

## Males in the nude: Intertextuality and the Representation of Masculinity in Rosa Regás's *Azul*

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Naomi Schor reported in *Bad Objects: Essay Popular and Unpopular* on a 1980 exhibition held at the London Institute of Contemporary Art whose theme was “Women’s Images of Men.” To such exhibition, Schor writes, male critics “responded with particular outrage.” The scandal came from the fact that women dared to depict males in the nude (111). In Spain, women’s narrative representation of males—metaphorically in the nude—in which men’s inner conflicts and struggles are represented free from the constraints of socially constructed images and stereotypes is a relatively recent event which has not been given much critical attention. The narrative representation of men as a central theme by women can be considered revolutionary as women foreground themselves as subjects of a discourse, overthrowing the traditional dichotomy woman/object. Thus, men in women’s narrative become the object of the female gaze. By questioning men’s social and cultural positions, women writers adopt a new identity: that of the female observer writing male behavior. In *Azul*, Rosa Regás’s second novel, the one for which the Catalan writer received the Nadal Literary Prize in 1994, the author seizes the role of the patriarchal observer by becoming the beholder of male performance.

Born in the city of Barcelona in 1933, Rosa Regás is one of Spain’s most prestigious and socially committed writers. In many of her novels Regás reveals the effects that a collective social consciousness has on the lives of individuals. A collective social consciousness can be identified as ideology, which in Rosa Regás’s *Azul* is not defined only as a unilateral influence of political, social, moral, and religious values, but also as a series of discrete interpersonal dominations by which subjectivities are shaped. Thus, this narration exposes a series of individual and collective energies capable of constituting and molding masculine subjectivities.

The narrative of *Azul* is centered on the life of Martín Ures, a young man fascinated by the attractive corporate world of television and cinema. The novel begins with a description of a Greek island, Kastellorizo, located in the Dodecanese, just off the Turkish coast, which was semi-destroyed by bombings during both World Wars (Bowman 224).

The main characters, Martín, his wife Andrea, accompanied by a powerful television magnate, Leonardus, his girlfriend Chiqui, and Tom, the hired ship pilot, embark on a leisure trip by sea through the Mediterranean. They arrive at the mysterious island as their ship Albatros breaks down unexpectedly. The island is described as a barren, labyrinthine terrain overwhelmed by the intense heat of the summer and whose few inhabitants, “envejecidos y anquilosados” prefer to remain in the shadows (14).<sup>1</sup> Strange events occur to Martín during his stay in the semi-fantastic space. These events will lead him to a constant movement of ascension and descent through the sterile

landscape. By way of a series of narrative retrospections in the life of Martín, we learn about his submission to Andrea, his female partner, from the time of his adolescence. Martín's aimless wandering in the island parallels the course of his life in search of his own fulfillment. The novel ends as the characters leave the island with a new perspective into their own vital situations, which ironically reinforces their prior status of tediousness and desperation.

The temporal axis of *Azul* comprises the last years of Franco's dictatorship, the time of political transition, and the first years of Spanish democracy. Curiously, Regás's description of male subjectivity during the time of political transition in Spain as a turbulent phenomenon parallels the social and political confusion which occurred after the death of the dictator. We must recognize the importance of the representation of masculinity in *Azul* as a reflection of polarized energies: residues of the old dictatorial regime of Francisco Franco, and germs of the new political era that begins after Franco's death.

Through the use of symbolic language and the alternation of facts and myths, the narration describes the turmoil which accompanies a moment of crisis in the formation of masculinity. Male subjectivity in *Azul* is defined as the result of different modes of domination in an era of social and political change, as well as the outcome of transformations in the evolving concept of women's roles and of gender relations. Jana Sandarg, who characterizes this narrative as a mystery, and a story of love and deception, indicates that in this novel the characters are neither heroes nor antiheroes but simply people who try to understand each other and control their own lives (92); even though this is true, the main character in *Azul*, Martín Ures, possesses a tragic inability to fulfill his human potential, to achieve his own individuality, and to control his own destiny.

The novel is told by an omniscient narrator from the perspective of Martín Ures. The narration is divided into eight chapters and it evolves in two levels within a circular structure which begins and ends on the island. The action of the first level extends the two days the characters spend on the island while their ship is being repaired. The second level unfolds as a series of narrative retrospections that allows us to observe Martín's previous life experiences. These retrospective scrutinies occupy several key moments in the life of Martín: his childhood in a provincial Spanish town; the time when he met Andrea and had a secret love affair; his experiences while living in New York; and his return from New York and the beginning of married life with Andrea. Thus, we come to know about Martín's origins, his family, his plans for the future, and his crisis. The novel's central theme can be defined as the crisis in the life of Martín as he begins to realize that what he perceives to be his own identity conflicts with the forces that shape his environment. The entire novel represents a memory as it glimpses at past recollections which include Martín's experience on the island; a memory that must be forgotten if the present is to continue in its normality. The narrator informs at the end of the novel:

Quizás Andrea y él mismo quisieron convencerse de que aquellos dos días no habían sido más que un descalabro, una distorsión, el crecimiento incontrolado de unas células que habían enloquecido sin motivo ni fin aparente cuya memoria se

había desvanecido ya como se escurren los ecos entre los montes para deshacerse en la nada, porque sólo así les sería dado seguir unidos hasta el fin, perdidas sus voces en el marasmo de dolor del mundo (260).

Rosa Regás declared in an interview: “Yo creo que *Azul* es la historia de una mujer contada por un hombre. Vista a través de un hombre que ama. Y siempre lo vemos tal como lo ve él, no lo vemos de otra manera” (Ávila Lopez 219). Indeed, the voice of Martín Ures exudes through the omniscient narrator, and if we consider, as Julia Kristeva, that from the point of view of a semiotics of culture everything becomes a text, then what we have in this novel is a “female” reading of a “male” text. It is not our objective to discover whether this female reading is only an expression of female gendered desire; but rather to discover the psychological and social manipulations that contribute to the formation of male subjects as described by a female author, and to uncover the strategies by which these manipulations are represented in the text. Intertextuality allows us to examine the narrative mechanisms by which a female author is able to pass through to the world of masculine subjectivities and describe it without gender suspicion.

By using the concept of intertextuality as understood by Julia Kristeva in relation to the textual dynamics that form the novel *Azul*, we are able to unveil a series of historical, social, political and literary influences that contribute to the formation of the unique and distinct subjectivity of the novel’s male protagonist. The result of such analysis is the unveiling of a fragmented, non-unitary, non-coherent subjectivity. Kristeva states in regards to intertextuality that “it can be at once a melancholic moment of crisis, a loss of voice and meaning, a void and displaced origin, and a rebellious conquest of a new polymorphous expression against any unproductive identity or totalitarian linearity” (“Nous Deux” 9). Kristeva describes a textual destabilization and de-centering which precisely allows us to detach the name and gender of the author from her textual gathering, resulting in a “polymorphous expression,” or the text itself working against the notion of identity and coherence. The author becomes the creator to a crisis, the one who gathers already existing concerns and thoughts and weaves them into a new and fragmented consciousness. In line with this notion of intertextuality are Rosa Regás’s own words: “en el acto de creación se desvela un objeto que ya ‘es’ en alguna parte, como si fuera cierto que existe un mundo de las ideas, donde lo que nosotros vamos a escribir o a inventar está esperando desde siempre a que le llegue su turno, a que nazca aquel a quien le será dado convertirlo en una realidad del mundo terrenal” (“¿Para quién escribo?” 126).

Julia Kristeva explained in an interview with Margaret Waller that a textual segment is formed from a combination of several voices and textual interventions. The varied interventions take place at different levels: semantic, syntactic, and also phonic, and such participation at these different levels reveals “a particular mental activity.” Kristeva explains that “analysis should not limit itself simply to identifying texts that participate in the final texts, or to identifying their sources, but should understand that what is being dealt with is a specific dynamics of the subject of the utterance, who consequently, precisely because of this intertextuality, is not an individual in the etymological sense of the term, not an identity” (Interviews 190). Kristeva refers to the

creator as the “subject of the utterance” who disappears in the act of uttering. Within the narrative of *Azul*, Martín Ures, the male protagonist is to be considered the subject of the utterance, since he lends the text his illusory voice and experience, and at a moment of crisis, when he becomes aware of the inutility of his life to that point, he disappears and recreates himself into a different, fragmented subjectivity. At a different level, the author of the novel *Azul* has detached herself from her creation by not allowing her male protagonist to exhibit a subjective, unitary identity, but has formed her male character from a plurality of voices.

Kristeva also speaks of the “subject-in-process” which poses a challenge to identity as a unitary phenomenon. By characterizing the textual narrative of *Azul* as a polyphony, or a kaleidoscope, to use Mikael Bakhtin’s and Julia Kristeva’s words, and unveiling the different textual influences that constitute this narration, what is revealed is the formation of a subject—a “subject-in-process”—who disappears in a moment of crisis, and ironically reconstitutes itself anew. That is, through intertextuality we observe the textual dynamics that contribute to the destruction of the subject’s identity and its ironic reconstitution from a plurality. Every possible influence capable of acting on the formation of the subject—psychological, environmental, sexual, political, religious, etc.—is part of the constituting plurality. This new plurality can be traced to different points of origin, but as Kristeva explains “the final meaning of this content will be neither the original source, nor any one of the possible meanings taken on the text, but will be, rather, a continuous movement back and forth in the space between the origin and all the possible connotative meanings” (Interviews 191). An intertextual analysis of *Azul* serves to discern the major texts which support this narrative, and contributes to an understanding of the formation of male subjectivity during the period from dictatorship to democracy in Spanish modern history.

The narrative construction of male subjectivity in *Azul* is a conflictive fusion of the history in which the male protagonist is rooted and the new socio-political trends; and of traditional and subversive narrative models. Textual plurality comes in the form of adoption—or the borrowing of traditional textual configurations—, and subversion—or the questioning of such configurations. As Regás’s male protagonist undergoes a psychological development which is determined by his time, society and gender relations, in order to understand the textual dynamics that contribute to the narrative representation of masculinity in *Azul* we must inscribe within it a series of textual influences. In the formation of the novel’s male protagonist we can easily discern an ironic dialogue with the past, as well as an abrupt encounter with modern times. We will focus in this study on significant literary intertexts that contribute to the textual formation of *Azul*. These texts also help us understand the formation of the male subject, its moment of crisis, and its ironic reconstitution.<sup>2</sup>

Regás situates Martín Ures at the intersection of key points in his life and he is able to produce, through memory, the texts which introduced him to the formation of his newly regained consciousness. But he is also placed at a crucial historical and political intersection, between the old dictatorial regime of Francisco Franco, and the beginning of democratic life in Spain. The blending of traditional and new textual influences results in

fragmentation vis-à-vis the formation of male subjectivity. This fragmentation is defined by contradiction and conflict, and is expressed through the narrative structure of the Bildungsroman and its subversion.

We associate the Bildungsroman with the maturing process of a male character who achieves a harmonious relationship with his social surroundings after a more or less conflictive process of acculturation (Karafilis 63); the sort of novel in which the main protagonist develops his personality throughout the narrative in the key life stages from adolescence to maturity (Estébanez Calderón 99). Nadal M. Al-Mousa defines the Bildungsroman as a type of novel in which “action hinges on the fortunes of an ambitious young hero as he struggles to live up to his poetic goals against the negative forces of prosaic reality. The typical hero in the novels of development is a male who “grows up in a humble family in the provinces, but, endowed with an adventurous spirit, leaves home to seek his fortune and realize his ambitions” (223). Likewise, *Azul* defines a period in the life of its protagonist in which he attempts to construct an identity in harmony with the social and cultural forces of his time, satisfying thus the traditional pattern of the Bildungsroman. Martín Ures is a man of humble origins who grows up in Sigüenza, a provincial town. During Martín’s youth he leaves his home and family and sets out on what he believes to be a period of learning. He has a clearly defined goal in the form of a dream: he wants to become a film-script writer. As in the Bildungsroman, by way of traveling and facing new risks, Martín Ures has developed a unique subjectivity, has molded his conception of the world and has discovered what he believes to be his destiny. Martín embarks on a journey of self-knowledge: “Pero él seguía día y noche descubriendo los recovecos de su historia en unos parámetros que nadie sino él habría reconocido. Y en su entusiasmo le pareció que estaba aprendiendo a conocerse” (59). But in *Azul*, narrative events subvert the traditional definition of the Bildungsroman in which the protagonist finds harmony between himself and the world. First, Martín’s actions are involuntary. In the traditional Bildungsroman, many male protagonists willingly embark on an adventure in search of the meaning of life; they take active charge of their exploits. However, Martín Ures’s development is guided by a series of unintentional actions, and is thus defined by passivity. Martín is separated from his familiar surroundings by the government, and not because of his adventurous spirit. As we know, the Franco regime established a compulsory military draft by which every twenty-one-year-old male was required to serve in the Spanish military forces. Martín is thus forced to leave his childhood home to fulfill his duty to the state. Later, against his own desire, he will be pushed into leaving his country, Spain, and unwillingly experience life in foreign surroundings. Finally, he will reluctantly take a trip by sea which will mean the definite moment of introspection and self-discovery.

The critical life stage when learning should supposedly occur, from adolescence to maturity, is for Martín Ures a period of ‘unlearning.’ During this stage, Martín has to separate himself from the traditional and familiar values in which he once believed and embrace a new set of social and moral rules. As the novel expands over a period of time which encompasses the end of the Franco dictatorial regime and the beginning of the democratic era in Spain, the narration reflects the dissolution of traditional values that the new political age brings about as well as the new concept of gender relations. Conflict

within the male protagonist of *Azul* is consequently created as the opposition between the new democratic values put forward in Spain, and 'normality,' which to Martín meant the traditional and conservative religious, political, and familial values advocated by the Franco regime. Martín is astounded and confused by the new values represented by his young female partner when he contrasts them with those of his elderly mother.

Martín se maravillaba de la poca importancia que Andrea concedía a lo que su madre, en Sigüenza, habría llamado los respetos humanos, y de cuán poco se preocupaba de esconder sus pasos...Algunas noches de mar rizada, Martín, sentado en la bañera, acusaba el incontrolado balanceo de la falta de gobierno y sentía un peso en la boca del estómago. (117)

Thus the period of transition between dictatorship and democracy when in Spain there were no definitions of 'normality' directs and shapes the novel's plot.

Franco Moretti affirms that "the Bildungsroman...has succeeded in representing this fusion (between individuality and socialization) with a force of conviction and optimistic clarity that will never be equaled again" (116). In *Azul* the fusion is certainly realized but not as an optimistic or even harmonious event since resolution brings with it the negativity of entrapment. The 'harmony' which characterizes "the continuity between external and internal, between the best and most intimate part of the soul and the public aspect of existence" comes in *Azul* at the cost of repression and submission to the old order of things (Moretti 117). At the end of the narration, the characters arrive at their destination as scheduled, life continues as it always has: "No perdieron la conexión de Barcelona ni la de Londres. Y cuando hacia las cinco de la tarde llegaron cada cual a su destino se dieron cuenta de que sólo llevaban cuarenta y ocho horas de retraso sobre el programa previsto" (260). As the resolution offers no positive gains, we come to interpret Martín's painful vision of himself as a newly regained consciousness of his entrapment. The end of Martín's journey takes on an ironic dimension. The social agreement achieved is only a cover of his anguish, and a passive but painful acceptance of his prostration.

The narrative of *Azul* maintains a dialogue with other texts which fit the structural pattern of the novel of development. An intertextual analysis of *Azul* helps to unveil the meaning of masculine subjectivity. Three main texts influence the configuration of *Azul* in its narrative representation of the development of masculinity: Joseph Conrad's sea travel narrative especially in his novel *The Heart of Darkness* (1900), Carmen Laforet's *Nada* (1944), and the sixteenth century picaresque novel *Lazarillo de Tormes* (1554).

Conrad's influence on modern writers throughout the world has been well documented.<sup>3</sup> Conrad's influence on Regás is not surprising given the fact that they both share a common passion towards everything related to the ocean. Regás borrows Conrad's words to head the first chapter of *Azul* in the form of an epigraph:

Can the transports of first love be calmed, checked, turned to a cold suspicion of the future by grave quotation from a work on Political Economy? I ask—Is it



conceivable? Is it possible? Would it be right? With my feet on the very shores of the sea and about to embrace my blue-eyed dream, what could a good-natured warning as to spoiling one's life mean to my youthful passion? (*A personal Record* 11).

Conveyed in this short fragment is the idea of 'erosion' that will be developed in *Azul* and which repeats itself as a leit-motif in Regás's novel: "Como se transforma en dos la cuerda tensada un instante más o a partir de una repetición la caricia se muda en tormento, o se transforma en odio, resentimiento y dolor el amor que va más allá de su propio límite" (15). Erosion is defined as a gradual and devastating depletion which characterizes all human emotions, from love and passion to hate. The outcome of erosion is always a break up and ultimately death. Consequently, after reading the epigraph, the reader is warned of the experience about to follow: the death of youthful illusion that follows the demise of a dream. As in many of Conrad's novels, Regás takes the reader throughout the protagonist's journey which is defined by a questioning of prevailing and eroding moral values.<sup>4</sup>

As in many of Joseph Conrad's novels, the symbolic use of the sea is crucial in Regás's narrative. Not only has the exuberant use of marine lexicon conveyed a distinctive narrative style to both writers, but the in-depth knowledge of the marine world is utilized by these authors to represent a turbulent world where notions of masculinities are constructed and destroyed. The young protagonist of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Charles Marlow, chooses travel by sea and through a river to achieve his childhood dream: to go into the heart of Africa, the blank spot in the African map which represented the unknown, or the Congo. Regás's protagonist, Martín, chooses to join his life to that of Andrea's, the woman with the intense blue eyes whose world is the ocean, a foreign and unknown world to his own, in order to fulfill his dream of becoming a script writer. Both protagonists, Marlow and Ures enter darkness: the African Congo and a mysterious Mediterranean island respectively. In *Azul* as in *Heart of Darkness*, as Frederick R. Karl argues, adventure represents a journey into the dark of the unconscious (124-25). Both settings, characterized by mystery, deformation, and grotesque images of nature, symbolically express the protagonists' introspective look. In both novels, masculinity must be proven by a test of survival in the course of a journey to the unknown, and in the midst of an antagonistic atmosphere.

Elsa Nettels has analyzed the use of the grotesque in Joseph Conrad's narrative as determined by "the distortion of persons and objects, the yoking of incompatibilities, the fusion of the fearsome and the ludicrous, inducing the reader to a sense of dislocation and insecurity" (144). The grotesque in *Azul* is an important narrative feature and is portrayed, as it is in Conrad's work, in the form of physical distortions. In *Azul* not only the landscape is distorted, but also the female character who contributes to ending the protagonist's illusions (Andrea) has a distorted sense of perspective as symbolized by her myopic visual defect. The environment in this novel will assume a near-fantastic quality full of grotesque figures, once the protagonist's familiar world has been shattered. In *Azul*, the mysteriously grotesque environment signals confusion in the face of a crisis which is about to take place as the male protagonist comes to face to face with his own

reality; but it is also symbolic of the deformation by which the male protagonist is perceived by others, especially his female counterpart, Andrea. In this sense, both novels afford an impressionistic vision of the male protagonists. Both journeys, through the Congo river in Conrad's novel, and through the Greek island in Regás's novel represent a personal impression of the formation of one's own consciousness; a subjective, deformed account of one's own text and of the text of others.

The grotesque atmosphere characteristic of the central part of *Azul* is also found in another novel by a Spanish female novelist: Carmen Laforet's *Nada*. With its gothic expression of postwar Spanish society, *Nada* constitutes another intertext for Rosas Regás's *Azul*. It is chance that Carmen Laforet and Rosa Regás were both awarded the Nadal Literary Prize in 1944 and 1994 respectively; but chance ends when we note the affinities between the two novels. The protagonists of both novels, Regás's Martín Ures and Laforet's Andrea, are separated from their childhood environment and arrive at a new place with a feeling of euphoria, ready to learn through new experiences. An affinity can be noted between Nada's house in Barcelona's Aribau Street and the Greek island where Regás's characters land unexpectedly. Both spaces are portrayed as sinister and diabolical, inhabited by bizarre characters. The occupants of these bizarre spaces fill the protagonists with a sense of estrangement which will force them to an introspective look.

The theme of illusion is present in both novels as it is in the traditional genre of the Bildungsroman. Martín Ures and Laforet's Andrea arrive in Barcelona with an optimistic sense of beginning and change. However, in both novels, the theme of youth's illusion soon turns into disappointment as the characters come into contact with the real but changing world. In the case of Laforet's Andrea, it is the deteriorating society of the Spanish Postwar; in the case of Ures it is the evolving society of Post-dictatorship Spain. Within the particular patterns of these changing societies, and the influence of individual histories, the protagonists are not allowed any social progress. Several critics have agreed to classify *Nada* as a female Bildungsroman;<sup>5</sup> other critics, such as Mark Del Mastro and Barry Jordan agree in that "the novel's circularity controls the protagonist's quest for identity, thereby thwarting progress." Andrea's development is thus defined by Del Mastro as a 'visual illusion' (Del Mastro 55). However, 'progress' can also be explained as the individual's achievement of self-knowledge; therefore, 'progress' occurs to the protagonist of *Nada*. Barry Jordan alludes to the fact that Andrea's desires are fulfilled in what appears to be a "happy ending" (107). The 'visual illusion' to which Del Mastro refers is simply the individual's new understanding of the conflict between herself and her social surroundings; a conflict that we never see resolved in *Nada*. Jordan states in regards to Laforet's novel: "there is something slightly puzzling and paradoxical about this novelistic resolution. Andrea's great expectations look as if they will be fulfilled, but if this happens, it does so off-stage" (108) Such a mirage in the representation of individual identities can also be said to represent the life of Martín Ures, as the novel's narrative structure is also circular and a resolution between the individual and society does not exist. Martín Ures leaves the island with a new comprehension of his own subjectivity and the realization that he is trapped within a world which he has not created for himself; we can only assume his bitter anguish and misery as they happen "off-stage."



But even if we agreed to classify Carmen Laforet's *Nada* as a Bildungsroman, it must be noted that the novel breaks the rules of the genre by presenting a female rather than a male protagonist who accomplishes maturity—without the aid of a male figure—resulting in a new outlook on life. The portrayal of female development was very distinct from the traditional female protagonist of the 'novela rosa,' a prevalent genre in Spain at the time *Nada* was being written.<sup>6</sup> Likewise, Rosa Regás's *Azul* also subverts the genre by defining a period of 'unlearning' in the life of a male subject. In addition, it is a female figure that is in charge of guiding the process of Martín's 'unlearning.' The outcome of *Azul* is an inversion of the traditional ending of the novel of development as it ends with the male protagonist's entrapment: we sense that he has no other choice but to unwillingly conform in light of his female partner's strength.

Pablo Veiga Córdoba concludes his analysis of *Nada* in "Aprendizaje, mito y modelos de mujer en Nada, de Carmen Laforet" by highlighting the fact that "Andrea huye de Barcelona sin llevarse nada. Apenas ha logrado dejar de soñar, pero también ha aprendido valiosas lecciones sobre el tipo de mujer que no quiere ser, sobre el tipo de relación personal y sexual que rechaza con todas sus fuerzas" (146). Likewise Martín Ures leaves the island with nothing but a new perspective of his future. He has looked into himself and his life, and disliked what he found, but nevertheless resolves to continue his past existence unchanged. His future becomes a 'no future,' as he returns to his previous situation.

The parallel between *Azul* and *Lazarillo de Tormes* vis-à-vis the representation of masculinity is also notable. Like Lázaro, the protagonist of *Azul* is forced into a journey by which he comes into contact with different sectors of society unfamiliar to his own. Martín travels from a rural environment where traditional and conservative familial and religious values are prevalent, to the up-and-coming urban world of the big city, where new notions in regards to family, religion, and morality are being established as a result of political and social changes. The objective in both cases is to achieve success in society: "acercarse a los buenos." What both male protagonists find in their new environment is hypocrisy, the pretense of high moral values in which the characters don't really believe, as well as bad faith, insincerity, cheating, and malice.

In these two novels, *Azul* and *Lazarillo de Tormes*, the female partners play an important role in the final outcome of the male protagonists' journey. Both narratives assign blame to women for the male characters' entrapment and submission to the established order. In order to keep the place in society they have already achieved, both, Martín and Lázaro must tolerate their wives' adultery; they must hypocritically look the other way since the men with whom their wives are romantically involved have the power to destroy their professional and social achievements. Lázaro and Martín both seem dominated by their female partners; however, what looks like an empowerment of the female gender is nothing more than manipulation by a powerful male character. In the case of Lázaro it is the "señor arcipreste de San Salvador" who is quick to 'warn' Lázaro of the 'malas lenguas': "Lázaro de Tormes, quien ha de mirar a dichos de malas lenguas nunca medrará...Por tanto, no mires a lo que pueden decir, sino a lo que te toca, digo, a tu provecho" (238); in the case of Martín it is Leonardus, the powerful television magnate,

defined by his ability to dominate the other characters, by his sexual potency, and his success within the public sphere, who moves the professional and social strings to which Martín is so attached. Even though Leonardus forms part of the narrative as a secondary character, at the moment of climax, the reader realizes the overarching power he exerts, and his invisible presence throughout the entire novel. We come to understand that it is Andrea's love for Leonardus that compels her to act in a particular way. The power Andrea exercises on Martín is realized through her association with Leonardus and is represented by her objectification of Martín, as she utilizes him to reach her goals. In *Azul*, Martín Ures discovers he is trapped in a life he has not chosen, and which was created for him by his wife, Andrea. Even though he has the possibility of escape, he chooses to stay 'cerca de los buenos,' and continues to live a lie.

All the novels analyzed here represent a steadfast incrimination of society's values. The social cynicism and skepticism found in the narratives analyzed are the tenets that guide the development of male subjectivity. The description of masculine subjectivity is informed by the major concerns at the time of the novels' diegesis: new directions in gender roles, gender relations, new familial concerns, professional issues, and the questioning and shifting of traditional moral values. The male protagonists of these novels willingly submit to the social order of things at the cost of sacrificing their integrity and inner desires.

Rosa Regás offers only a sample of what contemporary Spanish women novelists are doing: daring to depict men "in the nude."<sup>7</sup> The formation of male subjectivity in *Azul* is described as a moment of crisis brought about by a series of dominations in a time of social and political turbulence. Masculine development is presented in *Azul* as a conflict between the male protagonist and his surroundings. The central male character does not dominate or mediate the lives of women; he is not triumphant, but subjugated to higher power or powers. This presentation of masculine subjectivity contributes to the deconstruction of the myth of the Iberian macho, and it presents a realistic portrayal of men.

To Julia Kristeva, textual analysis should not be limited to identifying the texts that form the final text, but to the investigation of the "specific dynamics of the subject of the utterance" (Interviews 190). The examination of intertextual influences within the narrative of *Azul*, allows us to discern the dynamics which contribute to the formation of a fragmented male subjectivity in a moment of crisis, and at the same time informs the separation of the author's name from the narrative. The result is a female author penetrating the physical and psychological world of a male and describing it without prejudice.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> All textual quotations are from Rosa Regás's *Azul*, Barcelona: Destino, 1994.

<sup>2</sup> The term "subject" is to be understood in this study according to Paul Smith's definition as "something at the behest of forces greater than it" (Smith xxxiii). The subject is

enmeshed within its social environment, and all subjects “arise at temporally shifting intersection of multiple interpellations.” (Foreword by John Mowitt in Smith’s *Discerning the subject*, xvi).

<sup>3</sup> Jeffrey Meyers in his article “Conrad’s Influence on Modern Writers” describes Conrad’s legacy to the modern novel from T.S. Eliott to Thomas Mann; however, no Spanish writers are mentioned in the article.

<sup>4</sup> J.M. Kertzer highlights Conrad’s cynicism in an epigraph from Conrad’s *A Personal Record* (1912): “I think that the proper wisdom is to will what the gods will without, perhaps, being certain that they will, or even if they have a will of their own” (121).

<sup>5</sup> Barry Jordan refers to Marsha Collins, Sary shyflter, Michel Thomas, and Juan Villegas as critics who view *Nada* as a female Bildungsroman. Mark Del Mastro also notes critics such as Carlos Feal Deibe who consider *Nada* as a novel of development.

<sup>6</sup> Alicia Andreu expresses the importance given by Carmen Martín Gaité to the genre of the novela rosa and its popularity the years of the Spanish Postwar.

<sup>7</sup> Other Spanish women novelists such as Rosa Montero, Soledad Puértolas, Irene Gracia, and the late Dulce Chacón present in many of their novels a portrayal of males as subjects in conflict, affected by social, political, religious, gender and the cultural concerns of a changing society.

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