.

The same is true for Toto and Berto. Toto is referred to indirectly as "el nene," Mita's son, providing little attention that he will be a structural and thematic link to the rest of the text. As for Berto, he is treated as a secondary subject. He is introduced in passing, without a name and in reference to the movies: "El marido de Mita es idéntico a Carlos Palau, siempre lo dije" (11). The speakers' treatment of Berto demonstrate not only their resentment of him for stealing Mita far away to a barren existence, but it also indicates the characters' proclivity

to relate their existence to the fantasy world of mass culture. The only other detail provided about Berto is the condition of his stomach, a subject hardly relevant to his character development. Berto and his family reflect the image presented by the first chapter: isolated shadows entrapped in their dull existence.

Chapter one ends as it began, that is, reminiscing about life when Mita was present. It also establishes a structural pattern that falsely imitates circularity. Chapter one, like the following chapters, does not finish at its starting point, rather, it spirals around uncovering more possible texts as it is read. Thus, the first chapter accomplishes several purposes: first its establishes the tone, style, language, form, and structure; it introduces characters; distracts the reader by forcing him to search for the chapter's underpinnings; and thus deceives him. Jonathan Tittler points out that the remaining chapters affirm the alienating narrative structure of La traición de Rita Hayworth: dialogue (chapters I, II and IV), interior monologue (III, V-XI), and assorted forms of writing (XII-XVI) (81). The novel goes from direct discourse and truncated dialogue (the one-sided telephone conversation with Choli in chapter four) to "unedited" thoughts which are meant for the characters alone. The last third of the novel consists of written samples provided by the characters. Chapter thirteen is directed to an audience, appearing in the form of a school composition, ('Concurso

anual de composiciones literarias' "Tema libre": "La película que más me gustó," por José Casals, 2° año nacional, Div.B,) The following writing is meant for one person in chapter fourteen (anónimo dirigido al regente del internado del colegio "George Washington", and Carta de Berto, chapter sixteen), and others are personal reflections for their eyes only (chapter twelve, diario de Esther, and chapter fifteen, cuaderno de pensamientos de Herminia). The novel's narrative structure goes from direct communication to the isolated self-alienated text that communicates with no one.

On one level La traición de Rita Hayworth reveals more information about the characters through the progression of the text, however, by the end of chapter sixteen, the text seems to have presented few details about the characters' lives or their existence. Instead of presenting more direct clues about the characters early in the text, new ones are constantly introduced up to the penultimate chapter. Every chapter is a closed installment that tells its own tale and does not relate to what precedes or follows it.

For example, the novel begins with free-flowing dialogue and ends with a one-sided attempt at communication that is destroyed. The final presentation of Berto's letter in chapter sixteen seems to answer many questions posed by the text. The reader is presented with basic information as to why Jaime's son, Héctor, is living with the Casals family, the reasons for Berto's resentment and blame toward Jaime,

and Berto's agressive attitude. At the same time, the sudden shift back to 1933 places the integrity of the narrative structure into question.

Chapter sixteen is presented in epistolary form and as if the reader were witnessing Berto in the act of writing. Although the time frame is displaced, the attempt to communicate with his brother seems as if it were taking place in the text's present. Thus, the text splits into two directions.

On the one hand, chapter sixteen finalizes the text entitling the contents to no options and falsely closing its pages. Berto's life, business, and future is a failure because of his brother:

> Qué lástima haber dejado el colegio a los quince años, eso nunca comprendí como pudiste decidirlo. Si necesitabas ayuda en la fábrica te podrías haber conseguido cualquier muchacho de confianza ¿qué necesidad había de que me sacaras de la escuela, simplemente porque necesitabas alguien de confianza con vos? No, Jaime, eso nunca pude comprenderlo, cómo pudiste sacarme del colegio, antes de que pudiera hacerme de algún arma para luchar en la vida. Y después se te ocurrió vender la fábrica e irte a Buenos Aires. Y te fuiste. La cuestión es que el señor haga su gusto, y siempre has hecho lo que has querido (298-299).

Berto's letter explains his behavior and motives displayed in the first fifteen chapters and the text concludes with Berto's resigning himself to his mediocre destiny, which carries with it his family's future. However, by chronologically "misplacing" the final chapter that belongs to the year 1933, the textual structure becomes spiral, returning the story and the reader not to the beginning,

rather to chapter two. The family maid, Amparo, interrupts Berto while in the midst of composing the very same letter found in chapter sixteen (the same type of chronological displacement is seen in Boquitas pintadas as well). The novel now sets on a shifting and deceptive foundation, one dependent on an unsent letter that compromises both intertextual and extratextual relationships, that is, those bound in the novel and those established with the reader. New discourses emerge that were non-existent in the preceding chapters. The relationships between family members become more evident and yet more obscure. The letter may explain the situation of the Casals family, but it also posits more questions, particularly with those dealing with Berto's inablity to cope with his life and family. For example, Hector's presence is never fully explained. The reader is told that he came to live with the Casals family as a seven year-old youngster because of his mother's illness, but the reader is not informed to the extent that her recovery is feasible. Nor is Hector's future with the Casals family made clear. One must also speculate Berto's relationship with Héctor and the effect that the letter's destruction will have on their destinies. No questions are fully answered and the reader is left alienated from the text with more dilemmas to resolve. The exposure of the letter in chapter sixteen also presents the duplicity of the dialogue between the reader and characters. The relationships between reader, text and

characters formed in the prior chapters may be subsumed through the possibilities created by Berto's letter. The reader is faced with new points of departure for (re)interpreting the text. One new perspective, for example, can be seen through the title of the novel. One must question the meaning of the phrase, "La traición de Rita Hayworth" as well as its relationship to the text. Lucille Kerr notes that:

> ...the title has a crucial and also curious relation to its text. Certain issues are raised by any such heading because of its complex relation to its "body"--titles, as we know, appear to precede, float above, and follow their "bodies"; they help us to read, but are also themselves read through, their texts. Puig's title embodies a paradoxical movement that both aids and impedes our reading of the novel. The title sets up a reading, an interpretation, that it also undercuts. It is precisely through its dialectical, reflexive moves that this title offers a way of understanding some of the connections among the novel's fictional and textual figures, as well as the relations between is narrative structure and thematic material.[13]

In the case of La traición de Rita Hayworth, the referent is quite unclear, due to the grammatical function of the preposition "de" as a double genitive (Kerr, 28). Rita Hayworth, who appears as an extra-textual character in the reiterated movie, Sangre y arena, can be interpreted as both a subject (the betrayer) and an object (the betrayed), thus her relationship to the text and the reader is questionable.

In one way, Rita Hayworth mirrors the world of the reader, providing a false point of perspective, distancing and potentially alienating the reader from the novel's fictional world. Her prominence as a Hollywood actress (as well as other movie stars that become part of La traición de

Rita Hayworth) shifts the focus outside of the novel. Rita seems to have no direct involvement in the text. However, she serves as an intra-textual link and leit-motif through the chapters as she appears in Toto's movie reiterations and everyday speech. She is an escape mechanism for Toto (as well as for other characters), an alienating device from reality, and a deceptive basis for judgement. Toto is enchanted with her existence as a beautiful movie star, but it is his father's reaction to her that serves as a basis of Toto's feelings:

> ...y salíamos del cine caminando y papá decía que le gustaba Rita Hayworth más que ninguna artista, y a mí me empieza a gustar más que ninguna también, a papá le gusta cuando le hacía "toro, toro" a Tyrone Power, él arrodillado como un bobo y ella de ropa transparente que se veía el corpiño, y se le acercaba para jugar al toro, pero se reía de él, que al final lo deja. Y a veces pone cara de mala, es una artista linda pero que hace traiciones. (82)

Toto realizes that although his father likes Rita more than any other movie star, she is capable of betrayal. Her thematic presence links the chapters, and at the same time places the relationships between title and text, reader and text, reader and fiction, and characters at odds. Nothing is what it seems on the surface. Rita's thematic and structural significance is irresolvable, which leads us again to the end of the novel, where Berto reflects the image of Rita Hayworth, playing the role of both the betrayer and the betrayed.[14]

Both the title of the novel and the presentation of Berto's letter in the last chapter put the text at odds.

They both suggest an ordered text, but in reality offer a chaotic presentation. From a structural standpoint, Rita and Berto betray the novel, leading the reader "inside" and "outside" the text as well as back and forth through the chapters.

Berto's letter also compromises the novel's narrative structure through its form and its relationship to the rest of the text. The letter, although in written form, is presented as if it were direct discourse with Jaime, emulating the act of free-flowing speech. Berto has the opportunity to edit and revise his text, but he chooses to let his pen run away from him, apologizing for his irritable mood:

> Perdóname el largo de la carta, pero son las cuatro de la tarde y no tengo absolutamente nada que hacer,...perdoname que te hable de cosas tristes, pero es que hoy tengo unas ganas tan grandes de estirar los brazos y abrazarla fuerte a mamá. (295)

Instead of editing his letter, Berto opts to destroy his creation and the very act of communication.

This final act of the novel is based on denial and effacement. The letter is an attempt to communicate with someone who is absent in the text and who seems to refuse to reciprocate Berto's wish for dialogue: "La verdad es que no te perdono que no me hayas escrito durante tanto tiempo..." (292). The intention is perhaps more to vent Berto's anger than to reach his brother. He promises to destroy the letter, a threat which if carried out, would efface the text and render useless the entire act of communication. The

final moment of the novel reveals the act of textual betrayal. Berto's letter seems to be the missing link that structurally binds the text. Yet, the final sentence is one of definite rejection: "esta carta va al tacho de la basura" (299), undermining the scaffolding of the novel and denying the text of the very act of writing. In other words, the destruction of the letter endangers the structure on which the novel rests.

THE SHIFT OF NARRATIVE VOICE

The narrative form of La traición de Rita Hayworth also compromises the novel's stability. The reader cannot depend on the textual guidance from a particular author, narrator or discourse. Rather, the reader co-creates the text through the act of reading. Puig seems to have stepped out of the text, delegating the authorial and narrative voice to the characters. Rodríguez Monegal points out that "el autor era responsable sólo de la recopilación y del montaje. Ordenaba los textos..., los titulaba, también daba título a la novela" (391). The characters do not serve as mere fictive entities, rather they play the roles of creator, story-teller, and actor. Although the characters may be unaware of their actions, the reader is forced to interpret the text by the various textual clues given by these multi-faceted characters, and becomes aware of the process of the text's creation itself.

As author, each character "writes" his or her own text. The "reality" created stems from the character himself

along with the products of cinematic mass culture that he/she has drawn into his existence. Thus, each character mirrors his own text, unable to become an active part of another's creation. Rather, he is an end product of the combination of mass culture pulp and his imagination. This perhaps explains the textual isolation and entrapment as it reflects the marginalization of each character's existence and participation in the novel. One cannot actively or knowingly participate in a fiction written by another; there are no co-creators, instead several authors unwittingly offer separate entries to form La traición de Rita Hayworth.

The evidence of an outside authorial voice appears through the ordered compilation of the text. Beyond the role of "editor," authorial control seems to have disappeared, even in the chapters where one expects some authorial direction. For example, although chapters I, II, and IV are presented in dialogue form, no particular authorial voice controls or directs the interactions. In these chapters, the characters are intra-textually distanced from each other. Both chapter one and two display disparate conversations among characters that demonstrate little clarity unless the reader imagines himself watching the scene from the audience. For example, in chapter two the dialogue jumps back and forth between Amparo and Felisa, two lower class servants who are attempting to keep Toto quiet so Berto can finish writing a letter (revealed in chapter sixteen to be the unsent key correspondence to his brother,

Jaime). More importantly, the text reveals that Berto's articipation is more than passive; he, like the reader, learns his information which becomes his text, through eavesdropping. This second chapter revolves around Berto who not only listens to the servants' gossip about his failures but also who hears what Adela and Mita had said about him (information also withheld until chapter sixteen).

Chapter two is created through Berto's eyes, and it is as if the reader stood behind the curtains with him, listening to all that is said. Other techniques are used to obfuscate textual control. Choli's truncated "dialogue" with Mita in chapter four emulates the script pattern of the previous chapters, and it also lacks a necessary element: half of the dialogue. A common scene in the movies and theatre presents one person talking with a character on the other end of the telephone. Vital to the interpretation of the scene are the reactions, gestures and tone of the speaker on stage. However, without visual cues, this technique in literary form presents important obstacles. Although the reader is presented with Choli's half of the dialogue, it may be the absent participant, Mita, who possesses the virtual authorial control of the conversation. On the other hand, Choli represents the active narrative voice. Along with attempting to interpret the missing dialogue on literal, thematic and figurative levels, the reader must also ponder who is controlling the text. The reader himself may become entrapped, as he must, perhaps

unaware, take on the role of author, of creator. Through the act of inferring the missing dialogue, the reader must piece together a two-way conversation. In other words, the meaning, text(s) and context(s) all must be created by the reader, placing him on a privileged level, which alienates him from his creation.

Textual authority is questionable throughout the entire novel. The absence of a controlling authorial voice mirrors the problematics of narrative voice. There is a key element that differentiates the voices, yet like the lack of authorial control, narrative voice is deceptive. Although the author seems to be absent, there are many narrators in La traición de Rita Hayworth. Chapter one and two offer dialogues with no controlling narrative voice. Each speaker "narrates" his own contribution to the conversation. The remaining chapters (excluding chapter four) are presented in first person, either through interior monologue (chapters III, V-XI) or written form (chapters XII-XVI). Eleven different characters narrate these non-dialogue chapters with only Toto narrating more than once. There seems to be no continuous voice that binds the text. Until chapter fifteen, the text continually introduces new characters instead of developing the already present ones. The result is voices placed on voices that create a textual cacophony. But one element converts it into a discernible melody: the underlying discourses about the mediocre lives amongst the voices that link them.

Manuel Puig has pointed out that the voices of La traición de Rita Hayworth represent a collective unconscious that reflects the Argentine society in which he was raised (Christ, 23). In the text, the collectivity has been effaced. Indeed the voices share common themes and forms, but they also chop up the text and entrap the reader within the fragmentations of text while the reader attempts to sort them out. The characters are alienated from each other on a textual level, entrapped within the boundaries of their creations unless they become topics of other chapters rather than its participants. Unwittingly they feed off of each other and the circumstances of their micro-cosmos that imprison them. The characters and their discourse often focus on beyond the periphery of their chapters. Characters from the literary margins seep in from other dialogues or chapters as well as from the extra-literary fantasy world of the movies, thus deceiving the direction of the text. Soledad Bianchi states that:

> ...por semejanzas o disimilitudes, por paralelismo, por oposición, los discursos responden y se anticipan a los del otro. En un sentido más restringido, numerosas citas y palabras de extraños discuten con las de los narradores-personajes, que también se interrogan y reflexionan interiormente, dialogando con sus propios enunciados. (838-839)

In other words, the characters unknowingly entrap the others in their textual worlds, and at the same time offer prejudicial information to the reader with which he will use in the interpretation of the following chapters. No profound communication passes between characters. Instead,

the "narradores-personajes" offer their texts as if no one else were witnessing the creation of the text. The reader, in turn, benefits from these self-reflections without the knowledge of the characters (Bianchi, 850).[15] However, the forms of discourse which the characters employ act as a deceptive obstacle to the interpretation of the novel. Puig uses true speech, interior monologue and the act of writing in La traición de Rita Hayworth to convey his characters' actions and emotions. These techniques demonstrate the characters' capacity for free thinking and the ability to communicate. However, they seem to depend on extra-textual sources such as the movies, radio broadcasts, and novels that become infused into their personas in order to truly express their mundane existence and the reality in which they live.

CINEMATOGRAPHY AS A NARRATIVE DEVICE

Sources from outside the text include novels and elements drawn from or patterned on mass culture, such as radio sports-casts, and Hollywood movies from the 1940s. However, unlike more traditional forms of discourse, they pose problems for the reader. They play ambiguous roles that seem to both transcend and subvert the text at the same time, effacing the margins between the literary and extra-literary world.

Extra-literary sources serve as both techniques and themes in La traición de Rita Hayworth. The allusion to pop culture, especially Hollywood "Grade B" movies from the

1940s, permeates the novel creating the narrative voice and the language of many of the characters. Although this will be discussed in greater detail in the analysis of particular characters, it suffices to mention here that the use of film as a technique influences the perception and values of both characters as well as readers.

Pop culture not only serves as a narrative device, but also contributes to entrapment and alienation for both characters and reader. This form of communication is generally perceived as a spectacle and form of mass entertainment generated from the Western world, more specifically from Hollywood, that transcends the barrier of social classes, and in this case, crosses the borders that separate fantasy and reality. The movies, music and ideologies presented stem from what David Bordwell terms as "classical narration Hollywood films that are easily comprehensible... and are bound together by its unity of time, space, and action."[16] In La traición de Rita Hayworth the use of the Hollywood spectacle serves as an escape from reality for the novel's characters as well as a model of another reality to which they desire to transcend. Stars such as Ginger Rogers, Fred Astaire, Norma Shearer and Rita Hayworth possess the values that Toto (not to mention others) wishes to emulate. Through the movies, "they create a star persona which recurs from film to film,"[17] as Toto points out: "Norma Shearer es una artista que nunca es mala" (37). Thus, because of the movies that they have previously

seen, the spectators, in this case, Toto, carry certain exigencies in viewing a film. On the other hand, the movie reflects those demands by creating absolute truths, eventually shaping the spectators' perception of reality of both in and beyond the film. The films that appear in La traición de Rita Hayworth are all predictable, complete with happy or idealistic endings, that seem to balance the dull realism that the characters attempt to mask.

Although those who escape to the movies seem to lose themselves in the romantic ideals of the screen, they can distinguish between that and the reality which surrounds them. However, it does not deter them from trying to imitate the social prototypes created by their favorite stars. The gap between life and the existence that mass culture portrays willingly becomes blurred in the eyes of the beholder. The cultural, historical and political values portrayed by the glitter of mass culture is diffused into the spectators of the films. The viewers not only absorb its values and ideologies but its myths as well. Choli, for example, attempts to reflect the images of Hollywood no matter the cost. It does not seem to be important to her what exactly Hollywood is or to what extreme she must go in order to emulate its image, exposing her naivté during her conversation with Mita: "Yo me quise morir cuando vi lo lejos que estaba Estados Unidos de Inglaterra, yo creía que Londres era la parte más chic, pero más cerca" (61).

Choli's main concern is that she can emulate the values

portrayed in the movies: "Y así quedo bien, será que soy muy alta, tengo un tipo de norteamericana" (53). Choli has the advantage of reflecting the image of the Hollywood woman, especially since she sells its products:

> Con turbante. El turbante oscuro me hace muy rara, claro que ahora teniendo a mi disposición todos los cosméticos de inspectora de Hollywood Cosméticos sin pagar, con los montones de muestras gratis que llevo, - puedo probar qué es lo que me queda mejor. (52)

She believes that the product's name will convert her into the image of someone like Mecha Ortiz, the Argentine actress who had transcended her existence into a "Hollywood-type star." Choli's occupation transforms her into that "other reality," blurring the margins between her existence and the life in the movie screen:

> Con trajes de brin de sport, amplios, con un buen cinturón ajustado para lucir la cintura, y con el cabello bien cepillado hasta que parezca que la melena es de seda, que bailando en una boite tirás la cabeza para atrás y caería ese pelo en cascada provocativo sobre los hombros, y si hubiera una despedida en un aeropuerto el viento lo hace flotar y parecería emocionante. (53-54)

Choli's real life is not acceptable to her, she has dismissed it just as her imitated life was rejected by her late husband: "Si me arreglaba un poco él se me reía, como diciendo '¿para qué?'" (51). The result is a shell of a woman whose outer presence reflects her alienation from the rest of the world, or perhaps more exact, from her own true identity. She is entrapped in the image that the ideals of pop culture has helped her to create, within a marginalized existence that she cannot comprehend. Choli's final comment woman whose outer presence reflects her alienation from the

rest of the world, or perhpas more exact, from her own true identity. She is entrapped in the image that the ideals of pop culture has helped her to create, within a marginalized existence that she cannot comprehend. Choli's final comment to Mita confirms her imprisonment in a life that offers her little. The only solution is to escape and pretend to be someone else from that "other reality:"

> ¿De dónde sacan el coraje esas mujeres, para hacer esa vida? La ladronas de joyas, o las espías. Hasta las mismas contrabandistas. Pero hacen otra vida. Más interesante. Porque eso es lo principal, que la gente te vea pasar y diga "qué interesante es esa mujer...quién sabe quien es...." (68)

Not even Choli can answer that question. She, like the other characters in La traición de Rita Hayworth, view the products of mass communication as a means of buffering their daily existence in Argentina, incorporating spectacle with reality. On the othe hand, the use of mass communication that permeates the text poses dilemmas for the reader. Pop culture as a mode of entertainment serves as a means of escape and a form of communication and narration. Furthermore, these products of pop culture represent a reality in the literary world. However, one must wonder exactly what world(s) it reflects and at what level(s). The elements of mass communication that appear in La traición are extracted from the extra-literary world. Thus, the reader is placed in a precarious position to approach the novel through them. The products of Hollywood are narratized versions from the characters' memory, edited and revised according to their needs and desires. What appears

in the text is the contextual product of the characters' conscious and unconscious. Therefore, pop culture in the text becomes much more relevant than what appears on a primary surface.

The reader's position is also challenged from an reader's standpoint. María Salgado contends that:

> ...es que el lector se deje envolver en una novela que le fuerza a confrontar un mundo de una mediocridad abrumadora. Examinada de cerca, sin embargo, la mediocridad revela estar estrechamente ligada al cine, y es ésta precisamente la razón de que el lector se siente atrapado, ya que responde intuitivamente a la red de mitos y clichés provenientes del cine que reconoce porque también son parte de su marco de referencia cotidiano.[18]

The social prototypes, ideologies, values, and myths that the reader has absorbed from pop culture in the extra-literary world influences the reading and interpretation of the use of pop culture in literary levels. Moreover, the elements drawn from pop culture are so imbued in the essence of both text and character that the margins between literal, figural, thematic, and technical levels have become practically indistinguishable. The reader is offered many footprints to follow from the text, and from his/her extra-textual "library," thus the potential for many readings abound in La traición de Rita Hayworth.

The possibilities of several levels of discourse is no more evident than through the characters who wander in and out of the constantly shifting text (a dependent characteristic of Sangre de amor correspondido as well).

The dichotomy of presence and absence is evident beyond the physical realm. The characters contribute to alienation and entrapment on narrative and linguistic levels as well, not so much through what they reveal, but what they repress in the text. Their actions, stagnant attitudes and fragmentarily presented language borrowed from pop culture lead the reader down several paths. Moreover, their development and participation in the novel establishes its distorted tone and direction.

Toto Casals, Berto and Mita's young effeminate son, seems to be the nexus around which the text revolves. However, that point of conjecture is somewhat questionable. Certainly his name is mentioned by every character that appears, and Toto is a topic of conversation more often than not, but on the other hand, Toto represents a vehicle for outward discourse between the other characters that contributes to the interpretation of the text. Their presence is entrapped within the development of Toto's image. The characters, though, do not have the opportunity to evolve, alienated from the texts that they have helped to create. The nuances of Toto Casals fill the pages of La traición de Rita Hayworth, but his presence is deceptive since he never seems to develop as a character.

Toto binds the text together, yet as a major character, he is quite underdeveloped. Although he is introduced in his infancy by mere mention in chapters one and two, little information is provided about him--his full name, José L.

Casals, does not even appear until chapter thirteen under the title of his high school composition. Toto appears alone as a six year-old child in chapter three through the form of interior monologue. This private form of communication suggests that a profound abundance of personal insight might be offered. However, Toto's first appearance reads like an edited movie script, jumping from one scene to another, providing the pattern for his remaining appearances. Little attention is dedicated to Toto himself. Rather, the focus constantly shifts outward to reflect his innermost anxieties: the fear of abandonment and living in the margins of the nuclear family and social circles.

Toto's identification is as elusive as the text(s) into which he is diffused. Even the characters in the novel recognize his potential to be composed of several layers:

> ...y parece que basta mirarlo un poco que se le transparenta como era más chico, como una cebollita, se le quita una hoja y adentro hay otra cebolla igual, pero más chiquita y más blanca, el Toto de los ocho años....(151-152)

He is made up by several texts authored, narrated and viewed by both Toto as well as the characters who surround him, either directly or from the margins of the text. Thus the reader receives a broad description of Toto about which this character is unaware. On the other hand, Toto is a fragmented character who matches the descriptions of him. The details provided by other characters shape Toto physically and emotionally in a rather vague manner. For example, Choli reveals that "no puede seguir tan lindo, va a

cumplir ocho años, y lo encuentro divino" (49). Many impertinent details about Toto are offered, such as his propensity for gossip and being a tattletale, neither of which contribute profound information to his development in the text. As insignificant as those details seem to be, they form, shape, and "le da su real fisonomía: trazos, rasgos, matices, luces varias."[19]

Through the comments that the other characters unconsciously offer to the reader, Toto mirrors their mediocre existence and desires to escape alienation. The outward texts that they have provided send them deeper into the margins and into intertextual isolation. The characters, including Toto, are unable to speak for themselves, hence their discourse consists of prejudicial information about others.

Most often it is Toto who plays the role of spectator, narrator, author and spokesperson. He is the voice for others, such as Paquita who reveals her thoughts through a reiterated dialogue with Toto. Her entire interior monologue takes place while waiting in line for confession. Yet, her thoughts seem to have been invaded by Toto's essence. Paquita lashes out at him and at the same time reveals her innermost problems to the reader:

> ¿no oíste si tu papá y tu mamá hablaban de la Celia? "alguien de mi colegio se escapó a la casa en el recreo otra vez" no les digas a tu papá y tu mamá que te pregunté de la Celia "a los padres no hay que ocultarles nada"...él cree que sabe todos mis secretos.... (178)

The characters share their individual worlds, and Toto has

unwittingly aided the others in every single chapter to create and narrate isolated texts of which he constantly jumps in and out. He not only represents and mirrors the other characters, but also reflects his true image through the eyes of the others (and vice versa).

Pamela Bacarisse notes that Toto embodies everyone else's problems and anxieties.[20] He is the end product of alienated images and thoughts, most influenced by the repression and abandonment of his parents, Berto and Mita. They are directly responsible for his escape into the fantasy of the movies and in an indirect way, they form Toto's contribution to the text.

Toto's relationship with his parents is made clear from the beginning, where his silence surfaces as he becomes the topic of conversation. Chapter two clearly reveals that Toto is the apple of his mother's eye and a nuisance to his father, Berto, as he yells at Amparo to keep him quiet: "¡Amparo! ¡Hace callar a ese chico que estoy trabajando!" (23). Yet, he makes sure that Toto dressed neatly to meet Mita at the hospital pharmacy where she works. When Toto does appear in chapter three, his relationship with his parents is already established.

Speaking for the first time on his own behalf, Toto's interior monologue is interspersed with free association that jumps from one subject to another, mixing fantasy with reality. In one sentence alone, he changes the subject three times, making it difficult to both understand his

thoughts as well as distinguish reality from escape:

> Tío Perico, siempre en el bar con los del campo, después de la feria de los novillos van a jugar al truco, no van nunca al cine y las plantas del fondo del mar es una lástima que se coman a los pescaditos lindos de todos colores, se tendrían que comer a los pescados malos viejos con cara de pulpos y de tiburones pero en los cartoncitos mamá dice que la cinta que más lujosa va a quedar es El gran Ziegfeld que por fin van a dar - el jueves (44).

The sole manner of knowing Toto is through his language, one that is alienated, jumbled and borrowed from both what he has absorbed from others and the extra-literary world.[21]

The interior monologue of chapter three demonstrates Toto's inability to cope with the real world. He is left alone to entertain himself while Berto "snatches away" Mita for the daily siesta, lest he be punished by his threatening father: "nunca te he pegado pero el día que te ponga la mano encima te deshago" (37). Thus, Toto must pass the time in silence, stifled by his repressive father and from the fear of abandonment of his mother. He is closed off both temporally and spacially from the maternal figure with whom he identifies. Toto's daily alienation forces him to turn to free association which paints his reality by sheltering it and replacing it with a more acceptable one. His private recourse allows him to escape the boundaries of entrapment imposed by his own father.

In Toto's first escape into fantasy, the language, values and images reflect those of a six year-old boy. Fairy tales and movie plots become infused with everday reality. As the fantasies appear in the written text, they have gone

through the restructuring process to solve the problems and anxieties that flow through Toto's mind and to invent a happy ending to make the escape into fantasy worthwhile. His edited version includes what Bacarisse states as typical for an immature individual:

> He may actually change what he has seen so that he himself can become part of it, a kind of "secondary revision"; or he will apply its circumstances to a fantasized version of his own life, with not only himself but characters from his everyday existence as protagonists. (18)

The result is a pastiche that includes members from the realistic plane, such as Mita; friendly figures from his imagination--"pajaritos, chiquitos, Shirley Temple and Ginger Rogers;" and those that threaten to stifle him--"un gitano malo, un gato rabioso, plantas carnívoras." Whereas the distinction between reality and fantasy may be blurred, the relationship between the two is identifiable.

Immediately preceding Toto's fantasy, his mind wanders to the discourse that justifies his escape. He must fill up the time quietly in order to avoid his father's ire: "¿Qué dibujo hago hasta las 3? El aburrimiento más grande es la siesta y si pasa un avión papá se despierta, los gritos, mamá se aprovecha y se levanta" (69). Toto also reveals that Mita stimulates his fantasy world, both through the "cartoncitos" that they make together to pass the time, and by the seeds of inspiration that she plants into his imagination: "voy a pensar en la cinta que más me gustó porque mamá me dijo que pensara en una cinta para que no me aburriera" (37).

Toto's imagination sprouts by using movie fantasy to link the fictional and historical plane, mixing Mita and "la Ginger" in savior-type roles, while posing Berto and the bad gypsy as threatening figures. Toto transcends reality by floating above the clouds with Ginger, creating his own happy ending while overcoming adversity in both the realistic and fictional worlds. The problematics of the constantly shifting monologue emphasizes the evasiveness of the parameters between fictional reality and fiction within fiction. Their gaps cannot be distinguished, nor can Toto face them.

As Toto matures, so do his fantasies. Yet, it would seem that he would accept or even acknowledge the gulf between reality and fiction. On the contrary, the gap between the two is made evident, along with Toto's dependence on escape into his own fictional world. The subject matter does not change. As in chapter three, both chapters five and thirteen deal with romance, revenge, and salvation with Toto playing definitive roles. In chapter three, he transcends reality and is saved in the fictional world along with Ginger Rogers. In chapter five, Toto incorporates two conflictive situations from his real world into his fictive one.

Toto bases his fantasies on models that he draws during the siesta hour which stem from the movies. He is so dependent on them that he cannot identify with the real and fictive world without his portrayals. The act of creation

is hindered by the artistic influence of the products of popular culture. Toto must have a model from which to draw: "Sin modelo no sé dibujar" (68). What he sketches reflects his dream world and vice-versa: movie scenes that take him to another world, neatly incorporating people and events from his everyday existence. Chapter five demonstrates Toto's complete dependence on the cinema. His drawings become more like real life as they reflect Toto's fantasy world. From his real world Toto takes Alicita, the girl for whom he holds his affection along with her ideal uncle and incoporates them into a fantasy which originates from his drawings. Toto draws a life-like picture of Alicita's uncle that resembles his likeness. His drawings represent real life, which means for Toto, one that imitates the movies. Once he has established the scene, Toto jumps into the fantasy. He becomes so involved in his "other existence" that he verbally slips:

> Y el tío un día la besa en la boca y le dice que la quiere y yo desde la cocina del hotel le tiro una moneda al del organito que pasa por la calle para que toque una pieza y Luisa Rainer se levanta poco a poco y se da cuenta que se está curando y salen a bailar. (77)

At this point Toto plays character in the text, narrator of the text, and editor and character in fantasy. Thus, he has not only authored two texts but has symbolically linked them through the movies as well, truly affirming himself as a cinematic motif.

Other fantasies and situations seep into Toto's text. After his visions of having Alicita's uncle as a surrogate

father, he escapes from the thought that his true father "hace traiciones" like Rita Hayworth, by delving into the cabin/Gran Ziegfield fantasy, which includes his male idol from the realistic realm, Raúl García. Toto imagines himself as the helpless weak female type, hoping to be rescued, not from the dream world, rather from evil forces. Ironically, his fantasy switches later, placing Raúl in the role of the avenged instead of a savior.

Toto cannot cope with the secret witnessing of Paquita's deflowering by Raúl in the seat of a truck. Toto's fantasy both effectively deals with the problem and narrates it to the reader. Paquita and Raúl will meet their demise because they are sinners, or perhaps to be more exact, because Toto had no choice in observing their sinful act.

The act of witnessing takes hold of Toto again in the chapter as he sees Alicita with another boy, Luis Castro, at her birthday party. After Luis kicks Toto, the latter chooses not to look his attacker in the eye, but to flee like Errol Flynn on an imaginary bell tower rope, unable to contend with his marginal presence at the party. He conveniently rids himself of Luis Castro by having him become eaten by a ficticious crocodile that appeared earlier in the chapter. Once he has fled the scene, Toto has no recourse but to confront reality. However, he finds that he is unable to face his father within the repressive confines of his home. Toto fears that his father might

think he is a coward if he were to see his face red from crying.[22]

Thus he hides behind the door and flees into his dream world, leading the reader back to the birthday fantasy of the chapter. He imagines the demise of his rival, Luis Castro, and his accomplishment of winning Alicita through deception, closing the chapter with the final desire of transcending into the body of Alicita's uncle:

> después va a correr a darle un beso al tío con la boca de perfume de haber besado tantos besos al tío, y yo en mis adentros me voy a reír, pero despacito, porque Alicita, ella que se cree tan viva, no se va a dar cuenta que me está besando a mí. (96)

The level of deceit reaches beyond Alicita. Toto, of course, has tricked himself into believing that he may benefit from both worlds. The reader, on the other hand, must sort out the shifting fictional planes.

Although a number of years have transpired between Toto's monologue of 1942 and his composition, "La película que más me gustó" of chapter thirteen, he does not seem to have matured greatly.[23] He is still unable to communicate with his schoolmates and longs to be with his mother in Coronel Vallejos. Toto's language does reflect that of teen-age years, and his level of intelligence is notable. Toto reads a book a day while at boarding school in Buenos Aires, not necessarily out of interest, rather as a way to make time (reality) fly by faster. The gulf between the fantasy world and the real world has become more blurred. Toto has made an important distinction in his first two

monologues that changes in his written composition. Actual movie stars appear in his fantasies from chapters three and five. These stars are drawn from his extra-literary world; Shirley Temple, Ginger Rogers, Rita Hayworth, and Errol Flynn, among others, seem to link Toto and the reader with the fictional plane. However, the image may be deceptive.

Once again, the fictional plane is constantly shifting. It is ironic that Toto is bound to a fictional plane through extra-literary resources, those who are known for their fictional protrayals. Toto not only imitates but also becomes part of the fictional world that he is narrating.

The characters from both the literary and non-literary world are also caught up in his shifting perceptions of fantasy and reality. Toto presents the movie stars from a distorted plane: one of his real life. He does not refer to the characters' names that the Hollywood stars assume in their movies, rather they are presented as if they appear outside their own cinematic "texts." Toto processes his fantasies by sieving them through a distorted reality, one in which Toto can play a role without losing touch with his real world. Furthermore, Toto verifies that it is the myth that the stars create to which he is attached, not the movies themselves.

In chapter thirteen Toto breaks the pattern by reiterating the movie, El gran vals, without including the names of the movie stars. Toto writes his composition as if it were an actual movie instead of an account of one, with

himself as one of the characters. Toto does not refer to Luisa Rainer by name, who was the star of his previous fantasy and the movie, El gran vals. Rather, Toto tells the story without referring to her or the movie title.

The reader is immediately placed inside the movie script and the action; he is introduced to the characters without knowing which Hollywood actors are representing them. Instead, Toto relates the romantic tale between Johann Strauss, a composer down on his luck, and Carla Donner, the singer who saves him from his misery. Unlike his other fantasies, reality bursts the bubble of a possible happy ending. Carla is chained to an army officer,

Hagenbruhl, who happens to be Johann's political idol. After he punches drunken Johann in the caberet where Carla is performing, Carla saves Johann and they ride away in a carriage into a dream-like utopia. At this point Toto transcends into Johann's body, able to read his thoughts: "Se me ocurre que hay algo que me escapa al entendimiento, algún secreto..." (252). Toto can also narrate Carla's dream which becomes text by passing through several planes: dream in the movies in Toto's conscience. Thus, what appears as (con)text is the result of the infusion of other smaller, edited texts that stem from the movies as well as other characters.

However, by the infusion of reality, Carla is confronted by Johann's wife, Poldi, and is forced to accept Carla and Johann's idealistic existence. Toto must bow out

of the movie, one that he imagines in shadeless white: "El milagro de amor terminó, Johann ha vuelto a ser Johann" (260). Toto, like his characters in the movies, fades into the sunset, formally retiring from the text. His presence is imbued into the remaining chapters through the eyes of the other characters who contribute judgemental details about him that offer the reader tainted information. Ironically, by the end of the novel Toto's character is far from complete. Beside his small, effeminate stature, high intelligence, and his penchant for escape into fantasy, little else is known about Toto, that is, nothing substantial for a novel's protagonist. He and the other characters are also left in textual limbo, shoved into the margins of their creations. Jonathan Tittler emphasizes the lack of textual goals or progression:

> No one dies; no one triumphs. At the chronological end of the novel, in fact, nothing of consequence is resolved. No indication is given as to what the future of the characters will be like. (98)

Hence, Toto is left in the margins of the text and his mind, entrapped by his creations and the created text that the other characters have contributed to him. Perhaps the greatest enlightenment about Toto's character development stems from his parents, Berto and Mita.

Berto plays the roles of the alienated and the alienator from a thematic standpoint as well as from a formal structure. His presence influences and drives a wedge between his family (two focal characters) -- Mita and Toto. Both are imprisoned by Berto's oppressive and

threatening behavior that keeps them alienated from the rest of the characters. Mita is abandoned in a barren town and isolated from her reality in Buenos Aires, without family, friends or the opportunity to pursue her career potential.

Toto is held to Berto's images of male identity, even if it costs enrolling him into the Baby Soccer league. Berto also deems it necessary to send Toto away to Buenos Aires to school so that he will fit the "proper image." Berto has alienated and at the same time entrapped his family. He has pushed them aside and away from Mita's family, isolating them in a sterile environment in which they cannot flourish. Thus, both Mita and Toto find consolation in attending movies and fantasizing about them afterward, an activity to which Berto cannot relate. There is a glimmer of hope when he views Rita Hayworth in Sangre y Arena with Mita and Toto, but that quickly fades as soon as he meets his fellow workers in the café near the theater afterward. Once he leaves with them to listen to the soccer match, Berto delineates his inclinations to dwell in reality rather than to "lose himself" by escaping from his grim existence. While alienating his family and their activities, Berto also alienates himself (along with his family) from the rest of Coronel Vallejos. As discussed earlier in the chapter, Berto balks at the opportunity to reveal his inner self and to justify his actions that take place in the novel. Instead, he wields his "machista" behavior to attempt to keep his world in his domain, which

drives everyone away. His failure to communicate entraps him in the periphery of the text, and he takes with him Mita and Toto.

By identifying with Rita Hayworth, Berto confirms his alienation from his family, especially for Toto. He had hoped that his father would be able to bury himself in Toto's world and understand his illusions and idol worship.

Instead, Berto relates to the star that deceives, shattering Toto's imaginary escape world:

> Rita Hayworth es bella pero cruel, su imagen física no corresponde a su imagen moral, lo que quiere decir que el universo fílmico pierde su equilibrio, su perfección, su previsibilidad. El mundo imaginario traiciona a la ilusión del espectador. La lectura confiada de Toto parece experimentar un choque profundo.[24]

Although Toto does not lose his illusions, he does forfeit the acceptance of his father.

Berto serves as an alienator of the text as well in an attempt to control it. He permeates the novel, either by direct reference or by influence. No chapter is dominated by him, although the final chapter suggests such a theory. Chapter sixteen is created by Berto, however it is destroyed before it is truly "read," once again affirming his inability to communicate and control. The resolution of the novel is left in his hands, which he effaces. Berto has unknowingly relinquished the text to the reader, one that he has both opened up and closed off simultaneously. Mita is perhaps the greatest inspiration for Toto, yet she is

probably the most elusive character of the novel. Her development is built on absence and repression. Mita is always elsewhere, yet she seems to frame the text and link other characters. Mita, or more specifically her isolation, dominates chapter one and recurs in the dialogue with Choli in chapter four. The reader is offered many clues of her alienation through her relationship with Berto as well, who keeps her isolated from her loved ones. Mita concludes the first half of the novel through her monologue that, like the other chapters, entraps her in the margins of the text and exposes her mundane world and self-deception.

Mita seems to live in a memory, one based on remorse for her baby's sudden death. She refers to the account in her monologue as if it had happened yesterday, as if time had not transpired. In the same breath, Mita refers to pregnancy, confusing the past with the present. It is covertly revealed that she is pregnant again. Mita's text does not only jumble time, but, like Toto, mixes fantasy and reality as well, deceiving both herself and the reader. The subject of "baby" links past with her present condition, instilling fear which leads her into tying her demise to cinematic escape. Her deceased baby was perfect, like one that "alquimistas locos" (139) were trying to create. Yet, she punishes Toto for emulating her way of dealing with reality. Mita has created a vicious circle; she provides a fantasy model to imitate, encouraging Toto's dependence on the movies by drawing picture cards of them. Then she takes

the models she helps to create and throws them down the sewer. Through her thoughts and actions, Mita represses or destroys the texts (mental or drawn images) that she has contributed.

Every avenue of escape leads to deception, be it the movies or the Church. Both have entrapped her: "lo más triste es que los nenes no bautizados no van al cielo, van al limbo..." (149). God has deceived her. Mita is able to change the ending of the movie Romeo and Juliet in order to fit her needs. She sees it fitting that God do the same: "¿y por qué Dios no cambia de idea y hace salir todo bien? (153). In other words, Mita who is aware of her own existence as an author, wants to assure that the editor of the "Grand Text" exercise the same subjective control. She does face the truth, however, realizing that she cannot exercise textual control over reality and that escape is really impossible, even in death: "ese panteón es una celda" (148). Mita, like her baby, will exist forever in the periphery, alienated from the existence which she desired.

Ironically, the majority of the characters are spiritually or emotionally linked to Mita and they admire her in some way. They have not enjoyed the privilege of knowing Mita's innermost thoughts which have been offered to the reader. Thus, these characters do not have the advantage of knowing her inner self or becoming deceived by it. Instead, they see her as a glimmer of hope amidst a dull existence. Those closest to her are, of course, the

most deceived.

Héctor and Teté (Mita's niece and nephew who stay with the Casals family), Delia (a forlorn maid who seeks advice from Mita at the pharmacy), and Paquita (Toto's friend), all see Mita as a type of savior with whom to identify or as someone who has the solutions to their problems. Mita's stifled presence contributes to their distorted view of her and to their own self-deception as well, serving as a reflection of deluded expecations of life. Héctor perhaps best mirrors Mita's false image. He sees her as a maternal figure, yet his relationship with her is obtuse. Héctor is introduced to the reader in the same fashion as Mita--as a vague topic of conversation. Toto's recollection of a schoolmate's question in chapter three covertly reveals Héctor's presence in the Casals household: "El chico de enfrente '¿el Héctor es tu hermano?'" (37).

Yet, Toto does not answer the question until two pages later, while buried amongst his fantasies:

> El Héctor no es mi hermano, mamá dice que el Héctor es primo pero la madre está enferma y el Héctor vive en casa pero no juega conmigo y los cartoncitos. (39)

Héctor's character development depends on hazy commentary from those around him, and much of the necessary information to understand Héctor is withheld. For example, as David Southard points out, "the exact difference in age appears only in chapter twelve, where a diary comments that Héctor 'tiene diecinueve años' and that Toto 'tiene catorce años'". The reader must accumulate data from here and there, roaming

through the text until the last chapter, where Berto's letter reveals the reason for Héctor's presence.

Other characters who appear without warning, yet bear weight in the process of entrapment and alienation. They also provide insight to Héctor's behavior. In chapter seven, Delia reveals Héctor's active sexuality that supposedly lures the young girls to him. It is not until his monologue in chapter nine that the reader is aware of his relationship to the characters and the text. His attempts at sexual escapades and gruff language do not mask his alienation and loneliness nor does it compensate for the absence of his parents. Héctor cannot accept his presence amongst the Casals family, especially with Mita, because he is unsure of his relationsip with her: "Mita no es como una tía, es más que una tía y no me quiere cagar, ¿ella me quiere más que una tía?" (162).

On the other hand, Héctor feels that Mita does act on his behalf, promising to write to his father for permission to remain with the Casals family and go to school to be a mechanic. Yet, as in the case of Berto's letter to Jaime, Héctor's father, Mita never sends her letter to him either. Instead, she sends Héctor to boarding school in Buenos Aires, just like Toto, exercising control over him. Mita seems to depend on Héctor as well, doling her displaced maternal instincts on him after her baby's death. Héctor not only fills the void of her infant, but also provides for a "macho" role model. Héctor, who is masculine, strong and

extroverted contrasts with Toto's small, introverted and effeminate presence. However, a strong relationship is never established between Héctor and Mita, nor with anyone else. Instead, Héctor fades into fantasy, pretending to broadcast his own stardom as a soccer player:

> ...de centrojá le paso la pelota al win, el win en violenta jugada al otro win que se la pasa al centrojá y ¡gol! ¡gol, señores! ¡gol de centrojá...! (162)

Héctor's development through his monologue and reactions from others in the text reflect the demise of the remaining characters: self-deception and entrapment.

Another cousin who stays with the Casals family also falls into the same trap. Teté suddenly appears without explanation. The textual cues that are given lead the reader to assume that she and Héctor might be brother and sister. Both are Toto's cousins and each has a gravely ill mother. It is not revealed until after the accumulation of several clues that clarifies that Teté and Héctor have different mothers. Teté's presence is questionable. She disappears in the margins of the text and from other people's lives almost as quickly as she arrives. Unlike Héctor, she lacks a bond with the family or reader. The focus of her monologue seems to reach outward, explaining the details of other characters, especially Mita. Teté uses Mita as a justification to cling to religion, blaming Mita for Jesus's suffering because she does not attend mass. Tete's absorption in the Church attempts to mask her obsession with the fear of suffocating to death like her

tubercular aunt. For Teté, her escape is blaming herself for everyone's suffering because of her sins. Thus, the logical source for deception is religion.

Mita represents both temptation and redemption in Teté's eyes. Attempting to evoke a sense of spirituality, Teté turns to Mita and asks her for an orange, which she had resolved not to give her in order to resist temptation. In an quasi-erotic description, Mita is both the source of her pleasurable sin as well as her savior:

> sí, una naranja, Mita, sí, quiero una naranja de la planta, que Mita vaya y me arranque la naranja de la planta, sí, sí..., ésta me gusta, la chupo, hacele un agujerito y la chupo, la chupo.... (103)
>
> ...Mita es buena, fue a arrancar una naranja de la planta para que no me ahogue.... (115)

Teté seems to inspire sympathy from the reader until she covertly reveals that she is not in need of it. Instead, she is left to wallow in self-delusion.

Paquita, Toto's friend who is seduced by Raúl, also turns to self-deception through a different source: the literary world. In her case, she uses the church as a cover. Paquita's interior monologue transpires as she waits in line for confession, convinced through readings of the Bible that she must have sins to confess. Paquita's stream of consciousness reveals her secret temptation of a sin that she would like to commit--to act out an erotic interpretation of Jorge Isaac's novel, <u>María</u>, in her teacher's hotel room. She apparently went to his room with the book and forgot to take it back home. For Paquita the

literary world represented by María not only conjures up fantastic images, but also becomes the object of desire:

> cada página le leo y la toco, si el instructor me dice que la leyó, toco cada página, cada página la rozo apenas con las yemas de los cinco dedos...me devuelve el libro hecho un espejo: el instructor se leyó cada palabra de María y ninguna me voy a dejar de releer yo. (185)

Sharon Magnarelli shows that: "the book becomes a mirror image of the beloved, and the desire for the beloved is substitued by desire for the reflection, the book, the beloved converted into discourse and frozen."[25] Thus, the object of interpretation focuses on María.

Isaac's novel obviously represents a point of departure from the extra-literary world for the reader. Thus, Paquita's rewriting of her literary world must at some point conflict or distort the interpretation of the discourses as it appears in her stream of consciousness. Paquita's chapter well demonstrates the opportunity to uncover the palimpsestic potential where the overt and covert literary cues are twisted to meet the author's needs (in this case, Paquita's) in order to cope with reality.

Furthermore, Paquita uses María as a way to link herself with Mita, who also uses the same romantic novel to escape from reality. In Paquita's eyes, Mita is worthy of listening to the confessions of her sins of the flesh--both those with her teacher (which stem from her conscious) and those committed with Raúl. Paquita's link with Mita serves as a textual anchor, placing Paquita's chapter as part of a related whole. She is the only minor character that is

somewhat developed before appearing in her own chapter. Four other minor characters appear without any introduction that seem to subvert the text. Cobito, Delia, Esther and Herminia all provide chapters late in the novel (chapters eleven, twelve, fourteen, and fifteen respectively), either through monologue or through written text that break away from the rest of the novel. Although Cobito and Esther attend school with Toto, their contributions to the novel do not overtly provide details about him. Instead, both characters focus inward.

Esther's diary is ridden with guilt for hoping to maintain the scholarship that the Peronist government has so graciously bestown on her.[26] She jumps in and out of her text, shifting from the "yo" form to addressing herself in the second and third person. She even includes an implied reader, imploring him to follow her commands, such as "Empecemos" (234). Esther maintains a distance from her addressees by threatening anyone who might expose her inner feelings: "Guay de que te lean" (237). She seems to contribute little to the text. Her diary underscores the alienation and entrapment that both the textual boundaries and the process of reading impose.

Cobito, another schoolmate of Toto, provides a text that seems to reveal little to the reader. His monologue displays resentment toward Toto for his failure in school as well as for being poor and fatherless. He also covertly intimates that Toto is to blame for his situation. Cobito

proves to be lazy and unwilling to assert himself. His escape into gangster fantasy solves his problems by shooting the traitors like Toto who are able to go home from school to their families on the weekends.

Ironically, Cobito is the prime suspect as the author of "la carta anónima" that appears in chapter fourteen. He does not have the initiative to pass his classes to avoid spending an extra month in school, yet he is driven enough to direct a letter to the dean to attempt to tattle on Toto.

In reality, his letter follows the pattern of the other chapters, focusing on another character to covertly expose the textual and contextual underpinnings of the character narrating the text. Cobito reveals his identity through his mobster-like language and the tone of resentment so identifiable in his previous interior monologue.

Delia, a lovesick maid, provides an interior monologue that prepares the reader for Mita's chapter. She appears without any previous introduction or mention in the text. Although her role may seem questionable, Delia contributes prejudicial information in the development of Mita's character. She is in love with López (who married someone else from his home town), but is engaged to Yamil, a sloppy Turk. Mita gives her advice, encouraging Deila to wed him because he is a nice man. In other words, Mita tries to convince Delia to accept her mundane reality and live entrapped in a relationship that is anything but ideal--just like Mita. Delia, like Paquita, tries to model herself

after Mita, yet she deserves little sympathy. She is content to exist as she does, and if not, she escapes to "dormir a pata ancha hasta el otro día" (135).

The final minor character that appears, Herminia, seems to be the most disparate. She is never mentioned in the the novel, yet she writes her own chapter that is placed penultimately in the text. Herminia herself vehemently denies any connection with the rest of the world, emphasizing its influence of pop culture: "No puedo juzgar, no puedo hablar de algo que no conozco" (279). She instead fantasizes through the avenue with which she is most familiar: classical music. She wishes to die like the wylisses, virgins who commit suicide after they dance until they are out of breath, which very much parallels Herminia's existence. Herminia revitalizes the dichotomy of presence and absence in her "cuaderno de pensamientos," pining away about the life she cannot achieve, stifled by her asthma. Her potential to be a concert pianist was snuffed out by, like Mita, being forced to move to Coronel Vallejos from Buenos Aires. Herminia exists alone in her apartment fantasizing not about the life she might have, but of dying, perhaps like Chopin spitting up blood on the piano keys. She cannot think about life as others experience it, thus she must deprive herself of life's lust. Instead of reading novels about life, she turns to the black and white objective pages of the dictionary. Herminia is no different from any other character, just perhaps more fatalistic. She

professes not to fall into the trap of escape, yet she realizes that her life has meant even less than the mediocre existence of the others, comparing it to a text: "Mi vida es una página en blanco" (291). This penultimate chapter leads to Berto's letter to Jaime. She suggests an attitude of hopelessness and non-existence that sets the tone for the final chapter. Thus, La traición de Rita Hayworth ends like Herminia's life, with an effaced text, "una página en blanco."

In summary, as one reads through La traición de Rita Hayworth, the deceptive nature of the text is exposed. Several readings become possible through the dichotomy of presence and absence in its formal structure, narrative and authorial voice, and characters. La traición is built upon a shifting base that spirals, leading back not to a beginning, but to paths that lead to more irresolvable questions. The novel's form also projects the potential of deceit, requiring that the reader play an active role in creating and deciphering the text and exposing its underlying discourses. La traición de Rita Hayworth offers a myriad of textual footprints that seem to take several paths that turn, twist, fork, and intersect. The formal structure deceives the reader by its symmetry of two sets of eight chapters. On the surface, the text's foundation seems to be neatly ordered, chronologically based from 1933 to 1949. However, the penultimate chapter reveals its underpinnings by taking the reader back to 1933 through the presentation

of information in Berto's letter to his brother that offers other alternatives to the interpretation of the text. Moreover, instead of suggesting a linear structure, chapter fifteen sends the text in a chaotic spiral. The relationship between chapters seemed to be inter- and intra-textually linked as well. Characters are bound together within and between chapters through a common bond--a life doomed to mediocrity. Their constant wandering in and out of dialogue and subject matter equates their evasiveness with the sense of alienation of their existence in society as well as in the pages. The characters' absence or repression lends as much bearing on the readings as does their presence. The characters' contribution to the text does not edify their own development, rather their existence underscores their alienation within the pages. Their greatest offerings are details of other characters, especially in Toto's case. Chapter one establishes the pattern of absence through the periphery of the dialogue. The focus, if one exists, seems to stay on the Casals family who no longer lives in Coronel Vallejos. More importantly, the characters who participate in the textual "cacophony" are unable to follow one particular thread of dialogue. Each one is entrapped in his/her own "text," alienated from the rest of the interlocutors. Rather, each attempts to construct his/her own world, and in doing so, discovers that he/she has built a labyrinth of inescapable fantasy. Another ramification of the dichtomy of presence and absence shows

through the progression of the chapters and narrative voice. Chapter one begins with dialogue, suggesting direct communication. However, through the progression of the text, the form of narration shifts to the destruction of communication. Dialogue shifts to interior or truncated monologue, diaries and epistolary that is destroyed before reaching its intended receiver, closing off any type of direct communication. One method of communication as well as narration is reflected through the use of popular culture. The characters' inability to relate to each other is reflected through escape inward. Thus they turn to the glamorous fantasy world of mass culture. The parameters between the literary world and the extra-literary world are potentially effaced through its deceptive role for both the reader and characters--those within the text as well as those within pop culture, especially for Toto. The cinema creates discourses between character, fantasy, reality, and reader. The movies of the 1930s and 1940s reflect absolute truths and a perception of reality through the absorption of values, ideologies and myths created by the larger-than-life stars. Grade B movies, radio broadcasts and romantic novels transcend the medium and act as narrative voices for the textual characters. They also transcend the medium and incorporate themselves into their fantastic creations.

Through the process of creation, the characters' role is expanded to narrator, actor, and subject. The reader also must transcend the boundaries of his/her extra-literary

point of departure. The role of popular culture deceptively suggests a parallel relationship between character, text and reader where the latter must actively participate to decode the text. However, because he/she plays a part in the act of creation, the interference offered by popular culture can entrap the reader. The characters' function within La traición de Rita Hayworth is also somewhat questionable. They play dubious roles, sharing the tasks of author, narrator, and actor. Their meaning within the text is vague, and their absence seems to speak more loudly than their presence. Their existence is marginalized and resurrected by becoming topics of other discourse. Toto seems to be the central focus of the text. Yet, for a protagonist he seems rather underdeveloped which distances him from other characters as well as from the reader. He is a mere emulation of his mother who inspires him to equate his existence with the fantasy world he creates through the movies. His parents, Berto and Mita are no better off. They are created through textual repression and effacement that they perform. Their roles are questionable, and like the remaining characters, define the direction and tone of the text. It seems that their roles are meaningless, continually wandering in and out of chapters, except for Herminina who suddenly appears through her diary in chapter fifteen. They support the continuous shifting of the text, and underline the lack of a central focus.

It is the reader who is left with the responsibility of

resolving the textual problematics posed by the alienating structure, form and characters that flow through the other novels in this study. Authorial voice seems to continually shift, appearing in one moment, only to be elusive in the next. The potential of several readings exist that seem to lay in the hands of the reader but one must carefully read in order not to become ensnared in textual entrapment.

NOTES

1. "La traición de Rita Hayworth: Una tarea de desmitificación", Narradores de esta América, (Buenos Aires: Editorial Alfa Argentina, 1974); 365.

2. For a detailed study of the role of pop culture in Puig's novels, see Introduction, 48-52.

3. Pamela Bacarisse, The Necessary Dream: A Study of the Novels of Manuel Puig (Totowa, NJ: Barnes and Noble Books, 1988); 8. "a vie est ailleurs" ('Life is somewhere else') is the title of Bacarisse's chapter that analyzes La traición de Rita Hayworth where she focuses on the human condition and life's incompleteness.

4. Rodríguez Monegal contends that the text does not merely convey a collective voice, rather "no se trata en ella simplemente de enfilar de cualquier manera capítulos sobre una mediocridad colectiva, sino en hacer jugar los distintos niveles de esa mediocridad a través de un contrapunto de voces que, al mismo tiempo que definen su peculiar situación y tono, contribuyen a ilustrar el concierto general" (361).

5. The chapters seem to be linked "inter-textually" by characters who continually enter and exit the text, either physically or by mere mention. "Extra-textual" sources, such as Hollywood cinema and radio broadcasts connect both characters and text as well, providing a false sense of cohesiveness to the novel.

6. See Jonathan Tittler, "Betrayed by Rita Hayworth: An Androgenous Text," Narrative Irony in the Contemporary Spanish American Novel (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell UP, 1984), 79-100. Tittler points out that although Toto seems to approximate the role of protagonist, he "cannot be deemed the novel's principal character. The text is so imbued with his presence that he is associated instead with the sum of its parts: the novel itself" (85). He suggests that, rather, small-town Argentine life is the main character of La traición de Rita Hayworth.

7. For a specific analysis of the use of the "folletín" in La traición de Rita Hayworth, see Hugo Dogopol, "Puig: Los límites del folletín," Boletín Cultural y Bibliográfico 18.2 (1981), 67-74; and Begoña Ibáñez Avedaño, "La mímesis como parámetro en la narrativa de Manuel Puig," Letras de Deusto

16.36 (1986): 91-105.

8. "Aproximaciones a Manuel Puig," Plural 57 (1976): 25.

9. Soledad Bianchi, "La traición de Rita Hayworth, una novela dialógica," Revista Iberoamericana 53.141 (1987): 850.

10. Bianchi suggests that the dialogue attempts to: "unir, anudar, establecer relaciones, añadir, atar cabos, elaborando un bordado [un tejido] un texto con dedicada y concentrada atención" (857). She uses this homology from Roland Barthes, Le plaisir du texte (Paris: Seuil, 1975).

11. There is speculation whether Chapter One is a complete dialogue. See Marta Morello-Frosch, "The New Art of Narrating Films," Review (1972): 55. She contends that Chapter One is a dialogue that serves as the basis of communication. There is a conflictive proposition in Lillian Manzor-Coats, "Un affair de traición: el lector en dos novelas de Puig," Revista de Crítica Literaria Latinoamericana 14.27 (1988): 114, since she sees that "el texto no va de comunicación a la ausencia de ésta sino que verbaliza desde el comienzo la alienación de los personajes a través de un lenguaje oral que no les sirve de nada."

12. Manuel Puig admits the influence of his occupation as script-writer for films before becoming an author. See Ronald Christ, "An Interview With Manuel Puig," Review 44 (1977): 52-61; and Jorgelina Fidia Corbatta, "Encuentros con Manuel Puig," Revista Iberoamericana 49 (1983): 591-620.

13. Suspended Fictions: Reading Novels by Manuel Puig (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1987) 27.

14. Lucille Kerr analyzes the relationship between the betrayal of Rita Hayworth and Berto's involvement with the text. Her chapter suggests that the "key" to La traición de Rita Hayworth is Berto's role as betrayer on several textual levels, contending that Berto most closely relates to the title of the novel.

15. Soledad Bianchi, "La traición de Rita Hayworth: una novela dialógica". Bianchi asserts that the reader must act as an intruder to the characters' minds: "ante la ausencia de un narrador que ortorgue una visión definitiva--se ve obligado a creerle a los personajes y porque, al mismo tiempo, debe intentar traspasar las exterioridades para conocerlos, pero antes tiene que observarlas y enterarse de halagos y de disputas. De este modo, aunque no lo quiera, se transformará en un espía más porque así se lo exige una buena lectura" (850).

16. David Bordwell, Narration in the Fiction Film, (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1985) 158.

17. Bordwell contends that "the spectator comes to a film with schemata, and these are derived in part from experience with extrinsic norms. The viewer applies these schemata to the film, matching the expectations appropriate to the norms within tacit conventional frameworks that are social and historical" (151-152). o el arte nuevo de narrar

18. María Salgado, "En torno a Manuel Puig y sus metamorfosis del narrador," Hispanic Journal 7.1 (1985); 81.

19. Hugo Dogopol, "Puig: Los límites del folletín," Boletín Cultural y Bibliográfico 18.2 (1981): 69.

20. Bacarisse states that "if we think about the gulf between reality and Toto's dreams, we should better understand the circumstances and the psychology of the adult characters who are not all that different from him. And if we look at how he adapts to his personal reality, we see that the adults' "therapy" varies little in kind. They may choose different models, and they are likely to have more experience and to be more practised and subtle in the game they are playing, but that is all" (15).

21. Alicia Borinsky, "Castración y Lujos: La Escritura de Manuel Puig," Revista Iberoamericana 41 (1975): 35. She posits the reader only knows Toto through his language, and "su individualidad consiste en su generalidad. Su lenguaje es el de los otros y lo único que conocemos y existe de él para nosotros es su lenguaje."

22. Ironically, Berto is unable to face Toto and reality as well when he confronts his father with the fact that Toto had noticed that his were red: "Y él tampoco pasó a mirar los árboles de pera recién cortados, dio toda la vuelta por el negocio para no ver, y le pregunté si había llorado que tenía los ojos rojos y dijo que los hombres no lloran" (81).

23. Chapter thirteen is the only chapter without a date provided. However, the preceding and following chapters are both from 1947, leading the reader to assume that chapter thirteen must also be from the same year. Yet, because the final chapter is out of proper chronology, the date for chapter thirteen may also be uncertain.

24. René Campos, "Las 'películas de mujeres' y La traición de Rita Hayworth", Literature and Popular Culture in the Hispanic World, A Symposium^W, Rose S. Minc, ed. (Montclair, NJ: Montclair State College, 1982); 65.

25. "Woman as Dramatized Reader: María and La traición de Rita Hayworth", Hispanofila 32.1 (1988): 85.

26. For an analysis of Manuel Puig's criticism of Peron's rule within La traición de Rita Hayworth, see Pamela Bacarisse, "The Projection of Peronism in the Novels of Manuel Puig", The Historical Novel in Latin America, Daniel Balderston, ed. (Gaithersburg MD: Hispamérica 1986), 185-199.

BOQUITAS PINTADAS: THE STRONGHOLD OF MEMORY

Only a year after the publication of Manuel Puig's first novel, La traición de Rita Hayworth (1968), appeared another of Puig's novels about the small town of Coronel Vallejos, entitled Boquitas pintadas (1969), that confirmed the preoccupations and struggles of living in the author's native country during the decades of the 1930s and 1940s. In many ways, Boquitas pintadas seems to share common characteristics with La traición de Rita Hayworth.[1] Both novels share a similar time frame and geographical setting, although the period of Boquitas pintadas extends two decades beyond that of La traición de Rita Hayworth.[2] Also they are structurally organized into two divisions of eight chapters each. More importantly, these novels are built upon a constantly shifting narrative foundation that not only stems from the very lives, ideologies and myths that betray the characters, but critiques them as well, thus creating a self-reflexive text. Furthermore, the novels' ideals and mores are based upon social and literary myths and the conventions of popular culture that are drawn from the extra-textual world, opening the possibilities of unearthing several texts and in its process, the potential for reader entrapment.

reflect Puig's intellectual affiliation with the link between literary reality and the extra-literary world. As Puig has stated in several interviews, he composed his first two novels from childhood memories.[3] The characters that appear are composites of the relatives and acquaintances that roamed Puig's boyhood town named General Villegas during the very same period of La traición de Rita Hayworth and Boquitas pintadas:

> I wrote about those people from my childhood who had been close to me, people about whom I had a lot of information because they had talked to me a lot. As a matter of fact, they had devoted time to me because they were mostly misfits with not much else to do....I had the whole burden of memory inside me. (Christ, 52)

From Puig's personal experiences and the memories of these events came the foundation for La traición de Rita Hayworth and Boquitas pintadas where he portrays oppressed and alienated characters entrapped in a society which they more or less have accepted. As discussed in chapter one, La traición concentrates on one particular family, the Casals; or perhaps more accurately, on one member of that family, Toto Casals, who serves as the thematic nexus of the novel. He establishes the connection between the fragmented text through his relationship to the other characters and their narrative. Toto is the son of Berto and Mita, Héctor's cousin, and the butt of rebukes of his schoolmates. Yet, throughout the work no invitation is presented to internalize either Toto, his family, or any other textual link. Rather, he is a composite of the myths, and ideologies transmitted through cinematic fantasy and

clichés. Perhaps La traición de Rita Hayworth could be categorized as a social novel, one that represents a certain group or class of Argentinian society, thus glossing over any obvious, specific details that would pinpoint or personalize any one character. Few details are provided for Toto or his father, Berto, his mother, Mita, or any other character in order to classify them beyond one-dimensional. Their link to each other is the relationship to a particular middle-class nuclear family, as established in the opening dialogue. The reader is presented with a conversation during a sewing circle at the house of Mita's parents, a traditional "family-type" activity. However, no identity of character is provided in the dialogue, nor does there seem to be any true personal relationship amongst characters, thus opening an immediate gulf between the reader and the characters which distances the reader from the narrative.

Boquitas pintadas follows a similar pattern to La traición de Rita Hayworth. In many ways, Puig's second novel seems to continue the saga of the alienated populus who live in Coronel Vallejos. The names of the characters have been changed, but not their circumstances. Whereas La traición de Rita Hayworth focuses on Toto as a fictional nucleus, Boquitas pintadas concentrates on a group of people from various social classes whose relationship revolves around a deceased character.

On a narrative plane, Boquitas pintadas employs similar techniques found in La traición de Rita Hayworth: one-sided

monologues, elisions, letters, cinematographic conventions, stream of consciousness, unnamed interlocutors, and convoluted time frames; all which demand the active participation of the reader in the re-writing of the text. However, Boquitas pintadas has gone even further with narrative play. Legal documents, medical reports, obituaries, memo books, contribute as well. What is so striking though in Boquitas pintadas are the complicated twists absent in Puig' first novel. Its narrative development stems from distinct points of perspective: separate narratives contributed by individual characters.

In Boquitas pintadas, a variety of sources constitute the fiction. This developmental technique is similar to that of La traición de Rita Hayworth, but instead of progressing the action as it does in the latter, the perspectives continually twist and spiral back to the same events, thus resulting in multiple overlapping narratives. Furthermore the role of the epistolary is extended.

The literary convention of writing letters dominates the direction of the text as well as the two main protagonists, Juan Carlos and Nené. In La traición de Rita Hayworth one letter exposes the potential for several readings, whereas in Boquitas pintadas a proliferation of correspondence builds the text bit by bit, leading the fiction and reader in one direction and then another, striving to reinforce and undermine it simultaneously. The unveiled (but answered) responses also establish the bearing

of the novel.

The emphasis on popular culture plays a distinct role in Boquitas pintadas. Used as a narrative voice for the characters as well as an escape mechanism, a variety of popular culture products serves as a structural device. On a deeper level, they contribute to reader deception. These devices help to efface the constancy of time through the convolution and inversion of old and new mass culture conventions. The cinema, which plays a minor role in this novel, is infused with the soap-opera, women's magazines, and the tango, whose popularity indicated social status.

Moreover, a literary product borrowed from the 19th century--the "folletín"-- acts as the deceptive foundation of the text. Parts of the text are presented by installments, as if they were published weekly so that the reader would anxiously await the next episode. The eclectic combination of different elements of mass culture not only manipulates the novel's chronology but narrows the focus of the text as well. Ellen McCracken points out that although the novel seems to concentrate on the legacy of Juan Carlos, the true nucleus may be otherwise:

> ...it must be remembered that some of the rules of mass forms he employs are those which traditionally have been addressed to women. While Puig does show the effects of mass culture on male figures within the novel, he pays special attention of mass culture's effects on women of varying socio-economic positions.[4]

The majority of mass culture forms are brought to the text for the benefit of the female figures. The novel's title and epigraphs are directed at women, originating from the

lyrics of the romantic tango. Again, the novel's underpinnings comment on and critique not only the characters and their fiction, but also these very forms that emanate from popular culture, in particular, the tango, soap operas, and the movies.

Lastly, Puig has complicated the modes of narration by adding multiple narrative perspectives. As with the form of the "folletín," Puig has glanced to the past by resurrecting the eye of the omniscient narrator, who is able to provide details that the characters cannot. However, before studying these deceptive techniques, we must return to the underlying motives of the characters within the text. The characters in Puig's Boquitas pintadas resemble those of La traición de Rita Hayworth; they are spurious "misfits" (Christ, 52) as well, aware of the pathetic circumstances that life has dealt them. Boquitas pintadas reveals the story of six prominent characters whose lives intersect, diverge and conjoin repeatedly. All are linked to their circumstances in Coronel Vallejos that somehow lead to one semi-pseudo protagonist, Juan Carlos Etchepare. One portentous detail stands out that makes his fictional bearing questionable. He is introduced at the very onset of the novel by his obituary notice, a young Don Juan dragged away by tuberculosis in the prime of his life. Thus, the major link to the remaining characters technically does not exist. He is "resurrected" by the other characters who continually bring him back to life by their own narrative

creations. Nélida (Nené) Fernández de Massa, a malcontented middle-class housewife and heroine, pines, both in the past and present, for her "true-love" throughout the novel. She constantly relives their relationship from 1935 to 1937, established in her correspondence to Juan Carlos's mother in 1947 and dwells on it until she dies in 1968, which finishes the text. Her claim to true love is that she successfully "saved" herself for Juan Carlos by not falling into his trap of sexual seduction.

On the other side stands Mabel Sáenz, a former schoolmate of Nené, who is also romantically linked to Juan Carlos, and like Nené, is entrapped in the past or at least does not see the need to confront the reality of the present. She, however does not resist the temptations of Juan Carlos's amorous advances. She is his secret lover from 1935 to 1937 while he is courting Nené. Mabel plays an even greater role in deception. While Juan Carlos is away at the sanatorium receiving treatment for tuberculosis, Mabel is sleeping with his friend and cohort, Pancho. She withholds the details of Pancho's murder that transpires on her patio after he leaves her bed . Her deception doubles back on her and she ends up as alienated as the others. One difference seems to marginalize Mabel even further: she hails from the upper-class, but life has not dealt her a privileged hand; she is entrapped in the same circumstances as the rest of the characters, and like Nené, married in order to escape her dismal life. Three other characters tie

in as well. On the other end of the social ladder stands Antonia Josefa Ramírez (Raba) and Francisco Catalino Páez (Pancho), who attempt to escape their poverty and alienation from society, but ironically do not seem to inspire any more compassion because of their low social position. Pancho, Juan Carlos's "sidekick," attempts to better his existence by two routes. One is to imitate his idol, Juan Carlos, so he may satisfy the romantic aspect of his life, which he seems to achieve by secretly sleeping with Mabel (and thus deceiving his mentor, not to mention climbing the social ladder). Pancho also seduces Raba and abandons her on discovering that she is carrying his child. Secondly, to better his financial status, Pancho enrolls in the police academy to be an officer at the new police station in Coronel Vallejos. His hope is shortlived, cut off by his fatal stabbing just a few months after contracting employment. Raba, a maid who eventually works for Mabel's parents, seems to be the most entrapped in circumstance, especially after she gives birth to Pancho's illegitimate son and is rejected by him and doomed to live with the social classification of unwed mother. Her revenge redeems her situation: she stabs Pancho to death with a kitchen knife after discovering him in bed with Mabel. Finally, Celina, Juan Carlos's irascible sister, seems to appear as a superficial character, one who despises Nené because she believes that Nené caused Juan Carlos's death by sharing frequent rendezvouses with him at night in the cold,

damp air. Celina's role is underscored as an accomplice in deception by playing manipulative textual games with both the characters and the reader. For example, she disguises herself as her mother, Doña Leonor, through correspondence with Nené, a fact revealed only to the reader in the penultimate chapter.

On a superficial level, the characters in Boquitas pintadas seem to be linked to their relationship with one character, Juan Carlos Etchepare. It could be said that these same people are brought together by fate and circumstance. Their relationship is neither familial or social, nor does Puig establish any key relationship that immediately indicates a particular bond among them. They come from distinct familial situations and social classes. Yet the characters that comprise Boquitas pintadas seem to take on a second dimension that the ones in La traición de Rita Hayworth lack. Puig explains:

> Volví a Buenos Aires después de once años de ausencia y fue el reencuentro con ciertos personajes de mi infancia en el pueblo que me inspiró esta historia [Boquitas pintadas]. Noté un enorme desencanto en quienes habían vivido de acuerdo al sistema social de su momento, sin la menor rebeldía. Habían aceptado todo ese mundo de represión sexual, habían aceptado sus reglas, la hipocresía del mito de la virginidad femenina, y claro, habían aceptado la autoridad. Los noté decepcionados en su madurez.... No era un desencanto consciente, destilaban simplemente frustración, tristeza..., esta gente había creído en la retórica del gran amor, de la gran pasión, pero no habían actuado de acuerdo a ella. (Sosnowski, 74)

In this novel Puig's characters display more than the nervous tension given to those in La traición de Rita Hayworth. Instead, they carry the potential to inspire

emotions beyond sympathy. Emir Rodríguez Monegal points out that he shed a "metaphorical tear" over reading the fate of the "heroine," Nené, and by the end of the novel she was not a mere stereotype, but a complete human being.[5] These characters are more real and identifiable, even though claims have been made that Boquitas pintadas is a book about a group, a generation (Bacarisse, 34). On one hand, the novel does concentrate on a small nucleus seemingly linked by one character. It also can be stated that the characters indeed represent a particular epoch shaped by ideologies, mores, myths, and oppression.[6] On the other hand, each character stands alone, complete with his own individual psychology and marginalized by circumstance and social class. These characters entrapped together, yet marginalized, take on a soap-opera type quality, continually muddling through life while sentimentally attempting to relive the past. Their psyche is composed of ideals and myths supplied by the era and society in which they exist. Furthermore, the reader provides what Margery A. Safir defines as "pre-textual myths" taken from the extra-literary realm which forces the reader to both view the text subjectively as well as participate in its creation.[7] The potential bias between the presentation of the myths from the literary world and those from the reader's position open the way for the emergence of texts underneath.

The direction of the text lies heavily in the hands of the reader. Puig has arranged Boquitas pintadas in a way

which at one turn juxtaposes an authorial figure and the reader, and at another turn, the two seem to challenge each other. It is never certain just who holds the director's baton. The authorial figure appears as quickly as it flees. For example, Juan Carlos leads the reader through his imagination and his photo album that explain the verbal snapshots with inscriptions on the back of each picture, then suddenly the authorial voice shifts to another place and time.

One of Boquitas pintadas salient features is the indeterminate relationship between the reader, the authorial voice and the text. This novel is constructed in such a way that their relationship constantly shifts direction. Narrative structure and form play a decisive role in creating such a tension. What seems to be a homogeneous text based on the serialized novel, is what Lucille Kerr deems as "a text potentially out of control, a text which might threaten to regenerate itself without end."[8]

THE CONVOLUTION OF TEMPORAL PLANES

It is evident through its first few chapters that the art of deception is working strategically to manipulate the reader, sending him in various directions simultaneously. Like La traición de Rita Hayworth, the narrative structure serves to deceive the reader through a spiral in time. However, the order of La traición can be determined to be quasi-linear in comparison with this text. One of the main divergences of Boquitas pintadas from Puig's first novel is

its convoluted narrative structure. As mentioned previously, Boquitas pintadas does not begin at the plot's starting point, nor does it follow a linear direction. Instead, the narrative structure follows an inverted pattern. The text commences in the middle of the story in 1947, traces backward, then forward, once again backward, and then jumps to 1968. The majority of the text takes place between 1936 and 1938 (chapters 3-12; chapters 13 and 14 are not dated but are presumed to be from the following decade), yet the later dates define the point of perspective in narrative, discursive and thematic strategies. Both beginning and end of the novel are marked by the deaths of the two main characters, falsely enclosing the text and entrapping them in an eternal post-mortem image. The novel opens with the obituary notice of Juan Carlos Etchepare and ends with the death announcement of Nélida Fernández Massa. Their deaths never allow them to develop for the reader. They will be seen throughout the text only as memories, alienated from the other characters, and more importantly, alienated from the opportunity to become alive in the text.

Chapters one and two begin the novel in the middle of 1947, ten years after the main events have transpired. The obituary of Juan Carlos (chapter one) and the one-sided epistolary of Nené to Doña Leonor, Juan Carlos's mother (chapters one and two) determine that the direction of the narrative will go in a backwards fashion, nostagically retelling a story. Nené's letters are a series of requests

to Doña Leonor for the collection of love letters wrapped in a sky-blue ribbon written to Juan Carlos during their relationship, therefore providing continued interest in the story. Nené's one-sided correspondence establishes two mysteries. First one must consider why she so anxiously desires to retrieve letters that are over ten years old (unless she had written some type of compromising information). Secondly, the reader must ascertain the other half of the correspondence from which he is distanced while assessing the narrative from only Nené's point of view. Chapters three through twelve follow the pattern established by the first two chapters, describing the events of 1935-1939. However, within those chapters, time is transposed: in chapter three a text from 1935 is placed after two from 1937; the last excerpt of chapter six is dated "el 23 de agosto, 1937;" and chapter seven begins with "el tres de julio, 1937, followed by a letter dated "23 de agosto 1937" after several from April of that same year. However it precedes texts in chapters seven and eight that are dated "julio" and "agosto 1937." Chapters thirteen through fifteen seem to take a forward direction into the 1940's. More confusing, chapters ten, thirteen and fourteen are not provided with dates, thus obscuring the distinction between time frames. One must keep in mind that the chronology of Boquitas pintadas has been strategically manipulated by an authorial presence, not solely to present the narrative, but also to actively involve the wits of the

reader who can become entrapped by its very narrative twists and turns. In the process of winding through the Borgesian-like labyrinth, the reader can untangle the convoluted readings that lie underneath. The final chapter contains Nené's obituary which would seem to neatly tie the loose ends of the novel. Following her death announcement is her husband's symbolic burning of Nene's and Juan Carlos's love letters (as one of Nené's final requests). On one hand, the mystery text literally goes up in smoke, thus destroying their "legend" and closing the pages of the novel. On the other hand, Nené and Juan Carlos, along with the fragments of his letters are metaphorically resurrected to another plane.[9] On the other hand, Boquitas pintadas does not neatly end. Its structure suggests a spiral that leads not from beginning to end, but back and forth, up and down through time and circumstance, narration and discourse that constantly underscores the disjunctions between plot and the story as a whole. The text seems to be constructed so that it is never quite obvious just what story has been presented or to whom it belongs. Because of the gulf between the story and the narrated text, time is virtually displaced from the perspective of the reader. In other words, time plays a key role in manipulating the text and reader; it is disjointed both in the text and beyond. As mentioned above, the chronology is convoluted, not just from chapter to chapter, but from within certain chapters as well. It seems as if time had stood still throughout the

text; as if the point of perspective were snagged in one place, where as Alfred MacAdam claims "el tiempo no pasa, sólo se acumula."[10] Each character is entrapped in time, continually reliving the past from a distanced temporal standpoint, not just wishing to recreate the moment, but to be able to live nostalgically as they did during that idealized epoch, alienated from their present. Hence, the novel's temporal plane continually shifts from one level to another. First, time progresses on an objective realistic level that functions to piece together the events that transpire in the text. Temporality is transformed on a second plane that in some instances converges with the first, and other times attempts to efface it altogether. The disparity between story and plot greatly depends on this second temporal shift which is based on a subjective sentimental perspective. The reader is given the task of separating the potential texts by piecing together disparate and/or conflicting information, or filling in the gaps created by continual shifting temporal levels. What is presented from both a realistic temporal plane (the action from 1936-1938) and what appears on the page (accounts from the nostalgic viewpoints of the 1940s and 1960s) provide the opportunities for various (mis)cues and (mis)readings, potentially entrapping the reader within the strategical temporal gaps. It is all but impossible to stifle a subjective reader viewpoint; the text is not based upon fact. Objective reality for the characters on one level can

be presented quite subjectively through the disparate story presentation. Lastly, the concept of time is challenged by the theme of death that acts as an underlying foundation of the novel.

As mentioned previously, Boquitas pintadas opens with the death announcement of the protagonist, which ironically underscores time's uncontrollable power to sweep away a young life:

> Fallecimiento lamentado. La desaparición del señor Juan Carlos Etchepare, acaecida el 18 de abril último, a la temprana edad de veintinueve años, tras sorportar las alternativas de una larga enfermedad, ha producido en esta población, de la que el extinto era querido hijo, general sentimiento de la apesadumbrada sorpresa, no obstante conocer muchos allegados la seria afección que padecía.[11]

Juan Carlos's obituary seems to close the door to any reason to continue the text. However, time is constantly revived, along with the memories of Juan Carlos that (re)construct the text and his life. His legacy offered in disjointed and conflicting views provide the psychological stimulus to continue reading the text.

Juan Carlos is not the sole character to be presented in retrospect. Pancho appears in the novel not only as a memory of the other characters, but as a deceased entity that continues to participate in the text long after his death. Pancho's status is emphasised through a particular narrative strategy employed in the novel: a "day in the life" objective observation by an omniscient narrator. This type of verbal snapshot, as Jonathan Tittler points out,

"serves as periodic stablizers, textual anchors, orienting aids."[12] It also contributes to the constant clashing of temporal planes that both announce and contradict the text.[13]

In chapters four and five, a camera-eye description provides for the reader parallel routines of Nené, Juan Carlos, Mabel, Pancho, and Raba and again the same strategy is employed in chapter nine. However, the third appearance of this narrative technique in chapter fourteen includes a twist. The chapter, "el día sábado 18 de abril de 1947" begins with the details of Juan Carlos's death, followed by Nené's daily habits. Pancho's description is given next, although he was murdered in chapter eleven, "17 de junio 1939."[14] The presentation of Pancho's remains as a "living" part of the text confirms the deceptive quality of time:

> El ya mencionado día sábado 18 de abril de 1947, a las 15 horas, los despojos de Francisco Catalino Páez yacían en la fosa común del cementerio de Coronel Vallejos. Sólo quedaba de él su esqueleto y se hallaba cubierto por otros cadáveres en diferentes grados de descomposición, el más reciente de los cuales conservaba todavía el lienzo en que se los envolvía antes de arrojarlos al pozo por la boca de acceso.... (222)

The passage of time is similar to the dead bodies heaped on Pancho's skeletal remains. Both, because of their disjointed presentation, are shown in various stages of (de)composition. They are entrapped in the confines of the cemetary, unable to re-enter the world closed off through death. The characters in the text are unaware of the

potential effacement of time and their deceased acquaintance, yet in the reader's hands both can greatly determine the potential readings and directions of the text. In the final chapter, "el 15 de septiembre 1968," a "slice of life" of the characters appears one last time. The identical description of Pancho's state is presented again with one variation. In the first observation, the fig tree next to the common grave where Pancho is buried contains "frutos maduros" (222), whereas in the latter, the tree "se la veía cargada de brotes color verde claro" (250), as if to falsely suggest the hope of renewed life, and perhaps renewed text.

The fig tree symbolizes Pancho in life and in death, resurrecting the memory of the fig tree at the police station where Pancho had worked. The tree serves as a focal point at which Nené would stare from her bedroom window while idealizing her relationship with Juan Carlos. Juan Carlos planned his seductions with Pancho under the fig tree, and more overtly, Pancho erotically and metaphorically picked the fruits of the tree with Mabel that led to their illicit affair by taking advantage of the tree's position adjacent to Mabel's window, thus making his secret seduction possible. The fig tree serves as a link for both characters and time that is, in one sense, effaced by death as Boquitas pintadas comes to its final chapter.

As the catalyst of temporality, Nené's death is announced in chapter sixteen, along with an elaborate

description of the newly placed plaques on Juan Carlos's grave, once again resurrecting his presence. Yet, the novel does not close here. The revelation of the love letters between Nené and Juan Carlos sends temporality into its everlasting spiral, transporting the text and the reader back to another time and place.

In addition to the constantly shifting and disparate temporal planes, the text is authorially manipulated through a combination of forms that contribute to narrative, thematic and discursive strategies. A significant number of these stem from Puig's penchant to employ forms and expressions of popular culture in his novels. Unlike La traición de Rita Hayworth and Beso de la mujer araña, where the use of the cinema predominates as a narrative technique, Boquitas pintadas employs a variety of mass culture products as narrative conventions. In the aformentioned novels, Puig uses the movies as a barometer for the chronology, in other words, they place the novels in their time frame. In Boquitas pintadas, products of mass culture serve another purpose: their variety and overuse provides the basis for social critique and parody as well as underscoring the dependence of the entrapment within nostalgia to portray fiction. Puig has convoluted the variety of mass culture forms that stimulate all of the senses: the movies, the tango, soap operas, newspaper and magazine articles, and the serialized novel. The reader views, reads, and listens to the mass culture products along with the character. The

most salient of those features also serves as the scaffolding of the novel: the use of the "folletín" as its organizing structure.

The employment of the serialized fiction as the outer structure of the novel is both complementary and contradictory, depending on the perspective. It sets itself up to be read as a folletín on the one hand, and on the other, lies a collection of dissimilar texts grafted together with other narrative forms and genres.[15] "Puig" manipulates the "folletín" as a form of reader entrapment. The reader is falsely lulled into expectations of "veracity" when he is hit by the clash of textual voices. Much criticism has been dedicated to this very polemic.[16] At question seems to be whether Boquitas pintadas should be interpreted as a true "folletín" or as a parody of one. In this case, the "folletín" sets up the novel to be read in a particular fashion, and at the same time critiques its very form.[17] From an authorial standpoint, the use of the "folletín" can be seen as a manipulative strategy to steer the reader toward a particular textual pattern, hence potentially entrapping him in a specific mode of interpretation under the guise of the sentimental/romantic novel.

Puig has stated that the use of the "folletín" as an organizing structure would capture the readers' interest to continue through the text:

> I considered the idea of using the structure of the serials but at the same time of sustaining it with a

> lot of realistic detail. So suspense and romance had to be emphasized, each chapter had to end at a crucial moment. I narrated by "escamoteando", by palming some of the incidents--the way a magician does--and not revealing them in their proper chronological order--the tricks of the "folletín." (Christ, 54)

Puig has acknowledged that by using a popular art form, the novel can become a source of critical analysis of itself:

> Como la palabra "folletín" está tan desprestigiada, se me ocurrió que poniéndola debajo del título ya obligaba al lector a una lectura crítica especial, a no esperar "literatura" con mayúscula; advertirle que venía una cosa distinta....(Sosnowski, 73)

Puig's intention was to print Boquitas pintadas in installments true to the "folletín," however publishing demands would not permit it. Instead, the resulting texts became a complete novel, divided as if each "entrega" were a separate installment. The obvious ploy of the "folletín" seems to question itself. The novel is set up not in chapters like a typical novel, rather each section is marked by the word "entrega" and its chronological number. Thus, the reader is cued and forced to read each section as if it were a separate text that ends in suspense, only to await the upcoming installment. If that were indeed the case, then it would also be assumed that the reader would be given a lapse in time between installments which would require different reading strategies. Lucille Kerr contends:

> Given that the text's installments are not, in fact, installments--they are not separated by the regular temporal gaps that would help to produce the kind of indeterminacy typical of the genre--and, given that the reader's appropriation of the text is thus coincident with, but not determined (i.e. postponed or regulated) by, the temporality of publication, as is the custom of serial fiction, Boquitas pintadas also renders impossible the identity that its subtitle and chapter

headings insist upon affirming. (93)

With this novel, the reader only has to turn the page to continue the fiction. The reader is potentially deceived through the stereotypical cues of the "folletín." One can note that the "folletín" is directed at a particular type of reader, one that Pamela Bacarisse suggests, does not fit with Puig's intended reader.[18] The "folletín" seems to generally attract the type of person that the characters in Boquitas pintadas represent, those who escape into shallow sentimental fiction without having to critically analyze it. Ironically, these perfectly suited characters for the "folletín" are unaware that their texts have become part of one. More specifically, Andrés Amorós has provided a sketch of the typical reader of the "folletín;" one who is naïve and simple that follows traditional values.[19] The reader is almost always female, who is supposedly attracted to sentimentality. Thus the characters in the novel act as both model and imitator of the "folletín." We must acknowledge the textual contributions from Juan Carlos, his physician, Dr. Malbrán; Pancho, and an omniscient narrator, who stand on the outside of the workings of the "folletín." Instead, the female characters offer their stories that constitute the "folletín."

Through the constant juggling of narrative and discursive elements under the guise of the "folletín"-- such as temporal distortion, elisions, and disparate narrative techniques--the text offers another narrative entrapment

that arises from the structure of the "folletín."[20] Along with the division of the novel into sixteen "entregas," Puig has split the text into two equal halves provided with epigraphs derived from tango lyrics that abrogates the intention of the "folletín." The first division, entitled "Boquitas pintadas de rojo carmesí" (7) seems to confer with the "folletín," that is, a subtitle full of life, potential romance, and frivolity. However, the text confounds this assumption by beginning immediately afterward with the announcement of the protagonist's death. Margery Safir's contentions show that the epigraph "es un significante falso" (55). The red painted lips in actuality signal both four women in the text (Mabel, Raba, Nené and Celina), but also represent Juan Carlos's sickness and the bloody sputum which leads to the next epigraph, suggesting an underlying linear narrative. The second half of the novel opens with "Boquitas azules, violáceas, negras" (133), which serves two purposes. One is to smoothly follow the first half by confirming the death of Juan Carlos.

Secondly, it seems to close off the novel by suggesting the impossibility of continuance for both the characters and the text. The epigraph signifies death in two ways, one which relates to the fiction and the other to the text as a whole. As for the fiction, it points to the fact that death has entrapped the characters (and reader) in a spiraling time frame, constantly resurrecting the sickly image of Juan Carlos. In regard to the latter, the second epigraph

undermines both the first epigraph and the title of the novel, nullifying its concept.

VOICES FROM THE RADIO

Other more recent forms of mass culture serve a variety of functions in the text. As in La traición de Rita Hayworth and Beso de la mujer araña, characters not only use popular art forms as escape mechanisms, but as a means of identification as well. The radio is a prime source in Boquitas pintadas, especially those programs centered around the tango.

The tango plays a greater role in the text, providing a link between popular culture, text, fiction and the extra-literary world. The sad, sardonic lyrics of the tango provide a form of narration as well as escape for certain characters. These sentimental songs reveal more than the characters' outlook on life. Ironically, the words of the tango reflect the pessimism and futility of hope, in other words, do not offer any encouragement for a better life, rather they underscore the banal existence of the characters. For Nené and Raba this form of popular culture entertainment proves a vehicle for nostalgia to link past with present, fantasy and reality. An omniscient narrator reveals the women's escape into fantasy on two different levels. Nené's involvement with the tango is nostalgic, hoping to imitate the social images conveyed by the songs. The narrator, one that seems to be distanced and objective by describing frame by frame the song's plot and Nené's

subsequent response, captures Nene's interpretation of the tango's objective. Following the presentation of Nené's first three letters of request to Doña Leonor (10 de junio de 1947), the narrator provides a glimpse of Nené's cultural enjoyment, faithfully listening to a favorite radio program, "Tango versus bolero" (15). Nené does not acknowlege the sharp, dramatic selections of the bolero. Rather, she identifies with the sentimental tango that loosely parallels Nené's short-lived romance with Juan Carlos--a young gaucho meets his love in the cold rain, only to lose her in a storm. The moral of the song is that love, like the flower, quickly blooms and dies. After a rendition of a similar bolero that follows, Nené responds:

> La audición finaliza. Frente al espejo en que se sigue mirando, después de aplicar el lápiz labial y el cisne con polvo, se lleva el cabello tirante hacia arriba tratando de reconstruir un peinado en boga algunos años atrás. (16)

Rather than overtly placing herself within the confines of the tango, Nené attempts to recreate the young middle-class image of ten years before, affirming the same objectives of her correspondence to Doña Leonor, Celia's mother. Raba, on the other hand, views the tango on a deeper level, transcending reality and absorbing herself directly into the song lyrics. Raba is reminded of her alienation at the bottom of the social scale, while she works as a maid at Mabel's house. She, Mabel and Nené had attended school together where social distinctions where made evident by their seating arrangement in class. The humiliation she

must bear by the fact that she is her schoolmate's maid, perhaps explains her excuse for her complete immersion into the tango. To exacerbate her situation, she found herself pregnant, and when Pancho left for training at the police academy, her dreams for a happy life went up in smoke. Like Nené, Raba's escape into the products of mass culture stems from the cause and effect relationship to her circumstances and futile hope. However, Raba does not base her illusions on nostalgic dreams of reliving the past like Nené, rather she becomes the character in the song so that living in the present will be more tolerable. Raba's psychological entrapment acts as a buffer to the dismal reality created by her familial situation and the ramifications imposed by society. Raba's interior monologue in chapter eleven transforms into two sad gaucho songs as she washes Mabel's clothes. As the lyrics reveal the event of the death of the gaucho's lover, Raba fantasizes about a circumstantial meeting with Pancho in the street with her ("their") baby and Pancho's acceptance of his fatherhood and the subsequent responsibilities. Raba imagines what would occur if she were to die. Another song mirrors her situation as she sings the life of a young factory worker who dances the tango with a handsome young man. She wonders whether she will be thrown out of the factory for dancing with him, only to have to work as a maid. Her personalization with tangos supports her obsessive idealization of escape from her circumstances with the father of her child. Her fantasy

comes full circle. One tune leads to the idea of their unceremonious wedding, which in turn transcends her life into a sad gaucho song that underscores the futility of her dreams:

> ...entró al rancho en silencio y dos velas encendió, al pie de la virgencita que sus ruegos escuchó, decile que no me olvide, virgencita del perdón, decile que su gaucho se quedó sin corazón, tal vez por buena y por pura Dios del mundo la llevó... . (170)

Raba is convinced that if the lover can pardon her gaucho, then Raba can certainly forgive Pancho's misgivings. The theme of the tango ironically foreshadows Raba's mistaken hypothesis and chance meeting that occurs shortly afterward --where Raba will knife Pancho as he slips out of Mabel's bedroom, violently underscoring her hopeless and pitiful cirumstances.

Other forms of popular culture are employed to manipulate the reader and characters as well. Beside the serialized fiction and tango programs, the soap opera that emanates from the radio plays a key role as a narrative and thematic device. On one level, this particular form of mass culture reveals its influence as a status symbol, which is also evident in La traición de Rita Hayworth. One's social standing (as we note that Nene's style of dress is modeled after the suggestion of the tango) is compared to the radio announcers who speak flawlessly: "Nené no era una india bruta: hablaba como una artista de la radio y al final de las palabras debidas no olvidaba de pronunciar las eses" (79). However, it is evident that Nené's facade does not

help to boost her up the social ladder; she never achieves beyond the status of package wrapper at the department store in Coronel Vallejos.

Nené's failure and disillusionment to succeed in life is emphasized through her strained dialogue with Mabel in chapter thirteen. Instead of attempting to mask their miserable marriages and unhappy circumstances, Mabel and Nené opt not to create a facade of contentment. Their dialogue reveals both their unhappiness and the continual reiteration of the Juan Carlos theme. As the dialogue deteriorates, they choose not to face each other through direct speech. Rather, Mabel unearths her obsession with the images perpetuated through mass culture entertainment and convinces Nené to listen to the current most popular soap opera of the region, "El capitán herido," to which Nené, ironically has never listened.

The soap opera represents for Mabel what the tango does for Nené--an outlet for nostalgic desire to idealize a life that is impossible to grasp. The characters' objective of listening to the soap opera, as with other modes of pop culture, lies in the act of escape, of enclosing, and unknowingly entrapping themselves in the fictional world, thus alienated from the real world. Secondly, the soap opera, like the tango and other conventions of mass culture, reinforces personal and social ideals to sell itself. Neither Mabel or Nené can bring themselves to unmask their true identity, therefore they turn to the products of mass

culture, which further alienate them from reality. The obvious, through their brief dialogue, is that they had been short-changed in life. Both women were mesmerized (or as they claim, in love) by the presence of Juan Carlos, yet he slipped through their fingers. Instead, Nené quickly married Donato José Massa, a public auctioneer "con ojos chiquitos y nariz carnuda" (192) and fled to Buenos Aires. Perhaps Nené's choice of spouses parallels her love for Juan Carlos: both equate idealized escape from her monotonous life. She could marry someone like Donato, an outsider who could take Nené from her marginalized existence. As a result, she finds herself in a sparsely furnished apartment which she is too humiliated for her mother and friends to see, stuck with "dos hijos que no son nada lindos...que son feúchos" (196). Instead of escaping the dull and stifling existence of a small town, Nené has entrapped herself within the four walls of her apartment, alienated from the very existence she had created through the myths and ideals lent by mass culture and society.

Mabel finds herself in the same situation. She marries an unknown named Gustavo, un petiso mal hecho" (197). From a social standpoint, Mabel had the most to lose. Of the upper crust, she once had the opportunity to wed a prospering Englishman from the same social class, a business marriage more or less arranged by her father. However the young man threatens a lawsuit against her father, thus erasing another dream. First, she loses the ideal of true

love through the death of Juan Carlos. Then, the opportunity to marry in order to maintain her high style of living is swiftly snatched away. Thus, Mabel chooses to involve herself in the idealized and benumbing world of mass culture, much like Toto in La traición de Rita Hayworth.

The metadramatic technique of the radio serial, or perhaps more appropriately, soap opera within soap opera, plays two roles in Boquitas pintadas. On one level the soap opera parallels the lives of Nené and Mabel, identifying with and exposing their underlying thoughts, feelings and ideals. On another plane, the soap opera complements yet overshadows the conventions of the "folletín." The 5 p.m. soap opera that becomes the textual focus, narrative voice, and escape mechanism for Nené and Mabel, functions as a microcosm of the novel, reflecting similar conflicts of the larger fiction. The program is about a young, wounded soldier who hides in the hayloft of a married couple. The wife nurses him back to health and consequently falls in love with him. Unfortunately, she cannot break the shackles of her unhappy marriage and must accept her mediocre circumstances. Like the "folletín," the soap opera works to critique itself through its discourse and its extensive use, thus making the reader conscious of its conventions to the extent that the soap opera seems to parody itself as well as its fictive frame. Mabel contributes further to the effect that mass culture has on women through the printed word. Her letter appears in an advice column in one of Argentina's

vogue magazines. Although she does not use her name--rather she signs off "Espíritu confuso" (45)--, Mabel's identity is inferred through the details contained in the letter. She pours her heart out to a "Dear Abby" column in the popular magazine, Mundo Femenino, where she reveals both her calamity and the attitudes supported by mass culture. She is in love with Juan Carlos, which she emphasizes his "apuesta figura" (45), who not only is ill with a sickness that is socially unacceptable, but she is set to marry a man of her social standing who is not the true object of her affections. She is willing to go on a four-day holiday with him to maintain peace in the family, however she is torn because of her feelings for Juan Carlos. The response of the letter reveals "not only the style of cheap literature (Eres muy joven y puedes esperar la llegada de un príncipe azul... 45), but also its priorities" (Bacarisse, 50).

Mabel is willing to consult an "expert" and publicly expose herself, although in a covert manner. More importantly, the response to her letter shows the social implications inferred by mass culture.[21] Her mentor advises Mabel that she is a typical teenager from a happy home. She warns that "seguir con tu amorío (perdóname el término) significaría romper esa armonía familiar" (46). Thus, maintaining family harmony and the rules imposed by social standing are more important than following her heart. These rules are underscored, and at the same time, subverted by mass culture. After all, the ideals conveyed in the soap

opera, cinema, and tango certainly conflict with the response of the advice column. The movies, although they are perhaps a bit obscured by the other popular art forms in this novel, also contribute to the deception aided through the products of mass culture.

The perspective of three different social classes, through the eyes of Mabel, Nené, and Raba, portray their dependence for escape, but for somewhat different reasons. Mabel, after an afternoon at the beauty parlor, leafs through the newspaper for the movie section, able to choose whatever release is playing. Her goal is to escape the heat in the air-conditioned theatre with her aunt. When she cannot find it, she wads up the paper and throws it. On the other hand, Raba sees the opportunity to attend the 5-cent movie as one of her few privileges in life. When she is spurned that opportunity for having to serve a dinner party for her employers, "sin saber por qué tomó una alpargata del suelo y la arrojó con fuerza contra una estantería" (86). In both cases, these women depend upon elements of mass culture as their prime escape from the societal bonds in which they are entrapped, and when they are unable to attend the escape mechanism of the movies, they react in a violent manner. Nené and Mabel use the movies as what Gilberto Triviños terms "un mundo paradisíaco" (120). He points out that they infuse their circumstances into the movie plots; Nené lives happily ever after with Juan Carlos, while Mabel imagines herself and Juan Carlos in the comedy of seduction

that she has just seen, tormented that they cannot kiss. She later sees herself as the love of Robert Taylor or "en su defecto Tyrone Power" (128). Their complete immersion in the products of mass culture edifies their self-alienation and self-deception. From a readerly standpoint, the extensive use of pop culture pulp causes an awareness not only of the negative effects on the characters, but one that calls for the extra-literary consciousness of the reader.

THE MYTH OF DON JUAN EXHUMED

From another angle, the male characters provide modes of deception through myth, acting as both model and imitator. Puig has constructed his male characters upon a popular literary image that has proliferated and transcended European texts, and in a modern sense, represents the stereotypical "macho" image of Latin America. Like mass culture forms, the myth of Don Juan is both self-evident as well as self-critical. The allusion to Juan Carlos as a model of the myth, and its imitator cannot be easily refuted. Lucille Kerr notes that Juan Carlos is "both a seductive model and a model of seduction of this text" (Kerr, 80). His presence provides an organizing and deceptive foundation of the novel, as well as a thematic foundation. He inspires fantasy, disillusionment, and deception on a figural level as well as on a metaphorical one.

Juan Carlos seems to perpetuate the characteristics of the Don Juan figure.[22] He successfully seduces a handful of

women from all classes, except Nené, whose love for him remains eternally pure. The thought of hell and damnation do not enter his mind, rather defiance of authority (in this novel, both religious and medical) dominates his actions. Juan Carlos would prefer to risk his health in order to satisfy his passionate desires through the experience of "bon vivant" ways:

> si tenía que renunciar a vivir como los sanos prefería morirse, pero que aunque no le quitasen las mujeres y los cigarrillos lo mismo prefería morirse, si era a cambio de trabajar como un animal todo el día por cuatro centavos para después volver a un ranco a lavarse bajo el chorro de agua fría de la bomba. (65)

The allusion of Juan Carlos as a Don Juan figure is well supported through the novel, whether it be from other characters or from himself.

To complete the image, Juan Carlos is supplied with the typical sidekick Pancho, who attempts to create himself in his mentor's image. He not only lives to be like him, but also spends his available time with his idol, serving as a protector: "Pancho le dijo que tuviera cuidado con ser descubierto en casa ajena" (81). Pancho, of course, is of a lower class than Juan Carlos and seemingly could never rise above his idol.

The presentation of (Don) Juan Carlos in the text does everything to undermine its mythical presence. Most obvious is the fact that Juan Carlos never has the opportunity to truly establish his own myth, nor does the reader see it engendered, Juan Carlos begins the text as a deceased fictive entity. Also, Pancho destroys the Don Juan figure

without Juan Carlos's knowledge, by sleeping with one of Juan Carlos's forbidden seductees, Mabel. This represents a conquest for Pancho in two ways. Mabel is off limits for Pancho because of her higher social status. Secondly, through his affair, Pancho deceives both his mentor and the myth that he attempted to perpetuate. Juan Carlos is never privileged to Pancho's "triumph," thus in a sense parodying both model and imitator. Poetic justice prevails with Pancho's violent murder by Raba who truly loved him.

Also, Juan Carlos is constructed through a memory, thus he has no opportunity to redeem himself before the final judgement, which is one preoccupation, along with a proper Catholic burial, that invades Nené's correspondence with Doña Leonor), therefore his myth is anti-climatic. Instead, the imitation of Don Juan is eternally resurrected in the text, and in the end metaphorically rises with Nené in the form of the love letter, whose intention would annul itself if they were written by the Don Juan model.

CORRESPONDENCE AS A FRAGMENTING DEVICE

The form of the epistolary seems to link the fragments of narrative. The text depends upon correspondence to establish the relationship among characters as well as a justification to read the novel. Only the "hero" and "heroine" (Juan Carlos and Nené) provide their thoughts on paper, which is a key to reading the text. Thoughts cannot be read by others, at least within the text, but in written form they are exposed to prospective treachery which cannot

so easily be effaced. Once Nené's letters appear in the first chapter, the mystery begins. Her letters reveal more than a question of continued passion, they also determine the direction of the text and covertly suggest a quick slight of hand at authorial manipulation, leaving elusive textual footprints that offer the choice of many paths to follow. Nené's one-sided correspondence to Juan Carlos's mother provides key referents and details to reading the novel, mostly signaling to the characters and their circumstances.

As the novel progresses, the letters become more apparent for what they may have omitted as well. At first glance, the focus seems to be on the past relationship between Nené and Juan Carlos. As each letter follows, Nené's characterization is already well drawn. Her nostalgic writing walks the reader through the past (1930s) and catches him/her up to the present time of the correspondence. We do not learn much about Nené, rather we become aware of what she has not achieved in life. It is painfully apparent how monotonous and empty her life really is through the obsession she displays for her former love. Her existence seems to revolve around the acknowledgement of her inquiries through a prompt response. Moreover, Nené's loneliness is underscored through the intimate bond that she builds with each missive. She begins her first letter in a completely formal manner: "Estimada Doña Leonor" and signs with "Nélida Fernández de Massa" (10). But as she

fabricates her relationship with the recipient, Nené believes that she has established a true friendship. In her last letter, Nené sends along her nostalgic newspaper clipping of the Spring Dance of 1935 where she was crowned queen, and more importantly, where she and Juan Carlos began their relationship. Nené signs off with "La abraza, suya, Nené (32).

Any description of her family is conspicuously absent. In order to establish a frame of reference, she mentions in her first letter that "poco tiempo después de casarme nos vinimos para acá con mi marido" (10). Otherwise, Nené mentions her husband only on one other occasion during the description of her daily routine. Her loneliness and alienation is evident: "...ya no aguantaba las ganas de estar un poco sola. Ese es el único alivio..." (21).

Nené's correspondence also provides information about other potential stories of the text. Most evident is the dispersions that Celina, the sister of Juan Carlos, holds for Nené. She writes to Doña Leonor's post office box instead of to her home address in fear that Celina still bears her grudge and may intercept the letters. Nené provides the reasoning for Celina' ill-will through two avenues: her dead brother and her personal gain. Celina blames Nené for Juan Carlos's death, but even worse, she sees Nené as the controller of her fate. Nené was never to have participated in the Spring Dance of 1935 because of her social standing. Only those who belonged to the Social Club

(determined by social status) were allowed, which would have excluded Nené. However, the high school was providing a dance number in which Nené participated, thus giving her the opportunity to attend the dance where she would meet Juan Carlos. Celina had other ideas. She conjured the ideal solution for the escape out of her monotonous existence by attempting to push Juan Carlos to like Mabel Sáenz. Like the rest of the characters, Celina looked to someone else to rescue her from her circumstances. She had pushed Juan Carlos toward money in the form of a young brunette. Celina realized that if he had married Mabel, then Celina's family might be financially supported. Nené is the indirect cause of Celina's mediocre fate. This may seem like trivial detail on a superficial level, yet it establishes the anti-climatic ending of the novel when the reader discovers that Celina authored the "Doña Leonor letters."

Nené's letters are written on an extremely personal level that are specifically meant for Doña Leonor's eyes only. Yet, the participation of an authorial figure is evident through the explicit manipulation of the correspondence. Not only are the letters interrupted by an omniscient narrator, but the response is absent, thus demanding a number of inferred readings. The objective of Nené's privacy is obliterated through both the reader and an authorial force.

Nené's letters to Mabel confirming their friendship and providing the details of her wedding, which also appear in

chapter nine, seem to provide a solid thematic and discursive foundation for the text. That image is quickly eroded in chapter fifteen when it is revealed that Celina was the author of the absent correspondence, a fact privileged only to the reader, yet Nené alludes to Celina's treachery without knowing it:

> ...tengo ganas que me siga escribiendo, una cosa que me sorprendió es el pulso que tiene para escribir, parece letra de una persona joven, la felicito, y pensar que en los últimos tiempos ha sufrido una desgracia tan grande. No es que Usted se las hace escribir por otra persona, ¿verdad que no? (14)

Nené is unaware of Celina's audience as well as any other. Her letters were meant for one addressee, but due to authorial play, Nené's correspondence is both displayed and displaced, entrapped in a snare of wits. To add to the manipulation and confusion, Celina had kept some of the more revealing letters between Nené and Juan Carlos, along with those that Nené had sent in 1947, and forwarded them to Nené's husband. Once again, the late and anti-climactic revelation of the letters underscores reader deception. Celina's plans would seem to preclude any happiness for Nené, however, as David Southard observes, its consequences are hardly mentioned by Nené: "Fue hace dos semanas....Ahora él está arrepentido (243).[23] Thus the deceptive tactics through the epistolary carry the potential to turn on both the reader as well as on itself.

Juan Carlos offers epistolary contributions as well. His letters though do not transcend time, rather they seem to refute other "texts" within the novel as well as his own.

His correspondence does not appear until the middle of the text (chapters seven and eight), where he writes his letters from the sanatorium. Firsthand, they support and subvert the Don Juan myth. He composes correspondence to Mabel and Nené, professing true love, a suspicion that Nené admits to in her requests to Doña Leonor: "si le da mucho trabajo saber cuáles eran las cartas para mí me puede mandar todas, yo le devuelvo después las que no me corresponden" (19). On the other hand, the image of Juan Carlos seems to be undermined through his simplicity. He must consult the professor down the hall of his bedroom to proofread his correspondence to correct his numerous grammatical and spelling errors--again another detail privileged only to the reader.

Vital information is contained in Juan Carlos's letters that confirms that he is corresponding with more than one person. As mentioned previously, through a letter to Nené, Juan Carlos reveals Pancho's death, both providing key data to the reader as well as the anti-climax for the next chapter that acts out Pancho's death scene. It is obvious that Juan Carlos is a connsumate liar and like Nené, unaware that the reader is attuned to his flaw. Not only are his contradictory love letters exposed, but documentation from his doctor supports his weakness. We note that in chapter seven, shortly after Juan's installation into the sanatorium, a letter (23 de agosto, 1937) from Dr. Malbrán to his colleague reveals that Juan Carlos "no obedece el

tratamiento" (104). In chapter nine, Juan Carllos's displaced letter (19 de agosto, 1937) to Nené states otherwise: "Hoy hago una promesa, y es que voy a seguir todas las indicaciones de los médicos" (118). Juan does not solely lie to others, he convinces himself as well of his fabrications: "cuando deje este lugar es porque voy a estar sano" (119). Through his falsehood, Juan Carlos unveils the ironic truth: unlike the others, he wants to return to Coronel Vallejos. Juan Carlos can go back to the source; he is the only one to completely live the lie that he and others have created for him. His fabricated image is further supported by the textual distance as well. What appears on the page is a re-written and re-created shadow of an image, built from Juan Carlos as well as from those who surround him.

Beside authorial manipulation, the characters within the fiction and the forms of narration play a key role in determining textual play. As we have seen, one-sided dialogue, standard dialogue, stream of consciousness, documents, and the epistolary have contributed to the complexity of the narrative form of ^WBoquitas pintadas^W Yet, a trait uncommon to Puig's novels is evident in Boquitas pintadas: the contributions of an omniscient narrator, juxtaposing mediated and unmediated discourse, in other words internal discourse and one based on direct communication with the reader (Bacarisse, 42). Bacarisse notes that the latter is based on four kinds of relator who

plays the role of:

> the transcriber who presents something already written by someone else (newspaper items, for example); the objective narrator, describing for instance, the decor of Mabel's room; the objective classifier, who gives ordered, official sounding information from a position of omniscience (this is not a rhetorical device of course), and the subjective narrator. (Bacarisse, 42)

This combination of outside narrator/transcriber provides constant attention devices for the reader, who can adjust from several different types of direct (and indirect) discourse. The "outside" narrator links the discourse from within. His objective narration--for example, in chapter two he provides Juan Carlos's "Albúm de fotografías" -- provides an anchoring device as well as static frames of reference for the reader. These "verbal snapshots" freeze both temporality and characters in a particular point of reference (Tittler, 191).

The omniscient narrator also seems to have a stablizing effect on the text, offering the histor's point of view in order to fill in textual gaps. For example, the contribution of the "day in the life" comparison of each character where each reveals "su mayor deseo y su temor más grande" seems to parallel and link each major character and their "texts." However, the narrator's presence may be deceptive. Puig's use of an outside or omniscient narrator would seem to be an unnecessary technique. Vital information could be easily provided through the other previously mentioned conventions of this text. Yet, the addition of another narrative form has the same effect as

the other forms. The proliferation of dissimilar narrative devices not only obscures the text but also turns on and comments upon itself.

SELF-INCRIMINATION

One final source of entrapment, the characters themselves, seem to represent the driving force of the text. Simply by their existence, they contribute to the tension created by the text. Their monotonous lives greatly determined by the confines of social class, contrast with the direct and indirect presentation of their stories. The themes and discourse that result from the narrative structure and voice tend to marginalize the characters from their own text, manipulated by their own hand as well as a higher authority.

One character benefits from the narrative. Nené, who contributes to the development of the image of Juan Carlos, transforms into the focal point through her unexpected and sentimental death. Her passing attaches a bundle of emotion along with it. Nené's death ends the novel, yet the denouement--if her death can be classified as such--is somewhat anti-climatic, since the text takes both characters and reader on a journey through the continually resurrected past based upon the "hero's" death. On the other hand, Nené's death shifts the thematic focus from her relationship to Juan Carlos, to her life and subsequent disillusion. The final blow is the destruction of the love letters that falsely represented and guided her life, an effacement of a

particular text at Nené's request. Instead of being buried with an illusion, she finally faces reality as she reaches the end of her life:

> Habia hecho pedido debía ser cambiado, en lo que atañía a las cartas. Ahora su deseo era que en el ataúd le colocaran, dentro de un puño, otros objetos: un mechón de pelo de su única nieta, el pequeño reloj pulsera infantil que su segundo hijo había recibido como regalo de ella al tomar la primera comunión, y el anillo de compromiso de su esposo. (251-252)

Nené seems to have finally escaped the hand of deception that had held a firm grip on her life. The reader as well must come to terms with Nené's transcendence to a fully developed human being through death.

Another character seems to have fled from her circumstances. Raba, the lowest on the social ladder found a way to climb out of her misery. She had been controlled by the upper class not only economically and socially, but emotionally as well. The strongest example is Mabel's manipulation of Raba that masked the revealing details of Pancho's murder to the police (and consequently, Mabel's illicit affair with him). Mabel, who should have been the happiest by social standards, fades away bit by bit. Raba, in some ways represents the pinnacle of reality and seems to enjoy a "happy ending." Although she completely involves herself in the tango, she is no more entrapped than any other character. Raba seems to recognize the reality of her situation and makes little attempt to mask it. In the last chapter, the omniscient narrator offers a final "day in the life" glance at the characters which provides the outcome of

everyone's life. Juan Carlos, Nené, and Pancho are dead;

Celina and Mabel seem to have been swallowed by the earth as well--the living seem to merely exist. On the other hand, Raba had become a concubine to a landowner who has died. She had a daughter by him who is about to marry a neighbor.

Panchito is happily married and have welcomed Raba into their home. Her story, as with the rest of the chapters, is juxtaposed with her co-creators of the text, mirroring yet conflicting with the remaining narratives.

CONCLUSION

The discursive and thematic paradigms found in Boquitas Pintadas are derived from narrative techniques that are both traditional and non-traditional, a trait not so uncommonly found in contemporary Latin American literature. Boquitas pintadas is based on constantly shifting temporal planes, one that serves as an objective chronology, others as subjective points of relating the text. The result is a disparity between story and plot, opening the possibily to expose underlying texts. Time and perspective change from chapter to chapter as well as within to further disjoin the narrative fragments. As time erodes a "stable" foundation, the narrative scaffolding constantly twists and turns. The conventions of mass culture entertainment in Boquitas pintadas follow the pattern of La traición de Rita Hayworth, yet they transcend its usage. This text goes beyond the cinema to act as a narrative device as well as a

chronological marker. Rather, the products of mass culture invade the text as a narrative voice, a structural base, thematic and generic paradigms, as well as a critique of their very conventions. Whether this text parodies these devices is still a point of contention. Yet, parody is not the issue at hand in this analysis. Puig's overuse of mass culture products draws the role of author and reader into play, perhaps more than any other novel that he has created.

The manipulation and portrayal of mass culture has drawn attention to the author as doling out part of the responsibility of "divine intervention" to the reader. The latter must actively participate in the creation of the novel, yet the proliferation of mass culture and myth, both derived from present and past, conflict with and complement the pre-textual myths taken from the extra-literary world, once again offering the potential for a variety of readings based on the infusion of the parameters of myth established by the reader and juxtaposed with their portrayal in the text.

The traditional form of the epistolary is seen in another light as well. As with Puig's first novel, Boquitas pintadas uses the convention of letter writing to expose underlying deception and to obscure it as well. In fact, the emphasis lies on what is hidden instead of the one side of the correspondence that is revealed. Yet, although the text abounds with a proliferation of techniques, genres, and narrative forms, which coexist and create a very dynamic

literary reality, the focus always returns to the sad, monotonous lives of the characters who have also built their beliefs upon the same ideals reflected and confounded in the text. Thus, Boquitas pintadas transcends the self-reflexive text. One may contend that, instead it mirrors everything that an authorial force, the reader and the fictive entities provide--the boundaries for potential readings have been re-written and at the same time effaced, re-created, and welcomed to once again build upon its creative sources.

NOTES

1. See Pamela Bacarisse, "The First Four Novels of Manuel Puig: Parts of a Whole?" Ibero-Amerikanishes Archiv, IV, 4 (November, 1978), 253-263. She refutes the general consensus that Boquitas pintadas is a mere continuation of La traición de Rita Hayworth.

2. La traición de Rita Hayworth takes place between 1933 and 1939 whereas Boquitas pintadas covers the period between 1935 and 1968.

3. See Ronald Christ, "An Interview with Manuel Puig," Partisan Review 44 (1977): 52; Jorgelina Corbatta, "Encuentros con Manuel Puig," Revista Iberoamericana 49 (1983), 591-620; Saúl Sosnowski, "Entrevista con Manuel Puig," Hispamérica 3 (1973), 69-80.

4. "Manuel Puig's Heartbreak Tango: Women and Mass Culture," Latin American Literary Review. Her detailed study conentrates on this novel as a "meta-serial...that Puig has utilized as a pervasive mass cultural format which is common to radio and television soap operas, comics, continuing series in magazines, newspapers, movies and television, as well as the early novel itself" (29).

5. Manuel Puig, "El folletín rescatado," Interview conducted by Emir Rodríguez Monegal, Revista de la Universidad de México 27.2 (1972): 32.

6. In an interview with Ronald Christ, Puig defends the basis for the development of Boquitas pintadas: "I had admired these people [upon whom I had based my characters], and I had feared them and rejected them at the same time--their strength, their use of authority was unpleasant to me. Meanwhile they had a certain shine, a self-assurance that was fascinating.... The story was all about failure: the failure of people who had believed in all the lies of authority. An in the rhetoric of passion too. They had believed the words of the songs: love was something that everything else had to be sacrificed to. But, these middle-class people had not really acted according to passion. Their real attitude was a scheming one, a calculating one--a Catholic, middle class, cold approach to things, always direct to climbing a little further up on the social scale. As a matter of fact, they had betrayed their belief in passion by their conduct" (54).

7. "Mitología: otro nivel de metalenguage en Boquitas pintadas," Revista Iberoamericana 90 (1975): 47-58.

8. "The Fiction of Popular Design and Desire: Manuel Puig's Boquitas pintadas," MLN 97.2 (1982): 411.

9. Unlike Juan Carlos' letters to Nené, her letters to Juan Carlos, which had been wrapped in pink ribbon, had never been untied. Therefore, when incinerated in a bunch, they did not come apart and their ashes were not spread.

10. "Las crónicas de Manuel Puig," Cuadernos Hispanomericanos 274 (1972): 105.

11. Quotes are cited from Manuel Puig, Boquitas pintadas, (Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1968).

12. "Order, Chaos, and Re-order: The Novels of Manuel Puig," Kentucky Romance Quarterly 30.2 (1983): 191.

13. See Lucille Kerr, Suspended Fictions: Reading Novels by Manuel Puig (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1987), 80-130, for a detailed study of the temporal play of the novel. She refers to the constant shifting of temporal planes as analeptic and proleptic movements, that both contributes to the models of seduction and suspends the fiction above the text.

14. Although the exact date of Pancho's death is not provided until chapter twelve in a formal police report (181), Juan Carlos alludes to the event in a letter to Nené dated "28 de junio" in chapter eleven.

15. The concept of "grafting" of texts by the use of the "folletín" in Boquitas pintadas was introduced by Severo Sarduy in, "Notas a las notas... A propósito de Manuel Puig," Revista Iberoamericana 72.36 (1976), 555-567.

16. For a detailed study of the use of the "folletín" in Boquitas pintadas, see Alicia Andreu, "El Folletín: De Galdós a Manuel Puig," Revista Iberoamericana 49 (1983), 541-546; Lucille Kerr, "A Succession of Popular Designs: Boquitas pintadas," Suspended Fictions: Reading Novels by Manuel Puig; Alfred MacAdam, "Las Crónicas de Manuel Puig," Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos 274 (1972), 85-106; Julio Rodríguez-Luis, "Boquitas pintadas: ¿Folletín unanimista?," Sin Nombre 5.1 (1974), 50-56; Severo Sarduy, "Boquitas pintadas: parodia e injerto," Sur 321 (1969), 71-77; Gilberto Trviños, "La destrucción del verosímil folletinesco en Boquitas pintadas," Texto crítico 9 (1978), 117-130.

17. See Douglas Thompson, Manuel Puig's Boquitas pintadas: True Romance of Our Time," Critique 23.1 (1981),37-44. He contends that "Boquitas pintadas attacks

the very thing it borrows from so freely: popular sentimental art forms" (43).

18. See in particular pages 48-51 where Bacarisse describes the typical "folletín" reader as well as the common traits found within the art form. She contends that they do not exist in Boquitas pintadas.

19. Subliteraturas (Barcelona: Ariel, 1974), 141-142.

20. See Severo Sarduy, "Boquitas pintadas: parodia e injerto," ^WSur^W 321 (1969), 71-77. He posits that the folletín constantly points to itself, "aparato cuya única función es la ostentación de su engranaje" (72). According to Sarduy, the result in Boquitas pintadas is "la transgresión paródica, el doble irrisorio del folletín" (73).

21. Ellen McCracken emphasizes that one of the overriding principles of mass culture (and popular culture) products is "a commodity which is bought and sold on the market, one which poses no threat to the dominant order. (27)

22. I refer to Tirso de Molina, El burlador de Sevilla, 1630; Juan de Zorrilla, Don Juan Tenorio, 1844.

23. David Southard, "Betrayed by Manuel Puig: Reader Deception and Anti-Climax in His Novels," ^WLatin American ^W ^WLiterary Review^W 9 (Fall-Winter 1976): 24.

EL BESO DE LA MUJER ARAÑA
THE SPIDER AND THE FLY

Manuel Puig's fourth novel, El beso de la mujer araña (1976)[1] demonstrates his greatest manipulation of narrative conventions, use of popular culture, and shifting voice of authority. As in La traición de Rita Hayworth, Boquitas pintadas, and Sange de amor correspondido this novel offers an authorial voice that seems to be conspicuously and deceptively absent. Puig has evidently strayed from traditional techniques, delegating authorial control to the characters or reader, only to snatch it away in the text's final pages. This void does not leave the text without a controlling force, but makes it difficult to identify or pin down. The absence of authorial omnipotence underscores Puig's penchant for authorial and textual manipulation. He allows the reader to participate in the (re)writing of the novel in order to give him the impression that he indeed has either identified the controlling voice, or has gone as far as to be part of it. Upon reading the text, one can easily become captured in its deceptive entrapments that have been laid out by formal structure, narrative techniques and authorial voice. Once the reader

has unearthed one strategy or reading of one piece to the puzzle, another overtakes him.

El beso de la mujer araña focuses upon two characters, Luis Alberto Molina and Valentín Arregui Paz, whose full names are not provided until chapter eight in a formal police report. They are imprisoned in the Villa Devoto penitentiary on the outskirts of Buenos Aires, physically and socially alienated from the rest of society. Molina, a homosexual, has been sentenced to eight years in prison for the corruption of minors. Valentín, a self-professed Marxist revolutionary, is serving an indefinite sentence for an unspecified disturbance relating to a factory strike.

The majority of the novel takes place within the four walls of the cell except for Molina's meetings with the Director, the police report that describes Molina's short-lived freedom, and Valentín's mysterious interior monologue.

To pass the time within the confines that have physically entrapped them, Molina narrates film recollections of the 1930s and 1940s to Valentín that becomes infused with their dialogue. Both dialogue and cinematic narration are difficult to separate or distinguish. For example, the novel begins with the narration of the movie,"The Panther Woman" which is not revealed until much later when Valentín interrupts by asking

questions about the movie. Until that point, the cinematic discourse is presented as if it were the plot of the text. As in Puig's other novels, action is not a key factor in the story. Very little transpires within the time frame of April 4, 1974 to October 25, 1975.[2] Instead, the plot focuses on the establishment of Valentín's relationship with Molina and the struggle for psychological and emotional control which provides the basis for their web of deception.

Both Molina and Valentín implicitly scheme to betray the other. Both have motives for deception but it is only made gradually clear to the reader. Molina has the chance for early parole if he can coerce Valentín in revealing information about his revolutionary comrades. Valentín allows Molina to develop an emotional and physical relationship in order to attempt to use him as a potential messenger to his fellow revolutionary members once he is paroled (although Molina's imminent release is not announced until chapter 8). Molina, on the other hand, attempts to fulfill his emotional needs and physical desires through befriending and eventually seducing Valentín. Neither can escape the chains of physical, emotional, and psychological entrapment. They are willing to become entrapped in order to deceive. Molina is the victim of the prison/government's scheme to expose leftist activities. It seems that Molina's life is worth much less than apprehending anti-government members. Valentín as well sacrifices his sexual preference to befriend Molina. Valentín and Molina betray each other,

as well as themselves. The reader, also can become ensnared in the web spun by their implicit schemes.

Puig, too has spun a complex web that is tightly interwoven by a deceptive formal structure, varying levels of dialogue and narrative voice, and authorial control. To analyze one strand of the whole is to risk becoming entangled in several interconnecting and underlying counterparts. Through the analysis of El beso de la mujer araña, I will unmask the individual strands of the web along with their potential to deceive and entrap the reader. I will examine the levels of entrapment and alienation through the text's superficially simplistic formal structure that masks its underlying complexity. Secondly, generic and narrative techniques that vary from political and cinematic discourse, to footnoting, not to mention the role of pop culture, play key roles in textual entrapment and alienation. Also the manipulation of an authorial and authoritative voice continually shift the potential readings of the text. Through the twists and turns of shifting authorial voice, narrative technique and dialogue, Molina and Valentín's individual schemes of deception and entrapment surface, and at the same time, unearth other possible readings. The precarious relationship between reader, author and text takes precedence in the interpretation of El beso de la mujer araña, which both opens the text and the potential for reader alienation and entrapment.

Early in the novel, the establishment of Valentín's relationship with Molina and struggle for emotional, psychological, and narrative control is reflected through the prisoners' private dialogue, film narrations, and other narrative devices, such as stream of consciousness, prison documents, and script-like dialogues between "El director y el procesado." These varying narrative devices display both the quest for narrative control as well as a premise for textual seduction. One overt narrative technique binds characters and reader--the presence of cinema as a narrative voice.

Valentín and Molina pass the time away in the prison cell while Molina narrates his favorite Grade B movies to his cellmate. A function of this type of medium in the novel becomes cinematic discourse which seduces character and reader alike. The mass-culture Hollywood Grade B films that appear in El beso de la mujer araña[3] follow a simplistic pattern. These movies are easily understandable, many times with contrived plots. The ideals as well display a superficial simplicity. The film tends to move toward idealized truths that always encounter happy endings. The movie also seems to be based on "infantile logic" (Bordwell, 159) Yet, for all its obtuse characteristics, the spectator (which includes character and reader alike) is easily convinced to watch, precariously lured into the trap of self-absorption. The cinema, as well as other narrative techniques, structure and manipulative authorial voice

contribute to the overall premise of entrapment and alienation of El beso de la mujer araña. The web is held together by a common thread that weaves the text together: the stifling element of repression.

This topic is not unfamiliar to Puig's readers. His previous novels implicitly criticize repressive Argentinian control of the Perón regimes of 1946-55 and 1973-74.[4] Like Puig's previous works, he once again sets his novel in Buenos Aires during a period under the grips of an oppressive dictatorship. More specifically, the novel takes place in the most repressive atmosphere possible: in the prison Villa Devoto on the outskirts of the city. But on the contrary, in this text the decades of the 1930s and 1940s are not the focus, rather the author's present of the 1970s serves as the time frame. Secondly, whereas in his previous novels the subject of political repression during the regime of Juan Perón may be covertly criticized, this theme indeed significantly shapes El beso de la mujer araña. Juan Goytisolo points out the novel's potential to expose to society the destructive effects of such gripping governmental control:

> [Es] en efecto testimonio demoledor, implacable del mal que corroe no sólo a la Argentina, sino a la totalidad de Latinoamérica: de la monstruosa pirámide de opresión política, social y moral que aplasta a los hombres y mujeres del continente en nombre de unos valores cuya inanidad y mentira resulta cada dia más flagrante.[5]

Although the time frame has changed, the atmosphere has not. The Perón dictatorship had been regenerated during the 1970s with the same ideologies and oppressive attitudes as in its

earlier dictatorship. Puig's perspective of the latter era of 1973-74 though, stands from a distanced view. Whereas he wrote his earlier novels based upon memories of his childhood, El beso de la mujer araña was composed while he lived in New York City, geographically alienated from the reality of his native land. This novel was censored in Argentina, due to its critical overtones against the government. Thus, like its characters, El beso de la mujer araña spent time alienated from its representative society.

The criticism of Argentina's repressive political and societal situation (or that of Latin America) is manifest in El beso de la mujer araña. The text focuses on two imprisoned men who represent the margins of society. Their prison reports in chapter eight reveal that neither was arrested for a specific crime. Rather, it seems that both Valentín and Molina are convicted for their potential danger to topple an ideal society. They are marginalized within the cell under the scrutinizing eye of prison officials (who, of course are representatives of the government), as well as from the society that rejected them. These victims of society, government, or perhaps even fate, discover that they do not stand on opposite poles as it would seem. Nevertheless, neither character can seem to break the bonds that the government has imposed on them. Valentín and Molina's demise points to entrapment which they helped create. Once Molina acheives his freedom by cooperating with prison officials, he is gunned down in a train station

as he is about to meet with Valentín's comrades. Once again, the trickster is duped by his own hand. Valentín, too is unable to escape the bonds of repression. His final appearance shows him in a morphine-induced dream, attempting to escape the pain of a prison torture session.

The element of repression runs even deeper than a political level in the novel. Various strategies contribute to the deceptive twists of El beso de la mujer araña, revealing a complex scheme of power and control. Perhaps the most covert is the novel's formal structure.

STRUCTURAL CHAOS

The formal structure of this novel seems to follow a linear, clear-cut path that takes the story and the reader chronologically from April 4, 1974 to October 25, 1975. It is curious that this novel is so specifically ordered when the concept of time means little to two prisoners serving a "timeless " sentence. What appears to be a tightly ordered text is actually one that is threatened by chaos. Puig follows the same patterns of his previous works by structuring the text with sixteen chapters divided in two symmetrical parts.

The first half of the novel seems to develop a mutual relationship between two men of opposite ideals, deeds and desires. However, the final chapter of this division sends the text to an abrupt halt, as Pamela Bacarisse asserts:

> It is only when the reader, too, has been lulled into an attitude of complaisant indulgence that the bombshell is dropped. In the strategically-placed chapter eight, we discover that Molina had in fact been planted in Cell 7

> in the previous April...the stakes are as high as they could be: Molina is playing for his freedom and, too, his peace of mind and happiness, for if he serves out his full sentence it is almost certain that he will never again see his old and infirm mother. This revelation obliges the reader to reconsider, if not re-read, everything that has gone before it, and this has the same effect as a second reading of a mystery story, when the criminal's identity is known.[6]

This discovery of ulterior motives divides the text as a counteracting force of "engaño" versus "desengaño" where the final pages cannot offer a solution to the textual entanglements.

Unlike the other novels, El beso de la mujer araña strays by not only following a linear pattern, but also lacks many of the other novels' characteristics that further (or in Puig's case, halt) the progression of the action, such as fragmentation and repetition. In other words, Puig has omitted the glitter of his "acotaciones," such as the epigraphs of La traición de Rita Hayworth. In its place is the ironic use of kitsch.[7] Jonathan Tittler contends that Puig uses kitsch in two ways:

> First its predictable regularity suggests that the novels are consumer-oriented, mass-produced pulp literature, which, if certain passages were lifted out of context, they would resemble. Second, the symmetrical structure imposes a new context of strict order on the chaotic, contradictory, disconnected mass-media material. (188)

The paradigms of kitsch, or more precisely, movies from the 1930s and 1940s, are used as a framing device that shifts narrative focus between the diverse sections of the text. This shift between popular and literary worlds is pronounced in the play between film and dialogue that is established

from the onset of the novel. Molina narrates his vast library of old films to Valentín to make the eternal passage of their prison term more bearable. These plots are interspersed with framing dialogues that range from simple conversation to psychoanalysis and the prisoners' innermost fears and desires. Jonathan Tittler contends that as the novel progresses and Valentin and Molina's relationship grows that:

> a curious textual process unfolds: the frame and the picture-story change places in relative importance, the movies becoming flat and insipid while the characters take on dimension. Like an art-gallery customer who has spilled paint thinner on a canvas, the reader is left staring at the valuable frame. (194)

It might seem that the gap between cinematic narration and the dialogue generated from such reception would easily be discernable. On the contrary, the two are linked together by thematic and narrative bonds that constantly reflect each other. The film narrations that spring forth from Molina's "picture-perfect" memory are inseparable from the definition of his character and linguistic ticks. They are not only an extension of Molina, but also provide him with the facade of narrative control. This convolution of film and dialogue leaves the reader with a puzzle to piece together as he takes part in the narrative process.

One more structural complication can be noted by the interpolation of film narration. Puig's quixotic intercalations reflect the stories of old, however with a modern twist. Instead of having a character relate tales to other fictive entities without bowing out of the picture,

Puig has delegated the cinematic narrative to tell the stories of the fictive entities. Yet, in order to come to a deeper understanding of the precarious relationship between film and fiction, we must take into closer consideration the narrative devices, more specifically, the role of the cinema.

VOICES FROM BEYOND THE MARGINS

Not only is the film a unique form of narration, but also its presentation within the dialogue poses a deceptive narrative statement. The narrow demarcation between reality and fantasy is quickly and often erased throughout the text.

Larger-than-life images and star personas of the movie screen offer both an escape mechanism as well as paradigms and prototypes of social norms that "provide a mirror where the viewer can recognize himself in the counterfeit image it throws back of him." (Pellón, 186) Thus the spectator is invited to entrap himself in the gap between what is portrayed as reality and what truly exists. The glitter of the Hollywood movies provide the opiate to deaden the reality of existence, or in the case of Valentín and Molina, to survive the oppressive pain of reality.

In El beso de la mujer araña the focus is set upon the actual escape mechanism instead of the characters themselves. This is emphasized by the fact that the dialogue between Molina and Valentín is indicated only by slashes. Their names are not even introduced until pages 18 and 25 respectively. Nor does the reader discover their

is offered to the reader.

These details seem trivial, thus taking a back seat to the films. The opening paragraph of the novel presents a movie, not the characters. The reader, however, is unaware that the narration is actually a recollection of a film. There is no indication of it until page 13 when dialogue interrupts the film narration:

---Para la colega arquitecta.

---¿Cómo sabes?

---Nada, lo acerté, no más.

---Vos viste la película.

Once the reader discovers the source of narration, the narrative fragments begin to fit together. The discovery of the split narrative voice denotes another role given to the reader. Already required to participate in the Borgesian-like puzzle, the reader now becomes part of a fictive audience as well. He, like Valentín is an active spectator to Molina's narration. It is as if the prison cell has become enlarged to entrap the reader.

Along with providing a listening ear to Molina's stories, Valentín's contribution to the narration is to move the story along by asking questions about details or attempting to take control of the dialogue by analyzing or criticizing Molina's narratives. But his interjections provide another function: to let the reader know of Valentín's existence and his reactions to the films. The interaction between Molina and Valentín provide the purpose

for continuing the text. Valentín's reactions to the movies account for the continuing dialogue. Molina vies for narrative control and a type of textual seduction for Valentín as well as the reader by manipulating the film recollections. He purposely omits details, only to return to them at a later time which demands that the audience re-think Molina's narration: "Y con la luz de los candelabros el está tocando algo un poco triste porque me olvidé de decirte que ella está llegando tarde a la cita" (86). He shows another form of control by leaving his audience in the dark:

> Y lo que se oye ahora es el ruido de pisadas entre los matorrales del parque pisadas de animal, que se acercan.
>
> ---¿Y?
>
> ---Mañana seguimos. Chau, que duermas bien.
>
> ---Ya me las vas a pagar. (32)

By abandoning the narrative at his whims, Molina leaves the "text" hanging, along with Valentín and the reader, thus tempting all interested parties to maintain an eager listening ear.

The text begins with the narration of "The Panther Woman," through the detailed description of a beautiful young lady, one that is derived from a person well attuned to feminine perspectives. The reader might assume that the narrator is female. It is Valentín, not Molina who reveals both only the identification of the narrator and also his intentions to transcend the cell through his dream-world.

Valentín keeps a watchful eye on the fine line between reality and the imagination, not allowing Molina to tempt to drag him into the world of fantasy:

> --las piernas las tiene entrelazadas, los zapatos son negros, de taco alto y grueso, sin puntera, se asoman las uñas pintadas de oscuro. Las medias son brillosas, ese tipo de malla cristal de seda, no se sabe si es rosada la carne o la media.
>
> --Perdón pero acordate de lo que te dije, no hagas descripciones eróticas. Sabés que no conviene (13).

In order to control the narration, the protagonists must strive beyond their personal dialogue. Each must struggle to maintain the role of storyteller, which seems to lie in the hands of Molina. The film narrations belong to Molina's nostalgic recollections which he can offer to his audience or refuse to provide full details. He plays the role of the censor as well, editing and choosing the scenes as he wants them played, or at least how he has remembered them. He narrates the scenes as if he had witnessed their creation. For example, in this first film narration, he knows that the panther cannot smell the woman while she sketches near the cage. For Molina, the films have replaced the realm of dreams, thus accounting for his ability to incorporate all of his senses into his film narrations. Molina also chooses the "modus operandi," opting to relate his tales at night while he and Valentín are laying in their beds getting ready to fall into the realm of dreams. He offers his stories by installments to bait his audience for the next night. Yet from the onset of the text, the struggle for narrative, psychological and emotional control is evident.

Although Valentín shows a stoic fortitude to resist the aesthetic pleasures of the movies, he finds himself seduced by the narration of the panther woman who is cursed by her ancestors: "¡Estás loco!, ¿Y la pantera? Me dejaste en suspenso desde anoche" (34). As Masiello contends, Valentín's analysis does not stem from the same perspective as Molina's:

> Puig contrasts Valentín's critical analysis with Molina's sentimental evaluations of the films described and allows for a series of metacritical alternatives that span the field of possible literay interpretations. Each character brings to the critical act a priori assumptions about art. For Molina, the screen universe is perfectly congruent with the everyday world. Molina understands art as a mimetic alternative to real life woes. (20)

Valentín sees the movie as "una alegoría" (36) of the sexual appetite between male and female. His venue for escape lies in his books of politics and philosophy which he uses to interpret Molina's creations. Despite their different criteria for artistic evaluation, the results remain the same: they are both attracted to the film narration. Valentín, unaware of his intrigue, begins to fall into Molina's trap.

Further baiting his cellmate, Molina employs another form of entrapment by contaminating his narration of movies with facts from Valentín's love life. Molina names Valentín's girlfriend after the character to whom Valentín is attracted in the "Panther Woman" movie:

> --Yo ahora me acordé el nombre de la artista que hace de arquitecta.
> --¿Cómo es?

--Jane Randolph.

--Nunca la oí nombrar.

--Es de hace mucho, del cuarenta, por ahí. A tu compañera le podemos decir Jane Randolph.

--Jane Randolph.

--Jane Randolph en...El misterio de la celda siete.

--Una de las iniciales le va... (49)

Until the end of Chapter Two, which indicates the end of the panther woman movie, Molina and Valentín refer to Valentín's girlfriend as Jane Randolph, subtly incorporating fiction with reality. He later identifies with Jane Randolph as his own girlfirend and as the one who is in danger, not the arquitect. Valentín's point of view may seem ironic since he had been an arquitect before his arrest. Yet, Molina further deceives Valentín by capturing his interest through providing a role model for him, in a sense--a psychoanalytical perspective. From the first film narration, Molina offers bait to entrap Valentín's intellectual or political curiosity. The nameless (but "obviously" evil) psychiatrist attempts to critically solve the panther woman's dilemma, but in the end, causes her to turn to her dark side and murder him, set off by the fateful kiss that transformed her into the panther (much like the kiss between Molina and Valentín which marks the prelude to Molina's death).

For Molina, the self-absorption and deception of all his movie narrations is much more serious. The reader is immediately aware of the careful attention Molina gives to

minute details that deal with sexual identification. His contempt for the male is evident throughout the narration of this first movie:

> y la pantera la mira, es una pantera macho y no se sabe si es para despedazarla, y después comerla, o si la mira llevada por otro instinto más feo todavía. (9)

As in all of his narrations, Molina never names his male characters or provides detailed descriptions of the protagonists. His rejection of male identity becomes obvious through his film discourse. In this film, the lover of the panther woman, whom she eventually marries, is innocently victimized and is never praised by Molina for his heroic efforts to allay her fears and cure her of her curse.

Rather, Molina portrays him as a person who needs to mother someone. The other male character, the psychiatrist, shows his desire to help the panther woman as secondary; his first goal, as Molina recalls, is to have sexual relations with her. Molina's control of the narrative and subsequent point of view is emphasized by the fact that the reader never has the privilege of reading any actual dialogue within the movie. Instead, the narrations are all presented in the third person present tense as a re-run from Molina's imagination. The women in the movies play a major role for Molina, as both a tool for psychological self-identification and for a device of entrapment. It is evident through his narrations that Molina is obsessed with women. He pays special attention to detail when it comes to describing female characters, be it their clothes or the special

hair-do they sport. On the other hand, Molina is able to suffer from memory relapses at will, causing an ellipsis in the narrative movement. Much to Valentín's aggravation, he insists that Molina recall the details to which Molina plays dumb. He often leaves Valentín in suspense by omitting details, or even worse, stopping the narration entirely at a climactic moment. Molina knows that this is one way of weaving his web a bit stronger. The conflation of text and context provides the backdrop for Valentín's opportunity to confide in Molina about his "compañera," "Jane Randolph" as well as attempt to take narrative control: Hagamos una cosa: cuando yo sienta que te pueda contar algo te lo voy a contar con todo gusto. Pero no me lo pidas, yo sólo te voy a sacar el tema (53). Puig snatches away Valentín's stronghold by abruptly ending the chapter, only to open the next with a new movie narration.

As time progresses, Molina continues to set his trap. The following two chapters deal with a Nazi propaganda film in which a young and beautiful French caberet singer, Leni compromises her patriotic loyalty by falling in love with a handsome German officer. She ends up a heroine, sacrificing her life for the German officer and the Third Reich. This is the perfect movie for Valentín and Molina, placing their ideals, politics and love in opposing positions. Neither can understand the other's viewpoint:

> --Es que la película era divina, y para mí la película es lo que me importa, porque total mientras estoy acá encerrado no puedo hacer otra cosa que pensar en cosas lindas, para no volverme loco, ¿no?... Contestame.

--¿Qué querés que te conteste?

--Qué me dejes un poco que me escape de la realidad, para qué me voy a desesperar más todavía? ¿Querés que me vuelva loco? Porque loca ya soy. (85)

Valentín warns Molina of the dangers of his complete escape into his fabricated reality but Molina pays no attention. He has become entrapped by the film he appears to narrate, identifying himself with Leni, the heroine. This is underlined by the sarcastic use of the feminine adjective in his self-description, "loca ya soy." To Molina, Leni represents the epitome of feminism. She is beautiful, intelligent, tender, and most of all, she is willing to sacrifice her life for the sake of her lover. Although her lover is an army official of the German enemy, she overlooks their differences. However, an official of the "maquis" blackmails Leni to steal information for the French underground and at the same time sways her into believing that her lover's ideals and beliefs are evil. When she confronts Werner, he escorts her to the army's secret headquarters. It is there that he shows Leni the army's activities through documentary German film. Leni, like Molina is convinced of a certain representation of reality through the silver screen, which entraps both of them. Through his identification with the weaker sex, Molina also strives to show Valentín his submissiveness.

Molina's identification with Leni also stems from his idealization of the perfect male lover, which is how he envisions his waiter "friend," Gabriel, who like the

characters in Molina's narrations, is "un galán de película" (69), and unattainable since he is heterosexual and happily married:

> --¿Qué es ser hombre, para vos?
>
> --Es muchas cosas, pero para mí...bueno, lo más lindo del hombre es eso, ser lindo, fuerte, pero sin hacer alharaca de fuerza, y que va avanzando seguro. Que camine seguro, como mi mozo, que hable sin miedo, que sepa lo que quiere, adonda va, sin miedo de nada.
>
> --Es una idealización, un tipo así no existe. (69)

Valentín's reaction reveals his vulnerability to pangs of jealousy, which demonstrates to Molina that Valentín may be suseptible to his amorous intentions. When Molina proposes the same question to Valentín, the latter, more or less, reproaches Molina in a protective manner: "no dejarme basurear por nadie...es no rebajar a nadie, con una orden, con una propina" (70). His advice goes unheeded, by Molina as well as by himself.

Valentín's weakening becomes evident through the film narrations and his reactions to them. Valentín is affected by Molina's hypersensitivity when Valentín hurts his feelings. He cannot fathom Molina's gullibility to the false political ideals which the Nazi movie expresses. Upon scolding Molina for this, he becomes crushed and begins to cry. Valentín realizes that perhaps his political ideology is not as important as he had thought. In fact, he falls a bit deeper into Molina's trap:

> --Y contame un poco más de la película...
>
> --Por que, ¿te aburre?

--No me gusta pero estoy intrigado. (85)

Valentín had offered little information previously about his life, claiming that Molina would not know his world. Through the movies, he reveals the details of the middle-class life he had rejected and that he really is not much different from Molina. Both characters inwardly struggle for the need to be accepted and nurtured. The Nazi film reveals not only its superficiality but also the power of love that can overcome any obstacle. It does not matter to Molina if the movie doesn't portray truth or reality, he is entrapped in the only escape mechanism that helps him to forget his physical confines: "para mi la película es lo que me importa, porque total mientras estoy acá encerrado no puedo hacer otra cosa que pensar en cosas lindas, para no volverme loco" (85).

Valentín warns him that he can go crazy by "alienañdote... escapar así es como una droga." (85) Little does Valentín realize that he has fallen for the same trap.

A turning point in the narrative is evident that shows Molina's contempt for Valentín's criticism of his sentimentality. His inward thoughts lash out at Valentín. Along with it, the following dialogue reveals that Molina is meeting with his lawyer to sign "special" papers, which in an isolated incident would not arouse any suspicion. A few pages later, the beginnings of treachery from beyond the cell invade the text. When the daily "polenta" arrives, Molina offers the larger plate to his cellmate knowing that

it is tainted, but Valentín rejects it. Molina ends up eating it so that Valentín will not suspect anything. The final pages of the chapter reveal Molina sick and helpless. Moreover, the scene shows Valentín's reluctance to help him, a trap which doubles back on the trickster; Valentín shows that distance is a form of control. He suggests that Molina finish the film narration to keep his mind off of his intestines.

The tables are turned when Molina successfully carries out his mission to feed Valentín poisoned rice. Molina combines his film narrations with Valentín's illness to take advantage of him. Valentín becomes dependent upon Molina for both physical and emotional support, which did not occur for Molina during his illness, making Valentín more vulnerable to Molina's web of deception. The movie he narrates conveniently parallels Valentín's life. The mother and father are divorced, the son is a drifter who seeks financial support from his father. It seems that the mother, a plantation owner on a tropical island, is the innocent victim of oppressive political dealings. The details of the family reflect Valentín's life which alienates him more than he already is. Ironically the female heroine, who represents a maternal idol for Molina, turns out to be the true betrayer and is executed in the end. The young male protagonist realizes that he had set up the death of his mother by allowing a group of revolutionaries dictate his life. The reader at this point may not realize the

connection, but this, of course parallels Molina's final demise.

To keep Valentín firmly in his grasp, Molina baits him with another horror film. Molina has chosen this movie because Valentín admits to him how much he liked the same type of story in the panther woman movie:

> --¿No te acordás de ninguna del tipo de la mujer pantera? Esa fue la que más me gustó.
>
> --Bueno, así fantásticas hay muchas.
>
> --A ver, decí ¿cuáles?
>
> --Bueno, ... Drácula, El hombre lobo...
>
> --¿Qué otras?
>
> --La vuelta de la mujer zombi...
>
> --¡Esa! A esa nunca la ví. (163)

The narration of "Vuelta de la mujer zombi" through chapters nine and ten is significant in other ways as well. Molina is aware that Valentín is attracted to horror movies, but he may not realize the ramifications of this particular inclination. Puig's deformation of "I Walked with a Zombie" fits the other film narrations, following the tragic plot line that emphasizes the suffering femme fatale.[8] In Puig's version, the heroic actions revolve around two women, one who comes to a tropical island from the United States in order to marry a plantation owner. The other, the plantation owner's first wife, appears as a zombie like the other workers of the plantation. While the weak husband pines over his dead first wife, drinking himself into a stupor every night, his new wife confides in the witch

doctor to find a cure. The movie culminates with the zombie killing the husband and setting fire to the zombie huts, thus liberating the oppressed inhabitants of the island. The movie follows Molina's ideals as well as his situation. As with his other narrations, he identifies with the female, opposing the male authority figure. In this film, the relationship leads to marriage, which underscores Molina's constant preoccupation with his sexuality and resulting alienation from "normal" society. Valentín's situation is emphasized as well, representing a weak male figure. He has become a zombie in a sense, poisoned by the prison food and completely dependent upon Molina's care. Stephanie Merrim stresses that his vulnerability exposes his bourgeois family origins, hidden emotions and tastes. Even more important, he confesses that he loves, not his comrade in revolution, the middle class Marta, thereby framing a love triangle between a "healthy" woman and a political "zombie," who nonetheless (as did the first wife) retains his affections. (307) Valentín has completely transformed his image from strong, stoic political revolutionary into a weak, emotional bourgeios male who, like the husband in the movie, does not have the power to liberate the oppressed by his own will. Valentín has implicitly invited Molina to become part of the love triangle with "both the caretaker and victor which will allow him to become Molina's lover" (Merrim, 307). Molina is not finished with his plans of entrapment. As a final film narration, he chooses one that he would enjoy telling

instead of consulting Valentín. This film takes place in Vera Cruz and Mexico City where a handsome young man meets a breathtakingly beautiful woman at a masked ball. Their relationship seems to have the ideal future, but as in all of Molina's films, the utopian dream shall soon end. The rich heroine cannot commit herself to her lover for she is chained to an oppressive marriage to a controlling husband with Mafia type affiliations.[9] The former nightclub singer attempts to stage a comeback but her husband manages to have the club closed down at her debut. At the same time she cannot ignore her love for the faithful journalist. He saves her reputation by smearing ink over a slanderous article that was about to go to press. The loss of his job results from his heroic actions, thus the nameless young hero turns to bouts of heavy drinking while writing lyrics in the bar for his lover to one day sing. His health fails and from his hospital bed, he calls her name. When she is found, she had managed to escape the clutches of her husband. She vows to save her lover, and in order to do so she must prostitute herself to pay for his hospital bill. When he discovers that she was not singing to support him, he leaves her so that she would not have to sacrifice herself. Molina's choice of film parallels with his own situation; he too has prostituted himself for the prison warden. He sees himself as the selfless heroine, and Valentín, the sick lover. As much as Valentín attempts to control his resistance, he inevitably falls into the trap of

sentimentality and admits to Molina its appropriateness to their own situation. The ending mirrors all of the films in its tragedy. However, this movie ends as the novel will, with the death of one of the lovers. The journalist dies as the heroine once again finds him in a hospital. She knows that he will always be with her, if only in memory of his songs. Molina focuses on the final frame: a close-up of the heroine's face reveals a smile while tears stream down her face. Valentín is intrigued for he feels that it is better to have loved and lost, which he relates to his own situation ("Te voy a extrañar, Molinita" 263.) Molina's perspective runs deeper. He cannot accept the "fin enigmático" (263).

The disparate voices created by Molina's narrations establish the enigmatic tone of the text that Molina has just labeled in his final movie recollection. Both Molina and Valentín develop through the film narrations and their reactions to them. However, another narrative voice contributes not only to their character development, but also to the premises of entrapment and alienation.

VOICES FROM WITHIN

The introduction of another narrative technique in the text serves as a distancing device for the reader, shifting focus to yet another convention. The use of interior monologue in <u>El beso de la mujer araña</u> mirrors the cinematic narrative, yet it serves to alienate and entrap character and reader. On one hand, interior monologue expresses the

innermost thoughts of the characters, closing them off from the other fictive entities and the inside world of the cell. The reader has the privilege to be the sole spectator, placed inside the four prison walls, and more specifically, inside the character's mind. Moreover, the interior monologue alienates the character from reality and entraps him in his created world. The reader must jump back and forth from several planes--from the cinematic narration, to dialogue, to interior monologues of Molina and Valentín. The boundaries between fantasy and reality, narrative control and entrapment are constantly redefined while exposing possible readings.

Molina's interior monologue in chapter five shows the link between private thought and film discourse, both which proves his entrapment and dependence upon the cinematic world. In this instance, Puig invites the reader to view Molina's thoughts as privileged information, that which cannot be contaminated by Valentín's interruptions. Molina offers a version of "The Enchanted Cottage" through stream-of-consciousness ramblings. In this movie Molina lets his imagination blend in with the real because he does not have anyone to criticize him. While Valentín is "transcending the cell" through his books on Marxist theory, Molina is escaping reality within his mind. Molina chooses to reiterate this movie in the form of interior monologue to closes himself off from the rest of his small world, which allows Molina to alienate himself from reality, the cell and

Valentín.

For Molina this movie is special, and as a form of narration it shows its distinctions. The recollection of the movie is a direct, "pure" reflection of Molina, unedited for an audience, but it seems to be a narration that takes several twists and turns. On one level, the narration is an intrusion of Molina's private thoughts, but on another it serves as a meta-narration where Molina acts as both narrator, interpreter, and interlocutor.[10] In one sense he and the reader are doubly distanced from the narration.

Molina chooses a film that has an omniscient narrator to tell the story taking place, one that focuses on other characters. Moreover, the narrator is a blind man who relates the details from an internalized perspective, much like the stream-of-consciousness narration presented in Molina's mind.

The narrator explains the metamorphoses that are taking place within the movie. The ugly couple transforms into the beautiful through, ironically as the blind narrator states, "the glow of the eyes" (109). The heroic fighter pilot who brings his fiancé to the cottage to plan their honeymoon becomes horribly scarred before the event can be carried out. After the breakup of his relationship he arrives alone to become a recluse, and a transformation takes place where he and the ugly servant girl of the enchanted cottage see beyond their deformities. The love between the nameless homely couple is invincible, their beauty indestructible

until reality shatters the created image. This narrative is self-reflexive not just in the sense that Molina narrates it to himself but also that the movie is a direct representation of his inner being. He sees himself like the servant girl who is not what she appears to be, capable of being loved if one could overlook the external appearances. However, as Echavarren points out, "the servant girl is NOT beautiful, and Molina is NOT a woman."[11] This becomes clear in the middle of the narrative when the movie transforms into a vision of Gabriel. Again, the description of the eyes stand out: "tabaco negro, la mirada triste perdida a lo lejos..." (113). Molina cannot distinguish reality at this point:

> y si me muero antes de salir de esta cárcel no voy a saber qué gusto tiene la saliva de él ¿qué pasó esa noche? Al despertar el miedo de que fuera un sueño... (113).

As reality eventually comes back into view, so does Valentín. Molina fears that some sarcastic criticism may ooze into his movie, and thus his existence, so he silently lashes out at Valentín and then sets his bait by serving Valentín the poisoned rice. Like Molina, Valentín has fallen in the same trap, completely taken in by the narrations of films. Valentín's thoughts are invaded by the ideals, themes and language of the narrative. His interior monologues appear interspersed among dialogue and film narration that both reflect and imitate the discourse of the prison cell. Valentín's version attempts to follow the pop culture pattern and the result is an obvious imitation:

> una mujer europea, una mujer inteligente, una mujer hermosa, una mujer educada, una mujer con conocimientos de política internacional, ...un muchacho que muchacho que recuerda peones encarcelados por robar el pan que no podían comprar y que recuerda peones alcoholizados para olvidar después su humillación, muchacho que cree sin vacilar en la doctrina marxista... (128-129)

Valentín's struggle with his own identity infuses the play between film narration, dialogue, and interior monologue. In both the narration of the "zombie-woman" movie and the dialogue between Valentín and Molina appear dream-like illusions in the imaginations of the two prisoners. Neither one realizes what the other is thinking, it is in the reader's hands to sort and interpret. The problem with the dreams is that they are incoherent, yet reminiscent of Molina's movie recollections. Here the reader must interpret the metaphoric symbols. Valentín's dream is filled with guilt and remorse:

> Valentín also dreams his own film scripts, revising one of Molina's described movies to forge a lyric yet grotesque vision of his ideological conflicts. The dream takes a form of reiterative litany, an exorcism of sorts articulating the character's guilt and confusion. At the end of that dream, he announces his desires for a traditional, uncomplicated love and in this sense, begins to share Molina's fondest illusions (Masiello, 19).

Valentín's dream is ironically shadowed by the zombie woman movie, dealing with creatures that have lost their own will and are controlled by others, affirming to himself the futility of his situation: he is locked up in prison, losing his will to the system after being drugged, and little by little becoming Molina's "zombie".

On the other hand, Molina's dream is a symbolic tribute to his selfless dedication to helping Valentín, yet he is still a bit apprehensive of Valentín's intentions:

> ...la pobre enfermera, no tiene suerte, le dan el enfermo más grave y no sabe que hacer para que esa noche no muera o la mate, más fuerte que nunca el peligro al contagio... (177)

> ... la enfermera tiembla, el enfermo la mira, ¿le pide

> morfina?, ¿le pide caricias? ¿o quiere que el contagiosa fulminante y mortal? (181)

By revealing his preoccupations, Molina becomes just as vulnerable as Valentín is to him.

The movies and dueling monologues converge along with the thoughts, ideals and emotions of Valentín and Molina. They consummate their relationship, but not before Molina once again visits the "Director" to finalize plans for early parole, that is if Molina can get Valentín to confide political details to him. It seems that Molina has succeeded in entrapping Valentín. Ironically Valentín has deceived Molina as well by becoming the possessor of his emotions and the image of the ideal man that he has sought through his movie narrations. Both characters have transcended their images, their monologues, and the cell: "Es como si estuviéramos en una isla desierta. Una isla en la que tal vez estemos solos años. Porque, sí, fuera de la celda están nuestros opresores, pero adentro no" (206). A complete transformation has taken place; Molina and Valentín no longer stand at opposite poles:

> --Por un minuto sólo, me pareció que yo no estaba acá,...ni acá,...ni afuera...
>
> --...
>
> --Me pareció que yo no estaba...que estabas vos sólo.
>
> --...
>
> --O que yo no era yo. Que ahora yo...eras vos. (222)

Their final dialogue discloses the web of deception: (Valentín): "Vos sos la mujer araña, que atrapa a los

--Me pareció que yo no estaba...que estabas vos sólo.

--...

--O que yo no era yo. Que ahora yo...eras vos. (222)

Their final dialogue discloses the web of deception: (Valentín): "Vos sos la mujer araña, que atrapa a los hombres en su tela." (Molina) "¡Qué lindo! Eso sí me gusta." (265) Molina's fate is sealed with the kiss which he requests from Valentín. Just like the panther woman in the first recounted film, the kiss leads to the death of the protagonist. Moreover, Molina's symbolism leads to Valentín's final interior monologue that finishes the novel.

Valentín appears in a morphine-induced stupor after enduring a torture session. The details of the scene are at best hazy, identical to the dream-like monologue that imitates Molina's style of narration. The reader is left to ponder Valentín's own "fin enigmático." Critics disagree on his whereabouts or destiny. Some attest that he dies in prison whereas others believe he has escaped and his comrades are left to care for him.[12] The purpose of Valentín's last appearance compares to the text itself. The scene seems to focus on a specific character, yet the true nexus underlies it.

Valentín's monologue serves not so much to explain his final demise, rather, he justifies Molina's death, claiming that he died as he would have wanted, like a heroine in one of his films. Valentín also seems to be caught up in

Molina's world, finding himself in a movie-setting. He sees himself on a tropical island, and although it may seem that he has transcended his boundaries, the refuge is no different than the cell in which he was entrapped--he cannot escape the marginality imposed upon him. Also, Valentín envisions Marta, his true love, on the island with whom he has a dialogue. However, he is still bound to Molina's image: "Marta, no te podés imaginar qué ganas tengo de dormir después de comer todo lo que me encontré gracias a la mujer-araña" (286). His dream ends as does the novel: "este sueño es corto pero es feliz" (287). The reader must deal with an incoherent narration that marks the text with an uncertainty that leaves it open to interpretation, yet closing the text by neatly tying together interior monologue, dialogue, and film narration. The reader must also wonder if he is the greatest victim in Puig's web of deception.

SCRIPT FROM BEYOND THE MARGINS

The chapter that precedes Valentín's monologue sharply contrasts with the personal, private atmosphere. Molina's character is developed through the narrative device of the movies; another distanced technique reveals his demise--his death is presented by an impersonal narrative form: a sterile, objective police report, which not only reveals the details of his demise, but also alludes to the fact that Molina's life was much less valuable to the government than the possibility of extinguishing Valentín's political

activities. By observing Molina's actions, it seems that he was aware that he was being followed and that his phone was tapped. Yet, Molina attends the meeting arranged by Valentín and is mercilessly gunned down by extremists, more than likely so that Molina would not have a chance to confess. The formality of the document by a nameless spectator distances the reader from the relationship built by the rest of the text, posing an anti-climactic atmosphere which leads the reader to the final and perplexing chapter and a parallel to Valentín's "fin enigmático."

SCRIPT AND CONTROL FROM BEYOND THE MARGINS

The framing story of the text is shattered by another narrative form, that of Freudian psychoanalytic explanations of homosexuality. It appears in the form of footnoting which situates the reader on a separate plane from the narrative. The authorial figure has set the reader apart from the characters also, giving the reader the privilege of intertextual interpretation and a form of alienation from the text.

To obfuscate the task of interpretation, the reader is offered another "text" below that both complements the reading of the text above and attempts to subvert it. Several interruptions of footnoting appear at the bottom of the text with its weight curiously placed in the middle chapters.[13] This dialogue with the reader appears well after he has become involved in the reading. The abrupt introduction of a new text questions not only the thematic

text, which is generally reserved for non-fiction:

> Like introductions or critical prefaces, appendixes or afterwords, they are inherently marginal, not incorporated into the text but appended to it. As annotations, they are innately referential as well, reflecting on the text, engaged in dialogue with it, and often performing an interpretive and critical act on it, while also addressing a larger, extratextual world in an effort to relate this text to other texts, to negotiate the middle ground between this author and other authors, between this author and the reader.[14]

Therefore footnoting addresses both the text, the author, and the reader. Benstock asserts that footnotes can reflect ambivalance as well, "toward the text, toward the speaker in the text, and toward the audience (204). The discourse created by foonotes is both inner-directed as well as outer-directed which offers a myriad of critical assumptions. In other words, it comments on the text above, yet it stands as its own text. But the primary purpose of foonoting is to engage a critical study of the text above without subverting it.

Within fiction, footnoting takes on other possibilities. As a critical tool, it comments upon itself, its sources and the traditions within which it falls. Footnoting transcends the critical boundaries into the creative realm, even, as we see in El beso de la mujer araña, when it "cites real sources outside fiction" (Benstock, 205). The function of footnoting, which generally serves to clarify the text above, seems to serve an opposite role within fictional writing. The footnotes become an inherent part of the fiction, although they may emphasize the distance between reader, subject, text and author. Thus

the notes force the reader to resolve the gaps by searching for the authorial presence that is offered. Roberto González Echevarría suggests that the author of the text (and in this case, the footnotes) is much like the figure of the Latin American dictator, who reveals himself as a source of power and control. He contends that in the twentieth century Latin American novel, the figure of the author has been replaced by the uncertain figure of the writer. There is no mediation between the traditional third person narrator and powerful author. Thus, the "scriptor" fills the void of a center of power, the absence of the concept of self. One way to minimize the void is through the presence of authorial figure who, if he cannot control, he can present the facade, in this case through the technique of footnoting. In El beso, the margins of the text reflect the the polemic of author and writer. As Valentín displays his authority in the political and philosophical realm, he opens the invitation for the participation of an outside voice, here in the form of footnoting. As Valentín attempts to educate the naive Molina, Valentín admits his ignorance regarding homosexuality: "...yo de gente de tus inclinaciones sé muy poco" (66). Valentín's authority and control is swiftly effaced by both the characters within the text as well as by the author. Valentín's ignorance invites the reader to not only see Valentín's weaknesses but to also place him on the same level of the reader. By using footnotes to explain "homosexuality", it also points to the

regarding homosexuality: "...yo de gente de tus inclinaciones sé muy poco" (66). Valentín's authority and control is swiftly effaced by both the characters within the text as well as by the author. Valentín's ignorance invites the reader to not only see Valentín's weaknesses but to also place him on the same level of the reader. By using footnotes to explain "homosexuality", it also points to the reader's ignorance of the subject and his alienation of an unacceptable, marginalized aspect of society. Valentín's admittance of ignorance initiates the footnoting on the theories of homosexuality. Thus, the author presents himself as the spokesperson for several authors, those which stem from the extra-textual world. Theories ranging from psychological, social, anthropological and physical sources attempt to explain the origins and nature of homosexuality. Familiar names such as Freud, Marcuse and Brown accompany these theories which seem to accredit their feasibility within the fiction. Each footnote discusses a reason for homosexuality, beginning with physical possibilities and ending with social and anthropological reasons within modern culture. The weight of the notes lies on psychoanalysis which seems to parallel Valentín's train of thought. However, the last footnote further binds him to Molina's identity, entrapping him in a category from which his image cannot escape. It emphasizes the theory that homosexuality is political, that is, homosexuality is a revolutionary practice. Thus, the marginal notes not only solidify the

thematic bond between Molina and Valentín, but also support the discourse that runs through the text.

The notes on homosexuality allow the authorial figure to make an appearance that confirms his presence as well as a facade of his control. He enters the text masked as a fictional entity. A non-existent Dr. Anneli Taube, a psychoanalyst who speculates through her work, Sexualidad y revolución, that the homosexual is actually a nonconformist revolutionary. Lucille Kerr asserts that Dr. Taube also "postulates the ultimate liberation of both homosexual and heterosexual relationships from the bourgeois paradigm of oppression and sumission." (Kerr, 225) The authorial figure has not only managed to converge the main text and the one below through his neatly theorized hypothesis, but also has placed himself among the other authorial figures from the extra-literary world. More curiously, he, like the characters in the main text has masked his identity, alienating himself from the rest. He appears in the guise of another gender, representing an ambiguous identity. Authorial control appears in another set of footnotes that serve as an addendum to Molina's narrative of the "Nazi film" and acts as an interruption to the "scientific" notes on homosexuality. This abrupt shift connects Molina's fiction with the propaganda "fiction" of World War Two. The note, "Servicio publicitario de los estudios Tobis-Berlín, destinado a los exhibidores internacionales de sus películas, referente a la superproducción 'Destino'," leads

the reader to believe its historical reality by the quotes offered by Hitler and Goebbels. The documentary nature of constitutes, in a sense, a variety of discourses that contrasts with the film narrated by Molina, who as Kerr points out "is himself a fictional character whose discourse is invented by another author" (Kerr, 223). The note offers details about the actress who plays Leni and about the time she spends in Berlin with her lover. The note parallels Molina's narration of the film. Thus the note goes beyond Molina's recollection, and at the same time, is reflected through its similar discourse. Authorial play between fiction and footnote supports and undercuts the discourses created through it. An authorial figure appears in a text that distracts, yet invites the reader to further explore the discursive and thematic possibilites of the fiction. However, through the margins of discourse, authorial control posits a clever game of hide and seek with the reader, subject, audience and author. In its midst, this evasive voice exposes the possibility of true liberation of the sexually and politically oppressed.

CONCLUSION

As a mirror of contemporary Latin American society, El beso de la mujer araña employs the element of repression on a political, thematic, narrative, authorial and structural level that binds the text. Puig's fourth novel disseminates the struggle for power and control on various levels of reading, not only for what is unearthed, but also for the

textual elements that are repressed.

The structure of the text is deceptive, not for its elusiveness, rather for its chaotic imbalance that lies underneath. On the one hand, Molina and Valentín benefit from the chronological formal structure, slowly weaving their private web of deception and entrapment. Neither seems to be aware of the other's plans; it is up to the reader to decode each level of intrigue. On the other hand, Molina's masked film recollections first appear to be the narrative focus of the text. As the text progresses, dialogue and cinematic narration exchange roles, the former takes precedence and the latter becomes a framing device. Narrative conventions play a decisive role in the (re) writing of El beso. The overwhelming voice is played by the pop culture product of Grade B movies of the 1930s and 1940s. The controlling voice seems to belong to Molina, who narrates the majority of the text, and controls its direction. However, the narrations truly belong to another realm that has been infused with Molina's character. The pop culture product of Grade B films not only narrates its own story but also becomes part of Molina and Valentín's tales. Its themes, values and linguistic quirks become part of their life, personality, and character. Film and dialogue interweave, resulting in varying narrative, thematic and generic strategies which unmask underlying possible readings of the text. Molina's film serves as the primary focus of the text, although no indication is made that the text is

actually a film recollection. However, the interspersion of cinema and dialogue result in a transformation where film becomes a frame and the resulting discourse acts as the focus. Yet the function of film as a narrative, thematic and generic device cannot be overshadowed. It not only serves as an opiate for the protagonists, but also potentially entraps the reader who, like Molina and Valentín interpret through identification. In other words, the reader can easily be deceived through the (mis)cues that link the extra-literary world established by the pop culture products in the text. In other instances, other distancing narrative devices play the role of character voice, stealing glimpses of Molina, Valentín and surrounding life through narrative techniques, such as the script-dialogue between "Director y procesado", the police report, and the pseudo-cinematic interior monologues. The shifting or absence of the authorial voice comes to the forefront in El beso de la mujer araña. Molina seems to take the reins as the creative force through his film recollections, and the authorial voice snatches them away through various discursive and narrative ploys. The authorial voice appears through the miniscule footnoting that infuses him in both the fictional and non-fictional worlds, placing him among the world's most famous psychologists and authors. Yet, for all the continual deviations, the voice of authority seems to rest within the various discourses that result from them.

The reader must shift the focus from the main text to what awaits below. The footnotes on the latter plane force the reader to the margins of the text, distancing him from the text above. He must perform two tasks simultaneously, interpreting two distinct texts and at the same time juxtaposing and comparing them. Therefore, he must deal with at least two separate discourses, not to mention those which result from the text and footnotes combined. The potential for the footnotes--a literary technique generally reserved for non-fiction--to contradict or even subvert the text becomes a possibility, especially when one considers the authorial play that has been bestowed upon the text and audience. Thus, the reading of the text seems to lie in the hands of the reader who must actively participate in the creation of the text. However, the reader must ponder--is he another victim of the great web of deception?

NOTES

1. Between Boquitas pintadas and El beso de la mujer araña, Puig published The Buenos Aires Affair in 1973.

2. Unlike the chronology, the time frame is offered implicitly. The former date is given through a dialogue with the warden in chapter eight, the latter provided in a police document in chapter fifteen.

3. Puig has included six recollections of films in the text, five of which are based on actual Hollywood movies. They are as follows: "Cat People" dir. Jacques Tourneur, (1942); the invented Nazi propaganda film called "Destino:" "The Enchanted Cottage," dir. John Cromwell (1946), the "Adventure Film" (a complete invention by Puig); "I Walked with a Zombie," dir Jacques Tourneur (1943); and "Mexican film".

4. For specific examples, see Pamela Bacarisse, "The Projection of Peronism in the Novels of Manuel Puig," The Historical Novel in Latin America: A Symposium, ed. Daniel Balderston, (Gaithersburg, MD: Ediciones Hispamérica, 1986), 185-201.

5. Juan Manuel García Ramos, La narrativa de Manuel Puig, Colección Monografías,. 16 (La Laguna: Secretariado de Publicaciones de la Universidad de La Laguna, 1982): 378.

6. Pamela Bacarisse, The Necessary Dream: A Study of the Novels of Manuel Puig (Totowa, NJ: Barnes & Noble, 1988), 89-90.

7. See Gustavo Pellón, "Manuel Puig's contradictory strategy: Kitsch Paradigms versus Paradigmatic Structure in El beso de la mujer araña and Pubis angelical," Symposium 37.3 (1983): 186-201. He supports that "kitsch is art that follows established rules at a time when all rules in art are put into question by each artist (186). Also see Jonathan Tittler, "Order, Chaos, and Re-Order: The Novels of Manuel Puig," Kentucky Romance Quarterly 30.2, (1983), 187-201.

8. For a comparison between Val Lewton's "I Walked with a Zombie" and Puig's "La vuelta de la mujer zombie," see Stephanie Merrim, "Through the Film Darkly: Grade "B" Movies and Dreamwork in Tres tristes tigres and El beso de la mujer araña," Modern Language Studies 5.4 (1985), 300-312.

9. Pamela Bacarisse notes that the heroine of this last movie is "like so many other people in El beso de la mujer araña and elsewhere in Puig, kept a prisoner" (123).

10. Pamela Bacarisse refers to Molina's version of "The Enchanted Cottage" as a meta-meta-narration where "Puig narrates the tale of Molina, who narrates the tale of a blind man, who narrates the thoughts of the servant-girl, who is a reflection of the second narrator, Molina" (109).

11. "El beso de la mujer araña y las metáforas del sujeto," Revista Iberoamericana 102 (1978): 79.

12. For differing opinions about Valentín's final demise, see Lucille Kerr, Suspended Fictions: Reading Novels by Manuel Puig, (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1987); Stephanie Merrim, and Gustavo Pellón.

13. Footnotes appear in chapter three (66-68), chapter four (88-94), chapter five (102-103), chapter six (133-135), chapter seven (141-143), chapter eight (154-155), chapter nine (168-171), chapter ten (199-200), and chapter eleven (209-211).

14. "At the Margin of Discourse: Footnotes in the Fictional Text," PMLA 98 (1983): 204.

SANGRE DE AMOR CORRESPONDIDO: A DISPUTE OF CREATION

A recurrent characteristic of Manuel Puig's novels is expressed through the lives of his characters who struggle to survive the backlash of the stifling and repressive society of Argentina. Although no overt historical events are mentioned in his works, the social, political, and personal ramifications of the Perón regimes and afterward are reflected through the attitudes, values, and ideals of Puig's characters. For example, Toto in La traición de Rita Hayworth masks his entrapment in a dull, meaningless existence through the complete immersion in the fantasy world that stems from the glitter of pop culture. In El beso de la mujer araña, the protagonists, Molina and Valentín transcend the physical barriers of their prison cell that the repressive government has imposed on them by living through Grade B movies. In Puig's novels, the characters share the same demise. They are unable to escape the entrapment and alienation that society has created and that which the characters have unwittingly constructed as well in their attempt to mask or escape their predicament.

Puig's penultimate novel, Sangre de amor correspondido (1982) also reflects these models of repression. But in this work, the focus sways toward a different direction. His

previous novels all take place in the encumbering atmosphere of urban sprawl where the characters are anonymous entities among the population. Even in the case of La traición de Rita Hayworth where the Casals family is isolated in the small town of Coronel Vallejos, they cannot seem to identify with or function in the limits of the "pueblo." Their existence remains tied to the repressive urban atmosphere of Buenos Aires where they had lived most of their lives. Puig's first novels, La traición de Rita Hayworth, Boquitas pintadas, and El beso de la mujer araña take place in Buenos Aires. The following three, Pubis angelical, Maldición eterna a quien lea estas páginas, and Cae la noche tropical shift to outside of Argentina, yet remain within the chaotic confines of urban areas (They take place in Mexico City, Washington, D.C., and Rio de Janeiro, respectively). All of these novels point to the characters' eternal chastisement for the life they had lead in their native Argentina. Sangre de amor correspondido not only abandons the setting of Argentina, but also the overpowering urban sprawl of its largest city. Instead, the novel takes place in the poverty stricken rural areas of contemporary Brazil, shifting the focus from the crowded city to individual destitution. The change of focus is not merely geographic. As Puig's novels have progressed, so has the complexity of formal structure, narrative technique, and authorial voice. This chapter will focus on these conventions and how they entrap and alienate both characters and reader, emphasizing the novel's

narrative technique, and authorial voice. This chapter will focus on these conventions and how they entrap and alienate both characters and reader, emphasizing the novel's framework of social repression that deceptively binds the text to create a cohesive whole.

Puig's previous works are presented through various narrative forms, taking advantage of interior monologue, dialogue, footnotes, letters, and various conventions of popular culture (such as Grade B films, movie scripts, radio broadcasts and the tango). For example, in La traición de Rita Hayworth and El beso de la mujer araña, Grade B films speak through the characters, and in many instances, serve as actual narrators that blend in with their own marginal voices. By the end of the novels, the fragmented presentation of the text seems to fit together to form not a coherent whole, as the reader may wish to discover, but rather the final result is a multiple exposure that uncovers the possible texts that lay underneath as the reader participates in its (re)creation. Sangre de amor correspondido offers a new twist to Puig's jumbled creation made up of cues from seemingly distorted planes: convoluted spacial and temporal frames with mismatching voices. Sangre de amor correspondido offers a portrait of a young, poor stonecutter, Josemar, who relates his uneventful auto-biography through a twisted, and at times unintelligible interior monologue. The presentation of his story parallels his life that consists of a never-ending

tale that journeys from place to place, along with his short term employment throughout small Brazilian towns such as Baurú, Santísimo and Cocotá. He tells his story as he rides the two hour journey from Santísimo, where he lives with his ill mother, to work in Río. The novel does not explicitly reveal the temporal or spacial planes of his narrations; the reader must piece the narrative clues together as the text progresses. Josemar confesses that his 31 years have not produced much in life, which stems from his experiences in Cocotá. His stay there is unclear. He claims that he lived in Cocotá ten years ago, and in other instances he says that he was eighteen years old when he abandoned the town. Originally Josemar's family lived outside of Cocotá on the "chacra," alienated from the town and its social advantages as well. But as a young child, Josemar went to live with an aunt in Río to escape his violent father, isolated from his ture family during his developmental years. Upon his return to Cocotá as a sixteen year-old young man, he meets María da Gloria. Josemar is obsessed with her and everything she symbolizes. Although when they meet, she is only twelve years-old and from a higher social class, her mother permits that they have a relationship. The details and consequences of their affair constitute the focus of Josemar's monologue. It seems that he had deflowered María da Gloria and later abandoned her, supposedly which led to her insanity. His story is imbued with his sexual escapades with other women, enhanced by his

attempt to fulfill the macho self-image dictated by society. Josemar claims that he left Cocotá in hopes of a better future, but underneath that facade, his ramblings reveal his poor family life due to his drunken father who beat the mother he adored, and Josesmar's failure to acheive any kind of success in life. The end of the novel returns to its beginning, and through the process, exposes the possible underlying readings through Josemar's dialectic between truth and reality and his version of them. The voices created within Josemar's mind provide the facade of narrative control. Moreover, it seems that Josemar also holds the reins of authorial voice. Because of the delicate balance between authorial and narrative voice, both must be considered within the text. Josemar's role as an authorial subject is credible. The term "author" in this case does not solely refer to Manuel Puig, who stands above and beyond the text. One must consider the fictionalized characters within the novel who take on the responsibility of authorial subjects as well. Josemar's stories can be considered as a stream-of consciousness that appears to the reader in written form. This can easily account for the sudden shift in versions and subject change, as well as the lack of veracity when compared to previous stories that he has presented earlier in the text. Josemar's accounts are based upon memories that serve, as Jesús Lázaro points out, as "el escape al pasado por el peso del presente."[1] In this light, Josemar mirrors María da Gloria. Neither are able to

remember the pertinent details of the night when Josemar deflowered María or the stories that revolve around their alleged turbulent relationship. The key difference between María da Gloria and Josemar, however, is that Josemar's invention, his very essence, is based upon an event, an existence that may have never been given life. It seems that Josemar constantly recreates and relives the stories within his mind, similar to a dream text where he fills in the missing details where his memory has failed him.

The elusive quality of Josemar's monologue creates the facade of authorial and narrative control which he cannot master. Rather, his attempts to manipulate the text are contradicted and undermined by his own hand. The continual shift of temporal and spacial planes further contributes to the potential deception of the novel. The analysis of each of these components exposes the undercurrent of alienation and entrapment in Sangre de amor correspondido.

ELUSIVE FORMAL STRUCTURE

The search for reality on a spiraling continuum of shifting temporal and spacial planes provides the structural foundation of the text. True to Puigian form, Sangre de amor correspondido reveals information bit by bit, omitting details and key referents. The reader must follow Josemar's subconscious journey through time and space that constantly halts and shifts without warning. Another departure from Puig's other novels also contributes to a change in strategies. Instead of the typical sixteen

chapters divided into two symmetrical halves, this novel contains twelve chapters and an epilogue that leads back to the beginning of the text by almost exact repetition. Repetitiveness runs throughout the novel, constantly jumping back and forth between the present, past and future, taking a significant form. Pamela Bacarrise points out that Josemar "uses the same phrases over and over again and he tells the same story more than once."[2] Josemar not only must search for the story in his mind, he must rewrite history, one which he cannot seem to remember.

Josemar's use of language reinforces his propensity to confuse the facts and time frames. His tag questions, such as "¿verdad?," "¿no?," or "¿está claro?" flood the novel. In chapter one alone, they appear in at least forty-seven instances. The proliferation of such linguistic addendums not only irritate and interrupt, but also counteract their purpose to verify the truth. They put into question everything that Josemar relates in his subconscious text. Another twist has been added to Josemar's monologue: his story is presented as if the protagonist had been interviewed by an anonymous entity who has recorded Josemar's thoughts. This technique throws a deceptive focus on Josemar, who fields direct questions offered in the present tense "tú" form from unidentified, at at times unidentifiable interviewers. Through context, one can ascertain the contributors who constantly interrupt Josemar's thoughts that shift amongst the identity of his

mother, Carminha; Zilmar, his adopted negro brother; Lourdes, the mother of his two children; and María da Gloria, who ironically seems to be the only character to believe Josemar. This narrative technique gives the impression that the reader is witnessing the actual event instead of recollections within Josemar's mind.

In turn, Josemar responds to the questions in the third person preterite as if a spokesperson had been speaking for him or had recorded Josemar's voice. This form not only distorts the presentation of the text, but as René Campos states "el discurso surge desde el espacio privado de Josemar."[3] From his private vantage point, the reader is given privilege to participate in Josemar's world, one created from an emptiness in which he is entrapped, emphasized by the repetition of events and meaningless tag questions. The novel opens with a question from this vacuum, not posed from Josemar, but from most likely María da Gloria: "¿Cuándo fué la última vez que me viste?" (9)

The focus on interruptive interlocutors distances the reader more from Josemar's text. Through Josemar's presentation of his quest for the truth stands the disparity between the created world within his mind and the written text. This gulf underscores his alienation through the distance created by the numerous conflicting voices in the text.

DISPARATE NARRATIVE VOICES

Through the use of the third person preterite, Josemar

has distanced himself from his own invention, and from his own existence in one sense. The result is a proliferation of his character into a myriad of roles that constantly intermingle: Josemar/author, Josemar/narrator, Josemar/character, and Josemar/person.[4] Not only is Josemar unable to distinguish between his various functions within the novel, he also cannot maintain a credible balance between reality and fiction within the text. Like Puig's other characters, Josemar is responsible for the creation and destruction of the very control which he has attempted to master by creating the text through his own narrative voice.

In Puig's previous novels, other narrative techniques have served as vehicles for the creation of the novel. The incorporation of popular culture in these works has acted as narrator, author and text. For example, the recurrence of cinematography in El beso de la mujer araña and La traición de Rita Hayworth is infused into the text as a coherent story-telling device. For a great part of these novels, the reader is given the opportunity to witness the creation of the text, as if he were sitting in the audience watching a movie. The reader has the advantage of following the characters as they wander in and out of the creation.

Although at times the reader must be dilligent in order to follow certain characters, their names and characteristics expose their identity. Sangre de amor correspondido, however, seems to lack any of Puig's previous

distinctions in its relationship with the reader. The revelations of Josemar's conscience are not reflected through any of these vehicles, except through sentimental songs by Roberto Carlos, which situates Josemar's memories within a specific timeframe. Every bit of information that becomes the written text evolves from Josemar's conscience which is constructed on a faulty memory. Not only are his details questionable, but also what Josemar omits (whether intentionally or not) causes the text to be obfuscated even further. Events, details, and characters constantly appear and disappear from the text without ever being identified or providing any revealing characteristics about themselves. For example, in chapter seven, Josemar's monologue is interrupted by several different characters without any of them ever being called by name. Unlike Puig's other novels, many of his characters in Sangre de amor correspondido are never directly addressed. In some cases, characters have no nomenclature whatsoever. Josemar's true father is referred to only as "el dueño de la chacra" whereas his two illegitimate sons and the woman who bore them are never given any clear identification.

Josemar's role as narrator of Sangre de amor correspondido demonstrates another way to twist and entrap the reader. The monologue within Josemar's mind creates the deceptive illusion that he has been delegated narrative command. This not only creates a subjective point of departure, but also a false textual center. The focus seems

to concentrate upon Josemar's life, escapades, failures, and his attempt to cope with his miserable situation. The only manner of survival, as in Puig's other novels, is to escape into an acceptable mixture of fantasy and reality--one where the border between the two has been opaquely muted. The narrative structure implies the false image of control, which potentially deceives both Josemar and the reader. Although the text comes from Josemar's conscience, the interviewers provide their half of the dialogue in the second-person present tense. Thus the characters that Josemar has created play greater narrative roles than what appears on the surface.

Josemar's ever-changing versions of his auto-biography reveal that he cannot accept himself as the center focus of the text. Slowly, his stories shift to an outward direction, placing spotlight (as well as the blame) upon the interviewers. By permitting other characters to pose the questions, Josemar eventually concedes partial narrative control to them. They must step in to create and edit the text so that it cannot get out of hand. The participating characters keep Josemar's stories "in check" (Bacarisse, 210). Whenever his versions become too suspicious, an interlocutor then interrupts to contradict him:

> Hasta que aquella noche del baile del sábado se fueron al hotel. En el baile estaban contentos, felices de la vida.
>
> ---¿De qué hablábamos en el baile? quiero ver si me estás diciendo la verdad. (11)

The image of control is deceptive because the discourse that ends up on the written page stems from Josemar's mind, not directly from the interviewers. Therefore, it seems that Josemar would have editorial control on what appears as text. As the stories unfold, the reliability of the characters who provide the interview questions are put to task. In the beginning they seem to contradict Josemar's claims, not vice versa. Yet, as the text progresses, it becomes evident that Josemar cannot maintain narrative control over his creation. The most evident, of course is María da Gloria. His text does not emphasize their relationship. Rather, it is based upon the event that lead to her alleged loss of virginity and the subsequent loss of her sanity. Although details of Josemar's sexual prowess invade the discourse (for example, he exclaims several times throughout the text "se la montó como loco"), his comments and questions underscore not only the effect that it had on María da Gloria, but perhaps more importantly whether she remembers any of the details that pertain to the events of their affair. Ironically, Josmar reveals from his very first utterance that his memory seems to be as deficient as María's. It does not serve him well nor does he have a grasp of the truth:

> El la vio por última vez hace diez años, ocho años. Fue en Cocotá, Estado de Río. En la plaza, del lado de la iglesia ¿verdad? ella le fue al encuentro, tenían cita ¿o cómo fue la cosa? (9)

Shortly thereafter, Josemar claims that he had met María da

(19). His doubts and contradictions about their relationship are too obvious to dismiss. There does not seem to be any justification for Josemar to completely confuse temporal space because he has not experienced enough in his brief life to entangle its events. If his relationship with María were so relevant to his existence, then it would seem that their relationship would link together the basic precepts of chronological time.

Reality and fiction become one through the eyes Josemar, lending credence to the narrating "histor," who relates the text as he has interpreted and recorded it.[5] Josemar displays his evident lack of reliability as a narrator from the onset of the novel. Life is portrayed as he has experienced or interpreted it, and it is quite obvious that he is not sure of his own testimonies. He distances himself from his own narrating voice by casting it to the third person preterite. This way, he cannot be blamed for the incredibility of the stories. Also, Josemar can play the same roles as the interviewers: as witness and judge to the alleged events. Therefore, as he blends in with the others, Josemar shifts the attention to his unsuspecting players.

His discourse is based upon challenging questions from other characters who seek the truth or who already know it. Their questions serve a variety of purposes: to justify that Josemar relate his tales, to progress the text, to uncover a variety of contradictions and variations of the

text, and to reinforce the fictional boundaries which Josemar constantly attempts to efface. The participating characters help Josemar to create his fiction and expose his incapacity to discover or accept the truth/reality. Truth is presented as an intangible set of possibilities that is continually and obsessively reiterated. The "truth" becomes so convoluted that the fine line between reality and fiction is continually subverted by Josemar's perpetual variations of his existence. The quest for truth is not an objective of Josemar's story-telling since he does not seem to have the ability to grasp it. His constant reiterations point to his desire to detect if María knows what had transpired during their relationship, or if at least she sees life from the same standpoint as Josemar. He is intent to entrap her in his version of the "truth": "El le va a contar toda la verdad a la Gloria, de lo que pasó antes y después de la enfermedad de ella" (117). Yet, he keeps changing his stories about their love affair, and moreover about the details of the alleged events which led to her loss of virginity. Two possibilities exist for Josemar's strategies. First, he must see if María da Gloria knows more than he does about their relationship (and perhaps about the Josemar he cannot fathom). If so, she could expose his indescrepancies and therefore destroy Josemar's text.

Secondly, Josemar seems to fight continuously in order to create a solid version of a final text that he can live

text.

Secondly, Josemar seems to fight continuously in order to create a solid version of a final text that he can live with. He lacks a memory which, unlike María da Gloria, is not justifiable. At least it seems that María cannot be held accountable for her actions because of her mental instability. On the other hand, every time that Josemar tells María a version of the events that had transpired, she reveals a loophole that forces Josemar to change his story. Even though she cannot seem to remember, María da Gloria instinctively reacts to Josemar's lies. Josemar, however, does not believe that María can be a threat to his inventions. He exposes her illness in the very beginning of the text, thus dispelling her as a reliable source of the truth. In Josemar's eyes, María da Gloria cannot subvert his text because she lacks the key to undermining it: a memory. However, although Josemar never identifies his interviewers, it seems that María da Gloria posits the majority of the questions, thus entrapping Josemar in his own deceptions. Josemar has made a grave error: truth and memory do not equate.

As the novel unfolds, it becomes evident that María da Gloria does not remember the details of the pain or pleasure of her deflowering, and for a good reason: it seems to have never occurred. First Josemar tells her that she lost her virginity in a hotel. María knows that an unchaperoned young girl from her class standing would not be able to

register in a hotel, moreover with a young man from the "chacra" without anyone taking notice: "¿---Y nadie se dio cuenta, que una chica de quince años entraba a un hotel?" (9). Thus, Josemar changes the location of the event to the bushes, then to under a tree. Once the reader is led to doubt the veracity of María da Gloria's loss of virginity, Josemar reveals the event which serves as the catalyst of the novel: his attempt to consummate their relationship in his mother's shed:

> La Gloria nunca había llegado hasta ahí, no conocía la casa y entraron por la puerta del fondo del galpón, la otra puerta se veía desde la ventana de la cocina, y los hermanos varones ya sabían todo...era la primera vez que alguien se montaba a la Gloria, pero él cerró bien la puerta rapidito, y las ventanas. Se quedaron afuera sin oír nada, los carajos. El acortó la rienda en seguida, así ella no tenía más tiempo de arrepentirse, lo que ella empezó a sentir fue mucho frío. (113)

Josemar does not expose to María da Gloria (or to the reader) the true version until the end of the first half of the novel. There is little reason to believe this version of María's deflowering since it does not vary from any of the other stories that Josemar has fabricated. It is not until the rest of the novel comes together that this particular account can be verified by his mother as the official story. Still, Josemar contends until the last chapter of the novel that he and María da Gloria did indeed consummate their relationship.

Other details of their love affair are also based on half-truths, not because Josemar is a spinner of tall

tales, but rather because he too lacks a memory, entrapped in the fantasy of capturing his prey from a higher social class: "De ahí en adelante él parece que se olvidó, trató de olvidarse y no se acuerda ya más nada" (22). When any of the interviewers pressure Josemar to reveal the truth, he hurriedly shifts to the present tense, frantically searching for the cigarettes that seem to link the past with the present: "Y no encuentra los fósforos, tiene que fumar para acordarse de aquello" (25).

The truth seems to be that Josemar wants to put his past behind him:

> ...lo que necesita ahora es resolver sus problemas, él quiere este año resolver todos sus problemas para vivir un poco más la vida, porque últimamente no ha vivido nada. (101)

However, Josemar unveils the real reason for rejecting his past:

> Carajo, el problema del trabajo por un lado, y encima la enfermedad de la madre, está bien jodido. Ahí no tiene tiempo, no tiene manera, no le da el tiempo para olvidarse y dedicar algún rato al sexo ¿está claro? (101)

He does not mention María da Gloria, rather the theme of forgetting is emphasized. The loss of memory is not only a central focus, but this handicap also becomes a key to reading Josemar's texts. The woman whom he claims to have loved, whose life revolved around him, is effaced through Josemar's attempt to reproduce his life, his text: "El por más que quiere acordarse a veces hasta se olvida de la cara

de ella. De la boca" (66). Even a true image of María da Gloria does not help Josemar to remember:

> Lo que tenía era la foto, y la miraba muchas veces. Y después cerraba los ojos, para ver si se acordaba de la cara de ella sin estar mirando la foto...no se podía acordar ni de la cara de ella ni de la cara de la madre de ella. (121)

The more Josemar tries to forget, the greater the burden of the past becomes. It seems that his dependency upon the lost relationship does not have so much to do with María da Gloria as it does with ideals and values she symbolizes.

THE MASK OF SOCIETY

Sangre de amor correspondido mirrors Josemar's life--both text and life are based upon prevarications, denial and alienation. Two conflicts that form the foundation of the novel are evident and intertwined: Josemar's questionable parentage and resulting lower class status; and the love trist between him and the woman from the "other side of town," María da Gloria. The main focus of Sangre de amor correspondido, María's deflowering, is a significant point of departure.

Josemar's justification to tell his stories revolves around the sordid details of the love affair between him and María da Gloria. One must question why María's affections stand out so brilliantly when Josemar relates his many different sexual relationships with other women. Through the descriptions of his relationships, it becomes evident that they do not represent the challenge nor the reward for Josemar because they come from the same lower class standing

as he. Therefore, the temptation to taste the "forbidden fruit" does not exist. For example, Josemar frequently mentions Azucena's willingness to make love with him. He also emphasizes the fact that she is of the same social standing, thus minimizing the importance of his triumph.

Josemar too, iterates the conquest of his grade-school teacher, Valsei, on whom he had a crush as a young boy. Ironically, she does not remember Josemar when he pursues her. Most revealing perhaps, is a vaguely identified woman named Lourdes, who bore his two illegitimate sons. She not only invades the text, but also serves as a link between Josemar and his idealized mother.

Josemar contends that he wanted María da Gloria the moment he laid eyes on her. Although she is not described in exceptional detail, it is the first time in Manuel Puig's novels that the reader is provided with any specific physical descriptions of his characters.[6] Yet, one must question why the characteristics are included. Ironically, the descriptions provided speak more of Josemar than of María da Gloria, the character described. In one breath, Josemar describes María da Gloria's youthful looks, and in another he cannot remember what she looks like, even after referring to her photograph. Furthermore, Josemar is unable to remember his own appearance without gazing in the mirror.

Physical characteristics are not what they appear to be in Sangre de amor correspondido. The loss of memory seems

to erase not only the importance of outward appearance, but also its superficiality. Beauty is not merely skin deep; on the contrary, physical characteristics for Josemar determine success or failure in life. He knows that he cannot live up to the expectations that María da Gloria has proposed for him. She wants him to go to school to become an electrician which would require an expensive tuition. Social barriers restrict Josemar from pursuing a career. His "macho" values prohibit him from taking money from her father as well. Thus, Josemar is destined to live the fate that society has dictated to someone of his social standing. His appearance is a case in point. The text has made apparent one determining factor within the confines of rural Brazil: social hierarchy based on skin color. Josemar realizes that he does not belong to María's class nor is he accepted as one of his own family. Josemar's light skin tone reveals the crux of the conflict. He does not reflect the indian blood of his mother and father, rather María da Gloria points out "Y yo sé por qué eras diferente" (31). Josemar was obviously considered as an outcast of the family:

> El tercer hijo era más blanco, no tenía cara de indio como todos los demás, era más lindo todavía que los hijos del dueño del campo, que eran blancos como el Josemar. (31)

The "sangre pura" of his parents, although it is of "wild indian" stock, determines his family's social status. They are deemed to be poor owners of a non-profitable "chacra." After all, his grandmother "era india...sí la habían

agarrado entre los matorrales, al fondo allá en la selva, le habían echado el lazo" (75). Moreover, Josemar's lack of indian characteristics determines that he is illegitimate, which carries unfortunate consequences. First, he is rejected by his father who is aware that Josemar is not one of his own. More importantly, Josemar must bear both the stigma of illegitimacy and the resulting lower class status. How Josemar perceives life is shaped by those who either accept or reject him.

Josemar's relationship with María da Gloria seems to exist upon the prospect of conquest of the upper class rather than on love or physical attraction. This perhaps, accounts for Josemar dwelling upon the subject throughout the novel. María da Gloria was not an impossible catch, on the contrary she was a naive and innocent adolescent still experiencing the throes of puberty:

> Pero para entonces él ya había visto a la muchachita, la María da Gloria, por la calle, fue cuando él se metió con ella.... Era una criatura pero ya estaba formada, iba a cumplir doce años, una muchacha ya bien fuerte, lindona, ya con los pechitos bien grandes. El pelo rubio bien largo, la carne blanca, los cachetes bien colorados de la sangre que ya estaba empezando a calentarse, y un día le iba a hervir ¿y volcarse toda? (42-43)

As Josemar reiterates in the text, he could sleep with whomever he wished. Yet, he is obsessed with the details of their affair and the ultimate failure to consummate his relationship with María da Gloria, who represents something much bigger than life to Josemar.

Josemar and María da Gloria share one element in

common: the shade of their skin. However, the similarities end there. María da Gloria hails from white, middle-class stock. Her father is a successful salesman that was able to provide a nice home in the "proper" neighborhood. On the other hand, Josemar comes from the rural "chacra" where not only is everyone poor, but whose origins carry a negative stigma. Josemar is well aware of the differences that separate the two social groups:

> Los que viven en el campo son totalmente diferentes ¿no? la gente del pueblo sabe más cosas, y hasta se burla de la gente del campo. Los del campo hablan diferente, hablan mal, cuando tienen a una persona delante no le dicen las palabras que deben, los paulistas tampoco, parece que están siempre cantando, no hablan portugués claro... ropa común. Son simples para vestir. Andan mucho descalzos, entonces por ese motivo la gente del pueblo los encuentra raros, diferentes, entonces dicen, "Aquel es un chacarero, anda descalzo". (85-86)

No matter what Josemar attempts, he cannot diminish the gulf that separates him and the middle class and remains alienated from María da Gloria's social privileges. For example, he makes a point to leave for the dances in Cocotá in the evening so that the dust stirred up by the trucks traveling on the road will have settled by then. That way, his long walk into town will not reveal "el pelo todo lleno de polvo" (86). Yet, Josemar continues to insist that he has eroded the barriers that distinguish him from María da Gloria.

Although Josemar and María da Gloria may have continued a relationship for some time, her mother's approval of it is somewhat questionable. Josemar claims to have charmed

her mother through his "macho" wiles, yet it is doubtful that she would have permitted her adolescent daughter to run free with him where other townsfolk could witness their escapades and spread harmful rumors. He purports that he formally lunched with María da Gloria's family when she knows that her parents would have never permitted it. He also claims to have escorted María da Gloria to a large family picnic in the country. The more Josemar claims, the less credible his text becomes. Josemar also mixes with the same kind of fantasy that through the myths of "machismo" that entrap him in social barriers that prohibit individual identity. His macho behavior is most evident through the particpation on the soccer teams. First, he claims to have played on the team in Cocotá where María da Gloria's father was the coach. Not only was Josemar the hero, but also he had duped María's father for having relations with his daughter without him being aware of it. However, Josemar's story contains too many doubtful details. Most importantly, being from the "chacra," he would never have been permitted to join the amateur "middle-class" soccer league.

Based upon his first story, Josemar's soccer fantasy in chapter seven must also be considered as unreliable. Not only does María da Gloria become silent during his monologue, but also Josemar removes himself from the center of narration. Instead, he views himself as if he were being broadcast on the radio: "¡Josemar! ¡Josemar! ¡Viva nuestra nueva gloria!" (130). Although he has revealed his

propensity to narrate pure falsehood, Josemar believes that no one can even investigate this one: "...y tenía a todo el mundo a sus pies ¿verdad? Qué vayan y pregunten de él en Baurú, todo el mundo se acuerda" (131). On one hand, distance proves to be an advantage for Josemar. No one can question the veracity of the story because he was alone in Baurú, a city much too far away for the text's witnesses to attempt to disprove. Spacial referents mean little to Josemar and are as distorted as his time frames. One minute he is bowing to his female soccer fans after a glorious match in Baurú, the next he is struggling to make a living as an "abañil" in Santísimo.

Distance, however proves to be a disadvantage for Josemar. It not only accelerates his vicious cycle of failure, it also drives a further wedge between him and his family. His parents or siblings could not identify with him, perceiving him as "different," not fitting in. In chapter two when Josemar returns to the chacra in his new car, the separation between them is evident: "¿Qué es eso, hijita? ¿es una tormenta?", "No, señora, es un coche que se acerca, un Maverick", "¿Quién viene, hijita?", "No sé señora, de lejos no veo la cara pero tiene ropa nueva..."Hijita, él se va a reír de nosotros porque somos pobres ¿no te parece?", "No sé señora, ese joven tal vez esté pasando a mucha velocidad, y parar por acá, no va a parar". (40)

Ironically, Josemar's Maverick changes into a Gordoni,

and later he wishes that someday he would like to own an automobile. Furthermore, in the following chapter, Josemar reveals that upon returning to the "chacra" after a ten year absence, his mother does not recognize him, not because of his high class appearance, but rather for the worst possible reason--she could not remember him: la madre no lo reconoció..."El asunto es el siguiente: yo tengo un hijo que se llama así, Josemar, pero a usted no lo conozco"...él se quedó hablando después solo con la madre una hora y media, más o menos para ver si ella lo reconocía, pero no lo reconoció. (42) Although the years and his long, disheveled hair had changed Josemar, the denial of his mother equates a rejection of his consanguinity. She too seems to lack the key to complete control: a memory. However, we will see that this theory can be dispelled at the end of the novel.

Josemar's numerous siblings are not subject to the rejection and cruelty that he had suffered. On the contrary, they are left alone to live as they wish. Even

Zilmar, the adopted negro son is treated better than Josemar. The latter is viewed "como si fuera adoptivo" (73). However, in his family's eyes, a negro like Zilmar with legitimate parentage merits a higher status than a biological offspring whose skin tone proves "que el tercero era hijo del dueño del campo" (74). Josemar's resentment is manifest through is disrespectful conduct toward his half-brother, relating to him from a societal standpoint. At least Josemar sees himself on a higher social rung than

his black sibling.

Josemar believes that his race permits him to enjoy a higher status than Zilmar, thus he addresses him as if he were low-class trash, even though Zilmar is the only person that looks up to Josemar. He is quick to jump to the defense of class structure that has entrapped him when Zilmar complains of its subjectivity:

> ...tiene que haber gente más pobre y gente más rica. Hay gente que no le alcanza para comer y otros que se sirven estos casi dos kilos de papas fritas, y no dejan ni una de recuerdo. Sí, en los países comunistas dicen que sí, pero acá, no. Acá no es posible porque si fuese toda la gente del mismo nivel entonces nadie trabajaría. Pero eso es demasiado para que lo entienda un negro ignorante ¡como usted! (139-141)

Zilmar serves as the scapegoat of Josemar's conscience who mirrors Josemar's marginalization from society and his family. Josemar represents a true reflection of the problematics of the search for an identity that is linked to culture and society. On a larger scale, it can be proposed that Josemar's quest parallels that of Latin America; both are bastards of racial infusion.

Most revealing to Josemar's alienation is his relationship with his father, Astolfo, who enters and exits the text without much character development. The reader is placed in the same position as Josemar, distanced from the identity that has determined Josemar's ideals, values, and social standing. Astolfo, like María da Gloria, represents Josemar's failure to escape the alienable societal confines which he cannot break down. Astolfo is a victim of his

destiny and social barriers as well. He became a drunk and escaped to Santísimo, perhaps in order to erase the marks from Cocotá which publicized that he did not father his third child. In Santísimo, Astolfo builds a new house and life, working within the limitations of his social class as a stevedore. Eventually, he returns to the "chacra," leaving the house which Josemar eventually calls his own.

Somewhere in between, Josemar relates that he and his father reconcile in Cocotá. He covertly reveals that his father has accepted his son:

> ...cuando a la tarde se quedaban los dos solos el padre se quedaba mirándolo, y lloraba, estaba muy cambiado, ya no empinaba el codo...El día que el hijo se fue de vuelta a Mato Grosso el padre fue y cortó más rosas todavía, lo trataba diferente, lo consideraba como hijo... . (174)

Moreover, Josemar exposes the underlying controlling force, of both his life, and as we will discover, of the text: his mother, Carminha (whose name is not revealed until late in the story). She has controlled Astolfo's life and failure. By conceiving an illegitimate son, Carminha exposes the taboos mandated by society. Not only has she been unfaithful, but also suggests that her husband could not fulfill his masculine role, therefore seeking satisfaction elsewhere. More damaging to Astolfo's identity is the fact that Josemar's biological father comes from a much higher class than he, further emphasizing his sorry and inescapble state in life.

Carminha represents both the link and the destroyer of

the relationship between Astolfo and Josemar. She has determined their lives as well as their failures. Although the two do not share consanguinity, they indeed have much in common: a determining and alienating force beyond their control.

Most descructive to Josemar's identity is the realization of his mother's deception. She is the only person whom he idealizes and completely trusts. Yet, she ultimately controls and entraps Josemar in an existence and failure from which he cannot escape. From the beginning of the novel, Carminha establishes control of Josemar and his text. He places his confidence in her when he intends to flee the "chacra": "El solito planeó todo, la única que los sabía era la madre de él" (17). However, Josemar is well aware of her potential:

> -Usted parece una gallina bataraza con ese pelo canoso y todo crespo, todo sin peinar"... La madre de él es buena, si nadie se mete con ella, son las gallinas batarazas las que dan picotazos que pueden lastimar. (17)

Josemar cannot outwardly admit that she does not represent the idyllic savior that he had imagined. She did protect him from his violent father who had beat him repeatedly for burning his rice machine and killing their greatest source of income: the cow that had gored Josemar when his father forced him to walk by it. On a deeper level, the slaughter of the cow was not merely vengence, rather a violent and symbolic act against his father. Josemar claims to have fornicated with the cow previously, symbolically raping

something out of his own "class," similar to how Josemar was conceived. Thus, by killing the cow, Josemar can release the hatred built up towards his father. However, this act further fuels the fire. His father attempts to kill Josemar and his mother steps in to protect him. She and Josemar flee, sleeping under an "árbol de mandarina" (38) where the cobras or just as venemous, his father, will not attack. She later convinces an aunt to take Josemar to live with her so that Josemar will be safe. On the other hand, it can be considered that Josemar's mother is actively contributing to his exile, precluding any possible reconciliation between Josemar and his father, and controlling his bleak and alienating destiny. Five years later Josemar returns, only to find out that his own mother does not recognize him. His image of the perfect mother figure is gradually shattered.

Josemar contends until the end of the novel that his mother always knew her place in society. She worked as a washer-woman for several middle-class families, never complaining of her low status. Her acceptance of her station in life is deceptive, however. Although, Josemar does not admit to it, Carminha cannot allow Josemar to pursue María da Gloria. It is possible that she does not want him to repeat her error, but more likely is that she must maintain control of her son, the only evidence she has of her affair with "el dueño de la chacra." The picture that Josmar keeps of her reflects his image of her:

Y él le pidió que le dejara la foto, pero si se olvida

> que se la lleve nomás, él no le va a andar rogando nada.La María da Gloria nunca vio la foto, de la madre de él cuando era criaturita, de ocho años, una postal en colores, no era foto de ella misma, porque en la familia eran pobres y en el campo no sacaban fotos... (194).

María da Gloria attempts to shatter the false image of his mother that Josemar has maintained. Throughout the text, she mentions well-known gossip that she has learned: "La madre tenía la culpa" (34) (to which Josemar does not respond) or "Tu mamá te hizo un mal que jamás va a tener remedio" (95). In his final chapter, Josemar breaks the barrier and admits both the truth and her treachery:

> ¡vieja sarnosa y puta madre que te parió! que la culpa de todo es tuya, vieja inmunda, ella estaba entrando al galpón, ella me quería, ella estaba decidida esa noche, y yo la iba a preñar ¡bien preñada! ¡ése era mi plan! Ya después los padres no iban a poder decir nada. Pero ese día la asustaste, se arrepintió ¿no te das cuenta de eso? y la hiciste sentir como una puta... (197).

Yet, afterward Josemar falls back into his dream world, reiterating that he loves his mother unconditionally. The acceptance of his mother's control allows him to surrender his text, and along with it the blame for his miserable life.

MOTHER'S VOICE OF AUTHORITY

Through Josemar's confession of the truth, he relinquishes the reins of control to his mother, who replaces him as the authorial voice. The convoluted text becomes further distanced from the reader. Josemar's interior monologue now belongs in the hands of his mother, who edits and controls the text according to her own needs.

One of those is to force Josemar to love her unconditionally even though she is responsible for his failure in life. Not only did she catch him and María da Gloria in the shed ready to consummate their relationship, but also she bled his money dry in order to receive hospital treatments for her rheumatism. She acheived her financial needs by selling the house in Santísimo, which was the only roof over Josemar's head. It also represented his freedom from his mother and was the only link to reconciliation with his father, Astolfo, who had built it after escaping from the life that was killing him (and Josemar). That edifice served the same objective for his son: a place to forget his past in Cocotá and to attempt to begin anew once again. Therefore, by selling the house, his mother symbolically forfeits Josemar's identity and hope for the future. Josemar must once again swallow his words: "La madre de él nunca los abandonó. Y nunca jamás va a permitir que él se quede sin techo. Antes se deja matar" (68). And of course, he must blame Carminha for his parentage, the "mala sangre" which he passes down to his two illegitimate children, thus casting their future failure and entrapment in stone. Josemar's mother maintains authorial voice long enough for him to subvert her authority and make her the literal testimony for his failures in life. Once he has textualized his blame, Josemar does not need to depend upon his memory as a literary map to seeking the truth. Realizing that he is no longer the creator of his own fictions, he

relinquishes the title to his mother. She finishes the text on his behalf, offering the "true" image of Josemar:

> ...al Josemar lo quieren de todas partes, porque es tan lindo, y él no anda siempre necesitando de tanto como los otros, porque está lleno de cosas, y del cariño de tantas mujeres que le van atrás, algunas descaradas y otras no. Y por eso él me puede querer mucho y no me pide nada, porque él no tiene mucho dinero pero tiene otras cosas, y es como si fuera rico. (203)

Josemar atttempts a final effort to regain control of the text by offering the epilogue. However, it is little more than a reflection of the first chapter. By traveling back to its beginning, Josemar proves his perpetual entrapment in a spiral journey that never ends.

CONCLUSION

Sangre de amor correspondido represents a step in Puig's evolution of novels. In many ways, this penultimate novel demonstrates that Puig's writing is circular as well. His first two novels, La traición de Rita Hayworth and Boquitas pintadas offer self-effacing authors that write, edit, and destroy the texts upon which the novels rest. The main characters, like Josemar, rely on memories to construct their texts, lending the possibilites of effusing reality and fiction. They all find the need to escape from reality in order to accept their miserable existence as the result of a repressive South American government. The reader as well must participate in order to separate the fine distinction between reality and fiction, as well as to piece the text together. Yet, because of the continual spiraling of time and space, the reader is offered multiple

readings through the re(creation) of the text that can both enlighten and entrap. The narrative conventions in this novel appear simple in Sangre de amor correspondido, stemming from a solitary source: the protagonist's subconscience. This is not the first time that Puig has employed interior monologue or stream-of-consciousness as a form of narration. However, Josemar's discourse appears as a disparate and distanced text, one where the role of contributing interviewers actually remains questionable. Rather, their questions are reiterated to serve as stimulus for Josemar's thoughts. In all of Puig's previous novels, characters have anonymously appeared and disappeared, yet they were either directly addressed or identifiable through their speech patterns. In Sangre de amor correspondido^W, however, characters bear no nomenclature, and in some instances display no identifiable characteristics.

The repressive force of social class plays an overriding factor in the text as it has in Puig's previous novels. In this work the focus has shifted to the lowest rung on the social ladder where no possibility exists to escape the confines dictated by society. The barriers imposed upon Josemar are reflected literally and metaphorically through his attempt to ascertain some type of identity out of the clutter of the "macho" ideals and values handed down to him by history and consanguinity, paralleling the situation of Latin America.

Sangre de amor correspondido can be classified perhaps,

as a misrepresentation. The novel, as well as Josemar's life is based upon a distortion of reality and the truth, upon ideas and events conjured up within his conscience that may have never happened, or with people who never existed. So is his text and the readings created from within. Josemar offers a deceptive center: the broken relationship with María da Gloria, whose deflowering never occurred (perhaps María da Gloria is his mirror image, whose infirmity actually reflects Josemar's state of mind). His goal focuses upon the "deflowering " of a forbidden social class with hopes of diffusing the differences that alienate him from belonging to María's social group. Instead, Josemar's mother, Carminha, ultimately controls and authors his text, preventing the rape of social tradition, ideals and unpenetrable barriers. Thus, Josemar's auto-representation is shattered, proliferating the possibilities of perpetuating images of the final text. The reader is left with the responsibility of (re)editing the various readings that emanate from the dialectic between the truth and Josemar's version of it.

NOTES

1. Jesús, Lázaro, "La inquisición sobre la soledad de Manuel Puig", Quimera 4 (1981): 44.

2. Pamela Bacarisse, "Life's a Dream," The Necessary Dream: A Study of the Novels of Manuel Puig, (Totowa, NJ: Barnes & Noble: 1988): 219.

3. René Campos, "Una estrategia fallida: El recuento de Sangre de amor correspondido", Chasqui 18.2 (Nov. 1989), 37.

4. The notion of the split role of Josemar is taken up by Campos in "Una estrategia fallida: El recuento de Sangre de amor correspondido, in which he refers to it as "el desdoblamiento de Yo/Otro" (40).

5. For a definition of histor, see Robert Scholes and Kellogg, (The Nature of Narrative, New York: Oxford UP, 1966), who trace his role back to the ancient Greeks, classifying him as "not a recorder or recounter but an investigator. He examines the past with an eye toward separating out actuality from myth" (242).

6. That is not to say that Puig has completely relinquished his authority in his previous novels. See Lucille Kerr, Suspended Fictions: Reading Novels by Manuel Puig (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1987). She contends that Puig has rejected the role of the traditional author, and instead has handed the responsibility over to the narrating subjects: "[In his novels] many curious moves are made by the authors figured in these texts. These figures come together in Puig's writing to form the unfinished image of an author who is suspended above and within the total, yet incomplete, text through which it is constituted...Such authorial moves produce no final figure or system of authority, no fixed view of where an individual or overriding authorial figure stands in Puig's fiction" (240).

CONCLUSION

Manuel Puig has been categorized as one of Latin America's most influential "Junior Boom" authors of the twentieth century. His unique perspective of Argentinian and Latin American society implicitly exposes the repressive atmosphere of its people in a context that links political and historical reality with narrative fiction. Although Puig does not provide explicit historical or political events, he paints the specific societal image under the Perón regime of the 1930s and 1940s, as well as its second generation of the 1970s. Puig's criticism is found buried within the text, through attitudes and self-alienation inflicted upon his characters who seem to live on the periphery of society.

A consequence of Argentina's repressive political system results in **alienation** and **entrapment** of its people. These concepts link history and literature and play significant roles as a principal theme and structural device in La traición de Rita Hayworth, Boquitas pintadas, El beso de la mujer araña, and Sangre de amor correspondido.

Through the thematic, narrative, and structural levels the characters display their entrapment and alienation, and the reader becomes a potential victim as well. Alienation and entrapment are elusive traits in Puig's works that

co-exist on two levels--the textual, and that which is hidden "underneath" it. The narrative structure of the novels offers a twisting path of fragmentations and discursive elements that continually shifts the texts's temporal plan and alienates the textual and temporal fragments from parallel narrative voices and structures, and from the reader. Through narrative conventions that vary from traditional dialogue and footnoting to those based on popular culture, the novels supply the foundation for alienation and entrapment by providing conflicting or isolated texts. The fragmentation by theme, subject, or temporal and spacial planes invite the reader to actively participate in the (re)construction of the text. By the end of the novel, the pieces of the puzzle seem to fit together, but due to the deceptive circular or linear narrative structure of the texts, the reader must re-interpret the entire novel from a distanced a priori point of view.

The role of popular culture contributes to the deceptive nature of the texts. All four novels of this study use mass culture as narrative and generic strategies. Soap operas, tango lyrics, movies and radio broadcasts shape the attitudes, cultural myths and ideals, and linguistic ticks of the characters while establishing the atmosphere and direction of the texts. Pop culture speaks for the characters that invades their psyche and personality. All the characters in the novels are somehow bound to the conventions that alienate them. The result is that the

conventions of pop culture displaces all the characters from the literary world through the act of reading. The reader becomes disjoined through the very same instances. These adaptations from the extra-textual world placed within the text leads the reader to identify with them from a distanced point of view. La traición de Rita Hayworth offers the potential for alienation and entrapment through the glitz of Hollywood Grade B movies from the 1930s and 1940s. Used as an escape mechanism, especially for Toto, the movies also serve as a narrative device that infuse reality and fantasy and functions as a manipulative device. Toto attempts to control the text by conflating his life with the deceptive ideals and stories borrowed from the cinema. His hand at control fails and vies with his father's manipulation of life and textual dominance. The convoluted narrative structure reveals that Berto holds the key to authorial dominance and direction of the text. The revelation of his letter to his brother, Jaime in the penultimate chapter not only exposes the potential to subvert authorial control, but also underscores the vulnerability of authorial displacement. The reader is left with a text potentially out of control, continually reaching back to a past that has entrapped its characters.

Boquitas pintadas follows the same pattern as La traición de Rita Hayworth. Its characters are entrapped in the past, constantly resurrecting the memory of Juan Carlos Etchepare. The text is based upon nostalgia, which functions

as theme as well as technique. The narrative structure and voice is more complex than in La traición, offering the folletín as the scaffolding. The folletín and entrega are combined with contemporary devices from mass culture, leading the reader to follow contradictory and deceptive narrative strategies. Cultural reality and the conventions of pop culture and literature become so intertwined that the two converge, blurring reality and the representation of reality on which the interpretation of the text depends. The characters are entrapped by the escape mechanisms that culture has offered them. Moreover, they are ensnared by the inescapable societal divisions that chain each character to his class and fate. They attempt to flee the spacial confines in search for emotional, social, and psychological freedom, but they discover that they are doomed to their banal existence.

The same fate holds true for Valentín and Molina in El beso de la mujer araña. These two prisoners are spacially and psychologically entrapped within the margins that society has imposed on them. This novel leaves little doubt of its critical objective. One half of the perspective of the text is provided by Puig's first political activist, Valentín, who attempts to persuade Molina, an ardent disprover of Peronism, to fight for a new ideology. The question of class does not seem to lurk in the forefront, rather political and sexual freedom rank highest. As with Puig's other characters, Valentín and Molina remain

marginalized victims of the society that bore them.

Molina and Valentín are emotionally and pyscholgically entrapped by the devices that sustain them. Although Molina is able to separate his existence from the movies he narrates, he cannot comprehend reality without applying it to the values, ideals and mores of the movies. Valentín, cannot escape his political ideologies either.

Life is seen through the Marxist ideals that has imprisoned and alienated him from the rest of society. The movie recollections offer a narrative device that serves as both a central focus of the text and a framing device for Molina's and Valentín's dialogue that eventually subverts the movie narratives. The function of film as a narrative, thematic and generic device cannot be overshadowed. It not only acts as an escape mechanism for the characters, but also potentially entraps the reader who, like Molina and Valentín interpret through identification. The use of footnotes also add to the deceptive quality of El beso de la mujer araña which shifts the focus from the main text to what awaits below. The footnotes distance the reader to the margins of the text, necessitating the interpretation of two distinct texts simultaneously. The reader must deal with at least two separate discourses, contributing to textual subversion or contradiction already offered by narrative and thematic strategies.

Contradiction is a key element in Sangre de amor correspondido. The protagonist, Josemar attempts to control

narrative and authorial voice through his interior monologue. He never seems to grasp the reins of textual dominance, continually shifting from second person present tense to the third person preterite. Josemar's ramblings reflect the distorted characteristics of an endless free association. He constantly reiterates his text in search for the truth, not only repeating, but editing, only to attempt to efface his textual footprints in the end. The concept of truth cannot be grasped by Josemar. He is bound to the social stigma of being an illegitimate child from the poor class. As hard as he tries to escape the social barriers that preclude him from having a relationship with María da Gloria, nothing can break the societal chains that bind him. Only his mother, Carminha comprehends his fate. She has accepted her situation in life, which is why she is able to take control of Josemar's text in the end. She is the holder and bearer of absolute truth.

The social realism of Puig's works reveals the problematics of existence under the stifling grip of Argentine repressive society. His innovative narrative techniques place him among Latin America's most influential writers. Much of the attractibility of La traición de Rita Hayworth, Boquitas pintadas, El beso de la mujer araña, and Sangre de amor correspondido is indebted to the potential to unearth readings "underneath" the text that involves the active participation of the reader to the extent that his own entrapment and alienation become a distinct possibility.

The reader can become easily bound to the text through the many avenues that Puig has offered, whether it be authorial play, thematic, narrative, or generic devices. The act of reading cannot be considered a mere exercise in Puig's works, rather an adventure where the reader may be one of his potential victims.

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